

'TWIXT SIRDAR  
*and* MENELIK



CAPTAIN  
M.S. WELBY



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'TWIXT SIRDAR & MENELIK



'TWIXT  
SIRDAR & MENELIK

*AN ACCOUNT OF A YEAR'S EXPEDITION  
FROM ZEILA TO CAIRO THROUGH  
UNKNOWN ABYSSINIA*

BY THE LATE  
CAPTAIN M. S. WELLBY  
18TH HUSSARS

ILLUSTRATED



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To  
HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR  
MENELIK II.  
G.C.M.G. &c. &c.  
KING OF KINGS OF ETHIOPIA

1003754







CAPTAIN M. S. WELBY.

## P R E F A C E

IN venturing to publish an account of my recent travels in Abyssinia, in the countries beyond, and between the Egyptian provinces and King Menelik's domains, I no more assume to pose as an authority on Abyssinia and on the Abyssinian people than I do on wireless telegraphy or the microbes of tropical diseases. Had my sojourn of months been one of years, then such a claim might rest on more substantial grounds. As it is, I have merely written a brief and simple description of my experiences in and beyond Abyssinia, and at times have ventured to offer an opinion; and, if occasionally I may be thought egotistical, I ask forgiveness on the score of my solitary position during the journey.

Those who take an interest in Abyssinian affairs, and who deem these pages worthy of perusal, will notice that in almost every point I differ from probably every other writer, or, perhaps I should say, more experienced writers touching on the same subject. It is for this very reason that I

## Preface

hasten to speak of the Abyssinian character, dealing, so far as my short experience permits me, with their virtues and their redeeming points. I should state, however, that I entered the country thoroughly prejudiced against the Abyssinians—having been influenced by the writings and sayings of others. Those patient readers who wade through the pages of this volume, will very likely, in the end, exclaim that, in any case, I am but a poor champion of the people and country I profess to uphold ; but it must be borne in mind that I have endeavoured to describe their faults as well as their virtues. In doing so, I firmly maintain that the majority of their failings are entirely due to ignorance, and to the result of their having existed for so long in an independent state ; and my belief is that as soon as their minds are enlightened by more direct dealings and closer intercourse with European nations, many of their failings will disappear, and the more desirable traits in their character will shine forth and increase.

As I have endeavoured to publish these pages with the least possible delay after returning to civilization, I have been compelled to write them at odd hours or half-hours, and I, therefore, trust the reader will remember that he is about to rush through a production of no literary weight whatever, but merely a recital of facts strung simply

## Preface

together, dealing with the people and country I have seen and the experiences I have undergone. That I should have been able to travel in and beyond Abyssinia, receiving the utmost help and most genuine hospitality from every Abyssinian I came across, is solely due to the friendliness of H.I.M. King Menelik and Monsieur Ilg, *Conseiller d'état*, and their readiness to aid me in every way to carry out my plans; and also to the generous assistance accorded me at all times by Captain [now Lieut.-Col.] Harrington, H.B.M.'s agent.

The maps that accompany this volume are mainly the result of the untiring perseverance of Duffadar Shahzad Mir, 11th Bengal Lancers, whose great aim was to portray accurately the country we traversed, and whose faithful services rendered to me throughout the journey I shall always remember.

A few extracts from my letters to the *Times*, entitled, "A Journey in Abyssinia," have been reproduced in this volume by kind permission.

MONTAGU SINCLAIR WELLBY.



## INTRODUCTION

CAPTAIN MONTAGU SINCLAIR WELLBY, the writer of this book, was killed in South Africa in the performance of his duty as a soldier to his country, and hence it comes that at a time when I had hoped to have had his aid in my official work in Abyssinia, where it had been arranged he should join me as my assistant at the close of the war, and where the experience and high qualities evidenced by this book would have been of the utmost value, I find that I have, instead of the anticipated pleasure of welcoming him as a fellow-worker, the sorrowful task of writing this short notice of a dear friend.

A very brief outline of his life and work will, coupled with the record of his solid achievement contained in this book he has left, suffice to show that his too brief career gave promise to his country of much which death has left unfulfilled.

Born in 1866, Captain Wellby was educated at Rugby. At the age of twenty he passed into the Army from Sandhurst, being gazetted lieutenant

## Introduction

in the 18th Hussars. In 1894, he became captain, and in that year commenced the work of exploration in Africa by which he afterwards became principally known. In this first journey to Africa, he explored and mapped out much of the then untrodden ground of Somaliland. In 1895, he continued his work by a second expedition to Somaliland, surveying as far as the Dolbahanta country. The following year, he, in company with Lieutenant Malcolm, of the 23rd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, made an expedition to Central Asia, passing from Cashmere through Northern Thibet, Mongolia and China, to Peking. He has left a record of this journey in his book, "Through Unknown Thibet," which forms his first permanent contribution to geographical science, and to the inspiring literature of knowledge gained through hardship and endurance.

On his return to India, he rejoined his regiment, and in the following year took part in the Tirah campaign, where, as transport-officer in the Tochi Valley, he did valuable work. In August, 1898, he came to Abyssinia, joining me at Harrar. He accompanied me on my journey to Adis Ababa.

His qualities were such that he obtained the full regard and friendship, not only of all the Europeans whom he met in Abyssinia, but also of the Emperor

## Introduction

Menelik. Through the kindness of the latter, he obtained leave to travel through every part of his dominions, and on the 18th December, 1898, he started, without any white companion, on the journey of exploration described in this book, through unknown parts of Abyssinia and through "the devil-infested country of Walamo," to Lake Rudolf, whence he passed on to the Sobat, at Fort Nasser coming in touch with the Anglo-Egyptian forces after a hazardous journey of seven months.

In all his travels through Africa, of which I can speak to some extent from personal knowledge, his unflinching tact, his cheerfulness, resource in dangers and hardships, and the winning qualities which endeared him to all who ever knew him, won him the confidence and affection of the natives with whom he came in contact. I have seldom, indeed, known any one better fitted to deal with natives. He came to Abyssinia when, owing to the disasters of Italy in the Abyssinian War, the prestige of Europeans was at a low ebb indeed; so low that even Europeans in official positions were not absolutely secure from insult. It was typical of his character and disposition that he, of all the Europeans who were in a camp of over 50,000 Abyssinians, many of whom had never seen a white man, wandered freely about unaccompanied

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by any attendant, without any disagreeable incidents ever happening to him.

One incident on his last journey I must mention, as a proof—if proof, indeed, were needed—of his courage and endurance. Near Lake Rudolf, in opening a tin of preserved provisions, he cut the fore finger of his left hand; blood poisoning set in, so that he subsequently lost it. No medical aid was nearer than Khartoum, yet he marched miles in intense agony, holding a mortifying finger upright during the whole of the long and miserable march, concealing his pain, so that his followers should not lose heart.

His journey along from Adis Ababa to the Nile, with so small a following, the bulk of whom were Abyssinians who detest the unknown, deserves, in my opinion, to rank as one of the finest in African exploration.

He returned to England in 1899, and shortly afterwards, war being imminent, rejoined his regiment in South Africa. He arrived at Ladysmith just before the investment, and went through the long-drawn-out suspense and suffering of that siege so recent in our memories, to its ultimate relief in March last. On the 30th of July, in a reconnaissance at Mertzicht, he, with his small force, was taken at a disadvantage by the enemy; he told his men to save themselves, and, the last

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man to leave the ground, was himself surrounded, called on to surrender, could have saved himself by surrender, and would probably have been justified in doing so; but he chose the nobler part, drew his sword, refused to yield, and was immediately shot, receiving wounds from which he died at Paardekop, on the 5th of August, 1900.

So long as England has sons prepared to die as he died, she may look confidently to the future. His best friends would not have had him do otherwise than as he did. Yet it is permissible to regret that a brilliant career should have been thus cut short with its bright promise but partly fulfilled.

J. L. HARRINGTON.

SEPTEMBER 28TH, 1900.



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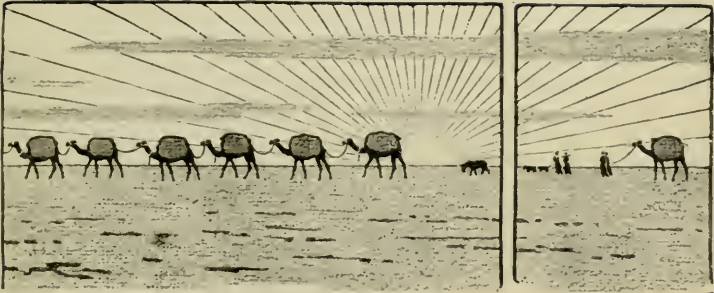
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# 'TWIXT SIRDAR AND MENELIK

## CHAPTER I

### FROM INDIA TO AFRICA

Introduction—Reasons for the expedition—My opportunity—I am granted leave to travel—My companions—The start—Steamship *Melbourne*—Arrival at Aden—Departure for Zeila—Reception by the authorities at Zeila—Meeting with Captain Harrington—Start into the interior—Supper in the desert—A discouraging outlook—We return to Zeila.

WHILST the Sirdar was preparing to deliver his stupendous blow at the Dervish power, I at the same time had often pondered in my mind over the possibility of appearing with a handful of men at the south of Khartum, simultaneously with the arrival of our troops from the north. Such an idea struck me as quite feasible, but the preliminary steps of obtaining permission from my Government to travel, and leave of absence from my regiment,

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

were insuperable difficulties. The suggestion of finding a route either through or round Abyssinia to districts lying south of Khartum was declared as one contrary to all treaties and against the wishes of King Menelik, and a year's leave from regimental duty was a question that one dared scarcely whisper. So it happened that the Sirdar, who waited for no man when the time to strike had come, advanced and smashed for evermore that barbarous power he had so carefully determined to crush, and together with the fall of Khartum, my castles in the air were likewise considerably shattered.

Nevertheless, it was evident to me that there were large stretches of country, very imperfectly known, lying east of the Nile and north of our Uganda protectorate, extending as far as Abyssinia and the country claimed as its dependencies; and that, without taking into account our ignorance of Abyssinia itself and of its people, knowledge of this no-man's-land should be acquired by us, for the sooner we learnt the value of these regions and the condition of their inhabitants, the more advantageous it would be for us and for them.

I knew that certain expeditions (notably Major Macdonald's, Major Gibbons's, and Major Martyr's) were about this time working up from the south, and that in all probability others would find their way to Abyssinia from the west, either in pursuit of the routed Dervish remnants or bent on exploration. Furthermore, it struck me as being quite unaccountable that whereas certain French, Russian, and Italian explorers had travelled in Abyssinia

## Reasons for my Expedition

with more or less sanction from King Menelik, no Englishman had so far been granted the same privileges. It also appeared to me as clear as daylight that when the Dervish host should have been destroyed and Khartum have fallen, King Menelik would be forced by mere circumstance to lend a readier ear to our wishes, and would also see the wisdom of winning our perpetual friendship.

It would be inappropriate here to enter into lengthy arguments with regard to our own policy in Abyssinia, and that of other countries towards it. Suffice it to say that, for reasons unknown to me, our dealings with Abyssinia for the last thirty years (that is to say, since the successful expedition undertaken by Lord Napier of Magdala) had been at a standstill, whereas other Powers had taken the lead from us, and were gradually and quietly ingratiating themselves into the confidence of the Negus, and at the same time gaining a footing in the land. Whatever their objects and aims were, and what the results of their policy have been, are matters too lengthy to discuss, and are perhaps out of place here. I will therefore endeavour at once to tell of my own dealings with the Abyssinians, and of my experiences in regions beyond King Menelik's domain.

In August, 1898, my regiment being quartered at Lucknow, I ran up to Simla for a ten days' visit and cooling, and during that time a telegram from England was placed in my hands. It came from the Intelligence Division of the War Office, informing me that Captain Harrington, H.B.M.'s



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(SEE OPPOSITE PAGE.)

## King Menelik's Letter

Free translation, by Captain (now Lieut.-Colonel) Harrington, of King Menelik's letter (on opposite page) accepting the dedication of Captain Wellby's book:—

The lion has prevailed from the tribe of Judah. Menelik II., the Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia, to Captain Harrington, salutation—

We received your letter of the 20th of September, and were glad to learn that Captain Wellby desired to dedicate to us the book describing his journey, and are pleased to accept the dedication.

We are especially glad to hear Captain Wellby had reached his country in safety. We desire you to offer Captain Wellby the assurance of the friendly feelings we entertain towards him.

May God permit us to meet again in this world.

WRITTEN AT ADIS ABABA,  
*The 3rd of November, 1899.*

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

Agent in Abyssinia, was about to return to that country, and was willing to take me with him if I cared to go. One point was quite certain—that the only way of getting into Abyssinia had been laid open to me, and I wired an answer of acceptance. I have always felt grateful for the kind interest taken and advice given me in the matter by Major-General Sir E. Collen, K.C.I.E., and Colonel More Molyneux, at that time head of the Intelligence Branch, Quartermaster-General's Department. My next step—having accepted the offer—was to obtain a year's leave; and on my intentions being known, my commanding officer expressed his recommendation, which was strongly favoured by Major-General Jemings, C.B., commanding at Lucknow, and finally readily granted by Sir Baker Russell, commanding at Bengal. It was already the 22nd of August, 1898, so that little time remained to make my preparations, for Captain Harrington would be at Zeila on the Somali coast on the 7th of September, and it was essential that I should meet him at that spot. On this same day Lieutenant Vincent, Royal Horse Artillery, asked if he might accompany me, and I readily accepted the addition of a worthy companion. I also took with me two native surveyors, Duffadar Shahzad Mir, 11th Bengal Lancers, who had travelled with me across Tibet and China, and Duffadar Ramji Lal, 4th Bengal Cavalry, also a fox-terrier named Lady, who had successfully undergone with me the climatic trials of the Tochi campaign.

On Sunday, 28th of August, we all met at

## Avoiding Quarantine

Bombay, and here it seemed that we were likely to suffer a severe check, for our agents, Thomas Cook and Son, declared that the authorities of the steamship *Melbourne*, sailing on the 30th inst., absolutely declined to book any passengers to Aden on account of the prevailing plague, as that entailed certain quarantine regulations which had to be adhered to. But when one man falls in battle another takes his place, and on this occasion Messrs. William Watson jumped into the open gap, and promptly arranged with the steamship company in question, not only for our own passages, but also for those of our two surveyors, our ammunition, and the terrier. Bombay was soon lost sight of, in my case probably for good and all, as my regiment was due to sail for South Africa the following October.

There were very few passengers on board. One of them was a wealthy pearl merchant from Bombay, whose sole idea in life was to accumulate money and live in luxury. He could not comprehend why of our own free-will we went off on such an errand as we were attempting, instead of marrying and enjoying the sweetness of life. We had with us certain books to study during the trip to Aden, but our plans for the five days' voyage were somewhat upset, like ourselves, by the monsoonish weather that prevailed throughout the journey. On arrival at Aden, owing to the kindness of Brigadier-General Creagh, V.C., the annoyances of quarantine were dispensed with. Our two Duffadars were promptly carted off with all the luggage, on board the Royal Indian Marine ship *Elphinstone*, whilst we were taken on shore and

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

hospitably entertained by the General and Colonel Sadler and their wives. Our stay in Aden was of short duration, sufficient, however, to enable me to look up an old Somali friend named Ali, proprietor of the Hôtel de l'Europe, who had helped me when



BRITISH RESIDENCY AT ZEILA.

making previous trips into Somaliland for shooting and exploration.

That same evening we embarked on board the *Elphinstone*, and the following morning at daybreak Zeila's uninviting shores were before us. The discomforts of this inhospitable barren maritime station

## We start for Harrar

were soon forgotten on receiving a hearty welcome from Lieutenant Harold, Assistant Resident, and Lieutenant Picton Jones, R.E., who was living there for a few weeks to carry out some piece of engineering. Here, too, we were fortunate enough to meet Harrington himself, who had arrived only the previous day.

Round and about the bungalow lay piles of baggage, which Somalis were endeavouring with much clamouring to divide into loads for the camels that stood in groups close by. This busy scene warned us only too truthfully that H.B.M.'s Agent was starting almost immediately for Harrar, situated near the borders of Abyssinia. Of course we talked over our prospects. Harrington himself could give us very little hope of our being able to travel beyond King Menelik's capital, whilst the other two officers ridiculed the proposition. "I suppose," said Harrington, "you are bringing your dress clothes?" remarking that when Prince Henri d'Orleans came into the presence of Menelik attired in shooting costume, the king exclaimed, "Who is this person who does not know how to appear before a king?"

Having decided to camp that night with the Agent, by sunset we were off, Harrington leading the way perched aloft on one camel, the two Duffadars on another, and Vincent and myself on a third. There was no moon, but the stars shone clearly, and we found the journey pleasant and peaceful enough, after the hustle and bustle of the last few days, as we silently moved along over the

## "Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

sandy monotonous maritime plain. It gave us time to collect our thoughts, and to turn over in our minds the *pros* and *cons* of the situation.

The march to Harrington's first camp was only eight miles long, and on arrival there we found a host of camels, men, and baggage, and also two



HAIR-DRESSING IN THE BRITISH AGENT'S CAMP.

tables, with chairs, laid out for supper, which seemed strange in the midst of a desert. One of these tables was placed for the benefit of the interpreter, Mr. Beru, an Abyssinian, and the doctor, Mr. Wakeman, an Eurasian. "Are you hungry?" shouted Harrison to his two assistants. "Oh," replied the Abyssinian, "we are only half hungry; we will have some potted meats and tea." Mr. Beru was the first Abyssinian I had ever seen, and my first

## A Restless Night

conclusions with regard to these people led me to believe that they were of a very different class to the ignorant barbarians they had been generally depicted, and that they were, in fact, quite civilized and up-to-date. Mr. Beru, like Captain Harrington and the other officials, gave us but little encouragement. Indeed, he threw more cold water on our schemes, by scoffing at the idea of King Menelik allowing us to travel beyond his capital.

Somewhat disheartened, we lay down at eleven o'clock for slumber. Personally I waged a ceaseless war against mosquitoes, but at the same time gained experience of the advantages of alarum clocks. Harrington having set one of these to rouse the camp at 2 a.m. for continuing the desert march, placed it on his table. Yet, in spite of this precaution, some one awoke him about midnight, stating that it was already two o'clock. Again, later on, a second restless being roused him with the same statement; and yet even a third disturber appeared, who even went so far as to affirm that the alarum had already gone off. Harrington was up at once, and, in the midst of giving orders, the alarum really did at last go off, much to his own astonishment and my amusement. I had far more admiration for Harrington's lesson in patience than for the usefulness of his clock.

After bidding Captain Harrington good-bye, we retraced our steps to Zeila, with the intention of sailing to Berbera, and of equipping an expedition at that port.

## CHAPTER II

### A REAL BEGINNING

Zeila—We proceed to Berbera—A revised programme—Berbera of to-day—Vincent leaves me—Blindness of one of my surveyors—His return to India—I return to my original plan—My caravan—Mohamed Hassan—A second start—Arrival at Hargeisa—Lord Delamere's house—The Hargeisa people pay their respects—They discuss railway questions—Departure from Hargeisa—The sick are brought to me—Encamped on the plain—A midnight adventure—Arrival at Jig-Jigga Fort—Reception by Abdullah—An enforced but pleasant delay at the frontier—Ras Makonnen's reply—Departure for Harrar.

WHILST waiting a few days for the return of the *Elphinstone*, we were enabled to judge the meaning of a solitary life at Zeila, and to learn what banishment from all worldly pleasures it entails. To begin with, the climate is of a very trying nature, besides being destructive to the memory and the eyesight. The residency itself, a badly constructed stone bungalow, stands alone in the midst of sand. Beyond the doors of this depressing-looking building there is no inducement whatever to venture—not even a hare to shoot over this flat and profitless land. The sea itself, they say, is infested with sharks, and before even boating can be attempted, a broad stretch of shallow water must be crossed.

## Zeila To-day and To-morrow

We walked over a furnace of sands to inspect the native quarter. There was the usual accumulation of temporary huts built by Somalis who brought laden camels to the port, and a permanent collection of miserable buildings forming very narrow and dirty lanes. The most pretentious-looking shop was one kept by a Greek, who sold, or rather hoped to sell, vast stores of brandy and vermouth. Nor did we have any inclination to test this unknown brand, in spite of the permanent thirst that Zeila promotes. Possibly, in a few years' time, changes will have taken place, and Zeila will have blossomed into prosperity. Instead of finding a solitary British officer there, fighting all he can for his own Government and for his health, we shall then perhaps meet and hail a cab on landing, and request to be driven to the railway terminus.

On the 11th of September we landed at Berbera, with ideas of taking an expedition southwards across the Webbi Shebeyl river east of Barri, and across the Juba river east of Lugh, then striking west for the south of Lake Rudolf, before steering northwards for Khartum. This journey, however, interesting as it would have been, transgressed boundary treaties, and speedily vanished into dreamland.

Since my last visit to Berbera some three years ago, many changes had occurred; the whole atmosphere has changed—the place appeared to me to have lost its former charm and freedom. To-day every stone of it is strictly under the official thumb, entailing endless rules, regulations, taxes, and certificates from every shooting-party. Since, too, the

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

whole of the Ogaden country has been handed over to the Abyssinians, the field for sport is decidedly limited. Then, too, the prices of all things are undoubtedly higher. Camels, for instance, were formerly bought for from thirty to forty rupees each, whereas to-day the price is from fifty to sixty. Many Somalis now speak English well, and there has sprung up a small hotel, where one expects to find a notice board with some such comforting announcement as this :—

“Shooting excursions carefully arranged in every detail. Somalis trained to English ways; none supplied from the jungles. Camels carefully selected and purchased,” and so forth.

At this critical time my little party became reduced to half its original number, for Vincent said he would rather go shooting than make further attempts to reach Abyssinia; whilst Duffadar Ramji Lal fell nearly blind of one eye, and thus his services as a surveyor being at an end, he was sent back to India.

I therefore decided to try and overtake Harrington at Harrar, and travel with him to the Abyssinian capital. After some difficulty I hired eight camels for one and a half rupees apiece per diem, and four camelmen to convey Shahzad Mir and my own goods as far as the Abyssinian frontier post of Jig-Jigga. I also enlisted a Somali boy named Mohamed Hassan, who had previously become acquainted with me, had already made journeys with numerous English sportsmen, and had recently visited England as a member of the troop of

## My Somali Boy

Somalis who were exhibiting at the Crystal Palace. Mohamed was chiefly struck by the kind treatment and gifts he had received from English ladies, whom he found far more generous than those who were to be met with at continental exhibitions. He



MOHAMED HASSAN, MY SOMALI BOY.

*Come now, is he  
really a boy?*

was also astonished at the size of the sheep and horses in England, and at the low course the sun took across the heavens. In addition to Mohamed I took a cook-boy, most appropriately named Hash. On the afternoon of the 13th of September, having bid farewell to Vincent and Lieutenant Cordeaux, the Assistant Resident at Berbera, we started. The Somalis, on seeing the small size of my caravan, remarked, "This gentleman does not intend going

*In 1900  
that was  
quite  
better  
we*

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

very far ;" and they wondered why I travelled on foot, yet there was no reason for their astonishment, as on that day there was not a single mule or pony to be bought. It was quite jolly, after so much shifting and muddling, to be definitely on the move again ; besides, I am always fond of Somalis—they appear to me to be so cheery, affectionate, plucky, sporting, and clean. Their one fault is avarice, which may be classed as a relieving feature amidst so many virtues.

By beginning the march at 2 a.m., and again in the afternoon, we reached Hargeisa on Sunday the 18th. On that day I had marched eleven hours, so was glad to seek rest beneath a shady gurha tree, and await the arrival of the camels. Shortly after my arrival the son of Sheikh Madr, who is the leading spirit and Molah of the district, came to my camp and refreshed me with some dirty water from his holy bottle, and afterwards brought me a more appetizing drink in the shape of a "deel" of fresh milk. He inquired how it was I seemed so destitute, without food, water, or hat—the latter having been lost in pursuit of some oryx. He then offered to conduct me round Hargeisa, a spot of exceptional beauty. We crossed the moist sandy river-bed, and ascended, through shady trees and bushes bright with flowers both red and yellow, to a whitewashed building composed of four square sides with rounded corners, constituting a species of watch-tower. Entering by large wooden folding-gates, we came upon an open yard, and in one portion of it, a single-roomed building supported by many pillars. It was a damp and dingy abode, reminding me of an

## Hargeisa's Possibilities

underground dungeon, a most undesirable place of residence ; and this appears to be the opinion of the builder, Lord Delamere, for I am told he has never yet visited the house. The village of Hargeisa itself consists of a number of mortarless huts separated by stone-paved streets. The only house of stone to be seen is one that Sheikh Madr is building for his own use.

On the arrival of the tired camels, just before sunset, several people came to pay their respects, having learnt that an Englishman had arrived from Berbera. They all talked of the railway which the French had commenced making from Jibouti, and eagerly inquired why the English did nothing to help the inhabitants of Hargeisa by constructing a line to Berbera and to Harrar. These simple people place such complete confidence in the Sirkar (Government) that they believe whatever we wish to accomplish we can do, in spite of every opposition. Certainly, a railway running through Hargeisa would carry a strong inducement to the people of those districts to cultivate the soil and utilize the fine pasture land to a greater extent than they do at the present day. The difficulties, moreover, of such a piece of engineering would be facilitated by the supplies of stone and wood to be had around Hargeisa itself, and possibly by the quantity of coal to be found between Hargeisa and Berbera. In my idea, a residence at Hargeisa, which lies at a height of nearly 4000 feet, with a temperate climate at this time of the year, would be far preferable to a sea-level, sand-beaten domicile at Berbera.

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

On leaving Hargeisa we travelled for many miles through beautiful park-like land, alive with birds and jungle fowl. We met the usual Somali khafilas of Habr-Awal men, carrying their skins, gums, ghi, and coffee to our port at Bulhar, situated between Berbera and Zeila. Many of these Habr-Awal, who had pitched their karias (or native village) by the Abyssinian border, had evidently mixed their breed with the latter, but whether willingly or not I cannot say. As is customary when travelling in Somaliland, despairing mothers and relatives brought their sick to me to be cured or killed; and my camelmén, who complained bitterly of the cold in the early mornings, maintained their reputation by continually asking for sheep. My generosity in this respect was rewarded by their inability to rise on the day following their feast before five instead of at 2 a.m. I therefore carefully explained to them the gravity of their crime and the penalty forthcoming, and warned them that they had had their innings, and that now I intended having mine.

We travelled practically all day long, till we reached an open grassy plain, over which roamed immense herds of camels. As we were traversing this vast stretch of prairie-land, rain began to fall freely, and a halt was called. I retired for the night in my small tent, and soon fell sound asleep. Suddenly my dreams were rudely disturbed by the collapse of my sleeping place. All was in an uproar and all was darkness, while I was fast becoming suffocated, and was struggling violently beneath the dripping canvas, whose

## A Futile Fort

great weight completely foiled every attempt at shouting. At this juncture my ever ready duffadar rushed to my aid, and explained to me the cause of my misfortune. It appeared that two of the camels had had an altercation during the night, and had selected my tent as a suitable spot in which to settle their dispute.

At the further extremity of this plain lies the Abyssinian fort of Jig-Jigga, whither I had already despatched a messenger to inform its commander of my approach, and to request that no hindrance should be placed in my way of proceeding further. The reply ordered me to halt at once and await instructions. Thereupon I despatched a second messenger, politely pointing out that a waterless plain could scarcely be considered a fitting place in which to remain encamped, and that I was proceeding slowly to Jig-Jigga. A few hours later on, from the higher ground, we hailed the fort. It was situated in an open valley, and, though built on a low level, I was struck by the conspicuous position it occupied, for it commands the main roads to Berbera, Zeila, Harrar, and the Ogaden, and it is the tax-collecting station for all caravans using these routes. As we began to descend towards it, a violent storm swept over us, yet the camels somehow managed to slide along the soaking track till within rifle-shot of the place, when, leaving the men to pitch camp, I took my Somali boy Mohamed with me, and walked on to the fort. We first came across a couple of Abyssinians, then Harraris and Somalis, who inquisitively pressed around us; and,

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

whilst word was being sent inside, I took advantage of the delay to look around, and at once concluded that "fort" was a somewhat misleading designation to apply to such a place, for it consisted merely of some feeble stockade work strengthened by a platform of earth built up against it inside. In fact, should the commander raise objections, I felt quite capable of storming it merely with my camelmen. Abdullah, however, for such was the chief's name, proved himself to be a worthy host, and a friend with the best intentions. It was an unmistakable pleasure to enter his primitive, circular, wattle hut, where a wood fire was cheerily glowing, and where fresh dry grass and matting had been spread out for my sake, with a carpeted box whereon to dry and warm myself; and when cigars and hot cups of excellent coffee had been handed round, I for a few moments forgot the storms, the slippery roads, and the drenched, weather-beaten men and camels—such is the selfishness of human nature. The Arab Abdullah explained how but latterly Jig-Jigga had been recognized by Abyssinia as a link in its boundary chain, and how he was stationed there for observation, and to furnish information of parties attempting to cross the frontier, adding with apologies that more than one messenger had already ridden off post-haste to Harrar to report my wishes to its governor, Ras Makonnen. He also expressed his willingness to provide me with fresh camels, ponies, and everything else I might require, even placing at my disposal his own little house, until such time as the messengers returned from Harrar.

## Killing Time

At the same time, he expressed with evident sincerity his admiration for the British Government, and his love for the British people, and favourably compared our methods with those of other countries.

These few days of forced delay were a trial of patience, for I feared lest Harrington should quit Harrar before my arrival, knowing that to effect a satisfactory departure from that town without his aid would be a tedious and doubtful undertaking. Sometimes Abdullah, with an armed and mounted escort, would pay me a visit, when an outspread rug, a tin of biscuits, with tea and cigarettes, gratified his curiosity, while a liberal supply of ghi and dates was equally appreciated by his attendants. Each morning my gun provided guineafowl, hares, and bustard for the table; whilst milk, eggs, and vegetables were sent from the fort. Later in the day we would form hunting-parties, and, mounted on Abdullah's excellent ponies, ride off in search of lions through countless miles of high grass. In the evening I would sit with Abdullah in his pretty little garden, neatly planted with jowari, onions, tomatoes, rhubarb, bananas, and various herbs, flowers, and spices, and we would remain chatting in the shade over our coffee and cigars till sunset.

By my description of my host's garden some idea will have been gathered of the productive powers of this beautiful grass valley, which is irrigated by the river Jerrer flowing close to the fort. It lies, too, at a height of 5200 feet above the sea-level, and, at this time of the year, the maximum temperature was 80° Fahr. by day, and 40° by night. Abdullah was

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

modest in his demands when I insisted on returning his welcome. He wished only for some medicines, and more particularly an antidote against snake-bites, for he averred that a certain snake had made his own house its home, and he was anxious to have a medicine ready to apply as soon as the snake thought fit to bite him. The Somali chiefs who dwelt in this place were somewhat discomfited with regard to the unsatisfactory position of their tribe, complaining that half of them were subjects of the British Government, and the other half under the Abyssinian rule. They gave me their opinions on the Abyssinians in general, telling me how, just at the present time, they were enjoying a ten days' celebration of the feast of Mascal, or of the Holy Cross. They added that this was the cause of the delay in the return of the messengers from Harrar. They also told me that Sunday was a day observed by them all. In fact, they did all they could to allay my impatience.

Finally, on the 28th of September, our waiting was amply rewarded, for a reply arrived from Ras Makonnen, demanding from Abdullah the cause of his delaying me so long, and ordering him to assist me in reaching Harrar without delay. Forthwith we set out with fresh camels and riding-mules, bidding a friendly good-bye to our Arab host.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ARRIVAL AT HARRAR

Across the frontier—A pretty picture—I push on with all speed—Arrival at Shummet—First glimpse of Harrar—Arrival in the city—A visit to the palace—I overtake Captain Harrington—Ras Makonnen visits our camp—Impressions of Harrar.

FROM Jig-Jigga onwards the characteristics of the country changed, making me feel that we had indeed crossed the frontier into another dominion. Instead of open plains and jungles of thorny trees, we were in a land of hill and dale, beaming with barley and jowari fields, with neatly-made little villages dotted about in cosy corners, whose circular wattle huts of brown or red mud looked quite picturesque. Whilst halting at midday in the midst of such pretty scenery, where children ran out from the huts to bring me milk and piles of freshly picked tomatoes, another messenger arrived from Ras Makonnen, telling me to make all haste to Harrar, as he and Harrington were both on the point of leaving for Adis Ababa, the capital of Abyssinia.

Without any delay, I set out in advance of my party, with my Somali boy Hash, leaving Shahzad Mir and Mohamed to bring the baggage. That same

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

evening, about nine o'clock, we reached the village of Shummet, which crowns the summit of a range of hills lying between Harrar and Jig-Jigga, and can be noticed from a very considerable distance on account of three fine trees that stand out conspicuously against the sky-line. The headman of this village was a Somali, also named Abdullah, who did all that lay in his small power to provide us with a night's lodging. We were invited into one of the circular huts with whose exterior we had now grown familiar, and here we sat talking for some length of time, till I fell asleep. Occasionally I half-awoke, and whenever I did so I always heard a confused and incessant babbling. Later on I awoke altogether. The hut was dark and silent, yet I discovered, on shifting a leg or an arm, that somebody came in contact with me. I could not make this out at first, but on dawn breaking I became aware that we were simply packed like sardines, but in a stifling atmosphere instead of in oil.

I jumped up, and, after thanking Abdullah for his warm reception and for the two ponies he had lent us, we mounted and hastened onwards with all speed to Harrar. The ponies, alas! were small and weak, and the sun arose before we had covered very much ground; still, we had been able to see our goal from early morning, and the first glimpse had shown Harrar to be a town occupying high ground, and of red ochre colour relieved by one white tall building. On we pressed, riding and walking alternately, taking refreshment from the several

## Harrar at last!

rivulets that crossed our road, for the country was hilly and cultivated. As we drew nearer, we met great numbers of noisy, uncouth Abyssinian soldiers, carrying their rifles, who were returning to their villages after the big festival of Mascal, or the Holy Cross. Shortly after noon rain fell heavily, and we



HARRAR (FROM THE WEST).

hurried on towards the city walls to seek shelter beneath one of the five covered gateways by which entrance is obtained.

As I stood for a moment with a "rescued from drowning" sort of feeling, several Abyssinians, who were evidently on duty at the post, commenced

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

loudly shouting at me, whilst one even went so far as to lay hold of my pony's bridle. A second wetting I strongly resented, and my good little pony manfully seconded my objections, for he also was dead tired. All attempts at removing us had so far proved fruitless, when I suddenly realized that the Abyssinians only wished to show us a more serviceable shelter close by, where too we should in no way be obstructing the thoroughfare.

As we waited for the rain to pass over, we watched the women bringing in their bundles of sticks, from each of which the guard at the gate selected a few pieces as a tax on their goods. We then made our way up a narrow street paved with big stones, over which the water now swept like a torrent, till we found ourselves in the market-place of Harrar. Here we were in the midst of an aimless, idle, loafing crowd of Abyssinians, Gallas, Harraris, and Somalis. As we strolled around, looking about us, I noticed a European face behind the counter of a small nondescript shop, and on entering I found its owner to be an Armenian. Out of sheer good-heartedness he provided shelter and grass for our ponies, and bowls of tea for ourselves, so that we felt sufficiently invigorated to continue our search for Ras Makonnen, who is the fountain-head of everything here, for nobody could afford us any information beyond news of his own personal doings. We passed over to the other side of the market-place, and then crossed a couple of court-yards of the old palace, filled with a noisy and talkative crowd. Over the entrance of the palace floated a flag of three

## A Dangerous Misunderstanding

pennants of the Abyssinian colours—red, green, and yellow. Sometimes they are hung in one order, sometimes in another, but whether any special meaning is connected with the change I cannot say.

At one spot I noticed a Somali quietly leaving the place, when, without any apparent provocation, an Abyssinian came up behind and severely beat him with a stick. Quickly the Somali turned, and, seizing the weapon from his aggressor, returned the blows with such interest, that the latter would have fared but badly had not other Abyssinians rushed up to his aid and joined in attacking the poor Somali, who continued fighting against unequal odds, whilst we were carried along by the crowd out of sight and hearing. From what I know of the Abyssinians now, I dare say the Somali in question deserved his punishment. On reaching a third court, from which a few steps led up into the palace itself, the clamour was deafening, for many of the throng seemed scarcely to have recovered from the effects of the last few days' merry-making. At this point an aged Abyssinian priest offered his services, and on learning the object of my visit, straightway ascended the steps to inform the Ras of my arrival. During all this time my fox terrier was with me, and in order to take better care of her I had handed my rifle to Hash, impressing upon him the necessity of never parting with it, but, whilst awaiting the priest's return, I suddenly became aware of a terrific scrimmage taking place behind me. There, to my amazement, was Hash

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

seized from all sides, but still determined to carry out his instructions in refusing to let go his hold of the rifle. I expostulated and joined the scrimmage, when fortunately at this juncture the priest reappeared, and, having upbraided the officials present for their conduct, informed me that Harrington was



CAPTAIN HARRINGTON AND HIS ESCORT.

encamped without the city walls, where he would order an official to conduct us. The crowd, on learning that I was an Englishman, forthwith made way.

We had soon quitted the court-yards, the market-place, and the narrow, dirty, stony lanes, and were walking briskly over the turf outside the town. As we proceeded, the official, who evidently

## The Lesson of Khartum

regretted his previous behaviour, made amends by trying to make me understand that the English and Abyssinians were Christians, with identical views—that we were, in fact, one and the same.

It was not very long before the smartly pitched camp of H.B.M.'s Agent was in sight, and heartily glad I was to find that our attempts to make up for lost time had so far proved successful.

Before reaching Harrar rumours had almost convinced me that I should meet a Frenchman at every corner, and that everything and everywhere would be smacking of French. Certainly the salutation of "Bon jour, monsieur," from a Somali boy who crossed my path with a caravan a couple of days the other side of Jig-Jigga, and incidents of a similar nature, further strengthened these reports. But as we drew close to Harrar itself incidents the very reverse frequently befell me, and once within the walls of this important town I was soon impressed with the fact that, after all, the friendship of the English and not of the French was, for the moment at least, considered more desirable of cultivation. What was the cause of this inconsistency? It was the fall of Khartum! On the very day of my arrival I had ample evidence, not only of the sincere personal liking evinced by Ras Makonnen for H.B.M.'s Agent, but also his determination and wish to increase the existing friendship with the English people. All this augured well for my relatively unimportant projects.

After Harrington and I had exchanged greetings,

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

we sat down to discuss our adventures on the road. The British Agent had scarcely finished telling me what had befallen him on the way from Zeila, when it was announced that Ras Makonnen was about to pay him a visit. Stepping outside the tent, we saw a dense crowd moving from the city towards our camp. At the head of the cavalcade was a large body of soldiers marching in loose formation, yet



RAS MAKONNEN'S CAMP AT SHOLA.

presenting a striking picture, decked as they were in their white shammas with broad red stripes. Then rode the Ras himself, wearing a grey slouch felt hat. Being mounted on a mule, he was therefore easily recognizable among the host of followers. Behind him came more foot-soldiers, and crowds of people brought up the rear. As soon as the approach of the Ras was announced, Harrington's escort of four sawars, chosen from the Aden troop, were formed

## Ras Makonnen

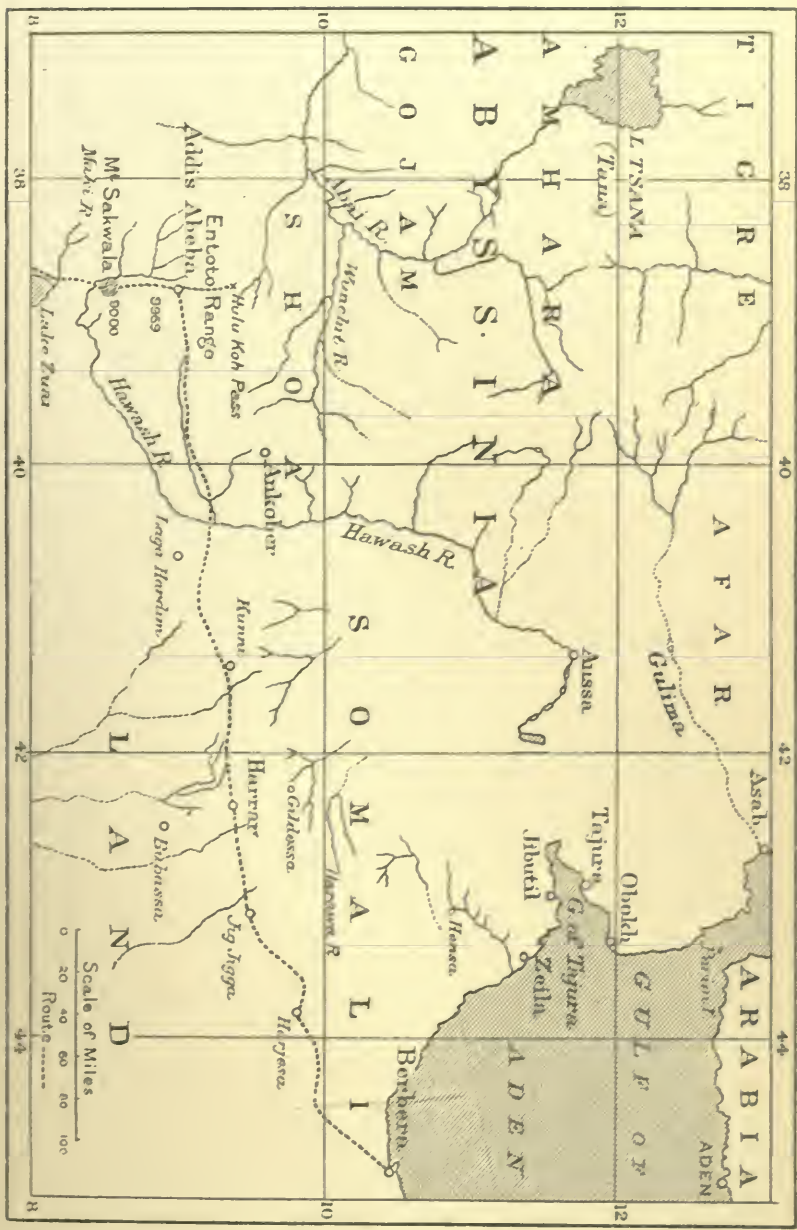
up with drawn and carried swords, ready to receive Makonnen as he drew near to the tent. As the Abyssinian general approached and saluted the escort, I was struck with his appearance. I saw him to be a well-made, clean-built horseman, with an intelligent, shrewd, kindly, and thoughtful expression. During his somewhat lengthened stay with Captain Harrington, the mass of followers standing without, a few yards distant from the tent, respectfully maintained a dead silence. As soon as the Ras prepared to move off, certain Gallas (who are the inhabitants and former possessors of Southern Abyssinia) rushed forwards, crying loudly, "Abeit!" "Abeit!" which means "Justice!" "Justice!" but for the most part they were promptly collared and roughly handled by the soldiers, who gave them a dose of what they considered "abeit." As a matter of fact, Ras Makonnen is always ready to listen to every complaint, but as these are sometimes numerous, certain aggrieved individuals have perforce to await their turn for several days, hence their impatience.

The Fates laughed at our hurried journey to Harrar, and decreed that we should remain there for more than a week, Harrington being unable to leave earlier. These days were a pleasant rest, full of interest and enjoyment. Everybody and everything was novel to me, and, above all, I was favoured with the daily companionship and friendship of Harrington himself.

The first morning after my arrival in camp, I rose early to inspect the walls of Harrar and its neighbourhood. The town is oblong in shape, surrounded

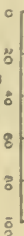


CAPTAIN HARRINGTON EN ROUTE TO THE CAPITAL.



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Scale of Miles



Route .....



## The Climate of Harrar

by walls ten or twelve feet high, varying in breadth. My mule, who was but a slow walker, took three-quarters of an hour to carry me round. This will give some idea of their extent. On the south side lay a rich valley of jowari, coffee, bananas, and vines, with a profusion of flowers, amongst which the wild geranium was the most noticeable. Towards the north stretched green valleys and hills; and on this side, close by the walls, one of the principal watering-places had been established, and to this spot numbers of women repaired. Ranges of hills on the north-west and south command the town, and were they held by skilfully posted batteries, with additional ones at Harrar itself to protect the eastern side, Harrar would be impregnable. As it is, there are some guns on the north side, where salutes are fired, and others close to the city on the west side, and more again further away in the hills; but their powers of execution or of defence are probably not very formidable. Anybody who pays Harrar a visit will wonder why the place was ever allowed to slip from our hands, for it is an important district, both commercially and strategically; and as soon as the Abyssinians come to a reasonable understanding, and have more direct dealings with Europeans, its value is bound to increase tenfold. The town lies at a height of over 6000 feet above the sea-level, and at this time of the year the climate is delightful, with a maximum of  $90^{\circ}$  by day and a minimum of  $45^{\circ}$  by night. I was told that the temperature, day or night, only varied  $10^{\circ}$  C. throughout the year.

## CHAPTER IV

### LIFE AT HARRAR

The foreign community at Harrar—The custom house—Church service at Harrar—Arrival of the French representative—Harrar's bakery and brewery—The prison—Ras Mangaschia—The departure for the capital—Ras Makonnen's army.

A SECOND visit took me inside the town itself, where I was fortunate enough to become acquainted with Mr. J. Gerolimato, representative of Liverato Frères and British Vice-Consul. He is a well-wisher and sound helper of all Englishmen. Many a stroll I took with him through the bazaars and busy parts of Harrar, where I came across several other worthy Greeks, and imbibed many tiny cups of excellent Turkish coffee. I must have met nearly twenty foreigners in all, none of whom, generally speaking, struck me as being in a very flourishing condition, though I heard the Armenians did fairly well. None of them are allowed without the city walls, with the exception of a single Greek, who has lived at Harrar for the last twenty-five years. The customs house, where most of the goods consisted of ivory, coffee, cloth, lamps, and blue enamelled tumblers without number, always presented a busy, hot, and dusty spectacle.

## I go to Church

On Sunday church was my attraction. The service commences very early in the morning, finishing perhaps at eight o'clock. How these times would suit the good people in England I don't know. With Mr. Beru as my escort, I first entered the outer yard of a circular building—a free-and-easy place of worship, for there we found many breakfasting. We then mounted a dozen stone steps to the outer circle of the church itself, where were assembled the congregation, who stood around leaning on sticks five feet long, with tops of wood or brass. The priests, who, by the way, may be always known by their white turbans, used sticks with silver tops. I was handed a brass-topped one, and endeavoured to lean naturally upon it, like everybody else. I stood between two priests, one of whom was kind enough to shake me by the hand. The sexes were divided. The women sang and prayed in the east half of the building, and the men in the west half, being separated from seeing one another by some white sheeting. Within this outer circle was one for the "holy ones," such as had undergone a term of fasting and so forth, and again within this was the circle of the head priest. The service itself conveyed nothing to my mind; I must therefore be forgiven for taking note of the dirty walls, which were all scribbled over. The two priests who stood by me took the opportunity of an interval in the service to call upon a youth to test his powers of chanting, with a view to his employment. Although the noise he managed to create reminded me forcibly of a tom cat wailing

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

at night time on a garden wall, yet the priests were highly satisfied. The youth's attempts at chanting, added to the contortions of his face, actually drove me out of the church. There is no collection in an Abyssinian church, so there was nothing mean in my leaving before the end. Most of the priests are poor ; they are allotted a piece of land by Government, which they have no time to till, and consequently give half of it away to the first comer who will undertake to cultivate the other half for them. Occasionally a man at his death leaves something for the benefit of the church. Repairs are carried out by the priest, who applies to Government for the wherewithal. The difficulties of constructing a new church are overcome by the neighbouring people assisting as best they can, some subscribing thatching, others wood, and so forth. After service, Harrington and I sumptuously breakfasted with the principal French merchant, Monsieur Guinioni. What the nature of the business of this hospitable gentleman was I never discovered, but, to judge from his liberality and open house, he must have been carrying on a very profitable trade.

One morning Monsieur Lagarde, the representative of France, arrived from Jibouti, and I sallied forth in good time to see what was going on. The town, as I entered, presented its normal appearance. Suddenly there was a transformation, and, with astonishing rapidity, the streets were lined with soldiers, the officers being easily noticeable by their various coloured silk shirts, and by their green and purple shields inlaid with gold or silver. At

## The French Representative

the same moment three-minute guns boomed from the saluting battery, and Monsieur Lagarde appeared in full uniform, mounted on a mule, escorted by a number of Somalis dressed in white uniform, and some Abyssinians. I took up a lofty position on a raised platform close to the new palace itself, affording me



M. LAGARDE'S ARRIVAL AT RAS MAKONNEN'S PALACE AT HARRAR.

a splendid view of all that was taking place, and also of the surrounding country. It was somewhat strange to see a Frenchman of such dignity riding in Abyssinian fashion, with men on either side placing their hands on the pommel of the saddle. This is an old custom, dating even as far back as the Portuguese Embassy to Abyssinia in 1520. Father Francisco

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

Alvarez, in describing the travelling of Prester John, tells us—

“ There go with him inside the curtain six pages, whom they call ‘legamonehos,’ which means pages of the halter, and they go in this manner. The mule carries a rich headstall over the bridle, and this headstall has at the chin two ends with thick tassels of silk, and with these ends or tassels go two pages, each on one side, who lead the mule as if by a halter ; two others go, one on each side, with their hands on the neck of the mule ; and two others behind them in a similar manner, with their hands on the mule’s haunches, or on the hinder pommel of the saddle.”

King John rode after this fashion, and most men of importance at the present day continue more or less to uphold the custom, though King Menelik himself rides without helpers. I believe the custom originated from the inability of the king—like most of us—to do two things at the same time. He used to hear and decide cases as he proceeded along the road, and therefore had no time to guide and direct his mule.

Amongst the sights worth seeing at Harrar are the bakery and brewery at the old palace of Ras Makonnen. The work is carried on in some adjacent buildings. The bread is made from a small reddish grain called teff, which, after being ground up and mixed with water, is left to ferment. It is then cooked into a thick paste, and poured out on to an open pan in the shape of a thin round cake, starting with the outer edge. This food is light enough, though, owing to the fermentation, slightly

## The National Drink

sour, but this is counteracted by the addition of pepper and spices.

Adjoining the bakery were the "tej" brewers. To drink tej is the highest bliss of some Abyssinians; it is one of the main objects of their existence. Without tej and without women life would be a blank to them. The process of making it is simple enough. Water and honey, in the proportion of 5 to 1, are mixed together, and to this is added an infusion of the leaves of the geichi bush, which gives the drink its intoxicating strength. The longer this mixture stands, the stronger it becomes, till finally the essence of tej—known as araki—is distilled from it. The women employed in its manufacture were generous enough with their offerings, pouring first a little into their own hands to drink, and then handing me the glass.

The beer-making is much more complicated, as five different ingredients are required: (1) Ground-up barley; (2) barley soaked and caked, and kept till it begins to take root; (3) powdered leaf of the geichi bush; (4) roast barley, ground up; (5) pieces of geichi stick. Nos. 1, 2, and 3 are first mixed up together in certain proportions, and after three days, Nos. 4 and 5 are added. I gave one of the women a dollar for the trouble she had taken in trying to drum into my head the intricacies of this beer-making. "Oh," she said, "if you will only stop here, I will teach you how to make it by yourself." Time and patience forbade such a pleasure, so having declined her invitation, I continued my sight-seeing, and visited

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

the house of an ordinary petty Abyssinian merchant.

As Mr. Beru and I entered, the wife of the merchant and her female servant, who were sitting industriously spinning, rose to receive us. The house—or hut—was circular, and measured about twelve feet in diameter. Facing the door was a platform raised a foot higher than the level of the floor, to serve as a bed. In the mud walls were various niches, accommodating odds and ends, and on them hung the merchant's rifle, cartridge belt, his Bible in a cloth bag, and a small lamp, also some caked sprouting barley, for most Abyssinians brew tej in their own small way. In the centre of the floor was a hole to carry off the water after the morning's ablutions. The lady of the house at once proffered me some tej, which I had to decline on the score of already having done ample justice to the wine ; but on her pressing me a second time, I accepted, and, after sipping, passed it on to my servant, according to custom. As she was telling us that she never allowed her husband tej before the evening, he entered, and, with true politeness, handed us more tej. " Ah," remarked his wife, " he knows quite well that you won't drink it, and that he will thus get it for himself." Coffee in little cups without handles standing in second cups, in order to protect the fingers from the heat, was then brought to us. On leaving, our host and hostess accompanied us, and, according to etiquette, remained with us until requested to return.

The prison was our next attraction, and here the custodian refused entrance without our producing a

## A State Prison

permit from the Ras. But there are other ways of overcoming such denials, and very soon we found ourselves on the other side of the prison walls, standing in a court-yard around which the cells were built. Coming as we did from the filthy alleys, I was naturally struck by the wonderful cleanliness of the place. The inmates were chained at the ankle, sometimes two together, and, with few exceptions, seemed perfectly contented with their lot, and had no reason to complain of lack of company. Murderers and deserters were mixed up indiscriminately with petty offenders, regardless of their nationality. There were some who told us the history of their crimes, whilst others professed ignorance of the cause of their punishment ; but then, men of this description can be found in any prison. It looked an easy job to scale the walls and effect an escape, but their recapture in Abyssinia would be almost a certainty, bringing with it the consequent penalty, so attempts at escape are infrequent.

At this particular time, it appeared that Ras Mangaschia, of the province of Tigré in Northern Abyssinia, who is the natural son of King John, had neglected to obey the mandates of King Menelik. The latter, therefore, after ineffectual attempts by negotiation to bring him to reason, finally warned him that the continuance of such disloyalty would be suppressed by force ; and, acting up to his word, Menelik thereupon issued orders for the mobilization of an army to lead into Tigré. Amongst those who were summoned was Ras Makonnen. Now, many of his troops had but lately returned from a campaign

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

against the Gallas, and some of the leaders and soldiers were much averse to a second expedition following so soon upon the other, entailing further separation from their wives and neglect of their crops. Matters became very serious, and rumours were afloat that several of the leading officers had



RAS MAKONNEN'S SOLDIERS WAITING OUTSIDE CAPTAIN HARRINGTON'S TENT.

been imprisoned for refusing to obey the call, and that, in order to secure the services of the soldiers, it was announced that they would only be taken as far as Adis Ababa; and a proclamation by tomtom was issued to the effect that all soldiers refusing to come would henceforth never be allowed to serve in the army. All these unexpected troubles on the

## Our Departure

eve of Ras Makonnen's departure naturally delayed him; and as he had expressed a desire to travel to the capital in company with Harrington, the latter could not act otherwise than wait till his difficulties were settled and preparations completed. Finally, on the 6th of October, Harrington and I started from Harrar, and two days later were joined by Ras Makonnen, with a following of several thousands strong, and by Monsieur Lagarde. To judge from the number of soldiers that marched out of Harrar, I fancy the proclamation had had the desired effect. Interesting though it was to watch the customs of so many Abyssinians on the march, still we paid the penalty for our curiosity by the inconvenience we experienced along the road.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ABYSSINIAN SOLDIER

HARRAR and its dependencies can probably put a force of over 20,000 men in the field. This is divided into regiments. Sometimes these form separate villages, others have special regimental names. For instance, the Abyssinians speak of the Northerners, though all composing that force may not necessarily have come from that district—just as sometimes occurs in our own regiments. There are many inducements for a man to enlist. This he generally does at festival times, and, finding the easy life of a soldier suitable to his temperament, he continues to serve. Every soldier, moreover, stands a chance of becoming an officer. At Adua some were made colonels on the spot for distinguished service.

