

A PICNIC
PARTY IN
WILDEST
AFRICA

C.W.L.
BULPETT

Tyler Morse



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**A PICNIC PARTY IN
WILDEST AFRICA**



Frontispiece

THE AUTHOR AND THE ORGANISER

A PICNIC PARTY IN WILDEST AFRICA

BEING A SKETCH OF A WINTER'S TRIP
TO SOME OF THE UNKNOWN WATERS
OF THE UPPER NILE

BY

C. W. L. BULPETT

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAP

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P R E F A C E

THIS short account of a few months' exploration in the wilds of Central Africa has no pretence to be considered from a literary point of view. It merely attempts to relate the experiences of a party of friends who spent a short period one winter away from the turmoil of civilised life. The relation of the little adventures they underwent is written in a plain, matter-of-fact way, and no attempt, it is hardly necessary to say, has been made to produce artistic effect. It purposes to show how much that is novel in the way of sport, and enjoyable in the way of travel, is within the reach of the ordinary person who wishes to undertake the experience.

Such experiences always leave pleasant memories behind them on the return home. It is then that one is best able to contrast the charm of existence in the wilds with the quiet pleasures of our conventional life at home—the neat little tent in which one passes one's time in the desert, the breeze whispering in the trees above, with the snug warm room at home; the cry of the night-bird, the wail of the hyena, and the splash of the crocodile in the water, for ever reminding us of the charm of nature and its simple pleasures, with the habitual sounds of the streets.

A great part of the descriptions of the scenery and life on the Nile and Sobat rivers, are extracts from the journal of Mrs. Mc Millan, who most kindly put her notes at the disposal of the author. When such extracts are introduced they are placed between inverted commas, and the reader will have no difficulty in distinguishing them from the rest of the book. Many of the engravings are from drawings taken on the spot by Mr. Jessen, the engineer and surveyor to the expedition; and there are reproductions from photographs made by various members of the party. I also am much indebted to Mr. Jessen, who has kindly consented to look over the proofs of the book during my absence from England.

C. W. L. B.

December 1, 1906.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THERE are picnics and picnics. Some people prefer to take their outings on the banks of the Thames, or in the sylvan retreats of rural England. I suppose it was a desire for novelty, and perhaps also a little spirit of adventure that led us to do our picnicking in less frequented regions, and under circumstances where the possibilities of the unknown were ever presenting a new interest and giving at each sunrise renewed energy and food for the imagination.

26 Though we were fully equipped for a picnic, we were also thoroughly prepared for exploration; to shoot game, big or small, from the elephant to the dik-dik; and to provide ourselves and our men with those necessaries which in most picnic parties it is the part of the butcher or the poulterer to supply. The advantage of our method of proceeding was that it combined the joys of the cockney picnic on the Thames with the excitement of the many adventures in sport and exploration to be met with in an unknown country. We also associated real hard work with our pleasure and sport. We mapped out and surveyed many hundreds of miles of previously unexplored country; and thus we left behind us more lasting evidence of our descent upon the land

than the old bits of paper which so often defile the tracks of picnic parties.

It can be well understood that we did not always have all the luxuries of civilisation at hand, and that we often were obliged to subsist for days together on very short commons. Our servants, too, were not neatly dressed white domestics, but black and naked savages, who strutted about with spears under their arms instead of the conventional napkin. Nevertheless we enjoyed ourselves. We had our "ups and downs"—our attacks of fever, and the glorious days of health and strength that only hard work and exercise can give.

It is the experiences we underwent that I now propose to relate, in the hope that I may induce other parties to undertake a similar enterprise. Grouse-shooting in Scotland is good; deer-stalking in the Highlands is an uncommonly fine sport; but both grouse-shooting and deer-stalking must fall far short, in interest and in excitement, of sport and exploration in an unknown land, where it is impossible to say what interesting experience the next moment may bring forth, or whether the next animal jumped in the thicket may be a dik-dik or an elephant, a lion or a giraffe. And then the sense of freedom and unrestraint; the mental exhilaration that traversing an unknown and unexplored country must give. And to think that all this is within the reach of most men who can afford to take a moor or a deer forest in Scotland. If it were generally known how easy the access to these distant lands is, and how easy of attainment is the best sport that the world contains,

I believe that many a man who now spends his time in comparative idleness would shoulder his rifle and march to the distant but by no means inaccessible regions of Central Africa, where everything in the way of sport is to be had for the seeking.

The climate, too, in many parts where the game is most plentiful is superb ; and experience has shown that the popular idea of the general unhealthiness of North East Central Africa is a false idea. The greater portion of this part of the world lies on a high plateau several thousand feet above the level of the sea. Even during the rainy season the climatic conditions are quite bearable. The rains are hardly ever continuous, and during the rainy season the days are almost as often fine as wet.

The advance made in the preparation of preserved provisions now makes it possible, and even easy, to carry a considerable amount of luxuries, without unduly enlarging the dimensions of the caravan ; and the sportsman is by no means obliged to confine his " menu " to what the country he passes through supplies. How different it all is from the days of Livingstone, of Burton and of Speke ! Now, any one with a decent constitution can cross and recross Africa from end to end and be all the better in health for his trouble.

It was the hardships from the want of proper food that brought ill-health and disaster to such expeditions fifty years ago.

CHAPTER II

OUR EQUIPMENT

Our boats and their crews—Personnel of the expedition—Our sporting dogs—Effect of the heat on them—The right kind of tent—A good head man essential—Other servants—Provisions for whites—Trade goods—Cost of sporting expeditions in the interior of Africa—Where to buy mules, donkeys and camels.

It was decided that our picnic party should set out from Khartoum, and by the middle of January we were all of us assembled there. Our stores and provisions, camp equipment, &c., had been previously sent up to that place and were stored there awaiting our arrival; and now everything was in readiness for the start.

A regular flotilla of boats had been got together to convey us, our servants and our stores, up to the higher waters of the White Nile.

First of all, we had a fine seventy-five foot steam launch built by Yarrow, drawing only twenty inches of water, and constructed for burning either wood or oil for fuel. As will be seen further on, the scarcity of fuel for the launch was one of our chief difficulties, as very little wood can be obtained throughout the marshy regions of the Upper Nile and its tributaries.

This launch was capable of berthing eight people below decks, and had also a bathroom below, and a promenade deck above stretching along its whole

length. We had also with us another launch, a forty-five feet boat which drew twenty-four inches or more of water; and besides this there was a small naphtha boat.

The crews of the launches were Soudanese; and very efficient men they proved to be on every sort of occasion. Besides these launches we had two large barges which we had had constructed for us at Khartoum. The steam launches had come out from England in sections and had been put together at Khartoum; but these barges were constructed on the spot. They were each of them forty feet in length and had a ten-feet beam. They were large and roomy and were roofed over with matting, and were capable of carrying an immense amount of material. They conveyed most of our stores and all our dusky servants.

To enable us to reach the upper waters of the Nile with greater quickness, we had, by permission of the authorities, hired a large Government steamer, a stern wheeler, to tow us up the river as far as it was possible for such a boat to go. This steamer drew from four to five feet of water; but it eventually towed us up to Nasser on the Sobat river, that is, about two hundred miles above the junction of that river and the White Nile, a distance altogether little short of a thousand miles from Khartoum. This was as far as her draught would permit her to proceed; but she was a great help to us, and saved us much valuable time, as our own launches would have taken a very long time to tow such a large flotilla a thousand miles or so up the stream.

Moored to the quay in front of the Grand Hotel, at Khartoum, our flotilla really presented a most imposing appearance. All that remained for us now to do was to thank the Sirdar and the authorities at Khartoum for their kindness and for the help which they had extended to us ; and the morning of January 24 saw us all aboard and ready for the start.

It is perhaps now the moment to say something about the *personnel* of the expedition. The organiser of the picnic party was Mr. W. N. McMillan, an American gentleman resident in England. A praiseworthy desire to combine pleasure with utility had suggested to him the idea of this expedition, which would give all the excitement of sport, and at the same time afford useful employment and hard work in an unknown land. His wife accompanied him for a great part of the journey ; and he had with him his personal attendant, William Marlow, while Mrs. McMillan was followed by her faithful companion and maid, Louise, the heroine of many adventures to come. Also with us was a gentleman whom I shall style "The Chief." He was on his way to a distant diplomatic post and kindly put his experience and authority at our disposal. At his efficient "open sesame" all doors were unlocked ; and to his help and forethought the expedition owed much of its success. We had with us a medical man, Dr. Singer ; and our engineer, surveyor and cartographer, Mr. Jessen, a Norwegian by birth. We had also a Greek, Zaphiro by name, who had lived for many years at Harar in Abyssinia, where he had occupied himself as a chemist and had practised as doctor among the

natives. At the same time, he had interested himself in natural history and had made a collection of birds for our Natural History Museum at South Kensington. He was also very useful as an interpreter, as he spoke Amharic (Abyssinian) perfectly, also Galla and Arabic, and of course English and a little French and German. There was, further, the "Chief's" personal attendant, Towell, whose duties included looking after and distributing the stores; and finally there was myself.

A most important adjunct to the party was a troop of sporting dogs seven in number. The breed of these dogs was a cross between the bull terrier and whippet. Experience had shown us that this was the best sort of dog for the purpose. They were really lurchers, and possessed the speed of the whippet combined with the courage of the bull terrier; and moreover, they were not too big. Large dogs get into trouble with the wild animals, and in these hot countries seem to be more subject to disease than small ones. Such dogs as ours were are invaluable for bringing a lion to bay, or for finding out his exact position when he is skulking under a thick bush. They attract the attention of a dangerous quarry by their skirmishing tactics, and thus allow the sportsman to get a fair shot, and he is thereby less exposed to the chances of a charge.

By the time we had arrived at Khartoum, what with the heat and confinement, our dogs had become tolerably savage. When they were first let out from their kennels (for each dog was carried in his own kennel), there was a general fight between them.

The consequences were serious, as two of the dogs were killed by their companions, or were so injured that they had to be destroyed. The remaining five accompanied us during the whole trip; but they became so uncontrollable as to be of little use with the game, and we had no time or leisure to break them in. They could never resist the naked legs of the blacks and would put a whole caravan of porters to flight in no time. The men would throw down their loads and rush into the Nile, quite regardless of crocodiles, whenever the dogs were let loose near them. Nothing was sacred to them. When no native's calf was at hand, the hind leg of a mule or a goat suited equally well. Eventually they became so unruly that they had to be tied up, and served merely as camp guards.

A word as to the method of organising sporting expeditions such as ours, and some estimate of the probable expense of such sporting parties may perhaps not be out of place, and might be found useful to those who are inexperienced in such matters. To the old campaigner such hints are of course unnecessary; but everybody must make a beginning, and a good deal of trouble and expense may be saved if one knows exactly how to go to work.

First of all as to one's tent, camp equipment, &c. Having tried most sorts of tents, I personally prefer and recommend the Indian type made at Cawnpore. Every man of experience, of course, knows what he wants, and what sort of tent suits him best; but I think there is a general consensus of opinion in favour of the Indian-made type of tent. People in India,

civil servants and officials especially, are more accustomed to camping out than we are at home, and it is natural, therefore, that they should have devised the best type of tent for the purpose.

The tent should be made of Willesden canvas. Its inside square body may be ten feet by ten feet. This is a good size and equally convenient for one or two persons. Two upright poles are amply sufficient to support such a tent. The inner skin should be slung on the transverse top pole which supports the outer cover, thus preventing the necessity of having two transverse poles. These poles may be either of ash or male bamboo. Such a tent should be nine feet high in the centre sloping down to the vertical side walls, which should be three feet six inches in height. The outer skin or fly should reach almost right down to the ground. At the entrance, a semi-circular peak or porch, attached to the outer skin or fly, should project to a radius of five feet away from the front pole, being attached to the outer skin at a height of four feet six inches from the ground, and a similar peak should be attached to the fly at the back of the tent to protect the back of the tent or bathroom. The floor cloth, made of the Willesden canvas, should be all in one piece, and made to lace up to the walls of the tent, but in such a manner that it is also detachable. The vertical walls, three feet six inches in height, when detached from the floor-cloth, should be made so as to be capable of being hooked up all round. This is most important, as it is an enormous luxury in very hot weather to be able to have an under draught right through the tent.

The above will be found to be a most serviceable type of tent for both hot and cold weather. Such a tent is, in fact, a tent within a tent; the outer fly, with its peaks fore and aft, making a covering on which the inner tent is hung from the transverse pole above. It may be objected that this tent is too large, but of course it is quite easy to make a smaller one on the same pattern, if preferred.

I prefer the Willesden canvas to the cotton cloth tents of the Indian type, as this canvas dries more quickly in wet weather—a very important point when it is necessary to pack up and march daily during continuously wet weather.

The weight of a tent such as I have described, including poles and pegs, and all the accessories would be about two hundred and fifty pounds, which would make, strictly speaking, four loads for porters. The inner tent itself including the bathroom behind would weigh about eighty-five pounds; the fly or outer skin including the two peaks would weigh about the same. The bathroom which is laced on to the inner tent is detachable, as also are the two peaks, so that the whole could be packed up in smaller loads if required. The ash poles would weigh about forty pounds, and are best carried separately across men's shoulders.

Bearing in mind the importance of lightness, it is very advisable that all the less important pegs should be made of aluminium, and the fifty or so required would not weigh altogether more than fifteen pounds at the most. Four long strong iron pegs to support the four principal guy ropes are all that is necessary

for pegs of the heavier metal. All the rest should be made of aluminium.

Of course it is needless to emphasise the supreme importance to any expedition of engaging a really good head man, who should be in command of the whole camp under the authority of the white man. He acts as a buffer, and reduces all the direct friction which would otherwise arise between the white man and the less important workers in the caravan. Aden or Berbera is probably the best centre for getting such a head man; and personally I prefer a Somali, who has been accustomed to white men, to any other nationality. He usually speaks several native languages, besides having a knowledge of English, and can act as an interpreter if required to do so. Arabic, which most Somalis understand and speak, will carry you through almost any part of North East Africa. You may have to pay one hundred rupees a month for a really good head man; but he is worth it.

Another very important person is your tent-boy, as he is your personal servant and valet. A Somali accustomed to the work is the best man for this duty; and a really qualified one may cost you forty rupees a month. Your Somali cook will cost you sixty rupees a month; and Somalis are generally pretty good cooks. The price for your shikaris (usually Somalis) varies. One generally takes out two for each sportsman, the principal one costing sixty to seventy rupees, the second thirty to forty rupees a month.

The amount of provisions taken with one so much depends upon the nature of the country you are going

through, and the means of transport at your disposal, that it is impossible to give any definite idea as to this. But if the loads are to be carried by porters, see that no load weighs over sixty pounds. If mules are to be had, arrange your loads so that each mule carries about a hundred and fifty pounds.

As to the kind of provisions taken, I should recommend lots of tinned bacon, tinned milk, oatmeal porridge, sugar and salt, all in tins; and of course plenty of flour, also in tins, for it keeps much better in this way.

The providing of food for your porters and mulemen, is sometimes a great difficulty, and often wants a great deal of thinking out, when the expedition may have to go through a country where no flour of any sort is to be obtained. Somalis require rice, dates, and ghee;* say a pound and a half of rice, two ounces of ghee and a few dates per day. The dates are a luxury and are not always obtainable. They should have coffee and tea, and plenty of coarse sugar and they will eat flour at the pinch instead of rice. Abyssinians need dhura, and teff flour and ghee. Swahillis, the native porters in British East Africa, feed on rice when they can get it, and maize and dhura when they cannot. The natives of Uganda are generally fed on bananas, of which they eat about sixteen pounds weight a day each man. It is advisable, if possible, to give your men meat once or twice a week; sheep when they are procurable, but if sheep are not to be had, game. A fair supply of meat keeps the men in good humour, and they work better on it;

* Ghee is clarified butter.

but you must bear in mind that meat for them is a luxury and not a necessity.

It is well to remember that in most parts of the interior of Africa, salt is worth more than any other commodity, so that you can hardly have too much of it. It will buy food when nothing else will do so. A large supply of the well-known American cotton cloth will be most useful for trading and paying purposes; and brass and iron wire, of the thickness of the common telegraph wire, has always a good exchange value, though it is heavy to carry. Beads nowadays are rather at a discount; and as each tribe has its own particular fancy as to their size and colour, it is often very difficult to know what kind of beads to take. But they are generally found useful for small purchases, and if taken, a very varied assortment should be had. The large amber-coloured beads are as valuable to natives in the far interior of Africa as pearls to us in Europe.

It is not very easy to make an exact estimate of the cost of a well-equipped expedition, say for a period of six to eight months. A good deal depends on circumstances; prices vary in different localities. If mules and donkeys are available, a large primary outlay may be necessary for buying these animals; and as all your transport animals are liable to die, and often do nearly all die, there is sometimes a dead loss here.

A fair estimate, however, would be a thousand pounds for a single white man going on such an expedition; additional white men joining the party could go at a relatively cheaper rate per man. A

sportsman could be a year out and do himself well and go anywhere for a thousand pounds. Of course the luxury of a steam yacht is quite apart from the general scheme of things. But you can go through most countries and do without one; but a Berthon collapsible boat, nine or twelve feet in length, is of the greatest use for crossing rivers, and should always form part of your equipment.

Good mules can be bought in Abyssinia at three pounds apiece on the average; and donkeys for eight or ten shillings each, and there is excellent sport of every kind in southern and south-western Abyssinia. In Egypt and the Soudan and in British East Africa, mules and donkeys cost three times as much as they do in Abyssinia. Mules are especially dear in British East Africa, where they are hardly to be had, and in that country caravans are generally taken along by porters. But a few donkeys are to be had even there. Camels are best bought in Somaliland and in the Danikil country. The Danikil country lies along the course of the Hawash river in the lower lying land between Adis-Harar and the Abyssinian plateau. The price of camels varies according to circumstances. They can often be had for three pounds a head. The hardiest camels for the interior are those that come from the Danikil country. They stand the cold and sparse fodder very well.

CHAPTER III

KHARTOUM

Description of Khartoum—Soudanese soldiers—The Gordon College—Beautiful sunsets—The start—First difficulty of navigation—Scenery along the Nile—The Zerut fly—Beautiful water-fowl—The first hippos—Family nick-names—Steam-boat service on the Nile—Fashoda, alias Kodok—Shelluks—Wood fuel stations—Repulsive Nuers—The mouth of the Sobat river—Our black cook—A narrow escape—The American mission station on the Sobat—First onslaught on crocodiles—The first giraffes—A big python—Mosquitoes—Large quantities of game—Native method of spearing fish—Numerous Marabout storks—A night alarm—Arrival at Nasser—Difficulties of navigation—Habits of crocodiles.

KHARTOUM has a glorious climate during the winter months. The desert air has a crispness which must be experienced to be appreciated; and though the rays of the mid-day sun are very powerful, the freshness of the early mornings in winter is delightful.

“The city of Khartoum is laid out in fine broad streets emanating from an open square like the stripes of the Union Jack, making perfect defence against any hostile attack possible from the square itself. The buildings are good, in architecture appropriate to the climate, but, save for the private gardens on the river front, there is as yet no shade in other places, the recently planted trees being as yet only a few feet high (1904).

“The Soudanese are a fine looking race, tall and

straight and with more intelligence than the average black. They make splendid-looking soldiers, carrying themselves very erect and looking very striking in their uniforms of white with trimmings of red.

“At the Gordon College the classrooms of little chaps might well put to shame a class of our small boys at home.

“But when all is told, Khartoum is an uninteresting town, save for the associations of Gordon and the Mahdi. There is nothing to do, no place to walk in, ride or drive (and one must have very good horses to enjoy riding in the desert). It is very hot in the daytime, and the heat is modified only by a strong wind which blows dust and sand into one's eyes, and is generally demoralising to the feminine hair and toilet, but the nights are beautiful beyond words, —such splendour of sunset colour, and such glory of moonlight as only this country can afford. At twilight, the Blue Nile (here a noble stream worthy of its name) becomes a brilliant opaque green; the sands take up the rose of the sky, and the whole landscape gradually sinks into the soft purple mist which presages the night.”

The sun rises bright over the sandy desert which surrounds the newly built town, and a fresh breeze blows from over the sandy wastes, bringing with it an exhilaration and vigour which can hardly fail to instil energy into the most lazy of us. There is no sign of a cloud as the life-giving enemy rises red and fiery on the low horizon. Soon all is bustle; a blow from the whistle and we are off. And a curious sight our flotilla presents. The white inhabitants of Khartoum

evidently think so, if we may judge from the number of people lining the shore who are taking snapshots at us from their cameras.

The big Government stern-wheeler is in the middle of the flotilla, and lashed to its sides are all our various craft. Our unwieldy mass had some difficulty in weathering the point, a spit of land that runs out at the junction of the Blue and White Niles. Once this promontory rounded, we set our course due south on the main stream of the White Nile. Khartoum, be it said, is built on the southern bank of the Blue Nile, and to get into the main stream of the White Nile, it is necessary to descend the Blue Nile for a mile or so, and to make a sharp turn to the south round a sandy promontory.

"We are steaming along the most beautiful banks covered with acacia and mimosa trees, the river dotted with little clumps of grass islands, and bunches of tall feathery reeds, the whole bathed and merged in the purpling rose of sunset, while the breeze comes cool and fresh, laden with the elusive scent of strange vegetation.

"A native felukka is just passing, picturesque and silent in the gathering dusk; curious clumsy nuggers loaded with wood, with high prows and enormously long oars; even our noisy dogs are quiet.

"We have just stopped at a wood station, and went ashore for the first time. Don Carlos and I took Pat for a long walk, passing through a little village of straw huts. The natives (Dinkas) were very black and very friendly, with quite a Christian amount of clothing. The ground was black cotton soil, the

grass dried to a bone, and the trees chiefly of the mimosa order now out of leaf. The entire impression was that of desolation and sterility. All the dogs had a good run ; one of them caught a goat by the hind legs and pulled him down. We had a great time making him let go and some altercations in pantomime with the owner of the goat, but he was at length satisfied with a small present for the slight injury done to his animal.

“ All day yesterday the banks of the river were charming ;—lovely little bits of colour from the various greens and long grasses. Too hot to do anything save read and play a rubber at bridge.

“ We are in the region of the Zerut fly, a beast about an inch long, and the arrival of one on deck is the signal for a general chase. They are very nasty, the bite being very painful, causing a large swelling, and while not dangerous to human beings, they are very destructive to horses, mules and cattle, which, when bitten, go into a decline in two or three weeks.

“ We have just touched another station, where we bought some fresh vegetables and the usual supply of wood.

“ After this morning on shore our naturalists are hard at work,—Singer killing poor inoffensive beetles, and Zaphiro and his man cleaning birds for stuffing, for we are making a collection of birds of the district. Bird-life is beautiful here, consisting of many brilliant coloured small creatures, and fine large water-fowl, pelicans, crested cranes, wild swans, marabout storks and so forth. Of these the marabout stork is the most picturesque, needing only a pair of spectacles

and a book to be a perfect caricature of some learned and dignified professor.

“The insects are unique to this part of the world.

“Yesterday we came across a shoal of four or five hippos, disporting themselves in the water. I was disappointed not to have more of a sensation—felt as though I had seen them all my life !

“We are collecting fines for the purpose of souvenirs of the trip on our return to England, and it has been made a finable offence to address any one of the party by his or her own proper name. The Chief is called ‘His Excellence’ or ‘The Immaculate One’ (according to the state of his collar), or ‘The Dragon’ (according to the state of his temper). Don Carlos is ‘The Revered,’ the ‘Ancient One’ or ‘The Venerable,’ or ‘Uncle Charlie,’ and Dr. Singer is ‘The Baby,’ and I am ‘The Universal Nuisance.’ My husband is the only one who, up to now, has escaped having a nick-name.”

But there is nothing very exciting in life aboard a boat on the Nile. Hour succeeds hour and day succeeds day with even monotony ; there is scarcely any variety in the scenery as we ascend the river, and during hundreds of miles, the appearance of the banks offers no distinctive feature that would indicate to the traveller that he has arrived at any particular place. At first, after leaving Khartoum the sandy desert with the fringe of mimosa trees is everywhere. Further up the stream the shore is lined by masses of reeds. So thick are these reed beds, with the water lying deep in them, that it is often difficult, and indeed sometimes impossible, to effect a landing

on the banks. Beyond, is a stretch of low scrub which goes back as far as one can see. Such is the general aspect of the river scenery of the Nile, which continues with little variation right up its junction with the Sobat river, five or six hundred miles higher up the stream above Khartoum. When the river is low, as it is during the winter months, the chief interest for any one navigating it consists in watching the myriads of water-fowl which crowd on the numerous sand-banks that lie exposed by the receding of the water. Of crocodiles in this part of the main stream there are not many, neither are hippos plentiful.

There is now a service of steamboats, which runs regularly every month up and down the river from Khartoum to Gondokoro on the Uganda frontier, some twelve hundred miles south of Khartoum, and the noise of the paddles of the steamers has driven these animals away to less disturbed waters; and very few crocodiles or hippos are seen until the Sobat river is reached. This river flows into the Nile from the east, some six hundred miles above Khartoum and sixty miles above the historic Fashoda.

The very name of Fashoda is now erased from the map. This very uninteresting marshy spot, which the exploits of Colonel Marchand brought into such prominence some years ago, out of regard for French susceptibilities, and as a consequence of the *entente cordiale*, has been renamed, and is now called Kodok, so that the old name of Fashoda shall no longer be even a memory.

“It is situated in the centre of the Shelluk tribe, who are great cattle-breeders. The Shelluk natives

are taught brick-making and make all the bricks for the Government buildings at Kodok. They are a peaceable tribe, entirely under the control of their own chief, who regulates all their personal affairs, even to marriage. The head-dress of the Shelluks is of the most original description ; the hair is worked up with clay when they are youngsters, and moulded into the most fantastic shapes imaginable,—some flat and fan-like, and some in fringe. One chap had his shaped like the top of an ancient Greek helmet, and might have been silhouetted for Agamemnon or Ajax or for any other of these old heroes.”

We had arrived at Kodok after five days steaming, and even at this time of the year, that is, the month of January, when passing through the Jebel Ain district, we found the heat very great, the thermometer registering as much as 107° Fahr. in the shade.

Jebel Ain is a granite peak, and is about two hundred and twenty miles above Khartoum. The district is noted for being one of the hottest on the Nile. At Kodok we tied up for a few hours and paid a visit to an old friend, Colonel Matthews, the Governor of the province.

We had met with nothing of note up to this point beyond an occasional view of antelope on the banks of the river ; but though we had licences to shoot in the Soudan, we did not avail ourselves of them, as we were anxious to get to more distant regions.

The next day, after passing Taufekia, we tied up at the mouth of the Sobat river. Leaving there our launches and barges, the Government boat went on

to the wood station which is situated a little higher up off the main stream of the Nile on a large lake or backwater. Here we loaded up with wood to the fullest extent of our steamer's capacity. I may mention that there are permanent wood stations at certain places all along the whole navigated course of the Nile, where the steamers replenish their stock of fuel. They are under the management of the Government, and of course the wood has to be paid for.

"We are tied up by the side of the stream loading up wood as usual,—the long procession of natives with huge pieces on their backs, making a picturesque procession. The banks are flat and covered with dry grass and a few trees scattered here and there. The natives seem to be a mixed lot, but on the shore, watching us with great interest, sits a group of five or six Nuers—the most hideous creatures the Almighty ever put on this beautiful earth. Tall, gaunt, large-framed, some with a scrap of cloth over the shoulder or around the loins, some stark naked ;—the worst nightmare could never conceive such monstrosities of heads as crowned these rather fine bodies ; and to my dying day never shall I forget the hobgoblin who sat in the middle grinning at us ! Smeared with ashes from head to foot, with not a hair on his head, the only thing which broke the phantom gray of this apparition was a row of yellow fangs in the upper jaw, the huge red cavity of his mouth, and the glitter of his small wicked eyes. A death's head with a little parchment skin drawn very tight could surely not compete with this living rival.

“These beauties add to their natural charms by knocking out the front teeth—usually from the lower jaw, but sometimes altogether, and dyeing their hair (when they have any!) bright red with cow dung, which usually colours part of the face as well; and no words can describe their low, stupid yet cruel expression, not unlike the Red Indians save in matter of intelligence. Deliver me from the Nuer country! The Government cannot control them here, having no patrol stations; and at best they are treacherous, shy, and thoroughly barbarous. Loathsome brutes! They have not even the sense to work. They think it altogether beneath their dignity! Compared to them, the old black woman (who cooks for the Soudanese boatmen) stirring her hell-broth just below my cabin door is a perfect beauty. Poor old thing! she is cold this weather and has no clothes save the grease in which she is steeped, and a rag which she uses alternately for shawl, hat or skirt; so last night we gave her a blanket, and her joy was unbounded. She kissed it and hugged it, and kissed her hand and smiled to us with a perfect torrent of gibberish and broad smiles.”

As we set off again across the lake to gain the main stream of the river the wind began to blow, and so unruly did our over-laden craft become that we nearly upset—the flat-bottomed boat very nearly turning turtle. Had this catastrophe happened, we should probably none of us have ever got out of the water again, as the place swarms with crocodiles, and their ugly noses could be seen popping just out of the water in every direction. However, destiny was kind to us,

and we escaped this untoward fate, and returned in safety to the Sobat mouth; and here we found the rest of the party had passed the six hours of our absence in fishing, and had succeeded in catching several cat-fish of thirty pounds and upwards. These fish, though their flesh is soft and flabby like that of most of the Nile fishes, are just eatable.

We now proceeded up stream of the Sobat river, and an hour or two later, just before sundown, arrived at the American mission station which has been established by the river banks. We tied up for a short time and paid the missionaries a visit, enjoying our five o'clock tea with them in the comfortable quarters they have built for themselves. They are trying a civilising mission on the Nuers and Dinkas of the neighbourhood—a very difficult task. But they spoke well of the results of their efforts, and though working in a fever stricken region, they all seemed to be in tolerably good health.

“An exciting day on the Sobat! We began by seeing an enormous pea-green crocodile on the bank quite close to the boat, but of course no one had a rifle out. After that every sportsman armed himself and they have been popping away at the nasty brutes all day. Don Carlos got a big one, and His Excellence four or five, and my husband several, but we only stopped to pick up two. His Excellence shot the last one with an eight-bore explosive bullet, and its head was blown completely off. Game appeared in the distance on the left bank, which is the Sanctuary. At about four o'clock a fine hartebeeste, a white-eared cob, three ostriches and a herd of

giraffes came down to the river to drink, the long necks and ungainly bodies of the latter showing dim, ghostly and sinuous against the grey-blue of the horizon.

“Later we came across a herd of waterbuck quite close to the shore ; but the game laws are very strict, and no one is allowed to shoot for a stretch of two hundred and fifty miles on the north side of the Sobat river under pain of a heavy penalty.

“We are creeping very slowly up the river, feeling our way with a long pole and not making over two miles an hour. Very uninteresting country here, the banks being perfectly flat and scarcely a tree to be seen anywhere.

“A big python swimming across the river just in front of our boat caused some excitement. We shouted out to the Somalis to catch him, but they did not see it that way ! More game all the way along. My noble lion-dog (who is later on to protect my tent) is crouched under my bed shivering with fright at the sound of the guns and refuses to be comforted !

“We shall probably have to leave this boat before another day and take to our own fleet, as the river is getting too shallow for the big steamer.

“We passed several groups of natives on the shore just now, who asked us to shoot hippos for them, as they value the meat highly, but we have seen none to-day.

“Just two months ago to-day since we left London ! Now, we are tied up to the bank of the river in the midst of a hundred naked savages with their eternal spears, while all around on the ground sit thousands of kites, vultures, marabouts, and all sorts of huge

birds, whose wings (when startled by a shot) are like the rushing of mighty waters.

“Some of our boys are trying to give the natives soap, which I am sure they will eat as soon as we are out of sight !

“An uninteresting day yesterday, and a particularly disagreeable evening, thanks to millions of mosquitoes and other insects which swarmed about at night. I never saw such a sight. We had to eat our meals inside a mosquito house with the lights outside ; and even then they were in everything ; while from every fold of the netting they could be gathered up literally by cupfuls, and with every step they ‘scrunched’ under our feet—being nearly half an inch deep on the deck !”

The next few days, until we reached Nasser on February 4, brought us nothing of any particular note, though the various sights from the deck of the steamer had become much more interesting and enabled us to pass the day without any thought of *ennui*. Great quantities of game could be seen on the banks of the river. Elephants we did not then see, as at this time of the year they are up in the higher lands where the feeding is better ; and it is during the wet season that they seem to come down in great herds to the swamps about the rivers.

It is most interesting to watch the natives spearing fish. They use their cranky dugout canoes for this purpose. One man sits in the bows armed with a spear while another paddles the canoe from the stern. It is wonderful with what quickness the spearman, who is sitting upright in the bows holding

his lance poised all the time, throws it at the sight of the fish leaning for a moment in the water; and it is surprising how often he transfixes his prey. When the lance strikes the fish, its metal head comes off; but this head is attached to the shaft of the spear by a cord. The barbed head of the lance sticks firmly into the body of the fish, which is pulled into the boat by the cord, which, attached to the shaft, is also tied round the man's wrist. The Sobat is swarming with large fish and in no very long time the fisherman has the canoe full of them. They usually weigh from fifteen to twenty pounds.

The water being low at this time of the year, the sloping banks of the river, and all the uncovered sand-banks in mid-stream were swarming with crocodiles, and a regular cannonade was kept up the whole time from half a dozen rifles, always ready to slay these vermin pests. Hundreds fell victims to our onslaught. Some of the larger ones we rowed up to and measured; but we never killed one more than between fifteen and sixteen feet in length. When lying half asleep and exposed on a sand bank, they form a very easy prey to any decent shot; and a bullet well placed behind the ear is generally sufficient to prevent the crocodile from rolling down the sand-bank into the water. But if he once reaches the water he sinks and is never seen again. It is quite an extraordinary sight to see with what speed the dozens of crocodiles lying half asleep and exposed on the sand-banks jump into the water at the sound of a rifle-shot, leaving their dead companion alone.

We saw numerous settlements of natives camped out and engaged in drying fish near the river banks. During the rainy season all the country near the river is for the most part flooded, and the inhabitants retire up-country; but when the waters recede, during the dry season, a series of small shallow pools is left in all the depressions of the soil. These shallow ponds are literally swarming with fish that cannot escape, and are speared by the thousand, smoked and dried. These encampments are surrounded by enormous flocks of marabout storks, thousands and thousands of them, who feed on the thrown-away bits of fish. These birds are often huddled together as thick and as numerous as a crowd at a mass meeting. We never allowed anybody to shoot them, as they are only valuable when dead on account of their tail feathers; whereas when alive they are most efficient scavengers. Of course, had we cared to do so, we could have killed them by thousands, as never being molested by the natives they are quite tame.

As we were creeping up the river one night, seeing numerous lights, we thought we had arrived at Nasser and blew our steam whistle. The effect of this was as extraordinary as it was unexpected; in a few minutes every light was out. It appeared, however, that we had not yet arrived at Nasser but were passing some large native village. The lights we had seen were the reed-made fires of native fishermen, who light these small fires in the reeds where they are fishing, probably to attract the fish. These poor fishermen thought an infernal enemy had descended upon them and all decamped in an instant.

A little later at about eleven o'clock that night we did arrive at Nasser and tied up there, being most kindly received by the commandant of the post, Captain Headlam.

The waters of the Sobat were sinking fast, and the captain of the Government boat feared that if he did not start back at once he would be unable to return to Khartoum, owing to the shallowness of the water in the river, which was running down at a great rate. So he was determined to lose no time, and at the earliest possible moment of the day after our arrival at Nasser he was allowed to set off on his homeward journey.

The Sobat is a fine large river varying from one hundred to two hundred and fifty yards in breadth, and at certain times of the year brings down more water than the Nile itself. Its banks are very high, rising to fifteen or twenty feet above the low water mark. During the rains the river is bank-full, and presents a grand appearance, very different to the comparatively shallow stream of the dry season. The river is at its lowest in April. In May it begins to rise, deriving its water from the downpour which takes place at that season in the Abyssinian mountains. In August and September it is at its fullest and after that it begins to sink again. Thus Nasser is only approachable for boats drawing five feet of water or less, from the end of May to the beginning of February. For the rest of the year it is cut off from water communication with the Nile except for boats of very shallow draught. There are numerous sand-banks in the stream, which are either exposed, or are

a hidden obstruction when the water is low, and great care is required in the navigation. The Khartoum rais* generally makes the most of these difficulties in navigation, as he hates steaming up these distant rivers. He has a preternatural dread of fever, and will, if he can, pretend that navigation is impossible, when by a little trouble a passage could be often found through the sand-banks.

There was no happier man in the Soudan than the rais of our Government boat when the order to return was given him, as above all things he dreaded the idea of being detained for several months at the fever-stricken station of Nasser. So the boat returned at once and we were left to our own resources and to be cut off from the rest of the world for several months. We landed all our stores and piled them up in the compound of the station, placing them under a guard of Soudanese soldiers, and decided to stay where we were two or three days to make our final arrangements.

These final arrangements were not so simple as might be supposed, and it was evident that it would be no easy matter for us to tow our large, heavily laden flotilla two hundred miles or so further up the Sobat and Baro rivers; the water being low would, of course, make the navigation much more difficult. The stream was strong and the sand-banks were numerous.

For the information of those who may not know it, I may mention that the Sobat above its junction with the Pibor, is called the Baro; and the Pibor

* The rais is the navigating captain.

joins the Sobat about thirty miles above Nasser. We knew that fuel for our launches would be very scarce. The provision of oil we had with us for the engines could not take us very far; and yet we could not convey everything up in one trip to the spot on the river we had decided upon as our point of departure into the interior. Everybody, moreover, told us that we should find it impossible to go much higher up the river in our steamers at this season of the year, and all sorts of difficulties were prophesied for us. The result proved that, though there were many difficulties, they had been much exaggerated; and we managed to take our seventy-five foot launch up as far as Gambela, which is the furthestmost spot to which navigation is possible at any time of the year. We thus proved the possibility of navigating the river with a properly constructed boat at all seasons.

