

ADVENTURES AND ACCIDENTS

BY

LORD BADEN-POWELL OF GILWELL

G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

WITH TEN ILLUSTRATIONS



Baden-Powell of Gilwell

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Editor's Notes:

The reader is reminded that these texts have been written a long time ago. Consequently, they may use some terms or express sentiments which were current at the time, regardless of what we may think of them at the beginning of the 21st century. For reasons of historical accuracy they have been preserved in their original form.

If you find them offensive, we ask you to please delete this file from your system.

This book was written in England and thus contains English spelling and English terms.

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I

A YACHTING ADVENTURE AND ITS LESSON

When men are nervous under fire the best thing their leader can do is to find some petty fault with them—criticize a haversack wrongly fitted or firmly remind them to keep step.

The stressing of such details when metal death is whistling through the air may seem ridiculous, yet it has the effect of arresting thoughts which may be running towards panic, even if it is only to grumble at the preposterous flourishing of red tape at such a moment.

I learned that little piece of wisdom, which has aided me several times, many years ago, when I was a boy, and when I was the one in need of rebuke.

For a long period of my boyhood my four elder brothers and I owned a ten ton cutter—the finest boat, of course, that the world had ever seen. As a matter of fact, she really wasn't a bad boat. We tried her pretty highly in various ways—fishing in spring, cruising in summer, racing in autumn, wild-fowling in winter—and she brought us safely out of all the dangerous moments into which we carelessly ran her.

Our skipper was my eldest brother, who had been a sailor, and therefore knew how to navigate. We younger boys picked up our knowledge from him, and from our own mistakes. We learned not only navigation and boat-handling but all about bending the sails, rigging and painting the ship, deck-scrubbing, cleaning, and carpentry.

Also, of course, we had to be able to cook and—most important of all, perhaps—to swim.

I remember one day in Haslar Creek, Portsmouth, when the fluke of our anchor caught in a mooring chain at the bottom and refused to be raised. To hire a diver and apparatus to go down and clear the obstruction was far too expensive for our small resources. Cut the cable and lose the anchor? We couldn't afford that either.

In the end my brothers stripped and went over the side themselves, descending by the cable, working until their lungs were at bursting point, then bobbing up like seals for gulps of air before diving to the anchor again.

The job was a long one, but at last they all broke surface together, broad grins on their faces. All clear.

My task as the youngest had been to prepare hot cocoa and hot towels for the amateur divers. I saw to their needs, and very soon we were cheerily under way.

That was only one of the adventures we had in Portsmouth harbour and its creeks, which were favourite haunts of ours.

When men-of-war were moored in the harbour, we played the ass at eight o'clock flag-raising and sunset retreat-sounding by solemnly copying naval ceremonial. And what the bluejackets enjoyed particularly was the spectacle of our piping the side when our skipper came alongside from a trip ashore to buy provisions—perhaps a tin of toffee or some kippers.

The neighbourhood provided us with fine fishing, too. We used to catch mullet by going out in the dinghy with a long three-pronged spear, hooking on to the stern-post of one of the old hulks in the harbour, and stabbing downwards whenever we saw silvery glints among the weeds below.

But, unfortunately for the rest of us, our skipper craved for more adventure than sport could offer. He conceived the idea that if we went out to sea whenever dirty weather was brewing, instead of sheltering snugly in harbour, we might some day have an opportunity of rescuing a ship in distress and making a fortune in salvage.

Our suggestion that we should more probably have to pay salvage money to some boat which rescued us was received with scorn. He reminded us that even if the crew were incompetent, our boat was skippered by an expert. All we should have to do would be to leave things to him and decide how to spend our share of the prize money.

I liked the idea of winning a fortune so easily, and quite sympathized with helping boats in distress, but I still had misgivings. However, I kept these to myself. Our skipper had a scathing tongue for shirkers, and could be a martinet when he liked.

So we became amateur lifeboatmen. And one of our first experiences in this capacity occurred off Harwich.

We were lying in harbour there when a northeast gale swept down upon us with such force that a number of vessels brought up their anchors and shifted to more sheltered spots. In the midst of this turmoil, we saw the lifeboat making her way out to sea. Evidently she had received some signal of distress.

The sight was too tempting for our ambitious skipper. Instead of following the other vessels to shelter, he decided to make for the open sea. He addressed his crew:

‘There are two channels out through the sands. Quite likely the lifeboat will take the wrong one and never find the ship. We will take the other and find her.’

Even to my youthful mind, it seemed that there was a flaw somewhere in this logic, but there was no time for discussion. Without demur-but without noticeable enthusiasm-the crew busied themselves with hoisting the storm sails and making everything snug for a buffeting.

In a few minutes our anchor was up and we slid from our cosy berth into the murky swell of the elements.

Not a sign of lifeboat or ship was to be seen among the foaming mountains of water through which, drenched to the skin, we crashed our way. And very soon we forgot all about those other craft. We had enough to do to save our own boat.

For a whole day and night we had to face the storm, powerless to make our way back to land. When, exhausted, we reached harbour-and how welcome was the sight of that placid water!-we found that the vessel in distress had been picked up by the lifeboat and a powerful tug and towed safely home to the tune of some thousands of pounds in salvage.

Even that experience, however, did not cure my eldest brother of his ambition. Several times afterwards we had similar thrills and found ourselves more likely to be salved against than salvaging.

The one which remains in my memory most clearly came one day when we were sailing out of Portsmouth harbour in a light breeze, with a very strong tide running against us and a chop on the water.