The Abyssinian soldier is never drilled, and his daily duties are *nil*; he generally makes himself known by his loud talk and swagger. At war time (if excursions against the defenceless Gallas may be classed as war), all the loot, I was told—with the exception of a tenth portion, which goes to Government—is divided amongst the soldiers. Only the

## Payment and Marksmanship

officers wear uniform, which consists of coloured silk shirts and shields, embossed with gold or silver, according to the rank. Medals are awarded by placing bands of gold round the sword scabbard. Ras Makonnen's A.D.C. possessed a scabbard that was completely hidden by bands, so worthily had he fought. On being called out for service, the Abyssinian soldier merely seizes his rifle and belt from the wall of his hut, and he is ready for the field. This accounts for their marvellous speed of concentration, an important item of military training in which they can give us many points. With regard to rations, the arrangements are simple, and in this respect far and away ahead of us. The soldier merely draws something like 80 lbs. of grain for the entire month, a good deal of which he exchanges for meat, or tej, or other luxuries he may fancy.

As to their shooting powers, the Abyssinians are not even acquainted with the rudiments of aiming or even of cleaning the rifle. Yet I believe the Italians at Adua trained efficiently and quickly a force of 10,000 Abyssinians, whose strength, however, was entirely wasted by gross mismanagement. What their actual tactics in war may be I cannot say, yet the soldiers know his leader, follow him in any loose formation, and fire when he does. To my idea, and judging from the recent successes of the Abyssinians, fights and battles have been won rather by mere force of numbers than by skill and discipline. When King Menelik called for volunteers to fight against the Italians, I am told some 200,000 responded, and were taken to the battlefield, whilst hundreds besides

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

were sent back because there were neither means of feeding them nor room for them to fight.

There is no general commissariat or transport system, each soldier being followed by his wife and servants, who bring his food along on a donkey ; thus when this supply, in addition to the resources of the



MY ABYSSINIANS DRAWN UP TO RECEIVE AN ABYSSINIAN GENERAL.

district in the immediate sphere of operations, is exhausted, there appears to be no means whatever of obtaining more. This same failing equally applies to the supply of ammunition in the field. Beyond the cartridges carried in the soldier's own belt, from thirty to forty in number, there seems to be no other source of supply, or, even if there were, no means

## The Army and Patriotism

of supplying more in action; probably because the soldier hitherto has never had need of more than those he actually carries. It is well known that after the battle of Adua, the soldiers were almost in a starving condition, and could not have much longer withstood the strain of the campaign.

It would seem indeed that the Abyssinians possess no proper organization for the maintenance of a force in the field for an unlimited length of time, even within the boundaries of their own frontier. Their recent mastery over the vast extent of territory which has been added to the empire, has been acquired in an unequal contest against packs of naked savages, whose only weapons were the spear and bow. At the same time, these conquests are the rational result to expect. From time immemorial the Abyssinians have lived on internal strife, raids, and counter raids, and now suddenly finding themselves armed with European rifles, they have quite naturally seized the opportunity of paying off old scores and of subjugating their less fortunately armed neighbours.

In some respects the Abyssinians may be said to be patriotic, yet were there a call for men to come forth to master and work at the art of soldiering for the sake of their country, and to be prepared to fight before fighting was actually required, there would probably be no standing army at all, for the Abyssinian loves a life of liberty unchecked by indisputable orders; besides, to prepare for battle when no immediate battle was at hand, would be quite above his comprehension. Many might be induced

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

to undergo a course of training did their officers see the necessity of being more energetic and tactful, instead of lazy and ignorant. Of course, demands for higher pay would then be heard, and were a soldier smarting under some imaginary or real injustice, he would at once cry, "Enough; I'm off." Without looking so far away as Abyssinia, we may note exactly the same thing. Manage soldiers or volunteers in the right way and there will be plenty forthcoming; and *vice versâ*.

In another particular the Abyssinian resembles our own countrymen, for these same individuals who find no pleasure in serving their country during peace time, would in an instant, at the call of their king, combine to expel an invader. "Numbers! Numbers!" too, would be their cry. "In numbers we are safe. What can skill and discipline avail against numbers?" And Adua shows that numbers can succeed.

## CHAPTER VI

### OUR JOURNEY TO THE CAPITAL

Approaching Adis Ababa—M. Lagarde's camp—A visit to the French camp—We pay our respects to the Ras—Present of an Italian horse—A rich but wasted country—"Dergo"—On the road to the capital—An Abyssinian encampment—An adventurous Irishman—A storm of locusts.

BUT to return to our journey. On the 8th of October we were encamped a couple of marches out of Adis Ababa, at a place called Worabili, in a beautiful grassy depression, with pine-topped hills on every side. A stream of clear water trickled over this green expanse, away down a valley eastwards. A few hundred yards north of us was pitched the camp of Monsieur Lagarde, most of whose baggage, strange to say, was carried on Arab camels, in preference to the hardy mules of the country, who are far more at home over the hills and stony, muddy crossings, and thrive more vigorously at night-time, when the temperature falls below freezing-point. It was a wonder to me that any of the camels ever completed the journey at all. Those that did succeed certainly looked as if they had gone quite as far as was good for them. Monsieur Lagarde himself, who sometimes

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

bestrode a mule, also had an eye to comfort, for in lieu of wheeled conveyances, an unknown article in this country, he had treated himself to an open and closed palanquin, each carried by two mules, one pulling in front, and the other pushing from behind. These conveyances are all very well over the immense plains of Northern China, but with continually bumping up and down steep stony gradients, they are likely to come to grief. I admired the cool nerve of the man who could recline with such ease on the very brink of a precipice.

Monsieur Lagarde's camp bore quite a martial air, for his Somalis were neatly clad in white uniform, and every morning a bugler sounded the reveillé, or, I should more correctly say, intended to sound it, for his efforts disclosed that either he or his instrument was out of order. His object, nevertheless, was achieved, since the French camp was generally first on the road. Ras Makonnen's stockaded camp was built on much higher ground, on a level with the pine belt ; yet, despite the fact that he had to descend the hill, on the very first night our joint camps were pitched he paid Harrington a quiet friendly visit, and found sympathy for the fatigue he felt. That day he had risen very early, before commencing the tedious march, to settle various complaints before leaving Harrar.

The following morning we all marched to Kalubi, a place of park-like beauty, and halted there for one day, during which Harrington, taking advantage of the delay, took me with him to visit our fellow travellers. Monsieur Lagarde, on our

## The French Camp

arrival at his camp, was just starting for a gentle stroll through the forest of cedar, pine, cotton, and olive trees which flourish amid luxuriant growths of lavender and roses. He was followed by an armed party some twenty strong; but on observing Harrington, he at once courteously gave up his walk, and, leading the way into his canvas house, bid us welcome to his hospitable board.



RESIDENCE OF M. LAGARDE.

Later in the day we climbed the mountain-side to another dwelling of the Ras. This, as usual, was built within a strong stockade some twenty feet high, with an eight-foot rampart of solid earth, varying from six to twelve feet thick, surrounded with a row of stout wooden spikes six feet high, which struck me as furnishing rather an aid than an obstacle for

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

intending stormers. There were stockades and dwellings within stockades; and as we waited in one of the houses whilst word was being taken to the Ras, we noted the fine beams ornamenting the roof, and also the door, which was made from one solid piece of wood, seven to eight feet high and two to three feet broad. We found the Ras sitting quite alone in a diminutive circular dwelling. Even the interior of the stockade bore a deserted look, and differed from all the rest, for not a single soldier or attendant was loitering around. Our host was seated in a recess on a raised platform, the only furniture of the room being some carpets. The walls were nicely whitewashed and relieved by two tiny windows. It was the cleanest Abyssinian house I had entered, and the refreshment, in the shape of nine-year-old tej, was the finest Abyssinian wine I had tasted.

That same afternoon the Ras sent to Harrington's camp a couple of first-class ponies from which to select the one most suitable for himself. With these ponies there also arrived a piece of Italian loot, in the shape of a war-horse, which stood a little over fifteen hands high, and was altogether too big a mount for Abyssinian taste. The animal appeared to be much larger than she was, by contrast with so many little ponies, the majority of which run to 13.1 and 13.2 hands high. With this addition to the stables, we were tempted to break the sabbath and indulge in an exhibition of tent-pegging, etc. With the exception of our display at Harrar, the Abyssinians had never

## Neglected Possibilities

witnessed any sport of this kind, and declared that, after all, the Ingliz were better horsemen than the Shoans—Southern Abyssinians famous for their irregular cavalry.

I will not here attempt to describe the nature of the country we traversed during our journey to Adis Ababa, for an excellent account of this same route may be found in Major Count Gleichen's most interesting book, "With the Mission to Menelik," published by Arnold. Suffice it to say, there were two salient points which struck me as remarkable. First, the immense amount of fertile land that lay uncultivated and undrained, and growing nothing but vast stretches of grass six or eight feet high, destined only to be wasted and burnt; second, the astonishing absence of villages and cattle. The conclusion drawn from the two observations would lead one to believe that small inducement had been offered to the Gallas, or to the Abyssinians themselves, either to cultivate or to breed, and that the advantages of commerce have so far been overlooked. Whenever Harrington's camp was pitched at nightfall in the neighbourhood of villages, it was curious to see strings of ill-fed, half-naked villagers bringing in supplies for all his followers, whether he required them or not. But such is the custom of the country. These poor Gallas are bound to supply any traveller of importance passing through their villages, and by doing so are exempt from certain taxes. This custom is known under the name of "dergo." It always struck me that these hungry-looking beings

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

were far more in need of dergo than we were; and my opinion was evidently shared by Harrington, who never permitted a dergo subject to depart without his receiving an equivalent in money for his supply.

Throughout the journey many of the camping-grounds had magnificent sites; sometimes our



M. LAGARDE AND HIS DOOLIES CROSSING THE BRIDGE OVER THE HAWASH RIVER.

three camps were nearly a mile apart. After dark, the army of the Ras, resting and encamped on the grassy slopes of the side of a pine-clad hill, would, from the distance, strongly resemble a busy little town at night, when only the many fires and lights flickering in every direction could be seen, and a subdued murmur of many voices would reach

## Marching Discomforts

us with the wind. Everybody was astir again before daybreak, and as we moved off, we occasionally found ourselves unpleasantly placed in the very midst of the army. Here, along the single road, every one strove for him or herself, some mounted on mules or ponies, others walking, all armed with guns, sticks, swords, and tent-poles. Then there were hosts of mules, ponies, and donkeys laden with flour, driven along by the soldiers' wives and servants, and boys carrying their masters' shields or guns. There were many women with burdens of flour, followed by a brood of youngsters. The white-turbaned priests generally rode, followed perhaps by herds of living beef and mutton with their drovers. Then would follow some chief with his mounted attendants. In fact, the struggling stream of thousands upon thousands of human beings seemed endless.

When the level road changed, and a very steep winding pathway would ascend a stony and rocky hill, then began a veritable babel of shouting, hustling, and jostling—one and all for himself. As we endeavoured to ride along quietly, a mule would suddenly stop in front of us, or another, coming from behind like an express, would almost knock one of us out of the saddle. At the same time that one tried to recover, an undeserved prod or blow from a stick or tent-pole would still further add excitement to the ride. One pair of eyes afforded us very indifferent warning in such a mixed crowd. We were constantly changing our place, and our baggage-mules became scattered and split up into twos and

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

threes along the road. When the going was good comparative silence and order reigned, yet all swept along, each caring for no one beyond himself, bent only upon reaching the next camping-ground. Occasionally, towards the end of a long march, some would seek rest under the shade of a tree by the roadside, or a dead mule would testify to the extent of its exertions. One of the most noticeable features along the road were the Ras's tej brewers, a string of young ladies carrying on their backs large gombos of the precious fluid, fermenting like themselves as they struggled along in the hot sun. These fair porters could be spotted from a considerable distance, as the highly prized burdens were wrapped in red cloth. This valuable portage was protected from thirsty souls by a number of soldiers, and the overseers of the brewery, riding on their mules, were also present to guard the liquid. We inquired of one of the ladies, "Where are you going to?" "Oh," she replied; "that I don't know: all I know is that I have to carry my gombo to the next camp."

On looking down from a height upon the camp of the Ras with its thousands of souls, one would at first sight have declared that all the tents had been pitched in a haphazard way; but such in reality is not the case. The Ras's tent is the first to be pitched, and is so placed that the door of it will face the direction of the morrow's march; then the chief officer will place his tent to the right front of this door, and the next in rank on the left front, till eventually a complete circle of tents is formed

## Casual Grazing Customs

round that of the Ras. Then the followers of these officers will form a circle of tents round each of those of their chiefs, and so on *ad infinitum*, circles within and circles without circles. So capably is this method carried out that each location of each tent is known, and that despite the fact that the irregularities of the ground often necessitate the formation of very imperfect circles. Many of the soldiers who are unprovided with tents rig up in a very few minutes a shelter, by making sheaves from the high grass.

The most remarkable piece of happy-go-lucky management is the grazing of the animals, which appear to roam anywhere of their own free will, yet at sunset all flock to their owners' tents, having, doubtless, thoroughly mastered the intricacies of circles within and circles without circles. Sometimes it happens that an owner finds at nightfall that one of his animals is missing, whereupon he will go the round of the tents, crying aloud, "For the love of God, has any one seen a black mule or a white donkey?" (as the case may be). "Tell me, for God's sake."

After a few days of joint camps, we had learnt quite as much as we wanted to know of the mysteries of an Abyssinian host on the march, and resolved in consequence to push on ahead of the Ras. Accordingly, Harrington having duly sent him word to this effect, we set out on Sunday morning, the 16th of October, having had our slumbers broken long before sunrise by the commencement of the Church service.

At this period we were joined by an adventurous

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

Irishman named McKelvey, who has lived in Abyssinia for the last forty years, during which time he has become quite naturalized. He was formerly bodyguard to King John, and was one of the English prisoners held by King Theodore at Magdala. He dresses as an Abyssinian, wearing short trousers, tight in the leg and baggy in the seat, a shamma, and no shoes or hat. He feeds, too, as a native, and has married an Abyssinian lady. Nevertheless, he still has a tender corner in his heart for his old country.

One day we encountered a blinding storm of locusts. These pests measured from two to three inches long, and their bodies were of a red colour with speckled wings. From a distance they resembled a mist hanging over the land, and at first came upon us like wind-driven snow; then thicker and thicker they came, till everything was locusts, the air and the earth too. There chanced to be a village close by, and the people could be seen busily engaged in lighting fires to smoke the intruders away from their little piece of cultivation.

Along some portions of the road, even at this, the dry season, we found several places muddy and difficult to cross, which made one reflect how impossible it would be ever to extricate one's self from this mud during the rainy season. The land, however, could undoubtedly be easily drained, and decent roads very quickly made.

## CHAPTER VII

### WE REACH ADIS ABABA

A drunken official—The Hawash river—A sporting excursion—A fatal pass—Balchi—Harrington's narrow escape—A letter from the capital—Entry to Adis Ababa.

AT a place called Laga-Hardim, which may be considered the boundary between Ras Makonnen's and Ras Darghe's country, the 'Shum,' or civil officer of the district, whose name was Banti, not only showed his partiality for Englishmen by supplying an extraordinary amount of dergo, but also by putting in an appearance himself—albeit in a very festive condition. As further evidence of friendship, he determined to sleep in our camp; but Harrington persuaded him to deny himself that pleasure. This remarkable man is notorious for his conviviality; yet he possesses more than the average influence over the people of his district, and is very fairly popular.

To me one of the most interesting bits of the journey was crossing the river Hawash, because, in order to do this, the road takes a very circuitous route. It is said that, owing to the steep nature of the banks, a crossing at any other spot is impracticable, yet it would appear that no steps have been

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

taken to ascertain the real truth of this. It is a piece of country well worth exploring. The Hawash here drains the land east and west. On either hand extends a waterless stretch of several miles, making it probable that abundance of game would come to the river's edge to drink. During a short excursion



VILLAGERS BRINGING SUPPLIES.

I undertook, I found fresh tracks both of big and small koodoo, oryx, and elephants, and, from native information, I gathered that elephants are found still further north of the main road, in a district called Filwa, as well as at Asabot. As most of the tracks headed in that direction, there is every likelihood of the statement being correct. When encamped on the banks of the river close to the

## Unsuccessful Fishing

bridge (a piece of engineering that will not defy the storms and rains for ever), we launched Harrington's canvas boat to try our luck at fishing, but could only tempt a single fish called "ambazza," which proved to be boneless and soft eating. They are said to run to great weight. The most satisfactory method of exploring the river would be to construct a stout though light raft, which could be lifted out of the water and carried over unsuitable places. A river always has a fascination for me, and creates a desire to spy round its next bend to seek out its source and its course, an occupation that rivets my attention and sends all else into oblivion, in the same way that a range of hills draws me to their summit to view the unknown land beyond.

After leaving the Hawash, we crossed a low pass at night-time. The pathway ran between steep volcanic rocks, rising abruptly on either hand, which at one moment entirely obscured the light of the moon, and at another displayed a weird-looking spot, suggesting to one's mind how suitable it was for the execution of foul play. Some eight or nine years ago it happened that the Abyssinian chief Aberjambry met his death in this very pass at the hands of the Gallas, who afterwards cast stones from above on the dead body as it lay in the valley below. Hence the name of the pass, Aberjambry.

Forty miles before reaching Adis Ababa, we came to the important post of Balchi, where the telephone communicates both with Harrar and the capital—that is to say, whenever it happens to be in working order; but during my stay at Adis Ababa,

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

the chances were always against getting a message through. In order to reach Balchi, one has to ascend a steep, narrow, stony pathway, which, starting from the market town of Godoburka, skirts the side of the hill, in such a fashion that a slip on the wrong side of the track would undoubtedly be fatal. Harrington was riding leisurely up this road in front, whilst I was walking a couple of hundred yards in the rear, when quite suddenly, without any warning whatever, his powerful mule whisked round and set off at a full gallop downhill. There was but an instant for considering the best course to take. Had I stood in the middle of the track, the mule might have dodged me on the wrong side, and vanished with its rider down below, or it might have gone straight at me with equally disastrous results. As it was, I planted myself on the outer edge, with the intention of keeping the mule on the inside. The pace was terrific, and how the animal ever managed to keep its footing over the loose stones and rocks, or to negotiate the corners, was really marvellous. In this lively fashion the rider sped on his return journey for another two or three hundred yards before he could bring the brute to a standstill. It was indeed fortunate that the baggage-animals were well in rear, otherwise a very serious mishap must have occurred. As a spectator of the whole scene, I can confidently recommend a gallop down the Balchi hill on a runaway mule to anybody suffering from a sluggish liver. The cause of the scare was merely a bundle of grass which was being carried on a man's head. The man was himself

## Mr. Wakeman's Sleep

hidden by the protruding rock, his load only being visible, and the sight of a bundle of grass sailing gaily downhill to market, apparently of its own accord, was altogether too much for the nerves of the mule. "It must be the devil himself!" he cried; and with this notion fixed in his head, fled accordingly.

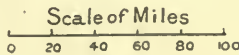
Although we were now but a small party on the road, namely, Harrington, Beru, Wakeman, McKelvey, and myself, we nevertheless enjoyed our little jokes. Mr. Wakeman, though an excellent doctor, detested privations and early rising. "What time do we start to-morrow morning, sir?" he would ask of Harrington. "Two a.m.," was the reply; and Mr. Wakeman's jaw would fall accordingly, and his face wear a distressed look. Nevertheless, in order to make the most of the remaining time, he would leave his two companions when only halfway through their dinner (no small loss on a cold night), and, without taking off his heavy walking-boots, lie down to rest, wrapped in his thick overcoat, considering that any time which might be devoted to sleep should not be unnecessarily wasted either in eating or in dressing. The sun had risen the following morning when we approached the doctor's tent to wish him "Good morning," and inquire whether he required any breakfast; at the same time pretending utter astonishment at discovering he had never been to bed at all, for we all knew that sleeping in this fashion was the doctor's greatest horror next to early rising. After all, he was repaid for the loss of his dinners and

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

uncomfortable slumbers, for he enjoyed the fun as much as the rest of us.

On Monday, the 24th of October, a messenger arrived from Adis Ababa. He brought a letter from M. Ilg, Conseiller d'État, informing Harrington that, in accordance with his wishes, his reception at the capital would in no way be made official, and at the same time inviting us to breakfast. At dawn the next day, accompanied by the four sowars, we started ahead of the baggage, preferring to walk the first mile or so, for, despite our heavy overcoats, we were extremely cold.

Map showing the route of  
**CAPT. M. S. WELLBY**  
 from  
**ADDIS ABEBA TO THE SOBAT RIVER**  
 1899



Route -----  
 Heights in feet





## CHAPTER VIII

### AT THE COURT OF THE NEGUS

First impressions of the capital—The king's palace—Reception by M. and Madame Ilg—The payment of muleteers—The foreign Residencies—Dinner with the Italian Resident—A summons from the palace—The Emperor of Ethiopia—An audience of the Negus—Menelik's departure for Tigré—We follow—The great camp of the Negus—Menelik's breakfast-party—The Queen of England's phonographic message to the Negus—The king's procession—Menelik's camp, 1st of November, 1898—An Abyssinian Aldershot—Diagrams of camp.

As we draw nearer to the capital, we met many people coming and going. Soon we were in the midst of little round huts with their compounds protected by low mud walls, dotted here, there, and everywhere, but all alike. In the very centre of the whole scene, and completely occupying a separate hill, stood the king's red-tiled palace, surrounded by a plantation of sycamore trees. On all sides we saw extraordinary numbers of mules, ponies, and donkeys grazing on the excellent pasturage, and in the most suitable spots villages of canvas had been pitched, all indicative of the king's impending march into Tigré.

As soon as we had reached the heart of Adis Ababa, we were met and warmly received by

## "Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

M. Ilg, who straightway led the way to his own house, where his charming wife gave us a hearty welcome. Our stay was of necessity short and sweet, for Harrington at present had no house of his own, and he had consequently much work to accomplish in superintending the formation of a temporary camp.

On reaching our tents, I felt with satisfaction that the first stage of my travels had been successfully accomplished. We had taken nearly three weeks on our journey from Harrar to Adis Ababa, a distance of 270 miles. For each of my baggage-mules I had paid about 50 dollars (£5 or thereabouts)—a high price. The pay of my head muleteer was 15 dollars a month, that of the others 10 dollars, and of a boy muleteer 5 dollars. Each muleteer also received 2 dollars a month for food. My advice to intending travellers is to engage boys, who do exactly the same work as men. It is a curious fact that most of the so-called boys are men, whilst many of the men are boys. It is advisable and more satisfactory for all parties that a fixed rate should be agreed upon. At the present day, every foreigner—French, Russian, Italian, and English—pays according to his fancy; but whatever the pay may be, there are always plenty of men forthcoming. This rate of pay for the journey is considerably lessened if the expedition is to remain at Adis Ababa.

Harrington's camp was pleasantly enough situated in a fashionable quarter of the capital, on a stretch of excellent turf, used as the grazing land of

## The Russian Representative

numberless baggage-animals belonging to soldiers bound for Tigré. The site was well-fitted for a cricket or polo ground. Close by was Ras Makonnen's own important-looking dwelling; and north of the camp, at the foot of the hills, lay the Residence of M. Lagarde, famous for the cage-like stock-



RUSSIAN RESIDENCE AT ADIS ABABA, SHOWING M. LAGARDE AND  
M. AND MADAME VLASSOF.

ades built around it in such a way as not only to shut out most effectively hyæna and jackal, but also most of the sun's life-giving rays. Further east is situated the Russian Residency, occupied by Monsieur and Madame Vlassof—a whitewashed and suitable house, commanding cheery views of all the neighbouring country. At the other

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

end of Adis Ababa stood the Italian Residency of Captain Ciccodicola. There was nothing remarkable about this dwelling from the outside. It was merely a somewhat pretentious Abyssinian house in a lonely situation. This drawback, however, was counteracted by the cheery reception



KING MENELIK'S PALACE.

always to be found inside. Our first night at the capital we dined with the Italian representative; but, despite the good fare, we were compelled to don our overcoats for protection against the cold.

That same evening a message arrived from the king expressing a desire to see Harrington at the palace at 8.30 the next morning, when I was to have the honour of being introduced.

## The Emperor Menelik

I felt very foolish donning evening clothes and a felt hat at 7 a.m., and must have cut a very ridiculous figure riding a mule through the busy parts of the city *en route* to the palace in these garments ; but as the Abyssinians saw nothing laughable about me, it did not matter much. On entering the outer stockade of the palace, we crossed an untidy, rough, stony court, where a large, square-looking building was in process of construction. On the other side of this we were met by M. Ilg, who conducted us up a flight of stone stairs into the presence of His Imperial Majesty King Menelik II., G.C.M.G., Emperor of Ethiopia, Negus Negasti, King of Kings.

Having been introduced by Harrington, and shaken hands with the monarch, I retired a few paces, but only to advance again very shortly, and, after a second hand-shake, to depart. Such a brief meeting scarcely allowed me to form a fair judgment of the king. Seated as he was when we entered, I should have taken him to be quite a small man, whereas he stands five feet ten inches high. Though by no means handsome, there is yet a very taking and frank look about his features, or perhaps I should more correctly say an open look. Shahzad Mir summed his appearance up in these words : "I saw a very little man and a very big mouth."

The following morning it was announced that the king, who is styled Janhoi, intended starting that same day for the province of Tigré ; and as we were not quite prepared to leave so suddenly, we agreed, at any rate, to see him off for the wars, and follow

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

on as soon as we conveniently could. Contrary to my expectation, his departure from the palace was entirely without ceremony, and, considering the importance of the occasion, there were but few people about. The king was evidently bent on getting away as quietly as possible, for on leaving the palace, instead of coming boldly forward into the open as he might have done, he kept close by the stockade. He was preceded by a motley crowd of soldiers, both mounted and on foot. A similar force followed in his rear, some leading his extra ponies, gaily decorated with red cloth and silver-coloured trappings. We rode alongside of the king for some short distance through a struggling mob, through which men with long canes forcibly made a lane for us. We were able to go at a sufficient pace to compel those on foot to break into a double. The scene was a remarkable one; everybody seemed to be in somebody else's way, and one and all shouted, wrangled, argued, and pushed. Away on the outskirts of the moving crowds stood a line of beggars calling loudly on their king, "Janhoi! Janhoi! Janhoi!" My curiosity was soon satisfied, and I was glad when Harrington gave the signal to bid adieu to Menelik and turn our horses' heads homewards.

Two days later we were following in the king's steps. There was no mistaking the road, which took us over the hills in a north-east direction, for numbers of soldiers and their servants were flocking to the same point; whilst a few who had accompanied the king might be seen returning for the

## On the March again

purpose of taking the more direct though rougher road, and rejoining him later at Barumeida. As we proceeded at our leisure, we noticed there were two



AT ADIS ABABA : ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH.

routes, an upper and a lower one, both clearly indicated by the continuous throng of people moving along them.

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

Early in the afternoon we sighted the mighty camp of Janhoi and his followers. At first glimpse it looked as though snow had fallen on the plains and hillsides. On closer approach the snow proved to be an enormous collection of tents, which so bewildered us, that we despaired of ever finding the space allotted to us for our camp. Fortunately, M. Ilg kindly met us, and conducted us to a camping-ground close to the tents of Janhoi himself. As the day advanced more soldiers continued to pour into camp, and more tents sprang up in every direction.

The following day being Sunday was duly observed, for the army remained halted, and we had the honour of breakfasting with Janhoi himself at 10 a.m. As might be expected, there were crowds of attendants around and about the king's tents. We passed under an awning, and then entered a very fine circular tent, where we found the king seated on a low, cushioned sofa ornamented with two wings or arm-rests. Placed in front of him was a large decorated basket, holding a pile of thin round pieces of bread, called injerras, of which he occasionally ate. In front of this was a long row of baskets covered with cloth, holding bread and little dishes of spices. On either side, seated on the ground, were the governors of the provinces, the generals, and other grandees. Amidst this select company stood attendants, dangling before their noses yards of raw, quivering meat, which had been stripped off from the animals the moment after their throats had been slit. From these appetizing joints, the guests

## An Abyssinian Banquet

themselves, armed with long thin knives, cut off pieces, each according to his taste, which they forthwith proceeded to devour with great gusto. By the side of each guest stood a decanter of tej, which was always refilled as soon as emptied.

I was surprised at the silence which pervaded the gathering. Occasionally Janhoi would make a remark; otherwise there was very little talking, all being bent on eating and drinking, an operation over which they in no way hurried themselves. This semi-barbarous feast, strange to say, was brought to a most unexpected and incongruous end, for glasses were handed round and then filled with champagne and emptied with evident gusto. I was glad to find this little touch of the civilized world so congenial to their tastes; and I thought to myself that it was indeed civilization washing away barbarism. When the king himself was about to drink, his own personal attendant would pour a few drops into the palm of his own hand to taste, before pouring out for the king. Other attendants then hid him from view of the "evil-eye" by spreading out their shammas in front. Yet it would seem that this custom is gradually falling into disuse, for the king drank his coffee openly like a European.

Besides the distinguished guests who were breakfasting, other officials of importance stood in groups near or about the king. Nobody smoked, for as yet the Abyssinians have not learnt the pleasure and benefit to be derived from this sociable practice. The absence of the habit is due to the edict of King

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

John, who absolutely forbade smoking. Menelik, however, neither forbids nor encourages it, and one will occasionally meet an Abyssinian who appreciates tobacco. Before very long smoking will probably be fashionable.

As for M. Ilg, Captain Ciccodicola, Captain Harrington, and myself, we sat at a long, narrow table at right angles to the king, and were amply and properly regaled, for besides prodigious piles of injerras and dabo (thick bread), we partook of excellent soup, omelettes, and endless courses of meat prepared in various ways. It was perhaps for this reason that we declined the last item on the menu—a lump of raw, quivering meat—although it was an offer from Janhoi himself. My little terrier, Lady, attracted the royal attention, for the king is fond of dogs; but I regret to say she behaved very badly, for in spite of much coaxing on the part of our host, she would only look round at me, imploring to be taken away. Whilst we were enjoying our coffee and champagne, M. Lagarde put in an appearance at the party.

As the day advanced the tent grew proportionately hot and stuffy, so that, after the remnants of the food had been taken away, it was with a great feeling of relief that we suddenly found a large portion of the canvas removed, admitting a flow of fresh air; and disclosing many more baskets of injerras placed here and there upon the ground. At the same moment a blast from a long wooden instrument summoned the various commanders to draw near and be fed, and in response each approached in order of rank. Some of the seniors

## Raw Meat

were curious-looking old fellows enough ; but no matter who they were, down they all at once squatted, and tightly packed themselves round the baskets, entirely regardless of elbow-room, and I wondered however the attendants managed to stand



ABYSSINIANS EATING RAW MEAT.

in their midst and hold up their loads of raw meat. These enormous pieces of flesh gradually grew less and less as the officers continued to cut and slice, till the bare bone alone remained. After this function, great numbers of soldiers were in their turn fed outside ; but I had really had sufficient enlightenment in Abyssinian diet for one day, and actually dreamed

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

of raw meat that night. The king himself is a reasonable feeder, showing even in this respect ideas far in advance of those of his subjects. Sometimes he even forgets all about breakfast until the afternoon, whereas one of the chief considerations of an ordinary Abyssinian is his food. The king generally ends the day at nine o'clock, starting early again at 3 a.m.

On the afternoon following the feast, we were destined to enjoy for a second time the honour of visiting the king, for Harrington had brought a message for him from H.M. the Queen of England, which she herself had spoken into a phonograph. As we entered the tent, nearly half of which had been opened, we found the king seated as usual, whilst around him stood a number of dignitaries. Harrington and his sowars, with drawn and carried swords, took their places immediately opposite the monarch. A table was then set in front of the king, and on this the phonograph was placed. With the exception of the gurgling sound produced by the instrument, dead silence pervaded the tent. The Negus was highly gratified with the message, even standing up that he might the more distinctly catch the words, for he was much struck with their clearness and firmness. He listened to the Queen's gracious words time after time, and readily consented to my attempting to photograph the scene. During this time a grand salute of eleven guns was being fired to celebrate the occasion. I stepped outside to try and take a picture of this event also, and found soldiers running about in every direction,

## The Phonograph as Viceroy

anxious to learn why guns were being fired on the sabbath.

The phonograph was then carried off to the private quarters of Queen Taitu, who was equally charmed with the message, demanding several times a repetition of the Queen's words. It was



WITH MENELIK'S ARMY. FIRING A SALUTE IN HONOUR OF THE QUEEN'S MESSAGE DELIVERED FROM A PHONOGRAPH.

a wonder to me that this particular cylinder was not completely worn out. The Queen, although understanding no English at all, was nevertheless easily able to recognize the mention of her own name.

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

Before sunrise the next morning the vast camp was again on the move, wending its way to the next halting-ground. We ourselves were invited to ride with the king's party, and were thus enabled to see to advantage all that went on around us. The king himself rode a mule or pony, and was preceded by his spare animals and his dogs. Close by him walked several of the more important officers, and immediately behind came his "gasha jagry," bearing his rifle clothed in crimson, his shield, cup, and Bible. Another mounted attendant followed with a second rifle wrapped in red cloth, while a third, on foot, carried the king's chair. It is an invariable rule that these attendants should immediately follow the king whenever he is on the march, and under no circumstances is any one permitted to come between them and his Majesty. We rode immediately behind the agafari, whose business it is to repeat the king's orders, and to first see any one desiring an audience.

At first, owing to the crowding and hustling, we derived but little enjoyment from our ride, until Janhoi, who is ever mindful of his guests as well as his inferiors, gave an order for breathing space to be allowed us. His orders were carried out to the letter, and for ever afterwards we rode along in perfect comfort. As we glanced back over our shoulders, we saw a clear space of about a hundred yards, and then a perfect wall of mounted men stretching across the valley and moving forwards. As we proceeded, more followers flocked in from both flanks, and many

## The King's Progress

moved along the sides and crests of the hills. On passing each village a crowd of its inhabitants would collect to greet the king, and do their homage by stripping themselves to the waist, and calling aloud, "Janhoi! Janhoi!" Occasionally malcontents came out, who, after their fashion, cried loudly for justice, "Abeit! abeit!" and to these I fancy messengers were sent to hear their complaints. One individual in particular attracted attention by his determination not to lose his chance of "abreit," for, disregarding a nasty shower of blows from the officials armed with the long sticks, he forced himself before the very eyes of the king, and bitterly cried aloud, "Abeit! abeit!" The shawm players who led the way would every now and then take up a position on an elevated piece of ground, and, facing the approaching king, blow a series of low, deep blasts.

Our route lay through a continuation of magnificent well-watered grass valleys separated by low ridges. There was very scanty cultivation, and the little patches of mashillah (dhura) we did come across were carefully avoided by everybody, for on this point the king is most particular. There was also a remarkable scarcity of villages. After a four hours' march, in which time a distance of twelve miles had been covered, an open plain of short green grass lay in front of us. Prepared beforehand by nature, it was a fitting camping-ground, as flat as a billiard table, and intersected by clear, running rivulets. Here no tent was seen until the king's had been pitched, and the

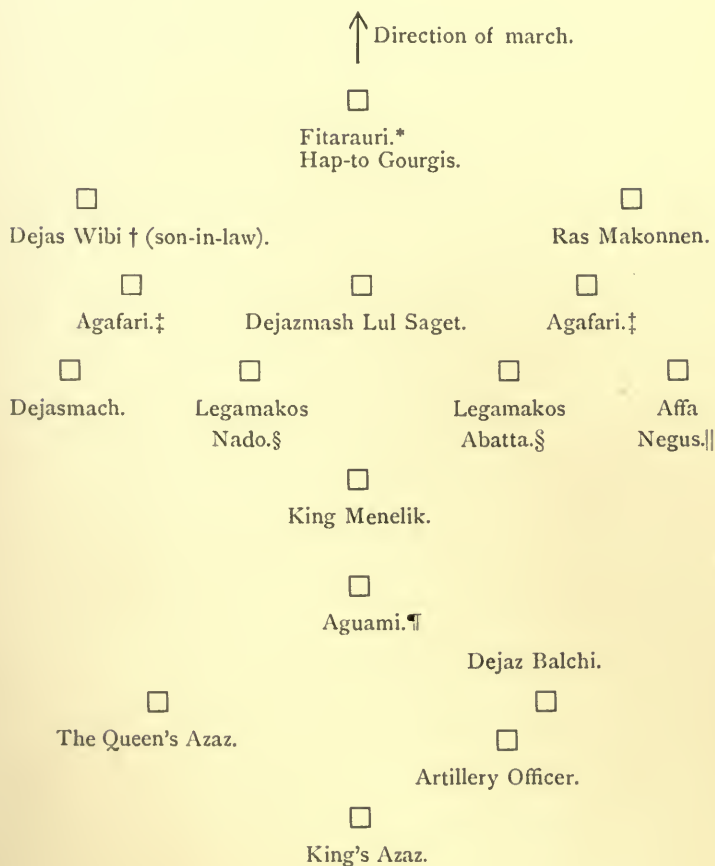
## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

same procedure followed as on the previous occasion, the entry to the king's tent as usual facing the direction of the morrow's march. Then tents sprang up around with wonderful rapidity, each general knowing well enough his own correct position. No orders were issued, there were no tedious measurings with lines and little flags, no dressing of pegs, no trumpets sounding, no arguments, no talking. There was no noise whatever; every man knew exactly what to do, with the result that in an incredibly short space of time the deserted plain was converted into a sort of Abyssinian Aldershot.

The accompanying diagrams should give some idea of the camping arrangements adhered to by an Abyssinian force on the march.

## On the March

Diagram showing disposition of Menelik's army on the march.



\* Fitarauri—leader of advanced guard.

† Dejaz—short for Dejasmach (a general).

‡ Agafari—receive people and distribute king's orders.

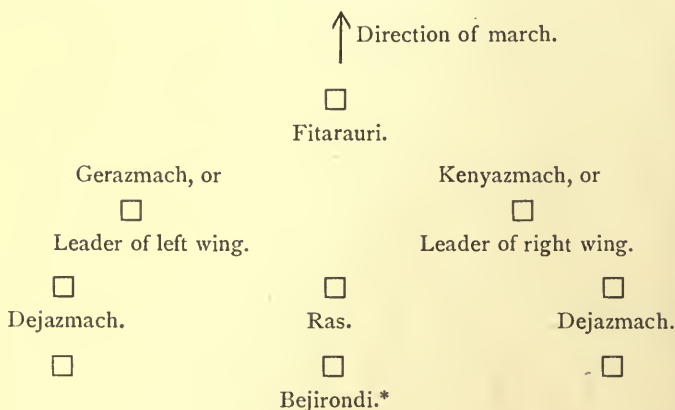
§ Legamakos—only two who dress like the king in battle.

|| Affa Negus—Lord Chief Justice.

¶ Personal attendants for food, water, tents, etc., under the direction of the Azaz.

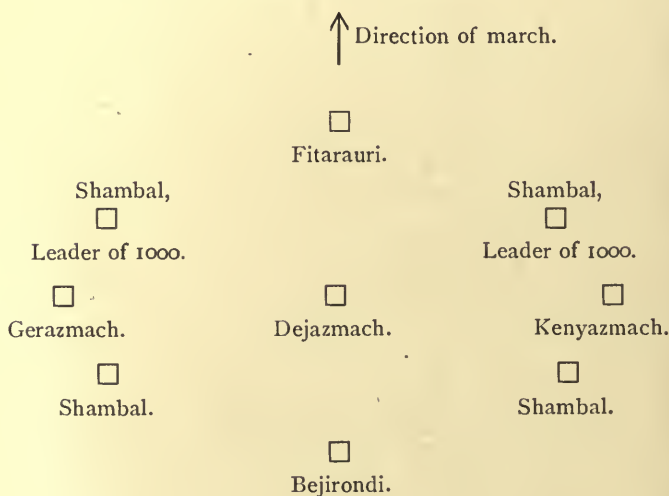
## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

Disposition of the force on the march of a Ras or the Governor of a Province.



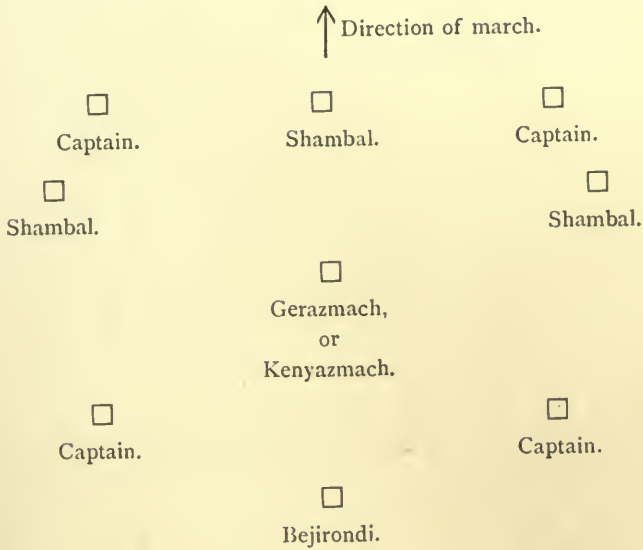
\* Bejirondi—looks after baggage.

Disposition of a Dejazmach's force.



# Camping

Disposition of a Gerazmach or Kenyazmach's camp.



## CHAPTER IX

### WITH THE ABYSSINIAN ARMY

Menelik's military manœuvres—The queen's arrival—The Beni Shangul people—I receive permission to travel anywhere—My farewell to Menelik—A comparison between the Negus and King John—Menelik's good example—Departure from the great camp—Return to the capital—Entoto—Preparations for my new expedition—Market-day at Adis Ababa—Abyssinian money—Side excursions.

WITH 6° Fahr. of frost at night-time, we were glad to see the royal tent still standing at sunrise. Suddenly, down it went; every other tent immediately collapsed, and we were once more on the move.

Towards the end of the march the king changed his mule for an iron-grey and richly caparisoned pony. This was evidently a well-known signal, for every officer at once mounted; while the king, wheeling off to a flank, was followed by a force of several hundred horsemen, who trotted after him over a fine stretch of turf, forming a perfect ground for cavalry. Sometimes the king broke into a smart canter, whereupon we all swept along after him—an irregular body of horsemen. Presently the pace would be slackened, and, at a word of command, a hundred officers galloped out to the front and rode off.

## Queen Taitu's Arrival

the very midst of this vast concourse, we could not have enjoyed a quieter meal had we been alone in the jungle.

As soon as the royal tents were ready, the arrival of Queen Taitu was announced. She was preceded by a large escort of armed and mounted soldiers, and immediately around her rode a number of officers and ladies, who made a pretty picture in the bright sunshine with their gay and multi-coloured sunshades. The queen herself, who was thickly veiled, rode a brown mule, and was sheltered from the sun's rays by a scarlet sunshade of enormous dimensions. As she rode past close by where we stood, we showed our respect, not after the fashion of her own subjects by stripping ourselves to the waist, but by saluting.

At one of our camping-places, a hill in the midst of a broad valley was chosen for the royal tents. From its summit we watched with Menelik the approach to the camp of the continuous stream of men and animals. Amongst this multitude my attention was drawn to the men from the Beni Shangul district, who were ornamented with numerous brass bracelets, sometimes almost concealing the entire arm. An individual of this description is rather to be avoided, for each bracelet signifies that its wearer has killed a man.

The men of Tigré, as a rule, have more finely cut features than the southerners; whilst a boy of this district is recognizable by a very short pigtail and by the shaving of his hair in front. On passing boyhood the tail is cut off, and the youth receives

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

from his father a gun in exchange. The hair over the forehead is no longer shorn, and when it has grown the youth is presented with a horse.

But to return to the king's hill. The crowd seemed indeed endless; far as the eye could see the living stream was still pouring in. The queen, surrounded by so many gay colours, was noticeable at a great distance. Her arrival at the royal hill was the signal for us to leave, and we departed to our different tents.

In the evening, Harrington, on returning from an interview with the king, told me to my astonishment and delight that his Majesty had not only granted me permission to travel wherever I liked in his country, but had also promised to forward letters to the chief officials of all the districts through which I intended to travel, informing them of the fact. Such kindness surpassed my expectation, and as I shook hands and said good-bye to the king next day, I earnestly wished him every success in the campaign he was then commencing. I also asked him if I could not make some return for all his kindness. "No," he replied; "only let me have copies of the maps you make."

The Emperor Menelik has really achieved wonders for the well-being of his country. He is far in advance of any previous Abyssinian monarch, and under his peaceful reign the population and prosperity of the Abyssinians have undoubtedly increased. He differs essentially from his predecessor King John, and has thoroughly won the love of his countrymen. King John was a great warrior,

## Menelik's Greatness

and being a man of fine physique and an athlete, was esteemed by the people. His decision, whether rightly or wrongly given, was law, and though anxious to be just—for he loved his country—he would take advice from none. Menelik, on the other hand, has not the physical or athletic powers of King John. He is of heavier build, and more given to thought and deliberation. Yet he is far in advance of his predecessor, for he takes counsel from those about him, and is always mindful of those below him. It is said that at the time of the "pest" some ten years ago, when the people were in dire distress by reason of their losses, Menelik formed a big camp, and setting the example to his people with his own hand, and assisted by his soldiers, tilled the soil, and in due time handed over to the sufferers the fruits of their labours, an example that encouraged others to do likewise. I was told that for three years he ate no beef, for he argued, "Why should I enjoy plenty while my people are in want?" I doubt if any European ruler would have denied himself to the same extent for a similar cause. The severity of the "pest" is felt at the present day, for the price of a cow is from 25 to 40 dollars (£2 5s. to £4), whereas its former value was from 2 to 4 dollars—animals then being so cheap that the hide was sometimes sold on the live beast, as the owner was too lazy to slay and skin it.

On leaving the mighty camp, we took a more direct though rougher road back to Adis Ababa, crossing a pass called the Hulu Koh, said to be 12,200 feet above the sea-level. The valleys we

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

rode through were narrow and rough. Some of them were rich in cultivation, and most of the hills on either side were crowned with rocks of basalt. There were many juniper and kusso trees, the latter affording excellent shade and bearing a long red hanging flower from which the Abyssinians extract a medicine to exterminate the worms that so persistently infest them, owing to the custom of eating their meat raw. As a rule, this medicine is taken every two months. From the summit of the pass we were rewarded with magnificent views, and on the sky-line of a distant range of hills could see two trees that showed us where New Entoto lay.

Entoto, which means "green place," boasted the royal residence previously to its being transferred to Adis Ababa (which means "new flower"), and comprises the range of hills lying north-east of that city, old Entoto being situated on the opposite side of the valley. The king found New Entoto an extremely bleak spot, besides being inconvenient, since it stands at a height of 9700 feet above the sea-level, or nearly 2000 feet above the plain of Adis Ababa, and is reached by a road which is very steep in places. We reached New Entoto in good time the following morning, and, passing by the churches of St. Raguel and St. Mariam, descended the hill, which is rich in iron and sandstone, to our camp at the capital.

The route of my expedition after leaving the capital had already been determined upon, but my arrangements were by no means complete. I had

## Preparing for the March

with me Shahzad Mir, my Somali boy Mohamed, and the goods we had brought from Berbera, comprising my own personal belongings, supplies, instruments, and ammunition. My instruments included a theodolite, plane-table, prismatic compass, barometers and thermometers. I will, however, pass quickly over these preliminary details. By the end of November my caravan was complete except for the rifles and ammunition for my men, which had



MARKET-DAY, ADIS ABABA.

not arrived from Aden. Red tape on this occasion caused us to waste six weeks, and at least 500 dollars (or £50) as well. The time spent at the Ethiopian capital was, however, full of enjoyment. The climate was delightful, and the preparations for an expedition into the unknown afford immense pleasure.

The first consideration was the formation of my transport. Mules are *par excellence* the animals for Abyssinia, but mules, owing to the king's

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

campaign, were scarce and expensive, costing 50 dollars each. I had, therefore, to content myself with thirty of these, and to make up the deficiency by purchasing ponies and donkeys. Every day, excepting Sunday, which, as I have said before, is strictly observed, is a market day at the capital, but by far the largest is on Saturdays, when from the early morning villagers coming from all quarters may be seen driving their donkeys or mules laden with goods for sale. One of the most interesting corners of the market is where the ponies are gathered together and their points exhibited along the open sward.

The Abyssinian's ideals in a horse are pace and the power of suddenly pulling up, and without doubt the movements of a great number of ponies are hampered by the severe bits used to ensure success in this practice. As a rule, there are not many ponies up to 13.3 hands high, and they can generally be bought for from 20 to 30 dollars, whereas a baggage pony will cost about 10 dollars. There is a very fair supply of ponies, some hundreds appearing in the market, and were there only Englishmen in the country, measures would be taken to introduce fresh blood and improve the present class. With but little training, many ponies as it is will very soon make polo ponies, for none of them have any fear of the stick, being daily accustomed to the frantic waving of the spears. Few can jump, though most of them take to it willingly enough; but this is not always the case, for on one occasion my latest purchase, in a fit of obstinacy, refused to jump, and

## Abyssinian Horseflesh

knocked down half the mud wall built round one of the wattle huts. "Oh!" cried out the old lady who occupied the place. "It's all very well, if you



HORSE-MARKET, ADIS ABABA.

take a fall, you have the money to pay somebody to nurse you; but I have no one to pay for the nursing of my wall."

Next to the ponies, the wood-sellers take up

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

their position in the market, and one cannot help being filled with commiseration for these men on comparing the amount of their work and their pay, for they have to bring the "turbs" or long pieces of wood into market from a distance of fifteen miles. Close by are the sellers of honey, wax, and butter, the latter averaging about a dollar for 8 lbs. Next are the sellers of various sorts of grain. This is principally barley and teff, but I have also noticed wheat, peas, oats, rice, and linseed. There are also for sale silver trinkets, cloth, beads, cartridge-belts, files, skins, leather straps (machanya), saddles, inferior knives, various articles made of iron, hardware, and so forth, and lastly fowls, sheep, and cattle. One is much struck by the appearance of the women who throng the market, for many of them are excessively pretty.

In spite of the big market, the money in circulation is sufficiently awkward to deter most Europeans from buying. A quarter of a dollar is represented by an amolé, which is a stick of salt measuring nearly a foot in length. If chipped, however, five or even six of these go to a dollar. Cartridges are employed for smaller sums than this. Adjoining the market-place is the custom-house, where ivory and coffee and piles of Gras rifles are most conspicuous. Mules and donkeys, of which a few months ago large numbers were to be seen in the market, are now no longer for sale, owing to an edict of the king restricting the price. I was therefore compelled to undertake several two-day trips to search for them.

## CHAPTER X

### LAST DAYS AT THE CAPITAL

A mysterious hill—An Abyssinian legend—A visit to the Shaitan's cave—The British Residency—Managasha—The king of the forest—M. Vlassof's ostrich—Final preparations for my journey—My caravan—My last day at the capital.

THESE little excursions were also useful in other respects, for I always selected well-known and conspicuous hills as fixed points for commencing our surveying. Parts of some of the hills were wooded, and barley grew almost up to the very summits (some were 10,000 feet high), whilst good shooting was provided by three different kinds of gazelle, as well as bustard, partridges, and guinea-fowl. One day I informed my Abyssinians that I intended paying a visit to the hill called Yerrer, situated west of Adis Ababa; but they did all they could to dissuade me from such a trip, saying that a "Shaitan" dwelt there, and that for this reason they dare not go. This strange bit of news was quite enough to rouse my curiosity, and I made inquiries regarding the Shaitan, and was told the following legend.

Somewhere on this hill there is a cave guarded by the Shaitan, which penetrates so far into the

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

bowels of the earth that nobody has ever been able to reach its limits, where the Gallas, when invaded, were accustomed to conceal their cattle. According to popular belief, there will at some period emerge from this cave a king, whose name will be Theodore, and an abuna (bishop) called Zahai (sun). These will rule from Yerrer to Gondar. The army of this King Theodore will be composed of Shangkallas.\* East of Yerrer all will be prosperous, but towards the west King Menelik and his army will be annihilated.

During the reign of this new king, a small piece of land will satisfy the wants of thousands of people, and the milk from one cow will be sufficient for thirty men; prosperity will reign throughout, and all will love God and will strive for Paradise and obtain it.

Early the next morning I set out to visit this cave, to try and find out the truth of the legend from the guardian himself. After a pleasant ride of seven or eight miles over grassy undulating ground, we reached the Akaki, a clear flowing stream, on the opposite bank of which were a number of caves inhabited by people and their cattle. These caves were all connected by mysterious back passages, and, although providing good shelter from sun and rain, have this drawback—that, on emerging from any one of them, one stands a very good chance of stepping into space. There are

\* Abyssinians, in general, call everybody with a black skin a "Shangkalla," no matter whether he is a Galla, Turkana, Soudanese, or anything else.

## A Journey of Discovery

said to be great stores of grass inside these caverns. After another couple of hours' ride, we halted by a rivulet for breakfast and to rest the animals. My Abyssinians again took the opportunity of repeating their belief that none who ascended Yerrer would come down alive. Disregarding their assertions, I moved on again at noon through fields of oats, peas, beans, and linseed, steering for the north-east side of the hill, where a collection of small villages were situated. Here the present of a "salt" (amolé) gained the friendship of one of the inhabitants, who agreed to act as guide and take me to the summit of the mountain, and show me the "Shaitan's" cave. We walked and climbed hard for an hour or so, and were well repaid for our exertions, for I was enabled to take bearings to all my other points. On the return journey, after taking a somewhat indirect route, we climbed with loaded rifles along a precipitous hillside, thick with undergrowth, till quite suddenly we came upon the entrance to the mysterious place. Here lay a quantity of bones, the hoof of a pony, the jawbone of a donkey, porcupine quills, and other tokens of the Shaitan's greed; but all our efforts by shouting and hurling sticks and stones failed to disturb the guardian. To penetrate into the cave was by no means an inviting task, as it entailed for the first few yards a crawl, literally *ventré à terre*, in thick slimy mud, and I preferred to go off and shoot a couple of gazelle for supper instead of grovelling in slush.

On returning to our bivouac, I found the villagers

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

had brought milk, water, chopped straw for the mules, and a sheep for my Abyssinians, which they of course ate raw. They are hardy fellows in their own hills, and good climbers ; and when I suggested dropping down a few hundred feet or so to a snug little nook to avoid the cutting wind, they replied, " Oh, we don't mind the cold." I must, however, confess that although well supplied with blankets, I was considerably discomforted by it.

At daybreak we climbed again to explore more caves and renew our search for Shaitan. Some were most awkwardly placed ; and as we crept along hanging on to tufts of grass and hardy plants, my boots were far from giving me a sound footing, and my men were equally persistent in warning me that if I did slip, I should in truth be launched into eternity, as if the danger of my position was not sufficiently brought home to me without frequent reminders. Search as we might, all was in vain. We therefore returned down the eastern side, in order to see some famous ruins of a building said to have been erected by Cadros (King Theodore). The outer walls had originally been of circular shape, and inside them there had been a square building, where the remains of massive pillars and the ruins of steps leading up to the interior could be distinguished. The whole had been built with slabs of sandstone. Some of them were of immense size (as much as twenty feet long), and the sight naturally made me pause, and wonder how on earth men contrived to carry and place them there.

## Abyssinian Generosity

Not far from the ruins I fired at a gazelle, and was annoyed to see the bullet strike the ground beyond. A moment afterwards, to my surprise, I saw the gazelle drop down dead. I afterwards found that the bullet had entered by one shoulder and left by the other.

On our return journey, a friendly Galla had prepared a feast for us all by the wayside. There was milk and crisp bread for myself, and injerras, with spices and tej, for the men ; and on my pressing upon the native a couple of dollars in return for his hospitality, he not only declined all payment, but offered me the present of a cow. Is there another country in the world whose inhabitants are blessed with such generous instincts ?

At this period, Harrington had chosen, and had been given by the king, a fine tract of land as a site for the British Residency. The difficulty in building anything more pretentious than a round wattle hut lay in the scarcity of wood, for almost every tree near Adis Ababa had already been cut up for firewood, and the supply has to be carried in on men's heads from a greater distance day by day. It would appear that eventually either the people must do without firewood or the king must remove his palace to a timbered district. Some of the best wood grows in the forest of Managasha, fifteen miles off, whither Harrington and I rode to arrange for a supply of timber for the Residency. The road was pleasant enough as we cantered over miles of grass land, crossing every now and then a deep gully or rivulet running north and south, and the

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

soil everywhere was undoubtedly fertile and only waiting cultivation.