Gambela lies just at the foot of the Abyssinian escarpment, and is some two hundred miles by water above Nasser. We had, however, our difficulties. Oftentimes it seemed at first as if it would be impossible to find a passage in the shallow waters through the sand-banks. But the energy and determination of our engineer, Mr. Jessen, conquered all these difficulties. Frequently had our devoted crew of Soudanese to jump into the water, regardless of crocodiles, and to tread out a passage through the soft sand, while we stood at the bows of the boat and constantly fired our rifles to frighten away the crocodiles.

In these little frequented waters the crocodiles do not appear to be anything like so dangerous as they

are in places where they are accustomed to see man and to catch him occasionally. Here they seem to have the instinctive dread of man that all creation appears to have, especially before experience has shown how easy a prey poor man is.

The natives dread the crocodiles up to a certain point, but they will always enter the water fearlessly no matter how many of them there may be around, if there is a firing-party at hand to frighten the beasts away with the noise of their rifles. However, one is never actually safe, and it does not do to run risks, for the ways of crocodiles are curious. Numbers and noise of course usually frighten them ; but then when all seems safe and you are wading a stream in apparent security, a man may be suddenly snatched away from the midst of his comrades. *Verbum sap.* Never run unnecessary risks with crocodiles.

CHAPTER IV

NASSER

Description of Nasser—The Nuer tribes—A white man's grave—Getting milk under difficulties—Our men down with the heat—A trying day—Insect pests—Slow rate of progress—The Pibor river—The Adura river—First experience of sleeping out—Boats sent back for fuel.

OF all the Government stations we had passed in our journey from Khartoum, Nasser was perhaps the most woe-begone in appearance. It was an old Egyptian outpost fort established there by an officer in the Khedive's Government, a man of the name of Nasser. It was built in the old days of Egyptian rule before the Mahdi came on the scene, at a period when the slave trade was in its full vigour. The mud wall of the old fort still exists, though it is fast crumbling to decay, each rainy season washing away some portion of what remains. The Commandant's house, and all the buildings for the Soudanese police who guard the fort, are built of mud and wattle. Outside the precincts of the fort, there is quite a flourishing settlement, composed of the wives and families of the Soudanese military police who occupy the fort. There are about sixty men stationed there under the command of a white officer; and a very lonely post it must be, as there is very little sport even to be had in the near neighbourhood of Nasser.

It is the furthest post up the river and is only visited once or twice a year, when the river being full permits the Government boat to ascend the stream.

But the settlement of Soudanese round Nasser itself has quite a flourishing appearance in its way, with its flocks of sheep and goats, and innumerable fowls, all the property of the military native police. The native Soudanese stationed there seem to be happy enough. The surrounding district is thickly populated by the Nuer tribe.

The Nuers are a very strong and prosperous tribe, probably much the strongest of any tribe in these parts, and are particularly truculent in their appearance. They are for the most part entirely destitute of any clothing and are surly and cantankerous by nature, and bully the surrounding people. They have large herds of cattle, and sheep and goats in quantities; but they are not hunters and never interfere with the game in any way, though they are always armed with terrible-looking spears.

This outpost fort of Nasser was placed there on the edge of the marsh as a protection against inroads of the wild and untamed tribes to the east, principally Nuers, who none of them ever came under the control of the Central Government at Khartoum even in its most prosperous days; and I do not think that these tribes were ever much troubled by the slave-dealer even when that trade was at its height, before the time when the late Sir Samuel Baker was engaged in his crusade against slavery. A more uninteresting spot it is impossible to imagine. To myself it was particularly hateful. Four years before, a friend

of mine had died there and was buried in the compound. It is the only white man's grave to be found anywhere in those parts, I believe. I was with him at the time of his death. We had come down the Baro river from Abyssinia, and he had met with a serious accident some hundred and fifty miles above Nasser by incautiously approaching a wounded water-buck. He believed the animal to be dead, and having laid his rifle down on the ground preparatory to cutting its throat, he was at the mercy of the beast, who charged him, and inflicted wounds upon him of which he eventually died. With great difficulty, for I was the only white man with him, I got him down to Nasser in a boat and there he died. But that is another story, as Rudyard Kipling would say.

"A more God-forsaken place than Nasser would be hard to imagine! Absolutely nothing but a mud hut, which Captain Headlam facetiously calls 'The Residency,' and two or three trees. There seems to be no sense in a post like this. The Nuers are too dispersed and too shy to be controlled; and having no boat and no land transport, it is impossible to patrol the country, therefore a white man is doomed to unnecessary exile.

"They have been trying to get me a cow, as I ought to be on a milk diet, being a little seedy, but the Nuers decline to part with a cow for any amount of brass wire, beads, or even wives, so morning and night two soldiers are sent over to see a cow properly milked, and the milk is brought solemnly into camp under rifle guard! It tastes a bit strong of marsh weeds, but still is drinkable.

“The men who have been cutting wood for our engine have come down with heat strokes and headaches, so they have been ordered off duty, and we ought to start off in a few minutes. The poor wretches have nothing but dry rations, dates (very bad ones) and rice, as we can buy no sheep, and the banks of the river are so high that even were there plenty of game we could not see it, so they are having rather a hard time. Partly for fun and partly for example, all our party have gone out and are having a wood-cutting match, but I don't think they will keep it up long. Don Carlos looks almost professional, and my husband's mighty form makes a fairly good impression on every place he tackles !

“The bank under which we are moored is very tropical, the trees overgrown with creepers and a thick underbush. Just the haunt for monkeys, serpents, and creatures of that sort.”

Well, we were not sorry to say good-bye to this place after a stay of four days. We were obliged to leave the greater portion of our stores there for the time being, under the charge of the Soudanese soldiers stationed in the fort, as the two barges could not contain both our servants and our spare stores of provisions. Having to tow our flotilla of barges and boats by means of our seventy-five feet launch, we could only make slow progress, and at nightfall of the first day had only reached Nyariau, a Nuer village on the right bank of the Sobat, a few miles above Nasser. We tied up there for the purpose of laying in a good stock of wood fuel, as here the forest is thick and wood suitable for the purpose. This was



OUR FLOTILLA



YAMBOS ON THE BANKS OF THE BARO

our last chance of getting fuel until we should arrive at the Nuer village of Kaig, one hundred and twenty miles higher up the river.

“We tied up after dark, and it really seemed as though we were at last in the wilds, when we heard orders given for posting armed sentries against possible raids on our ‘barnyard’ (as we call the animal barge), or a possible hostile native. Anyhow, we could all swear that the jungle was *not* uninhabited, as no sooner were we tied up than the plague of insects began again. We sit in the dark, and we go to bed in the dark, and we almost begrudge any one the light of a match for a cigarette; but, in spite of all we can do, the nights are night-mares and there is no limit to the variety of these insect pests.

“Our beds on this boat are wooden benches with hard cork mattresses over them (and oh! how hard I worked to find a crack in which to comfortably fit an odd hip bone or two); and from every crack and corner, once the mosquito curtain was down and one thought one’s self safe, came rushing squadrons of tiny little black beetles that stung and pricked, and danced all over one, until the only prayer one offered was for the daylight to come. Beastly night!

“The men have all thrown themselves down on the barges dead tired, poor creatures! The dogs too are miserable, shut up in their kennels in this blazing hot weather. Altogether, this has been a very trying day, and we shall be glad to reach a camping-place.”

The number of insects, not to mention mosquitoes, that fly by night in these regions is beyond count.

It is quite impossible for any one who has not gone through the experience to believe that they could exist anywhere in such numbers. We luckily had with us a mosquito house, that is, a large mosquito net about twelve feet square set on four poles, and pegged out like a tent with the side walls weighted at the bottom so as to keep them down firmly on the ground. We dined and sat in this mosquito house till it was time to turn in. The insect pests come out soon after sundown and fly about by myriads till about ten o'clock when most of them, mosquitoes excepted, disappear, and then end their short existence, I suppose. Attracted by the light, beetles and all sorts of "fly-by-nights" surrounded our mosquito nets by millions, and the next morning we could often scrape up on the outside literally bushel-loads of their dead bodies. Each district seemed to have its special kind of night-flying pests. We had gone through the same experience at Nasser; but though the latter place was only a few miles distant the insects which molested us there were mostly of a quite different species.

On this voyage up the Baro we always tied up during the nights and started off again at daybreak, as it was impossible on account of the shoals to make any progress in the dark; and going at our best pace, our rate of progress, while under full steam, did not exceed one and a half or two miles per hour.

On February 12, after thirty-eight hours actual steaming we arrived at the lower mouth of the Adura, which is situated about fifty-three miles above Nasser, having passed by the mouth of the Pibor on our way.

The Pibor is a powerful stream, and is one of the few rivers in Africa remaining unexplored, and its sources are quite unknown. But it probably rises in the highlands to the south of Abyssinia far away to the south-east. The Pibor here marks the Abyssinian boundary to the south of the Baro.

Though the Abyssinian sphere of influence extends to the mouth of the Pibor, it must not be supposed that Abyssinians are to be found down in these parts. Their real control is bounded by the limits of the high escarpment of the mountains, two hundred miles further east, though occasionally raiding parties descend into the lowlands in these regions.

The Adura is merely a loop of the Baro ; it runs out of that river from its southern bank nearly opposite the village of Kaig, seventy miles higher up the stream, and into it again twenty miles above the Pibor mouth, thus forming a loop. Its course is something over sixty miles in length, rather shorter than the main stream of the Baro connecting the same points. It was now practically dry and only had water in pools.

The banks of the Sobat had been too high over our heads for us to see the surrounding country from the deck of the launch. But occasional inspection on shore showed us that the land was quite flat, and no doubt it is to a great extent covered with water during the rainy season. On the horizon could be seen what appeared to be the fringe of forest growth.

"I had my first experience of sleeping out last night on deck, and found it delicious. To be snugly tucked up under a mosquito net and to go to sleep

with the fresh, sweet breezes playing over one, lulled by the splashing of the crocodiles and the calls of the night-birds, and closing one's eyes to the beautiful southern stars, is about the nicest sensation I know of. I kept willing myself to wake up for the pleasure of dropping off again. An old hippo grazing on the bank over my head gave an occasional disgusted grunt, but came no nearer—much to my disappointment; it would have been quite a sensation to have him come down his usual path to the water and find me and the boat there! I don't know which of us would have been the more surprised! I would not miss an hour of this for the world and yet I do not know that anybody could pay me to make another trip! One would not believe it possible to spend so many days doing nothing—we do not even read; but there is the greatest possible fascination in just watching the river and the shores. The water is simply alive with crocodiles pushing their ugly noses out of the water, or sunning themselves on the bank, and an occasional hippo, while the birds number millions.”

Though we had not gone very far, our stock of fuel was now exhausted and it was necessary for the launch to go back to Nasser with two barges to get some more wood. We decided to encamp upon the south bank of the Baro, on a spit of land formed by its junction with the Adura, and to wait there for the return of the launch. We felt sure there would be game in plenty both to the north and the south of the river, but we could not attempt to shoot on the north shore, as on that side it was still Soudan territory, and all that part of the country is a reserve in

which it is forbidden to shoot any sort of game whatever.

Our time on board the launch had been passed pleasantly enough ; when we wanted a diversion it was easily supplied by watching the Chief and McMillan ragging the doctor. The latter was a very good fellow, only rather green, and was quite unaccustomed to the sort of life we were leading, and so he became an endless source of good-natured chaff to his more experienced companions. Though our time had been so pleasantly passed on board the yacht, we were none of us sorry to get on shore and to pitch our camp ; though the spot that fate had decided for us to set up our first camp upon was in appearance forbidding enough in all conscience—an immense level plain, blackened by the burning of the grass, with not a tree in sight.

CHAPTER V

DESOLATION CAMP

Our first disagreeable experiences—Sooty “dust devils”—
“This is hell!”—Baked crocodiles’ eggs—A curious shot—
Hippo meat—Somali peculiarities—Their terror of alcohol—
A free fight—A baby hartebeest—Hot weather—Abundance
of game—Recalcitrant Nuers—Fuel at last—Native ways
—Machar—Kaig—Unexpected visitors—Greek traders—
Soudanese troops.

“OUR first really disagreeable experience began now. Our fuel gave out—wood and oil (which last we burned for a day only)—and it was decided to pitch camp at the mouth of the Adura river, and send the *Sobat* back to Nasser for fuel and provisions, which were running rather low. Accordingly, behold us camped in the middle of a burnt, flat hot plain, not a tree or a green shrub in sight anywhere. Beneath us about two inches of loose, upper soil and ashes mixed, which every footstep sends over us in clouds, into eyes, noses and mouths, and above us a sun without mercy. The breeze, which by moments tempers the heat, at other moments comes like a blast from a fiery furnace, and brings with it the dreaded “dust devils” which pick up all the dirt in sight, whirl it into a column, and march it clean through one’s tent, and everywhere least desirable. And here we remain for a week! Everywhere is confusion

and everywhere is dirt indescribable, and heat indescribable. The radiation from the soil is the most trying, as one cannot escape that anywhere.

“Two very scrawny sheep and three odd chickens form our entire meat-supply for a week, and the men’s provisions also are running very short. As my pious Louise was heard to exclaim on coming out from her tent this morning, ‘this is hell!’”

With one accord we named the unholy spot on which we were now forced to pitch our tents “Desolation Camp.” The whole plain for miles round as far as eye could see had been burnt. The grass here grows most luxuriantly to ten or fifteen feet in height and to the thickness of a man’s finger. It is quite impenetrable for man or beast, and unless it is previously burned and the land cleared, it is impossible to make any way over the country. The natives burn vast tracts, and with the first rains the new grass springs up from the roots. The whole country around was now one vast black plain; but we had no alternative and we were forced to set up our tents on this dreary spot. This was the first appearance of our tents, and their pristine whiteness was soon changed to the colour of soot; a continuous breeze from the north-east wafted the sooty substance formed from the remains of the burnt grass into our tents and all over us and our belongings. At last seeing the hopelessness of it we gave up all attempts at remaining clean, and surrendered ourselves to the force of circumstances.

Undoubtedly the happiest men at “Desolation Camp” were the Soudanese crews of the boats, who

were continually making great finds of crocodiles' eggs, which they baked and ate. The egg is about the size of a swan's egg, which it much resembles in shape, and the yolk is of a very pale yellow colour. Baked, they are not at all bad eating. The eggs, when laid, are placed by the mother crocodile a couple of feet or so down in the dry sand close to the water's edge and are hatched out by the warmth of the sun. It is not difficult to find these egg deposits, as a practised eye can quickly see where the sand has been disturbed. They were found here in great quantities, but I have never been so unfortunate as to eat an addled one.

"The river was alive with big crocodiles. Don Carlos killed the first which measured fourteen feet. Then His Excellence got a big chap; then William brought down two with one shot. A very curious thing, that. The bullet passed through the first crocodile, breaking its back, struck another big one forty feet away, and wounded it so that it could not move for some minutes (though eventually it got back to the water before it could be despatched). No one took another shot at it, not realising that the creature was really wounded, the more so as the sand-bank between the two was apparently raised far beyond the level of the bullet, which must have ricocheted off the body of the first one struck and described a circumflex action before reaching its second victim.

"That was an exciting day! In the afternoon my husband shot a big hippo, putting a small calibre soft bullet clean through the brain, and the beast went down like a stone. Fortunately it was in

shallow water. The excitement of the men was intense. The boat was stopped, and in about ten minutes the huge carcass was dragged to the shore, while twelve men fell to work cutting, hacking, and hewing.

“The Somalis and Abyssinians won’t touch hippo meat as it is too much like pork, and their religion forbids them pork. They are bound by the strictest of ties where their religion is concerned. They have also an aversion to dogs and it is rather difficult to keep our pack away from them. Dogs are considered unclean, and the Somalis are obliged to wash three times if brought into contact with anything unclean.

“The other night we had an awful row when John, my personal attendant, in play, threw the remains of a whisky and soda over one of the Abyssinian boys, and a few drops fell on a Somali boy. They all set on him, and were ready for a free fight, because they thought he had insulted their religion purposely by touching them with forbidden spirit. After all, I wonder if they are not happier and better off with all the ignorance, their unquestioning belief in Allah and a future life, if they obey a few cut and dried and thoroughly hygienic rules (for the basis of the Mohammedan religion is hygiene), than we with our so-called superior intelligence.

“The evening was also enlivened by another free fight on one of the barges, which resulted in the loss of one or two boxes knocked overboard in the tussle. John’s boots and hair brushes were also used as missiles. The finale was a kourbashing of the ring-

leader, a freed slave boy, who has been far more decent and well-behaved since; nothing appeals to these people like superior brute force.

"John is down with fever now. My husband is very seedy indeed, and cannot digest anything. All the others are well, self included.

"My day has been taken up trying to care for a baby hartebeest which one of the shikaris brought in this morning. The wee thing is only a few hours old (the man claims to have seen it born, and that the mother fled at his approach, leaving her baby), and it is the most pathetic-looking little mite imaginable. It can scarcely stand, and its piteous little wail, for the mammy it never knew, goes to one's heart. It is calmer now, and has taken a little milk from a sponge. We shall try to have it nursed by one of the goats, and if successful the little mite may live, otherwise I am afraid we must condemn it to be shot.

"To-day has not been quite so hot as yesterday, but for about two hours this morning we had a dust storm which nearly drove us all to drink, especially as it came just as we were dressing, and we were blinded by the ashes and dirt. My tent is still about an inch deep in dust, and as it is chiefly charcoal, my clothes are a sight for men and angels! A blouse which was condemned to the wash some days ago has been resurrected for dinner dress, and I feel highly respectable in it. Hands, face and hair are unmentionable!

"Our days are divided into two parts here; the first half waiting for the heat to culminate and pass

over, and the second going to bed when it is cool enough! Every morning we have two hours' high wind and dust, after which the breeze drops and the heat is very trying until about four o'clock, when the temperature diminishes rapidly. Last night I was glad of a great-coat. The beauty of the night redeems the horror of the day, and we sit out under the stars after dinner—all disagreeable things forgotten—quite content and peaceful.

"I have been very uncomfortable, feeling the heat badly for the first time; but the days are passing and Jessen ought to be here soon to relieve us from this beastly camping-ground, provided only he can bring enough wood to get us to Itang.

"There is no longer any shortage of meat, for yesterday several went out shooting and brought in an abundance of game.

"My baby hartebeest (after doing very well for several days) suddenly went into a comatose state when we thought it asleep, and died—being finished with a bullet at the last. The milk of the goat must have been too heavy, and the day was unusually hot, which may have helped to do for him too. He was a beautiful little creature and had ceased to struggle for freedom, and was just beginning to be confiding and friendly. My only consolation in having made his little life miserable by captivity is that he would have been caught by a hyena, or by the prairie fire which raged on the other side last night, had he not been brought into camp.

"Another long hot day is finished, thank goodness! We seem to have run out of the country of beautiful

sunsets—or beautiful anything, for the matter of that—and there is nothing either picturesque or interesting in this dead, flat burnt plain. It begins to get on my nerves. We all look like coal-heavers, the most disreputable company imaginable! It is perfectly hopeless! The little doctor is perhaps the funniest, as he goes about as lightly clad as the law allows. His hair is cropped and he is growing a beard (at present in the worst stage). In a few years he will look like a typical German naturalist. Don Carlos and His Excellence both look as well as any one can, outing “rags” being extremely becoming. I am unspeakable!”

By going some distance to the south across the Adura very good sport was to be obtained. Tiang were numerous and here for the first time we saw the beautiful white-eared cob (*cobus leucotis*). Both tiang and leucotis are fair eating and in these regions even the water buck is palatable.

This district may be called the home of the water-buck, for I think they are more numerous here than in any other part of Africa. It is the *cobus defassa* which abound, not the *cobus elypsiprimnus*; the latter are not to be found here at all, at least we never met with them. I have tried to eat water-buck in Somaliland and in Abyssinia, but had never yet succeeded in swallowing more than a mouthful. For some reason or other his flesh is less dry, more tender, more palatable here on the Nile lowlands than elsewhere; perhaps it is because on these low-lying lands the grass is more succulent than on the arid plains of Somaliland. I think there is no doubt that for

some reason or other the same game varies immensely as an eatable in different places, and no doubt also at different times of the year.

The Chief had quite a little adventure here. He went out some miles from camp with his shikaris and shot two tiang which he proposed to bring back to camp as food for the men; but the difficulty was how to carry it. Attracted by the sounds of his rifle-shots, some of the native Nuers of the country, no doubt scenting meat from afar, came up to where he and his men were cutting up the animals. In return for a portion of the food these Nuers promised to carry the meat into our camp; but here the great difficulty arose. The Nuers were told to walk just ahead, but this they refused to do, as, perhaps not unreasonably, they did not like the idea of the loaded rifles just behind them. At the same time the Chief and his shikaris felt quite as uncomfortable as the Nuers did at the idea of going on ahead themselves, as half a dozen long spears just behind their backs felt quite as uncomfortable to them as the rifles did to the savages. Eventually they were unable to come to any agreement, and the greater part of the meat had to be left behind, to the ultimate advantage of the Nuers, of course.

Notwithstanding the dirt, the time passed pleasantly enough at "Desolation Camp." There was a sufficiency of sport, and the novelty of the thing prevented the natural disadvantages of the place from becoming too apparent. On February 16, four days after they had gone away, the launch and barges reappeared well loaded with wood. This wood, which is the

principal fuel throughout the whole of the Soudan, is a sort of acacia which burns best when green. It is very hard and is almost as useful for fuel as coal.

"On board the *Sobat* again and running very well. On Tuesday at about one o'clock, the Chief, my husband and I were sitting in my tent waiting for the heat of the day to pass, when suddenly a whistle in the wilderness greeted our astonished ears, and presently the *Sobat* steamed up the river with a goodly load of wood, Jessen standing on the top deck waving to us. Such rejoicings! We had not expected him back for three days yet, but he had worked night and day. Captain Headlam, in charge of the post at Nasser, sent out a large fatigue-party to cut and stack wood, and Jessen was actually back in four days from the time he started. We *were* pleased. That same afternoon we broke camp and slept aboard the boat that night.

"Don Carlos was a little disappointed, I think, for he had been out all day after a very fine specimen of the white-eared cob, and lost him after ten or twelve miles' hard walking. Then he lit grass fires all round to drive him into a corner where he intended to bag him next morning had we remained. I have never seen such endurance! More than twenty miles in this fearful sun I should think would knock up any one, especially a man of fifty—but he seems to think nothing of it.

"There was a rather amusing incident in the afternoon when the natives who had been helping in odd ways came in to be paid. All sat down in a ring—black, naked, good-natured savages. Those who

had cut wood were paid in wire, which they liked best, and the others had blue beads. Then we found some empty bottles and boxes, for which there was a general, but very dignified, scrimmage. Old bits of cloth and odd scraps of everything were grist to the mill; but in the end the biggest man got the whole lot, in spite of our efforts to be impartial. Let us hope he was just in his later distribution. I expect, should we return to that spot a week hence, we should find the weirdest decorations in the shape of rags, tin cans, bits of broken glass, and so forth, to be the ruling fashion of the day. Old sardine tins are a very favourite decoration with these savages. They hang them round their necks and delight in the bright reflection the tin makes in the sunshine. Occasionally they will hang them on to their ears. These men are regular camp-followers for the sake of any odd scraps, hippo meat and so on, which may be going begging, and some of them have been very useful driving our donkeys on shore, and so forth.

“Breaking and making camp are quite long processes with us; we have so much kit and such big tents. My tent is the height of luxury, with dressing-room, bed-room, sitting room and veranda. Nothing could be nicer, though it is rather cumbersome. It will probably share the fate of some of my superfluous clothing (I had been told in London to prepare for 120° in the shade and 4° below zero and to take no luggage) and of many pounds and quarts of medicines with which we have usefully strewn our pathway thus far—the Doctor being nothing if

not generous both in ideas and in the disposal of the results thereof.

“Our men do not like this expedition at all. Hadji Ali, the head man, confided to ‘His Excellence’ that it was ‘werry bad expedition, werry severe Sahibs, werry much work!’ Still they are a jolly lot, and sing at work as if they enjoyed it. All African natives sing (or rather intone), and work to the rhythm. On the whole we might have had a much worse place than ‘Desolation Camp,’ though it is hard to imagine; and the nights were beautiful enough to redeem the days. We heard our first hyena howl when we left camp: it took him a long time to find us out.

“The river has been most uninteresting lately; the grass and thistles on the banks are so high we cannot see over them. Even crocodiles are few and birds and hippos (of which there are plenty) are our only excitement. One old hippo came up under one of the barges yesterday, and nearly lifted it bodily out of the water. Last night and to-day have been very hot. At 11 A.M. the thermometer was $101\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$, but now a refreshing breeze has come up.”

We proceeded on our way with even monotony, tying up at night and steaming on by day, not attempting any shooting, which would have delayed us too long, as we were anxious to get to our ground; and the Chief was very anxious to get into Abyssinia proper.

At about eighty-five miles from Nasser we reached Machar, a Nuer village situated on the north bank of the Baro, at its junction with the main stream

of the Garre river. This river rises in the Abyssinian highlands to the north east, and is here the boundary line between the Soudan and Abyssinia on the north side of the Baro. In the rainy season it is quite a formidable stream; now there was practically no water in it. From this point we were free to shoot on either side of the Baro where we would, and what we would, north, south, east or west, at our own sweet will. We had the Emperor Menelik's permission to go where we liked, and shoot what we liked, only that the score of elephants was limited to one each.

On February 20, we arrived at the upper mouth of the Adura, and encamped on the opposite bank of the Baro, on the north side of the river, close to the Nuer village of Kaig. Sometime before arriving at Kaig, between that place and Machar, we were much surprised one afternoon to see a large Soudanese sailing-boat tied up to the bank, the sort of boat called a nugger at Khartoum. Our surprise was greater when, on getting within seeing distance, we found a lady and gentleman in the nugger. They had only a couple of men to manage the boat, and two Abyssinian personal servants. We found out that they were a Russian and his wife who had travelled all the way from the Legation at Adis Ababa at the court of Menelik. They had made the rash attempt to reach Egypt from Abyssinia by coming down the river Baro almost alone, and with a very scanty store of provisions. We really rescued them from a very unenviable position. Though, being on the river, they were tolerably safe from the natives, with their slender store of provisions they were

obviously in some danger of starvation, as nothing can be obtained for food hereabouts—at all events at this time of the year, as it was just before the harvest, when there is almost always a shortage of food amongst the natives.

The course of the Baro is extremely crooked and you cannot always depend on the wind; so that even going down with the stream the rate of progress on board a sailing-nugger must of necessity be very slow. They seemed extremely glad to meet us, and well they might be. We took them back with us to Kaig, and later, when our launch went back there to bring up to us the rest of our stores, sent them down to Nasser.

“We are in camp thirty miles from Itang. Again a question of fuel. Fortunately, this time we have a charming spot on which to camp, under some huge spreading trees, rather different from ‘Desolation Camp,’ but it is extremely hot. The heat is beginning to tell on all our nerves, and the hours from eleven till three are unspeakably trying; every five minutes seems an hour.

“There are a good many people here, one way and another. An Egyptian officer with some native soldiers, and three traders, a Jew, a Greek, and a Syrian. Poor, miserable looking creatures, two having been victims to low fever for weeks. We have been able to buy some sheep, some chickens, and a little milk—this last being a great luxury.

“A big herd of baboons is walking majestically over a sand-bank opposite, thoroughly dignified creatures. First come the males reconnoitring for

safety, then the mothers with their babies on their backs, and all the rest of the family gambolling round. Ridiculously human ! ”

At Kaig we found encamped the party of Greek traders who had been sent up the Baro under the auspices of the Soudan Government to occupy the enclave of Itang, which is in Abyssinian territory and had been leased to the Government by Menelik for trading purposes.

This enclave of Itang had been leased to the Soudan Government so that they could form a depot for trade purposes between Abyssinia and the Soudan. It was hoped that the Abyssinian traders would bring their goods down from the mountains to this post on the river, and that they would then be carried by water transport down the Nile to Khartoum.

Itang is about thirty miles by water above the point where they were encamped and they had been unable to proceed further up stream at the present time, as their nuggers, which drew five feet of water, were unable to pass over the shallows at this time of the year. We were told by them that it was very doubtful if we ourselves would be able to proceed any further up stream with our boats, as there was a very shallow piece of water just above the point where we were encamped ; but as our smaller launch only drew thirty inches fully loaded and our bigger one very little over twenty, we felt very confident that we should be able to get over this difficulty and be able to take at least one of our boats right up as far as Gambela.

As a protection to these traders there was a

company of Soudanese troops under the command of an Egyptian officer, Riad Effendi by name. These Soudanese had built huts for themselves, and had drawn up military lines just as if they meant to settle down there for the rest of their lives. They had brought their wives with them, and they had poultry, and did not seem to be having at all a bad time of it. There was nothing for them to do except to guard the camp from surprise by the natives.

CHAPTER VI

KAIG CAMP

A permanent camp—Numerous baboons—Bathing under difficulties—The Doctor guards the launch—Excellent sport—Our daily routine—Lost dogs—"The sheep and the goats"—Mohammedan Christmas—Work for the Doctor—Native gratitude—The effect of a gramophone—Nuer physique—Characteristics—Distant excursions—Value of signal pistols—How *not* to fry bacon—A giraffe hunt—Ostriches—A magnificent shot—The "Mem Sahib's" buck—Peculiarities of hippos—Return of the launch with stores—Arrival of mules—Galla porters—Difficult navigation—Itang—First view of the Abyssinian highlands—Abyssinian looters—Pokum—Olea—The parting of the ways—A lovely country.

As soon as the boats could be unloaded and their contents piled beside the river on the high bank, we sent the larger launch with the barges back to Nasser to bring up our reserve of stores. It was a long and tiresome journey to Nasser and back; and as it turned out it was three weeks before we saw the launch again. But we knew that we should have to remain at our present camp for a considerable period, so we made our arrangements accordingly.

We had no fear that the time would hang heavily on our hands, as we could see herds of antelope of different sorts on all sides of us, and we immediately began to set up our camp around a large gemaisa tree close to the spot where the Greek traders were encamped. There were a quantity of these beautiful

gemaisa trees about us all around and they afforded a good shelter from the sun, which from eight o'clock in the morning until five in the evening was very fierce.

Our camp was pitched on the high river bank, and there was a very pretty outlook across to the opposite shore, on to the broad bed of the Adura, which was now nothing but a tract of dry sand. In the early mornings and evenings large companies of baboons would come down to drink the water from the river, and to play and frolic on these sands. The river here was about one hundred and fifty yards broad, and the movement in the camp did not seem to frighten the monkeys at all, as there was the whole of its breadth between us; and they would, young and old, play about as if there was nobody near, though they seemed to be continually watching us, having an eye at the same time on the crocodiles which swarmed in the river; for crocodiles are very fond of monkeys, and occasionally catch them as they come to the water to drink. The monkeys, however, are quite aware of the danger, and will sit chattering upon the boughs of the trees overhanging the river, seeming all the time to be making fun of the crocodiles.

Our Doctor afforded us constant amusement. Not content with the habitual bath on shore, he would be satisfied with nothing else than a bath also in the river. He would put a chair in the shallow water and sit on it sponging himself with one eye on the crocodiles all the time, his boy being close at hand with a rifle ready to shoot in case of emergency.



NUER HUTS



KAIG CAMP

Each day the crocodiles would come nearer and nearer to where he was, and each day the Doctor's chair would be placed nearer the bank. At last he found it got to be too nervous work, and finally he had to abandon this method of taking a bath.

Severe thunderstorms were now of constant occurrence, accompanied by heavy rain. One night after some heavy rain the river rose seven inches and we thought that the spring floods had really begun, and that all difficulties of navigation would be over. It was merely a false rise, however, due to the casual rainstorms that occur in Abyssinia during the months of February and March. Later experience told us that the river remained at its lowest during April and that no definite rise could be expected before the month of May.

We had now nothing to do but to scour the country in search of game, and each day we all set off in different directions for that purpose. The Doctor and myself went out together the first morning. We took the small launch and steamed a few miles down the stream and landed on the south bank of the river. The banks were very high there, and the grass extremely rank and thick. My shikari and myself got on shore to see if we could see anything in the nature of game, and I told the Doctor, with whom we left two Soudanese, to wait in the boat for our return. We saw no game, however, and when we got back to the boat, there was the Doctor upright in the middle of the launch surrounded by native Nuers. Hidden in the long grass, they had been watching us all the time. They had pounced down on the boat as soon

as they saw that my shikari and myself had gone away. The Doctor had had no experience of such things and in an evident state of alarm was trying to appease what he thought might be hostile in the natives' attentions by a distribution right and left of everything he could lay hands on in the shape of old bottles from the boat's lockers, old biscuit tins, and such like things. Now, all these things are articles of value in unfrequented African countries, and he must have distributed quite a handsome amount in presents to appease what he supposed to be a hostile demonstration. An old bottle is worth quite a dozen eggs, and so on. Of course the natives had no hostile intentions and had surrounded the boat out of mere curiosity; but to an inexperienced person, and indeed even to those who have had experience, it is often difficult to know what to expect from sudden incursions of this sort. The best plan is to appear perfectly unconcerned and at the same time to keep a very watchful eye. But we had a good laugh at the Doctor notwithstanding.

We all of us had excellent sport from day to day. The tiang were so numerous and so tame that it was not difficult to kill as many of them as we wished, and we always had to shoot a certain quantity to keep ourselves and our men in meat. Water-buck were very plentiful, and many of them were very fine specimens of their species; and at no very great distance from the camp there were large herds of white-eared cob and also giraffe. There were no lions about, at least we never heard any, nor saw any signs of them; neither were there hyenas or jackals;

anyhow, if there were any, they were very scarce. This is so different from the Somali coast, where hyenas, jackals and several kinds of foxes abound, and where their weird cries are heard throughout the night.

Mrs. McMillan, whom some undeferential person named "The Nuisance" just by way of contrariety because she was the very reverse of a nuisance, enjoyed the sport with the rest of us. She would get up before sunrise and shoot her tiang or water-buck, and return to our mid-day meal as strong and as well as the best of us. They were very pleasant days, those mornings of sport, and afternoons of siesta. The morning call would be just before daylight. A hasty toilet, and there was breakfast ready before one's tent, just in the half light before the rising of the sun. The breakfast usually consisted of hot coffee and preserved milk, porridge and tinned bacon. This "menu" did not take many minutes to consume, and before the sun was above the horizon we were invariably away from the camp and marching across the flat grassy plain. We were obliged to go mostly on foot, as our mule contingent, which was to come down to us from Abyssinia, had not yet arrived. We had, however, four fine Khartoum donkeys, of which we made the most. By ten o'clock we had generally shot what we wanted, and were on our way back to camp, usually arriving there about twelve or one o'clock, to spend the afternoon in a long chair, waiting and longing for the cool of the evening to come; for the weather was intensely hot.

On one occasion we tried what we could do with

our lurcher dogs ; but the attempt was not a success. Two of them who were sent after a wounded animal disappeared altogether and were not heard of for hours ; and one of them had not returned by nightfall, to the great distress of Mrs. McMillan, whom in our moments of deference we called the "Mem Sab," *i.e.*, Madame Sahib. Search-parties were sent out in all directions. The dog had been lost several miles away from camp, and it was feared that it had become exhausted from want of water and had lain down and lost its way ; or that it had been caught by a leopard or hyena. But all searching was to no purpose, the dog was not to be heard of and weeping was the order of the evening. The next morning we had given up the animal for lost, when it occurred to one of us to go and look in his kennel, which was at a little distance away from our tents. There was the truant curled up and sleeping peacefully ; and there was joy and peace again in camp.

"One day I let John, my personal attendant, go shooting, and much to every one's surprise he got the finest water-buck that had been killed, the horns being almost specimen size. That was a bit of beginner's luck, and I was very glad for him, as he has had a miserable time of it, being sick so much.

"Camp life is quite luxurious here ; we have all sorts of delicacies, such as fresh milk, chickens and so forth (and incidentally we are using the fresh hams brought from Khartoum, which have almost been a cause of divorce between my husband and myself, as I think he eats more than his share ! The bringing on of the ham is a signal for watch duty, and we all

regard each other with jealousy and distrust!); but all the little amenities of life, such as table linen, "menus," &c., have disappeared long since, and no one the worse.

"We all sleep out peacefully side by side—the sheep and the goats together—and when rain threatens, William and Towell and other assistants come and gently draw our beds under safe cover, without so much as disturbing us. And above all there is delightful freedom from care. The only drawbacks are intense heat of 105°, 106°, or 107° and the mosquitoes and ants, the last-named being perfect pests, from which it is impossible to get away. They get into one's clothing, shoes, and so forth, and bite like little devils! One friendly insect takes me back to America in June, the firefly. They are not numerous here, but wonderfully brilliant and very swift in their flight.

"Mohammedan Christmas. All our men, having prayed for an hour or so (instead of working) have proceeded to make themselves very smart indeed. They are to have a feast to-night, fireworks, &c. My tent-boy reminded me that it was Christmas—Mohammedan Christmas—then casually remarked he had no money and no clothes, so I promised him new clothes when we reached a place where they could be bought, and he went off rejoicing. After a few moments he returned—having thought it all over, and told me that he would prefer the money *now*, and I could get him the clothes later! That boy deserves to be a good American citizen!