To avoid the tide, we hugged the Haslar shore, but at the critical moment of that course we passed into the lee of the fort and an eddy of wind took us aback. Before we knew what was happening, we felt a frightening bump and a heave. We heeled over, stuck hard and fast on the stone groyne

running out from the fort.

It was a dangerous situation, but our skipper did not lose his head. He gave orders calmly, as if the mishap were part of our ordinary programme. And the crew jumped to obey him.

As for me, I was frankly scared. I realized that we were in a very serious predicament, and trembled.

As we worked, the boat was screwing herself about on the cruel stones, creaking with so sinister a sound that it seemed she must break up at any moment.

She was nearly on her beam-ends, and we younger boys looked around us, felt how vast the waters were and how small we were-and put a new desperation into our labours.

Then, with a wave of hope, I saw two big wherries racing towards us, followed by a powerful tug.

‘Now,’ I thought, ‘we may be all right. We shall get a few hefty fellows on board with a good warp which they can pass to the tug, and in a jiffy we shall be off and afloat.’

My relief lasted for just one minute. When I pointed out our would-be rescuers to the skipper he said angrily, ‘If one of those fellows puts a foot on our deck knock him overboard. We don’t want their help.’

As they came near he bawled to them that we did not need assistance. Our trapped boat groaned on the stones with what to me was a new note of despair.

My brother explained crisply as he laboured, that if the ‘wreckers’, as he called the wherries, once passed a rope to our vessel they could claim salvage against us.

‘We can’t afford it,’ he said; but what he meant was that our pride would not allow it.

Under my brother’s sharp orders I worked with every ounce of my strength, but all the while the violent lurches of the boat were adding to the panic which I was trying to smother.

Then a new shock hit us. The boat began to heel right over to the water, and it seemed inevitable that disaster had arrived. I came to the end of my tether, shut my eyes and waited numbly. . .

A voice shouted in my ear. It was our skipper’s. ‘Save that boathook, you lubber! What are you dreaming about?’

I opened my eyes. My brother was pointing angrily at a boathook which was slipping overboard close to me.

The command did me good. I slid to the gunwale as the hook fell into the sea, and began to make grabs for it.

And as I did so, I found that I was not afraid any more. If, I thought, my brother could concern himself with little things at this moment, then our plight could not be so desperate. Death, perhaps, was not at our elbows after all.

I caught the boathook, and pulled it aboard, ready now to use it as a weapon against any wrecker who dared to board us.

As I looked round eagerly for further orders, the boat began to sway again. Slowly, slowly it moved . . . until it had, as if by a miracle, regained an even keel.

Surely we were heaving clear of the rocks? A moment of suspense, and-yes, we were off! We were afloat!

We handled the sails with an energy that surprised even ourselves. There was a favourable puff of wind, and we were under way.

We sighed deeply, looked at each other with faces that were perhaps a little white, and then burst into the laughter which often follows tension.

‘Well, we fooled the wreckers, eh?’ grinned the skipper.

Afterwards we treated the incident lightly, as nothing but a little joke, but one moment of it made an indelible impression on my young mind.

That was the moment when I had been giving in to fear but had been inspired to take a new grip on myself by my brother’s brisk order to attend to a detail.

I do not know whether he had spotted my plight, but I do know that his command at that critical moment was one of the best things that ever happened to me.

II

JOKILOBOVU

Jokilobovu was the gentleman’s name.

If you imagine to yourself the kind of man who ought to have such a name, I believe that the actual bearer of it would exactly fill your picture.

He was a big, burly, jovial, good-looking savage.

There was a look of joyous vitality and of great consequence about him as he strode from the village across the veldt in the breezy sunshine.

With his towering muscular form shining with oil like a polished bronze, his kilt of wild-cat skins swinging from his hips, and his great hardwood knobkerrie glinting in the sun, he made a fine figure of a man.

He was a very live contrast to the bowed little old fellow who followed in his footsteps, a pathetic creature shuffling quietly along behind him.

The women and children from one particular group of huts, shading their eyes, looked vaguely after the two men; others scarcely turned their heads.

The old man was, as they expressed it, ‘going for the walk’ with Jokilobovu. The phrase was a well-understood one in Embekelwane. ‘The walk’ was a frequent occurrence there.

From that walk presently Jokilobovu will return, alone, swinging along cheerily through the waving grasses, knobkerrie in hand, his duty done.

That duty? To remove from among the many mouths of the tribe one who was no longer able to

earn his food as a hunter or as a warrior or as a councillor.

As they walk there is no thought of flight or evasion on the part of him who follows Jokilobovu; he has played his little part in life; his turn has come; it is the regular custom of the tribe- as immutable as a white tie in a London ballroom.

Those who were his kith and kin are looking curiously after him for the last time; above the little 'Hill of Death' in front the aasvogels are already circling to welcome him.

'Jokilobovu! Tell me how many men you have thus killed?'

The great fellow, looking down at his questioner, merely laughs and asks: 'How many locusts are there in a flight?'

At the time when I knew him Jokilobovu was certainly a busy official. The nation was just then mourning for its late King. When their great chief died the fact was immediately known all over the country by that wireless of uncivilized lands still unaccounted for. But it was etiquette not to know of the death until official intimation was given, and this, for a very human reason, would not be for some weeks. Meantime, it was understood that no singing, no dancing, no feasting, no smoking went on in the kraal.

Directly the King breathed his last, one of the royal oxen was slain and the hide was stripped off and wrapped round the King's body. A hole was then cut in the back wall of the kraal and the corpse was removed secretly during the night and conveyed to the mountain, and there bestowed in a cave. His widows accompanied and took charge of it.