Soon we reached a rounded, thickly wooded hill, and after passing this, we arrived at the abode of the king of the forest of Managasha—who is a Greek. Greeks always will, somehow or other, ferret out the least-frequented spots on earth, and there eke out an existence. Around his circular wattle hut, the home of this particular Greek, a space had been cleared, and the views over the tops of endless cotton trees were magnificent. He was happy enough with his Abyssinian wife and female slave, drawing sixty dollars a month from the royal treasury; and as we reclined on carpets sipping Turkish coffee beneath a shady tree, hot and tired from our long ride, I for a moment, but only for the moment, envied the little Greek, as he related his battles with countless panthers, and his stalks over the hills after game. The spot well deserves a visit by reason of its beauty, not to mention the hospitality of the Greek.

Amidst my preparations the days slipped by at an alarming rate, and had there been more English people at the capital, I might have never wished to quit it. Some of our mornings were spent hunting the "jack," but the royal pack (the dogs were being trained by Harrington for the king) at first were scarcely accustomed to our ways, and the day was generally ended by our chasing the jack with spears, and without the hounds. Others were employed in visiting our Russian, French, or Italian neighbours, or in a chat with those most hospitable



M. VLASSOF (THE RUSSIAN REPRESENTATIVE) AND HIS ESCORT.

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

and charming people, M. and Madame Ilg. In Abyssinia there is as good a climate and as good sport as one could possibly wish to have, but there is a dearth of Englishmen.

The Russian Residence is distinguished by a "tame" ostrich which guards the portals. On entering the enclosure the first time, I was taken quite unawares by the "pet" rushing furiously at me and my pony. Had I been able I should have fled straight away, but an irate ostrich, of all animals, gives no time to think of flight, and I mechanically slashed out right and left with my stick, while my attendant aided by throwing stones from a safe distance. While in the midst of the encounter, Madame Vlassof appeared on the verandah of the house, and called out in a great state of mind, "Do nothing! do nothing!" This advice, however, I was rude enough to disregard; but, retiring and defending, I eventually made good my retreat to where she stood, when the ostrich, more obedient to Madame Vlassof's voice than I had been, desisted from further attack. In order to guard against any future encounter, I promised to arm myself with a sharp sword, hoping that my threat would cause the bird to be tied up if its life were valued.

But to return to my preparations. Although the purchase of mules progressed rather slowly, there was no difficulty whatever in enlisting men. "Are you prepared to go anywhere and for any length of time?" was my invariable question; "and your pay will be five dollars the first month, with an

## Cook and Ex-trumpeter

increase of one dollar more each month if you behave properly." "Will go anywhere you like, even for a year," would come in reply. Daily I was accosted by half a dozen Abyssinians or more wishing to enlist for my expedition. Seeing that I was the only European, it was advisable for many reasons to take other men besides Abyssinians. In Adis Ababa I found four Somalis, and sent to Harrar for four more. I also obtained the king's permission to enlist five Soudanese, who had charge of the royal artillery and acted as instructors to the Abyssinians. They were remnants of the Italian Bottego's ill-fated expedition. Being penniless, they had had no chance of leaving the country, but they eagerly took service under me.

I also discovered a man hailing from Massowah, who had fought for the Italians at Adua, had been taken prisoner after the battle, and then acted as King Menelik's trumpeter. Owing to his liberal potations of tej, his blowing had become so inaccurate, and so jarred upon the nerves of his royal master, that his services were no longer required, and thus being without work, he offered himself to me as "cook." He had never cooked in his life, but he was soon taught the rudiments of frying meat and making chupatties ; and not only did this for me throughout the whole of my travels, but also gave me daily lessons in exercising patience and self-control, for I must add that he seldom produced a meal under two or three hours.

The remainder of my men were Abyssinians and Gallas, making a total of forty-four. For

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

every man I carried nearly four months' supply of food—flour, salt, pepper, and durgosh, the latter being a preparation from flour, and of special value, for half a mug of it mixed with cold water forms a ready-cooked and substantial meal. All the food was tightly packed in skins. Then we had to make pack-saddles and leather ropes for the mules, cartridge-belts and tents for the men. We took also axes, sickles, and cooking utensils, besides beads, cloth, and knives, &c., for barter with natives. Our impedimenta included a light collapsable canvas boat, easily carried on one man's head, and capable of holding three men. Though we took great care of the boat for several months, without needing it, our labour towards the end of our journey was amply rewarded.

As regards water-cans, I consider empty kerosene tins to be the most serviceable; they are light and strong, and two in a box are suitable for loading either on mules or camels. They were scarce at the capital, and the price varied. I came across one of them in a shop kept by a French merchant; the price for the empty tin was seven dollars (fourteen shillings)! I fancy the tin is still on sale. The Hindu merchants sold me them for half a dollar a piece. The shops at the capital are few in number, and kept principally by French and Hindu merchants, who have a miscellaneous collection of things on sale. In the French shops a few stores can be bought—sugar, for instance, but at four shillings a pound!

Sunday, the 18th of December, was my last day

## Farewell to Civilization

in Adis Ababa, and a very busy one. My Abyssinians likewise had business, for in the evening all were missing. Although I was actually about to start from the capital, I had no intention of going very far until my rifles and ammunition arrived from Aden. After all, the time would not be altogether wasted, for it was just as well that my men and myself should become accustomed to one another before launching into unknown regions. The baggage animals, too, would be grazing on fresh land and fattening for the work that lay before them.

At sunrise the next morning all the absentees had returned, and were busily engaged loading up. Soon afterwards I said good-bye to H.B.M.'s Agent, the last European we should see for more than six months.

## CHAPTER XI

### FROM ADIS ABABA TOWARDS THE UNKNOWN

We start for the unknown—Commissariat and camp arrangements—  
A squabble with the Gallas—Christmas Day—I lecture my men—  
Christmas meditations—The wonders of Mount Zaquala—Christ-  
mas sports—The Hawash.

WE steered a southern direction for the famous hill of Zaquala, and about noon halted by the side of a rippling rivulet, where we made final arrangements which would have to be adhered to throughout the entire journey.

The men were divided into six sections—one composed of the Soudanese, one of the Somalis, and four of the Abyssinians. Each section had its own commander, its own tent, animals, baggage, cooking-pots, tins, axes, &c., and each one took its turn at sentry duty by night and at guarding the grazing animals by day. In addition to these six tents (each of which weighed only a few pounds, and together did not even constitute a donkey load), there was my own tent, weighing about 50 lbs., and Shahzad Mir's, 30 lbs. Both of these, which were made of "mill rain," I had brought from Cawnpore. There was also a small black, gipsy-like tent for my cook, and a fairly large one for the headman,

## Our Baggage Bearers

where stores could be packed in wet weather, and where natives, who were small fry, scarcely worth my own attention, might receive hospitality from the others. My own stores, which had cost me twenty pounds, and which chiefly consisted of tea, cocoa, coffee, and jams, were carried on three mules. At night-time we formed a circle with our ten tents. On either side of my tent were the cook's and headman's tent, and opposite was Shahzad Mir's. At night the animals were picketed by their respective tents, the baggage lying between tents and animals. Each section loaded up and moved off independently, being only responsible for its own respective animals and loads. The advantages of such a system were proved times out of number, principally in that the time of loading and unloading was reduced to a minimum.

At the first streak of dawn the sentry would ring a bell, our reveillé, and woe betide the man who lingered. In half an hour we were on the road again.

On the second day out from the capital, not wishing to march longer than from three to four hours, I was compelled, through scarcity of water, to take advantage of a small pool I chanced to hit upon. It was stagnant, with dead leaves and branches on the surface. Such an uninviting supply would seem to be scarcely worth fighting over, yet on my Abyssinians taking the mules to drink, a host of Gallas appeared on the scene and declined to allow them even a drop. Hearing the noise, more men rushed out of camp to join in the fun—for, so

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

far, they were absolutely ignorant of discipline—and all was ready for a first-class row, when I produced the king's letter with magical effect. The Gallas fled precipitately, leaving two spears in our hands; but the mules, after all, ungratefully turned up their noses at the stagnant water. I then sent a messenger of peace to these poor ignorant and somewhat terrified Gallas, to explain who I was, and to express my willingness to pay for all the water both men and animals had drunk, which, by the way, did not amount to very much. During the absence of the messenger, I lectured the men on my method of dealing with Gallas and all other natives, explaining how it differed from their own, and that my motives and wishes were always of a friendly nature, that I was totally averse from the exercise of force, and that as long as they chose to remain with me, they would have to adapt themselves to my ways. They all "isshe"\* and bowed.

Towards evening the Gallas verified my predictions by bringing me a goat, for which, contrary to their wishes and expectations, I insisted upon paying two dollars, and afterwards they brought fowl, eggs, injerras, and tej. In return I further distributed a few dollars amongst the youngsters, which, by the way, were taken away by the old people for the purpose of returning to me. After sunset, they brought in milk, and again at daybreak some injerras. We finally parted with

\* "Isshe" means "Yes, we quite agree," and is the invariable acknowledgment of words or deeds. "Isshe" is always on the lips of many Abyssinians.

## Abyssinian Potentialities

many protestations of friendship, they even going so far as to say that they would look out for us on our return journey.

This is an instance out of many I might quote illustrative of the friendly disposition predominant amongst the Gallas. The lot of these people is a varied one, for some are perfectly contented, whilst others are the reverse. It must be remembered that the king and his rases, or governors of provinces, are, generally speaking, enlightened men with good hearts and sound intentions, whilst the ordinary Abyssinian knows nothing beyond tej, shooting, and raiding. Not that the Abyssinians are to blame for a single moment; arm a primitive people with guns, and what must be the inevitable fate of their less fortunately armed neighbours? To me it is astonishing that the results have not been more direful than they are. It speaks well for the Abyssinians, and I still cling to my first impression—that there is good and plenty of go in them, which will be developed as soon as the cloud of astounding ignorance enshrouding them is lifted. They are not to be blindly censured, though their words and deeds are often wrong. The reproach, if there be any, lies with those through whom a reckless importation of rifles has been permitted.

On the third day we camped on a western spur of the Zaquala hill, and afterwards moved to some healthy-looking grass on the high banks of a mountain stream, where, having pitched our camp beneath the delicious shade of some gurha trees, I decided to stop and celebrate Christmas Day. It so

## "Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

chanced that the back of one of the baggage-ponies was slightly rubbed during the last march, and as we should be compelled to hang about for several days, I gave orders to load one of my baggage-ponies that the wounded one might recover. This greatly astonished my Abyssinians, who argued that all the mules and ponies would have raw backs before very long, but that it really did not matter, for they could be loaded just the same. Towards evening I became aware that grumbling was going on amongst the men, because the headman had told them their pay would be cut on account of the injury to the pony's back. I therefore resolved to settle the little matter without delay. I took my chair before the big log fire that was always made before my tent at nightfall, and summoning all the men, inquired into the cause of the trouble that was brewing among them. They were evidently shy and somewhat taken by surprise, but at length muttered that they did not like to see me load my own riding-pony, and that they would rather carry the load themselves. Ignoring this statement, I replied that I was glad they had come before me, and that if they were afraid of losing their pay, they might rest assured that all payments would be made by my own hands. Should I ever think of cutting their pay, I would personally tell them so face to face, and through no other means. I told them that we were about to start together on a journey which would last for many months, and that I wanted only willing men who would trust and believe in me, and in whom I could repose confidence. I added that if any of

## The End of the Meeting

them were discontented, they could return to their homes at once, as this could now be easily done, and I should not stand in any one's way. With one accord they isshed and bowed, swearing to follow me even to the sea, for any length of time, and begged me not to load my own riding-ponies any more. I replied they did not yet know the Ingliz, and that when necessity demanded, we went a good deal further than that. The assembly then broke up, and the men set about singing and dancing to the banjo and the whistle, as happy as sandpipers, and left me alone by the burning logs that glowed in the frosty night air.

As I sat smoking my pipe in solitude, I reflected on many things, and on the journey before me, summing up the difficulties that beset our path. There were only two that really made me pause—first, the possibility of all my animals dying from attacks of the tsetse, or seroot fly; secondly, the possibility of my Abyssinians turning back. The first would come from the hand of fate, against which I had no power; but the latter problem I was determined to overcome—not only should they not turn back, but they should follow me of their own free will; although their departure would not have marred my expedition in the slightest, for I should have gone on just the same with the remainder of the Soudanese and Somalis. So far, however, no foreigner had succeeded in taking Abyssinians out of their country: they had either turned back at an early date, or had sickened and died; and I was resolved to succeed where

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

others had failed, and prove that Abyssinians can leave their country like other people. Besides, I hoped eventually to be able to show them something of our power in Egypt, to enlighten their minds and generate a spirit amongst their fellow-countrymen for future enterprise, for I trusted they would return safely to their country, and there encourage others to leave it, and see for themselves something of the civilized world. These meditations were interrupted by the return of my Abyssinians, who, forming a circle round the fire, talked and joked over the trip some of us intended making to the top of the mountains on the morrow, and I could see by their faces that they were eager to do all they could to help me.

There is a legend connected with Zaquala hill. There is said to be a lake at the very summit, from the centre of which a dim light used to be seen shining through the dead of night, but which latterly, owing to so many sinners visiting the spot, had disappeared. It is also said that on this mysterious hill there are two big stones lying close together. No sinner is allowed to pass between them until he confesses his faults, but should anybody whose soul is perfect attempt the passage, he will pass straight through without harm. The lake, too, has marvellous properties, for all who bathe in its waters not only cleanse their bodies, but their souls also. There is no end to the legends connected with this priest-ridden spot. I set out for the sacred mountain with half a dozen Abyssinians, taking a fairly good track through long grass, at times over

## A Holy Man

steep and rocky paths. The climb was enlivened on the way by a successful stalk after a gazelle, and rewarded at the summit by finding there a lake of wonderful beauty. It lay silent at the bottom of a natural hollow; hills, which here and there were thickly wooded, rose up on every side for some six hundred feet. Around the lake grew turf and shady bushes, and there was an air of sanctity about the place.

As we stood cooling in the breeze and gazing on the sombre water, I broke silence by saying that we would first visit the two holy stones, which our guide pointed out close by. They certainly were rather awkward to negotiate, but I was the first to try to get through. When half way I stopped short, pulled a long face, and shouted, pretending that I was fixed up. The men were at their wits' end, until my laughter spoilt the joke, which they all thought tremendous fun. We next inspected a rounded rock standing alone on the grass by the water's edge. It was actually sweating in the sun, this being due to the practice of certain Gallas, who, in order to propitiate the spirit of the stone, deposit a small dab of ghi on its surface.

We then saw, hidden in the midst of cotton and juniper trees, a couple of churches, close to one of which dwelt a "fakir." This holy man had spent his entire lifetime wrapt in meditation, wanting neither money nor food, and living entirely on the grass. He was so concealed by the thick bushes that I could not catch a sight of him, though I distinctly heard his mumblings. Whilst

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

enjoying our luncheon, three priests passed by, who, on hearing that I was Ingliz, expressed a wish to show me a third church, where men came to worship. This sacred spot consisted of three holes in the midst of some rocks, large enough to hold worshippers. There was nothing remarkable in their appearance, but the fact of men electing to bow down in such a place struck me as distinctly odd. The priests told me the depth of the lake was beyond measure, but I had no means of verifying the statement. Its height above the sea-level was almost 9000 feet, water boiling at a temperature of 195° Fahr.

Christmas Day fell on a Sunday, and on coming out from my tent, I found all the men drawn up in line, waiting to salute me and wish me a merry Christmas. In order to celebrate the great day I inaugurated sports. We started by hewing down a tree and manufacturing a target, which we set up against the side of a hill at a distance of two hundred yards; but on seeing how small a mark it represented for the bullets of my untrained followers, I remarked, "Before we begin to shoot, we had better make the target double its present size." But the Abyssinians, with their customary ignorance and brag, scoffed at such a notion, declaring that if I did so, they could hit it with their eyes closed. So I gave way to their wishes, and commenced the competition by offering a dollar for every one who hit the target. At the end of the practice the dollars were still jingling in my pocket and the target was untouched, much to

## I shoot a Hippo

my own amusement and to the chagrin of the rest. A race round the target and back was the next item on the programme, entailing afterwards much drawing of thorns from the feet. Then came a three-legged race, tugs of war, and, last of all, a fat sheep for every four men and a glass of araki apiece. In the evening all came to sing and dance for my edification, the Soudanese and Somalis being gifted with talent greatly in advance of the poor Abyssinians.

From Zaquala we shifted our camp to the banks of the river Hawash, the same stream that I had crossed on the road from Harrar to Adis Ababa. My first introduction to the water was inspiring enough, for on the opposite bank lay a large hippopotamus. With my 12-bore Riley I soon sent a solid bullet into his head, and as he rose, a second behind the shoulder. He, however, just managed to topple into the water, and then died and sank. In one hour's time the carcass had risen to the surface, and by means of ropes and sheer strength, we hauled him to the shore. He measured 148 inches from nose to tail. The men had no liking for this meat, though several Gallas were glad to be able to take away all they wanted. Lower down the stream there were immense numbers of these huge brutes, more fortunate, indeed, than their ill-fated brother, for they were destined for the camera instead of the rifle. All along the banks of this part of the river many excellent roads—entirely made by the hippos—ran through the grass and bush. At night-time,

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

they would wander inland for a couple of miles in search of grass, twigs, and roots, returning again to the water at daybreak. The meat is well worth eating in the absence of other food, and the hide provides most durable shoes. Very few of my Abyssinians had ever seen a hippo before.

The pleasures of camping on this side of the Hawash river would have satisfied many people, but curiosity led me to explore the other bank, and for this purpose I took Mohamed and two Abyssinians. After tramping down stream for a few miles, I decided to cross over, and we all four started to wade to the opposite bank. Quite suddenly we found ourselves out of our depth—not that this would have mattered had only my Abyssinians been able to swim. The one course open to us was to make a struggle for it, and, by dint of tremendous energy, we just managed to reach shallow water. At the time the sun was hidden by clouds, and the men were chattering and shivering from the cold. Fearing lest fever should attack them, I started them all at a good swinging pace. We had not gone far when we saw a lion in the dry yellow grass only a few yards off.

## CHAPTER XII

### FROM ZAQUALA TO LAKE LAMINA

A hot spring—Arrival of my rifles—Incidents on the road—The Arusi Gallas—Arrival at Lake Zouai—Arrival of an official from the king—A disagreement with Tezaze—A night alarm—Arrival of messengers from Harrington—Hidden treasure in the lake—A hartebeest chase.

WHETHER my damp cartridges would have been effective or not I can't say, for the lion bounded away, and we never saw him any more. Zaquala district is looked upon as the home of many lions, yet this was the only one I ever came across. Whilst searching along the banks for a ford of less width than the one we had just crossed, we came upon a steaming pool of clean water surrounded by rocks, and, on further examination, discovered a hot spring, whose temperature I afterwards found to be 94° Fahr. In the pond were a couple of fat ducks, luxuriating in their morning's hot tub. They were so extraordinarily fat that flight by wing was impossible—showing how a life of ease affects even the winged tribe. I visited this hot water on frequent occasions afterwards, and always found the happy couple there.

Our stay by the river Hawash was of longer

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

duration than I had bargained for, owing to the unaccountable delay in the arrival of the rifles from Aden. Our life was as pleasant and free as one could wish to lead, but a waste of time. We varied our existence by living on one bank and then on the other, then moving lower down stream. We made excursions in all directions over hills and plains; we caught fish in abundance, shot gazelle, guinea-fowl, partridges, and sand-grouse. When the moon was full, and as my men were beginning to want shoes, we waged battle by night against the hippo; and my sentries, who had a habit of picturing lions on the point of seizing the mules under cover of darkness, provided me with ineffectual night rambles after an imaginary foe.

The Gallas from the neighbourhood brought us in daily supplies, as they had been ordered to do. We had abundance of everything—sheep, eggs, chicken, flour, bread, tej, ghi, milk, honey, and beer. For us it was a land of plenty, and our own securely packed stores of flour remained untouched. Every morsel that the Gallas brought us I paid for in dollars at the market rate, which perhaps encouraged them to increase their supplies beyond the powers of our consumption. The Abyssinians cried out bitterly against such an unheard-of procedure. “Why do you pay them?” they asked. “They are bad people. The food is not theirs; it belongs to Janhoi, and Janhoi is sending it to you.” “Oh,” I replied, “it is merely the custom of the Ingliz to give as well as to receive. Your custom in some ways differs from mine, so don't cry out.” In addition to our making

## Arrival of my Rifles

many trips for shooting and exploring, I taught my men how to aim, shoot, and clean their rifles, and drilled them, so that they could "present arms" and march in a creditable manner, and each knew his place and duty in case of an alarm by night. They all took an interest in drill, and many of them showed exceptional intelligence and quickness. Many of my men were very young—in fact, half of them were merely boys; but it seemed to me that useful soldiers—equal to most, and better than some, native troops—could be made out of the Abyssinians.

On the 11th of January, 1899, we moved to our last camp on the river Hawash—exactly north of Lake Zouai—a beautiful spot at the head of a grand waterfall. Bathing was the order of the day with us, and it was hard to say whether more time was spent in or out of the water. Three days later definite news reached me that the rifles would arrive the following day; so at daybreak I dispatched the caravan with the intention of following alone on horseback on the arrival of the rifles, which would be brought on the next day under the care of Shahzad Mir. The march was a waterless one of seven or eight hours south to the river Maki, which flows eastwards, and then southwards into Lake Zouai. The afternoon following the departure of the caravan was well advanced, and there being no sign of the rifles, I was preparing to start on my lonely ride so as to get into camp before nightfall, when a Galla walked up to me, offering for sale a pony saddled and bitted. This was

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

strange, for none of them had cared to part with their ponies, far less their saddles. The pony was good and marvellously cheap, and no sooner had my purchase been effected than I marched seven mules, loaded with thirty-five Martini-Henri carbines and six boxes of ammunition, in charge of two of my own Abyssinians. I asked if one of them would like to come along with me at once and ride the new pony. It was already four o'clock, so we made all possible haste along the narrow track that turned and twisted for ten miles round the trees and bushes of the forest. We then struck a broader road, and pushed along it faster than before till it bifurcated. There was scarcely light enough left for me to distinguish tracks in the sand and stone, so I hastily chose the left-hand one, and, after riding along it for a short distance, distinctly heard men calling. I imagined that they were the voices of my own men, and that we were approaching our own camp, but suddenly I caught sight of a large body of natives armed with spears, rushing towards the road, where a group of six or eight men were already collected. My Abyssinian pulled up his steed, and, while loading his carbine, exclaimed in an agitated tone, "The Arusi! The Arusi!" I seized the rifle from him, and, giving him my hog-spear in exchange, rode straight up to the party by the roadside, with the carbine carried in such a manner that the muzzle was purposely pointing at them. I was asking them if the road led to the river Maki, when a warning "Be quick, be quick!" from the Abyssinian behind left me no time to wait

## The Conservative Gallas

for a reply, and we galloped off as hard as we could. Scarcely had we gone a quarter of a mile when we met a dozen of my own men coming along at the double, armed with spears and guns. As darkness had set in, and knowing that I was only carrying a spear, they had come out to search for me, fearing that something had befallen me at the hands of the Arusi.

In the eyes of the Arusi Gallas, the Abyssinians are a bad lot, this view being possibly based on the fact that it took five years to subjugate them, and also because on the last occasion when Menelik passed along this road, three of his followers were speared by them. I have no doubt whatever they would repeat the performance were a chance offered, but whether they would have done me any harm is questionable. It is certain that were the Arusis armed with rifles, they would be a hard nut for Menelik to crack. They live mostly in the hills, and are said to be always on the look-out for plunder and revenge. The Gallas living on the banks of the Maki brought me goats and milk, their sole means of subsistence. I asked them why they grew no crops, for the soil was fertile and water plentiful. They could only give as a reason that their fathers and grandfathers never had done so. This may have been reasonable when intertribal warfare was the order of the day, but as under Menelik's rule peace reigns and taxes are paid, there seems no excuse for their laziness and apathy.

On the 16th of January, 1899, just a month since leaving Adis Ababa, my entire caravan, consisting

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

of 30 Abyssinians and Gallas, 5 Soudanese and 9 Somalis, 31 mules, 19 donkeys, and 11 ponies, Shahzad Mir, and my fox-terrier, with a litter of three pups, was on the banks of the river Maki.

We steered south, and the sun had but just risen when the rippled waters of Lake Zouai came into sight, and my muleteers, involuntarily carried away



DINKA MEN FISHING.

by the really beautiful scene, spoilt my illusions by breaking into the loudest of their most unmusical songs. As we drew near, shrill cries arose from the various water-birds, and the shore was alive with partridges and guinea-fowl, whilst in the water itself large herds of hippopotami, who had just returned from their nightly rambles, were snorting and playing. We marched along a track on the

## Tezazo's Obstinacy

western shore, that led us over turf and under shady trees, till the height of the sun reminded me it was time to stop and feed both man and beast.

At this camp we were joined by an official named Tezazo, coming direct from Menelik. He had been specially dispatched by the king to accompany me to the southern extremity of Abyssinia, and see that I was supplied with all I wanted and allowed to go wherever I chose. Unfortunately, on the very first day Tezazo and I had a difference. I had made up my mind to visit a lake called Lamina, situated south of Zouai, which was unexplored, and whose inhabitants were not even subject to Menelik, whereas Tezazo maintained that his orders were to take me through a district called Wubarākh, lying west of Zouai, and thence travel south by a well-known road. Though I had permission from Menelik to travel wherever I chose, still nothing would induce Tezazo to accompany me; and finally we separated, I agreeing to meet him in Wubarākh on a certain date, after having seen Lake Lamina. Tezazo galloped off, ostensibly with the intention of waiting for me at Wubarākh, but in reality of hastening back to the king to complain of my behaviour. Not that this would have mattered, for in no respect was I exceeding the privilege granted me. The Tezazo affair, however, had thoroughly upset my camp, for all the Abyssinians were talking amongst themselves, some fearing to go to Lamina, seeing that it was a place where the people did not even recognize Menelik, others maintaining that if they did go, they would be acting in contravention

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

of the king's orders, and would be punished accordingly. I again called the whole of them up before me, and told them that they were now my servants, having only a few days previously sworn to go anywhere with me. Now they were wavering. If they were afraid, I ordered them to stop where they were or go back home, but to Lamina I should go, even if I went alone. I added that if any man was punished by King Menelik for going with me, I would give him a thousand dollars as compensation. They all issued, bowed, and at once promised to go with me anywhere. With Tezazo's departure and the men's minds once more set at ease, we marched off again.

In the middle of the night I was aroused by hearing a shot fired, and, jumping up, found the sentry with his rifle at the "present," on the point of pressing the trigger against a couple of men who were approaching our zareba, and whose forms I could just make out in the darkness. I seized the rifle and heartily cuffed the man, for, contrary to his instructions, he had stuck a cartridge in it. Had I been a moment later grave results might have occurred, for the strangers were two messengers from Harrington, who had come by the eastern route, bringing me my last batch of news. At dawn we parted, they to march home again northwards and we further away southwards.

We travelled all along the western shore of this fresh-water lake, and I was thus enabled to form a fair judgment of its size and to note some of its peculiarities. There are several islands in it. The

## A Fruitless Treasure-Hunt

following piece of its history is credited by most people. About the middle of the sixteenth century, Gagn, or Grangye, Mohammed, a powerful chief of Danakil, invaded and devastated the country, and hid for safety on these islands an immense quantity of treasure, the results of his plunder. This wealth remained hidden without attracting the curiosity of any of the Shoan kings till the beginning of this century, when King Sahela Selase, son of Wassan Saggad, and seventh king of Shoa, made determined but ineffectual attempts to recover these riches. The treasure must, therefore, still be hidden there—a good find for some one. It was unfortunate for me that the east wind which blew caused waves sufficiently strong to swamp my little canvas boat, and thus put an end to all endeavours at unravelling the truth of the legend.

The lake extended south for nearly thirty miles, and stood at a height of 5165 feet above the sea-level. The climate was perfection. It seemed remarkable to me that the Waiyu Arusi Gallas who dwelt in the neighbourhood, and who are subject to Menelik, had made no use of the water which had been given them for irrigating the land and growing crops, for the people are exceedingly poor, possessing scarcely any clothing. Beyond the possession of a few goats, donkeys of good breed, and a few ponies, they have to a large extent to depend upon the chase for an existence. They hunt the elephant and hartebeest on horseback, and differ from the Hamran Arabs in their method of dispatching their victims, for they use the spear instead of the sword.

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

At the southern end of the lake the overflow is carried off by the river Suksuk, which, at first, taking a course through rich alluvial soil, afterwards cuts a channel for itself through banks of chalk over a hundred feet high. In this neighbourhood live the Gombo Arusi Gallas, who very much resemble the Waiyu, and are equally poor. Still, they brought me a goat and so forth ; but when I saw my own men leading into camp several donkeys laden with the flesh of two hartebeests I had killed, I returned the goat with a donkey-load of meat besides, for the poor Gombos were in sore need of it.

The Suksuk flows into a second lake called Hora, which, in spite of this continual supply of fresh water, is strongly impregnated with soda or saltpetre, and, excepting by travellers, would be classed as undrinkable. Although the Gombo Arusi Gallas maintain that this water is unfit for men, the very fact that thousands of animals, from an elephant down to a snippit, come from far and near to drink it, as shown by the marks along the shore, at once removes all fear as to its noxious properties. I have found this proof verified in other countries—whenever the water of a lake is good enough for wild animals to drink, there is no harm in travellers drinking it as well. The Gombo living by the fresh water of the river Suksuk have no need to drink the brackish water of Lake Hora, and therefore call it undrinkable. Afterwards I came to tribes at Lake Lamina who drank only the water of that lake, which is far

## In Pursuit of Hartebeests

more brackish than Hora, and scarcely drinkable even for travellers.

Most of the Arusi wear a string round the waist, so are generally recognizable, in the same way that an Abyssinian may be known by the cord round his neck, which is a token of his Christianity.

On reaching the point where the Suksuk joined the Hera lake, a favourite haunt of the hippos, we travelled westwards along the flat, sandy banks, so as to circumvent this large sheet of water. There were thousands of flesh-coloured birds, which rose as we drew near, and many antelopes scattered off across the plain, disturbed in their morning drink. At the bend of the lake we came upon a hunting-party of the Arusi. They were armed with spears and shields, and were leading their wearied ponies close by the water's edge. They had been out for several days, and were somewhat disheartened at their ill-luck in finding no elephants.

We had not left these people very long when we saw a host of horsemen galloping towards us. My Abyssinians were afraid we were about to be attacked, so I mounted my best pony to reconnoitre, and, after all, found that our imaginary foes consisted of a large hunting-party driving before them an immense herd of hartebeests. On they swept towards the lake like a whirlwind; then the horsemen split into parties, some following the beasts, who took to the shores of the water, others endeavouring to get round them or pursue small separate bodies of them. As they came close to my caravan, the temptation was too much for me, and

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

seizing a hog-spear, I joined in the chase. After a while I found myself riding neck and neck with a single Arusi, and very close on the rearmost hartebeest of a small herd, when whiz flew a spear from the Galla's hand, and, glancing from the beast's back, fell harmlessly to the ground. Try as I would, the pony could not gain the two more yards necessary for a thrust, and somewhat reluctantly I had to relinquish the chase. Perhaps it was time too, for Arusi Gallas surrounded me on all sides, and my own people were out of sight. On returning I found the caravan halted, as three of the ponies, regardless of the loads they were carrying, had, like myself, been unable to restrain the excitement of joining in the chase. One poor pony broke his spine over the game, and had to be shot.

## CHAPTER XIII

### LAMINA TO WALAMO

Lake Lamina—I explore an island—A startling adventure—Tuki Arusi Gallas—Reception at Wubarākh—Meeting with Tezazo—Galla raiders—Fulwaz springs—Arrival at Walamo.

ON resuming our march, we worked round to the south again, and reached the third lake—Lamina—the one that had caused my difference with Tezazo. Again we saw the same clouds of flesh-coloured birds and herds of ponderous but happy hippo disporting themselves in the exceedingly brackish water. We camped by the water's edge, and by mere chance discovered close at hand a couple of canoes. Although simply constructed of long reeds, they were capable of supporting two or three men; and my Abyssinians were soon in the water, and enjoying a novel experience in their endeavour to master the art of canoeing. Far out into the lake we could see a very strange island. It seemed to rise, a mass of rocks, abruptly from the water's edge, and assuredly demanded exploration. So I gathered together my fleet of three boats. In the canvas boat I took Shahzad Mir, and in the two canoes put a Somali and a Soudanese. We first of all rowed

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

and paddled towards a long, big island which intervened between us and the remarkable spot we were bound for. Here we found the canoes too heavy for transportation to the other side ; and as a paddle round the island would have taken up too much time, we left them on the shore where we landed, and contented ourselves with only carrying the canvas boat across. Having done this, I embarked with my Somali, and left Shahzad Mir and the Soudanese on the long island, telling them to watch and be ready to meet us on our return.

For the first hour of my row there was a strong wind blowing against us, and the waves were constantly breaking into the little boat. It seemed doubtful at times whether we should accomplish our task at all ; but afterwards, as we gained the shelter of the island itself, the work became comparatively easy. We could discover only one spot suitable for landing, at the northern extremity, as elsewhere rocks and euphorbia rose precipitately from the water's edge ; and at this little harbour, to our intense surprise, we found at least a score of canoes hauled up on to the land and leaning up against the rocks. These at once told us that the island was inhabited. Besides the canoes we could see no other signs of life, and were full of expectations of what was in store for us ; so having carefully landed, we first hauled our boat on shore, and after emptying out the water, placed it in readiness for our return journey. We then loaded our rifles, and with our eyes and ears on the *qui vive*, began to cautiously ascend the rocks by a narrow pathway.

## We invade an Island

We had proceeded in silence only a few hundred yards when we were suddenly brought to a standstill by hearing somebody "call" from above. It was an ominous "call," and came as a warning to us. "Yussuf," I said, turning to my companion, "we must not leave our boat with nobody to look after it; we want another man." So we there and then retraced our steps, unloaded and re-embarked. By this time the sun was about to set. The wind had completely dropped, and there was scarcely a ripple on the surface of the water as I commenced leisurely paddling back, enjoying the intense stillness of the evening, and wondering at the weird and solitary island, now lit up by the last rays of the setting sun, when suddenly a canoe with three savages shot round the northern corner, followed by another, and still another. There were six of them in all, and there could be no doubt about it, they were after us. Without more ado, I pulled for all I was worth, knowing that help was awaiting us on the long island. It was a stern chase, and the canoes gained but very slightly on us. Nearer and nearer we came to the island, and our hopes rose and rose accordingly. A broken oar or damaged rowlock would have meant disaster, and such a catastrophe was not altogether impossible, as I was pulling hard for so frail a craft. "Can't you see Baba now?" I asked Yussuf, Baba being the name by which they all called Shahzad Mir. "No," he replied, after a pause. "Gallas—all Gallas!" I turned my head, and, true enough, saw naked savages running through the bushes and along the sandy shore, but no sign of Baba or the Soudanese.

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

I rowed to within fifty yards of the shore, still in hopes of seeing them somewhere. But I was doomed to disappointment. There were only savages, who, as they ran, shouted aloud, "He, he, he!" and brandishing their spears, beckoned to others, who were coming up from behind. Yussuf grimly shook his head, and quietly muttered, "Baba mota" (dead).

Seeing that matters were becoming grave, and that the savages were filled with confidence of effecting our capture and death, I told Yussuf to call to them, for he knew the Galla dialect, that I should fire unless they cleared off. The sun had already set some time, and I felt that our rifles would have been but little use in the dark, but would be effective, if needs be, as long as the light lasted. On hearing these words, the savages yelled and redoubled their antics, so dropping the oars for a second, I seized a carbine and fired. As one man they all fell to the ground in an instant, flat as a pack of cards—quite a theatrical performance. Without a minute's pause I resumed the oars, convinced that our only chance of escape lay in getting round the island. The pull seemed interminable. The pursuing canoes were drawing closer. The savages on shore were again becoming threatening. It was almost dark, and the hippos, as is usual at this hour, were grunting and snorting around us. "Now direct me to the light of the camp," I said to Yussuf, as we at length rounded the island. There was no reply for a minute, and then, to my amazement, the silence of the evening was broken by his cry of "Safer yellum—Baba

## “Baba is dead!”

mota” (“There is no camp, and Baba is dead”). We could see no camp-lights at all, and I rowed on mechanically for the shore, my spirits sinking to zero, when Yussuf roused me by exclaiming, “Ashkar! Ashkar!” (“Your men! Your men!”) Looking round, I could just distinguish a crowd of black forms standing by the water’s edge. My joy



GLEESON

RHINOCEROS BIRDS.

lasted but a few moments, for on drawing nearer, my companion hoarsely whispered in my ear, “Khoi! khoi! *hullu* Galla; safer yellum—Baba mota!” (“Stop! stop! they are *all* Gallas; there is no camp, and Baba is dead”). It then flashed across my mind that these wild and independent savages of Lamina had surprised and taken my camp in my absence.

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

It was a crushing blow—all my faithful servants had been killed without a fight, my own plans had been completely shattered. I cursed and prayed as I hastily turned the boat, resolved to have a last pull for it to the southern end of the lake, and there endeavour to escape over the mainland under cover of darkness.

I had just got the boat round when a cry from the shore reached us. It was my boy Mohamed's voice, and it turned out that the dark group of figures on the shore were my own ashkar after all. They were all standing by the edge of the lake, in awe and bewilderment. They had already given us up as lost, but had been without any means whatever of coming to our aid. As they rushed forward, knee-deep in the water, eagerly pressing around to hear what had taken place and to help me from the boat, two shots were fired from the long island. Had Baba fired them, or had he and the Soudanese been killed, and were their rifles in the hands of the savages?

It was no time for hesitation. "Come along, Mohamed," I cried, "and be quick—rifles and ammunition"—for Mohamed was a sharp and fearless lad. In a few seconds more I was again pulling for the long island, straining to the utmost, whilst Mohamed kept up a fusilade as a signal to friend and foe that help was at hand. "Out you jump, Mohamed," I cried, as the boat grounded; and we were standing on the island, confronted by Baba and the Soudanese, who though unable to keep their appointment, had managed to avoid the bushes,

## Friendly Ladies

and keep the savages at bay by boldly confronting them. The two canoes I found just as we had left them, and thus my little flotilla was enabled to sail back to our camp on the main shore in the same order as we had previously set out.

The next morning we marched away in a south-westerly direction, and fell in with the Tuki Arusi Gallas. Our introduction to them was of a most charming nature, and was very much appreciated after our experiences with the savages of Lamina on the previous day. When we first met them we chanced to overtake a score of young ladies, shy, mirthful, and bewitching. I felt a little sorrowful at seeing such pretty girls employed in such menial work as carrying gombos of water from a small river called the Jiddo to their village two miles distant. At the spot where we overtook them, there chanced to be good grazing for mules, and as I gathered we should find no more water ahead for some time, I inquired of these damsels if they would sell me their loads. With shy smiles and smirks they readily consented, and emptied the contents of their gombos into our water-cans, whilst I in return offered them money. None, however, would accept the money without permission from the leader of the party, an elderly and somewhat severe-looking lady. I therefore put the dollars in her hand. "We don't want anything," she cried. "Why should you pay us merely for water? All we want is a good name." And this dear old soul talked away apparently in the most eloquent fashion, explaining the wrong they were all doing in accepting my money merely for a few pots of water, and,

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

at the end of the speech, persisted in handing back to me the price I had paid for their timely service. Such is the character of some so-called savages before they are improved (?) by the teachings of civilization. Even the accidental breaking of one of the precious gombos evoked no feeling of bitterness against the cause of the disaster, but merely occasioned amusement.

In comparing the Tuki Arusi Gallas with the savages of Lamina, one cannot help but perceive the effects of the rule of Menelik, who, I am told, has a particular liking for these people. These Gallas, who are named after their headman Tuki, though no agriculturists, are better able to keep body and soul together than their eastern *confrères*. They add to their livelihood by collecting the white crust from the edges of Lake Lamina, and buying grain from the Guragues living still further west. They are also keen hunters. If they kill an elephant, one tusk is sent to Menelik, and the other they sell to men from Adis Ababa for forty or fifty dollars or a cow, according to the size. Menelik in return for every tusk gives them a ring, to be worn in the lobe of the ear. Some of the men wore metal bands round the wrist, each representing the death of a lion, elephant, or man.

After leaving these friendly people we came to other small tribes, the Addari and Waragi, and travelled through magnificent park-like country, watered by the Jiddo (also called the Dijo or Sheriftu), and plentifully stocked with game—large and small koodoos, hartebeest, gazelle, and elephants.

## Tezazo's Change of Front

We then camped under a fine shady "warka" tree by the running water. We were now very near the district of Wubarākh, where we were to meet Tezazo. I therefore sent a messenger to the shum (official) of Wubarākh, informing him of my whereabouts. This man, Ratta by name, proved himself to be a particularly decent and well-mannered fellow. He liberally provided me with supplies, at the same time refusing any recompense. He told me that he had received orders from the king to do his very best for me, and to help me to travel by any route I chose, and to show me anything else I wished to see. Whilst chatting on the country in general, he admitted and several times expressed his regret at the gross ignorance of matters in general common to all Abyssinians.

The Guragues (Gallas) over whom this shum ruled were evidently contented with their lot; they were fat and cheery, and looked very different to the poor Waiyu and Arusi Gallas.

Tezazo, although a day behind time, in other respects kept his appointment, and met me as arranged. As I had anticipated, he had interviewed the king, with the result that Tezazo's demeanour was changed. His only idea now was to agree entirely with all my proposals, and do his best to help me carry them out. He said that the king had impressed upon him that I was to have an absolutely free hand to travel in any direction I wanted, and that if I elected to go to Rudolf, I was to have a guard of a hundred soldiers as far as the lake. Henceforth, from that day till we reached the

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

southern borders of Abyssinia, Tezazo spared himself no trouble in carrying out my wishes, and in helping me on every possible occasion to overcome any difficulties that arose. Never studying his own comforts, he was generosity itself; and when he left me some weeks later to return to the king, with tears streaming down his cheeks and a lump in his throat, I knew I had lost a very staunch friend, and we all regretted his departure.

Leaving Wubarākh on our right, we took a road never previously traversed by any European, and after crossing over open plains of grass and bush-land, forded the river Shashago. In this part of the country Galla horsemen from the east are in the habit of organizing raiding parties, and sometimes come in conflict with the Abyssinians. We only saw a couple of these gentlemen, who were possibly the scouts of a larger party, but they wisely made off on seeing so well-equipped a caravan. The general trend of this country is southwards towards a lake district, and not eastwards towards Lake Lamina, as was generally supposed. We marched well to the west of the Shashago river, though I should say a better road would be found along the river banks, and finally came to a hot spring called Fulwaz, in the district of Kambata. The hot vapour was rising from the ground in such dense volumes that at first I imagined the grass had been set on fire. Close by a party of Gallas had made a temporary home, for the waters are held in high estimation for their medicinal properties. The pond was about twenty yards in diameter, with rocky banks six feet high, and

## Hot-water Treatment

everywhere the water was bubbling up and hissing at a temperature of 158° Fahr. There was one particular spot resembling a well with the top boarded over, and as I listened I could hear the water below steaming and bubbling in the most furious manner. The rocks on which we stood had been stained to a brownish-reddish hue. There was a smaller pool trickling into the larger one, whose temperature was bearable; and here sick people sat all day long and boiled. Several of my own men, who had recently overeaten themselves, stewed for some hours, and afterwards presented themselves before me just like a troop of lobsters. It happened that my terrier Lady unwittingly put one of her hind legs into the big pool, and screamed as though the Prince of Darkness had himself got hold of her. There is a certain amount of convenience gained by camping in close proximity to such a remarkable cauldron as this, as boiling water in any quantity is ready at all hours. Two days afterwards I came across a young Galla who had completed his course of stewing. He bore such a boiled appearance that his eyes seemed to stand right out of his head. I cannot recommend the treatment for enhancing one's personal beauty.

The natives of Kambata are extremely badly off, as they scarcely cultivate at all, and possess no cattle. Their miserable condition is largely due to their own bad behaviour. As they are always on the *qui vive* to cut the throats of solitary Abyssinians who may cross their path, they cannot expect to receive the same consideration from the Abyssinians as their better-disposed neighbours.

## CHAPTER XIV

### WALAMO TO TENCHA

Arrival at Walamo—The chambetta—The Walamo market—Visit to Damota—The devil zone—Baroda—My musical box and the officials—The overthrow of the Walamo—Reception by the chief of Baroda—Reception by Fitarauri—Gamo.

FROM Kambata we had an eight hours' waterless march into the district of Walamo, one of the most beautiful parts of Abyssinia. Our first glimpse of it was at Damota, a fine hill with its base covered with trees, where the Abyssinians have planted a post, the headquarters of the Walamo district. The hill itself is said to be very rich in minerals of many kinds, though I have no proof of such actually being the case. The soil, much of which is of red ochre colour, is extremely fertile, and those portions that are not covered with fine timber or crops, produce a multitude of flowers and good grass. In addition to the usual crops, Walamo grows more particularly banana palms, tobacco, limes, ginger, raspberries, and a delicious vegetable called godari. The whole country is hilly, and intersected by many small streams of bright water. When riding, it is always advisable to keep to the tracks, for in addition to the rivulets being often difficult to cross, there still

## The Walamo Market

exist everywhere the "chambetta." These are successive rows of little pits, dug in close proximity to one another, and resembling our military obstacles. They were constructed by the Gallas of Walamo to baffle King Menelik's cavalry when he took the country about four years ago, and, to judge from their awkward-looking appearance, they must have done good work.

The inhabitants of this district supplied me plentifully with sheep, eggs, fowl, ghi, bread, milk, tej, and honey, and themselves appeared happy, contented, and well fed. The district of Walamo has a fine climate, and should, with proper development and the facilities of communication and transport, become exceedingly prosperous. Leaving our camp by a grove of palms, I strolled off to the gobiye, or market, where business was in full swing. But I attracted so much attention that buying and selling for the time being ceased, as all flocked to look at so novel a sight as an Englishman. The crowd became so thick that I had to undergo the scrutiny of hundreds before getting a chance of taking a look round. The people had erected temporary stalls by sticking branches of trees into the ground, and, squatting alongside of them, displayed their goods for sale. These chiefly consisted of dhura, or mashillah, barley, ginger, onions, skins, cotton, talla or beer gombos, ghi, buttons, and beads (chiefly blue ones), cattle, sheep, goats and ponies. A purchase was made by means of "dormas." A dorma is a thin piece of iron with one end bent, measuring about two feet long and one inch broad.

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

Fifteen of them go to a dollar. For every transaction a small tax is exacted, either in the shape of a pinch of cotton or a piece of ginger, or zingerbil, as it is called.

From the market I cantered over to the post at Damota hill, half a dozen miles distant. Here

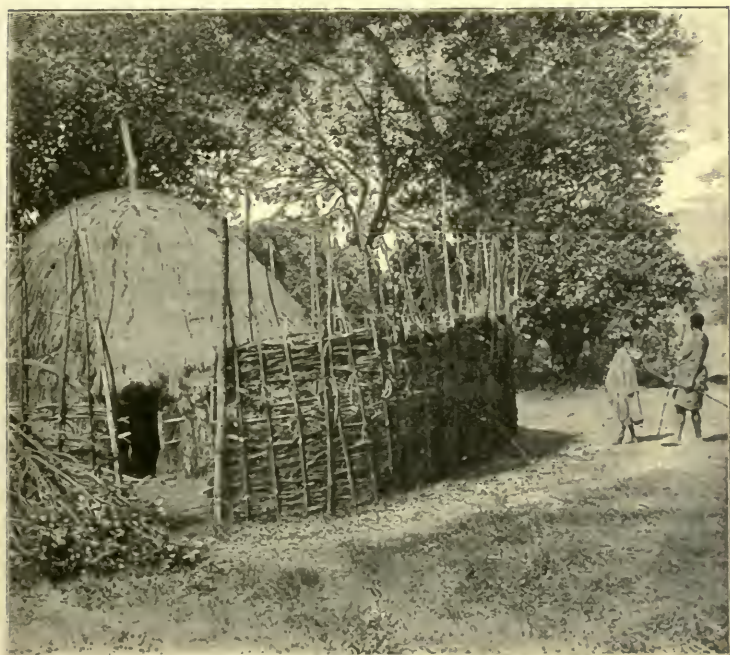


MARKET-DAY AT WALAMO.

resided two Galla shums, secure within a strong stockade. On a few words from Tezazo, the faces of these two old savages changed from wonderment to goodwill. They conducted me to their own dwelling, showering kisses on my hands as they led the way. They were, in fact, so persistent in this objectionable form of demonstrating their friendship that I stuck my hands in my pockets, and kept them

## Perilous Eating

there. Inside the stockade I found Gallas and Abyssinians living amicably together, and jointly administering justice throughout the district. In spite of the luxuriance and rich beauty of Walamo, it seems to be a generally accepted fact that the



HOUSE AT WALAMO—DEVIL-INFESTED REGION.

natives of Walamo are capable of imparting a devil, or gin, into the bodies of strangers who come there, more especially if they are permitted to be present while the stranger partakes of food. If such were indeed the case, there was the danger of my entire caravan becoming devil-possessed—a most serious

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

drawback to my further progress. Though my Abyssinians had on several occasions mentioned the subject to me, I quite pooh-poohed such an idea, and laughed at them for their superstitions, and thought nothing of it. In fact, when I was inside the "infected zone" I never gave the matter any consideration for a moment, for, being alone, I had far too much to do to worry myself about the complicated and mysterious powers of hidden devils.

Yet, curiously enough, on returning from my visit to the stockade, I found one of my Somalis in a very remarkable condition. His look was that of a wild man; at times he would talk and rave utter nonsense, now and then ejaculating the word "Walamo," and occasionally shaking from head to foot. The men told me that he had, when I saw him, quieted down a bit, for when the attack commenced, he had rushed into camp from the bushes, screaming aloud that "they" were all after him. As far as I could learn from the man afterwards, he had seen in the bushes close to our camp no end of Walamo savages armed with knives, who had suddenly made a rush at him from all sides. I administered some tea and a strong aperient, and afterwards a tonic, and the next day the victim was on a fair way to recovery, and I thought little more about him, till one morning, as we were on the march, he suddenly drew a knife and rushed about, crying out that he was going to kill them all, meaning the men he had seen in the bush. He was possessed of such strength that it took five men to catch him and bring him quietly along.

## I defy the Devil

Strange to say, on camping at the end of our march, he set about unloading in the usual way as though nothing had happened to him; but for some weeks he was liable to attacks from the Walamo gin, when he became decidedly dangerous. Thus I had to deprive him of his rifle and have him secretly watched.

Of course, the moment my followers saw the condition the Somali was in, they maintained he was possessed of a Walamo devil. I therefore had misgivings as to the effect it would have on their minds; and in order to dispel their doubts, and prove to them the absurdity of it all, I told them that I myself would purposely eat a meal before the natives of Walamo, and they might then see that no devil would seize me. The Abyssinians themselves had been most careful to eat their food unobserved, and were equally anxious that I too should not fall a victim through want of care. It was the custom of the natives of Walamo every morning to bring me in supplies, when perhaps over a hundred men would come into camp. So when the entire party had arrived, and out of natural curiosity had all their eyes fixed on me, I put my little table outside my tent and called for breakfast. This consisted of mutton-chops, unleavened bread, and honey and tea. I finished my meal much to my own gratification, but to the great displeasure of my followers.

Now comes the strange part of it all. The next day I felt strangely unwell, and was altogether "off colour" and "off food." I felt I was undergoing the tortures of a bad sailer on a rough sea. This,

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

too, was the only day on which I felt unwell through the whole of my journey, but I took good care to keep my ailings to myself. It has been suggested to me that poison was placed in my food, but this I can most emphatically deny. At the time I was in what is sometimes called "rude health," and cannot even now understand why, the day after my meal with the Walamo gentry, it received such an unwelcome shock. A few days later—one evening—one of my Soudanese was possessed of the "Walamo devil." He was a powerful fellow, and it was only after he had inflicted several wounds on three of my men that we were able to secure and bind him with ropes. Even then it took several men to hold him down. He struggled in the most violent manner, and, shaking his head, called aloud, "Walamo! Walamo! Walamo!" On his recovery he affirmed that he knew the Walamo native who had caused his madness; the man was a grass-cutter, and had seen him in the act of eating a piece of bread.

It is a curious fact that my Abyssinians, who alone were acquainted with the powers of the Walamo devils, were the only ones who escaped their influence. Possibly the cause may be put down to the condition of the water of these regions, which is undoubtedly impregnated with certain metals. While this might affect the Soudanese or Somalis or myself, it would in no way hurt my Abyssinians, who in addition to having stomachs like ostriches, would be unharmed by water of this description, owing to their being accustomed to it perhaps in other districts from childhood. With regard to my

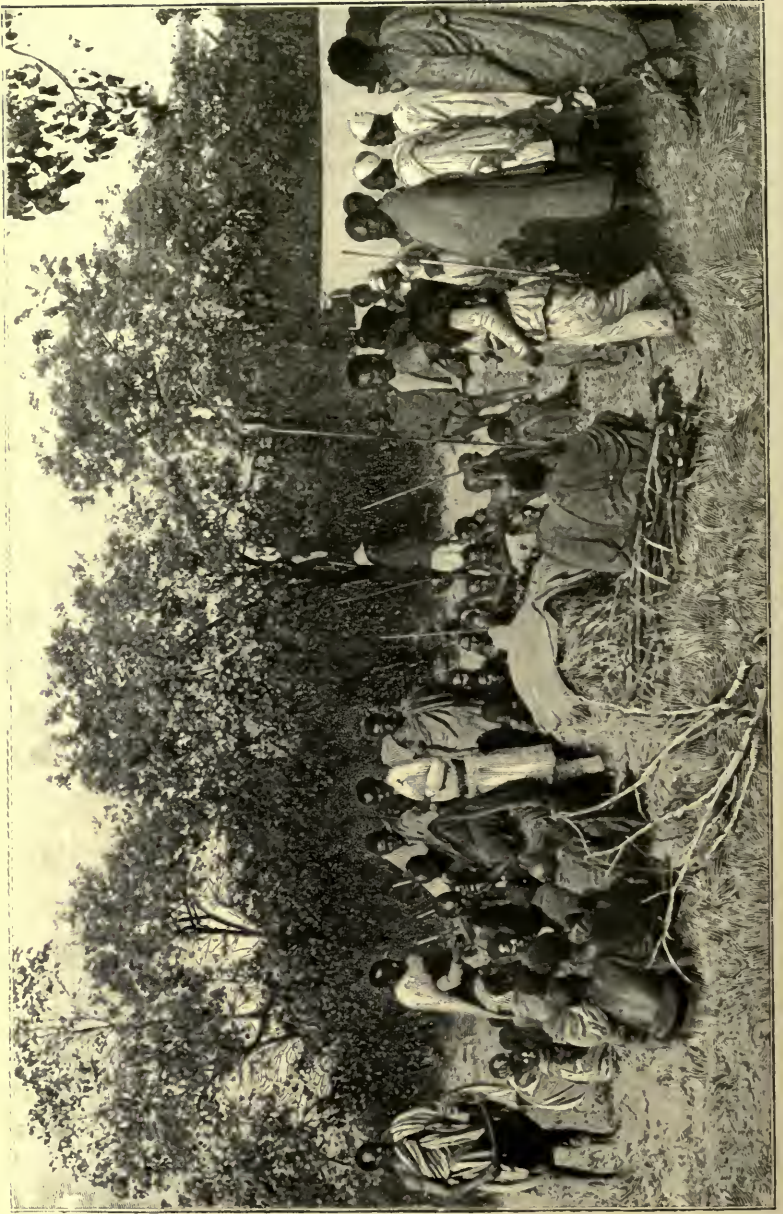
## The Musical Box

own peculiar condition, it has been suggested to me that at the time of my famous meal I was undergoing great mental strain. I must say, however, that during the breakfast I was unaware of this, as at that time I regarded the Walamo devils and their craft as being well inside the sphere of imagination.