"The Soudanese stationed here also came to us

with the day's greetings, for which they expect to get backsheesh; the soldiers first, and the women and children dancing in front of my tent afterwards. To-night they will make the night hideous with their singing, bon-fires and eternal tom-toms.

"It is sweet to-day with all the scents of Araby, the breeze blowing over a dozen or so of heads, skins, and so forth, all drying in the tropical sun.

"We hope the *Sobat* will return soon and that she can go as far as Itang. The river is rising a little, thanks to heavy rains at Goré and in the hills. We tried to get the *Adis* up stream yesterday, but she stuck about a mile from here and she had to go back.

"I went out this morning with Don Carlos and shot my first hartebeest—that is, I drew the first blood, and Don Carlos finished him. I don't take much credit for that, although, according to the law of shikari work, the head (which was not a very good one) and skin belong to me, as my first shot lamed him. It was quite by accident, as I shot afterwards four times without touching him, and Don Carlos (taking my gun) shot fourteen times before discovering that the sights were wrong. After this, Don Carlos got a reedbuck and another hartebeest. We were walking four hours and riding two and a half—a pretty good morning's work for me. We lost both dogs, but one of them returned to us on the way home, so exhausted from his long chase (he rushed after a water-buck and reedbuck), that I had to carry him in front of me on the saddle; and to manage a big restless dog, an umbrella, and a mule all at once under a blazing sun of about 130° for some

miles is not exactly easy. Poor Jack, the other dog, has not turned up yet, and I fear he may have come to grief. A search-party has gone out for him now.

“My husband got five hartebeests and an ostrich, but ‘The Chief’ never saw any game at all, though out for hours. The hartebeests are remarkably tame when one is mounted, and we get almost into the midst of the herd, but the moment one dismounts they seem to scent danger and are off at full gallop. There were lots of little ones in the herd to-day.

“Our little Doctor has made himself useful here among the merchants and natives. An old Jew, one of the party of traders, broke his wrist the other day, and lucky for him it was that we had a doctor. He is a grateful old chap and has tried to ply the whole camp with presents, far more than he could afford, or we accept. A sick Nuer came into camp yesterday, and the Doctor (though knowing the case hopeless) gave him some medicine. A few moments later the poor creature came back, and throwing himself down on the ground, laid at the Doctor’s feet a scrawny, live chicken, probably his only meat dinner for a week. It was pathetic, and one wonders where these children of nature get their ideas of gratitude. They are most amusing with the gramophone, frightened, though curious. At first they insisted there was a man concealed somewhere, but having looked inside, underneath, and all round, they concluded it must be a devil, and consequently stuffed their mouths with dried grass—leaving their ears open to the wiles of the Evil One. One old Nuer was particularly child-like in his pleasure; his face was a study between

fear and delight, and finally he pointed to the skies with the one word 'Wok,' which is their God! The Somalis and Abyssinians roared with laughter, feeling themselves immensely superior to these 'wild men who wear no clothes.' It is very difficult to get into touch with the natives here, our only means of communication being through an old Nuer who was once in the service of the Government at Nasser, and whose knowledge of Abyssinian is so limited it is difficult for him to make our interpreter understand.

"The particular tribe near whom we are camped are rather fine-looking men, tall, slender, and muscular, less fantastically painted and coiffed than those lower down the river. The younger ones look good-natured and amiable, the older ones more surly. Their clothing consists of an occasional bracelet, or beads, and some of the women wear bits of skin. Most of the women we have seen are well developed muscularly, and fairly graceful, especially the younger ones. They seem to be entirely a nomad tribe, constantly on the move, their villages consisting of the usual grass huts easily run up in an hour or less. They are one of the most primitive tribes in Africa. They have the reputation of being shy, treacherous and generally nasty, but so far we have had no difficulty with them, although it would probably be unsafe to try to penetrate inland. Their weapons consist of the inevitable spear with jagged teeth and a short club. Their ornaments are generally of iron with spiked rings and bracelets, and occasional bits of ivory. Aside from spears their only possessions of value seem to be their pipes.

"Their ideas of agriculture are of the most primitive,

their crops consisting of dhura, a little maize and crude tobacco. They also have some flocks, and a few cattle, which they guard most jealously.

"They have a vague idea of the Supreme Being, whom they call 'Wok.' They are apparently monogamists, and their moral laws are said to be very strict. Property rights are also regarded. Of their direct form of government it is difficult to express any opinion. They have a king or chief to whom they are subject, and to whom they pay certain deference.

"Their most striking characteristic (to my mind) is their absolute lack of curiosity. Whether this is really due to the low state of their intelligence, or to an instinctive dignity, it is hard to say. But our presence, our ways, our boats, our camp, attracted absolutely no attention and many of them would walk through our midst without apparently realising our existence. In fact, until we had been there several days it was extremely difficult to get into touch with them at all. Afterwards for the sake of the brass wire, beads, and so forth, which we had to give them, we came into relations with them to a very limited extent, the women especially being induced to work, bring in wood, and so on, by the goods we had to offer. They objected at first to being photographed, but on more friendly acquaintance allowed us to snap-shot them several times, and even took a slight, though dignified, interest in peering into the camera.

"This tribe is very war-like and aggressive toward the weaker tribes, they themselves being in turn

raided and preyed upon by the Abyssinians, of whom they have a great distrust and fear.

"Our prospect of leaving here soon grows beautifully less. The river is falling rapidly again, and no sign of the *Sobat*.

"This ground is pretty well exhausted as far as novelty goes, though last night we had a concert of jackals, hyenas, monkeys and one hippo, the two last apparently swearing at each other. We have had good weather lately, not too hot, but every one is tired to death of staying here, and impatient to be on the move."

We would occasionally make distant excursions from the main camp, staying out two or three nights, two of us at a time, taking a tent with us and a few men. The Nuers seemed quite friendly to a white man, so that we could make these excursions without running any risk. McMillan and myself had a very successful hunt on one of these occasions. We set out from camp one afternoon about four o'clock, and marched up the Baro in an easterly direction until it was quite dark, passing several native villages on the way. In our impatience to get on we rather incautiously went too far ahead of the porters who were carrying our tents and stores, and consequently lost them for some time in the bush and darkness. By means of signal pistols, however, we restored communications, and I cannot too highly recommend this useful means of signalling for all sportsmen who may wander in desert and tractless countries. They are merely pistols of a very large calibre which shoot out Roman candle stars of

a large size; and their mechanism is perfectly simple.

As it was perfectly dark, and the ground was rough and broken and covered with bush we had some difficulty in pitching our camp; but after groping about in the darkness, having at last found what seemed to be a suitable spot, we managed to light a large fire and by its light and that of a lantern we at last got our tent up, and then proceeded to cook our dinner, which, by the way, was not a very luxurious one, and consisted chiefly of sardines presented in various ways, washed down with a little whisky and water.

Next morning at breakfast time we told our Abyssinian boy, Desta, to fry us some bacon. Desta was our cook for the occasion. We had a fine piece of tinned Wiltshire bacon, a pound in weight, fat and luscious, a portion of which we proposed to have fried; but when we called for our bacon, what a disappointment! The boy had put the whole piece into the frying pan and had fried it so successfully that all the fat had melted away, and nothing remained of our bacon but a small burnt-up piece of lean. But such things will happen; the important point is not to allow them to happen twice.

We were soon on our way again and by the afternoon had camped on a spot by the river where game appeared to be plentiful. Towards sundown numerous herds of antelope came down to the river to drink and we calculated that we had pitched our camp in a very favourite place. Large herds of leucotis were there, also tiang, water-buck and giraffe in numbers, and we soon got as much to do as we

wanted in the way of sport. McMillan was anxious to get a giraffe. These animals are sometimes very difficult to stalk; with their long necks they can see the stalker over the tops of the bushes, and it is thus often very hard to approach them if they have once been disturbed. We went out together to the fringe of the forest, about two miles from the river, and there we parted company, McMillan sighting a particularly large specimen of giraffe which he determined to follow, while I pursued and bagged two very fine specimens of leucotis which I skinned, preserving them as trophies to be sent back home to England.

I then returned to camp myself; but when night came on and there was still no sign of my companion I began to fear he had lost his way. Luckily, we had the signal pistols with us and a good supply of cartridges. They proved most useful, and eventually by this means the lost man was led back to our camp where he turned up very late and quite exhausted, and without his giraffe. He had not taken a sufficient supply of ammunition with him; for though he had mortally wounded a giraffe and had got to within a few feet of him, he was unable to finish him off for the want of one more cartridge. An unarmed man is no good against even a mortally wounded giraffe; and so he had to leave him. The natives eventually got the animal for him. Giraffe is very fair eating: some people think it good, but I have generally found the flesh rather tough. In fact very few of the larger antelopes are really good eating, though some of the smaller gazelles are quite tasty and are usually tender.

There were a very considerable number of ostriches in this district north of the Baro. The wild ostrich, however, is no game for the sportsman and his feathers hardly repay the trouble of plucking them, so we did not attempt to shoot one. But it is really a grand sight to see a herd of them run off at full speed when frightened, especially if you can hide yourself in a bush and get some one to drive them close past you. An ostrich running away at full speed looks very much like a man setting himself to run a quarter of a mile at his top speed. His two long legs protrude from under the feathers, and give every bit the appearance of a man in tights striding along at his best pace. They stretch out just like a runner trying to make the best of his stride on the running path, and it is truly a magnificent sight to see them go past you thus at full speed.

After a day or two more of general all-round sport, we set off again back to the main camp at Kaig, passing on our way numerous encampments of natives, who were engaged in catching the fish imprisoned in the shallow pools near the river, and drying them over smoky fires. McMillan on our way back made a truly magnificent shot at a leucotis, which he bowled over as it was galloping across him at full speed quite two hundred yards away.

We found our rather prolonged absence had caused some uneasiness in Kaig Camp, as after all you never quite know what may happen when you are away amongst these wild and little known tribes, and a small party has always to be careful.

“Waking from a sound sleep this afternoon, I

heard the 'thug, thug' of an engine, and realised that the watched pot had boiled at last and the *Sobat* was really here! I have not yet heard the report of the trip, as Jessen is at lunch, and that poor hard-worked man deserves his first meal in peace. Even before I was fully awake I heard the Chief's voice shouting to know if they had some breakfast ready, and Towell's voice calling 'bring a whisky and soda,—look sharp now!' for Jessen's return is usually a fête, and every one tries to make him comfortable and minister to his wants, as his return means escaping imprisonment, in this case far too prolonged.

"Yesterday was the hottest and longest day I can ever remember. I was seedy and trying to stave off a relapse of my old illness which I had at Nasser. The atmosphere was stifling. Altogether, by night I was ready to cry off, and say I wanted to go home.

"When the Chief asked me if I wanted to go shooting in the morning, I was ashamed to say 'no,' as he had planned to take me twice before, so I went to bed to a wretched night and felt that the morning's trip would be a great burden, unless I suddenly recovered. At five o'clock after a great struggle of will, I got up and dressed, still feeling wretched, and by six o'clock we were on the other side of the river with our mules and donkeys. We first sighted water-buck about three quarters of a mile up the river; but in spite of good shelter they were very shy and went off at a gallop after a moment's hesitation, during which good shooting might have got a buck. With great foresight, I had put on a white

shirtwaist, which was of course most conspicuous and an excellent danger-signal. After another short walk a doe appeared out of the long grass a long way off, and then another and another and finally the buck came into sight. Fortunately we were protected by grass, and crept up quite close behind an ant-hill. The Chief insisted on my taking a shot, steadied the rifle over his arm, and I aimed and banged away. The Chief cried out: 'You have got him,' and my old shikari patted me on the shoulder and said 'good,' and when sufficiently recovered from my surprise at hitting the beast, I went up to find him stone dead on the spot with a bullet straight through the brain. Perhaps I was not proud! Though of course it was only proverbial beginner's luck. The Chief did everything but pull the trigger, which last I hope I did intelligently. I was sorry after all, even though death must have been instantaneous.

"We were interrupted in a doze after lunch by the return of the wanderers, who came back in high spirits, reporting a good trip though they got no big game. They camped about eighteen miles from here and went out each day. The 'Revered's' bag was four white-eared cob, which he has been most anxious to get, and my husband's the same, save that he killed a giraffe, but lost him through the growing darkness, after a stalk of about two and a half hours. The forest was thick and to have remained would have been dangerous. The first night they pitched camp in the darkness, thinking themselves in an open plain, but when morning broke they found themselves camped in the middle of a native village, which was

a surprise party all round. All the men of the village were away fishing, and there were nothing but old women left, who fled in all directions when they found themselves so invaded. Don Carlos said he never saw so much game together in one spot. Twenty or thirty giraffes ranged up to watch him in their gentle placid way. White-eared cobs, ostriches, hartebeests, reedbuck, in endless numbers, returned to their peaceful grazing after a moment's inspection and he walked through a lot of them so close that he might have photographed them with a kodak.

"The Doctor gave me a native spear yesterday—a very pretty one. Usually the natives decline to part with their spears, but a string of amber beads and some brass wire roused this man's cupidity, and I am the gainer. The only other thing they possess of value is their pipe made of a gourd, the stem in leather and curiously twisted."

We had one or two curious experiences with hippo during our cruise up the Baro. In places they were very numerous and generally speaking they did not seem to be much alarmed at our approach, notwithstanding that the puffing of our engine created a really terrifying noise. Where the water was tolerably deep they would sink under as we neared them and hide themselves beneath the surface until we had passed by. Sometimes they made an error in calculation. If the water was not quite deep enough, our launch, which was dragging our heavy flotilla of barges and consequently presented a great weight, would collide with the sunken back of the hippo. This was more than Mr. Hippo had bargained for.



GAMBELA ON THE BARO

He had come into contact, perhaps for the first time in his life, with something heavier than himself, quite a novel sensation evidently. At any rate, the effect was usually great on the hippo. He would rise to the surface of the water evidently in a terrible fright, and make the best of his way to shore to hide himself in the thick reeds, plunging through the waves, half running, half swimming, and looking round at us from the corner of his eye in the greatest consternation as he ran for safety. The sight of him in full flight was a highly amusing and grotesque one and the enormous beast would cut an almost extraordinary and ridiculous figure.

Hippos are of course not difficult to shoot if you get sufficiently close to them and take them in the right place. Just under the eye or behind the ear I have generally found to be the best spots to place a bullet. The bullet should be of solid nickel, as an ordinary split or soft-nosed one will not as a rule penetrate to the brain. When alarmed the hippo invariably sinks under water; but he cannot remain long beneath the surface and has to come up every few minutes to breathe. In the presence of danger he remains but for a second or two in view, and then only the top of his head is exposed; so that the sportsman has but the chance of a very quick shot, and unless he hits the beast in exactly the right spot he does little damage. When shot through the brain they sink to the bottom immediately, and do not come to the surface again until the decomposing gases float the carcass. The period elapsing between their death and the refloating of the body depends upon the

temperature of the water. When the water is comparatively cold, the body will not reappear for two or three hours, but when it is really warm, the carcass reappears on the surface in a much shorter time. Hippo ivory used to be much esteemed, principally for making false teeth, I believe, as it is of an exceedingly hard texture. Now, there is not so much demand for it; but the smaller tusks make very handsome handles for carving knives. The meat of the hippo is very much liked by the natives, but it is very coarse and fat.

We did not shoot these beasts except when food was wanted for the semi-starving native population. For a considerable period before the annual harvest there is invariably a shortage of food amongst these careless people, who can rarely be induced to sow sufficient corn to last them throughout the year. Consequently, hippo meat on these occasions is a god-send to them.

Baby hippos are very amusing to watch. They remind one very much of little pigs. They usually will not stray far away from their mothers, who watch over them with the most tender care. But occasionally, curiosity getting the better of them, they will wander far afield. One of these little ones on one occasion followed our launch for quite a long distance swimming after us just behind the boat, to his own and certainly to our great amusement. It was a very pretty sight to see the little beast with his ears pricked and to notice his evident curiosity as to our identity. Needless to say, he was quite safe from our rifles.

A hippo on shore may be a very dangerous customer ; that is, particularly if the sportsman should come across one in the thick reeds and find himself between him and the water, his natural refuge. When disturbed on land he always makes for the water, and woe to the luckless sportsman who finds himself in the narrow hippo path in the thick reeds between him and his retreat. A charging hippo is not at all a pleasant customer, if the reeds are too thick for you to jump aside out of his way. He is neither easy to kill nor to turn. Sometimes a hippo, when driven to despair at being continually shot at each time he rises to the surface of the water to breathe, will make for the shooter on the bank. But in doing this he must expose himself and so form a very easy mark. I had a personal experience myself of this sort of attack.

This kind of life went on from day to day until at last after three weeks' absence the launch and the barges in charge of Mr. Jessen returned from Nasser with the rest of our stores. Mr. Jessen had had a really hard time of it, and had been reduced to great straits on account of the scarcity of wood and had only managed with great difficulty to reach our camp at all. During the last day of his progress up stream, he was forced to burn one of the barges for fuel.

Meanwhile, a large contingent of our mules had arrived from Abyssinia. They had been procured for us at Adis Ababa some time before by the kindness of the Legation there, and had been sent right across Abyssinia under orders to be held in readiness for us at Goré. We were now ready to proceed.

Goré is the frontier fortress-town of South-West Abyssinia, is the centre of government of the Province, and is three hundred miles away from Adis Ababa, the capital. We had some time before sent up a messenger to Goré, a distance from our camp of about one hundred and sixty-five miles, telling the mulemen in charge to bring the mules down to us at Kaig, so that these animals had had a pretty long journey before they reached us; and yet it was only now that their really hard work was to commence.

But even now that we had the mules, we had not sufficient transport to convey all our stores, and we were forced to look out and see if we could not engage native porters. The natives in these parts are not accustomed to act in this capacity; but with some trouble and with the help of the local chiefs, whose goodwill we took some trouble to conciliate, we managed to impress a considerable number of men into our service and eventually we engaged a couple of hundred of them. Each chief was held responsible for his own contingent, and for what his men carried. In this way most of our stores were conveyed up the river as far as Itang, which lies thirty-five miles higher up the stream, without the loss of a single package. All the men we engaged as porters belonged to either the Nuer or Yambo tribes. The Yambos are the next people eastward of the Nuers and I shall have a good deal to say of them later on. They are a much more civilised race than the Nuers, and in every way more amenable to discipline and more easy to handle.

In camp scenes of great activity prevailed! The

porters sat round in huge groups, waiting for their respective loads, stalking off in single file towards the forest with huge boxes on their heads. Fine-looking chaps many of them, with that curious, stolid indifference to all things strange and new which so characterises the real aboriginal here. The Gallas from Abyssinia, on the contrary, showed much curiosity and they are the first people who have apparently even noticed the difference between white men and white women, as they followed me about, and even sat almost in the tent to watch Louise. To the Nuers, Yambos, Shelluks, and the rest of them a white person is a white person, irrespective of sex, clothing, &c. The Gallas (though slaves to the Abyssinians) are a better looking race, being lighter in colour (a real chocolate brown) and some with fine European features.

“When the last porter had disappeared, order was very soon evolved out of chaos, and we started off on our little boat again in high spirits.

“We had to leave a dying Abyssinian behind. He could not have been moved, and would die more comfortably where he is, for there is but slight prospect of his living, poor chap. We left money for his food ; the Doctor gave him medicine and instructions, which the Greek merchants promised to follow, and they said they would look after him well. Five other Abyssinians being only half-starved, who were being sent home from service at Nasser, recovered sufficiently to go on with our men. The merchants were sorry to have us go ; we were a godsend to them both in trade and medicines. All were ill when we

came there, and all well when we left, except for the old chap with the broken arm, and he is doing all right.

"It is lovely on the water, a nice fresh breeze blowing all the time. The shores here are quite pretty with fine trees and overhanging shrubs. We thought we saw some wild roses on the bank just now, but probably it was something else."

While the caravan was marching along the shore the big launch, towing the two barges, proceeded to Itang by water. Just above our camp at Kaig there was a very shallow bit of river, so shallow that we found it impossible to float the smaller launch, which drew thirty inches, over it, so we were forced to leave her at Kaig near the camp of the Greek traders, in charge of two of our Soudanese. We packed all our trophies into her and stowed them away in the dry cabin of the boat.

We managed to get the rest of the flotilla safely to Itang in two days, with no more difficulty than is inseparable from the navigation of unknown and shallow waters.

Itang is a large native Yambo village ruled over by a black man who styles himself by the name of king, and is directly tributary to the Abyssinian Ras of Goré; at least, he was so tributary until the Soudan Government took over the lease of the place from Menelik. Of course at that time, as the traders had got no further than Kaig, there was as yet at Itang very little trace of the trading-station that was to be.

"In sight of the promised land of Abyssinia. The

highlands show up a pale blue line on the horizon, and close at hand are the beautiful Pam hills,* a welcome sight after so many weeks of absolutely flat open country. We anchored to cut wood, a little above Itang, a sweet bit of primeval forest. The trees were full of monkeys, scarcely frightened at our approach. A big tamarind—its roots more over than under the ground—sheltered our boat, and the jasmine grows in wild confusion. Altogether charming, in spite of the burning sun. Yesterday was a fairly hot day, and to-day promises even worse.

“It is a real triumph to get up the river even as far as we have done, and it looks as though we might even now reach Gambela. So much for the old croakers who said we would not even reach Nasser so late in the season, and that we would be forced to return to Khartoum! The greatest possible credit is due to the indomitable Jessen, who has had the boat pulled through some of the shallows by main force, has dug channels, run her backwards, sideways and upside down rather than give up.

“The river since leaving Itang has been a really noble stream, in places two hundred or three hundred yards wide, and a rather swift current. One would never suspect the hidden shallows save for an occasional peeping sandbank covered with birds. The country, too, the last few days has been attractive, fertile and green, with trees nearly all the way, well populated and well cultivated. The strips of land which line the river banks are divided into patches

* These hills were the first rising ground we had seen since passing Ahmed Aga on the Nile a thousand miles back.

where are grown crops of grain and tobacco, all apparently in very good condition, and exhibiting evidences of considerable care.*

“ We spent the night at Itang. It is quite an extensive village, well shaded and prettily located. Of course it is a British station, and the familiar British and Egyptian flags met our eyes very pleasantly. Only a few merchants here (Capatos men) and a native officer, Riad Effendi, who was at Camp ‘ Toolong ’ (as Kaig was afterwards christened from the length of our stay) when we first arrived. I have reason to be grateful to him, as he lent me the two cows whose milk, I believe, saved my life. But I digress. The King of Itang is quite a personage, a tall, very comely negro dressed in a blue tunic, which apparently does duty in many ways; a modern soft felt hat, and some very fine ivory bracelets. He keeps his people in excellent order. As they approach him, at a distance they crouch almost to the ground, and if they wish to speak to him they must crawl up on hands and knees! For that matter the women, poor wretches, all adopt this attitude even when they speak to their husbands. ‘ The Chief ’ is quite wild over reports of Abyssinian looting in this part of the country. At Camp ‘ Toolong ’ a company of Buruns came down to see us, begging protection and redress, some of them horribly mutilated; and here they have been at work looting the country, carrying off the women, and behaving like the savages that they really are, under the thin veneer of civilisation. These poor natives cannot stand against

* The natives here were Yambos not Nuers.



IN A YAMBO VILLAGE NEAR POKUM



YAMBO VILLAGE NEAR ITANG

them, being simple people, and of course entirely without fire-arms.

“This morning has been so fascinating that I have ceased longing for home. We did get fairly bored at Camp ‘Toolong.’ Once back in civilisation, I wonder whether we shall not miss the charm and freedom of this life, the beautiful nights, sleeping under the stars, the calls of the night-birds, the swishing flight of the crested cranes, and the distant howl of the hyena. The hours in the day-time from eleven till three one could well dispense with; then comes the tea hour, when we all drink huge cups of hot and very bad tea, and each hour after that is a delight. Our meals are : lunch at 10.30, tea at 3, and we dine at 6, an arrangement which (in my humble opinion) makes a very long day.”

We only remained at Itang one night and proceeded by boat to Pokum, another Yambo village ten miles higher up the stream, situated on the opposite side of the river to Itang itself, which lies on the south bank. Our stores were still carried by our native porters. A mile above Pokum on the opposite side we found a suitable place for the camp, and immediately started to fix our tents on the high river banks beside the stream, at about half a mile from the native village of Olea.

This spot we had previously fixed on in our minds as a suitable depot, and as a good point of departure for our exploration campaign due south into the interior; and here also our picnic party was to be finally divided into two divisions. The Chief, the Doctor, and Mrs. McMillan were to proceed in an

easterly direction across Abyssinia to Adis Ababa ; and the rest of us were to march due south in the direction of Lake Rudolph as soon as the necessary preparations for such a trip could be made. The party going through Abyssinia had no time to lose in making their arrangements, as they had made up their minds to leave the main caravan and start off the next day, March 16. Those going to Lake Rudolph would of necessity have to remain some time at Olea to make due preparation for so long a march up country. So a suitable spot was chosen for a permanent camp and the two parties divided off.

“ We have come to the parting of the ways, and to-day, March 16, say farewell to the Blue Caravan, whose members we shall not see for many months.

“ The expedition was made up of three separate equipments. That portion which was intended for use on the Baro river was called the Red Caravan ; that part which was to cross Abyssinia we named the White Caravan ; and that which was to go to Lake Rudolph was called the Blue Caravan—a distinction made merely to facilitate the distribution of provisions and stores and to prevent the mixing up of the goods and chattels belonging to the various parties. We camped Monday night at Olea, or rather the Blue Caravan did, while we (the White Caravan) stayed on the boat, and all day yesterday was spent in dividing goods and chattels, each side watching their own possessions like hawks. Even William and Towell, until now great cronies, became suspicious of each other, and serio-comic ructions ensued. No one dared stray within the sacred precincts of the

other and we dined each at our own mess, we on the boat and they on shore, and paid each other formal calls afterwards. The 'Revered' is at present our guest, and insists on being treated with all due ceremony!

"The camp at Pokum or Olea was not attractive, being on a flat plain, with only one small tree and some woods in the distance. The natives, however, in about half an hour ran up some grass huts, very thick on top and open at the sides, which were cooler than the shade of any trees, as the air filtered through; and it *was* hot yesterday, the sun was burning and the ground radiated heat from every pore. We did not have a thermometer, but we thought it must have been at least 110° in the shade. Then came the lovely night, when the camp was most picturesque with the fires in some of the tukls casting weird shadows over the weirder groups of Yambos, Gallas and Abyssinians; the mules outside in a circle on the plain, and all the features of camp-life, which must be experienced and not described. Here we saw a rare bird indigenous to this country, a peculiar species of night-jar. It has apparently double wings, one pair about eight inches above the other, suspended on a very slender thread, and looking like another bird or huge moth.

"The river has been pretty and very thickly inhabited; groups of natives have followed us all day long, curious as children, romping and playing and chattering along the bank like a lot of young animals. We threw them empty biscuit tins and all sorts of rubbish; the ensuing scrambles were very amusing.

“ ‘ His Excellence ’ and the ‘ Baby ’ made a march on foot after a giraffe, but although they saw no game, they report most lovely country, and forests full of beautiful flowers. They brought back some sprays of purple orchids, the flowers very like the large purple orchids one buys in London, only much smaller flowers, and a fine white feathery but not very pretty one, and some wild plums which were like greengages, but very bitter.”

CHAPTER VII

THE DIVIDING OF THE WAYS

Plans for the future—Start of the Abyssinian party—Colonel Marchand—Friendly Yambos—A dangerous fire—An improvised sedan chair—A hard march—A beautiful country—Gereza monkeys—The ford of the Baro—A native bridge.

It was now March 16, so that it was about seven weeks since we had left Nasser. During those seven weeks such time as we had not been occupied in navigating our boats up stream we had spent in shooting; and a very fine collection of heads and trophies we had obtained between us. The white-eared cob and water-buck were some of them particularly good trophies, and we had some fine specimens of other game, including several whole skins of tiang and leucotis. Some very large hippo heads, too, had been secured. But though we had shot hundreds of crocodiles we had hardly made any attempt to preserve their skins; and when we did try to do so, we found great difficulty in drying them properly, as the scales invariably fell off before the skin was in a proper condition to be packed away.

Our party was now going to divide and separate into two divisions, proceeding in two different directions. I have mentioned in the last chapter those who were going to Abyssinia. Those who were going in the direction of Lake Rudolph were

Mc Millan, Jessen, Zaphiro, William Marlow and myself.

The village of Olea, where we were now encamped, is at about $8^{\circ}10'$ north and longitude 34° east. The northern end of Lake Rudolph comes up as far north as latitude 5° north, and lies at about longitude 36° east, so that we had to march some hundreds of miles nearly due south before we could reach that lake.

Though taking the advantage of any shooting there might be on the way, our main purpose from now onwards was to explore and survey the little known country south of the Akobo river; and to map out the unexplored plateau of Musha as far up as Mount Naita, a prominent mountain just north-west of Lake Rudolph. After having made a thorough survey of the top of this Musha plateau, we were to return to the Baro river at Itang, passing on our way back through the Boma country, which lies north-westward of the Musha plateau. The Akobo is an affluent of the Pibor, and is a big river with a swift current flowing between high banks. It rises in the mountains south of Abyssinia proper.

This programme of march which I have sketched out above we eventually carried out in its entirety, reaching our old camp again at Olea on the Baro on July 2 following; but I am anticipating.

It was decided that those going through Abyssinia should start off the next day, and that I should accompany them as far as the frontier town of Goré, and there buy the mules and donkeys which were necessary for our expedition to the south. Goré is

one of the richest districts of Abyssinia, and large numbers of transport animals can generally be obtained there.

It is about one hundred and twenty-five miles from Olea to Goré, following the native track which runs beside the river Baro up to the Abyssinian escarpment; but we intended to try and reach Gambela by river, making use of our big launch. Gambela is situated about forty-five miles by water above the spot where we were encamped at Olea and was the highest point on the Baro reached by Colonel Marchand on his launch when he went out of Africa across Abyssinia, after the Fashoda embroglio. But it was in December when he was in these waters, and the river is then at its highest and he found no difficulty, I believe, in navigating it up to that point.

After two days' steaming, the caravan marching along the river bank all the time, we reached the rapids just below Gambela, two miles below the actual point that Colonel Marchand had attained. The Abyssinians who were with us showed us the spot at which he had to abandon his launch and take to marching.

The river banks, particularly on the southern shore, between Itang and Gambela are very thickly populated by natives of the Yambo tribe. They received us in a much more friendly way than the Nuers had done, and showed great curiosity at our appearance. Our steam launch was to them something quite new, and troops of them, especially boys and grown-up girls, followed us for miles, running

along the banks of the river, and showing the greatest interest in all we did.

It was impossible for us to go any further than Gambela by water. We therefore disembarked and landed all our stores close to the river bank in the thick bush which skirts the water. Our native porters were encamped all round there. While they were cooking their food, they managed to set fire to the grass close to where all our things were piled up and, before we realised the fact, ourselves and stores were surrounded by a burning mass of bush and grass. We did not take long, however, to realise our danger, but it was not without difficulty that we succeeded in overcoming the flames by the usual method of beating them out. It was a very near thing, as the dry grass and bushes burn with amazing rapidity. Had the flames defeated us, those of our party who were going across Abyssinia would have had a very rough time of it, as all our provisions would have been destroyed, and there is no food for civilised persons to be obtained from the natives in these remote regions.

It is not an easy matter to put out a fire when there are bushes mixed up with the burning grass. A fire of burning grass can generally be beaten out by men beating down the flames with branches of trees with the green leaves on them; that is, if the grass is not so high as to make the fire too fierce to face; but when the grass is mixed up with bushes, this is not often possible.

The next day we set on our march to Goré. Mrs. Mc Millan's faithful companion, Louise, was not much



THE CAMP



EN ROUTE

accustomed to mule riding and so it was decided she should be carried ; and we rigged up a sort of sedan chair for her. By passing two long poles under an ordinary easy chair, a very decent imitation of a carrying chair was fashioned, and a party of natives was told off to carry Louise on this improvised conveyance. We innocently thought that she would find it to be an easy method of progression, and that we could easily drill the men who were carrying her, to their work. Such, however, was not at all the case. In the first place, it is hard to get four men of the same height to carry the chair, for the poles were carried on the men's shoulders, and then the men were quite unaccustomed to such work. Occasionally, too, they would quarrel amongst themselves, quite regardless of any discomfort they might give their passenger ; and, when to emphasise their wordy warfare they would stop and gesticulate, the chair and its passenger cast about on the shoulders of the men were in the position of a ship at sea. At last it could be endured no longer and Louise decided she would take to her mule with all its risks, and for a novice at this sort of thing she made surprising progress. Our Egyptian courier, Machoui, was told off to be her esquire and she performed the rest of the journey without much difficulty, though the route we traversed could hardly be described as an easy one.

“ We have been on the march continuously since leaving Pokum and I have been too seedy to want to occupy my leisure moments with writing ; moreover, it has been exceedingly hot of late, with still, sultry nights, when it was hard to sleep and harder

still to wake up at 5 A.M., and be ready for the road at six. But to go back. We were on the boat two days, and a very pretty run it was. The river lost its noble width and narrowed down to about fifty yards, while the banks began to rise in low hillocks beautifully green and wooded. At twelve o'clock, mid-day, after two days' steaming, we passed through a small rapid and by about one o'clock found the river almost impassable with rocks and rapids, charmingly picturesque, but rather dangerous to the boat; so in spite of Jessen's ambition to go higher than Commander Marchand did in his retreat from Fashoda in '98, we abandoned the boat and took to the march, spending the first night, however, just where the rapids began.

"We passed a pool in which were about twenty hippos and very amusing they were to watch. They were seemingly quite unconscious of our presence.

"The next day (the 18th or 19th) the 'Revered' and I on our mules and Louise in a litter started out on our first march, leaving 'His Excellence' to struggle with the porters, and the 'Baby' to come on with the caravan.

"The route was very pretty, winding through forests of mimosa and acacia with thick shrubs of jasmine making the air heavy with perfume; and most lovely glimpses of the river with its rocky shore and the blue hills beyond. Even scenery palls, however, after about three hours of unaccustomed riding, and the last hour and a half was a real grind; the more so as Louise was now left behind and I was afraid she would be nervous and frightened; however,

she turned up some time later all right—on the mule—peaceful, though very tired. The porters who carried her on their shoulders in mid-air were of uneven sizes and heights, thus throwing the burden unevenly first on one foot and then on another, with the result that they all took to quarrelling among themselves—quite forgetting their helpless victim in mid-air, and on two occasions nearly pitched her on to the rocks. This was too much for Louise's nerves—she got on to her mule and clung nobly to him like a long-lost brother and the word 'litter' even now makes her turn quite pale !

“The view from our camp was exquisite ; the river was fairly broad and open, and the winding valley revealed a seemingly unending vista of hills and peaks rising one above the other and fading into a soft haze. The natives washing for gold* added a picturesque note to the scene ; the sunset was beautiful and the day went out in a blaze of glory—almost equal to the sunsets at Assouan.

“The caravan came in slowly behind us owing to lack of porters, and the Chief did not get in until long after dark, groping his way along by the light of a torch. Half of our goods were left behind and the next day was spent sending back for them, which was fortunate for me as I was absolutely wretched and longed for nothing but my bedroom at home. It was too hot to rest during the day or night and I thought the hours would never end. We were off at 6 A.M. next day, however, and though at the

* There is a small quantity of alluvial gold in the sands of the Baro, and Gallas come down from Abyssinia in search of it.

beginning I felt I could hardly sit on my mule, we did nearly five hours hard marching, and nearly wore out the whole party, as we set the pace by going ahead. As a matter of fact, after a certain point there was no place in which we could camp near water, so go we needs must. Louise did nearly the whole distance on her mule, she who thought she never could ride half an hour ! Necessity is a stern master.

“ Even the Chief came in grumbling over the length and severity of the march as a starter, cursing ‘ The Nuisance ’ for not saying she could not go on, and ‘ The Revered ’ for not knowing better.

“ We spent the heat of the day in a beautiful sylvan glade on the edge of the river. Hotter than Hades—in spite of shade and cover. Mine is the only tent pitched now, as the nights are so warm, and it saves time in the morning ; so we sleep peacefully in a group, I under my awning and the others all round in a most brotherly fashion. The next day we had a short march of two hours only, and camped by the ford of the Baro. A delicious, cool breeze from the hills tempered the hot sun and reminded us for the first time that a cool climate really existed. This country is really beautiful. At every turn new and lovely views greet one, while the actual route is charming though rough. The trees here are like young saplings, and the grass beneath is green and fresh as in early spring in the north. To-day we went through half a mile of white feathery shrubs like spirea, only deliciously perfumed, and saw one beautiful tree a mass of purple blooms but too far away to investigate. Red seemed to be the prevailing colour,



GALLA WOMAN GRINDING CORN



BRIDGE OF CREEPERS AT FORD OF THE BARO

however, and we passed quantities of what looked like red verbenas. Lizards, too, have red heads and tails with black bodies, and I saw a bright red insect of a most beautiful hue. We have seen no game; but we passed trees full of monkeys. But it is the hills and mountains that rejoice my soul. I never tire of looking at them and longing to be among them. To-morrow (D.V.) we ought to reach the plateau at Gouma, the first Abyssinian post. Awful nuisance about porters. Half of them are sick and the other half have to be whipped to keep them from running away and the Chief of this district positively declines to give us any men, in spite of being ordered in the name of Menelik, with offers of pay beside."

Along this part of our road we saw multitudes of Gereza monkeys; these are the beautiful black and white species whose skins make such pretty rugs, but we did not attempt to shoot any of them. After three short marches we arrived at the spot which is well known in the district as the Ford of the Baro. The river here forms the boundary of Abyssinia proper, and it is by this ford that every one must pass into the country from the valley of the Baro, as the very precipitous nature of the mountains would make it impossible for the caravan to enter the country by any other route.