And here they kept their painful watch until in process of time the hide coffin became dry and hard, and that which was inside also became withered and dried up. From time to time the coffin was rocked by the attendant ladies, and when at last it gave out the rattling sound that told of complete desiccation within, the time was judged to have arrived for the news to be publicly proclaimed that the King was really and truly dead.

Upon this followed two important items of ceremonial. In the first place the coffin was taken out and laid upon the ground in the open. The royal herd of black cattle was brought to the spot, and the first ox that went forward and noticed the body was reckoned to have imbibed the soul of the dead chief. It was thenceforward known by his name and was given special care and feeding for the remainder of its natural days.

The next ceremony was that where a huge grave was dug and the body of the King was lowered into it. The grave was large because it had to accommodate something more than the royal corpse. The living widows had to enter it, and, kneeling round him, were buried with him. The great man could not be allowed to go alone into the next world.

This part of the ceremony was accountable for the somewhat natural hesitation on the part of the ladies to announce that the King was dead.

But they were not the only ones to go.

I happened to be there as a member of a commission at that time, and the King being dead we had to do our business with his mother, who was acting as Regent, and with his ministers.

One day we missed the Prime Minister from the conference, and when we asked where he was there was a sort of tittering among the others and they said they thought he was not very well. The next day the Minister for Foreign Affairs was not there; another day, and the chief butler was missing; then the chief baker was absent; and when again we had asked for the fifth time what it

all meant, the Queen Mother suddenly spoke words to this effect: 'Oh, you jossers, don't you know? They've all "gone for the walk".'

Yes, we knew what that meant. It implied going for the walk with Jokilobovu to the hill of execution from which none ever returned.

The idea of this was that the King would need, in addition to his wives, his councillors and his servants to help him in the next world just as much as he had needed them in this, and so they had all been sent after him.

Well, we remonstrated with Her Majesty about this, but she seemed a little hurt and remarked 'Oh, but that's nothing. I'm obliged to send a whole lot of other people too to keep him company. You see, it's this way. The whole nation is mourning for the King. If you go to any village in the land you will find many people weeping and crying for him. Well, in a great many places they have never seen him or known him. So that their tears are merely camouflage; they are not mourning from their hearts.

'Therefore, in order to make them truly sorry for his death, and so that they shall not be humbugs, I send some of my executioners round and they kill one or two men in each village, and the people then have something to weep for.'

We told her that this was all very well, but it wasn't done by the best queens nowadays.

So she asked about our Great White Queen, Victoria; did she never have anybody killed?

'Oh, no,' we replied; 'at least, hardly ever. Only in very rare cases, and then after they have had a fair trial.'

'Ah, well,' she replied, 'then I am all right, because I always give my people a fair trial. You see, when my executioner comes to a village he makes all the people sit in a circle, and he then walks round and just points here and there and so picks out those who are to be killed. When you are sowing mealies some grains may fall on soft damp ground, and others on hard dry ground; some the sun may shine on, others may be in the shade-it is a matter of fortune; the sower does his best for all; all have their fair chance.

'And so it is with these people and the executioner. They are strangers to him; he knows nothing about them personally; there is no favour or affection, and in that way everybody has a fair chance.'

We gave full appreciation of her fair-minded intention, but finally told her that since the nation was now being treated on the level of one that really counted she must put an end to these unworthy methods.

She replied that she quite saw it now. It was what the missionaries had told her also. Her nation was now to be on a higher footing than ever before. She felt that in raising it she raised herself; she felt that soon she might no longer look up vaguely into the sky for a sight of the Great White Queen, but that she would herself be sitting on the same mountain-top by her side, hand in hand, as a sister ruler.

We became perfectly enthusiastic in our applause of her sentiments.

'So that was what we approved of!' 'Yes, yes.' 'And then there would be no more need to threaten or to lecture her?' 'No, no, certainly not'.

'Good. Then the day after to-morrow executions would cease.

(A side glance at Jokilobovu's face told one plainly that he had hardly grasped in all its dire significance what this portended for him; the habitual smile was on his face, but rather in a state of suspense, as it were masked; the meaning behind it was for the moment not quite alive.)

'Yes,' she continued, 'the day after to-morrow. Meantime, before the old system was entirely finished there were just nine more people she felt she must hand over to the attention of Jokilobovu (a bright intelligence at once illuminated his features). She felt sure that after the vast concessions she had made to meet our wishes we could not, of course, refuse this last little concluding ceremony, which would the better mark the end of the old and inception of the new régime.

This proposition, cleverly and suddenly put, and accompanied by so arch a play of her big brown eyes and so beseeching a smile, all but tumbled our resistance to the ground.

As it was, our opposition was so feeble that I have never been able to persuade myself that those nine did not take the fatal walk. Certainly for some days afterwards Jokilobovu was in particularly happy mood, with none of the downcast air of an unemployed worker about him.

At any rate, before we could collect our wits sufficiently to put our protest into really effective form, our astute opponent went ahead and, from her point of view, took the right strategic step by delivering a rapid counter-attack upon our position, and though that bombardment occurred some decades ago the sound of it still rings in one's ears and the false outworks which it shattered still lie in ruins.

It began, apropos her determination to end executions, when she added a rider to the effect that of course she could only guarantee that she personally would not order them, and that if her young men went out to kill it would be another matter.

She said, by way of quoting an example, that this would very likely be the case within the next few days, when they were proposing to sally out one night and kill the four or five white traders in the country.

'But-you can't mean that!' we expostulated.

'Oh, yes. Well, you see, my elders have considered the matter very carefully and they have come to the conclusion that those traders are playing a low-down trick on us, particularly in selling gin to our people to such an extent that our young men and women are becoming utterly wrecked and demoralized.