Probably more light than I can throw on the subject will be found in the pages of a book written by the Rev. John L. Nevius, D.D., entitled, "Demon Possessions and Allied Themes," where coincidences of an identical nature in the far distant and very different land of China are ably described.

From Walamo we marched to Baroda, along broad sandy roads shaded with magnificent foliage, through which we got peeps of the glorious country on either hand.

As we were traversing the water-shed that separates the chain of lakes on our left, or east, from the river Womo, or Omo, on our right, we were visited in camp by a number of Galla officials, who brought me no end of the usual supplies as presents. When the officials, their followers, and the bearers had assembled, I produced my musical box before the immense crowd. On hearing it, the shums maintained that it was worked from heaven, and bowed before it. They had never previously set eyes on any white man, and being interested with all they saw, prolonged their stay, so that to get rid of them politely was no easy matter. Still, they were genuine good fellows, and highly pleased



PAYING WALAMO NATIVES FOR SUPPLIES.

## A Quick Recovery

with a knife I presented to each of them. I also distributed money to the poor people who had carried the supplies.

On marching off the next morning, they overtook us along the road to bid us God-speed, and to give my boy Mohamed a beautiful shamma and myself a sack of ropes, for they heard I was in need of them. This showed us the sincerity of their hospitality and generosity, for they knew well enough that on the march I could give them nothing in return. The names of these four good Galla chiefs were Albazo, Chabarasha, Alumbo, and Aricho.

We continued to travel through the same fertile and red-soiled country, passing several more gobi-yehs. Close to one of these markets where we had camped, I found one of my own men by the roadside in great pain. The Abyssinians said that he would surely die. I knew what had happened. The unfortunate man had first gorged himself with meat, and afterwards, to an inordinate extent, imbibed beer at the market. Thus, being overheated, the extra warmth of the midday sun had completely overpowered him. The outward heat was soon overcome by placing him in the shade, and I then proceeded to dispel the inward heat by applying doses of ipecacuanha and water. Presently his friends came running to me saying that he was very ill, and that my medicine was causing his death. I walked over to where the man lay, laughing at them as we went, for I knew the medicine was doing its work well. On arrival, we found the invalid completely recovered, and faith was

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik .

established in my Burroughs and Welcome medicine chest for the remainder of the journey.

Very early in the morning an uproarious hyena came pounding along close to our camp, howling in the most extraordinary fashion. So terrifying were its cries that some of the Abyssinians became alarmed, and got up. They said the Walamo people had been transformed, and returned in the shape of a hyena. I told them that the arrival of such an early visitor every morning would be an admirable institution, as it would save me the trouble of routing them out.

I am told that Walamo has acknowledged the suzerainty of King Menelik only within the last four years. Although the Negus had previously made unsuccessful attempts to subjugate the country, his last effort was completely successful. He first despatched an envoy to the inhabitants, to inquire whether they intended fighting or whether they would submit peaceably. On hearing of their resolve to oppose him, he collected a powerful force of cavalry, and camped with them in the very heart of the district, thence despatching several bodies of cavalry into every quarter. So skilfully were his plans organized and carried out, that in one day the whole of Walamo was totally overthrown, and the inhabitants became from that day subjects of King Menelik. Many of the natives were killed, and the Abyssinians themselves lost heavily from the spears of the enemy, who lay hidden in the bush.

The boundary between the districts of Walamo and Baroda is marked by a stream, and by the

## A Notable Escort

erection of a wooden archway over the road itself. Throughout Baroda I met with every civility from the natives, who greet strangers with the word "ashum," or "surro," and also from the head of the district, Magero, a bulky Galla six feet high. He lived on a beautiful and well-cultivated hill ornamented with trees, grassy slopes, and brooks. On my entering his neat and cleanly dwelling, built within the usual stockade, he rose from the angareb, and gave me a very cordial reception. On reading the king's letter which Tezazo placed in his hands, he became more anxious than ever to prove his friendliness, and insisted on escorting me back to camp. Preceded by his shawm and reed players, our combined parties made up quite a formidable procession. Afterwards he sent me a hundred men laden with food and drink.

The hilly district of Baroda afforded us superb views of the beautiful lake Abai on the left, the mountain boundary line of Kudja on our right, and the hilly district of Gamo ahead, where we could just distinguish a distant Abyssinian post perched high up on the loftiest mountain-peak. After magnificent travelling over the mountains, I was met on the road by a crowd of Abyssinian horsemen. These officials had been despatched by the Abyssinian general, Fitarauri Duri, to conduct me to a suitable camping-ground. Already a capacious and snow-white tent had been pitched on the green turf on the edge of a clump of tall trees for my special benefit ; and as soon as the men had unloaded the animals, they fell in four abreast, and with

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

myself riding in the rear, we were escorted to the house of the general. On the way we were met by a large body of Abyssinians and Gallas armed with guns and spears, many of whom were on horseback, and all decked out in their most gorgeous attire. Many wore coloured sâtin shirts and skins, and others had fastened round their heads a wreath of lion's hair. They were indeed a savage yet picturesque-looking lot. As we drew near our destination, they opened out, so as to allow us to pass through, and then formed up again in rear, so that by the time we reached the general's stockade, I felt like the hero of a triumphant procession.

Fitarauri Duri, who is a middle-aged man gifted with a kind face, good heart, and charming manners, received me with much friendliness, and led me to the seat of honour in front of the wood fire that was burning inside his clean and roomy circular abode. After an interesting chat, all my followers trooped in, and sitting down in groups round the baskets of injerras, were feasted after the Abyssinian fashion in the most liberal manner. With Duri dwelt the Galla chief whose father had formerly ruled this part of the country. During the afternoon the Fitarauri returned my visit, but not in the same empty-handed way in which I had entered his house, for with him came three hundred men laden with supplies, as well as several head of cattle and sheep. I vainly protested against such excessive liberality, explaining to him that had I double the number of men the food he had given me would exceed our

## Fruitful Gamo

requirements. I begged him to accept a rifle as a token of my appreciation. "Oh," replied the general, "whatever supplies you do not need you can give to the poor, for there are plenty of them; and as to accepting a rifle from you, I will take absolutely nothing, because you have a long journey before you, and will require all you have."

The land of Gamo appeared to me a veritable fairy-land; the country was magnificent, and the views of lake and mountain grand. Some of the high-lying grassy slopes brought back to mind the land of Mongolia, other portions rivalled with the choicest bits of Kashmir, whilst much, including the fine lake, was peculiar to the country itself. The air, too, was bracing and bright. In addition to all these charms provided by nature, here, too, were men, liberal-minded and kind-hearted, whose one object was to help us and to make our stay enjoyable. In this they succeeded, and we were as happy a party as one could wish to see. Again I remembered that the men who freely did so much for us were Abyssinians, and I maintain that in Abyssinia there are just as good men to be found as there are in any other country. At night-time our camp was protected from entirely imaginary dangers by the close proximity of six other tents, each crammed with soldiers, by order of the Fitarauri. One of the latter's officers, too, offered the services of himself and his following, a hundred strong, as an escort along the road.

## CHAPTER XV

### TRAVELLING TOWARDS THE UNKNOWN

Reception at Tencha—Lady visitors—My tea-party—A visit from Duri—An Abyssinian concert—Malcontents in the camp—The scene of Sacchi's murder—A Mohammedan festival.

THE next Abyssinian post we came to was Tencha, commanded by Fitarauri Imani and his two officials, Tagla Gurgis and Kasa. We were met on the road by the general himself, his musicians, and his army, arrayed with all the pomp and circumstance of war, and conducted to a grove of trees, where, on a gentle slope of green turf, a large tent had already been pitched for me. I had intended moving the next morning, but the general and his people showed me such extreme kindness, and we were camped in such a bewitching spot, that I was unable to tear myself away ; besides, it would have been selfish of me to have disregarded their desire of making our stay as pleasant and comfortable as possible. On both days my entire party were again feasted in the most generous way, and supplies were lavishly poured into camp.

I chanced, on the second day, to be looking round the market when some of my men came



WALAMO VALLEY, NORTH OF DAMOTA HILL.

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

running up to tell me that some lady visitors were waiting outside my tent! That was, indeed, good news, but who could they be? I felt untidy, unkempt, and unprepared for receiving the fair sex, but I doubled back to camp with all speed, anxious not to tax to too great an extent the patience of my lady visitors. My exertions were rewarded, for, standing just outside my tent, I found a bevy of comely ladies. My visitors were the wife of Fitarauri Duri, and her lady attendants. She had heard of my passing through, and had come on purpose to see me. Of course I apologized for my stupid absence, and conducted her and some of her attendants inside my tent. She was a good-looking woman, with captivating ways, and by the number of intelligent questions she put to me, she displayed an intellect of no mean order. In fact, I regret to have to make the confession that my own was hardly equal to replying to all her questions. Tea was then brought in—the very first cup of tea she had ever tasted—a tin of biscuits—also a novelty—followed by the musical box, and finally the medicine chest. We were well in the midst of a very enjoyable afternoon, when it was suddenly announced that the Fitarauri was coming. “Oh, oh!” my guest cried, as she rose and swallowed the last sweet dregs in the tea-cup. In another moment we had shaken hands, bidden farewell, she had mounted her mule, and with her attendants was gone. No sooner had she disappeared than her husband was seen approaching from the opposite direction. But why on earth was he coming to see me again? That

## Wife and Mule

puzzled me, as we had already said our final farewells. Was he in a towering rage with me over the fair visitor who had just fled? Duri rode up with the usual benign smile. I at once told him of the unexpected way in which I had been honoured that very afternoon. He was highly amused at my little tea-party, particularly on hearing the cause of his wife's hasty withdrawal. Duri's purpose in visiting me was to present me with a magnificent grey mule, already saddled and bridled. It was, in fact, one of the finest mules I had seen in Abyssinia. I only hoped he would show equal consideration for his pretty wife, and I do not see how he could act otherwise.

Fitarauri Imani was at this time in command of all the posts in Southern Abyssinia, many of which are so cleverly placed that every road into the country is effectively guarded. There is, moreover, a system of communication between each post, so that a force of several thousand rifles could be concentrated at any one point, in a very short space of time. As an instance, one has merely to record the disastrous failure that befell the Italian Bottego when he attempted to force his way through the country from the south. During our conversations, Imani inquired much about England and the English people, at the same time deploring the condition of his own countrymen, comparing them to stolid cows, ignorant of everything. As we looked over the maps together, and I pointed out to him my intended route, he thoughtfully remarked, "I will write a letter for you, and if by chance you come across any

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

Abyssinians east of the Nile and north of Rudolf, and show them this letter, every assistance will be afforded you, otherwise you might find yourself in difficulties, for they cannot have received intimation of your coming." Among other handsome presents that Imani vainly pressed me to accept was the large, comfortable tent he had pitched for me, together with a couple of mules to carry it. I was, however, compelled to accept a first-rate pony. In return for so much generosity, I could not induce Imani to accept anything whatever. However, I left with him one of Lady's pups, which, I am sure, will live a life of luxury, as a special house was built for him, and my advice with regard to feeding and washing was carefully noted.

In the evening, a compliment of the highest order—one usually reserved for kings only—was paid me by the Fitarauri, who sent round his own musicians to play in my tent after dark. In order to make the most of the performance, I illuminated the place with candles, and, calling my followers inside, prepared to listen to the music. There were altogether eight players, half Soudanese and Habesha by birth, who displayed considerable skill with their bamboo instruments. They played and danced simultaneously, and the programme terminated with some clever acrobatic tricks, which amused us all till it was time for bed.

As we left this important post at daybreak, we were escorted by fifty mounted soldiers, and followed by a long string of Gallas carrying our extra supplies. Our march was through a grand hilly

## A Mutiny quelled

country. We had not long settled down in our next camp, when certain of my men came to inform me that Tezazo had been telling the Abyssinians on no account to go with me further on my travels; and that, if they did so, Menelik would surely cut their hands off. Such a ridiculous fabrication as this I could not for a moment allow to pass, especially as I was thoroughly convinced that amongst my followers there were two or three black sheep who were upsetting the minds of others by spreading false rumours. Without more ado, I summoned Tezazo to my tent, together with the men who had brought me the information. As might have been expected, the meeting was productive of nothing but a scene of wrathful accusations and denials. However, I was determined to fight the black sheep in my flock, whoever they might be, and give them no further opportunity of mischief, so I made it known that I was immediately riding back to Imani to ask him to supply me with a written statement guaranteeing the safety of all men who went with me, and assuring them that they would not be punished for doing so. Imani received me with the usual hearty welcome, and willingly gave me every possible assistance.

On reaching camp again, I was greeted by a salutation from the whole of my men, who were drawn up in line ready to receive me. It transpired that, during my absence, they had held a general consultation a short distance from the camp, and had one and all decided to go anywhere with me. Again I called my men before me, and carefully

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

explained to them exactly the extent of the journey we were about to undertake. I told them that I was well aware that amongst them there were two or three malcontents who had caused the present dissatisfaction, and added that once again—but for the last time—I gave one or all the option of returning to Addis Ababa if they wished, but to remember that if they elected to turn back after this, they would do so at their own risk and without receiving any pay. As though my words had been anticipated, they all “ishhed,” and once more swore to follow me anywhere, whilst one or two of them, probably the black sheep, cried and bent down to kiss my feet, but I sternly walked away, and refused to accept their belated protestations of loyalty.

It must not be gathered from this that much blame was really to be attached to my Abyssinians. Abyssinians, unlike Somalis and Soudanese, are quite unused to travel beyond the limits of their own land, and, generally speaking, never leave their homes unless on a raiding expedition, and consequently have not the slightest conception of anything outside their immediate surroundings. Moreover, my men had perhaps never seen more than half a dozen Englishmen in their lives, and it will therefore be readily understood that I was asking a good deal in expecting these Abyssinians to go for a two-thousand mile tramp through an unknown land. We were about to penetrate right into the midst of and beyond tribes raided by their own countrymen, who would never think of doing this without a force several hundreds strong.

## A Lofty Camp

Even in these raids, the Abyssinians had not penetrated beyond the northern end of Lake Gallop, and the few Abyssinians I came across who had had even a glimpse of this large sheet of water were extremely proud of the fact.

Having put matters on a proper basis with my



MY CAMP IN GAMO.

people, we once more resumed our march. After a long climb through a superb country, very similar to Kashmir, we camped at a height of almost 9000 feet above sea-level. My own tent was pitched close to some rocks on the very edge of a steep, grassy slope which dropped precipitately many hundreds of feet to the valley below, which led to the beautiful lake Abai. Behind us green rocky

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

hills rose for 1500 feet higher. I could easily distinguish two small islands in the lake, and was told by one of my Soudanese, who was present at the time, that it was opposite these islands on the main shore that the Italian doctor, Sacchi, had been killed and buried by the Abyssinians. He had been a member of Bottego's expedition, and met his death while endeavouring to recover some ivory he had previously deposited in a certain spot.

We had no sooner pitched our camp than we were enveloped in thick clouds and a drenching rain, so that the hills behind and the valleys below were completely lost to view. Everything was dripping and cold, and I sat in my tent wrapped in an overcoat, wiping my nose and stamping my feet, and thinking enviously of those who were in a more genial climate. Such are the vagaries of tropical Africa! Towards evening, when the rain fortunately ceased, we saw Kaneazmach Salilih, with a large following, approaching over the hills, and as they were some distance off, we had ample time to make preparations for his reception. My men, drawn up in two lines, formed an avenue for the general. Meanwhile I put my tent in order, placed the whisky handy, and prepared tea. Salilih, who is an elderly looking man, at first struck me as being somewhat cold in his manner (the inclemency of the weather was perhaps responsible for this), for after some conversation and some whisky, he thawed considerably, and finally took his departure in a very cheerful frame of mind. It certainly was no trivial task for him to come so long a distance

## Sons of the Prophet

in such dreadful weather, and his kindly consideration was proved by the fact that he brought with him four cows, nine sheep, and a large quantity of supplies for me.

We remained an extra day in this camp, as my Mohamedan Somalis and Soudanese begged me to allow them to celebrate their great day, Sunday, the 12th of February. In the still early morning I could hear these faithful followers of the Prophet praying by the rivulet which adjoined our camp. They then began a weird chant, and, as they did so, proceeded in line towards my tent, where they halted and saluted by shouldering and presenting arms.

## CHAPTER XVI

### IN UNKNOWN ABYSSINIA

Fitarauri Degafi—A courteous visit—A lofty camp—An invitation from the Galla queen—We leave the mountains—Primæval forest—An imposing caravan—An interrupted elephant hunt—Charged by a rhino—Hammer Koki hills—I again lecture my escort.

OUR road now skirted the steep side of a range of hills, and commanded a view of the lake. This road had only been constructed eighteen months previously by Galla labour, under the order and supervision of Waldo Gorgis, and it reflected credit on his engineering capabilities. All over the hillsides grew wild raspberries, trees known as *ulkufa*, resembling our chestnuts, the handsome *kusso* tree, bamboos and eucalyptus, with bracken, and a countless profusion of flowers and undergrowth. Beyond this, we had some back-breaking hills to negotiate, and my caravan was consequently scattered along at least a couple of miles of country. Rain fell during the greater part of the morning, so that the animals slipped and strained in the most distressing manner over the steep, slippery mud.

At this stage I was met by a body of officials from Fitarauri Degafi, inviting me to his post, where

## The Courteous Degafi

grain for the animals and food for the men were awaiting us. I had reluctantly to send back word, that, owing to the rain, and the long, hilly road, it was impossible for us to come to him till the next day. On finding a convenient spot, we then and there pitched our camp, much to the satisfaction of those who were struggling on in the rear. Later on, we saw Fitarauri Degafi himself, with a large force, moving over the grassy slopes towards us. They made a very pretty picture with the sun shining on their clean red and white shammās, their green, yellow, and other coloured silks, and their richly caparisoned ponies. I was annoyed that we had been unable to reach this general's station, and felt quite undeserving of so much consideration on his part, for this large body of gorgeously attired horsemen had come several miles, merely on my account. Owing to the lateness of the hour, they would, moreover, only be able to spend a few minutes in my camp. Yet Degafi by no means shared my views on this matter, and equalled his brother generals in kindness, politeness, and generosity.

It was drizzling the next morning when we reached the camping-ground which had been prepared for us, where two big black tents had already been pitched. This proved to be our highest camp. It stood over ten thousand feet high above sea level, and opposite the spur on which the Abyssinian post was built. As we set about arranging our camp in the soft, wet grass, with numbed hands and feet, a messenger arrived from Degafi in hot haste, begging us all to come over to breakfast at once.

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

We were very soon decked out in our best, and marching off in full swing towards the town and the general's house, where we were welcomed by a log fire, and received and feasted in the most open-handed manner. Fitarauri Degafi talked with me for a long time about the country in general, my intended route, and the Italian expedition under Bottego, with whose actions and fate he was well acquainted. Degafi was an exceptionally well-informed man for an Abyssinian, able to read and write, and he readily learnt to understand the use of the compass with the map. Among other gifts, he insisted on my accepting an exceedingly handsome mule and a useful pony, which were brought into the house itself for my inspection.

This was the last Abyssinian post of any importance that we should see, and the next morning at daybreak we moved on. Regardless of the cold and the early hour, Degafi was up to see us off, and Tezazo, the faithful Tezazo, bade his last and sad farewell, much to the regret of all. With him, too, went our musical box, which had amused so many friends along our road. I had sent it by him as a present to Fitarauri Duri, who, with a beaming face, had declared that he could listen all day and all night to the tune of "Daisy, Daisy," whilst his wife had been equally amused with the instrument.

We were still travelling through the beautiful district of Gamo, with its hills and red soil, its clay and rocks, flints and iron, its forests, hamlets, and cultivation, and wherever we went abundant supplies were brought in to us, which made me often pity the



MY CARAVAN DESCENDING A HILL IN GAMO.

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

poor Gallas of these parts, some of whom—almost starving and naked—were always eagerly waiting to pounce down upon any tiny morsel of food that might perchance be left behind in our deserted camps.

At this period we had reached the limit where dollars could be used, and all transactions had, therefore, to be carried out by exchange of goods. I had received an invitation to pay a visit to Queen Mishery, whose husband, a short time ago, had been king of all the Gallas; but interesting as this visit would have been, I had to forego it, as she dwelt on a lofty hill somewhat off our route, and several of the animals were already beginning to feel the strain of so much climbing. On reaching a place called Busa in Gamo, the centre of a big market, Fitarauri Imani's soldiers returned to their post, and a fresh force was requisitioned for me, by order of the Shum, Gami, and Tawaz, the principal military official. These men were to accompany me nominally as far as the river Womo or Omo. The road beyond Busa continued to run over the hills, in a direction too much to the eastward to suit me, so I explained to the officials that I intended leaving the mountains, and descending to the plains, where I could see good country stretching away in the direction I wished to go. They maintained there was no other way excepting the one over the hills; but I knew that their sole reason for this statement lay in the fact that they had never attempted any other route. Still thinking to dissuade me from my purpose, they argued that, in any case,

## My Caravan increases

the road I wanted to follow was only a track made by elephants, who roamed over the plains. "That is excellent," I replied; "where an elephant can walk, a mule can go." So they laughed and gave way.

The two hours' march down the hills would certainly have been a trying one had I not organized a small pioneer corps, armed with axes and stout poles. Taking the lead myself, I set out with them, in advance of the caravan. By this arrangement, we managed to cut down trees, and remove obstructing rocks, without causing any delay or inconvenience to the caravan. At the foot of the hills we travelled through a primæval forest abounding with tracks of elephants and rhinoceros. My caravan, by this time, might almost have been called an imposing one, for, in addition to my sixty animals and forty odd men, there were quite two hundred Gallas, laden with supplies for us, a flock of sheep, and nearly thirty head of cattle, as well as the fifty soldiers, many of whom were mounted, and their large crowd of Galla bearers. At sunset, three separate camps were formed, when the flickering of innumerable little fires and the indistinct murmuring of so many voices alone disturbed the silence of the night. Most of my Galla bearers wore no clothing at all; muscular, big-limbed fellows as they were, they scarcely ate enough to keep a cat alive.

At first we found the plains unpleasantly hot after the cool hills. After marching across them for two days, it was agreed that the Gallas should return home again, owing to the uncertain attitude of the

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

tribes in front of us. On the eve of their departure, I sent them a sack of flour, and they, poor fellows, unaccustomed to such treatment, celebrated the occasion by singing loud and long into the night.

After their departure, our next march brought us to an enchanting grassy valley which disappeared among the hills. Close by our camp flowed a clear stream, plentifully stocked with excellent fish, and along the banks grew delightfully shady trees. The neighbouring forest provided a happy home for koodoo, buffalo, zebras, and elephants, as well as vast quantities of guinea-fowl and partridges. From this point, the soldiers wanted to take me by a long, circuitous route over the spurs of the hills, instead of straight across the plains, maintaining that there were no other roads, and that even if there were, we should find no grass or water on the plains. Knowing quite well the hatred Abyssinians have of leaving their hills, and being, moreover, certain that the stream by whose banks we had camped flowed into the valley, I told them that I intended spying out the land for myself, and with that object made a trip to a certain hill some miles distant, from the top of which I could distinctly see green grass and water in the direction of Hammer Koki, whither we were bound. On hearing this, the soldiers, as a last resort, said they knew the waters to be saltish; but as I was well aware they had never been there to see, I replied that that would suit me admirably, as many of the animals just at that time were much in need of salt. We therefore marched across the plain to the broad shallow flowing water I had seen,

## Abyssinian Elephant-hunters

This river flows into Lake Stefanie, or, more properly speaking, Lake Chouwaha, for that is the name by which it is locally known.

Curiously enough, we came upon a dead elephant not very far from the river. It was in a kneeling position, and, to judge from its appearance, it had evidently only quite recently died a natural death. The skin was entire, and a great deal of the flesh still remained. The soldiers said it had been killed by lions, though they could point to no sign proving that such was the case.

Situated west of us, there was a valley bounded by the Hammer Koki range of hills inhabited by certain Gallas who refuse to acknowledge Menelik as king. I took a party of four men to spend a day shooting in the valley, and we soon discovered perfectly fresh tracks of elephants and rhinoceros. As we were about to follow them, we were surprised to hear continual firing from the direction of our camp. Being unable to understand what had happened, we abandoned our shooting, and hastened back with all speed, half expecting to find fighting in progress. Judge of my thorough disgust when I learnt that a large hunting party of Abyssinians, taking advantage of my presence in the valley, had followed in our wake, bent upon killing elephants.

The Abyssinian method of exterminating these fine brutes is quite opposed to our ideas of sport, for from a safe distance an entire party fifty or a hundred strong pepper the victims with volleys, and sometimes meet with success. An Abyssinian who has killed an elephant is looked upon

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

in the country as a man of some parts. Menelik himself on one occasion shot one, and there were rejoicings in consequence. I was told that he fired the first shot, and then three hundred men fired the second. We must hope that the second was altogether superfluous, and that the first had done its work well. I was naturally annoyed with the people who had thus spoilt our morning shoot, and having quieted them for the remainder of the day, sallied forth a second time. Whilst pursuing elephant tracks, I saw a rhinoceros quietly walk into a thicket unaware of our presence. I had no difficulty in coming up to him, and then fired both barrels at him from a distance of ten yards. With an angry snort, he rushed straight at me like a thunder-bolt. In an instant I had stepped aside, and then saw the heavy monster go thundering on. We had no time left to come up to our elephants, but we saw a giraffe, some hartebeests, oryx, and other game.

We travelled to the foot of the Hammer Koki hills, where dried-up thorn bush, with rocks and flints, predominated. At this spot the mule I was riding, the gift of Duri, without warning, took fright and dashed off at full speed as straight as an arrow. Luckily he ran into the middle of a dense thorn bush, and considering the rocks and trees we so nearly encountered on our mad career, let me off lightly, with a severe scratching.

The independent Gallas who dwelt here, though possessing a few sheep, are exceedingly poor. During the rains they rear a little crop, but only

## The Stolen Sheep

sufficient to last them for a very few months. In order to supplement this scanty fare, they move down to the riverside and catch fish, besides collecting certain eatable grasses that grow on the banks. Formerly, they were the owners of many head of cattle, but now all have been raided by the Abyssinians. At nightfall they brought for our animals grass which they had cut from some distance off, and in return for their trouble I presented them with cloth, much to the disgust of the Habesha soldiers, who, acting up to their traditional habits, had taken advantage of the strength of our combined force, and seized some sheep from the harmless natives. I was very angry with them, and protested against such cowardly behaviour, telling them that when news of their actions reached the ears of Janhoi, he would put the blame on my shoulders, and that I, on my part, would send him a letter, explaining how the robbery was committed by his own soldiers against my wishes. Once more I warned them that if they wanted to loot they must leave me at once, and do it alone, for I knew quite well they dared not have done so by themselves. They agreed that it was always the custom of the Habesha to loot the Gallas of these parts; but I merely repeated what I had already said, and left them to think over my words. The result was, at any rate, satisfactory, for they forthwith returned the sheep.

## CHAPTER XVII

### DISPUTES WITH THE ABYSSINIAN ESCORT

A needless alarm—A dispute with the officers—They leave me—We find water—Another Abyssinian escort—A further dispute—We release two prisoners—Arrival of further Abyssinians—Hammer Koki Gallas—Towards Lake Stefanie—A mysterious watering-place—The nations of Alibori—Abyssinian raids—A moonlight journey through marble hills—Gold-bearing stones.

IT was always our custom to bring into camp at sunset the mules which had been out grazing, but this evening there was no sign of their coming, and my men began to get anxious, saying that they had been taken by the Shangkallas. Suddenly we heard three shots fired; at the same moment a man rushed up shouting, "Rifles, rifles! We shall all be killed." I ordered him to sit down and eat his supper, and after appropriating his rifle, despatched half a dozen men towards the direction of the firing, to find out the cause of the trouble. It soon transpired that it was nothing more serious than that the mule-keepers had started back homewards too late in the day, and had lost their way.

At this stage the soldiers and I had a difference of opinion as to which road we ought to take. They only knew of one route that led over the Hammer

## A Cantankerous Escort

Koki hills, and stoutly declared that there was absolutely no other. I explored the road they advocated, but I found it to be very steep and stony, and almost impracticable for loaded animals. Even had it been less uninviting, I had at so early a period in the journey no desire of wasting the strength of men and animals by unnecessary climbing, and so definitely told the officers that the road on the hills was totally unsuitable, and that I intended finding a way round them. They replied that if I attempted such a course, we should not find a drop of water, and should all be dead in a few days; to which I replied that if I followed their advice and went by the hill road, the mules would be dead in twenty-four hours.

Throughout the night I could hear the soldiers talking in high-pitched tones over our controversy, and wondering what action I should really take in the morning. They even secretly went the round of my men endeavouring to frighten them from following my route, by saying they would most certainly all die of thirst. At daybreak the bell rang as usual, but the men were slow indeed at rising and loading up. They were only half-persuaded, but the soldiers were still trying to influence them. Yet I said nothing, and waited patiently. Eventually, the officers again approached me with the intention of dissuading me from my purpose, and certain Gallas also came up with the same object. Still I could not help thinking there must be water on my proposed route, for some of the hills ahead were green, and the general lie of

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

the country strongly led me to believe this. I told them once and for all, water or no water, I should go round the hills. Thereupon the officers played their last card, replying, "If you take that road, we and our soldiers will leave you and return." "Just as you like," I said. I then wished them farewell, and presented them with a few dollars, not that they deserved them, but that they might know I was determined to stick to my guns. We then moved off, the men looking very glum, and carrying on their heads or in their arms all the vessels they possessed, filled with water. Many of them thought they were about to make their last march on earth, yet scarcely dared openly to object in view of their recent promises.

After a while we came to some huts, from one of which a Shangkalla came, saying he would show me a road where we could get water. So, keeping this guide in front of me, I marched ahead, and after four miles reached a nullah that ran up between some hills. Here were green trees, and grass, and doves, and other birds, and I felt sure that water must be close at hand, and knew from experience that by digging in the sand, at any rate, we should get it. My belief was strengthened by finding a track well worn by men and sheep. Up the sandy nullah we marched, and wonderfully good going we found it, and presently saw some beautiful pools of clear water, and, further ahead, a crystal stream trickling by shady gurha trees. Just beyond was some splendid green grazing, the very best grass we had come across on our journey. We had now

## Alone again at last

risen to considerably higher ground, and a cool, refreshing breeze, which we had not felt for some days, blew right up the nullah, and cheered us all. The men marvelled at the turn of good fortune, saying that in future they would rather follow Geyta's (master's) road than any other. To me it was an agreeable change to find ourselves alone, started at length under such favourable circumstances, instead of for ever being surrounded with shums, officers, and soldiers. I was indeed glad to have in their stead a few harmless, friendly Shangkallas, about whom I had heard nothing but dreadful tales. Still I did not feel altogether safe, and had an idea that the soldiers would report my behaviour in a wrong light to the officer in command of the Abyssinian post in the Hammer Koki mountains, and that he would come over the hills in strong force, and put some obstacle in my way, or possibly stop me altogether. It was an unpleasant feeling, for I knew that it was the custom of the country for petty shums to interfere with foreigners proceeding beyond certain limits, and to bully and delay them to no purpose.

I therefore determined to make a very early start the next morning, and to march as long as we could. I kept well ahead of the caravan as we made our way up the nullah, and we had very nearly reached the summit, when, at a sudden bend, I saw drawn up in front of me, across the road, an Abyssinian force, some two hundred strong. It looked as though our troubles were about to begin, and my men began to show signs of

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

apprehension. However, determined to take the bull by the horns, I walked up to the crowd. To my amazement, they all bowed. The headman, or shum, then stepped forward, saying that he had had news of my coming, and had received instructions to conduct me as far as the Womo river. I thanked him, saying how sorry I was they had had such a chase over the hills after me (for I really was sorry, because I did not want them), and begged them not to trouble any further, as I could find the road quite well by myself. "We are going with you," was the reply. So our united forces marched along, and afterwards camped in the hills by a rivulet.

Somehow I felt suspicious concerning the road ahead, so at once despatched some of my own men to inspect it, and on their return, they reported the hill track as being quite impossible for mules, adding that even a man with a load could not negotiate some of the places. I therefore called the shums, and told them that as the road they wished to take me by was totally unfitted for mules, I should steer for the plains. "You will die for want of water ; we will make a road for you," was the reply. I did not discuss the matter, but firmly expressed my determination of leaving the hills, and finding a road over the plains. They replied that they would go and talk a little together, and then let me know. As bedtime drew near, and they had not told me the result of their conference, I again called for them, but they were still opposed to my leaving the hills. As I relied upon getting

## We liberate our Guide

assistance from certain natives, I warned them that if they prevented the Shangkallas from showing me the way, I should report the case to Janhoi. "Oh," they said, "there are plenty of Shangkallas here about the camp, and you can have any of them you like."

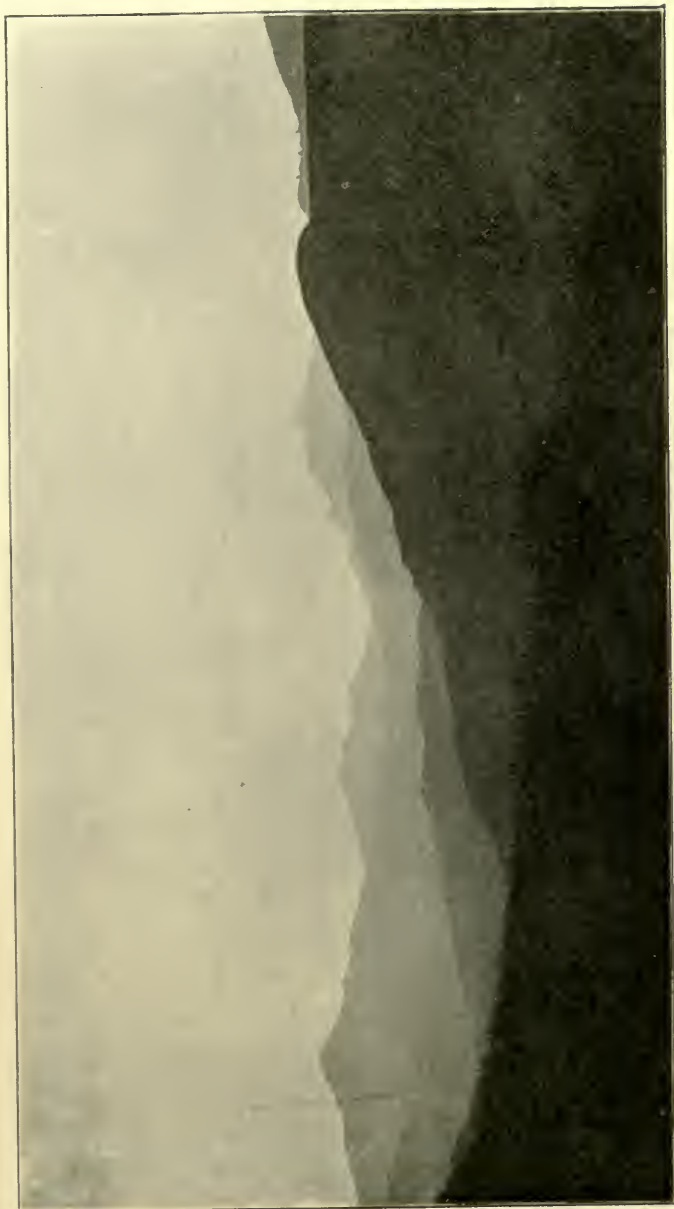
As soon as they had left, my old guide told me that he knew for certain there was a Shangkalla in the camp of the Abyssinian soldiers who knew all about the roads, and where water was to be found in this part of the country. By this time it was late, and all had gone to rest, so I took the guide with me into the Habesha camp, and we silently walked on tiptoe over and between the bodies of the sleeping soldiers, till he pointed out to me a Shangkalla whose hands and feet were very tightly bound by ropes. I called loudly for the shum, causing some commotion among the slumbering soldiers, and asked him the meaning of it, knowing well that the object was to prevent me having the assistance of this guide. At first he was unable to reply, and then blurted out that the man had been tied up because he had been ordered to bring me supplies, and had not done so. I replied that I needed nothing; that, in any case, I would take nothing from men who had nothing to give; and concluded by reminding him that as he had recently said that I might have any Shangkalla I wanted, I should like to take this prisoner. He could only say, "Take him." So we brought him over to our camp—his name was Kulo—and afterwards relieved his son, who was likewise bound. Both

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

were extremely grateful for the service we had done them, and secretly told us they knew where to find water ahead, about which the Habesha knew nothing whatever, and they then explained that they had been bound simply to prevent them giving me the information.

I had given orders for loading up at four o'clock the next morning, and on waking discovered that a fresh force of Abyssinians had arrived during the night. With them was the head shum of Hammer Koki. He walked up to me, saying that as his soldiers had sent him no news of me, he had come to see for himself, and straightway the arguments about the roads were started again. This shum was a particularly well-mannered and obliging man, and most anxious for me to return with him to his post, where he wanted to furnish us with everything we wanted. His whole tone differed essentially from that of his understrappers, and he was a superior man in every sense. On seeing my determination to follow my own route, he no longer pressed me to try an impossible road, and lose half my animals, but warned me, in a friendly way, that if we went by the plains we should certainly die, and he could not allow any of the soldiers to go with me. I acknowledged the risk we were about to take, and having thanked him for his well-meaning advice, we shook hands and parted in a friendly way, whilst the other petty shums remained hidden in the background, ashamed to come forward and show themselves.

After a stony descent of two hours, we found



MOUNTAINS SURROUNDING LAKE ABAL.

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

grass by a sparkling stream. Close by were some Shangkalla houses, but all the inhabitants had fled under the impression that we were Habesha, although our guides made good use of their voices to convince them of their mistake. The Gallas of the Hammer Koki district are of the poorest description imaginable, and it is difficult to understand how some of them manage to exist at all. Whatever they have had has been taken from them, and there is no doubt that some of the petty Abyssinian shums treat the Shangkallas of these parts in a very discreditable manner. The shums, however, are not altogether deserving of blame, for they behave thus, I am convinced, entirely through ignorance. Raiding comes as a second nature to them, and they consequently get but a very slight idea of the suffering they cause.

After watering at the stream, we crossed the open plain, alive with ostriches and big bustard, and steered for the foot of some hills. I also despatched three men in an easterly direction to a place called Alibori, by Lake Chouwaka, or Stefanie, as it is generally wrongly named, to try and find some more Shangkallas, who would inform us about the country and roads in front. Our guide took us through a trackless bush forest to the sandy bed of a narrow river. This little retreat was supposed by its occupants to be so safe from interference that we completely took by surprise some natives who were tending a flock of goats, and who, on our approach, fled precipitately, casting away their bundles of grass, and leaving all their property in our hands, had we

## The Luckless Alibori

wished to avail ourselves of it. They had, no doubt, taken us for the dreaded Habesha. Although we had reached our watering-place, it was no easy matter to discover its exact whereabouts. It flowed from a fissure in the side of the hill trickling over the rocks in a tiny rivulet, and by exercising patience, we succeeded, after four or five hours, in drawing sufficient for the requirements of ourselves and all our animals.

At this camp, I almost lost the terrier Lady, who was suffering from bronchitis, and had become so extremely weak that for some few days she had to ride, being unable to walk.

On returning to camp from shooting, after bagging some gazelle and bustard, I found the men had arrived from Alibori, accompanied by six Shang-kallas. These poor fellows had brought with them a sheep and some honey as a present to me, and on first meeting, each of them in turn came forward, kissed me below the knee, and then held forth his hand, saying, "Gari gari," as a form of salutation. It appeared that as soon as my men had come in sight of their village, the inhabitants, taking them at first for Habesha, had prepared to flee, but on discovering their error had shown them every hospitality that lay in their power. I sat down with these citizens of Alibori, and listened with interest to all they had to say. They explained to me how they had formerly been the wealthy owners of many head of cattle, whereas to-day they had scarcely any to speak of, and were consequently dependent for their living upon the fish they caught. They begged me to lay before King Menelik an account

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

of their real condition, because they knew him to be a good and just man, and were sure that he was not aware of the behaviour of his own people in these regions, for the Abyssinians had raided them no fewer than seven times. Although they themselves were anxious to arrive at a friendly understanding with the Abyssinians, and were prepared to pay whatever taxes were right, still they were never allowed a chance of doing so. Sometimes they had even gone out to meet the Abyssinians, taking with them the property they were willing to give them, but had only been mercilessly shot down. They explained that they themselves were not the real headmen of the villages, but the representatives of two elder men who, though most desirous of seeing me, were unequal to the exertion of so long a journey on foot, and unfortunately had now no chance of riding, as all their donkeys had been carried off. Their pitiable story was probably true, for their statements, as far as could be gathered, were corroborated by my own men who had been over to the tribe.

We left this obscure spot by moonlight, and crossed over the hills, which were remarkable in their way, for they abounded in marble. The highest peak of all, close to which our track ran, was crowned with a beautiful pinnacle of white marble rock. The road in places was most indifferant, and altogether impossible for our caravan until we had cut down several trees and dislodged huge rocks, sending them bounding and crashing down the mountain-side. Our labours in this respect

## No Time for Gold!

were amply rewarded, as the sight of these ponderous masses of rock following one another into space was well worth seeing.

We then descended to a broad, sandy, waterless nullah, where the hills on either hand were arid and barren. Along the edge of the bed an occasional solitary thorn tree could be seen, reminding me of the gloomy and desolate-looking nullahs of the Tochi valley. We plodded up stream through the heavy soil for several hours before finding any water, and then we soon learnt, to our regret, that its properties were purgative.

In this place, some of the men brought me stones which to every appearance contained gold, but my mind at that period was mostly exercised as to the best means of administering to the wants of my animals, as my best pony was dying from anthrax, and there was then no time to thoroughly investigate the matter. Even had we found the precious metal in vast quantities, we could never have carried it, with the transport means at our disposal. In my opinion, it was imperative that we should move on without delay, and remain in no place for any longer than was absolutely necessary till the disease had abated. A certain number of Shangkallas were living on land about these hills, though many of them, I was told, had been killed off by the Habesha. These survivors were in an extremely poor way, living in simple hovels, owning neither cattle nor crops; so when they learnt of the death of my pony, they swooped down like carrion birds to feast on the foul, putrid flesh.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ADVENTURES ROUND LAKE RUDOLF

Arrival at Lake Rudolf—The Asilli tribes—Their religious beliefs—Rain-makers—An extraordinary people—Illness and recovery of Lady—A native linguist—An elephant-hunt—Rest by the lake shore—A miserable night.

THE next morning, from the summit of the hills, we gained our first glimpse of Lake Rudolf, or, properly speaking, Lake Gallop, for that is the name by which it is most generally known by every tribe I came across who are acquainted with the lake; and later on we passed by the villages and tribe of Wangobeino. At the time when the Italian Bottego visited these people, they stole some of his cows, and he in retaliation shot them down and burnt their villages. Not far from the Wangobeino runs a sandy river-bed called the Alanta, furnishing an easy road to Lake Gallop. There was no water to be found on its surface at this time of the year, but certain wells which had been dug by the Shangkallas served our purpose admirably.

During the last few days we had been travelling through country sparsely inhabited by the Asilli tribes, who extend westward to the Aliboran of Lake Chouwaha, or Stefanie. As far as I was able to

## The Nine Asilli Tribes

gather, the Asilli are split up into the following nine sub-tribes, or divisions: (1) Bulenna; (2) Buri; (3) Simballi; (4) Bursah; (5) Chakanda; (6) Wangobeino; (7) Kasha; (8) Kulambino; (9) Kurkuna. Of these the Kasha and Wangobeino are considered by the Shangkallas to be imbued with very war-like instincts. With regard to their religion—and their notions are, I presume, prevalent amongst other tribes



VIEW ACROSS LAKE GALLOP, SOMETIMES CALLED LAKE RUDOLF.

as well—they consider the heavens to be their god whom they worship by the name of Wak. They also imagine that whenever it thunders, a white man has been born. They argue that a white man has no parents, but is born by thunder, and, therefore, when a white man chooses, he can cause rain to fall, which would explain the reason why they frequently asked me to let them have some rain. This notion

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

of a white man's birth is probably the result of their never having been fortunate enough to set eyes on a white woman ; but when they do, their belief in our powers of producing rain may receive a severe shock. Their own priest, whom they call Dobie, resides in the midst of the hills, and can also bring rain, because they say the rains belong to him. There is only one other man who can accomplish this useful feat, namely, the priest's son ; so when the priest dies, his son will still be able to supply their wants in this respect. They say that when the priest is in a bad humour, he declines to send them rain. They also say that when a marriage takes place amongst the Asilli, the priest speaks a few comforting words, and receives ghi, honey, and sheep in return for his kindness. It would appear that the Asilli priest holds a paramount position amongst his people that many of us might envy.

The Asilli adorn themselves with small copper earrings, and wear round the neck, wrists, and upper arms, many iron, brass, or copper rings. On noticing an Asilli warrior with at least half a dozen iron rings round his neck, suggesting a high and fashionable collar of unbearable weight, I asked him if he did not find such an ornament very heavy and uncomfortable. "Oh yes, indeed, we do," he replied, "but still we like them." Each of these rings round the neck, which are the work of native artificers, is valued as the price of a cow, and in addition to these they wear ivory round the arms, red and blue beads round the neck, but, practically speaking, no clothing. They also carry a knife—also of local manufacture

## The Habesha again

—secured in a leather sheath, and fastened to a leather strap round the neck. The Asilli of the district in which I happened to be, complained bitterly of the treatment they suffered at the hands of the Habesha, telling me how ruthlessly they had been shot down, and their cattle carried off. They entreated me to make my home amongst them, and teach them the art of manufacturing guns, so that they might become as well armed as the Habesha. Then they could fight them, whereas now, without guns, they acknowledged their inability of accomplishing anything. I asked them, if their story were really true, why they did not move off to the south out of harm's way, as the country lay open to them without anybody to stand in their path. They replied that in the rainy season the Habesha raided far and wide, and there was no escaping them. This was scarcely a satisfactory reason, as they had never shifted their homes to learn the facts for themselves. They also added that they had lived there since they were children, and their fathers and grandfathers had done so before them.

During the past four or five days Lady had been very ill from a nasty cough and severe attacks of sneezing, but she now took a turn for the better, and, together with her pup, enjoyed the happiest and healthiest of lives for the rest of the journey.

We travelled down the sandy bed of the nullah, which was frequented by elephants, rhinoceroses, and giraffes, till we reached an open space, where we found plenty of good grass for our animals and more wells; and, to judge from the evident signs

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

around, it was the favourite haunt of big game. The Shangkalla whom some days ago we had released from bondage was still acting the part of guide to us, and was here met by another savage, whom he proudly claimed to be his own brother. He was, indeed, a man worthy of relationship or acquaintance, for he boasted complete knowledge of no fewer than seven different languages. Both these good fellows expressed their willingness to accompany us for many more days to come. They warned us that if we went by the western shore of the Lake Gallop, we should meet the Turkana tribes, whose language they knew, and whose friendship they would win for us; but that if we travelled by the eastern shore, we should scarcely encounter any inhabitants at all, as they had almost all transferred themselves and their property to the opposite side of the lake. It had, indeed, proved to be a fortunate moment when we contrived to set free the Shangkalla who had been so severely bound both hand and foot, for he had since saved me all anxiety about watering-places, roads, and the attitudes tribes might adopt towards us, and now was prepared, with the valuable aid of his linguistic brother, to establish a friendship between ourselves and any other tribe we might come across. As his powers would have been wasted in an uninhabited land, I doubted if they would still wish to accompany me when they should discover that my route lay along the eastern and not the western shore of the lake.

It seemed now as though the anthrax epidemic

## My Elephant-hunt

had worn itself out, so I decided to stop and give every one a day's rest, and enjoy some sport after elephants.

We were not long in finding perfectly fresh tracks, and, as we followed them up, we came upon quite recent droppings, and, finally, to a great tusker. He was standing all alone, and, as he faced us, exhibited a fine pair of tusks; but for some unknown reason, he moved off before I could get sufficiently close to fire, so we resumed our tracking, and, after a while, came upon a herd of over twenty elephants, some of whom had enormous tusks. I carefully approached to within a dozen yards of them, and then waited for a fine fellow, whom I had my eye on, to give me a chance of firing a side shot at his head. Then I fired both barrels in rapid succession; but the big brute only winced considerably, and shambled off with the rest. There was a terrible stampede and a crashing of jungle, as they all strove to escape down one of the roads they themselves had made through the thick bush. They were so crowded together that they were unable to move at all quickly, whilst I, running after them, was very soon so close upon the rearmost elephant that, had I a lance in my hand, I could easily have pricked his haunches, or, with a sword, I fancied I could have executed the Arab trick of severing the sinew, whereas a rifle-shot from behind would have been absolutely useless. I might as well have blazed into a rampart of earth for all the damage that would have resulted. Presently an opening in the jungle afforded me a chance of

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

getting on their flank, when I again fired, at only a few yards' distance, at the head of one of the largest elephants in the herd, but again, without killing him. The herd, upon this second onslaught, split up into two parties ; so, calling up my men, I took a couple of them, and pursued one half, and gave instructions to the other three to follow up the second half, in hopes of finding the wounded ones dead. I was intently bent upon tracking, when, looking up, I saw a single elephant standing alone, and, as I was trying to get close enough for a shot, he, without rhyme or reason, raised his trunk, and trumpeting aloud, rushed straight at me. I fired both barrels of my rifle at his head, the second one at only a distance of half a dozen yards, and then turned and ran for it. Luckily for me, the elephant laboured under a mistake, for, imagining I had a third barrel, he at the same instant turned and fled too. Although we tracked him till after sunset, when darkness frustrated our efforts, we met with no success, and, thoroughly disappointed and disheartened, we had nothing left but to make our way back to camp.

With sorrow I reflected over the day's work. I had wounded three magnificent elephants, and, at the time, felt that I could never bring myself to fire at a fourth. Why hadn't I killed them? It was unaccountable to me, for with this same rifle, a double-twelve bore, on a previous trip, I had killed a big elephant by a single shot in the head. Whether my ammunition, which had been filled in Bombay, was inferior (formerly I had loaded my

## The Calibre for Elephants

own), or whether I had shot badly, or fortune was against me, I cannot say, but throughout the rest of my journey I never fired at the head of another elephant again with the twelve bore. With the same rifle, I killed elephants afterwards with a single shot behind the shoulder, and conclude that the penetration was sufficient to reach the lung or heart, though insufficient to touch the brain, owing to the



NATIVES FROM LAKE GALLOP.

somewhat inferior loading of the cartridges. With a single shot at the head between the eye and ear from a .303 carbine, at a distance of ten or twelve yards, I found I could instantly kill an elephant.

As we walked homewards, I formed plans to start tracking again for the wounded animals with the first streak of dawn, but the fates somehow or other were undoubtedly against me, for, on arrival in camp, bad news was awaiting me. Two more ponies had died during the day, and two more

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

mules were in a very sad way, and, as the welfare of my means of transport was the first consideration, there was no alternative left but to move on ; so I gave orders to load up and march the moment the moon rose. After a hasty meal, I lay down to seize a few hours' slumber, a rest disturbed by pitiful visions of those grand, majestic, inoffensive monsters, wounded and bleeding at the head. At two a.m. we were ready to move off, while my herd of thirty cattle, all of which had been given me by the Abyssinian chiefs, had already been driven on well in advance. Soon after daybreak Lake Gallop was in sight, and, though we travelled at a rapid rate along a splendid track for most of the way, yet we did not reach the shores of this beautiful water till after noon. We then pitched our camp fairly close to the edge, that all might enjoy the water, for we were thoroughly hot and thirsty, having had none along the road. In the afternoon, I satisfied all hands without any trouble, by bowling over three hartebeests, and fetching all the meat into camp. It was always an advantage to shoot meat for everybody when possible, as we could still keep our reserve of cattle to fall back upon when the time came. In the evening another pony died, and we all spent a most miserable night, for as soon as the sun had set, mosquitoes attacked us by shoals, and few of us closed our eyes. Some Shangkallas, attracted by the smoke, came towards our camp, but made off without approaching within hearing distance, no doubt having taken us for a party of Habesha. At daybreak we moved to some higher

## Deserted Ammunition

ground, the very spot that Bottego had chosen, and probably Delamere too, as we found quantities of ammunition '577, buried in the sand. There were also here the remains of several deserted "karias," and my guides informed me that the people had left them owing to reports reaching them of Abyssinian raids.



## CHAPTER XIX

### EXPERIENCES WITH THE LAKE TRIBES

The camp at Lake Rudolf—A curious hartebeest—Side excursions—  
An uncomfortable night—An exciting swim—We provision our  
camp from across the river—An elephant charge—A deserted  
Shangkalla—A good bag—Fever and anthrax—New guides.

THIS was indeed a lovely camp, for there were a few shady trees, and the clean, short grass sloped down to a border of pure white sand, over which broke the blue waves of the fresh-water lake, and sometimes, when the wind blew from the west, these equalled the power and noise of sea billows. Along the edge were duck and geese, the golden-crested crane, and an occasional crocodile or hippopotamus. From our camp we could view the country for many miles around, and, with glasses, easily distinguish the various herd of antelope, the solitary rhinoceros, and other game. A fresh breeze would blow throughout the day and night, so that we were always cool and free from the annoyance of mosquitoes and other pests. Amongst the variety of

## Exploring the Womo

game at this camp, I saw a snow-white hartebeest. To all intents and purposes he resembled every other hartebeest, excepting in his colour, which was pure white. I made several attempts at shooting this remarkable animal, but he always seemed to be protected on both flanks by another hartebeest of the ordinary type. He seemed to be well aware that he was an uncommonly rare specimen, and to have resolved on that account to expose himself to no danger, and, as far as I was concerned, was most annoyingly successful, for whenever I shot his guardians, others replaced them. I believe the only way of securing this trophy would have been to shoot the entire herd.

This camp was several miles south of the river Womo or Omo, as it is called, at its junction with the water of the lake itself, and as the animals were no longer suffering from anthrax, and most of the men needed a rest, I considered the present spot suitable and healthy enough for a lengthened stay ; so leaving the majority of the men under the care of Shahzad Mir, I equipped a small caravan consisting of a dozen men, my Galla guide Kulo, and nine mules, and set out northwards to learn for myself whether or not the river Womo flowed into the lake or took a more westerly course. There had been some controversy amongst those interested in the geography of these parts as to the true course of this river, though, personally, I held the testimony afforded by an experienced and scientific traveller like Dr. Donaldson Smith to be sufficiently convincing ; but as there appeared to be still doubt

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

hanging over the subject, I felt there would be no harm done by merely verifying previous information. Besides, I had gathered from the same traveller that there were certain natives dwelling on the banks of the river who cultivated dhura, and I was anxious, if possible, to buy grain from them, and replenish my own supply, that we might make a fresh start, and feel ourselves independent of any extraneous aid for at least three months more.

Half of my party consisted of Christians, and the other half of Mohammedans, and at this early period of our journey, when food was plentiful, both parties were firm in their resolve to abstain from eating meat which had not been hallaled \* by one of their own belief. Thus, as we marched northwards along the edge of the lake, I found it necessary to shoot a hartebeest for each section, from the immense herds that crossed our path on their way to and from drinking, and this made all thoroughly happy. For our first night's camp we selected a piece of rising ground lying about half a mile from the lake, where the remains of some huts were still standing. Here we had anticipated a good night, free from the buzz and bite of mosquitoes, but our hopes were sorely shattered, for not only were we pestered by legions upon legions of most venomous mosquitoes, but we were also completely drenched to the bone by a severe storm of rain and thunder. When morning broke, therefore, and we started on our northward course, we felt anything but refreshed. We passed more deserted karias and came upon

\* *I.e.* killed by cutting the throat.

## Mohamed's Swim

tracks of elephants and rhinoceroses along the jungle and high grass that bordered the lake, and as we proceeded up the banks of the river Womo we saw a few natives, who, in spite of Kulo's calls, fled at once, as though their lives were in jeopardy. As it was now about midday, I camped where we stood, on the very spot that Bottego had formerly camped in. It was almost opposite the village known as Murle on the further bank. The country south of Murle is called Guma. I fancy the villagers used to live on the left bank, but shifted across to avoid the Habesha raiding parties.