This so-called ford is not by any means what one would call an easy place at which to cross a rapid stream. The ford itself is merely a deep pool, some forty yards across just above some rapids, where the black basaltic rocks hold up the water of the river. The slack water above affords a tolerably safe place

for swimming the animals across, but in no part of the pool can you touch bottom. With the help of a Berthon boat there was no difficulty in taking our stores across ; and half a mile lower down the stream there is a curious sort of bridge fashioned with the entwining creepers, which hang upon the projecting boughs of two large trees. So skilfully is this bridge made that it affords quite an easy passage for foot passengers, but, of course, it is impossible for mules. When we had got everything across, which we succeeded in doing without any mishap either to our beasts or to our stores, we camped on a level piece of ground on the opposite side and gave men and beasts a rest in preparation for the steep climb they had to accomplish on the morrow. To get to our next camp we had to ascend about four or five thousand feet.

CHAPTER VIII

ABYSSINIA

The ascent of the Abyssinian escarpment—An Abyssinian frontier-post—Exhilarating climate—A great reception—Abyssinian feudal customs—Bouré—Position of women in Abyssinia—A “durgo”—A native “tukl”—Agricultural richness of the neighbourhood—Value of women slaves—Natural beauty of the country—Absence of game—Exasperating Negadis—Visits of ceremony—Goré—A gorgeous escort—A striking situation—A native dish—A visit to the wife of the Ras—A handsome present—Native characteristics—Buying mules—Return to Olea—Donkeys and mules as swimmers—Mule sickness—Sport around Pokum—Hippos as food for starving natives—The first elephant—The fate of our hippo skeleton.

THE next morning as soon as it was light we started off on the ascent. There was a distinct track all the way up the mountain side. The climb did not present any real difficulty, and after some stiff work of three or four hours' duration, we found ourselves on the top of the pass at the Abyssinian frontier-post of Gouma.

Here we saw for the first time a representative of Abyssinian authority in the person of the officer who commanded the post. He had been warned of our approach by the Governor at Goré and had made preparations for us, having built several tukls for our accommodation. A tukl is a hut built of grass and wood and is generally circular in form, and when fresh

and clean and strewn with newly cut grass is a first-rate place to sleep in. We enjoyed the rest here very much, the exhilarating air of the mountains forming such a contrast to the hot steaming air of the Baro valley.

“ The day’s march was about four hours and a half. The first part was a rather steep ascent winding over hills, through very pretty woodland, and freshened by the cool breezes which swept down from the mountains. Louise got on very well with her mule. By force of contrast to her other experiences, which had made her so nervous, the ride on her little grey mule seemed a luxury and haven of peace.

“ As we went up, the road became wilder and more picturesque ; first through bits of jungly forest, then through what seemed like our own northern woods, until we came to the dry bed of a mountain stream which marked the end of the woodland ; and there we halted for half an hour’s rest in a sweet spot under some huge trees. After that, the ascent became very steep, indeed almost perpendicular, and the track absolutely bare under the broiling sun. How our mules ever got up it with their burdens I don’t know. We dug our hands into their manes, flattened ourselves in almost horizontal positions, and clung on for dear life. It was no easy matter, but certainly not so bad as we anticipated. This day’s march up the mountain side from the valley of the Baro into the plateau has been a nightmare in prospective to us all, such fearful tales had we heard of it. Major Austin in his book reports the ascent as absolutely impossible for loaded animals ; and

Zaphiro on his return from Goré said that Louise and I positively could not get up it; that it took him personally ten hours, that he almost died and so forth and so on! All rot; but it did serve to frighten us all, and many an hour have I spent wondering how my poor Louise could get up, or whether we should really have to turn back; but here we are safely on the much desired promised land. This morning we made a short and easy march of about three hours, which seemed longer than any we have done yet. I don't know why, save that the country was so open that the distance swept away seemingly without end. We travelled over low, rolling hills, open and grassy, with occasional bits of woodland. All along the road were azalea trees in full bloom, convolvulus, primroses, lilies and the flower which looks like a huge red thistle (I don't know its name). In the woods were myriads of song-birds, which sounded familiarly northern.

“Half way out we were met by a gay cavalcade; two big chiefs and several small ones, who came out to welcome Our Chief. A picturesque sight indeed; the chiefs dressed in embroidered coats covered with their long black mantles, mules and horses gaily caparisoned, and their gorgeous silver and gold embossed shields carried behind them by their retainers. The soldiers in their white draperies with broad red stripes looked a fairly useful lot.”

The next day we resumed our march towards our next camping-place, which was to be in the neighbourhood of Bouré, and when still some miles distant from the town we were met by a great concourse of

people, which included all the prominent personages of the district, and at their head was the Governor of the Province Shaka Tacalin, the representative of Ras Tasamma. All this crowd of people, which numbered some hundreds, were mounted on horse-back or mules or apparently on any sort of mount that could be procured. They surrounded us and escorted us in a sort of triumphal procession to the spot selected for us to camp on.

Bouré is the centre of a very large and prosperous district, and the surrounding country is extremely fertile and well cultivated. It is perhaps in this respect the most favoured district in all Abyssinia. The population is almost entirely Galla. The Gallas are a subject race recently conquered by the Abyssinians and have been reduced to the servile position of mere villeins of the soil ; and they have to cultivate the land for the sole benefit of their Abyssinian overlords, just as the Saxon population of ancient Britain were compelled to do for their Norman conquerors after the Conquest.

As is generally the case, here as elsewhere, the lot of these villeins is not a very happy one. They are tied to the soil and have to exist on so much of the lean of the land as their prosperous overlord deigns to leave them.

The township of Bouré, which is a large rambling, populous district and not, properly speaking, a town at all, in our acceptation of the word, is situated on this high plateau some five or six thousand feet above sea-level. The climate is fine and bracing and the rainfall sufficient and seasonable. The scenery, too,

is superb, the country being broken and undulating and exceedingly well wooded. There is here a mixture of tropical and sub-tropical vegetation, and the combination of the two makes a very fine effect.

"This is no place for a white woman to retain her proper self-respect. Bless my soul ! When we ride through the country, Don Carlos leading the way, every native salaams to the ground to him, while they never even vouchsafe me a nod ; and in camp when sitting round they look at Louise and me with the utmost contempt, and wonder (I suppose) why the white man lets his slaves be so idle. No place for an independent American woman ! They also have an irritating way of covering their mouths and noses while near us—to prevent contamination, it seems.* A most self-satisfied class of brutes, on the whole.

"We are camped on the edge of the Bouré plateau, and are having our first taste of an Abyssinian storm. Hailstones as big as walnuts fell, until the ground was white. This is what we must expect every day, they say. But thank God we are in the high country at last, and the relief is unspeakable. The air is like fine wine, and the fresh, strong breeze which comes from the hills is laden with sweet forest scents, while on every side are most exquisite views of green valleys, wooded slopes and blue peaks fading off into the mist. Never have I been so thankful for the blessing of cool weather. To be able to breathe freely, to feel life a joy and to sleep through the cool, sweet night is the greatest pleasure one has known for weeks ; and I

* A custom common throughout Abyssinia. It is their way of showing superiority.

would not have exchanged for a palace in London the pretty tukl which has been freshly built for us by orders of the Ras. Travelling with the Minister Plenipotentiary to the country has its decided advantages. This tukl, my little house, is about fifteen feet in diameter, circular in shape, built of osiers and covered with grass, the floor laid with fresh green rushes; it has a raised bed covered with dry grass, which, however, I would not try. The roof is built like the top of an Indian basket, beautifully symmetrical and the whole is clean, fresh and attractive. One felt like spending a month there.

“Once arrived in camp there began the usual gift of ‘durgo’* or presents of food. At five o’clock a most gorgeous procession appeared bearing a durgo from Ras Tasamma, a truly royal gift. Two bullocks, (stall fed, one with his hoofs all curled up, never having been allowed to walk), seven sheep, eighty fowls, three hundred Abyssinian and one hundred and sixty Galla breads, jars innumerable of honey, tedj, and great bundles of firewood,† all this accompanied by the usual salaams, palavering and so on. I have described this ‘durgo’ somewhat in detail to show what it is, as this custom followed us throughout the province of Ras Tasamma and we received similar attentions every evening. Nothing is ever given in Abyssinia without the expectation of return, and, needless to say, these daily durgos in the course of our

* Durgos are the native tributes of food given to passing strangers of distinction.

† It is always customary to give firewood in this way to caravans travelling through Abyssinia, and, at places where wood is scarce, it is a great blessing.

journeyings almost exhausted our extra supply of cloth, revolvers, guns, &c., not to mention the dollars which we distributed as 'pourboires' to the soldiers who brought these gifts, so that we reached Adis Ababa, the capital, in an almost destitute condition. This hospitality costs the Ras himself practically nothing, as he exacts it as a tribute from his people and it is merely an example of the taxation, direct and indirect, with which the people are ground down from high to low. It is this system of grinding taxation which causes the lack of enterprise, especially in agriculture, so prevalent throughout the whole country.

"One bullock was presented to me personally by the Ras and by proxy I am writing a very suave letter to 'Madame Ras,' as well as giving an oriental carpet to the very dignified under-chief Tchalka Tchakalla, who was the medium for the presentation of these gifts. I shall probably also give to 'Madame Ras' a cloak and parasol intended for the Empress Taiton. It seems the cloak is not suitable for her Imperial Majesty, as it is embroidered with imitation stones. I thought it just the thing to please her, but am told she might consider the gift of it an insult, as the stones are not real.

"*Two days later.*—Still sitting on the hill-top at Bouré, waiting for the Negadis, the transport carriers throughout Abyssinia, who with their mules have not yet turned up. The first apportioning of loads is a long and tiresome process at best, so we won't attempt to start until to-morrow morning.

"It is a charming place to stay at; the air is

simply delicious. The first night we had a storm worthy even of the country. I felt as though I had never seen rain before. Such torrents came down from all quarters. Lightning on all sides at once, continuous thunder and high wind. The bathroom of my tent was a lake, the floor of my bedroom caked with mud. Everything was dirty and disagreeable, everybody swearing.

“We passed a quiet day yesterday. ‘His Excellence’ was busy with the chiefs here arranging for our transport. In the afternoon I went over to the village to see the tukl which was built for me. It is a very fine one, about fifteen feet in diameter, and beautifully built, with several divisions for rooms, and divans for beds (covered with woven reed rugs) stone ovens, &c., all complete. It seemed ungracious not to use it, but considering that while waiting our arrival it had been occupied by these same chiefs, their children, servants, mules, dogs, and their retinue, I preferred the cleanliness of my own tent.

“These Abyssinians are rather fine-looking men, and if properly controlled should make a splendid nation. As it is, they cannot be depended upon, being untruthful, wily, hard and cruel. Certainly they have intelligence. The country seems to have endless possibilities; magnificent grazing-ground suitable for all agricultural purposes, and probably very rich in minerals. There are rumours of coal not far from here, but they have never been verified. Coffee in this district sells for a penny a pound; and beyond Goré for a halfpenny a pound, and cattle, so easily raised here, would be invaluable in the Soudan.

If proper transport could be established between here and Khartoum, the future of the country would be immense, this western side of Abyssinia being more suitable for trade purposes than the eastern. This is one of the many problems which our indefatigable Chief is working out in his mind. He wants to establish and to properly protect frontier-posts and to ensure the lower tribes against the tyrannical raids of the Abyssinians. As it is, often here in Abyssinia the Galla tribes are practically slaves, while the captives who are brought up from the low country are absolutely so, in spite of the fact that actual trafficking in human beings is strongly prohibited by Menelik, who, however, is not able to keep proper control in the far districts of his kingdom.

“Women slaves are considered much more valuable than men, bringing from forty to sixty dollars* per person, while the highest price paid for a man slave rarely exceeds forty or forty-five. The women are the stronger, hardier and more versatile, and accomplish three or four times the amount of work that a man does in a day. The Galla women are rather good-looking, splendidly developed from the standpoint of physical strength, with broad, square shoulders and muscles standing out like those of an ox. They are of a light chocolate colour and wear a mop of black woolly hair tressed in tiny cork-screws, allowed to grow about three inches; then cut square and covered with grease. Among the younger ones, one sees rather nice faces. The men are less distinctive

* The Maria Theresa dollar, worth two shillings.

in character, though a fairly good-looking lot, and often with fine Caucasian features.

“Our little Doctor has his hands full. All the sick in the neighbourhood have come to him at the rate of about a hundred a day. Many of them are frauds, but occasionally there are very bad cases. Goitres, leprosy and the inevitable skin disease seem to be very prevalent.

“Don Carlos and I went out for a little ride this morning to see the donkeys belonging to the Blue Caravan, which were to go to Lake Rudolph. They are in bad condition, but better than we anticipated, and I should think at least a hundred might be fit for use in a month. More mules have been bought here for Lake Rudolph. I rode one of the new ones this morning and liked him so much that ‘His Excellence’ bought him for me. (He afterwards turned out very badly and was christened ‘the flatcatcher,’ and I was supposed to be the victim, but as Don Carlos was the one who originally bought him and originally passed him, I think I can fully share the responsibility with him !)

“My dog Pat is suffering from his eyes and must be doctored ; he and Bob, the other dog, travel very well.”

After a delay of two days at Bouré we proceeded to march toward Goré, which is distant thirty-five miles. We traversed this distance in four days’ very easy marching, passing all the time through most beautiful landscape scenery, through tropical forests, through valleys and high rolling grass-lands ; in fact through every kind of natural beauty in turn. It is



GALLAS CUTTING UP AN ANTELOPE



GALLA WOMEN DRAWING PLOUGH

a peculiar fact that there is no game of any sort to be found in this part of the country. And indeed throughout the highlands of southern and central Abyssinia there is almost an entire absence of game, and nothing is seen with the exception of an occasional wart-hog, some reed buck and oribi. The game seems to avoid the highlands, though directly you come down the valleys of southern Abyssinia all sorts of antelope are numerous.

“Second day from Bouré. I don’t know the name of the place, but we are camped in a very pretty spot on the hill-side with lovely views of soft green valleys and rolling hills.

“We left Bouré yesterday after remaining there two days, a delay which could not be avoided, but which seemed wicked. There never were such people to deal with. They are a most maddening lot! They come in crowds and sit around ‘His Excellence’ in front of the tent and drink green Chartreuse, and then the picnic begins. First about half an hour of ‘We trust you are well; we offer you our homage; our country is honoured;’ and so forth and so on, *ad nauseam*; but to get out of any man the price of a pound of butter or make a contract for carrying loads, or to fix a day, requires the wisdom of Solomon and the patience of Job; *enfin*, one thinks everything finished and one prepares to start at a certain hour.

“At the last moment the loads are too heavy, the price not sufficient, the time too short, the mules impossible to collect; a thousand and one excuses, until one loses all patience, threatens to report the offenders to the Emperor, commands, orders, bribes,

cajoles, and finally the start is made. After that, things go more smoothly, although if we marched as the Negadis wish we should do about an hour a day. The gorgeously embroidered gentleman who guided us to-day pointed to a near hill-top after we had been *en route* for about an hour and said: ‘*Voilà notre encampment pour ce soir!*’* He was very disgusted indeed when we continued to march two hours beyond that, but rode along in silent but grim resignation. This same dignified personage was sent to watch over the older dignified Chief at Bouré, to see that he carried out his orders from the Ras; for no one trusts any one else in Abyssinia, the general principle being ‘set a thief to catch a thief,’ the thief with the greatest interest offered him usually coming out on top.

“Our march yesterday was very short and uninteresting. We stopped at the home of the Negadras Beru (the Negadras is the head of the merchants in Abyssinia) and found some nice little grass huts freshly built for our use; a great convenience when one is sure they *are* fresh, as it saves pitching tents. In the afternoon, the Negadras’s wife came to pay her respects accompanied by six women attendants and one man-servant. She is a pretty little thing, very young, and with the most marvellous coiffure made of tiny braids woven close to the head from the forehead to the nape of the neck, the hair flowing free from there. She brought a jar of tedj (a native beer—very nasty!) and a flask of araki (the *eau de vie* of

* A few of the Abyssinian chiefs speak French, having learnt it at the French mission schools on the east coast.

the country). This last I drank, finding it very good, though fearfully strong. She in return accepted the hospitality of a glass of port wine, a servant holding up a rug in front of her while she drank, presumably to keep off the evil eye, such being the custom among the Abyssinians. We then photographed her and her attendants, and she departed, having done her duty.

“At five o’clock I returned her ladyship’s visit armed with two pieces of coloured gauze, two bottles of bad perfume, a bottle of port and a box of biscuits, and accompanied in due state by the faithful Machoui, our Egyptian courier and my faithful body-guard, Johannis (our interpreter) and three or four syces. I was ushered into a small grass tukl, dark, dirty and smelly, filled to overflowing with rugs, hangings, straw partitions, and beds, and kitchen utensils, with no sense of order whatever. A mule was stabled in one corner, several dogs made themselves at home any and everywhere and every inch of remaining space was occupied by people. All my retinue had to come in also. I was given the seat of honour on what seemed to be an overturned barrel (whose raised edges nearly stopped the circulation in one’s legs) covered with a doubtful rug, and after the usual meaningless phrases, I was offered more tedj, which I just tasted and passed on to the others, and then a cup of coffee. My little hostess had nothing to say, but my host was most talkative, most *empresé*, and most apologetic that we should visit him in this most unworthy temporary house (his real palace, he informed us, being at Goré); and he finally capped the climax by

offering me one of his sons (about five years old) to take back to England with me. I had the greatest difficulty in refusing; however, we compromised by my offering to photograph him at Goré with his proper paraphernalia, gorgeous gold shield and all the rest; and then I went home to a bath of insect death, and to hang all my belongings out on a clothes line to air. Somehow, my curiosity as to the life of these people is not sufficient to carry me through such ordeals gracefully.

“Our march to-day was uneventful, though through very pretty rolling country through which run little streams of clear water, and some lovely lanes, almost like English lanes. The Abyssinians cut down most of the trees round their dwellings on the ground that they are unhealthy and breed malaria and mosquitoes. Some few giants have survived, however, and we passed some magnificent specimens of fig-bearing rubber trees and cacti.

“I am more and more impressed with the beauty and possibilities of this country. The soil is a rich red volcanic loam, and freshly turned up by the plough (which is generally drawn by two tiny cows or oxen about as big as calves) it looks as though it would grow any crop on earth, and repay in fullest measure the least care spent upon it. Certainly no one could ask for a more charming climate or a more charming country in which to live, if it could only be properly civilised and governed, and were not quite so far out of the world.

“We have arrived at Goré at last, after a very interesting day. No words could describe the beauty

of the forest and of the country through which our route led us—the breadth of the views spread out before one from the top of the high hill at Goré and the interesting and picturesque features of our reception there.

“We left our last charming hillside camp at 7.15 A.M. on as fresh and sweet a morning as ever dawned. For the first two hours our path led through the densest tropical forest, which is invaded by the finer and more feathery foliage of the trees of a temperate climate. Huge trees with straight tall trunks formed a trellis on which was hung endless beauty of trailing vines, each stem clothed in soft green hanging moss. Here and there a severely dignified palm or cactus shewed its glossy leaves, a rank outsider from the tangled moss; and here and there the wild asparagus cast a misty green veil over some unsightly tree skeleton. There were very few flowers, but an unending variety of greens, each leaf glittering with the morning dew, while the orioles calling to each other from the thicket with their liquid, silvery notes alone broke the intense silence. Orchids in profusion clung to the high limbs of the trees, but very few were in bloom, and those not especially brilliant ones. Our route was a mere footpath cut through the jungle, and the mules had very bad footing between the rocks and the thousands of tree roots through which they had to pick their way, with occasional streams to ford. So our progress was slow, but each moment revealed new beauties—pictures never to be forgotten, never to be surpassed.

“The later part of the route was through more

open country, though still very charming. Truly this is the garden spot of the earth. We rested half an hour at the foot of the final ascent to Goré, a sweet spot under some spreading trees, the air fragrant with the scent of unknown flowers, and in the distance we could hear the weird music of the Abyssinian band which marked His Excellence's triumphal entry into the town, he having gone on ahead to inspect the markets."

The town of Goré is built on an isolated mountain which rises about a thousand feet above the plateau we had been passing over, and its appearance, from whatever side it is viewed, is most imposing, as the mountain on which the town stands is quite cut off from any of the adjoining ranges and forms, as it were, an island of itself. I should say it would be quite impregnable against any native attack. Here, in this stronghold, is the centre of the Abyssinian rule in the south-western parts of the kingdom and the seat of the government of Ras Tasamma.

Ras is the title given to the sub-kings of Abyssinia who hold feudally of the Negus or King of Kings, Menelik. Each province has its Ras and there are quite a number of such feudatories all over Abyssinia.

It was really a steep climb from the plateau below to the top of the mountain on which was situated the town of Goré.

Arrived there, we had a repetition, only on a larger scale, of the reception we had had at Bouré some days before; and here the Ras's own bodyguard turned out to receive us, dressed up in a quaint and curious uniform which gave to the show rather a picturesque

and somewhat of a fantastic appearance. Ras Tasamma was not there himself, as he was away at the time in Adis Ababa at the court of the Emperor Menelik.

Of course we had every civility paid us and received the tribute of food for our men, which was brought to our camp every evening by the natives. The Abyssinians compel the subject Gallas to administer to the wants of travellers in this way and thus it falls upon these poor Galla farmers to supply the wants of all strangers who pass through the country. As it may be supposed, this custom constitutes a great hardship and is doubly arduous when some great chief passes through the country with a numerous retinue of followers, and it is no doubt a great burden on the people.

“Although absent for the moment, Ras Tasamma has certainly left no stone unturned to show honour to ‘our distinguished Minister Plenipotentiary,’ and as the ‘Baby’ aptly says: ‘Before the splendour of this throne we need no lustre of our own,’ for he has been most royally treated.

“The ascent into Goré is very steep and rocky; fortunately no rain has come lately to make it worse with a covering of mud.

“Half way down the mountain we were met by a native band with its curious barbaric reed instruments so well suited to the scene and the surroundings, and on arriving on the plateau we found a unique and picturesque assembly awaiting us in two broad lines, perhaps three hundred feet apart. The soldiers

were drawn up three deep, their white shamas* with the red stripes making a charming note of colour in the green landscape and the sun glittering on the metal embossed shields. The brother of the Ras and some of his attendant officers came forward to greet us, mounted on fine horses, their trappings covered with silver sequins and embroideries and we were escorted by a body-guard wrapped in bright red burnouses, which against their black skin made them look like little red devils. The most curious costume of all was worn by the chief of the musicians and was a tunic of lion skins falling from the shoulders over the back of his horse, the mane being made into a head-dress for the horse. I am glad I did not meet him on a dark night !

“ His Excellence was very pleased that they sent the band and military escort out to meet me and that they did so of their own accord, as a woman’s position in this country is not usually recognised in any such way. Grouped at the back of the soldiers were thousands of Abyssinians, the whole population of Goré. It was as picturesque and interesting a sight as one could see, and even our poor tired mules felt the inspiration and came into camp in a way quite worthy of the surroundings. A large tukl was placed at our disposal, but, as usual, I preferred my own tent, which was pitched in an enclosed compound, while the rest of the party occupied their grass palace in peace.

* A shama is a cloak of cotton thrown over the back and shoulders. When it has a broad red stripe across it, it denotes that the wearer is a military man.



A VISIT OF CEREMONY



ABYSSINIAN CHIEFS

“ The wife of Ras Tasamma has not yet appeared on the scene, and as her husband is away she will probably not come out to us, but I shall go to her to-morrow to pay my respects. She sent us an excellent ‘ durgo ’ in the name of the Ras, including two splendid bullocks (one snow-white, a magnificent animal with dewlaps nearly to the ground, brought up in the house and washed each week) and many fat-tailed sheep, bread, native wine, &c.

“ Her Highness lives in a beautiful two-storey tukl, situated on the highest point of the hill, with glorious views on all sides. One overlooks a billowy sea of mountain tops, ranges of unending peaks as far as the eye can reach. At sunset the whole landscape was bathed in most lovely purple light and the huge red ball lost itself in a mass of clouds and hilltops so blended together that one could not tell where the one began and the other ended.

“ We shall have a busy day to-morrow, at least His Excellence will, with many visits to receive and to pay and there will be much to photograph. We must get some of these chiefs in full paraphernalia—particularly the lion man.

“ We meant to go through without stopping here, but after all these preparations to receive us it would seem ungracious not to stay a day at least; personally (in spite of my haste to get on) I am glad of a day’s rest in a place so full of interest, as usually the stopping-places have been deadly dull. The town of Goré itself is the usual straggling colony of huts, a little more populous and prosperous than the other towns we have passed, and with the quite imposing

Guebi of the Ras as the nucleus. It is the central point of western Abyssinia, the principal products being coffee, grain and cattle.

"The poor little Doctor has been very seedy lately, and has not been allowed any self-indulgence, so is feeling decidedly sad and sorry for himself.

"We leave the 'Revered' here and he returns to Pokum. We shall all miss him inexpressibly. He has been our constant companion for nearly four months, always kind and considerate and always the most charming of comrades.

"I forgot to say that we tried at dinner a native dish called 'wot,' consisting of chicken or meat, red peppers and butter, all stewed into a liquid mess. It tasted better than it looked or smelled; for I regret to say that the butter of this country is put to many purposes, so that the associations with its odour are anything but pleasant. In every stage of rancid decomposition it saturates the hair and garments of every passing Galla or Abyssinian and heralds his approach at a very considerable distance, not to mention the fragrance it leaves in the wake.

"We left Goré this morning at 9.30, accompanied by chiefs, red devils, military escort and native band; the same motley company who welcomed us on our arrival. At the brow of the hill descending from the town all but the mounted chiefs, Fitaurari Heila and Mariam (the brother of the Ras, and by far the most suave of them all), left us, the Negadras Berud and the Kaniasmach following as part of our escort. In vain did the gorgeous gentlemen try to persuade us that the camping-ground was only

twenty minutes further on. We know their wily ways by now, and the 'Revered' announced he was going to have his lunch then and there, whatever the rest of us did. We stopped. We did not a bit like saying good-bye to him, but he had to get back to Goré so we bade him God-speed, and watched him out of sight, his broad shoulders intolerant and truculent to the end. How many weary hours have I followed those shoulders just carefully removed out of ear-shot, when I was tired and wanted to stop!

"After that we marched an hour and a half (instead of twenty minutes) before reaching this charming camp in the midst of lovely woodland.

"Yesterday, my courtesy visit to the wife of Ras Tasamma ended in a most amusing tempest in a teacup. It was arranged that we should go up to the Guebi (the Ras's palace) and that I should go in to pay my respects to her ladyship, so we all started at 10.30, a quite imposing cavalcade headed by the Chief and myself and followed by our syces and other attendants, bearing gifts. We were most graciously received by the household of the Ras, invited to drink tedj, sweet champagne and various abominations and then to inspect the house. This palace occupied a commanding situation overlooking the whole countryside, and is an oval shaped structure of the usual architecture, *i.e.*, built of poles of bamboo, osiers, stucco and thatching, and is two storeys high. The second storey is approached by a slanting passageway of very slippery logs with a little watch-house, or Chamber of Justice, half way up. The premises are very large, consisting of palisaded compounds

containing the houses of servants, kitchens and workshops.

“The room into which we were ushered was large and oval with beautiful views from all windows or apertures ; the walls were covered with white cotton with broad bands of red forming panels, the whole looking remarkably clean. This large reception room contained the usual raised divan for a bed, covered with rugs and cushions and curtained off with some cotton print. The usual numerous rugs were strewn on the floor, two European cane-seated chairs, a broken sofa, several of the beastly three-legged stools with uncomfortable hollowed-out seats, and tables covered with woven stuffs completed the furniture.

“When it came to the moment of my personal visit to the Ras’s wife, she declined to allow my interpreter to accompany me. His Excellence refused to let me go in without one, as the visit would have been entirely useless ; and then followed a most amusing discussion. Her ladyship begged to be excused, as she had just taken some strong medicine and was very ill ; ‘would Madame come to-morrow morning at seven ?’ Madame regretted infinitely she could not come to-morrow at seven, the more so as her visit had been arranged for that day, and the folly of incapacitating herself for receiving on the eve of a visit that had been arranged beforehand was pointed out to her strongly. ‘Impossible for Madame Ras to receive Madame McMillan on that morning,’ and so on and so forth. All kinds of excuses calculated to blind no one, until finally the Chief waxed wroth, gave them a few home truths, said we did

not come there to be insulted, that we were not a pack of fools to be taken in by such evident lies, that it was not a personal matter, but an insult to his entire country, and we departed in high dudgeon.

“No sooner had we reached the first gate than a messenger came after us to say that Madame Ras would receive me with the interpreter if we would be so good as to return. So back we went and after keeping me waiting a long time, during which I nearly lost patience and departed, her ladyship appeared rolling and groaning with her feigned illness. The interview was a bit stiff at first on both sides, but after some tedj and villainous champagne we both unbent, exchanged the usual courtesies, and she ended by begging me in the name of ‘our great friendship’ to intercede with the Chief that he might not be angry with her. I was somewhat annoyed myself, the more so as we had loaded her with valuable gifts; but I was rather curious to see this great beauty, who was *belle comme un astre*, as old Johannis said (Johannis was the Abyssinian interpreter and spoke decent French, having been educated at a French mission school at Jibouti), and in my superiority of white race I did not quite feel that a black woman could really be insulting. Her reasons for this conduct would be hard to say; she may have really been afraid to receive a strange man during her husband’s absence (were he only an interpreter); but probably it was that she wished to impress us all with her great superiority and the ceremony with which she was surrounded. She was very fat, not very dark, with

fine eyes and a pretty smile, but beyond that like all the rest of her race.

"The Chief's anger caused the greatest consternation, and all through the afternoon the various native chiefs came to express their regret and offering their apologies and prayers for forgiveness, each laying the fault of the misunderstanding on to the shoulders of the other. Then came a personal 'durgo' for me from Madame Ras, and a letter again asking me for kind intercession in the name of our friendship, to which I graciously replied that I thought all was forgiven and forgotten and the incident was closed. It was all very amusing.

"These people stand in great awe of 'the Chief,' especially since some years ago he had a big chief, Waldo Gabriel—who lives at Goré, by the way—whipped in the market-place of Adis Ababa for some offence to the English, and the salutary lesson has never been forgotten. This same individual happened to be at Goré at the time and came to see us this morning still very humble, but His Excellence sent him away rejoicing with the promise of a sword as a token of complete reconciliation.

"The Princess's appreciation of 'our great friendship and my kind intercession' was later testified by the gift of a beautiful grey mule, completely caparisoned with all the Abyssinian trappings and embroideries. I am still pondering whether that mule was a peace-offering or a vendetta, for he turned out to be a well-known vicious and unreliable beast, and the chiefs who remained as our escort came to me each day and begged me not to ride him, fearing the

responsibility would be on their shoulders in case of accident. However, the 'grey devil' became by dint of long marches quite amenable to reason and eventually carried me across Abyssinia with ease and comfort to us both. I parted with him with great regret, for we became great cronies, though to the end he remained exclusive and unapproachable to the masses. Many times in the future shall I wish myself on his back again, the bridle loose on his neck, wandering through the beautiful forest paths in the early dewy mornings, the silence broken only by the swishing wings of some brilliant bird, or the rustle in the bushes of some gazelle lifting its pretty head to gaze with soft, untroubled eyes at the strange intruders. Such are the charms of this primeval life."

The native Abyssinian is a very hardy individual and always goes about bare-footed. For clothes he has nothing but a shirt and very tightly fitting trousers reaching down to the knee. Indeed these trousers are so tight that one is almost inclined to believe what one is told, that they can never come off at all till they are worn to rags and fall off. In his own mountainous country, where water is plentiful, the Abyssinian is the best man to get over the ground of any native I have ever come across in North Africa. He is unequalled in ascending a mountain side. His bare feet seem to suffer very little from rocks and stones ; and you may see him running up the steepest ascents with the activity of a baboon. And yet his daily fare is of the simplest ; a couple of handfuls of dhura or teff, which he often has to grind himself, is all that he can expect as a right from his master, with

a feast of meat perhaps once a week at the gebbi of the chief. The gebbi is the Abyssinian equivalent for a baronial hall, and here the retainers of the chief have their weekly feasts of raw meat on Sundays. For the Abyssinian always eats his meat raw.

In your daily rides or other expeditions, your syce or groom follows you on foot at whatever pace you go. Whether you walk or gallop your horse, and whatever the nature of the ground you have to go over, you will invariably find him just behind you at the end of your ride. These men would make the best of our cross-country runners look to their laurels if they had to meet them in a steeplechase across rough country, and the rougher the ground the quicker relatively they would go. They are physically a fine, hardy set of men, and in their own mountainous country would make extraordinary good skirmishers.

I, myself, remained some days longer in the district of Goré alone with my two Somali servants for the purpose of buying mules and donkeys. When this was completed I set out again with my purchases for our camp at Olea, having engaged several Gallas to look after the animals, numbering mules and donkeys together about two hundred. Of the one hundred and fifty donkeys which had been brought down for us from the other side of Abyssinia, and had been awaiting my arrival at Goré, fifty had already perished. They were unaccustomed to the cold nights of these high regions, and those that had survived were in very poor condition; but the mules I had just bought in the neighbourhood were in very good case.

Mules, that is good pack-mules, can be bought in Abyssinia for £3 apiece, and donkeys for from 8s. to 10s. apiece. Of course, a good riding mule costs more, and as much as £10 may be paid for one.

I had no difficulty in reaching Olea with my caravan, and the only thing which could have caused any delay was the fact of having to swim so many animals across the Baro at the so-called ford at the bottom of the Abyssinian escarpment. Mules are strong swimmers; donkeys, on the contrary, are very bad ones. The donkey, as long as he can keep the water out of his ears, can just manage to get along fairly well; but once let his ears get filled with water and he will sink like a stone. Previous experience had taught me this, so I had the donkeys all towed across, tied at the back of the Berthon boat, and I lost none of them. Mules, it is well known, will follow a horse anywhere, and so it is an easy matter to get them across a river that is not too swift and broad, by dragging a horse over in front of them and then driving them all pell mell into the water. With their eyes fixed on the horse, they will swim by themselves without help directly to the opposite bank.

On my arrival back at the old camp at Olea, I found all my companions were fit and well, and they had been enjoying good sport during my three weeks absence.

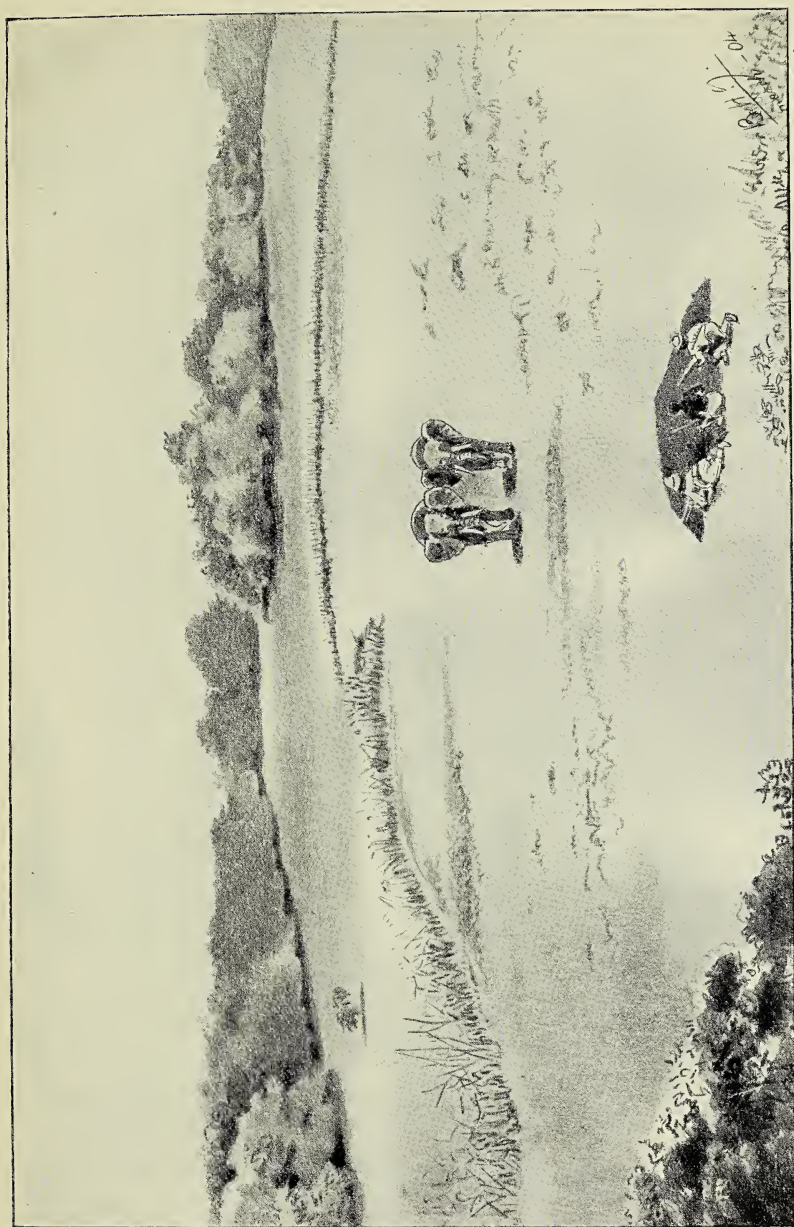
We had now quite a large camp there, and after a few days' preparation we were all ready for our trip to the south. Unfortunately, during these few days' interval our mules were attacked by the Abys-

sinian mule-sickness—a sort of glanders—which carried them off in great numbers. This was a real misfortune as it deprived us of so much of our transport. The donkeys, however, did not suffer from this sickness but showed a great improvement in condition now that they were down in a warm region.

