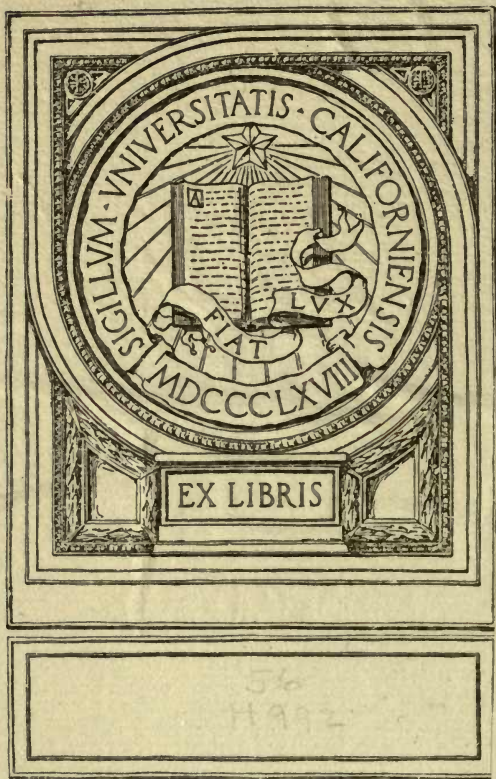


THE DIARY OF A
SOLDIER OF FORTUNE



By STANLEY PORTAL HYATT

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THE
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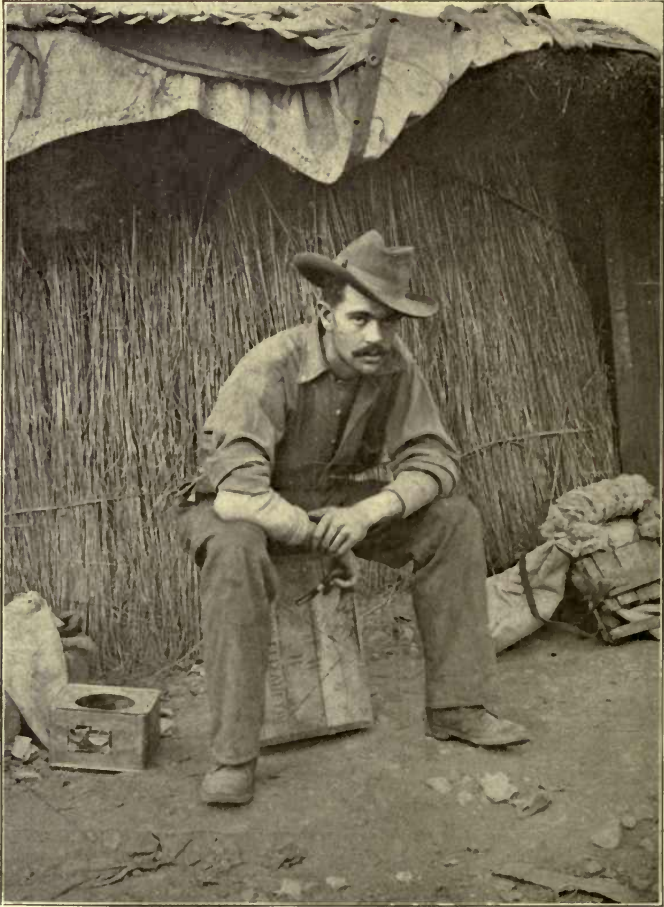
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THE AUTHOR IN 1899.

Frontispiece.

THE DIARY OF A SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

BY

STANLEY PORTAL HYATT

His Experiences as

ENGINEER
SHEEP STATION HAND
NIGGER DRIVER
HUNTER
TRADER
TRANSPORT RIDER
LABOUR AGENT
COLD STORAGE ENGINEER
EXPLORER
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CARDEN**

BLACK SHEEP

THE LITTLE BROWN BROTHER

Etc. Etc.

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THE DIARY OF A SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

CHAPTER I

THE vessel on which I left England the first time was—and I believe is still—one of the finest and fastest sailing ships ever launched. She had been built in the days when the cargo-tank was still a horror of the future, and she held the record from the Cape to Melbourne, having made the run in seventeen days. True, she had done the feat by accident, involuntarily, having been unable to heave to; but the fact of her achievement remains. However, when, as a youngster of seventeen, I was a passenger on her, she was not trying to startle the world of sailormen. Her skipper was careful—the ship's company used to put it more crudely and emphatically; he liked to put his vessel to bed before he, himself, turned in; and the mates knew better than to set a single stitch more canvas until he reappeared. On the other hand, he used to hold a service every night before he shortened sail, and, possibly, that may have compensated for the extra work he caused. At anyrate, it is to be hoped that his prayings in the cabin neutralised the effect of what was being said about him on deck.

I did not like that skipper. Even now, I look back on him with a definite amount of resentment,

THE DIARY OF

which the ordinary traveller would not understand. On the average mail boat, with its hundreds of passengers and its fixed time-table, the skipper is the "captain," a gold-laced personage, possessing a bland smile and showing infinite patience in answering futile questions. He appears at regular intervals, suave and shaven, in the saloon, on deck, in the smoking-room, and, before one out of a score of those on board has learnt to know him at all, the voyage is over. On a sailing ship, however, the "captain" becomes the "old man" omnipotent and always present. If his liver is out of order, everyone scurries to cover; if he has a fit of religion, everyone shares in his gloomy depression and hums alleged hymns; if he looks on the whisky when it is yellow, the entire ship's company becomes afflicted with what is usually an unquenchable thirst.

There is no gold lace about the old man of a sailing ship. This particular specimen used to wear a frock-coat of semi-clerical cut, and one of those wholly detestable hats, hybrids between the silk hat and the bowler, dear to the heart of the retired Anglo-Indian. Even in the Tropics, when the pitch in the seams was bright and sticky, and the livestock in the coops abaft the forecastle was gasping and dying for want of the breeze which would not come, the old man would stalk up and down the poop in that same garb, a female relative on either arm. I did not like him, as I have said, but he had a certain strength which one could not help admiring. Most people, meeting him on land, would have taken him for an uneaten missionary, who had awed his local heathen into a state of

trembling submission, either by his grimness or by his possible toughness. One could imagine him converting a whole tribe, and then marching back, at the head of the inevitable punitive expedition, to avenge the roasting of his successor. But he was certainly out of place in command of an Australian clipper. The second mate, who had been in the United States, used to declare that the old man was a Hard-shell Baptist, although he admitted he was not quite certain of the tenets of that particular sect. Personally, I do know that the skipper abhorred tobacco and alcohol, and regarded me as a malign influence, possibly because I had objected to sharing a cabin with a man in an advanced state of tuberculosis.

It was an uneventful trip, despite its length. There were some twenty passengers in all, mostly men with various complaints, ranging from alcoholism to consumption, and we went through the usual round of quarrels and reconciliations. We played nap for matches in the midshipmen's berth during the dog watches, and dozed and read and smoked for the rest of the day. We fished for albatross when we got down south, and tried in vain to preserve the skins of those we caught. It was too long a voyage, of course, and yet as a whole it was very pleasant, even despite the dreary influence of the skipper; but, none the less, the best moment of it seemed to be when the tug took our tow-line a few miles south of Sydney Heads.

The moon was just rising as we dropped anchor in Watson's Bay. Somehow, the memory of that night seems absolutely fresh to me even after fifteen years. We had seen nothing of Sydney Harbour,

save the lights along the shore, and the heads themselves looming up black and threatening against the sky ; and yet, the moment the ship pulled up to her cable, a sense of the perfect security and peace of the place seemed to come on you, and you realised suddenly the beauties of the scene which the morning sun was going to reveal to you. I have seen many harbours since then, but I think the only ones which excel Sydney are Dar-es-Salaam, the Place of Peace, in East Africa, and Nagasaki. On this occasion it was the absolute stillness after the hundred days on the never-still ocean which told at first ; then, from over the water, very faint yet very distinct, came the barking of a dog, and the longing to be on land again, the natural instinct of man, swamped any regret one might have felt at quitting the old ship and the good fellows on her.

Looking back at it now, I realise that I must have been pretty green when I landed in Sydney. Since leaving Dulwich, two years previously, I had been working for a firm of engineers, whose head, Roger Dawson, was one of the pioneers of electric lighting in England, and I had picked up a certain amount of technical knowledge ; but beyond that my experience had been very limited. I was just a lanky, ungainly boy, who had outgrown his strength, and was suffering from that worst form of shyness, the one which makes you bluff clumsily to try and get through.

It is a wretched thing to be shy. I believe I am so still. Even dealing with publishers and editors and mining engineers has not hardened my shell completely ; and, more than once, when I have

wanted a cheque particularly badly, I have gone into an office to ask for one, and then come out without having managed to reach the point. So I must be shy, for I am always convinced that publishers and newspapers owe me money morally, if not actually. On the other hand, I have never felt a moment's nervousness on the platform, perhaps because I have always been certain that my audience knew no more about my subject than I did myself, and so could not contradict me. Yet in Sydney, though I was put up for the New South Wales Club, and should have been only too glad to have taken advantage of the fact, I could never muster up courage to pass through its doors.

Those were the days when Sydney abounded, not only in larrikins, but in fan-tan shops as well. All down Lower George Street—probably the lowest George Street in the world—you would find those little gambling dens, which the police were, apparently, unable or unwilling to close. You usually went down a long, matchboarded passage into a large and grimy room at the back, where you would see a score of men, mostly larrikins and sailors, clustered round a big, matting-covered table. The game is simplicity itself—you merely bet on how many little brass coins will be left when a Chinaman has counted them off by fours at a time; you put your money on nought, one, two or three, or combinations of these, and you win or lose accordingly. It is not very exciting, though you can generally find some squalidly picturesque details in the setting. I can still hear the long nails of the Chinese croupier, those horrible, gruesome claws, scratching over the matting as he raked in the lost

money, still see the unconcealed spite on his face as he paid out to an unusually successful gambler.

Sydney may be pleasant enough in these days—it might have been pleasant enough then for a visitor who had plenty of money, although it was just after the bank failures and trade was still paralysed—but, personally, I was only too glad when, a fortnight after landing, I had the chance to go to a big sheep station over four hundred miles up country, in the driest, hottest part of New South Wales. It was a fine place, splendidly kept up, splendidly stocked, and in later years I often found myself comparing the miserable little flocks of a few hundred scabby sheep and goats, of which the Afrikaner farmer is so proud, with the hundred and thirty thousand head of stock we had on that run. Yet, somehow, I cannot say that station life made any great impression on me; certainly, it never appealed to me. Even so far up country as that, there was little suggestion of the back-blocks, and no hint at all of the Australia of the novelists. It was all quite prosaic and quite proper. I daresay I should have stayed there much longer, perhaps have settled down to it altogether, had it not been for the horse-racing. It was not the races we saw that wearied me, but those we talked about. They formed the one subject of conversation, until I grew absolutely to loathe the very mention of them; and I believe it was this, rather than the fact that the prospects were extremely poor financially, which really sent me drifting back to the coast.

I got back to Sydney with two pounds in my pocket, and but a meagre chance of earning more. I tried to cut things down to the limit, for the first

time learning what a really cheap eating house is like—you could get splendid sixpenny meals in Sydney—but I was soon absolutely broke. It was then I lost my first dress suit. I had been very proud of it, and I had, so far, regarded it as potential wealth; but the little Hebrew down in the Argyll Cut, that detestable place where the larrikins drop lumps of blue-metal on the heads of passers-by, cross-examined me so sharply about it—where had I got it, why was I selling it—that I almost began to fear that I really had stolen it; consequently, when he raised his original offer of seven and sixpence to ten shillings, I believe, for the moment, I looked on him as a generous benefactor, who was saving me from being turned out of my lodgings and becoming a "Domain Squatter," from sleeping out in that public park which was then the common camping ground of all the broken men, and all the cosmopolitan rascality, of Sydney.

I have often wondered what became of that ugly little Semite; whether he went to Johannesburg and became rich through buying gold shares or stolen gold, whether he stayed in Australia and reached wealth through Parliament, or whether the larrikins treated him as they should have done down in that same Argyll Cut. At anyrate, he got my dress suit cheaply enough; and yet, perhaps, the beggar brought me luck, for, within a couple of hours, I had got a job to overhaul the electric lighting of a big coffee palace in the centre of the city.

CHAPTER II

AUSTRALIA to-day seems entirely devoid of the element of Romance. Possibly, the same can be said of any prosperous country, for excitement means insecurity and dislocation of trade. On the other hand, it does seem rather remarkable that practically all the successful Australian stories of adventure should have dealt with violent crime of the bushranger type. Nowadays, those who would have been bushrangers a few decades ago, who are still bushrangers in spirit, find a safer and more remunerative field for their energies in politics. Life has become drab, for you cannot well admire the man who is piling up the National Debt for you, greatly though you might have been interested in his father when that gentleman was merely robbing your richer neighbours.

In the end my job petered out, and I had to do as I might have done all along—cable for money, an unpleasant confession of failure. I left the country without regret. It had never made the least appeal to me, perhaps because of its very order and security, and the only incident I can remember which even verged on the picturesque was the arrest, as a rogue and vagabond, or its Australian equivalent, of a man who had been one of our Parliamentary candidates only the week before.

I came home round the Horn, again in a wind-jammer, and once more the trip, a hundred and

twenty days in duration, was perfectly uneventful, except for the fact that, owing, I believe, to the steward's desire to save money, we ran short of provisions, and, after eating the cow, which was disgustingly tough, had to borrow off a German oil-tank we were lucky enough to meet. I often think that sea novelists and sea poets must have wonderful luck in getting their experiences—or is it that those experiences make them break out into fiction and verse? Altogether, I have spent about a couple of years as a passenger on various craft, which have ranged from a tiny Philippine coast-guard to a Cunarder, and have been on pretty well every sea, yet I have never had a maritime adventure, never even been seasick. Luck does go that way. I might have got copy for two or three more novels out of one shipwreck. The thing has been done before.

I suppose most budding engineers want to be inventors. Certainly, during the eighteen months I was at Home I had the craze badly; and the nation was the richer to the extent of protection fees on five epoch-making inventions; though it showed an utterly callous indifference to the value of them all. The first was a camera. I claimed that it was the lightest and neatest ever invented. Possibly I was right, and undoubtedly it would have been the most expensive to manufacture; so the makers passed it by. The next patent was for a bicycle brake, which would have been so powerful and sudden in its action that it would have upset the machine, and probably killed the rider. Then came a steam-engine valve, which, besides not being entirely novel, would have leaked badly

as soon as it became worn. An arrangement for glazing the windows of railway carriages I still hold to have been good, if only because the big German firm, which had the model, made innumerable excuses for not returning it, and finally managed to keep it in the end.

The pick of the inventions was, however, a paraffin lamp for using the incandescent mantle. One of my brothers and I worked on that together, and we had a company promoter ready to float it—when it was ready. I grew quite used to fires during the experiments. We kept a box of sand at the end of the bench, and every time the lamp burst we used to empty this over the blaze. The thing did work, there was no denying that. When the atmospheric conditions were right, or the vaporiser was in a good humour, the light was far brighter than that obtainable from coal gas; but at other times it either poured out volumes of thick black smoke, or blew the mantle to pieces. We never succeeded in getting an automatic adjustment; and, in the end, we lost about a hundred pounds over it.

It was during these lamp days that my brother Malcolm and myself signed contracts to go out to Matabeleland for two years. That country was just being opened up in earnest; the second Matabele War was practically over, and the dawn of prosperity was come—at least the financial papers said so, and they must have known. Our mine, the Geelong, was to be the first actually to produce gold, and, with that end in view, a special staff was recruited in England. My position was that of electrical engineer, and, though I was a little

doubtful of my own capability to see the thing through, it was good enough to risk, good enough for me, at anyrate.

I think, in all, there were eighteen of us went out for the company. Of these, my brother is still in Rhodesia, whilst I know where a couple more are to be found in England; but the others are scattered far and wide. I know that several are dead; I feel fairly certain that several more have also made their last trek; and I cannot say definitely that more than two of the remainder are alive. The men who were in Rhodesia in those days dropped out of the race rather quickly. The new-comers stand the country well enough. They scoff at the idea of its being unhealthy, never realising that the conditions of life have changed completely. They would have died off fast enough in the bully-beef-and-mealie meal days, perhaps faster than did our fellows, because, though the latter were not those detestable people, desirable citizens, they were of a much more hardy and self-reliant type. They were not settlers. I do not think anybody then wanted to settle in the country; the main object was to make some money and go home before the fever or the natives finished your career; but, incidentally, we broke down the way for the settlers.

I was twenty when I went out to Matabeleland, but I looked a good deal older. I remember I proposed to a girl two or three days before I sailed, and, after receiving a qualified acceptance, was quite sentimental for some time, really until I began to get some good shooting. Then I forgot that she, being wise, had ceased to write.

Perhaps it was being in love that made me hate Port Elizabeth so much. We landed there for our long journey up country, and I took a dislike to it, right away. It is one of those towns where there are always flies in your morning coffee, and blatant, loud-voiced men in the hall and bar of the hotel, men whose sole object in life seems to be to impress the newly arrived Britisher. They did impress me, certainly.

I remember once hearing a Yankee describe the town; he said: "It's hotter than blazes. It's all Jew boys and flies and plague and niggers; and I wouldn't stay there even if they made me Mayor. No, sir; not even if they threw in the customs' job as well."

Up in Rhodesia the name of Port Elizabeth was anathema. It was there that the whisky came from—literally. True, it was in Scotch bottles; but only the Teutonic gentlemen at the coast could tell you what the contents were. It was said that the essential part, that which actually gave you alcoholic poisoning, came from the Fatherland, in which case I admire that country for having the sense to send it away. Then, too, the customs people and forwarding agents, being patriots, in a colonial sense, did their best to delay the transit of stuff imported direct from Home, holding that it ought to be handled first by a local firm; and so, in the end, the unfortunate Rhodesian had to be content with inferior or doctored brands. Consequently, it is not unnatural that, when a Port Elizabeth man did chance to come north himself, he often heard unpleasant things.

Railhead was at Palapye then, or rather at Palapye siding, eleven miles from Khama's town itself. We jolted northwards in leisurely style. Sometimes the train attained a terrific speed—twenty miles an hour or so—but as a rule it went at the far more dignified gait beloved of the English south coast lines. Once, near Taungs, from where I was sitting on the footboard of the carriage, I saw the engine driver shoot a hare, jump to the ground, pick it up, and regain his footplate without his mate having to slow down. We spent a night at Mafeking. The stationmaster insisted on that. The train had been only three days and four nights doing seven hundred miles, he said, and if it went on in that way it would be establishing a most dangerous precedent; other passengers would be claiming to be carried at that fearful rate.

Next morning we jogged along again, until about midday, when we reached a siding where we stayed till nightfall. The line is, of course, a single one, and we were supposed to be waiting for another train to pass us. Unfortunately, the other engine driver was doing a similar thing a few miles higher up, and we might both have been where we were all night had not a travelling nigger carried the news of our situation to the down train. Nobody was sorry when we finally went on again. There was any amount of whisky on board, but no one had any water, except the engine driver, who declared he could not spare a drop. Consequently, it was a thirsty day, if not exactly a dry one. Evidently, the guard found it so, and I am afraid he was not exactly

a teetotaller; for when at nightfall it was suggested that he should light the carriage lamps, he first denied that there were any lamps, then denied that it was dark, then finally, after bumping his head in an attempt to stand up, murmured softly that he had no pain now, and went to sleep on the floor of his van. After that, we did the job for ourselves.

Amongst the passengers was Doel Zeederberg, the famous coach contractor, probably the best-known and best-liked Dutchman north of the Crocodile. From that time onwards for seven years I often met him, but after I left the country I heard no more of him till 1908, when I saw in *The Daily Telegraph* a curt announcement of his death in a London nursing home. It was a curiously pathetic end for a man who had done so much, whose whole work had lain ahead of the railways, in the open air, to come to England and die amid the smoke and grime of the metropolis.

We were five days and nights in all from Port Elizabeth to Railhead, about nine hundred and seventy miles. Last time I passed through Palapye siding all that marked it was a big nameboard and a derelict iron tank, yet in 1897 there was quite a township there—three or four stores, a hotel, a restaurant, five police tents and a couple of score of hovels inhabited by Greeks, coolies and natives; whilst, in addition to these, there was a huge accumulation of stuff of all sorts—mining machinery, whisky, and provisions—waiting for transport.

The only water at the siding was what came up on the water train, and the railway people were

none too generous with regard to the number of trains they ran. So much water a day was issued to the hotel and the restaurant and the heads of businesses, but none to stray individuals. Washing of any sort was absolutely impossible. There were men in the siding who had not even rinsed their hands for weeks, and the flies and the dust between them did not tend to render that siding a clean place. At the restaurant, which consisted of a square mud hut with a roof of bush, they gave you one cup of tea, and no more. You could not buy a drink anywhere, at least openly, for Khama's country was strictly Prohibition; although, after I had been there a day or two, I did manage to get some whisky from a store-keeper who had smuggled it in, but even that had to be consumed neat.

Altogether it was a perfectly detestable spot, blazing hot by day, bitterly cold at night. There was always grit between your teeth, always flies, which had previously visited some Kaffir, trying to crawl into your eyes. If you smoked to keep the flies off, you got thirsty; if you stopped smoking, the little brutes drove you mad.

We were waiting for the wagons which were to take us to the Geelong mine—everybody seemed to be waiting for wagons in those months following the Rinderpest, when nine-tenths of the cattle were dead—our stuff was all ready, but day after day went by, and no transport riders appeared. Finally, we were told we must trudge the eleven miles into Palapye, and either wait there, or go on another trek to the Lotsani Drift, where there was supposed to be plenty of water.

It was a very dry tramp into Palapye, through heavy sand, the only landmarks being the Rinderpest wagons, which had been abandoned when their cattle died a few months before. Some had been looted, but the number of these was small, for Khama has always had his tribe well in hand ; and, whilst the civilised part of him looked upon theft as a deadly sin, his savage side—and every African native is a savage at heart—knew how to devise suitable punishments for thieves. Palapye Town—Palapye Stadt, they used to call it, though I believe the wretched spot has been abandoned now—was, if possible, more hateful than the siding. It was reputed to be the largest native settlement in Africa. I daresay it was. I am certain it was the most insanitary one.

Khama's people, the Bamangwatu, are Christians. At least the Blue Books and missionary reports say so ; and, consequently, it must be true. Certainly they sing hymns with great and inharmonious fervour, and steal whenever they think it safe so to do. As labourers they are useless, as warriors they are despicable ; in their homes they are the dirtiest of South African races. Possibly they have some redeeming virtues ; but they hide these so carefully that no white man—save some stray missionary, perhaps—has ever discovered them. Yet, none the less, Khama, their chief, will go down in history with his great foes, Umzilakazi and Lobengula, as a native statesman and a black gentleman. I admire him as much as I detest his people. I met him in Palapye the day after I arrived there. He was on horseback, and pulled up to greet, through an interpreter, the youngster who was



OUTSIDE PALAPYE.



LOTSANI RIVER.

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with me and myself. There was nothing remarkable in his appearance; and yet, as was the case with several chiefs I met subsequently, especially old Gabaza, the great M'Tchangana warrior, who was poisoned by the Mashona in my camp, you could see he was used to giving commands which had to be obeyed. I have no love for missionaries, and even less for native Christians, but the greatness of Khama, the missionaries' chief, goes far towards redeeming all the faults of the others. But then, of course, Khama was the convert of John Mackenzie, who, if not the greatest missionary, was certainly the greatest Imperial statesman who ever breathed in South Africa. There could be no better proof of our utter lack of a sense of proportion than the fact that, as a nation, we have forgotten that Mackenzie ever existed; and yet, but for what Mackenzie did in the eighties, when he saved Bechuanaland, the Gate of the North, from the Boers and the Germans, there would never have been a Rhodesia or a British Central Africa. Griqualand West would have been the boundary of the British colonies. Cecil John Rhodes was a great man, but, even though I commit the unpardonable sin in saying so, I hold that John Mackenzie was greater.

But to go back to the subject of Palapye Stadt—I hope I never go back to the spot itself—it stank of natives. There was no denying that fact. Even the hymns could not sterilise the effluvia. It was a huge slum of round mud huts. The roads were merely wide stretches of offal-littered white sand; whilst the centre of the town, the aristocratic portion, merely consisted of a few galvanised iron

stores, where the white men, most of whom were of Hebrew extraction, bartered skins for shoddy trade goods. Under the eaves of every one of the thousands of huts hung Rinderpest biltong, strips of dried or putrescent meat which had been cut from defunct bullocks. These did not furnish the main smell—the Bamangwatu themselves did that—but they helped to swell the total in a noticeable degree.

We put up at one of the stores, where they fed us badly and charged us highly. Water was almost as scarce as it had been at the siding. There was no chance of a wash, a thing which we had now been without since leaving Mafeking a fortnight previously. The men in the store were accustomed to it, some, I fancy, from birth; but, to put it mildly, we were itching; and so, after a couple of days in the stadt, we decided to trek out to the Lotsani Drift, and wait there for the wagons.

In Palapye they talked eloquently of the Lotsani River. To them it was as splendid as Southend is to the Londoner; so we started out with high hopes. We were going to quench our thirst and have a wash; but we had yet to learn that in Africa things never quite come up to expectations. There was no running water in the Lotsani, just a baked mud watercourse with pools every few miles, and the pools themselves were hardly up to the mark. Doubtless those firms which disfigure the hoardings with meat extract advertisements would have waxed enthusiastic over the water, for it would have reminded them vividly of their own products. When a bullock felt he had Rinderpest, he struck out at once for the nearest pool of water; sometimes he

died on the way ; but, if his strength held out, he died in the water itself ; and tens of thousands of cattle had caught the plague within a few miles of the river. Consequently, the pools consisted of beef extract, as you could tell the moment you approached them. The water stank, even when you had boiled it. There were fat slimy things on the surface, and fatter, and even more slimy, fish in the mud at the bottom. When you had washed you felt more dirty than ever ; when you had had a drink your mind turned to the question of emetics. Yet for over three weeks we drew all our water from the Lotsani. It was an auspicious beginning to my seven years in Africa.

CHAPTER III

THE wagons turned up at last. I was new to the trek bullock in those days ; but, even to me, it was obvious that the cattle were a job lot. As a matter of fact, both wagons and spans belonged to their native drivers, who were typical Bamangwatu, utterly inefficient ; whilst their oxen consisted of a number of untrained beasts, many of them cows and heifers, which the Rinderpest microbes had disdained to attack. Probably, they were the worst teams in the country, at least it is to be hoped they were. They stuck in every drift ; sometimes they stuck even on the level ; and their drivers had not the least idea of how to make them go on. With every trek they grew more leg weary and thin, being unaccustomed to the yoke ; and though the loads were only three thousand pounds' weight, instead of the regulation eight thousand, it took over six weeks to do the two hundred miles' journey to the Geelong mine.

We followed the old Pioneer's Road as far as Macloutsie ; but from that point onwards we had to cut our own track. There were many thousands of tons of machinery to come up after us, and transport rates were so high that a short cut seemed a matter of paramount importance. True, in the end, our road proved to pass through such atrocious country that transport riders preferred the old track, across the three-quarter-mile-wide drift on the Shashi, where the sand was so bad you

had to put forty-four cattle on each wagon, and then on through the Dry Stretch, up the Tuli Road ; but as yet the company did not foresee this. South African mining companies seldom do foresee things of that sort. Technically, their staffs may be competent ; but, as far as the crude pioneering part is concerned, they generally get some man who knows a little, and thinks he knows all, about mining work ; just as, in their compounds, they have a man who knows, and thinks he knows, as much, or as little, about natives.

The abandoned wagons were the main point of interest on that old road. They stood singly, in twos, in tens, in one place even thirty together, here in a bare patch of sand, there amongst the bush, with the wild vines trailing over them. Some, but very few, had been looted, as was obvious from the broken cases lying round them ; but the majority had their loads still intact, the buck-sails yet over them, looking as though they might have arrived a few hours before and the cattle were away grazing ; then a stray gust of wind would raise the corner of the sail, and it would flap in the air, showing the stuff rotting and discoloured beneath it. Then you noticed that the hyænas had eaten the neck strops, and the yokes had rotted where they lay, and the wheels looked as though at the first jolt they would crumble into powder. And here were the black embers of a fire, all the white ash having been carried away by the summer rains ; and a rusted iron pot over some bits of half-burned mopani log, which the white ants had attacked in vain. Some empty bully-beef tins, off which the paper had long since peeled, a few pages

of an illustrated paper, torn, yellow, and barely legible, a bottle or two, also without labels, an oven in an ant-hill, and a rotting whip stick showed where the transport rider had camped before the awful scourge caught him, and in a few short hours wrecked the work of a lifetime. They were intensely human—and therefore bitterly sad—those relics of the great disease.

If the water were near to the stranded wagons, you would find the pool full of great, slimy fish, and if you were curious enough, or rash enough, to strip and go in, you could grub out of the mud the skulls and bones of what had once been trek oxen; and when you tried to drink that water it gave you a queer, sickly feeling, and you thought, perhaps, more of the ruined transport rider than of the possible enteric; but still you had to drink it, even though it stank; you would gladly have walked ten miles to another pool, certainly, but for the fact that you knew it would reek as badly as, or even worse than, the one you were leaving.

If there was no water close, you would find a veritable valley of dry bones, skulls, with the noses crunched off by the mill-like jaws of the hyænas, bones without a vestige of skin or flesh left on them, horrible, abominable, not skeletons, in some sort of order, but just scattered remains, which had been dragged about and chewed up by the schelm. All the schelm got fat in those days of the Great Disease, so fat that, like Jeshurun of old, they kicked, or at least lost their caution, and so were easily destroyed. But, as every transport rider and trader can tell you, when you kill one schelm—a

lion, a hyæna or a wild cat—three more immediately turn up to eat the carcass, so that the last state is worse than the first. Some day, perhaps, I shall write a book on schelm, but it will be a failure. No one will believe me ; for whilst other orthodox books declare that the lion is a noble animal, the King of Beasts, I regard him, and his friends, the hyænas and leopards, as unmitigated pests. But then, of course, the King of Beasts theorists have seen him in a cage, magnificent, and, if you will, regal, and I know him only as the brute who used to steal my oxen, and yet never gave me a chance to shoot him.

There were twenty men and three wagons in our party, and we were the juniors of the crowd. From those data, it is not difficult to work out where we had to sleep. It was winter, and the Protectorate is a bitterly cold place at night ; but we had been sent out lacking nothing, and, in a very few days, we were used to sleeping on the ground in the open. Quarrels soon began amongst the crowd. As a whole, the men we had were not up to the usual Rhodesian standard. Professionally, they were good enough ; individually—with the exception of a couple who stood out in strong contrast to the rest—they were poor specimens ; and, when I compare them with the men I was associated with subsequently, I wonder how they got through as well as they did. Three out of four of them were of the wrong stuff. They wanted jam and butter and a man with a maxim gun, or at least with a tamer's whip, to drive the naughty lions away. In short, they were a typical mining crowd, and the colonial-born amongst them were

no more hardy than the others. I got a bad impression of Rhodesian mining men from the outset, and I never saw the slightest reason for altering my views. Possibly, however, later years have brought improvements in the general tone of mine life.

Few men nowadays visit Macloutsie. Twenty years ago it represented the frontier of civilisation; but to-day Railhead is in the heart of the continent, and Macloutsie is merely a long stage on the road down to Cape Town, where you find the steamers which take you Home. Macloutsie is in Khama's country, then a Prohibition area, but it was excited, almost incoherent, the day we struck it. There was nothing much to look at in the place, and much to avoid. The fort, occupied by men of that finest of forces, the Bechuanaland Border Police, was constructed of bully-beef cases—they sent that same bully up to the mines later on, and when we opened the tins, which cost us two shillings a pound, it was nearly black—and beyond this there was just a big mud-walled telegraph office, a transmitting station, and a store or two. The most noticeable features of the settlement were the number of abandoned wagons and the piles of koodoo horns. No buck suffered more severely from the Rinderpest than did the koodoo, and the local heathen had taken a fit of going out into the veld and collecting the skulls of the dead bulls. These they had brought in by hundreds, then, finding the market glutted, had thrown them down in disgust outside the stores, where they lay, rotting and covered with weevils.

A case of whisky had just come up to Macloutsie,

either smuggled in, or imported openly in virtue of that most valuable of favours, a liquor permit from Khama. At anyrate, it was there. The police camp was deserted; in the telegraph office the instruments were clicking away unheeded; practically the whole white population being gathered in one big hut. Macloutsie was "on the drink"; and as the straw envelopes and empty bottles outside the door grew to exceed in number those remaining in the case, so men began to talk, according to the way of the frontier, of those who had already gone on the last trek. There was the linesman who had died of black-water, whilst out alone, looking for a broken wire; the hyænas had nearly finished when the natives came on the scene; there was the police trooper who had gone out shooting in that deadly, waterless stretch of country where only the bushman and the blue wildebeeste can find their way; he had never returned, though it did not need much insight to say what his end had been; and yet another, a trader—and that was the worst of all—had gasped out his last oath whilst crawling round the hut on his hands and knees, moaning about those twenty-foot pythons you can find on the Palm River.

It may have been the fault of that same smuggled case of whisky, but when we reached Macloutsie everyone—everyone white that is, the natives never count—was talking of these snakes, just as at Tuli to this day they talk of lions; and at Enkeldoorn, where the Dutchmen are, of native risings. And yet one could not help sympathising with the men. Think of it! The main stream of transport was already

diverted to the west, up the big road which ran through Tati to Bulawayo; and within a few months, certainly within a year, the railway would be open, and no wagons at all would pass through Macloutsie. The place was doomed, already moribund. If you grew weary of being in the bully-beef fort, all you could do was to go to the mud-walled telegraph station and listen to the clicking of the instruments, transmitting messages to the north, or else wander down to the store, where the proprietor, besides being insolvent, had no whisky. What wonder then that, when a case of spirits did come through, men made the most, or the worst, of it. I, myself, knowing the life, can understand it. There is so much to forget in those dreary out-stations, the men who have already gone, the men who are going before your eyes, the uncertainty of your own stay. The past is so bad that you long to forget, even for a few hours, both the present and the future. Whilst the spirit is in you, you may be able to scoff at it, but when you have only tea without milk to drink, and bully beef and Boer meal to eat, you resent fiercely, if you are a man at all, the idea of dying uselessly in such a forsaken spot, dying and being buried in the sand, with a cairn of stones over you, so that the hyænas shall not dig up your body. Of course men drink in those out-stations, and they always will drink, so long as there are such places, and so long as alcohol will bring them temporary oblivion. And what right has the theorist at home, who has never been tempted, has never gone beyond the shelter of his county council and the grip of his rate

collector, has never known fear and what fear brings, has been bred up in the belief that the natural end of man is to die in bed of zymotic disease, what right has he to condemn men who drink because they want to forget that the shadow of the Angel of Death is always across their path?

We struck lions first a little north of Macloutsie. One of the herd boys found their fresh spoor, and we camped down that night expecting to have them round the cattle. True, they did not come, but to us, raw from Home, the anticipation was as bad as, or even worse than, the actual fact would have been. Later on I got the measure of a lion. I reckon I have heard the brutes round my camp on five hundred nights; but that first night, when we did not hear them, was worse than all the others put together. I did not sleep. I was really scared. I knew the lion could see and I could not, and all the time I was picturing him coming out of the long grass in dramatic style, and jumping on me. Now I know that he would have jumped on the cattle, or the niggers, before he thought of a white man, and, both of these being so bad, there would have been no loss to the sacred cause of Progress and Light in Darkest Africa; but I am a good deal older now, and I am writing in a land where lions are, brutally enough, kept in cages for idiots to gape at, instead of being destroyed mercifully in their own country. That was a bad night for me; I remember only one worse, and that was during the last Philippine War, when I turned in feeling absolutely certain we should all be boloed before the morning, and boloed we should have been—a bolo is an ugly two-feet-long knife—had not two

big dugouts full of American infantry chanced to come up the river just before midnight. On the other hand, these lions never materialised. Possibly they were merely fictions evolved from the brain of a Bamangwatu herd boy ; but I think not. That stretch of country has schelm enough and to spare.

I wonder how many men have ever been thirsty. I do not use the word in the sense the cyclist, or the athlete, or the soaker does, but crudely, going back to elemental things. Hunger is bad. I have been hungry in civilisation, when I was dead broke, more than once ; in the Far East I have lived for a whole month on boiled bats, and that is getting near the limit ; but I would sooner be hungry a hundred times than thirsty once. Hunger is a slow and lowering thing ; you lose strength and you lose heart, but it rouses no violent passions ; its action is too prolonged for that, and the physical pain from it is comparatively small. It is a longing rather than a suffering. Thirst is different. In a few hours it grows from a discomfort to an agony, and madness and murder are the natural, the inevitable, results. I have seen a man shot for the sake of the basket of clams he was carrying on his back, and, starving though I was, reckoned the shooting a crime ; but in Bechuanaland, on the one occasion when I was really thirsty, I would have shot a man for a cup of water.

The incident occurred about twenty miles south of the Tuli River. The wagons were getting on with deadly slowness, and from the outspan where we were to the river itself there was not a drop of water. Twenty miles may not seem much in England ; it would seem very little to me now, but

then there was a handful of us youngsters, raw, soft, totally unacclimatised, and whilst the colonials, and those who had adopted colonial ways, insisted on our trekking on ahead, alleging that the wagons could not carry water for us, they remained behind with the wagons—and the water bags. It was a typical mining man's trick; a transport rider or a trader does not do such things. Curious how one remembers incidents such as this. If possible, my resentment is stronger now than it was then, perhaps because I have a better sense of proportion. It was the Afrikander spirit—do the young Englishmen a bad turn.

We were told to start at dawn, and to follow a cart spoor to the Tuli, where we were to await the wagons. No white man ever carries a pack in Africa, even a seasoned old prospector will not try it, yet we had to take rifles, blankets, food and water—and we had been little more than three weeks on the veld. Moreover, there were no water bags, and we had to be content with vulcanite bottles, holding a pint each. We, my brother and myself, got on about five miles without a drink; then we opened his water bottle, to find that, whilst it had been hanging on the buck rail of the wagon, someone had stolen half its contents. We got along another five miles fairly well; but the weight of our packs and rifles, and the heavy sand under foot, was telling. It was about ten o'clock then, and the thirst began. Our pace was slackening down, and by midday we had added only a couple of miles, and, though we had fought hard against the temptation, the water bottles were empty. There were eight miles more to do,

theoretically, really about twelve, the most ghastly trek of my life. We had to go on; we had to stick to our packs and rifles, and yet, with every step, the pain of the thirst increased. We were raw, and that was the main trouble; yet even an experienced man would have found it hard going under the conditions. By three o'clock the pain had become positive agony. I would have killed a man for a drink then. We stuck to it, just because we had to, because the only chance of relief was the water ahead. At about the sixteenth mile we came on another youngster who had started before us—the way we went off, in ones and twos, shows how raw we were—he was lying down, sobbing, and I remember well the job it was to make him get up and come along.

The water of the Tuli River, I can taste it still. Not only did it put a stop to that abominable agony of thirst, but, after we had drunk quarts of it, wallowed with our faces in the pool, sucking it up, we realised that it was the first clean water we had tasted since leaving the mail steamer at Port Elizabeth. In the latter town you suspected, with reason, that there were microbes everywhere, and you tried to kill them with the villainous spirit of the place; I expect you did kill them, in fact; on the train it was as bad; whilst throughout Bechuana-land we had found nothing but extract of Rinder-pest. Yet the Tuli, running down a broad sandy course, five hundred yards wide in places, though the actual stream was seldom more than a few feet across, was clear and sparkling, real water, better at that moment to me than any champagne I have since drunk.

Two days later, the wagon party caught us up. It had suffered terrible privations, of course, gone through struggles which no mere Britisher would understand. As I have said, I was very young and raw at that time ; subsequently I was a transport rider myself for years, and so I got the measure of those folk.

CHAPTER IV

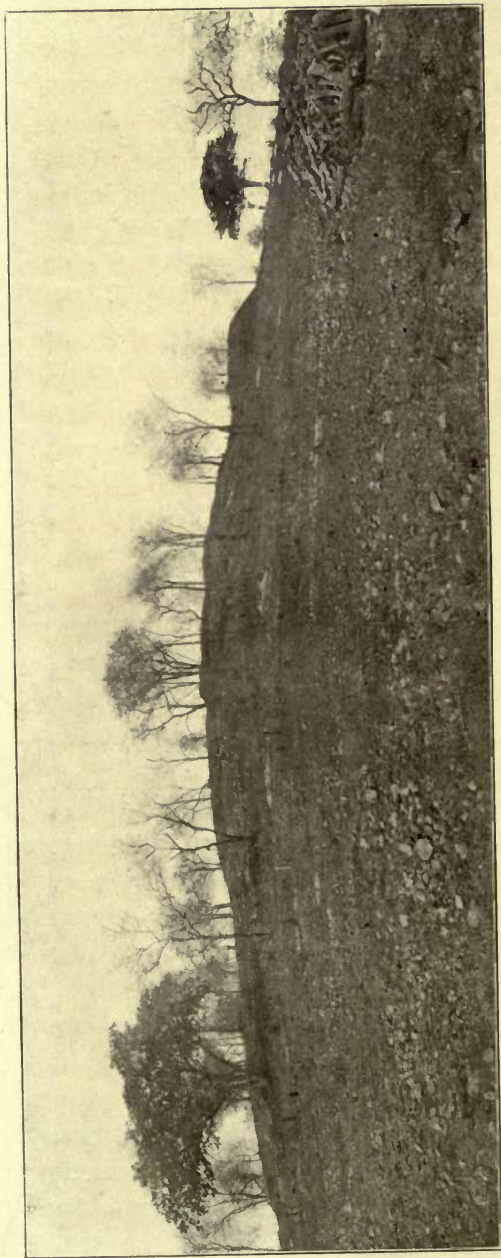
THERE was a time when everyone in Rhodesia was interested in the Geelong mine, when, in fact, it furnished the community with its chief topic of conversation. It was to be the test property of the country. For some inscrutable reason, the mining industry was to stand or fall according to the way it turned out. All that is ancient history now. The Geelong failed, and the mining industry went on, growing beyond all anticipation; whilst it is safe to say that nine-tenths of the present Rhodesians never give a thought to the very existence of the old camp.

The mine itself was on a small rise at the foot of a great tree-covered kopje. From this point the ground sloped away, undulating but steadily falling, to the Umsingwane River, three miles distant, where the nearest water was to be found. It was bush veld of a type common in Matabeleland—mopani scrub with here and there a giant mahogany-tree, good game country certainly, but also, as it proved only too quickly, very unhealthy.

When we reached the Geelong there was a galvanised iron canteen and store under the big kopje, and two or three grass huts on the farther side of the rise itself. That was the extent of the camp. Including the storekeeper, there were, I think, four white men there, and these had only arrived a few days ahead of us. Except for such work as had been done by the "Ancients" in

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GEE LONG MINE, NOV., 1897.

presumably prehistoric times, the reef was untouched.

For a start, we were all sent down to the river, where a camp had been built consisting of seven or eight grass huts on a small kopje, with a large lion-proof cattle scherm just below them. In a way, the position was not a bad one, at anyrate it was always preferable to the settlement which only too quickly sprang up on the mine itself. I think I lived in the River Camp, as we called it, for about six months; I know I was about the last of the construction staff to leave it. After I had gone it was turned over to the unfortunate wretch who, for the time being, had the dreary task of driving the big pumping engine we put in down on the river bank.

From the River Camp, looking up the Umsingwane Valley, you could see a number of small granite kopjes dotted about the veld, some five miles away. Beyond these again was a regular range, the Mahaulihauli Hills, really an outlying portion of the Matoppos themselves; whilst opposite us, across the river, were the M'Patane Hills. When we first occupied the River Camp, in the latter part of 1897, all these kopjes were infested by small bands of Matabele warriors, who, still uncertain as to whether the white man would abide by the terms of peace settled by Cecil Rhodes, and perhaps fearing that they themselves would be punished for their share in the recent rebellion, had not yet given in their guns. Practically speaking, they were still rebels, and, as there were hundreds of them within half-a-day's march, the position of our little band of about twenty white men, unpro-

tected by any form of stockade, was not a very enviable one, though it must be admitted that no one seemed to worry greatly. True, there was some talk of a Maxim gun being ordered; but I fancy there was never any ground for the idea; certainly, the gun never came; and within a couple of months we had ceased to see the Matabele fires amongst the hills, and, in fact, some of those same warriors had already come in to work in the wood-cutting gangs.

The lions were a more serious nuisance than the natives. Night after night, they kept us awake by patrolling round the little hill and growling. In some ways the training was good for those who, like myself, were raw to Africa. After a week or two of it, our point of view changed. Anger, or rather hatred, took the place of fear, and we grew to regard the pseudo-King of Beasts as a pest instead of as a danger.

For some time, our visitors got nothing bigger than a fowl; but at last a horse belonging to an Afrikander was left out after dark, and the lions made short work of it. The following night a trap-gun was set over the little that remained, and when a party, consisting of about half-a-dozen white men, went out next morning they found a big male lion, wounded through the intestines, but still full of fight. I was not in the firing party. If I had been, perhaps I should not be writing now, for it seems that bullets flew, mostly unaimed, in every direction. For a few moments the position was critical—a charging lion and empty cartridge cases; but, before anyone was hurt, the brute fell to the rifles of the two men who kept their

heads. Then the carcass was borne back in triumph. I photographed it, and the Afrikanders told us how the great deed had been done.

So far, we had escaped any rain ; but soon after the slaying of the lion the first storm broke, and we began to realise how joyous Matabeleland could be. It is hardly correct to say our huts leaked, the latter word is wholly inadequate. The roofs seemed to collect the rain, to concentrate it, and direct a steady stream on to our stick-and-grass beds, whence, after soaking our blankets, it poured over the earthen floor, forming large mud puddles. Then, too, with the rain the flies appeared. The cattle scherm, which had been built much too near the camp, was an ideal breeding ground for these pests, which increased in numbers every day, until, at last, it was actually impossible to eat or drink in the place during daylight. The moment you poured out a cup of tea, half-a-dozen flies committed suicide in it ; if you tried to put food into your mouth, flies followed it in. It was all unspeakably disgusting, one of those experiences which words cannot describe, because only those who have been through the same thing would believe the facts.

We had not been in the camp long before food supplies began to run short. Even at the start, everything was abnormally dear. Sugar cost one and ninepence a pound, tinned meats—jungle products—two shillings a pound ; flour was five pounds a hundred-pound bag ; and after a while these, and most other things as well, always barring whisky, became unobtainable. For three weeks we lived on sardines and mealie porridge, washed down by

tea without milk or sugar ; sardines three times a day, not a taste of meat, butter, or even jam. I have loathed sardines ever since.

The shortness of food lasted some time, and great was the growling over it, not without reason too, for the fever season was coming on, and we had the prospect of beginning it half starved. The consulting engineer—the Boss, as he was generally called throughout the country—came in, most unjustly, for the blame. Not that he worried much about what men might say concerning him. He knew that he had ordered ample stores in England, everything of the very best quality ; and that those stores had arrived in Palapye. If the forwarding agents were fools—and, as a transport rider, I found afterwards that most are combinations of the fool and the knave—and sent up boilers instead of bully beef, it was absurd to blame the Boss. He had to use such tools as he could get ; he was the hardest worked man in Rhodesia ; and I am certain of one thing—if his staff was on short rations, he was no better off. He was not of the stuff from which the average mining engineer is fashioned. He never asked a man to do things he would not do himself. Still, whoever was to blame—and I have not forgotten the names of the chief offenders—the fact remains that, when the fever really began, we were not fit to face it, and the miserable record of that wet season was very largely due to the hungry months which had preceded it.

Another factor which had a good deal to do with the ill-health of the camp was the way the hours of work were arranged. We started at seven in the morning, worked on without a break until twelve,

then, after an hour for lunch, continued again until half-past five. It was a perfectly fatuous scheme in a country where sickness is one of the employer's greatest difficulties. Few men anywhere can make a decent breakfast before seven o'clock, least of all in the Tropics; consequently, a very large proportion went to work after breakfasting on two or three whiskies, and were off-colour all day. Then, too, the hours were much too long for the climate, whilst there was always a certain element of "nigger-driving" at the expense of those who, like myself, were under agreement, and could not leave the detestable place.

Of course, I know the hours we worked were the usual ones on mines. But that is no excuse, rather otherwise in fact; for, in Africa, when you hear anyone citing the "custom of the country" as an argument, you know that some perfectly idiotic practice is being upheld by the only reason which can be adduced in its favour. A good instance is furnished by the way mine Kaffirs are fed. Some Transvaal or Kimberley mine manager, having to deal with Basutu, a mealie-eating race, evolved the theory that mealies are the correct food for natives; and he has been followed slavishly by each succeeding idiot. At anyrate in my time, nine mines out of ten in Rhodesia would buy nothing but mealies for their boys, despite the fact that rapoko, the natural food of the local savages, was both cheaper and more nourishing. The mealie is good enough as a food when it has been winnowed and pounded in a wooden mortar; but when ground in the usual mine fashion, very coarsely and with all the grit

and dirt left in, it is almost uneatable. More than half the sickness on the Rhodesian mines was due to the badly ground mealies, and practically the whole of the labour troubles of the early years arose from the same cause.

On the Geelong, however, we had an unusually sane native policy ; many of the boys received extra money in lieu of rations, and were allowed to feed themselves ; as a result, the compound was almost always packed at a time when other mines were filling the air with lamentations concerning the wickedness of the Matabele and Mashona, who would not take up the black man's burden, as represented by the duty of using a shovel or hammering a drill in a badly ventilated working, and sustaining their strength on practically uneatable mealie porridge. There was an appalling amount of cant and nonsense talked in those days concerning the labour question, chiefly by those who were already convinced that their own mines were not payable, and saw, in the alleged shortness of labour, a most convenient excuse for postponing the day of reckoning with their shareholders, drawing their salaries meanwhile. Still, there was never any hint of this sort of thing on the Geelong. The latter turned out a failure, but that was solely the fault of the reef. It was given every chance to prove a success.

The fever came on us suddenly, and the doctor soon had his hands more than full. The hospital consisted of a large and extremely leaky grass hut, and all the drugs, and surgical instruments as well, had been held up at Palapye ; as a matter of fact, they did not arrive until the worst of the sickness



RIVER CAMP, GEELONG MINE.



RIVER CAMP, GEELONG MINE.

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was over. The doctor had a few drugs of his own, and, being an unusually able man, contrived to pull through somehow, so there was no open scandal, and the forwarding people continued in the same old ways; but, at one time, out of the staff, which then amounted to about sixty men, half were incapacitated by fever, or the results of fever, whilst the death roll, which included a couple of outside men, contained, I think, eight names. In a camp controlled by men of the pioneer type the record would probably have been very different; but in the early days of Rhodesian mining—and the Geelong was the first mine to crush—there was a spirit of amateurishness and hurry; and I believe that four-fifths of those who died on the mines in the first two or three years following the Matabele Rebellion fell victims, not to the climate, but to the miserable arrangements for their feeding and housing made by the companies. They were half-starved and overworked, and when the malaria microbe came along he found their constitutions ready for him.

I suppose all these outlying mining camps are the same, little Gehennas of envy, malice and all uncharitableness. Men get nerves and quarrel over nothing. The life is an utterly miserable one. You are cut off completely from the outer world; the only society you get is that of your fellow-sufferers. You are always on the property, always at the beck and call of the company; you lose all sense of being a free man. Then, too, the air is full of suspicion. If any rumour concerning the real condition of the mine reaches the outside world, everyone is suspected of having committed

the horrible crime of putting the truth into a letter. You never know who is a spy. You live either in a mud hut, or a sweltering tin-roofed line of quarters, with rusted cans and empty bottles littered about outside, because the company cannot spare niggers to clean up the camp. Probably, the company insists on your having your food either in a mess run by the secretary or else down at the store, in which it has a share. In any case, your food will be outrageously dear—a mine secretary likes to live in state—and it will taste of a coolie's dirty hands, conditions which are neither necessary nor pleasant.

When you have got away from work for a time—you never finish work—there is nowhere to loaf except the canteen, where the whisky is a shilling a tot, and Bass four shillings a bottle. You go to the canteen and drink, because there is nothing else to do, because there is no apparent reason for self-restraint, and finally, most important of all, because it is the custom of the country. Once in the early days, for two or three months, the Geelong camp washed itself, shaved, put on clean clothes, and went back to decent ways. There was an American lady, the wife of a contractor, living in some huts at the back of the mine kopje; and whilst she was there the whole place felt the influence of her gentle refinement; but she left too quickly, and, at anyrate during my stay, her place was never filled. We had other women up there certainly, but they were mostly Afrikanders, and none of them was ever able, or perhaps anxious, to reform the camp.

You must live in a mining camp to understand

the real meaning of "evil-speaking, lying and slandering." Perhaps the Geelong was especially bad in this respect; certainly, every man was at war with at least ten others, and when he was really sober every man loathed his job. Had we all been Home-born, matters would have been better, but we were unlucky enough to have some Afrikanders, and they upset all the rest. One man in particular, a half-bred Boer, on whom an English public school education had been wasted, was particularly virulent against my brother and myself, and succeeded in making us fairly miserable. Since those days I have had other reasons for not loving that same man, and I hope that, when the next South African War comes, I shall get a chance of settling our quarrel, finally. If ever a human being touched bed-rock in low meanness, that one did. Still, it is in his blood. I like the Boer; I always got on well with him, once I learnt to know his limitations, and so ceased to expect much; but the cross-breed, half Briton and half Boer, with the vices of both races, blatant, untruthful, brutal, is, like the Cape boy, one of Nature's mistakes, or rather one of man's mistakes at the expense of Nature.

The cause of our offending against the Afrikander element was rather curious. It shows how pitifully small are the things which count in a mining camp. My brother and I knew nothing about shooting when we went up to Matabeleland; consequently, the African-born used to treat us with a kind of patronising superiority; but within six months, though we may not have been the best game shots there—that is a reputation usually acquired by hard

lying—the fact remained that we shot more buck than all the rest of the staff put together; consequently, there were very real grounds for jealousy, at least according to South African standards.

The Cornish, or to give it its more usual name, the Cousin Jack, element was always strong on the mine, and, of course, the Cousins formed a party by themselves, hostile to the rest. I came into contact with them a good deal, for when I had got my electric light running—successfully, after all—I was given the job of looking after and repairing the compressed-air drills used underground. I got on well enough with the Cousins for some time, until an ugly little incident happened, and from then onwards there was war. The Cornishman has much in common with the Essex man; although, of course, whilst in the latter county there are practically no men of birth and education, in Cornwall there is a very fine landed class, poor, perhaps, but intensely hospitable and kind hearted. So far as Africa is concerned, however, the Cousin Jack miner is the only Cornishman; and the Cousin Jack, like the Essex man, looks on blackmail, not as a crime, but as an industry in which every sensible person will take a hand whenever opportunity arises. They were not long in getting to work on the Geelong. The chance was a good one. It was a Saturday night, and, for the first time in its history, the mine had draught beer, two barrels having arrived that morning on the wagons; consequently, the chronic state of soddenness had been exchanged for something more vigorous. There were not six sober men out of the sixty, and one of the most drunken was a young Boer, a nice, clean-minded

boy. I had been down with fever—I usually got it about every third day on the Geelong—and I had not been near the canteen. On the other hand, I had happened to see that same youngster coming home, reeling, and I had put him to bed, unseen by anyone, and unknown to him.