'And it doesn't stop there. The temptation is getting hold even of those who ought to be leading the nation aright, the men of the royal blood-aye, and the princesses themselves. More than once we have warned these traders, but without effect. The evil continues.

'When the lion pulls down the hyena, the devourer of the lion's kill, it might be thought that he was doing it from personal annoyance. But here he does it out of friendship for his hunting comrade the panther; the hyena is the foe of both. The lion will kill for both.

'In killing these men we want to uphold you and the missionaries and their good work; and therefore we know we shall have your support and agreement in this little venture.

'The missionaries have told us how good and noble are the Englishmen, and that, if we take up their religion, we shall be like them-honourable and fair-dealing, kindly and helpful to all, sober and moral, clean and healthy. Is not that the truth?'

We heartily assented.



JOKILOBOVU WAS GRINNING

‘Well, and we believed what the missionaries told us; so when white men asked if they could come and set up their shops in our country we, the rulers of the nation, welcomed them, knowing that they would show our people how the white man carries out these good precepts in his actual practice of daily life.

‘They came. They have been here many seasons and we find that they lie, and cheat us in all their dealings. They drink and they make our people drunk; they steal our cattle and women and enslave our children; they buy from us but they never pay. We have asked them to go back to their own country, but they only curse and beat and shoot us.

‘They have proved the missionaries to be liars, and there is danger that by their actions they would now make you out also to be untruthful.

‘So it is to preserve your honour as much as from any selfish ends of our own that our young men are going to take them for the walk.

‘I ought not really to have told you all this, as we intended it to be a pleasing little surprise for you one morning, to show our belief in you; for in spite of the white men-missionaries as well as traders-having lied to us, we are still trying to believe in you.’

Here was a nasty jar. It was a shock that struck home; we had no defence. She was right. The teaching of the missionaries had, as was too often the case, been absolutely let down by Christianity as seen in practice. Once again the object-lesson did not work-a fact that has more than once prompted the question: Would it not be better for missions, like charity, to begin at home; for the missioners to concentrate their efforts there, and when they had ousted crime and sin and squalor and evil and replaced them with Christianity among their own people, then to let these go out as true missioners to the heathen-men who could give the living example in a workaday life to their darker brothers?

It was difficult to counter the Queen’s attack. All we could do was to say that her young men must hold their hands; that we were there to look into little difficulties of that kind; that we would see the traders and go into the whole question with them, and that these abuses-and most especially the liquor traffic-must assuredly be put an end to.

We would see to it.

‘And will you have all the gin in store smashed up and destroyed, so that there is no chance of its further misuse?’

‘Most certainly we will. You can rest assured of that. Trust to us. You may now go in peace to your kraals.’

The Queen made as if to depart with the rest, but paused to let the public and her own entourage go out, and then as she turned back again we felt that she had come to give us one word of thanks from her heart.

She took a further hasty look round to see that there were no listeners about; that arch, appealing look came once more into her eyes, and with a captivating smile she whispered: 'When you are breaking up the liquor, please save just one case for me.'

And Jokilobovu behind her was grinning.

III

A STORY OF THE MATABELE RISING

I was in Bulawayo when the Matabele Rising I was in full swing—in 1896.

At ten o'clock at night, just as Sir Frederick Carrington was thinking that we had done enough office work for the day, Sir Charles Metcalf and Burnham, the American Scout, rode up and came into the office looking a bit dishevelled and worn.

They had been riding out in the evening to visit Colonel Beal's column in Salisbury, which was camped about three miles out of the town. Seeing fires close to the road and near to where they thought the camp must be, they had ridden up to them and found themselves in the camp of a large impi of the enemy. They had only escaped by making their way home by a detour through the bush.

The news seemed too improbable, almost, to be true, and yet the bearers of it were not men to get excited and bring in a false report.

So I telephoned to a picket we had at Government House (about two miles out of town) to send a patrol to investigate.

But the subsequent reports were not wholly satisfactory, and I roused up a friend in the middle of the night to show me the way; and we rather upset the sleep of the residents of Government House by appearing there to make further inquiries at about three in the morning.

Nothing satisfactory was to be learned there, so back we went to Bulawayo, and, getting a fresh horse and a police trooper for guide, I went out again towards Beal's camp.

There, in the early dawn, I was at last able to see the enemy clearly enough.

On the opposite bank of the Umgusa River they were camped in long lines, fires burning merrily, and parties of them going to and from the stream of water. I took my information on to Beal's camp.

I was much taken with the coolness with which the news was received there. It was not above two miles and a half from the camp of the enemy.

The men were ordered to get their breakfast without delay, and a patrol of a sergeant and two men was sent out to the stream to see if there was good water there, and also (apparently as an afterthought) whether they, too, could see the enemy.

Before we had finished breakfast they returned.

‘Well, is it all right? Is there water there?’

‘Yes.’

‘Is it good water?’

‘I couldn’t tell.’

‘Why not?’

‘Because the Matabele were there and wouldn’t let us come near.’

So we saddled and moved up towards the spot to await the arrival of more troops from Bulawayo, for I had sent my police trooper back with a note to tell them there that ‘it was good enough’ and to ask that Spreckley’s mounted column should be sent out to join us.

Presently they came up, followed by a few volunteers in carts, who wanted to join in the fun.

Our strength was 260 mounted men, with two guns and an ambulance.

The country was undulating veldt, covered with brush, through which a line of mounted men could move in open files.