On April 27, however, we determined to make a start, notwithstanding the bad condition of our transport. There was no use in delay, as we might lose all our mules if we waited much longer. When we took stock of our transport to find out what we really had, we found that there were but one hundred and twelve mules and one hundred donkeys all told, and many of these were quite unfit for work.

While I had been absent in Abyssinia buying mules, McMillan and the rest of the party had been constantly making sporting expeditions up country away from the river. They had had two or three bouts with elephants and had managed to secure one. McMillan himself had shot a fine lioness quite close to the village of Olea. This lioness had been living a very easy existence, her daily fare being a sheep from the flocks of the natives of the village. McMillan followed her up into the bush and shot her. This was the only lion we heard of during the many weeks we were on the Baro river.

At this time of the year, just before the native harvest is garnered, the natives, as I have said before, are invariably in a semi-starved condition. With their natural carelessness they seem to be unable to provide for the morrow, and though they could easily grow enough corn and to spare for all their



AN ELEPHANT HUNT NEAR POKUM, BARO RIVER

wants, experience never teaches these foolish children to be wise. This year was no exception to the rule. All the maize and dhura had been consumed, and the people from the villages kept continually coming up to our camp praying McMillan to kill them hippos for food. This he used to do for them, and, doubtless, to their gratitude for this service we chiefly owed the friendly reception we received from them, and tribes related to them higher up the country. Sometimes when a hippo was killed between the confines of two villages, there would be a fight for the possession of its flesh, and blood would be shed.

Jessen and Marlow had a very exciting experience with two elephants during my absence. They suddenly came across two large males in an open bit of country. As the elephants were coming their way, they lay down under a small ant-hill, the biggest they could find, and waited. The elephants came straight for them, and without seeing them, made directly for the ant-hill behind which they were lying. Lying close to the ground and waiting till the beasts were almost on them, the three men, Jessen, Marlow, and a Somali shikari fired a volley at the beasts at ten yards distant. Their fire, however, was without effect, and the elephants turned and fled. The volley had had much more effect upon Jessen than apparently it had had on the elephants. He was using a double-barrelled ten-bore rifle, and in the excitement had let off both barrels at once. The result was that he was completely knocked out of time by the recoil of his own discharge, and the elephants escaped. Marlow and the shikari had only

.303 rifles and soft-nosed bullets with them, so that their discharge could not be expected to have much effect.

As we had been asked to bring home with us the complete skeleton of a hippo, with a good deal of trouble the carcase of one of them was dragged on shore and stripped of its flesh, and all the bones of the skeleton carefully collected and stowed away in a tukl built especially for the purpose. It was our object to take the complete skeleton of this hippo back to England, and we had collected all its bones and stowed them away in perfect order. Unfortunately, sometimes, "man proposes and God disposes." One night hyenas broke into the tukl and carried several of the bones away, thus spoiling our specimen. It is rather a troublesome business to collect large specimens of this sort, and we never found time or opportunity of getting another whole specimen of a hippo.

CHAPTER IX

FROM THE BARO TO THE GELO RIVER

The queen of Olea—Friendly relations with the natives—From Olea to Bakedi—A stockaded village—Personnel of our caravan—Provisions—Bad condition of our transport—Mutiny of porters—A masterful chief—To Perbom—Crossing the Aluro river—Paying off the new porters—Mosquitoes and fever—Friendly chiefs—Scanty cultivation and scarcity of food—Bark cloaks—Night march to Komaton—Mule sickness continues—Funeral pyres—The Gelo river.

OLEA, a native village on the Baro, is situated at about latitude $8^{\circ}10'$ north and longitude 34° east. It is a Yambo village distant perhaps half a mile from the river bank. It is ruled over by a queen who theoretically has absolute authority; and, in fact, she seems to be pretty well obeyed by her subjects. Whenever any male of the tribe passes near her, he walks by with his back bent and his head inclined horizontally down to the level of his hips; and as for the female portion of the population they have to crawl about on all fours in the presence of their queen. The men go about entirely without clothes, but the married women wear a piece of goat-skin round their loins, while the unmarried girls roam around in their innocent nakedness.

On April 27, we left this place, where the main camp had been located since March 14, and marched through the forest to Bakedi, a large Yambo village

about ten miles distant due south. During our stay at Olea we had had daily dealings with the natives. We had obtained fowls and some sheep from them; but sheep were not to be had without some trouble, the Yambos being very unwilling to part with them. They are a sort of capital used for buying wives, and like most of us they are naturally averse to parting with their capital.

As I have related in the last chapter, we had been able to be of great service to the natives here, who were in a semi-starving condition, and we had shot some hippos for them to provide the people with food. In return for this, the queen of Olea had promised to provide us with a number of porters to help convey our provisions and stores to the next village of Bakedi; and finally, she provided us with one hundred and twenty-five men for this purpose.

Our route lay due south to the Gelo river. The track runs through a forest country most of the way, passing by the villages of Bakedi and Perbom, and the large township of Komaton. From the Gelo river we were to march nearly due south to Mount Ungwala, a prominent mountain peak situated on the eastern bank of the Akobo river, and something over one hundred miles distant. Bottego* and Austin † had traversed these regions before, but

* Bottego was a courageous and determined Italian traveller. He started in 1896 from the Italian Somali coast, and coming right round the southern boundaries of Abyssinia, was attempting to reach Massowah by crossing Abyssinia, when he was stopped and killed by the natives.

† Major Austin is well known to English readers. His adventurous journey from Nasser by Lake Rudolph to Nairobi is graphically told in his own book.

they had kept to the west of our route for the greater part of the way, so that some portion of the district we were to go through before reaching Mount Ungwala had never before been traversed by white men.

The track through the forest to Bakedi was pretty good going. There were muddy pools of water at intervals, and occasionally swampy bits of marshy land had to be crossed. Jessen went ahead of the caravan with prismatic compass to map out the route. On this occasion McMillan, Zaphiro and myself, remained behind at the old camp till four o'clock in the afternoon, to see the rear of the caravan safely on its way. But, notwithstanding our one hundred and twenty-five porters, and our mules and donkeys, we could not carry all our stuff in one journey, and we had to leave a large quantity of it behind; and forty mules had to be sent back from Bakedi to bring up what remained. During all this period, in fact throughout the whole time we passed at Olea, the heat had been very great, and I think whilst at this camp it was greater than at any other time during the expedition.

The last of us got into Bakedi just after sunset, having marched during the last hour through a violent thunderstorm. Bakedi is a large stockaded village quite hidden away in the forest. There are two stockades round it; the outer one is very high and strong. However, the natives were quite friendly, and allowed us to pass through the stockade and into their village. The gate entrance of the stockade was so narrow that we had difficulty in getting our mules through it and the caravan did not attempt

to go through the village at all. Each separate house of this village, which is neatly built after the usual Yambo fashion, is surrounded by a high cane stockade, so high that you could not see over it from the back of a mule; and thus each household is quite private.

We pitched the camp about a mile beyond the village near a dirty pool of water which issued out of a reedy khor. We were told that this was the only water to be had in the neighbourhood.

As it may interest the reader, and such as may be at any time anxious to follow in our footsteps, to know of what our caravan was composed, now that we were really starting on our long march into the unknown country, and were beginning the serious work of the expedition, I will jot down the following details.

We were five whites in our party—Mc Millan and myself, Jessen, Zaphiro, and William Marlow, Mc Millan's personal attendant.

We had with us: ninety-nine Abyssinians and Gallas, thirteen Somalis, three Soudanese, and five Yambo guides, in all one hundred and twenty men besides ourselves. Hadji Ali, a Somali, and a man of experience in expedition work, was head man of the camp. We divided our Abyssinians into four sections, putting a head man over each section, who was responsible for the men and mules under him, and we had a separate head man for the donkey division. All these head men were directly responsible to Hadji Ali. We gave out fifty-six rifles to the best of the Abyssinians, those whom we con-

sidered most capable of using them effectually in an emergency, and ten rounds of loaded cartridges for each rifle. Twice a week we had rifle-drill to see that the rifles were properly looked after, and that the cartridge-belts were in a proper state, as in wet and damp weather the cartridges are apt to get mouldy and stick in the belt in such a way as to make it impossible to get them out in a hurry.

As our chief interpreter we had an Abyssinian named Nuri who spoke French tolerably well, having been educated in a French mission school near Jibouti. He could also speak Amharic, Galla and Arabic.

By way of provisions for our men we had twenty daoulas of teff flour, ten of dhura, five of maize, eighty sheep, four large tins of ghee, each tin being one mule load. (A daoula weighs about one hundred and seventy-five pounds.)

An Abyssinian on full rations should have two mugs of flour per day, say a good quart, and two ounces of ghee or clarified butter, meat once or twice a week, and game when other meat is not obtainable. We had also with us three milk cows with their calves for invalids. But cows in this part of the world give very little milk. We took three of the dogs with us which had accompanied us from England. It needs but a simple calculation to show that, with the provisions as detailed above, we had rations for our men for six weeks only, so that, unless we could manage to renew our stores, we should most of us have to exist on very short commons before we returned to the Baro again.

As I said before, the mules and donkeys of our transport were in a very bad condition—in fact only about seventy per cent. of our animals were fit for work.

We remained in camp at Bakedi during the next day, while forty mules were sent back to Olea to bring up the provisions we had been forced to leave behind there. When we were getting ready to start on the following morning the Olea porters mutinied, and said they would go no further, being unwilling, I suppose, to go into an unknown district. We reminded them that they had contracted to go on as far as Komaton, which was two marches further on, and we told them that unless they agreed to come with us to this place and thus fulfil their contract they would get no pay for what they had done. But as they had had a good feed of meat, which we had provided for them from the game we killed, and which was probably all they wanted, they would listen to no terms whatever, and went off in a body.

While we were debating what we should do, the chief of Bakedi came into camp, and promised to provide us with three hundred porters to take us on to Komaton. His name was Abu Gillo, and he proved to be a good friend. The prefix "Abu" before his name means "Father" in the native language. We immediately gave him ten dollars for himself by way of encouragement. The dollar is the Maria Theresa dollar, and its value is about two shillings in our money.

Abu Gillo said he would try and get us some more sheep; this, however, he failed to do, and I am quite

sure that there are very few of either sheep or goats in this part of the country. But he appeared to have a most complete control over his people and acted in every way as a savage chief should act. The natives here were much more tractable and amenable to discipline than those at Olea, and experience afterward showed us that the further we got up the country and away from the Baro river, the more amenable the natives became, and the more ready to help us in any emergency; while those living on the Baro were suspicious in their dealings with us, and grasping in their demands.

Leaving Bakedi at daybreak we reached the river Aluro by ten o'clock, after twelve and a half miles march. The road continued to be through forest country all the way, and there was a good dry track as far as Perbom, the next village, which was a few miles distant from Bakedi. From this point you have to descend slightly to get down to the bed of the Aluro and have to pass through two miles or so of reeds before reaching the river bank itself.

We had obtained one hundred and seventy-five porters of the three hundred which had been promised us, and they carried our loads to our camp, which we pitched on the south or the further bank of the river just above the reeds, and on the fringe of the forest.

Crossing this river, which has steep banks, Mc Millan nearly had a serious accident. He is a heavy man, and the mule which he was riding nearly fell over backwards with him as he was attempting to scale the steep bank of the river out from the bed of the

stream. Had he not been able to recover himself he would very possibly have fallen under his mule, and have been drowned in the muddy waters of the river before we could have rescued him.

The Aluro (the Kokori of the Abyssinians) is in April a sluggish stream of about twenty yards in breadth, with about three feet of water in it. Its banks are high, and it flows through reedy marshy land. We found out afterwards that the marshy valley through which it flows, and which is about two miles across, is entirely under water during the rainy season.

We paid off our porters with abujedid (a coarse American cotton cloth) or with brass wire or beads. Almost all of them preferred the cotton cloth. This preference shows, at any rate, that they are becoming sensible to the advantages of covering their nakedness, as they used the cotton cloth which we had given them as pay as a covering for their bodies. The rate at which we paid them was as follows: either a piece of cotton cloth four feet in length and about thirty inches in breadth; or if they preferred it, about eighteen inches of brass wire, the thickness of a telegraph wire; or a cupful of beads assorted; or half a dollar per man.

They all of them went off contented with this rate of pay, and gave us a dance to show us their satisfaction. As a reward to the chief we gave him ten dollars, a piece of cloth, and a sheep. We could hardly spare a sheep, but he begged so hard for one and had acted so squarely by us that we thought it better to accede to his request.

We had to send back forty mules for the rest of the goods left behind at Bakedi, and so were obliged to remain a day on the banks of the Aluro. This day we spent in search of game. But we saw very little of anything excepting water-buck, though there were fresh elephant spores and giraffe tracks everywhere.

The sub-soil here is all lava, which crops up through the surface in places, making from time to time bare clearings in the forest, the thinnest of the soil in such places not being adapted for forest growth. The timber throughout the forest through which we had passed was small and of little value.

While at this camp several more mules died of the Abyssinian sickness, and many of our men were already down with fever thus early in the campaign. As may be supposed, mosquitoes swarmed in this marshy district. But the climate was good, and it was a great deal cooler than it had been on the banks of the Baro, where the temperature often went up to 110° in the shade by nine or ten in the mornings. Here, however, we had beautifully cold mornings and generally thunderstorms at night. These storms began now to be of frequent occurrence.

Ammer, chief of the Perbom district, came into the camp during the day ; and soon afterwards the chief of the Komaton district, who had heard about our coming, also came in to see us. They promised us between them as many porters as we wanted to carry our goods through to the Gelo river, which is about thirty miles distant from the Aluro. This march to the Gelo river had to be performed in one stretch

as, at this time of the year, there is no water to speak of at Komaton, and what there is, is only to be procured from deep wells dug in the muddy bed of the river Nikani, which would not have afforded us sufficient to water our mules had we stayed there.

The natives continued to be most friendly, much more friendly than we had thought possible; but this, no doubt, was due to our long stay at Olea, and to our friendly intercourse with the people in the district. A good report of us, no doubt, had gone on ahead, and we were looked upon as harmless people to be welcomed rather than to be received suspiciously. Hence we never had, luckily for ourselves, throughout our expedition through the Yambo country, any differences with the inhabitants.

There seemed to be a great scarcity of cultivation throughout the Aluro district, and indeed, the country appeared to be composed of reeds and foliage, but experience had taught me to beware of first impressions with regard to appearances of cultivation. Savage tribes often hide their cultivated fields of maize and dhura far away in some clearing right in the midst of the forest, either because they find that the soil there is more suitable for cultivation, or as a safeguard against hostile raids. I have many a time come across a large extent of cultivation hidden away in the forest in most unexpected places; and as there is often hardly any track to mark the approach to these cultivated patches, they are, in a manner, completely hidden, and would not be easily found by a party of raiders. Whatever sheep or goats these people may have had must have been hidden

away, for we saw none ; and as at Olea there seemed to be a great scarcity of food. The harvest here takes place in the month of June or July, and for some weeks before the corn gets cut you can see the inhabitants eating the green corn stalks for food, and chewing them as if they were chewing a piece of sugar-cane.

Many of the natives here had cloaks made of woven bark ; that is the bark of the sycamore fig tree, which is stripped from the tree and treated by being beaten out into a rough sort of covering. We had seen nothing of this sort on the Baro.

Our search for game in this region had not been very successful. The forest was too thick for shooting, and the best part of our bag was composed of guinea-fowl.

We left Aluro camp at half-past one in the morning of an exceedingly dark night, and it was with some difficulty that we could find our way through the narrow ill-defined track of the forest. But we reached Komaton just at daybreak, which is about six o'clock in the tropics. Here we had our breakfast and a short rest. Then we paid off the two hundred porters who had carried our loads from the last camp. We settled with them in the same way as with the porters on the previous occasion ; and they were evidently greatly delighted at our generosity, being apparently surprised that we paid them anything at all. The Abyssinians, when they come down into this country to hunt elephants, never think of paying anything for services received and treat the people like slaves.

After our rest we got two hundred fresh porters, and set off at a smart pace towards the Gelo river which we reached at about four o'clock in the afternoon, after three and a half hours very quick marching. We found our camp there already pitched by Hadji Ali, who had gone ahead straight through with the mule and donkey caravan, carrying our tents and all things of immediate necessity. There is a sort of slight native track all the way from Komaton to the Gelo river. The forest growth continued to be just the same as before, and we crossed numerous fresh elephant paths going in every direction. The distance from Aluro was, I should say, about twenty-seven miles.

We struck the Gelo river about eight miles east of Lake Tata, at the point where Bottego had left it when he came through this country seven or eight years before. Up to this point we had followed the same track which he had taken, though travelling in an opposite direction.

As to game, I have no doubt there is plenty of all kinds in this district. The tracks of elephant and giraffe were numerous, and Jackson's hartebeest were in great numbers ; but we had no time to look for game at present, as we wished to get further south as quickly as possible, and the native reports told us that we should find all we wanted on the south side of the river Gelo. We afterwards found this to be true, and that the country south of this river, and between it and the Akobo, abounded in game in great quantities and variety, and that it was, in fact, a hunter's paradise. It was quite unknown up to

this time to the white man, and had been only occasionally crossed at distant periods by marauding parties of Abyssinians. The elephants in this district are particularly large and fine, and may be seen in great herds; and there is a plentiful supply of water throughout.

The Gelo is a fine, wide and deep stream with high banks, and at this time of the year, that is to say at the end of the dry season, brings down as much, or more water, than the Baro itself.

For the last four weeks, we had lost on an average one mule a day from the Abyssinian sickness. They sicken and die of it in one night. Just before death the mouth and nose are covered with a thick white foam. This disease is very contagious, and it is extremely difficult to keep the sick animals apart from the others, as the sickness may come on suddenly during the night when they are all tethered close together. Whenever we remained for a day or so in the same camp, we used to burn the dead mules by heaping an enormous pile of dead wood on the top of the bodies, and then setting fire to the pyre. This we found to be the best way of getting rid of them. It was futile to try and attempt to drag them out of camp into the forest, as the foam from the poor beast's nostrils necessarily infected the ground over which they were dragged and where the other mules would have to feed, and so such a proceeding would, of course, have made matters ten times worse.

We had again to send back to the Aluro forty of our mules to bring in what stores we had

left there, and also several sick men who had been unable to march when we left. Most of those men who had succumbed to fever were Gallas. These latter are very soft and wanting in courage. They have been so ill-used by the Abyssinians during late years, having been treated as a subject race, that they apparently have had all the pluck driven out of them. They are considered by the Abyssinians to be of an inferior caste, and while the former are engaged at a rate of pay ranging from five to eight dollars per month, the Galla workman never receives more than four dollars per month for his work. I am referring, of course, to the European scale of payment when these men are engaged by white men for shooting or exploring expeditions.

We made an attempt to get porters at this spot to carry on our stores to our next stopping-place, but the neighbourhood is very thinly inhabited, and we were advised to follow up the river Gelo to a large Yambo village called Gog, twenty miles higher up the stream. Though we had never heard of Gog and it was not marked on any maps, we determined to follow this advice in the hope of obtaining there a large supply of porters.

The Gelo here is of a uniform width of fifty to sixty yards, and in most places is very deep, and the banks rose ten or fifteen feet above the present water level. It looks to be quite a navigable stream, although the current is very swift. Probably lower down its course where the banks are low, and where the surrounding country is all marsh, the river overflows its banks and loses its waters in the marshes, so that

it may be a much less important stream at its junction with the Pibor than it is here where we struck it higher up above Lake Tata. A curious fact we noted about this river is that there are no hippos in it. I do not know how to account for this, unless it is that the steepness of its banks makes it unsuitable for the hippo, who generally goes on shore to feed at night.

The Gelo river does not flow into Lake Tata as it is shown to do in all maps, but makes a bend round the southern end of this lake. There is an overflow khor coming from the lake into the river, and we were told by the natives that when the Gelo is in full flood the water flows back along this khor from the river into the lake.

CHAPTER X

A SUCCESSFUL ELEPHANT HUNT

Across the Gelo—A fine tusker—Lake Tata—A geographical discovery—Effect of cavendish tobacco on natives—Native method of making pipes—Producing fire from wood—Exciting experience with a herd of buffalo—General sport—Navigation of the Gelo river.

THOUGH from the frequent traces of them it was evident that elephants were numerous on our side of the Gelo, we were told that they were still more numerous on the opposite side of the river. The Abyssinians occasionally hunt them north of this river but hardly ever cross over to its southern bank for the purpose of shooting, as it is practically an unknown land to them and they are afraid of the natives. For that reason the other side of the Gelo is quite undisturbed and most of the game is not at all wild and is easy to approach.

So, the first off-day, I crossed over to the other shore just before daybreak by means of a dug-out canoe lent by a friendly native, accompanied by Zaphiro, who begged to be allowed to come with me, and my two Somali shikaris. We came upon quite fresh elephant spore as soon as we had got into the bush on the ~~other~~ ^{poor} side, and after following it for a couple of miles we found ourselves in close proximity to four elephants.

The bush was thick, so that we could approach within twenty yards of them without difficulty. One of them had fairly large tusks and I had crept forward to take a good shot at him, when, just as I was about to fire, my shikari violently pulled my arm and looking round I saw an enormous elephant with very fine tusks approaching us end-on on the right. He was coming right upon us and was but a few yards distant, and it was evident from his manner that he was suspicious of danger. As he was quite close up, I gave him both barrels of my .450 cordite rifle, aiming for the hollow of the temple ; but I could not get a fair shot at him and the shots failed to bring him down. He twisted quickly round and galloped away followed by the rest of the herd. We followed after them as quickly as we could through the thick forest. Fortune favoured us, and after a tiring trek through the thick underwood we came up to the wounded animal and found no difficulty in giving him the *coup de grâce*. The tusks of this animal, when cut out, weighed nearly ninety pounds each. This was a pretty good bit of luck for a first attempt.

The native savages living about in this region, as many as were within sound of my rifle, soon swarmed round the dead animal and cut it up for meat, this provision being a godsend for them ; while I started back for camp in the midst of a very fierce thunder-storm, arriving there just before dark very well satisfied with my day's sport.

Meanwhile, Jessen had started off early the same morning to march to and explore Lake Tata and had made up a small caravan, as he intended to be

absent two or three days. The natives hereabouts were quite friendly, so that there was no risk in his starting off with such a small escort.

In marching round the lake he made the geographical discovery, which I have noted above, that the river Gelo does not flow in to it as it appears to do in all maps, but makes a curve in its course round its southern shores. The so-called lake, however, is merely a large shallow pool of water.

The natives fraternised with his men, and without any difficulty whatever he got on to the best of terms with them, commencing by giving away some of his plug tobacco for them to smoke. All natives are very fond of tobacco, and all the recipients of his present began at once to smoke it in their unbaked clay pipes. The effect on them was most surprising, as all who smoked the tobacco succumbed and became violently sick. I suppose this tobacco must have been stronger than their own, though one would not have thought that to be the case. They are accustomed to smoke their very coarse-looking tobacco in large unbaked clay pipes which they make themselves; and it is no unusual sight to see one of them pick up a piece of wet clay and make his pipe of it there and then, and put into it green tobacco leaves mixed up with half burned ashes and sit and smoke the compound. But it certainly surprised us that our own tobacco should have had such an effect as to make the savages ill. Theirs is made up of the coarsest materials. First of all, of course, dried tobacco leaves, to which are added ashes and clay or dung; the ashes presumably to help the tobacco to

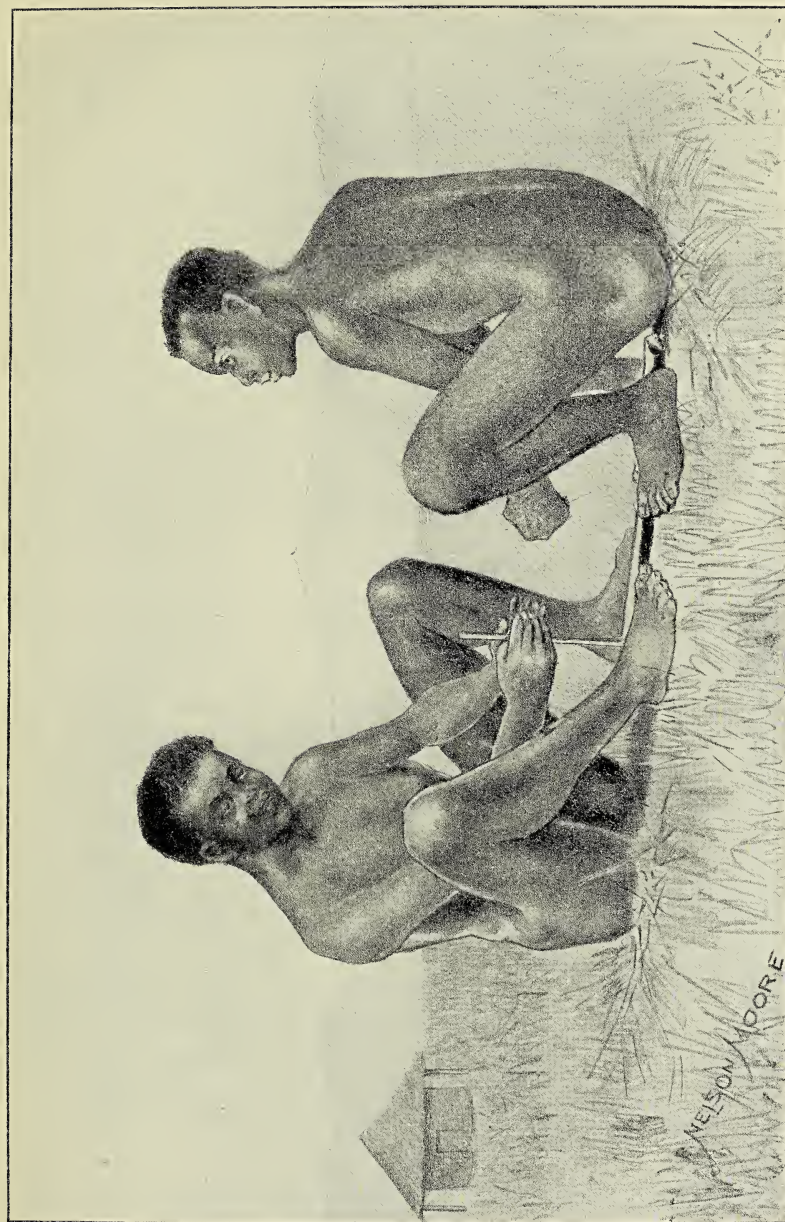
burn and the clay or dung either to weaken the mixture or to make it adhere together in the form of the big sugar-loaf shape mass it is fashioned into when prepared for market. Anyhow, I can give no better explanation than this for the component parts of this curious mixture. They are fond of putting half-burnt ashes into their pipes, and I fancy the carbonic acid which comes from the ashes mounts to the head and gives what is to them a pleasant giddy sensation; at the same time, it makes them cough almost incessantly while smoking, as they always inhale.

These natives are wonderfully quick at producing fire by rubbing two pieces of wood together. Occasionally, I would have forgotten to bring matches with me, and the first time I had made this omission I was in a state of consternation, for I saw no means of lighting my pipe; but I soon found out that it was quite unnecessary to carry matches with me when accompanied by natives, for by the simple process of rubbing two pieces of wood together they can make fire in a very few minutes. But our own unsuccessful attempts to do the same thing proved to us that the process was not quite so simple as it seemed.

Their method is as follows. They take a bit of dry softish wood about one foot in length and of the thickness of your forefinger, and just cut it flat in the middle on one side, making a little hole in the middle of the flattened portion. They then cut another piece of wood of harder texture and of about the thickness of an ordinary pencil, pointed slightly so that it can be inserted into the little hole made on the

flattened portion of the other piece of wood. This first piece, which is the piece of the softer texture, they hold on to the ground with their feet, two men sitting opposite each other, each holding down his end of the stick firmly to the ground with his feet. Each one then takes it in turn to twirl violently between the flats of his two hands the pencil-shaped piece of wood which is inserted into the hole, and this hard piece of wood, revolving like a bradawl in the hole, works a sort of sawdust out of the softer wood. Smoke is soon seen to rise caused by the friction due to the rapidity of the motion, and the fine dust or sawdust produced by the working of the hard piece of wood in the softer one becomes a mass of smouldering tinder looking very much like gunpowder. When there is a sufficient quantity of this dust, that is to say, about as much of it as would fill a nutshell, they put a piece of dry moss to it, blow gently at it and a flame starts at once. You may imagine that it would be rather difficult to find dry moss in the rainy season ; but every native carries with him a little water-tight leather pouch in which he puts dry moss or some such material ready for the occasion. I occasionally tried myself to produce fire, as the natives did, but I never got further than producing smoke ; and for any one unaccustomed to the job it is very tiring work for the hands. But I have no doubt that with a little practice one could produce fire as easily as the natives do.

Meanwhile, on the same day that I had gone after elephants, Mc Millan had gone out shooting in another direction on our own side of the river. It was necessary



NATIVES PRODUCING FIRE FROM TWO STICKS

to provide meat for the camp as we had two or three hundred men dependent upon us. He came upon a herd of giraffe not far from the camp and killed two of them, and a little later on he secured three water-buck. He had also a most exciting experience with a herd of buffalo. While returning to camp when he had secured sufficient food for the day, he came across a herd of the Abyssinian buffalo. The ground was not favourable for stalking, as it was too open. However, he got sufficiently close to fire and shot down a fine young bull. On hearing the report of his rifle, the whole herd put up their heads and charged straight for him. It was impossible to escape by running as there was no cover, and it was impossible to escape by climbing as there were no trees ; so there was nothing to be done but to face the enemy and to fire off as many shots as could be fired in a short space of time, so as to turn the herd. Both his shikari and himself commenced to do this and luckily managed to turn the whole herd, who passed at full gallop just on his flank.

The account of this buffalo hunt fired me to go and have a try for myself the next day. I saw plenty of traces of them, and denied myself the pleasure of shooting many antelopes I should have liked to shoot, for I was afraid that the noise of my rifle might lose me the chance of getting near the buffalo. But luck was against me and though I was apparently quite close to the herd I never saw one of them the whole day.

I missed thereby following up a herd of antelope which I believed at the time to be white oryx, and

I was particularly anxious to get a specimen of this species. I had never seen white oryx out in the open before, but I knew their appearance well enough. The bush, however, was so exceedingly thick that I could not be sure that the antelope I saw were white oryx, and they may have been roan antelope. In discussing the probabilities later on with people who know something about the subject, I was told that white oryx have never been seen east of the Nile, and that therefore I must have been mistaken. I am inclined, however, to think that I was not mistaken and that the antelope which I had seen were really white oryx. Unfortunately, my desire to get at the buffalo prevented my finding out the truth one way or the other.

We had all of us proposed to cross the river and go after elephants again before breaking up our camp in this place ; but it was suggested to us that, if we killed another of these animals, we should not be able to get any native porters to carry our goods to the next camping-ground for a long time to come, that is, until all the elephant meat had been consumed, and that, therefore, our success in one way might be the cause of delay and failure in another. Natives will never leave the neighbourhood of uneaten meat, and as we knew that we should come across numerous elephants later on, and that we had a long journey before us before getting back to the Baro, we did not think it worth while to delay.

Jessen, who had been exploring the Gelo river in a cranky little tin canoe which we had carried all the way from England with us, said that the stream

in places was very deep, twelve feet at least, and that were it not for the swiftness of the current it would be quite navigable. There were very few shallows or sandbanks, at any rate, in this part of its course, and its width varied from fifty to one hundred yards, never exceeding the latter width. In this it is a great contrast to the Baro, which at Itang, and indeed at many other places, is fully three hundred yards wide and full of shallows, though with all this great width the river is bank full in flood-time and navigable right up to Gambela for boats of fairly deep draught. He confirmed what we had already observed, that there were no hippo in this part of the Gelo. The inhabitants hereabouts seemed to be very poor and there was really very little cultivation of any sort. It is, however, very difficult to judge of the amount of cultivation in a district except about a month or two before harvest. The ground is sown and the harvest reaped and all done from the sowing to the garnering in a couple of months. During the rest of the year the ground lies fallow, and is grown over thickly with weeds and bush of every description ; so that unless one happens to be on it at the time the crop is there one might never guess that one was anywhere near cultivated land at all.

CHAPTER XI

A FINE YAMBO CHIEF

Gog, an unknown village—Native porters spear water-buck—Shamo, King of Gog—His tribute of ivory to the Ras—His friendliness—His assassination.

ON Saturday, May 7, we broke up our camp. Réveillé was sounded at five o'clock in the morning, but owing to the heavy rain we did not actually get away before eight o'clock. We struck out in a south-easterly direction and marched fifteen miles up stream along the north bank of the river Gelo, following a track close by the stream the whole day. We had heard, as I mentioned above, there was a large village, unmarked on any map, about twenty miles south-east of our last camp, called by the natives Gog; and we were told that we could obtain porters in much greater numbers there than in the district which we were just leaving.

Our course for Mount Ungwala lay due south, so that this march to the eastward took us a little bit out of our direct line, but we were told that for this diversion we should be amply compensated by the fact that we could easily obtain any number of porters at Gog.

We did not actually go into the village of Gog itself, but camped by the river side opposite to what

we were told was a ford about five miles away from the village. We saw at once from many indications, that the district of Gog must be a very populous one.

We had obtained two hundred porters from the Lake Tata district and with their help had carried most of our stores to our new camp in one march. We were forced, however, to leave twenty-six mule-loads behind at the old camp in charge of a few sick men. The friendly attitude of the natives will be understood better than anything from the fact that we could safely leave behind six or seven sick men alone with the stores. Such is the pacifying influence of the white man. No party of native Abyssinians could have afforded to do this.

There was a good foot track all the way to Gog and we passed several native villages during the march. *En route* we came across a herd of water-buck and had the novel experience of seeing one of these antelope run down and speared by our native porters. Of course, even when carrying their loads, these natives never leave their spears behind them. At the first sight of the game, which they quickly saw to be placed in such a position that there was some chance of a successful hunt, as one man they threw down their loads and quickly rounded up some of the herd in the bush. There was a general *mélée*, with the ultimate result that the niggers emerged triumphantly from the bush dragging the dead body of a water-buck after them.

The river here was about one hundred yards broad, very swift and deep and full of crocodiles. The banks were beautifully wooded and its course was no

longer surrounded by the thick breadth of reeds which one always saw further down the stream. We had now got up into higher ground and had left the marshes behind us. Jessen got out the small tin canoe and had himself paddled from where we were down as far as the last camp, for the purpose of marking out correctly the course of the river, which was more circuitous than one could have believed ; and in his cranky little craft he had quite an exciting time of it with the numerous crocodiles.

As our transport animals, especially the mules, were in very bad condition, before striking across country for the Akobo river, we determined to give them a few days' rest. We spent the time in scouring the country for game and in shooting antelope to provide meat for our numerous retinue. Several hundreds of our future porters were encamped round us, outside our camp of course ; and to keep them near so as to be at hand when wanted, and in a good humour, we had to provide them with meat. We found the game on this north side of the river wild and comparatively scarce, as the Abyssinians come down a good deal in this district to raid and to hunt elephants. There are, of course, water-buck and a certain amount of Jackson's hartebeest to be found, but to get a sufficient quantity of meat to feed three or four hundred Yambos besides our own men we had to work hard. With so much firing at antelope, the elephants had almost all been driven out of the district, so that while forced to hunt the antelope for food we were depriving ourselves of the chance of getting any more of the nobler game. But the first necessity

was to feed our men and we knew that elephants were plentiful higher up the country ; besides, we were restricted by King Menelik in the number of elephants we were allowed to kill, and south of the Gelo was unknown country and we had great hopes of the possibilities of the unknown.

The Yambos in this part are a much better lot than those on the Baro. They are much more ready to work and far more obedient to their chief. While we were encamped here, the King of Gog came in to see us. He had just returned from a sort of captivity at Goré.* This King or Sheikh of Gog is tributary to Ras Tasamma who rules at Goré, and he is entirely dependent on the Ras. His tribute consists of so many tusks of ivory each year, which he must obtain by fair means or foul, if he does not wish to bring the Abyssinians down upon him to raid his villages and carry off his men and women as slaves. The poor people here live in mortal dread of the Abyssinians, who maltreat them in every way.

This Sheikh of Gog, whose name was Shamo, was a most excellent fellow, and professed himself to be anxious and willing to help us in every way. He came into camp one morning soon after we had arrived, with about eighty followers, who were his escort of warriors. When we saw him approaching with so few men following him, we upbraided him for not bringing in more porters. He replied that this was only his personal body-guard with whom he always marched about, and that he could supply us with as many porters as we wanted, four or five

* Now called Genet.

hundred of them if necessary. He said he would go with us as far as the Akobo river, which he stated to be a week's journey distant from where we were, to the point at which we wished to strike it. All he asked for as a reward for this service was a handful of beads for each of his men who went with us ; and that they should be provided with food, that is, meat, during the time they were working for us, both on their journey to the Akobo and also for their journey back home again.

This chief, Shamo, proved as good as his word, and we found him of the greatest service to us. During the next week we were to traverse a piece of country hitherto quite unexplored, lying between the Gelo and Mount Ungwala. We had not got any very clear idea of the distance we should have to march before reaching the Akobo river ; we had an idea that the country was waterless, so we were glad of any information that this chief could give us. He told us that there was plenty of water along the route and that it would take four to five days to reach Digira on the Akobo.

Since returning home to England I have heard from Riad Effendi, the Egyptian officer whom we met at Itang and who was in command there, that Shamo had been assassinated by one of his own men, almost immediately after we left the district on our return home through his country in the month of July following.

CHAPTER XII

A MUTINY

Mutiny of our Abyssinian porters—Their specious reasons, and captious complaints—Drastic repressive measures—A plot to prevent our proceeding further—Our Yambo porters—Their swimming capabilities—A Berthon boat ferry—Across the Gelo.