On the following morning the Cousin Jacks sprang their surprise. They accused the wretched boy of having endeavoured to assault the wife of one of them on the previous night, and demanded a hundred pounds down as compensation to allow the lady to take a trip Home and recover from the shock.

The youngster, believing he could not account for his movements after he had left the canteen, actually agreed to pay, and great rejoicings had already started amongst the Cousin Jacks when I happened to hear of what was going on. Within an hour, my evidence, against that of a drunken woman, had knocked the whole scheme on the head ; but the Cornishmen never forgave my interference, and I had many a dirty trick played on me. The Cousins joined hands with the Afrikanders, a natural alliance ; but I cannot say they scored greatly, although they had some good opportunities. Of course, like every other sane man in Rhodesia, I always made my own Game Laws, or rather Game Law, which had but one clause—that I could shoot what I wanted, when I wanted it. Nominally, there was a close season and a schedule of Royal Game, and I know that, time after time, I was reported to the Mounted Police. Luckily, the latter were a most decent lot of fellows ; they knew that everything my brother and I shot we brought in,

that we never indulged in the colonial sport of slaying for the mere lust of destruction ; consequently, they were conveniently blind, and would always accept the hind quarter of a reed buck provided it had a label on it stating that it came off a goat of abnormal size.

The Geelong camp was always drink sodden, as was but natural under the conditions, and yet, on occasion, it could go further, and get raging drunk. The latter fact is curious, for, as a rule, it is usually the teetotaller, or at least the temperate man, who goes to that extreme. I can remember some horrible bursts, which always had their aftermath in the doctor being kept unusually busy, and, more than once, in a funeral. Generally speaking, these outbreaks were started by some trifling occurrence. One or two men would go clean over the line, and the rest would quickly follow, until every section of the staff had caught the infection ; and those who were not soaking at the bar in the canteen had got bottles of whisky in their offices or rooms. And then they blamed the climate when they developed black-water fever.

CHAPTER V

MALARIAL fever is a queer thing. I daresay the quinine-selling folk, and even some of the doctors, will want to start on my track with guns when I say that the mental effects of it are worse than the physical; yet I say it advisedly, and I think I can speak with some authority, for very few men can boast, as I can boast, that they have had malaria over eighty times. Most of them get black-water, or blow out their brains, or go off in delirium tremens, long before they reach that splendid total.

I think that Amyas, the younger brother who joined me in Mashonaland, had it turn and turn about with me, but I had nearly three years' start of him, and, moreover, he had the finest physique and the finest constitution of any man I ever met. Between us we reduced malaria down from the level of an illness to that of a beastly nuisance. We knew how to tackle it, and it never scared us in the least. Of course, in the background there was always the dread of black-water fever, but we used to ensure against that by drinking much Hollands gin, De Kuypers', I think it was, in tall, black bottles, an acquired taste, perhaps, but still a wonderfully practical one.

We saw so many men die—practically all the old crowd has gone now—that we grew callous in a way, and yet we never lost heart. For one thing, the doctor on the Geelong was certainly one of the best fever men in Rhodesia, and he

taught me a good deal. On two occasions he pulled me right out of the Valley of the Shadow, not because he had drugs and a hospital, but because he was determined not to let me go. He bucked me up—to use a crude phrase—and he made me look on malaria from the same point of view, as a disease from which no decently courageous man need die. Then I owe a good deal to Dr Koch. I met him in Bulawayo, really for the purpose of giving him some details concerning cattle sicknesses. I was a bit of an expert—Heaven knows I had lost enough cattle then—but he repaid me by telling me about his malaria experiments. He is a great old man. Doctors and pseudo-scientists may say what they like about Robert Koch, but they will never persuade me that their criticisms are due to anything but jealousy of a man who is too great not to admit that he has been mistaken. The average English doctor gives quinine in malaria cases. He has read in a book that quinine is the proper thing, and he plugs it into his wretched patient, at stated intervals, in stated quantities, like a county councillor screwing a rate out of his victims.

Quinine may cure you, if you chance to take it at the psychological moment. It has cured a good many men, I believe; but, if you take it sufficiently often at the wrong moment, it will kill you. Most men who are supposed to have died of malaria have really died of quinine poisoning. Quinine, ten grains every two hours, is both the Nicene and the Athanasian Creed to the ordinary English doctor, his way of salvation, and, at anyrate in my days, he used to kill his patients with rather unpleasant

regularity. One doctor I met, however, dared to break away from the tradition and study the disease for himself. His patients did not die, at least when there was a chance of saving them; and, when I came to talk the matter over in later years with Robert Koch, I found that the great German professor used almost the same words that I had heard from the young English doctor down in Matabeleland.

I can speak as an expert on the malaria microbe. I know him as well as I know hyænas. If you can strike the right moment, when he has developed the correct number of tails or legs or antennæ, and you take about twenty grains of quinine, you will certainly kill him. At other times, however, quinine seems simply to act as a pick-me-up for him; it spurs him on to further efforts. If you have a doctor who knows his work he will keep on taking samples of your blood until he finds that the microbe is ready and fit to be poisoned; but, if he is not doing this, just drop his medicines out of the window, or give them to a cheeky Mashona, and take a strong aperient, followed by strychnine and arsenic tabloids. You will pull through that way, provided always that you believe that malaria is not a fatal disease.

Black-water fever is, of course, different. I cannot say that malaria deaths ever troubled me for long. I hated to see the men die, but I realised that they were not of the stuff which has an unquestionable right to live. On the other hand, black-water is horrible. They tell me that nowadays they save most of the patients; but I saw five out of six of ours die. I used to get a kind of hopeless

feeling, and, as I nursed them, all the time there was drumming through my brain those most beautiful and most terrible of words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord."

I have read the Burial Service myself on the Road; I have heard it read only too often; and yet I believe it stirs me to-day as much as it did when I was a raw boy of twenty, and first helped to carry a dead man wrapped in a blanket; because there was so often a sense of waste and futility. The pioneers, the traders and the transport riders were not of the hooligan, football-watching ruck we have at Home; and they ought not to have died like that. We could have spared the footballers so much better; in fact, I, for one, would have seen them go gladly; but the men who built up Rhodesia were real men, and the country will never see their like again.

I wonder what Rhodesia's tale of dead is. The Chartered Company has never told us, and therein it has been very wise: for the mortality in those early days was, if inevitable, still abnormal. The terrible death rate was a temporary thing; it represented the price of the acquisition of the country, not the price of its occupation. The new Rhodesians know nothing of these things—it is well for them that they do not—and there are very few of the older hands left to tell the story. And yet I believe most of us who have come through it are content—even though we are as poor as we were in the nineties—because we know that our country, our country in a sense which the post-war settler cannot understand, is going ahead after all; and though few of us have any share in the rewards, and we see a cheaper class of men scooping in the profits, I do

not think we trouble greatly, because we know that, as in our own case, they have but a life interest in their work ; the capital must revert to the Empire.

I began this chapter with the intention of pointing out that malaria is chiefly mental, and annoying the doctors by saying so. I will go a little beyond that and say that I never saw a man die of malaria—malaria *sans phrase*. There was always something else, alcoholism or the Funks, generally the Funks.

I suppose malaria can be fatal ; I know it ought not to be so. If a man is not scared, if he makes up his mind to get out of his bunk at the earliest possible opportunity, if he looks on the thing, not as a misfortune, but as part of the daily round, he will not die. If he does die from it, he was not worth saving. He ought to have stayed at home, and become a municipal politician or a professional football player, or anything else that is vulgar and nasty and safe.

I had my first dose of malaria in the Geelong River Camp. The doctor had shifted up to the mine, three miles away, and his hands were more than full. My bed consisted of sticks and grass, my pillow of a brown waterproof bag. I was alone all day long in the camp, not even a nigger to bring me a drink of water—such are the ways of mining companies—and I was five days and five nights before I got a moment's sleep. Moreover, I had been suffering from chronic dysentery and pleurisy ; and the only nourishment I had was what the doctor could manage to prepare and send down himself. Is it to be wondered at that I have no love for mining companies ? If I had died then—and I was very near

it—they would have stopped my pay from the very day, and probably have buried me in a blanket.

The doctor had no means of moving me, nowhere to move me to, in fact. I know now that the consulting engineer, the Boss, felt each man's death as keenly as though he had been brother to the dead man; but he was only there at long intervals, and he had to trust to those on the spot. He knew they were poor tools, but they were the best he could get at the moment; and, after all, his first duty was to his shareholders. The blame lies with his subordinates, many of whom were Afrikanders, or men saturated with Afrikander ideas. During the Boer War we got the measure of these people, and no sane Englishman would put them in responsible positions to-day; but at that time they were considered reliable, and were allowed to be in charge of Home-born men. I hate the Afrikander. I do not mind saying so—it is much better to be open in these matters—and I despise utterly those Britishers who throw in their lot with the Afrikanders. "Civis Romanus Sum," should be the creed of every Home-born man who goes out to South Africa.

Drink brings on malaria, and malaria makes men drink. The two, the whisky and the fever, act and react on one another until no one can tell which is really to blame. The worst part of the fever is the terrible depression and restlessness which follows it; for a few days after you have got out of bed everything seems utterly wrong and miserable, and those few days really constitute the critical period.

I fear dysentery far more than I do malaria. It



THE AUTHOR'S HUT, RIVER CAMP.



INTERIOR OF ABOVE.

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will pull you down in less time, and whereas, after a certain point, the fever is just a passive misery, dysentery is always active suffering. I know only one certain cure for it, a native medicine made from the bark of a small sapling. It never seems to fail. I learnt of it first from a barman in Bulawayo. He was a ghastly wreck. The hospital had discharged him as an incurable, chronic case, and you could see he had not very long to live, unless the disease were checked; moreover, he had not the means to leave the country. Knowing I was always out amongst the Kaffirs, he told me of this stuff—some other transport rider had mentioned it to him—and begged me to get some for him. Three days later I was down on the Matoppo Hills, and the first headman I spoke to obtained me a handful of the bark. It was nearly a year before I met the barman again; but then he told me that two doses of it—it tastes very like ginger—had effected a complete cure.

I have never known that stuff fail in real dysentery; but, on the other hand, half of what is diagnosed as that disease is merely due to poison administered by the natives; but the story of that, and of how I found it out, belongs to my trading days in Mashonaland. Whilst I was on the Geelong I was ready, like everyone else, to blame the climate for all the various sicknesses.

I think I had more than my share of illness. More than once I was on the point of getting my agreement cancelled and leaving the country. Altogether, I was off duty seven months in my two years; and I am quite sure I should have left, but for the good shooting I used to get when I was well

enough to go out for a week-end on the veld. Somehow, that seemed to make up for it all; and I am very glad now that I did not throw up the sponge, as, in that case, I should have quitted Rhodesia knowing only its drab and sordid side.

CHAPTER VI

You can find the history of the Geelong mine in any of the Stock Exchange books of reference. I believe some of the shareholders are still sore about it. They lost their money, of course, but as most of them were gamblers, rather than investors, sympathy would be wasted on them. Then, too, the failure was a perfectly genuine one. The gold, or at least the payable gold, was all on the upper levels, and when that had been worked out there was only poor quartz left. At no time did the prospects, or the performance, of the mine justify the high price of the shares, and if the public insisted on overvaluing the stock, it should not growl at having been disillusioned. It went into the gamble voluntarily.

On the mine itself we knew very little about the movements of the shares. Our mails were so slow, and, at first, so irregular, that we had practically no chance of speculating by post; whilst we could not trust the telegraph, or rather the telephone. The latter was worked by the police—we had a camp of two troopers and a sergeant close to the canteen, conveniently close—and in their guileless intemperance they were always ready to tell you what messages had been sent. Poor wretches, it was about the only subject of conversation they had. More than once, in casual conversation, other men's most private business was blurted out to me; whilst the company must have

seen every word which was transmitted. I always knew that there was a regular system of espionage carried on by some of the mine officials, men of the true crawler type, anxious to curry favour with the Boss—who must have loathed them, being essentially a man—and so serious did the matter become at one time that we used to give our letters to the transport riders to post in Bulawayo, distrusting the company's mail bag.

That same atmosphere of suspicion was one of the most depressing features of life on the mine. In most cases it was the men who were conscious of their own dishonesty who were most active in hunting down others, fearing the presence of the straight men. My brother, Malcolm, was the victim of an exceedingly dirty trick of this kind, a trick which failed only because those who planned it told too many lies. It made us very sore at the time; but afterwards we grew so used to that sort of intrigue on the part of the same little clique that it became part of the regular round of existence. There was very little of brotherhood or loving-kindness in any of those mining camps; and I am afraid that, if the same spirit had prevailed amongst the pioneers, Rhodesia would still be in the hands of the Matabele tribesmen.

Our mine was the first in the country to crush, but I do not remember any outburst of gratitude on the part of the company, although the engineering work, at least, had been carried out with extraordinary rapidity and efficiency; but then our resident engineer, Edward Trevennen, was about the most able man I ever had the good fortune to work under. With the starting of the mill, life



FIRST WORKINGS, GEELONG.



GEELONG, AFTER A YEAR'S WORK.

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in the engineering department entered on a new phase. We were no longer construction, but maintenance, men, repairing what other people had damaged. There was constant war between us and both the mill staff and the underground men. I thought then, and I still think, that our enemies were always in the wrong; for whilst we were, after all, professionals, the others were, technically speaking, only labourers, who could learn all about their duties in a few days. Some of my particular foes of the Afrikaner clique were in the mill; and it was wonderful how often my electric light went wrong. The majority of the accidents could be accounted for only by a blow from a big hammer. It sounds absolutely idiotic now, writing of it in cold blood; but at the time we were so run down and nervous, and shaken with fever, that we were all ready to do stupidly malicious tricks of that sort.

In a year the Geelong camp grew from one tin store and two or three grass huts, to a wilderness of grotesquely shaped galvanised iron buildings, chimneys, and headgears, with arc lamps and big ash heaps or tailings dams to bear witness to the supreme triumph of civilisation. It was all very well arranged, and very practical, and very hideous. The surrounding bush had been cut down for fuel, the grass killed off by the dust and smoke. Every building seemed to contain a machine grinding out a hateful din, every open space to be littered with bottles and rusted cans and derelict packing cases. Every white man had a dog or a monkey, and upheld with fierce vehemence his pet's right to quarrel with his neighbour's animals.

Even after the first shortness of food stuffs was over, messing arrangements were a constant source of grievance. The company itself started a mess and the employees had practically no option but to join. In itself, the scheme, as mapped out by the Boss, was an excellent one. He had found time to order a large consignment of the very best supplies obtainable in England, and his intention was that these should be charged to the staff at bare cost. Then, having so much else to do, he had to leave the details to the men on the spot. The result was that the first month's bill ran us into twelve pounds ten each for most indifferent food, four pounds ten more than the store-keeper charged. There was trouble, to put it mildly, and the trouble grew to something very like mutiny when it leaked out that we had been debited with the capital expenditure on the coolie cook's garden, in addition to our legitimate mess bills. Next month the charge was reduced to eight pounds, but the grumbling over the cooking was so great that the company decided to get in a contractor—I forgot to mention that the first cook, a white man, died of fever before he had prepared a single meal—and then the crisis came. The great Fricadelle Row was one of the most important events in the history of the mine.

It was all started by some hungry niggers. The contractor had been running the mess for about a fortnight, with fair success, when one morning we went to the mess house to find no breakfast ready. The natives, waiters and kitchen boys, had gone on strike, and were then squatting outside the compound manager's door, retailing their griev-

ances. They were starving, they declared. Instead of being allowed to have the pieces off the plates, they were forced to collect these together and mince them, the resulting mess being manufactured into Fricadelles. Immediately, everyone remembered that Fricadelles had appeared on the menu at every meal. When questioned about the matter, none too politely, the contractor answered by getting furiously drunk and beating his wife, who took refuge in the room next to mine, her husband standing outside the door and shouting insults at everyone in the quarters, until the staff as a whole came out and drove him off. Next day the mess broke up, finally. Nowadays, the fuss we made about the matter seems rather childish; but it appeared of paramount importance to us then, possibly because we had only petty little things with which to occupy our minds.

One of the most striking points about the early history of Rhodesian mining is that it never led directly to any violent crime. I cannot recall a single instance of highway robbery or murder for the sake of gold; and yet there were far better openings than the Australian bushrangers ever had. In Australia, the thief had but little prospect of escaping from the country with his booty; if he made a big haul he was bound to hide it somewhere, at least for a long time. On the Geelong we were only about seventy miles from the Transvaal, where there was no extradition; whilst, if the bushranger did not fancy sharing his loot with the Boer officials, he could make his way to the Portuguese territory. Police camps were few and far between; telegraph wires were easy to cut and took a long

time to repair, the linesmen usually travelling in leisurely fashion in a bullock cart, doing twelve or fifteen miles a day until they came to the break; the coach carrying the gold and mails had no guard, and usually no passengers, just a Dutch driver and a Basutu leader; yet no one ever tried highway robbery.

I will not say the matter was not discussed. More than once it was suggested, in a joking spirit, that we should form a little syndicate for the purpose; but on one occasion an attempt was planned out seriously; and the coach certainly would have been held up had not the tongue of one of the gang wagged too freely in a Bulawayo bar. They were all Germans in the scheme, and they sent two women of their own race down to the mine, nominally to ply their calling, really to obtain full details as to how and when the gold was sent. The coming of the women had the effect of sending the camp into the wildest racket in its history. So many men were away from work that the mill was nearly stopped for lack of quartz; and, probably, every secret known was blurted out, every secret except the most important one—that in almost every case the “gold” on the coach consisted of boxes of lead, the real gold being sent in by Cape Cart.

I never knew why the plot was abandoned in the end. The confederates may have found out that the police in Bulawayo had already learnt of their scheme, or the unceremonious way in which the women were ultimately driven off the property may have frightened them; at anyrate, the whole scheme came to nothing; but the burst led to at least one death.

My two years' contract with the company ended in a splendid dose of fever, which lasted for nearly seven weeks. My brother and I had long since made up our minds to quit the mine, and go on a shooting expedition ; consequently, when the doctor advised me to take a trip into Bulawayo, just before my agreement ran out, I went gladly—it gave me a chance to buy the pack donkeys we wanted.

Those were the good days of Bulawayo. The town was still Railhead, the distributing centre for the whole of Matabeleland. There may not have been plenty of money there, but, at least, there was unlimited credit, which, in the eyes of most people, was as good as, or even better than, having the cash. Money is a definite thing, which sooner or later comes to an end ; credit continues until the crash comes, by which time the wise man is out of the country. Not that there was any spirit of dishonesty in Bulawayo, any wish to avoid liabilities, at least on the part of the transport riding and trading section. As for the others—the clerks from the mining companies' offices and the Government officials, with their perfect puttee leggings and their hunting stocks, their swagger and their utter ignorance of the veld—I always gave them a wide berth, and so knew but little of them. I daresay they would have paid could they have done so ; but, when everyone is spending more than he is earning, twenty shillings in the pound becomes a vague, unattainable longing. Most people failed ultimately—I did, amongst others—but in the case of the Bulawayo storekeepers nine out of ten had started without capital, as the victims of the wholesale German houses in Port Elizabeth ; consequently,

the greater part of the losses fell on the latter, and no decent people were the worse off in the end.

In 1899 no one in Bulawayo cared whether you paid cash or no. It was bad form to ask a man to settle an account. In the bars you signed a card for your drinks; in the stores they entered it up to you. A stranger got credit as easily as an old inhabitant. What did a few bad debts matter, after all? The country was going to boom; in fact, the boom had actually begun, some years before, and, though the local officials and companies might seem to be making a mess of things, Rhodes would come by-and-by and put it all right, as he had done before. If they were not marrying and giving in marriage in Bulawayo, at least they were eating and drinking, especially drinking, ignoring the fact that the railway extension was being pushed on, and that soon, from being the terminus, the town would become a mere station on the line; refusing to believe that the Boer War was inevitable; never suspecting that Cecil Rhodes was already a dying man. A few months after I struck Bulawayo first, the flood of disasters came, and, ultimately, destroyed most of them.

I bought six donkeys on the market square for fifty pounds ten shillings. They were a fine lot. Joshua, as we afterwards called him, the leader of the people, who always walked ahead, was the biggest donkey I have ever seen, whilst the others, if not so tall, were equally strong. It was characteristic of Bulawayo that, a quarter of an hour after I had cut my lot out from the span, the auctioneer begged me to let him put them up for sale again. That was the way of the town—you bought and

you sold again immediately, not necessarily at a profit, but it gave you a little excitement and a legitimate excuse for a drink on the deal. However, I wanted my donkeys to carry packs from the Geelong to the Portuguese border ; so I actually paid for them, and drove them off to the outspan on the Tuli Road, preparatory to starting back to the mine, where I was to pick up my brother.

CHAPTER VII

WHEN I left Bulawayo with those six donkeys I was new to the ways of the breed; when I sold them four months later for ten shillings less than they cost I swore I would never travel with pack donkeys again.

A pack donkey would be right enough, provided the track were always dead level, that there were no lions about, and that you never desired to unpack your loads; on the other hand, in veld of the type we travelled through, rugged granite country for the most part, with innumerable sharp little dips down to streams, with the possibility, or rather the probability, of lions round your camp every night, and with packs which you were always wanting to open, and so disarrange, donkey transport becomes a veritable curse.

The pack donkey is an absolute, unmitigated fool. When he comes to a stream he breaks into a trot down the slope of the drift, stops suddenly at the bottom, and shoots his pack over his head into the water. When he sees two trees very close together he tries to pass between them and gets jammed; when you stop for a moment to do something to one of his mates he wanders off into the bush and attempts to get lost. Then, too, lions prefer donkey flesh to any other, and will leave all their proper business to follow up your animals; consequently, you have to tie the beasts round a tree, and sleep within a few yards of them—or, at least,

try to sleep. Then you will discover that a donkey never by any chance rests. If he is not kicking out, or shuffling about, he is chewing his neighbour's neck; the only variation is when he endeavours to break his reim and stroll away into the jaws of the waiting lion. As for the packs, they are perfectly hopeless. Malcolm numbered each one, and made a list of its contents, whether food stuffs, trading goods, spare clothes or cartridges; but after the second night's outspan the boys had mixed all together, and from that time onwards we ceased to think of arrangement. When you wanted any particular article, you emptied pack bag after pack bag until you found it.

Joshua, the big donkey, had a special saddle, which Malcolm had bought cheap. I never knew what sort of animal it would have suited. I know it did not suit Joshua—and as he always insisted on walking in front, leading the people, his saddle was the first to get into trouble. The bags in it were long and shallow, and Joshua used to manage to empty them on to the veld at least twice a day. We solved the difficulty in the end by presenting the saddle to a nigger, and loading Joshua with bundles of raw hippo sjamboks; but for the whole of the outward journey the thing was an absolute nightmare to us.

We started out from the Geelong casually. We were going eastwards, to shoot game and buy cattle, and we were coming back to civilisation when the fit took us—that was the extent of our plans. Our boys came from the Sabi district—or at least they said so—and they promised to show us where game was plentiful as flies were in the Geelong camp;

whilst one boy, Tom, declared he could not only lead us to many hippo, but could also find a big store of sjamboks, hidden in a tree, which some stray white hunter had put there four years previously. I wish I had a list of our stores. In after years I became a professional so far as these long trips of several months' duration were concerned, and I learnt to get things down to the irreducible minimum; but still I know we made a good selection that first time. Flour, tea, coffee, sugar, salt—those are the absolute essentials, at least half-a-pound of flour per man per day, and double the quantity of tea and sugar you would use at home. Bacon is almost an essential, for game has no trace of fat in it; but it is not a bad plan to use it boiled, instead of fried, then it will not make you bilious, even if you trek immediately after eating it. Rice is useful, but sago is far better; there is nothing to equal it at the end of a long night trek. Alcohol is useless. You cannot carry enough to last you throughout the journey, and the little you can take you will finish the first time you are cold and tired—at least, that was my experience—and then, next time you feel played out, you worry over your rashness, instead of pulling yourself together with strong tea.

We left the Geelong joyfully—heavens! how I had detested that camp and its inhabitants—and started down my telephone line to the old river camp. I had been bad with fever again, and I was so weak that the three-mile tramp was more than enough for me, and we halted for several hours in the river bed; then we went on, and outspanned for the night at the M'Pempeze River, a perfectly rotten

place for lions. We heard one of the brutes about a mile away, and, from the behaviour of the donkeys, I fancy some came a good deal closer to us ; but still none of them made any attempt at an attack, greatly to our relief.

From the M'Pempeze we had a trader's road for about twenty miles ; but at the end of that stretch we lost all trace of the white man's rule, until, on the eighth day out, we suddenly came on an old road, almost overgrown, and obviously disused, with the drifts washed into great ruts, and native game traps set across the spoor. It was the old Pioneer's Road, up which Selous had led the Pioneer Column in 1890, once the main highway to Mashonaland, now abandoned, and forgotten by all save the survivors of that column. We came on the remains of some very long wagons which had been used for carrying iron telegraph poles, and here and there were the ruins of what had been huts ; but there was no recent spoor, no wagon spoor at all, really, whilst under the great Sugar Loaf Hill at the Lundi Drift we searched in vain for any trace of the graves of the forty-nine white men who are supposed to have died there, I think in 1893, when the river held the wagons up for six weeks.

A queer incident happened when we were camped at the Sugar Loaf. Malcolm had shot some big buck, a sable antelope, I fancy, and we had made a little thorn scherm in the bush, where we were drying some of the meat, and resting both our boys and our donkeys. We had been there a couple of days when the piccannin, who had been down for water, came hurrying back from the drift to say that four Dutchmen on horses were coming along

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the road. When we had left the mine the Boer War had been in the air, and at every kraal we had heard rumours of trouble across the border. It may have been this sense of uneasiness which made us cautious; at anyrate, we stayed in the bush, sending one of our boys along, in the guise of a travelling Kaffir, to see who the strangers were, a precaution which probably saved our lives.

The Dutchmen offsaddled at the drift, and, after sending our boy for water, made coffee. Then our boy squatted a few yards away, and waited for information. What they told him we never knew; what he told us when he came back was that war had already broken out between the British and the Boers, and that these four men were on their way down to join the latter. The last part alone was true, though had they known that two Englishmen were there with six valuable donkeys, I fancy we should have got a short shrift. As a matter of fact, only one was a Boer, two being Cape Colonials, and the fourth a German doctor. War had not broken out, but they were already on the warpath, anxious to start hostilities by looting what they could. I met the Boer afterwards, and I found him, like most of his kind, very decent and very slow-witted. He told me the fate of the German doctor. It was tragic—and very suitable. He was found killing off the British wounded after one of the fights, skulking round, shooting in their faces with a revolver. Two Tommies got him with their bayonets. He scrambled on the ground, begging for mercy, which he did not get.

Many months later, after the Relief of Mafeking, I was one of two passengers on a south-bound

train. We had an armoured truck attached, and an armoured train as escort; consequently, we travelled slowly, with many long stops. When we reached Vryburg they decided that we had better stay the night there. Contrary to expectation, the little railway station was quite animated, the centre of interest being a sergeant in one of the Welsh regiments. That soldier was a well-satisfied man in a sombre sort of way. Had liquor been obtainable, he could certainly have been solemnly drunk. It seemed that the colonial rebels, those high-minded patriots, had murdered his brother a few months before, apparently for the sake of his watch, and when a rebel had to be hanged, after having taken and broken the oath three times, the sergeant had begged the privilege of being allowed to carry out the execution. So far as I could make out, that rebel was one of the party of four which I saw through the bushes at the Lundi Drift. I never knew where his fellow-colonial went to; certainly, he never reappeared in Mashonaland, so I trust that he, too, was sent to his own place.

From the Lundi Drift, we struck down the river, following the northern bank. We were just getting into good cattle country, and we decided to buy some young bulls first, with the cash we had, eighty-four pounds in all, then, leaving our animals, including the donkeys, at a convenient kraal, make our way with carriers down to the tsetze-fly country, returning just before the rains began.

The first kraal we reached after leaving the drift was a wonderfully picturesque place, a group of some thirty or forty huts in a little grassy basin, almost completely enclosed by huge granite kopjes.

We got to the village about three o'clock in the afternoon, and found it absolutely deserted. There was not even a dog to be seen ; but a faint sound of drumming from over a neck in the hills explained the matter to our boys.

"There is beer," they said, then Tom and another youngster started off to investigate.

They were gone some time, an unreasonably long time considering the apparent distance, and when they returned, bearing a large pot of native beer, they were distinctly apologetic, and almost incoherent. It was the kraal of Jackalass, they said, and Jackalass was the most estimable Mashona they had ever met—our boys were M'Hlengwi and Matabele—he was very sorry that a great festival in the fields prevented him from coming to see his white guests at once ; but he was sending them a pot of beer, to be going on with, and would come back himself at sundown.

He was as good as his word. The sun had hardly disappeared behind the kopjes when a great singing and jodelling announced that the people were coming home. They were the most happily drunken crowd imaginable. None of them was really sober, and yet all were on most friendly terms with each other. Even the cattle seemed to have caught the spirit of their owners, for they trotted in with the herd boys riding on their backs.

Jackalass certainly was a good Mashona, or rather Makalanga—Mashona being really a kitchen-Kaffir word, though one now sanctioned by general usage. He was that very rare thing, a native gentleman, even though he wore but a loincloth

and was prone to drink too much of his national drink. He started by sitting down in front of us and clapping his hands. Then he signed to one of his sons, who produced a fowl as a present; a few minutes later he gave us some meal for our boys; and so it went on for an hour, a dozen little things, one after another, sour milk, eggs, tomatoes, everything he could think of likely to please the white men, ending up with a small and vociferous goat. Of course, he got present for present, limbo, beads and matches; but he was giving gladly, taking a pleasure in it, a striking contrast to the general run of Mashona headmen, who expect double the value of their presents, and then try and get the latter back, in order to sell them to their visitor.

In the morning, half the men of the kraal went out to show us where the game was. Malcolm shot two klipspringer, those queer little mountain antelope, and I got one; consequently there was great rejoicing when we returned at midday, and in a very few minutes every pot was full of spicy scraps of entrails.

Jackalass sold us the first bull we ever owned, a dull red animal which afterwards developed into one of the finest trek oxen in our spans. Poor Jackalass—we called him after his breeder—he died in the days of the Great Disease, somewhere between Selukwe and Fort Victoria. Most of his mates, bought on that trip, finished their days at that same outspan, and their wagon was also abandoned there. Probably, the remains of it are there still; though the bones of poor old Jackalass and his mates must long since have rotted away.

Jackalass, the headman, would have liked us to stay a month, during which time, he assured us, we should shoot so much game that his people would forget the taste of porridge, their staple diet; but we declined the invitation, and went on to a village about fifteen miles away.

There, too, we found them all drunk. In fact, they were drumming so vigorously, this time in the kraal itself, that they never heard us coming up the path. When they did see us, however, there was a wild rush for the shelter of the rocks on the part of the women and children, whilst the men seized their assegais and guns, and retreated to the edge of the clearing, looking rather ugly. We were the first white men who had ever been there, and they were afraid we were labour agents. However, we soon reassured them, and they turned out to be quite a decent lot, though they had none of the joviality of Jackalass' people.

Their kraal was not a cheerful place. An hour or so after we got there, although it was still broad daylight, a couple of leopards began to growl in the kopje near by. Just before sunset one of our boys came in to say that a flock of guinea-fowl was down in some old lands beside the water hole, and I reached the spot in time to see a huge crocodile dive off one of the rocks into the pool. I was still watching the bubbles rising when something stirred at my feet, and I looked down to see a twelve-feet-long python uncoiling himself. He finished the process with his head blown off, wagging a shapeless stump to and fro.

Most people would have reckoned the spot too prolific in schelm, and have detested it accordingly.

Not so with my boys. They forgot the leopards and the crocodile, and ignored altogether the hyæna which turned up shortly afterwards. Had I not killed a python, an N'Hlatu, a great snake, and did not every sane person know that when you killed a snake you were going to have luck in hunting? The greater the snake, the greater the luck; and they spent half the night discussing what I should shoot on the morrow. They even went so far as to give the local witch doctor a snuff-box and the promise of a shilling to throw the bones, and so discover which side of the Lundi River would be lucky. He decided that I must cross, and so in the morning, a chilly winter morning, the guide took us down through the dew-laden grass on the river bank, through the bitterly cold stream itself, into the mopani scrub on the other side. Usually we took some food with us—cold guinea-fowl and bread; but, on this occasion, so sure were our boys of the luck of the great snake that they carried only a small bag of monkey nuts. Malcolm went away to the right, after agreeing to meet me under a certain bald kopje; and I saw no more of him for some hours.

The first thing I struck was a duiker, who dived into the scrub and was lost. A few minutes later a dozen vague grey shadows, seen indistinctly against the thorn bush, materialised suddenly into so many waterbuck cows, then, before I could shoot, disappeared again. The boys laughed. The luck of the N'Hlatu would be something far better than mere waterbuck, tough and strongly scented. A mile farther on there was a sudden crashing

amongst the bush, and an eland bull, the buck of all buck, was away in a cloud of dust, followed by a badly aimed bullet from my rifle. Then I saw the horns of a sable antelope just disappearing behind some mimosa bush, and after that again a troop of impala really out of range.

I was beginning to get sore at my ill-luck, as well as hungry. We stopped on a big flat rock, lighted a fire, cooked our handful of monkey nuts; and then I proceeded to give those niggers my candid idea of their great snakes and their rotten superstitions. They listened in silence, chewing their monkey nuts, then they took snuff, copiously, and after that they explained to me that we had yet to find the animal of the great snake. Doubtless, there was an eland, or at least a roan antelope, waiting for my rifle. As for those we had seen so far, obviously the spirits of their ancestors did not agree for them to die yet.

I did not answer the arguments, knowing Kaffirs fairly well; but I started homewards, down the Lundi bank. I had gone perhaps a mile when a bush buck jumped up and I knocked him over at about a hundred yards. He scrambled to his feet again, making off, and we were looking for the blood spoor, when, suddenly, Tom, who was carrying a Metford carbine, gripped my arm.

"There, baas, there is the luck of the N'Hlatu," he whispered.

I followed his pointing finger to see in the pool, about a hundred and sixty yards away, the head of a huge hippo, a very giant amongst giants, sticking clear out of the water.

Rhodesia had game laws, and amongst these was,

and may be still, one which declared that the man who shot hippo must pay some idiotic fine—about fifty pounds, or give an I.O.U. of that nominal value—for each beast he killed. Still, those game laws seemed of even less importance than ever at that moment. It was my first hippo. Had I been older I should have gone closer, and, as I crept up, I should have remembered that I had only soft-nosed bullets in my belt; and then I should have left the animal alone. As it was, however, I fired from where I was, hit him in the exact place, behind the ear, and ran forward, reckoning I had got him. Just as I reached the edge of the pool there was a sudden bellow, and the great beast came out of the water with ponderous deliberation, as though utterly dazed, as in fact he was; and began to push his way through the reed bed.

An instant later, Tom's Metford carbine spat out its vicious note, just beside my ear, a wholly futile body shot. Then he and I were in the water, forcing our way through the water, waist deep, breast deep, whilst the big bull was moving so slowly, lurching a little as he went, that we got to the other side of the pool almost at his heels. Tom fired again and yet again, uselessly as before, into the hindquarters. I was waiting for a head shot—I had that amount of sense left. Suddenly, the hippo turned at right angles, back to the pool; and I got him again, in the head. He gave a bellow, lurched forward into the water, and, for a few seconds, was lost to view. I thought he was done, and when he began to dive down into the sand at the deep end of the pool and root that up I took it to be his death flurry.

I was squatting on the bank—I never kneel to shoot; down on your haunches, Kaffir fashion, is a far better position—waiting for him. At last he came within ten feet, out of the water suddenly, roaring at me. I took him fair and square in the forehead—I saw where the bullet had struck before he dived again—and being, as I have said, young and foolish, I imagined my soft-nosed bullet had finished him. He got into a real flurry then. If there were any fish in that pool, they must have reckoned that the Day of Judgment had come. The bull spouted blood till the water was red half across its width, and then he became very quiet.

Tom rubbed his stomach gently, as though in anticipation of a huge gorge. "He is dead," he said.

I will say this much for Tom, that, though he made a big mistake, he took the same risk as myself; in fact, he led the way into the pool when he suggested that we had better get back to the north bank. We must have been half-way across when Tom gave a cry. That hippo was still alive, very much alive, and he was coming for us. We were waist deep at the moment, and only those who have tried to hurry through water with their clothes on can understand what it means. We had thirty feet to go to safety, and the bull was within twenty feet. One snap of his jaws would have sufficed to cut a man in half. I had the butt end of my rifle ready to drive into his mouth if he gave me the chance; but I knew that, according to all ordinary rules, my game was played out; and then, suddenly, when he was within ten feet of me, he seemed to lose his sense of direction, turned round

in a semicircle, and blundered into a reed bed. He was still absolutely dazed from my last shot.

Yet, in a way, he got his own back. Fate evened up things ; for, as I clambered out of the pool, I slipped on a big rock, and twisted my knee, injuring the muscles. For a fortnight I was dead lame ; trekking became a perfect misery ; and the knee has never got really strong since. Now, after ten years, I dare not get on a restive horse ; whilst if I stand about for an hour or so—say, waiting for a south-coast train—that knee begins to remind me of my first hippo, six thousand miles away, in the Lundi River.

The bull is there yet, for all I know. In the morning I was too stiff to move, but Malcolm went, with big knives and ropes and axes and a camera, to do the cutting up ; but the quarry had vanished. There was not a trace of him, and no nigger down that river found a dead hippo ; so I imagine my soft-nosed bullets merely stunned him ; and, after a bad headache, he went on his way rejoicing. When I asked the niggers about the luck of the great snake, I was told that it was the fault of my cartridges, not of their witchcraft ; and I think they were right ; still, the witch doctor might have warned me to take some solid bullets. He was a fool.

CHAPTER VIII

CATTLE-BUYING from natives is a game requiring infinite patience. Generally speaking, it takes about three hours to settle on the price of a beast, though I have begun negotiations at dawn and not concluded the deal until after sunset. The correct procedure is for the owner of the animal to bring out some worthless, undersized calf for a start ; this, he declares, is so strong that, by itself, it would pull a wagon. Then he has a knobstick thrown at him ; and his beast is driven off by your own boys. A few minutes later he returns to offer you a little larger bull ; this time he is refused with rather less insult ; and, after that, he begins to talk about the animal which you wanted, and he intended to sell all along.

He asks twice as much as he expects to get ; you offer two-thirds of what you intend to give, counting the gold on to a native hoe lying on the ground in front of you.

After a while the owner shakes his head mournfully, draws his rag of a blanket a little closer round his shrivelled body, and remarks to the other old skeletons squatting beside him : " The white man is very dear."

His companions take snuff copiously, and sneeze, then they too shake their mud-plastered heads.

" The white man is dear indeed," they quaver.

The owner has been asking ten pounds before,

now he stares upward at a soaring eagle, as if seeking inspiration, and mutters: "The price is eight pounds."

You reply by adding another half-sovereign to the three pounds already lying on the hoe.

The old men exchange glances, and one examines the latest coin, without however touching it. Possibly he finds it is a "queen," a coin with the Royal Arms, whereas the owner prefers "Horses," those with the George and Dragon on them. You change the coin, cursing the ingrained idiocy of the Mashona, and then pretend to go to sleep, waking up only when the seller reduces his price, or you think that the moment has come to increase yours. Both you and the other side knew at the start what the price would be—five pounds in this case—but the decencies of debate must be observed, and, after all, a deal in cattle is a most serious matter, one to be undertaken only after serious consideration and a throwing of bones by the witch doctor. It is an incident of the day to you; it is probably the event of the year to the native. Traders would do well to remember this; it would save them much irritation and the expenditure of many unnecessary swear words.

We were beginners at cattle-buying then; but we bought extraordinarily cheaply, more cheaply in fact than later on, when it became our principal business. Sixteen cattle which ultimately formed a wagon span, and were worth fully three hundred pounds three years later, cost us exactly sixty-four pounds in gold. We were out for pleasure, and we did not grudge the time we spent on the buying, nor the expense of our boys meanwhile. It was all new

experience ; and it was very pleasant wandering about more or less aimlessly through that marvelously picturesque granite country, where there is a village on almost every kopje, and guinea-fowl innumerable in every native field ; where a handful of beads will buy you more milk and eggs and tomatoes than you can use ; where there is a stream of clear, cold water in every dip, and when, at least at that season of the year, you have not the slightest fear of bad weather.

There is not much big game amongst the kopjes, though the local natives, being inveterate optimists, were always ready to take a cheerful view of the prospects, and to lead us away on long and futile hunts. I remember one big stretch of scrub between two ranges of kopjes where, we were told, there was no long grass because the antelope had eaten it all down. We decided to go there ; tramped ten miles over very bad ground ; camped for the night in an old watercourse with a leopard and some hyænas for company ; and in the morning saw no game at all and scarcely any trace of fresh spoor ; though, as we were coming back, we did light on the bones and skin of a freshly killed waterbuck bull. The lions had dragged the carcass, weighing alive some six hundred pounds, nearly half-a-mile, and were just finishing the last of it when we disturbed them. Their foul saliva was still warm and sticky on the bones ; but our Mashona did not mind that. Within five minutes they had lighted a fire, and were grilling those bones, preparatory to gnawing away the scraps of gristle the lions had left ; and yet they were not unusually hungry.

That experience sickened us of trying to hunt in

the granite country. Our main camp was then at a village called Chivamba's, pretty well the most easterly of the Mashona kraals; a very few miles beyond it the bush country, inhabited sparsely by M'Hlengwi, begins. The bush certainly sheltered more than enough lions, and was reputed to have patches of tsetse fly as well, so we left our donkeys and cattle at Chivamba's, and went on with about half-a-dozen carriers.

You must go into that bush country of Eastern Mashonaland to realise its dreariness. Words are inadequate to paint it. The ground underfoot is red sand; the leaves on the mopani scrub are a decidedly bright green when not a warm brown; the tree trunks are almost black; the grass is yellow. Analyse the constituents of the scene, and each, in itself, is cheerful enough, and yet the impression of the whole, the impression which you carry away with you, is of a grey desolation, drab, silent and unspeakably wearisome. Nine men out of ten would describe that bush as grey, though that colour is to be found only in the skins of the waterbuck, who, however, blend so perfectly with their surroundings as generally to be invisible until they start to run.

The M'Hlengwi villages suit the bush. As a rule they consist of about ten huts, miserably dilapidated, with ragged eaves and smoke-grimed roofs, walls often leaning over at a dangerous angle, and no trace of windows. The intervening spaces are invariably littered with rubbish of all sorts, forming an ideal breeding place for flies. The fowls, which spend their whole lives in routing amongst that same rubbish, on a futile quest for stray pieces of

offal, are small and desperately thin ; the dogs are, if possible, even more mangy and aggressive than those of the Mashona ; the sheep and goats alone are good, by reason of the splendid salt grass to be found amongst the mopani scrub. The people, themselves, are in keeping with their surroundings, utterly dull and apathetic, having no real interest in life, save witchcraft and its attendant abominations. And yet they are not without ingenuity. Most of the gunpowder makers of South Central Africa are M'Hlengwi. The secret of the manufacture, supposed to have been learned in the first case from the Jesuits early in the seventeenth century, is handed down from father to son, and guarded equally from both white men and other natives. I never yet heard any tenable theory propounded regarding the process used, or rather regarding the process and the materials employed.

Carbon is, of course, an obvious matter ; salt-petre is obtained by burning the dung of the rock rabbit, soaking the ashes in water, filtering, and then evaporating the liquid ; but no white man living knows whence the sulphur comes, or whether something else is not used in place of it. Sulphur occurs nowhere in that country in a native state. It is almost inconceivable that the powder makers should extract the very small amount of sulphur obtainable from iron pyrites, and yet, beyond that, I know of no possible source of supply. Probably the matter will always remain a mystery. The native knows how to keep a secret, as well as he knows how to learn the secrets of the white man.

They told us there was plenty of game to be found, if you went down from Chivamba's kraal to

M'Bambo's, and thence to the Tcheredzi River. The game was plentiful as goats, they said ; and you could shoot lions until you were tired. The first part of the statement was strictly true, provided you did not expect very many goats ; whilst as for the latter part, the lions certainly made you tired, by eternally prowling round your camp, making disturbing noises, and keeping you on the jump. The lions down there were like London County Council tramcars. There was not only plenty, but a surplus, and they were a perfect pest to everyone within earshot. I have often wondered that none of us, the three brothers who were with me at various times or myself, ever shot a lion. Personally, I reckon I had them round my camp on at least five hundred nights ; and I have wasted very many days in chasing them. I have bought skins from natives, and sold them, at a huge profit, to sportsmen from home, men with chairs and tables and all the idiotic paraphernalia dear to the heart of those guileless amateurs, British army officers and British big-game hunters, and I have thrown in, with the skin, an outline of the lies to be told when that skin was solemnly hung up on the walls of the ancestral home. But I never had a fair shot at a lion, nothing better than a haphazard blaze with a shot-gun in the darkness ; and I am quite certain I never hit one ; so I have no lion stories to tell. The lion is an unmitigated beast, that is all I know about him, a slinking pest, one of whose regal attributes is that he will sit for hours on a flat rock, waiting for a chance to kill field rats with his kingly paw. Still, like the ridiculous, assegai-waving, song-singing Zulu of the South African

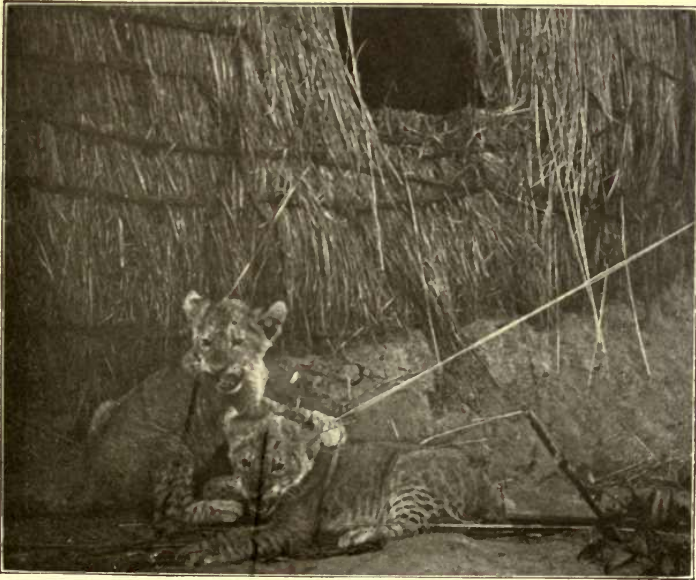
novelists—whose local colour is usually as faulty as their grammar, thereby depriving them of all hope of salvation—the lion of the story-books has become a recognised institution. Expert evidence would be powerless to dethrone him. Why, in that case, journalists and those who write Sunday-school prize-books would lose one of their too few stock phrases!

We went down into that bush veld, but our luck was clean out as regarded game. Malcolm's impressions, written at the time, furnish a fine warning to the hunter who trusts to native reports. Moreover, it must be remembered that, as big-game shots, we were not mere beginners. Malcolm wrote:

“The game is undoubtedly here. Waterbuck spoor everywhere, sable antelope, roan antelope, koodoo, zebra, Lichtenstein Hartebeeste, impala, a veritable Zoo, in fact. We have never seen so much spoor at one time before. Just as we were coming to our first camping place on the Tcheredzi River we spotted a troop of waterbuck in some dense bush. Stanley got a snap at the nearest one—a cow it turned out to be—and brought her down; but she was up and away before we could reach her. Then, try as we would, we could not keep the spoor. A few dozen drops of blood encouraged us; but the ground was too bad, rough and stony, and at last we had, very reluctantly, to give it up as a bad job. Still, we had this consolation—there were plenty more about, waiting for us, although it always seems rotten to wound a buck for the hateful lions and hyænas to finish. . . . We had started into the bush veld with the certainty



DONKEYS FOR SHOOTING TRIP.



LION CUBS.

To read
Alphabet

of doing some wonderful shooting—we had begun with a wounded, and lost, waterbuck cow. The next morning we drew blank again—spoor and no game; and matters began to look ugly. We had left most of our stores at Chivamba's kraal, with the cattle and donkeys, and carried the irreducible minimum with us. Now the position was this—no meat in camp, no game to be seen, and two hungry white men, and half-a-score of even more hungry boys; so the obvious thing was to set some of those same boys to work trying to catch fish in a big pool near by.

“That evening I got a long shot at a sable bull, which I missed. It was a difficult shot, head and neck only at two hundred and fifty yards, so I did not blame myself for missing. Coming back to camp, I met a smell wandering along on the evening breeze, a smell which nearly knocked me flat. One of the boys had found the waterbuck Stanley had wounded, and they were just revelling in it. That cow was about the deadeest buck I have ever come across; but to the niggers it seemed exactly right. They wanted no Lea & Perrins. It appeared that Stanley had hit her half-an-inch behind the heart, a clean shot, and she must have run about half-a-mile, and dropped dead, close to our camp.

“Things were more cheerful that night. We had no more anxiety concerning the boys' food; our sense of smell reassured us on that point. As for ourselves, damper and fried fish still constituted the entire menu; but the fish was by no means bad. We turned in with a certain degree of mis-giving—we could hear hippo roaring in a pool near

by, and there was always the chance of one of these idiotic survivals of prehistoric times wandering through our camp, and, incidentally, placing a foot like a steam roller on the chest of one of us—but we soon forgot the hippo, and even the lion growling on the opposite bank, and thought only of Stanley's waterbuck. The latter may have brought the lion. Personally, I think it should have driven it away. We got, as we thought, to windward; but, even then, an occasional change in the breeze would bring the stench of that cow down to us, and we would hastily cover our heads with the blankets. A mouthful of that smell was a meal in itself.

“The following morning, I came on a big waterbuck bull with one horn broken off short. He was in that dense bush beloved of his kind, and he gave me but one chance of a shot. A minute or two later, about a dozen cows broke away quite close to me; again no chance of a shot. Then, in coming out of the scrub into the open, I saw four more cows trotting along three hundred yards away; but, when they stood, they gave a wonderful object lesson in protective colouring. They were right out in the open, and, although I watched them carefully, one of the four appeared as a faint grey shadow, whilst the other three were totally invisible. We wanted meat so badly that I chanced the shot, sighting at a mere blurr; then when I had pulled the trigger, the unmistakable thud of a bullet striking flesh told me I had hit, much to my satisfaction, and more to my surprise. I could not tell if one was down, as seven or eight immediately broke away, whereas I had only seen four at first. Then came a long search for blood spoor, but not a drop

of blood could I find, and at last I decided that I must have missed, after all, that the thud had been a glance off a twig.

"I got back to that doleful camp on the Tcheredzi River, to find that Stanley, too, had had no luck. So only fish again that day, fish that was beginning to taste rather flat and muddy. Dawn next morning saw us on the move again, through the dense mopani scrub along the river bank where the hippo had beaten down convenient paths, through mimosa or wait-a-bit thorns where those same hippo had omitted to go, along the edges of vleis thick with queer, foot-catching yellow grass; but never a sign of game did we see, only fresh spoor everywhere, newly made footprints and smoking dung, as usual. In every shady spot, it was obvious that game had sheltered there, either from the noonday sun or the night cold, the long grass, pressed down, showing where some great beast had been lying down, or, trampled or tangled, where another had stood as sentry over his sleeping mates. It was all very interesting, but very unsatisfactory, because we had the meat hunger on us.

"Then, suddenly, Tom, my big M'Hlengwi boy, seemed to go suddenly rigid, 'pointing' just like a well-trained dog. Following the direction of his eyes, I made out ten or twelve shadowy forms moving across our front, about a hundred and fifty yards away. Five minutes' stalking, sometimes crawling, sometimes running a few steps, sometimes dropping flat in the grass when one turned back to look round, got us into a good position behind an ant-hill on the edge of a vlei, which the buck were just starting to cross. Waterbuck again! I had

suspected that at once, but I looked in vain for a bull amongst them. They were now only a hundred yards off, all in a bunch, evidently going to lay up for the day. It is bad form to shoot a cow, I know, but hunger makes all the difference; and we were really hungry, meat-hungry; so I fired. The result was instant confusion, and a general stampede. Another miss, almost too bad for words this time. The boys' faces showed their feelings, only too plainly.

"We lunched, or breakfasted, call it whichever you like, on fish and damper, duller and more muddy fish than ever, and went out again in the afternoon. Stanley was now grim and silent, smoking much bad tobacco, as though it were the only thing left in life. He went one way, I went the other. Just at sundown, when I was trying to persuade myself that there was merit in eating fish and damper, I saw a big sable bull, a real giant, standing at the far end of a narrow vlei. A long shot laid him low, but, before I had got twenty yards in his direction he was on his feet, and a second shot as he lurched off into the bush missed him clean. Then a second bull appeared in the open, standing long enough for me to get a bullet through his shoulder, which nearly brought him down, though not quite. Then began one of the wildest scrambles in which I have ever taken part. When the second bull staggered off into the mimosa bush, six or seven cows dashed across the vlei after him; and they were all standing there, watching anxiously, when we ran up. They were away too quickly for me to get in another shot; and then we chased them once more into the scrub. Time after time, I came up with one or

other of the wounded bulls at a few yards' range ; but, somehow, I never got in a shot. Each time, one jump seemed enough to put the animals out of sight behind another bush ; then, at last, the young bull, the second one I had hit, fell ; and, seeing he was safe, I shouted to the boy, who was carrying my spare rifle, to go and finish the big bull.

"A shot through the neck ended the career of my buck. He would have charged, had his strength held out. Like all sable, he had the spirit to do it ; but a broken shoulder and lungs full of blood will stop anything. He fell, gave one kick, and it was all over. A moment later, I heard a shot near by, followed by the thud of a bullet striking flesh ; but the boy seemed an interminable time getting back to tell me of his success in finishing the big fellow I had wounded. When, at last, he did come, his face was very long. He had come on the bull, dying, with a cow beside him, apparently trying to get him along, and thinking to get them both, and so ensure an absolute gorge, that miserable nigger had fired at the cow and lost both. Still, we had my young bull.

"Stanley was sitting by the fire, cooking something on the hot ashes, when I reached camp with my sable meat.

"'Plenty of meat now, Stanley. Got a young sable bull,' I said. 'But what have you shot ?' I added, noticing a huge pile of freshly cut up meat on the rocks near by.

"Stanley shook his head, and slowly took his pipe out of his mouth—the young beggar might not eat much, but he never seemed to stop smoking.

“‘Never fired a shot,’ he growled. ‘Those are the two waterbuck you shot. You didn’t wound them; you killed them stone dead. You hit both in the same place, just at the base of the neck; and they must have died instantly. . . . Soon after I started this afternoon, I found a crowd of travelling Mashona pigging into a waterbuck. They said they had shot it themselves; but the boy spotted the remains of a Metford bullet in a piece of meat, and remarked that the shot was very close to where you had fired this morning. Then the Mashona, wise for once, owned to having found it dead. Whilst they were cutting up the carcass, our boy showed one of the Mashona where you had been when you had fired. The Mashona, keen after cartridge cases like all his kind, started off to search for the one you had ejected, and immediately stumbled over the body of the young bull you had shot the previous day.’

“With two consecutive shots, I had killed two waterbuck, and not only had I seen neither fall, but my boys, no fools at hunting, had also been convinced I had missed. It was a lesson to me.”

Malcolm’s diary ends abruptly, as he went down with fever soon after; but the extracts I have given will serve to show what sort of luck attended us in that bush veld, at least so far as our own shooting was concerned.