As we advanced we formed into line, with both flanks thrown well forward-especially the right flank, under Beal, which was to work round in rear of the enemy onto their line of retreat-a duty which was most successfully carried out.

The central part of the line then advanced at a trot straight for the enemy’s position.

The enemy was about 1,200 strong, as we afterwards found out. They did not seem very much excited at our advance, but all stood looking as we crossed the Umgusa stream; but as we began to breast the slope on their side of it, and on which their camp lay, they became exceedingly lively and were soon running like ants to take good positions at the edge of a long belt of thicker brush.

We afterwards found that their apathy at first was due to a message from the M’limo (a sort of god), who had instructed them to approach Bulawayo and to draw out the garrison and to get us to cross the Umgusa, because he (the M’limo) would then cause the stream to open and swallow up every man of us. After which the impi would have nothing to do but to walk into Bulawayo and cut up the women and children at their leisure.

But something had gone wrong with the M’limo’s machinery, and we crossed the stream without any accident. So, as we got nearer to the swarm of black-heads among the grass and bushes, their rifles began to pop and their bullets to flip past with a weird little ‘phit’, ‘phit’, or a jet of dust and a shrill ‘w-e-e-e-w’ where they ricocheted off the ground.

Some of our men, accustomed to mounted infantry work, were now for jumping off to return the fire, but the order was given: ‘No: make a cavalry fight of it. Forward! Gallop!’

Then, as we came up close, the enemy let us have an irregular racketsy volley, and in another moment we were among them.

They did not wait, but one and all they turned to fly, dodging in among the bushes, loading as they ran. And we were close upon their heels zigzagging through the thorns, jumping off now and then or pulling off to fire a shot, and on again.

The men that I was with-Grey’s Scouts-never seemed to miss a shot.

The Matabele, as they ran, kept stopping behind bushes to fire. Now and again they tried to rally, but whenever a clump of them began to form, or try to stand, we went at them with a whoop and a yell, and both spurs in, and sent them flying. Of course, besides their guns they had their assegais.

Several of our horses got some wounds, and one man got a horrid stab right through the stomach.

Farther on a horse was shot and in the fall his rider was stunned. The Matabele came louping up, grinning at the anticipated bloodshed, but Sergeant Farley of Grey's Scouts was there before them and, hoisting up his comrade onto his horse, got safely away.

Everywhere one found the enemy creeping into bushes, where they lay low till some of us came by, and then they loosed off their guns at us after we had passed.

I had my Colt repeater with me, with only six cartridges in the magazine, and soon I found that I had finished all these, so, throwing it under a peculiar tree where I might find it again, I went on with my revolver.

Presently I came to an open stretch of ground, and about eight yards before me was a Kaffir with a Martini-Henry.

He saw me and, dropping on one knee, drew a steady bead on me. I felt so indignant at this that I rode at him as hard as I could go, calling him every name under the sun.

He aimed-for an hour it seemed to me- and it was quite a relief when at last he fired, at about ten yards' distance, and still more of a relief when I realized that he had clean missed me.

Then he jumped up and turned to run, but he had not gone two paces when he fell, shot by one of our men behind me.

At last I called a halt. Our horses were done and the enemy were all scattered, and there were as many left behind us hiding in the bushes as there were running on in front.

A few minutes spent in breathing the horses, and a vast amount of jabber and chaff, and then we formed the line and returned at a walk, clearing the bush as we went.

IV

THE SPORT OF RAJAHS

Among the several pig-sticking spears which hang in honourable retirement upon my wall there is one whose shaft is split for some three out of its six feet of length.

And by that split there hangs the tale of some of the most exciting moments of my life.

Two of us were out in camp together, more for shooting than for pig-sticking; still, we had our horses and spears with us. Our tents were pitched in a delightful spot on the high-wooded bank of the Jumna. Close to us lay our hunting-ground, rough grass country with occasional strips of thick jungle and occasional nullahs, or dry watercourses.

A preliminary glance at the ground overnight revealed signs of pig-in acres of upturned earth-so abundantly that we were forced to forgo our shooting in favour of trying for a boar instead.

Thus the early dawn found us posted at the point of one of the covers, while the coolies began to beat it from the farther end. Waiting in a state of keen expectancy, we could hear their shouts drawing nearer and nearer, and our horses' hearts were beating quick and tremulous between our knees.

Suddenly both horses fling round their heads with ears pricked; there he stands-not thirty yards from us a grand grey boar with curling yellow tusches and his cunning, savage little eyes glistening in the broad morning sunlight. He is listening to the distant sound of the beaters and does not see us.

Scarcely daring to breathe, we sit motionless as statues, with all our eyes, all our senses, fixed on him. He moves a few paces forward and pauses again to listen. Will he never go?

At last he swings round, trots for a few paces, and then breaks into a rough, tumbling canter away across the open.

Now we cautiously gather up our reins, slide our feet home, and prepare to follow so soon as he has got sufficiently far from the cover not to be tempted to double back on finding himself hunted. At length my companion gives the word to go, and we bound away together after the great louping form now distant a good quarter of a mile over the yellow grass.

Our horses are mad keen for the fray, and as one tears through the fresh, cool air all bodily weight seems to leave one's extremities and to be concentrated into a great heartful of elation. One realizes then how good it is to be alive.

On we go with little to check our pace but an occasional grip to fly; presently, however, my horse begins to show that he at any rate does not realize any material change in my actual avoirdupois, and I gradually find myself dropping behind in the race. Nearer and nearer we draw to the pig, and at last George turns his spear ready to take the first blood.