ON the morning of May 10, there was a mutiny in the camp among the Abyssinian contingent, who numbered something over one hundred men in all. Just as we were preparing to start out shooting and were having our early breakfast, the Abyssinians came up to us in a body and began to make complaints. They said they were having very hard work and very poor food; but the principal cause of complaint, or any way the ostensible cause, was that we gave them no ghee to eat with their flour rations. The two-ounce ration of ghee which is served out to each man daily is a great luxury for the Abyssinians; they eat it with the dry cakes they make from the flour, and as may be well understood it helps to carry it down. It was true that we had not been giving them any ghee, as we wished to keep it as a luxury to be distributed later on. But they were perfectly within their rights in asking for it, as long as there was any to be had, as a couple of ounces of ghee per man is the usual fare and is always given when it is possible to get it.

But the men knew that during this expedition they would have to undergo a certain amount of hardship, and that they were being paid extra because they were being taken into a distant country, and that they had to trust us to do the best we could for them. But as they insisted so strongly, orders were given that ghee should be served out to them daily with their other rations.

Somebody, however, called them women, for demanding as a necessity what should be considered as a luxury by men who intended to go through an expedition such as ours was. To call an Abyssinian a woman is by far the greatest insult you can offer him. On this occasion the men took it very badly indeed; they all struck work at once and refused to obey orders, saying that if they were only women they were unfit even to work for us, much less to accompany us across the river into an unknown country.

This sort of thing had to be met with at once and in a drastic way if we meant to make our expedition a success. And Mc Millan and myself determined to hold a court on the men immediately.

We called them all up and told each man to bring his rifle and lay it down before us; to bring up also all the extra clothes and cooking utensils we had supplied them with. We then addressed them through the interpreter, and told them that if they did not obey orders and go back to work within five minutes they would be turned out of camp into the forest. As they were unarmed and without tents or cooking utensils or any food whatever, this could

hardly be a pleasant alternative for them. All the mutineers except nineteen caved in at once. These nineteen stalwarts were called up before us, and told to choose some one out of their lot to act as spokesman to address us and to state their grievances. They then chose their spokesman, and this man addressed us, and what he said was interpreted to us as he went along. We found that there was nothing at all in their complaints ; that they were only trying to make mischief with the idea of breaking up the expedition and of preventing us from crossing over the river where they had no wish to go. When we discovered what their complaints amounted to, and that it was really nothing but a "try on," we took hold of their spokesman, whom we considered as the ringleader, and had him courbashed then and there by one of the Soudanese, who certainly was a very stalwart man and not likely to err on the side of mercy in applying the whip. At the first stroke of the courbash, all the Abyssinians—not only the nineteen men who were up before us, but also the whole contingent, including those who had accepted our terms—ran away to their tents. Meanwhile, the flogging went on to its conclusion. Afterwards we ordered all the Abyssinians to come up immediately before us, and to signify their intention of obeying us in every way or else to quit the camp within half an hour.

The thought of being turned out into the forest naked and unarmed, to be at the mercy of the Yambos, who doubtless would attack and kill a great many of them before they could get back to Abyssinia in safety, was too severe a trial for the majority of the

mutineers, and they quickly said they were ready to concede to any terms we chose to make. The nineteen stalwarts, however, were still foolish enough to persist in their mutinous attitude. These we straightway turned out of camp into the forest, without anything to cover them except the clothes they stood in, without arms or tents or anything necessary for camping out, and gave orders that nobody was to hold any communication with them or give them any food. When night came on, it began to rain in torrents and the mutineers doubtlessly began to feel very sorry for themselves, for they sent in a messenger of peace asking to be allowed to come back on any terms. But this we would not accede to, as we were determined to punish them and to make an example of them, so that the same thing should not occur again. And they had to remain out during the whole night. Owing to the heavy rain they could not light a fire, neither had they any food, and in the morning they were a very unhappy lot. Finally, we took them back as they appeared to be thoroughly contrite, imposing by way of punishment the fine of a month's pay on each of them. This, however, was a severe lesson, and none of them ever tried it on again.

We heard afterwards that they had other causes of complaint which they had intended to bring forward just as an excuse for making trouble. In fact, a regular conspiracy had been formed to stop the expedition and to prevent our crossing the river to the unknown country beyond. But the flare-up which the insult at their being called women had

caused made them lose their heads and prevented their conspiracy from taking its proper course, and so it had fizzled out.

Personally I think they were all in a blue funk at the idea of crossing the Gelo, and of going into an unknown land where they feared they would die of fever as so many of their compatriots in their raiding parties had died of fever before. They wanted by their mutiny to force us to give up the expedition and to return to Abyssinia. They had already got six or seven months' pay due to them, and that they considered sufficient for their present needs ; so, thinking themselves rich for the moment, they were against doing anything that might risk their lives just for the sake of getting a little more money. I believe also that one of the objects in view in making the complaint was to have the chance of insisting that a man of their own nationality should be appointed head man over the Abyssinian division in the caravan, and that he should act directly as interpreter between ourselves and them, and that they were jealous of the Somali Hadji Ali having any authority over them. Nuri was the Abyssinian interpreter, and it is possible, though I have no justification for making the accusation, that he had instigated the mutiny, seeking to better his own position.

Occasionally we were under the necessity of being severe with the men. We had to put one man into irons for twenty-four hours,—that is, in handcuffs—as a punishment for selling his clothes to the natives. The natives were quite ready to buy with food any

clothes that the Abyssinians would sell them. We had supplied each of our men with a thick cloak, the sort of shawl called by the Gallas a "belucca." The ordinary Abyssinian does not possess such a cloak as this, and his natural instinct, if not restrained, would be to turn it into money or money's worth. But it was very necessary for our men to be warmly clad when they should get to the mountainous regions we should have to march over later on. Their health and even their lives depended on their being kept warm at nights, and we had no intention of allowing our gifts, on which the health of the men and the success of the expedition depended, to be turned into ready money.

The hundreds of Yambos encamped around us were immensely delighted to see an Abyssinian whipped in their presence. They hate and fear the Abyssinians, and it was quite a novel experience for them to see one of this hated race, who always tyrannised over them whenever they got the chance, receive condign punishment.

Having succeeded in establishing order again in the camp we now decided to cross the river at once ; and here we found what great use our Yambo friends would be to us in helping us to make the passage of this rapid stream. All the Yambos swim like otters, and they were invaluable in helping us to swim the mules and donkeys over the rapid current. These Yambos are really most expert swimmers. They will drag a mule down the steep bank of the river and one on each side of him will take him into the water and swimming beside him, each having a

hand on one side of the bridle, will drag him right across the stream, however swift the current and whatever the distance, notwithstanding all the struggles the mule may make. In this manner we swam all our animals over without any mishap. This it would have been impossible to do without the help of these men.

As a means of carrying our stores to the other bank we strung a rope across the river and pulled our Berthon boat across, by dragging it along the rope. The current was so swift that it would have been almost impossible to row the Berthon boat across, fully laden as it was with our stores. Anyhow, it would have been impossible to make the other shore without descending several hundred yards down the stream. The rope used for ferrying our boat over was tied across the river diagonally, one end being fixed on the further bank lower down the stream, so that the stream itself would carry the loaded boat over to the other bank, along the rope to which it was attached. The empty boat could easily be pulled back along the rope, though slightly up the current.

CHAPTER XIII

FROM THE GELO TO THE AKOBO

Remains of Abyssinian ivory-hunters—Talks with Shamo—
Site of Digira—First view of the Akobo—Paying off the Gog
porters—Their enthusiastic gratitude.

WE had now between five and six hundred men with us, including our native porters, and we had every appearance of quite a formidable army as we marched in a long string across the country. We started off at daybreak on May 12, in a south-westerly direction, marching for about four hours to the next camping-ground.

The land rises immediately from the river two hundred feet or more and we followed a faint track over a low dry plateau through a thin forest country with open grass spaces between the trees. There were numerous rain-pools about and we made our next camp near one of these large pools. We had not seen much game during our march. This was probably owing to our numbers, which must have frightened it away. The weather was relatively cool and there was a nice breeze. We crossed on our way a little ditch or stream, a mere brooklet, which we were told was the Atiwat river, and camped later on, as I have said before, by a pool which they told us was called the Otoki.

On this spot we found many human remains—that is to say, human bones and skulls of men who must have died quite recently. The natives told us that they were the remains of a large number of unfortunate Abyssinians who had accompanied Fitaurari Mashsha down to Digira on the Akobo river in search of ivory a few months before. Five hundred of them had come down, it was said, and only a hundred had returned. Our Abyssinians, who had doubtless heard of this expedition, thought that a similar fate was being reserved for them, and it is probable that the knowledge of the fate which had come upon this party of raiders and the fear that like consequences might happen to us had had a great deal to do with the mutiny. Our friend Shamo accompanied us all the time, and we found him of the greatest use in controlling his men, over whom he seemed to have absolute authority. He knocked them about pretty freely whenever they showed any disposition to shirk or loiter over their work.

The next day we made a short march and encamped beside a small stream called the Owag, having again taken a south-westerly direction. Game abounded all over the country, Jackson's hartebeest being particularly numerous. Several pools of water were met with on the plain and we had good going all the way and the weather was fine.

I should say that this was not at all an unhealthy country, as there are no marshes to speak of and the soil seems tolerably dry. We had in the evenings long conversations with our friend Shamo, through the medium of interpreters. He found nothing bad

enough to say against the Abyssinians. On our asking him why there were no cattle to be seen in this part of the country, he replied that it was because of the fly. He said that all our mules would die from their bites. We thought at the time, he was referring to the zerut fly, but on coming through this country later on, on our way back during the rainy season, I observed another fly which I am sure must have been the tsetse, though rather different from the species of that fly I had seen before.

On Sunday, May 15, we arrived at the site of the former village of Digira. There was no sign of any village there now. The site of the old town, now destroyed, lies about two miles from the main stream of the Akobo; but the river itself is unapproachable here on account of the marshes. Indeed, the first view of the famous Akobo is most disappointing. Its waters cannot even be seen on account of the tall, thick reeds which extend along its banks for miles as far as eye can reach, forming a broad band from a mile to two miles in width stretching on either side of the river. It is impossible to march through these reeds except in certain places, as they grow out of the water and one would very soon sink in them out of one's depth.

We made out the place where we were camped to be about latitude $7^{\circ} 10'$ north and longitude about $34^{\circ} 10'$ east. We had found game very plentiful all along the route of our march from the Gelo. Fresh tracks of elephant could be seen in every direction; also numerous traces of giraffe and Abyssinian buffalo. The commoner game such as tiang, water-

buck, reed-buck, oribi, roan antelope and Jackson's hartebeest abounded. Our camp was pitched at some distance from the Akobo above the marsh, and on slightly higher ground. But, unfortunately, we were forced to drink the marsh water as we could not get near the river.

The chiefs who live both at Gog and around Digira bear witness to Abyssinian influence. The kings or sheikhs of each of these places are dressed just like Abyssinians. The sheikh of Digira was named Olimi, and his village was situated about three and a half miles from our camp and lay in a westerly direction from us at the point of junction of the Akobo and Akula rivers.

We now proceeded to pay off the four hundred porters who had come with us from Gog and had worked so well for us. The payment was to be in brass wire and beads, as we determined to economise our American cotton cloth and to save it for other and more important occasions. We gave each man the choice of either eighteen inches of brass wire of the ordinary thickness, a small cupful of mixed beads, or one Maria Theresa dollar. It was a great surprise to us when fifty of them preferred to take a dollar for their week's work. It seemed difficult to guess what they could do with their dollars, but it is possible that they had fixed up some arrangement with the Abyssinians of the party, who of course would be very glad of a dollar if they could get it. The remaining three hundred and fifty of the porters were content to take, some of them wire, and some of them beads. At all events they were all highly

satisfied with our treatment of them, and gave us before they set out for home a magnificent war-dance by way of showing their appreciation of us. The dance was more a military manœuvring than a dance and the manœuvres were skilfully performed under the direct command of their chief, Shamo.

Of course we had fed them extremely well on meat during all the time they were with us, and I think that that in itself would have been sufficient to content them, and would have been considered as sufficient pay for the work they had done for us ; for all natives are very fond of flesh and get it very rarely. It is a great luxury to them, as usually they can only get it in very small quantities. We sometimes had to kill as many as twenty antelopes a day for food ; but we were determined to treat them as well as possible, if only for the sake of future travellers who might be coming over the same way.

During the last night our black friends were with us, throughout the whole time from sunset to sunrise, they kept up a high feast and danced round the camp fires till daylight brandishing their spears and behaving in quite a mad way as is the custom of all natives on such occasions.

They became so exuberant at times that our Somalis thought they might be going to attack us and they kept a careful watch over them during the whole night. But we felt sure ourselves that they had no such evil intentions, and, as we anticipated, everything passed off perfectly peaceably.

CHAPTER XIV

OLIMI, CHIEF OF DIGIRA

Visit to Olimi at Digira—The Akula river—The chocolate Akobo—Jealousy between Olimi and Shamo—We send back for flour—Reduction of the caravan.

ON the first opportunity we, that is, the whites of the party, went off from our camp on a visit to the village of Digira, escorted by its chief, Olimi. This village is situated under very fine gemaiza trees on a narrow causeway lying between eternal marsh and the main stream of the Akobo at the point where, by its junction with the Akula river, it forms a narrow strip of dry land between the two streams.

We had to cross the Akula in a canoe to get to the village. This stream or "cut" is about thirty-five feet broad and very deep. Here we first saw the waters of the Akobo. The current was swift and the water deep, and I believe the river is unfordable from this point for about ten miles up stream, until you reach a place called Kenna, at about the point where Major Austin crossed it some few years ago.

The Akula river rises in the Abyssinian foot-hills flowing quite close to Mount Ungwala to the north of it and continues its course parallel to the Akobo for fifteen miles or so through the marshes, till it finally joins that river at Digira. It is, without doubt,

the river which Bottego named Chiarini. Bottego, who passed to the east side of Mount Ungwala when he came through this country and therefore crossed the Akula a few miles higher up than we did, makes it flow into the Akobo at the wrong place. Crossing it higher up stream, he took it for granted that it continued its course straight for the Akobo, while as a matter of fact its course turns sharply to the north-west a mile or two before reaching that river, and, as I have said before, flows parallel to it for twenty miles, before finally effecting its junction with it at Digira. It is a deep and sluggish stream where it flows through the marshes. Higher up, near Mount Ungwala, it is a quickly flowing little river between high banks.

In the height of the rainy season, Digira must be surrounded by water on every side. The Akobo here is about fifty yards wide, its current is very swift, and its water is of a dark chocolate colour. It was in half flood now, so that the water did not reach to within six or eight feet of the top of the banks, but Olimi told us that in full flood in the month of August the river was bank full. Digira is not a large village nor is the country here very thickly populated.

On taking the roll-call of our transport animals we found that we had lost thirty-eight mules and two donkeys since leaving the Baro, that is, forty animals in twenty days.

Shamo and Olimi were not the best of friends. They regarded each other with the greatest suspicion, and I think there would have been fighting between them,

if we had not been there to keep the peace, or if Olini had thought himself strong enough to overcome the four or five hundred men Shamo had with him. Anyhow, all our natives, that is, those who had come with us from the Gelo, kept close together and took care not to wander far from camp in this, to them, strange country, though, of course, all being Yambos, they speak the same language here as further north.

From this camp we sent Nuri back under Shamo's escort to Bouré in Abyssinia to get flour. Before leaving the Baro we had written to the authorities at Bouré and Goré, asking them to send thirty daoulas of teff flour down to Itang by Galla porters, and we had also sent to Sir John Harrington, the British Minister at Adis Ababa, asking him to use his influence with Ras Tasamma to get this done. The chief authority at Bouré is Chaka Tacallin, who is the Ras's lieutenant and rules over the district of Bouré and all the Yambo country, under the authority of the Ras.

Our object in getting flour down to Itang was to have a reserve there in the event of having to retreat on that place; or possibly as an extra provision in case we might be able to send for it to come to us later on from Melileh. The latter place is where we intended to make a halt of some duration, a spot higher up the Akobo at its junction with the Ajuba.

Nuri was sent to try and get Galla porters to bring the flour down to Melileh, instead of to Itang; or at any rate to carry it as far as Gog, from whence Yambo

porters would convey it on to us at Melileh, thus making the latter place our depôt for exploration on the Boma and Musha plateaux. We determined also to send back about thirty-five of the most useless of our men, principally Gallas, who were almost always ill and had become merely an incubus.

Our intention now was to go ahead and establish a permanent encampment at Melileh, and we expected to have news of Nuri in about a month after his departure. We had heard a good deal about Melileh as a place of some importance. It was marked large enough on the maps at any rate, and is placed by Bottego at the point of junction of the Akobo and Ajuba rivers. It is, however, quite a mythical place, and we found out later on, that no such village exists or had ever existed, if we are to believe the Yambos of the district—this is, as far as the name is concerned.

After this thinning out of the camp we were left with seventy Abyssinians, thirteen Somalis, two or three Yambo guides, and three Soudanese.

On May 17, these supernumeraries who were to go back were paid off and told to accompany Nuri. Each man received, besides the pay due to him, three Maria Theresa dollars as ration money; and our excellent friend Shamo, in return for ten dollars, promised to provide them with sufficient food for their march from his place at Gog on to Bouré, promising at the same time to protect them from molestation.

Since leaving the Gelo we had been traversing new ground, and Jessen, our cartographer, had made a

very careful map of all the country we had gone through.

While in camp at Digira our most energetic efforts were spent in trying to get buffalo, and though we saw plenty of fresh traces of them we came across none. I suppose the noise of our porters and the turmoil of our camp had frightened them out of the district. Nor did we come across any elephants but there was plenty of other game, which, however, we did not molest more than was necessary for supplying the camp with food. The natives told us that the week before our arrival there had been plenty of elephants, but that our shooting had frightened them all away.

CHAPTER XV

FROM DIGIRA TO MOUNT UNGWALA

Mount Ungwala—Escapes from cobras—Numerous pythons—Yambos as game-trackers—A solitary Galla—A fine roan antelope—Commencement of the rains—Ascent of Mount Ungwala—Magnificent views from the summit—A case of quinsy.

WE were now within close proximity to the first noticeable landmark on our journey to the south, namely Mount Ungwala. This mountain is an isolated granite peak some thirty miles or so away from the main range of the Abyssinian escarpment standing right out on the plain and detached on every side from any other hill. It rises about fifteen hundred feet above the surrounding country, and thus is about three thousand five hundred feet above the sea-level. It is a very prominent landmark, and looks from its position to be much higher than it really is.

Three short marches from Digira brought us to its base. The first day out, having marched three hours in a south-easterly direction, we pitched our camp on the south bank of the little Akula river some few miles away from the main stream of the Akobo. The Akula here is a nice little flowing stream, but is fordable in places only. Its banks are steep, rising ten feet above the normal water-level, and the stream

itself is quite deep in places. There is no doubt, as I have said, that it is the Chiarini of Bottego.

We had no difficulty in carrying all our stores along with us, as Olimi had furnished us with a hundred and thirty porters, who were engaged to go with us as far as the mountain. Since leaving the Baro we had seen no signs of lions, though Mc Millan had shot one at Olea, as already mentioned. Neither did we see any traces of them through the Yambo country through which we have just passed. Here, however, they seemed to be fairly numerous and we could hear them roaring every night. One morning we saw the fresh traces of lions round the dead carcase of an antelope which one of us had wounded, and which we came across in the bush the next day. We followed up the tracks of the lions for a long time, but finally lost them in the bush. Giraffes are very plentiful in this part of the country, and so are snakes.

I myself had a most providential escape from being bitten by a cobra. Walking along, scanning the horizon for game, I did not see it lying asleep sunning itself in the short grass, and I struck it with my feet as I passed, not knowing even that I touched anything. A cry from the Yambo guide who was just behind me startled me into giving a jump aside and I then saw a huge snake making the best of its way to escape from me. I seized the spear which the Yambo was carrying and ran the snake through the back, pinning him to the ground. When he felt he could not get away, whether from pain or despair, he turned round on himself and drove his

long fangs deep into his own back. This snake was about four feet long and about ten inches in circumference ; a regular type of African cobra.

Jessen had had a somewhat similar escape a short time before, also from a cobra. He woke it up somewhat in the same way as I had done, and the snake had actually struck at him but failed to reach him, and he killed it with a shot-gun. Snakes are fairly numerous in this part of Africa, but I imagine that a great many of them are not poisonous. On one occasion Jessen sent his boy up a tree to take a survey of the surrounding country and to look for game. When the boy had got to the top of the tree and was hanging on to some of the outside branches about thirty feet from the ground he saw two long thin snakes, each about five feet in length, climbing along the branch on which he was. The boy gave one yell and dropped from the tree, but escaped with merely a severe shaking.

Pythons are also numerous in this part of the country. Marlow trod on one that was asleep, also at this camp, an enormous beast fifteen feet in length. He lost no time in retiring to a safe distance, the python making the best of its way to escape also ; but a well-directed shot from a gun blew his head off. I imagine these huge pythons are for the most part quite harmless, though it is possible that, if one had eaten nothing for a long time, he might coil himself round an intruder ; at any rate I have often heard stories of their chasing people, though I have never experienced it myself, and I have seen a good many of them. It is truly wonderful how seldom the

barelegged, barefooted natives get bitten by snakes. They have a wonderful eye for them, and every now and then you may see a man jump aside, having spotted one in the grass which probably no white man would have seen.

These native Yambos are wonderful trackers and have a very fine eye for noticing the slightest disturbances of the grass or reeds which may have been caused by the passage of some animal. In this respect they beat the Somalis hollow.

Frequently I have known the Somali shikari fail to be able to follow the traces of a wounded antelope and seen one of them motion to the Yambo guide accompanying us asking him to take up the trail. This the Yambo would usually do with unfailing success. It was perfectly astonishing to all of us how skilfully they could detect the slightest mark in the grass made by the passage of any sort of animal.

We were now on the boundary of the Yambo country; but here the natives were just as friendly as they had been throughout; and what surprised us more than anything else was one day to see in this remote region, far away from his own country, a Galla coming into camp. He was living there quite alone amongst the Yambos and said he was an envoy representing Ras Tasamma. He said that the Abyssinians occasionally raided down to this point, coming down the Akobo, but that they never crossed the latter river.

We now had to put all our men on half rations of flour, and consequently we had to provide them daily with meat. Each day after marching, tired or

not, one of us had to go out and do the butchering work for the camp, while the others would go in another direction seeking more interesting game. As for the elephants, we seemed to have driven them out of the country; but the frequent traces we saw in every direction proved that there must be a large quantity of them in the district.

I had the good luck to shoot a very fine roan antelope here one day, which measured more than sixty inches at the withers. He was such a large animal that I had him skinned and sent his hide home to be set up whole.

We formed our camp to the south-east of Mount Ungwala. The mountain itself is about a mile from the Akobo. The river here is surrounded on each side by a thick growth of reeds extending for about a mile from its banks on either side. At this time of the year, at any rate in the neighbourhood of Mount Ungwala, it was tolerably dry walking through these reeds, so that the river could be approached at almost any point; but nobody who has not tried it would have any idea of the hard work it is to force one's way through these tall thick reeds, which grow to at least fifteen feet in height and are as thick and close together as wheat in a cornfield.

The Akobo is sometimes called the Yabello. That is the Yambo name for it. Its banks are very steep in most places. It would be a very difficult river on that account for a mule caravan to negotiate the passage across the stream.

We explored the country all round in search of

game for a couple of days, but the bush was too thick to make shooting a success; and at this time of the year game is hard to find, as the grass is high. Then, as the rains had begun, there were pools of water everywhere and the antelope were scattered all over the country, as they had no need to come down to the river to drink.

While we were in camp we determined to make the ascent of Mount Ungwala. It is always interesting to ascend a virgin peak and there is no doubt, I think, that Mount Ungwala had never before been ascended by a white man and possibly not even by a native. The natives protested that nobody had ever thought of going up the mountain. But Jessen and I determined to make the ascent, and early on May 24 we started out for this purpose.

We were accompanied by half a dozen Yambos, led by the chief of the district. They thought us perfectly mad to undertake such a tiring climb and were quite incapable of understanding our motives. As I said before, the mountain is composed of grey granite and rises some fifteen hundred feet above the surrounding plain. It is clothed in vegetation to the summit of its highest peak, though there are great masses of bare rocks which stand clear out against the sky-line right close up to the highest point.

We found the ascent to be a very rough climb, the vegetation on its sides being very thick, and the bare granite boulders shooting out from the thick tropical growth were very difficult to negotiate. After a stiff climb of a couple of hours or so we reached a huge bare granite pinnacle standing out two hundred feet perpendicularly above us, which we then thought to be

the highest point of the mountain. But after exploring about a little we came across another peak lying further to the east which we found was still higher, and this peak had vegetation right up to its summit.

Our main object in getting to the top of this mountain was to take observations, to take bearings for our future survey, and from this high latitude to map out the surrounding country. We felt sure that from the isolated situation of the peak, which would give a clear view to every point of the compass, we should be well rewarded for our pains. Nor were we in any way disappointed. The prospect on every side was just about as fine as could well be imagined. We could see the silver line of the Akobo throughout many miles of its course flowing down from the Abyssinian mountains right on the plains below us, and we could follow its circuitous route through the dense masses of reeds which surrounded it on either bank.

In the distance, almost due south, we could plainly make out the Boma plateau, with Mount Aguma in the foreground thirty miles away. The Akobo must quite treble the length of its course, so frequently does it turn and twist about and double back on itself. There appeared to be forest all round as far as eye could see. To the east the rugged range of the Abyssinian highlands with the fine line of the Gourafarda mountains gleaming against the sky four or five thousand feet above us, and to the west below us one vast and apparently level plain of vegetation.

Jessen mapped out the surrounding country with great care and took most useful bearings for our future march. I had carried to the highest peak a



MOUNT UNGWALA—3550 FEET

photographic machine fitted with a telephoto lens and took photographs in every direction. I am sorry to say that none of these photographs came out, as the wind which was blowing on the top of the mountain made it impossible to take a satisfactory photograph through the telephoto lens, which requires absolute stillness to make a picture of any sort.

We got down to camp again by evening well satisfied with our day's work, having now a much clearer idea of the geography of the country around us than we had before.

When back in camp we found that William Marlow, who had been ailing for several days, was now really seriously ill with what appeared to be a quinsy; and the worst of it was that we had no experienced doctor with us and did not quite know how to treat him. Zaphiro, who was perfectly capable of treating native ailments in the rough and ready way that is usual in camp life, expressed himself as very diffident when it came to treating a white man who had really anything the matter with him. He never showed any nervousness in taking a pair of pincers and pulling out a black man's tooth when he was suffering from toothache, or opening out an abscess, a common form of sickness amongst the Abyssinians, but he confessed himself to be quite incapable of diagnosing the present case. The patient had been unable either to eat or drink for four days and we were really beginning to be very anxious about him. Suddenly, however, the abscess in his throat broke and after taking a whisky and sparklet by way of medicine he very soon began to get all right again.

CHAPTER XVI

NEW PLANS

Reorganisation of the caravan—Short rations—Inconvenient religious scruples of porters—Start for the Musha plateau—Melileh the Mysterious—The Ajuba river.

It had been apparent to all of us for some time that the caravan, as at present constituted, would be totally unfit to explore the Boma and Musha plateaux. Our stock of flour was nearly finished and it would be suicidal to make the attempt to go into the utterly unknown district of the Musha plateau, and through the difficult and mountainous country surrounding it, accompanied by such a large number of men, unless we had plenty of provisions wherewith to feed them; especially as throughout a great part of the country we were going to explore, it was very doubtful if we should come across any game. We thought it would be taking too great a risk with the lives of our men to try and drag our large caravan without food throughout this unknown district; and probably a great many of them would never have returned had we attempted to proceed as we were across what was known to be a very difficult bit of mountainous country. Our own mess for the white men was well provided for. It was for our men that we should have found it difficult to provide.

We had had no news of Nuri, who had gone back for flour, since he had left us at Digira. We thought it possible that he might have come to grief in some way or other, or that he had played us false. We had no great faith in him, as he never seemed to like the idea of going into the country we were setting out to explore, and we thought it very likely he would find some excuse for not coming back, but in any case we could not afford to wait.

Bearing all this in mind, it was decided that we should divide up the caravan—that Jessen, as cartographer, and myself should go on and do the exploration work, while Mc Millan and the rest of the party should remain in the Yambo country for shooting. Jessen and I were to start immediately with twenty-five picked men, twenty good mules and twenty of the best donkeys. We were to take with us nearly all the flour that remained, that is, five daoulas, ten sheep, a tin of ghee and provisions for our two selves for two months. I took an Abyssinian named Mangasha as my head man, as I thought him to be dependable, and told him to pick out the men he wanted to go with him.

The new caravan was finally made up as follows; seventeen Abyssinians, eight Somalis, three Sudanese, three Yambo guides. In all, thirty-one people, twenty-three of whom we could arm with rifles in case of attack.

Mc Millan was left in rather a difficult position, as he was entirely without flour rations. However, there was plenty of game in the country he was going through and he told his men they must be content

to live on meat. It was necessary to make some arrangement of this sort if we wished to carry out the main object of our expedition, which was the survey of the Musha and Boma plateaux.

By keeping strictly to half rations, and by making the men eat meat as much as possible when it was obtainable, I thought I might be able to make the small stock of flour which remained last out for five or six weeks. Our men were to receive only one small mug of it per day and little enough indeed it seemed.

In the result, things came out all right; and considering the hardships during the five weeks they were on this march the men complained very little. We occasionally got plenty of game and occasionally we got none at all; and the men, by their own fanatical obstinacy, often made things more difficult for us and for themselves than otherwise would have been the case. The Somalis are the most fanatical of the Mohammedans. They may be called the High Church party of their sect; and under no conditions, not even if he is nearly starving, will a Somali eat the meat of an animal that has not had its throat cut by one of his co-religionists before death, so that the blood may flow from the living animal. It was very often annoying when one had had a difficult stalk after an antelope and had succeeded in killing it, and had done so entirely in order to get meat for the camp, to find that the Somalis would not touch it if the animal happened to have been shot dead, and was not alive when they came up to it so that its throat might be cut while it was still breathing.

Not only was it unpleasant for the men, who would have to go without their dinner, but it was also unfortunate for us, as we could not get a proper day's work out of half-starved people.

Some of the Abyssinians were almost as bad. Each nationality serving with us, that is to say, Abyssinians, Soudanese and Somalis, seemed to take a pride in showing off before each other how strictly they could adhere to the tenets of their different religions. The Abyssinians are, of course, Christians and as such, one would have thought, need only follow the customs common to all Christians; and there was not the slightest reason why they should adopt the Mohammedan right of hallaling* the animal before death, as that, of course, has nothing to do with the tenets of the Christian faith. But many anomalies have crept into their creed from their contiguity to the Mohammedan races who live round them. They also follow many Jewish customs and will not eat pork. Wart-hog is a very common game in this country and many a time when we have been hard up for meat one would have thought a nice piece of pork would have been very acceptable to anybody. But I have time after time had to let the chance of shooting one of these animals go by because none of the men would touch it. I have no doubt there would come a time, when the men were actually starving, when they would eat anything, but luckily we did not get into such a strait as that; the fact remains that they often preferred to exist on half a pint of flour each day and so have, with this slender

* The usual term for cutting the throat.

fare, the satisfaction of not breaking through the rules of their religion.

The Somalis kept up a continual state of prayer throughout this trip, which lasted thirty-five days ; and I think the feeling that they were passing through an unknown and unexplored land stimulated their devotion. My tent-boy, who was better educated than any of the others, acted as mullah or priest, and led the services which invariably took place at every halt, made at any time during the day when they could get a few moments to themselves.

On the afternoon of Thursday, May 26, Jessen and I started out with our small caravan along the north bank of the Akobo towards the spot where we supposed Melileh to be ; and the next day after making a long march of fifteen miles we arrived at the place indicated on the map.

For a great part of the way there was a decent track, and I told our Yambo guide to take us right down to the Akobo to a spot opposite the place where it makes its junction with the Ajuba.

We found it a precious difficult task to reach the river at all, so thick and high were the reeds. When, after very hard work, we had got to the river's bank, we could see nothing at all, as we were literally smothered by these reeds, which were fifteen feet high, and it was most difficult to find one's way about in them or indeed to get through them at all. We were finally forced to retrace our steps and to pitch our camp about a mile to the east of where we supposed the junction of the two rivers to be, selecting a spot as near to the river as the reeds would permit, that is,

about half a mile distant from it, and I imagine somewhere near the site of Major Austin's camp three years earlier.

We had seen plenty of game during our day's march, but it was very unapproachable and we had no time to attempt any shooting. The banks of the river, here as everywhere else, were very high, fifteen or twenty feet above the present level of the water. The current was very swift and the river quite unfordable. We had our Berthon boat with us, but it was quite impossible to row it against the strength of the stream. On our march we had passed through the village of Odiek and were asked to act as doctor to a boy who had just had his arm bitten off by a crocodile while drawing water from the river. I am sorry to say we could do very little for him.

We looked in vain for any trace of Melileh. We found out, however, that the Ajuba is called by the Yambos, Adjuma, and that it is but very little known to them. The obvious reason for this, as I found out afterwards, was that the far-famed Ajuba is nothing but a stagnant little brook which you could almost jump across in most places. I had heard so much of the Ajuba that I expected to see a really respectable stream and I was quite disappointed.

We were now at the extreme confines of the Yambo country, and though there are one or two small settlements of these people higher up the Akobo on its northern bank, the surrounding district was very sparsely inhabited. On the southern bank of the river above its junction with the Ajuba we were told that there were no living beings of any sort to be

found. The Abyssinians have raided, for centuries probably, all down the northern bank from Ras Tasamma's country, and this would account for the paucity of the population on a soil seemingly fertile and in a country perfectly healthy. Ras Tasamma's people, we were told, never cross the Akobo because they said there was nothing to attract them on the other side as there were no inhabitants to raid, nor elephants to be killed.

CHAPTER XVII

RAIN AND REEDS

The Akobo river—Lost in the reeds—A beautiful country—
Terrific rain—Native indifference to it—Lions and hyenas—
The Lion Rock—The country under water—An unexplored
country—The Kaia river—Taking compass bearings.

THE next day, May 28, I decided to put the Berthon boat on the river and explore its course as far as possible. There had been incessant rain for the last two days and things were decidedly wet. Regardless of the downpour, I put the boat on the Akobo and rowed down the river, accompanied by my two shikaris, to find its point of junction with the Ajuba, having an understanding with Jessen that, if I was not back by midday, he was to strike camp and to proceed a march up the Akobo and there make a new camp.

We had much difficulty in getting our boat carried through the very thick reeds to the river bank, and had it not been for the friendly Yambos we could not have done it at all. It took us an hour's hard work to get through the half-mile of reeds to the water, so trackless are the reed swamps, and left to ourselves we should have doubtless lost the way. A twenty-five minutes' easy pull down the swift current brought us to a small "cut" or channel coming down into the main stream from the south. I got out to explore,

and there was no doubt in my mind then, a fact which I afterwards found to be correct, that this channel coming into the Akobo from the south, was the far-famed Ajuba we had heard so much about. It was nothing but a narrow ditch with two or three feet of water in it; but I followed the ditch up on foot for two or three miles to make quite sure that it was the river I was in search of. There were reeds everywhere, and I had to climb a tree to get the bearings of the surrounding country. At this time of the year of half-flood, there was no water coming down from the Ajuba into the Akobo, as the water of the latter river was on a higher level, and held up the water of the smaller stream. The Ajuba was, perhaps, ten feet wide at the water-level, and about thirty feet across at the top of its high banks.

Having thoroughly explored this part of the river, we attempted to row back up the stream. We all three of us exerted ourselves to the utmost, but such was the strength of the current, that after an hour's hard rowing, we had made only a few hundred yards. So we gave up the task as impossible. We pulled the boat up the steep bank, and I left it there under the care of one of my shikaris, while the other one and myself made the best of our way back to the old camp. It proved, however, no easy matter to find the camp. We had now no Yambos to guide us through the reeds, nor was there any sun visible, and, as the weather was thick and rainy, not even a hill-top to show us our way. The tall reeds made it impossible to see any landmarks which might

have guided us as to our course, and in a very short space of time we were both of us utterly lost, nor had either of us the slightest idea of the points of the compass. We had lost all sense of direction, and it is not an easy thing to non-plus a Somali in matters of this sort. We shouted and shouted, but could get no answer from the Somali we had left guarding the boat. The only thing we could do was to struggle on in the hope that sooner or later we should get out of this tangle of reeds. After about a couple of hours of most exhausting work we did get clear out, but it would, no doubt, have been interesting if anybody could have mapped out our zig-zag wanderings, and could have shown us afterwards a sketch of our tortuous course.

At about two o'clock we found the site of the deserted camp and saw my syce waiting for me, and also half a dozen Yambos. It was most lucky that we found these Yambos here, and we sent them back to find my shikari, who was left behind with the boat, telling them to bring up the boat itself; and at about four o'clock in the afternoon I started to follow Jessen's tracks, and marched on through a thunderstorm of the utmost violence.

After three or four hours' ride through a downpour which much resembled a water-spout I came upon the new camp, which Jessen had pitched in a most beautiful spot. The sun had set, and the weather had cleared, and the spot chosen for our camp was a nice dry piece of land sloping down to the river, which was here fringed by the most splendid specimens of the gemaiza tree. Having got higher up the

river we had left behind us the reedy marshy bottoms, and from this point onwards we were not troubled much more by reeds, and the banks of the river were most beautifully timbered. Indeed, this part of the country is as beautiful as any we came through in all our wanderings. There were enormous iron-stone mountains around, which I think accounts for the violence of the thunderstorm. The iron-stone certainly had a very bad effect on our compasses, causing them to deviate several degrees.