CHAPTER IX

WE did not get much game on the Tcheredzi River, and we shot no hippo. We saw the spoor of the latter often, and once I had a glimpse of one on land, over a mile from his pool, but they never gave us a chance. The local savages explained matters by declaring that they, themselves, had rendered the huge brutes shy and wary by throwing assegais at them, or blazing futile bullets at them from Tower muskets, on every possible occasion. I daresay that, for once, they were telling the truth. One would expect idiotic tricks of that sort from Mashona and M'Hlengwi. They had no weapons wherewith to kill a hippo from the shore and, unlike the MaTchanga of the coast, they had not the pluck to attack their quarry from a canoe, with a harpoon and an m'diggadigga, a great weighted lance; but they were quite ready to waste ammunition and assegais whenever the hippo showed himself.

Still, though we got no hippo ourselves, we did not come away without plenty of sjamboks. On the Geelong mine, nearly two hundred and fifty miles away, Tom, our head boy, had told us that he knew where about a hundred raw sjamboks were stored in a tree. A white man had shot three hippo there four years previously; he had carried away the sjamboks from two, but had been forced to leave the remainder for lack of carriers. According to Tom, the hunter himself had ultimately been

murdered by the Mashona; at anyrate, he had never returned.

The sjamboks were stowed away in grass bundles jammed between the forked branches of a huge tree on the banks of the Tcheredzi River, miles from any kraal. There was no landmark there, yet Tom led us straight across the veld to the very spot: he did not hunt round and waste time: he had been there once before, and, being a native, he knew his way back by virtue of that curious instinct every native possesses.

We hauled the sjamboks down, reckoning ourselves the natural heirs of that long-vanished white man. The weevils had got amongst them, badly, and we threw away at least half of them; but the remainder we took along, to form Joshua's pack when we got back to Chivamba's kraal. Ultimately, we sold the half we kept for about seventeen pounds, a very fair price. The ivory, which was also there, I brought home in the end, and gave away as a wedding present. There was one gigantic pair of tusks, and they now serve to support a dinner gong.

It is strange how one never manages to keep any trophies or curios for oneself. The only thing I have got left now is a hippo sjambok, cut from a big bull my young brother Amyas shot; and yet few men in Mashonaland had more curios and horns through their hands. My first lot of horns, which included a pair of klipspringer horns half-an-inch longer than the recognised record—that ram was the chief of all the klipspringer according to the Matabele, who were inclined to be ugly when I shot him—that lot of horns was left in Bulawayo

in charge of a man who died before I got back to the town; consequently, they were lost, or sold by his executors, and doubtless now some Afrikaner Civil Servant has my klipspringer's head on his walls, and tells his friends: "Man, you should have seen me shoot him, at five hundred"—or even five thousand, if the whisky is strong—"yards. Man, I tell you an Englishman could never have made a shot like that."

After that I began to sell all my horns, those I shot as well as those I traded from the natives. A Jew boy in Bulawayo—the English Jews there were, generally speaking, as decent as the German Jews were rotten—used to give me seven shillings a pair all round, good and bad, a price which paid extremely well, as I could always buy from the natives for a shilling a pair. My curios went much the same way; there was always a ready demand for them; and the result was that, when I left Africa finally, I had nothing whatever left, save that one sjambok which I used to carry on my wrist.

The trip to the Tcheredzi River confirmed one impression I had gained some time previously—that the modern small-bore rifle is a delusion and a snare when used for big-game shooting. I daresay it does well enough for the sportsman from home, who arrives with ample supplies and a long string of carriers, who has taken out a permit to shoot so many head of game, and is quite unmoved by the total he may wound and lose, provided that, ultimately, he gets the number for which he has paid. This type of amateur loves the Metford or Mannlicher rifle; it is light to carry, and so does not fatigue him unduly; it has no recoil, and so does

not bruise his white shoulder, causing ugly and unprecedented black marks. It is nothing to him that, owing largely to the introduction of the small-bore, and the consequent increase in the number of wounded buck left for the hyænas, those who are building up the new countries, to whom the preservation of the game, their main source of meat supply, is of vital importance, that these men are steadily finding their work becoming more and more difficult thanks to the doings of himself and his fellows. He has never had to go hungry on the veld.

Personally, I would forbid shooting parties of any sort, unless they were composed of men who had a definite interest in the future of the country. The strangers, with their absurd "colonial outfits," their tables and chairs and bedsteads, their double-fly tents, their baths, and all the other absurd gear they have carried along, are not welcome guests, even when British-born; whilst the Americans and other aliens who come out to slaughter game merely for the sake of what they can make out of magazine articles concerning their own exploits are indeed anathema to all decent people. I do not see why the convenience of these so-called sportsmen should be considered; and it is from them that the main outcry against the abolition of the small-bore rifle would come. The majority of real pioneers now use it because its ammunition is practically the only sort readily obtainable; but they would welcome its disappearance from the country as the most effective measure of game preservation ever introduced into Africa. The small-bore means five or six buck destroyed for every one buck brought into camp; whereas with a rifle of decent bore, a 400-bore

or 450-bore cordite Express, practically every animal hit is knocked over by the mere shock. Moreover, the blood spoor from a Metford may, and usually does, consist of merely a few drops, which quickly cease altogether as the tiny hole closes; the blood spoor from a cordite Express is obvious enough for even a story-book detective to follow.

I have had some most excellent shooting with a small-bore. My first rifle, a Martini-Enfield by Rigby's, was the most perfect weapon I have ever handled, so far as balance and accuracy were concerned, so perfect that I despair of ever owning its equal. Only, as I have said, the bullet was too small, at least for a man who is hungry, and hates wounding game. The next rifle I tried—I tried it but once—was a brute of a thing Malcolm bought for some outrageous price, using black powder and a bullet like a piece of lead drainpipe. It was by a famous Birmingham maker, but it threw the shots anywhere, and knocked you backwards about ten feet whenever it deigned not to miss fire. Amyas scornfully nicknamed it "the giant-killer." It never killed a buck. It cost some thirty pounds with its vast stock of cartridges, and as soon as Malcolm had gone away to the Boer War I sold it to a colonial for six pounds ten, thereby confirming at least one Afrikander in his detestation of Englishmen.

My next rifle was a 400-bore cordite Express by Cogswell & Harrison. It was, I think, without exception, the most deadly firearm I have ever owned, absolutely accurate in its shooting; everything I hit with it I got, from hippo downwards. You could

make no mistake with that rifle. Other men used to say it kicked badly. Personally, I never found it do so ; but then, of course, it must be remembered that a great many fellows brace themselves up to meet the recoil, holding their muscles stiff and rigid, fairly asking for the shock ; instead of keeping loose and cool. A pop-gun would kick these people ; and their opinions and criticisms are absolutely valueless. If I ever get back on to the game veld, or if I ever get into another native war, I shall go with perfect confidence if I have one of those Cogswell & Harrison 400-bores. I know they will kill, not merely wound. I honestly believe that an army of twenty thousand picked men armed with rifles of that type could absolutely walk through a quarter of a million ordinary soldiers who had but the futile little Metfords, or Kraggs, or Mannlichers. If you are going out to kill anything, game or men, surely the sane thing is to take a weapon which will accomplish your end.

All this is very heterodox, and ought, I suppose, to get me into serious trouble, especially with the makers of small-bore rifles ; but still I am convinced that my own ideas are correct—which is, after all, the correct mental attitude for a reformer. As regards camp equipment for an expedition on the veld, I think every practical man will agree with me that more parties come to grief through excess of gear than from any other cause, and that nothing has led to more bitterness against the white man than the huge trains of carriers taken inland by the soi-disant explorers and hunters who have swarmed out to Africa in recent years, men burning to find adventure and excitement in a land where their

unadvertised predecessors have already reduced the risks of travel to a minimum.

No sensible man wants to cart tables and chairs and bedsteads out into the veld with him. I know the British army officers considered them essential in the Boer War, but still that is no argument; I know the war correspondent must have at least a vast filter and a bath, and two or three camels or a bullock wagon for the remainder of his kit; and yet I remain unconvinced; for, after all, these folk, the embryo generals as well as the gatherers of news, were amateurs at the game, and I never met but one or two yet who had really begun to understand its rules. Two good blankets, a waterproof sheet, a patrol tent weighing complete nineteen pounds, two spare pairs of shoes, two spare shirts and two spare pairs of trousers, these with a kettle, a couple of saucepans and a bake-pot, are all the gear a man needs for a thousand-mile trek. Leggings and puttees I abhor. They cramp the muscles of your legs abominably. If the thorns are bad, just tie the bottoms of your trousers round your ankles. Bandoleers I dislike also. They make your shoulder sore and tired. Far better have half-a-dozen cartridges in your pocket, and let a nigger carry the rest. Anyway, the six will probably suffice. You will kill, or have been killed, before you have got through them. Revolvers are, of course, schoolboys' toys. They are unreliable at any distance, whilst if you want to kill anyone or anything at short range take a shot-gun for the job. Then you will make quite sure. I know that.

I wonder how many of our pseudo-explorers realise the immense hardship which the feeding of

their huge trains of carriers entails on the villages in which they camp. The big native town chiefly exists in books. There are, of course, a good many vast, garbage-strewn settlements of the type of Palapye, but there are usually five hundred miles between them. The average native village does not exceed twenty huts, say twelve families; and when, as happens every day, one of these is called upon without the slightest warning to provide a meal for a hundred or so hungry carriers, matters become serious. Sometimes, but not always, the white men are willing to pay what they consider an adequate sum for the food supplied; but, as a rule, money cannot compensate the native, because he cannot buy food with it. As a rule, there is very little surplus food in a village, the stock cannot be replenished until the new harvest is gathered and threshed, and every pound of meal commandeered by the strangers means that the local people will be short of that amount. They do not want to sell; in most cases they cannot afford to sell, and to force them to do so is to commit a gross injustice. Of course, there are districts, like those round Fort Victoria, where the natives regularly grow grain for sale; but the mere fact of their doing so proves the existence of sufficient civilisation to keep the explorer and the sportsman away.

What is needed is a system of international control of expeditions into the interior. Perhaps it would be going too far to send experienced white guides as dry nurses for the explorers; but there certainly should be a limit to the number of carriers and to the weight of stuff to be carried. Ten years ago these amateurs of the veld were ludicrous;

now, however, they are becoming an absolute nuisance both to the Governments and to the natives.

Malcolm got the fever down on the Tcheredzi River. Possibly the climate was to blame, possibly the general gloominess, possibly the waterbuck meat, toughest of all flesh, possibly a combination of all these. At anyrate, whatever the cause, he became what the country used to call "putrid with fever," ill in a negative sort of way, miserable, depressed and off his feed. Hitherto, he, alone of all men on the Geelong, had escaped malaria; now the comparatively little he got affected him greatly. So we went back to Chivamba's where the donkeys and cattle were, but the change did him little or no good. He was a difficult patient. If I wanted him to take Livingstone Rousers, he demanded Dover's Powders; if I prescribed milk diet, he insisted on chewing waterbuck biltong; when I declared he ought to ride Joshua, he hurried on ahead on foot. He got so low at last that we decided to go straight back to the nearest white man's camp we knew, a trading station about a hundred and ninety miles away. It was a thoroughly miserable journey for us both, though I suspect he had the worst of it, as he was feeling things badly, resenting his ill-luck.

We took sixteen days reaching the trader's camp, where we stayed about a week, until Malcolm was stronger again; then we made our way on to the Geelong. To say the mine was surprised to see us is to express things inadequately. The men there reckoned we had been dead some weeks then. It appeared that a certain Native Commissioner had

managed to get his district into a dangerous state of disaffection, and it was touch and go whether his people, who were Mashona, rose or no. So serious did matters become, that many white men were under the impression that the natives had actually risen. The Dutch settlement at Enkeldoorn went into laager at once, and stayed in that state, drinking and breaking several of the Ten Commandments, until, in the interests of morality and common decency, the Government sent a force of police to drive the Boers back to their farms. I believe Enkeldoorn would go into laager if it heard that a Basutu had thrown a stone at a white man's dog on the banks of the Zambesi. Anyhow, it was alarmed this time, and so were several other settlements; consequently, any foolish story found credence; and when a boy came into Geelong and announced that the Mashona had killed both Malcolm and myself, the camp believed him, and, as I heard later, the Afrikaners rejoiced. And yet we, ourselves, down amongst those very same Mashona, had never heard a whisper of the trouble. The only danger we had been in had been from the German and the colonials at the Lundi Drift, men of our own colour.

I had left the mine an absolute wreck, and Malcolm had left it in perfect condition. Matters were exactly reversed when we returned; and yet, within a couple of months, they were back as they had been at the start. We had made up our minds to quit the detestable mine life as soon as possible, and start a trading station down in the country we had just visited, making our headquarters at Chivamba's village, on the edge of the bush veld. We were

going to train our cattle, buy a wagon, and trek eastwards again, this time through Fort Victoria, as soon as the rains were over. Unfortunately, however, the rains had not yet begun, and there were six months to be killed, somehow. Naturally enough, we went back to the mine for work; and the mine did not treat us too well. The Boss was away—he was still the most hard-worked man in Matabeleland—and, though he gave Malcolm a job on another mine as soon as he returned, the Geelong could not find a vacancy for him or for me. Finally, however, I went to the West Nicholson, a detestably unhealthy camp in those days, with the most insect-infested quarters I have ever struck. There I set to work to try and repair the rock-drill machines which the Cousin Jack miners had been knocking to pieces.

I stood the West Nicholson for a couple of months, whilst a Dutchman was training some of my wild young bulls; then the fever got the upper hand of me, and I went to the Geelong hospital, where the doctor pulled me together a bit—I never knew him fail in a fever case which was not hopeless from the outset—and then he told me bluntly to quit Matabeleland and go home. I suppose, if I had been wise, I should have followed his advice. However, instead of doing so, I bought a small wagon and some trek gear, engaged an alleged driver, inspanned my wild beasts, and started off on the Transport Road.

CHAPTER X

I DO not remember meeting another home-born transport rider all the time we were on the road. It is curious that such an exceedingly remunerative occupation should have been left to the Afrikaners ; but the reason probably was that men were shy about taking on a job they did not understand.

I never loved my brother Boer very much, and I loved the colonial far less ; but, somehow, on the road the question of nationality seemed to matter but little. We might, in fact we did, squabble over pitiful trifles in the mining camps or the little whisky-soaked townships ; we hated each other cordially, and generally without much reason ; we were always on the lookout to do each other a bad turn, or to spread a nasty story—in short, the environment, or the atmosphere, whichever you will, was hopelessly wrong. It turned the weak man into a blackguard, the blackguard into a beast. On the road, however, we got back to the primitive decencies of life, and, as a result, behaved decently. There was no bullyragging general manager to be studied, no crawling, white-clad secretary ever ready to carry some slimy untruth to the consulting engineer, no spies, perpetually on the lookout for a chance to make up a tale about you. A transport rider was his own boss, working for his own hand, the most independent, really the only independent, man in the country, because the country could not get on

without him. As a rule, he detested both the mining companies and the Government, knowing that the two were working hand in hand, and desired nothing more than they did to cut down his earnings. The mines wanted to treat the transport riders as they treated their employés—rottenly; and the Chartered Government—or at least the local officials—was with them heart and soul.

On the road we did not love Cecil Rhodes. There were many little things to show us how his sympathies ran, and, finally, there was the one big thing, during the later stages of the Boer War, when he tried to flood the transport market, and deprive us of our livelihood, by getting up four hundred wagons and spans belonging to so-called "refugees" from the Transvaal, a foul and insanitary crew which had been in arms against us a few weeks before. The transport riders never forgave Rhodes for that. Unlike the mining companies, we had never received any special favours from the Government, and we had asked none; but we had done all the roughest work in the opening up of the country, and we did expect fair play. Curious how these memories rankle still; and I fancy I am not the only one who has not forgotten his bitterness.

My first span consisted entirely of bulls, sixteen wild animals, who seemed to consider that, the moment they were in the yoke, they were expected either to throw themselves on the ground, or to roar their loudest, or to try and smash up the trek gear. They were a charming crowd. Usually, it took about two hours to catch them, an hour to inspan them, and then, when we did get off, they

stuck regularly every quarter of a mile. My driver was a Zulu, a perfect and absolute fool. I am certain he had never driven before, because in that case his baas must have killed him.

I made first for Bulawayo, up a little-used track across the veld. The wagon was quite empty, yet, so far as I can remember, the trip of eighty miles took us twelve days. Possibly, I had showed that driver too plainly what I thought of him, and he had divined my intention of sacking him; at any-rate, a couple of hours after we had outspanned at the old Racecourse outspan on the Tuli Road he vanished, never to return. I did not look for him; instead, I sent a piccannin down to the Location to inform the mixed rascality there that I wanted a driver, who must be neither a Cape boy nor a Zulu, must not speak English or know how to read and write.

The following morning a strange little figure strolled up carrying a bundle of blankets, which he deposited on the end of the wagon, as though his engagement were a matter of course. He was clad in a very old canvas shirt and a much-patched pair of dungaree trousers, whilst on his head was the remains of a Boss of the Plains hat, yet he had one of the best wagon whips I have ever seen knotted round his waist, and a most business-like sjambok hanging on his wrist. He told me that his name was Amous, that he heard I had a span of very little cattle which were cheeky in the yoke, and he had come to break them in and train them so that my wagon would never stick. I asked him if he could drive, and he answered calmly that he was the best driver in the country. For once, a

native told me the truth. I never saw the equal of that quaint little old Basutu, who served me with doglike fidelity so long as I had cattle for him to drive.

I believe, honestly, that Amous made me readjust my estimate of black humanity, certainly he made me modify it greatly. He was absolutely tireless, and absolutely honest so far as my stuff was concerned; and if he stole such trifles as cattle bells, reims, or neck strops, he always did it for my benefit. He lied, of course, but his lies never injured me, and I never knew of them until he was leaving, when he admitted casually that he could read and write but had never told me before for fear I should sack him. "I knew I should never forge your name, like a Zulu or a Mission Kaffir would have done," he added.

When he had been with me a year, I discovered that he had a wife in Bulawayo; that fact, too, he mentioned casually, and when I asked him how she was getting on, all alone, he remarked that we had been so busy training in young cattle, and attending to important matters like that, that there had been no time to think about her.

I engaged Amous at three pounds ten a month and his food. The moment the deal had been struck, he asked me for some tobacco, filled an enormous Boer pipe which was sticking in his belt, then hurried off to inspect his new span of cattle. A couple of hours later he was back, full of enthusiasm. They were very little cattle indeed, he said; but they were all strong, and they would grow big. As soon as we got down to the low veld, we would buy another span, and then another; and,

after that, we would ride transport properly; passing all the other wagons, which would only have huge, slowly moving colonial oxen. He grew quite enthusiastic about the matter, and I saw that he was one of those Basutu to whom cattle are an obsession, who have no thought for anything beyond the span they happen to be driving.

Amous never seemed to finish his work. At the outspans, if he were not greasing the wheels or cutting new brake blocks, he was trimming a whip or hacking out yoke skeys. Even at the end of a night trek, when a reasonable being would have rolled himself up in his blankets at once, Amous would gather the unfortunate piccannins round the fire, and give them a lecture on oxen and their ways, and woe betide the little boy who dared to go to sleep.

Often, before I have dropped off myself, I have caught something like this: "Now, Rooiland, who pulls eight up in Klaas' span, is not properly trained. See how he turned the yoke in that mud hole to-day. Whilst Witpans, in my span"—and so on, until I would call out to him to let the wretched youngsters go to bed, an order which was always obeyed reluctantly.

The night after Amous entered my service the piccannin disappeared. Possibly, he foresaw that a new *régime* had begun, and felt his own inability to come up to Amous' standard. By a curious piece of luck, however, his place was filled immediately, by a small and sad-looking youngster who seemed to belong to no particular tribe and to have no particular home. I never knew his real name, although he was with me a consider-



BULAWAYO IN THE EARLY DAYS.



A MINE COMPOUND.

TO THE
ASSOCIATION

able time. Amous called him the "Scarmanyorka," a perfectly untranslatable word, explaining that the boy's proper name was too long for ordinary use; so the Scarmanyorka he became thenceforth.

I loaded in Bulawayo for a trading station in the M'Patane district. Naturally, as I was travelling with a single wagon drawn by untrained bulls in the wet season, I did not take much stuff, only two thousand six hundred rounds; but I found that almost too much. Amous did wonders with the cattle; in a couple of treks he had got them into some semblance of a span; but all his skill could not alter the fact of the mud. It was the wettest season which had been known in the country for several years, and in many places we literally ploughed along, despite the lightness of our load. Still, we kept going somehow until we reached a great mudflat near the Killarney mining camp, and there we stuck, hopelessly. There was no other transport on the road to help us out: the mine had no cattle to lend; consequently, the only course was to make a sledge of tree trunks and drag our load across the mud on that, afterwards returning for the wagon. It was not a very pleasant trip on the whole, though it had one good effect—when I got back to Bulawayo, some weeks later, the cattle were sufficiently trained for us to start on our long journey, through Gwelo, Selukwe and Victoria to Chivamba's kraal.

We left Bulawayo in March with about two hundred pounds' worth of trading stuff and stores; and about a hundred pounds in gold for cattle-buying; no great amount of capital perhaps; but still more than most traders have at the outset. As

a rule, they are started in business by some wholesale firm, which charges them exorbitantly for their Kaffir truck, takes their grain or cattle over from them at about half the market rate, never allows them to have any cash, insisting on paying everything in goods or Port Elizabeth whisky, and in the end, when the business has been worked up to a decent size, finds some excuse for seizing the whole and turning the unfortunate proprietor adrift. We, on the other hand, were always independent of the wholesale people. We bought wherever we liked; but, even then, we were constantly swindled. It was but rarely that the stuff in the cases or bales bore more than a mere family likeness to the samples we had been shown.

In excuse, I have often heard it urged that the competition in Bulawayo was very severe, and the wholesale men had to live. Personally, I could never see any necessity for the continued existence of most of them.

Gwelo was then, and probably is still, little more than a collection of shanties disfiguring a mudflat. Selukwe is a mining centre, with innumerable, grotesquely hideous, iron buildings dotted about the slopes of some steep hills. All the bush and scrub has been cleared off the latter, and the whole landscape is thoroughly unsightly. I believe the district boasted that its average consumption of whisky per man was the highest in Africa, which also means the highest in the world. Possibly, it was right; the mere look of the camps was enough to drive any man to drink.

We arrived at Fort Victoria at last. I had often heard of the place, the first township founded in

Mashonaland; but I had never heard anyone describe it. Consequently, I had kept an open mind concerning it, which was lucky, otherwise, I might have been surprised rather badly. On the official plan, a copy of which the Civil Commissioner used to have hanging on his door, behind an old coat, Victoria consisted of some half-dozen streets crossed by as many avenues. As a matter of fact, the white population, including a dozen police and a Boer family of fifteen which usually camped in an old wagon, never exceeded eighty in my time, and yet it sufficed to fill all the houses. In no case were there two buildings adjoining one another, and you generally made your way about, not by following those same streets and avenues, but by cutting across the tin and bottle strewn vacant spaces.

The centre of life was, of course, the one hotel, the Thatched House. When, by chance, a man had any business to do, he transacted it there; when he had none he waited there for some to come along, waited often for weeks, very cheerfully as a rule, for the hotel gave unlimited credit, and when you did go down with fever the hospital was a very comfortable one. Nowadays, they tell me, there are only four men I used to know left in Victoria, and the place has changed entirely; but when I knew it it was quite the best town in Rhodesia, the best so far as the character of its inhabitants was concerned. They were more virile, more hospitable, and infinitely more English, than in the larger settlements. There was very little of that petty Afrikander spirit which seems to have given the tone to society in Salisbury and Bulawayo. Each man was always ready to help the next, and Victoria could boast

truthfully that it never allowed a white man to go hungry or thirsty, if it knew of his needs.

The town shook its head over its whisky when it heard that we proposed cutting a road to the kopje country. No one had ever taken a wagon down that way yet, it said. The drop in level was probably about two thousand feet, and this was only spread over some twenty miles. As for our destination, Chivamba's kraal, no one even knew the name, much less where the place lay. On the occasion of our other trek there, we had come in from Southern Matabeleland, now we were trying to reach it through Eastern Mashonaland; and the task promised to be no easy one, at least when it was a case of going down with a loaded wagon. True, the Native Commissioners are supposed to keep lists of all kraals. Perhaps they do now, they certainly did not then. Moreover, the official name of a village which figures on the hut-tax roll is usually quite different from the one in general use.

There is a trader's road running out of Victoria towards the south-east, the direction in which we reckoned Chivamba's lay. For twenty miles it was really good, leading across a level stretch of high veld; but when we came to the kopjes the trouble began. No one had been down the last fifteen miles for several years, and I was not surprised at this when I walked on ahead and inspected that most appalling track. You tumbled down the sides of hills into watercourses at the bottom, and pulled out up a bank like the side of a house. In one place for fifty yards the road ran over, and down, one of those vast masses of granite which form perhaps the most noticeable feature in Mashonaland—smooth,

slippery, furnishing no hold for the wheels, even when these had been locked with the brake. Half-way down was a broken wagon, a grim reminder of what the possibilities were. And yet, thanks to Amous' splendid driving, we got to the end of that road in safety; and began the new phase of our journey, the actual search for Chivamba's.

The track finished under a huge granite kopje, one of the largest I have ever seen. The country ahead looked terribly unpromising, range after range of hills, whilst we knew that, before we reached Chivamba's, we must descend to a good many hundred feet nearer the sea-level.

Amous, not liking the look of things—he was quite new to the kopje country—walked on ahead to look for a way through; Malcolm, hearing there were plenty of Lichtenstein Hartebeeste, a buck he had never shot, in the neighbourhood, went in search of them; I, myself, crawled into the wagon tent with a raging dose of fever. My recollection of the next five days is very dim. I know it was five days, because, when I came back with Amous some months later, he showed me where the wagon had outspanned each night; but I could recall nothing of it. I must have seen the scenery as we trekked along; but it all appeared new to me. Amous found a road of sorts; winding in and out amongst the granite kopjes, from the top of which innumerable baboons barked at the wagon. There was a kraal every mile or two, and whenever our track crossed a field—all the crops had been gathered already—some skinny old Mashona was certain to come out and demand compensation for the damage to his land. As a rule he was not the owner; and,

in any case, there was no harm done. Generally Amous used to catch them coming in, and his arguments were rapidly delivered and very effective. He always excused his methods on the ground that the Mashona looked as if they were about to be cheeky, and he thought it best to stop them in time.

At last, a fortnight after we left Victoria, we got definite news of Chivamba's. The local heathen said they knew it, it was by Bota's, and they volunteered to show us the way. I was better then, and I went forward to see their proposed track. It was lucky I did so. A wagon might not have had "a wheel on the horns of the Morning," but it would have had all four "on the edge of the Pit." We scratched, so far as their route was concerned, and Amous said rude and pointed things, truths probably, about their female ancestors; but I had recognised the country. It was that miserable stretch where we had hunted for the game which had eaten down all the grass, and had found waterbuck bones with the lions' stinking saliva on them. In short, we knew where we were. Ultimately, we had to tumble down a hillside. We took out all but the two hind bullocks, Biffel and Appel, the finest cattle transport rider ever had, and we let those two great brutes guide the wagon down.

Men look on trek bullocks as mere animals. Well, men themselves are but animals, after all, so I suppose their idea is right; but this I do know—I have come across but few men who had the loyalty and the courage and the patience of those trek bullocks of mine. I would sooner find Biffel and Appel, Fransman and Jackalass, Blomveld and Six-

pence, and a hundred others I had afterwards, in Valhalla, than I would meet ninety-nine out of a hundred of the white men with whom I have had to do. They never went back on me. Biffel would come and shove his great head under my arm when I called "Biffel, Biffel!" To the crowd he might be a savage black bull of abnormal size; to me he was a faithful friend, who loved me only a little less than he loved Amous, his driver. And so it was with the others; they were unswervingly loyal, unvaryingly brave. Even now I can see them as I saw them on one horrible night in 1901, fighting through the flooded Umgesi River, just keeping their feet, straining at the yokes until the tough stinkwood cracked and cracked again, striving, not for their own safety, but to get the wagons, my wagons, into safety. When they had all got through, Amous sat down on the bank and cried—with joy, I suppose. And then men treat Kaffirs and bullocks as mere beasts, which merely proves what I learned before I had reached one and twenty, that the majority of men consists of shortsighted fools, who, having begun life obsessed with idiotic ideas, go on growing more idiotic every day. If you want faithful service, unselfish love, unflinching courage, look for it in a dog, a Basutu, or a trek bullock, anywhere but in a white man on whom the curse of the South African tradition has fallen.

CHAPTER XI

CHIVAMBA's people came out to welcome us in their own peculiar way—that is to say, they tried first to extract payment for alleged damage to abandoned fields; then they endeavoured to sell us utterly useless things at absurd prices; and finally they drummed without ceasing for forty-eight hours. And yet they were a cheerful lot of beasts. I liked them all, with the exception of their witch doctor, MaTumela's father, whom my boys killed afterwards. Chivamba himself was a toothless old skeleton, prone to telling long stories in a forgotten dialect. When we got there he had just taken an additional wife, despite the fact that his memory stretched back over seventy years, to days prior to the time when N'Yamandi and his horde of blackguards marched northwards from Zululand into the Portuguese territory. The Matabele irruption in 1837 under Umzilakazi—why will the pseudo-historians and pseudo-novelists call the old Lion of the North "Moselekatze"?—was quite recent history to Chivamba; he could tell you the whole story of it, with totally different detail on each occasion. Still, in his way, he was quite a good old boy. He used to spend most of his time squatting on a rock outside my camp, wrapped in a six-shilling blanket I had given him, and I missed him very much when, two years after my arrival, he was gathered to his fathers.

Chivamba held strong ideas, even if he did express

them mumblingly, in a dialect which had to be translated to me. He used to declare, with perfect truth, that the Mashona were increasing too rapidly. In the old days the Matabele kept the numbers down, by killing off the surplus, and anyone else who happened to get in the way of the stabbing assegais. Now, however, he said, there was no killing, and the people increased and multiplied at a dangerous rate. Soon there would be no land left to support the Mashona, who would have to move inland, to the high veld, where they would come into conflict with the white farmers and landowners. He talked sound common-sense, and I used often to wish that some white man could have carried his words, or at least his theories, back to England, and have rammed them down the throats of the Race Suicide idiots, who see in a declining birth rate, not a sign that the country is already overfull with the diseased and the unfit, but a sign of what, in their idiocy, they call National Degeneration. Chivamba was an old savage, with red mud rubbed in his wool, and with Kaffir beer and snuff as his chief joys in life; but, as far as common-sense was concerned, he could give points to many reputedly great white men, even to American presidents and Anglican bishops. Only, being a savage, he could not advertise himself. Some day I myself hope to get up and preach Chivamba's creed, and, I suppose, be barred absolutely in consequence. Of course, it is all tilting at windmills; we are essentially a people delighting in unctuous platitudes, and "Increase and multiply" has been taken as part of the creed of every party. We, or at least the majority of us,

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recognise the survival of the fittest as one of Nature's greatest laws ; and then we go out of our way to secure the survival and the propagation of the unfit.

There was a little kopje near Chivamba's kraal, and, after making sure that we could not hear too much of the drums from it, we decided to build our store on its summit. It was a fine place for a camp. Whatever breeze was blowing, we were certain to get it. We had a magnificent view up and across the valley ; and from the doorways of our huts we could always see the sun set behind what we afterwards named the "Hyæna Kopje." There was plenty of water a hundred yards away, plenty of feed for our cattle, plenty of guinea-fowl clamouring to be shot in the old lands near by, plenty of game, from koodoo down to duiker, in the scrub ; whilst, if a man wanted the brutes, there was a plethora of lions around M'Bambo's kraal, a bare eight miles away to the eastward.

Our first task was to fix the prices of things, after consultation with Chivamba, Bota and a couple more local chiefs. A nigger is a funny animal. He believes that cheapness means nastiness ; and he has his own ideas as to what goods should cost. According to his law, a Kaffir pick, a heart-shaped affair weighing two and a half pounds, and costing us one and ninepence, was worth five shillings, no more and no less. Limbo, trade calico, was a yard and a half for a shilling, and so on. They proposed also to fix a bullock, big or small, at ten pounds ; a fat-tailed sheep at a pound ; a goat at ten shillings ; but to these terms we would not agree, declaring that each beast must be the subject of debate and bargaining.

From the outset we did a big trade. The local savages were hungering for stuff, and cattle and sheep and goats poured in on us faster than we could build scherms to accommodate them. You cannot keep accurate books when your business is mainly barter; but I fancy that our profits for the first season must have been at least twelve hundred pounds, though, as all this went into the business in cattle, wagons, gear and trading stuff, we never actually touched it.

We bought cattle from the natives for cash, and they bought goods from us with part of that cash—that was the principle of our business. We kept the pick of the cattle for ourselves, broke them in to the yoke, and rode transport with them, working the wagons ourselves in the wet season when the fever drove us away from Chivamba's; and at other times letting Amous, or a young Dutchman, work them. The cows and the showy young bulls, which did not look like making transport animals, we sold again to white men; and on these I know that during the first season we made a clear ninety per cent. on our outlay. Trading goods sold on the average for a little over double what they cost, including allowance for transport.

At the outset we naturally made some mistakes, buying unsaleable stuff and having it left on our hands. Once the manager of a wholesale store in Victoria, one of the two outsiders of the township, contrived to get Malcolm to take nearly two hundred pounds' worth of rubbish, mainly glazed calico and beads of many colours. I suppose we lost a hundred pounds on that lot, and the seller rejoiced for a time; but I got the fellow later on, when he was

very short of grain and I had plenty, and I squeezed him properly. It hurt him the more, because, after all, he had made the profit out of us for his firm; whilst the loss on the grain was his private concern. I do like getting square with people. I left Rhodesia finally owing no man anything in money, and not owing very many grudges. I have since paid off most of the latter, though one or two men who have done me bad turns have died before I could even up the account. It is annoying when things go that way; but it is more annoying still when the men to whom you owe a debt of gratitude drift out of your life altogether, and you never get a chance of repaying them for their kindness. And the good turns I had done me in Africa greatly exceeded in number the bad ones.

If any man wants to go trading in Mashonaland—and I advise no one to do so, the game now not being worth the candle—let him leave all side lines alone, and take only blankets, limbo, beads and picks. The profits on these are definite and certain. You know where you are with them. They tell me now that the Greeks and the Germans, whom we allow to crawl in after the real white man has taken all the risks, and steal the white man's business, that these parasites have cut down prices so that any trader who wants to live decently, like a white man, can no longer do it, that trading is now a white Kaffir's job. I am afraid this is true; if so, I hope the coolie will come along and cut out the others, for he is, at least, a British subject, and is, in nature, just as white as the average specimen of its inhabitants which a happy, and wise, Fatherland exports to our colonies. I have often been told

*That means
make 500%
profits on
ignorant
blacks
by German
Sheng!*

The fellow seems to detest everybody except himself. Some specimens are English I suppose.

that I am prejudiced against Germans. That may be so. The fact remains that I detest them, and I would gladly support a measure which forced them to wear gaberdines and pointed hats, and ring bells when they walked abroad, like the lepers of old. They are the canker in Africa; and, if we were not a stupid people, we should not only charge an import duty, but should also levy a heavy poll tax on them.

South hurts sometimes. Fritz doesn't it?

Nothing makes me so wild as to read the lists of unwholesome aliens who have been allowed to take out naturalisation papers. No decent man ever turns his back on the country of his birth. The mere fact of his wanting to do so proves that he was an unpatriotic and undesirable citizen of that country; and, for that reason alone, he should be sent back to it, at once. But there is an even stronger reason for refusing the gift of British citizenship. Our fathers built up the Empire; we are supposed to maintain it; and we ought to regard it as a priceless heritage to be handed down to our sons. What right have we to part with even an infinitesimal portion of that heritage, to give it away to any alien scum, which, being itself disloyal to everything, wishes to become "British" because our laws will give it a better chance of making money than would those of its own land? One never hears of an Englishman becoming a citizen of Germany or Greece, although I will admit that we have several millions whom we could spare those countries gladly.

The Mashona is a curious individual to deal with, intensely suspicious, pitifully afraid of being ridiculed by his friends for making a bad bargain, full of a

low and futile cunning, which is perpetually causing him to overreach himself. On the other hand, once he trusts you, his trust is given implicitly, and if you realise fully that he is, after all, only a savage, with a savage's limitations, and if you treat him as such and respect his savage's prejudices, then you can do what you like with him. He smells badly, he lies badly, his main joy and interest in life is in witchcraft and all its attendant abominations, he is a polygamist and a devil worshipper, he has never had a vote and does not want one, he never went to school and would not be able to distinguish a London County Councillor from a drainman; and yet I like him in many ways, Heaven only knows why. Possibly the reason is that he recognises his own limitations frankly, and he is absolutely devoid of the smug hypocrisy which education evolves. He cheeks you, certainly, and, when the psychological moment comes, he will do his best to kill you; but, at the same time, he is never malicious. His cheek is due mainly to nervousness, and he murders by order of the witch doctors.

The risks of trading as we understood it were considerable. Even if I were still a bachelor, with no ties, I do not think I would take it on again. Our position at Chivamba's was this—forty miles from us, half-way into Victoria, was the camp of a Native Commissioner. That official, whose knowledge of his district was of the most slender description, was our nearest, in fact our only, neighbour. We could go a hundred miles north, a hundred and fifty miles south, nearly three hundred miles east, without finding a white man; we were absolutely alone amongst scores of thousands of savages. If

the latter had risen, our chances would not have been worth considering. True, we were very popular, but popularity never yet saved a white man in those circumstances. He ceases to be an individual baas, and becomes merely part of the common enemy of the black man. Twice, we had alarms of native risings, the first was due to a rumour that Lobengula had reappeared, and had ordered every man to be ready to take the field. For a few days, matters looked ugly ; the youngsters were all for fighting, the elders all for peace. A big beer drink, ending in the murder of the nearest trader, would have resulted in a general revolt ; but, fortunately, it was too early in the year for beer to be plentiful, and the scare died down as quickly as it had arisen. The second time we heard rumours of revolt, things were more serious. It was Magalousa, our chief herd boy, who warned us to be in readiness to leave at a moment's warning. It was the old familiar story. The officials in Salisbury, finding that their gross mismanagement had brought about something nearly akin to a financial crisis, had turned to the native as a source of revenue, and had proposed to raise his hut tax of ten shillings per hut to a poll tax of two pounds a head. Already, the victims knew what was in contemplation ; and, as they could not possibly pay, they were preparing to do the only other thing—to fight ; a course which would have suited both the virtually insolvent mining companies, and the Afrikaner element amongst the officials. For a week or two we were on the alert for further information. Trade absolutely ceased during that time, not a single customer coming near the store ;

then, to our great relief, and also to the relief of the Mashona themselves, the police boys came out to summon the headmen in to pay the tax, ten shillings per hut as before. The danger was over immediately, and before it arose again we had ceased to be traders.

The risk of accident was considerable. A gun might go off by mistake, a wounded buck might charge, the cattle might trample you, or a fall on one of the smooth boulders might result in a fractured thigh, yet we were never less than eighty miles from a doctor, and often over two hundred miles away from one. The fever and the complaints resulting from it were, however, our worst enemies. They were always with us, and it was seldom that one or other of us was not either ill or getting over a dose. Perhaps doctors can do little in cases of malaria; but there is all the difference in being properly nursed and fed in a hospital, and in lying alone in a leaky hut with absolutely no food, save rough stuff which your stomach rejects instantly.

I had some bad times with fever, and I looked right into the Valley of the Shadow more than once; but Amyas had the worst time of any of us. I had left him at Chivamba's to finish up the season's work, and was on my way home, when he went down with a severe dose of fever and dysentery. As I passed through Victoria I had sent him by runners a good selection of special food stuffs and medical stores, including some wine and liqueur brandy, as I was afraid he might be ill. I was not very anxious, because he had with him a youngster, an educated Afrikaner, who had been our guest for several months; but I found out after-

wards that no sooner had I gone than this young savage repaid our hospitality after the manner of his kind: drank all the liquor; ate all the food; and then worried Amyas for the loan of thirty-five pounds to carry him down country, and having got that cleared off. Already he had robbed us of about sixty pounds' worth of trading stuff at another of our stations, where he had been staying, nominally to shoot. He left Amyas, as he thought, dying, and the difficulty we had in getting even the thirty-five pounds back showed that he had obtained it reckoning I should never hear of the loan from Amyas' lips. As far as I can remember, every Afrikander who was ever my guest in those trading days did me a bad turn, or tried to do me one.

CHAPTER XII

WHEN we first went down to Chivamba's the valley had one great advantage—there were no schelm there. One glance at the rotten state of the cattle kraals, in and out of which the beasts seemed to walk at will, was enough to tell you that. The goats, too, slept in the open, tied up to posts; and the local heathen jeered at Amous when he began to build a lion-proof cattle scherm. It was just so much wasted work, Chivamba's elders decided, as they squatted on the rocks and watched the operations. Amous retorted that they were foolish old baboons, who could only be distinguished from their long-tailed relatives on the kopjes by the fact that they had rubbed red mud on their hair, a thing the other sort of baboon was too sensible to do. Then he went on with his scherm building, or, rather, made his trembling gang go on with it.

Two months passed peacefully. During that time, we had bought about three hundred sheep and goats and nearly a hundred oxen; consequently, there were regular, beaten footpaths leading to our place; and, as many of the animals we had bought had come across the lion-infested veld to the east, it was not unnatural that the schelm came up in their wake. Curiously enough, however, from the very beginning, the schelm seemed to arrive in waves; there would be a flood of them making night hideous, then, after a week or so, we would have a lull, not more than a couple

of alarms a night, sometimes only one ; but the new wave was never long in rolling up, and I would once more have to take my blankets out on to the smooth flat rock in front of the hut, so as to be able to jump up immediately, when a nigger came and whispered : "Chief, chief, there's an evil beast biting the cattle."

The first schelm to arrive was a lion, a big male by his spoor. The incident was rather an interesting one. Chivamba's had been, to use the only appropriate phrase, on the burst. They had brewed a lot of beer, which had started them drumming, and after that, as one of them explained to me, though the beer was finished, the drumming kept them drunk. Be that as it may, I know they kept their detestable tom-toms going without a moment's intermission for seventy-two hours. Knowing the ways of Mashona, we had built our store where we could hear the row but faintly, still we could hear it, and I was sitting outside the mess hut, wondering if they were ever going to cease when, suddenly, the noise stopped dead. A moment later a piccannin rushed up, followed by about thirty of Chivamba's men, breathless, perspiring, covered with dust, carrying muskets, battle-axes and assegais.

"There's a lion biting your cattle, chief, down in the big vlei beyond the rapoko field," the youngster jerked out.

We hurried down to the place, followed by all the Mashona, only to find that the lion had disappeared into some thick scrub, after having done no damage amongst the oxen.

Chivamba's people were obviously perturbed. At first they were inclined to blame themselves. "We have drummed too long and that has brought the

lion," they declared, taking a view which I supported most cordially. We found the spoor, found too that it was impossible to follow the brute on account of the bush, then, after leaving two armed boys to herd the cattle, we turned back.

As we were crossing the old mealie lands, a piccannin came up, looking horribly scared, and said something to Chivamba's son, who was with us. Amous stayed behind to listen, curtly demanded an explanation, smacked the piccannin's head sharply, gave Chivamba's son a dig in the ribs with the butt end of his rifle, then hurried after me.

"They say it isn't a lion at all, baas, but a man who turns himself into a lion, a wizard with a grudge against the valley. The piccannin—I know him, he cheeked me when I shot his father's dog which had been eating our neck strops—the piccannin saw the lion going into a belt of scrub, and then saw a man running out on the other side. What fools these baboon folk are!"

We got our own boys together and set them to work right away, piling brushwood round the scherm. Before they had been at it long, Chivamba and his elders came up, squatted on their favourite rocks, took snuff copiously, and sneered as openly as they dared. After a while, Chivamba sent a message to say that it would be but polite for me to ask them to have something to eat.

Amous carried back the answer, and entered into a short and one-sided argument, which ended in his kicking the more able-bodied visitors down the kopje side. He came back a little out of breath, and very indignant. He had told them, from me, to put their own rotten scherms in order, so that

the lion should get nothing to eat in the valley ; and they had replied by remarking that white men were always fools, who did not even know the rudiments of witchcraft. It was not a lion at all, but a wizard who turned himself into a lion ; so they were taking the obvious course, and hanging very potent charms on the rotten poles of their cattle kraal. All the other villages were going to do the same, they added.

That night the lion had a sniff round our scherm, got scared by a charge from a shot-gun, and thereupon found he had urgent business at a kraal on the other side of the valley, where he got a heifer. The following night Bota's lost a young bull ; two nights later Chivamba's own cow went ; and so it continued for about a week, to my intense disgust, for I knew that in the schelm world the news is passed along very quickly, and that the success of this one lion would mean other lions, and leopards and hyænas as well.

We set trap-guns and we put down tasty little pieces of meat flavoured with strychnine, with the sole result of making the old men wag their heads and jeer as openly as they thought safe. Once Amous, happening to go down to the kraal, found them throwing the bones, their favourite forms of witchcraft. He confiscated the bones, and kicked the witch doctor ; but it seemed that his interference had come too late, for the following day a whisper reached us, through one of the herd boys, that the terrible wizard had been found and destroyed. It appeared they had poisoned a poor, unoffending nigger over at Bota's kraal, some two miles away. Yet that very night the lion took one of Bota's calves.

Of course, the old men swore it was a fresh lion

altogether, a real lion this time. They even went further and declared that it was my lion, that I had enticed it up with my cattle, and that I was responsible for their losses. Naturally, for a time, relations were a little strained. Amous beat his particular enemy, Chivamba's eldest son, and, as a mere matter of precaution against poisoning, all of Chivamba's boys who were working for us were discharged. But the breeze was soon over. The old headman himself came up on the excuse of begging some sugar, mumbled out an apology, and his boys came back without being told to do so. Consequently, the only one who had any unpleasant recollections left was Chivamba's son; but he deserved all he got.

The schelm came fast, once the lion had shown them the way. A leopard climbed my cattle kraal and killed my two best calves. A lion—there were several domiciled in the valley now—found a donkey belonging to Amous, one he had bought off a coolie hawker, and we found the fore quarters only. Wild cats paid two or three visits a night to my fowls; owls, great two-feet high brutes, did the same; a black momba snake killed Swartboy, one of my best oxen, greatly to the delight of the Mashona, who ate the poisoned meat without a qualm and without any ill effects. The name of the hyænas was legion. We must have poisoned scores of them, have killed as many more with trap-guns, yet the total always increased. We found out afterwards that it is a fairly safe rule to assume that, whenever you kill a hyæna, three fresh ones will turn up to eat the carcass. If you remember this, it may save you cartridges, strychnine and disappointment.

Often at night that camp at Chivamba's was a miniature Zoo, or rather an inverted Zoo, for the animals were loose and we were inside. Ultimately, after two hyænas had actually stepped over Amyas as he lay sleeping across the doorway of his hut—we found their spoor inside in the morning—we decided to fence in the camp with reeds. It was becoming a little too exciting for us.

On one particular occasion we had a very interesting experience with schelm. We had been called up, I think, three times already, and had just got off to sleep properly, when a terrible clamour arose from the goat scherm, goats and sheep bleating, the unmistakable voice of a hyæna, and also something which sounded very like the growl of a leopard. We hurried down, to find the bars of the goat kraal literally torn asunder, one wounded goat, and one sheep missing. There was nothing to be done; the schelm had departed—with their prey; but in the morning we went down to the nearest water hole to see if the hyænas had hidden any of the meat in the water, as is their usual custom. There it was, a fair-sized fragment, which we flavoured carefully with strychnine, and left on the footpath. In the morning there was one of the offenders absolutely rigid, the big male leopard, who had broken open the kraal for the hyænas. Him we skinned, then added a little more strychnine to the poison already in his carcass. Next morning his three hyæna friends were also dead. It was a fine instance of poetic justice. The leopard and hyænas killed the sheep; the sheep killed the leopard; and the leopard killed the hyænas.

The most serious trouble we had with Chivamba's

people was over the matter of poisoning. We failed completely to sympathise with each other's point of view on the question. The Mashona regarded poisoning as a pastime; we looked on it as a crime. There had been a good deal of talk about it for some time. They had killed off several local men for no particular reason, at least so far as I could discover there was none; and then they began to threaten my boys, particularly Magalousa, the cattle herd, who was a half-bred Matabele. Still, we did not take the thing very seriously, believing that they feared us too much to go to extremes; moreover then, as always, except at the time of the lion affair, we were on very good terms with the whole valley. It was considered an honour to have a large store there, whilst the financial advantages resulting from our coming were not negligible.

When we went down shooting to N'Glas' kraal in the bush veld, we were not worrying greatly about Chivamba's and their poisons. We had pretty good sport. Malcolm had then gone down to the Boer War, and was in charge of the signallers in Driscoll's Scouts; but Amyas had joined me some months previously, and he had already got into the ways of the country. Malcolm is a good shot, an unusually good one. He is about the only man I ever met who can hit both a target and a buck; as a rule your target marksman is absolutely useless for practical purposes; to send him out on the veld is like putting a prize Alderney cow in the yoke. Malcolm is a good shot, as I have said; but Amyas was a perfect one. In that, as in everything else, he excelled by what seemed a kind of natural process. Instinctively, when you met him,

you expected him to do better than yourself, and his extraordinary charm of manner prevented you from resenting the fact.

We had some good shooting that trip. N'Glas' people got very full of meat, which they needed, poor wretches, their crops having failed completely that year. We had been there about a week, and were just thinking of going back to the store, when an old man named Gabaza, whom we knew well as one of the most decent natives in the district, came and begged our permission to live at our store. He would build himself a hut beside the cattle scherm, he said, and he could live by tilling some of the vacant land at the foot of our kopje. He was growing old and stiff, he explained, and he was tired of the constantly recurring famines in the bush veld. He was a Tchangana, of pure Zulu blood, and he hated living amongst dogs of M'Hlengwi. Later on we found out that he was formerly one of the head indunas of M'Zila, the chief of Gazaland; but he had fallen into disfavour with M'Zila's successor, Gungunhana, and had fled westwards to save his life.

Gabaza came up with us, and straightway began to build his hut. He was, I think, the most gentlemanly native I ever knew; consequently, when Chivamba's people came to complain that I had introduced one of their hereditary enemies, a Tchangana, into their midst, that he was using land which they themselves wanted—we were paying the Chartered Company a rent of ten pounds a year for that same land—they heard some home truths concerning themselves, and some speculations concerning their ancestors. They departed, grumbling,

and something which one of them said was overheard by Amous, whose action increased their pace appreciably.

For a week or two we heard no more. Gabaza finished his hut, and began to break up his piece of land; then I went away, leaving Amyas behind, and I did not hear the rest of the story for some months. It seems that, as soon as I had gone, the local witch doctor began to throw the bones, and, by their magic, he discovered that it was auspicious for Gabaza to die, and that the ordinary poison, powdered bamboo, would prove effective. Had he been content to stop there, it is possible that that same witch doctor might still be throwing bones and poisoning innocent folk; but he went too far, and discovered that it would also be most auspicious to poison Amyas as well.

Powdered bamboo is a horrible thing. The minute spines stick in the intestines and set up ulceration. The victim seems to be suffering from a severe attack of dysentery, and I fully believe that more than half the so-called dysentery cases in South Africa are caused in this vile way. Gabaza died within forty-eight hours, tied up in a knot. Amyas sent him down brandy and opium; but it was little good. On the other hand, Amyas himself made a hard fight and pulled round, though it left him frightfully thin and weak.

On the second night after old Gabaza's death, Amyas was awakened suddenly by loud voices outside his hut, the cook boy disputing with some obviously excited MaTchangana. So far, my brother had imagined his complaint to be dysentery—he was too ill to indulge in speculations—but the moment

the new-comers entered the hut and explained matters, he understood what had really occurred. Both he and Gabaza had been poisoned, and the Mashona were already boasting of their valiant deed. There were fifteen of those MaTchangana, young men, all armed with stabbing assegais. They had come at a run for nearly forty miles, and they had come to wipe out Chivamba's village, to kill everything, even the fowls, as their fathers had been wont to do in the good days, before the white man came, when a warrior was a warrior, and a Mashona was a dog. They wanted Amyas to come too, to see how thoroughly they were going to do it; and for a moment the boy—he was barely twenty then—wavered, feeling much as they did about Mashona. A word from him would have started a big tribal war, bush veld against kopje country; but he did not say that word, and so saved Chivamba's sleeping village. Instead, he quieted down the warriors, promising to go with them in the daylight, when they would be able to see that no Mashona escaped; then he ordered a goat to be slaughtered for them; and, in place of killing someone else, they gorged themselves. In the morning most of their fierce resolutions had vanished. They were stiff from their long run, cold from having slept without blankets, so it was an easy matter to persuade them to leave their assegais in the store, and merely call on Chivamba's men with sticks. As it was, the Mashona spent a rather miserable day up their own kopje, whilst the victors smashed the drums and beer-pots, and scattered the livestock over the veld.

The sequel to the poisoning came nearly six

months later, when we returned after the wet season. It was too serious a matter to ignore, yet the law would have been useless. It was Amyas who hit on the scheme we adopted. It was simple and effective. Late one night we strewed nicely poisoned pieces of meat round the village; and next morning, before anyone belonging to Chivamba's was up, we went out and collected nine mangy curs, stark and horrible. These were arranged in a semicircle outside our big hut, and then Chivamba and his elders were summoned. They came, a little tottering and apprehensive, and as they squatted down they glanced at the dead dogs out of the corners of their eyes.

In reply to a question, they admitted that the curs were dead, very dead, and then they admitted, too, that the white man's poisons were stronger than their own. They did not deny the poisoning of Amyas and Gabaza; consequently, the rest was easy. We made a bargain—a most improper bargain perhaps—that we should not put strychnine in their water hole so long as they abstained from trying to poison ourselves and our boys; and, I must say this much for Chivamba's people—they kept to the terms of our agreement.

As for the witch doctor himself, I was never quite sure what was the nature of the accident with which he met at the hands of my boys. I told them, casually, that he was the head poisoner, and they answered, also casually, that he was doubtless a dog. I think they found him down in the vlei that very day. At anyrate, as I never saw him again, I did not inquire, and they volunteered no information, which was just as it should be in such cases.

CHAPTER XIII

WE had been trading at Chivamba's about six months when my youngest brother, Amyas, joined us. He had been on a farm in Canada for a year or so, having gone there when he was only fifteen, and he came out to Africa full of Canadian ideas concerning matters pastoral and agricultural. Canada is essentially the land of scientific farming, of white labour worked to the limit; the dollar itself, and not what the possession of the dollar can bring, is the farmer's ambition. South Africa, on the other hand, is tied together with reims, strips of raw hide. You can afford to adopt crude measures when native labour is so cheap, and you know that the locusts or the drought will probably destroy your crops. Why worry under such conditions? So long as there is enough to eat, and a little more than enough to drink, and there is good shooting in the low veld, a man is a fool to put capital and energy into his land.

Amyas came out from Canada, knowing things. He was shocked first; then amused, but in the end he accepted it all as inevitable. He saw that the real Curse on Africa is the Curse of the Afrikander Tradition, and, being wise, he realised that there was no use in kicking against it. We were making money then, and our idea was to get all we could out of South Africa, work our reef out, and then spend what we had made in a white man's land.