But there's many a slip. The old pig is still cantering along in his deliberate yet far-reaching stride, looking to a novice as though he had not seen us; but he knows; his ears are laid back, and one eye or the other is constantly glancing behind him to watch our moves.

At last George's chance comes. Closer and closer he edges to the boar; an extra spurt and he is nearly on him.

The boar gives a half-turn to the right, and quick as thought George's horse has turned with him-but the boar's half-turn is but for one stride; in the next he whips round at a right-angle to his former course, and George's spear-head drives bloodless into the sand a yard behind him.

Riding twenty yards behind George, I am able to turn my horse more rapidly onto the new direction, and I gain a good start by cutting the corner to head my quarry.

As I approach his intended line the boar cocks his ears, alters his course a point towards me and, as though projected by some hidden spring, is suddenly close under my horse's girths.

My spear-point is down just in time; by good luck rather than good management it plunges in between his shoulder blades, and I crash it down with all my force while my horse cleverly jumps the snorting monster; but the spear is jammed in the boar, and as he rushes beneath me he tears it from my hand and staggers onward with the shaft standing on him.

Nor does he go far, for his blood is up, and when George hastens gaily after him, intent to kill, the enraged old brute turns staunchly to him with every bristle pricked and tusches chapping, makes towards his enemy. Now George's horse with staring eyes and frightened snort whips sharply round and will not face this fearsome foe. For a moment the pig marks the man's discomfiture and then turns to profit by it. At a sturdy trot he pursues his way towards the jungle looming large ahead. Once more, and yet again, does George try a fresh attack, always with the same result. Each defeat, however, has brought the boar much nearer to his refuge, so as a last resort I take over George's spear and press with all the speed I can command to overtake the pig. He has but twenty yards to go when I am on him. He flies along, nor deigns to turn.

Ah, friend, I have thee now! I close with him and jam the spear down fiercely on his burly back; the spearhead slips aside. Again I try with like result, and an instant later the thorny bushes close behind him and bar my further way.

We quickly make our plans, and, posting ourselves on either of the cover in which he hides, we watch against his least attempt to escape.

Presently the boys join us, and while one goes back to camp for a fresh spear for me, we get the blunt one fined up on a local sharpening-stone.

A grateful interval of refreshment, and then, rearmed and rested, we set the beaters on to drive him forth once more.

But this is no easy job. He cares not for their drums and threats, but when they near him charges and breaks through their line to nestle into some thick bush behind them. They turn again and treat him to an infernal serenade.

Suddenly their monotonous yelling takes another tone; there is a confused babble of talking, a hush, and then a succession of somewhat more coherent shouts, from which we gather that 'old Buldoo is killed by the boar'. The beating ceases and the coolies come huddling out of the bushes carrying one of their number between them.

Of course he is not killed, nor anything like it; but his friends hope that he is, seeing in his decease a possible division among them of eighty rupees consolation money from us sahibs!

Poor Buldoo has, however, a horrid circular gash inside the thigh; but we soon have him well patched up and homeward bound, comfortably installed upon a native bedstead from a neighbouring melon-gardener's hut.

Then for the first time my shikaree steps forward, grinning, and holding in his hand the spear I had lost in the pig. The boar, in charging Buldoo, has brushed close past himself, so that he was able to grip the spear with both hands and to wrench it out. But the shaft is split beyond repair.

Once more the beaters get to work, and whether it is some innate pluck or a stoical submission to fate that guides them, one cannot but admire the way in which they proceed, unarmed and on foot, to tackle a brute who has ten to one the best of them in the jungle.

George too dismounts and is going in with them, spear in hand, leaving me to ride the boar should he break; but at this moment excited shouting from a goatherd on a neighbouring knoll informs us that our wily quarry has taken advantage of our preoccupation and has quietly slipped away.

In a few seconds we are on the knoll, and thence we see our friend lobbing away across the plain. For a second time we have a glorious but all too short burst in the open, and again George forges well ahead of me. However, the pig is in no humour to give us a gallop; when he finds that we

are overtaking him he stiffens his stride, and, dodging in his course for a moment or two, he suddenly turns and comes at George with murder in his eye.

But he has not reckoned on the sharpened spear, and as he bounds for the horse with his head on one side to deliver the gash of his razorsharp tusk, the spear-point catches him fair in the shoulder and rolls him over in the dust. He is on his legs again immediately and, furious with rage, turns and comes at once for me.

He is a grand specimen of sturdy, savage pluck as he bristles up large towards me; but gives one little time for admiration as he plunges headlong at the horse.

A good point into his back scarcely stops the impetus of the rush, and a quick upward twist of his head, as if merely to look at me, results in an ugly slit in my horse's shoulder.

But the boar himself is now sorely stricken. Close by him is one of those curses of the Indian hunting-ground, a deep nullah, or dry watercourse, some twenty feet wide and ten deep, with steep sides. Into this he plunges, and when we reach the edge we see him creeping into the cover of a big thorn-bush in the bottom. We note that immediately above the bush the sides have toppled in and have completely blocked the ravine. So, moving a few yards down the bank, we dismount, leave our horses, and scramble down, spear in hand, into the bottom of the nullah. Then we advance shoulder to shoulder towards the bush, and from a distance of ten yards or so we hurl two or three clods into it.

Presently there is a rustle, and our friend quietly sneaks out on the far side, trotting lamely up the nullah till he finds the road barred by the fallen walls.

Then he turns and faces us, his little eyes sparkling red with rage, blood welling and glistening down his shoulder, his broad nose dry and dusty, and blood and slime dropping from his panting jaws.