Several Yambos were following us as guides and helps; but they did not seem to mind the terrific rain in the least. They were naked and their skins dried quickly. They slept out in the rain and quite peacefully and contentedly, and merely cut down a few boughs which they placed over themselves for protection. For the first time during this expedition we had a fine chorus of hyenas at night; lions also made their concert round us, prowling about the camp all night, and leaving their tracks visible the next morning. But we had no time to indulge in shooting; we had business to do, and considering the terrific rain and the shortness of provisions for our men we could not afford to delay.

This was truly a most beautiful bit of country, and in the dry season must be a paradise. Here and there were small Yambo villages, but really there were very few inhabitants. One of the chiefs of the district, who acted as a guide for a short distance, said that the Abyssinians had recently made a raid down into this part of the country and carried every woman away out of the place. The

soil here is mostly of the sort called black cotton soil.

We were now in the narrow valley through which the Akobo runs in its course from the Abyssinian mountains, and all the storms of heaven seemed to have centred in this spot. The next day we marched for six hours and only made ten miles. The heavy rain impeded us very much, as all the little gullies had become raging rapids, and were excessively difficult to cross. One would come across water-courses looking like permanent rivers, which were not marked on any map, and which were raging torrents at the time. Under normal conditions these water-courses would have been merely small rivulets, but after these tremendous rains, they had been converted into formidable rivers.

Jessen and I went on ahead to try and find a dry piece of ground for our camp. We finally pitched on a place situated about fifteen miles west of the rock named by Bottego the Lion Rock, the rock itself being on the other side of the river. Bottego had come down the Akobo along its southern bank; and for that reason we were ascending it on the northern side so as not to go over the same ground.

I certainly never saw such rain as we had while we were in this valley. The whole country, which here slopes down gradually to the river, was one vast moving lake, three inches deep in water; and though we were high up on rocky ground with a nice slope on it, it seemed at one time as if we should not be able to put up our camp at all, as it is impossible to

pitch tents in a moving lake. The deluge, however, moderated before nightfall, and we managed to form our camp; the sloping nature of the ground draining the water off quickly as soon as the rain ceased; but it was quite impossible for any one to get anything dried, and we had to be content to remain wet. Through all these troubles we found the Yambos who were with us most helpful and obedient.

It was obvious that, if the rain was going to continue like this all the time, we should be beaten and should have to turn back, as neither our men nor our animals would be able to stand it much longer. But we had with us all picked men, and there was no sickness among them as yet; and, of course, it was not so hard for us two white men, as we were better protected and managed to keep comparatively dry. Our animals were all chosen ones. They had done wonders in the last two days and as yet showed no signs of giving in. It looked, however, as if the rain had set in for good. We were surrounded by mountains, and there was a continual roar as the newly falling water rushed down the hill sides. The beautiful nature of the country continued. It was finely wooded and there were gentle undulating grass-covered slopes slanting in all directions, surrounded by numerous small peaks and conical hills with grass-crowned summits, while game abounded.

We were now again in a country unexplored by white men. On taking an observation by the stars at night we found that the compass deviated a full ten degrees to the west, no doubt in consequence

of the iron-stone hills which surrounded us. During the night we heard numerous lions around the camp. The next day the weather having cleared a bit we marched up stream three and a half hours, to a spot where a little river coming from the north joins the main stream of the Akobo. This river is called by the natives the Tobok, and was unmarked in any map.

We formed our camp close to the banks of the Akobo opposite to a ford which the natives showed us, and where we intended to cross the next day. The river was about forty yards broad, the banks towering twenty feet above the then water level. There were only about four feet of water in the stream, and though the current was swift it was quite fordable.

During our march of this day we had passed the point of the junction of the Akobo with a river coming from the south. We had been on the lookout for this nameless river as it was up its course that we intended to march; but the thickness of the vegetation near the river-bed had prevented us from seeing it as we passed by. It is called by the Yambos the Kaia river and is marked on the maps, but had no name given to it. According to the maps with which we were provided, it comes straight down from the Musha plateau.

There was much game all around of the same descriptions as we had found in the country lower down the river. Here, too, there are a great number of india-rubber trees of a very great size, and also large tamarind trees.

The rain was beginning to tell on the health of the men. It is not comfortable to have to sit all the afternoon and evening in wet clothes, but one had to do so if one wished to dry them. Fires were impossible in this drenching weather, and there were absolutely no means of drying one's clothes, except by sitting in them. Even putting them between the blankets of one's bed and sleeping on them did not seem to have much effect. When the rain did cease, the air was so charged with humidity, especially at night, that drying anything was quite out of the question. It is uncomfortable to be forced to sit all the afternoon and evening in one's wet things, but it is infinitely worse to get out of one's warm and tolerably dry bed the first thing in the morning and to have to get into drenching wet clothes. It becomes all right after riding or walking for an hour, but the beginning is unpleasant. But this we had to go through for days together, and it was beginning to take effect on our men, though, strange to say, it had no bad effect on Jessen and myself, probably because we were able to sleep dry.

The next day the weather had much improved, and on May 31 I started out to explore the mouth of the Kaia river, while Jessen ascended some high hills at the back of the camp to take compass bearings and to lay out our route towards Mount Naita, which was the point for which we were making. Mount Naita is situated about forty miles north-east of Lake Rudolph, and its summit is about eight thousand feet above sea level. It lies right at the south-eastern edge of the Musha plateau, and we thought

if we ascended this mountain, as it is more or less an isolated peak and dominates all the hills about, it would give us a fine view of the surrounding country and would enable us to take a sketch-map of the whole plateau. While we two were thus occupied the caravan was being taken across the river. On coming down the river to put the men on to this work we found that it had risen several feet during the night, and that it was no longer fordable. We were forced, therefore, to make use of our boat and to steer the caravan across by taking a strong rope over the river. This method of crossing, though it presents no difficulties to those accustomed to it, is always a tedious affair; and here the Yambos again came in useful, as they helped us to get our mules and donkeys over to the other bank.

Although I had a Yambo guide with me who knew the country thoroughly well, I had some difficulty in finding the mouth of the Kaia, as the vegetation along the river banks was extremely thick. When I did come upon it I found the Kaia to be a stream of about forty-five feet in width, and having about four feet of sluggish water in it—its waters being held up by the Akobo. But the Yambo guide told me that there was flowing water in it throughout the year.

Meanwhile, Jessen had been occupied during the day in taking bearings on several points to the south of us, making use of all the prominent peaks in our line of march for his triangulations. He laid down what was to be our course for the next week, and pointed our line of march towards a high mountain,

which was apparently over a hundred miles due south of us. Its shadowy outline was just visible in the dim distance, and as it lay in the proper direction we supposed it must be Mount Naita.

CHAPTER XVIII

ACROSS THE AKOBO

A visit from Abyssinian elephant-hunters—Crossing the river—Large herds of giraffes—An adventure with elephants—A stampede—Lily Pool camp—Departure of the Yambos by night.

WHILE we had been exploring the country on the previous day our camp had been visited by a party of Abyssinians. It seems they were encamped on the mountains high above us to the east, and hearing our rifle-shots had come down into the plain to see who we were. They were elephant-hunters by profession, but as they did not care to remain in the low lands during the rains, they had formed a camp on the mountains and were waiting for the season of sunshine. They had come from Ras Tasamma's country. They said they considered all the land north and east of the Akobo to be under the sphere of influence of their Ras and of his dependents ; while the country south of that river was under the authority of the Ras from Banga—another powerful sub-king under Menelik. They said there were no elephants hereabouts on the other side of the Akobo, and that the country there was quite uninhabited. They seemed perfectly friendly but I have no doubt they would have tried to interfere with us had we been a

weaker party, as these Abyssinian emissaries of the Ras act in a very high-handed manner with strangers, if they think they are strong enough to do so.

Meanwhile all our goods and chattels had been transported to the other side of the river, and on our return we found our tents pitched, and our tea ready for us in the new camp.

Next day at daybreak, we made a fresh start pointing south-east, straight for the distant peak we had taken our bearings on the day before. To our great delight the weather seemed to be improving. We went straight ahead, following strictly the compass bearings right through the jungle. There was, of course, no vestige of a track; and after having marched twelve miles we thought we had done as much as our transport could stand, and we formed our new camp. We had been marching all day nearly parallel to the course of the Kaia river and a few miles to the east of it, and we camped at the foot of a peaked mountain rising about a thousand feet above the plain we were on. We had been ascending all day, and the camp was pitched at an altitude of about three hundred feet above the last one on the Akobo.

During our day's march we had found game to be tolerably plentiful, and I shot a small giraffe and a Jackson's hartebeest for food. But the Abyssinians will not eat giraffe meat nor would they touch the hartebeest as the solemn right of hallaling it had been performed by one of their compatriots who had not kept his Lenten fast, and he was therefore deemed to be unclean. The Abyssinians are extremely

strict in keeping this fast, which lasts forty days, and attach great importance to its observance, and will touch no meat during the period. As they refused to eat the meat of the hartebeest, though they were only getting half rations of flour, they were content to go nearly supperless to bed, notwithstanding their hard day's work.

Nine Yambos followed us on this first day's march, though this side of the river was quite unknown to them. Of course we gave them no flour, but fed them on game ; and they were quite content to follow us for that, and to help us in various little ways about the camp, such as drawing water for us, and collecting firewood. As I said before, they are all of them most excellent trackers and enter into the spirit of the sport, and so we found them useful in many ways.

The beautiful valley in which we now encamped was surrounded on all sides by small conical-shaped hills of volcanic origin, clothed with grass quite up to their summits, and there were large herds of giraffes roaming about in every direction. Jackson's hartebeest were in great numbers ; reed-buck were numerous, and there were also a few ostriches to be seen. Contrary to what we had been told by the Abyssinians whom we had met two days before, it was evident that there were elephants in this part of the country as we saw many fresh traces of them. There was plenty of water to be found in pools, and altogether the place was a paradise in its way. However, the country was uninhabited and there were no signs of human life of any description. The

going during the day's march had not been in any way difficult; and there was a gradual rise up from the river. The soil was still of the sort called black cotton soil on the lower ground; but on the higher elevations it was of a stony character.

As soon as we had arrived at the spot where we were to pitch our camp, Jessen climbed the mountain above us to make a map of the surrounding country, and to make compass bearings for the next day's march.

We had here our first casualty since leaving the camp at Mount Ungwala six days before, for one of our donkeys died. We had heard lions the night before who were paying a visit to our old camp which we had just left on the other side of the Akobo, but we never came across any signs of them while we were on the Musha plateau, and only on one occasion afterwards near the Boma country.

The geological formation is the same here as elsewhere in these parts and is all of volcanic origin. We named this camp "Ree" camp, because of the numbers of giraffes in the neighbourhood, "ree" being in the Yambo language the word for giraffe.

The next day we continued our march pointing in the same direction, and encamped at evening beside a small khor which, doubtless, was a small tributary to the Kaia river.

While Jessen and myself were on the march about a mile ahead of our main caravan, we met three elephants coming quietly along feeding in our direction. The wind was right and we came close upon

them without their being conscious of our proximity. Unfortunately my chief shikari, Osman, was down with fever and so he was not with us, and I had not my elephant gun with me at the time. My second shikari, Ahmed, was carrying a .275 Mauser rifle loaded with soft-nosed bullets. However, I was myself carrying my .450 cordite express, and I determined to try my luck on them.

The country here was quite open, dotted with small bushes about the size and shape of plum-trees in an orchard, merely thin stems with no cover at their base; but I managed to get within forty yards of the nearest elephant. I got a good broadside shot, aiming at the head of the big bull. The other two with him were the mother and a three-parts grown young bull. The shots brought the animal I aimed at down on to his knees, but apparently did not do him much damage, for on catching sight of me he came straight for us, followed by the female and the three-parts grown young one. With their ears out and their trunks up in the air they were a fine sight to behold. I had just time to put one cartridge in my rifle, and I fired straight at the bull as he came to me. The effect of the shot was to turn him so that he rushed past me, closely followed by the young one. The cow was behind and was coming straight for us and I was unloaded; but Ahmed, my shikari, shot at her with his small rifle, and that was luckily sufficient to turn her. But it was a narrow escape, and we were in rather an uncomfortable position. The cow gave me what Jessen described as a lady's smile and passed on. It was lucky she

did pass on, for I was quite at her mercy had she charged.

Meanwhile Jessen, who had no proper rifle with him at the moment, was directly in the line of the charging elephants and two hundred yards behind me. They went straight on for him and the men who were with him. These were the syces and Soudanese who were looking after our riding mules. There was nothing for them to do but to run, and the stampede which followed was a sight for the gods to behold, and would have made me laugh had it not been so serious. However, everybody managed to get away unhurt, and we saw the elephants going at a fast trot away in the distance over the open country behind us. I did not attempt to follow, as it would probably have taken us all day and lost too much time, and I could not afford to delay the caravan.

It is very hard to do exploring work and to shoot at the same time, and to do justice to both, unless your time is quite unlimited and your stock of provisions ample.

I must say it was a most magnificent sight and a very imposing one to see these big brutes bearing down on you at full speed, trunk and tails erect, looking as if they must annihilate you. But one has not time to feel any sensation of fear, and all one's energies are occupied in the excitement of the sport, and there is no place for any other feeling. It was a very pretty sight to see these elephants feeding quite unconscious of danger or of the presence of man at all in this remote and uninhabited region. Grazing close to the elephants within a few yards of

them was a herd of hartebeest fraternising, as it were, with them. It was curious to see these animals so different from each other feeding so close together in such a friendly way.

The effect of the former week's rain now began to be felt, and a great many of our best men were down with fever; but the weather had apparently changed or probably it was that we had left the rainy region behind. Our Yambos all left us in a body during the night without saying good-bye, no doubt, being unwilling to go further into an unknown country, and fearing that we should compel them to accompany us if they had made any mention of their intention to depart.

We christened the place where we were encamped Lily Pool camp, as we found there a large pool of sweet water, doubtless a spring, in which water-lilies were growing, proving beyond doubt that there must always be water there.

When we had questioned the Yambos about what we might expect to find on this side of the river, they had told us that after some days' march a good deal further south, we should come across inhabitants of the country. But none of them had ever heard of Abyssinians having been seen south of the Akobo. Up to the present moment, however, we had seen no natives.

CHAPTER XIX

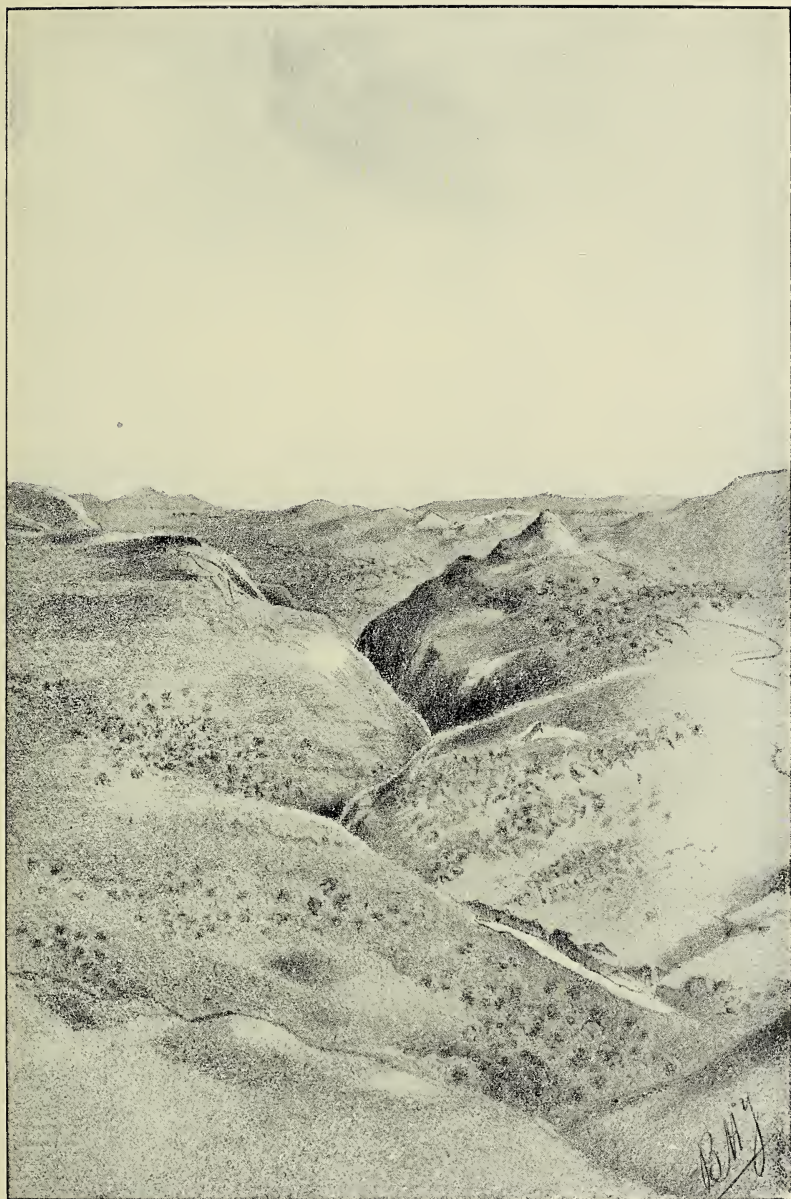
THE MUSHA PLATEAU

Oryx camp—A terrible day's march—Carrying the donkeys—Fine weather at last—On the Kaia river, 3500 ft. above sea-level—A beautiful oasis—An uninhabitable country—Central Peak—Health of our men—Ascent of Central Peak—Mapping the unknown country of Musha Plateau—A visit from timid natives—A real paradise.

DURING the next day's march Jessen ascended a high hill to take bearings and said that from the top he saw a herd of white oryx, but as he saw the herd from a great distance I fancy he must have been mistaken and that the animals he saw were roan antelope.

Anyhow, we named the camp, which we pitched at the foot of the mountain, Oryx camp, and made it out to be two thousand eight hundred and seventy-five feet above the sea-level.

We were now at about six or seven hundred feet higher altitude than the valley of the Akobo where we had left it and about thirty miles distant from it as the crow flies. We were gradually rising over a very broken and undulating upland and the going during the last day's march had been about as rough as it could be. The whole face of the country was strewn with large angular boulders between which the grass grew high, and it was a very difficult matter for our mules to thread their way through this broken



VIEW LOOKING SOUTH FROM MOUNT ORYX. KAIA RIVER AND
CENTRAL PEAK

and difficult ground. Rugged ravines of great depth had to be crossed at every few hundred yards ; and consequently on this day, though we marched until late in the afternoon we only got over a distance of seven or eight miles. How our little donkeys ever got over the ground at all is a mystery to me. In many places our men lifted them over the difficult spots. We saw a few hartebeest in the distance and a solitary roan antelope or two, but the ground was so rough and we were so dead beat that we found it quite impossible to go after them.

The weather had now become very fine, with a warm sun and a nice breeze from the south-east. We were camped on the main waters of the Kaia river, which here flows from the south-east ; and I should say that the rainy season was over on this plateau and that the seasons here are similar in time to those at Lake Rudolph where the heavy rains cease at the end of May. The long grass, the tips of which were just turning brown, seemed to point to this ; and, at any rate, I do not think there could have been any rain to speak of for at least a fortnight in this district.

The next day, June 4, after a terribly hard march of eight miles or so, we camped some distance higher up the Kaia river. We made the altitude of this camp to be three thousand four hundred feet above the sea-level. The same rough ground continued and it was quite impossible to attempt any shooting and to do a day's march at the same time. We began the day by ascending a steep ridge, marching parallel to the river, which cut its way through this ridge, making in its course a deep gauge some hundreds

of feet below us. This ridge seemed to be the escarpment of the central plateau of Musha and from this standpoint we saw, for the first time for many days, the prominent peak the bearings on which Jessen had taken from the high ground on the other side of the Akobo. Soon after we had crossed the ridge above mentioned, we found ourselves on a level plain, furnished with beautiful grass and with no boulders whatever to trouble us. Our disappointment was great, however, after marching for two or three hours further, to see another peaked mountain just behind and rather to the east of the one we had been making for, and after due consideration we came to the conclusion that the second peak was Mount Naita and the mountain towards which we were making was an unknown one, for it was not marked on any map.

We were very glad to march under these new conditions across a flat grassy plain. Boulders hidden everywhere in the long grass are a frightful thing to march through, especially for laden pack-animals. The rocks strewn about here are all of volcanic origin and are of every size and form, and sharp and angular ; some of them sticking fast into the ground, some of them mere rolling stones. As may be imagined, our animals suffered much and their fetlock joints had become bare and devoid of skin as a consequence of marching through the sharp rocks ; in many cases the shins of the poor animals were cut to the bone. The only way to protect their legs from serious injury was to tie bandages of cotton cloth round them. It was almost impossible to walk without frequent falls, the long grass hiding numerous holes into

which one inevitably put one's foot. I do not believe that a caravan of transport animals has ever crossed a rougher country; and of course for days there had not been a semblance of a track.

The country was totally uninhabited and indeed totally unfit for habitation, at least the greater part of it. Every now and then we would come across a small flat plain some miles square with a nice rich soil and without a boulder upon it. These grass-covered plains were generally swarming with game, and formed a sort of oasis, as it were, in the middle of these stony deserts. But then the rough country would begin again and our troubles also. I can best describe the general appearance of the country we were crossing by comparing it to a rocky sea-shore at low tide, intersected by deep ravines at frequent intervals. But it was the long thick grass growing up between the rocks and stones that added more than anything else to our difficulties in marching through this rocky district.

The peaked mountain on which we had taken our bearings was now about thirty miles distant due south, and the mountain slightly to the east which we afterwards found out really was Mount Naita, was about thirty miles beyond this peak. We named this new mountain "Central Peak," as it rises in the centre of the plateau.

Most of the Abyssinians were now free from fever. I think the healthy air of the high plateau suited them, but the Somalis were not so fortunate, and some of them were in a very bad plight. The Abyssinians we had with us were all picked men and a very

fine strong lot they were ; of course they are accustomed to a mountainous country, Abyssinia being one of the most mountainous countries in the world, and naturally they were therefore more fitted for this kind of work than the Somalis, who live mostly on the plains. As for our three Soudanese, they were of iron, and no change of climate seemed to affect them in the slightest degree. Both Jessen and myself were perfectly well.

The next day, June 5, we marched due south, and made good progress, marching fifteen miles, all the time over a flat grassy plain. This should have been a very easy day for the animals, but they were completely tired out by their previous efforts, and we did not get our camp fixed much before dark. This camp we made out to be about six miles north of the base of the mountain we had named Central Peak. The level plain on which we now were was a most beautiful spot with the high mountain peak towering just beyond it. The soil around us seemed excellent, and was in some places of a deep red colour, and in others black cotton soil. Zebra were here seen for the first time, swarming all over the oasis. Ostriches, giraffes, and Jackson's hartebeest were very numerous, and occasionally reed-buck would be seen dashing out of the long grass.

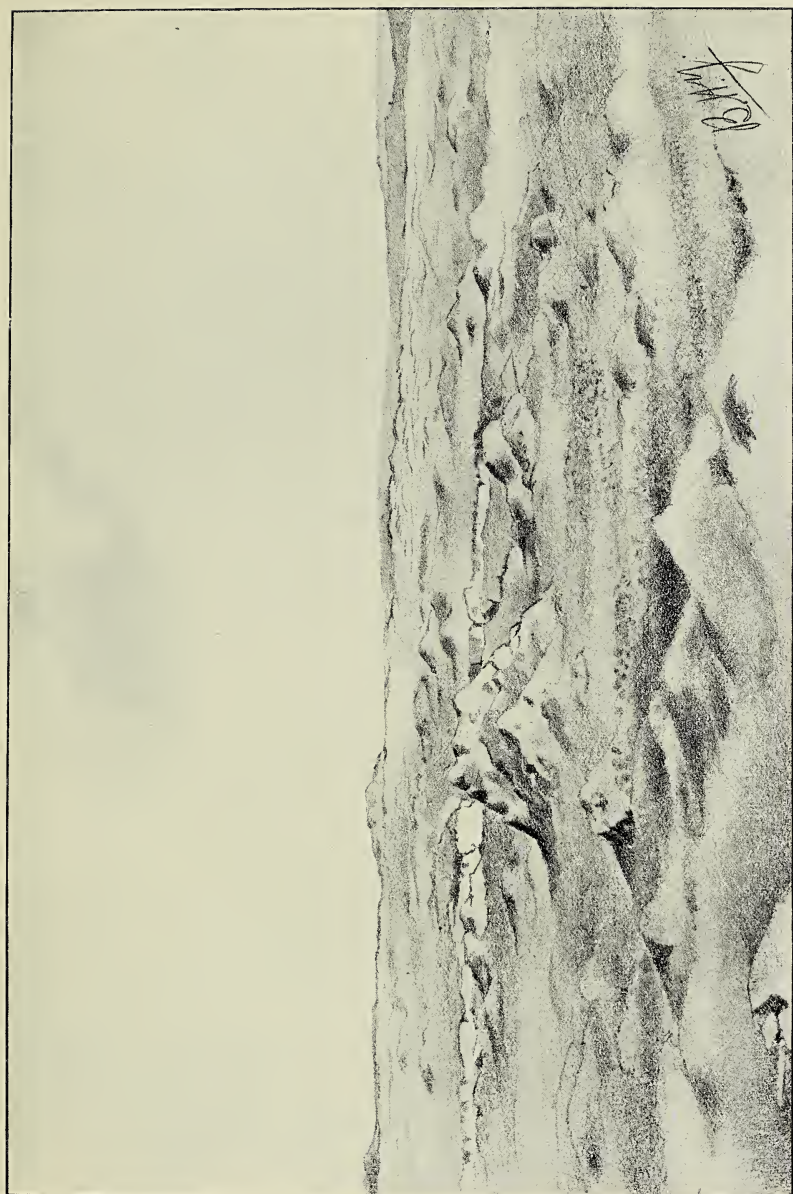
I cannot imagine why this plateau, which seemed to possess everything in the way of fertility of soil and beauty of climate, should not be inhabited. It cannot be because water is scarce, as we passed, during our march of that day, several khors with water in them and pools, apparently springs, con-

taining water-lilies, besides crossing two streams which traversed the plain tributary to the Kaia. The main stream of the Kaia river itself we had left just before arriving at the last camp, as to follow up its course would have taken us too far away to the eastward. The grass in this plain grew very high and was of the wild oat and rye grass species, and not the coarse description of grass to be seen on the plains below. The plateau on which we were encamped was about three thousand eight hundred feet above the sea, and while we were there, there was always a fresh breeze blowing from the south-east, and the temperature hardly ever went above eighty degrees Fahrenheit in the shade in the day-time, nor below sixty degrees Fahrenheit at night. But the direct rays of the sun were very powerful and seemed to be more burning than in the plains below. The air was very dry and there was little or no dew at night, during the week or so we were encamped there.

We started early the next day to ascend the unknown mountain which we had named Central Peak. There was no difficulty in the climbing of it, though the actual ascent was very steep. We found its height to be five thousand two hundred and seventy-five feet above the level of the sea; and as it was quite isolated from other hills, the view from its summit was most commanding and it afforded us a fine prospect in all directions, standing as it did exactly in the middle of the plateau with nothing high nearer to it than Mount Naita. The mountain itself is of volcanic formation and is composed of black basalt rock in contrast to the peaks in all this

neighbourhood, which are invariably of granite piercing the volcanic rocks of the plains. Jessen was able to make a very exact map of all the surrounding Musha plateau. To the north of us was the Abyssinian Mount Bocol and to the north-west the mountains of the Boma plateau. The country between Mount Naita to the south-east and Boma to the north-west was laid out as a map below us, and it would have been impossible for us to find a peak more suitably placed for our surveying purposes. The peak itself lies at about longitude $35^{\circ} 5'$ east and $5^{\circ} 55'$ north latitude. Numerous clip-springers were to be seen on its higher slopes jumping from rock to rock just like chamois.

All the country on either side seemed quite uninhabited and for the most part, I should say uninhabitable. However, in the direction where the sources of the Sacchi river lay, about twenty miles to the east of us, we saw smoke. Bottego, when he came through this part of the world from Lake Rudolph about seven years before, passed up the Sacchi river and found inhabitants, I believe, where we now saw smoke. We also saw very distant smoke away to the north-west towards Boma. The plain to the south-east of us towards Mount Naita and all the country lying south and south-west was very broken up and was traversed from end to end by enormous cañons and ravines. All the streams in this district, except those forming the head-waters of the Kaia river, seemed to flow towards the south-west and the land to the southward of us seemed to dip down in that direction. It was our impression that these streams



VIEW LOOKING SOUTH-WEST FROM CENTRAL PEAK

must form either the head waters of the Pibor river, which flows into the Baro just below Nasser, or else the head-waters of some river flowing directly into the Nile from the east. From our lofty standpoint we could see immense masses of black clouds covering the Abyssinian mountains, and though it was fine where we were and we had had no rain for a fortnight, the deluge we had ourselves experienced in the Akobo valley was doubtless continuing there.

Next day we made a day of rest, and we basked in the warm sunshine and sweet breezes of this charming plateau, sending out our shikaris to kill meat for the men, being too lazy to do so ourselves. While we were sitting basking in our long chairs two natives of the district suddenly appeared, hovering about us some distance from the camp, and seemed to be too frightened to come near us. However, by holding up a piece of meat as a bait we managed to induce them to come within hail. But it was impossible to make ourselves understood. In answer to our inquiries, carried on entirely by signs, we made out that they had come from the eastward, doubtless from the sources of the Sacchi river, where we had seen smoke from the top of the mountain the day before. They were very timid and frightened and would only remain a few minutes in the camp. One of them was wearing the skin of a newly killed zebra, no doubt taken from the body of one which had been wounded by us and lost two days before. We made a point of never killing zebra unless we were obliged to do so for food. Zebra meat is very good eating and the men are very fond of it.

While shooting and exploring in this neighbourhood we came across a perfect elephant's skull, showing that somebody at all events had killed an elephant here at some time or other ; though from the state of the skull it was evident that many years had passed since this one had been slaughtered. Jessen came across some wild dogs, but he failed to get one.

This would have been a perfect spot for a permanent camp, had we had the leisure to make a long stay, and had we had plenty of flour for our men. A healthier place it would have been impossible to find. The water-supply too was excellent and I need not say how very important a good pure water-supply is. It does not so much matter for us whites, who have filters and take care not to drink polluted water ; our men had no filters and are always absolutely careless as to what kind of water they drink. Indeed, they would seem, if anything, to prefer polluted water ; at all events, you will constantly see them drawing water from a polluted source when sweet fresh water is to be obtained at a distance of a few yards ; and when camped on the banks of a running stream, if not watched, they will take water below the spot where hundreds of animals are polluting it, rather than give themselves the trouble of going a short distance up stream.

CHAPTER XX

THE RETURN MARCH

Homeward — Terror-stricken natives — The bees' revenge—
Rain again—A leopard in camp at night—or a lion ?—More
unexpected company—An uncomfortable position—Native
dread of fire-arms—Prosperity on the Boma plateau.

ON June 10, we broke up camp and started off in a south-westerly direction, through the same broken country. It was very difficult to keep a true direction while marching, on account of the numerous cañons and crevasses in the soil, which obliged us to take a very zigzag course. Jessen, who headed the return march, could only make about seven miles as the crow flies on that day, so difficult was the nature of the country.

I stopped behind in the old camp for a few hours with my two shikaris, waiting to allow the sun to dry some zebra-skins before we folded them. I whiled away the time while waiting for the skins to dry by going out and shooting some partridges and quail, which were very numerous in this district. In a thick bit of bush I came across an isolated native kraal, very cleverly hidden away in the rocks and brush-wood, which proved conclusively that natives do come down here occasionally. In the kraal were numerous remains of hartebeest bones, showing also

that the natives do occasionally succeed in killing these animals. I was told that they managed to do so by surrounding them in great numbers, but that it is a work of great labour and they are far too lazy to take the trouble to hunt in this way unless they are very nearly starving.

On my way back to the old camp with my pockets full of quail before starting after Jessen, I came across a band of eight or ten natives, marching in Indian file and with their eyes intently bent towards our old camping-ground. They had doubtless been watching our movements from a distance, and having seen the caravan going away thought that the coast was clear, and they were coming down to see what they could pick up. So intent were they that they did not see me and my two shikaris, though we were only about one hundred and fifty yards away from them ; so I gave them a shout. On hearing the cry all the lot of them with one bound, without looking to see where the disturbance came from, turned and fled as if the devil himself had been behind them, not one of them looking back ; and they continued their flight until they had put at least a mile of ground between us. I followed after them as best I could, as I wished to get into communication with them, but as I neared them they went further and further away, and I at length gave up the chase as useless, as they could run a great deal faster than I could.

I found considerable difficulty in tracing Jessen to our new camp, as from the nature of the ground he had had to retrace his steps so often that it was very difficult to know exactly where he had gone, even with

the most careful tracking. But we managed to hit upon his camp just before sunset. We found the whole place in the greatest commotion. The camp had been pitched close to a hollow tree and one of our curious Soudanese boys had found a bees' nest in this tree and regardless of the stings of the occupants had made an attempt to loot the honey with the natural consequence that everybody about was severely stung.

This camp was about seventy feet below the one we had just left and lying a little south-west of it was the furthest point south to which we reached. From this place we swung round in the direction of Boma and made a long march over a dry plateau which afforded much better going than we had had for a very long time. We passed during this march three rivulets all flowing to the south-west. We found also that the weather was gradually growing hotter, the temperature being about one hundred and five degrees Fahrenheit in the shade. As we approached the Boma country the going began to get better and the land began to have a more fertile appearance; vegetation became very luxuriant and doleb palms were to be seen growing beside the streams.

June 12 was a wet morning, the first rain we had experienced since May 30. We were now marching through very long grass reaching high above our heads, growing out of a black soil. Later on in the day we came across some date palms, showing that this region had evidently been inhabited at some former period. Elephant tracks appeared again, though none of them were very recent. But the

only antelope we saw were Jackson's hartebeest ; they were very plentiful.

At night time we encamped near the banks of a stream in very long grass and during the night a leopard crept into the camp and created quite a diversion. We had had a very long day's march and it was sunset before we got our tents up. All round us and in amongst our tents was long grass at least fifteen feet high, and the men were so tired out that I had not given orders to have the grass cleared away from the neighbourhood of the camp, and so our tents were almost hidden away in the thick high vegetation. This, of course, was very careless of me, and it ought not to have been allowed. I was awakened in the middle of the night by one of the men who was acting as guard pulling me almost out of my bed, saying that there was a lion in the camp, roaming around amongst the tents. I ran out with my rifle and stood at the entrance of the tent, but though I listened intently I heard nothing and of course the high thick grass made it quite impossible to see anything. But I then heard the unmistakable bark of a leopard at close quarters and it may have been this that had disturbed the camp. So I told the man to fire off his rifle two or three times into the air. But I am not sure that I was right and the man may have been right in supposing that there was a lion about, for two minutes afterwards I heard two lions roaring at a little distance away.

On June 14, while on march some miles ahead of the caravan Jessen and myself, with our two shikaris and a Yambo guide who had stuck to us throughout,

suddenly came across a plot of cultivation, quite hidden away in the thick forest growth. This showed us that there must be a village near at hand and so we told our Yambo to shout out in his own language any friendly greetings he could think of. We soon heard voices in all directions, but on account of the thickness of the undergrowth we could see no one. At last one man more courageous than the rest plucked up courage and came into full view. Yambo, however, was evidently quite an unknown language to him and we could not succeed in making ourselves understood.

Our position was not altogether a comfortable one as the natives appeared to be very numerous, while we only numbered eight all told. Had they been hostilely inclined they could have speared us all from behind the thick bushes without our being able to retaliate. I thought it unwise to remain in this exposed situation, as one can never tell what may happen on these occasions, a very slight misunderstanding often occasioning a serious quarrel; so we forced our way at our best speed through the thick undergrowth on to an isolated grassy knoll which I had marked out, a little distance away, and had pitched upon in my mind as a good place for a camp.

We managed to get through to this knoll without any untoward incident happening. No doubt, being so few in numbers we caused no fear to the natives and they appeared to be quite friendly and unsuspecting. They surrounded us in great numbers while we were awaiting the arrival of the caravan and

did not seem disposed to interfere with us in any way.

I fired off my rifle several times as a signal to the caravan to show them where we were. At the sound of the first shot every native, and there were two or three hundred of them, fell flat on his face; evidently the sound of a rifle was something quite new to them.

It was impossible not to remark at once the prosperous nature of the country. Large tracks of maize and fields of dhura appeared in all directions, and from the exalted position of our camp we could make a very good survey of the country all round and could see that the maize and dhura crops were just getting ripe.

We were now, it was evident, on the Boma plateau, and right in the most thriving centre of the Boma people. We made out our altitude to be three thousand eight hundred feet above the sea-level and longitude about $34^{\circ} 30'$ east and latitude $6^{\circ} 10'$ north.



VIEW NORTH FROM CAMP "CASTLE ROCK," BOMA (MOUNT UNGWALA TO THE LEFT)

CHAPTER XXI

BOMA

An interesting race—Curious geological formations—Spears and head-dresses—A non-commercial people—Cloth and beads—Boma as a future health-resort—Precautions at night—Illness of my syce.

WITH the exception of Major Austin and his party, who had skirted this district three years before, we were the first whites who had ever visited the Boma plateau. Major Austin, I believe, had neither the time nor the opportunity to have much intercourse with these mountaineers. He was hurrying on for another purpose and left these people as it were, beside him on his march. Our circumstances were more favourable and we were able to explore the country pretty well.