He was a fine boy. Reviewers tell me, with irri-

tating repetitions, that I cannot draw a woman's character in my novels. I daresay they are right, in fact they must be—as a reviewer myself I know we cannot err. I know why I fail so far as women are concerned. For five years I never spoke to an educated Home-born woman, and those five years were the period during which a youngster usually gets the impressions which last; but during that period I met many fine men, and of these the finest was that young brother of mine. Physically he was splendid, mentally he was perfect. His sense of honour was equalled only by his courage. He had that strange magic in his nature which made everyone agree without demur to what he proposed. He was the youngest of us, and, as our generation has no sons, it may be that he will prove to have been the last manchild of our family born. If so, the family will have ended well, in its best son. Anyway, there can be none better; and there can hardly be one as good.

Amyas got the grip of things at once; and when, at the end of our first season, Malcolm went down to the war, he really took the principal part in the business. I always make bad bargains—publishers can tell you so—but Amyas always got the last cent out of the other side; so, in the end, I used to buy from the natives and he used to sell to the white man, an arrangement which worked excellently.

I shall never forget the day I went to meet him on his arrival in Victoria. I had come up from Chivamba's with a Scotch cart and six oxen, having done the journey in five days, or rather in five nights, for the grass was too poor to allow of day trekking. It was all right amongst the kopjes,

pleasant travelling; but when we climbed on to the high veld the bitter cold of winter caught us. The cattle suffered as badly as, or even worse than, we did. Poor brutes, I pitied them heartily. Morning would find them so stiff and chilled that, really, it was a positive kindness to inspan them and get them to work. I was sleeping on the ground, of course, in the open, and the last morning before reaching Victoria the frost was so sharp that I awoke, or rather the alarm clock awakened me, at three o'clock, to find my blankets covered with hoarfrost.

Under those conditions a man does not wash and shave, nor does he change his clothes. I should have looked dilapidated enough in any case; but it so happened that much of the veld we crossed was burned off, and the fine black ash literally choked the pores of my skin. I turned up at the Thatched House Hotel, thin, gaunt, yellow from fever under my grime, with three days' growth of beard. I was clad in tattered dungaree trousers, an old canvas shirt, its breast pockets sagging down with cartridges, I had veldschoen on my feet, no socks, and a rather rusted rifle in my hand; these, with an ugly-looking sheath knife in my belt and a very large Boer pipe in my mouth, made up a rather unlovely whole. It is typical of African ways, or rather of the mental attitude which Africa produces, that I was totally unconscious of anything being wrong; it was only when Amyas, handsome, well-shaven and scrupulously clean, criticised my appearance in detail that I realised my shortcomings. In time, he did effect an improvement; but, even then, I merely

succeeded in looking like a discharged Portuguese official. My dark eyes and the dull yellowness of my skin, the hall-mark of malaria, combined to render me totally unlike an ordinary Englishman.

We had our first beer drink soon after Amyas came. Let me explain at once that the Mashona drank the beer, not we ourselves. Cocoa folk have since told me that we were grievously in the wrong, that we were encouraging the heathen in his blindness; and I know that their views have, at least, the merit of sincerity; that, on the cocoa plantations whence that mouth-clogging drink comes, not only has the native no beer on which to get intoxicated, but he has no pay wherewith he might be tempted to buy beer. So that, after all, the institution of slavery is of benefit to the great Temperance cause. By its means, tens of thousands of savages are rescued from the grip of the demon of strong drink.

We started the beer drinks primarily because they would furnish a break in the monotony of life—and trading can be monotonous—but incidentally they brought us a lot of trade. On the first occasion, we gave Chivamba's two thousand pounds' weight of grain, and told it to make beer for the countryside, an order it obeyed with alacrity. During the brewing process, deputations from other villages dropped in, to see how it was getting on, and to ascertain the precise date of the gathering. We bought pumpkins and monkey nuts and meal for those who wanted to eat as well as drink, and we even provided several hundred pounds of waterbuck bull biltong, which is stuff that only a Kaffir or a hyæna can masticate.

Our invitation to the district was to come—and bring its drums. We regretted the latter part afterwards, for the social function was held in an old rapoko field just below our kopje, and there were nine and twenty drums, which were beaten without pause, or even slackening of effort, for forty-eight solid hours. The biggest drum, which was also the least offensive, was three feet across, the worst ones were Chivamba's own, little noisy brutes, which you could hear above all the others. Our guests drank deep and then danced, drank deeper, then danced more vigorously. I reckon there were about five hundred of them, four hundred Mashona, a hundred M'Hlengwi and MaTchangana. The two latter danced together, the Tchangana dance, standing in a row, their assegais in their right hands, stamping their feet to that eternal, sickening song which they sing on every possible occasion, the old war chant of their tribe when summoned to muster for a fight—

“We have been called, we have been called, O chief,
We have been called and we have come.”

Even at the end of the first twelve hours, those words begin to pall on the listener. The Mashona danced national dances too, very similar to the antics of baboons. They were better off so far as the number of their songs was concerned, having five or six, all equally lewd and perfectly untranslatable.

The second morning, old Bota, the headman of the district, sent word to us that, though the beer had been finished twelve hours after they had started, they were still drunk. The truth of

his statement was so obvious that we wondered he had troubled to make it. The heathen had his famous blindness on. We thanked Bota for telling us; then, a few minutes later, a messenger came back to say that, as we had many cattle, more than anyone could need, it would be mere politeness on our part to have one slaughtered for our guests, who, in that case, would stay at least three days longer. He even indicated the beast they would like, one of Amous' hind bullocks. The Basutu driver, who was listening, fairly spluttered with wrath, and suggested that Bota should be beaten without delay; but the Mashona were our guests and we calmed the little man down.

They drummed on steadily through that day; but about nightfall Mashona and M'Hlengwi began to quarrel. It was the old, savage feud between the bush veld and the kopje country; and, for a few minutes, matters looked ugly. Every man of the five hundred was armed with assegais, and most had muskets as well; but we got amongst them with sjamboks, and drove them back to their dancing.

By the third morning we were heartily sick of it; and we sent for Bota and the M'Hlengwi chief, and gave them a hint that they were outstaying their welcome. The M'Hlengwi went at once—I think they had had enough of it—but the Mashona drummed on with redoubled vigour, until we appeared amongst them with wagon whips, handy little implements, forty-five feet long from the butt of the stick to the end of the lash; then, understanding that the party was over, they gathered up their drums and rattles and departed homewards, apparently not in the least fatigued.

Amongst other things we tried during our trading days was recruiting labour for the mines. We had a good reputation amongst the natives, extending as far east as the sea, as far south as the Low Country in the Transvaal. If we said a certain mine would treat the boys well they were perfectly ready to believe us. We made two contracts for supplying natives, one with the Globe and Phoenix mine at two pounds per head, one with the Geelong, at thirty shillings a head; the difference in price being due to the fact that the former wanted a guarantee of three months' service, whilst the latter was to pay on delivery and chance its luck after that.

The Globe and Phoenix people treated me well. They were genuinely anxious for boys, knowing that their reef, if not abnormally rich, continued payable to a great depth—in short, that their mine was a commercial proposition. In common with the Geelong, they would not have Rhodesian natives, all I sent in must come from across the Portuguese border, although I offered them five hundred Mashona a month at ten shillings a head.

As regarded the Geelong, I never quite understood what happened. My argument was made in Bulawayo, with one of the heads, a man of unblemished honour who still believed in the property. He really wanted me to send in boys, knowing they were badly needed. Yet, when I did send in a party, my messenger who accompanied it returned with a rude note from a plethoric person on the mine—I remember he looked like a hippo calf, but I cannot recall his name—who was acting manager, or secretary, or something like that, telling me that

the Geelong, having more boys than it needed, wished to cancel my contract. The messenger was about a fortnight on the way back; two days after he returned, a runner came down from Victoria with the latest Bulawayo paper, from which I learned that, very reluctantly, the Geelong had closed down, owing to want of native labour. I wonder how much the bears made that time—and who the bears were.

I learnt one useful thing in Rhodesia, never to speculate in what some grim humorist has called "Rhodesian Securities"; not that I have ever had the money, either of my own or anyone else's, wherewith to speculate, but if publishers or editors ever do present me with a vast cheque, I think I shall buy labourers' hovels in South-East Essex, somewhere Tilbury way, and get some of those high-minded Gravesend solicitors or agents to collect my rents, then, though my tenants will die of typhoid or other dirt diseases, I shall wax rich, and my agents will become mayors or county councillors, or whatever else such people do become before they get the justice which this world has omitted to serve out to them. Even to-day, if you go to Gravesend, in Dickens' own country, you will find the direct descendants of the Dodsons & Fogg's and of a score more of his undesirable folk. The type survives and flourishes there still.

The labour-recruiting work nearly landed us in difficulties. When we started it, we decided to send out about twenty messengers down to the Portuguese border, to spread the glad tidings that whosoever wished to take up the black man's burden, as repre-

sented by the privilege of pounding a drill or shovelling quartz, had only to apply to us. It is the proper way to do it, if you get the proper messengers. We did not, and therein lay the trouble. We took on twenty savages, all of whom we knew of old as decent workers; but we did not reckon on the difference which the lack of our supervision, and of Amous' sjambok, would make. Certainly Amous did suggest that they should all be beaten before they left, urging that they were certain to get fat and cheek by-and-by, being Amagomo (hillmen) and therefore akin to baboons. But we very foolishly disregarded his advice—we always reckoned an Englishman does not go in for hitting Kaffirs, that being an essentially Afrikander industry—in fact, we even went further, and agreed to their request for coats and hats to keep them warm at nights. We had a bale of old City police overcoats, badly rat-eaten to be sure, but still imposing and official, and we had some trade felt hats. Each of our messengers was lent a coat and a hat, and away the twenty went.

A fortnight passed without a word from any of them; then an old headman from a kraal near the Sabi River, a most decent native for his kind, came up to complain of the doings of our "police," and to beg us to recall them. Two of them had quartered themselves on his village, had insisted on receiving the best of everything, goats and fowls had to be slaughtered for them, special brews of beer prepared, the children had to go without their milk, the old men without their eggs; they were the police of the white man of Chivamba's store, and the people must do their bidding. The next day another

headman arrived with the same story, then another and another.

It seemed that our twenty blackguards, having police overcoats and hats similar to those worn by the Native Commissioner's police, had made the most of their opportunity. One of them had stolen a piece of red limbo to make puggaries, thereby completing the resemblance; then they had returned to their own kraals, fetched their guns, commandeered piccannins to carry their blankets, and started off on the glorious career of the blackmailer. Instead of finding labour for us, they were doing our business untold injury.

We took the only possible step. We enlisted another twenty, without uniform, to pursue the first lot, to discredit them with the kraal natives, and, if practicable, to bring them back captives, at anyrate to take their uniforms from them. This proved rather a long job, and cost us several pounds in wages; but in the end we recovered nearly all the uniforms, though no prisoners were brought back. However, the following season, the whole of the twenty reappeared at different times, requesting to be taken on again as "they had worked for us before." There is something rather fine about the impudence of a Mashona.

Labour agents' work, carried on from a distance as in our case, does not pay, despite the seemingly high fees. The reason is this—camped on the main footpath, a few miles from every big mine, you will find a German or a Hebrew, or, more likely, a combination of the two, whose mission in life is to intercept your gang of boys, to take away the note you have given them, and then himself to conduct

them to the mine, as his own discoveries, and to draw the capitation fees on them. Is it wonderful that we used to rejoice when we heard of lancers spitting Teutons on their lances during the Boer War?

Perhaps the most notable point about our trading business was that it led to our being the fathers of the Rhodesian tobacco industry, which is now becoming quite an important factor in the progress of the country. We started trading tobacco from the natives—the picked rolls cost us an average of fourpence per pound—and we used to take from a thousand to fifteen hundred pounds' weight back with us at the end of each season. A Bulawayo firm made us a standing offer of one and ninepence a pound for all we could deliver, and I believe they did very well over it at that price. Up till then, no one would buy Rhodesian-grown tobacco; but our stuff became so popular that white men began growing it for themselves. Nowadays, I always smoke their products, which have, at least, the merit of being unadulterated. But I still look in vain for the "Chivamba Brand."

CHAPTER XIV

THE beginning of the rubber adventure was curious. Three Portuguese boys came up to the store, spent all their money, sold us all their curios, and begged as much more as we were inclined to give. In cases like these, when our customers had come several days' march—in this instance fifteen days—they could always have food and shelter for the night, for two or three nights if they wanted it. These particular boys stayed the night, fed till they could hold no more, slept, and doubtless dreamt of evil spirits; but, in the morning, having remembered some special beads they wanted, they came up to the store hut, and asked me if I would buy some "candles." I had a look at the latter, queer black little things, about the size of a man's middle finger, soft and sticky, with a wick, or rather a core, of a kind of fibrous twig. I lighted one, caught a whiff of its smell, then called Amyas. It was undoubtedly rubber. We bought the lot, cut them open, examined them, stretched them out, then demanded details as to whence they had come.

The savages were not very communicative. It was N'Dande, and it came from the N'Dandine, literally the "place of the N'Dande." Where was the N'Dandine? It was far, very far, many days' march beyond M'Khati, the "place between the rivers," when the Sabi and the Lundi joined. What was the N'Dande? The strangers shook their heads. It was a bad thing, which brought

trouble on the people, an accursed thing, which brought the Portuguese down into the jungle, with soldiers and police, who forced the people to work collecting N'Dande, beat them, even killed some, yet paid nothing for labour. N'Dande was bad, all through, and before they left it was obvious that our informants regretted having mentioned it at all.

We had three stores going then, Chivamba's, a grain-trading station in Mabouka's hills, forty miles from Victoria, and a little place at Thomas', a tiny kraal sixty miles beyond Chivamba's, where we sold for cash only. Yet there happened to be a lull in trade, and we had some good niggers capable of seeing to things during our absence; so Amyas and I decided to go away as soon as possible in search of the N'Dande; obviously, there was money in the thing. We had learned already that the rubber came from the Landolphia creeper, and the first matters to decide, before applying to the Portuguese for a concession, were how plentiful were those creepers and what was the chance of discovering a large area suitable for cultivation.

Even now, I look back on that first Sabi expedition with a certain degree of annoyance. We bungled it so badly. The ground was, of course, entirely new to white men; we had no maps to guide us, no idea of the country to be crossed, at least after leaving our store at Thomas'; and yet we ought not to have under-estimated both the distances and the difficulties in the way we did. I, at least, had been out sufficiently long to know better.

Properly speaking, we ought never to have started

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at all that year. We were very short of stores at Chivamba's, white men's food, I mean; but there was no time to send into Victoria; so we decided to go with what we had got and to chance the rest. Eight carriers were sufficient for our stuff, eight rather poor specimens they turned out to be, for when, in accordance with our plan, we tried to make them hurry, they went sick and footsore at once.

Our plan was to follow the Lundi down to its junction with the Sabi, cross into Portuguese territory there, and push on rapidly until we found approximately where the rubber jungle lay; then to come back as quickly, before the rains could cut us off, and to take down a proper expedition the following year to explore the district thoroughly. The first sixty miles' stretch was a simple matter; we knew every foot of the path, and it was merely a question of standing a certain amount of physical and mental weariness to get through. Beyond this, there was no trouble. The stage took three and a half days. We slept the fourth night at our store above Thomas' kraal, and from there our real difficulties began. Thomas' itself consisted of a score of very dilapidated grass huts in a rubbish-strewn clearing amongst the mopani scrub. At the back of the village rose a huge kopje, almost a miniature tableland, one of the very few landmarks in that level bush veld. It was on the top of this that we had built our store, a couple of huts on the very edge of a three-hundred-feet precipice, at the foot of which was the sandy bed of the Lundi, nearly half-a-mile wide at this point. There were baobabs and fever-trees and aloes, baboons innumerable,

and, of course, a corresponding proportion of leopards to live on the baboons, jackals and wild cats in legions; but, in addition to these, Thomas' kopje, or the M'Bendese, to give it its proper name, had a weird variety of lesser and unclassified schelm, or semi-schelm. The boys in charge of the store used to set gin-traps on every footpath; sometimes they caught one of Thomas' boys and apologised; sometimes they caught one of those weird schelm and ate it. I saw only the skins. I believe some of them were ratels or aard-varks—at least I have heard so since—but we used to class them all as snarks, and I do not think we were very far wrong. I believe there is a fine selection of unknown animals still to be discovered in the low veld.

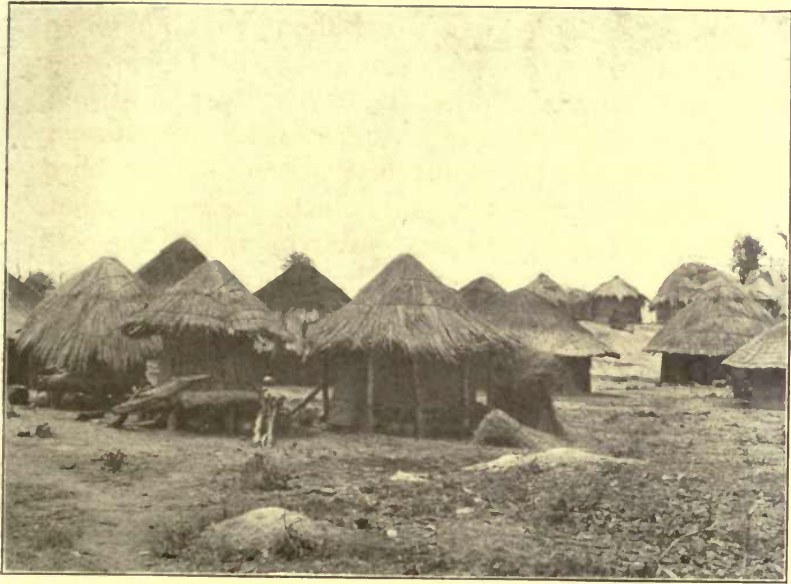
From our store huts on Thomas' kopje we obtained a splendid view over the country we had got to traverse, apparently a vast sea of grey bush, with hardly a kopje to break its horrible sameness. They told us the Portuguese border was two days' walk away. Of course, they lied, being natives. It was at least five days' heavy going, through the most appalling country, dense bush all the way, and very rough underfoot. Moreover, the day we left Thomas' we got the "itch" for the first time. I never met another white man who had been down in that veld to catch the abominable complaint, or one who had caught it elsewhere.

I imagine it is something peculiar to the district, for we developed it each time we passed through from Thomas' to the border. It begins with a slight irritation on the inner side of the upper arm; that is the first night; the second night the irritation is violent; the third night you want to scratch

your whole skin away. Yet there are no outward and visible signs, no rash of any sort, whilst it ceases altogether during the day. We tried various remedies, internal and external; all the former failed completely; whilst of the latter, lard, rubbed in well, was the only one which gave any relief. Really, the best plan was to strip, and let the cold night air get at you, to lie outside your blankets. Certainly it was chilly, unpleasantly so; but anything was preferable to that most appalling itch.

They could sell us no meal for our carriers at Thomas'. Their crops had failed—as most South African crops do—and they had only just enough to last them through till the new crop was in; but on beyond Thomas' they had not even that. All we could get was beans and a queer little flat seed called runinga, and those two furnished the staple diet of our boys, and afterwards of ourselves, until we got back to Chivamba's. Of course, we shot any amount of guinea-fowl and such buck as we could get without going off our path; but the native, and the white man, too, for that matter, is not a carnivorous animal; meat to the Kaffir is merely a flavouring for other food, and he would die of starvation if you gave him meat alone for a month. Nor does the Kaffir fancy beans and runinga as a regular diet; those also are only flavourings. Consequently, as day after day went by and we could get no meal, our boys grew weak and sulky.

We had taken all the flour there was in the camp for our own use; but it did not amount to much, and, before we even reached the border, it was looking like running short. It was then that we



A MASHONA KRAAL.



SOME OF OUR FOLLOWERS.

invented the runinga cookie. The process of manufacture is simple. You take half and half of flour and pounded runinga, knead the mixture up into a stiff brown dough, roll this out into the thinnest possible biscuits, and bake the latter on a gridiron. The result may be an acquired taste, but we grew to like it so much that we constantly had the same sort of cookies made even when flour was plentiful.

From one cause or another, delays through boys being sick, turning off the direct path in the hope of finding food, and uncertainty as to water ahead, we were twelve days in reaching the border. I think the last fifty miles of the journey is the worst piece of country I know. True, it has the merit of being level, if you can apply such a term to a stretch of veld in which there is a steep little donga every hundred yards, but the ground underfoot is horribly rough and stony, whilst the grey, monotonous desolation of the scrub is simply indescribable. When you do reach the end of your trek, the kraal by the water hole consists of three or four hopelessly dilapidated huts, inhabited by savages so apathetic that, though most of them have never seen a white man before, they cannot manage to evince the slightest interest in you. When they see your party filing in, they merely turn their heads for a moment, then go on with their favourite occupation of staring at the few smouldering sticks round which they are squatting. Ask them for meal, and they will mumble out that they themselves are starving; ask where the next water hole is, and you will learn that it is "douzi-katchan," "near and yet far"; ask for the headman, and, though he himself

is probably answering you, you will be told that he has gone on a very long journey ; ask where their cattle are, and then you will hear the truth—the lions have forced them to give up keeping cattle.

There is one place on that path where any man who was not quite sure of his own nerve might settle the question, once and for all, merely by spending a night in it. I forget its name, in fact I do not think we ever knew it by any other than that of "The Schelm Water"; but for those who wish to find it, and shoot schelm generally, I may say it is ten miles west of M'Khati, on the path leading to N'Hlosi's kraal. We ourselves discovered the place ; but, for my part, I am not selfishly anxious to keep the knowledge of it to myself. Anyone can go there ; though I could not guarantee the visitor's return.

Nowadays, I expect that all you would see would be a rather ordinary-looking spruit, with mopani scrub coming down to within fifty yards of its banks and one or two small kopjes a little way below the crossing. When we first struck the spot, however, there were the ruins of a fair-sized village on the western bank, though of these nothing would now remain, save the big ash heap. The borers and the white ants will have seen to the rest, long before this.

We got to the Schelm Water after sundown, and we camped down, right away, without troubling about anything in the nature of a scherm. For Amyas and myself there was, of course, the comforting knowledge that the lions would not worry about us until they had finished with our nine boys, whilst the fact that we had seen no game and heard no

schelm for the last forty-eight hours was in itself reassuring. So we ate runinga cookies, beans and cold guinea-fowl, and then we rolled ourselves up in our blankets, practically on the bank of the spruit. I remember that the itch was not as bad as usual that night, and we went to sleep quite early. But we did not sleep long. About nine o'clock an indescribable noise suddenly arose from the nearest of the kopjes, the barking of scores of baboons mingled with a savage growling. A couple of leopards had tried their luck amongst the Mashona's cousins, and had failed. The natural result was that the leopards came along to us, not seeking sympathy but a feed. We never saw them, but we heard them in the spruit, and began to heave flaming brands as a hint that we were not at home to them. For an hour or two, they remained within a few hundred yards, then we heard them no more.

About eleven o'clock a hyæna came along, a brute with a peculiarly offensive voice. He made a circuit of the camp six times, jodelling as he went, but on the seventh round a charge of shot gave him an ugly shock, and though, in all probability, he was not injured, but merely stung, he found he had important business elsewhere. Then once more we lay down to sleep.

It must have been an hour or so later when the next alarm came. The lion who caused it was at least a mile away, travelling along the crest of the last ridge we had crossed ; but when he roared the whole party sat up in its blankets, rather suddenly. Not that we were troubling about the noisy lion, he would not come our way ; it was his silent partner to whom he was driving the game, who was worry-

ing us, for, according to the direction of the wind, that same partner would be somewhere in our neighbourhood.

He, or, as it turned out to be, she, arrived before long, with her family, and took up her position about fifteen yards from us, just behind a little knoll. I have not the slightest idea what her object was. She stayed there till an hour before dawn, growling occasionally. We could hear her cubs sucking and quarrelling amongst themselves; but she never made any move in our direction, nor did we in hers. I know a man in a book, or even a sportsman from Home, would have shot the lot, possibly with only one discharge of his breath; but we were out hunting rubber, not lions; and, moreover, the night, besides being dark, was very misty. So we got right down into our blankets, and hoped that, if any of the niggers had to go, it would be the cook boy, who had recently spilt half our slender stock of tea.

In the end, the lioness went, having done no harm to anything but our nerves. The list of visiting schelm was, however, not yet complete. A leopard, probably the same one as before, had a walk round at a safe distance, purring out blessings on us; three hyænas took up their position amongst the ruins of the huts, and told us something, possibly how glad they were to see us; and then, just as dawn was breaking, we heard a pack of wild dogs pulling down a buck at the bottom of the vlei. That day, I must admit, I did welcome the smiling morn, and so, I think, did our carriers. We reached M'Khati, the border kraal, at noon, and then we learned that the village at the Schelm Water had

been abandoned because the lions had taken sixteen natives out of it in six weeks—a truly cheerful spot.

At M'Khati, we got the first definite news of the situation of the rubber jungle. Everyone agreed that it was at least a week's journey farther on—which meant ten days, or twenty days there and back, allowing no time for actual exploring work. We both wanted to go on, having come so far; but then we looked at our tired, half-starved carriers and our own slender stock of food stuffs, and we reckoned up, roughly, what day of what month it was, and how long we had before the rains would bring the rivers down in flood, and so cut us off from Victoria. The thing could not be done. There was no use jibbing at facts, and declaring that, because we had never turned back yet, we never would turn back. We had made a mess of the trip, and the only safe plan was to return to Chivamba's, and come down again next year, earlier in the season, with more stores and more carriers.

We got back to the kopje country more quickly than we had come down, possibly because we knew the path and the water holes, possibly because we were growing really hungry, and we believed that the wagons should already have arrived at Chivamba's with some decent food stuffs. It is curious how, in South Africa, everything seems to resolve itself down to a mere question of eating and drinking, unmitigated animalism. Culture and comfort do not enter into any man's calculations, as neither has ever been known in the sub-continent.

CHAPTER XV

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THE failure of the first rubber hunt did not discourage us. The stuff was there, and we were going to get a concession from the Portuguese to work it. True, it is derogatory to a white man's dignity to ask permission of a Portuguese or any other nasty Dago; but European nations have, in their idiocy, recognised the Mozambique territory as Portuguese, and so decent people must make the best of it.

I was pretty rotten with fever at the end of that season, so rotten in fact that Dr Williams in Victoria told me I must get out of Rhodesia and keep out. Poor Williams, one of the kindest-hearted and most optimistic men who ever lived, he believed in his own luck, believed that the boom was shortly coming in Victoria, and yet, in the end, the fever got him, and the boom has not yet come.

Most of my old friends have gone. That is the worst of pioneering work; you cannot look back on the past with pleasure, because of the ghosts which flit before your vision. Nine incidents out of ten have but a melancholy interest for you, because the other man who was with you is dead. If you are lucky—is it luck after all?—you come Home and try to pick up the old threads, the old interests; but, somehow, you are terribly lonely, and unless a woman, the One Woman, the Good Comrade, comes into your life, not to fill the void, but to compensate you for it, you will drift back to the frontier, to go under as did the other fellows. I

have been one of the fortunate ones, thanks to my Good Comrade; but had she not married me, had she not taken the risk she did in linking her life to that of an unsuccessful son of Ishmael, I should long since have been back on the frontier, killing time until the Inevitable happened.

I suppose the game is not worth the candle after all. When I look back and remember the splendid men who have gone, the very pick of the men I have known, and I compare them with the men I know now, it seems such a ghastly shame, such an abominable waste. The educated men I meet now boast of how many tame pheasants they have killed, or how many times they have smitten a golf ball; the other class finds its chief joy in watching salaried hooligans playing Association Football; neither sort takes any risks, though, all the time, it is reaping the benefit from the work of those who did do so, men infinitely superior to it in every way. Somehow, I still feel lonely at times, because it seems as though I were one of the few survivors of a dying class. I cannot get into line with the people I meet to-day, and my old friends are now so few and so scattered that they hardly count. But still there is always the Good Comrade to keep me from brooding over the dead past, and the memory of the dead men of the past.

I took Dr Williams' advice and started Home, leaving Amyas to run things. I had been five years in the wilderness then; and I was shy as a wild cat when there were women about.

The post cart took me as far as Enkeldoorn, which I found to be, as usual, on the burst, in a sodden, Boer way. I slept the night there, or,

rather, I paid for a bed and spent the night killing its inhabitants, and at dawn next morning I was in the coach for Bulawayo. I will not attempt the impossible and describe a coach journey of thirty-six hours' duration. I can only say that it is even slower than a London County Council tram, and more jolting than a Chatham train; that you sometimes upset once a mile—I have known the coach turn over fourteen times in the eight-mile stage onwards from the Shangani Drift—and that the food in the wayside stores is as bad and as expensive as that you get in a railway refreshment-room. You pay five shillings for bully beef, baking powder bread, and coffee without milk or sugar.

More than once, when I was riding transport on the Bulawayo-Salisbury road, I have found the coach stuck hopelessly in the mud, and hooked the mules out with a span of my bullocks, greatly to the satisfaction of both driver and passengers. I do not know whether we were right or no; but, when a northward-bound coach overtook us, we always pulled out of its way—it was his Majesty's mail; but for the south-bound coach we never budged, it was just the Chartered Company's post. It seems a horribly futile distinction nowadays, but it serves to show how we felt at that time. The war was still on, and, amongst Home-born men, feeling was running very strongly against the Chartered officials. Many of these were Afrikanders by birth, others had married Afrikander wives. Their loyalty had been suspected from the outset, and it was felt that, given a big Boer victory, they would declare themselves in favour of the old ideal—"Africa for the Afrikander."

In Bulawayo I managed to get a pass to leave the country—the railway was, of course, under military control—and I was one of two passengers on a train consisting of one coach, a score of empty goods wagons, and an armoured truck with a long gun where the guards' van usually is. My fellow-passenger was E. J. Lawler, then the assistant magistrate in Bulawayo, afterwards our magistrate in Victoria, the most brilliant official the Chartered Company ever possessed, and had not the sense to retain. He was Home-born, therein lay his crime so far as the Tin Gods of Salisbury were concerned ; but I feel sure that, had the High Gods of London Wall known of his ability, they would never have let him drift away from their service. I have fought the Chartered Company on more than one occasion ; but as I have grown older, and possibly more sensible, so I have got to realise that the vast majority of the mistakes for which the London board has been blamed have been due to the fact that that same board has, of necessity, been dependent on the advice of its local officials. It is the latter, and the latter alone, who have gone so near to wrecking the company.

Our train took its time. We were, altogether, six days and seven nights doing the thirteen hundred miles to Capetown. The reason for the delay was, of course, that our brother Boer was laying dynamite on the line, a playful practice which made travelling rather nervous work. For a couple of hundred miles they sent our train on ahead, with an armoured train following a mile behind. We were to draw the Boers' fire, so we were told, and the soldiers were then to hurry

up with their Maxims and seven pounders and catch the brigands red-handed. It was a very nice arrangement—for the soldiers.

Capetown was seething with disloyalty and bubonic plague—two diseases you would naturally expect to find there—and I quitted it gladly. Then the change came. You must live at least five years on the veld to understand what it means to shake that most abominable dust of South Africa off your feet, and get back to your own people, to dress for dinner, and eat food which does not seem to taste of the smoke from a cow-dung fire. You do not look back at all; you are looking forward, towards the white man's land, which is always Home to every decent man. And yet when you get Home, when, as in my case, you land in a fog, which wraps round you and brings out the latent malaria, goads those abominable microbes into a most detestable state of energy, you think of the veld, where the air is clear and clean, you hear the guinea-fowl calling in the mealie fields, the jolting of the wagon as it pulls off the outspan into the road, the thud of the bullet striking flesh which tells you that the buck is hit—you hear these, and you forget the fever and the thirst and the starvation, the niggers and the Afrikanders, the bad food and the worse liquor, and you long to go back to Africa, the country where men seek for wealth, and usually find a grave.

In London I made the preliminary arrangements for obtaining a rubber concession in the Mozambique territory, and I picked up another young brother, Kenneth, to come out and help

us with the business, which seemed to be growing too big for Amyas and myself to manage. I was at home four months altogether, and just before I left I received a curious offer and a curious commission. The latter, which was a concrete thing—I received a cheque for fifty pounds down for it—was to report on a copper mine near Macequece. As my route out led me to Macequece itself, I was glad enough to go. The job occupied me in all three days, so the pay was good enough. My instructions were to send a written report; but so convinced was I of the comparative worthlessness of the mine—it was totally undeveloped and its value was absolutely problematical—that, fearing the syndicate employing me would perhaps be bluffed into converting its option into an actual purchase, I cabled from Macequece, at my own expense: "Suspend purchase pending receipt of my report." The report was absolutely damnatory. I never received an acknowledgment of it, although the addressee afterwards admitted having received it—as he was bound to, it having been registered; and I found subsequently that it had been ignored, and the property floated as "The Manica Copper Company Limited." If anyone is curious to know whether, on that occasion, I was in the right, let him ask one of the shareholders in the company, or study the Stock Exchange quotations. There was nothing to float, beyond the mining rights of a bare hill, on the crest of which was a large, copper-stained boulder. Still, the great fool public subscribed the capital; and I suppose, after all, if it had not done so, it would have

wasted its money in some other equally futile way.

The offer I got just before I left England was a strange one. I had been writing some articles for a financial daily—which, by the way, still owes me for them—and through these I had come into contact with a certain famous firm of South African financiers; Hebrews, certainly, but very decent people. I will not give their name, for obvious reasons, but the concern is amongst the richest in the City of London. I had proposed some transaction to them, which they had duly declined; and I had already booked passages to Beira for Kenneth and myself, when I received a letter asking me to come up and see one of the partners on the following day.

I went up, wondering, and the proposition made to me fully justified my wonder. I was told that Cecil Rhodes, in conjunction with this firm, was about to send a large expedition up to Central Africa, to take possession of some richly mineralised area. The people with whom I was dealing were making it a condition that the man in command of the practical side of things, the pioneering, transport, and road-making, should be an Englishman born, and they had picked me for the job. I pointed out that I had a large business I could not afford to leave, and they retorted that they themselves would not only buy the business, but would also take on my brothers, as my assistants. With regard to details, they could not settle those without consulting Rhodes, and, as I was going out anyway, we arranged that I should meet the latter in Capetown, and fix up matters

finally. Accordingly, Kenneth and I sailed; and when I reached Capetown I heard that Cecil Rhodes was dead, and the whole scheme had fallen to the ground. Since then, I have often speculated as to what there was in the thing, what the real objective could have been.

Rhodes being dead, we went on to Beira, intending to go up to Macequece, and make our way from there to Chivamba's. There was, of course, martial law all along the coast, and, for some inscrutable reason, Beira passengers were regarded as suspicious personages, possibly because, through the other ports being jealous of the growing trade of the Portuguese towns, people had spread and fostered the idea that none but madmen, criminals or very desperate characters wanted to go to Delagoa Bay and Beira. Still, we got through, after a delay of a fortnight in that most detestable of South African towns, Durban.

You must know Beira to realise it—I will not say to appreciate it, for no man ever succeeded in doing that. The town, tin-roofed and sweltering, stands on a little sandspit which juts out from a mangrove-circled bay, into which the yellow Pungwe River flows with muddy deliberation. Sand, mangrove swamps and galvanised iron—those are the main constituents of Beira. The streets are merely loose beach shingle, into which you sink ankle-deep at every step. Wheeled traffic is impossible, walking is equally so; but the difficulty is solved by little, narrow-gauge car lines, on which every white resident runs his own nigger-pushed truck.

Beira is frankly, undisguisedly wicked. It makes

no pretence at morality, but, at the same time, it sins in a light-hearted, southern manner which northern nations can never imitate. It is intolerably, abominably hot, as well as indescribably unhealthy, and perhaps its excuse lies therein. Not that it tries to excuse itself. It has long since passed that point. Every second building is a bar, and every bar is something a good deal worse. The vice of Beira is open, clamorous and, above all, cosmopolitan. With the exception of the small British community, white clad and unutterably weary, the white inhabitants form a perfect collection of samples of polyglot rascality, male and female. East and West, North and South have sent specimens of their very worst to that sultry little Gehenna on the shores of the Indian Ocean. Most men spend more than half their day's earnings before breakfast in pick-me-ups, trying to neutralise the effects of that ghastly climate, and, incidentally, making those effects far worse. They drink absinthe there, mixing it with soda. That is the first drink of the day; afterwards they go on with whisky. They told me in Beira—I will not vouch for the truth of the story—that the most prosperous man in the place was the Anglican parson, who demanded two guineas, payable in advance, for every funeral he conducted. At anyrate, he got plenty of work.

When Amyas landed in Beira, there was a score or so of passengers, and the guileless Portuguese Collector of Customs suggested that, if each Englishman would contribute half-a-crown, his official sense of honour would allow him to pass in the baggage unopened. They contributed, without further parley. On the other hand, when

Kenneth and I landed, we were the only passengers, and the whole customs staff attended to us. We put bribes into at least a dozen dirty hands; but still the clearance fees on our luggage amounted to two pounds fifteen, despite the fact that we smuggled through a couple of new Cogswell & Harrison rifles. I suppose I am prejudiced, and yet no man has ever adduced any good grounds why I should love a Portuguese to the extent of paying his outrageous impositions.

We went up to Macequece, slowly, as is the way of the Beira railways, stopping whenever steam ran short, or the driver felt tired, and once because a gauger was lying dead in a hut and his boy wanted to know whether the white men had a coffin left for his baas. For once—and it rarely happened so—the supply of coffins exceeded the demand, and the guard promised that one should be sent down speedily, before the hyænas broke into the place and obviated the necessity of burial. I daresay that nowadays the Beira railway is quite a normal institution, that its employees die decently, of zymotic diseases, and are buried by a duly ordained priest; but at that time they usually died alone and unattended, unless, by chance, Father Ronchi, the Jesuit, that finest of priests and bravest of gentlemen, the one man who was never asked for a ticket on the Beira railway, happened to hear of their plight, and hurried down. If Rhodesia ever has a Pantheon, dedicated to its heroes, Father Ronchi, the little old Italian with the little tin church at Umtali, will come very near the head of the list. He was—I trust he is still alive for me to be able to say “he is”—perfectly fearless and perfectly

unselfish, the truest servant of his Master I ever had the privilege of meeting.

In Beira I had practically arranged the matter of the concession with the Portuguese—they were to give us five thousand hectares—roughly, twenty square miles—for plantation purposes, and the right of collecting virgin rubber over another five thousand hectares. The terms were very reasonable, and the only thing remaining was to select our plantation area. Our idea was that I should take Kenneth across country to Chivamba's, where Amyas was already, teach him the rudiments of the business, then go back to the Sabi country with Amyas and investigate the rubber question.

When we left Capetown, despite Rhodes' death, the prospect seemed bright; but by the time we reached Macequece they were as black as possible. A new cattle disease had broken out, and, as the largest cattle traders in Mashonaland, the outlook for us was the reverse of pleasant. Cattle were dying by thousands, and already it was whispered that the Rhodesian Government intended to take no steps to stop the disease, that Rhodes' death had demoralised the Stock Exchange to such an extent that the officials in Salisbury dare not recognise the existence of a new plague, and, consequently, were going to ignore it utterly, trusting to the guardian angel of idiots, their patron saint, to see them through safely. Still, we had the rubber adventure in view; and, even though our cattle might be doomed—and it hurt terribly to think that those brave, faithful animals might have to go under—we had the prospect of saving something out of the wreck, if we got our concession.

CHAPTER XVI

WE found Amyas at Chivamba's store, very well, but very bored. He had not spoken to a white man for three months ; and he had long since got through his stock of reading matter. He knew of the cattle disease, and reckoned, as I did, that it would spread right through the country, having been allowed too good a start ; yet, prior to the outbreak, his profits in Chivamba's store alone—and we then had four stores—had been two hundred and sixteen pounds for a single month.

The disease, of course, stopped all trade. There is no sense in buying cattle which are bound to die, and if we paid no money to the natives for their beasts they could not buy trading stuff from us. So we decided that Kenneth should stay at Chivamba's with a young Afrikander to help him, whilst Amyas and I went once more in search of the rubber.

This time we intended to do things properly. We had got a fair idea of the task before us, and we meant to go through with it. Looking back on it now, the venture seems to me to have been a little risky. To begin with, our base, Chivamba's, was eighty miles from civilisation, which also meant from a doctor, and our objective was, at least, two hundred and fifty miles farther on, through absolutely unexplored country, country which, moreover, we knew must be absolutely rotten with malaria microbes. Then, we could not take an

armed force. The natives in the Portuguese territory were, we knew, infinitely more warlike than our Mashona and M'Hlengwi carriers, and could have eaten up our boys if they wanted so to do. The Portuguese can only go down into the jungle with a small army at their back, and, even then, they do not get very far, being wise, and knowing the qualities of a poisoned arrow; but we were going to chance that side of the matter, trusting to the prestige of the British name.

If we had come to grief down in that jungle, no one would ever have learned any details. Our carriers, if not killed by the local heathen, would have slunk home, holding their tongues, fearing to be charged with our deaths. We should not have come back—that would have been all; and the Portuguese would not have troubled to avenge us, hating Englishmen in their hearts, knowing Englishmen to be white, and not, like themselves, libels on the European races.

We had a good supply of stores on which to draw when we started eastwards the second time. On the other hand, the fear of famine made us keep our number of carriers down to the minimum, and we left behind whatever was not absolutely essential. We took tea, coffee, sugar, flour, salt and pepper, about ten pounds of bacon and a ham, some sago and rice, but no tinned meats. Our armoury consisted of a double 500-bore Express, black powder, which Amyas used; my 400-bore cordite Express; an old 12-bore shotgun which I had bought, shop-soiled, from the Army and Navy Stores for five pounds six years previously; it was still as good as new, despite

the hardest of usage, and is probably in use to-day; and two Tower muskets belonging to two of the carriers. In addition to these, each carrier had assegais, and one or two carried battle-axes as well.

When we started, we had no idea how long the quest of the rubber would take us. We told our boys we should be three months, and engaged them on that understanding, although we knew that, once we were in the Portuguese territory, they would stick to us until we brought them back, fearing the local natives, their hereditary foes. I, myself, thought that five weeks should suffice, as it never occurred to us that the local savages would have any reason for denying the existence of the rubber creepers. We imagined that the offer of a decent reward would make them eager to show us every Landolphia in the neighbourhood; but therein we were altogether wrong.

I have two records of the trip, one kept by Amyas, one by myself. As these were written from day to day, actually on the spot, with no idea of publication, but merely as letters to our mother, they give a pretty accurate account of things. On the other hand, the fact that these diaries had to go overland by runners for nearly three hundred miles, which involved a considerable risk of their falling into the wrong hands, made us omit anything which might be considered compromising. For instance, the diaries do not relate that, when we heard of the Portuguese official at M'Kupi's having some three thousand pounds' worth of rubber, we decided, if possible, to capture his stuff, and to leave him for the local savages to deal with. He was, at best, a

Dago slave-raider, and there was a long account to be settled between the jungle-folk and his kind. We missed him by a couple of days, however, and, as our scheme had failed, we thought it wiser not to mention that we had even tried it. Now, however, it is different. I have not the slightest objection to confessing things in this book ; although, I fancy, there will be some who will charge me with having left a good deal unconfessed.

I know that, during the Boer War, it was often whispered by men who were jealous of our success that the cattle we were constantly sending in for sale were not bought from the natives at all, but had been looted by us and a little band of Mashona brigands in the Northern Transvaal. The only foundation for the tale was the fact that we should have done so if we could, and that, when we heard of the proposed Boer trek through Eastern Mashonaland to the German territory, we did enlist a number of natives provisionally to help us cut off some of the Boers' cattle, our idea being to get those by the Lundi Drift on the old Pioneer's Road, and drive them away through a certain pass in the hills. The spirit was willing, I admit that, but the opportunity never came. Again, in Bulawayo, we thought of going down to Tuli in search of Boer cattle ; but were prevented by the authorities, who seemed strangely solicitous about the welfare of their Boer brethren, possibly because they foresaw the time when those same Boers would be brought up to ruin those dangerously independent folk, the loyal transport riders.

Amyas' diary is written more fully than mine and gives by far the better picture of the jungle. Still

I will quote from both. He wrote on 22nd June 1902 :

"We left the station, Chivamba's, at two o'clock yesterday afternoon, and, after taking the wrong footpath, and then losing that, we finally arrived at a dirty little M'Hlengwi kraal just after sunset, having covered fourteen miles. A hyæna turned up in the night, and lifted up his voice, which was, by the way, an unusually cheerful one, as though he knew that the strychnine bottle had been left behind. I fancy we shall hear many of his brethren before we get back.

"I am writing this in a Kaffir garden, where we have stopped for breakfast. We have come eight miles this morning. Stanley has just shot a guinea-fowl, which will come in handy to-morrow morning.

"We have eighteen carriers, nine Mashona and nine M'Hlengwi and MaTchangana. Fourteen of them are dressed in old Metropolitan Police overcoats, three have velveteen jackets, and the last, a piccannin, has an old dress shirt, worn back to front. He is known, for short, as M'Bumvana, 'the little red thing.'"

That night I wrote : "We are camped on the bank of the Tcheredzi River. We waded it two hours ago, and could go no farther on account of the scarcity of water. A dreary spot, low bush and small trees scattered about a desert of yellow, tangled grass. The river bed is broad, though at this season the stream is confined to a deep, narrow channel. There is hippo spoor everywhere. But for the way in which those great brutes have beaten down the reeds we should never have got through at all.

"Our boys are distinctly nervous on the score of lions, and are wasting a great deal of energy in making a thorn scherm.

"There is something infinitely depressing, something indescribably sad, in the whole atmosphere of this part. The waste and desolation, the utter uselessness of the country to white man or Kaffir, these come home to you at the end of a long march. What was it all made for, save perhaps to be the grave of restless fools like ourselves?"

The following day, after tramping fourteen miles across a most ghastly stretch of burnt veld, we had to stop again on account of water. I wrote that night: "It is the old, sickening story—no water ahead near enough for us to reach before dark. This kraal, N'Tambandiro's, is like most others in the bush veld, a dozen dilapidated huts, their thatches untidy and smoke-grimed, and all around them that wonderful collection of litter in which the soul of the Kaffir rejoices. To the east is the smoke of a huge grass fire, in some places rising in black columns, elsewhere hanging in a dense black cloud, obscuring the horizon. To-morrow we shall have to cross that newly burned stretch, and get choked with ash and dust. Cheerful prospect."

The fifth day out, Amyas headed his entry: "Fifteen miles from anywhere." He said: "We left N'Tambandiro's before sunrise yesterday, and about three miles out saw a few Rooi buck. Just as I was going to shoot they ran. Stanley and I followed a little apart. After going a few hundred yards I saw a silver jackal, and was wondering whether I should shoot it or no, when it trotted behind a bush, startling some partridges, which flew up with the usual amount

of screeching. At the same moment the whole veld seemed to go up in the air. I had been so intent on the jackal that I had never noticed that I had got right amongst the troop of Rooi buck. Yet the trees were so thick that I never got a shot after all. I cursed that jackal.

"After breakfast all the carriers had some of their wages knocked off for telling lies about the water the day before. We reached the kraal of Mahihi, the local chief, about three o'clock, made tea there, then went on to Selan's village, which proved to be only a mile distant. In the middle of this kraal was a post about four feet high, with a piece of blood-bespattered limbo round the middle of it, and a broken calabash and a cow-elephant's tusk at its foot. This arrangement, we were informed, was for the use of Selan's spirit, which resided in it, looking after the village, when Selan himself was in the fields.

"We left the kraal early this morning, and about seven miles out I got the fever, or, rather, the fever came out. It is always in me. Stanley and four boys stayed with me, and I was able to go on in about three hours. But, oh, it was not nice walking when one felt so seedy and had no water; and then this place turned out to be ten miles farther on. As for the veld, there are no words to describe it. 'Thorns and Desolation' is as near as I can get. As Stanley says, we have been having a lesson in the gentle art of being scratched. Everything has been grey to-day, grey thorns, grey grass, grey thorny ground and not a drop of water for seventeen miles. Now we are camped at a little oasis beside a good water hole. The place is famous for schelm

of all sorts ; and we have made the boys fix up a novel sort of scherm, just a space large enough for the two of us, hollowed out in the middle of a clump of prickly palms, with a huge fire across the entrance."

On the 26th of June we were at our old camp where the lioness passed the night with us some months previously. We had not intended to stay there again ; but in the morning Aymas had shot a sable antelope bull. His first shot wounded it, and we had a long chase on the blood spoor before it was finally brought down by a hammered-iron slug out of the muzzleloader carried by one of our boys, who had got ahead of us on the trail. The skinning and cutting-up took some time and, in the end, we found ourselves compelled to stop at the schelm water. My entry for that night runs : "Yesterday, in spite of its being Coronation Day, proved tame and uneventful. We had a procession of our own, the usual order of marching. First a youngster, clad in a tattered and filthily dirty dress shirt, sleeveless, and worn back to front, carrying Amyas' rifle. Then Amyas, in a grey shirt and blue dungarees, bare-armed, with an old sombrero on his head ; next myself, much the same as Amyas, except that I had a long rifle ; after me, the cook boy, Jumbo, a big villain I had picked up in Macequece, carrying the bucket canteen and the shot-gun ; and trailing behind the long string of carriers, all with weapons of some sort.

"Now, the camp reeks of freshly killed meat, and there are sure to be schelm round soon ; but we have a splendid lion-proof scherm to-night. The

sides are made of brushwood and poles about ten feet high, and across the entrance is a huge fire, by the unpleasantly warm light of which I am trying to write this. The Mashona are nervous, and beginning to wish they had stayed at home. Unfortunately for them, they are only at the starting point of their troubles. They will be experts in schelm by the time they get back. If not, it will be because the schelm are experts in the flavour of Mashona. Still, as I told them just now, Mashona are very plentiful."

In the end, we heard very little that night. Some beast wasted a good deal of time in sniffing round our scherm; but, as nothing could get in, we did not worry to waste a charge of shot on him. The leopards and baboons were, as usual, having an argument on the kopje down the spruit; whilst a couple of hyænas sang to us from the site of the village out of which the lions had driven the people; but that was all. We had both had touches of fever that day, so we were thankful not to be really disturbed.

The following day we reached M'Khati, the border kraal, the limit of our former exploration. It is a beautiful spot, more like a vast park than anything else, whilst the village itself, which contains about a hundred huts, is far superior to any other I ever saw in Rhodesia. It really marks the beginning of the M'Tchangan country. All its inhabitants are M'Tchangana, of pure Zulu descent. We found that the headman was away, and his deputy was inclined to be insolent when we asked for meal for our boys. However, we soon brought him to his senses.

The day we reached M'Khati I shot a curious guinea-fowl, of a kind I have seen only in the Sabi jungles. The spots are very small, and of a bright electric-blue, on the head is a tuft of curling black feathers, whilst the eyes are a brilliant carmine. Unfortunately, though I tried to keep the skin of that and another I shot, the rats at Chivamba's ultimately ate them.

It was curious how we both hated that low country. Of course, we were full of fever, and Amyas was often in an agony from toothache as well, though he tried to disguise the fact; but I think it was the utter dreariness, rather than the climate, which told on us. I believe any other two men, save he and I, would have quarrelled savagely under the conditions. I know I could not have stood a different companion. Our nerves were gone. Not that we were afraid of dying down there—honestly I believe we never gave that a thought, for, had we done so, we should have turned back at the border—but we had got irritable and quick-tempered where the natives were concerned. We never carried revolvers—very few men do on the veld—but, had we possessed them, I believe on more than one occasion we should have shot some of those lying brutes amongst whom we spent the next two months.

The entry I made at M'Khati gives a good idea of how I was feeling. "We have reached the border kraal, seven days exactly from Chivamba's. I reckon the distance a hundred and eighteen miles; but, considering the delays, and the fact that the boys are raw, I think we have not done so badly, after all—an average of sixteen and a half miles

a day. I am never tired physically, I seem to have forgotten what that means, even when I am putrid with fever ; but I am unutterably weary of this eternal travelling. I wish I did get tired ; then I should get to sleep earlier. As it is, I lie awake in the evenings, long after everyone else has turned in ; and I get morbid and disgusted with everything. I am not really suffering from insomnia ; simply, I need very little sleep. I always wake in the mornings perfectly fresh, though for weeks I have not gone to sleep till long after midnight, nor been up later than dawn."

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN we left Rhodesia and entered Portuguese territory our real quest of the rubber creepers began. Our first intention had been to cross the Sabi at the nearest point to the kraal at M'Khati ; but, in the end, we crossed the Lundi instead, and followed down the south bank of the river. So far, the only member of our party who knew what the Landolphia creeper looked like was Jumbo, the cook boy. Neither we ourselves nor the carriers had ever seen it. Nor did we realise yet the difficulties ahead. We expected the jungle to be thick, and found it was impenetrable in most places ; we expected a large native population, and found a very small one ; we expected water to be plentiful, and found it extremely scarce ; above all, we expected assistance from the local natives, and they put every possible obstacle in our way.

It was not that we went out ill-prepared so far as information was concerned, because no information was obtainable. We had to chance our luck, that was all ; and when our luck was bad we could not blame ourselves. The rubber was "tagatewe," "accursed"—therein lay the trouble. The Portuguese system of forced labour, slavery, if you will, had brought so much misery on the natives that they had decided to put to death any of their fellows who showed the white man a virgin belt of rubber. We loathed them for their lying ways then ; but I do not think we blamed them in our

hearts. They were following the instinct of self-preservation, and anything which tends to bring the Portuguese into a district must be accounted a misfortune.

My first entry written in the Portuguese territory runs :

“ Twenty miles down the Sabi, Portuguese East Africa.

“ I am trying to write by the light of a wildly flickering candle, with mosquitoes making violent attacks on my ankles, rendering it a difficult matter to think of anything but swear-words. We have passed through some splendid scenery to-day. On the Rhodesian side it is like some vast English park, which has been left untended for years ; the only difference being that the grass is knee-deep and yellow, but this rather adds to the beauty, as it throws the green of the trees into strong relief.

“ On this side of the border, dense forest is the prevailing characteristic, a mass of tropical vegetation, palms, huge trees, vast creepers, some two feet in diameter, twisting like giant snakes along the ground or up the tree trunks, great swamps, covered with weirdly green grass and reeking of stagnant vegetation, the whole beautiful, fertile, but horrible on account of its obvious unhealthiness. A man new to Africa would delight in it ; I, on the other hand, have had six years of fever, and I look at it all with yellow eyes. It is typical of nine-tenths of South and East Africa, fascinating, but utterly useless to the white man.’

Amyas’ next entry is dated 30th June, north bank of Sabi River : “ They told us where we slept yesterday that ‘there was a big kraal here, also a

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pool containing hippo, and a path which followed along the bank of the river. When we got here, the village proved to consist of four wretched huts, there was no hippo pools, and, worst of all, no path. There will be much weeping and gnashing of teeth in that last kraal when we call there on our way back. They told us yesterday, where we stopped midday, that there was no virgin rubber left; all the creepers had been worked out. Of course, they were lying. When we find a truthful Kaffir, I will make a note of the fact, and underline it.

"This morning we only had half-a-mile to go before we came to the ford on the Sabi. They told us the river was deep—it was. The carriers were all afraid to try it, so Stanley and I stripped and started. The river bed is a full mile and a quarter in width; but the actual stream there was only about two hundred and fifty yards. The tallest boy was told off to follow us closely with our clothes. There was a strong stream running, and that, with the heavy sand bottom, made walking difficult. At one point the water was up to my chin; yet we dared not swim, for then the carriers would have refused to try it. It was a winter morning, and, even in East Africa, the air is sharp at sunrise, at least to a wet and unclad man; consequently, as soon as we landed, we looked round for our clothes. Lo and behold, however, the boy who was supposed to be bringing them was still on the other bank, taking snuff. We shouted and whistled to him, then ran up and down in the sand for all we were worth in a not very successful attempt to keep warm.