His picture is photographed on my mind; but the photograph is an instantaneous one, for in a moment more his ears are pricked, his mane is on end, and he comes towards us at a shambling trot; at five yards' distance he changes to a gallop and rushes blindly at us. Our spears are low; there is a shock; we are both hurled back against the side of the ravine.

Then in a cloud of dust we see the boar on his knees at our feet, both spears planted in his chest and shoulder.

He essays to rise but falls back upon his side, and one more spear-thrust into his side finishes off as game a boar as ever ran.

V

A LION HUNT

If we had not gone hippo-hunting that day there would have been no lion hunt-so I must begin at the beginning.

A friend and I were camping near a lake in Africa in which there were a lot of hippos, and the natives thereabouts were in a state bordering on famine, and needed meat badly.

But the hippos were very cunning. They would not show themselves above water when we were about, so it was very difficult to get a shot at them.

One day we went out to a distant part of the shore to stalk them.

Hippos, as you know, can stay a long time under water, but they have to come up occasionally to breathe. When doing so they are mighty careful only to put their nostrils just above the surface; they then blow off a little fountain of water, and down they go again. So that all one sees of them is six little black dots-their two nostrils, eyes, and ears-and these only appear for about three seconds. But they always come up at the same spot; so the method is to have your rifle ready aimed at the place, and the moment the eye appears to pull your trigger.

My friend and I had a match to see who could kill a big hippo who was behaving in this fashion opposite the place where we were lying. I lay on my back in order to get a steadier aim, and when he came up in the same spot a second time I was ready for him and let fly.

The monster heaved himself half out of the water with a tremendous snort and then plunged in amidst a fountain of spray, and we saw him no more.

Another appeared not far off, and my friend had a shot at him and made him hop, too.

When killed, a hippo usually sinks to the bottom; but four or five hours later he floats up to the surface. Our natives were very much on the look-out, therefore, for the bodies, and in the evening a runner came excitedly into camp to tell us that one of them was floating on the lake dead.

We hurried down to examine him, and there he lay, a great fat monster, stranded among the rushes and lying on his side.

We could find no trace of a wound until we opened his eyelid, and there we found the eye had been smashed; the bullet had gone straight to its mark and had entered his brain.

Of course, each of us claimed the animal as his. I had been firing with a Government rifle while my friend had used an Express. When we dug out the bullet it had the broad arrow on the base, proving that the hippo was mine.

You should have seen our natives and what they did with that hippo. As a first step they cut a square hole in his side, just big enough to admit a man, and one man accordingly went in with a knife and fetched out all sorts of titbits in the way of chunks of liver, heart, etc., which he handed to his friends.

Covered with blood literally from head to foot, that grinning 'boy' was a horrible picture to behold.

The country around us was almost desert, and we had noted few inhabitants, yet by nightfall there were nearly a hundred natives collected on the carcass, to whom a lump of raw meat gave as much joy as a turkey at Christmas to the ordinary Englishman.

That night our camp was the scene of tremendous feasting and festivity. Every man lit his own fire, and after skewering great slabs of meat on his assegais he planted them round his fire. Then he sat down and solemnly set to work to eat the whole lot, allowing no time for it to get cooked.

All through the night, whenever we woke, we could hear the men champing away at their meal.

At about four in the morning we were sleeping peacefully, the camp fires were burning low, and even the most hungry of our boys were dozing, when one of the dogs roused me. Then a neighbouring goat startled the night with a shrill bleat of alarm; in another moment there was a sud-

den rush as of the wind, a crash and confused trample of flying hoofs, and our herd of four oxen burst out from their corral and rushed into the surrounding bush.

In a second everybody was awake and moving. I rushed from my tent, hog spear in hand, to find all the boys in an unwonted state of excitement, with but one word in their mouths-'I'gonvarna' (lions).

Attracted by the scent of the roasting hippo, a roving band of lions had made a rush through our camp, and the cattle had stampeded, followed by their aggressors. While we were yet discussing the situation, a shrill bellow of pain echoing through the bush at a short distance from the camp told us the fate of one of our bullocks.

At dawn we dispatched three boys to ascertain the worst, while we prepared ourselves to follow up the lions and exact what vengeance we could.

Of course every boy in the camp wanted to join in the expedition, but we selected only a dozen or so of the best trackers and most reliable men. These at once proceeded to dress themselves in their best war paint and feathers.

(Our bluejackets from the earliest times have been accustomed to put on their best silk neckerchiefs when going into action, and many a good man besides Nelson has liked to dress himself with extra care for a dangerous task; so in the same way our natives delighted to deck themselves out with all their panoply of feathers before leaving on an enterprise which might remove them for ever to happier hunting-grounds.)

We had hardly finished our coffee ere the three men whom we had sent out returned to camp in solemn procession, bearing the wet skin, the shank-bone, head and horns of the dead bullock.

They had disturbed the slayers at their banquet within half a mile of camp and had found one lion and two lionesses devouring our beef, while another, a grand old lion, having finished his breakfast, had retired to allow the younger ones to have a chance.

We started off without delay to visit the scene of the repast. Arrived there, we took up the trail of the lions, whose soft feet left but an indistinct spoor in the yielding sand. Slight though it was, it was quite sufficient for the practised eyes of our hunters, and they led us along at a quick walk in perfect silence for a long way through the bush. Every few hundred yards they would notice that the lions had paused to listen and had then changed the direction of their retreat; the new line was of course immediately taken up, but for a long time we went on without being rewarded by sight or sound of our foes.

At last, as we were advancing stealthily in line, ready for anything to our front, a sudden rush and scurry through the bushes was heard on our right; a glance at the ground showed that our quarry had in its zigzag course passed back close to our flank; again and again this manœuvre was carried out without our catching a glimpse of any of them.