As soon as the sun began to set, I took four men and climbed down the steep banks to the edge of the water. It was all very well for our friendly savages on the other bank to tell us to come over to them, but when we noticed that every boat had been taken over to their own banks, and no one would bring them across to us, their simple instructions were not so easy of execution. These boats consisted merely of hollowed-out trunks of trees, and were about twelve feet long and of great weight, and were worked by means of a very long pole. The question was, how to get hold of one. "Well, Mohamed," I said, turning to my Somali, "if you don't care to fetch one of these boats, I'll do it." In a moment this ever ready and plucky Somali had stripped, and regardless of any monsters the river might have held, jumped into the water. As he swam across with all his might, we pelted stones and clods of earth around to ward off any alligator that might show undue affection for the

## "Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

boy's legs. The river, I should say, was about thirty yards broad and about twenty feet deep in the middle, with scarcely any appreciable current, so Mohamed quickly and safely landed on the opposite bank. The rest was simple enough, for, without any interruption from the natives, we had soon fetched four boats over to our bank. I then crossed over with the four men and Kulo, and having secured the boats, we ascended the steep banks by a track that led to the cultivated land and the villages. My Abyssinians were astonished at my doing this. They said that two hundred Habeshas would never have dared to cross the river with so many Shangkallas on the opposite bank, a statement which perfectly agrees with their method of raiding. "Nothing venture, nothing have," is not altogether in accordance with their custom, which rather seems to be, "Nothing venture, plenty take."

We crossed a field of beans, and then lost sight of everything in the high dhura stalks. On the outskirts of these grew thick bush, and a village stood close by, with others but a short distance off. Round the grass-built hovels that comprised the village, a thick zareba of dried thorn bush had been built, and as we stood outside it, Kulo called aloud to the inmates inside, receiving no reply in return, except from the cackling hens. So keeping watch myself outside with one man, I sent the remainder of the party inside to investigate the interior, and, as I had expected, they found the place completely deserted. In almost every house they found quantities of dhura and tobacco, and from each took

## I seek Revenge

a small amount of the former, leaving in its place some red and white cloth. As we were engaged in these operations, we could distinctly hear the villagers calling to each other in the bush, but, owing to the density of the cultivation and undergrowth, we could only seldom catch a glimpse of any one of them. As soon as we had taken out all we needed, we carried the gombos of grain down to the boats and filled our sacks, and leaving the empty vessels carefully piled up together by the water's edge, paddled across to the other bank. There we safely secured the boats, and carried the goods up to our camp.

Throughout the night we had to keep a very diligent watch over our mules, for they became terribly frightened, and sometimes nearly stampeded, owing to the number of elephants that were trumpeting in the immediate vicinity of our camp. This annoyance lasting throughout the night made me anxious for revenge, so having sent on the caravan with instructions to camp after marching ten miles southward, I took a couple of men with me, and made a circuit by the water's edge, to try conclusions with the disturbers of our slumbers. We had but little trouble in finding them, for they were roaming about in such numbers that they were moving around us on all sides, yet, in spite of this fact, and also of their close proximity (for some of them would come within ten yards of us), owing to the density of the bush it was most difficult to obtain a clear shot at any one of them. The only plan open to me was patiently to follow a herd, and wait till a

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

favourable opportunity showed itself. There were many tracks which turned and twisted in the most unaccountable fashion, and I hoped to be able eventually to get into such a position that some of the elephants would cross me at right angles, and afford an easy shot at a very short range. The rearmost elephant of the herd I followed chanced to be a female, and the happy mother of a baby-elephant, which walked along in front of her, and as she came behind, she frequently showed her affection for her offspring by stopping and holding up her trunk and sniffing the air from every quarter, till on one occasion she did this too successfully. She had scented us, and round she immediately turned without more ado, and rushed straight upon us. My two followers wisely enough vanished like lightning, and I stopped to fire one shot, and then ran too, but, fortunately for us, the bullet had hit the enraged beast in the head, and had turned her. We followed up a second time, and again the fond mother charged, but we all crawled away into the thick bush, and she continued her angry attack along the empty track. I felt very thankful that elephants, although blessed with useful olfactory organs, are ridiculously blind. In our ignominious retreat, we came across some other elephants moving along another track, and then mutually agreed that the place was altogether too hot for us, so, leaving the monsters victorious for the day, we turned our steps towards camp, and hot, thirsty, and scorched by the midday sun, rejoined the rest of our people soon after noon.



THE SHORE OF LAKE RUDOLF.

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

On arrival, the men told us they had seen several Shangkallas in the bush by the water's edge, so I went down there, and found the savages had made off, taking the most of their belongings with them. There only remained a decrepit old lady and her faithful dog, and the poor soul told me to take whatever I wanted, adding that the people had already taken away most of their goods, fearing the Habesha were coming. I told her I had no need of anything, and gave her some cloth to put round her body, and the cold tea from my water-bottle, for both of which little attentions she was evidently grateful, and said she would let her people know that they had no cause to run away from us. They had already deserted their villages, and taken to the bush, and, strange to say, I had quite unintentionally turned them out of their second homes.

We all spent another bad night, for the mosquitoes hovered around us in myriads, and the mules again demanded a deal of looking after, on account of the strange noises kept up by the elephants. The mules, indeed, were more than we could manage under the trying circumstances, for one of them got loose, and ran off to its old home. It was the splendid mule that Fitarauri Duri had given me on the day of my ladies' tea-party, and it is very probable that he reached the home of his former master. He wasn't going to spend any more bad nights in a new country; and perhaps he was right in his choice. When day broke, we all felt cross and unrefreshed, and thought I had no inclination to go elephant-

## Another Bout of Vengeance

hunting, still I felt eager to wreak my vengeance on our night enemies, and as the mosquitoes had disappeared with the light of day, my vengeance was limited to the larger fry. We soon came upon a big herd in somewhat less dense jungle; and without drawing on myself the tender attentions of any of them, I crept up to within a dozen yards, and then fired at the nearest, who staggered from the effects, and then toppled over; a second, as he was moving off, I bowled over like a rabbit, with a shot behind the shoulder; and then taking my other rifle, I wounded a third in the head. With the help of the two men who were with me, we had soon tracked him by the blood droppings, and found him at a standstill in a very bad way, so that a second head shot finished him off in an instant. The middle-sized elephant of the three stood ten feet four inches high at the shoulder, having very fair tusks; the other two, owing to the awkward position in which they had fallen, could not be measured. I was exceedingly pleased with my unexpected success, for my Abyssinians had been telling me over and over again how their fellow-countrymen could knock over elephants. They used to say that if I would only take twenty men with me, and let all fire at one elephant, I would then have much more chance of killing, and that it was simply madness for me to try and shoot an elephant alone, for I should never do it. An Abyssinian who has killed an elephant—that is, of course, with the assistance of a large body of armed attendants—is looked upon as a man of some standing in the country, and a man who has killed more

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

than one is so much elated at his own skill that he will not deign to talk to anybody.

The next morning I was again tempted to try for elephants in the jungle bordering on the lake. Taking my boy Mohamed with me, we soon discovered a large herd grazing and walking in our direction, so we both crouched down in the grass to await their approach and select the largest amongst them. Several passed within a dozen yards of us, quite unconscious of our presence, and then a little fellow came within four yards, and Mohamed whispered, "Geyta, do you wish to be trampled on?" So we rose, and moved a little further to one side, when the entire herd, becoming suspicious, began to shuffle off. I then stood up and fired two shots from my '303 at the head of the largest elephant, killing him on the spot; then firing again, wounded the second so badly that he ran for only a few hundred yards, and we had no difficulty in tracking him. I found him standing alone in the bushes, and fired at his head, when up went the trunk, and he thundered upon us. We both ran as hard as we could to one flank, and the elephant, sorely hit, went toppling along. Again we went after him, and found him still standing in a very sad way, so, crawling up to very close quarters, I bowled him over, stone dead, with a third shot in the head. I felt sure that the first shot had really done its work effectively, and that had I not gone after the elephant, he would have died where I found him standing.

Late that same evening we returned to our old camp, where I had left Shahzad Mir in charge.

## Beside Lake Gallop

Some of the men had contracted fever during my absence, and three more mules had died from anthrax. The fever had been brought on by bathing in the lake at midday. After this, I never allowed bathing excepting in the early morning or evening, just before sunset. This at once stopped all fever.

It was delightful enough travelling along the shores of Lake Gallop, or Buzz or Baso, by which latter names it is also occasionally known ; for the days were cool, never registering more than 105 Fahr., and there was abundance of game. The water of the lake, though very slightly brackish, is, nevertheless, perfectly good for drinking. The lake gave me the impression of having a slight tide.

Besides abundance of meat, we could always knock over plenty of duck and geese, and catch any quantity of fish ; yet, in spite of all these luxuries, we were in a very bad way, for our animals were dying at an alarming rate, and those who did not suffer from anthrax had grown very weak and were in very poor condition. I fancy the unaccustomed change, from the hills to the plains, was to a great extent the cause of this falling away. A great deal of the grass, too, by the water's edge provides but little nourishment, and parts of the shore being marshy caused some of the animals to suffer from fever. As soon as we had completed our morning's march, the animals at first were accustomed to go straight down to the water's edge to graze, when they would often lie down and sleep instead ; and this, in marshy ground, must have had anything but

## 'T'wixt Sirdar and Menelik

a beneficial effect upon their constitutions. I afterwards tried a new scheme, and for the first few hours after halting sent every animal on to higher ground away from the lake, no matter whether the soil was sandy, rocky, or grassy, and after they had enjoyed a thorough rest there in the breeze, drove them down to the grassy edge of the lake, where they all fed greedily. No sooner had I adopted this plan than the animals began to pick up daily. I consider the camel to be the most suitable animal for taking a caravan along the shores of Lake Gallop, as there is almost everywhere excellent food for him.

On the second day after starting south, we caught a man and woman gathering red and black berries from a bush called "awy" by the Somalis, the wood of which is used for cleaning the teeth, and for allaying thirst by chewing. Whether they were a married couple, or brother and sister, I never knew, nor did it matter either, for they willingly agreed to accompany us along the shore of the lake, and show us the best track to follow. We were glad to have them, for our old friend Kulu, and his brother of seven languages, had left us at their own wish, as they did not relish a journey along the uninhabited side of the lake. This new couple belonged to the tribe called Gallopa, most of whom have now crossed over to the other side of the lake to escape the raids of the Habesha. The husband or brother, who was dressed in the garb of Nature, wore a small, oblong piece of flat brass hanging from the lower lip, and was armed with a spear and bow. Both he

## Two New Recruits

and the woman wore beads round the neck, and both possessed considerable intelligence. A third addition, in the shape of their dog, joined our party, and found such good food in her new home, and such valuable companions in Lady and her pup, that, on the departure of her mistress some days later, it preferred to throw in its lot with us, and eventually safely reached Sobat on the White Nile. During their stay with us, they fed well, and, when they left, had become considerably stouter. They were, in fact, so contented with their life that, when we had no further need of their services, they still did not want to leave us.

From the time we reached Lake Gallop, Shahzad Mir and myself always travelled on foot. We were more or less compelled to do so on account of the havoc created by anthrax. Almost every day, as we moved southwards, some animal or other would die, and my store of dhura was given to the survivors, in hopes that a little grain would strengthen them, or, at any rate, lighten their loads. I had been successful in shooting other elephants, and had no desire to shoot any more. My largest elephant stood eleven feet two inches high at the shoulder, and measured five feet ten inches round the circumference of the near foot. He carried a single tusk only, the other one having been broken close off to the head—this one tusk weighed over a hundred pounds. Had he possessed two tusks, I should never have shot him, for we could not possibly have brought them both along. From the same rifle a bullet shot just

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

behind the ear of a rhinoceros meant instantaneous death.

One afternoon, I strolled out to shoot some sand-grouse for dinner, and, curiously enough, a rhinoceros was standing close to where the sand-grouse congregated. Instead of trotting off as I had expected, he came straight for me, and I had to run for it. Almost everywhere I found rhinoceros absurdly tame, and much given to charging, but at the same time, the brutes' attack was always easily avoided by stepping aside. I shot them only when the men were hard up for shoe-leather.

## CHAPTER XX

A CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS, WITH A HAPPY ENDING

A plague of mosquitoes—My last pony dies—Transport difficulties—  
I meet with an accident—A fresh start—A search for water—A  
stony wilderness—A hostile native—The south end of the lake—  
A serious situation—Arrival of donkeys and sheep—A happy  
meeting.

AT Alia Bay, about halfway down the lake, stood a couple of fishing villages, one of which was situated close to the water and the other on an island a short distance from the mainland. It made me shudder to think of the mosquitoes that must infest these two villages, for although our own camp was pitched right away from the lake in an open spot, yet at nightfall the mosquitoes made sleep impossible both for men and animals, all of whom spent the hours which should have been devoted to rest, to waging war against the tormentors. About midnight we were too exhausted to carry on the fight any longer, and confessed ourselves beaten. I, therefore, rang the bell for loading up, and shortly before daybreak we came to some good trees, and as some of the mules were going very slowly, I halted, and, after unloading, lay down to snatch a few hours' sleep before sunrise. Here, too, the

## 'T'wixt Sirdar and Menelik

mosquitoes gave us no chance, and, as a last resource, I took my gun and knocked over some guinea-fowl and duck for breakfast. At this camp, the last of my ponies died.

The condition of our transport was becoming a very serious matter. Some of my tusks I had to give away to natives of the Gallopa tribe, or to fishermen who had rendered me any service, but even that availed us little. We had lost more than half our baggage animals, and the remainder were weakly, and unequal to covering more than half a dozen miles a day. It was imperative that we should get animals from somewhere, for, as a matter of fact, we were only just beginning our travels. As a temporary measure, I broke in the cattle, and loaded them, but this was not without its drawbacks. First of all, it took four or five of us to adjust the load, and the moment we let go, the cow would tear about in the most dangerous manner, and end up by falling on the ground in sheer rage. But all these little failings we gradually overcame; though we could never increase their pace of marching, which was painfully slow. On the other hand, cows had undeniable advantages over the ponies. They were extremely economical, for, besides carrying a fair load, they supplied us with milk, and whenever a poor beast became too footsore to walk any further, it gave us all a good dinner of roast beef. We did not attempt that more economical dodge adopted by a certain traveller, of cutting off beef-steaks from the living beast, and allowing the flesh to heal again, so as to furnish a steak later on.

## I lose a Finger

Yet this plan merely emphasizes the fact that there are more ways than one of travelling and living in Africa.

At this period of our journey, towards the end of March, I met with an unfortunate accident. While opening a tin, I drove the instrument—the



LIFTING A CAMEL INTO THE RIVER.

three-sided pointed weapon usually found in any big hunting-knife—clean through the first finger of my left hand, causing me to lose half my finger. The whole arm was affected for many days, so I felt thankful and pleased that the results were not more serious. Although I could use my hand but little for the remainder of the journey, the mishap never gave me fever or affected my health in any way.

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

My Abyssinians, with the best of intentions, would daily come and inquire whether my arm was not dying as well as my finger, and they cried out that now my shooting days were over they would all die from want of food.

It had been my original intention to explore the country well to the east of Lake Gallop, and to discover a river which is said to exist somewhere or other in these parts. At this time of the year there was no water whatever running into this side of the lake; every sandy rivulet was as dry as dry could be, and I had not enough strong mules to take away on an experimental journey. Had I not lost so many animals I might easily have established a water-station some thirty miles east of the lake, and extended my explorations another fifty miles east of that point, but in our present condition it was absolutely impossible. Had I possessed camels, there would have been no difficulty whatever, but mules, with all their advantages, must have water. I resolved, however, to attempt the journey, hoping to come across some tribe, possibly the Rendile, from whom I might be able to get camels. I took the only two strong mules left to us, and, loading one with water, and the other with food, set out with ten men at one o'clock in the night, steering due east by the moon. The country, at this time of the year, was very dry and parched; we crossed some low sandy hills, and, after seven hours' hard marching, came to a dry, sandy river bed, where grew shady thorn-trees, and dome palms, with their clusters of brown-looking nuts. After following up the bed for

## The Search for Water

another hour, in the vain hope of finding water, I halted to rest the mules, and feed the men. There was abundance of game about here, elephants, giraffe, lions, wild donkeys, and various gazelle, besides big bustard. The question that was always uppermost in my mind was, where did all these beasts drink? Did they trot off daily down to the lake? I think not. After satisfying our hunger, I sent out three separate parties, consisting of three men each, in different directions, with a promise of two months' pay to every man who brought me back word of water or people, and, leaving the remaining man to look after the mules, I went off to try and shoot some meat and have it ready by the time the men returned. Here I found that my wounded hand was far too painful for shooting, and that without it my firing was far from accurate. My shooting for the rest of the journey was practically at an end, and I never dared touch a rifle unless the men were hard up for meat. None of the parties returned till after sunset, and then, thoroughly parched, exhausted and disheartened, told their unwelcome tales. They had come across several deserted villages, and old droppings of camels, but had found no people and no water. We then finished our two mule-loads, and at 2 a.m., as soon as the moon rose, tramped back to camp, where we found all anxiously looking out for our return, in expectation of hearing we had found camels, or other equally satisfactory news.

Some distance down the lake, there runs a range of very barren hills, rising from the very edge of

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

the water. Every previous traveller has, I believe, at this point, left the lake and gone round the hills ; but in our case it would have been madness, for we should have found no water at this time of the year, nor could we have carried it if we had. For the first few miles we were fortunate in finding a track, which, however, after a bit, altogether disappeared, and we travelled along over masses of brown and black sharp-edged stones, till we reached a sandy cove ornamented with a few shady trees, and a little grass. Here I collected my caravan, which was straggling far behind, and halted, preparatory to exploring the road further ahead. I found the nullah, at whose opening we had camped, led up into a wilderness of the most desolate and stony hills imaginable. Many of the remarkable configurations of the rocks—results of volcanic action—strongly resembled those of Fingale's Cave. After marching for about three hours the next day, we found it quite impossible to proceed any further till we had literally made a road for our transport. Even now, in spite of our laborious improvements, I should never recommend this route to any future traveller.

Though the disease amongst our animals was at this period beginning to wear itself out, for all that, we were losing mules and donkeys, and our only chance of success lay in reaching the southern end of the lake, for we had been told we should be able to refit there by the purchase of donkeys and camels. In order to assist us in getting to this desirable spot, I enlisted half a dozen natives of Gallopa, and induced them to carry loads, rewarding them with

## In Pursuit of Awal

food and beads. Of course, the more men that joined our caravan, the more were the difficulties of feeding increased, and sometimes, when game happened to be scarce, the work entailed in shooting the necessary amount of food fell heavily on the few individuals who were able to use a rifle effectively against game.

One morning, when we were in one of these predicaments, after I had unfortunately failed to bag a hippopotamus which was standing by the shore of the lake, and which would have fed the entire caravan ten times over, I set out to try and kill some gazelle, and shortly reached some low hills, covered with black pebbles, where I observed several awal and oryx. Whilst endeavouring to creep up unobserved within range of the latter (for the flesh of one oryx would have been equal to that of no end of gazelle) I unexpectedly found myself within decent range of some other awal, who had so far escaped my notice, and had stopped short on their way towards the water for a midday drink. They were intently watching me, evidently wondering, and unable to decide what species of creature I was, so I sat down and remained motionless. We gazed with keen interest at one another at a distance of about 150 yards. This trick of mine made them still more inquisitive, and gradually they drew nearer, advancing a few steps and then stopping. They came along at a painfully slow pace, and the black pebbles on which I sat, heated by the midday sun, burnt like an oven, and were fast cooking my own steaks.

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

It seemed that the gazelle would never come close enough to suit me, but as I could not endure the heat for another moment, I fired. I commenced a rapid fusillade from my '303, and knocked over three of the awal. I then rose to call up the two men who were concealed some way behind, and found, on getting up, that my burns were really rather serious, for I could scarcely walk, and the wounds smarted terribly.

Early the next morning, my advanced guard caught a native hiding in the grass, on the point of shooting an arrow at us. We made a "friendly" of him to the extent that he carried a small load for us, receiving food and payment of beads in return for his services. Along our road, we picked up great numbers of beautiful crystals, also light pale blue, almost transparent stones, and innumerable fossils, that gave one the idea of having originally existed in a form of sea-anemone. The crystals and stones have, I should say, been washed down by some of the many rivulets from the hills lying east of the lake. At this period, the men were crying out for salt, and the morning after hearing their complaint we discovered plenty of this valuable article close to the lake itself. I suggested the advisability of their asking for pepper, a spice which they are fond of, or for any other luxury they might take a fancy to, since Fortune smiled so kindly at us.

On the 8th of April we caught our first glimpse of the southern end of the lake. It was quite a memorable incident, as the men had for some days already given up all hope of ever seeing anything

## The End of the Lake

else but this everlasting lake, and I certainly sympathized with their feelings, as our marches each day had to be so short and slow that they became most wearisome. We seemed to make no headway. Yet, with more than half of our animals dead from anthrax, and the others in a sickly condition, and with natives and the slow-moving cows carrying our flour and other goods, it was no wonder that we could not cover more than five or six miles a day. But worst of all, each day matters were growing more serious, and it became more and more imperative that we should get assistance somehow or other. "Won't Geyta (master) turn back when all the animals are dead?" asked some of the men. "No," replied my Somali boy Mohamed; "if every animal and every man dies, Geyta will still go on." Had all the animals died, a catastrophe that was quite possible, it would perhaps have been more risky to return than to go forward.

While in this unfortunate situation, we saw, one morning, smoke rising from the end of the lake and also from the opposite shore. Our friendlies told us that the smoke at the end of the lake indicated a village of the first people we should meet, who possessed both donkeys and sheep, and they added the gratifying intelligence that living next to these people were the Bomi, from whom we should be able to buy camels. I had intended taking a party eastwards myself, to search again for the Rendile tribe, and try to exchange beads and cloth with them for camels, but at this period my finger had shown such alarming symptoms that I decided to



CAMELS BEING PULLED ACROSS A RIVER.

## Unsavoury Birds

despatch Shahzad Mir and Mohamed, with sixteen best men, and the most intelligent "friendlies," to the southern end of the lake, with means to buy donkeys and sheep from the Lokub. I would take the opportunity to nurse and poultice my hand, and be better fitted to struggle onwards with the remainder of the men. On the morning of their departure, as I was anxious they should not start with an empty larder, I sallied forth with my rifle, and very quickly knocked over six gazelle ; but for the next few days sorely repented my foolishness.

As soon as the little expedition had left, I found it necessary to move our camp a few miles southwards, for the wind had shifted from the east round to the west, and with the change brought a most offensive smell from the myriads of pink water-birds that had congregated in some stagnant pools by the edge of the lake. The odour was absolutely unbearable, and though we moved only three or four miles to avoid it, this took us a deal of time, for some of the mules and men had to make double journeys. From this last camp I could scan the opposite shore of the lake with my glasses, but it was never sufficiently clear to learn the whereabouts of our party.

About half a mile away, and at some distance from the lake itself, there was a pool, one side of which was flanked by reeds, and on the other side gazelle and ostriches would come at any time of the day to drink the water. Some of the men who considered themselves crack shots were wont to spend many hours, hidden in the reeds, in the hope

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

of shooting meat, and though they had no end of chances, and blazed away a vast amount of ammunition, the results were far from satisfactory, excepting that it reassured them of their inability to hit anything but a target. Fearing the men might get disheartened, I again shifted camp, and discovered a suitable spot only a few miles ahead, where, at some previous time, Galla stone houses had existed, for we could still distinguish the formation and size of them from the remaining stones. There were also a few thorn-trees, and numerous herds of gazelle were wont to pass by them on their way to the water. All the hills around were covered with loose brown and black stones, and in some parts quantities of limestone were visible. The men were rather disappointed at their lack of skill in killing gazelle, for they knew as well as I did that they were fairly accurate marksmen at a target. So, feeling that they really needed meat, I took my rifle, and sat down on the ground about half a mile from camp, and very shortly afterwards a large herd of gazelle drew near me. I fired and fired again and again, and they, poor beasts, not knowing whence the noise came, were utterly bewildered, and unable to decide on the best direction for flight. Before they had eventually made up their minds and galloped off, I had fired ten shots, and knocked over five gazelle, much to the delight of all in camp.

In the afternoon of the same day, two messengers arrived from Shahzad Mir bringing a note from him, in which it was stated that he was bringing

## Shahzad Mir's Haul

sixty donkeys and some sheep. This was excellent news, and all felt we should now be able to make as long marches as we chose. The note arrived in the very nick of time, for we were all spending a most unpleasant and trying day. A strong wind was blowing clouds of very fine sand into the eyes, hair, and everywhere else, and there was no shade worthy of the name ; while countless swarms of ants armed with painful stings, and any number of the ordinary house flies, who up to date had thought us quite unworthy of their notice, pestered us in the most persevering way. All these annoyances were soon lost sight of in making preparations for an early start the next morning. We made every effort to meet our returning party as soon as possible, for all wanted to know details of their success, and it seemed to every one that we had been separated from one another for months instead of only a few days. After about two hours' march, and on the crest of one of the spurs that ran down into the lake, we met Shahzad Mir, followed by a herd of superb donkeys, and half of the men he had taken with him. The other half had remained behind, to look after the sheep, which were slower marchers than unloaded donkeys. There were great rejoicings among both parties at our meeting again. A stranger would have thought we had made a journey round the moon and a couple of the planets, and had not seen our lost brethren for years. How delighted we all were !

## CHAPTER XXI

### AMONG THE RENDILE

Why Shahzad Mir took the animals—My reflections thereon—Determination to make reparation—The donkeys' liking for human hair—The Rendile people—A stony march—A strange discovery—A warning to travellers—A traveller's camp.

It appeared that as soon as the people living at the southern end of Lake Gallop, or Rudolf, caught sight of Shahzad Mir and his men, they, without more ado, fled, leaving many of their donkeys and sheep behind, and, as they made off, they broke their spears in two, and threw them away, implying that they had no desire to fight Shahzad Mir and his party. The donkeys that they left behind numbered several hundreds, whilst the sheep and goats were innumerable, and the Pathan helped himself to what he considered right and necessary. He had tried his best to induce the people to see the advisability of coming and talking with him, but they were very much afraid. One man they caught, and though they treated him with every possible consideration and kindness, he behaved more like a wild and scared animal than a rational being, and ran away on the very first opportunity. Now, the question arises, why did these ignorant savages flee? Either

## An Ethical Question

they must have heard rumours of the raiding carried on by the Abyssinians, or they must have been severely dealt with by some previous traveller, or, owing to the continual state of guerilla warfare existing between themselves and their neighbours, the Rendile to the east, and the Bomi to the west, they knew of no other policy but that of killing and raiding, and had never come across any people who were willing and capable of acting in a just and friendly way. The notion of friendship outside their own family circle, so to speak, is evidently foreign to their nature. Be that as it may, I cannot help thinking that these people, at some period of their lives, must have experienced the effect of rifle-fire, or they would not have fled as they had done at the very first sight of a handful of men. I was much annoyed at the unfortunate accident to my hand, which had prevented me from personally dealing with this tribe about whom we knew nothing, and, judging from my subsequent experience with other tribes, I fancy the outcome might have been more satisfactory.

As it happened, my people had inflicted injury on nobody; they had merely been compelled to take away goods in the shape of donkeys and sheep from a tribe, because the latter, through unreasonable fear, would not stop and barter them. Of course Shahzad Mir was new to the country, and having since his arrival been mixed up more or less intimately with Abyssinians, whose chief topic of thought and conversation was killing and raiding, and with Soudanese who on previous journeys had

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

been accustomed to shoot natives and carry off property in the most regrettable manner, he had to a certain extent become unknowingly influenced by them, in the same way that any man whose lot is thrown, for a time, amongst people of different race and habits from his own, finds himself involuntarily falling into their ways and customs, and even,



SHAHZAD MIR.

as a natural consequence, adopting their feeling and mode of thought. Thus he was perfectly convinced in his own mind that we should never be able to come to a friendly understanding with any tribes at all on our journey, and that we should have to take what we required by force, or else help ourselves in the same manner as he had just done. One thing,

## Our New Donkeys

however, was certainly clear, that had not Shahzad Mir then helped himself to donkeys and sheep, we should probably be still struggling along the shore of the lake.

The whole affair, nevertheless, was quite contrary to my own theory of pioneering. It is true that the donkeys which my men took made no apparent numerical impression on the gigantic herd left behind, nor could the looting of the sheep have affected the whole tribe or any individual in particular; yet I resolved on reaching the villages of the tribe myself, to try and repay them as far as lay in my power. I would leave them my own wearied donkeys and mules, with loads of cloth and beads, and anything else they might take a fancy to, and I much looked forward to the day when we should see them, and be able to carry out my wishes.

The new donkeys were in the pink of condition, of a very light colour, with broad backs, strong powerful frames, and stout little legs, standing between eleven and twelve hands high. In their bearing and action they much more resembled a wild than a domestic animal. Sometimes, as we continued our march, they would spurt along together in a herd, then suddenly pull up with heads erect and full of life, look round on every side, and then at one another, as much as to say, "What is the meaning of all this? who are these strange masters? and where have they come from? And what are these scraggy looking creatures struggling along with drooping heads and burdens of all kinds on their backs?" I feel sure that these

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

domestic donkeys must have originally lived in a wild state, and that fresh wild blood must be constantly introduced. In comparing the two classes, it is hard to discover any difference at all. On more than one occasion, during our first march, I saw some of the wild ones at a distance from our caravan, and not knowing what they were, inquired whether they were my property or whether they were at large.

There is no denying the fact that I was delighted to get such timely help, and to be able to release the remaining mules and donkeys from the work that was fast killing them. Not that they were actually doing very much, but they were all completely out of sorts, and quite unequal even to the small task we daily imposed upon them. Our animals, taken as they had been from the hills, had not yet become acclimatized to the comparatively trying atmosphere and indifferent feeding of the plains, neither would my fourteen or fifteen remaining cows have lasted out for many more marches. Many of them had grown exceedingly footsore from the stony nature of the ground, and all of them had lost their sleek condition through being forced to perform the unaccustomed duty of carrying loads, some weighing as much as eighty pounds.

After halting for breakfast, I decided to move on and reach, if possible, my second party with the sheep, who had halted in a suitable spot by the edge of the lake. The sun had already set before we caught sight of the glimmer of their camp-fire, and, a few minutes later, I found the men smilingly drawn up in line, eager to salute me, after their few

## Improved Saddle-mending

days of absence. As soon as all the animals had been unloaded, we set about constructing a zareba for the night, that our new friends, the donkeys, as well as the mules, sheep, goats, and ourselves, might be protected. I must confess that that evening I indulged in so many mugs of fresh milk from the sheep and goats that there was no corner left for dinner, and my two dogs, Lady and her pup, fared with equal satisfaction.

The first duty to be carried out the next morning was to hold a saddle inspection preparatory to breaking the new donkeys into carrying our loads. Most of the saddles required mending and restuffing, I therefore issued packing-needles and stout thread for this purpose, but noticed, after a bit, that very little headway had been made in the work. I knew quite well that the men were all casting longing eyes on the sheep, of which we had over a hundred, so I explained to them that, as soon as the saddles were finished, the work on the sheep should commence. These words had a magic effect, and in a wonderfully short space of time the saddles presented a very creditable appearance.

We were now camped in an exceptionally lovely spot, particularly welcome after the desolate, barren, and stony country of the last few days. There was a brisk little stream running down from the hills east of us, through a thick coppice of willows surrounded by good turf; around all grew plenty of dome palms and shady gurhas, whilst the blue lake, half a mile away, and below us, backed up by the dim ranges of hills on the further shore, completed a very pretty

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

piece of landscape. The country, too, abounded in rhinoceros, hippopotami, gazelles, hares, partridges, and the tiny gentle dik-dik, but big and small game alike had no need to fear death from my rifle or gun.

On waking at dead of night on the edge of this marvellous lake, I felt a strange sense of wonder. Excepting the sentry on watch, who moved silently about the camp, both man and beast were sleeping peacefully after the labours and stimulating uncertainties of the day. It was strange to listen, as I lay on the bare ground, to the breaking of huge waves on the sandy shore, knowing all the time we were actually hundreds of miles from the mighty ocean, and in the heart of a vast tropical continent.

The following day being Sunday, we enjoyed, for us, a day of rest. The natives who had helped us in carrying our loads received their reward, and then, of their own accord, offered their services as far as the end of the lake, so pleased had they grown with their novel and unexpected life. But I had no further need of employing them, for our new blood took kindly to their work, and we could pick and choose our animals, as we possessed more than our requirements demanded. These new donkeys thrived in an astonishing way; they seemed to flourish and fatten on the most barren country, but, unfortunately, they had as well, I am sure, a partiality for short grass, and during the night had a habit of nibbling at my crop of hair, labouring under the impression that it was food for them. The Bomi are accustomed to let their animals graze at night-time, though we dared not run the risk of

## The Vanished Rendile

allowing this indulgence, and our new donkeys, missing their nightly supper, were driven by the pangs of hunger to try and substitute hair for grass.

At early dawn I sent off a small party to inspect the hills lying west of us, to try and find some signs of the Rendile people, for we had seen fires burning in the distance. In the evening they returned, having discovered that the smoke had been caused by a grass fire on the hillside; they had seen nobody, but had merely noticed the locality on this side of the hills, where the Rendile must have recently lived, for there were many signs of camels and houses. This agreed with the information given me by the natives who had accompanied us, that the Rendile used to live close by the hills, but owing to the constant quarrels and fighting with the Bomi, they had, for the sake of a peaceful life, retired to a distance.

As we set out with our new reinforcements, we might have been taken for a small army, to such enormous dimensions had our caravan attained. At this period we marched in the following formation. In front of all was my advance guard of four men, then I came with an attendant and the two dogs, followed by the baggage animals; then the spare animals followed with the sheep and goats, while the cattle brought up the rear. Shahzad Mir and his attendant moved where most convenient for surveying. Looking down on the whole cavalcade from higher ground, I was astonished at the important show we made. The road, after a bit,

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

favoured us with a continuation of brown and black stones ; in fact, there was nothing but stones, even down to the water's edge. About halfway across this comfortless stretch, and in the stoniest of stony places, we, strange to say, found masses of camel bones, all accumulated close together within a limited area. Some of my men offered a suggestion that certain Shangkallas had stolen camels



REMARKABLE ACCUMULATION OF CAMEL BONES, LAKE RUDOLF.

from some tribe or other, and had rested there to eat them ; others, again, urged that a traveller must have gone this way, and had also grown hungry, and cut up all his camels for food ; but his appetite must have been abnormal, and, with no wood at hand, his dinner barbarous ; besides, no sane man would have brought camels by such a road, when he might have travelled round the hills. Still, it is curious that so

## Signs of a European

many camels should have succumbed at the same spot ; and yet, again, no sane man either would have camped on a sloping mass of brown and black edged stone, without a single square foot of any other ground. To stop and eat camels in such a stony desert must have caused the death of the owner as well as of the camels. My own opinion is that the camels, having covered part of the stony zone, died at the disheartening prospect of more stones ahead, in spite of all they had already crossed. I have a still more remarkable statement to make : that two of my cows selected this very spot whereon to end their travels, for they simply laid down and died, apparently without any cause. I speak of this in hopes that a warning may be given to future travellers intending to try this route. I know that I myself felt so exasperated at these everlasting stones that I almost envied the fate of my two cows.

We camped the following evening close by the side of some former traveller's encampment. The party, to judge from the space they required, must have numbered far more than ourselves. Their transport had consisted of camels, and they were more careful than we were, for they had made a zareba round their camp. They had spent some time at target practice, and were skilful marksmen, as we picked up pieces of wood riddled by bullets ; also a packet of medical plaster, and other small things indicative of the presence of a European.

Close by the water's edge walked a fine hippopotamus, followed by her youngster, nibbling at the

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

grass, and enjoying an evening ramble. They were quite unsuspecting of any danger, and allowed me to approach within an easy range of them. Before they were aware of my immediate presence, I had shot them both—with my binocular camera! Just then they discovered my game, and immediately made all haste to hide themselves under the waves of the lake, as though objecting, like many civilized beings, to the operation of being “took.”

## CHAPTER XXII

### GIANT TRIBES

Unsuccessful attempts to make reparation—The Lokub people—A race of long-haired men—Severe storms—Teleki's volcano—Despatch of an advance party—A welcome signal—Giant footprints—An encounter with Shangkallas—Mohamed wounded.

THIS evening's camp was only a few hours' march from the homes of the Lokub tribe, from whom we had taken the donkeys and sheep, and in order to be ready to offer them compensation, I took a mule with me. This animal, laden with cloth and beads, I placed well in front of the caravan, in the hopes that the tribesmen would catch sight of it, and rightly guess that my intentions were of a friendly nature. I also held in readiness every animal we could spare, so as to be able to present them the moment we met. Unfortunately, our preparations proved entirely wasted, as we never caught sight of any one at all. We found the country destitute of donkeys, sheep, and goats, and it was evident that they had been driven away, and that the people had quitted their homes two or three days previous to our coming. I felt very sorry myself at being totally unable to repay them. Had I left donkeys

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

and mules and goods behind me, the chances are they would have been snapped up by some one else, for I was well aware that we were daily followed by a number of savages, who, though never actually showing themselves, regularly pounced down on our deserted camp, eager to seize any little article we had cast aside.

My only chance of coming across these terrified truant Lokub was to go and look for them, so, leaving the caravan at the deserted villages, I took four men with me, and climbed the stony hills in the direction they had fled. We searched all day long, but still saw no signs whatever of them, even from the topmost hills. They must have gone away some days distant without any present intention of returning. This Lokub tribe are a race of very finely made men, with long hair stretching down to the waist; they wear no clothing except beads round the neck, and rings of iron round the arms. They live on milk, meat, and probably fish, whilst flour and vegetables are unknown in their menu. The physique of the men speaks much in favour of a milk and meat diet. As a rule, I found men living on meat and milk finer in physique than those living on cereals as well; while those dependent only on fish were inferior to other tribes, both physically and intellectually. We found many useful articles which had been carved from wood, viz. water-vessels, bowls, spoons, and so forth. They make peculiar pack-saddles for their donkeys from thin sticks, which are so constructed that they can carry four or five water-vessels on each side of

## Lokub Pack-saddles

the animal. They are made in the form of a kind of basket, with sides of an oval shape. Close by the village of the Lokub there existed quantities of rock salt, and a small salt lake.

At this time we observed, with some uneasiness, that severe storms were bursting every afternoon



A DIFFICULT CROSSING.

principally over the country south of us, and we thought ourselves lucky in getting only the fringe of these disturbances. Still, it seemed to me quite likely that the rainy season had commenced from the south, and would perhaps work up northwards. There were, however, no means of knowing how the seasons really behaved in this part of the

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

world. I could only form my judgment, and act accordingly. I had read in one of Sir Samuel Baker's books his advice in relation to the seasons of these regions, and had based my own expectations on the view of so experienced a traveller. He states—

“It was necessary to wait at Khartum for arrival of the north wind, so as to make an early start in December. Although the north and south winds blow alternately for six months, the former, commencing in October, does not extend many degrees south till the beginning of December—a great drawback to exploration, as when near the north side of the equator the dry season commences in November and closes in February. Thus the departure from Khartum should take place in the latter part of September, allowing the traveller to leave Gondokoro, lat.  $4^{\circ} 54'$ , shortly before November; he would then secure three months of favourable weather for an advance inland.”

After leaving the village of the Lokub, we climbed over a somewhat difficult and very stony spur, and then came upon the outskirts of the active results of Teleki's volcano. There were two tracks to choose from—one ran round the lava, and the other across it. The former, though the longer of the two, was far better suited to our laden animals, and we took it. We found an immense field of black molten lava, highly resembling coke in appearance, and, curiously enough, this entire mass of igneous matter ended with such neat and abrupt edges that it appeared to have been shovelled three or four feet high by human means. I concluded that the burning substance must have been poured forth

## A Lava Stream

like liquid lead over the surface of the ground, and suddenly cooled just as we had seen it. We noticed several trees knocked over by the hot lava, the upper limbs of which were protruding. They did not appear to have been long in this position, and this, added to the fact that the road running round the lava appeared to have been recently used, led me to believe that the volcano must have been in action at no very distant date, say within the last three or four years, but this, I own, is purely supposition on my part. After circumventing this field of lava, we camped at the south-west corner of the lake, our very last halt by the edge of this beautiful water.

In spite of its many attractions, and the almost reliable supply of venison, all of us had had a sufficiently big dose of Gallop, and looked forward to seeing fresh country and tasting pure water, for that of this lake cannot be altogether recommended. It is slightly brackish, and very often increases rather than assuages thirst. I found that the state of the water varied on different banks. Whenever stone and rocks formed the shore, the water became less brackish. Yet it must not be gathered from this statement that the water was actually undrinkable at any time, for although we had no filter, all of us drank the water for weeks, and experienced no injurious results from doing so. I learnt from constant bathing that, as a rule, I got out of my depth about forty or fifty yards from the shore. I also learnt that there existed a certain amount of tide, though quite possibly this was due to the wind. As

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

far as I am aware, there is no outlet ; evaporation must regulate the dimensions of this grand lake.

It had been my intention to strike a westerly course for about a hundred miles or more before steering north again. My only serious uncertainty in thus acting lay in our total ignorance of the supply of water we were likely to get ahead. I would willingly at this time have exchanged all my animals for five and twenty camels, for we could then have carried our goods, and, in addition, a week's supply of water for all. As matters now stood, it was almost as imperative for the mules and donkeys to have water each day as it was for the men. West of us lay a rather steep range of hills 1646 feet higher than our camp by the lake, which we should have to tackle. As to what lay beyond them, we were in total ignorance, nor had we any one with us now to guide or help us. As far as I could judge, we might have marched northwards along the edge of the lake, and some of the men asked the question, " Why does Geyta try and get over hills when there is a track northwards along the side of the water ? " They could not understand why I wanted to explore unknown land, and why I was eager to avoid recognized routes.

I had no wish to make a bad start into the unknown, for it might have disheartened my followers, so, previous to encountering the hills, I despatched a party of four picked men, under Mohamed, to spy out the land, supplying them with full instructions as to how to act, where to look for water, and where to go. I may be thought inconsiderate and foolish

## The Shangkalla Standpoint

in sending so small a number of men into the unknown, but if I had asked only two men to go they would have done so without any thought of danger, for they had grown completely fearless. This was a great contrast to their feelings a few weeks back, when most of them dare not leave the camp by themselves, and I used to ask them whether they were afraid of the antelopes. In this connection, it must be borne in mind that when travelling and exploring, my intentions were entirely peaceful, and absolutely opposed to anything like hostility. A party of twenty men without the presence of myself might have got out of hand, and would certainly be more likely to impress any Shangkallas they might come across that their motives were unfriendly, than a party of a quarter the size. Let the reader, if he can, imagine himself to be a Shangkalla living in a remote corner of the globe, and passing a life of continual strife with surrounding neighbours; what would he think if one day men of different colour and dress suddenly appeared in his midst? In the event of the strangers' numbers being but insignificant, the Shangkallas would regard them with feelings of curiosity, but should the intruders approach in force, the natives would gather at once that mischief was intended, and prepare to deal with it.

I watched my little band of explorers till they disappeared out of sight over the crest of the hills, and then waited patiently for a prearranged signal. Two shots would inform me that they had succeeded in finding water, and in that case there would be no need for the men to climb down the hills again.

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

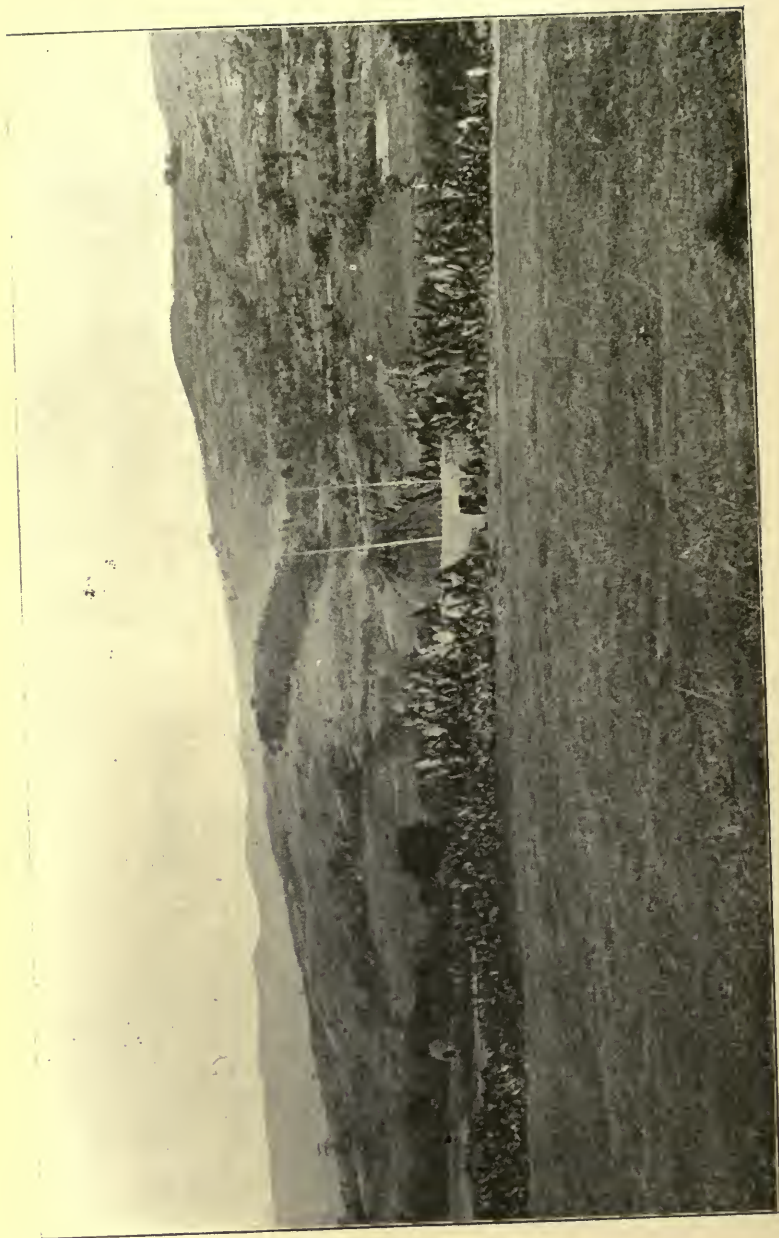
They could spend the night on the top, and await our arrival early the next day. If more than two shots were fired, it would inform me that they were in trouble, and needed my assistance. To meet such a contingency, I told off eight men to be ready to start with me at any time, at a moment's notice. Darkness had fallen over us for some hours, and still there was no signal one way or the other, so I lay down to sleep whilst there was an opportunity of doing so, for there was no knowing whether I might not be called upon to race up the hill in the dead of night. I had just dozed off, when I was awakened by the sound of a shot echoing through the hills, and a moment afterwards another. I sprang up to catch the sound of a third, when the sentry quietly remarked, "Two only, geyta." A couple of hours afterwards, we heard a man challenge from outside the zareba; it was one of my Abyssinians, whom Mohamed had sent down to let me know that they had found water, in case by any chance I had not heard the two shots. The good man, too, had brought with him, the whole way, a vessel of the rain-water they had found, which he handed to me, remarking that he hoped I would like it better than the water of Gallop.

Outside our zareba, I saw footprints in the sand—they must have been the feet of giants—telling of spies around our camp in the night. I felt glad that the single Abyssinian had not come across any of these long-footed individuals. We then commenced the ascent of the hill, and discovered a very fair winding track, which must have been made by the

## Trouble brewing

Shangkallas after an immense amount of labour. It took us fully two hours to climb, and, on reaching the summit, there lay before us an open plateau, a mile or two in extent, through which ran a little water-course, where, luckily, stood pools of good water, caused by the recent storms. There were also the remains of houses, so I fancy, at certain times of the year, there are tribes who bring their flocks for grazing, and live there. The young grass was just beginning to sprout, and our animals had to nibble at some coarse, dry stubble.

We had thus successfully accomplished our first move westward, and from here I again despatched my Somali boy, Mohamed, with three other men, to have another look for water, telling him how to act should he meet any Shangkallas, and to try and induce one of them, if possible, to come and see me, for I had hopes of getting hold of a local man who would act as our guide. About the middle of the day, I saw, to my surprise, one of Mohamed's men running breathless into camp, with the astounding news that Mohamed had been speared by a Shangkalla. All were astir, for none could tell what might be upon us, and I sent out a party with water and mules to meet the returning men. On their return, I learned that Mohamed and his men had penetrated some miles westward without encountering anybody, and had then ascended a hill by a well-worn track, from the summit of which they saw below them people, villages, and cattle. Deeming it best to return and give me the news, they were on the point of doing so, when they



A HOUSE IN GAMO.

## Mohamed's Reprisals

noticed six Shangkallas walking up the hillside from the direction of the villages. The hilltop was evidently a look-out post belonging to these people, and I fancy the savages were about to take up their position for the day. Mohamed and his three men decided it would be advisable to await them, for, if they made off, they would be seen and pursued.

On the savages drawing near, Mohamed called "Koshumba, Koshumba," which means "white man;" then the Shangkallas turned, and began to run, followed by Mohamed, who ran after them, in hopes of getting hold of one, and persuading him to come to my tent. One of the Shangkallas was a very indifferent runner, and, finding that his own friends were not inclined to stop and help him, and that Mohamed was drawing close, he turned and hurled his spear at the boy with all his might. Mohamed ducked, and received the weapon in his back, at the side of the spine, where it stuck, firmly planted. Forgetful of my orders, in a moment of wrath and revenge, he stood up and shot the savage dead, and then waited for his own men to come up and draw the spear from his own body.

On examination, I found two very deep wounds where the spear had entered, and where the point had come out lower down. The loss of blood had been very serious, so that Mohamed was in an exceedingly weak state. I prepared a soft couch on the ground in my own tent, and, laying him upon it, cleansed the wounds with a weak solution of carbolic acid, administering a few grains of opium internally, to stop the bleeding. Although he could

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

scarcely walk for a week or two to come, he eventually quite recovered, and was none the worse for his adventure. He was the best boy I ever had. His chief desire was to serve me well, and, to do this, he never spared himself in any way. His chief fault was his utter recklessness. His wound proved his impetuosity, for, totally regardless of results, he had run after six giants armed with spears, in hopes of laying hold of one, and bringing him to me as a preliminary to establishing a friendly understanding with the tribe; for he knew quite well the importance I placed on capturing a savage, if no other course lay open to us, as I could then send him back again to his own people laden with valuable presents, and thus secure the good opinion of the tribe.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### ADVENTURES WITH THE TRIBES

Another expedition in search of water—Comforting news—The Turkana—Mammoth warriors—Making friends with the Turkana ladies—A salutary lesson to my Abyssinians—Another move into the waterless unknown—We discover water—and savages—A deadly struggle—I lose two of my Abyssinians.

INSTEAD of marching next day, as I had intended, we were compelled to halt, to rest the wounded boy, and on the following day we made a short march over a belt of very stony ground to the sandy bed of a river, where we found plenty of good rain-water, and further remains of old Shangkalla villages. From this camp I ascended the mountains, and spied out the land from the top of the hill where Mohamed had met the Shangkallas. I could see no signs of any natives, sheep, or cattle, and concluded they had run off, and had no intention of avenging the death of their comrade. In the distant valley, on the other side of the hills, across which my route lay, I concluded from the lie and nature of the land there would be water. Still I had no wish to take the entire caravan so far and then find myself forced to return, for, with want of success, some of the men might have lost heart and confidence in me and my

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

arrangements. So I packed off Shahzad Mir, for he and Mohamed were the only two men I could trust alone, in charge of a party of a dozen picked men, and supplies of food and water on mules, to investigate the valley below, and send back information regarding water to a prearranged meeting-place, whither I would march in the morning.

This camp was pitched in a very pretty spot, amongst enormous rocks and trees. There was, however, but little grass, and no water that we could discover, so we were entirely dependent upon what we brought up from the river bed. I think there must have been water somewhere near by, as the Turkana tribe, who lived in the villages which were quite close to our encampment, must have had some supply known only to themselves. Whither they had fled I had no idea, but I had hopes that when they saw that we avoided all interference with their villages, they would know we intended no mischief, and would return and show themselves.

Towards evening three Abyssinians arrived from Shahzad Mir, with the comforting news that he had found water in the valley, and had with him five camels. On the strength of this information, we loaded up by moonlight, and for four hours stumbled over brown stones and rocks till we reached the broad valley below, and after two more hours' travelling over a grassless land, we reached a broad belt of thorn-trees, where were fresh tracks of camels and footprints of savages. As we penetrated further into the wood, we caught sight of several Turkana men moving through the bushes. They appeared

## In the Land of Giants

to be filled rather with fear and curiosity than with any intention of hostility. Shortly afterwards we found Shahzad Mir and his party. They were



A TURKANA GIANT.

camped inside a zareba, close to the sandy bed of a river, where stood a number of pools of water, and with them were camels, sheep, and donkeys, and two Turkana women.

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

The Turkana warriors, who strolled about among the bushes in groups of four and five, were men of prodigious size, many of them perfect giants in their build, with a mass of thick, carefully woven hair hanging over their broad shoulders right down to the waist. They carried extraordinarily long spears, and were magnificent specimens of savage strength. Shahzad Mir had had no trouble whatever with these people; he had marched straight across the valley, and having come across two women with sheep, donkeys, and camels, had taken the entire party into his zareba. Later in the day, the men had appeared, and no doubt were hanging around in alternate hope and fear as to the fate of their wives. The two Turkana women were elderly souls, each blessed with a bright little infant, and were extremely frightened on first seeing me. It was quite clear they thought their last hour was at hand, and it was only by my making them some trifling present every time I came across them that, gradually, they conquered their fear. At first they could scarcely believe that the beads I gave them were really to be their own. By degrees the despairing look that overspread their countenances lifted. When it was time for them to leave us, I returned them all their donkeys, and half their sheep, and at the same time gave them other donkeys in exchange for the camels and sheep we were, in a way, appropriating. When, in addition to this, I helped them myself to load the animals with the goods I had given them, they entirely changed, and their true and natural characters

## My Diplomacy wrecked

shone forth. They talked and laughed most cheerily, and were quite loth to depart. I had explained to them over and over again, by signs, at my numerous interviews, that I required Lory (or camels), and was ready to pay well for them, and that I had no intention or wish whatever of harming anybody, or taking anything without payment. On the following day, we found a powerful male camel outside our zareba (the five we already had were females, for the Turkana keep the animals only for milk, and never utilize them for baggage), and I verily believe that this animal had been sent to me as a gift from the two elderly ladies. He was a magnificent fellow; carried a heavy load during the entire journey, and was finally sold by auction in Omdurman for seven pounds; but then he presented a very different appearance, after months of incessant labour. I was exceedingly glad to know that my struggles in endeavouring to explain my wishes to the two savages had not been thrown away, and I hoped that the present of a camel would be the beginning of many more friendly dealings.

Little did I anticipate the rascally manner in which my plans and desires to leave a good impression amongst these people were being frustrated. For whilst I was, with the aid of my Somalis, breaking in the camels to the duty of carrying a load, I sent off three Habesha to try and find grazing for the mules, and afterwards had reason to suspect that, during their search in the forest, they had come across the two Turkana ladies, and had actually taken from them the very cloth I had given

## Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

them. My first impulse was straightway to thrash the men within an inch of their lives, for not only had I now to scheme for winning again the friendship of the tribes, but also to guard myself against the underhand and scandalous doings of some of my own men. After due reflection, I felt that if they had really taken the cloth, they would never risk bringing it into the zareba that same evening, but would probably bury it outside, and wait till the night was well advanced. So I kept silent for three days, without allowing them to suspect that I had any clue to their deed, and then, without warning, I told them, to the astonishment of all, that as some of the men had three days ago stolen the cloth I had given the two Turkana women, I was about to institute a thorough search of all the baggage. As it happened, I had in the mean time carefully watched the three men on whom my suspicion lay, and first of all investigated their portion of the luggage. Unhappily, my surmises proved correct, for the cloth was found in the bags belonging to the men I suspected. They were dumfounded when the evidence was so clearly proved before their own eyes, whilst the rest of the Habesha raved about, and wrung their hands, protesting loudly against the conduct of their brethren, adding, that men who acted after this fashion in their own country would, on their return home, suffer the penalty of having their hands cut off by order of Janhoi. "Well," I said, "as to the corporal punishment of these men, I leave this in your own hands, and if you have any pride, you will

## A Sound Flogging

flog them yourselves." Thereupon, the three offenders were brought forward, and each in turn received a sound thrashing at the hands of their own countrymen. The more they cried aloud, "Abeit, abeit" (justice, justice), the more I told them to lay on the blows. The three men were further, and, perhaps, more severely punished, by being deprived of their rifles and belts, and forced to carry a load in their stead.