"When we reached this kraal we found no one



AMVAS PORTAL WATT.

in the night we discovered eighteen eyes which were none other than the point and we then had breakfast. When some local negroes and turn up they denied the existence of a path down the bank and also declared there was no river.

"The first step so small now, I can't possibly go on without as I have to put it down with a towel between every other word."

That same night had a large stock of grain which was absolutely heavy with twelve a fact that cost us some time on the night—we had to stay there because there was no water for a good many miles ahead—they got into our own boat bags and practically ruined our whole supply.

The man who has never been in the East Coast jungle would not understand the vital importance of the question of water and the race with which the natives can deceive you on that point. Not only was all the water on the path which was only a few feet from one of the few water holes to the west; but the jungle was so dense that nothing in the nature of a cross-country track was really really impossible. Here and there we did get a few hundred yards of open; but for the greater part of the way the path had been chopped out through the dense forest. I have gone for twenty miles at a stretch in that jungle without seeing a living thing or finding a glimpse of the sun over the hills. Not once in the undergrowth did it is usually lost together by the most extraordinary number of snuggles creeping with hooked thorns every few inches of them. A bird will swoop and you no more effectively than does that jungle fixed its position of which the country

in it, though we discovered eighteen eggs, which were more to the point, and we then had breakfast. When some local niggers did turn up, they denied the existence of a path down the Sabi, and also declared there was no rubber.

"The flies are so awful now, I can't possibly go on writing, as I have to hit at them with a towel between every other word."

That same kraal had a huge stock of grain, which was absolutely heaving with weevils, a fact that cost us dear later on, for, during the night—we had to stay there because there was no water for a good many miles ahead—they got into our own flour bags and practically ruined our whole supply.

The man who has never been in the East Coast jungles would not understand the vital importance of the question of paths, and the ease with which the natives can deceive you on that point. Not only was all the water on the paths, which practically led from one of the few water holes to the next; but the jungle was so dense that anything in the nature of a cross-country trek was usually utterly impossible. Here and there, we did get a few hundred yards of open; but for the greater part of the way the paths had been chopped out through the thorn scrub. I have gone for twenty miles at a stretch in that jungle without seeing a living thing, or getting a glimpse of the sun overhead. Not only is the undergrowth dense, but it is literally tied together by the most extraordinary number of stringlike creepers, with hooked thorns every few inches of their length. A brick wall would stop you no more effectually than does that jungle. Even the elephant, of which the country

is full, cannot break through it ; even the tiny little red jungle antelope, not much bigger than a hare, cannot get under it.

Under these conditions, you must find a path ; and as the latter is sure to start in an indefinite sort of way out of one of the fields, not becoming well marked until it is right in the jingle, a local guide is essential. The fact that the natives denied so strenuously that there was a path along the north bank of the Sabi convinced us that one existed and that there was rubber along it. However, in the end, they managed to get us away in a north-easterly direction, towards the kraal of M'Kupi, the big chief of the whole Sabi Valley.

At the first kraal across the Sabi, our M'Hlengwi carriers struck. They declared that they were tired, that if we went on the Bushmen—or “Archers” as they are called—would kill us all, and that there was no rubber and never had been any. It was an astonishing piece of insolence ; but the meeting only lasted long enough for Amyas and myself to understand what they were talking about and jump to our feet. We had not taken two steps towards them before they shouted out that they had changed their minds. In the end, they were all fined two days' pay, whilst all their biltong was taken away and given to the Mashona. We had no more trouble after that one futile little outbreak ; but we used to watch all our boys very carefully in future ; for it would have been no pleasant thing had they deserted us in that ghastly jungle.

The Mashona were frightened all the time. They were far from their beloved granite kopjes, amongst

the most dreaded of their hereditary foes. Fortunately, however, they realised that their best chance of safety lay in keeping with us. In addition to the actual dangers and difficulties of the journey, the jungle was full of unseen terrors for them, evil spirits which jumped out on you from behind trees, witches who gave you unimaginable diseases, local natives who were men one moment, lions the next. I remember one night they were asking if we should go as far as the sea, of which they had heard, vaguely. Amyas answered that we should, adding that, as soon as the Mashona bathed in the salt water the tails which their ancestors had lost would grow again. It was said with a laugh; but the alarm and consternation of the heathen showed that it was no joke to them.

On the thirteenth day out we found the first trace of rubber. Amyas writing from "Nowhere in particular" said: "We left N'Dabula's early, and, after eight miles' tramping, came to a broad sand river, with permanent water in some holes the Kaffirs had dug, and plenty of lion, rhino, and elephant spoor. We stopped for breakfast at a kraal on the farther bank. They told us there was no water for a long way, so our boys filled their calabashes, and were very wild when we found water twice in the next four miles. From the last water hole, Stanley and I and three boys walked on ahead very fast, hoping at every turn to come on the next kraal. However, we did not get there till sunset, tired and disgusted; but we forgot all about this when Jumbo came in, long after dark, carrying some leaves and bark off a rubber creeper. He had noticed several about twelve miles back, and

had remained to investigate. At first, we were inclined to go back ; but finally decided to have a look at the Portuguese at M'Kupi's first, and then to return to Jumbo's rubber."

As a matter of fact, though neither of our diaries hints at anything of the kind, we had made up our minds to see first whether that same Portuguese still had his big consignment of rubber with him ; in which case, we thought it would save us the trouble of searching further, three thousand pounds' worth of gathered rubber being worth many scores of thousands of creepers hidden in the jungle.

We had heard that the Dago was leaving shortly, and, naturally, we were in a hurry to get on ; but every trek there was the same trouble about water, and once a guide wasted a whole day for us. My entry about that cheerful savage is : "We took a local boy as guide, and before long were congratulating ourselves thereon, for the path split up into a number of smaller ones ; and the guide seemed to have no doubt as to which to follow. After a while, the track became very indistinct, finally petering out altogether. The country was mainly jungle, a tangled mass of undergrowth with here and there a few larger trees. Every branch, even to the smallest twig, was covered with a light green fungus, somewhat similar to asparagus, except that it hangs in festoons and has no apparent roots or stem. It gives a weird, unwholesome look to everything ; the very air seems a sickly, greenish hue, whilst the enormous amount of dead wood strewn over the ground shows the destructive effect the stuff has on the trees themselves. The guide led us down a long, muddy sluit, evidently a

favourite haunt of buffalo, followed it for some distance, then turned abruptly into a belt of open bush country. He travelled quickly, as if quite sure of his way, and we thought he was taking a short cut. The veld gradually became rougher, a series of dry watercourses and rocky dongas. Finally, he climbed the bank of a small sluit and we found ourselves on a miniature tableland, bare and stony. Our savage squatted down, carefully laid his bow and arrows on a rock, took snuff, and then informed us cheerfully that he was lost.

"There was no sun to give us the direction, and, even had there been, we had not the vaguest idea as to where the water lay. The guide thought, but was not sure, that the kraal we were going to lay behind us on the left. We absolutely refused to accept that view, and sent out some of our boys to look round for a path. By a rare piece of luck, they came on the absolutely fresh spoor of two natives crossing a patch of burned veld, a sign that there was a way through in that direction. We followed the spoor, found water a couple of miles along it, and finally discovered our kraal in exactly the opposite quarter to that in which the guide had declared it lay."

It was a dreary task plodding through that jungle. Every trek, our objective, M'Kupi's kraal, where the Portuguese rubber was, seemed to grow farther away. It would be fifteen miles off at dawn, forty miles away at sunset. There was no game, at least we saw none, though elephant were obviously plentiful, as were also buffalo. We shot a good many guinea-fowl, and these formed our staple food; but for a fortnight neither of us used a rifle. The

natives, most of whom were of a very low type, used the bow and arrow. One rarely saw an assegai. Their arrows were beautifully made, barbed in a most elaborate way and poisoned with the greatest care—curious how a black man loves poisons—but the bows, though over six feet long in most instances, were so stiff as to be nearly useless; really the spring was in the gut bowstring, rather than in the wood itself.

The kraals are split up into a number of little groups of huts, seldom more than two or three in one clearing. At first we could not conceive the reason for this; but an ingenuous youngster explained matters. It appeared that if they all lived together they could not refrain from poisoning one another.

We reached M'Kupi's at last, or rather his out-lying fields, and stayed there to wash, shave, put on clean clothes, and even ties, wherewith to impress the Portuguese. We had to see him first, and see his rubber, before we made any definite plans. I have sometimes wondered what would have happened had we found him. The attitude of the average Briton in South Africa towards the Portuguese is a curious one. He looks on the Dago as something quite beyond the law, a brigand who lives by his trade, and may be dispossessed of his spoils without the least injustice. However, in our case, the question of what we might do never actually arose. The Portuguese had been gone four days when we arrived there. We found his hut, a miserable little square affair, and we saw two of his wives, who had red mud plastered in their wool. Whilst we were there, one of his police boys came back to say that

a carrier belonging to the kraal—they had all been pressed into the service, and were, we heard, “carrying ten men’s loads”—had died from exhaustion, and his brother was required to take on his load.

M’Kupi’s kraal was a huge one. There must have been some five hundred really fine huts in it ; whilst the inhabitants were, without exception, pure-blooded Zulu by descent. We asked for M’Kupi, and were told he was away, the usual lie ; although the chief himself, a splendidly built old Kaffir, was standing by at the time. We had lost the Portuguese, and had as yet seen no rubber creepers that were of any practical value ; moreover, we knew it would be perfectly useless to ask M’Kupi where the real N’Dandine lay ; but we did want meal for our boys badly, and, as the crops had obviously been very big, we intended to have it. M’Kupi’s brother professed to be acting as headman, and presented us with a pot of beer. In return we gave him some limbo, and asked for a good supply of meal, offering payment. Whether our offer seemed so contrary to Portuguese practice as to be suspicious, or whether they had been told never to assist an Englishman, I do not know ; but we got no meal that night, and when M’Kupi, who had made up his mind to “return,” appeared in the morning, he brought at the outside five pounds’ weight. His excuse was that there was none ground—in a kraal of five hundred huts ! He was told bluntly not to lie ; but to get the meal quickly. He went away and sulked, whilst our boys hunted round for food. Of course they found it in hundredweights.

Towards afternoon we sent for M’Kupi again, to demand a guide to the Sabi. As he was not to be

seen, Amyas went in search of him, and arrived just in time to meet him coming out of the hut. Our boys were told to capture him, as we had sworn to make him carry a pack as a cure for his bad manners ; but he was too quick ; and the last glimpse we got of the great chief of the Sabi Valley was when he was struggling through a belt of thorn scrub, leaving his white coat behind him in the form of ribbons. Then we held up the kraal and took what we needed, paying for the meal with one long stretch of limbo, over which we left the inhabitants quarrelling savagely.

We took a guide too, in fact he volunteered to come, and not only to show us the path to the Sabi, but also to lead us to a large belt of full-grown rubber creepers. He merely carried a bow and arrows, no blankets, so we were not in the least surprised to find on the following morning that he had gone ; and I do not think we regretted him, as he would inevitably have taken us along a path which would have missed the rubber belt. Still our long tramp up to M'Kupi's, about a hundred and thirty miles from the border, had taught us a good deal. We knew now that it was quite useless to ask for information ; the only way was to extract it ; and we put our new theory into practice at the first opportunity which occurred.

CHAPTER XVIII

ON quitting M'Kupi's, our intention was to go, as nearly as possible, due south to the Sabi again; but we found such good indications of rubber that we changed our plans, and ultimately got back on to our old outward track. We saw small creepers, too small to be of any actual value, every mile or two; but what really encouraged us was the discovery of an Arab trading station in a little kraal where we spent the night. It seemed that, during the wet season, dhows stole right up the river, as far as the Mashonaland border, collecting rubber, and, in all probability, selling rifles and ammunition as well. Nowadays, in consequence of the report we made, the Portuguese have started a port at the mouth of the river, so I suppose the smugglers have to pay blackmail, unless, of course, the whole industry has been taken over by the officials; but in those days there was no supervision. The only law in the Sabi Valley was what you made yourself. We realised that fact when we left M'Kupi's, and for the next six weeks or so we were the Administration; our boys took to calling themselves Police, whilst Jumbo, who was very large and badly pock-marked, conferred on himself the local rank of "Capitaine." It was not a bad idea. The carriers got a new zest in their work. The venture began to interest them, especially when, as often happened, we had a string of prisoners to take the loads in their places. Our gaoler was Jim, a particularly villainous-looking

cross between a Mashona and some other race, I never knew which one. He had a Tower musket of his own, and he used to go about his duties with a tremendous air of importance. He always had a little package of extremely high meat slung round him somewhere—he preferred it when it had a definite flavour—consequently, you could find him in the darkest night, though, I need hardly say, he was not allowed to sleep in our own scherm. Jim loved his job, and he was the saddest Kaffir in Africa when we recrossed the border, and he ceased to be an official. Even the fact that he had a large calabash of absolutely putrid hippo-dripping failed to console him.

My diary during that portion of the trip is written in pencil, and is almost indecipherable. I was full to the eyes with fever, and not in a mood for doing much writing. Most of the work fell on Amyas' shoulders; but he was, as usual, capable of doing his own share and mine as well, and yet he still found time to write up his diary. There are not many boys of twenty who could take charge of an expedition through an entirely unknown country, and not only take charge, but carry things through to a successful issue. Up on the high veld, or even in the kopje country, it is different. At least you know what other men have done, what you may expect to meet; you are in the open air; you can see where you are. But down in the deadly stillness of that jungle, surely the most depressing stretch of country in the world, matters were quite otherwise. The physical strain was bad, but the mental was far worse. Yet Amyas went through it all cheerfully, with a smiling face. I am not sure

that he did not enjoy it, for the simple reason that it kept him strung up all the time.

Three days after we left M'Kupi's we got a guide who promised to show us rubber creepers innumerable. We did not believe him for one moment ; but still, he was worth a trial, so we allowed him to have a try. Amyas wrote : " We got up early this morning but we found the guide was most unwilling to go on. He had changed his mind. However, after a little gentle persuasion, he and two of his brothers came along. When we arrived here, a rather decent kraal, we could find no one except a few hideous old women and a youngster. Immediately we camped down, however, the guide denied having said he knew of any creepers, so, in accordance with our new plan, he and his brothers were shut up in a hut without food, to see if they could remember. Meanwhile, Stanley, in routing round, found a nice enclosure with a very big hut in it ; and, hanging up in that hut, Jumbo discovered several pounds' weight of newly collected rubber ; in fact, the old women had let out that the headman and all his people were out tapping the creepers at that very moment.

" By-and-by, three old boys turned up, and declared at once that there was no rubber. We were camped in that nice enclosure, which, it seemed, belonged to the headman, so they were at once put into the hut. A few minutes later, another came—the same process ; then another and another, until we had eighteen in all, including the guide and his brothers. The place was a perfect trap, as no one outside knew what was going on, and our prisoners just walked straight in.

“After an hour or two, they called out through the door that they wanted to talk ; but when Jim, the gaoler, answered, he found that they were under the mistaken impression that they were going to be given food and blankets. A little later, they called out that they remembered where there were some creepers as big as a man’s finger ; that did not do. Then they thought of some as big as a man’s arm ; but we insisted on those as big as a man’s thigh ; and at last they managed to recall where these were to be found.”

As soon as the prisoners remembered the big creepers, they were allowed blankets ; but we very wisely held back both food and fire until we had details as to the exact position of the rubber belt. We fetched out two of the old men, to see if they had anything reasonable to say, but they immediately went back to the old sickening policy of lies and denials. So Jim ushered them into the hut again, and there the whole eighteen stayed till morning. At dawn, we sent out four pairs of our best boys to search for the rubber, which we knew must be near ; and in less than half-an-hour one pair was back. They had found the creepers as big as a man’s thigh almost within sight of the kraal. The prisoners were then liberated, and sent to fetch meal for our boys, whilst we ourselves went down to look at the rubber. It was typical of the native character that, though those old men had spent a most unpleasant night, and had been proved liars of the worst kind, they recovered their spirits immediately, and apparently bore us no ill will. In the end, we parted the best of friends ; whereas, had we accepted their lies tamely, we should certainly have

got black looks and thinly veiled sneers when we went away. As it was, we had shown them we were chiefs, and they respected us accordingly.

The belt of creepers turned out to be of little use, after all. Certainly they were good, about the finest I ever saw, huge things, many of them hundreds of feet in length; but they were all within an area of half a square mile, whilst our proposed concession was to cover twenty square miles of virgin rubber and twenty square miles for cultivation. When we first saw them, we were tremendously elated, but then, as Amyas says in his diary: "After breakfast Stanley and I and five boys entered the jungle to try and find out the extent of the rubber belt. Oh! the delight of it. Two hours' walking, or, rather, scrambling to go as many miles. And the scratching! Our arms are still full of thorns. We soon found that a hide like an elephant's was necessary for the job; so we gave it up. But we had been far enough to find out that the rubber area was far too small for our purpose.

"A rubber jungle is one of the weirdest places I know—very dark, almost black in fact; tall, straight trees which only branch out at the very top; very little undergrowth, and last, but not least, the creepers. Creepers large and creepers small, rough, like the bark of an old oak, or smooth and shining like a snake, twisted like corkscrews round the trees, or hanging in great festoons from the branches; not by any means the place for a man liable to D.T. Stanley suggests, as a name for it, the 'Jim-jam Forest.'

"This evening, July 17th, we have got back to

where we were exactly a fortnight ago, when we were on our way up to M'Kupi's."

It was six days later when Amyas made the next entry in his diary: "On the 18th we did another good day's tramp, twenty-four miles, making a total of forty-four miles in two days.

"We got to the kraal near the rubber Jumbo had found on our outward journey just about sunset, and immediately sent for the men of the kraal to come and talk to us. The induna and nine others turned up. As we expected, they denied all knowledge of creepers in the neighbourhood; though, on being pressed, they remembered the existence of two, those Jumbo had seen in a sluit near the path. However, we reckoned they were lying, so they were all put into a couple of huts, without any food, to see if that would jog their memories. But it was no good; and, as their tale was an unusually plausible one, we began to believe them. The next morning we sent five boys of our own back to Chivamba's; two of them were to return to the border kraal with tea, sugar and flour. We thought at first that the whole lot of the carriers would mutiny; but, greatly to our surprise, the five who were told off to go proved to be the objectors. They wanted to stay and see the fun.

"That afternoon, we decided to go out on the veld and satisfy ourselves that there was no rubber in the neighbourhood; so we took our blankets and food for two days for ourselves and six boys, and started off, leaving instructions for the prisoners to be liberated, as we really thought they were speaking the truth this time. Of course, they were

doing nothing of the kind, as we quickly discovered. The rubber belt began a mile from the kraal, and continued, with breaks, for several miles. From a Kaffir's point of view, there were plenty of creepers; and yet, as far as we were concerned, there were too few. Still, the local heathen had lied to us badly, and we hurried back in the hope of gathering in our prisoners again. We promised our boys that the induna and his nine men should come along as carriers, and, naturally, our fellows were anxious to recapture the convicted liars; but when we got back to the village we could catch only the induna and two others, the rest had, very wisely, gone visiting friends twenty miles away.

"In the afternoon we started out again, the prisoners carrying loads of meal and water. Now, for forty-eight hours we have been steadily tramping through the veld round the kraal. Altogether, we have seen a good deal of rubber, but still not enough for a concession. Even after we found the creepers, the prisoners denied all knowledge of them, though many had been tapped recently. We discharged two of our convicts this afternoon; but the induna has got to come along for several days more. Total distance so far, four hundred and seven miles."

From that kraal we determined to go south and try our luck on the other bank of the Sabi. Our object was, of course, twofold—to find an area of twenty square miles suitable for rubber cultivation, and to discover a similar area containing virgin rubber, over which we could get the exclusive right of collection until our plantation began to yield a crop. We had started out not

even knowing the appearance of the rubber creeper; but, by the time we recrossed the Sabi, we had learned most of what there was to learn about the climate and conditions necessary for cultivation. Briefly, the *Landolphia* wants a light, sandy loam, which never cakes hard, and never produces weeds or grass of any sort; and complete shade, so that the creeper has to grow to a considerable length before it reaches the sunlight and branches out—two conditions which are not easy to fulfil. On the north bank we never found a hundred acres suitable for cultivation; and I will admit that we were not too confident when we turned south again. Still, we had made up our minds to stick to it as long as our food and cartridges lasted.

For the next week or so, I had rather a poor time. The fever came to the surface properly; and I seldom remember an attack which weakened me more. I believe that, if I had taken it lying down, I should have died. Fortunately, however, Amyas and I had discovered a new treatment of malaria—walking it off. The theory is this—the moment the vomiting and shakes have ceased sufficiently for you to do so, go on with your journey. Do not wait till the next day, when you think you may be stronger. Go that day, even if you do have to sit down from sheer exhaustion half-a-dozen times in the first mile; you will not sit down during the second mile, especially if you know the water is a long way ahead. Once you stay in your blankets, to try to get well, the chances are that you will stay down altogether, at least on that jungle. “Keep going” is the one safe rule. Follow

that, and you will get the upper hand of the malaria. I know, because Amyas and I were forced to try it so often.

I suppose malaria does sometimes kill men by direct action, but I am quite certain it kills more indirectly, by producing what we used to call "the funks," or by making its victims dose themselves with quinine. Personally, I would allow the sale of quinine in the Tropics to none but medical men, a step which would, I am certain, produce a fall in the death rate. But, unfortunately, the drug has become incorporated into that ghastly tradition "The Custom of the Country," and nothing would now stop men from killing themselves with it.

I went on nearly fifty miles during that bout of fever. Three times it got the better of me, and we had to stop for half-a-day; but I think that the theory of walking it off was amply vindicated, for, had I lain down to it, the dose would have been a very bad one.

During this stage, Amyas wrote: "We had expected to sleep on the south bank of the Sabi to-night; but we shall not be able to cross till to-morrow. We came about eight miles this morning, and then outspanned for breakfast. Almost immediately, Stanley got a nasty dose of fever, and, as it did not seem inclined to pass off, we are going to stop here.

"Like all other places one tries to reach in this sweet country, the Sabi is engaged in going farther away. Yesterday, it was about fifteen miles distant, since then we have walked thirteen, and it is still ten miles off. I am glad to hear it is not more than waist deep.

"Stanley called to me a few minutes ago; the shakes have left him, and he wants some tea; but, as a set-off, I am beginning to feel seedy."

The next entry is: "A long and dreary task reaching the river, which was much farther off than we expected, as it had taken a big bend to the south. About one o'clock we crossed, or at least started to cross, going through most of the water soon after we got into the river bed. Then came about a mile and a quarter of loose, burning sand, which threw up a most appalling glare; then another hundred yards of water; and after that another long stretch of sand. Altogether, it took over two hours from bank to bank.

"After that, we went a mile in the direction opposite to that in which we wished to go, and found a kraal. There we learnt that there was no path going away from the Sabi; but that there was one at the next kraal lower down; so back we went, and reached the other village in about an hour. There, of course, the path had shifted two kraals farther down still. As we were both feeling seedy, Stanley very much so, we camped for the night. We soon found out what was the main feature of this neighbourhood, for from dark to dawn we could hear hippo grunting in the bush just outside the kraal. More than once, it appeared as though they were coming right on top of us. They live in a backwater of the Sabi, it seems. We intend to stay again at the kraal on our way back, and get at least one of the noisy brutes.

"One of our boys shot a wild goose last evening. It has been boiling all night, and is now to be roasted, so it should be tender, and yet I will not prophesy.

"As soon as we stopped for breakfast, Stanley got the fever again, and as he is still too seedy to go on we are going to camp here.

"JULY 28TH. 35TH DAY OUT

"On the morning of the 26th we started off again, as Stanley was better. We told the guides that we wanted to go due south, away from the Sabi. However, we began to get rather anxious after the path had led us east for two or three miles, so we stopped the guide and asked him again. 'Oh yes,' he said, it was all right, the path would turn round soon. So it did, twice, and landed us at a kraal on the Sabi bank, eight miles lower down. The guide was immediately informed that he was a prisoner and would have to carry a pack. He is still with us in that capacity, and seems quite cheerful over it.

"Of course, there was no path going south from that kraal, though there was one from the next. The latter proved to be a large, clean place, very picturesque, with another Arab store in it. At which we were joyful, for, on going inside, we found a lot of rubber hanging up. Naturally, we concluded that there was rubber in the neighbourhood. We asked the store boy about it, and he could think of no better lie than that the creepers were six days' walk away, down the river.

"We told him a few truths, then sent for the induna, who proved to be a filthy old man, wearing a sailor's cap and nothing else in particular. He, of course, knew nothing of rubber; so, as we were heartily sick of that tale, we shut him up in a hut at once. Soon afterwards, we learnt that we had made

a big haul, as he was none other than M'Tchavi, the most important chief on that bank of the river.

"There was a path going south from that kraal; so, in the morning, we started off with a guide, and with the induna as an additional prisoner. For four miles the path went steadily south-east, with us cursing. Then we sat down, and asked the induna and the guide about it. Oh yes, it was all right. We should reach a kraal soon, where there was the real track.

"Two miles farther on, Stanley got sick again, and, as they said the kraal was near, I stayed behind with four boys to look after him, whilst the rest went on and camped down, two of them returning with water. About an hour before sunset Stanley was able to go on to the kraal, which was only half-a-mile away.

"As Stanley has been down with fever three times within the last four days, and is evidently played out, he is going to stay behind, whilst I go on with six boys for about a week, looking for rubber creepers.

"I got all my things ready, and after supper asked about the path. There was only one, they said, and it led straight to Delagoa Bay. Then I told them exactly what I thought of them, and informed them that in the morning they had got to cut a path for me through the jungle. However, when I woke up this morning, it was very cloudy, no chance of guiding yourself by the sun, and so I am waiting for it to clear. I do not doubt that there is a path to the south-west; we have evidently been brought down this direction to keep us away

from the rubber, which probably lies a few miles south of the path we have been following lately.

"JULY 31ST. 41ST DAY OUT. PLACE WITHOUT A NAME

"I did not get off on the 28th, as it never cleared up. I was not sorry, as I had a touch of fever. Next morning I started with one of the kraal boys and six of our own, carrying two days' water. After a mile or so I had to give it up, as the open bush round the kraal had changed to absolutely impenetrable thorn jungle. I never got so thoroughly scratched before, whilst the boys' legs were bleeding all over. The local savage informed me that we should soon come to some of the elephant paths, up which we could travel easily; but that, before long, we should come to the elephants themselves, who could get no farther into the jungle; and, as the animals would be frightened, and we should be on their only way out, we should probably come off rather badly.

"Another mile or two of scratching, and we reached the path again, returned to the kraal on this side of the hippo pool, found there really was a path going south from there, after all, and started down it. I never saw anything so tumbled to pieces as the trees along the track. It is not because they are rotten, but because the elephants, hundreds of them apparently, have been feeding there. Then I struck the dirtiest kraal I have ever seen and the lowest type of human beings. They were roasting a baboon when I arrived. Ugh!

"I cannot write any more now, as I am so worried by the ants, to say nothing of a touch of

fever ; moreover, I am tired, having covered sixty-three miles of jungle paths in three days."

Amyas went south as far as he could, right out of the Sabi Valley, into a horrible dry bush country, uninhabited, save for "M'Tchopi" or "Archers," Bushmen who usually shoot on sight with poisoned arrows. He came on one of these beings, squat, brawny, stark naked, sitting beside a water hole ; but the little fellow was gone the moment they tried to speak to him. The local heathen have a deadly fear of the Archers, and never venture into their country, the only path to the Transvaal being far to the east, within about fifty miles of the coast, though, even along that, the Bushmen are not unknown. They have no huts, sow no crops, and are supposed to be able to go a month without water. No one knows whether they are numerous, for no one has ever been to see, or, at least, no one has ever come back to relate what he has seen. One party of three or four Portuguese native police, boys from the far north, did go once into the bush. They were down collecting hut tax, and, in revenge, the local M'Hlengwi told them of the splendid villages a little farther south, where there were money and beer and cattle and goats. The police boys swallowed the bait, and went into the bush, where they found the Archers, or the Archers found them. At anyrate, there were vacancies in the force.

I suppose the stretch of country Amyas covered that time is one of the most ghastly in Africa. The jungle was too thick for him to see the elephant, who could hear him a long way off ; but they were round him all the time. However, there

was no other game, nothing to relieve the deadly monotony of the tramping. The three kraals through which he passed were just miserable little clusters of hovels, one of them being a full ten miles from the water hole, to which the women went once every four days.

Altogether, Amyas covered a hundred and twenty-five miles of absolutely unknown country in five days, splendid going for a boy of twenty, who was rotten with malaria and none too well supplied with stores, having only tea, sugar, weevily flour and guinea-fowl, though, perhaps, his worst troubles were the scarcity of water and the impossibility of getting any reliable information from the few miserable savages he found in the villages. I am afraid the ordinary explorer or big-game hunter, with his caravan and his guard, his tents and tables and other absurdities, his photographer to take him doing his mighty deeds, and his valet to dress him for the part, would hardly have relished our rather crude methods of travelling. Yet we got there, quickly and cheaply, without having to rob the wretched villagers of their food stuffs in order to feed our carriers.

CHAPTER XIX

THE journey Amyas made alone was fruitless so far as virgin rubber was concerned. He found very few creepers, and those were of poor quality ; on the other hand, he succeeded in the more important respect of finding a plantation area, a splendid block of suitable country, for which we afterwards obtained a provisional concession. I went up to the place with him about a fortnight after we met again. The soil was perfect throughout, there was ample shade, and, no small thing, two good pans of permanent water. I believe if that land had been planted with creepers six years ago it would have been worth sixty thousand pounds to-day, and a quarter of a million in ten years' time. It was, of course, a ghastly fever hole, and the renewal of managers might have proved a difficulty ; but on the East Coast men are always plentiful, provided the pay is high enough. As for transport, the area was only eight miles from the Sabi, which is easily navigable in the wet season, when the crop would be gathered. Altogether, that piece of land was a sound commercial proposition, and, some day, I expect to see that it has been made the basis of an over-capitalised company, promoted by a Pioneer who has never been farther than Brighton. We shall get nothing out of it, naturally. The men who do the hard work and take the risks are always left in the end. They lack the commercial instinct, and fail to realise that the Ten Commandments are

superseded in the City by the Eleventh. I suppose it is all for the best. I feel it must be whenever I see the sleek, silk-hatted aristocrats from Capel Court streaming back to their Surrey homes, and I am doubly convinced when I read of the gallant way in which they cheer a victory, and the consequent rise in the market; and yet, at other times, when I remember the better men the fruits of whose work has been stolen, I am almost wicked enough to fancy that there may be something rotten in the system, after all. *certainly? no honor between thieves*

When Amyas left me and plunged into the thorn jungle, we arranged that I should get back to the kraal where we had heard the hippo, and wait for him there. However, when I tried to walk, I found I could not manage it. I had pretty well reached the limit of my strength, although, on the other hand, the fever had left me, and I was able to eat again. Fortunately, I had retained old M'Tchavi as a prisoner, or rather he had stayed because I had forgotten to tell him to go; now, I sent for him, and asked him to get me carried to the hippo kraal.

I cannot say I cared about the idea. Somehow, it seemed to bring me down to the level of a Portuguese; but the natives knew it was physically impossible for me to travel in any other way. I daresay M'Tchavi was glad to be rid of me; at anyrate, he sped the parting guest. They turned out sixteen boys as bearers, made a hammock of our patrol tent, slung it on a pole, and started off at a trot, two boys taking me for a hundred yards or so, then being replaced by another pair without any slackening of the pace. The swaying of the

hammock was curiously soothing and restful, and I believe the journey did me a considerable amount of good. At each kraal, M'Tchavi turned out sixteen fresh boys; in fact, he managed the thing so well that he quite atoned for his former lies, although, of course, he may have felt that he was taking me away from some rubber, which, otherwise, I might have discovered. I was, however, too grateful to him to consider this; so, at the end of the journey, I gave him various presents, and we parted the best of friends. He was a very dirty old man, and he was a most unblushing liar; but he did know how to make his people work, which is high praise for a Kaffir chief.

The home of the hippo proved to be a large, swampy pan, about ten minutes' walk from the kraal. Roughly, it was a mile and a half long and half-a-mile wide. It must have been supplied by some spring, for, though it was then the latter end of the dry season, there was no indication of the level having sunk. It was a depression in the ground, rather than a pool; there were no proper banks, and twenty yards back from the edge of the water you had only risen a foot or two. Fully a quarter of it consisted of a vast bed of reeds, and it was amongst these that the hippo spent most of their time.

We had seen a good many other pans along the banks of the Sabi, but none quite like this, none so depressing and horrible. It was the surrounding trees which made it so bad. These were all thorns, like the ordinary low-country mimosa in form, but having trunk, branches and leaves of a most ghastly light yellowish-green. We named the place the

Swamp of the Bilious Thorns. It gave you the shakes merely to look at those ghastly trees ; and, had it not been for the hippo, one visit would have been enough for me ; but there were nine of the great brutes in the pan, and we wanted at least one of them.

Amyas had taken my cordite rifle with him, leaving me the double, black powder Express, which fired a lead bullet ; consequently, whilst I was waiting for his return, I never wasted a cartridge on the hippo. Even at a short range it would have been a futile thing to shoot ; but at two hundred yards, the nearest I ever got, it would have been a gratuitous piece of idiocy to try and kill one of them.

In addition to the hippo, there was a perfectly extraordinary number of crocodiles. Wherever you looked, you saw a pair of black nostrils just above the surface of the water. The thing that puzzled us was what they could have found to eat. The supply of fish could hardly have sufficed, and though there were wild fowl innumerable, from wild geese downwards, these were too wary to be caught. However, the night Amyas arrived they did get some ducks. He fired into a flight passing overhead, and brought down nine with a single cartridge. The boys picked up two, but the others fluttered down on to the water, and, within less than a minute, the whole lot had been taken by the foul brutes waiting below the surface.

That same shot had another effect—it secured us a big hippo bull. As Amyas fired, half-a-dozen hippo thrust their heads out of the water to have a look at us. They were then a full three hundred

yards off, and the chance of getting one seemed very small; but I told Amyas to have a try. He squatted down, practically on the level of the water, a most difficult position, and waited for an opportunity. At last this came, and he fired. There was the ordinary commotion amongst the wild fowl, but the hippo, on the other hand, merely disappeared, making none of the wild flurry we had seen on former occasions when one of them was hit.

Amyas and I reckoned it a miss, an opinion with which the boys agreed, the sole exception being the piccannin, who declared stoutly that the hippo was dead, although he could give no reason for his opinion. He knew it—that was all; and the more they chaffed him, the more convinced he became. In the morning we went down again on the chance of another shot. There were several heads out, and one beast was apparently lying on a bank. Immediately, the piccannin declared it was the one Amyas had shot. Even then, the other boys laughed; but when I fired at it, and the thud of the bullet came back without the animal moving, their laughter changed to shouts of delight. There was meat indeed now, and much fat for the greasing of bodies, which had long itched for want of it.

Still, there was one drawback. The hippo was at least two hundred and fifty yards from the shore, and the crocodiles were already nosing round it. In the circumstances we would not ask any of our own boys to venture in, and we were rather at a standstill for a plan, when the local chief, a young and very intelligent man, came down with

a crowd of his people. He solved the difficulty at once by calling for volunteers. The answer came immediately. Two old men came forward quietly, removed their loincloths, took some very potent charms out of a bag slung round the neck of one, tied these to their ankles, then, carrying a hastily-made length of bark rope, waded into the water as calmly as though the crocodiles did not exist. Afterwards, they explained to me that the charms rendered them invisible to crocodiles; and undoubtedly they believed it to be so.

The old men made their rope fast to one of the animal's hind legs, then started to pull it ashore. They were never more than breast deep; but we noticed that it was not until the water was to their knees again that any of the crowd waiting on the shore went to their assistance. Presumably, no one else had any anti-crocodile charms.

When the hippo grounded, it was seized by at least forty howling savages, who dragged it right up on to dry land; then we had a chance to examine it, and found that Amyas' bullet, a nickel-covered one, had passed clean through the massive neck, lodging just under the skin on the other side. The process of skinning and cutting off the fat occupied the rest of that day. By nightfall, the millions of mosquitoes literally put us to flight, but the natives did not seem to mind them in the least, and a dozen of the local boys volunteered to remain by the carcass to keep the schelm off. They had a lively experience. In our camp, half-a-mile away, we heard the hyænas arriving along every footpath, shouting in joyful anticipation as they came. Then, too, the crocodile began

to crawl out of the pan, in the vain hope of being able to drag the body back to the water. All night long, those guards were heaving blazing brands at some evil beast or other, and it was a very lucky chance that there was a splendid supply of fuel practically within the circle of firelight; otherwise, there would not have been much of that hippo left at dawn, even though it must have weighed close upon four tons.

I think I have never seen anything to equal the savagery of the scene when Amyas gave the waiting crowd permission to start in and cut up the meat. Every man was allowed to get as much as he could; and in a few seconds the body was literally hidden by naked black figures swarming over it, plunging their hands in and drawing out vast ropes of giant intestines, snarling at one another, snatching one another's lumps of flesh, yet all the while too busy actually to fight one another. Those who had not got knives, pulled the blades out of their assegais and used those, some, in their haste, even broke off the blades, to save time. They had never had a hippo killed in that swamp before.

We stayed three days more, to cut the skin into sjamboks, and render down the best of the fat; then, leaving the sjamboks hanging on trees to dry, we went back to Amyas' proposed plantation area, explored it thoroughly, decided it would suit us; then crossed the Sabi for the third time, and started on the last stage of our trip. In the course of the latter we covered some country we had been forced to leave unexplored before; but the only benefit we derived was the satisfaction of knowing

that we had done our job thoroughly. Amyas wrote of it: "We have been nine days on the north bank. I will not go into details of the journey, which was a very beastly one. Sometimes rough, rocky country, sometimes dense jungle, always bad walking" — which was, after all, the story of the whole trip.

CHAPTER XX

THE only event of any interest which occurred during the last stage of our journey in the Portuguese territory was the shooting of a couple of waterbuck bulls belonging to an unknown, or at least uncatalogued, variety.

We were just thinking of stopping for breakfast—it was a swelteringly hot morning—when we sighted four waterbuck bulls feeding at the end of a long vlei, some eight hundred yards away. There appeared to be a deep sluit running up the vlei, and, as the wind was right, we arranged that I should creep along this, as near to them as I could, then shoot, and, if possible, drive the others down to Amyas, who was to squat in the long grass, waiting.

I shall never forget that stalk. The heat in the sluit was appalling, and, time after time, I had to stop and wipe the blinding perspiration out of my eyes. Whilst I was creeping along, I had no idea as to whether the buck were still there; but when, at last, I did crawl into a clump of bush, and could look round, I saw that one was standing up, facing me, at about a hundred yards' range, whilst the other three were lying down. I fired with my cordite Express, and the thud of the bullet was unmistakable; but a moment later all four were dashing down the vlei, straight towards Amyas. When they were about eighty yards off, he stood up and fired; instantly one of the bulls collapsed.

The rest turned again, and passed me at about eighty yards. Wanting meat badly for the boys, I took another shot, and a second buck fell.

Naturally enough, we concluded that Amyas had killed the first, and that I had killed the second; yet, when we cut them open, the first had my nickel bullet, the second Amyas' lead bullet. Each was shot clean through heart and lungs, and each man's buck must have been actually falling when the other man pulled his trigger. Greatly to our delight, we found that they were of a much smaller variety than the ordinary waterbuck, and, though both were old, their meat was as good as that of a sable; whereas the Rhodesian waterbuck bull smells horribly and is practically uneatable.

The two boys who had been sent to Chivamba's met us at the hippo pool when we returned there for the sjamboks; and their news made us determine to get back to the store as quickly as possible. It appeared that Kenneth had been carried into Victoria Hospital, suffering from black-water fever, and that the whole business had gone to ruin. We had left a fine collection of food stuffs at the trading station, dozens of tins of tea, some three hundred pounds of sugar, three or four sacks of flour, and sundry groceries such as jams, curry powder and so on; yet all that the two boys brought us back was a sackful of tinned meats, the one thing we did not need. The rest had been looted by the young Afrikaner whom Kenneth had left in charge, a youth to whom we had been paying a good salary for the last eighteen months. He had taken, in all, about seventy pounds' worth of stuff. When, later on, I caught him and was going to have him

arrested, he blubbered pitifully, and urged as an excuse that his mother had made him rob the Englishmen. As a matter of fact, he was telling the truth on that point. I suppose I ought to have put the whole family in prison; but, instead of doing so, I took the more practical course of accepting compensation to the extent of about half our losses. Still, the incident was a very annoying one, and confirmed me in my determination never to employ another man who could not prove that he was Home-born. I daresay I am prejudiced on this point, people often declare that I am, and yet I can only write of the Afrikanders as I found them. I have, of course, met some of the other sort, thoroughly good fellows, especially amongst those who were colonial-born merely by the accident of their parents living in the country; but I am afraid these formed the minority. Still, I may have been unusually unfortunate in my experiences.

We got back to Chivamba's thin, hungry, practically barefooted, and literally in rags. Amyas had one brown dungaree trouser leg, the rest of the garment being blue. My last shirt had a sleeve and shoulder clean gone. According to our reckoning, we had covered nine hundred miles of unknown country in sixty days, including stops—not a bad average. And then, on top of that, I had to go straight on to Victoria, another eighty miles, in order to capture the young brute who had been stealing our provisions. I fixed him up, and then, of course, I got the fever, the absolutely inevitable result of passing direct from the coastal districts to the high veld. I was very tired, and so took the doctor's advice, and went into hospital. Dr

Williams spoke of ten days or a fortnight in bed ; but I was in a hurry to get down to Amyas, so I got one of the hospital boys to take a message to my carriers, bidding them get ready to start, and on the fifth morning I dressed and slipped away, knowing well that I should get better as soon as I was off that dreary high veld.

There was no business doing down at the store, in fact, the end had really come before we started for the Portuguese. The cattle were dying off everywhere so rapidly that trade of all sorts was absolutely paralysed ; and though, so far, our oxen were not infected, we knew that they were doomed. No one would buy cattle at any price. In March Amyas had actually refused five hundred and fifty pounds cash for our span of sixteen black oxen, certainly one of the finest spans in the country ; in June we could not have got one-twentieth of that sum for it. I remember one Dutchman, a very nice fellow, who was worth eleven thousand pounds before the disease appeared ; three months later all he had left was eight bullocks, and when he drove these into Victoria no one would even take them as a gift, and they wandered away on to the veld, to die there.

When the Rinderpest swept through Africa in 1896 and 1897, cattle owners took it with grim philosophy. It was the act of God ; no human skill could avail to stop a disease which was spread by the wild game ; moreover, the scourge was quickly past, and such cattle as did survive were thereafter immune and, consequently, worth five times as much as they had been before. The Rinderpest destroyed ninety per cent. of the cattle ;

and yet the enormously enhanced value of the remaining ten per cent. enabled many a transport rider to start afresh.

The African coast fever of 1902 was, on the other hand, a very different matter. You cannot ascribe to the act of God what you know arises from the gross incompetence of man. The disease was introduced into Rhodesia through culpable ignorance, allowed to spread through culpable negligence. The only possible excuse for the officials guilty is that they had been placed in positions for which their scanty mental attainments obviously rendered them unfit; but this does not palliate the fact that when, at last, they realised their mistake, they did not try to rectify it, but, instead, told lie after lie in a pitiful attempt to shift the blame. The coast fever ruined every cattle owner in Rhodesia, including myself, and even now it is an effort for me to write of it without bitterness. If I were to put down all I feel, I should say some harsh and impolite things.

The history of the African coast fever is this—it was brought into the country by a mob of a thousand Australian cows which Cecil Rhodes had imported with the idea of improving the breed of cattle. When these cows got to Beira, naturally, no arrangements had been made to send them up country—Rhodes was dying, and the little Tin Gods were already beginning to feel very mighty—as a result, the animals ran for a fortnight or so with the local cattle, and picked up the local disease, coast fever, which never comes out when the infected beast is on the coast, but

is fatal as soon as the victim gets a thousand feet or so above sea-level.

Rhodes' cattle arrived in Umtali, nine hundred and ninety-seven strong, and began to die in scores forthwith. The consternation amongst cattle owners may easily be imagined. They had not forgotten the Rinderpest. The Government was petitioned to have the remainder of the herd destroyed at once, to burn off all the grass on which the Australian cows had fed, and to draw a cordon of police round the whole area. So much in earnest were we, that we were willing to meet the whole expenses of these measures by subscription amongst ourselves. Had Rhodes been there, or had the London Board realised the truth, there is no doubt that the disease would have been stamped out immediately. But Rhodes had just died; the Stock Exchange had the "jumps" badly; and so the High Gods of Salisbury declared that there was no new disease, that it was simply red-water, that it must be allowed to run through the country, and that neither special regulations nor a quarantine area was necessary.

Nine hundred and ninety-six out of the nine hundred and ninety-seven cows died—and still there was, officially, no epidemic. The disease must run through the country—such was the fiat of Salisbury. And run through the country the disease did. In the end, ninety-seven and a half per cent. of the white man's cattle died, and we were all ruined, absolutely, irretrievably. It is needless to say that we were bitter, that we are still bitter, not against the Chartered Com-

pany itself, but against those whom it was unfortunate enough to have in its employ.

I am, as I said before, writing with restraint. I am not putting down half the things I feel now, a tenth of what we all felt then. I have learnt things since I quitted Africa. I know now that a K.C.M.G., or a C.M.G.—“Colonial-Made Gentleman” was how we used to translate those mystic, and much cadged-after, letters—is a person of importance, whilst a transport rider was merely a fool, who did the rough and dangerous work of the country, breaking down the way for wiser and more careful men; consequently, I realise that many of my prejudices were wrong, because I shall never be a C.M.G., who must be very noble, or he would not be considered officially a fit companion for two militant saints. Still, of course, those same saints have never had a chance of telling us their opinion of the new comrades foisted upon them.

Much of the story of that cattle disease reads like fiction. I will give only one instance, because, if I gave more, I should be led on to say those bitter things which I have been so careful to avoid hitherto. If I cannot bury the hatchet in my enemy's head, I hold that it is more dignified to bury it in the garden, or in some other place where it will be out of sight until you actually need it again. It is an unpleasant thing to have lying about. The instance is this—for three or four months the whole Victoria district was kept absolutely free from African coast fever. We did not have a single case, thanks to the fact that our Civil Commissioner, E. J. Lawlor, a young Irishman, by a long way the most brilliant

official in the Chartered Company's service, had kept infected cattle out of the district. I do not know whether we loved Lawlor more for his delightful, witty personality, or for the fact that when the Law of the Land—which is founded on the mongrel Roman-Dutch code, a fact in itself an insult to the British community—and the law of common-sense were at issue, he always based his decision on the latter. I have heard men call Lawlor a Wild Irishman. This I do know, he was the sanest magistrate and administrator I ever knew.

Lawlor kept the coast fever out of the Victoria district, and I believe he would have continued to keep it so, had not the Government upheld its theory of letting the disease have its run. Possibly in Salisbury they held that, the fact of the Civil Commissioner of Victoria being the mental superior of his colleagues, was no argument in favour of that district receiving preferential treatment. So in the end the disease came and ruined us all. Three spans of infected cattle were despatched from Salisbury. At the borders of his district, Lawlor held these up, and, as several of the local transport riders, including ourselves, had offered to go and fetch in the loads gratuitously, there was no conceivable reason why the dying cattle should come into our country, spreading the infection along the main road. But the High Gods thought otherwise, and insisted that those sick oxen should come in and infect all our cattle. I shall never forget Lawlor's bitterness. I think the incident killed all his interest in his career; for he saw that, until the London Board made a clean sweep of all Cecil Rhodes' un-

wise selections, there was no room in the service for an able and honourable man like himself. He is out of the service now, and the country is the poorer for that fact.

After Salisbury sent us the three spans of sick cattle, the end came quickly, so far as we were concerned. Our oxen, those gallant, faithful beasts, which we had trained ourselves, which had served us so well, died by the roadside, and were eaten by the foul hyænas. Our wagons, which alone represented nearly four hundred pounds, were abandoned on the road by the dead cattle ; our stores, filled with stuff of all sorts, were left for the Kaffirs to loot. True, the Portuguese gave us a provisional concession for our rubber area ; but, when our cattle were dead, we had no capital to work it, or even to pay the cost of survey and title, and so, in the end, we lost that too. We lost everything, in fact, the fruits of years of danger and fever and hard work. We just paid our debts—though nobody paid us—and then we had nothing remaining which we had acquired in Rhodesia, except badly damaged constitutions. What wonder if I still feel sore, especially as I know that, had our cattle not been destroyed by the disease, our careers would have been utterly different, and Amyas would probably be with me still. So I have only buried the hatchet where I can find it again.

Yet I have no bitterness against the Chartered Company itself, whatever I may have felt or written, in those days. If I blamed the London Board, I admit frankly that I was wrong. Matters were in a chaotic state ; Rhodes' successors had not yet got the grip of things ; or they were, inevitably, in the

hands of the men on the spot. The subsequent history of the country, the steady recovery which has been made since that ghastly plague had spent its force, proves that the board is now carrying out its proper function, making decrees for Salisbury to register and carry into effect. The Tin Gods have been rattled and shown their own hollowness, squeezed, and shown how easily they can be dented, or even crushed altogether; and so Rhodesia is going ahead steadily. But the change came too late for us.

CHAPTER XXI

DURING our cattle-owning years, after we had finally shaken the dust of those detestable mining camps off our feet, I think the best days were those when we were riding transport. True, we were only on the road in the wet season, and, consequently, got the roughest part of the life ; but still I loved it, even when the black mud was apparently bottomless, when the flooded rivers held us up for weeks on end, when, day after day, we had no cooked food, because the only fuel available on that ghastly high veld, the cow dung, had been turned into a horrible slime by the unceasing rain.

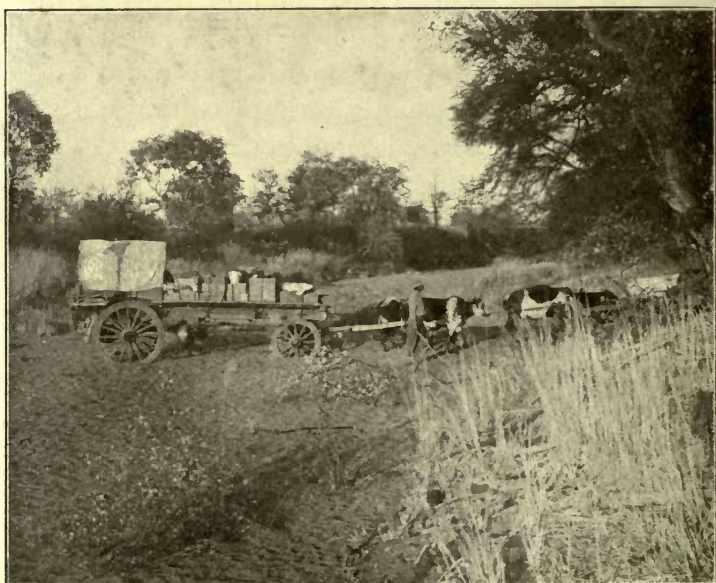
But the country was not all mud, or floods, or high veld. There were glorious times, when you went along, day after day, without sticking anywhere, when there was plenty of water, plenty of grass, where you could shoot buck from the wagon, whilst the beauty of the scenery more than compensated you for the barren dreariness of the great plateau, which, somehow, seemed to become merely a nightmare of which a Dutchman had told you.

The transport road had a curious effect on men. It was the greatest influence for good I have ever encountered. I never met a real transport rider who was a blackguard, and, if I have said rough things about colonials, these apply only to colonials in the mining camps or townships, not to those who got their living on the road.

There was no sense of nationality on the road.



A DRIFT.



ON THE ROAD.

We were all one people, just as everyone else was outside our world. I have met the mining man in charge of transport, trying to show off—as a youngster I have suffered from his showing off—but even the oxen saw the difference, and despised him. You cannot handle cattle unless it is born in you to do so: and if you find a man takes a delight in mining machinery and its abominations, if he talks of plates and dies and vanners, or stopes and winzes and shafts, and then goes on to tell you he understands cattle and the life of the veld, put him down as a liar, right away. Assuredly, he is one. I was a rotten engineer, my heart was never in my work; but I am certain, if only for that reason, that I was a good transport rider. It amuses me now to remember how some of those men we had on the Geelong used to brag and bluff and boast about how much they knew, how they used to take infinite pains to impress us youngsters fresh from home with their great knowledge; and yet, when I got on the road, and began to earn my living with my oxen, I quickly realised that they were all wind and ignorance.

I loved the road, and I loved the men of the road, those who understood it. As I have said, there was no nationality there—Boer and Briton, Cape man and Natal man, all fraternised, and helped one another through the bad places, and hated the mining people and the people of the townships, saving always the people of Victoria, who were different from the others.

The road is finished now. Its glory has departed. The railway has killed transport as I used to know it, and all that remains to-day is mere pottering to and fro from station to mine, footling little journeys

of a few days' duration, carriers' business, in fact. I wish the railway had been stopped at Bulawayo on the one side and at Umtali on the other side; in that case, I should have liked to remain in the country, for the new class of man, the German and the Greek and the Hebrew, the stiff-collared clerk, and the unctuous official, would never have come into it, and, thereby, Rhodesia would have been the gainer. I know how sacred a thing progress is; and I realise that all these people I detest so much represent Progress and Light in Darkest Africa, and Sunny Fountains, and Dividends; and yet, I would keep all of them out of Rhodesia if I could, preferring still the reek of the cow-dung fire to the exhaust of the motor car, the call of the guinea-fowl in the mealie lands to the braying of a hotel orchestra.

I loved the road—Heaven knows, I love it still, for its own sake, and also for the sake of Amyas, who was my partner on the road, who understood it as I did, heard its call as clearly as I did—but the road, our road, is gone. That abominable railway has replaced it, or rather displaced it, and the Romance of Rhodesia is dead. Men make money there now by orthodox occupations, die decently in hospitals of delirium tremens or phthisis or typhoid, and have the Burial Service read over them by real Clerks in Holy Orders, which must be comforting to their relatives. They have coffins where we used blankets; they have cash where we signed good-fors; they drink a bottle of locally brewed lager—ghastly stuff—where we got through a case of whisky. They have succeeded where we failed—I am not sure that their success is not due to the fact that we did fail, after having done the

rough work for them—and so, I suppose, they are worthy of admiration. At least, I wish them better luck than we had.

Perhaps, some day we shall go back and have a look at the country, my Good Comrade and I, and I shall show her the old places—if I can still recognise them. But I am afraid I shall be able to introduce her to few of the old friends; and therein will lie the bitterness. They tell me that in Victoria, the township I loved, there remain to-day but four men who even know me. Four! And at one time every white man there was my personal friend.

We shall go to Rhodesia, by train; and we shall stay at hotels where, instead of bully beef, we shall get ptomained cold-storage stuff from Australia, where an Italian manager will bow us in and calculate how much he can overcharge us, and a Greek porter will see our boxes up to our rooms and rob them whilst we are at dinner. I shall be treated as a new-comer; men who could not tell a yoke-skey from a voor-stell will wax eloquent in the subject of their own pioneering work, and will offer to conduct me down the very roads which Malcolm and Amyas and I made in the dark ages, the days of bully beef and mealie meal and burials in blankets.