They are an interesting people, these inhabitants of the rocky fastnesses of Boma, and are apparently quite isolated and cut off from the rest of the world. They live on a plateau on the top of the escarpment, about four thousand feet above the sea-level, looking down on the plains in the direction of the Nile ; and they are separated on all sides from other savage tribes by large tracts of uninhabited districts. Their language, as far as we could ascertain from the few words of their vocabulary which we were able to get from them, has affinities with that of the tribes of the

south near Lake Rudolph, but it seemed to have no connection with the language of the peoples to the north of them. They cultivate very extensive tracts of maize and dhura in the alluvial soil of the fertile passes lying between the undulations of the hills.

Great granite mountains and boulders of every size, and finger-shaped granite excrescences crop up through the volcanic rock in every direction. The shapes of these granite blocks are sometimes most fantastic; some of them resemble old Norman castles; others have long fingers pointed sharp like an obelisk; others are mere large denuded blocks of granite. As may be supposed, the views on all sides from this lofty plateau were magnificent. To the south-east, from whence we had come, we could see in the distance the sharp outline of Central Peak, with the vast uneven plain we had just traversed lying between us. To the north a long line of granite peaks leading the eye towards the shadowy form of the distant Mount Ungwala, the giant which guards the entrance to the Yambo country, and which is the last of this line of granite masses extending northward from where we were.

Geologically this long line of granite peaks running due north and south, piercing through the black basaltic rock like so many spikes, is a curious feature. To the south the land rose a few hundred feet above us, and on the top of this rise is situated the central stronghold, the citadel, as it were, of the Boma tribe. To the west are the plains and valleys stretching far away to the Nile.

The Boma people were very free and easy and quite

fearless in their manner towards us ; but that they had some suspicion of our intentions was evident, as they hid away any sheep or goats and other animals they may have possessed ; and we only saw one or two of their women. The female portion of the population was presumably confined to their homes. Neither would they allow us to visit their citadel, which indeed was not to be wondered at.

The majority of the men carried two or three spears always with them, as, of course, is the custom amongst all savage tribes. One of these is the war spear, ground sharp as a razor, the point of which is carefully covered up in a leather case to protect its edge. The other spears carried are for the general daily use. They can be used for defence in case of some sudden or treacherous attack, but are usually turned to a hundred different uses of daily want, and perform at one moment the part of a chopper and the next that of a spade.

The general get-up of the warriors of the tribe is quite striking, though their bodies are left quite unadorned except for an occasional bit of colouring laid on the skin, or for a string of beads round the neck or waist. But their head-dress is fashioned with the greatest care ; all the males take great pride in this adornment and the head-dress seems to be the great object of the artistic effort of the people. A broad band of several strings of red beads five inches in breadth is tied across the forehead and attached behind the head. Exactly in the middle between the eyebrows, white beads are strung into the red so as to make a vertical white strip from the top

of the forehead to the meeting of the eyebrows. The hair is grown thick on the top of the head and tressed out flat into the shape of a mat, while behind, it is shaved off close, right up to the level of the top of the ears. Many had feathers of birds stuck in coquettishly on the top of the head, after the fancy of the wearer. The *ensemble* is most effective, much more so than an imperfect description can convey ; and as a head-dress of the savage fashion it is singularly becoming. It attracts the eye at once, especially as there is so little adornment below to take away the attention. The women we saw were not nearly so becomingly adorned as the men, and they do not appear to take much trouble about their appearance. But then they have to work, while their lords and masters saunter round every bit like a flock of peacocks. For clothes the women have nothing but a piece of goat-skin around the loins, always beautifully tanned ; that is, the married ones, for the unmarried girls are not supposed to need any covering at all.

I imagine that no foreign trade caravans have ever come amongst these people, for they have nothing to barter, and their own wants are confined to salt, beads and iron wire. They have no ivory to trade with and nothing that could attract the trader. I do not think either that they have as yet been much molested by the Abyssinians, who are, of course, at a considerable distance away ; though Ras Tasamma must have passed very near this district on his march towards the Nile at the time of the Fashoda trouble. This, of course, was not his direct route but he came this way in order to follow the line of the mountains,

and to avoid the fevers of the marshy country around the river Baro.

As is well known, the Abyssinians only come down out of the mountains into the valleys in search of ivory. They have a mortal dread of the fevers of the plains. They are no explorers, and nothing but the search after elephants would induce them to risk the dangers of a low-lying country. They are not likely either to cross the miles of desert and uninhabited land which separates Boma from their country, for an Abyssinian does not like desolate places, as he is accustomed to make the natives of the country he passes through provide him with food ; and where there are no natives there is no food. The people of Boma do not, as far as we could ascertain, have any relations with the distant tribes to the north-east of them, separated from them as they are by an uninhabited country. They are totally unacquainted with the Yambo dialect and so we found it impossible to get much in the way of information out of them. But nevertheless we got into very friendly intercourse and they willingly bartered their ripe corn for beads. They generally preferred red coloured ones, but white beads were also in some demand. We managed to introduce a new fashion into the country. We had with us some very fine large amber-coloured beads. After these had been dangled before them for some time, though evidently a novelty, they became quite the fashion, and our whole stock was barely sufficient for the demand. Every savage tribe has its own fancy in beads ; what one tribe desires another tribe quite close by would

not take at all, and so before going into an unknown country, it is of the utmost importance to find out what kind of beads the people there affect. Brass wire had very little value in Boma. In this, these people are strikingly different from the savage tribes to the north of them, who prefer brass wire to anything else. Iron wire, however, had a good value, and they would part with everything they had for salt; for salt is the great common want of all natives in the far interior of Africa. Americana, that is, coarse cotton cloth, they have no use for. We thought to make the chief a handsome present by giving him a large piece of this cloth, which is known all over north-east Africa under the name of Aboujedid, and is accepted as currency everywhere, but he could hardly be prevailed upon to accept it. When one thinks that a bare two hundred miles away from him near the shores of Lake Rudolph, a small piece of this cloth would have purchased a donkey, one could but marvel at his ignorance of its value. But the Boma country is cut off and isolated, and its people are ignorant of the ways of the African world, and it would be a thousand pities if this interesting tribe should lose its independence and be raided and gradually wiped out by the stronger tribes in the neighbourhood.

Boma lies on the confines of south-eastern Soudan and should naturally come under the control of the Khartoum government. It is a most beautiful and fertile country with a perfect climate, and the plateau is after all not so very inaccessible from the Nile. Unlike the Africans generally, these people appear to be a steady hardworking race, and it is very rarely

in such remote places that one sees such large expanses of cultivation. Indeed, the amount of cultivation seemed altogether more extensive than the needs of the people would seem to demand. It is possible, however, that a much larger population than is at first sight apparent, lives hidden away in the rocky defiles, that the men only descend to the lower ground to cultivate the crops and retire away each evening to their mountain homes.

Such is Boma, and it is no exaggeration to call it paradise in its way, destined perhaps, one day to become a resting-place and health-resort for the hard-worked Soudanese official.

During the time we stayed on the Boma plateau, by way of precaution we set extra guards round the camp day and night, so as to be ready in case of emergency, as of course one cannot be too careful when in the midst of an unknown and savage people. Such a very little thing often raises a quarrel in savage countries, and when once a wordy warfare has begun, one never knows how it may end. The Abyssinians were particularly nervous, as they always seem to be when amongst a strange people; and there was no fear of their going to sleep over their guard at night. Indeed, the whole camp was awake all the night through, the Abyssinians singing and shouting as if to keep up their courage; and certainly between them they made noise enough to frighten away the devil himself.

In the early mornings numbers of natives would come into camp bringing in corn cobs, both green and ripe ones, to barter. This windfall of provisions was

a perfect godsend to ourselves and our men, especially the green corn, and for a long time each day the whole camp was one great market.

My Abyssinian syce became suddenly very ill here. Upon my inquiring into his case, I found that on the advice of one of his friends he had allowed the tip of his uvula to be cut off by way of treatment for a cold in his throat. In this state he naturally could not eat the coarse food which was all we had to give him, and as there was no fresh milk to be had, it was probable that he would die. We of course had to carry him for several days' march, and for some time we were afraid it would be a bad case; but it is wonderful how these people can thrive on nothing, and by the end of the week, he was almost well again.

CHAPTER XXII

MOUNT UNGWALA AGAIN

Suspicious attitude of the natives—Lost among the rocks—An anxious moment—Speeding the parting guest—Descent into the plains—The Ajuba river—Obliged to abandon stores—Hardships tell on the men—The Akobo again—A difficult crossing—More elephants—Our old camp—Timidity of our friend Olimi—Face to face with an immense elephant—A terrible storm—An opportune messenger from Mc Millan—Relief—Difficult crossing of the Gelo—Through a thick forest—Discovery of a village—Arrival at Komaton—Back on the Baro—Rapidity of our march—A magnificent tusker—Hadji Ali's narrow escape—The caravan paid off.

On the morning of June 16, we broke up camp early and pointed due north on our return journey. We had quite expected that some of the natives would have paid us a visit at daybreak as usual, but not a single one appeared, nor was there a living soul visible in any direction. We had hoped to get some one to guide us out of these fastnesses and though of course our general direction was obvious enough, it was not so easy to find the best path out of these rocky defiles.

Naturally we missed the best way and instead of taking the path that would have led us directly down to the lower ground, and which I believe to have been a tolerably easy one, we got entrapped into a series of bypaths along the side of the mountain, passing at times through large tracts of corn just ripening; but there was nobody to be seen.

All this, of course, looked rather suspicious, and it seemed almost as if some attack was meditated upon us, so we kept the caravan all close up together in case of any such accident. After some time, however, we came upon a large village and getting hold of the head man, who happened to be one of those who had received us so well in Boma some days before, we were soon put into the right way. We were most lucky to meet him, as he was the one man whom we had come across in Boma who could talk a little Yambo.

Going on a few miles further we again lost our way, and while we were reconnoitring to find out the path, we suddenly came upon a man hiding behind a rock. This person we seized with the intention of impressing him as our guide. Almost immediately from every side fully armed warriors sprung up as if out of the earth, and we thought we were in for a fight. But after some little difficulty we explained that we had no intention of doing any harm to anybody, and that all we wished for was for some one to guide us out of this labyrinth of rocks. They were finally convinced that our intentions were not evil, and the whole band at once constituted themselves as our guides, marching in front of us; and thus friendly relations were completely re-established.

As we went through the cultivated portions of the country, the natives, seeing that we were accompanied by a band of their own people, would come down to meet us bringing with them cobs of ripe corn which they would give as presents to our men as we marched past. But for all their friendliness I am sure they were very glad to see the last of us, as of course they

had no idea as to what our intentions might be and naturally they could not tell whether we should ultimately turn out to be friends or enemies.

At length, under the guidance of our friends we came to an abrupt hill side and descended down it quite one thousand feet. At the bottom of this descent we came upon a nice little stream and determined to camp there for the night, having made only ten miles march during the whole day, and having traversed the roughest country possible.

We had now only to follow the long chain of granite peaks pointing directly towards Mount Ungwala, and the next day we encamped at the foot of a mountain, marked on Austin's map Dim Hill. We were now traversing tolerably well-known ground, as we were marching only a few miles to the west of the route Major Austin had taken in an inverse direction three years before, we ourselves having intersected his line of march the day before. But there was no path or track anywhere, where we were at any rate, and the grass was thick, and twelve feet in height. But when we came lower down into the valleys we found numerous elephant tracks and game paths running through this thick grass and following these paths made our progress considerably easier. This region must abound in elephants and though we actually saw none of them while passing through the district, there was no mistaking the evident signs of them everywhere. I think they must have all migrated to the low marshy land where they appear to go at this time of the year to breed.

On June 18, having swung round a little from the

west, we encamped on the Ajuba river a little to the north-east of Dim Hill. This so-called river is merely a series of mud pools, and it is probable that it is only during the rains that there is a flow of water from pool to pool. The running streams which we had met with higher up in the Boma country, and which we thought formed the head waters of the Ajuba, flow away to the north-west, and are probably affluents of the Neubari. This I think we proved conclusively, as we marched in a north-westerly direction out of Boma, keeping the water-courses on our left. We then swung round to the north-east on to the Ajuba and followed its course down, but never again came across those streams we had left flowing in a north-westerly direction.

We were here obliged to destroy a great quantity of our stores as we were unable to carry them. Our transport was cracking up and the men were all tired out. Up to this moment we had, since leaving the main camp at the foot of Mount Ungwala, lost eight mules, four donkeys and one pony. Game was very plentiful in this neighbourhood, of the same sort that we had seen everywhere else during our march through the Yambo country, but the grass was too high to attempt shooting with any chance of success. After a long and tiring march through the thick high grass, we encamped by the side of a small shallow lake which is formed by the Ajuba river just south of its junction with the Akobo. Our men began to show signs of the hardships they had gone through and had become perfectly listless and tired out, and almost useless for any hard work. The Somalis seemed

to suffer in this respect more than the Abyssinians. This cracking up of the men was no doubt due to long continued hard work on half rations. The Somalis particularly seemed to have lost their *moral*. They are not explorers by nature, but hunters, and take no interest in going through an unknown country except for what game it possesses.

We marched along the west bank of the Akobo and crossed it at a very difficult crossing, near the Yambo village of Gwait. Of course the river here was quite unfordable, and the approaches to it were surrounded by high reeds for half a mile from its banks on either side and the banks were exceedingly high and steep. After firing off guns to attract attention, we managed to collect a few Yambos to help us at the crossing. The river banks were so high and steep, that the mules and donkeys had to be dragged up from the water by ropes and lifted bodily up through the reeds; but most luckily, notwithstanding the difficulties of the crossing, we only lost one animal.

When safely over on the other bank, we met many of our old Yambo friends and pitched our camp on the same ground we had marched over five or six weeks before.

At five o'clock that evening, just after settling down into camp, we saw four elephants feeding close by us in the swamps and high reeds which surrounded the camp. I attempted to get a shot at them by crawling through the wet weeds, taking good care, of course, to get the wind right, but apparently they suddenly got wind of the camp and decamped at a great rate. I tried to cut them off by making a

short cut; and running round them succeeded so effectually that I quite intercepted them and drove them into a corner between myself and the swift stream of the Akobo with its high perpendicular banks. But the animals, seeing their position, never hesitated a moment, and plunged into the deep swift stream of the river, landing without difficulty on the other side, scaling the steep banks in an incredibly short space of time; and thus I lost my prey.

Next day, June 21, we camped at the old spot at the foot of Mount Ungwala. We had nothing to do now, but to make the best of our way back to the Baro, and as we knew the country, having traversed it two months before, there was no difficulty in this. As we were so short of provisions we pressed on as fast as we could, and did not make any attempt to kill any game, except what was actually necessary for food; and indeed the length of the grass would have made it impossible to hunt with any great success. But the country here seemed to swarm with roan antelope, and I should very much have liked to have got another specimen or two of this beautiful animal.

Mc Millan had left us provisions under charge of the chief Olimi at our old camp at Digira. He had anticipated that we should be short of food when we should arrive back at this spot, and we now profited by his forethought. We quite expected to see our old friend Olimi on arriving back in his territory. We found indeed the provisions which had been left for us under the guard of his men, but we could neither

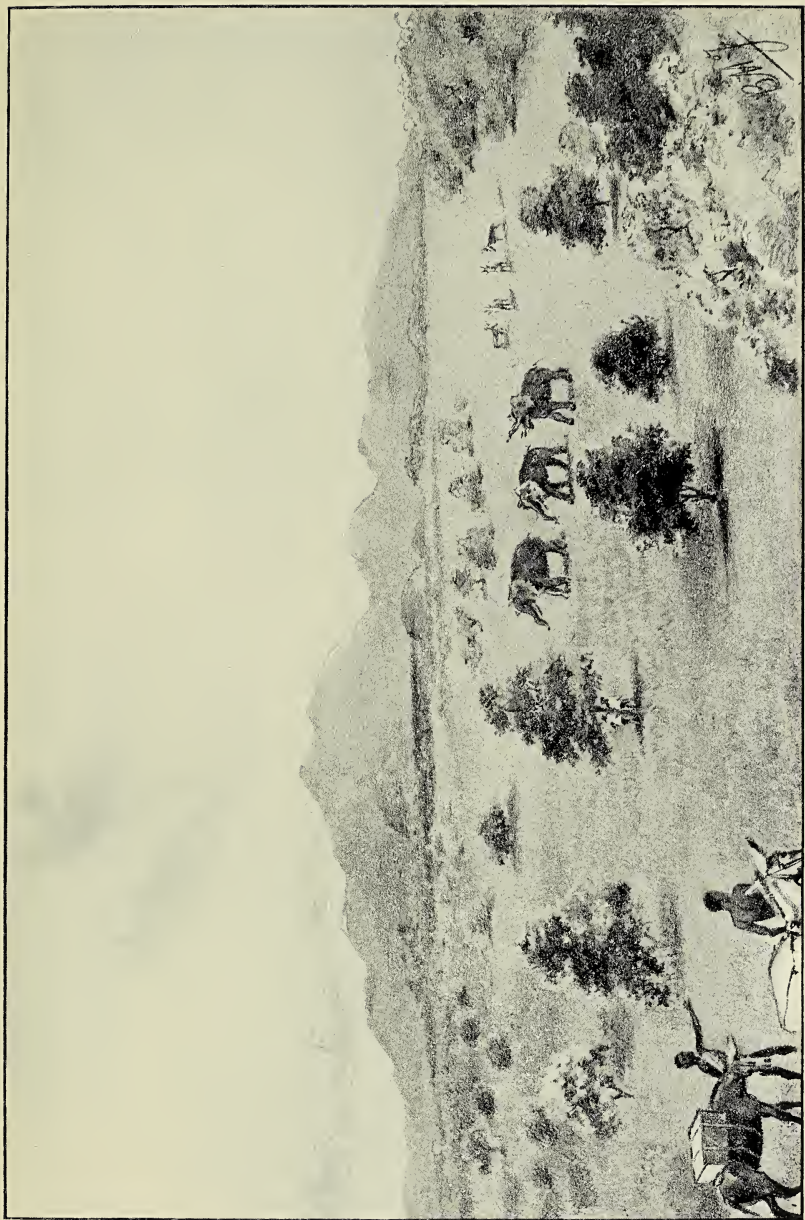
see nor hear anything of him. His people related all sorts of stories to excuse his absence, that he was busy with his harvest and such sort of tales; but the fact was, as we afterwards ascertained, that he avoided us purposely. The reason of it was this. A man in the pay of the Abyssinians, probably a spy, had shot one of his men, during our absence, because he said he had told the white men all about the country. The Abyssinians are very jealous of people obtaining information about this country and have always done all they could to prevent explorers obtaining any knowledge of the district. So Olimi feared complications and thought he had better make himself scarce and be on the safe side.

On June 25, we found ourselves at our old camp on the Owag, called by the natives Agogotok. There were numerous fresh tracks of buffalo and elephant in every direction, and as I was walking along at the head of the caravan I saw a very fine bull elephant two hundred yards distant to the right of us, seemingly quite unconscious of our presence. As I cautiously went up to him he walked quickly away, though I am quite sure he did not see me. After walking a mile or two he stopped to wash himself in a pool of rain water, putting a small bush between us. I, with one of my shikaris, crept up behind this bush to within ten yards of the animal, when unfortunately he must have got a momentary whiff of our wind. He made a step forward to reconnoitre, showing merely the fore part of his head and trunk round the bush. He turned his head directly upon us, looking at us face to face and certainly he was less than ten

yards distant. We stopped stock still without moving a muscle for quite a couple of minutes, he looking at us face to face all the time. As is well known the eyesight of the elephant is extremely defective, and, as we stayed so still, he probably mistook us for two posts of wood. Anyhow, at last he seemed satisfied that all was right and turned his head sideways again, giving me a chance for a shot at his temple. But his great ears were flapping backwards and forwards making it very difficult to place a bullet exactly in the right place, especially as the animal was not standing quite at right angles to us. I gave him both barrels of my .450 cordite rifle, but though the concussion of the bullets made him stagger he recovered himself and dashed off, going round me in a circle. I had time to slip in another cartridge before he got out of range and gave him a broadside, but to no purpose. We followed him as fast as we could through the long grass, but we never saw him again. The numerous tracks of other elephants made it almost impossible to follow a trail.

Soon after, one of my boys came running up saying there was another fine elephant right in the path of the caravan. I hurried forward only in time to see him disappear in the distance. The tusks of the elephants hereabouts are very large and I certainly have never seen finer specimens than these two possessed. Jessen was able to take several photographs of both of those we had just seen at a very short range but unfortunately they did not come out well.

This night we were visited by certainly the most



AN ELEPHANT HUNT

severe thunderstorm it has ever been my lot to experience; the thunder and lightning were simply terrific and the rain during the whole night fell in a perfect deluge. The next morning the surface of the country was under water. We marched on the whole day over the plains through water varying in depth all the time and found many a stream which we could step across two months before now very broad and deep and quite impossible to cross without swimming. Fortunately the going under the water was sound for the most part, or we could not have got through it at all.

Arrived at our old camp on the Atiwat, we met a Yambo messenger sent from Itang by Mc Millan and never was a messenger more welcome. He brought with him newspapers with the first account we had had of the Russo-Japanese War. Since our departure from Itang the Government boat had been up the Baro and had brought down the mails with the latest news. We also got a letter from Mc Millan himself saying he had sent down flour for our men from Itang to the care of the different sheiks between the Gelo river and the Baro. The messenger had also with him a sack of onions for ourselves.

Nothing could have been more opportune than his arrival, as we had not an ounce of flour left and we had had to feed our Abyssinians with rice from our own slender mess-store, which would not have lasted a day longer. We sent the messenger back to Mc Millan, saying that we hoped to be with him in Itang in four days, and then made the best of our way towards the Gelo river.

This river we had found rather difficult to cross two months before ; now it was really a most formidable obstacle. The water had risen quite ten feet since then and the current was so strong that we could not row our Berthon boat across the stream and tow a long rope to establish our communications with the other banks ; the weight of the rope, acting as rudder, kept the boat in mid-stream. We made half a dozen unsuccessful attempts at this. At last a troop of Yambos, sent by our old friend Shamo, came up and went to our rescue. About twenty of them got into the water swimming beside the boat and helped by pushing it till it reached the other side. The river was here quite a hundred yards broad, but having once established communication with our rope the chief difficulty was overcome and we could easily ferry our stores across. The mules and donkeys were swum over in the usual way by the help of the Yambos and there was not even a casualty, though there were many narrow escapes. On the other side we found four sacks of flour waiting for us in charge of Mc Millan's syce and a Yambo guard. We could not, however, get all our mules across on that day as the Yambos were quite worn out with their exertions against the strong current ; but the following afternoon when everything was safely over we struck out in a " bee " line for Itang marching straight on Komaton. This was not the route we had taken when coming in the other direction, but in reality it was a shorter and more direct one though more difficult. It passed straight through a thick and trackless forest where the undergrowth was so dense that it was very difficult

to force our way through and we all but got lost ; but we were assured that with the help of our Yambo guides we should arrive at Komaton more quickly in this way than if we followed our old route.

When we first started there was not a sign of a path of any sort and it seemed as if it would be impossible to force our way through the thick and trackless undergrowth. When things appeared to be at their worst we suddenly struck a blind path which seemed to start from nowhere. This path led us to a large clearing in the middle of the forest where we found a village and extensive cultivation. This village was called Tioba, and was a discovery, as it was marked on no map. Its chief gave us another guide, who was to take us on to Komaton. He also promised to forward our boxes of stores which Shamo's men, who were carrying them, would take no further.

We camped in a beautiful clearing in the forest, beside a pool of fresh water, two and a half miles from the village we had passed. The main part of the caravan did not arrive at camp till just before dark, having had great difficulty in getting the loaded animals through the thick undergrowth.

The next day, after two and a half hours march through thick forest all the way, we reached Komaton. This forest which we had traversed lying between Gog and Komaton was the thickest we had come across during this expedition, and without a guide it would have been quite impossible to find one's way through it.

Round Komaton was a large expanse of cultivation and the harvest was then just getting ripe. Ground

which was bare and lying fallow when we crossed it two months before, the crops not having even been sown, was now covered with fields of dhura and maize fifteen feet high, and the whole country had undergone a complete transformation. We hurried on without attempting to shoot anything. Indeed, we had had quite a surfeit of sport since leaving Khartoum the January before, and had got all the trophies we wished for.

The only obstacle now between us and Itang was the Aluro river, with its broad belt of reeds surrounding its banks two miles in breadth on either side. We had had no difficulty in getting through these reeds before, but now their whole surface was converted into a lake with water quite up to the withers of the mules in depth. We had to march half a mile through this water before we could reach the banks of the river, but we had become quite accustomed to this sort of thing and had little difficulty in reaching the village of Perbom that night. It is situated on the further bank a mile or two from the river and we camped close to the village. Our riding mules had all died and had not Mc Millan foreseen this and sent us down two fresh ones Jessen and I would have had to walk for the last week.

On July 1, we arrived back at Olea and found Mc Millan waiting for us there with the steam launch to take us the twelve miles down the stream of the Baro to Itang, while the caravan marched that distance by road, arriving safely the next day.

Out of our forty mules and donkeys which we had started out with from the camp at Mount Ungwala

thirty-five days before there were only now remaining fifteen, that is, eight mules and seven donkeys, and for the last few marches we had had to impress porters into our service.

We had left the south bank of the Akobo at its point of junction with the Ajuba on our return journey on June 20, so that we had performed the distance between that point and Itang in twelve days' marching, including one day of rest ; that is, eleven days' actual marching, not a bad performance in the rainy season. From May 26 to July 2, that is, for thirty-eight days during which our caravan had been separated from Mc Millan's main one, our men had been on half rations, and although there was some grumbling from time to time we never had any real difficulty with them on this score ; but then they were all picked men.

While Jessen and myself had been exploring the Musha and Boma plateaux, Mc Millan had been having excellent sport in the lowlands. Besides other game of many different sorts, he had managed to secure a magnificent elephant whose tusks weighed one hundred and ten pounds apiece. Having had no means of procuring flour he had had to feed his men exclusively on the game he shot ; consequently, numbers of them had suffered much from fever.

After several weeks spent in shooting round the regions between the Gelo river and Mount Ungwala he made for Itang, so as to be there to receive Jessen and myself on our return, and to be in a position to send us help if we needed it.

When he was taking his caravan across the Aluro

there was very nearly a tragic accident. The Abyssinians, as a rule, are not good swimmers and are usually very nervous when on the water. The only means of crossing the river was by means of a small dug-out, which had been borrowed from the natives, and which is about as cranky a style of craft as can well be imagined. The men when they were crowded into this canoe were naturally some of them a little frightened, and some timid person losing his head, upset the dug-out on one of its crossings and threw every one into the water. Several men who could not swim were struggling in the swift current at once. They were most of them dragged out by the Yambos who are equal to any occasion in the water; but two of the men struggling, got hold of Hadji Ali, the Somali head man, and dragged him down with them to the bottom, and had he not been as expert as a fish in the water, he would infallibly have been drowned. Eventually everybody was pulled out by the help of the Yambos and Mc Millan gained Itang without any further difficulty.

The next day, our camps being reunited, we paid off the Abyssinians and sent them back home under their head man into Abyssinia. Since leaving Olea in May, the combined caravans had lost two hundred and forty transport mules and donkeys. Of course the animals had been worked very hard, but I can hardly think that this could have been the sole reason for so many fatalities, and it is probable that the tsetse fly had a great deal to do with the loss of animals.

CHAPTER XXIII

DOWN STREAM

On board the *Sobat* once more—Changed appearance of the river and its banks—Breakdown of our steamer—Towed by the Government boat—A terrific “habob”—Struck by lightning—Driven ashore—Back at Khartoum—Our trophies—Best method of preparing and preserving them—Results of our picnic.

AT nine A.M. on June 3, we had everything on board our steam launch the *Sobat*. We steamed off, and with a fine flood current under us reached our old camp at Kaig at four o'clock the same afternoon; that is, thirty-five miles by water in seven hours, towing along with us one large barge, a nugger, the other steam launch and the small naphtha boat. The Baro was a fine sight now; the river was three hundred yards broad and almost brimming over its banks, and there were no sandbanks to be seen anywhere. In fact, it was not recognisable as the Baro of two months before. The tops of the banks were then fifteen feet above the water level, and steaming up the river in our steam launch we could on that account see nothing of the surrounding country from the deck of the boat. Now we had a fine view of the country around anywhere from the launch.

Our old camp at Kaig was not recognisable either.

So overgrown was it with reeds fifteen feet high, that we had some difficulty in finding a store of wood fuel we had left there. The old tukls which had been occupied by the company of Soudanese troops who, it will be remembered, had been taken up there to protect the Greek traders were completely hidden by a rich growth of vegetation, and the whole country where we had hunted four months before was so overgrown with grass that shooting on it would have been quite impossible. The Adura, which leaves the main stream of the Baro opposite Kaig, was now a broad and beautiful river, broader than the Sobat itself. When we had left it four months before, it was nothing but a wide sandy hollow. The crocodiles which we had seen in such numbers when ascending the river seemed most of them to have disappeared, and there were now no sand-banks for them to lie on. Probably they were hidden away in the reeds where they could not be seen. The hippos, too, seemed to have vanished; the fish also apparently had gone too; at least there were none of them jumping in the water, as we used constantly to see them do three or four months before. Perhaps they too had gone inland up the numerous khors.

We reached Nasser at eleven o'clock on the following day, July 4, having steamed all night. Jessen, while mounting guard just before dawn, saw a very large herd of elephants on the north bank of the river near Machar. We noticed when passing the mouth of the Pibor that the stream of that river seemed to be choked up with sudd, but there was none of it to speak of in the Sobat itself. On July 6, we were

opposite the American mission station which is situated near the mouths of the Sobat, and we tied up there to have tea with our friends the missionaries. We should have arrived there earlier in the day had not our steamer broken down. This breaking down of our steamer was a very serious business, as if we missed the mail steamer which was due to start north on that day from Kodok seventy miles away down the Nile, we might have to wait a month for the next boat. So we sent a messenger by land across to Taufekia, which is on the main stream of the Nile, and only a few miles distant and where we knew there was a telegraph station, with a note, asking the officer in command there if it were possible to wire up and stop the mail boat at Kodok. This was very kindly managed for us. We caught the mail and were thus saved many weeks' delay. The Government boat, which had already left Kodok, turned round and came back for us and took us all in tow, and we steamed down the Nile without incident until we arrived opposite Goz Abu Goma.

Here we were struck by a terrific "habob," one of those violent storms which occur in the summer time in the Soudan. They are very prevalent in the month of July. The storm came upon us suddenly, like a typhoon. The Rais, and indeed all of us, saw it coming, marking the dark streak of the storm along the horizon, and we made an effort to get our boat to the landing-stage of Goz Abu Goma before the storm struck us. When we were about two hundred yards distant from the shore the hurricane came down upon us in full force, driving

the sand of the desert before it in a manner that must be seen to be realised. The force of the wind was terrific and it was impossible to stand up on deck against it. Two minutes after the storm was upon us the rain came down in torrents, accompanied with terrific thunder and lightning, and our flotilla of boats drifted helplessly before it. We were towing on one side of us a very large steel barge containing on its lower deck a hundred head of cattle which were being sent down to Khartoum from the Shelluk country as food for the garrison there. On the upper deck of this barge was huddled up a mass of Arabs and their families. The barge itself was roofed over with a corrugated iron covering and on the top of this iron covering was a wooden coping to keep off the heat of the sun. While our boats were being driven quite unmanageable before the gale, and when we had drifted to about the middle of the stream, which is quite a mile broad here, the lightning struck the roof of the barge and ripped all the woodwork off it. It seemed almost incredible that nobody was hurt ; but the iron roof and the steel boat seemed to have formed a perfect lightning conductor and no doubt took off the electric fluid straight down into the water.

The storm, however, drove us right across to the other shore, and when it had subsided, which it did in about half an hour, and all was calm again, we found ourselves driven right up on a sand-bank almost high and dry. There we remained fast for eighteen hours, before we could be got off and pushed into the stream again ; and no doubt we should have been there much longer had it not been for the help of the

Soudanese troops, who came to help us from the garrison of Goz Abu Goma on the opposite shore. They turned out in hundreds and eventually dragged us by main force into deep water.

Two days afterwards we arrived back at Khartoum and had nothing further to do but to make arrangements for getting home.

As may be supposed, we had collected a very fine show of trophies during our expedition. These were most of them stowed away in our small launch, great care being taken not to pack the skins anywhere near the horns and skulls. The uncured skulls and horns generate a beetle which is fatal to the proper preservation of the skins.

After the skins have been properly dried in the usual way—in the shade if possible—they should be packed in cases, and a plentiful amount of kerosene poured over them, then they should be sprinkled well with the powder called insect death. It is well of course to see to this oneself, and personally I have never lost a skin that has been treated in this way, which has been properly dried in the first instance. But it is just as well, as soon as it is possible to do so, to put all skins into an air-tight zinc-lined case. It is very important that the case should be perfectly water-tight, as should water get into the case the skins will be destroyed. As for the horns, they can be packed in boxes and do not require much care. It is convenient with a view to the packing to put the long antelope horns into boiling water and to allow them to remain there until the outer covering of the

horn comes off, and they can thus be much more easily packed.

As we had very competent Somali shikaris with us, who understood the business well, all our skins had been well dried in the first instance. They were usually well rubbed over with Rowland Ward's taxidermine, especial attention being paid to the ears, nostrils and hoofs. In dry weather larger skins, which of course would take a great deal of the taxidermine—more perhaps than one could conveniently carry—can be sufficiently dried with wood ashes. Sometimes alum is used.

As for the work of exploration and surveying which had occupied us to a large extent during our trip, we were well satisfied with the results attained. The map which accompanies this book will show the route we followed ; and it will be seen that we passed through and surveyed a good deal of hitherto unexplored country.

The chief object of the expedition had been to thoroughly explore and survey the Musha and Boma plateaux which lay to the south of the Akobo, between that river and Lake Rudolph. We went over the whole of this district and procured thereby data for defining a boundary line which would fix the limits of Abyssinia on its extreme south-western frontier.



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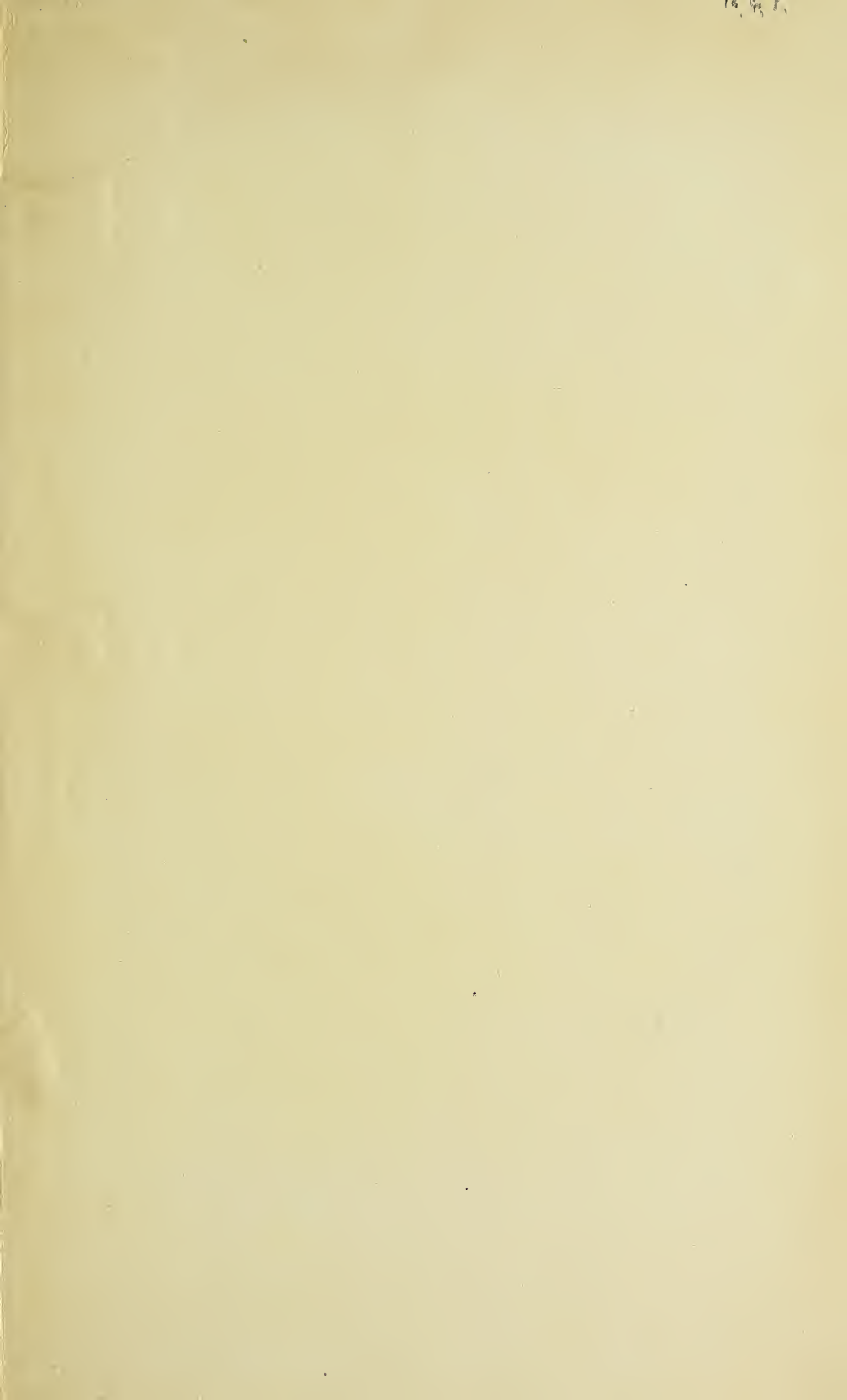
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