Our big caravan, with donkeys, mules, camels, sheep, and goats, moved off at daybreak from the scene of the theft. The day was hot, for there was not a breath of wind to dry our dripping skins, and as we were about to venture into an unknown land, I led the way, and, taking a couple of men, kept well ahead of the caravan. After crossing another sandy river-bed, we marched steadily over country which grew drier and more parched the further we went, and, apparently, there was no likelihood of finding water. Still, there was nothing to be gained by stopping—forward we must go. Hotter and hotter shone the sun as it rose higher in the heavens, and the men cried out, "Wherever is Geyta going to? We shall surely die for want of water!" And I could not help admitting to myself that the aspect of the country was far from promising. Ahead of us, there lay a range of dry-looking stony hills, and I thought that if we could only manage to struggle to the top of these, we should find ourselves in a far more advantageous spot for halting than in the stifling heat of the plains. We should, at any rate, get a cooling breeze, and

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

possibly, too, be able to see what kind of country lay on the other side. It was past noon when on reaching the summit I saw below me, on the further side, another sandy river-bed, with green palms growing on both banks. So I waved back a signal to the caravan, as they struggled despondently along, that I had found water, though its actual presence was by no means a certainty, and then hurried ahead, with the two men who were with me to look for it.

We followed a dry rivulet, thus reaching the sandy bed, and were walking up stream, eagerly searching for signs of water, when, to our surprise, we saw a group of twenty or more savages resting on the ground under the clump of palms. They were not more than fifty yards away from us, and, on becoming aware of our presence, sprang to their feet, and for a few minutes neither they nor we did anything but gaze at one another in profound astonishment. Then all of a sudden, without any visible cause, they turned and fled, leaving everything behind them but their spears. Amongst the party there chanced to be another of our old friends, in the person of an elderly lady who was unable to run, so I said to my two men, "Go, and catch hold of her gently, and bring her to me." I then selected a spot further up the river-bed wherein to pitch our camp, and there awaited the arrival of my caravan. The fact of our having discovered people living by the banks of the river, eased my mind as to the uncertainty of finding water, though, as sometimes water may be present at no great distance, yet most

## The Persistence of Looting

difficult to discover, I felt, by capturing the old lady, I should be able to persuade her to show me where to find it, and also to make her understand that I bore nothing but good will towards her friends.

It happened that the road by which the caravan was moving along would bring them close to the trees where the savages had been reclining, and where all their goods still lay scattered about. Whilst I rested under the shade of a palm, it flashed across my mind that, although I had lectured my Abyssinians frequently against interfering with property that did not belong to them, still I doubted whether they would be able to restrain themselves from pilfering the temporarily abandoned goods, so I doubled back to be ready to check them, and found half a dozen of them had already left their donkeys, and were flitting here and there amongst the things that lay by the palms. I at once fired my gun over their heads, to acquaint them of my presence, and to clear them off, and then ran up to administer corporal punishment on those I managed to get hold of, and thus fairly brought the entire lot to a sense of their duty. Of course they declared that they were only in search of water in the vessels that were scattered about. This was perhaps true; still it was unfair that one man should get a greater share than another.

The Abyssinians, who, in other respects, were doing well, could not for the life of them understand why I was so particular to leave alone things that did not belong to me, as their own ideas on this point

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

were totally at variance with my own; but I was determined they should learn to feel that Shang-kallas were more useful to them as friends than as enemies, no matter what price I paid for my tuition, and it will be seen later on how wonderfully my resolve was aided by the hand of fate.

The tribesmen we had now surprised turned out to be the Lokub. They had also left behind them many camels, sheep, goats, and donkeys, and as soon as camp had been formed, I brought the old lady to my tent, and made her understand how much we needed water, and she, as though well aware of the discomfort we were in, explained to me that we should find it in two wells; one up-stream, and the other further off, down the stream. It was gratifying, before letting her go, to be able to verify her statement. I then took ten of the camels that were grazing around, informing her that they were all I required, but as to donkeys, sheep, and goats, I would not touch them, and that for the ten camels I would now give her some of my own donkeys, as well as beads and cloth. I added that Koshumba (white man) was their friend, and there was, therefore, no need for her people to run away. I then loaded her with cloth, beads, and knives, adding that I would give her still more if she chose to sell me other camels. When it was time for the poor old lady to depart, she could scarcely waddle along, so heavy was her burden of presents.

The water-holes which the old lady had told us of were six or eight feet deep, with a few inches of good clear water at the bottom. We enlarged and

## A Fatal Encounter

dug them out till we were stopped by a hard surface of rocks.

As it was doubtful whether our new female camels would understand marching, I decided to halt the next day and initiate them into the work of carrying loads, and also manufacture water-skins from our goats, so as to be ready, if necessary, to abandon all the mules and donkeys, and cross a waterless tract of country by the aid of camels. We were all at work at daybreak watering our animals at the two wells, and digging out other water-holes, training our new camels, and making the water-skins, so that the morning slipped by only too quickly. After the animals had been watered, they were taken away to graze as best they could off the leaves of the palms, for there was no grass in the valley. It was a warm day, 104 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade, and after our work had been done, I was writing alone in my tent, when, about two o'clock, my head Soudanese ran to me, saying he had heard a shot fired. "Oh," I said, "I don't think anything is the matter; but take a couple of men, and go and see what is the meaning of it." He had no sooner left me than I heard a shot myself, then another, and another. It came from the direction of where the animals were feeding, and I felt then that something had gone wrong. So, without more ado, I shouted to two of the men to follow me, and to the rest to remain in camp ready for any emergency, and, seizing my rifle, ran off to learn the cause. I had not gone far, when I met an Abyssinian, Solon by name, running along with

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

a broken and blood-stained spear, which he held in one hand, whilst blood was running from the other. He was so terribly excited that I left him to harangue the hills, and hurrying onwards as fast as I could, soon reached the scene of the firing, and saw two men lying on the ground a dozen yards apart, and on drawing close, I found one of them to be an Abyssinian, Aheddy by name. He lay stone dead, with his head buried on his folded arms and a deep spear-thrust through the chest. And, a few yards off, lay the dead body of a naked savage, speared in the neck and several times through the ribs.

The Abyssinians who were with me, on seeing their dead comrade, fell upon him and wept aloud. It appeared that whilst Aheddy and Solon were watching over the mules they saw a single savage, leading a camel, coming towards them across the open, and, as he approached, picking up sand in lieu of grass, holding it up and letting it fall again to the ground, as a sign of friendship. Then the true Abyssinian instinct was to the fore. "Here is a Shangkalla," they said; "we must shoot him. What else can we do? He is coming towards us." So the two men sat down and commenced firing at the savage, who continued to lead the camel and pick up the sand as he advanced. Bang, bang went the guns, but still the poor ignorant savage, always dropping the sand, drew closer and closer, till he was within a few yards of them. Neither he nor the camel had so far been touched. Then Aheddy, finding him within arm's length, laid his hands on

## I point a Moral

the Shangkalla's shoulders and the latter quite rightly, fearing treachery, plunged his spear into the chest of the Abyssinian. Solon at once, casting aside his rifle, fought out a death struggle with the savage, to gain possession of the spear from the lifeless body. The two men were observed by others who had left the camels, and were running up to the scene, to withe and struggle on the ground in a deadly embrace. It was so willed that Solon should be the victor, for having gained the weapon, he plunged it, again and again, through and through the body of his foe. So fiercely had he grasped the blade that one of his own hands had almost been severed.

Leaving the dead body of the brave savage to the care of his tribe, for I concluded they had probably watched the scene from the adjoining hills, I told the Abyssinians to bring away their dead brother and bury him, for I was anxious to quit the place, so that the savages might be encouraged to come down and take away their own dead man.

That same evening I assembled my Abyssinians, and informed them how grieved I was at the death of the Shangkalla. I told them that he had merely come to give or sell me a camel, and that they in return had actually tried to shoot him. I asked them whether they now recognized that the Shangkallas were friends and not foes. Since they had paid no heed to my words on this point, they had now suffered a severe lesson, and I furthermore told them that I had no more pity for their own dead comrade than for one of my sheep with its throat cut.

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

It was the Shangkalla whose death I lamented. They then confessed that, instead of helping me in my travels, they had, by their behaviour, but added to my existing difficulties.

The miserable rifle exhibition that Solon and Aheddy had displayed rather tickled me, after all



CAMELS CROSSING A RIVER.

the pains I had been put to in trying to improve their target practice. Apart from the serious view of the question, the whole affair was ridiculous, and one thing was quite evident, that if a single savage could walk slowly up unhurt when two of my men were firing all they could, then twenty savages would

## Poisoned Arrows

be a match for us all. Although my men were fairly good marksmen against a target, they were no use whatever against a living mark. Here were two of my men deliberately sitting down and blazing away at a savage and camel from any distance to within a few yards, but absolutely without effect. It was fortunate, indeed, that the tribe never had an inkling of how despicable our rifles are in the hands of incompetent men.

Strangely enough, at this same camp it was destined that my Abyssinians should pay a heavy penalty for stealing as well as for shooting. One of them had appropriated some poisoned arrows, and the poison had come in contact with a tiny scratch on the middle finger of the right hand. Soon afterwards, the man, whose name was Liban, came to me complaining of a swollen hand, and I put on a bread poultice, telling him he must have got some dirt into the finger. The swelling grew worse and worse, despite the poultice and a dose of Epsom Salts, for I had no idea of the real cause of the pain, and fancied the man's blood, as he was a big, stoutly built fellow, was overheated. I did not know what had caused the swelling until two days later, when he died on the road, and then his friends told me that he had seized some poisoned arrows. In many ways, after this, the Abyssinians remembered the ill-fated camp, and believed and took heed to what I told them.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### AMONG THE TURKANAS

Death of Liban—Meeting with a Turkana giant—Marvellous head-gear—I sleep with a Turkana chief—A dense forest—Hordes of flying beetles—A stiff climb—Herds of white camels—A Turkana merry-making—The Loka tribe.

DURING the night the sentries woke me up, saying there were Shangkallas running about amongst the palms, and asked whether they had not better fire at them. "Why fire?" I said. "What does it matter, if a thousand of them run about the palms. They are doing us no harm; besides, if you fire, they will assuredly walk up untouched, and spear the whole lot of us, in the same way that they have killed Aheddy." "If that is the case, we won't fire," replied the sentries. As a matter of fact, I was rather glad when dawn broke, and we loaded up to march westwards over the hill, chancing to our luck in finding water. Just before leaving, I placed under the palms a pile of cloth, beads, and other odds and ends, so that the old lady, if she came across them, might possibly conclude that yesterday's mishap was, after all, only a mistake. I have often afterwards thought of the old lady and her friends, and wondered what opinion they formed of me.

## We are tracked

We followed a track running along by the side of a nullah, and as we moved off, we saw numbers of savages following us along the crests of the hills on both sides. However, they never ventured to come very near, and beyond keeping a sharp look-out, I took no notice of them. I fancy they were only following us to see if there were a chance of getting anything else besides the goods I had left under the trees, for once, when one of our sheep became too tired to march, they pounced down and carried it off.

After going for two or three hours, we came to a spring in a very narrow part of a nullah, so narrow that only three or four animals could be watered at a time, and not wishing to chance a disaster at the hands of Shangkallas, I posted sentries on the neighbouring hills, and successfully watered the entire caravan. We afterwards crossed over an easy pass, and, further on, finding water about two feet below the surface, on a sandy river-bed, camped there. The same afternoon, I reconnoitred the country ahead, and seeing plenty of people with cattle and camels at the foot of the hills, decided to march there the next morning. We found a good track, and on reaching the intended camping-ground, discovered that all the people had gone. Not that it mattered, as there was plenty of water just under the surface of the river-bed, close to which they had been living. I marched again that same afternoon, and saw people fleeing over the white, sandy plains, which were dotted with thorn bushes, and cut up by sandy rivulets, driving their camels and sheep

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

before them. Some of the savages ventured to come comparatively close to my caravan, but never near enough to talk to me. Not that I minded, for I had had dealings sufficiently intimate with them to last me for some days.

It was during this march that the unfortunate Liban lay down and died, from the cause previously mentioned. We thereupon halted on the spot, and the Abyssinians buried him in one of the sandy river-beds, lamenting in a loud wail the death of their comrade. They were certainly paying a heavy price as the penalty of disobedience. Although we had lost two men, the remainder were in excellent health ; we were all as well as men could be, and my two dogs were equally full of life. My only discomfort was the injured finger, half of which I knew was lost to me. In order that the Abyssinians might forget their grief, I moved off at 3 a.m. I had also a second reason for making an early march, for I did not expect to discover water until we reached the next range of hills. We had a pleasant march for seven hours across the white sands, where we saw sand-grouse, giraffe, gazelle, and bustard. We then came to a low, easy pass, lying between hills of basalt, where grew a multitude of green bushes, which at once convinced me that water must be present in the hills less than a mile away. So I sent off three separate parties to search for it, offering rewards to those who were the first to discover it, and in about an hour's time I saw three of the Habesha running in towards camp—they had won the prize.

## The Turkana Chief

As usual, I was well ahead of my caravan the next morning, accompanied by four men, when we came upon a naked youth tending a flock of sheep and goats. I stopped and beckoned to him, and, on his coming up, asked him to show me where there was water. He left his charge, and took me to a village very much resembling a Somali karia, where I could see there were a number of people inside. After waiting for a minute or two, a Turkana chief of prodigious stature stepped outside the zareba, and strode towards me. He was a perfect giant, and made us feel like pigmies. In his right hand he carried a spear twice his own length, and it was with a feeling of pleasure, I confess, that I noticed the edge and point of it were carefully covered with a thin piece of leather. In his left hand he carried a stick, a wooden sleeping-pillow, and a long-shaped receptacle for tobacco. Round his neck were fastened several rings of iron, which forced and held his chin a little higher than it would have naturally been. There were iron rings right up his forearm and round some of his fingers. There were rings of brass hanging from his ears, and a small chain around his waist. In other respects he was quite naked. But his hair!—it would have been a puzzle for Truffitt. It was as thick as a felt numnah, and hung in a thickly woven mass clean over the shoulders, right down to the waist, in the shape of an oval. As though not contented with this wonderful adornment of Nature, he had fastened a very thin stick, curled up like a tail, close in the end of the hair, and he always showed great care in its

## Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

welfare and in seeing there was no chance of its coming to grief. The end of his hair was curled up, and in it he carried his little knickknacks.

I made him understand that my caravan was some way behind, and that when they came I should camp outside his zareba. While waiting, several fine-limbed and fairly good-looking damsels, far from shy, came out, bringing me wooden vessels filled with milk, while the chief himself brought me a sheep in his own arms. By the time my caravan had arrived, it had been noised about that a Koshumba had come, and other Turkana very shortly appeared on the scene. They were, however, all very friendly disposed, and as we had no zareba, they strode about our camp as they chose. Some of them wore ostrich feathers in their hair, brass rings in the chin and nose, and rings of hair round the biceps, and some of them were always begging me to let them have the tails of the mules for adorning their arms. They all loved red, blue, and white beads, and, I must own, were rather greedy. Yet one forgot their avarice, intermingled as it was with much laughter and merriment. The head warrior explained that he would show me water a little further on, close to which we should be able to camp for the night. He pointed out a hole about four feet deep, in a sandy nullah, and taking off his sandals, which were made of elephant-hide, jumped down and began digging up the sand with his own hands. Whilst engaged in this operation, one of the Abyssinians took it into his head to appropriate the warrior's shoes. The whole thing struck me as very comical, though it

## Hunt the Slipper!

was no joke. When wet and covered with moist sand, this gigantic savage pulled himself out of the hole, and found his boots missing. He was in a towering rage, and the more I endeavoured to explain matters and pacify him, the more wrathful he became, and I half expected to see him at any moment dealing havoc amongst my men, starting with myself. He seized his spear, and strode into our camp, which we had made a hundred yards away from the water-hole, presenting a magnificent picture of savage ferocity. Something had to be done, or we should very likely have had the whole tribe upon us. So I summoned all my followers together, really for safety's sake, but ostensibly to tell the Abyssinians that unless the shoes were at once forthcoming, I would leave them in the hands of the Turkana, and march away with my Somalis and Soudanese. This elicited from them the whereabouts of the shoes, and taking the Turkana chief by the arm, I showed him his property hidden in the trunk of a tree. His usual remark at everything was a very short and jerky exclamation of "Up! up!" so, after he had finished his "upping," he grinned, and on the strength of finding the shoes, and to my concern, decided to spend the night inside my zareba. To have turned him out, or to have disagreed with his proposition, would have been an unfriendly action on my part, so I had to appear delighted at his self-invitation, and after providing him with supper, I gave him a piece of cloth to put over his body, for he looked so cold, lying, as he was, stark naked on the bare ground. I also

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

took the precaution of placing a sentry over him during the night with a loaded carbine, explaining to the savage my reason for doing so, that he might be quite safe from anybody interfering with his slumbers. At the same time, I impressed upon the sentry that his duties were to see that this Turkana giant didn't upset mine. The poor fellow had never been accustomed to be watched all night long; he moved from one side to the other, and never closed an eye throughout the night, for he could not stand the feeling of a man watching over him. The next morning, I tried hard to induce my big friend to wear a cloth round his waist, but he and I, in this respect, differed, and he, of course, had to have his own way. During the morning many Turkana came to visit us, and they were always friendly and merry.

When it was time to load up and move on, I found that six of the mules were missing. Although my men maintained the Turkana had stolen them, I did not believe it for a moment. And when, eventually, the Turkana themselves helped us to successfully track them, and bring them back, for they had strayed, all agreed that friendly Shangkallas were more useful than hostile ones.

We passed several villages of the Turkana as we marched off, in each of which groups of magnificent men and women watched with interest the entire caravan go by. After leaving the last village, we saw no living creature at all but gazelle. Whilst asleep that night, I was forcibly awakened by a sharp blow on the forehead, and the blood was

## Wounded by a Camel

trickling down my face as I jumped up, revolver in hand, ready for whatever might be in store for me. The sentries at first, until they saw me bleeding, fancied I was yet another victim of our old Walamo devils. It turned out that one of the camels had been kicking on the stony soil, and had sent a flint with considerable force against my forehead.

The next morning we reached a dense forest, and experienced some difficulty in getting through the thick undergrowth, the fine-timbered trees, and the high, rich grass. The place was alive with birds, including the honeybird, and it was the haunt of elephants. We halted on the banks of a river-bed—known as the River Tugwell—under the cool shade of tall trees till the afternoon, to feed up our transport on the excellent grazing. If we had only had with us a greater supply of food, or had my hand allowed me to shoot, I should have remained in that lonely forest for many days.

At this time of the year there was no running water, it lay in deep pools at various bends of the river, and satisfied the thirst of wild animals large and small. In the afternoon we saw more of the Turkana, who fled, driving away their flocks before them; but it chanced that some of their donkeys came after our caravan, and Shahzad Mir, who was in the rear, drove them back again to the tribesmen, and after that they ceased to run away, and even the women and children lost their fear. At nightfall we camped in sight of some distant smoke, and, later on, the braying of our donkeys attracted the people, for a couple of Turkana men strolled into our

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

camp, saying they had heard our donkeys, and had wondered where on earth they could have come from. They were much astonished at our stopping where we had done, for, as he rightly remarked, there was no water. I told them we had camped because the sun set, and as to the dearth of water, we had brought sufficient with us for the evening.

After having eaten some supper in our camp, they took their departure, assuring me that at day-break they would come and show me where to find water ahead. Our friends could not have been very early risers, for at dawn there were no Turkana forthcoming. It mattered little, for I had already made up my mind to steer for a big range of hills running north and south, and to follow the river valley at their base, as there would then be every likelihood of getting water.

We had only marched for about an hour, when our Turkana friends of the previous evening overtook us, and conducted us to some good pools; and whilst enjoying our midday halt, several more Turkana turned up, and talked with us about the country. I offered them each a piece of sugar, but could not induce them even to lick it, so suspicious were they of some underhand devilment of the Koshumba, and I am sure that they looked upon me in the same way as I regarded them: as a quite unenlightened being.

We passed on through many karias of the Turkana; there were great numbers of sheep, goats, donkeys, and camels, but we interfered with nothing at all, and nobody interfered with us. I spent

## The Beetles' Victory

rather an unpleasant night, for I was besieged by hordes of flying beetles, who attacked me by stealth. Instead of flying with a good honest buzz, and a "phut" against my face, they would silently crawl up into my pyjamas. Ten of them lay in ambush under my pillow, and more alongside my body, and many, not contented with bringing their own obnoxious bodies singly, carried droppings of camels and donkeys as well, as though resolved to shift me somehow or other. In this they were finally successful—I was completely beaten.

We worked along the foot of a big range of hills, which I intended crossing at the very first chance that offered itself. The highest peaks appeared to be topped with white and pink sandstone dropping perpendicularly, whilst most of the hillside was green with bush, trees, and grass, with rocks of basalt here and there. We had no more Turkana tracks to follow, so made use of those furnished by the elephants and rhinoceros. It was a lovely country; there was plenty of water below the surface in many of the rivulets that took their rise from the hills; the days were cool, and the mornings cloudy, and we were all in the best of health. Owing to the steep nature of the hillsides, it was some days before we could discover a means of crossing them. I should say that the greater part of the drainage from these hills runs away westward, as, on our side, there was no river of sufficient dimensions to carry off the water that must emanate from such lofty mountains.

At last, one afternoon, we discovered a valley

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

running westward, and after following it up for some miles, came to a beautiful pond. It bore almost an artificial appearance, for rocks and stones lay evenly along the edges, and the shape was circular. And all around grew fine turf and green bushes. Here we halted for the night, so as to have the whole of the next day before us to negotiate the steep hills that barred our way. Axes and choppers—in fact, all our pioneer implements—were in request as we commenced to climb. Throughout the ascent, we were frequently aided by old elephant-tracks. Yet, there were some places that I thought must baffle my camels, and I quite agreed with my Somalis that the camels of their own country could never have crawled up the steep, stony, and thickly overgrown places that our female camels travelled over. The foliage was so thick overhead that these patient brutes were forced to kneel down and literally crawl along portions of the ascent on their knees. Still, men and animals were determined to reach the top somehow or other, and although all worked with a will, my caravan straggled to an alarming extent.

After waiting on a grassy slope near the summit for the majority of the men and animals to collect, I went ahead with four men to spy out the land, whilst the remainder came along slowly. After descending a short distance down the western side, which afforded us easy going in comparison to the eastern, we saw, in the green valleys of grass and bush beneath us, innumerable camels and sheep dotted about everywhere. Yet, in spite of my field-glasses,

## We come upon Festivity

we could discover no people. It struck me that before we found water again we should have to reach this valley, so we pegged away downhill, and very shortly found ourselves in the midst of the beautiful white camels we had seen from above, who made off to either flank on seeing us. We were making for the bed of a river, which we had discovered by reason of the belt of trees along its banks, when the sound of men singing reached our ears. It reminded me very much of the cheerful noise Somalis are accustomed to make when drawing water from the wells in their own land. So I imagined we should find the natives here employed likewise, and we at once turned in the direction of the singing, and came in sight of one of the usual karias, or villages, close to which stood a large and shady tree. It was, doubtless, a favourite spot for midday siestas, for sitting and lying in the shade beneath were a dozen or more fine savages, whom I at once recognized as belonging to the Turkana tribe. In the bushes, too, by the tree, were many others dancing and singing and waving their spears. These were the men who had attracted my attention, but, instead of drawing water, they were enjoying a real good jollification. I walked up with my four men, towards those sprawling in the shade, and although they saw us, they seemed in no way surprised, they neither moved nor made any sign to me. One would have imagined that Koshumbas passed by every hour of the day.

After a minute or two the dancing ceased, and the young bloods joined their elders under the trees. So I walked up to within ten yards of them, not

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

caring to go any closer, and there I stood awaiting to be addressed, but they neither spoke nor rose. So, hardly knowing what was the best thing to do, I called out, "Gibi, gibi!" which means, "Water, water!" in an interrogative tone, and after a moment's consultation, one man rose, apparently the chief. He was of immense stature, a wonderful man to gaze upon, adorned with the same remarkable hair already described. "Koshumba, koshumba. Gibi, gibi," I repeated, airing the extent of my Turkana vocabulary.

The savage grinned pleasantly, and pointed with his long spear towards the river we had intended reaching, and after a little more signalling and grinning between us, he led the way, accompanied by three other men of his tribe to direct us to the water. There were merely some water-holes dug about two feet deep in the sandy river-bed. Here I selected a shady bush to await the arrival of my caravan, in the mean time amusing myself and my Turkana friends with endeavours to gather from them information of the country and people living around. It was three or four hours later before my rear-guard arrived in camp, but already numbers of Turkana, men and women, had brought vessels of dhura to sell for food.

This spot was so thickly bushed, and the Turkana tribe were in such force, that as soon as my men had eaten, I loaded up with the intention of marching along the river-bed till we found an open spot to pass the night in. Towards sunset we came to more villages. At first the people ran away

## The Loka People

leaving their camels and sheep at my mercy, but when they saw us driving away those of their camels that had come after our caravan, they gathered courage and approached us with beaming faces. We were compelled, owing to the bushy nature of the bank, to camp in the bed of the river itself. This is always rather a risky business, for one can never know in the tropics when a storm is going to appear; and this evening I was much exercised in my mind as to whether we had not been too rash in camping where we had done, for heavy clouds were gathering up from all sides and everything heralded a wet night. Not that we minded the rain itself, but we should have been sorely tried had our sandy river-bed been suddenly changed to a rushing torrent. About ten o'clock it was with a feeling of relief I saw a storm in full play passing away northwards, for we had thus not only been spared discomfort that night, but there was every likelihood of finding water in the country north of us which we were about to traverse. After following the river-bed ten miles, we came to a broad valley of short grass, where round about were camels, sheep, and donkeys belonging to the Loka tribe. These people at first were very much afraid; some running away altogether, while others did their best to drive away their property as well. Whilst the women and the children of the Loka were thus occupied, several of their warriors approached my caravan from both sides. I went towards them, calling out, "Koshumba!" and holding up grass, when a couple of the savages came to me. We were very soon friends,

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

and they guided me to a good watering-place, the result of the recent storm. They told me, that at first they had taken us for the "Tencha," whoever they may be, and had prepared to flee in consequence. I fancy that, in all probability, they meant by "Tencha" the "Turkana."



THE LOKA TRIBE.

After we had settled down, many men, women, and children of the Loka visited our camp, bringing with them dhura to exchange for beads. This dhura was not the produce of their own labours, as it had been brought from tribes living further west and north. The Loka were quite the nicest tribe we had, so far, come across. They were quiet,

## The Value of Water

well-behaved, respectful, and very intelligent. They implored me to remain till the morrow, when they would bring me some sheep ; but when they found I was not to be tempted, they of their own accord agreed to show me where to find the next water. It is curious to notice the importance that all the tribes attach to the whereabouts of water, and the readiness with which they always point it out. I cannot help thinking that most of them, at some period of their lives, must have suffered severe hardships for want of it, probably due to an abnormally dry year, for in this part of the country there does not appear to be any want of water a few feet below most of the sandy river-beds even at this dry season.

## CHAPTER XXV

### ANXIOUS TIMES WITH THE ABBAS

The anxieties of caravan life—Beautiful but uninhabited tracts—Heavy rains—Casualties in the bogs—Camels *versus* donkeys—A source of the Sobat—Two welcome guides—Encamped among the Abbas—An impromptu market—Difficulties with an Abba chief—An anxious night—Every man to his post—Surrounded in the bush—A successful ruse.

As we continued to travel north or north-west, we were in total ignorance of what we were about to encounter each day, for the only information that the maps afforded us was a blank. The three great questions that were our chief consideration were whether we should find water and grass, whether we should meet people and what would be their attitude towards us, and whether we should come across game we could shoot for food. It was this absolute uncertainty that increased the work of every member of the caravan. We guarded ourselves against the first by always carrying a day's supply of water, so, if one day we were unsuccessful in finding any, the animals were the only sufferers. Sometimes we would find good grass and water at some distance from each other, which either meant fetching the water or sending the

## Religious Prejudices overcome

animals away with a sufficient escort to graze. When we came across tracks of natives it was my custom to halt the head of the caravan, so as to prevent any unnecessary straggling, and then to march ahead with two or three men, so that when I came in contact with the tribe, my caravan would be a mile or two behind and well out of sight; and on every occasion, when I adopted this plan, friendship was the invariable result, unless the people precipitately ran away and gave me no chance whatever of speaking to them. As to the third uncertainty of finding game for food, we protected ourselves by husbanding a special reserve of flour, and, during the latter part of the journey, we had several camels as baggage animals, so that whenever game was scarce we used to kill one—a good day's supply of food for every one in camp.

At the commencement of the journey the Christian portion of my following were averse to eating meat that had been hallalled by the Mussulman, and *vice versâ*, though afterwards these scruples fell to the ground, and no one in camp minded whether the animal had been hallalled by a Christian, or a Mussulman, or by nobody at all. In addition to procuring food and water and cooking it, we had also to collect our food for the fires, and to make a zareba at night-time, both to prevent our animals from straying and to guard against the possible attacks of wild animals or natives. There were also saddles to mend, and ropes to make, water-skins to prepare, and, besides this, watch had to be kept over the animals by day

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

as well as throughout the night. More than once we were disappointed in our expectation of finding water, for sometimes we would see a storm breaking over the land, more or less in the direction of our march, and perhaps on arrival at this portion of the country where the rain had fallen, we would find the elephants had already been before us and drunk up the pools of water that we and our animals were looking forward to. On some occasions we used to march over magnificent plains of rich turf watered by running streams, and it seemed strange to find there were no tribes living in such inviting-looking districts. It occurred to me that no one ever had lived in some of these charming tracts, and that they had from time immemorial been handed over to the wanderings of the mighty elephants and herds of sleek gazelle.

Although I had no desire to kill any more elephants, it was often one of my greatest enjoyments to approach these monsters as close as possible without being scented, and then to sit down in the grass and silently watch them. Sometimes I would see them in an open plain, and wait for them to go past me. They always used to take their time, and I have seen them, though traversing an open plain, still keep in single file—this being doubtless due to their habit of penetrating jungles in that order. They would advance a few yards, and then stop and remain perfectly still for some minutes. They would very slowly flap their huge ears before making another short advance, and whenever they smelt me (invariably through raising

## A Stormy Season

their trunks), they would turn about and trot off. Often I would find elephants standing in the sun-glare at noon, when every other animal had sought a shady shelter.

On some occasions we were overwhelmed by terrific storms breaking over us. They would burst with exceptional violence, and the heavy rain would fall in a most remarkable manner. Instead of coming down continuously, it would descend like thousands of bricks on our heads, then almost altogether stop for a minute or two before a second onslaught. Heavy rains of this description naturally affected portions of the alluvial soil we marched over. This would not have mattered had I not been restricted by time, for I might have always waited till the land had drained itself again, and then travelled on leisurely. I also had no means of knowing the conduct of the seasons in these regions. As far as one could judge, heavy rains were at that time daily falling southwards, in the direction of the Uganda Protectorate, and gradually working their way up northwards. I was, therefore, very much afraid we might be caught by a rainy season and forced to wait in some spot for the country to dry up. From later experience, I should say that there are no long-lasting rains at all in these parts; still, at the time, this fear, added to my own limited leave of absence, urged me to spare no effort in travelling northwards as quickly as possible.

On more than one occasion, it was this eagerness to travel quickly that not only delayed us, but occasioned mishaps. Once, after some twelve hours

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

of heavy rain, instead of waiting a day for the land to drain itself, I continued the march; and though at first all went well, we later in the day found ourselves completely bogged, and at nightfall my caravan was split up into two parts, those who had crossed the treacherous belt and reached higher ground beyond, and those who were stranded on a piece of firm ground, only halfway across the heavy soil. The result was that the Abyssinians were half the night waist deep in water hauling out the mules and donkeys from the mud into which they had sunk in the most hopeless manner—though the camels had crossed the swampy track in comparative ease. So troublesome was the task of extricating the animals from the swamp, that one mule and two donkeys were drowned. It is a fact,—gathered from experience, yet contrary to the generally accepted opinion—that for crossing a swamp the camels were infinitely superior as baggage animals to the donkeys and mules. It must also be remembered that my camels, before they fell into our hands, had never carried a load before, and that their saddles consisted merely of our tents and rugs, over which we tied the loads by means of leather thongs, manufactured from our cattle or animals we shot, whereas the donkeys and mules had been beasts of burden all their lives.

Later on in our journey, we were frequently compelled, on coming to a swamp, to unload the donkeys and mules, and make the camels carry their baggage on a double journey, or else carry the goods ourselves on the top of our heads. I found



MULES CROSSING A SHALLOW RIVER.

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

my camels, which were females, could cross a swamp deep as a man's neck with their loads. Being provided with a broader surface to tread upon, they would carry their loads across without meeting with any mishap, whereas the little legs of the mules and donkeys would sink deep into the mud, and very often it was only with the greatest difficulty that we could extricate them by means of ropes.

On the 13th of May, at about latitude  $4^{\circ}$ , we struck a source of the river Sobat. It will be seen that the source we discovered, which is called Ruzi by the natives, drains a great portion of the land and carries it off for over three hundred miles, before eventually depositing itself into the White Nile, by means of its mighty tributary, the Sobat. This stream Ruzi we more or less followed, till it eventually flowed into the larger river. By "more or less," I mean that on one day we could see the course of the river, and on others, owing to the flatness of the country or to the intervention of a hill, we would lose sight of it. Then on other days we would strike the banks of the river itself, and travel along them. About a hundred miles north of the source of this Ruzi, we struck another stream, at a few miles west of its own source. The river was also named Ruzi by the natives, and it would thus appear that the word "Ruzi" merely signifies a river.

On some days we used to march through tracts of country abounding in partridges and guinea-fowl, and, without moving to either flank of our route, we would put up numbers of birds almost every minute.

## The Prickly Hig

Then, again, on other days we crossed districts of a sandy, gravelly soil, cut up by innumerable water-courses, where everywhere grew a kind of aloe, called Hig by Somalis. These generally stood about three or four feet high, and often had to be cut down or pulled out of the ground by their roots before we could proceed. The aloe was never a welcome plant, on account of the painful pricks it inflicted on many of us. It is not always easy, when in the midst of so many of these plants growing in every direction, to avoid the intensely sharp and strongly pointed leaves, and sometimes the pointed end of them breaks off in the flesh without one knowing it at the time. If the leg has been thus punctured, the pain becomes so acute throughout the limb that it is impossible to march until the point has been extracted.

On the 17th of May I was ahead of my caravan, and had placed a couple of men on either flank as well, to shoot some antelopes if possible,—for we were rather hard up for food—when I came across the fresh footprints of a Shangkalla. I warned my flankers to keep a good look-out, telling them, if they saw anybody, to persuade them to come and see me, and if any natives approached them with hostile intentions, not to retaliate, but to let me know of it as quickly as possible. At the time, we were marching northwards to the west of the first river Ruzi, which flowed in the same direction, and we had only gone a mile or two, after seeing the footprints, when I heard one of my own men calling to me from behind, and stopped to hear what was

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

the matter. He told me that two Shangkallas had come up, and were anxious to take me by a different route and a better road, a little further west. I waited for the two savages, to hear what they had to say, or, more correctly speaking, to see what they had to explain, for almost every word of conversation had to be carried on by means of signals. It soon became evident that they wished to make me understand that the route we were following was a very unsuitable one, and that they could show me a much better one. They also explained that they cultivated the ground, and were anxious to sell me grain in exchange for beads. So I followed the two Shangkallas, both cheery and intelligent fellows, though there was nothing very remarkable about them, either with regard to their physique or their features, nor was their hair very striking after what we had seen. Had they only been blessed with white skins, they would have passed for Europeans.

They took me by a broad track, along which there must have been immense traffic for this part of the world. So I well knew that, before very long, I should find myself in the midst of a powerful tribe. After walking with them for about two hours, I explained to my two guides that, as the sun was high in the heavens, and man and beast required water, as soon as they could show us any I should like to stop and camp. They were quite agreeable to my proposition, and a few minutes afterwards we came to fields of dhura stalks, remains of the last crop, and shortly afterwards we found cattle, and sheep, and many Shangkallas, who,

## Another New People

carrying their two spears as usual, kept a few hundred yards off, and hovered on both flanks.

A little further east of us, I saw several villages, about which thick bush was growing. Thither my guides were bent on taking me, but I had no wish to camp in the bush amidst savages whose intentions and characters were quite unknown to me. For all I could tell, they might, in accordance with a preconcerted plan, have been taking me into an ambush. I therefore declined the offers of such close hospitality, and chose a small clump of trees, standing alone in the plain by the side of a field of dry dhura roots, and, fortunately, one of the Shangkallas came forward and showed me a pool of rainwater, only two or three hundred yards away from the spot I had selected.

As soon as the caravan arrived, we set about lopping off the branches of the trees to form a zareba, for I intended stopping there the remainder of the day to try and get the people to sell me food, as I wanted to replenish our exhausted commissariat. The news of our presence was soon noised abroad, and many flocked to see the white man, so it was just as well that we had lost no time in settling down. I soon learnt that the name of this tribe was the Abba tribe. I do not think that they are related to the Arbore Gallas. Most maps show the Arbore Gallas as inhabiting these districts, but this, I fancy, is incorrect. The Abba are Gallas neither in appearance, habits, customs, nor language.

It was quite evident that most or all the people had never set eyes on a white man before. They

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

were, nevertheless, a well-behaved and merry folk, showing a friendly curiosity in all I did. Anybody who wished to do so was allowed to enter the zareba, provided he came without his spears, so that, in a very short time, we were pretty well crammed inside. Several came and sat in a group before my tent. The men, as usual, were in a state of complete nakedness; in fact, it would have struck me as rather strange had I seen any of them wearing a scrap of clothing.

Being anxious to secure a photograph of this unknown tribe, I waved my hand towards the group who were squatting before me, whilst I looked at them through my binocular camera. But the moment the apparatus was before my eyes, they jumped up and ran away, half in fear, and half in fun, no doubt wondering in their minds what unearthly deed Koshumba was about to perpetrate. I then showed them the different kinds of beads I possessed, explaining that, if they would bring me their dhura, I would give them kurmona (beads) in return. The idea of getting kurmona still more brightened up the faces of many a youth and damsel. Off they all ran to their villages to fetch the grain, and test the promise of Koshumba. Whilst they were absent, we had half an hour's comparative quietude to prepare our market for the much-coveted supplies, as, at this time, we were very badly off for flour, having nearly reached the end of our reserves, and were practically dependent on our guns. Every one in camp was rejoicing, therefore, at the prospect before us. The Abyssinians, in particular, were

## Our Exchange and Mart

glad at the turn affairs had taken, for most of them had given up hope of ever getting anything else to eat but antelope, guinea-fowl, and such-like, and, should we happen to be unfortunate in finding anything to shoot, they concluded our expectations of life would lie within very restricted limits. Such a feeling was quite natural, and just what one would expect to find in untravelled men, as my Abyssinians were.

Whilst awaiting the return of the Abba people, I arranged a temporary stall outside my tent, by making four of my men squat down on the ground in a row, and by placing in front of each a pile of beads, each lot differing in appearance. These men were my stall-keepers, whilst on either side of them stood another man with an empty sack to receive the grain as the purchases were made. No sooner were these preparations completed, than a few women were seen coming from the villages. With the first comers our bargains were completed only after a certain amount of haggling and laughter on both sides; but when they found they actually received the beads before emptying the contents of their vessels or gombos into the sacks, they departed in the highest spirits to go and fetch more dhura, and inform their friends of the successful deal they were making with Koshumba, for all these poor unsophisticated savages fancied they had obtained their beads at a ridiculously low price, and had fairly "done me in the eye." I was anxious not to spoil them by over payment for the sake of future markets, yet it would seem that, although my sacks



MULES CROSSING A DEEP RIVER.

## An Awkward Customer

were quickly filled at the expense of a very few beads, I had failed in my intention.

After the conclusion of the first bargain, boys, women, and men flocked towards our zareba' from every side, and, forming a long string, passed in at one entrance of the zareba and out at another, selling on their way their loads of grain at my stall. Our trade was an exceedingly brisk and merry one, but when we had filled seven or eight sacks, about as much as we required, a savage stepped forward. He was probably the chief, for he differed from the remainder of the men, in that he wore a mass of red, blue, and white beads on his forehead like a plaster, and claimed for himself a long string of my yellow beads. While this proceeding was no doubt agreeable to him, it was not so to myself, and I declined to allow him to take away the beads without bringing me a *quid pro quo*, for, in my humble opinion, it is the black man who should first seek to secure by gifts or otherwise the friendship of the white, and it is quite wrong for the latter to commence dealings with a tribe, however powerful, by allowing the chiefs to take away whatever they choose. It would have been looked upon as a sign of fear on my part, and as a confession of their superiority. Whether my refusal was the cause of his subsequent behaviour, I cannot say. He afterwards returned to our camp, and sending all the women and children right away to the villages, collected all his fighting men just outside the zareba. They must have numbered two or three hundred strong as they stood assembled, each man armed

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

with two spears, and all of them wonderfully submissive and obedient to their leader's call. Leaving his crowd of warriors for a moment, the chief again entered my zareba, and made an impassioned speech, the meaning of which was entirely lost upon us. He then returned to his warlike-looking adherents, and addressed them with even greater vehemence, gesticulating and waving his spear as he spoke. It was difficult to know whether he meant mischief or merely intended to give a display of their prowess for our edification. In any case, it was as well to be prepared for whatever was in store for us. So I loaded my revolver, and the men kept their rifles handy and ready, whilst the Abyssinians sharpened their swords, and the guard who were watching over the grazing animals drove them within the immediate precincts of our camp. The real danger of the situation lay from the very close proximity of so large a body of armed savages, for had they suddenly taken it into their heads to rush our camp, we should have all stood a very poor chance. It was, therefore, clearly my best policy to remove them by hook or by crook to a greater distance from our zareba, and I adopted the following plan.

Entering my tent with a look of total indifference as to all that was going on, I called for my Somali boy, Mohamed, and told him to go up to the Abba chief, and explain to him that Koshumba was very tired and wished to rest, and would be very much obliged if he would address his powerful oration to his tribesmen at a little greater distance from

## A Quiet Night

Koshumba's tent. The ruse proved to be completely successful, for the whole force filed away to a wood half a mile off, and there continued the meeting. The sun had set by this time, and although we felt tolerably safe, still I did not altogether like the look of things, for the warriors, instead of returning to their villages, as they would have done at nightfall, under ordinary circumstances, still continued to hold forth in the wood. Having collected all our animals inside the zareba, I made preparations for the night. In order not to be caught napping, I further strengthened the stockade, and placed four men on sentry, with orders to call out at the top of their voice the number of their post in Arabic every quarter of an hour throughout the night.

I remember falling asleep and hearing the four words, "Wahid, et nain, thalata, a-rb-a-a," and again on waking, before dawn, the words were still ringing in my ears. No one came near us during the night, and at daybreak we loaded up and marched northwards. We followed a track that took us past some of the villages of the Abba, who, when they heard us coming, swarmed out of their houses to see us go by. We had, however, taken precaution to march in a compact body, and had probably started at an earlier hour than they had expected. After quitting the neighbourhood of the villages, we lost our tracks, and found ourselves in very thick bush country, through which the caravan had to move in single file, and got, in consequence, into rather a straggling formation. We had had about two hours of this kind of country when, at the head of the caravan,

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I received a message from Shahzad Mir, who was in the rear, asking me to stop, as the Abba were swarming close behind and on our flanks, and that their intentions were hostile. At the moment I received the news we happened to have reached a small open plain, in the centre of which rose a little hill. So, halting the head of the caravan, I ran up to the top to have a look round, and could see numbers of black forms moving through the bushes on our right flank and in our rear.

The opening we were in was about 500 yards square. On all sides grew thick bush. To have proceeded further with all these savages round us, and with absolutely no notion of what lay in front of us, would have been a very risky undertaking; yet to have halted where we were would have been equally hazardous, for the tribes, for all I knew, might have collected in thousands and surrounded us, when, without water, our position would have been precarious. I adopted a middle course. Having collected the entire caravan, and placed a guard round it, to prevent the animals straying, a couple of men to look out from the hill, and the remainder in readiness to act in any way I might order, I took four or five men with me, and retraced our steps towards the edge of the wood, to deal with the crowd of savages who had been following close behind. I found that they were all standing behind trees; so, approaching fairly close to them, I fired two shots over their heads, to warn them what they were to expect if they tried any games with us. I don't fancy that the Abba had ever seen rifles before, or

## We shake off the Enemy

otherwise they would not have allowed me to get so near them. This little counter attack had the desired effect, for the savages left their trees, and walked away towards their villages. I remained where I was until the men on the hill signalled that the natives on our flanks were also moving off, then I, too, followed suit, and we made all haste to get through the belt of thick bush ; while protecting our flanks with three or four men, so as to have a timely warning of any further hostile movement.

We had travelled another hour or so, when we came upon a great number of cattle grazing in the jungle, without anybody to look after them. It struck me, that very possibly these cattle belonged to the Abba tribes we had just left, and that they were following us to see whether we were in the habit of cattle lifting. I was, therefore, most particular that the beasts should be left entirely alone, hoping that when the people came to count them, they would learn that, though we had passed through their midst, we had not interfered with them in any way, and that our intentions towards themselves had been, after all, of a most friendly character.

Later on, we halted for breakfast by the sandy bed of a river, where I expected to find water by digging, but though there was none to be had close at hand, we found a pool nearly a mile down stream. This proved to be one of the watering-places of other Abba villages that lay on the right hand of our route, for whilst we were fetching our water, dozens of Abba men also came for it. They were all perfectly friendly, and some of them came to my bivouac,

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

and asked me to camp close to their villages, that they might sell me grain for beads. As we had at this time plenty of food, there was no need to buy more, especially as I was anxious to lose no time. Towards sunset we came to more villages of the Abba tribe, whose sheep and goats were fat and numerous. Although we camped for the night by some of their villages, nobody came to see us, and this was the last we saw of these people.

The Abba, though nothing like so gigantic a race as the Turkana, are, nevertheless, a fine tribe. The men, of course, go about completely naked, and the women only wear a small piece of skin. The men fashion their hair into such a shape that they look as though they had a saucer of black felt placed over their heads, and the women wear their hair in ringlets, and hang beads around their necks. The men carry two spears, a long one and a short one, peculiar for the length of the blade, and oblong shields made of hide and thick straw. They smear themselves all over with mud, and sometimes adorn their bodies with red stripes. For ornament, they wear round pieces of brass in the ears, and also a leather protection on the wrists—a kind of sword-scabbard. Their houses are built principally of straw, and raised on a platform about five feet above the ground. I expect at times they suffer from severe rains.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### A RACE FOR WATER

An awkward predicament—A trying, waterless march—A welcome shower—I despatch men in search of water—A terrible disappointment—A silent midnight march—Mohamed's heroic act—A friend in need—The Tamata—A critical moment.

As soon as we had left these people, we discovered, as we travelled northwards again the next morning, that the land became more dried up the further we went, and the river Ruzi itself, which we had so far kept in sight, made a bend, and flowed away eastwards. At the time, I did not think very much of this, and imagined that it was merely taking a little turn, and that we should meet it again, if we continued straight, after ten or twelve miles. As it turned out, my calculations were somewhat faulty, for the river took a far greater bend than I had ever dreamed of, and, by doing so, brought us into a rather serious dilemma, as will be seen later on. We had been marching almost due north, over the lower spurs of the hills to the west of us, for a couple of hours or so, when we discovered that these hills ran away westwards.

Ahead of us there extended an immense plain, and far away in the distance stood a single hill

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

which I had been steering for. At this juncture I found myself in a rather uncomfortable predicament. We had been marching for about six hours, and as I have said, the country was getting drier and drier, and we could see no signs ahead of the Ruzi, or of any other water at all, so it would have been a very hazardous undertaking to have marched in a straight line for the solitary hill. We had not a drop of water with us, for latterly we had had but little trouble in finding it twice a day, either on the hills, in the river, or in one of its tributaries; but now we found ourselves cut off from all our customary supplies. To have turned back would have been altogether against the grain, and the question was whether to deviate from a northern course, and strike a westerly one by the hills, or an easterly one, to find the Ruzi again. I first considered the question which route would be of most geographical value, and in my own mind decided that, if we took the western route, we should in all probability reach the river Nile, which I imagined by this time would have become a fairly well-known route between Khartum and Uganda. I was, therefore, prejudiced against taking it, and I considered it of far more importance to find our friend the Ruzi again, and then continue to stick to it. So confident did I feel that this river would bend west again that, instead of marching due east at first, I struck a north-east course. It was no use whatever stopping for breakfast when we had not a drop of water, although we had done a good march and were all ready for it. So I explained to my followers that, as there was

## The Endurance of Camels

no water at hand, and the prospect of getting any ahead was not encouraging, we must take a somewhat easterly course, and march on till we reached the Ruzi again.

I walked on ahead, and the caravan followed, and as the hours went by, each becoming hotter and hotter, the more thirsty we and our beasts became. Some of the latter began to show signs of weariness, and the line of baggage-animals grew longer and longer. The camels, of course, with their wonderful powers of enduring fatigue without any water, shot ahead of other animals less fortunately placed. And I can speak from experience of this marvellous endurance of camels, for on a previous trip in Somaliland I once marched with a string of camels for eleven days, during which time none of them had a drop.

I had seen far away a belt of trees, and was buoyed up with hopes that they fringed the banks of the river Ruzi ; but we found they merely marked a tract of dense, dry jungle, and our spirits were more depressed than ever. By the time we had cut our way through it, the sun was setting ; and yet, on reaching the further side, we could see no signs of the river we so eagerly sought. As the afternoon advanced, we still continued our march, without stopping even for a minute. We noticed that storms were bursting over certain districts, and fervently hoped that one would break over us. We would have given worlds to have undergone a thorough soaking ; and it was most tantalizing to see the rain falling, yet to have none of it. Some

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

of the men wandered away to our flank, to try and get into a storm, but returned without success, and, after their extra exertions, were in a worse condition than before. At length, a few drops fell over us, and we spread out our mackintosh sheets, in hopes of having a good downpour, whilst I held up an umbrella, and caught the drippings from one part, whilst some of the men caught them from another angle. I can very highly recommend umbrella-water—it struck me as quite the nicest I had ever tasted. The mackintosh sheets were of little value, for by the time they were wet through the rain ceased. So we quickly marched on again, over a plain of alluvial soil, and lived in hopes of encountering a storm later on in the evening. After an hour or two, to our great joy, we came to a part of the plain over which one of the local storms had burst. It must have been a storm of some severity, for everywhere lay little pools of water, an inch or half an inch deep, and six or eight inches in diameter. The moment we caught sight of this godsend, we ran forward, knelt down, and lapped up pool after pool. I fancy I accounted for about a dozen, and my two little dogs also proved how thirsty they were. Of course, the great drawback of it all was that the little puddles were soaking into the ground, and very quickly diminishing in size, so I stood over some of the larger ones to preserve them for the men who were a long way behind with the tired animals. I also collected a couple of cans full for those whom I knew were still further in the rear, possibly a couple of hours distant.

## A Determined Drink

For the time being, we all felt thoroughly refreshed, and could not help laughing at the comical sight we presented, for in the eagerness of our thirst we had lowered our heads with such impetuosity that, on finishing our drink, we all of us had our noses and chins besmeared with mud. Had we met any natives at that moment, they would probably have concluded that this was our own particular fashion of adornment. As the sun had now set, I made for some bushes in the distance, and decided to camp there for the night. Two or three hours east of us lay some hills, so, without more ado, I selected two men, and, after feeding them, and giving them as much more water as they could drink from the two cans, I sent them off to try and discover water there, telling them to let me know at once, for I felt almost certain that there would be water somewhere in the hills; yet I had no wish to struggle on to them with the entire caravan, and then find ourselves without it.

Of course, if the men reported there was none, then at daybreak we would strike another course. After they had gone, I set about making a big bonfire, that the men who were behind, on emerging from the jungle belt, would at once learn our whereabouts. It was past ten o'clock before the last of the caravan had come in, and though by this time we all felt thirsty again, we still slept peacefully until daylight, for we had been marching thirteen hours without a break. As to our animals, the camels were all right, but the poor mules and donkeys were showing signs of the hardships they

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

were undergoing, and of the thirst from which they were suffering.

We had all expected an early return of our two men who had gone in search of water, yet at day-break they were not forthcoming. We had all been hoping, too, that a wet morning would herald in the



MADAME VLASSOF'S COSSACK ORDERLY.

day, but, to our disappointment, the sky was one of the clearest imaginable. The storms and signs of rain had completely vanished. It was puzzling to know quite how to act, yet it was clear that if we remained where we were without any rain coming, the situation would become more trying every hour. Yet we expected the two men to return any

## A Dispiriting March

minute, and conduct us to water, for, from our experience, we all concluded that they would find it in the hill. It was also impossible to march away and desert the two men. Thus it was that, continuing to put faith in the search of the two men, and reckoning on their returning with good news, I decided to remain where I was.

Still, as the afternoon approached, and there were no signs of them, I decided that, as the hottest part of the day was over, we would load up and strike in the most promising direction for discovering water, no matter whether it were north, south, east, or west, for I concluded that the two men had been unsuccessful, and were waiting, as we were, till the heat of the day was over before returning to camp, and that when they did come back they would have no difficulty in following our tracks, which were easily recognized over the plains of alluvial soil. We could do no good by sending other men to the hills to look for the two absentees, as we had no water to send with them. Some of the men suggested that they had been killed by Shangkallas, though I myself had no fear for their safety on that score. About three o'clock we began to load up, and I explained to my followers that we should now have to march on through the night until we found water, and that they must prepare themselves for a long, thirsty tramp. The question to decide was which direction to take. Throughout the day several herds of antelope had walked across the plain towards the south and east, so I concluded they had gone off to drink at some stream or pools

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

of rain that they were acquainted with. South of us we could just make out a belt of trees, and I thought that very likely we should find there the bed of a river, and possibly our old river Ruzi, which had played us a very nasty trick in making a bend far beyond our expectations. So I decided to march for the belt of trees, and then, if we were unsuccessful, to strike east for the range of hills. This range was a long way beyond the hill to which I had sent my two men.

In order to save the caravan as much as possible from the fatigue of what might be a fruitless march, my Somali boy Mohamed and I walked on ahead as fast as we could go, telling the rest of them to turn eastward if they saw us doing so. Over a large stretch of country, such as we were about to traverse, there always hangs a mirage during the heat of the day ; but, even now, late in the afternoon, the mirage had not disappeared, so it was at first most puzzling to know whether bushes were trees, or how far off they really were. As we proceeded, I now and then had a look through my glasses, and rejoiced to see there was a good deal of green bush, a fair indication of the presence of water, and as we drew closer we saw great herds of antelope on the outskirts of the belt. Still we could see no signs of the bed of a river. Why had they all come there? As we penetrated into the bush, we saw great numbers of giraffe, which allowed us to approach within thirty yards of them, but we had no necessity to kill any just at this time. I also heard the cuckoo in this forest. We passed more

## A Night March

giraffes, and onward we went, expecting to find water in some shape every moment. Then we saw the tracks of the antelopes, showing where they had been drinking, for, on following them up, we found ourselves by some pools. But, sad to relate, there was not a drop of water in any of them; the bottoms were muddy, and all the water had been drunk. The wild animals of the jungle had forestalled us. We hastened back, to publish our piece of disappointing news, and to turn the head of the column eastwards towards the hills. I felt that matters had now become rather serious, so I explained to the caravan that as the sun was now sinking, and the evening was cool, they must make up their minds to march throughout the night, and reach the distant hills before sunrise. I added they might be sure there was water in the hills, and I pointed out the exact position for which I would steer, so that any men who grew weary, and unable to keep up with the caravan, would still know where their goal lay. I then went ahead with four men, followed by the camels.