I left Amyas to scrape together what he could out of the wreck, whilst I went home, to try and raise capital for our rubber concession. I failed, lamentably. The men in the City, skin-dealing Hebrews, mostly belonging to the type which had robbed and killed my father, with whom I tried to deal, procrastinated and lied, whilst they were trying to get behind my back and obtain the concession direct, and so avoid the wrench of giving us a share.

For four weary months, I pegged away at the thing, hoping against hope, trying to infect men with an enthusiasm which was already waning within myself; but, at last, I realised that the game was up, and looked round for a job, which I found quickly.

In those days following the war, most things African were looked upon with suspicion by that extraordinarily astute person, the British investor; but one branch of industry did appeal to him, and that was the cold storage business. He argued astutely that, because there had been an enormous demand for frozen meat during the campaign, when everything was abnormal, the demand must be even greater during normal times; and so he subscribed readily to all the cold storage companies floated for the benefit of the African consumer. Amongst these was the Rhodesia Cold Storage and Trading Company, an amalgamation of several local concerns, a weird mixture of meat, drapery and Kaffir truck, carefully blended together by a master hand, presided over by a Person of quality, and capitalised at half-a-million sterling. I do not know what has happened to that company now. The papers no longer quote its shares, and the Person of quality has ceased to be its chairman. I have no doubt the shareholders remember it still, but the world at large has forgotten that it ever existed. I remember it, however, because I was engaged by it as assistant engineer, my duty being to install the new plant it was sending out, whilst my chief, Leonard Careless, one of the most able refrigerating engineers then alive, was to supervise generally.

The London office was in a hurry for me to go out to Salisbury, and, as I had no reason to delay

longer in London, I took the first steamer. However, on reaching the Rhodesian capital, I found that, as yet, there was no machinery for me to erect; and for two solid months I stayed at the Queen's Hotel, doing absolutely nothing in the way of work. I suppose some people would quote the old saying about idle hands and mischief, when I say that I put in a good deal of time writing articles for a London financial paper, which, by the way, paid me nothing for them. On the other hand, I, myself, did not regard it as mischief; I took myself very seriously then, and, as a matter of fact, the question on which I started, single handed, to fight the Rhodesian Government, was one of vital importance.

I was bitter over the loss of my cattle, I will admit that, and I put some gall into my articles; but revenge was not my motive. My object was to prevent a native rebellion, which would assuredly have broken out had the Administration been permitted to have its way, and raise the hut tax of ten shillings to a poll tax of two pounds. The injustice of the proposed measure was equalled only by its idiocy, and yet it was passed into law by the futile little Legislative Council. The natives could not pay two pounds per head, and an attempt to collect that amount would inevitably have driven them to revolt—that was the practical side of the question; whilst the moral objection to the tax was that the native would be getting practically nothing in return. The argument that the tax would force the native to go to the mines, where he would learn the nobility of toil, was the rankest hypocrisy; for many of the mines were already overstocked with

boys, whilst none of them would employ Rhodesian natives so long as Portuguese Kaffirs were obtainable.

At the time, I thought that the mining companies, or at least the unsuccessful majority, had urged the Government to increase the tax in the hope of bringing about a rebellion, which would give them an excuse for shutting down their works, and then reconstructing after the troubles, blaming everything on the natives, and so avoiding a scrutiny of their own misdeeds. Possibly this theory, which was held by a good many men, was right; at anyrate, it seems to furnish a plausible explanation of what was, otherwise, a gratuitous piece of folly. The London Board approved the measure; but then it must be remembered that the directors were dependent on the advice of its local officials, and, of these, the few who did understand the question, the Native Commissioners in the outlying districts, were naturally not able to make their opinions public. The Salisbury bureaucrats who knew all about natives—did not they see hundreds in the town every day?—were determined to have the two-pound tax, rebellion or no rebellion.

Amongst traders, transport riders, and prospectors, the men who, leading lonely lives far away from the towns, would have been the first to be murdered, feeling ran very high against the new ordinance; but few had the opportunity of saying what they thought, whilst the chorus of approval from those who dwelt in the safety of the towns and mining camps, and so took no risks, drowned the voice of the opposition. On the other hand, my press connection enabled me to

protest effectually; and, in an article in *The Financial News*, I exposed the absurdity, injustice and danger of the whole scheme.

When I sent the MS. home I had no idea of its appearing under my name. Some previous articles of mine in the paper had been published anonymously, and I imagined that the case would be the same with this one. It so happened that I left Salisbury for Umtali about the time I posted the MS., and I was so busy, getting in the foundations for the cold storage plant I was going to erect, that I forgot all about *The Financial News*; consequently, I was considerably astonished when, about five weeks after quitting Salisbury, one of the railway staff hurried down to my house to tell me that I was in terrible trouble, that I was going to get the sack from the Cold Storage Company, and, probably, be deported from Rhodesia as well, that I had upset all the plans of the High Gods, and, perhaps more terrible still, thrown the Stock Exchange into a fluster.

A few minutes later one of my general managers, the decent one, arrived, very solemn and a little nervous. He had received a cable from no less a person than the Chairman of the Company, a very grave and reverend seigneur, a cable containing an ultimatum for myself. The message ran, "Desire Hyatt send you a copy pernicious article published *Financial News* on Wednesday must supply evidence there is good foundation for statement coming rebellion if unable to must publish withdrawal or resign article forwarded by mail." The cable was, of course, in code, but the word "pernicious" was put in specially, and, as I took

good care to let everyone see my copy of the message, the adjective at once became famous. It appealed to people, and was applied to everything, especially to the local whisky ; though afterwards it was used mainly in connection with my oil engine at the cold storage, a particularly noisy and evil-smelling brute, which, in all probability, is still known as the "pernicious blighter."

I had not the slightest intention of withdrawing or resigning, and I told the managing director so, bluntly. Of course, the company could discharge me, and thereby risk an indictment of itself in the columns of the most powerful financial paper in London. I saw the strength of my position at once, especially as I had that copy of the cable, and I think I made the most of the cards I held. The general manager realised the position too, and was very careful to avoid a quarrel. He asked me to make a statement for him to repeat to the Administrator, but that I refused to do, not loving the officials ; on the other hand, I was quite willing to tell him privately what I knew about the whole native question. He listened very attentively, and we parted good friends ; moreover, an hour later, he told several men in the club that "Hyatt had convinced him."

So far, the victory rested with me, and the company said no more about withdrawals or resignations. But the local press was not so reserved. The virulence of the attacks made on me in Salisbury and Bulawayo was equalled only by the weakness of their grammar. I suppose their editors presumed on the fact that I could only sue them for libel in a Chartered court before a Chartered judge, or they may have reckoned, correctly, that

their effusions merely came into the category of "vulgar abuse." I hope it amused them, it certainly did not hurt me; whilst I daresay the writers were paid as much as ten shillings for a column of that stuff, and so were enabled to buy an extra bottle of whisky.

The attitude of Umtali society towards me after the "pernicious" affair was very quaint. The officials, slavishly anxious to crawl into the good graces of their chiefs in Salisbury, frowned heavily when I passed. Their assumption of dignity and importance had always been amusing, now it became absolutely ludicrous. I can see them still, with their puttee leggings, their hunting stocks, and their Afrikaner intonation, hurrying into their offices so as not to meet the wicked English demagogue.

My *Financial News* article was a nine days' wonder; then something else occurred, and it was forgotten. Personally, I was inclined to think that, on the whole, I had done myself a good deal of harm, and done nobody any good, that the native rebellion must come, after all. I had won against my own company, at least for the time being, though I was pretty certain I should get notice to quit before very long; and, in my heart, I reckoned I had been a fool. But a month or two later I was inclined to change my mind when I read in *The Gazette* that the Secretary for the Colonies had ordered the new poll tax law to be wiped out of the Statute Book. It seems he had investigated my statements, found them to be correct, and stepped in to prevent any further mischief being done.

I was a bitter critic of the Chartered Company in those days, and I still hold that all my criticisms

were warranted ; but, at the same time, in common fairness, I must admit that, so far as the general policy of the board has been concerned, I have found nothing to criticise, and a good deal to admire, during later years.

The cold storage at Umtali was not a success. To begin with, the population was too small to support a business like that, even if the meat had been good, a condition which most of the stuff I had did not fulfil. As a matter of fact, a great deal of what I had had been allowed to thaw off at some remote date, then it had been refrozen, with the inevitable result that it had "grown whiskers"—in other words, become covered with green mould. My chief told me once that meat which had whiskers over three inches long is not fit to eat. The rule is a perfectly safe one, so far as the company is concerned, for I found after repeated experiments that two and three quarter inches is the limit attainable. If you take whiskered meat into the sun, and rub it vigorously with a soft cloth, you remove, not only the mould, but the ugly black spots underneath the mould as well. Then the quarter or carcass is all right from your point of view and the butcher's point of view, whilst, in all probability, the consumer attributes his illness to something totally different.

The short history of the Umtali cold storage—it ran only about three months—ended in tragedy. The oil engine—the pernicious blighter—was a trouble from the outset. It never worked satisfactorily, and, time after time, I warned the company that we should probably have a fatal accident ; but my warnings seemed to have no effect, or were not believed until one day, just after Amyas had come

out from Home to rejoin me, what I had feared happened. The heating lamp exploded, burnt my engine boy, Coffee, to death, and narrowly escaped doing the same for me. I was working beside Coffee at the time, and one of my arms was scorched by the flames.

Considering that I was not on the best of terms with the authorities, I naturally wanted an inquest held, to clear me of responsibility. At first, the police demurred, then, when I insisted, they agreed to arrange with the magistrate, and let me know the date. My astonishment can therefore be imagined when, about eleven o'clock on the following day, I heard that the inquest was then being held. I was the principal witness, and yet I had never been summoned, in fact it was being held without any evidence save the proof of death. Still, I managed to get up to the court house in time, with two other witnesses, and the copies of my correspondence about the engine and its dangerous ways. I was exonerated from all blame—that was the part I cared about. As for the verdict, the magistrate gave none; but sent the papers on to the Attorney General. Rumour declared that the latter decided it was a case of culpable homicide on the part of the general managers, but, if so, nothing more came of it, save that the company considered it a good opportunity to get rid of me.

The cold storage was shut down. The meat with whiskers was placed in an ordinary covered truck—I took the temperature, it was 77° Fahr.—and sent to Salisbury, to be frozen yet again. I daresay it is there still. I am sure they would refuse to admit it anywhere else.

CHAPTER XXII

WHEN I went home after the rubber hunt I left Amyas to wind up our trading business, to collect what he could out of the wreck. I do not know to this day how he managed it. Everything was against him. Business generally was utterly disorganised; every day two or three of our cattle died on the road; and yet, somehow or other, he contrived to scrape together enough to square up every cent we owed in the country itself; and, even then, he had enough left to take him Home.

I know now that it was quixotic folly, that we ought to have let the whole thing go when the disease first came. Amyas spent the best part of a year of his life earning money for a lot of outsiders, who squandered the cash on liquor, and went bankrupt just the same. An hour of his time was worth a month of theirs. It was not that we owed so much, but that we were owed so much which we never received. Therein lay the trouble. We, being young and foolish, tried to act in accordance with a standard of honour South Africa could not understand. In the end, the men we paid laughed at us, and, as I say, flung our hard-earned money down on the bars of Bulawayo. A year later, one, presuming on our supposed softness, even had the insolence to come to us with an already-paid account of twenty pounds for some trek gear, which had arrived after our cattle were dead. He tackled us in the lounge of the Palace

Hotel in Bulawayo, a long, fair slab of a man he was, and then Amyas tackled him. The argument was brief, and ended in our pseudo-creditor paying for the drinks and burning his account. Poor wretch, I can almost pity him now. I suppose they had stopped his credit at his favourite bar, and he was reckoning on that twenty pounds to give him another three weeks' run on a cash basis.

Amyas joined me in Umtali just before the cold storage was closed down. He had put in his time at home studying assaying, and he brought out with him a very nice portable assay kit, oil furnace and so on. I suppose it was that which put the idea of prospecting into our heads. We had never had the gold fever before—I do not know that we had it then—but the amended gold laws had made it possible for the individual miner to work his own property, and, given a decent reef, the chances of success were very good. So, when the Cold Storage Company paid me off, we decided to go in quest of a gold mine of our own, trusting to be able to borrow the working capital—when we had found what we sought.

We bought two old bucksails and sewed them into a tent, collected a dozen or so natives to carry our stuff, and then trekked out eastwards towards the Portuguese border. Only five miles from Umtali, we found a likely-looking place, a long, narrow valley running practically north and south. We were pretty certain no one had ever done much prospecting through those hills—the rush had carried men past them, to the other side of Umtali—so we pitched our tent half way up the slope of a wooded

kopje; and then set to work to examine the innumerable quartz reefs around us.

We had typical prospectors' luck. The very first rock I broke with my hammer had a fair-sized fleck of gold in the fracture. Other pieces of quartz lying round showed similar results. But we looked in vain for the reef from which these came. We put in cross-cut after cross-cut, until our savages agreed that we were mad. We tramped backwards and forwards on that hillside, until we had to send to Umtali for new boots. At last we gave up the search there, and decided to go higher up the valley. Again we had similar luck. The day we moved our camp, Amyas came on a number of ancient workings, whilst I found the ruins of an ancient fort, half-a-mile away from these.

It seemed as if we had struck it this time. The workings were, of course, all choked up; but the waste quartz, which the ancients had thought not worth crushing, although they had stacked it into neat piles, gave, with a fire assay, results varying from five to seven pennyweights of gold to the ton. Seeing this, we began to talk of an ounce, or even two ounces, in the reef itself, and we immediately started to sink a prospecting shaft, intending, or rather hoping, to pick up the reef at about sixty feet, clean below the ancient workings.

It was bad ground to sink in, horrible ground, tough stuff which would not break, even with double or treble charges of dynamite. We took on more boys and started day and night shifts, sparing ourselves no trouble, dreaming all the time of that rich reef below. At the fifty-foot level we struck sand, about three feet of it, and thought it curious;

at fifty-five we came to a vein of quartz, only an inch thick, but enough to make us hopeful ; at sixty feet we were on a bar of diorite, which blunted our drills after a few minutes' use, and seemed almost unaffected by our dynamite. In a week we sunk a foot through that diorite, and then we gave it up, reckoning that the reef could not be below it, in fact that the whole valley was one huge fault, a weird jumble of strata, a conviction which was strengthened when we cleared out some of the old workings, and found little scraps of reef running in all sorts of directions.

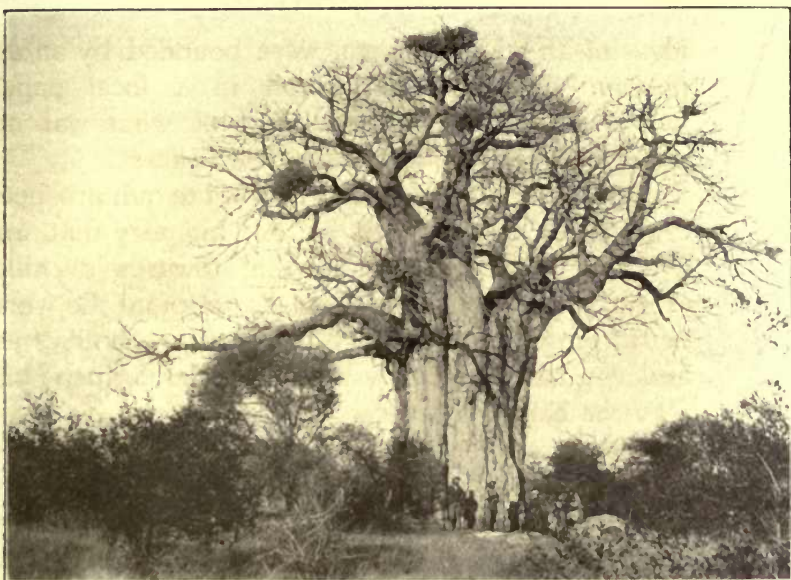
That failure decided us. Our luck was clean out so far as Rhodesia was concerned, and we made up our minds to leave the country. Only the question was—where should we go? We had tried several things already. An application to the Emperor of the Sahara, then in the zenith of his fame, had not produced any reply. A scheme to go on a trip from the Cape to Cairo as an advertisement for various quack remedies and patent foods had failed to appeal to the companies we approached. They did not grasp our idea, and imagined we proposed to sell their nauseous compounds to the unfortunate natives we met *en route*, whereas, of course, the idea was that they should boom us as their explorers, sent out in the interests of science and humanity, that we should write startling accounts of the effect of Pink Beans on Bilious Blacks, that we should photograph each other in places such as the Pigmy Land taking what appeared to be their remedies ; in short, that we should carry the Light of Quackery into Darkest Africa. But all to no purpose. The people we approached had no enterprise about them. Their

ideas of an advertisement were bounded by an unpleasantly worded paragraph in a local paper, headed by a worn-out woodcut of what was apparently a congenital idiot with whiskers.

For a whole day after we decided to quit prospecting, we lay on our beds in that big airy tent, and evolved futile schemes. Then, towards evening, Amyas sat up suddenly. "Let's go round the world on nothing," he said. "We can lecture, both of us; and you can write newspaper articles, whilst I can play the banjo."

I suppose we were in the mood for idiotic things; at anyrate, before we went to sleep we had decided to go. We had no money left; we were sick of the country, or at least of our luck in the country; we seemed to have little to lose by going; and, finally, Amyas was set on the idea, and he usually had his own way. To say our plans were vague is to put it mildly. We had no definite objective, so we decided to go to St Louis, and see the Exposition, trusting to make money by lecturing to the guileless American. It did not matter much where we said we were going, so long as we got on, eastwards. As for lecturing, neither of us had ever spoken a word in public, but we trusted to our luck, which, in this case, held good.

A week later, we had sold our tent and all our gear and were on our way to the Victoria Falls, which was to be the starting point of our trip. We had got passes to the Falls and back, first-class passes, representing about sixty pounds in railway fares. It was not a bad beginning; and we owed it to the fact that we had found Sir Charles Metcalfe in Umtali, and that Amyas had tackled him



BAOBOB TREE.



IN THE BUSH VELD.

belong. Somehow, no one ever said "No" to Amos, and the great engineer, the Director of the South African Railways, did not prove an exception. He told a man afterwards that the sheer shock of the thing appealed to him. I suppose that was the reason; at any rate, he frowned, then laughed, and told a secretary to make out the papers. So we went to the hall in wait on the first passenger train which ran up there.

I am not writing a book of descriptions, and even if I were I am far too little enough to think of describing the Hall. No man will ever do that adequately, just as no man can conceive what they see like until he has seen them. They are the greatest sights in the world, the most majestic, the most beautiful, the most awful.

We had no money when we arrived at the Falls Hotel, but we took a room, and then we explained matters to the manager. He was a decent, busy man, and in his case too the shock of the idea appealed to him. He put us up for two days—his ordinary charge for that would have been ten pounds or more—and when we left he gave us a hundred pounds. As a matter of fact, he was only the first of several who treated us that way. When ever we stopped in Rhodesia on that first tour we had the same experience, and the only bad memory I have of the stage from the Falls to Beira is of a most savage and ill-considered attack made on me personally by a Rhodesian paper. The paper was a good one—papers of that kind are usually a shame to their owners—but I always imagined it was someone who owed me some

boldly. Somehow, no one ever said "No" to Amyas, and the great engineer, the Dictator of the South African Railways, did not prove an exception. He told a man afterwards that the sheer cheek of the thing appealed to him. I suppose that was the reason; at anyrate, he frowned, then laughed, and told a secretary to make out the passes. So we went to the Falls in state, on the first passenger train which ran up there.

I am not writing a book of descriptions, and, even if I were, I am not idiotic enough to think I can describe the Falls. No man will ever do that adequately, just as no man can conceive what they are like until he has seen them. They are the greatest sight in the world, the most majestic, the most beautiful, the most awful.

We had no money when we arrived at the Falls Hotel; but we took a room, and then we explained matters to the manager. He was a decent little man, and, in his case too, the cheek of the idea appealed to him. He put us up for five days—his ordinary charge for that would have been ten pounds or more—and when we left he gave us a luncheon basket. As a matter of fact, he was only the first of several who treated us that way. Wherever we stopped in Rhodesia on that mad tour, we had the same experience; and the only bad memory I have of the stage from the Falls to Beira is of a most savage and libellous attack made on me personally by a Bulawayo paper. The author was anonymous—people of that kind are usually shy, almost retiring in their manner—but I always imagined he was someone who owed me some

money, or possibly it was a mining contractor, now a Great Mining Expert, who had taken offence because I would not let him have five hundred bags of grain for which he could not pay, and did not intend to pay. Soon after that incident, Fame came to him in the form of a marvellous escape from prosecution for a fraudulent promotion; and Bulawayo recognised him as a genius. He has done solid harm to the mining industry, and has made great wealth for himself: so I suppose he has proved his greatness beyond all question. Fortunately, however, the day of that type of man is drawing to a close in Rhodesia: the mining industry having become a business, instead of a mere wild gamble, with knaves as croupiers.

We gave our first lecture in the hotel at the Falls. I am quite sure we made a poor show; but still it seemed to go down. We lectured on ourselves, for want of a better subject, and we raised quite a decent sum. We did the same at the other towns along the line, Bulawayo, Gwelo, Salisbury and Umtali; and, by the time we left the latter place, we had got over most of our nervousness, collected quite a nice lot of lantern slides, and were in possession of over sixteen pounds sterling.

From Umtali, we went down to Beira, in an empty goods truck, for, though we had our first-class passes, there was not a passenger train for several days, and we did not want to waste time and money by delaying in Rhodesia. We were only too anxious to get out of the country, being, as I have said, sore over our long run of misfortunes.

It was seven years, to the day, from the time I

entered Rhodesia to the time I quitted it, seven years of hard work, and risk, and fever. I had made a good deal of money, and lost it all again ; and I left the country as I came into it, owning nothing but my clothes. Those seven years had aged me as much as fourteen would have done in another land, for most of them had been spent on the frontier, where white man's food is scarce, where there are no beds, and often no blankets, where the lions gave you the jumps, and the puff adders gave you the creeps ; where the natives always held your life in their hands, and the fear of black-water fever was ever before you, like the Shadow of Death across your path.

I left Rhodesia dead broke ; and yet I love the country, and I believe in the country, and were it not that my work now lies here, in England, I would go back to Rhodesia gladly, to the fresh air, and the sunshine, and the guinea-fowl calling in the mealie lands.

CHAPTER XXIII

BEIRA was much the same as ever—careless, shameless, rouged in the daylight. We landed there with exactly sixteen pounds between us, intending to go either to Mauritius or Madagascar, we did not greatly care which. We soon learned however that the service to the former place was suspended indefinitely—apparently when anyone could raise the money to leave the East Coast he had the sense not to go to the equally detestable sugar island—whilst the only way of reaching Madagascar was by an ugly, square-sterned little schooner then lying off the quay.

The owner of this craft was also proprietor of a combined canteen and marine store, retailing every commodity from potato spirit to stolen ships' fittings. He was a tall, piratical-looking person, of dark complexion, suave manners, and uncertain nationality, a typical East-Coast Dago. He received us effusively, with the greasy cordiality of his kind, and assured us that nothing would give him greater pleasure than to have us as passengers. Only, we should have to wait a little while, a fortnight perhaps, or a month; for the schooner was undergoing repairs. "Still," he added, "a month is nothing—in Beira."

We thanked him in fitting terms; but assured him that, as we were not Dagos, a month was a considerable matter. He did not seem disappointed—much though I detest Dagos I will admit that they are philosophical—and we learnt later that the

repairs were an airy fiction of his own. The crude truth was that he had been caught smuggling gin, and his schooner had been confiscated pending payment of a fine of five hundred pounds.

Both Madagascar and Mauritius being out of the question, practically the only alternative left us was Durban. True, the Durban authorities required deposits of twenty pounds cash before they would allow anyone to land at their port; but that sort of law applies only to the poorly clad; and we were always well dressed. Still, we had a week to wait before the German steamer would be in, and whilst a stay in Beira is a penance even to those who have money, it is a veritable misery to those who have to economise. It beats Palapye even for its thirst-producing qualities.

We stayed at a cheap hotel down on the beach, a place patronised by such of the unemployed British as could still obtain credit from its German proprietor. The manager was a young Englishman who had been bitten badly with the treasure-hunting mania, and after we had been in the place a couple of days he made us an offer of a partnership in a great secret. It appeared that a few months previously some old prospector, finding himself dying in the hotel, had confided to the manager his knowledge of some wonderful city in West Africa, where there was an immense store of ancient manuscripts, as well as a golden eagle which had been taken in the second century from a Roman legion. The manager's scheme was for the three of us to make our way round to the West Coast, raise a band of natives, and loot this unnamed town. It was an alluring scheme, quite romantic in its way,

only it had one weak point—the nearest description we could get as to the position of the place was that it was between Kordofan and Timbuctoo. So, reluctantly, we had to let our chance of fortune and glory go by.

For a week we sat on rickety chairs on an even more rickety verandah, and wondered how most of the people managed to live. Everyone, from the leading barkeeper downwards, was short of money; for the glory of Beira, and its trade as well, had departed five years previously, when the railway construction was finished. The only business left was that of forwarding material for the Cape to Cairo line. No one ever paid a debt; no one ever appeared to be really sober, despite the fact that liquor was abnormally dear. In our hotel, two or three obviously penniless loafers spent the whole day tossing for drinks, the loser always signing a card, which the proprietor seemed to consider as worth its face value. One could go into any bar and sign cards for drinks, a complete stranger being given credit as readily as an old resident, more readily perhaps. Very possibly someone in Beira is still cherishing cards of mine.

Once a man sank below a certain level in Beira he found it almost impossible to rise again. His debts prevented him from leaving; and when he did chance to get work his pay went towards old accounts. As he grew more hopeless, so the effect of the climate and fever became greater, and probably in the end he went the way of the majority of white men whose ill-luck has taken them to the Sink of the East Coast.

The Dagos' means of livelihood were even more

mysterious than those of the British. The mixed rascality round the harbour was always ill-shaven and unwashed, yet it never appeared to be hungry or without a cigarette ; and, but for the fact of its being sober, one would never have suspected its poverty. Yet it must have been desperately poor, for it did no work, save a little fishing, and even then it seemed to eat all it caught. We, ourselves, were amongst the unemployed of Beira. We wandered round their haunts, were accepted by them as being of their own kind, yet, when we left, we knew as little of them as they did of us. No one seemed to learn anything of his neighbour's business, how he contrived to live, why he had come to Beira, and why he had not fled when he discovered what a forsaken spot it was.

The *Sultan*, an old and dirty German steamer, wheezed into the harbour at last, and we went aboard with very real pleasure. We were, of necessity, steerage passengers ; and we were prepared to find our quarters the reverse of palatial. This was fortunate ; otherwise we might have got a shock. A Goanese steward, barefooted and greasy, conducted us down a companion way to the 'tween decks. As we descended, a varied odour, a mixture of every nasty smell ever imagined, struck us fairly.

It was a peculiar scent, and it conjured up memories of a weird mixture of scenes. At one moment, it was the coal porters at Port Said toiling up the narrow gangway in a seemingly endless stream ; an instant later, a whiff of hot air from the engine-room, heavy with the smell of oil, carried me back to old days in a Midland machine works ; a faint indescribable odour of cooked food—curry,

rice and a dozen strange dishes dear to the heart of the Oriental—and one was in the back slums of an Eastern town ; whilst through it all the unmistakable reek of Portuguese tobacco reminded one clamorously of those uncleanly, low-roofed Dago eating houses which abound in every seaport south of the equator. Our guide led us down a narrow alley way, through a bulkhead door, into the 'tween decks, abaft the engine-room. The greater part of the space was given up to Indians, called by courtesy "deck passengers," and it was from these that the more unpleasant constituents of the reek came. Men, women and children, in every stage of dress and undress, were lying about the filthy deck. A few port-holes let in a certain amount of light and air, apparently sufficient for the needs of the Orientals, who seemed perfectly satisfied with their quarters. Some were preparing food, others busily engaged in devouring the unwholesome-looking contents of their brass pots. In the middle, on the hatches, some well-thumbed packs of cards furnished an unending source of occupation. A few appeared to pass their whole time in reading aloud, in a low, irritating monotone, from some religious book ; whilst the older men, having pegged out locations by spreading sleeping mats in the more desirable spots, contentedly slept the hours away.

It was the "Gorgeous East" that the poets are so fond of praising ; but it sadly needed washing, whilst a little chloride of lime or carbolic powder would have been a welcome addition to the atmosphere. The Gorgeous East, in its own country and under its own conditions, may be fascinating and picturesque ; but in the 'tween decks of a small

German steamer it degenerates into a highly flavoured nuisance. A thin partition, a mere temporary wall of matchboard, neither sound proof nor smell proof, divided the stern portion, the third-class quarters, from the Indians' dwelling place. The light was dim and the air stifling, for the evening was coming on, and the ship was still at her anchorage in that breathless, sweltering harbour of Beira. Our state-room was certainly roomy, although scarcely luxurious, whilst the fact of its being directly over the screw promised some lively experiences in the event of our striking bad weather. In the centre, between two stanchions, a few planks had been fixed to form a rough table, on each side of which ran an equally primitive form—that was where we dined. Another bench, of similar design, served as pantry; a dozen rough china mugs, a few equally primitive plates, and some unreasonably blunt knives and battered forks and spoons formed the table equipment. On the starboard side were the bunks, little iron cots arranged side by side in two tiers, whilst in the corner was a pile of mattresses, pillows and rugs, from which the passenger was free to make a selection. We looked at these doubtfully, and lit a match to see if they were intended to be grey or white. We found the latter had been the original colour, years before, so decided to sleep on deck; for, though we were looking for items of interest, those bedclothes seemed to promise more items, exciting items, than we needed. Luckily, we had our own blankets with us. Meanwhile, our fellow-passengers were regarding us with interest, for we were clean, well dressed, and obviously English, conditions which they themselves

did not fulfil. There were a dozen of them seated round the table playing cards, or sleeping in the narrow, stuffy little cots. During the three days we spent in their company we tried to sort them out into nationalities, but without success. There were Portuguese, Italians, Greeks and Spaniards, so the steward said ; but which was which we could not decide ; for all were unshaven, dirty and voluble, their language apparently being some weird *lingua franca* which all understood ; so, at last, we ceased from worrying, and sized them up, generally and correctly, as Dagos. They were not bad fellows, except for their uncleanness and dislike for fresh air ; and, so far as small courtesies went, such as the offering of cigarettes and tobacco, could give a lesson in manners to any crowd of northern steerage passengers. We sat down to supper with a certain morbid curiosity as to the possible badness of the food. The latter, however, proved to be eatable, although the knives provided were never intended to cut East-Coast beef, the firm in the Fatherland which manufactured them having, apparently, put in pewter blades, instead of steel ; at anyrate I broke mine over the first piece of meat I tackled. The tea and coffee were excellent, and though the rest of the fare was over-cooked, and nastily served, there was no cause for complaint ; except as regards one cheese, and that will linger in my memory for a long while. It was not of that virulent type which enters the room noisily and is promptly ejected to the accompaniment of appropriate comments. There was nothing coarse or aggressive about this specimen ; it was small and unpretentious, almost an apologetic-looking cheese

—until one tried to eat it. It came out of a tin, so the steward said, and presumably he knew; certainly, nobody would have lived in the same house with it, unless it had been hermetically sealed; and the tin must have been very thick to be stronger than its contents. It was quite harmless at first sight, just a small cone of greenish-white paste. A Dago eyed it hungrily, then stretched out, cut a small piece and put it in his mouth. An instant later there was a vacant seat at the table, and a violently spluttering head thrust through a port-hole. The immediate neighbours of the victim gasped feebly, and turned as pale as their unwashed condition would allow. A sickly odour, which grew stronger every moment, was wafted along the table. One by one the Dagos rose from their seats, and regarded the thing from a safe distance. We were Britishers and could not be scared by a mere cheese. But at last I gave in, and left Amyas to face it alone. I saw his face grow stern, as he nerved himself for a final effort. Then, deliberately, he leaned forward, seized the offending article with a firm grip, and, amidst the applause of the Dagos, hurled it through the port-hole.

The trip proved utterly devoid of incident. At Delagoa Bay we lost all but one of our Dagos, and twenty-four hours later we were rolling heavily outside Durban Bar, awaiting the pilot.

We had been fearing trouble, owing to the fact of our being unable to produce the twenty-pound deposits required by the Immigration Department, but we had made up our minds to bluff it through; so we dressed ourselves carefully in immaculate white ducks, and, presenting our cards to the

Immigration officer, demanded permits to land. The man just glanced at us, and without a moment's hesitation handed us the slips ; although, a few minutes later, he absolutely declined to allow our fellow-passenger, the one remaining Dago, off the ship.

We had both been in Durban before, but beyond the fact that the hotels were bad and expensive, the atmosphere stuffy and enervating, and the people congenitally tired, we had carried away little knowledge of the place. However, before we had been a week in the town, we had learned many things. Durban may be described as a municipal council, a Government railway office, and some aggressive religious bodies, with, incidentally, a town attached to them. The council, the railway, and the Nonconformist caucuses form a powerful organisation which exercises an unfortunate influence on both public and social life.

Considering the state of our finances, we decided to leave hotels alone ; for we knew that the Durban managers would refuse us free accommodation, as the law would not allow us to follow our Rhodesian precedent, and give lectures in the dining-rooms. Moreover, we quickly found that Durban men avoided going into hotels, for fear of getting a bad name amongst the elect who fill the seats of the mighty. The town does its drinking secretly, publicly expressing its horror of the liquor it consumes privately, and, as South African whisky is invariably bad, perhaps there is a certain amount of reason in the practice ; whilst the man who helps to finish these abominable brands is also worthy of praise. In the circumstances, we decided that a cheap boarding house would suit us best,

and had no difficulty in finding what we wanted. Having settled that matter, and made sure that our landlady did not want payment in advance, we started out to find a suitable hall for a lecture. Unfortunately, as has been explained, Durban is a peculiar place; and at the time of our landing it was in the throes of an emotionalist revival mania, initiated by a travelling charlatan, who, besides an undoubted gift of eloquence, possessed a lively imagination, a fine genius for invective, and limitless assurance. He had been extremely successful in depleting the pockets of the Durban public, and we saw that, beside him, our efforts would seem dull and commonplace.

The only feasible plan seemed to be one which would bring us under the direct protection of the ultra-pious section. We therefore determined to appear in Durban as serious and high-toned lecturers, with educational aims and a distinct tendency to bore our audiences, that being, apparently, the attitude most likely to find favour amongst the good people of the Natal capital. We strolled up West Street, the principal thoroughfare of the town, and as we passed the town hall, noticed that some species of municipal election was in progress. We walked on, in aimless fashion, almost to the Berea, the fashionable quarter of Durban. As we stood on the curb, waiting for a tram to take us back, a carriage, bright with election colours, drove up, and the driver, with a thick-voiced familiarity born of much whisky, asked if we wished to go and vote at the town hall. Thanking him for his offer, we got into the musty vehicle, and a few minutes later arrived at the polling place. One of the agents of the candi-

date whose colours were on our carriage greeted us effusively, whilst his rival hovered round trying to find an opportunity of speaking. Wishing to learn more of the issues at stake, we managed to get both agents to expound their principals' views and discovered, naturally, that the only difference between them lay in their divergent views as to the best way of wasting the ratepayers' money. We heard their arguments out, then suggested that, as both the candidates were so excellent, we should vote for both. This proposition, reasonable though it seemed, appeared to have a most annoying effect on our friends. One muttered some impolite insinuations regarding our sanity, and departed to attend to a more promising subject; whilst the other, the agent of the carriage-hiring candidate, demanded our names, stating, with most unnecessary emphasis, his belief that we were not ratepayers at all. We endeavoured to pacify him, pointing out that it made our wish to vote the more meritorious, because, although we had no conceivable interest in the election, we were, none the less, ready to please each candidate by giving him two extra votes, which otherwise he could not possibly have got. However, we failed to appease the man, who, despite his respectable appearance, proved to have a most varied and comprehensive vocabulary. He was still engaged in stating his candid opinion of the mental capacity of our ancestors when a policeman, catching the drift of his eloquence, moved him on with great suddenness, and he disappeared from our view, involved in a heated argument with the guardian of the peace. So ended our one and only attempt to aid the municipal government of Durban.

CHAPTER XXIV

DURBAN may have some good points. I have heard several people, who know it better than I do, declare that it has many, although they never descended to details. Personally, I am still unconvinced; although I may be prejudiced, for, on the last occasion, Amyas and I landed there with three pounds between us, and with no chance of leaving until we had earned enough to carry us on to Mauritius.

One good look round the town—its hoardings covered with revival posters, its leading citizens perspiring in ill-cut suits of black—was enough to send us back to our lodgings feeling pretty mournful; and our spirits were not raised by the necessity, the urgent and clamorous necessity, of sharing our room with a number of fellow-lodgers, whom we impaled on darning needles. In the morning, however, we got some luck, for the first man we saw in the dining-room was a prospector from Mashonaland, a dear old chap, grey as a badger, gruff and kindly as a sheepdog. He knew Durban well, and he talked sense. He said we must put ourselves unreservedly in the hands of the serious section, that we must describe ourselves as educational lecturers, stodgy and dull, and that then the dull and stodgy people would take us to their hearts and help us along. It sounded wise and unpalatable advice, so we took it. We soon found the right people, or those who claimed to be the right ones.

They belonged to various associations ; they wore little badges in their buttonholes ; they did not smoke or drink ; in short, they were oppressively good ; but still, they promised much, and they seemed to know the ropes.

The first problem was to find a hall. On this point we took our mentors' advice. The Good Templars' Hall was the very place, they said. We could have it for three guineas a night. All the elect would come to it, and, if we left things to them, they would find us an audience without our having to go into the street to look for the ordinary sinner. It sounded good, especially as the fee for the hall was not payable in advance ; whilst, through their introduction, we got their especial newspaper to print our posters on credit, no small thing, considering the state of our finances. The whole arrangement was very comforting ; and though a request that any surplus might be given to some local society, of the Endeavouring kind, staggered us a little by its splendid impudence, we passed that over. Still, there were drawbacks.

Only the Good Templars themselves knew where the hall was ; the man in the street had never heard of it. Moreover, the public hates labels, and the very name of the place suggested grim fanaticism. But yet we did not worry, having got everything on credit, and, believing that our promised audience would be found, we tried, with very fair success, to catch the tone of our sponsors, and Amyas composed a special lecture which ought to have suited them. They said our show should be educational ; and on the night we found it was

so—to us. They sold us a pup, or rather a whole litter, which ran round that good hall and barked at us. We had hired their room, and after letting it to us, and incidentally letting us in, their interest in us ceased; and they arranged a rival performance in another part of the same building.

To start with, we found no hallkeeper, no one to manage the electric light or assist in rigging up the magic lantern. However, we set to work ourselves; but hardly had we started when a swarm of what were presumably Good Templars invaded the hall, and ordered us to clear out. It seemed they were going to initiate somebody into something. When they had departed, after hearing what they seemed to consider was an unjust estimate of themselves, they began to play tricks with the electric light switchboard. That, also, had to be stopped. Then they broke out in a fresh place. We had found a kind of altar, which made an excellent pedestal for the lantern, and had fixed this up, and were trying the light, when an excited youth dashed in and declared they must have it. They could not initiate without it. Still, they had to try. Amyas declared they used it to break bottles of whisky on, as a sign of their abhorrence of drink; but a reporter from *The Natal Mercury* pointed out that there was no sort of a tray underneath it.

The audience dribbled in slowly; the promised volunteer doorkeepers and stewards never arrived; and I had to take the gate myself. We got a house of seventy in all, and of these not five belonged to the class which had promised so much. Of course, we lost money on the lecture, or we should have lost it, had we not made a composition with our

creditors. At least, we called it a composition—we never heard the other side's view—and I recommend the plan confidently to other lecturers. It was simple in the extreme. We just wrote letters containing many of those kind words which never die, and gave as our address the post office box of a man we particularly disliked.

We lectured two or three times more in Durban, and I sold a few short stories and articles, just enough to pay for deck passages across to Mauritius. We were nearly a month in the Natal port, waiting for a steamer, a dry and rather hungry time. There is nothing picturesque about the place, nothing of the slightest interest. Its poverty is of a drab kind; its unemployed have no salient characteristic, save their hatred of South Africa. They have drifted there, and they want to get away, to a white man's land—that is their story.

The deck passenger usually does not have a very good time—we learnt that later—but on the *Clan* steamer which took us to Mauritius we had no cause for complaint. Rather otherwise, in fact. The skipper was, they said, the oldest master mariner afloat. That may have been so; at anyrate he was a charming old gentleman, as well as a fine seaman. He had commanded one of Green's clippers in the days when the Australian mails still went out by windjammer, and yet he had lived to be master of a great cow of a turret steamer, a huge and hideous cargo-tank, the exact opposite of the beautifully proportioned craft of his younger days. I hope he is still alive, I hope he will live many years yet, because he is of a type the nation can ill afford to lose.

There were no spare cabins ; but the old man gave me a sofa in the chart-room, and gave Amyas a berth in his own inner cabin. The other passengers had to shift as best they could. None of them was white, the majority consisting of representatives of the Gorgeous East, as was evident from the fact that they wore their shirts outside their trousers, and sadly needed a wash.

The steamer was to stay four days at Delagoa Bay, and we had reckoned on giving a lecture there ; but a very little investigation made us change our minds. The Portuguese are not patrons of the arts. They believe in killing the goose which lays the golden eggs, knowing perhaps that, otherwise, the bird will be wise enough to get away from their clutches. They will destroy a growing industry in order to obtain a little ready cash. Perhaps it is going a little too far to speak of lecturing as an industry, for it is really a penance ; but still, the Portuguese treat it as though it were one.

The way of the would-be entertainer in Delagoa Bay is hard. He must hire the theatre for a minimum of two nights at a maximum rate. The house is ridiculously small, but five of the best seats must be reserved for the Governor, who is always a dead-head, and three for the refreshment contractor, who is also too great to pay. The chief of the Fire Brigade must be paid to attend, and he may bring, at your expense, as many of his staff as he likes. Every ticket sold must bear a revenue stamp, and you must pay a high official to come and affix these stamps ; moreover, each of your advertisements

must bear a hundred-reis stamp. In short, everything stampable must be stamped, and every official who wants to come must be paid to do so; and if, after the entertainment, you have any surplus, some German hotelkeeper will probably get it out of you. Consequently, it is not surprising that the entertainment business languishes somewhat on that strip of coast.

The neighbourhood of Mauritius is famous for cyclones. They breed some of the finest in the world round there; but, fortunately, when we arrived it was not the season; otherwise, in a five-thousand-ton ship with only four hundred tons of cargo in her, things might have been a trifle various. The island of Reunion, whose great peaks we saw dimly through an evening haze, had been visited by one of these storms four months before, and we heard that the inhabitants were still picking up the pieces of their houses and of their friends. It is a cheerful neighbourhood as, in addition to the playful cyclone, they have the fear of the equally pleasant volcano, for, though most of the craters are apparently extinct, one, that of Bourbon, is very much alive, and serves to remind the dwellers in those parts that, at any moment, the whole lot may resume operations, and perform the great Mount Pelée trick, with appropriate accompaniments of fire and lava.

The best view of Mauritius is obtained from a ship, especially when the ship is going away. The island, a mere lava heap thinly coated with soil, is little over seven hundred square miles in extent. Generally speaking, it is flat, although, here and there, tall kopjes, ending in needlelike pinnacles,

rise with startling abruptness out of the plain. Round Port Louis, the principal town, these hills form a rude semicircle, which looks strangely like the remaining half of a huge crater, the completing portion being lost in the sea. The situation of the town, as viewed from the water, is very picturesque, and the new-comer's first impression will probably be favourable, although he will certainly acknowledge the unreliability of such hasty judgments after he has been a few minutes on shore ; still, the situation is fine. The great frowning hills seem to overhang and threaten the town at their foot. Their summits are bare rock, black and unpromising ; but the lower slopes are covered with bush, which appears to run down and mingle with the roofs of the houses. Of the latter, few are visible ; for, the town being on a flat plain, the larger buildings round the quays hide most of those behind ; and, as a large proportion of the houses are mere one-storeyed hovels, Port Louis appears, at first, to consist merely of a few substantial stone warehouses, with a church or two scattered amongst tall trees. On either side, a long, low neck of land, covered with scrub, runs out into the sea, rendering the anchorage fairly safe, except when the annual cyclones come along. The ships, moored in parallel lines by bow and stern cables, give a workmanlike neatness to the harbour ; whilst innumerable ungainly schooners lying beside the quays add a touch of quaintness to the whole.

Incoming ships have to anchor outside Port Louis Harbour in order to await the medical inspection. The place prides itself on being more thorough in its medical examination than any other

port in the world ; and if dilatory methods, maddening delays, and utterly unnecessary precautions constitute thoroughness, then Port Louis is doubtless unsurpassed, and it is much to be hoped it will long continue to hold the premier position. The ship anchored about eleven, having been signalled a couple of hours previously. At half-past three the doctor deigned to come off. He had a whisky and soda with the skipper, then took down the names, addresses and ages of the passengers. After that, the crew was mustered ; the doctor glanced at it, nodded his head, and retired for another whisky. That finished, he again took down the names, addresses and ages of the passengers, and then departed, after informing the captain that, as he had a clean bill of health, he would probably be given pratique the following day, when the ship had been disinfected. The gang charged with the latter job did not arrive till the following morning ; but the fine array of pumps and sprayers which they brought amply compensated for the delay. They sprayed everything and everybody with a futile, purposeless zeal worthy of a better cause. They dipped our linen, or as much of it as we gave them, in a solution of corrosive sublimate ; they sprayed the soles of our boots, and they sprayed the crew's bedding ; they disinfected the coloured passengers with a fervent thoroughness which should have brought them blessings, but, unfortunately, man is frail and some pretty vivid curses were their sole reward, whereupon they disinfected the swearers a second time. They were indefatigable in their search for microbes which could not exist ; and we came to the con-

clusion that the people of Port Louis must indeed be a clean race; although, when we landed, we discovered that the town was one bold, bad smell, rotten with plague, small-pox and half-a-dozen other unsavoury diseases, and that, instead of disinfecting the ship, they should have cleansed the streets in preparation for our landing. But as yet that was hidden from us. The disinfecting finished, the doctor came aboard once more; and after accepting a couple of whiskies and sodas, and once more taking the names, addresses and ages of the passengers, he granted the ship pratique, exactly twenty-six hours after she had entered the harbour with a clean bill of health, fourteen days out from a clean port. And yet they wonder why skippers rise up and call Mauritius anything but blessed.

Port Louis is a place which it is necessary to see in order to appreciate; and, even then, it is doubtful whether the appreciation will be very hearty, unless the visitor be a bacteriologist in search of specimens. Its chief characteristics are the smells. Each street has a different one; as you turn a corner a fresh reek catches you and tries to drive you back. They are not ordinary smells, those of Port Louis, no mere inoffensive odours, mildly suggestive of a distant dead cat; but fierce, clamorous stench, redolent of every germ from bubonic plague to Rinderpest, the conglomerate nastiness of a hopelessly mixed population drawn from every quarter of the globe, a population without the crudest notion of sanitation, or, even, of common decency, a population as ignorant as it is uncleanly, as immoral as it is objectionable.

The smells are of many breeds and have many moods. There are the creole smells, noisy, blatant and excitable; the Indian smells, mild, insinuating and heavy with plague; the African smells, crude and fierce, with a strong antipathy to white men. They are all quietest in the early morning, although as the sun rises they, too, awake to life and activity, and take their part, a very noticeable part, in the daily round. Towards evening they retire, presumably to restock themselves with microbes; for at nightfall they are out once more, defiant and riotous; and even when the last belated creole has returned to his virtuous and insect-haunted couch, and every policeman is sleeping peacefully on a doorstep, those smells still parade the streets, masters of the situation.

After the first shock is past, and the visitor's nostrils have recovered somewhat, he is able to notice the other peculiarities of Port Louis. The town, which is still the capital and sole business centre, was formerly the principal residential part as well. The big planters, descendants of the old French settlers, had their houses in its neighbourhood, and it must once have been a very different place. It is said that malaria was unknown in the island until Indian labourers were imported to replace the emancipated slaves, who refused to work on the soil. Be that as it may, it is certain that Port Louis has been steadily growing more and more unhealthy, and that to-day it is quite unfit for white habitation. Some twenty years back, the richer people gradually began to leave the town for the higher lands, and communities sprang up all along the Midland Railway line. In

1892 came the great cyclone, which reduced half the town to ruins. Very few of the better-class houses were left intact, and none of those destroyed were rebuilt. The fire of 1893, which completed the work of the cyclone, gave the final blow to Port Louis as a residential place, and when I was there the only white inhabitants consisted of two or three unfortunate Englishmen whose duties rendered it impossible for them to live elsewhere. All the rest of the forty-eight thousand inhabitants were coloured—creoles, Indians, Arabs, Chinese and negroes, a dirty, nondescript crew, whose sole medium of conversation was a most vile bastard French.

The dominant note in the town is squalor. Not the picturesque dirtiness such as one sees in Naples or Zanzibar, but sheer poverty and filth. The streets are narrow and littered with garbage. Fowls innumerable loiter about the pavements, apparently owned by no one, and having no object in life save that of getting in the way of passers-by. There are not many dogs, but such as one sees are, without exception, in a truly ghastly condition from mange. They wander about homeless, and masterless, picking up a living in the gutters; spending their nights in barking at the drains, which, in turn, growl back at them. Curiously enough, the horses in the public carriages are, usually, of very decent quality; and may be said to form the one respectable section of the Port Louis community. The cabmen are a cheerful lot of blackguards, who never haggle over a fare, and never tout for custom. Each one is accompanied by a barefooted imp, whose sole function seems to be to keep his master awake by

an unceasing flow of creole wit, a process which, a stranger would imagine, must be painful rather than amusing. The streets swarm with cake sellers, who yell and shake rattles with an unwearying persistence, which is the more praiseworthy from the fact that they never appear to sell anything.

Round the quays are warehouses stocked with dried fish. Apparently most of the latter had been dead some weeks before any attempt was made to cure them. They come from the island of Rodriguez, and the fact of their exporting them argues good sense on the part of the people of that place. They tie them into bales with stout cord, probably because they are afraid that, otherwise, they would return home on their own. The man who exposed similar fish for sale in England would be prosecuted for causing a disorderly crowd to assemble; but in Mauritius men pass by calmly, without even holding their noses.

The shipping trade is, of course, the principal business of Port Louis; and, but for that, there would be no reason for the continued existence of the place. The Mauritians certainly make the most of what goods they have to handle. The sugar, the main export, is carted about from dock to dock, from lighter to train, with what appears to be a purposeless, feverish haste; it is handled and rehandled; it is rushed about by snorting, stinking traction engines, and brought back in queer little mule trollies; and it is weighed in scales which might have been used for the forage in the Ark, and checked and rechecked by a swarm of clerks who would do credit to any Zoo; finally it is towed away in grotesque, wedge-shaped

lighters by a venerable relic of a tug which can be compared to nothing but a County Council steamer.

After the sugar export trade, the publishing of newspapers is the principal industry of the island. Any man who can buy an old printing press, or even a set of stencils, starts a newspaper. At the last census there were twenty-eight editors in Port Louis; and, although I actually unearthed only twelve journals, I was told that number was below the normal, possibly because six editors were in gaol. How they all make a living is a mystery; not by advertisements, certainly, for there is nothing to advertise; and the record circulation is only fifteen hundred copies. With one exception, they are all published in French. Some are clever, some merely scurrilous; but all are, more or less, anti-British.

The residential portion of Mauritius is now in the higher land along the Midland line. There are some half-dozen small settlements, the principal of which is Curepipe, fifteen miles out of Port Louis. They are mostly pretty, in a negative sort of fashion, and contain some good houses, but possess no special interest of any sort. The railway, on the other hand, is well worthy of study; a fact of which the railway officials are evidently aware, for they allow the traveller plenty of time in which to observe its working. An eloquent testimony to the unwholesomeness of Port Louis is found in the fact of people being willing to travel daily backwards and forwards on that line, rather than live in the capital. The railroad is a Government enterprise, built with money borrowed

from the Home authorities, and managed chiefly by Mauritians. There is plenty of traffic, and, in capable hands, it is difficult to see how the line could fail to be a success. As it is, however, it would shock even a Chatham & Dover director. The rolling stock is the first thing which catches your eye. Most of the carriages are two-deckers, with narrow, stuffy little first and second class compartments underneath, and narrower and stuffier little thirds on top. They creak and groan on the slightest provocation, and the traveller heaves a sigh of relief when he arrives at his destination and finds the coach is still holding together. From outward appearances, they must have been through many cyclones during the last fifty years, and it is much to be regretted that one of these did not bear them away bodily. But the engines are even more fascinating. I could sit and look at those engines for hours, and dream of the days when my grandparents were young. I used to weave romances round those venerable links with the days of Watt and Stephenson, and wonder what stories they could tell, if they could only speak, instead of spitting, fizzling and shaking their hoary frames in a vain attempt to pull two decrepit coaches. Sometimes I completely lost myself in the past, so aged did those locomotives seem, and pictured a driver and fireman in chain mail pricking the after end of the engine with their spears; and then I would awake with a start to the reality of a British foreman volubly cursing the uncleanly ways of the Mauritian representatives of the armour-clad men of my dreams.

It takes two of those engines, one behind and

one in front, to propel half-a-dozen coaches. The train jogs along with the tottering uncertainty of extreme old age, taking long waits in the stations in order to recover its breath. They fear to start again suddenly, after one short, shrill whistle from the guard, as is the custom with younger and more virile trains, so, after five or ten minutes' rest, the conductor blows a faint, tentative, half-apologetic blast; then, after another wait, he gives a further hint, a little louder, and then again and again, five blasts in all. By that time the engines are fully awake, the front one whistles wearily to the back one, which responds grudgingly, and, after one last screech from the guard, the train jogs on once more. Such is the regulation method of starting; but it is not always adhered to. Often, when the train has apparently started off in earnest, it slows down, stops with a rattle and jerk, and runs back into the station, for the sole purpose of allowing each of the engines to whistle once more; then it will finally dash off at a full ten miles an hour, the last burst of whistling having stirred those old engines into something like their vigour of half-a-century ago. The habit of having a locomotive at each end leads to much confusion; for the trains are never sure which way they are supposed to go; and, as often as not, they start off in the wrong direction, in which case a porter has to run after them, and persuade them to return.

Mauritian trains have one virtue; they are never late. If they come in apparently after time, the station clock is just put back until it tallies with their advertised time of arrival. I commend this plan to the directors of the South Coast lines.

The most venerable object in Mauritius is the great tortoise, who lives in the line barracks on a pension of a rupee a week. They say he is over three hundred and fifty years old; he certainly seems it, a huge, ungainly brute, with as much grace of shape as a hippopotamus or a baobab-tree. He looks decidedly weary, and, could he but speak, he would probably vote existence a bore and the creole a beast, and bewail the days of his youth, before man's footsteps and man's smells defiled the island, when he and the dodo were the leaders of Mauritian society. Even at that remote time, however, that tortoise can hardly have been frolicsome. The dodo has gone. Perhaps he was a rickety creature, whose habits brought on premature decay; perhaps he had good sense, coupled with a prophetic instinct, and foresaw the creole. But the tortoise remains, and there is a sort of determination in his look which seems to say that he intends to remain until the creole has joined the dodo. Who knows? That tortoise is no fool.