There was a very fair moon, so that, when crossing a plain, we were able to distinguish the outline of the hills, but when we entered a belt of jungle, we had to steer as best we could by the light of the moon. Every now and then I would halt and fire a shot so as to encourage those behind, and let them know my whereabouts, in case any man lost himself in the dark. On, on we went through the silent hours of the night. The men scarcely spoke a word, for we were

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

thoroughly parched, yet determined to reach the hills.

On one occasion, when I waited for the head of the caravan to catch me up, my Somali boy, without saying a word to me, took a mug he had quietly brought on purpose, and squeezed what little milk he could from the camels, and then gave it to me with a look of expectation in his eye at the pleasure I should show in getting it.

“Mohamed,” I said, drinking half the contents of the little mug, “you shall have the other half.”

“I would rather die,” he said, “than take a drop from you.”

So I passed it on to others of less self-denial.

We then continued our night-march, firing two shots before starting. Although the camels had come up, it was impossible to know how far behind were the mules and donkeys. The hills looked considerably nearer by this time, but they were still several miles off.

Later on in the night, we reached better ground ; there appeared to be abundance of grass, and there were innumerable tracks of wild animals, and the bush was green in many places. All these signs indicated the presence of water at no great distance, and every moment I hoped we should find ourselves on the banks of the Ruzi, which I fancied very probably ran at the foot of the hills we were steering for. But between one and two o'clock the moon sank very low in the heavens, and without the help of its light I felt afraid lest some of those behind should lose themselves, as they would no longer be

## Abyssinian Astronomy

able to keep the hills in view. None of the men were able to guide themselves by the means of the stars. The Abyssinians have no names for any of the stars ; they merely indicate by numbers those groups that everybody knows. Orion's Belt, for instance, they call the three stars, and Cassiopeia the five stars.

I therefore selected a spot under some trees that would give us shade the next day, where we might rest, for I felt that water could not now be very far away. I also despatched a couple of men—the least fatigued—to walk on in the dark to the hills, for they were fairly close by this time, telling them to fire off their rifles as soon as they had found water.

I then waited for the arrival of my caravan—firing off my rifle every few minutes. The camels arrived in safety, but not a mule or a donkey, or any of the men who were with them. I could do nothing but continue firing my rifle through the silent hours. Yet there was no signal from the two men who had gone to the hills in search of water. It struck me that, quite possibly, they had lain down and slept instead, or, what was much worse, that perhaps they could find no water ; so, with the first streak of dawn, I woke up Mohamed and Yussuf, telling them that it was imperative that we must get to the hills, and find water before the sun became hot.

We took a water-tin and our rifles with us, and walked as hard as we could in the cool morning, resolved to find water at any price, and not to return without it. When we left there was only one other

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

man in camp who knew anything about our departure. As many as had arrived were all thoroughly tired out, and soundly sleeping.

After an hour and a quarter, we reached the foot of the hills, and were deliberating whether to make for some green-looking bush we saw, where there might be water, or for a certain ridge, from which we should be able to see the valleys lying between, and possibly beyond the hills, when in our moment of uncertainty we heard the two men I had sent forward in the night shouting to me. At the time, they were climbing a hill, and happened to have just caught sight of us. We soon learnt from them that they had found some rain-water in a rock, but only about enough for six men, and without more ado we made our way to the spot, and, needless to say, drank our share, and filled our water-can besides. But what was the use of this—we must find more before firing a signal of success.

We were looking about us, and making our way to some higher ground, when we saw, on the side of an opposite hill, sheep and goats, and then felt certain there must be people as well, and therefore water. Still, there was nothing to be gained by firing until we really knew where the water lay; besides, we had no idea whatever of the attitude or the strength of the savages, who were doubtless living at nō great distance off. As we drew closer to the sheep, we saw several Shangkallas with them, and others coming up the hillside. They had now caught sight of me, and it was impossible to know what their intentions might be.

## We gain Two Friends

At this moment, Yussuf and Mohamed were with me, whilst the other two men were out of sight of the Shangkallas, so I signalled to them to remain where they were, and then walked forward with my two men. Some of the savages ran away, but others stood, not quite certain in their minds what course to adopt. So I put my rifle on the ground, telling my two companions to do the same, and then I called out "Koshumba, Koshumba," and beckoned to them to come to me. After a little hesitation, a couple of the Shangkallas came forward, and no sooner had they reached me than our mutual fears and doubts vanished, and we became friends. It will be seen later on how very true our friendship grew, and how these two savages, one of whom was called Kaisuki, who were about to save us now, extricated us from other difficulties afterwards.

I gathered from them that we should be able to get sufficient water for the men close at hand, but that the donkeys and mules would have to go a little distance for it. We then sat down on some big round rocks under the shade of some trees, and in a crevice the savages showed us more water, but only enough for two men. In this part of the world I learnt that one has to look for water in very remarkable places. It is very often no use searching in small or big valleys, for I have found it running across an open plain, and in solid rocks, not only on the sides of the hills, but on the very summits themselves, where one would never expect to get it. Of course, that found in the rocks is merely rain-water. After a heavy storm, the water runs off the surface

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

of these huge slabs of rock into holes and crevices, and there it remains for an extraordinary length of time, for, owing to the usually small opening, scarcely any evaporation can take place from wind and sun, nor can the water sink into the surface of the solid rock. Although these holes have but a small opening, they are themselves very often large—sometimes holding thirty or forty gallons of water.

As soon as my other two men, who had been watching from a distance the turn affairs would take, arrived, we all five of us stood up and fired three volleys in the direction of the camp, where I had left the men and camels, and where I hoped the remainder of the caravan would, by this time, have arrived. We felt sure they would hear us, and rightly guess that water was at hand. As we fired each volley, the noise echoed through the hills, and the savages, many of whom had joined us by this time, were evidently in some fear of what was going to happen next. However, I soon reassured them of our friendship, and made them understand that I was merely informing my other men, who were behind, of the presence of water, and that they would arrive very shortly.

We then reclined on the rocks, and talked about the country with our new acquaintances. They were called the Tamata, and I don't fancy they had ever seen a white man before, though they had heard of them.

I knew we should have to wait more than an hour before the men would arrive, so, after conducting a conversation on a very empty stomach, I lay

## One Search Party returns

down on the rocks and took a nap. Almost immediately one of my men woke me, saying that some of those from camp were coming up the hill. We all stood up to see who the arrivals were, when bang, bang, and whiz, whiz, went bullets just over our heads, and below I caught sight of two of my Soudanese firing at us. I stepped to one flank of the group, and waved and shouted, hardly knowing what would be the next item in the programme. Luckily they saw me, and then came along as fast as they were able. They told me how they had set out towards the hills to look for water, and how they had suddenly heard our volleys, and then, shortly afterwards, caught sight of a group of savages, and as they had not seen us, fancied we had all been killed. They were so thirsty that they hardly knew what they were doing, but they soon got a good drink from the hole the savages had shown us in the rock, and then lay down to sleep.

Presently we saw about a dozen men, headed by Shahzad Mir, struggling up the hillside. The gallant Duffadar, and all the men in camp, on hearing the volleys, concluded that I was engaged in some severe fighting, and those who felt equal to it had at once set out, whilst the others intended following to my assistance as quickly as they were able. It was gratifying to me to be able to reward them all in a way they at that moment appreciated more than words can tell. For as each man reached me—an Abyssinian was the first—I presented him with a mugful of water from the tin I had filled. There was still a little left, which I kept in reserve for the

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

next arrivals. Most of the men had brought with them gombos for carrying water, so I sent them all off under the charge of a couple of the savages, who would take them to a place where there was an abundance. And I told them, as soon as they had drunk their fill, to return at once with a drink for those who would come in later.

As we waited, the men by degrees dropped in with the animals and goods; but by this time the water was finished, the sun was high in the heavens, and the men lay on their backs, with drawn faces and staring eyes. Something had to be done, so, as soon as my medicine box and lime-juice arrived, I dropped into the mouth of each of them a citric acid tabloid, and afterwards administered an ounce of lime-juice. When the crisis was over, they used to say if I had not given them that wonderful medicine on that day, they would all have died.

On further conversation with the savages, I understood that we should find some more water in rocks on the very top of the hill we were on. So Mahomed, myself, and another man, took a water-can each, and two of the savages came with us. We searched the different rocks we found up there, and discovered two holding sufficient water to fill our cans. The man who had come up the hill with us was allowed to drink as much as he chose, and at his first draught he accounted for twelve large tumblers, regardless of the myriads of little tadpoles and filth that were floating about in it—for there was quite an aquarium—and also of the horrible smell. I, too, had a good drink, but drew the line

## Tea before Water

at twelve tumblers of the stuff. It would have been very unwise of me to have sent the water down, after filling one can, without going with it, for the men would have certainly fought for it, and probably spilt it all.

On my return to them, with several gallons of water, they sat around with their staring eyes fixed on me and the can—they knew what it was to be thirsty. I was astonished, and admired the way many of the men restrained themselves. I don't think any other people could have exercised greater control over their feelings than my followers did on this occasion. As fast as I could, I poured out a mugful, and gave it to each in turn, and then half a mugful, and the can was finished. There were still some half-dozen men behind with the rest of the baggage, at the spot where I had halted with the camels before setting forth in search of water. So the second canful I sent back to them, by the man who really had had a good drink. The third can was soon afterwards brought down from the hill—the last of that supply. But before allowing anybody to drink any, I made it into tea; and though at the time all were very angry at my doing so, they admitted afterwards the benefit they had derived from it.

It was quite late in the afternoon when the men who had in the first place gone for water returned. When they had reached the spot, they had forgotten all about their fellow-workers, and had stopped to sleep and wash. They had certainly brought a good deal of water with them; and, seeing they had

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

had a good rest, I sent them off to collect the animals and take them to water. It was gratifying to know that all the men had come in, with the exception of those few keeping guard over some of the baggage in the woods. Knowing we should require more water, I called for volunteers, offering a cup of tea to every one who would take a vessel and bring back water. As they were all extremely thirsty, there were plenty of volunteers, who merely thought of the moment's gratification they would get from another drink, however small, and were totally oblivious to the fatigue entailed by fetching more. The worst of it all was, that those who went for water—the distance to it was nearly two miles—were so thirsty when they got back again that they wanted to drink themselves all they had brought.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### DROUGHT, BUT RUNNING WATER AT LAST

A serious loss—A midnight adventure—Return of my water-messengers—Death of my head Abyssinian—We resume our northward march—A river at last!—The Boma people—I change guides.

THE men had been so thoroughly knocked up that they were totally unequal to the task of keeping watch over the baggage animals, so that when we prepared to take them to water, we found that the tribes in the neighbouring hills and valleys had stealthily come up and appropriated forty-five of our beasts, leaving us with only ten mules and five donkeys. Among the latter were the only two survivors of the original seventeen with which we had set out from Adis Ababa. These two donkeys were much smaller than the ones we had got by Lake Gallop, and were of a totally different breed. Curiously enough, they never associated with the other donkeys; they always grazed separately, and at night-time slept close together.

At the time when we first learnt of the theft of the animals, we did not pay very much attention to it; the main question was how to satisfy our craving thirst. We could not move down to the

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

water until all the men and baggage had reached the spot most of us were already in. When I had first set out in the early morning, I had left my two dogs behind, for they were suffering like the rest of us; and they had eventually come along part of the way with some of the men, but finding the sun intensely hot, had both rested under the shade of a bush. It was very sad to think of my two dogs dying of thirst, yet I dare not leave the men, situated as they were, to their own devices, and was sending back a party with water to look for them—a couple of volunteers—when, to my delight, mother and son trotted up to me of their own accord. Eventually they were none the worse for the sufferings they had gone through.

The last lot of men who had gone for water had been absent for several hours, and as it was already ten o'clock at night, I began to think that either some mishap had befallen them, or, more probably, that they had remained sleeping by the water, a proceeding I was very much against—for to be separated in our present condition more than could be helped was most inadvisable, seeing that we had already had our animals taken; and although we had two friendly savages with us, there was no knowing what other enormity the rest of them might be up to, for there were several hundreds of them about the hills. In this dilemma I decided to set out myself, and took with me a Somali boy called Ali, a very sharp lad. We had first of all to descend a part of the hill, and then we silently made our way through a thorn forest. There was a good moon

## Ali and I investigate

and not a breath of wind: so still was everything, that our treading over the soft sand or grass could be distinctly heard. Every now and then we held our breath and stopped to listen, not knowing whether anybody was watching and following us, as they did in the daytime. We then made our way over the spurs of the hill, gradually working towards the valley where the water lay, and which was on the opposite side to our own bivouac. Presently we saw the lights of a Shangkalla village, close to which we should have to pass. Though, strange to say, there were people about at this late hour, nobody saw us. We then crossed a valley and came to the water-pools. We did not care to shout very loudly, but as we could see no signs of our people, we decided there was nothing to be done but return again. So we took a track round the other side of the hill, which, though rougher, was shorter; but after going for half a mile, we saw a large camp of Shangkallas in front of us.

It would have been altogether too risky to have gone up to them in the dead of the night, especially as I knew they had only arrived there that same evening. Moreover, I had not the slightest idea who they were or what they were up to. We therefore climbed the side of the hill and skirted round above the camp, some three hundred yards distant. We made such a noise as we stumbled over the rocks that we thought we must be heard for a certainty. After a little we hit off another track leading uphill, and as we were ascending over big stones amidst the bushes, suddenly we heard whr-r-r,

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

whr-r-r. Ali ducked instinctively and I turned my head, expecting to see some black forms close upon us. Imagine our relief and amusement to find, after all, that instead of a couple of spears it was a brace of guinea-fowl which had so suddenly startled us.

After a long, steep climb over very rocky hills and valleys, with bruised shins and cut hands (for at every step we stumbled), we finally reached our camp about 1 a.m., when I was glad to learn that the water men had returned about five minutes in front of us. Unfortunately, their cans had already been emptied, seeing that I was not there to control matters. I therefore woke up some of the men and sent them off to bring in more water by daylight. I required this done at once for two reasons, first, in order that I might send water to the men with the baggage, and, second, that I might at once set out myself in search of the two men who were first despatched to the hill for water, but who had never returned to camp. I had fancied that they would have returned to our camp in the plain, where we had found the water-puddles, and thence would easily be able to follow on our tracks; but as they had not done so, I believed that my best plan would be to go back on our own tracks. As the mules and donkeys were too done up for what I expected might be a long journey, I arranged to take a camel with two cans of water, and three men. Everything was ready to start at daybreak, excepting the water, for the mules had not turned up—either the men would not hurry, or they could not. Anyhow, as it turned out, fortune was on

## Our First Search Party returns

my side, for the two men who were causing me so much anxiety presently walked into camp of their own accord. Our first feelings on seeing them were naturally those of delight; but when they had been refreshed with copious draughts of tea, and were able to tell their story, we were all ready to upbraid them for their selfishness, laziness, and want of thought. It appeared that in less than three hours after I had sent them off, they had reached the hills and found water. Instead of returning with the good news, they had remained drinking and sleeping throughout the night, and the most of the next day as well. Had they only returned to camp that same night or even during the next morning, all the trouble we were let in for, the half only of which I have related, would have been saved. We should have had a short march, there would have been no suffering, and no loss of baggage animals. One of the culprits was a Soudanese, and the other a Galla, both in other respects excellent fellows, who, at all other times, served me well.

So many of the black races, though the best men in the world under one's own supervision, utterly fall to pieces when dependent upon themselves. This was especially noticeable in the Soudanese, and on this particular occasion the Galla was completely under the will of the Soudanese. However, it was no use repining over unfortunate events that might easily have been avoided, our only course now being to make the best of a bad business. It was imperative that we should all get to the water,

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

with our baggage and animals, and there recoup. I therefore sent off twenty men with some loaded camels as a preliminary step, and, as soon as the water arrived, I sent it off with the remaining camels to bring in the remnant of our caravan.

After waiting for about four hours, the first lot of camels returned, so I reloaded them and myself, made my way with them to the water, leaving a few men behind with food and water to wait for the rear of the party to come in from the woods. The pools of rain-water were situated on the farther side of a valley which at the right season of the year is planted with dhura ; it was like old times again to find on arrival that the men had made a good zareba, and were carrying out their customary duties ; and, although there was plenty of water at hand, they all complained that they would never be able to quench their thirst for days to come. At one o'clock in the night, the remainder of my people and baggage turned up. Everybody was all right, excepting an Abyssinian, by name Bayiwall, my head Abyssinian, and a man well on in years. It seemed that after quenching his thirst for the time being, he had eaten a quantity of uncooked dhura—not quite the most suitable food after fasting so long. On finishing his meal, he had exclaimed, "I've done now, I'm going to die!" On his reaching camp, I placed him in a tent next my own, and did my best to cure him of his indigestion, but no medicines would avail a man who had made up his mind to die. Throughout the day, as he lay on his back, he cried aloud, "Mot'alla, mot'alla ; class,

## A Determined Decease

c-lass, c-l-ass, c-l-a-ss !” (“ I’m dying, I’m dying !”) Sometimes I would go to him, and tell him what utter nonsense he was talking, and endeavour, by chaff, to divert his mind to another channel, but all to no purpose ; he was bent on dying, die he would—and I don’t think that any man could have saved him. He was buried that evening.

In the morning I sent out Shahzad Mir and Mohamed, with a dozen men and one of the friendly savages, to try and discover the people who had taken our donkeys and mules, and where they had taken them. Our two friendlies belonged to a tribe called the Tamata, and said that their own tribe had stolen my animals, and taken them right away for a distance of three days. Shahzad Mir and Mohamed soon found their tracks, and followed them for some miles, but, as they had no water with them, returned to camp to ask me what they had better do. Our two Tamata friends had brought us in two or three of their own donkeys, but no others could be found anywhere, though there were several villages. Hardly knowing what to do, I told them I should follow up their tribesmen, no matter how far they had gone. They told me not to try and do so, for they would only go off again when they saw me coming ; but they added they would show me where they had left their sheep behind, and that I might take as many as I chose, and they would point out to me a way northwards where I should get water, and would then take me to another tribe from whom I would be able to get more donkeys. Shahzad

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

Mir and Mohamed had already seen the sheep these natives referred to, but had left them alone, as I had given them orders not to touch any, and they both well knew by now my feelings in this respect. I now sent them off again, this time to bring in a hundred sheep as some compensation for the loss of our baggage animals. I well knew that some fresh mutton would do the men a deal of good, and cheer them up, after the trying time of the last few days.

While the sheep were being driven into camp, most of the other men were engaged in carrying out the duties of burying poor old Bayiwall; and as quickly as they could do so with decency, they ended their lamentations, and soon forgot their grief amidst fresh saddles and legs of mutton.

The Tamata savages amongst whom we had fallen struck me as being very nice intelligent people, despite the theft of my animals. I saw several of their villages, and the inhabitants always appeared very friendly. They seemed to think it quite right of me to take their sheep after they had run off with my mules and donkeys. I might have taken several hundred sheep, but, after all, we were partly to blame for our loss. One cannot expect to be able to leave baggage animals safely grazing by themselves in the middle of Africa. Donkeys are the same to the Tamata as five-pound notes to us, and if I found five-pound notes being blown about by the wind, I should not hesitate to secure them. We could hardly reasonably expect these savages to bring up the donkeys, and ask whether

## Fertile Country again

they were mine. They were only too glad of enriching themselves by what is considered perfectly fair play in these parts of the world.

We marched early the next morning—for I wanted the men to forget about the death of Bayiwall—one of the Shangkallas, "Kaisuki," showing the way. All our animals were heavily laden. There were ten mules, seven donkeys, and fifteen camels. Of course we could not dream of carrying water, and it was necessary to make short marches to begin with. We travelled northwards, and our good Tamata savage showed us water in places where we should never have been able to discover it ourselves. He was an exceptionally intelligent man. For some days we skirted the foot of a range of hills and crossed valleys where lived giraffes, elephants, and rhinos—on one occasion I even saw as many as twenty-five of these brutes all together like a flock of sheep. We afterwards crossed a very beautiful plain of good grass, where roamed immense herds of hartebeests. We passed a tribe called the Geyu, who cultivate dhura, and keep both cattle and sheep, as well as a few donkeys. At the further end of the plain, we entered the outskirts of a forest, principally of mimosa, though there were other trees as well of fairly good timber, and, after penetrating into these for an hour or so, we reached the banks of a stream, which Kaisuki called the Ruzi. He pointed out to me the hills lying east of us, from which it took its rise, explaining how it travelled west and then north through an open plain, at times

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

disappearing altogether, and finally flowed into a big water, where men used boats. He probably meant the Sobat, but, of course, he had never been so far himself, but had collected his information from neighbouring tribes. As a rule, I am inclined to think that the men of these various tribes do not travel far beyond their own tribal limits. At the same time, articles such as grain, iron, beads, and possibly salt, are passed on in exchange from one tribe to another, and so penetrate far into the country. Information about distant peoples and countries travels in the same way, and, therefore, cannot be absolutely relied upon. Yet, when a man talks of boats, and has never seen one himself, his information is probably true, for the explanation of something absolutely novel would be more likely to be remembered, and thus passed on without any alteration.

We camped close to the stream itself, and found there were only a few places where we could get to the water, owing to the steep banks. The water was flowing over a sandy bottom only a few inches deep, and was very fairly clear. The men could hardly realize that we had actually reached running water, and were very soon deriving full benefit from it by having a thorough good splash.

At the same time, we were able to shoot some water-buck, and thus save our sheep for another day. Not very far from our camp there lived a tribe called the Boma. These were the people from whom Kaisuki said we should be able to buy donkeys, so I sent him off with Mohamed to explain

## The Value of Kerosene-tins

to them that I was here, and ready to buy them either with beads, cloth, or anything else they might fancy. On their reaching the villages, they found all the people had gone off excepting a boy who was looking after the sheep, so having won the boy's friendship by a present of beads, he showed them where his tribe had gone to. Kaisuki explained the position we were in, and how the Tamata had run off with our baggage animals. The Boma behaved splendidly. They brought cows and sheep and over a hundred donkeys, but I told them I required neither their sheep nor cows, but only between twenty and thirty donkeys. We selected the male ones, which were better suited for our purpose, and were of less value to them, and five of the Boma men drove them into our zareba. These natives were evidently very pleased with all they saw, and feasted well off the waterbuck we had killed. I placed before them the things I was ready to part with, and their choice fell upon beads, razors, and empty kerosene-tins. With these latter they were especially delighted, for from them they would be able to manufacture various sorts of ornaments. I find that empty kerosene-tins are the most serviceable water-cans going; they are far better than the cans that are made for carrying on mules, or the barrels that are made for camels, chiefly from the fact that they are extremely light. Two of them placed in a box form half a load either for mule or camel, and if the water is precious, and has to be guarded, it is very simple to fix a lock to the box. These Boma wear in their ears a piece of

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

round, thin brass, and from the underlip a piece of bone. They are, perhaps, not quite such finely made men as the Abba tribe, nor of such a cheery disposition. They carry sleeping-pillows and two spears, a long one and a short one. The Boma wear their hair very much after the Abba fashion, resembling a saucer with the bottom uppermost.

Kaisuki, having kept his word in obtaining fresh donkeys for us, had no wish to go any further, and, as it was, he had come several days' journey from his own home. So he left us in the best of spirits, and with many protestations of friendship, a far richer man than he had been a week ago. His place was taken by a guide of the Boma's, who willingly agreed to take us as far as the next tribe. His information about the Ruzi corresponded with that given by Kaisuki. This was quite a different river from the first Ruzi we had come across. The first Ruzi, which we had expected to meet, when we struck east on our waterless march, had flowed a great deal further east than we had ever dreamed of. From the top of the hills by the valley of the Tamata, we had been able to see the course, until it bent north again, when we lost sight of it. It must have been still flowing north, on the further side of the range of hills from which the present Ruzi took its rise, for, a few days afterwards, we again saw the river from the hills, and afterwards camped on its banks.

As I have mentioned before, Ruzi must simply mean "River," and there is no need for a tribe to call the only river it is acquainted with by anything else

## Guided by the Ruzi

than Ruzi, or River. We followed the banks of this second Ruzi for some miles across an open plain in a westerly direction. One would never have expected for a moment to find a stream running across a plain such as we were in, with no trees or bushes along the banks to mark its course. One could not tell there was a stream anywhere at all, until within a very few yards of its banks, when there was a drop of almost twenty feet, through alluvial soil, to the running water below.

Whilst resting on the banks for breakfast, where we had fine views over the plains dotted with herds of antelope, I explained to my Boma friend that I was desirous of travelling north, and not west. "Oh," he said, "fill your water-cans, and we will go north, and strike the stream again further down; or, if you prefer it, we can follow the stream all the way, which, after a little, will flow north."

We found it easy going over excellent grass till nightfall, when we camped, surrounded by plenty of antelope. The next morning we rose at three a.m., for I had no precise idea when we should get water again; but, after marching seven or eight miles, we came to a beautiful pool of rainwater, a favourite haunt of many antelope and giraffe.

In the afternoon, we marched north once more, and struck the Ruzi before nightfall. The stream had considerably increased in size during its detour, for here it was nearly twenty yards broad, though fordable. The water was not so clear. There

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

grew some good bush along the banks, and everywhere for many miles round was magnificent grass with large herds of giraffe wandering over it. It seemed strange to me that nobody had selected such a spot as this to live in.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### ABYSSINIAN RAIDS—THEIR RESULTS AND CURE

An old Abyssinian camp—Abyssinian raids—Their causes and effects—A remedy.

AGAIN we travelled north for sixteen miles over beautiful prairie land, sometimes crossing a tiny rivulet. There were plenty more giraffes, and great numbers of wild donkeys, striped like zebras, one of which I shot. At length we came to the place where the Abyssinians, coming over from the east, had quite recently camped. The camp had been well chosen on the banks of a stream, along which there was abundance of firewood, with a few shady trees. There still remained innumerable tukls, showing that there must have been a large force of them. Quite possibly it had been a camping-ground of the Abyssinian general, Dejasmach Tasama, who, I knew, had quite lately made an expedition in the direction of the White Nile. As we came to the ground, we saw a few tribesmen, but they ran away immediately, and gave us no chance of explaining to them who we were, in spite of my Boma friend calling out that we were not "Nuga," which is the name by which many of the tribes call the Abyssinians. The following day we reached some hills,

## 'Twiṣt Sirdar and Menelik

at the foot of which flowed a small stream, and everywhere grew grass, thick undergrowth, and fine trees. Not far from our camp, we found some members of a tribe—boys and women. They were terribly thin, every bone was visible, and no wonder, seeing that they were living on roots and grass. As far as I could learn from them, the men had been killed, and all their property taken by the Nuga. This was very likely true, as we found tracks of mules and animals, such as none of the tribes possess.

In previous pages I have made repeated references to the raids carried on by the Abyssinians, and have, like every one else, condemned these raids as being altogether unworthy of that nation. Yet to straightway throw blame on the Abyssinians, without entering into the causes of these raids, and the practicability of finding reasonable ways of bringing them to an end, would be unfair. It must be remembered that the Abyssinians, as well as all the tribes living on their border-land, have from time immemorial been accustomed to, and have delighted in, internal strife, external raids, and counter-raids, and that we (by we I mean the European world), instead of endeavouring to check and amend their customs, have rather chosen a contrary course. We have furnished them with the means of carrying on successful and destructive raids; we have supplied them with rifles, and it cannot be expected that they would do otherwise than try their level best to wipe out old scores with their less fortunately armed neighbours, and reclaim land which they consider belongs by right to the

## Human Nature Triumphant

Abyssinian dominion. Though thus well armed, they have at times met with reverses, but, as a general rule, have completely conquered and subdued countries and tribes, and have made their name one to be sometimes hated, sometimes respected, but always to be feared. It would be irrational to expect two African races of traditional enemies, whose countries are coterminous with one another, to institute friendship and equality of rights, when one side suddenly finds itself provided with the means of totally overwhelming the other side, and of appropriating all its property. To expect that they would act otherwise than to prove their superiority would be an absurdity. Though the Abyssinians are a Christian people, it is no guarantee at all that they will not sometimes behave like their neighbours. One African calls himself a Mussulman, another a believer in Wak, and so on, but that does not mean that he, more than other people, invariably adheres to the precepts of his Teacher. In considering the question of the Abyssinian raids, the results emanating therefrom, and the most advisable way of checking them, there is no need, therefore, to take into account their religion.

It is undoubtedly true that from our point of view the Abyssinians are, in many respects, savages, yet, in my opinion, they are savages of a very special blend; in spite of their ignorance, their able intellect, combined with their strength as a fighting people, which cannot be lost sight of, has placed them in a very unique position. Had they never received

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

a practically unlimited supply of arms, they might still have scarcely counted as a factor in the civilized world; they might possibly have been swallowed up by the first European nation clever enough to estimate properly the true value of the people and of the country they had to deal with, and powerful and able enough to rule them. The Abyssinians are savages in our eyes, because, so far, they have had no opportunity of learning the virtues and vices of civilization. As soon as we have come in closer contact with them, and our friendship and intercourse are more recognized, then we shall be in a better position to judge. As far as I can see, in my own limited way, the Abyssinians are gifted with exceptional intelligence—readily grasping the object, and recognizing the value of any innovation they see. After very little instruction they can master whatever matter may be in question, and if they find this impossible at first, they simply smile and confess their ignorance. The Abyssinians have been classed as notorious robbers. Personally speaking, I have never had a single article taken by them, though all my belongings, including food and money, have been open to every comer. They undoubtedly steal from one another in a petty way, but more out of fun than anything else. The Abyssinians are undeniably brave. Though they will raid a petty tribe with a strong force, they certainly show their wisdom in gaining their object without loss to themselves; and in this respect we might perhaps take a lesson from them. The Abyssinians who came with me were very much afraid at first to

## Old Customs now Extinct

leave camp and go alone through a portion of the Shangkalla country, but I chaffed them by saying that they were afraid of antelope, and when they got in time to know my ways, they grew absolutely fearless. Of course, my own knowledge of Abyssinians and their country is small, and I do not for a moment pretend to lay down the law with regard to them; I am merely making deductions from some of my experiences.

But to return to the raiding. It may be as well to look at some of the results it has caused. Take, for instance, a tribe like the Asilli, living north-east of Lake Gallop. It has been their ancient custom to pay the priest, on celebrating a marriage, ghi, honey, and sheep. An Asilli may have four or five wives, if he can afford to pay for them—each costing as much as twenty sheep or fourteen cows. “But,” I remarked to them, “how can you pay the priest and buy your wives, since you say the Abyssinians have taken all your property?” “Oh,” my informant said, “that is all knocked on the head now; we pay the priest nothing, and the women come to us.” Again, with regard to burying the dead: their custom was to wrap a cloth round the dead body, and place it in a hole in the ground, afterwards removing the cloth, and covering the remains with it. The cloth they used to buy from the Borana tribes, by Lake Stefanie, in exchange for sheep; but this old custom, too, has been swept away by the Abyssinian raids.

Let me now select another raided tribe like the Boma, living on the hills north-west of Lake Gallop. They have, so far, scarcely felt the worst phases of

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

raiding; yet they have been taken by surprise, their goods appropriated, and the men spared, for it would seem they had no time to resist. But, on the next occasion, they will undoubtedly be ready, and will fight. This was proved when they saw me coming, and prepared for a struggle, thinking we were the Nuga. They will then have to pay a heavy penalty, for, ignorant of the power of rifles, they will be shot down without mercy. Look again at the Morelli tribe, of whom more hereafter—a tribe of living skeletons—a sight that made one long to check the accursed raids.

Further north, moreover, the inhabitants of village after village had left all their property behind them and fled, without attempting to fight or parley with us, simply because they imagined we were Abyssinians paying them another visit. These poor people only too well knew the power of the rifle, and felt that had they remained anywhere at all near us, they would have paid for the delay with their lives.

To summarize briefly the results of raiding: They destroy ancient traditions and customs of apparently peaceful tribes; and they put a stop to agriculture, and thus render the lives of thousands of people miserable, both through want of food and from continued dread of further raids.

Now, in order to put a check on their raiding, there is, in my opinion, one speedy and effective method, and that consists in fixing a frontier line round the Abyssinian dominion, as close to it as possible. I put forward this suggestion now, not

## A Suggested Remedy

from a political, but simply from a common-sense point of view. Were such a suggestion carried out, raiding would at once be brought within certain limits. Abyssinian raiding-parties could not cross the border-line, and the practice would probably cease. Those tribes who suffered on one side of the line would, naturally enough, cross over to the other side, where they could live and enjoy life. Were such a proposition ever carried out, the Abyssinians themselves would in the long run reap the benefit from it, for on finding the source of supplies derived from raiding cut short, they would turn their attention to more profitable pursuits, and would have to trade. Remembering the able men that the country possesses, and the undoubted intellect of the Abyssinians in general, there is every reason to hope that the Abyssinian nation would then prosper and grow rich.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### FROM THE BOMA TO THE SHILLUK COUNTRY

More about the Boma people—A jam tree—The Morelli tribe—The Ruzi river again—The Nyuro country—A difficult crossing—A fertile and magnificent land—The seroot fly—A deserted village—Encamped on an ant-hill—The Shilluks.

BUT to return to my journey: In the afternoon we ascended to the top of a pass rising some 2000 feet between the green-clad hills. From the high ground we saw several villages of another Boma tribe, so, leaving the caravan to camp at the very summit of the pass (for I thought a good blow might do us all good), I went down hill towards the villages with three of my men and the guide. As the people saw us coming they ran here and there collecting their forces, evidently preparing to fight. Still, we walked on towards them, although they were every moment becoming more numerous. When my guide called to them that we had nothing to do with Nuga, but were Koshumba, they at first appeared doubtful, but afterwards they all came up to us, and we were very soon friends. Four of them agreed to come up to my camp. On arrival, they were soon made happy with some food and a gift of one of our few remaining sheep. They regretted the present state

## The Prepossessing Boma

they were in, for they possessed no grain at all, as it had been taken away by the Nuga, and they were now waiting for the next crop to ripen. They explained how the Nuga had settled amongst them and then suddenly deprived them of all they possessed. This Boma tribe, who live in the hills, carry two or even three spears—very slender though fairly long. They smoke pipes and adorn the forehead with a mass of red, white, and blue beads, like some of the Abba tribe. Some of them I found wonderfully quick and intelligent, whilst others could not or would not understand anything at all; but they are a fairly fine race of men.

They inhabit a very beautiful country of hill, dale, and streams, where all the valleys and hillsides that have not been appropriated for growing dhura and tobacco, are covered with luxuriant grass, undergrowth, and fine timber. The soil is exceptionally rich, some of it being black and some of a reddish colour. I found cotton growing, though I fancy it is not cultivated, inasmuch as the Boma, like the rest of these tribes, see no advantage in wearing clothes of any description.

It was daybreak on the 1st of June when we left our camp on the pass, and, after traversing the grand country of the Boma, which very often reminded me of Walamo in Southern Abyssinia (though of course the hills were not so fine nor were there any devils connected with this district), we stopped for breakfast in the long grass under the shade of a large tree whose circumference at the stem measured twenty-five feet. I had sent back

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the Shangkalla from the first Boma tribe, and his place had now been taken by three men from the second, who were willing enough to show me the best route through their own land. Close by where we halted we found a tree that was new to all of us: it resembled a cherry tree and bore a fruit very much like jam, containing a green nut—a new and naturally manufactured preserve that came in rather handy for breakfast.

In the afternoon we came to another tribe called the Morelli. We had only just struck the outskirts of their tribal limits, for they extended eastwards as far as our first river Ruzi. On catching sight of us they took us for the Nuga, and were very much afraid, but, thanks to my Boma men, an amicable understanding was soon arrived at. This was fortunate indeed, for without their help we should never have found water that evening. As our Boma guides had brought us safely to the neighbouring tribe, they asked if they might return, a request I readily agreed to. Before going I pleased them in the highest degree by presenting them with an empty kerosene-tin and a blue enamelled mug.

The Morelli tribe were in a very sad way, indeed, owing to the raids of the Nuga, and said they were absolutely starving. There was no need to tell me all this, for their outward appearance showed only too truthfully the condition they were in. They were living in a very pretty bit of country with plenty of woods, with here and there a delai palm. How anxiously must the Morelli watch the growth of their next crop, and how eager they must be to reap

## The Starving Morelli

the harvest before some raiding party comes and does it for them! One of the Morelli came to me explaining that he would go with me anywhere I liked if I would only give him something to eat. "A bargain!" I cried, or words and gesticulations to that effect, and straightway I gave him a lump of wild donkey flesh. Having eaten a portion of it, he asked if he might take the remainder to his family in the village, saying he would soon return again. I willingly let him go, for I could see quite well that the man meant what he said. It seems strange that many people of the same tribe speak totally different languages, but very likely this has a good deal to do with their skill and ability in understanding signs and in illustrating their meaning. The Morelli skeleton was not very long absent. On his return he began to bemoan his bony frame, explaining how he used to be a powerful young fellow, but to-day was nothing but a skeleton.

We gave the poor fellow plenty of food, for all my men knew he would then act as a guide, and, having no relish for another waterless march, they overfed him, and so loaded him with victuals, that, on that score, at any rate, he had no cause of complaint. Two lambs were born that evening. One of these he skewered with a stick, and roasted it over the fire whole before devouring it, the second one he carried next day on his spear uncooked, a good breakfast in store for him after the march.

We kept along the side of some wooded hills, and everywhere the country was extremely fertile. We passed several more villages, but all the people

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fled, doubtless taking us for the Nuga. My Morelli, though a skeleton, was a very decent sort of fellow, quite civilized in his behaviour. On passing one of the villages, he popped inside a hut without saying a word to me, and presently emerged with some green tobacco leaves, which, with a look of pleasure, he handed to me, at the same time patting his belly, as much as to say, "This is for what you have given me." As we made our second march in the afternoon, we discovered another kind of fruit. Externally it resembled an orange, but inside it was a mass of large pips covered with a yellow pulp. It was quite eatable, though possessing scarcely any flavour. Away to the west of us there stretched a magnificent green plain as far as the eye could see. East of us, too, the land appeared equally fertile, and was bounded by the dim and distant range of the Abyssinian hills.

In the evening we found some rain-water of excellent quality in the rocks and I was also lucky in being able to observe three stars between the clouds. After marching four miles the next day through a beautifully wooded land, we came to a very awkward stream. There were four feet of a steep muddy bank down to the water, which came above the waist, and there was no better crossing either up or down stream. It was a very nasty place to ask a loaded camel to cross, and, before we could think of doing so, we hacked away both sides of the banks, and collected a quantity of boughs. These, mixed up with the broken earth, made a fairly respectable road to the bottom of the stream. The

## A Difficult Crossing

mules raised no objection whatever to the improvement we had made, though the donkeys and camels were as obstinate as could be, and had to be literally pushed in by main force. The sheep were thrown into the water, and scrambled up the opposite bank of their own accord. I myself was about to wade across like every one else, but the men wouldn't hear of it, and so many of them jumped into the stream that *volens volens* I had to be carried across. On the opposite bank some of the men had erected a most enticing-looking shady bower for me to spend the morning in. We had, indeed, come to a very lovely spot with plenty of trees, and rich grass, and abundance of good water. I began to calculate how long it would be before we reached civilization, and to reckon up how many more days' supplies we had with us. The sheep would last three days, the dhura two, and the durgosh and flour three; then there were the camels, each of which would give all of us a day's food.

This same afternoon we met our tricky old friend the first river Ruzi, and camped about three hundred yards from its banks. My Morelli guide informed me that a tribe called the Nyuro lived but a short distance off, on the further side of a wood, so I sent five men to reconnoitre, and bring me some of the Nyuro to camp should they come across any. The Morelli savage did not want to go any further, for he said if the Nyuro saw him they would try and kill him, for his own tribe were always at war with them; so I did not care to insist upon his serving us any longer, especially as he, up to the present,

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had helped us to the best of his ability. My scouts, on returning, reported a bad road, and no signs of the Nyuro. A little distance from our camp there stretched a waste of marshy ground and high grass down to the river's edge, and in the midst of the swamp were many hippopotami, who at night-time wandered close to our zareba in their search after food. As soon as darkness set in we met some more old friends in the form of mosquitoes. These were most annoying throughout the night, and, though the sentries made a fire close to where I lay, the shoals of mosquitoes were too thick to be driven away by the smoke, so that in addition to being nearly eaten up, I was half roasted as well.

By this time Lady's pup was growing into a very fine dog, and was untiring in his hunts after hares and antelope. He gave his mother very little rest along the road, for she preferred trotting on quietly, unless she scented something, when she was off like an arrow, invariably followed by the pup. They were both excellent watch-dogs, so that no one could approach my bed without my becoming aware of it.

Unless there seemed a chance of rain, we seldom pitched any of the tents, and at midday, as a rule, found sufficient shade under the trees. The track we followed next morning brought us to the edge of a thick forest. So close to one another did the trees grow, that we had considerable trouble in cutting a road large enough for our camels to go along; but, after labouring for some hours, we emerged by the edge of some fields of dhura, close by which

## Lost in a Marsh

stood the villages of the Nyuro. We knew quite well we were approaching some habitations, for we had heard cocks crowing during the morning. It was just as well that the Nyuro were not aggressively inclined, for they could have made our position in the forest very unpleasant. As it turned out they had taken fright and fled, having doubtless heard us felling the trees, and imagining we were a strong force of the Nuga.

We followed a track through the fields and high grass, and, after a little, found ourselves on the banks of the river Ruzi. They were steep and some fifteen feet high, with only a narrow path leading down to the water. This was quite impracticable for our camels, and, even had they been able to reach the water's edge, the crossing to the opposite bank would have been a tedious undertaking, for the water was deep and from twenty to thirty yards broad; besides, there was no advantage to be gained by crossing to the other side if we could find a road somewhere on the side we were on. Our attempts at finding a way were without avail, and, in the end, we had to retrace our steps through the forest and find a road round the stream further away from its banks, through marshes and grass so high that we were all completely hidden from view. It was quite evident that the best course for us to adopt was to march at least half a mile, or even a mile away from the river, where we were likely to find higher ground. We very often followed elephant tracks, and were sometimes fortunate in getting easy shots at hartebeest and waterbuck. I

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was sorry to have had no dealings with the Nyuro, who would, however, see we meant no harm, for we strictly left untouched all their belongings.

One night we saw a number of savages outside our zareba, but on challenging them they made off. I fancy they had come only out of curiosity, but it would be far nicer if they came by daytime, when they would be able to see much more. In order to let them know we were always on the watch, I fired off a shot from each of the four corners of the camp.

The following afternoon we camped a short distance from the banks of the second river Ruzi, but it was too late to think of crossing the same evening, so at daybreak I went down to the water with some of the men and the canvas boat, leaving instructions for the remainder to bring on the baggage animals by detachments to prevent undue crowding. It chanced that only four of my men could swim—two Abyssinians, one Soudanese, and one Somali. These four I sent across to the opposite bank, together with two men in the canvas boat, armed with rifles. One man having taken up his post as sentry on the higher ground, we commenced the operation of crossing the entire caravan. The water was only about seven feet deep, so that the camels without their loads were easily pulled across from the opposite bank, for they could just feel the bottom with their feet and still keep their heads out of water. One of the camels had a young one who followed its mother in the most loving manner imaginable, for it was totally regardless of the depth of the stream, and must have had to swim

## Crossing the Second Ruzi

for a short distance. The mules and donkeys swam across with but little trouble; the donkeys were obstinate until they saw the mules giving them a lead, when they entered the water without more ado. One ought to have some sympathy for the asses, seeing they were not nearly such good swimmers as the mules. The little canvas boat was most serviceable for carrying the goods across. A leather rope was fastened to each end, and the boat, loaded to the utmost, was pulled backward and forwards, and then conveyed the men two at a time. The sheep were driven across after one of my swimmers, who led the way with one of them. The entire caravan, consisting of fifteen camels, twenty-five sheep, ten mules, twenty-eight donkeys, and forty-eight men, and three dogs, had crossed the river without any mishap in under two hours.

On exploring the opposite bank of the river, I discovered that a mile or so up stream the water was shallow enough to be easily fordable, so that we really might have crossed without any trouble at all; still, it did not matter, for it was just as well we had undergone the present experience, as it was a preparation for other more serious work that lay in store for us. Some way further still down stream I found places we could have crossed dry-shod, though it would have been impossible for the animals to have descended the steep, rocky, and overgrown banks, whilst the bed of the river itself was most irregular. As we marched in the afternoon, I was much struck by the fertility of the soil, and wondered whether the day would eventually

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dawn when so vast an extent of magnificent land would bear crops in sufficient abundance to satisfy millions. At present, the land is given up to immense herds of antelope, elephants, rhino and giraffes.

The latter are exceedingly beautiful to watch in their wild state; they vary considerably in the markings on their body, some being brown and white, and others black and white. I found that when disturbed they never retired to any great distance. The ground, with its numerous bushes, was well suited for stalking, so that we might have knocked over any number of them. I decided to shoot one for the sake of its meat, and, having done so, returned to find a place for the caravan to halt and spend the night in. On returning later for the giraffe, I found an immense number of crows, scraggy-necked vultures, and the usual storks, yet, strange to say, nowhere could I discover the whereabouts of the animal I had shot. I continued looking until nightfall, and then, rather disappointed, made my way to camp, resolving to halt the next morning and institute a thorough good search, for the dead body must have been concealed somewhere or other.

As it happened, we had, unfortunately, camped in a district infested by the seroot fly, and all my camels were bleeding practically from head to foot in the most distressing manner. These pests are a little larger than a bluebottle, with a dark green head, brown back, and large transparent wings. They settle on their prey so gently as to attract no attention; they then drive right through the skin of their

## The Prickly Seroot Fly

victim an instrument far sharper than a needle, which immediately draws blood. Their sting is quite sharp. I have had many of them on my bare legs, and seen the blood trickle down almost at the same moment the sting has been felt. They can even penetrate through a flannel shirt and draw blood. There was another smaller fly with a bright green body that was also annoying, though not to such a degree as the seroot. The camels were the victims most sought after, and the donkeys and dogs were not so much appreciated as the mules and the men.

On seeing the painful way in which my camels had been affected, I considered it imperative to move on at daybreak, and leave the dead giraffe to the tender mercy of the carrion birds. After all, we should see plenty more giraffe, though no more camels. I was not far wrong in my expectations, for the next afternoon we saw a great herd of giraffe standing exactly in the line of our march, and I had but little difficulty in bowling over a fine old mare, whose entire skin we took off. The men were in high glee at the sight of such quantities of meat, and, as they passed by with the caravan, many of them drew their swords and knives, and cut off a slice of the raw meat to gnaw at along the road. I ordered them to form camp as soon as they reached a suitable spot, and leave the spare baggage animals with me, that we might bring into camp plenty of meat for everybody. On inspecting the giraffe's mouth, I found she had eight front teeth in the lower jaw, and six back teeth in each of the upper

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and lower jaws, making a total of thirty-two in all. The meat, which somewhat resembles veal, is excellent eating. The skin of a giraffe extends to an astonishing size when spread out on the ground. Before we could continue our march, the entire surface had to be thoroughly scraped, and then



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sprinkled over with alum or wood ashes, and kept well out of the sun. Even when thoroughly dried, the skin is of an extraordinary weight.

At the last camp one of the axes had been left behind, and, as we could not very well afford to lose this, I sent back two of the men to fetch it. They found several Shangkallas already appropriating

## Signs that we are tracked

our old zareba, but these luckily ran away and left the axe behind them. This was additional proof that our doings were watched daily, though we ourselves had no notion of it whatever.

Whilst spending the morning over the giraffe skin, I sent three men to inspect the road in front, so as to save us trouble in the afternoon. As they walked on through the bushes and over the grassy plains, they saw several waterbuck. One of these they shot, and after hiding the body with branches and grass, they returned to inform me of the results of their reconnaissance. They gave me a very sensible report about the country, saying they had seen nobody at all, and had shot a waterbuck and concealed it. Yet it was curious, on reaching the spot, to find that the ever-present savages had been there and carried off all the flesh, and the bones, and even the brains from the head. Nothing was left behind except the horns, and as they were a fine pair I took them.

After again crossing the second river Ruzi on the 10th of June, we saw in front of us several villages, and as we drew nearer I was astonished to find no one about. One would have thought that all the tribesmen would have run forth in numbers to view so unwonted a sight as we must have presented. Closer and closer we came till we learnt, to our astonishment, that there was nobody there at all to come out—they had all fled, and quite recently too. Everything had been left behind, and as they could not have left their homes more than a couple of hours previous to our arrival, it was evident they must

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have taken us for the Nuga. Though I was anxious to inspect one of the villages, I was determined that nobody should touch anything at all belonging to these people, whoever they might be, for we had still sufficient food to go on with, and I hoped that by leaving everything alone, news would spread before us of the friendliness of our intentions, and would induce others to stay in their villages and receive us.

I am of opinion that the villages belonged to the Shilluk tribe, though I had no proof. On entering one of the tukls, I found it to be wonderfully clean; the floor and walls had been carefully and smoothly plastered with mud, and every particle of dirt had been scrupulously swept away. There were several rather nice-looking dogs about the place, but beyond an occasional bark they took no notice of me. In one of the tukls I found a very old man lying down—too old to speak. He was merely a bag of bones, and the sole occupant of the place. There were several stores of dhura kept in diminutive tukls, built purposely for preserving it from the weather, and in the neighbourhood of the villages there was a good deal of dhura growing. Probably, by the time their present stores are finished, the new crop will be ready for use. My poor Somalis of the Esa tribe had declined to eat giraffe meat, and, being rather hungry at supper time, were observed to be picking at the ear of a dead waterbuck. They had never eaten giraffe flesh before, and had got it into their heads that it was unclean food. However, they became wiser as the days went by, and entirely

## The Embarrassing Ruzis

agreed with me, that, after all, giraffe flesh was really preferable to waterbuck ear. Many of the men had gone to the opposite extreme, and eaten so much meat of late that they had to draw heavily upon my medicine chest.

After we had left the villages, we found ourselves again on the banks of the first river Ruzi, now quite a formidable-looking stream. There were several villages on the opposite side, but the natives all fled, though I made no pretence whatever of crossing over to them. It struck me as somewhat remarkable, to know that, as we travelled northwards, we were marching between two rivers, each of them called Ruzi, the sources of both of which we had practically discovered. Sometimes they flowed within two miles of each other, at other times both rivers would be lost to view, and we did not know which we were most likely to strike again first. There appeared to be no reason in crossing the bigger, or first Ruzi, though, had we done so, we might have found a better road, for, as it happened, the track we were following on the left bank of the river vanished unaccountably, and we had no alternative but to cut our way through reed-looking grass some eight or ten feet high. On reaching the further side, we traversed a very lumpy, grassy plain. Look in whatever direction we might, the plain was interminable—we had done with the hills. Though the soil seemed good, the grass was of a coarse nature, very different from the nourishing grass we had found southwards. As night came on us, and there was no moon, we were forced to halt and

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camp. There was not a stick within miles of us, nor was there any water as far as we could see, for neither of the Ruzis was visible. Some of the men—one from each section—were quite ready, however, to take the cans and go forth in the darkness in search of water, whilst the remainder, somewhat tired after a twenty-miles' march, lay down and slept. There was a mound of earth near our bivouac, and, after levelling off the top, I prepared to spend the night on it, when I found, to my great discomfort, that I was being devoured by countless tiny yellow ants. These little persevering wretches, added to shoals of mosquitoes, considerably interfered with the night's rest.

## CHAPTER XXX

### APPROACHING THE SIRDAR'S DOMAINS

Through the swamps—Frightened villagers—We strike another river—And cross in safety—More marshes—Shangkalla scarecrows—“Fashoda! Fashoda!”—Ideal savages—An important river—Native fishermen—Impromptu ropes—Pulling the animals across stream—Bonfire communication—Milking a dead giraffe—An ocean of grass—Attacked by bees—More deserted villages.

IT was useless to remain longer than could possibly be helped in such a comfortless camp, so, at daybreak, we loaded up and moved on, and, after travelling for an hour, found ourselves on boggy ground. The further we went the worse became the swamp, and we had eventually to retrace our steps and work round it; but after successfully passing it, we encountered a far more formidable swamp that seemed interminable. Many of the donkeys and mules were bogged, and the camels could only move very slowly; we struggled over more than a mile of the marshy ground, and, whilst spying out the land with my glasses, to discover, if possible, a way out of it, I fancied I could see some higher and dry ground to our left. —Just then I caught sight of a crowd of Shangkallas straight in front moving towards us, whilst other small groups of threes and

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fours were intently watching us. What their intentions were I had no notion. My first impulse was to collect my caravan and get out of the swamp, which was for the most part knee-deep. I halted the leading animals, and sent out some men to inspect the ground to the left, whilst I kept an eye on the Shangkallas. There happened to be a couple of trees away to the left (not that these guaranteed dry ground, for to-day we had found single trees growing in the middle of the swamp), and I had told the men to wave signals from them if the ground were good. As soon as I saw their signal through the glasses, I turned the animals that had reached me in that direction, and sent back word to the rear of the caravan what direction to take. What became of all the Shangkallas I don't know, for, on entering some high grass, we lost sight of them, and on reaching dry ground they were nowhere visible. They were probably just as much in the fog as to who we were and what we were up to, as we were in regard to them.

It was nearly three hours later before the last of my caravan reached the dry ground. All the country around, at first appearance, looked alike, and it was impossible to know where swamps began and where they ended. Of course, after one has gone through the country once, one would have no difficulty on a second visit in traversing the whole of it dry-shod.

In the afternoon we moved on again from our camp by the two trees and came to many more villages, from which all the people, without

## Water Difficulties again

exception, had gone. We saw nobody and touched nothing, and towards evening camped in sight of some more villages, from which, with my glasses, I could distinctly see the people making off. We were again unfortunate with regard to our water, for it took the men three hours to fetch it. It must be remembered that a can holding several gallons of water is no light weight, and a man cannot walk quickly for a couple of miles with it. During their absence I amused myself by observing the stars and changing my photographic plates. As usual of late, the mosquitoes paid us friendly visits throughout the night.

The next morning we passed through the village from which I had seen the people making off. There were any number of fowl and guinea-fowl, but we touched nothing; and as we marched on, along a very good and well-worn track, we saw Shangkallas in the distance occupying every mound or high piece of ground, but they always disappeared when we came within five or six hundred yards of them. They had evidently felt the effects of rifles, and were afraid to come within what they considered to be a dangerous range. I felt extremely annoyed, and sorry that these poor savages should be so terribly afraid of us; they must have experienced severe treatment previously. I had no means of explaining to them that to do them any harm was farthest from our wishes, for we could not get within speaking distance, try how we would.

After a while we came to a thick clump of trees, where a fire was still smouldering, round which

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were pieces of a large fish. The villagers had evidently spent the night there, and had roasted fish for supper. Some way west of us we could see the reflection of a large amount of water, and concluded there must be a lake. Soon afterwards we crossed the first river Ruzi at its junction with a stream. The water came a little way over our waists, and, though the current was strong, the entire caravan got over without mishap. After crossing this river we came upon the most disheartening marshy ground imaginable. There was water everywhere—streams, mud, and high grass,—and, knowing full well that the caravan behind me would be in trouble, I resolved to find a place to halt, and then go back and help them. Some way in front of us I saw many Shangkallas by the side of a large tree watching our struggles, while others were perched like birds on various mounds of earth. Before reaching this tree I had to pass through a quantity of high grass, and, for the time being, lost sight of the Shangkallas; but, on the tree coming into view again, about a hundred yards off, they had all gone. The tree grew on a piece of rising ground, and for about two hundred yards on all sides there was no water at all. This was a very suitable spot for bringing together the caravan, and, whilst I returned to cheer the men up, I sent forward those men who were with me to reconnoitre the land ahead. On looking through my glasses, I saw several villages in the direction in which we intended marching, and congregated in front of them, were several hundred Shangkallas, of whose intentions I was quite ignorant. It seemed

## The Ubiquitous Mosquito

to me that the best course would be to struggle along through the marshes, and to act as though there were no Shangkallas at all—beyond, of course, keeping a sharp look-out. Close to our halt for breakfast was a narrow stream, neck deep, and just on the other side of it a small village, abandoned some months previously. It struck me as very remarkable that there should be human beings who prefer to build their houses in the middle of an unhealthy marsh, and nightly to be worried by thousands of mosquitoes, and I often wonder whether men who are brought up from childhood amongst mosquitoes are ever troubled by these pests.