In a way I owe that tortoise a grudge. A certain London daily used to take about six guineas' worth of copy a month from me, which meant about six hours' work, until, in an evil moment, I wrote a column about the old pensioner at the line barracks. I never saw a copy of the article, and I forget what I said; but the result was that various angry Mauritians began to haunt that newspaper office, seeking my blood, and the editor, growing weary of them, declared he would never take another line from me, a decision which was hailed with delight by one or two of my pseudo friends, who had long

been wanting the space I was filling. Things were pretty bad at the time, both for them and for me, and I suppose it was but natural that they should hunt round for further evidence against me, to confirm that editor in his decision; and yet—I may be wrong—it always seemed to me just a little low down on their part. On the other hand, they were experienced journalists and I was new to the game, so I suppose they knew the etiquette of the matter better than I did.

The most interesting thing in Mauritius is, naturally, the Mauritian himself. He is not an easy subject to tackle, at least on paper. To begin with, it is almost impossible to define him. He is the product of a dozen races, both savoury and unsavoury, of civilisations and of savage tribes. He is every shade of colour, from white to jet-black. He is of every class, from a perfect gentleman to a perfect beast. It is impossible to draw a hard line anywhere, and to say "this is white and that is dark, this civilised, and that a savage." East and West, North and South, have mingled and mixed, and now one can only divide the classes by a rough generalisation.

The natural barrier between black and white having been entirely destroyed, there is no essentially white Mauritian community. Every man who has any white blood in his veins regards himself as being wholly European in descent. The last census returns, compiled by creole enumerators, gave a hundred and seventy thousand Europeans and six hundred and seventy Africans; whereas the figures could be reversed without casting a slur on anyone.

The poorer classes of creole, the frankly uneducated ones, are little more than savages, with all the half-pitiful, half-ludicrous ways of the latter. They are noisy, dirty, excitable, vain and boastful, with an overpowering love of foul food stuffs. They may have good qualities; but they are wonderfully successful in concealing these, and the stranger never even suspects their existence. The whole coloured population revels in filth, and the death rate is in proportion to the smells. There would be riots in the island if bubonic plague and small-pox and other foul diseases were stamped out. They are looked upon as old and trusted friends. Still, we had all this, and much more, to learn when we landed in Port Louis. Had we known it before, or even suspected it, I doubt if we should have left the *Clan* steamer and her kindly old skipper.

CHAPTER XXV

THE only hotel in Port Louis was about to be closed, which was fortunate, because the smell that greeted us on entering it suggested that the landlord was hiding a corpse under the dining-room table. As far as we could make out, no one ever stayed in Port Louis, no one ever wanted to stay there and, consequently, no one let rooms. Still, after a hunt, we discovered a place over a confectioner's shop, and took that for a week. Then came the question of food. Our capital amounted to nine rupees, and we could raise no more until we had given a lecture; but, by a stroke of luck, we found a very decent little restaurant close by, and, after paying for the first meal, arranged to pay weekly for the rest.

Those two difficulties settled, we started out to arrange lectures. Let me say right away that, though lecturing is a dreary job anywhere, it is a ghastly failure in Mauritius, where the small percentage of the population which does understand English hurries away from the smells the moment its day's work is done. Personally, I sympathise with those folk; though, at that time, I used to wish they had sympathised with us to the extent of taking tickets.

Of course, lectures are bores. The very word "lecture" suggests dull and improving things, told in a dull way. I do not know whether we

were dull; I suppose we were, at anyrate surprisingly few people ever took the trouble to come and judge for themselves. I do not think our average audience throughout was fifty. In one place it fell as low as the chairman, the barman and a fat cat, which was neither encouraging nor remunerative.

Our troubles in Mauritius were many. To begin with, there was no lantern; and though, in the end, we did hire a lens and condenser, and make a lantern for ourselves out of a sugar box, the owner, a very voluble Frenchman, made our lives a misery by coming round three or four times a day to try and get his treasures back, alleging that we should break them. Finally, we had to insult him pointedly to get any peace at all; and, even then, he used to follow us at a distance, muttering that we were thieves and rascals. But he was only one of many nuisances. Everyone was ready to give us useless advice, and mislead us in every conceivable way. We were on the wrong track all the time; consequently, our financial success was not striking. We just managed to live, that was all; and once or twice, when we had to go up that unspeakable railway to give a lecture, we had not a cent beyond our single fares. We had to trust to the takings to provide us with lodgings and bring us back, a condition which was not always fulfilled; still, we did not lose heart, as we expected to make a large profit over our performance at the Theatre Royal in Port Louis itself.

The Theatre Royal is one of the best little houses of its kind I have ever seen. It belongs

to the town, and, in order to encourage entertainments, no charge is made for the use of it. The mayor, who was also an editor and a dentist, readily gave us permission to use it, provided we paid for the electric light. The latter was generated by a dynamo driven off an exceedingly offensive oil engine, the noise from whose exhaust was one of the most effective advertisements a show could have. Everyone in the town knew at once that the theatre was being used that night.

However, we did not trust entirely to the engine. We had some weird posters of our own design, for which we had made stencils, and, after much weariness and perspiring, we had two hundred of these ready to go up. They were all duly pasted on to doors and walls, I know that; but by nine o'clock next morning there was not one to be seen. The gentle creole, following the custom of the place, had pulled them down in order to decorate his own abode. It was a delicate tribute to our artistic skill; though, at the time, we did not see it in that light.

The morning preceding the lecture was one of tribulation. We had already arranged with an old Frenchman to take charge of the *contrôle*—which meant issuing tickets, opening doors and showing the audience to its seats—for the sum of fifteen rupees, which was also to include his twelve assistants. The bargain had been made, on the recommendation of the mayor, the previous day; but before we had finished breakfast there were half-a-dozen more would-be controllers, all assuring us that the old man and his satellites were thieves, and that they themselves individually

were the only honest men in Port Louis. I do not know which lied, their tongues or their faces. If they had said they were the lineal descendants of the Forty Thieves I should have believed them readily, in fact I believed it without their assurance.

After these came many others, a bewildering succession of cadgers, each trying to extract payment for some important service he had not performed. One man wanted a rupee because a poster had been put on his gate, another claimed the same sum for having put it there, and a third wanted half-a-rupee for having stolen it. And so it went on, until we were reduced to a state of damp and speechless indignation. At last, however, the mayor, who was a very kind and courteous little old gentleman, sent a clerk to our assistance, and the new-comer settled the cadgers with a rather brutal directness. He seemed to know them all.

Meanwhile, the controller had opened his box office, although it was only eleven o'clock, and had begun his functions, which, so far, consisted in counting and recounting tickets which had already done service on many occasions; but at midday a new difficulty arose in connection with him. The mayor sent down to say we must have someone to control the controller; but, as he added that the latter himself must pay the additional man, we did not cavil, nor did the controller seem to object to the idea. The two sat together in the box office, counted and recounted those dirty tickets, then settled down to smoke cigarettes and drink *vin ordinaire* for the six or seven hours which must elapse before business began.



MRS. STANLEY PORTAL HYATT.

When we got behind the scenes that evening, we found more trouble. The caretaker demanded a rupee for something he had not done, and ought not to have done in any case. This was refused; then, when he was told to arrange some scenery behind the lantern, he demanded two rupees, and received only some hard words. We put the scenery in position ourselves; but no sooner had we finished than the brute began to take it away. There was only one possible course, and it became necessary to give him what he had probably deserved every day of his life—a couple of carefully placed kicks. Unfortunately, being a creole, he did not know what was good for him. He threatened us with the law, and he threatened us with the mayor and the press, and he called us gentle creole names; finally, he retired to some highly flavoured den of his own at the back, from which he did not emerge until the end of the performance, when he came to demand a rupee as his official fee.

The lecture was advertised for half-past eight. At eight thirty-five the controller of the controller came round to say that the "house" only amounted to fifteen rupees; but that there were several hundred creoles outside, and if we waited half-an-hour most of these would come in. They are rather casual in Mauritius. They take their standards from the railway, and nothing is ever less than thirty minutes late. The advice given seemed good, so I went to the front—I was lecturing that night for a change—and asked the audience to have a little patience. A voice from the dress circle, obviously British, answered: "That's all right, old fellow. But come and have a whisky and soda meanwhile."

Naturally, I accepted, from the stage—it was terribly hot in that theatre—and, leaving the fifteen-rupee house to reflect on the pure beauty of a blank magic-lantern screen, I went round to meet the stranger, who turned out to be a splendid old man, tough and rugged, the head of the locomotive yard. The best years of his life had been spent in trying to cope with the manifold idiocies of both his chiefs and his subordinates, and yet he was still cheerful, and kindly, and hopeful.

We were away a little less than the half-hour, and when I returned I found that Amyas had reduced all seats to half price. There was quite a rush at first, and we got in another thirty rupees; but before long it was obvious that no one else was coming, so we announced that all seats would now be free.

There were eighteen police in the theatre; but it took them all their time to keep what they considered to be order. The unwashed of Port Louis made the most of their chance. Creole and Chinaman, Zanzibari and Zulu, Hindu and Afghan, Mongrel and Nondescript, rushed through the doors, fought and clawed in the corridors, scrambled over the seats, into the dress circle, into the stalls, even into the mayor's sacred box, jabbering like a lot of baboons who have sighted a leopard.

I did not lecture. Whilst Amyas worked the lantern, I spent an hour in alternately imploring for silence and hurling insults at my audience; though, as not one in the fifty of the latter understood English, it did not matter greatly what I said.

At last my voice was done; but, meanwhile,

Amyas had borrowed a banjo—though he had lost the two first fingers of his right hand he was by far the finest banjo player I ever heard—and he came forward, in shirt sleeves, and began to play. He started with “Bonnie Scotland,” and the creoles went mad, right away. They would have stayed there all night gladly, if he would have gone on playing; but that was not in the programme. What he did want to give them was a shadow pantomime on the lantern screen—we were showing our slides from behind—so, whilst he was keeping them quiet, I took the lamp out of the lantern, and put it on the stage. Then Amyas came behind, and we treated that audience to an unrehearsed turn. It yelled with delight. It had never seen anything of the kind before, and it could not have too much of the idiotic show. We, on the other hand, had soon had enough. To say we were hot hardly expresses things. So, after about ten minutes, we stepped over the lamp and disappeared. There was another yell of delight at that; but a moment later came shouts of wrath, for Amyas was giving them the signal to quit—“God save the King” on the banjo.

It seemed that they had expected a three-hour show, and we had only given them two hours in all. True, nine-tenths of the audience had come in free, but that fact did not weigh with them. *The Planters' and Commercial Gazette*, the pseudo-English paper, spoke of “a thunder of applause and great cheering” at our show; one of the French papers was more candid. It said that “the creoles manifested.” If fighting the police is manifesting, that journal was right. There were eighteen guardians of the peace in the theatre, as well as a dozen or more assistant

controllers, and these ushered the crowd out with their boots. It was quite an affecting scene.

Nominally, we lost two or three rupees over that performance; really, it was the cheapest evening's fun I've ever had. However, the financial situation was an unpleasant one. We owed money for a good many small things, and our creditors used to haunt us in the most foolish way. They were unreasonable. We used to tell them how sorry we were for them and for ourselves, condole with them, comfort them, or rather try to comfort them; but still they would give us no peace.

There was no chance of earning any money. No one wanted white labour of any kind. The local papers did not pay for articles, as is the way of their kind, whilst lecturing was obviously no good. In the end, it came down to this, we were D.B.S., distressed British subjects, and the community sent us away. Possibly it does not sound pleasant, and it was less pleasant in reality; still, in those days we used to laugh at everything that happened, and no one could say we did not take our misfortunes lightly—which is, after all, the way every sane man takes them.

We were just a month in Mauritius, quite long enough to learn its chief characteristics; and, though we may not have left it in state, of this I am sure—we left it without regret.

CHAPTER XXVI

It is one thing to get to Mauritius, quite another thing to quit it, even when you have the means to do so. The steamers which leave it have a way of going to nowhere in particular—that is to say, they make for Point de Galle, where they receive orders by signal. They may go to Karachi, they may go to Calcutta or Aden or Colombo, certainly they will go to the one place you do not want to reach, from which you cannot get away again.

We saw one or two of these indefinite tramp steamers wheeze into Port Louis, and wheeze away, wearily, as if they felt their destination would prove as bad as the spot they were quitting. Then a British Indian vessel, the *Virawa*, loafed into the harbour, and began to load sugar. The chief merit about her, the only merit I should say, was that she had a fixed port to go to. The underwriters had betted the owners that she would return to the Cingalese port, and she was bound to attempt to do so.

We decided to go on the *Virawa* as deck passengers, amongst the coolies and the Chows. We told ourselves, very truly, that there was copy in it, so there was ; but that was not our principal reason. To put it crudely, we had no choice, being D.B.S. Yet there were some curious circumstances about our going. A man who had great influence in shipping circles had assured us he could get us a cheap fare, and he went to the British India

Company's agent. The latter sent for the skipper of the *Virawa*, introduced us to him, and then took him inside to discuss rates. They discussed earnestly and long, possibly with the aid of prayer, and finally informed us that they could take us for forty-one rupees each. We could manage that on the fund raised to send us away, and they told us it was a special favour; though, later on, we discovered that it was the schedule price, and that the long and earnest discussion, and the possible prayer, had merely ended in a decision not to overcharge us.

The Indian Ocean is the home of maritime curiosities. All the ancient crocks in Lloyds' Register drift down there ultimately, when decent ports will no longer receive them. The *Virawa* was no exception to the rule. True, she was but fourteen years old in those days, and yet she had an air of hoary decrepitude which made her seem coeval with the Ark. She always seemed to be apologising for herself. Probably this was due to her being a British India steamer. The fact must have preyed on her mind, and brought on premature decay. There are social degrees amongst steamships, strictly defined. The Western Ocean vessels are the aristocrats; then come other liners, the upper middle classes, which have a fixed address, and the movements of which can be traced in a Cook's office; and after the liners come the tramps, the middle and lower classes, frankly commercial. But the British India steamer is a demi-mondaine. She aspires to move in fashionable circles which will not, and cannot, receive her. She poses as a liner, and yet is less respectable than a tramp. She

revels in shoddy finery, whilst, all the time, everyone knows that she has the fiercest rats and the most voracious cockroaches of any vessel afloat.

The *Virawa* carried first-class passengers in the stern, and deck passengers wherever they could find a square foot of deck on which to stow themselves. She was engaged in a wholly abominable traffic and she seemed aware of the fact. The ordinary deck passenger is a coolie, who carries his own food, and passes his days in seasick misery, surrounded by his family and all his pitiful little stock of worldly goods. If the weather is fine, he sleeps most of the time; if it is bad, he is washed about the deck by every sea the vessel ships. He reaches then the very nadir of wretchedness, and yet, as a rule, he accepts it, as he accepts most things in life, with a mute, uncomplaining meekness. He belongs to a people foredoomed to sorrow and privation, and, dimly, he recognises the inevitable. Frequently—so frequently that this coolie emigrant track on the Indian Ocean has become a scandal and a disgrace, an abominable blot on the British name, a dragging of the Red Ensign in the mud in order that unctuous shipowners in Glasgow may grow rich, and so be able to give five-pound subscriptions to the missions of their kind—the coolie dies from sheer physical exhaustion. To put it crudely, he gets awash. He is seasick, exhausted from lack of food, the fires in the cooking places on deck having been put out; helpless from fear, the first big sea shipped licks round him, separates him from his family, scatters his belongings into the scuppers, and lands him with a sickening crash against a deck house. The cow

of a steamer rolls, and takes in a lump of green water on the other side, and the process is repeated. There is nowhere for the coolie to go on these open-deck ships like the *Virawa*—it is well to remember that; no 'tween decks, no quarters of any sort, no hold even in which he can be confined. He has paid for the deck, and he gets the deck and its chances, no more. A dozen dead, fifty injured, two hundred and fifty bereft of all they possessed—that is no uncommon record for one bad night on those open-deck steamers. Cattle would not be permitted to come across the Atlantic under such conditions, our public conscience would not tolerate it; but, as everyone knows, the Ten Commandments do not run east of Suez, and other laws are equally inoperative. We want our foreign cattle landed fat, so we are careful; we want our coolies conveyed cheaply, and coolies are wonderfully plentiful; a few lost *en route* makes no appreciable difference, so long as the dividends are paid on the steamship companies' shares, which is, perhaps, the reason why, though I have approached members of all parties, from cocoa folk to Tariff Reformers, from anti-vaccinationists to educated men, I have not found one who would ask a question in Parliament about this shameful traffic.

When we boarded the *Virawa* she was still taking in cargo at all holds, and, as much of this consisted of molasses, I will not attempt to describe the state of filth and confusion in which she was. Aft, in the first saloon, a score of tearful Mauritians, coffee-coloured and voluble, were bidding farewell to a departing couple, weeping, wailing, kissing one another, irrespective of age or sex, yet all the

time making the most of the free lunch. The deck passengers were scattered in little groups all over the ship, squatting on piles of baggage, surveying the scene with listless apathy. Winches, venerable links with a bygone age, rusted and decrepit, rattled and shrieked as, with obvious weariness, they hoisted in the dripping barrels of molasses; stevedores and their apelike creole clerks wrangled with each other, with the ship's officers, even with the winches. In the course of the afternoon the most ancient of the local tugs, probably the oldest steamboat afloat, coughed her way alongside with the mail bags; but though we took the latter on board—heavens! what a parody on a mail-steamer!—there was no sign of the *Virawa* starting. At nightfall, she was still taking in cargo, like a hyæna which goes scavengering round the bush for the last scraps of intestines the lion has left. We had looked for some spot in which to plant ourselves, but found the quest useless in view of the confusion. From stem to stern the vessel was plastered with a mixture of soot and treacle; we had expected to find some part of the deck reserved for white deck passengers, and there would have been on any other steamer, but the master of the *Virawa* seemed to hold the doctrine of racial equality—poor wretch, probably he dare not call his soul his own, and had to swallow the nauseous doctrines served out from Glasgow, or else quit his berth—at anyrate, he had lost his sense of what was due to his own race, and, arguing from the individual to the mass, had come to the conclusion that all white men were white Kaffirs.

We wandered up and down the deck, looking in

vain for a clean spot. It was nearly midnight before we even got a glimpse of one ; but at last we noticed that the after-hold was being covered over, and we immediately brought up our lighter luggage and prepared to peg out a corner location on the tarpaulin hatch cover. We were not the only ones with the same intention. The hatches, as the driest places on deck, are always greatly coveted by the Oriental, poor devil ; and, consequently, as soon as it was whispered that one was nearly ready, dark forms, each bearing a pile of goods, began to creep up. Then, the instant the tarpaulin was spread, there was a wild yell, and each man tossed his gear into the hatch, and began hurriedly to arrange a barricade round his claim. We secured the corner location, and were lucky enough to have Chinamen behind and beside us—lucky in the comparative sense, for, with all his faults, the heathen Chinese is immeasurably superior to the pious Hindu or the man and brother from Africa's sunny clime. He is the one coloured man I can tolerate ; he is surly, certainly, obsessed with the memory of his six thousand years of civilisation, but he is essentially honest, and, according to his rights, honourable ; all he asks of the West is to be left alone. You can respect a Chinaman, because you always meet him on neutral ground ; he is as civilised as we are, more civilised perhaps, in his Chinese way ; and yet, in our national idiocy, we send missions to him, as a heathen, and fraternise with the apelike little Japanese, who are, after all, merely veneered savages.

For a few moments the various claimholders squabbled amongst themselves like wild dogs over

a dead buck ; then their weariness came to the aid of the cause of peace, and they crouched down amongst their blankets, to get such rest as the local inhabitants of the latter would permit. A friendly Chow next to us, seeing we had not brought up all our kit, gave us a wise hint. "Indians plenty thieves, savee?" he said. We did savee, and we dragged up our trunk—on a B.I. steamer you keep your gear with you, if the sea and the other passengers permit you to do so—and then we went to sleep ; but at three o'clock a rain squall broke, turning the dry filth on the deck into liquid slime, and there was a general rush for the only shelter available, in the alley ways beside the engine-room, amongst piles of ashes, old sugar mats, and crude human filth. Possibly there was space for a third of the deck passengers ; the remainder shivered in the rain, contracting chest diseases.

In the morning the two or three of us who were being fed by the vessel received a cup of nearly cold tea. It was welcome enough, however ; but when we asked for a second one the black brute who acted as steward demanded a quarter of a rupee, fourpence, in advance, declaring that that was the regulation price per cup. Then we asked about a wash, and came up against the fact that there were absolutely no washing arrangements for the ten days' voyage, whilst the lavatory accommodation, which was open its entire length, was shared promiscuously by men and women, Hindu, Mahometan, and Confucian, violating, not only every law of native religion, but the crudest principles of decency as well. You have to see

those things to believe them, and then no one believes you when you write of them.

We starved for three days. After the Chinese boatswain and sailmaker and carpenter had been fed we used to get our food, the very smallest portions of curry and rice I have ever seen served, curry and rice three times a day, and not even enough rice. The ship grudged so small a thing as ship's biscuit, being apparently desirous of clearing five hundred per cent. profit on what we had paid ; but on the third evening we struck, and we got hold of the goatlike old coolie chief steward. He heard things which even the mate would not have dared to whisper, fearing the Company ; but we were deadly hungry, and the Company was nothing to us. I think that steward realised that we knew what we wanted, and what we meant to get ; for after that we received far better allowances, though the skipper's looks grew very black. We had met him in Mauritius, lunched with him at the house of a mutual friend, even spent one of our very few rupees in buying alcohol for him ; yet he never even nodded to us on board. He was the most complete outsider I ever came across, a real white Kaffir. I can picture him in Parliament, spitting out charges against men of his own colour.

In the end, we secured a location on the fore-hatch, which we shared with seven Sepoys. We could have had more congenial company, but, at least, we were away from the main body of the three hundred or so of our fellow-sufferers. The *Virawa* took ten days over the trip, being, as I have said, prematurely aged and decrepit ; but, fortunately, we had fine weather ; otherwise, being

loaded down to the Plimsoll mark, and having a very low freeboard, and only open wirework for bulwarks, we should have been awash the whole time. There is nowhere to go on those open-deck emigrant steamers, that is the point I want to drive home; if the seas sweep the deck, they sweep the deck passengers too. The trade is one of the most abominable things carried on under the shelter of the British Flag, and yet, I suppose, the dividends earned justify it, after all. The English cocoa manufacturers want cheap labour in Trinidad and other West Indian Islands, otherwise they would have to curtail their philanthropy at home; Natal and Mauritius want cheap labour for the sugar plantations; the shipping companies want balance sheets of which they can be proud. And, after all, India has three hundred million people; and will never miss the few hundreds who die on the open-deck steamers from cold, exhaustion, and the battering of the seas. Then, too, if they had not died on the steamers, the plantation work, the poor food and bad treatment, would possibly have killed them, the price of cheap cocoa and cheap sugar being rather high, if you are absurd enough to reckon it out in human lives. So I suppose it is all for the best, and I, myself, am merely tilting at a windmill, understanding neither commerce nor philanthropy.

CHAPTER XXVII

I WILL not say we left the *Virawa* at Colombo without regret, for the phrase is totally inadequate. We left her with positive delight. Our record for the next month or two is uneventful. We lectured and sold newspaper articles in Ceylon, then drifted up through Southern India, landing at Tuticorin and finally, after various stops, getting as far as Madras. Then we turned south again, to a forsaken spot called Negapatam, whence we got another British India steamer to Penang.

If I wanted to write a book of travels, I should have quite a lot to say about Southern India. Of course, I only got a superficial knowledge, a mere glance, but in these days that is usually considered sufficient, especially if you introduce some virulent political matter about the rights of man and the voteless, voiceless millions. There is good copy in India, money to be made out of India. If you do the thing properly, you can form a Reform Committee of your own, raise subscriptions, and give lectures with black polygamists flanking you on the platform. But, not being a believer in man-and-brother theories, I have missed all those by-products of travel.

In India the most interesting thing to us was the amazing snobbishness of the average Englishman. We had nothing to compare with it in Rhodesia in the early days, either because the risks of life deterred the snobs from coming out, or because the

climate and conditions were not favourable to their continued existence. On the other hand, Indian air seems to suit the breed. Certainly, we found the Services as a whole very decent, but the commercial class was absolutely appalling. It seems to have all the bad points of the City—the cheap smartness, the grovelling before wealth, the vulgar materialism—developed and expanded, though you almost overlook these in wonder at its sense of its own position. It dare not allow a stranger to approach it, until that stranger has first been put up for the local club, which it considers equivalent to being presented at Court. Its ignorance is equalled only by its offensiveness.

In writing of this class in India, I do not mean that India has any sort of monopoly, quite otherwise. All through the East we found the same thing, wherever there was a British commercial community; and I had an unusually good chance of appreciating the effects of commerce on character because I came across quite a number of fellows who had been at school with me. They had, without exception, been decent enough in those days, but the same could no longer be said of them. When they found the way Amyas and I were travelling, they turned their backs on us, promptly. People of position do not live by their wits, or write or lecture. Consequently, my old schoolfellows, mighty men, clerks in banks and merchants' offices, could no longer know me. I do not blame them, they were acting according to their own rather dim lights; and, at least, I got copy out of them. There is always that consolation for a writer; he can afford to suffer fools gladly, because their very

foolishness supplies him with literary capital. I have been called vindictive on account of some of the pictures I have drawn in my stories. I deny the charge wholly. The only useful purpose which the originals seemed to fulfil was that of object lessons, and I treated them on that basis ; that was all. I like Tin Gods, because they rattle so delightfully when you hit them ; and I dislike Tin Gods, because a good many of them have insulted me. Even my own kith and kin have shaken their unctuous heads over Amyas and myself, being shocked at our unconventional—or should I say uncommercial—doings, and have refused us introductions to their smug friends in the East. One, who was out there, and was living but a little way off our route, could not invite us to see him because his aunt's mother-in-law, or some equally close relative, was about to be married, or I suppose remarried, within the next month or two. I can picture the cold sweat of perspiration into which the prospect of our coming must have thrown him. For what can be more terrible than having to acknowledge as your relatives men who live by their brains? Other men in the club did not do so ; no one respectable does so, at least in the East.

We got down to Negapatam, a place which is about the limit so far as ports are concerned ; and from the quay we could see our British India steamer, the *Zamania*, wallowing in the roadstead. Our only other fellow-passenger was his Majesty's Minister to one of the most important Eastern courts, a young-looking man, rather lame, and quite devoid of "official side." He was travelling

privately, and it was not until later that we discovered who he was.

There was no hotel in Negapatam, but we managed to get the native in charge of the railway refreshment-room to go out and slaughter sundry animals and make us a meal; and then, the three of us, the Minister, Amyas and myself, went and hunted up the steamers' agent. He was weary and rude, and he told us that the office in Madras had made a mistake as to the date of sailing, and that we must wait on shore another twenty-four hours. As to where we might stay, he neither knew nor cared. I will not say that our thanks were effusive, because we felt tolerably certain that he could have sent us aboard there and then. On the other hand, we had not the slightest intention of abiding by his decision, so we got our baggage taken down to the quay, chartered one of the vast surf boats with its thirty or so oarsmen, and started for the *Zamania*. There is an ugly bar in Negapatam Harbour, a horrible institution quite in keeping with the rest of the place. If you are lucky, a big wave carries you over it; if your crew misses the psychological moment, you stick there and get saturated. Our crew missed, and by the time we did reach the *Zamania* none of us was looking his best.

We clambered up the vessel's side, and the officer on duty sent us to the skipper's cabin. Naturally, the eldest man, the British Minister, led the way, knocked at the skipper's door, and went in to explain that, owing to a mistake made in Madras, we had come aboard a day too soon. But the explanation was never made. The skipper gave none of us a chance to speak. He literally fired us out.

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We were accused of being drunk—because we were wet through and the other man walked lame. Still, we were aboard, and there we stayed.

In fairness to the skipper, I must admit that the man was half crazy from overwork at the moment, and that he apologised afterwards. Had I been in his place, I should also have insulted people. He was a white man, yet he had to kow-tow to uncleanly native merchants or risk losing his job; he had been bred up in the splendid traditions of the British Merchant Service, yet he had fourteen hundred indentured natives coming aboard the following day, to be crammed down into the 'tween decks, and wherever there were no natives he had to stow cattle and goats, about five hundred of the former and four hundred of the latter. He had three men's work, ten men's responsibility, and less than a man's pay.

The coolie labourers came off in the giant surf boats, seasick and drenched. The steamer was rolling heavily, as does every vessel whose fate it is to lie in that detestable roadstead, and it was no easy task to get the poor wretches aboard, yet, somehow, it was accomplished without serious mishap. Unlike the *Virawa*, the *Zamania* had large 'tween decks, and there was, at least, cover for these so-called voluntary emigrants; on the other hand, the deck space which the cattle and goats did not occupy was so small that, when the great cauldrons of curry and rice were brought out, ready for serving, the crush was such that a large proportion of the coolies got no food at all. The fight for those meals was one of the most savage, horrible sights I have ever seen. Twice a day the mob tried to

rush the pots, usually to be driven back with equal savagery by the kitchen police. Now and then, one of the huge cauldrons would be upset, scalding the feet of those around it; at other times the food would give out long before the weaker ones, mostly women and children, had received their shares. You cannot hope for order when you have fourteen hundred starving Indian peasants cooped up on a comparatively small vessel. Your only hope is that the weather will be sufficiently bad to keep a large portion of them seasick.

We had six lifeboats of various sizes hanging on the davits, just sufficient to take the ship's company and the white passengers, no more. I asked the mate one day what would happen in the event of a collision. He thought a moment, then replied that, after the coolies had been shut into the 'tween decks, we should take to the boats, telling the fourteen hundred down below to follow us at their own convenience. It sounded very well, only it might have been difficult to get the fourteen hundred battened down, in fact, there is little doubt that, at the first alarm, they would have rushed the upper decks, the bridge, the chart house, everywhere, and, in all probability, have thrown the officers overboard as sacrifices to the sea gods. At anyrate, I am certain that not a single boat would ever have got away from the sinking ship.

Nothing of interest happened at Penang, in fact the place seemed quite unpropitious so far as we were concerned, consequently, we drifted on to Singapore. We intended to stay a long while in the latter place, expecting to make much money there, and then go on to Deli in Sumatra; so we

took rooms at a hotel in the centre of the town, a large place with a French name owned by a product of the Fatherland. I hope that same German is still there, that he has had to mortgage the house, that he is making bad debts every day, and is acquiring all the various complaints which Singapore can furnish to the European-born. I am not often vindictive; I have tried to forget all my animosities whilst writing this book, and to say only nice things about people; but I cannot pass over that Squarehead. We were in his place from ten A.M. until five P.M., we had one meal only, and in the room we engaged we merely washed our hands; yet, when we announced that we were leaving for Manila that night, he produced a bill for fifteen dollars. We possessed ten dollars, and we offered him those—all our trunks were in his place or he would have had nothing—and finally, in order to get away at all, we had to give him a pair of gold sleeve links. He was a hog. If he is alive it is safe to say he is a hog still. The word may not be a nice one, but it is the only appropriate one I know. I hope, if a copy of this book gets as far as Singapore, someone will take it down to that hotel, and read out what I have said to that gross Teuton. They do not love the breed out there in our richest roadstead, and I can acquit them of the charge of prejudice. I feel sure they have good grounds for their dislike.

The cause of our hurried departure from Singapore was that we had been offered passages to Manila, free passages. I will not give the name of the steamer for this reason—she was running dynamite for the Japanese, she had over two thousand

tons of it on board when she was lying beside the quay in Singapore, ostensibly a harmless, necessary tramp, a fact which would, possibly, have given the town a creepy feeling had it known the truth. I think her skipper—he was quite a young man—was about the most decent fellow I ever met, whilst his officers were, without exception, of the same class as himself. It did you good to be on that ship, you realised what nice people there are in the world; and, after our experience with the British India line, and the Singapore Squarehead, we were able to appreciate our hosts to the fullest extent. I should like to meet that skipper again. I could never repay him for the good turn he did us, but I should like him to know I have not forgotten it, though, curiously enough, I have forgotten his name.

The steamer was not a record breaker, in fact her best run was a hundred and forty-four knots in the twenty-four hours. She was just a cargo-tank with a small box of machinery amidships; but, unlike most of her kind, she was thoroughly well found. Having all that dynamite on board, contraband of war, she had to avoid the Russians, and at that time most people supposed that the Baltic Fleet was already in Far Eastern waters. You cannot do much running away when your best speed is six knots, so the skipper did the other thing—he kept out of the route of ordinary steamers, hugging the coast of Borneo, where there are shoals and sunken rocks and reefs innumerable.

We dropped anchor in Manila Harbour after midnight, and, as was but right, the police launch came out at once, though I cannot say she did

much good, for the whole of her crew was so drunk that no one had noticed that her side lights had been put on the wrong way about, red to starboard, green to port. For safety, the mate of our vessel persuaded the police to tie up alongside us, and they remained there until the morning chill brought them to their senses.

Before they allow you to land in Manila, you are supposed to prove that you possess a hundred dollars, American coinage. Our joint finances amounted to ten Singapore dollars the skipper had lent us. Then there are also landing charges, customs extortions, and various other trifles of the same kind. Alone, I should never have attempted it; but Amyas' curious charm of manner carried us through triumphantly. We showed no money, we paid nothing, and we were past the customs, and in the town, almost before I knew what had occurred. As had happened a dozen times before, the boy's personal magnetism smoothed over all difficulties. He laughed, talked for a moment in that winning, musical voice of his, and the officials laughed too, and passed us on. I never knew a man say "No" to him.

We took cheap rooms, and therein I know now that we made a mistake. We ought to have bluffed, and then the British community would have received us; but, as it was, though there were several men I had known well in England, the whole crowd gave us the cold shoulder, ostentatiously, fearing to compromise its position. At the time I was intensely irritated; now, however, I realise that, from his very nature, a Tin God must be careful, he is of such frail material that the least

thing may dent him and spoil his beauty, so I bear the Britons of Manila no ill-will, although I could wish that some of them had been sufficiently interesting, or sufficiently amusing, to have furnished me with copy. But none did.

They were all purely negative in their snobbishness. I hope they all grow rich, and that too much haunting of club bars does not lead to enlarged spleens or liver complaints, so that, in the end, they can return home and rise to high fame, if not to high honour, as borough councillors, or even county councillors. Then they will still be able to look down on me, as a man who lives by his wits. And yet, perhaps, despite all the sorrow and privation and tragedy I have known, the unforgettable memories which are always in the background, life has brought more to me already than it will ever bring to them.

An hour or two in Manila, a couple of visits to those Englishmen we knew, were enough to show us that we must turn to the Americans for support. Consequently the afternoon we landed saw us, dressed in our best white ducks, at the palace. We asked first for the Governor General; a minute later, a perspiring young clerk, lank-haired and serious, came out with our cards, and asked our business. Amyas pulverised him. We had nothing to do with mere assistant secretaries; so they took us in to the Governor, who proved to be a very charming old Southern general, a Democrat, who had been given the post by President Roosevelt, because the Republican game of graft had been carried too far already, and it had become necessary to have a gentleman at the head of affairs, even though, as was the case, he was rendered practically impotent

by being surrounded by a gang of needy Republican nominees. General Wright always seemed to me a tragic figure. As in his youth, so in his old age, he stood for the Lost Cause, the long, bitter fight of Honour against Politics. Foredoomed to failure—for Politics always win—he stuck to his guns manfully, until the last chance of stopping the rot of corruption and injustice had gone. But, at least he left the palace as other governors have not left it, respected by all honourable men.

General Wright received us so cordially, although we really had no grounds for calling on him, that we felt encouraged to visit all the other big men of Manila. Consequently, we took each of the white commissioners in turn—we did not fancy leaving cards on the half-castes—and then we went to the fort, and saw General Corbin, who was in command of the Philippines, and General Randall, the Commandant of Manila. In short, we called on everyone who was worth seeing, and were well received everywhere. I think the Americans appreciated our bluff, and when, a few days afterwards, we asked them to take tickets for our first lecture, they responded generously. Certainly we did sell some seats to the British, but none of these turned up on the night of the performance, and only one or two paid for their tickets. The rest forgot about it, and continued to forget, even when they knew that we were desperately pushed for money, as was the case later on.

That first lecture took place about a week after we landed. To this day, I do not know how we made our capital of ten Singapore dollars last out; but Amyas was a wonderful financier, and he

accomplished it, somehow. We used to get our food at a little restaurant almost opposite our rooms, a place frequented by discharged soldiers and sailors. For the price, the food was very good, and though we might be thirsty, in fact we were so often, we were never hungry, and we always managed to make a decent appearance when we went into the more fashionable parts of the town.

So far as the audience was concerned, that first lecture was a failure, the room being almost empty ; but financially it was a success, especially as we let the various accounts, for the hall, the advertising and that sort of thing, run on indefinitely. At any-rate, we raised enough to provide the necessaries of life for a week or two, which was more than we had ever succeeded in doing before. Still there was, of course, the disquieting reflection that we had practically got all we could in that way, and were yet without the means of leaving Manila.

CHAPTER XXVIII

FEW British tourists ever visit Manila. The place is off the main track, which runs from Singapore to Hong Kong and thence on to Shanghai. The Philippine Islands are on a branch line. Moreover, they possess few historical associations, no world-famous temples, so the ordinary traveller passes by, without giving the archipelago a thought. To him, the word Manila conjures up visions of good hemp and doubtful cigars, tempered with insurgents; of Admiral Dewey firing at those Spanish ships which showed such indecent haste in opening their sea-cocks and sinking themselves, almost before the enemy's guns were fired; of the American eagle clawing down the golden banner of Spain.

Yet Manila is worth a visit, for it represents a new form of the East—an East without the ricksha coolie or the syce, without the Indian or the Chinaman, a bustling, nervous East, totally at variance with Oriental traditions. Perhaps it is all a little cheap and shoddy, and few, if any, of the so-called improvements will last any considerable time; and yet it is interesting, if only as an object lesson in misapplied energy.

The American went to the Philippines knowing nothing of the task of governing tropical dependencies, but, with characteristic audacity, he set out to teach the effete European nations how the thing should be done. True, the Filipinos answered the

first overtures by turning their bolos, their terrible two-foot-long knives, on those who had just rescued them from the so-called Spanish oppression ; but even then the American Government persisted in regarding them as civilised men, as "the little brown brothers," who, though kept in subjection by their late tyrants, needed but a little development to place them on a level with the white races. "The Philippines for the Filipinos" was the doctrine laid down by William H. Taft, the first Governor General, who came out to put into practice the theories of the Republican party, an ugly task, almost an impossible task, for a self-respecting white man. The islands were to be modernised, brought up to date. The brown brother was to be taught to appreciate the beauties of the square on the hypothenuse, to read Emerson, and even Henry James, to understand the glories of the Declaration of Independence and the Dingley Tariff. In short, an attempt was to be made to translate all the humbug and hypocrisy, all the false sentiment and falser assumptions, of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" into real life. The Northern spirit was to run amok in the islands, and, as had been the case after the Civil War, the Northern politicians were to garner in the dollars. It was a truly splendid chance for the Republican party. The sentimentalists of the Yankee states were even more ready than usual to support any policy founded on fads and fallacies, whilst the revenue of the Philippines seemed to offer ample opportunities for rewarding faithful political service ; moreover, the climate was reputed to be bad, so that there was always a

chance of death intervening and saving the party from having to continue to support its hangers-on and blackmailers. Consequently, everything was for the best, and the Republicans certainly were not slow to realise this fact. They sent their very worst to the Philippines, the scum off the political devil's cauldron—which was good for the United States and bad for the archipelago.

Whilst the islands were under martial law things were done properly, as they had been in the Spanish days. Nature has made the Filipino about the most bloodthirsty, lying and treacherous of savages; but, as if to redress the balance, she has provided the white man with unlimited hemp. The American army, that finest and cleanest of services, used the hemp, in the form of ropes, and was getting the archipelago into some sort of order, when the Civil Government took it over. Then the inevitable happened. Corruption and anarchy became the order of the day; all the splendid work of the army was undone, and the politician reigned supreme.

The first act of the Civil Government was to put the native, the bolo-wielding savage, on a level with the white man, both socially and politically. When we were in Manila, Filipino judges were sitting on the bench, trying white men, without a jury. Nay, more, to make the whole thing absolutely Gilbertian, three out of five of the judges of the High Court were coloured men. Filipino governors ruled provinces, and levied blackmail from the whole countryside. In Manila, Filipino police, armed with revolvers, ran riot at night; when they wanted to murder a man, they

simply shot him and declared he had resisted arrest. There was never any inquiry. In fact, it was only too evident that the Government, the Republican party, was not above using this means of ridding itself of critics; and during the latter part of our stay, when we had fallen foul of the corrupt gang at the Palace, we received from a friendly official a hint never to be out alone after dark, as the police had received orders to kill us if a chance occurred. It is indeed an infamous thing when white men, or pseudo-white men, call in savages to aid them in maintaining a system of vice and speculation.

The Americans boast of being a free people, yet no one was free in the Philippines, save those who were under the protection of foreign consuls, and even then, as in our case, there was always the risk of being murdered by order of the Government. American citizens who dared criticise the authorities were thrown into prison on some false charge, tried by a native judge, and either sent to penal servitude or deported. The most deadly offence of all was to refuse to mix socially with the natives, to refuse to allow the detestable, greasy little savages to leer and grin at your womankind. Nine out of ten of the officials had no colour sense, or rather their colour sense was as nothing compared to their cupidity. They were dead to all thought of the respect due to their own women; it paid them to be so, and, consequently, they loathed those white men who did remember their colour.

The American army is white all through, and, even to-day, it has not forgotten the comrades

who were tortured to death by the Filipinos. The fact that many of those same Filipino leaders are to-day in the employ of the Civil Government, as governors, magistrates, even judges, has not rendered the army less bitter. You cannot feel very calm when you see a man who has had your own brothers-in-arms roasted to death over a slow fire promoted to the bench and allowed to try white men. The army did not like the brown-brother theory; in fact, it was a soldier who wrote that famous little song, the refrain of which runs:

"He may be a brother of William H. Taft,
But he ain't no brother of mine."

The civil officials loathed the army, and lost no chance of flouting and insulting it. Martial law meant honest government, the suppression of corruption, and the dismissal, if not the punishment, of the chief offenders, both white and coloured. Consequently, whenever trouble arose in the way of a revolt, the main object of the authorities was to put it down without having to call in the military, and as their own troops, the Philippines constabulary, were usually quite inadequate for the task, they generally settled the matter by giving in to the rebels, proclaiming an amnesty, promoting the insurgent leader to some lucrative post, and ignoring the claims of the unfortunate loyalists. Moreover, at the time we reached the Philippines there was an additional reason why the army should be kept in the background. Theodore Roosevelt was standing for the presidency a second time, and he and William H. Taft had both assured the American nation that the brown-brother policy

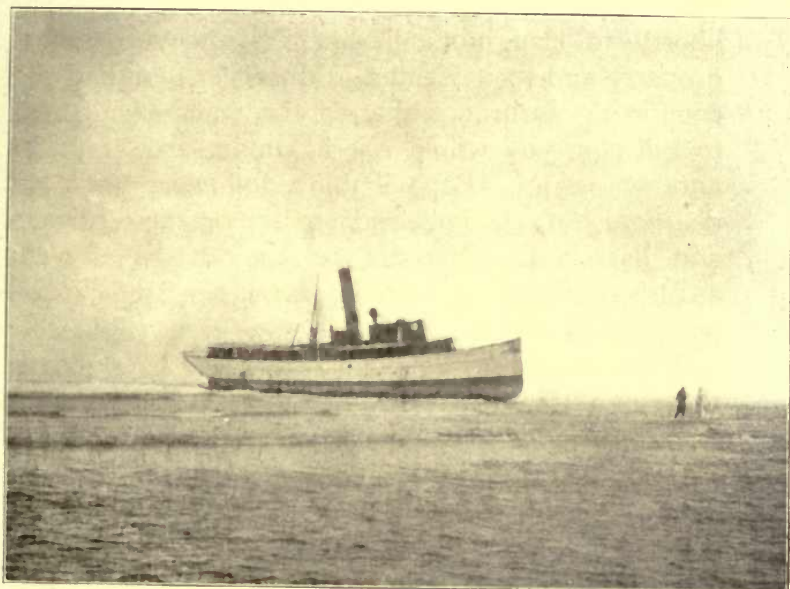
had resulted in the pacification of the islands. Had the American nation known at that juncture that the archipelago was literally seething with sedition, crime and corruption, that politically, financially and morally the Republican policy had been an absolute failure, the result of the election would possibly have been different, in which case the hungry carpet-baggers in Manila would have lost their lucrative posts. At all costs, the troops had to be kept out of the field, even though, as was literally the case, the natives were slaughtering one another by thousands up in the jungle.

Samar is the third island of the archipelago in point of size, the first so far as fertility is concerned; yet when we landed in Samar, just after Christmas Day, there were only a couple of small areas which were not in the hands of the insurgents. The insurrection had broken out, or, rather, had blazed up, some months before, inconveniently near the presidential election, as the leaders knew well. Probably, one may almost say certainly, the movement was engineered from Manila, by someone high in the confidence of the Government, otherwise it would have been impossible for the insurrectos to have learned within a few hours, by cable, the decisions arrived at in the supposed secrecy of the Governor General's council chamber. Nominally, however, the head of the affair was one Papa Pablo, the self-styled Pope of Samar and Leyte, who had proclaimed a holy war against all infidels, whether American or Filipino.

Papa Pablo's creed had, at least, the merit of simplicity. He was the true head of the Catholic Church—and if you believed in him you were at

liberty to slaughter all doubters and seize their property and their women. Moreover, you had the comforting assurance that, if the enemy happened to kill you, you would rise again in three days, in another island. Papa Pablo's followers wore, as distinguishing badges, red crosses on their breasts and hats, and sometimes on their backs as well, and, in consequence, were known as the "pulajanes" or "men in red."

The objects of the pulajanes were the same as those of all the other insurgents—loot and murder; but the element of fanaticism amongst the rank and file rendered them far more formidable opponents than Aguinaldo's pitiful insurrectos had been. Moreover, the leaders showed a good deal of political astuteness; they knew exactly the position of affairs in Manila—in fact we always believed that the outbreak was managed from Manila—and there is little doubt that they intended to make Samar the starting point for a revolt throughout the whole archipelago. Everything was in their favour. The white troops could not be used against them owing to the exigencies of the political situation, the islands being officially at peace; and the Civil Government could spare very few of its own troops; consequently, the pulajanes knew that there was only one course open to the authorities, the course actually followed—when the men in red took the field, sweeping down from the mountains on to the defenceless coast towns, the High Gods of Manila attempted to keep the news out of the press, by practically cutting off Samar from communication with the outer world, leaving the unfortunate coastal people, the tao or peasantry, to



WRECK OF S.S. MASBATE.



KATUBIG, SAMAR.

their fate. Yet, for months past, those same tao, knowing the pulajanes were preparing to rise, had been sending frenzied appeals for protection to Manila. A thousand white troops distributed round the coast would have resulted in the saving of fifty thousand lives. There was actually a white regiment in the island, at Calbayog, yet, even when the pulajanes were burning and slaughtering a few miles away, it was not allowed to leave its camp. Officially, Samar was at peace; and if the 14th Infantry had taken the field the American nation might have begun to doubt the truth of official statements, which would have meant the loss of votes. So the tao were left to their fate. Within the year, nearly a hundred thousand of the natives of Samar perished, and the island was absolutely ruined; but still, the election was won.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE Samar revolt blazed up suddenly, just before Christmas. At a place called Dolores, the pulajanes wiped out a force of Philippine Scouts, one man escaping out of forty-seven; at Oras, the next town, they held a very carnival of massacre, absolutely destroying a settlement containing thirteen thousand people, leaving not one habitable building. It was then that we first heard of the outbreak, and decided to go down to see how the little brown brother looked when following the national occupations of arson and murder. Still, it was easier to say you wanted to go, than actually to go.

The Civil Government dreaded publicity, which would involve the sending of the army, and, possibly, the exposure of much treason and corruption in high places; so it was obviously unwise to go to the palace for a permit. Moreover, we had absolutely no funds wherewith to pay our passages. In these circumstances, we did the only possible thing—we went to one of the local papers, *The Manila Times*, agreed, in return for a small advance, to act as correspondents at a ridiculously low rate; then sought out the general at the fort, put the matter to him boldly, and induced him to give us permits to travel down to Samar on an army transport.

The whole thing was arranged in twenty-four hours, and a second commission, from *The Manila Cablenews*, made matters easier, though, even then,

the two of us were taking our lives in our hands for a joint remuneration, which could not possibly exceed four pounds a week. We got the equivalent of ten shillings a column, and paid our own expenses; so we were hardly sordid. On the other hand, of course, we had asked to be sent to Samar, not been asked to go, and the editors had a perfect right to cut us down to the limit. Later on, when we found how serious matters really were, we got the skipper of a coaster to take a cable for us, asking for a regular salary arrangement, but, though the message was sent off, it never reached Manila, a fate which befell practically all our cables. It was only the pulajanés and their friends in the Government offices who could get messages to or from Samar.

We left Manila unostentatiously, on an army transport. The Governor General knew, unofficially, that we were going, but he was, as I have said, a white gentleman. His colleagues, on the other hand, had no idea of our intentions, otherwise, I doubt if we should have started. We should probably have been charged with murder, or burglary, or something of that sort, and finally deported without being sent to trial. Still, the commissioners did not know, and, three days later, the transport landed us at Calbayog, one of the few unburned townships in Samar. The place owed its immunity to the fact that the 14th United States Infantry had a permanent camp about half-a-mile from it, and, though the regulars had strict orders to take no part in the conflict, the pulajanés knew better than to put those orders to too severe a test.

Our real destination was Catbalogan, the capital of the island, some twenty miles down the coast ; but, as our transport was not going to call there, we left her at Calbayog, and went up to interview the officer commanding the infantry. We did not even know the name of this gentleman, but we had already had some experience of American army men, so we were not afraid of getting the somewhat stiff reception which a British officer might have given us. Still, Major Parke came as a surprise. He was, I think, the most perfect example of a Southern gentleman it would be possible to find. We met many men we liked in the course of our wanderings, and I have met many more since ; but that old major still remains to me the ideal of courtesy and hospitality.

We merely sent in our cards to him ; we had no introductions of any kind, no credentials ; but within a few minutes we were installed as his guests, to stay over the New Year festivities. True, he did offer to have steam got up in a launch at once and send us in it to Catbalogan ; but he did not want us to go ; and afterwards we were glad we had stayed. His officers were almost all of the same type as himself, and they gave us a splendid time. Incidentally, too, we got a good insight into the life of the American service, which differs greatly from the British in many respects. There is certainly less discipline, and more open grumbling. Possibly, this is inevitable when a man is a citizen first, free and independent, and a soldier afterwards ; but the short service, only three years in all, does not make for efficiency ; whilst the fact that, off duty, the non-commissioned officers are practically

on a level with the men, and live with the men, is the cause of a good deal of slackness.

There is nothing in the nature of an officers' mess. Every officer makes what arrangements he likes, and, sometimes, when one is hard up, he will actually mess with his own company. On the other hand, the American officer is essentially keen; the army pays him an adequate salary, provides him with a lifelong career; he learns to regard it as his home, and, as a result, takes comparatively little interest in civilian affairs. Politics do not affect him, as promotion is strictly by seniority, a regulation rendered necessary by the corruption of political life, though, as an officer seldom remains in the same regiment after promotion, there is a marked absence of *esprit de corps*. Still, even this state of affairs is preferable to making the service, like the civilian departments, the dumping ground for the President's personal supporters.

The American soldier is well fed, well housed, well paid; and, if the army had its own way, there would be little sickness amongst the troops in the islands. But wherever the civilian departments touch the service they leave a dirty mark. The Philippines are within a few degrees of the equator; the heat of the sun is intense; and British soldiers in the same latitudes would not be allowed out of barracks without sun helmets; but the American troops are sent into the field with only light wide-awake hats, and the mortality, directly and indirectly due to this, has been enormous. True, the mistake is realised by those on the spot, but it cannot be remedied, as it was made by the Republican party in the first case, and to admit it now would mean the

loss of many votes. Another fertile cause of sickness is the abolition of the regimental canteens, which resulted from the agitation of some society of female busybodies, which persuaded the President that the only way of catching the vote of the teetotal fanatics was to stop the soldiers from buying alcohol under state supervision. True, the Government did go through the farce of ascertaining the views of every officer above the rank of captain ; but, as only one advocate of prohibition could be found, it was considered that the officers must be as bad as the men, consequently, their opinions were ignored. In the canteen the soldier had been able to buy pure beer and spirits, and he had been prohibited from going elsewhere for alcohol ; when the canteens were abolished it became impossible to keep him out of the native grog shops, where the most vile decoctions were sold. As a result of temperance, crime in the service was more than doubled, whilst the death rate went up in almost the same degree. Yet, what matter, after all ? The Republican party secured the teetotal vote.

We left Calbayog with regret after a stay of a week, and went on in an army launch to Catbalogan, the town which then formed the base of operations for the futile constabulary campaign against the pulajanes. Hitherto, we knew nothing of the Civil Government's troops, save that they were generally despised ; but we quickly got to know them, and to realise, that, in most cases, the estimate was not a just one. True, they were always miserably fed, miserably armed, with carbines made in 1872, and, very often, miserably officered ; but when they had a good commander, a man who understood the

difference between brown and white, and showed his troops that he understood it, they were capable of good things. Most of them were Luzon peasants, who had been recruited, as they thought, for police duty in their own island, and now found themselves sent out to be slaughtered by the most savage insurgents in the archipelago; consequently, it is not surprising that they should feel little enthusiasm for the service, especially as their enemies were better armed and knew every inch of the ground. But, as a whole, the constabulary did their work manfully, and, though I have little love for the Filipino, I cannot deny that, before I left Samar, I had conceived a sincere regard for those ragged, half-starved little men who trudged into the jungle to be cut to pieces by the terrible bolos of the pulajanes. At least, they were better men than the white cowards in Manila who sent them there, who said: "This is a matter for police, not for soldiers," who declared solemnly, time after time, that there were only three hundred pulajanes in all, although they knew that there were certainly three thousand actual bolomen, and perhaps ten thousand more serving in other capacities, as lookout men, scouts and foragers.

We had several companies of another native force, the Philippine Scouts, in Samar; but though these are supposed to be infinitely superior to the constabulary, I must admit that they impressed me very unfavourably. I think they were the most inefficient and timid coloured troops I have ever seen. They may be better now, but at that time none of those with which I came into contact were fit to take the field against an enemy like the

pulajanes ; yet they had everything the constabulary lacked—food, clothes, cartridges, boots, even cots and mosquito nets, in the jungle ; whilst their pay was infinitely better. The reason for the difference in equipment lay in the fact that the Scouts were maintained out of army funds—nominally they formed part of the regular army—whilst the islands themselves had to pay for the constabulary, and the officials who had come out to “make their pile” whilst their party was in power were naturally disinclined to squander money unnecessarily on the public service. Their own wants came first.

The reason for the difference in efficiency was less easy to determine, but slackness of discipline had a good deal to do with it. The Scouts were pampered and overfed ; their officers made too much fuss about their comfort ; and, as a result, the men put too high a price on their own skins. In short, they were spoilt natives. They imagined themselves quite the equals of the white men, and were insolent to everybody. They objected to getting wet, they objected to getting muddy, in the wettest and muddiest spot in the world. They had been used to rice and fish in their homes, yet they grumbled if they did not have fresh meat and bread and coffee on active service, and, more amazing still, their officers took their grumblings to heart, and fussed round to get their food for them. Treated properly, as natives, the Scouts would have been as good as the constabulary, better perhaps, because they had boots and ammunition ; as it was, however, they were little more than a nuisance, a very bad example of the effects of the little-brown-brother policy.

When we reached Catbalogan we found that the Government had suddenly decided to make an attempt to put down the pulajan rising, and, the election being over, was even going the length of allowing the 14th Infantry to garrison some of the coast towns, although as only a few of these remained unburned, and their inhabitants were either dead or in hiding, the step did not seem likely to have much effect on the situation. We found the commander-in-chief of the constabulary, a seconded cavalry captain with a kind of non-descript civil rank of "General," in Catbalogan, and obtained permission to join one of the parties of constabulary which was starting shortly for the north-east coast of the island. Whilst we were waiting to get away, I sent the following account to Manila :—

"Catbalogan has not the appearance of the centre of operations against a serious rebellion ; in fact it is hard to picture it as the centre of anything. It just looks, and smells, like an ordinary Filipino town—a rickety wooden pier, a few score native shacks, two or three fairly substantial stone buildings, a painfully inartistic church, a huge wooden belfry in the middle of the plaza where a gallows should be, many dogs of undecided breed and objectionable tendencies, a few obviously weary natives, and a multitude of pigs, great, medium and small, routing amongst the innumerable heaps of refuse.

"The largest house in the place is General Allen's headquarters, as is evident from the khaki-clad sentries pacing outside, and the half-dozen constabulary lounging ungracefully in the doorway. Outside, along the main street, nothing seems

moving. A native is sleeping over a net he had started to mend ; he had spread it over the roadway, lighted a cigarette ; and then exhaustion must have overcome him. Another, near by, is seeing how long it is possible to spend over the manufacture of a length of twine. Two or three women are languidly gossiping in the doorway of a Chinaman's shop, and a mangy dog is nosing round for stray pieces of offal, being in fact, the only reasonably busy creature in sight.

“ There are many rumours in the town, and many theories and plans. Every white man has a different tale to tell, a different scheme to expound. According to some, the situation is grave, even alarming. The pulajanes are everywhere, every native is really in sympathy with them, and ready at a moment's notice to take a hand in the gentle game of bolo rushes. Another dismisses the whole affair with a shrug of his shoulders—probably he has never seen the big knives flashing in the jungle—and seems inclined to doubt the very existence of the insurrectos. Some, the sane ones, would call in the military and end the whole trouble by following old Simon de Montfort's plan ‘ Kill all. The Lord will know His own.’ Others favour gentler methods—moral suasion coupled with the Child's First Reader, and, later on, the square on the hypothenuse and Emerson. To which plan the scoffers answer pointedly ‘ First catch your pulajan ’ even inserting a rude, qualifying adjective. And so it goes on.

“ Many have tried to explain the cause of the trouble. It is the hemp trade, or the money-lenders, or the innate nastiness of the Samar native,

so they say outside Catbalogan; but if you go to the town itself you will find one very good reason why men should leave all and take to the hills—it is the Catbalogan band. They say the Filipinos are essentially a musical race. This may be so, but in that case only the tone deaf and the riff-raff can remain; those with any ear for harmony must long since have fled. That band would drive a white man to drink; but the Asiatic character is different, and, instead of drowning his sorrows in bad liquor, the native of these parts treks to the hills, sharpens his bolo, and kills everyone he meets, presumably on the chance of his victim being a retired member of that town band.

“At the moment, there seems to be a lull in operations by or against the pulajanes. Nothing much has happened since the massacres at Oras and Dolores; at anyrate, no news has drifted round to here yet. Drifted is the only word at all appropriate; for with no telegraphs, no roads, many energetic pulajanes, and the swell of the monsoon rolling in like a mountain on the eastern and southern coasts, communications are more than difficult.

“The pulajanes, they tell us, are to be routed out, and hustled, and fought, and pacified; but will they fight? That is the question. Will they not go on as they have been doing so far, lying low until they get the chance of making a sudden dash with their bolos on some winded, half-starved column trailing along in single file up a narrow footpath? You cannot call that fighting. It is just massacre—a few moments' wild cutting and slashing, a futile volley from the constabulary's futile Springfields, a vision of the soldiers frenziedly trying to ward off

the big knives with the butt ends of their carbines, and then the enemy has dived back into the jungle, leaving a score of dead and dying behind him.

“They have given each of us a Winchester repeater—a shot-gun, not a rifle—a weapon which will make quite sure of a boloman up to twenty yards, and to-morrow we are going round on a coastguard steamer with Captain Crockett and his constabulary to a place called San Ramon. They rather laugh at us here as mad Englishmen; but at least they are going to give us a chance to see what is going on, though whether we ever manage to send out any copy is another thing. I am convinced it would never be allowed to go through the post. They open letters in these islands, if they suspect them of containing criticisms of the Government. I suppose that is what they call being free and independent—free with other men’s property and lives, independent of any considerations of common decency.

“We went through Catbalogan Gaol to-day. They have a pulajan there, awaiting trial. He was caught red-handed, murdering tao; but in a year or two he will probably be in the Civil Service, being a little brown brother. The only other interesting prisoner is a white soldier, a regular. He was on sentry duty, and shot an armed native who refused to stand when challenged. The civil authorities grabbed him from the military, and his sentence is twenty years’ hard labour. Has he not slain his brown brother? Probably the sentence will be quashed, after he has spent some four years in prison; but the matter is interesting as showing

the savagely vindictive spirit which the Manila authorities display towards the army."

This was written on 3rd January 1905. The following morning we were on board the coastguard steamer *Leyte*, heading for the north coast of Samar.

CHAPTER XXX

THE *Leyte* took a couple of days reaching our destination, San Ramon, which was situated, or had been situated, at the head of a long, narrow bay. Navigation is no easy matter in those Philippine waters, which are still practically uncharted; whilst even where soundings have been taken you are never sure that a new coral reef has not been recently formed. Outside San Ramon Bay, right on the top of a reef, high and dry at low water, we found the wreck of the *Leyte's* sister-ship, the *Masbate*. No one was very certain how she came to be there, and more than one ugly rumour was floating round; but I believe the whole thing was purely accidental. The crew had managed to escape, first to a sand-spruit at the other end of the reef, then, next morning, to the shore. Fortunately, they were able also to salve the Gatling gun and some rifles and ammunition; otherwise they would probably have had an exciting time; for their brown brothers were watching them—the whole coast was patrolled by the pulajanes, who had a most marvellous system of look-out stations—and, at the very spot where they landed, they found the mutilated bodies of seven women. They made a camp, stockaded roughly, with the Gatling gun in position, and prepared for fraternal advances from the pulajanes; but, by a lucky chance, another steamer came through the straits on the second morning, and the shipwrecked crew was able to attract her attention. Yet, later

on, I knew a whole month go by without a single vessel passing within sight of that point.

The *Leyte* anchored off the reef, and we went aboard the wreck, but found little of any value remaining. Everything had been torn out of her by a salvage party, which had worked hurriedly, in fear of the pulajanes, and though there were apparently some cases of provisions in the hold we had not the time to get down and investigate these, as the skipper of the *Leyte* wanted to enter the bay that tide.

It was curious that the pulajanes should have left the wreck alone. It was not because there were none about ; we quickly disproved that theory, for, as the first ship's boat's keel grated on the beach, one of their scouts jumped up from under a bush and dashed for the jungle, leaving behind him his bolo, his papers and his uniform. The latter consisted of a rough canvas jumper with red shoulder straps and a red cross in front, the material being stamped with the mark of the 9th American Infantry. He had two passes, one a registration certificate from the Civil Government, the other from the pulajan authorities, on a printed form, stamped with an official die ; which seemed to show that, for mere ignorant fanatics, the pulajanes were fairly well up-to-date in their methods.

As he fled, one of the officers took a shot at the scout with his revolver, but missed. Still, as we found out only too quickly, this did not make much difference. There were two or three more lookout men round the bay and the news of our landing would have reached the pulajanes in any case, if in fact, they were not aware of the intended occupa-

tion of Sam Ramon long before we, ourselves, knew of it. Nothing that happened, either in the palace in Manila or in the headquarters at Catbalogan was a secret to the pulajanes for very long.

A very few minutes' investigation sufficed to show us all that remained of San Ramon. Two skulls stuck on the top of blackened poles grinned hideously at us. A few hundred half-burned timbers, leaning drunkenly in every direction, served to show where the houses had been before the pulajanes came down. The largest pile of ashes represented the church. The Presidente's house had, however, been a new one, with its timber frame still green, consequently it had resisted the fire fairly well, evidently to the annoyance of the insurrectos, who had laboriously hacked away its main supports, leaving it canted over at a dangerous angle. Giant creepers and tall grass had already sprung up everywhere, hiding the remains of the murdered inhabitants, though as you walked about, every now and then you stumbled against a fresh skull.

The only things which had been respected were four much-chipped plaster saints, which had been placed on an old table under a big tree, whence they smiled on us with the same benevolence they had shown towards both murderers and murdered. I do not know what the saints represented; none of our men could tell me; but this I do know—they were no more inefficient than was the Civil Government in Manila. Both had failed to save San Ramon from the pulajanes. The people had prayed to the saints, and they had sent a pitiful request for protection to the Americans. Ten white soldiers would have saved them, yet they

were told that there were really no pulajanes worthy of the consideration of the officials in Manila. At that point, the story of the San Ramon people stops short, for the pulajanes came and wiped them out, so the rest of the tale would be one-sided, and therefore hardly worth telling. And, after all, President Roosevelt was re-elected, and his parasites in Manila retained their jobs. These are triumphs of civilisation, beside which the dead of San Ramon are of absolutely no importance. I do not know whether I am right, but, from what I saw subsequently, I have come to the conclusion that you cannot attain to a due sense of proportion in these matters until you have seen, as I have seen, the working of the American party machine in Manila. When you have done that, you begin to realise, dimly, perhaps, as through a mist of blood, the paramount importance of Votes ; you see that a hundred thousand human lives are as nothing provided the President's friends retain their offices. Possibly, this will entail a reconstruction of ideas, a shifting of your moral standpoint ; but it must be right, because it leads to financial glory—for the President's friends. What wonder if the Americans call us an effete nation ! We must be, because we have not yet reached, we never shall reach, the height of understanding these great and immutable truths. We are still stumbling in the dark, savages with savage ideals, counting human lives instead of counting votes. Is not a Vote the end of modern civilisation ? Can man achieve more than the right to choose his own tyrants and despoilers ? Yet, though I have seen the civilisation of Manila, I must be still uncivilised,

for I feel that, where I erected a polling booth, I would also erect a gallows forty feet high, as a warning to candidates, and I would use that gallows frequently.

By the time our whole force, a hundred and twenty native soldiers and five white men, had been landed, the sun was setting in a sky heavy with the promise of rain. They had dumped us on the beach, in a hostile country, and the steamer had gone away. We had no tents, nothing to shelter us from the tropical storms; whilst we knew, only too well, that the jungle a few yards away held the scouts of the enemy, and that any moment a large force of pulajanes might be on us, cutting and slashing with their detestable bolos. We camped that night round the ruins of the President's house, so that we should at least be safe from attack on the seaward side, whilst the raised floor would give a score or so of us a chance of shooting effectively, or as effectively as one can shoot in the dark.

I had been scared before, in Africa, by lions, by fever, by the death which seems to lurk everywhere in the Mozambique jungles; but somehow I had never known more than a momentary sensation, bad whilst it lasted, but quickly over; now, however, I got down to the real thing, and I did not like it.

Amyas was utterly devoid of the sense of fear. He was incapable of being afraid, I believe; consequently, that first night in San Ramon he merely oiled his shot-gun carefully, tried the action once or twice, then rolled himself up in his old Jaeger blanket and went to sleep. The two lieutenants, youngsters also, followed his example; but the captain and I squatted in the lee of a

blanket we had rigged up, and, with our Winchester across our knees and a demijohn of alleged Kentucky Rye within reach, waited for the pulajanes.

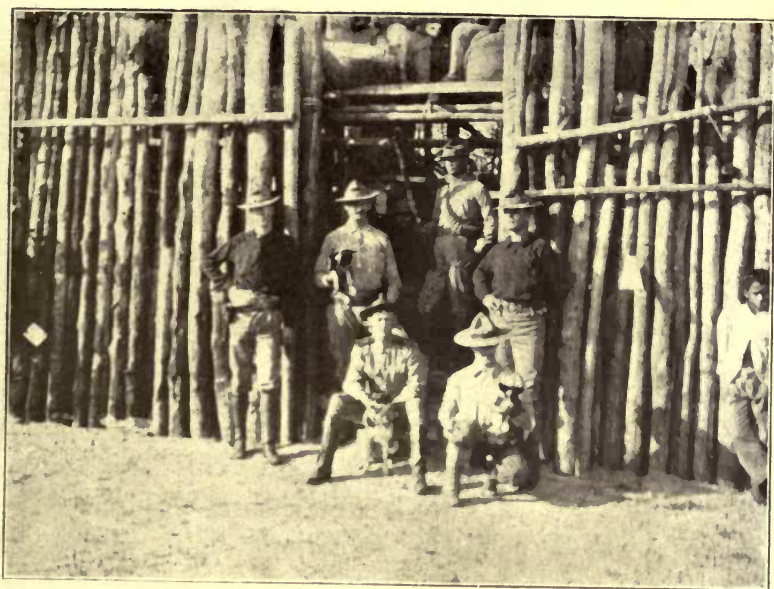
I will not say it was raining, because the word is hopelessly inadequate. Rather, the water was coming down in lumps, and the night was black as the record of most of the Philippine commissioners. Though we could not see it, we knew that the edge of the jungle was but some thirty yards away, that from the time the bolomen broke cover until the time they were actually on us would be but a matter of seconds. We knew, too, that there were pulajanes unpleasantly close. Twice, an alarm horn brayed out, and in the lull between the rain squalls we could hear voices. We were wet through, of course; but still, the blanket enabled us to smoke, and, possibly, the glow of our cigars had something to do with keeping the bolomen back. At least they knew we were awake. When we shivered, which was often, we drank Kentucky Rye, neat.

It was Crockett's duty to be there, and, I daresay, he found some consolation in the thought, being a clean, patriotic American, a Southerner of the Southerners, hating Yankees and other politicians; but I kept telling myself that I was there merely because I was an unmitigated ass, who had butted his head into another nation's trouble, and was likely to lose that same head in consequence. I got down to some crude truths that drenching night. I knew, as well as Crockett did, that we were in an ugly position, that, in the dark, an equal number of bolomen could literally cut us to pieces,

just as they had done a few weeks before at Dolores, when one man escaped out of forty-seven. The positions were exactly similar. I had plenty of time to think it over as I squatted in the lee of that blanket, chewing the end of my cigar. Every now and then we wiped our shot-guns and tried the actions, or waded out into the mud to make sure that the sentries had not been stabbed; but, for my part at least, those tasks did not seem to make one either warmer or more cheerful. I was unfeignedly glad when dawn came, bringing with it a cessation of the rain.

Amyas had his coffee before he got out of his soaking blankets, remarked he had slept well, despite the wet, got up, shaved very carefully, put on a clean shirt, and then proceeded to do more hard, physical work than any other two men in the outfit. He was not by any means a big man, and I think it was only when you saw him in evening dress that you realised how perfectly he was proportioned; consequently when those Filipino soldiers saw him pick up a baulk of timber they shook their heads in amazement, just as the Kaffirs had done in Africa, thinking it was uncanny.

Crockett's orders were to pacify San Ramon. In one way, the task was an impossible one, for the pulajanes had already carried out the job in their way. San Ramon was just a heap of ashes, and the people of San Ramon were either dead or in hiding. Still, there we were, and there we had got to stay, until the pulajanes came down and wiped out our force. In the circumstances, the obvious thing was to build some kind of fort, but as a frugal government had sent the constabulary out with no



OFFICERS, SAN RAMON.
Amyas P. Hyatt on right, in front.



OUTSIDE FORT SAN RAMON.

of
the
the

A BOMBING AT THE WHITE HOUSE

...of any sort as yet, or should be
...to be a difficult case. Still,
...was essentially a man used to difficulties,
...a way out of the trouble.

There were as I have mentioned, hundreds of
...lying about. From among these
...to select enough to build a large
...of an average height of about twelve feet
...for the posts with sharp-pointed
...up on my posts with poles. In the
...of the structure was the President's room,
...which we moved up and strengthened some,
...then reinforced with nine palms
...it made a double passage. Two, the doors
...shaky, and one had to walk half-
...of old but still it served to keep
...from the platform inside the
...a good sight from the ground, we
...on my platform, who were
...enough to attack us.

We spent three or four more anxious nights,
...the Kentucky life, but
...the enemy did not interfere with us and on the
...was complete even to the
...the gateway on which the
...to sound the alarm.
...That we sat down to wait for
...which were partially slow in
...coming.

For the first day or two we used to sit on the
...and take no share in the painful scenes
...of the day, but as the night
...and we had not a single
...that we soon grew tired of that.

equipment of any sort, no axes, or shovels, or picks, the job promised to be a difficult one. Still, Crockett was essentially a man used to difficulties, and he saw a way out of the trouble.

There were, as I have mentioned, hundreds of charred timbers lying about. From amongst these we managed to select enough to build a large stockade of an average height of about twelve feet. We dug trenches for the posts with sharpened sticks; we trimmed up our posts with bolos. In the middle of the stockade was the Presidente's ruined house, which we shored up and straightened somehow or other, then rethatched with nipa palms until it made habitable quarters. True, the floors were painfully shaky, and one had to walk delicately, like Agag of old; but still, it served to keep off the rain, whilst from the platform inside the stockade, a good eight feet off the ground, we could shoot down on any pulajanés who were venturesome enough to attack us.

We spent three or four more anxious nights, and, incidentally, finished the Kentucky Rye; but the enemy did not interfere with us, and on the fifth morning our fort was complete, even to the old church bell over the gateway, on which the corporal of the guard used to sound the hours, ship fashion. Then we sat down to wait for developments, which were painfully slow in coming.

For the first day or two we used to sit on the platform and take pot shots at the pulajan scouts on the other side of the bay; but as the range was nine hundred yards, and we had not a single accurate rifle, we soon grew tired of that. The

pulajanés had little camps all round us, in a range of miniature hills, and whenever we located one of these, by the smoke rising from the camp fire, we used to trudge out to it through the mud, not because we had any hope of finding anyone there—the alarm horns invariably brayed out the moment we left the fort—but because our sallying out was an invitation to the pulajanés to attack us. Still, they never accepted.

We found a number of these little outposts and duly burned the shelters, but we were none the better for that and the pulajanés none the worse. Once, and once only, we did get near a scout. He had picked up an American flag somewhere, and he had been so busy cutting out the red stripes, in order to make the cross for his uniform, that he had not heard us coming; but he got away in the end—at anyrate there was no blood spoor—and our loot consisted only of a bamboo spear, which we did not want.

One thing which we did need, however, was a fleet of canoes. The coast of Samar consists mainly of mangrove swamps, varied by arms of the sea which run inland ten miles or so before they become crossable; consequently, when the Filipino wants to go from one coast town to another he makes the journey in a dug-out. Unfortunately for us, however, the pulajanés realised this fact, and whenever they burned a coast town they also destroyed all the canoes they could find. On the other hand, the people of San Ramon had been expecting a massacre, and had hidden the majority of their canoes amongst the mangroves which fringed the arms of their bay, doubtless

hoping to be able to reach them when the attack came, and paddle away to safety.

The largest dug-out of San Ramon, possibly the state barge of the Presidente, a huge, hollowed tree trunk, capable of holding twenty men, had been temporarily disabled by having a hole, a foot square, hewn in its bottom. Subsequently, I managed to repair this craft, chopping a piece out of a half-burned table to fit the "leak," caulking the joints with hemp, and then fixing patches made from flattened-out codfish tins inside and out; but at first we did not think of this, and confined our energies to searching for smaller canoes.

The first one we found was capable of holding four men, provided there was not too much wind; and then the rest was easy. You stripped down to a shirt and a pair of linen drawers, took a shotgun and a cartridge belt, and then, accompanied by three of the native soldiers, you paddled round the coast, and explored every possible hiding place. It was a great game. Sometimes you found a canoe, and towed it home in triumph; sometimes you found the remains of one of the inhabitants of San Ramon; sometimes you got a shot at a pulajan scout who had been watching you for the last hour; sometimes the pulajan got a shot at you, or jumped at you with a bolo the moment you set foot on land. As time went on, and our little fleet on the beach increased to six or eight craft, the pulajanes began to think we were scoring too many points; consequently, the game grew distinctly dangerous, too dangerous for me; but, despite my protests, Amyas and three devoted little brown men con-

tinued to play it, though the spoils grew less and less every day.

Soon after I repaired the big canoe we made an expedition in force. Someone declared that there were pigs at Igut, the next burned town, and, as we were hungering for fresh meat, Crockett decided to go and shoot some of those same porkers. The San Ramon navy went out in style—the big canoe with twelve native soldiers and three white men, and five smaller canoes with three men in each. We had counted on having to go round the western arm of the bay, close to where lay the wreck of the *Masbate*, but, by a stroke of luck, we found a curious passage through the mangrove swamp, a straight waterway ten yards wide and nearly a mile in length, leading into the Igut inlet, saving us nearly ten miles of hard paddling. This was so totally unexpected that we began to discuss the idea of roast pork for supper that very night; but, unfortunately, the tide was running out fast, and we stuck in the mud a mile from our destination.

Only those who have tried to wade through a mangrove swamp can realise what it means. Words are hopelessly inadequate to express it. You are never less than knee deep, and often waist deep, in the ghastly grey slime. You pull yourself along by clutching the snakelike black roots, whilst abominable, stinking marsh gases bubble up around you. You do half-a-mile an hour, with luck, and every hundred yards you stop to make sure that the mud has not clogged the action of your shot-gun, for the Filipino insurgent is quite at home amongst the mangroves, being, after all, more like a monkey than a man.

We got to Igut at last, just as it was getting dark; but though we found the remains of one or two of its inhabitants, and heard a solitary cock crowing in the jungle, there were no signs of pigs. In fact the ruin of the place was as complete as that of San Ramon; it was just like nineteen out of twenty of the towns of Samar at that time.

It was raining, of course, so we made a shelter of palm leaves, which did not keep off the wet, and, after a meal of sweet potatoes, lay down in the mud and tried to persuade ourselves that we were not cold and hungry and miserable, and that the surrounding bush was not full of pulajanes. I remember we all envied one of the lieutenants, who, by some extraordinary chance, happened to have brought along a spare pair of breeches which, through being rolled up in his blanket, were still dry. However, he got them fairly wet during the process of changing, and that fact consoled us a little.

Next morning we searched for the reputed pigs, and found only pulajan lookout places and a woman's head, so, after grubbing up more sweet potatoes and roasting them in the ashes, we started back for the place where we had left our canoes, arriving just in time to see a small party of pulajanes landing on the opposite bank of the inlet. We kept out of sight, hoping there would be more to follow, but in vain, and at last we launched our own dug-outs and started homewards, in the teeth of a stiff head wind. It was sunset when we entered the passage through the big mangrove swamp, nearly dark when we

reached the other end, and meanwhile the breeze had stiffened to half-a-gale. Two of the small canoes were leading, and as they emerged out of the mangroves into the bay, from the big canoe we could just see the wind catch them, apparently curl round them, and sweep them away, despite the frenzied efforts of their crews. In a few seconds they were lost to sight in the darkness. We were powerless to help; all we could do was to make our great, unwieldy craft fast to some overhanging branches and wait for the dawn. I think it was one of the most uncomfortable nights I have ever spent. You cannot lie down in a dug-out, unless you have the whole space to yourself; you can only squat, cramped up; moreover, we were very wet, we had nothing to eat, we had finished our tobacco, and we believed we had lost six men.

The dawn seemed an interminable time coming, but when it did the wind had dropped, and we were able to get back to the fort, where we found the missing soldiers. They had been blown straight ashore, on the sandy part of the beach, and, owing to the darkness, the pulajanes had not discovered them; then, as soon as it was light enough to see where they were, they had hurried back through the jungle, to San Ramon.

The expedition was typical of many we made. They all ended in failure, owing to the splendid system of lookout stations organised by the enemy. We could never move a hundred yards from the fort without the fact being signalled immediately. As we left, the first warning, a long, deep note on the boudjon or alarm horn, boomed out, to be

taken up and repeated time after time, until the sound was lost beyond the range of hills. Sometimes it seemed to come from the tree tops, sometimes from amongst the grass; anyway, we never saw the boudjon blower. He appeared to sound his warning, and then to vanish utterly. There was a weird and uncanny air about the whole thing. It gave you a sense of utter hopelessness; you felt your task was so futile, that the pulajan was always the better man, that he knew and you did not, that he could see and you could not. You grew to loathe, but, at the same time, you grew to fear, him vaguely; and the more you knew of him the more the dread of Samar, the gloom of that horrible jungle, settled down on you. No man laughed in Samar in those days. Death was stalking by your side all day, squatting just beyond the circle of firelight at night. You could not forget that he was there; the chill of his presence was always on you.

No quarter—that was the rule of the game in Samar, the only rule. It was not a war, but just a killing of men, wholly brutal and, what was worse, wholly unnecessary, unless, of course, you reckon votes as a necessity. What was the use of taking wounded prisoners along with you, when you knew that the mud and rain would inevitably produce gangrene in a few hours? It was kinder, and quicker, to kill them, kinder too, although it sounds unutterably horrible, to kill off your own wounded. But it is no use raking up the past now. The dead lie there, in the silence of the jungle, and we who came through it want to forget it.

I daresay it is with the others as it is with me,

every now and then they wake up at night, groping for the shot-gun, crying out that the pulajanes are coming. You cannot quite forget those things; they remain graven on your memory, the fear and the horror of them, the dread of death—or rather the dread of dying uselessly in the mud, and of being buried in the mud. There is only this consolation—you know you have been right down to primitive things, you have known the worst, and, when other men talk to you of the wars through which they have been, you can feel assured that you have experienced something more ghastly—the fear of the bolomen slashing and jabbing in the darkness and the rain.

CHAPTER XXXI

WHEN we landed at San Ramon, we had three weeks' provisions; consequently, at the end of a month, we were getting short of most things. The Government had promised to send a coastguard steamer round with supplies, but the one which arrived had only some rather mouldy rice. Crockett took a good deal of the latter—luckily, as it turned out—and sent an urgent request for another consignment; then, knowing the ways of his superiors, he decided to go across country to Oras, some twenty-five miles away, where there was a white garrison, and a company of Scouts.

We started at dawn, Crockett, one of the lieutenants, sixty soldiers and myself, leaving the other lieutenant and Amyas, with sixty-five men, in the fort. The boudjon went as we filed out of the gateway, and again when the lookout men saw which path we were taking; consequently, we had no chance of surprising any pulajanes, although they might rush us. We had the usual sort of country to cross—mud and mountains, a seemingly endless succession of small, steep ranges, with reeking black quagmires in the valleys, and horrible slimy red clay on the slopes. All the little bridges over the streams were broken down, and several times we had to wade breast deep, and once it was necessary to cut down hemp palms and make a raft. The heat in that steaming jungle was appalling. The perspiration ran down into your eyes, half

blinding you ; the clinging mud made the very lifting of your feet a toil ; and always you seemed to be climbing, whilst you knew that any moment the men in red might be dashing down into the winded, exhausted column which, travelling of necessity in single file, sometimes tailed out for over half-a-mile. Crockett and I were at the point, the lieutenant brought up the rear. He was a very big heavy man, physically unsuited for jungle work, and the marching tried him severely. When we stopped at mid-day for some food—sweet potatoes and army biscuit as usual—I saw he was knocked out, and two miles farther on, just after we had crossed the fresh spoor of a big band of pulajanes, he had to give in.

Crockett was in a hurry to go on, fearing that if he delayed he might find the camp at Oras already broken up ; so he decided to take only twenty men, and to leave the lieutenant and myself behind with the rest. He told us to make our way down to the Oras River, which was, as far as we knew, about two miles away. Then, we were to make some sort of a camp, and, if he could find any canoes at Oras, he would come and fetch us in the morning. The prospect was not a very cheerful one. We knew, from the spoor we had seen, that at least a hundred pulajanes were in the neighbourhood, whilst only some twenty miles up the river was Maslog, the reputed headquarters of the insurrectos. Crockett was very loath to leave us, but, in the circumstances, it was the only thing to do. I would have gone with him gladly, as I had no fancy for being cut up, but that was impossible in view of the lieutenant's condition.

Crockett continued along the Oras trail, and was soon lost to view in the jungle, whilst we turned off due south, going very slowly. After a quarter of an hour's tramping we came on two or three native houses, the first unburned ones we had seen that day, an obvious sign that their owner was a pulajan; and a moment later, whilst we were having a look round, one of our sentries caught sight of a native creeping away through the long grass. We were evidently in dangerous country, so I urged the lieutenant to push on to the river.

We left the trees, and began to climb one of the inevitable small hills, but were scarcely half way up when there was a shout of delight from the sergeant. He had spied two water buffalo, the ordinary cattle of Samar, tied up amongst the trees. As it was a month since we had tasted fresh meat, we naturally took them along with us, and I believe the prospect of having a real feed that night almost made the men forget the other prospect—that of being cut to pieces by the pulajanes before dawn.

It wanted a couple of hours to sunset when we reached the Oras River, and I suggested searching round for an open spot, and making a zariba of bush; but, as luck would have it, we came on a small shack with a raised floor and open sides, and there the lieutenant decided to camp. It was as bad a place as one could well imagine, surrounded by some of the thickest jungle I had seen in the island. The pulajanes could easily have got within ten yards of us before we even knew they were there, and, though the floor of the shack was certainly a couple of feet from the ground, there was only room on it for about a dozen men.

The position scared me, I do not mind admitting that ; but I was, after all, only in the position of a kind of volunteer, and the man in command was unwilling to make another move. He laughed at my misgivings. So far, he said, he had never been in a fight, and he believed he never would be in one. It was his luck, and he was confoundedly tired. He carried his fatalism so far that I had some difficulty in getting him to post any sentries : the poor little soldiers were tired too, he said. As for slaughtering the water buffalo, he asked me to see to that, as he hated anything in the nature of butchering jobs, whilst, as an old hunter, I was used to it.

I selected the fatter of the buffalo, then had its mate taken to the other side of the shack, and tied up some twenty yards away, where it would not smell the blood. I saw to the tying myself, so that there should be no mistake, and noticed, at the time, that one of the sentries was posted within thirty feet of it. Then I had the other animal killed with a bolo, not using a rifle on it for fear of letting any possible pulajanes know our exact position ; but the precaution was wasted, for a few minutes later a shot rang out. The lieutenant had gone down to the river bank, and, seeing a crocodile, had fired at it.

When we had finished cutting up the buffalo, I went to look for its mate. The sentry was still there, but the buffalo had gone. The bush was so thick that the pulajanes had been able to steal in and untie the head rope without being detected. If I was uncomfortable before, I was trebly so now, and the men began to look at one another with

questioning eyes. But still the lieutenant only laughed, and, after a hearty meal of buffalo meat and sweet potatoes, prepared to turn in. He was feeling better now, and chaffed me, in his heavy, good-natured way, when I wanted permission to double the sentries. He was sure the pulajanes would not come, whilst I was equally sure that they would be with us just before dawn, and do to us as they had done to the Scouts at Dolores, twenty miles away.

I got to understand the psychology of fear that night ; and yet, though I was as thoroughly alarmed as a man can be, I am not sure that this feeling was not swamped in the end by a sense of impotent anger. I felt I had been such a fool. I had got into the whole business merely through my own idiocy. Personally, I had no quarrel with the pulajanes, no interest in the American success. I had nothing to gain, and everything to lose. I was going to be killed by a howling little brown savage, and my body would be mutilated and left to decay on the bank of the Oras River, and no one would be any the better for that fact.

I cleaned my shot-gun, saw that the men overhauled their unwieldy old carbines, then sat for about three hours swearing at things in general and myself in particular ; but, at last, in sheer desperation, I lay down and did a thing which I should have believed impossible—forced myself to go to sleep in order to forget all about it, at least until the pulajanes came.

It was about an hour later when I jumped up suddenly. Someone had fired a rifle about a mile away. The guard roused the men, and we listened

intently. A minute later we heard another shot, then, after an equal interval, another. I, for one, muttered a thanksgiving. It was the signal arranged with Crockett. Half-an-hour later, five big canoes, containing Crockett, a Scout officer, and some Scouts as oarsmen, appeared in sight and took us aboard. It turned out that at Oras Crockett had learned that there were some four hundred picked pulajan bolomen in our immediate neighbourhood, and there was not the slightest doubt that, had we remained where we were, our little party would have been massacred before dawn. It would have been merely a question of two or three minutes of bolo work.

Crockett had arrived wet, hungry and tired out. The town, or rather the ruins of it, was garrisoned by a company of Scouts, whilst a company of white infantry which had come to relieve these was at that moment engaged in getting its kit up from the landing stage. In addition to these, there was a rabble of friendlies, or volunteers, armed with bolos and spears of pointed bamboo. When Crockett and his ragged little band appeared in sight at the end of the long clearing on which Oras had stood, the volunteers on outpost duty immediately decided they were pulajanes, and fled, yelling, to the Scout camp. The Scouts, who were very raw and unreliable, caught the alarm, and swarmed into their barracks, a ruined convent, clambered to the platform, and prepared to fire, whilst the white infantry, hearing the uproar, naturally left their work and rushed for their rifles.

A less experienced man than Crockett might have come on and been shot down ; but fortunately

the constabulary captain knew the ways of Scouts and volunteers. He realised what was the matter, and, climbing on to a small mound, waved his handkerchief; but even then, when the white officers had grasped who it was, it was with difficulty that the Scouts were restrained from firing off their rifles. I made an expedition later with some of the force, and I think they were the most unsteady, and the most easily scared, crowd I have ever seen.

Crockett was tired out, but he was not going to leave us up the Oras River to be wiped out by the pulajanes, so, after he had snatched a mouthful of food, he went down to the beach, selected his canoes, and immediately started back to our relief; and there is no doubt that by doing so he saved the lives of all of us.

We stayed in the neighbourhood of Oras three days, not for the charm of the place itself—the town of eleven thousand inhabitants had been wiped out so completely that after the massacre the only living thing found in it was one hamstrung horse—but because there was reported to be a strong band of pulajanes in another burned town, San Polycarpio, and Crockett was eager to come across them. However, it was the same old game over again. The boudjon blowers announced our coming, and, though we did run across a small band of the enemy, nothing particular happened, and when we got to San Polycarpio we found it apparently deserted. We camped near it that night, on a small knoll, and, as soon as it was dark, the pulajanes gathered round. We could hear them talking some thirty or forty yards away, and once or twice we caught

the glimmer of a torch ; but we never saw anything to shoot at, which was rather fortunate ; otherwise all our men would have begun to shoot, and then the bolomen would have come in under cover of the smoke. It rained all night, and, as usual, we had no shelter, whilst leeches innumerable crawled up our legs and grew fat at our expense. Still, by that time I was getting used to the game. Every time you slept out—that is, slept in the mud—the same thing occurred. You could ill spare the blood when you had so little to nourish you, but the worst part of the effects was that, wherever a leech had bitten you, the mud was certain to work in next day and produce a nasty, running sore. Even to-day, I have a good many Samar scars on my legs.

CHAPTER XXXII

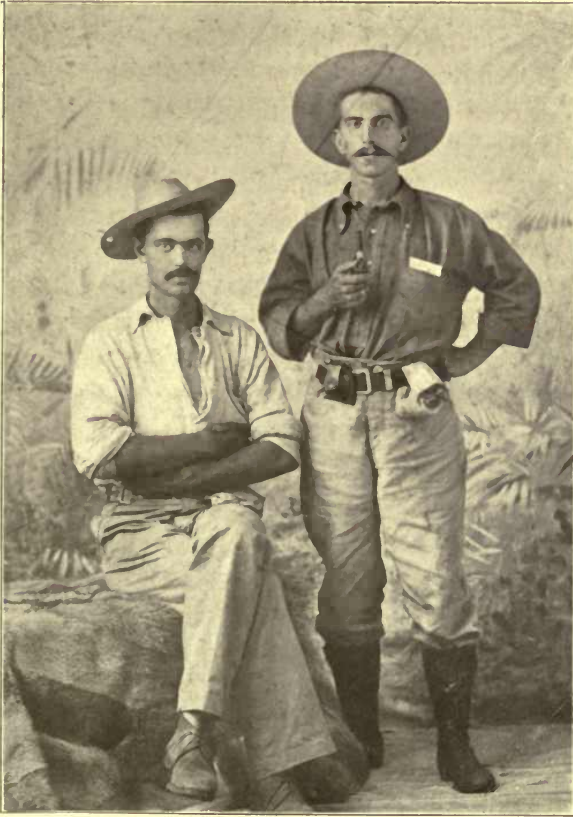
WHILST we were away on the Oras expedition, the garrison at San Ramon had an adventure, which, but for Amyas' promptitude, might have resulted in the capture of the fort. The third morning after we had left, the sentry on the stockade saw what appeared to be a party of native troops coming along the beach from the direction of Oras. He turned out the guard, and summoned the lieutenant in command. The latter, a very nice youngster, but one very new to the work, was inclined to think it was our party returning. At anyrate, he proposed to allow the new-comers to approach a good deal nearer the fort, the gate of which was open, with the guard drawn up outside. Amyas, however, took a different view. He pointed out the absence of any white man, and declared he could see only one or two rifles ; then, while the lieutenant was still uncertain, he settled the question in characteristic fashion by picking up a rifle, and firing a shot just over the heads of the strangers.

A moment later, all doubts had vanished. The band fled back to the cover of the jungle, from which two or three futile bullets were discharged at the fort. The supposed troops consisted of some fifty pulajanes dressed in the uniforms captured at Dolores and Oras, whilst, as we learnt later, there were nearly a hundred and fifty more bolomen lurking in the jungle, ready to dash out the moment their comrades had reached the gateway of the fort.

It was, in fact, the same band which we had been hunting at San Polycarpio.

That day was a busy one at San Ramon. Sacks were filled with sand and placed along the platform of the palisade, rifles were cleaned and ammunition boxes arranged at convenient intervals. From the smoke rising amongst the trees, it was evident that the pulajanes were camped about two hundred yards off, and from time to time the garrison could hear their war chants. It seemed absolutely certain that an attack would be made after dark, and no man slept that night. More than once, the defenders thought it was coming, as the voices grew nearer; and just about dawn, when a dozen torches suddenly flashed out, only some fifty yards away, there seemed no longer any doubt. A volley ripped out from the palisade, a couple of bullets came back from the jungle, and then—it was all over. When daylight came, the pulajanes had disappeared. Their fires were out, and not a trace of them was to be found. We never knew why they retreated so suddenly, and afterwards, when sixty-five out of that band of over two hundred attacked the fort at a time when the whole garrison was present, their conduct seemed even more extraordinary.

The following day we returned from Oras in a coastguard steamer which had fortunately happened to pick us up on the coast. As soon as we landed, the lieutenant gave us the news of what had happened the night before. Naturally, I looked round for Amyas, but could not see him. However he strolled out of the jungle a moment later, shot-gun in hand. He had been out, alone, to see



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if any pulajanes had been killed or wounded by the volley fired just before dawn.

The coastguard steamer had, of course, no provisions for us. We might have assumed that. However, she promised to return very soon with everything we needed. I sent a large batch of copy by her, and, as the skipper posted this in one of the other islands, thus disarming suspicion, it was delivered safely; and its publication made a considerable sensation in Manila, where, hitherto, the true state of affairs had been successfully concealed from the public.

The departure of that coastguard marked the beginning of our lean time. We started it with nothing in the storehouse but tinned salmon, mouldy rice and some weevily army biscuits, no tea, coffee, tobacco or meat. The salmon, however, did not last very long, and then we had to forage round for something else to eat with our rice. Already, Crockett had talked of eating bats, and we had laughed at him. Now we found that, as usual, he was a true prophet. The day the salmon gave out we had our first bat hunt, paddling out in our canoes to a little island at the head of the bay, where bats in scores were hanging from the branches of every big tree. We shot them down with our Winchesters, and the soldiers gave them the *coup de grâce* as they lay on their backs on the ground, trying to fight with claws and teeth. They were the most repulsive-looking brutes imaginable, about three feet six across the wings, with furry bodies and devilish faces, and their sickly white flesh tasted much as they themselves had looked. Still, we were very hungry, and that made a difference.

The bats were only the beginning, for it was exactly a month from the time the salmon was finished until the steamer arrived with stores. I wish I had our complete menus for those thirty days. Bat-stew and rice was, of course, the staple article, the staff of life; but sometimes we managed to vary it a little. There were a few toucans to be obtained in the jungle, and now and then we bagged one, but the local variety was small and stringy, whilst there was always the chance of a boloman bagging yourself instead. A large iguana, yellow and black, was by no means bad, when you did not recollect what he looked like in life; and the same could be said of the cuttlefish we found in the pools at low tide; but a stewed hawk, which we tried one day when there were no bats, was voted a failure. He tasted what he was—a bird of prey.

The old fish corral belonging to the town had been partially destroyed by the pulajanes; but the men repaired it, and we hoped for great results. However, we were disappointed. The catches made were so small that there was not even enough fish for the rapidly increasing number of sick, except on one red-letter day when we secured a small ground shark. The men ate monkeys, which they shot in the jungle near by, and the smell of these being roasted invariably made us ill, but still, it was impossible to complain. The poor little fellows never murmured once, possibly because of their intense personal loyalty to Crockett, though the fact that, like ourselves, they were clean out of tobacco told severely on their spirits. They ceased chatting, ceased card-playing, and began to spend their whole time on the seaward side of the palisade,

watching for the coastguard steamer which did not come.

Once, at the end of the third week, we had a few minutes of wild excitement. A soldier, who had climbed a big tree just outside the palisade, suddenly cried out that he could see smoke beyond the outer mangrove swamp. In a moment, everyone was straining his eyes, and then the vessel herself came in sight—a large cargo steamer some two miles away, heading up through the Straits of San Bernardino, her crew probably unaware even that the island was in a state of rebellion.

Besides the mere question of hunger, which was bad enough, the uncertainty of the whole situation began to tell on us. We were cut off entirely from the rest of the world; we had not even heard a rumour from anywhere, and we began to wonder whether a disaster elsewhere, or even a general rising throughout the archipelago, was not the reason for the delay in sending us stores. The authorities knew the position in which we were placed, and it seemed inconceivable that they should not trouble to relieve us. Moreover, we had heard at Oras that the pulajanes were becoming stronger in numbers and more daring in their tactics. For all practical purposes, we were besieged, even if we saw none of the enemy, for we had so many sick, and the rest were so run down, that we were not in a position to venture inland. We could only sit still and wait. During that month, at headquarters they had not the slightest idea whether Crockett's force still existed, or whether we had all been massacred, and, as it turned out afterwards, apparently they did not care greatly. They had

sent Crockett out on a futile errand, quartered him in a ruined town of no strategic importance, where, practically speaking, he could do nothing more than wait for the pulajanes to attack him, and with that their interest in him seemed to end.

Looking back on it now, I think the most extraordinary part of the business so far as we were concerned was that we did not quarrel. We had nothing to eat, nothing to smoke, nothing to do, and yet there was not even a squabble. Amyas was the only one who managed to find any occupation. He wandered out into the clearing one day, routed through the heap of ashes where the pulajanes had made a bonfire of the Presidente's furniture, and finally returned with a slightly charred table leg. He was going to make a piccolo banjo, he said. The next thing was the body. A couple of miles away, one of us had shot a pulajan with a remarkably large head, and we knew that the skull was still there, beside the trail. Crockett, who was keenly interested, suggested fetching this, but, as we had no saw of any sort, it would have been almost impossible to cut it down; so, in the end, Amyas made use of an abnormally big cocoanut shell. Frets were fashioned out of some tortoiseshell we had taken off another pulajan; pegs came from a smashed guitar which we had found on the Bat Island; there had been a long tress of black hair glued to it with dried blood, so we were pretty certain of its story. The question of a vellum worried Amyas at first, worried us all in fact. We tried monkey skin and failed; then, one day, a pulajan dog came within range, and the problem was solved. Amyas' sole tool was an old pocket

knife; but that banjo exists to-day, beautifully finished, and as true in tone as any you would buy in a big West End shop.

The last meal we had before the coastguard steamer came in was boiled snake. The bat-hunting party had been out, and found, to their dismay, that the bats were missing—apparently we had scared them off—but one of the soldiers had shot a fourteen-feet-long python, which was chopped into six-inch sections and delivered to the cook. The flesh was a kind of sickly white, and when ready for table exuded a yellow grease. I was deadly hungry, but still it was too much for me. I got up and went to the edge of the stockade feeling rather bad, but a moment later I had forgotten most of my troubles, for the lookout man in the tree shouted that he could see the coastguard steamer, actually see her.

That night the pulajanes might have taken Fort San Ramon. We were lethargic, to put it nicely. We smoked big, black, rank cigars, and drank even ranker Kentucky Rye, and then we fed: and after that we smoked and drank more rye whisky until the ship's cook had got another meal ready for us. Had we not been living for a month on bats and rice and water, and been trying to make cigars of paw-paw leaves?

After all, there was very little news. They had not worried about Crockett at headquarters—that was the only explanation given. They knew he was a resourceful man—very different from themselves; moreover, he was a Southern gentleman of good family and they, as Yankees, were not likely to feel kindly towards him. There was a good

deal of jealousy. Time after time, Crockett had done things they would never have dared even to talk about, so, naturally, they would not have shed many tears over his disappearance. Then, too, a new factor had entered into the situation. We, ourselves, had become of importance during that month. Our articles had got through to Manila, and the officials were thirsting for our blood. We had shown them up badly, no difficult matter in the circumstances, and—I say it deliberately, knowing it to be true—one at least of the commissioners was using his utmost endeavour to get us killed. Charitable people used to say of this man that he was merely a typical politician with a touch of the fanatic in him, that, whilst he was primarily out after the dollar, he also believed sincerely in the brown-brother theory. Personally, I am not sure about the latter part. I am quite ready to believe he was dishonest and dishonourable, otherwise he would have stopped the Samar revolt at the outset, as he could have done; but I believe, too, that the man was a traitor to his own country, that he was selling information, and possibly arms as well, to the insurrectos; otherwise, it would be almost impossible to explain his savage animosity towards both the army and ourselves. I can see him now, with his lean, pale, wolf's face, snarling at us on the landing of the palace. But that was later, when we had exposed his schemes, and he knew the army must go down to Samar. At the moment, however, all he could do was to hold up our correspondence, have it stolen in fact, and give orders to the coastguard skippers not to allow us on board their vessels—in short, when Crockett's party was taken

away, we were to be left alone on shore, for the pulajanes to murder us; and, very possibly, the pulajanes had already been informed of this plan. Still, the commissioner was far away, and the skipper of that especial coastguard was a white man. He told us of the scheme, and he told us, too, with many Squarehead oaths, to come aboard and go round the coast with him. If the worst came to the worst, he said, he could appeal to the Governor General, who was a gentleman from the South, and not a grafter from Boston.

So we went away on the coastguard, entirely upsetting the Manila plot for our elimination, and then we got in again with our old friends of the 14th Infantry, and they helped us up into the interior, having at that time a launch running on the Katubig River, a service of considerable danger, as there were many shoals, and, whenever the little craft ran aground, the pulajanes began to take pot shots at her from the bank.

Our main object now was to keep as far as possible from the Civil Government, so as not to be turned out of the island, and in this we were fairly successful. It was only when we had had enough of the campaign that we went back to Manila. Our later experiences were much the same as the earlier ones—dragging through the horrible mud, sleeping in swamps with the leeches crawling over you, chasing pulajanes whom you never saw until they were ready to turn the tables and chase you, starving and sweating and cursing your own folly in having come down to Samar at all. We should have given it up earlier but for one thing—we were the only British subjects in

the field, and, for that reason, we could not go until there was a decent excuse for so doing. The Americans were not going to say we were afraid.

The excuse came at last. Our later newspaper articles had literally goaded the Manila officials to fury, and orders had been given to stop us seeing anything more, to turn us out of the island at all costs. One of the senior officers of the 14th Infantry told us how matters stood. "You will see nothing more," he said, "and you are running a very big risk in staying. There is a transport coming in to-morrow. Go to Manila in her. After all, you have done your job; the army *must* be sent down now to clean up this mess." I am glad to say the latter prophecy proved to be correct. As a result of our articles the civil authorities were forced to call on the military, and the pulajan revolt was not only confined to Samar, but subsequently crushed, as completely as such revolts can ever be crushed in the Philippines—which is not saying very much.

We landed in Manila to find ourselves, if not famous, at least notorious. The wrath of the Government officials, especially of that section which was mixed up with native women, knew no bounds. Most of the men we had met before turned their backs on us now, at anyrate in public, though one or two certainly did warn us privately of the danger of being out alone after dark. The native police would certainly shoot us, they said, and we should not be the first to go that way.

Our most violent enemy was the Commissioner for Commerce and Police, a person named Cameron Forbes. His first move was to declare we were

not British at all, but we answered that by taking our passports to the British Consulate and having them inspected. I am afraid the Consul General looked on us as nuisances—in fact, he practically told us so, and hinted that we had better leave the islands; to which we replied that we would go when we had a chance, but that we were not going to let Forbes scare us away.

The commissioner then tried a new plan. He, a white man, actually attacked us through the columns of a native paper. It sounds almost incredible to anyone accustomed to British official methods, but I still cherish the translation of what Mr Cameron Forbes had to say to the editor of that scurrilous little sheet. Possibly, some ape-like native sub-editor, who was a ladrone in his spare time, altered the wording a little, as it has hardly the Forbes literary flavour, and yet the commissioner never attempted to deny that it was perfectly authentic. It runs:

"*The Manila Times*," said Mr Forbes, "has a correspondent in Samar, who, aside from being a news gatherer for his paper, is a liar. It is this class of men with which the provinces throughout the archipelago are abundantly infested, who are constantly exciting the minds of the people against the Government by their deceitful methods. . . . There is reason to believe that with this article [one of mine] it was proposed to gain a Satanic end, raise a cloud in the minds of American readers in order that these might work for the establishment of a military *régime* in Samar. But they are foiled. In the Scouts and constabulary now operating in Samar, the Government has sufficient

force to allow it to refuse to accede to the wishes of these ill-intentioned persons."

It will be seen that the commissioner had not a very sparkling or witty style, preferring apparently to rely on the professional politician's usual weapon, personal abuse ; moreover, as I have said already, Samar was turned over to the military in the end, and all the well-laid plots were knocked to pieces ; but, at the moment, we were mainly concerned with the fact that this Commissioner of Commerce and Police had published what we considered to be a libel on us.

We could have brought a civil action, claiming damages, but we had no funds, and, anyway, we had been told what the courts were like ; so we decided to take the other alternative and demand the arrest of the Commissioner of Police on a charge of criminal libel. We knew we should be refused, although we had what seemed a clear case ; but, at anyrate, there was a certain amount of fun to be got out of it, so, after warning the whole local press—I think we knew every man on it—we marched up to the judge's offices.

We saw a white judge. He was rude and aggressive from the start, knowing who we were ; but he lay back on his seat and gasped when we asked for a warrant. He could only say : "Commissioner Forbes is an important man, a most important man. He is the President's friend."

Amyas put it to him that, according to the American theory, all men were equal, and that, therefore, the importance of this person did not count at all. The judge was in a fix. He had seen the article, and he could not deny that we had a case, or that

we had a right to a warrant ; but he got out of it by being insulting, which was an effective way, although rather weak from a legal point of view. We told him a few home truths, about his laws, his commissioner and himself, and we left him gasping. Poor wretch ! I can pity him now, because I believe he had some good feelings in him, whilst a post such as his, the position of a political judge, involves unrelieved ignominy.

The press revelled in the incident. So many journalists had received savage sentences, four and five years' hard labour, for alleged libel, that the incident appealed to every newspaper man. I have known many pressmen, but I think I respected those in Manila more than any other crowd with which I have come in contact. They were plucky. If they were American citizens, they were entirely at the mercy of the Government. Anything could be construed as a libel, and the verdict and sentence were foregone conclusions. It was enough for them to be suspected of being in favour of the army, or opposed to corruption and the brown-brother theory, for them to be marked down for imprisonment. It was equally unsafe for them to offend the wife, or native mistress, of a high official, to omit a name in an account of some social function. Yet they never crawled to the commissioners ; in fact, the very dangers of their occupation seemed to have called out all their best instincts, to have put them on their mettle. The press may occasionally be venial in the United States ; but in the Philippines it certainly stood for honour, independence and honesty. It was, after the army, the best thing in Manila.

We were anxious to get away from the islands as soon as possible. We had got all the copy we were likely to obtain, and the chances of making any more money were small ; but we had no wish to go in the orthodox manner to Hong Kong and perhaps get stranded there. We could have got away due east, straight to San Francisco, but that was not what we wanted. The Russo-Japanese War was still going on—the Baltic Fleet had not yet reached Far Eastern waters—and we were anxious to see something of it. In common with most real white men in the East, our sympathies were, naturally, with the Russians, who were a civilised people, of our own colour, whilst their opponents are, at best, but veneered savages. But it was one thing to want to reach the seat of war, another thing actually to reach it, and our hopes had dwindled, almost to vanishing point, when, suddenly, the chance came. A certain famous British blockade runner put into Manila, minus some propeller blades, and through the Consul General, who was anxious to get rid of both her and ourselves, the skipper agreed to take us with him “to wherever he was going, probably to the bottom of the sea,” as he put it. I do not know who was the more relieved, the Consul General or ourselves. He was going to see the last of us, which meant there would be no more frenzied protests from the palace concerning our writings, and we were going to get away from those islands where a native was the equal, if not the superior, of a white man. Moreover, as we were perfectly well aware that our real destination was Vladivostok, then on the point of being besieged, there

were splendid possibilities of excitement and copy.

We should have about a week to wait, the skipper told us; so we settled down to kill the time as best we could. Everything seemed to be going right; we had beaten the Government over the Samar question; we had made Cameron Forbes the laughing stock of Manila; we had got some splendid copy; and now we were going once more into the thick of things. Then Fate intervened. Amyas went out one night to play the banjo at a friend's house in one of the suburbs, and returned in high spirits, though he remarked that a fly had bitten his cheek. Next morning, the fly bite had a black centre, and was paining him. We went to look for the English doctor and found he was away, so had to trust to an American. That evening he went to the Civil Hospital; forty-eight hours later he was dead. Anthrax, English surgeons now tell me it was, though the Americans did not recognise it as such. Nothing else could have killed so splendidly strong a boy in so short a space. He was game to the end, of course. He could not be otherwise. Only an hour before he died, he was talking to me of Vladivostock, wondering whether we should get there before the Japanese blockaded it. He had never known the fear of Death, and, perhaps for that reason, he never suspected that he might be dying. He simply went to sleep, and never awakened, leaving me alone.

The Manila press was good to me. Words are quite inadequate to express my gratitude for what those American journalists and newspaper proprietors did in those days of sorrow. They made

every arrangement for me, and, though I would not have the boy buried in foreign soil, every man on the press was present when the Bishop of the Philippines read the Last Service. Amyas' ashes now lie in his own country, the England he loved so well, but I know there are a score of towns in East and West where men still remember him for his grit, his sense of honour, his courage and, above all perhaps, for his sunny smile.

I left the Philippines, and then I wandered up the China Coast, to Japan, Vancouver, San Francisco, and thence across the United States. Finally, I came home to England, only twenty-eight in point of years, but middle-aged in reality, penniless, disappointed, weary, a broken man, to begin life anew, if I could. And that my Good Comrade has made possible.

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