As soon as the caravan arrived, and the scouts had returned and reported nothing but water ahead, we set about our breakfasts, the Somalis faring well on a baby camel that was born that morning. As soon as all were refreshed we loaded up again, for none of us had any wish to spend the night surrounded by swamps. We crossed the deep little stream, and then began to struggle and flounder along through mud and water, mostly waist deep. Very often we could see no distance at all, owing to the high reedy grass, and, when we did, we only saw Shangkallas watching us as before. Some of the mules and most of the donkeys sank deep into the mud, and had to be unloaded and hauled out by ropes, the loads being transferred to men's heads through the swamps. As for the camels, they managed wonderfully well. Though they moved slowly, they nevertheless carried their loads through the water without requiring any unloading. I had

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always been given to understand that a camel was totally unfitted to negotiate swampy land, but this journey had proved the belief fallacious. Here was a case in point where the donkeys and mules were helpless while the camels worked admirably.

After we had all eventually struggled to the end of the swamps, we reached some higher ground covered with large fields of dhura in full bloom. There were several raised platforms here and there, erected by the Shangkallas as places from which to fling stones and drive away the birds from their crops. On the present occasion they had made use of them to watch our movements. Some of them were still sticking to their posts when I came within shouting distance, so I called out at the top of my voice, "Fashoda! Fashoda!" and they, in reply, pointed out with their spears the direction of the place, and then jumped down and ran away. We took a track that circled through the fields where dhura was growing some ten feet high, and, on emerging into the open, saw another village in the direction in which we were marching. Between us and the village was a fast-flowing stream waist deep. Until we reached the stream the people stuck to their village, but when they saw we were actually crossing, as though a stream of this description was no impediment to us, they all fled with the exception of about a dozen warriors. They were fine-looking fellows in their natural state, and, with their long spears and heads adorned with ostrich feathers, were very picturesque. I was hoping they would stand their ground and allow me to come up

## Excessive Timidity

to them, or else come to me themselves ; but nothing of the sort—the moment I had crossed the water they wheeled off in single file, running with a very high, prancing step and with wonderful agility. They were perfect savages to look at, and I would have given worlds to have been able to talk to them.

After passing the village we entered better country, and camped on a grassy plain on the outskirts of a forest. It was very pleasant marching through thickly wooded country after the moist experience of the last few days. We passed many villages consisting of from three to ten houses apiece, with great numbers of fowls and dogs, and large crops of dhura ; all the people, however, had fled. Presently we came to an open bit of country and noticed two people walking along very slowly ahead of us, so I ran up to see who they were. They turned out to be two women, one of whom was certainly doing her share of labour, for she was carrying a child and a basket of goods on her head, and was also leading the other woman, who was blind. They were so terribly frightened that they were going to be killed that they could listen to nothing. On my endeavouring to explain to them that I would give them beads as soon as my caravan arrived, they, in fear for their lives, pulled off the beads from their own waists and handed them to me. "Take everything we have," they clearly intended to imply, "but spare our lives." On the caravan coming up we pitched camp, and I presented the ladies with some beads, salt, and meat,

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

and they in return showed me where to water our animals. In spite of this, they were still very much afraid; and when we finally left them, we were no wiser as to who they were, or anything else, than we were before we overtook them. They had, however, saved us a great deal of trouble with regard to the water.

We passed by many more villages, all of which had quite recently been vacated. We then marched for many miles over plains of very coarse grass, and, to our utter astonishment, found ourselves on the banks of an important river. We had latterly been marching through high grass, and by sheer good fortune struck the river just at a point where an open space had been cleared. This was evidently a spot much frequented by the Shangkallas, who no doubt came to catch fish, for there were many sticks lying about, and also a fish-hook, some rope, a harpoon, and no end of big fish-bones. The water, which was eight to ten feet deep and quite thirty yards broad, flowed in a south-westerly direction at nearly three miles an hour. I found, by observations of the stars, that we had struck this river at lat.  $7^{\circ} 50'$ , but whence it came I had no idea, and I have always regretted there was no time at my disposal to turn back and examine its source.

My chief consideration at present was how to get to the other side of it. I thought, quite possibly, we might find a route along the bank, for I felt sure the river would very shortly flow north again. I therefore despatched a small party to explore, and they reported a very bad road through

## The Value of American Sheeting

high grass, and that the river made several bends before flowing northwards. There was, therefore, nothing for it but to cross. I called up my head Soudanese and asked him how he proposed to get the camels over the river. "Oh!" he said, "God only knows, but I should put cloth in all their ears to save them from sinking owing to the water flowing into them." It was quite certain we could not cross the river without the help of ropes. Our leather ropes were not nearly long enough, and, even if they were, they would never have withstood the strain that would have been put upon them. In our perplexity I remembered our loads of unbleached American sheeting, which was in strips some twenty or thirty yards long and about a yard broad. This we twisted up to resemble ropes, and tied two or three of them together, according to our requirements. Thus we had as serviceable a rope as anybody could wish to have, and as much of it as we wanted. I used this on many occasions, and I consider it far preferable for travellers to the ordinary rope. The cloth is lighter and, I believe, stronger, and, in addition to this, it is a useful article of barter with some tribes, is unequalled for clothing one's followers, and is useful in no end of other ways. Whilst I was manufacturing the ropes I sent Shahzad Mir and twenty men to the opposite side of the river by means of the canvas boat. Their duty was to cut away the bank and prepare it for landing the animals. As soon as all were ready I sent one end of the rope over to Shahzad Mir and then commenced operations on one of the camels. We first

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

of all tied up its legs so that it would be unable to use them, then fastened to the beast's head an airtight water-can to keep the head out of water, and lastly tied the other end of Shahzad Mir's rope round the camel's body. Unfortunately for us the banks were steep and muddy, so we had literally to lift the camel up by sheer strength and drop it into the river. Until one tries to lift a camel, no idea can be formed of its extraordinary weight. As the men lifted they all shouted, and the powerless camel grunted in rage; then, the moment it reached the water, the shouting began on the opposite bank as they hauled the animal across. During the operations many a long-nosed alligator would show itself above the water to spy out the most tasty-looking victim. But we were always ready for them, for on both banks there were men, told off with loaded rifles, who popped at the intruders in the most merciless manner. The noise we made while crossing the river must have been heard a long way off, but, excepting the alligators, nobody, as far as I knew, came to have a look at us.

To expedite the work, I had two ropes. Whilst one was pulling the camel across, the second one was being brought over by two men in the canvas boat; one man to let out the rope, which was fastened to the shore, and the other to paddle. To cross the river before the rope was expended was perhaps the toughest job of all, for all the time the boat was being carried down stream. Now and then the Soudanese who was paddling failed to reach the bank, and had to paddle back again, whilst

## A Camel's Humanity

the Abyssinian, who was a very smart lad at handling the rope, had to haul it all again and coil it up in readiness for casting out again on the second attempt. Even with such a deep, powerful stream as this the baby camel showed its affection for its mother by making many ineffectual attempts to jump into the river and follow her, as she was being hauled across; but in spite of its affection we would not let it risk its life, and pulled it across like the rest. We all looked upon the camels as a reserve of food when our present stores had run out, so every effort was made to land them safely. Some of the camels at first struggled to the best of their ability, but after they found their legs were effectually bound, and they got a ducking into the bargain for their exertions, they remained quiet and were pulled across like great logs of wood. This is the only occasion on which I have seen a camel's face look at all human, for sometimes, when their heads went under water, they rose again by reason of the water-can, and then opened their mouths and gasped for breath, and wore an expression exactly like any of us would put on, under the same unusual treatment—an expression that is too well known to be described. To see a man in this predicament is amusing enough, but a camel is even more so. The sight was so funny that I inwardly hoped that each camel would struggle a little and get a ducking, as otherwise the passage bore some resemblance to a funeral.

After we had successfully got all the camels over we took the mules in hand—a comparatively easy

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

job. The first one was fastened to the end of a rope, and the remainder swam across most manfully. The mules were very fine swimmers, and took to it very willingly, as they seemed to know quite well that they had to cross, and made no bones about it. As to the donkeys, they were most obstinate and gave a good deal of trouble, but their efforts at resistance were overmatched by our numbers. We would fasten four or five on to the rope at the same time, and then pull them across. The donkeys were not at all strong swimmers, and never seemed to understand what they had to make for on the opposite bank, so, after once trying them by themselves, we decided that the risk was too great. The sheep were also tied to the rope and hauled across, otherwise they would have been a very tempting bait for the alligators. After all the animals had crossed without any mishap, we fastened two ropes round the canvas boat and hauled it backwards and forwards laden with the baggage and the men. The boat was quite equal to carrying three men in addition to some baggage. The two dogs waited patiently their time to cross with me.

We had started operations at daybreak, and the afternoon was well advanced before the passage of the river was completed, though we had not rested a single moment throughout the day. Some of the boys were told off to cook the dhura, and brought it to the men as they stood waist-deep in the water loading the boat or hauling at the rope. Though we had all crossed the river without any

## A Land of Beacon Lights

mishap, we were landed in the midst of high grass—a very unsuitable spot for camping in. Luckily, there was an open place a few hundred yards from the river-side, and there we carried all our property and spent rather an uncomfortable night, owing to the attacks of ants and mosquitoes.

After marching some miles further northwards, through woods and coarse grass, we came to several villages from which all the people had gone with the exception of one man, and he, too, much to my disappointment, followed their example before we could get within speaking distance.

There is a custom in vogue in the country we were passing through, which was common in old England in years gone by. It consists in lighting bonfires as a signal to neighbouring tribes, the volumes of smoke curling up towards the skies being seen from a long way off, and acting as a warning to other tribes of our approach. I am quite sure this method of communication was thoroughly understood amongst the tribes themselves. Whenever I saw smoke ahead, I now knew quite well that we should come to villages and see nobody. It is clear, they must have been raided before we came, or else there would have been no need of arranging amongst themselves such a system of warning.

As we passed through the villages, I noticed quantities and quantities of dried fish lying about everywhere, as well as dhura and some excellent white flour. As our commissariat was running short, I camped half a mile away from the villages,

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

and then returned with four or five men and took away sufficient food to last us for two days, leaving in their place their full value in the shape of beads, salt, and cloth. This was the first time we had taken anything from a village, and as the strict way in which we had respected the property of these savages had produced none of the results I hoped it would, I looked forward to these villagers clearly understanding that we had no desire of appropriating goods, but of buying them, and that they would use some other signal to warn the tribes ahead not to run away. That afternoon we saw more elephants and giraffes, and shot another giraffe for its meat. Some of the men also took advantage of the opportunity of milking the animal as she lay dead. Milk from a dead giraffe, though abundant, does not strike one as altogether appetizing, though on the day in question it was pronounced excellent.

On leaving the village where we had made an exchange we travelled for days over an immense plain. The going was fairly good, though sometimes the ground was much cut up by elephants tramping over it after heavy rain. There was always some uncertainty about finding water, so I used to give the direction myself, and place a man half a mile or so to the right and left of me, and one of us would generally manage to hit upon some pool or other at the time we wanted water.

One morning we struck the right bank of the river we had just crossed, and on the opposite shore saw a large village—the most important we had

## An Alligator robs us

seen. The houses were of a different shape to those we had come across lately : they were higher and more pointed at the roof, and the village itself seemed to be surrounded by a mud wall. We had, doubtless, reached the boundaries of another tribe, though even with the aid of my glasses I could see nobody living there. Our way lay along the banks of the river, and we had to cross several nasty little streams running into it. As, generally speaking, these were about thirty yards broad, and in some parts quite six feet deep, all this meant a great deal of work, for the animals, except the camels, had to be unloaded, and the goods carried across on men's heads or in the canvas boat. In all these water-courses we used to spear a good many fish several pounds in weight and well worth eating. There were also plenty of alligators. On one occasion, whilst crossing a stream of this description by moonlight, one of these brutes caught hold of one of the sheep, and in a second had pulled it under water. I was very thankful that none of us had been snapped up. We must have offered no end of chances, for we were standing up to our knees in the water for an hour or two, and, at the time when the sheep was taken, we were actually driving them across, and not more than a couple of yards from the one that was seized. Curiously enough, this was the only animal that was taken by an alligator, yet we crossed many rivers and streams infested by them. My own opinion is that in entering water overrun with alligators the chances are highly in favour of coming out again in

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

safety. The same rule, I should imagine, applies to sharks.

We travelled for many miles over the plains, crossing several other water-courses. There was not a single tree in sight, and so flat was the land that, as far as the eye could see, there was nothing but green grass; it seemed as though we were in the midst of a green ocean. One morning we hailed on the horizon—with as much joy as a mariner would welcome the mast of a ship at sea—a distant tree, and, as we journeyed towards it, we found a small forest. Nothing could have suited us better, for the camels were sorely in need of food more adapted to their liking than green grass. Whilst waiting under a fine tree for the caravan, I was attacked by a swarm of bees, and had to run at full speed for a long way before I could rid myself of their stings. I was, however, duly recompensed for my punishment, as my Soudanese revenged the onslaught by taking all the honey and presenting me with what I required—a most welcome gift, when one is reduced to chupatties pure and simple. After leaving the forest, we followed a track that ran along the bank of the river, and took us through and close to several villages, all of which had evidently been abandoned for a long time. Judging from the high grass that grew around all the tukls, I should say that nobody had lived in them for six or eight months. During this period we were sometimes visited by terrific storms, but I think we all preferred them to mosquitoes, who disappeared whilst the storm lasted.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### WITH THE SIRDAR

A formidable river—We lose some animals—A nasty swamp—Outbreak of fever—The Keir river—Sudd—Struggles with floating islands—We reach and cross the Sobat—The rivers—The first sign of civilization—Nasser—Egyptian, and not French!—A joyous welcome—Departure for Sobat Fort—Dinkas—The gunboat *Fateh*—An Anglo-Egyptian welcome—Fashoda—Break up of the caravan—Arrival at Omdurman—Baggage animals sold by auction—Farewells—Cairo.

ONE day we were pulled up short by a formidable river, which is probably that marked on maps as the Upeno. It apparently flowed in westwards from the Abyssinian hills. Whilst searching the banks for a suitable place to cross, I found another stream flowing into the river from a southern direction which somewhat restricted the limits of our choice of crossing. The river we thus had to cross was quite forty yards broad, very deep, but luckily with a very sluggish current. We were not quite so fortunate in our passage this time, for three of the donkeys were drowned (a disaster caused entirely by their own struggles), and four of the sheep shared a similar fate. On leaving the banks of this second river we came to another abandoned village, and then followed a track that brought us into a swamp.

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

As the track had led us into it, I concluded it would take us out again. On, on we floundered, higher and higher rose the water, until, by the time the sun was setting, frogs were croaking, mosquitoes were swarming, and there was a dampness and chilliness in the air that went to our very bones. To have spent the night in such a quagmire would have meant a stepping-stone to the graveyard. I hurried on ahead as fast as the weeds and water would allow me, hoping we had already reached the worst point of the swamp; but my expectations were cut short, for the water had soon risen above my waist, and I signalled back to the shivering caravan to retrace their steps. We floundered back again through the tall, wet grass—in spite of our exertions there was no warmth in such a place as this,—and it was not until long after dark that we again trod on firm soil. Though we were actually out of the water and damp grass, we were badly off that night. We could get scarcely any wood for our fires, and the mosquitoes were altogether beyond description. Several of the men were overcome with fever and pains in the back and head. All of them I doctored with hot tea and fever medicines. It was very bad luck having my men knocked over by fever so near the end of their journey, seeing that they had been marching for months without one being really sick.

As soon as daylight came we circumvented the swamp that had so baffled us, and, with only one stream to cross, reached a large abandoned village on the banks of the river. We were evidently

## Another Camel Dinner

getting closer to people, for several Shangkallas had spent the night in one of the tukls of the village. We were lucky in finding such a good place for a midday halt, as the men were able to get perfect shelter from the sun inside the tukls, and had plenty of wood over which to cook the meat of another



NATIVE BOATS ON THE LOWER NILE.

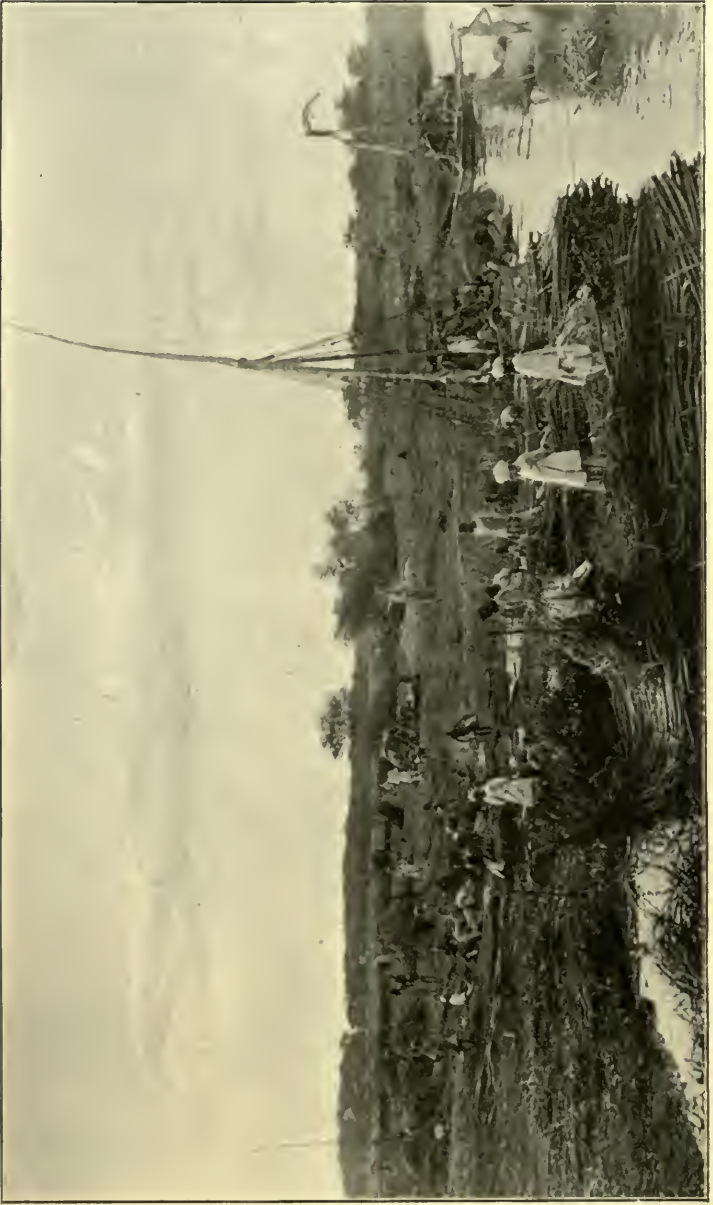
camel. The more camels we ate the less we should have to pull across the next river. Not far from this village was a second village built at the junction of another river flowing from the east into the stream on whose banks we were encamped. This new river is called, I believe, the Keir or Baro, and, at the time we saw it, the water was forty or fifty yards

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

broad, and must have been flowing at five or six miles an hour. No doubt it had recently been swollen by the commencement of the Abyssinian rains. I should have liked to cross this river and continue our northerly course, but, had we done so, we must have lost most, if not all, of our transport.

We had now reached the point where the Keir or Baro and the two Ruzis effected a junction with the river we had crossed at lat.  $7^{\circ} 50'$ . These combined streams, known as the Sobat, now flowed in a north-westerly direction to a junction with the White Nile. Had we crossed the Keir, we should have either followed the north or right bank of the Sobat to the White Nile, or else travelled north and struck the big river further north—probably below Fashoda. As it was, we crossed the combined rivers, and followed the left or south bank of the Sobat. Our wisest plan was to recross our own familiar river and travel north along the left or opposite bank. Though this river was almost the same breadth as the Keir, the current was nothing like so fast. Its volume had increased considerably owing to the eastern and southern rains, and I was most anxious to lose no time for fear we ourselves should be delayed by weeks of wet weather. Enormous pieces of land were being borne away on the surface of the water, and, whenever a man misbehaved himself, I used to say that I should put him on one of these islands with a leg of camel meat and send him off to Fashoda.

The afternoon was well advanced when we began to get our animals and baggage across the



SHEIKH DUGL'S CAMP ON THE NILE.

## "Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

river, and as we worked on through the evening aided by the light of the moon, the water every moment rose higher and higher, the current became swifter, and the alligators larger and bolder, requiring a deal of attention from the rifles, while huge islands came sailing along one after another in quick succession. These were our greatest dread, for sometimes one of them would get caught up in our long rope of cloth stretching across the river, then others would sail against it, and the strain on our rope became enormous. The more islands that floated against it, the more men had to lay hold of each end of the rope; and we found it most exhausting work, resembling a long tug-of-war. It generally happened that, just when we were beginning to feel we could withstand the strain no longer, the rope would slip over the mass of land, and, without losing a moment, we would fix on another camel and try and pull it over before another island was upon us. Each animal meant a very long pull, for the current carried them a long way downstream. The boat-loads of baggage were, somehow or other, carried the furthest, and before the boat could get from one bank to the other, it had to make quite a voyage. Everybody worked well. Even those who were down with fever did their share, for they took care of the baggage animals on the banks, and prevented them from straying. We were all determined to cross that night, as, for all we knew, the river, judging from its behaviour, would be double its size by the morning. Considering the difficulties we had to strive against, we were

## Alas! Poor Donkeys

lucky in losing only four donkeys. Amongst these four dead bodies we were all very sorry to find our only two original donkeys from Adis Ababa. Poor little chaps! they died during the night, owing to the vast amount of water they had swallowed on their passage. Latterly they had been carrying no



BRINGING IN WOOD BY BOAT.

load at all, and were great favourites with everybody, and always went by the name of "Adis Ababa," whereas the other donkeys went by the name of "Sigrya"—a Turkana word. Before the last boat-load of baggage had crossed the river it was close on midnight. We were all thoroughly tired out, and, in spite of the countless mosquitoes,

## "Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

lay down, as we were, in the tall, damp grass on the very edge of the river banks, and slept soundly till sunrise the following morning.

After crossing the high grass, we hit off a track which eventually brought us to the banks of the river again, just opposite some villages of the Nuer tribe, on the other side of the water. A number of the people ran away, whilst others, possessed of more confidence, stood their ground, and, in reply to my constant shouting, pointed out with their spears the direction of Fashoda, and gave me to understand that our best route lay further away from the river. Their instructions were self-evident, as, on account of the tall, thickly growing reeds, it would have been very hard work to have proceeded along the banks ; yet, on endeavouring to discover the track they spoke of away from the river, we contrived to run into the middle of swamps again. It would have been useless to have blundered on with the whole caravan, so we halted on a few feet of sound soil, and, having unloaded the animals, instituted a thorough exploration of the country for some miles round. I fancy the Nuers must have caught sight from the other banks of the river of our little parties shooting out in every direction, and must have certainly been filled with compassion when they saw the hopeless way in which each separate group became bogged, for, as we were debating on what course to follow, whether to cross the river to the northern bank or retrace our steps, I saw about a dozen of the Nuers coming towards us. They had crossed the river from their villages

## We conciliate the Nuers

in dug-outs. I was determined that these fellows, whether filled with curiosity or anxiety to aid us, should, at any rate, have no cause to fear us. So, telling all my men to remain where they were, I went out alone unarmed to meet them, and bade them welcome to my camp. They were very soon quite at home, sitting on the ground amongst my own men. They became merry and talkative; many of them were finely made men, with pleasant faces and fuzzy red hair. They each carried a couple of spears as well as a round-knobbed club. Many more came strolling into our camp on seeing what comfortable quarters their brethren were in.

This was all very well, but we were making no headway in discovering a route that would avoid the swamps, though we were, even now, in a somewhat moist locality. I was well aware of our position on the chart. I had taken my latitude, and knew exactly how far north we had journeyed. This knowledge, added to that derived from the work of the plane-table, so carefully carried out by Shahzad Mir, convinced me that we were close to a post called Nasser, situated on the banks of the river we were on—namely, the Sobat. Before starting on our travels, I had been given to understand that if we ever managed to reach Nasser, we should find the French in possession there. French or English, or any other nationality, it mattered little in our present condition. We were in need of food; we had found but little to shoot of late, and had been feeding on our baggage-camels. The swamps, too, and heavy work entailed in crossing so much



THE VILLAGE OF NYURO.

## My Triumph over Shyness

water, was telling on several of my men. They had done some very hard work, and I felt anxious to get them better food and drier beds at night. Our first consideration was to get clear of the swamps; and our "kismet" turned out to be wonderfully lucky. The Nuers who were in our camp knew both Nasser and Fashoda, and were evidently proud of having actually seen the "babur" (steamboat). After a little, they agreed to show me the best way out of the swamps, and to conduct me to Nasser. In return for their help I gave them some salt, blue beads, and our remaining goat. The Nuers and the Nyuaks, who live further west, have always been notorious for their intense shyness and anxiety to avoid all dealings with any Europeans who have come across them. It was, therefore, very remarkable, and quite contrary to our expectations, that these Nuers should, of their own accord, cross a big and fast-flowing river like the Sobat, and come to see me in my own camp.

These people were especially welcome, and presented a very strange appearance, for one or two of them actually wore a piece of cloth. For many a day we had met nothing but tribes absolutely naked. The very fact that they freely entered our camp, and that some of them possessed cloth, at once made me reflect that the feelers of civilization had already touched them. It spoke wonders for the centre of the administration—the outskirts of which, we had just entered—for only a few months after the Anglo-Egyptian flags had replaced the Mahdi's standard at Khartum, the very beginning

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

of more beneficial results to follow was already being experienced and welcomed at a distance of six to seven hundred miles. More than six months ago we had set forth from the capital of Abyssinia ; we had witnessed the state of those tribes who were completely subject to the Ethiopian king, and we had travelled on to the outskirts of Menelik's domains, and seen tribes who had merely been touched by his power and influence. Thence we had travelled for months through an unknown land, inhabited by simple, naked savages, lying between King Menelik's country and the Sirdar's rule. To-day we had reached the first tribe who had felt the influence of the latter. I could not help comparing the fates of these outlying tribes who had been touched by the administrative might of either ruler, and wondered what would eventually be the fate of the country and tribes situated 'twixt Sirdar and Menelik.

The good Nuers explained to me there were two ways out of the swamp : one by retracing our steps and working a long way round, the other—a much shorter one—by crossing a little river. I chose the latter route, and before very long we were once more in full swing, with our canvas boat hauling, driving and pulling. At sunset our guide took us to a small wood, on some really dry land, and cheered us all up by explaining that on the morrow we should reach Nasser. Rain fell heavily as we commenced loading up at daybreak, yet we cared little for it in the excitement of meeting Europeans again. Owing to the saturated state of the ground

## We come in Sight of Nasser

our progress was slow, and every mile became more arduous, for throughout the morning the rain never ceased.

About noon we caught our first glimpse of Nasser; we could just distinguish a number of white tents and a single *delaib* palm. At this juncture our Nuer guide asked if he might return—a request I readily agreed to, for now it was quite plain sailing. He was delighted, on leaving us, by receiving a few yards of American unbleached calico. As soon as we had arrived within half a mile of the fort, I considered it advisable to halt and camp, for we were all by this time very hungry, and were looking forward to the slaughter of another camel; and I did not care to go straight up to the French post in a dripping condition and with an empty stomach. So we set about making our *zareba*—pitching tents and all the other customary duties. Looking through my glasses, I could see men in white running about on the mud ramparts and spying at us through a telescope. We had evidently attracted the attention of the sentries on watch, and had caused no end of consternation. I felt quite sure that before very long they would be sending out parties to discover who we were and what we wanted. This proved to be the case, for I was waiting in my tent for breakfast when several of my men rushed up to me, rifles in hand, saying there were a number of soldiers coming towards us from the fort. “Never mind,” I said, “put down your rifles and let them come. I’ve no intention of fighting the French. You will probably find they



OUR NATIVE BOAT ON THE SOBAT.

## British instead of French !

will help us, and give us something to eat." These words scarcely seemed to appease the feelings of my men, who continued to warn me of their closer approach, till at length I heard strange voices outside the zareba, and, stepping from my tent, saw, to my utter astonishment, my own men shaking hands with the soldiers of Nasser, who showed themselves to be Egyptians. It was still more gratifying to see behind this advanced guard the commander of the fort himself striding towards me with a smiling countenance, and in a moment afterwards I was receiving a hearty shake of the hand, not from a Frenchman, but from a Britisher—Lieutenant MacEwen. MacEwen, on his side, had seen, with no small wonderment, our caravan. He had noticed the composition of our transport, and had concluded we must be a force of Abyssinians. Quite recently the Abyssinians had penetrated thus far, and, in his eyes, we might have been the forerunner of a large body of troops behind. We both had puzzled our heads and acted cautiously without any cause for it. At the time of my approach there was no flag hoisted at the fort; but I, in my turn, might have waved my Union Jack. Yet, had I done so, and had the French been in occupation, they might have construed my motive in a wrong light. As a matter of fact, the French, I think, only seven months previously, were there; but after the fall of the Dervish power, Nasser, like many other Egyptian posts, was reoccupied by the Anglo-Egyptian forces.

Nasser fort is merely composed of mud

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

strengthened by a couple of Krupp guns, formerly the property of the Khalifa, and held by a hundred and sixty Egyptian soldiers under the command of this single British officer. Nasser cannot at present be recommended as a health resort. The little place, without any shelter excepting from tents, is flanked on one side by the river Sobat and on the others by swamps. Mosquitoes, at sunset, make themselves distinctly felt. At the time of my visit a great number of the soldiers were down with fever—in fact, there were only fifty who were well enough to appear on parade. Yet, in spite of this, and of their being six hundred miles away from Khartum, the centre of administration, the Britisher was healthy, contented, and cheerful. He had nothing to complain of; he was carefully and tactfully carrying out his duties by bringing an encouraging influence to bear over the surrounding tribes, and helping, by his share, to promote and build up the great aims of the governor of the Egyptian provinces. Of course, Nasser is to-day in its infancy—but a promising one; and there is every reason to expect that, under equally tactful management, the country will be drained, the tribesmen will be eager to cultivate, and that the forests will help to open up the land.

On entering the fort, I felt we were really back in civilization, so overpowering is the feeling of meeting a European after endless arrays of naked, unsophisticated savages. Yet, in spite of the pleasure of meeting and feeding with one of my own countrymen, and of chatting over the latest

## We get a River Lift

news he could give me, I deemed it advisable to continue my march down stream the next morning, for I was afraid that if we rested many of my men would be down with fever. As it happened, every man had been well enough to walk into Nasser.



A SOUDANESE REGIMENT.

Nasser is a hundred and eighty miles by river to the next Anglo-Egyptian post, Sobat, at the junction of the Sobat and White Nile. Fortunately, MacEwen was able to provide us with a small native sailing-boat called a "filuka." We therefore arranged to put into it our baggage and four or five men who had been weakened by

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

fever. And whilst the boat floated down stream, or was rowed by a party of Egyptian soldiers, we marched along the banks with all our baggage animals, hailing the boat at breakfast-time and at nightfall. He was also able to supply us with plenty of flour, rice, and ghi; thus, for the remainder



THE NILE.

of our journey, we all fared sumptuously. For the first two days from Nasser we had several marshes to encounter, and a stream seven feet deep. Our difficulties, however, were comparatively small, owing to the diminution in our baggage. We soon reached some Nuer and Nyuak villages, and the men ran forward to salute us by crying out, "Abābā!"

## An Effusive Soudanese

and holding forth a hand to be shaken. They also showed their friendly disposition by conducting us from village to village, receiving a piece of cloth in return for their services. One evening we came to a village of only four houses, close to the river bank. Curiously enough, they were empty, and, as we had undergone more wet work in crossing another stream, I decided to halt there to rest the men for half a day, and await the arrival of our boat. The next morning we met a man wearing a blue shirt. This was somewhat strange, as, excepting a few who had contrived to possess a piece of white cloth, everybody, including many of the women, ran about stark naked. This blue-clad individual turned out to be a Soudanese, and, when a boy, had been captured by the dervishes. He rushed up, seized my hand, and began to implant kisses thereon, saying he had heard of my coming, and had journeyed a long way from his village to greet me.

Farey—for that was the man's name—travelled with us for a few days, and, amongst other interesting items of news, informed me that the Khalifa intended returning later on for the execution of further mischief. The sheikhs of several of the villages would frequently meet us on the road, and bring me a sheep as a present. These gifts I refused to accept, explaining to them that at the same time I was quite prepared to buy, and they were generally willing to let them go for a piece of cloth. Without exception these headmen were kind-hearted fellows, always ready to help me; they would march with me throughout the whole day, and at

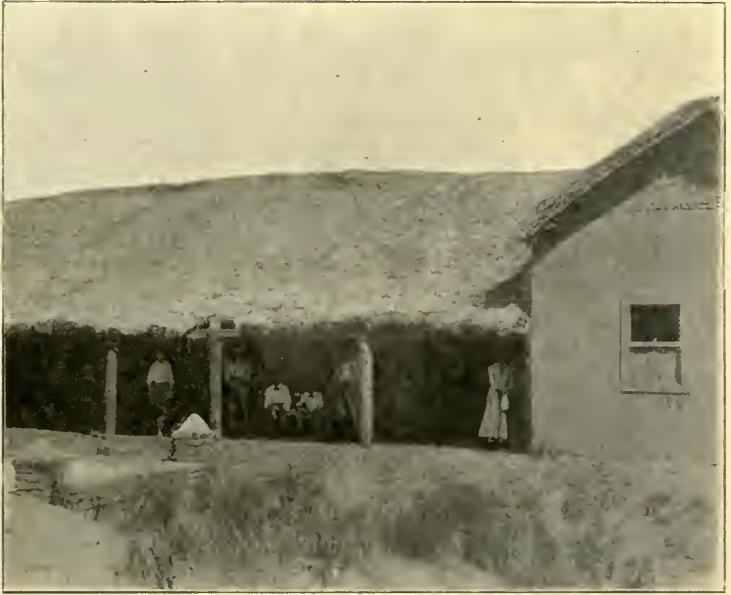
## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

night-time would sleep inside my zareba, and enjoy a supper of rice and ghi, which we could now easily afford. They would tell me how they were just beginning to learn what we were like, and to know how ready we always were to pay for what we had. They also gave me to understand that they would cultivate more than they had done recently, were they only sure of the non-interference of the dervishes. I always told them that as long as the Ingliz were anywhere near them they had nothing to fear on that score.

Throughout the country we now traversed we saw herds of hartebeest and waterbuck, and guinea-fowl, quail, partridges, and the golden-crested crane. There are also giraffes, hippos, and elephants. On the last day of June we were visited by the head man of the Dinka tribe; he brought us fowl and cow's milk for sale, or rather for presentation, and was delighted at receiving a few white beads, the price of each fowl. It is always a puzzle to know what class of bead will be appreciated. One tribe will go in ecstasies over some that another tribe will turn up their noses at. The Dinka chief showed me his men fishing in a shallow of the river. These sportsmen were standing nearly waist deep in the water, armed with bent sticks about eight feet long. One of the ends had a spike attached to it, and was joined to the other end by a string. The Dinka appeared to be better off than the Nuers and Nyuaks, for they had more ground under cultivation, and possessed many more sheep, cattle, and fowl. They, however, did not strike me as being quite

## A Sheikh who knew Gordon

such fine men ; they too are fond of cloth, though they do not wear it. On reaching the land of the Dinkas we found wood, which had been plentiful, grown, somewhat scarce. The sheikhs, however, sent us a supply from the villages. One of these governors was exceptionally kind. He came from



THE BRITISH RESIDENT'S HOUSE AT ATBARA

the village of Rouay, and had previously lived with Gordon in Khartum.

On the 2nd of July we reached the first village of the Shilluks, called, I think, Najok, where the sheikh (by name Munyan) came forth to meet me and took me unawares by kissing my hand. He said he had heard an Ingliz was on the road and

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

had been awaiting my arrival for days. He brought me sheep, milk, fowl, and beer. There was no difficulty in talking with the people of these districts, for there were always individuals on both sides who spoke Arabic. Munyan talked a deal about the dervishes, and was evidently in fear they might reappear one day.

The next morning we commenced our early march through bush country about half a mile from the banks of the river, when I was astonished to hear the noise of a steamboat or babur. I made all haste to the water's edge, and, on catching sight of the boat, called out to the owners to stop, and that I was an Englishman. Doctor Bray, who was on board, was somewhat astonished at finding one of his countrymen suddenly popping up in the middle of Africa before sunrise, amongst the reeds and bush of the river's bank. As he informed me we should find another boat at anchor lower down stream, I refused every offer of hospitality, especially as I knew the supplies on board were being taken to the remote defenders of Nasser. These steamers from Khartum pay periodical visits to the posts up stream, such as Fashoda, Sobat, and Nasser, bringing supplies, stores, papers, post, and so forth. They are by way of turning up every three weeks, but sometimes have to be utilized for more pressing duties, when the three weeks' separation from the civilized world is prolonged to double the length of time. Soon after parting from Doctor Bray, we encountered our last crossing in the form of a "khor" of the river called the Khor Fillus. Our animals, by this time,

## The Last of the Ruzi

had grown so accustomed to water that they had almost become amphibious, and consequently gave us no trouble whatever. The novel sight attracted to the spot a considerable number of natives who watched with keen curiosity our proceedings. Some of them crossed over from the opposite villages in their dug-outs.

A little lower down stream we came across the gunboat H.H.S. *Fateh* at anchor, commanded by Captain Escombe, R.N. His men were busily engaged on shore cutting a supply of wood—a substitute for coal. A few hours later we caught sight of the Anglo-Egyptian post of Sobat. As we drew near, the joint flags were hoisted to welcome us, whilst the officer in command, a fine old Turk, buckled on his sword and walked out to meet us. He and his staff had made every preparation for our comfort. The old Turk, in spite of his isolation, was proud of his command. At Sobat we saw the last of our river, the Ruzi, whose source we had endeavoured to follow for months. Though it had joined with other rivers some 180 miles back to form this single stream the Sobat, we still had a feeling of attachment for it, engendered by the fact that a portion of this water had at times supplied us with a necessity of life and at others placed difficulties in our path which had always given us a zest to overcome. Here at last the two Ruzis flowed into the mighty waters of the Nile. Their present course was changed, they were engulfed, carried away to be lost in the unfathomable ocean or in evaporation on their downward journey across the burning deserts.



H.I.S. "FATEH," WITH CAPTAIN ESCOMB, R.N., ON BOARD.

## We reach Fashoda

A few hours in H.H.S. *Fateh* brought us to the historical post of Fashoda. Here already progress was racing ahead, for capacious brick barracks had sprung into existence, the first step towards protecting the Egyptian soldiers from the fever and mosquitoes generated by the neighbouring swamps. The two British officers, Majendie and Redl, intended to celebrate my arrival by a sumptuous repast. This was prevented by the tukl which constituted the kitchen catching fire, and in two minutes being burnt to the ground, together with its contents. I began to reflect that, after all, our haunch of camel in a healthy forest or open prairie by the side of a babbling brook was, in some respects, preferable to the unexpected shortcomings of civilization.

At Fashoda my caravan had at length to undergo a separation—Fashoda marked the spot where our independence and freedom was at an end. It was arranged for us to go by steamer to Omdurman, an eight or ten days' journey. Unfortunately H.H.S. *Fateh* was unable to transport our entire party together. So, whilst I steamed northwards with half the men, the remainder under Shahzad Mir and Mohamed, with the baggage animals, were left at Fashoda to await the arrival of another boat; and there, thanks to the care bestowed on them by Majendie, the majority of them recouped and fattened, both man and beast. Steaming down stream for ten days was an agreeable change, though I regret to own that sleep occupied most of the time we were in motion. Very often we would tie up to the river banks to replenish the supply of wood. This gave

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

many opportunities of wandering off with gun or rifle. At half way we passed the Hills of Gebelain, a supposed abode of lions and a very noticeable feature on so extensive and flat a stretch of land. As we drew nearer to our destination, instead of



FASHODA FORT.

cutting our own wood, we found temporary stations where piles of the fuel were already awaiting us.

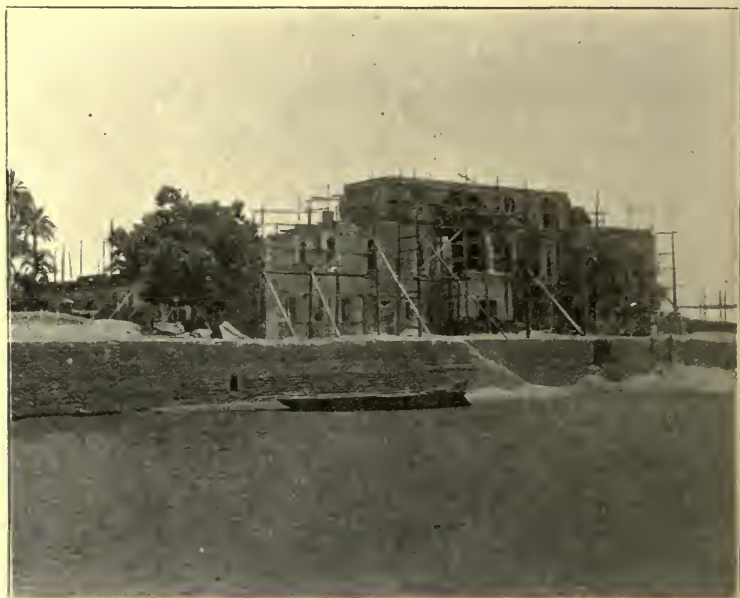
About the middle of July we hailed the vast accumulation of mud houses of Omdurman. Here, whilst awaiting the arrival of men and animals left at Fashoda, I found a comfortable home and a very hearty welcome under the roof of the Acting-Governor, Colonel J. G. Maxwell, D.S.O., whose

## The British Transformation

house had formerly been none other than the abode of Yakoob, brother of the Khalifa. My stay in this remarkable place will always be one I shall look back upon with feelings of pleasure, for, though the town is surrounded by an unattractive desert, this drawback was fully compensated by the hospitality shown me by the officers of the Egyptian army, both at the seat of Government, with the artillery across the river, or lower down stream at Wad Hamed, with Colonel Broadwood's cavalry. I was enabled, during my days of rest and idleness, to comprehend, in some slight degree, the wonderful strides that had already been made in opening up, and in carrying out the administration of the country. Until one actually sees the barrenness of the land, and learns something of the indolent character of the people who are to inhabit it, no fair judgment can be formed of the prodigious efforts, untiring patience, the determination and tact that must be used to ensure success. Yet already the results that are apparent bear testimony to the class of British officers who are there. It must be known that there are no home comforts in the Soudan, there is nothing superfluous, everything is practical. In the Soudan there is no such word as "can't," and there a single officer does the work for which elsewhere two or three officers and a native staff as well would be required. An officer is told to build a palace at Khartum! The railway, at the time, is hundreds of miles distant; wood too is, practically speaking, an unknown quantity at Khartum. There are no bricks, no stones; there is only

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

sand and water. There are no workmen, masons, carpenters, or any other mechanics. Yet the palace, on my arrival, was nearly completed. How is it done? Ask the one who knows, Captain Gorringe, R.E. You have only to see the splendid battalions



THE PALACE AT KHARTUM IN PROGRESS OF BUILDING.

of Egyptian and Soudanese soldiers, and the constant efficiency they are kept in, or the artillery and squadrons of cavalry, to know what can be made of dervishes. Not only are they taught the duties of soldiers, but British games as well. To see these fine men playing at football with plenty of dash and go, over a hard gravel, and with bare feet, will convey some idea of the stuff they are being turned

## I bid Farewell to the Mules

into. As to the work of administration, already fresh patches of cultivation are beginning to ornament the banks of the mighty Nile, and down-trodden races are beginning to know that at length they can make their home a permanent one, and lead a life of peace. As to their friendly disposition, I have already spoken.

As soon as the remainder of my caravan arrived by boat we bade farewell, and not without regret, to our baggage animals that had toiled so long and patiently. They were sold by auction in the market-place of Omdurman, and I was thankful to know that my ten mules, which had completed the entire journey from Adis Ababa, fell into the worthy hands of officers of the Egyptian army. With the sale of my animals I felt our journey was at an end, and turned my thoughts to conveying my Abyssinians, Somalis, and Soudanese safely to their homes again. The Soudanese had already reached their country, and were content to remain at Khartum. It was quite touching to say good-bye to these tough and hardy fellows, and to hear them pour forth their gratitude for what I had done for them. I have often wondered what has become of them, for the chances are their accumulated pay of many months was spent that same evening in feasting their friends.

There was no need to remain longer at Omdurman ; arrangements for our journey north were very considerably arranged by Colonel Maxwell and his successor, Lt.-Colonel D.F. Lewis, C.B. Early in August we had left the former seat of Mahdism and

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

were steaming towards the heart of civilization. I will not attempt to describe our travels further ; I may mention that, at this time, the trains were running from Atbara, and that the skilfully constructed bridge across the river had been just completed. There were two features that struck me. Firstly,



THE SIRDAR'S HOUSE, OMDURMAN.

as we were borne along by railway across the endless sands at forty miles an hour, one was able to realize the impossibility of conquering the land before the means of getting there had been prepared. Secondly, on noticing some dervish forts at the very cataracts of the Nile, where boats are sometimes brought to a standstill by the force of the stream,



FORT SOBAT.

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

one wondered why the dervishes had not built impregnable positions, and disputed the entrance by water to the very centre of their power.

As for the initiation of my Abyssinians into the ways of civilization, they had been mostly struck by the polo they had seen played at Omdurman and by the workshops at Wady Halfa. The piercing of holes by machinery, and the shaving of metals, filled them with astonishment, whilst the slabs of artificially-made ice sent them into ecstasies, for it brought them nearer to the frosts of their own land. The boats and trains were of course new to them, though, by the time we had reached Cairo, the novelty was somewhat past. Three days at Cairo gave them some notion that other towns existed besides those composed of tukls. Though utterly bewildered at first, they soon came to look upon a horse and cart, an electric tram and a bicycle (which they called "baklo," a mule) as nothing out of the common. The things that did continue to puzzle them were the electric lighting and water-taps at the Savoy Hotel.

It was certainly gratifying to meet at Cairo the Sirdar himself, and to be able to furnish him with the maps that Shahzad Mir had spent so much pains over—maps, too, that covered hundreds of miles of unknown land. How pleased, too, were my Abyssinians and Somalis, and how much we all appreciated the Sirdar's gifts; for, driving up one day, he not only spoke a few kind words to these worthy men, but presented to each a rug, a suit of clothes, and cotton and cloth for making more. In addition



THE FAREWELL TO OMDURMAN.

## 'Twiixt Sirdar and Menelik

to this they were well housed and fed, and a letter was written to the Abyssinian king to inform him of the safe arrival of his countrymen. At any rate, they carried back to their land a long-lasting memento of their visit to Egypt. From Cairo we trained to Suez—our parting-place, for from here they were all to be conveyed by a British-India liner to Aden. There their various wants would be ably looked after by General Creagh, V.C. Shahzad Mir would be sent back to Aden, my Somalis to Berbera, and my Abyssinians to Zeila and Harrar. I will not dwell on the parting with these faithful fellows. The fact of their having left their homes in total ignorance of everything ahead, and of their having served me well in times of need, and brought me safely through hundreds of miles of land untrodden excepting by the foot of naked savages and wild beasts, is proof positive that there are Somalis and Abyssinians made of the right stuff. It was truly gratifying to hear some of them say, on bidding farewell, "Geyta" (master), "our bellies are full, we will go with you again."

I was now alone with my two little dogs, Lady and her pup. Though I had no chance of getting them home to England, I was glad to know they would find a good and happy home in the hands of Lady Rennell Rodd. As soon as I had bidden them farewell, and jumped on board the vessel at the port of Alexandria, which was to bring me home just a year after sailing from Bombay, I felt really alone, for the last tie of our happy journey had been severed.

## My Own View of the Problem

As I reflected on the country we had traversed, I could not help remarking to myself that, had I the distribution and administration of this newly conquered land, I should feel inclined to hurry through the many miles of burning sand and leave them, so to speak, untouched, and seek the more profitable and fertile regions further south.

## EPILOGUE

BEFORE starting for South Africa, the late Captain Wellby asked me to look through the proofs of his book. He was anxious to say no word that might offend, to prejudice no cause. This duty I have carried out, making scarcely any corrections, and leaving the narrative as he wrote it in his own style ; and there would have been no occasion for me to mention this or add a word, were it not that the perusal of these pages has suggested to me that it might not be inappropriate to complete the narrative by telling the sad story of the end of that most lovable little dog whose adventures figure here so largely. The fox-terrier, Lady, was left in my charge, as the return to England of even so remarkable a traveller was rendered difficult if not impossible by the regulations in force. After the first day or two of separation from her old master, and consequent uneasiness, were passed, she attached herself to me with extraordinary devotion. I will not enlarge upon the qualities which had endeared her even to the Somalis, who regard the species as unclean, but need only say to all who have ever loved a dog that she was all that the most affectionate of the friends of man can be.

## Epilogue

About a year ago, when starting for the Soudan I had intended to leave her behind in Cairo, but the mute appeal of her brown eyes as she sat upon my luggage, and her anxiety each time I left the house, were too strong to resist, and I felt she must go with me. She had spent so many months in the tropics that a short visit could do her no harm ; and so we started together on our journey. Between the Atbara and Khartoum, while the train was crossing the desert in the night, and had stopped at a solitary station to water, she got out, unperceived, by an open door, and her absence was only discovered when the train was already well on its way. These desert stations consist only of a hut or tent, with a telegraph receiver and a water-tank in charge of two Egyptian soldiers. There was no means of stopping the train until we arrived at Shendy, some sixteen miles away. From there I telegraphed back and received an answer that the dog would be sent on by the next train. There are but few trains on the desert line, and one cannot return at any moment of the forty hours' journey. Confident that all was well, I went on to Khartoum. But Lady never came. There had been some misunderstanding about the first message received, and she was not at the station. The telegraph then gave the alarm all along the line, the Omdehs and sheikhs of the villages were warned, rewards were offered, and I returned to Hamadeb. It came out that she had returned to the station once or twice, and the soldiers in charge, meaning well, had tried to catch her, but she always ran away

## 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik

from them into the bush. The Nile runs a mile or so away, and along its banks are the ruined villages of the Jaalin ; through these I sought for her long and sick at heart. The days were burning hot, the nights were bitter cold ; the gaunt and savage pariah dogs prowled round the villages ; and in the bush, at the desert's edge, were jackals and hyenas. Imagination pictured in many forms the bitter end of my little companion in that grim country. The loving creature was so sensitive to a rough word, so wholly dependent on affection and confident in her master, that it became unbearable to think of her dumb agony when she felt herself abandoned in the night. Even now, as I write of it, the sorrow of that fruitless search returns. But so it was fated to be. I returned alone, and of all the many friends that relentless Africa has taken, there have been few I more grudged to death than I did that devoted little dog, which had passed through so many adventures to die at last in the desert.

He too, her master, the gallant soldier, the fearless traveller, now sleeps in an honoured grave at the far end of the dark continent. Fain would one think that in some Elysian field, where tired travellers rest, the lost are found again, and that there, not wholly unmindful of the other voice she followed, she has heard the voice of her old master calling, and so once more the brown eyes watch him lovingly and the little white head lies in his hand at peace.

R. R.

CAIRO, *Jan.* 31, 1901.

## A LIMITED VOCABULARY OF DIFFERENT TRIBES

### WALAMO WORDS.

Road . . . . .	Ogy.	Tree . . . . .	Kabba.
Water . . . . .	Hata.	Go . . . . .	Hameta.
Hill . . . . .	Gara.	Sky . . . . .	Hagy.
Horse . . . . .	Fardah.	Ground . . . . .	Beta.

### GALLA WORDS.

Lion . . . . .	Lencha.	Good . . . . .	Gari.
Elephant . . . . .	Arba.	Bad . . . . .	Gangi.
Road . . . . .	Karra.	Tree . . . . .	Mokah.
Village . . . . .	Makani.	Where is the road?	Karra Kam.
Bread . . . . .	Budina.	Where does the	Karra Kam-
Water . . . . .	Bisham.	road go?	ta Ko.
Nullah . . . . .	Lugga.	What name is it?	Biya Kanna.
Hill . . . . .	Gara.	Where is the camp?	Aisasafer.

### HAMMER KOKI WORDS.

Nullah . . . . .	Banty.	Is . . . . .	Wakindi.
Close . . . . .	Kunjisni.	Water . . . . .	Noko.
Far . . . . .	Pegni.	There is no water	Ogo noko lai.
Go . . . . .	Yiman.	Mule or donkey	Okulli.
Horse . . . . .	Farda.	Man . . . . .	Angi.

# Vocabulary

Woman . . . .	Mar.	To-day . . . .	Kena enni.
How . . . . .	Taki kaki.	Bring . . . .	Ba-an.
Take . . . . .	Yetki kut.	Elephant . . .	Donger.
Leopard . . . .	Zobu.	Camel . . . .	Gamli.
Cow . . . . .	Waki.		

## HAMMER KOKI WORDS (another district).

Road . . . . .	Gor.	Water . . . .	Bechi.
Hill . . . . .	Aselli.	Is . . . . .	Ajirta.
Tree . . . . .	Kor.	Stone . . . .	Tij.
Cow . . . . .	Leyhall.	Fat . . . . .	Ennu.
Flour . . . . .	Asuk.		

## GALLOPPA WORDS.

Donkey . . . .	Wal.	Grass . . . .	Eti.
Sheep . . . . .	Wuk.	Road . . . . .	Geri.
Hill . . . . .	War.	Flour . . . . .	Chillo.
Water . . . . .	Buff.	Nullah . . . .	Gulbo.
Tree . . . . .	Gorru.	Camel . . . .	Gelti.

## LOKUB WORDS.

Donkey . . . .	Sigrya.	Nullah . . . .	Nirum.
Sheep . . . . .	Engri.	Paper . . . .	Ninga.
Hill . . . . .	Swef.	Cloth . . . .	Duffer.
Water . . . . .	Buffo.	Night . . . .	Guarieh.
Tree . . . . .	Dabas.	Bring . . . .	Eyu.
Grass . . . . .	Gujeta.	Stone . . . .	Ding.
Tongue . . . .	Lejab.	Village . . . .	Geji.
Head . . . . .	Ugi.	Meat . . . .	Trekan.
Come . . . . .	Wawo.	Gun . . . . .	Gidong.
Road . . . . .	Guedi.	Bow . . . . .	Gow.
Flour . . . . .	Ruba.	Camp . . . .	Duni.
Camel . . . . .	Lori or Galori.	Day . . . . .	Leppa.
		Take away . .	Mabeyo.

# Vocabulary

## TURKANA WORDS.

Water . . . .	Gibi.	There is no water	Gibi man.
Donkey . . . .	Sigrya.	Dig for water .	Gibi Adama.
Camel . . . .	Galla or lo.		

## ĀBBĀ WORDS.

Road . . . .	Mar.	Water . . . .	Gibya.
River . . . .	Rue or Ruzi.	Come . . . .	Enuro.
		Boat . . . .	Arauro.

FINIS

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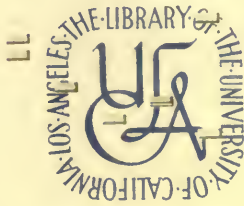
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