At length the great heat of the sun began to make itself felt; but if it had told on us we knew it must tell doubly on the lions, who are but poor workers by day, especially after a heavy meal.

The tracks too now began to give us every encouragement to persevere; the instinct (common to all animals, man included) that they were being followed now seemed to have possessed the lions; they had galloped for short distances with frequent changes of direction, halted for a short rest, then up and on again with despairing energy.

At last our leading tracker, sneaking along with his eyes cast well forward, suddenly 'froze' like a pointer, almost as if petrified. In one brief moment this living bronze statue was photographed

on my mind, and the next moment a crash through the bush told us that we had come upon the lions during their siesta.

But still we failed to get even a glimpse of them. The fright that our sudden appearance caused among them impelled them to make their escape in different directions, and thenceforward we proceeded to follow up the big lion, who had taken a line of his own.

On and on under the heat of the day we went, pounding through heavy sand, endeavouring to avoid treading upon crackly sticks and being caught by the 'wait-a-bit' thorns.

At length the bush became thinner and thinner; we were approaching the end of it, and the daylight gleaming between the trees showed that we were coming to open ground beyond. If we could only persuade him to take to the open we were almost sure of a shot.

Suddenly there was a check, a whisper, a shout, and a general rush for the open. There he is, five hundred yards away, bounding through the grass and scrub—a great lanky yellow cat with arched back and tail, making as fast as he can for a small isolated cover of thorn-bushes.

We all tear after him, the boys as excited as ourselves. Gradually we string out. The best runners gain pride of place while others drop behind. Although good for two hundred yards, I was never up to a quarter of a mile even at Charterhouse, and here, weighted by a rifle and ammunition, I was easily passed by the longlegged and well-trained native hunters.

However, the best of us were not quick enough to get within distance of this lion before he had in safety gained his cover. Boys were therefore posted at all corners to wait for his coming out, while we, the shooters, decided to advance into the place to find him. The cover was exactly like a patch of English gorse, thick and thorny, with runs of various wild animals forming passages and tunnels through it.

My Zulu gun-bearer then suggested an idea which he swore he had worked successfully once before, and that was that each gun should take a tunnel and crawl in on all fours with his gun-bearer close behind him. On seeing the lion, he should fire at him, or preferably at the ground just in front of him. The lion would then charge; the firer would lie flat; the gun-bearer would cover him with his shield and would assegai the lion as he leapt over the pair.

This arrangement for meeting the monarch of the jungle was simple enough, but not at all to my taste. It looked to me uncommonly like offering lunch to the old brute after having already provided him with an ample breakfast.

However, the others appeared to agree to it, and so I had to.

With my heart in my boots I proceeded to crawl into my hole. It is wonderful what you can get used to. Soon after I was in I began to get accustomed to the situation, and in fact rather liked it than otherwise.

On and on I crawled, until suddenly I espied before me—no, not the lion, but the exit from my tunnel.

It was with great relief that I found myself once more in the open, watching my companions emerging from their holes. All turned up; no one had been eaten, and no one had seen the lion. And we never saw him again. Whether he sneaked away through the long grass, took wings and flew, or swallowed himself up, we were never able to determine.

I have had other meetings with lions, and at least one with a more satisfactory sequel, but never a hunt that afforded me such a thrilling moment.

VI

BLUFFING IN MAFEKING

Mafeking was a very ordinary-looking place when I went there in 1899.

Just a small tin-roofed town of small houses plumped down upon the open veldt, close to the Moioopo stream and half a mile from the stadt, which consisted of red-clay circular huts with thatched roofs, housing about seven thousand natives. All around was open, undulating grass prairie.

Hardly the place where one would look for excitement.

It may be remembered by some that in 1899, two or three months before the South African War, we had prepared a force on the north-west frontier of the Transvaal to guard Rhodesia and Bechuanaland and to draw the Boers away in that direction as much as possible, pending the arrival of British troops at the coast when war broke out, and also to maintain our prestige among the vast native tribes of the north, and thus keep them quiet.

Half of this force was placed under Colonel Plumer in Rhodesia and the other half under Colonel Hore in Mafeking, with myself in general charge.

On the outbreak of war we in Mafeking were surrounded by the Boers, while Plumer drove back their attempts against Rhodesia and eventually pushed southward until he was able to co-operate with us in the neighbourhood of Mafeking.

The defence of Mafeking was, as an actual feat of arms, a very minor operation which was given an exaggerated importance in the Press at the time. It was largely a piece of bluff, but bluff which was justified by the special circumstances and which in the end succeeded in its object.

The objects of our holding on there, on the other hand, have been, if anything, underestimated. They have been best stated in Creswick's *South Africa and the Transvaal*, where the author points out that on the outbreak of war there was an agreement between the Cape Dutch and the Federal Boers, and the capture of certain towns was to be the signal for the joining of the allies to drive the British out of South Africa.

'It was thought that the comparatively insignificant village of Mafeking would be among the first to fall, and the Boers congratulated themselves that once the place went under the door to Rhodesia would fly open. Cronje could then have gone north and defeated Plumer. The capture of Mafeking would have unhinged the natives and would have forced them to side with the Boers. Disaffection would then have spread even to Table Bay had Cronje at the outset not been kept tied to Mafeking.'

The besieged in Mafeking consisted of a thousand men, newly organized and armed, six hundred white women and children and seven thousand natives. We retained there at first over ten thousand Boers under Cronje and later smaller numbers under Sneyman.

The siege lasted from 12th October 1899 till the 17th May 1900.

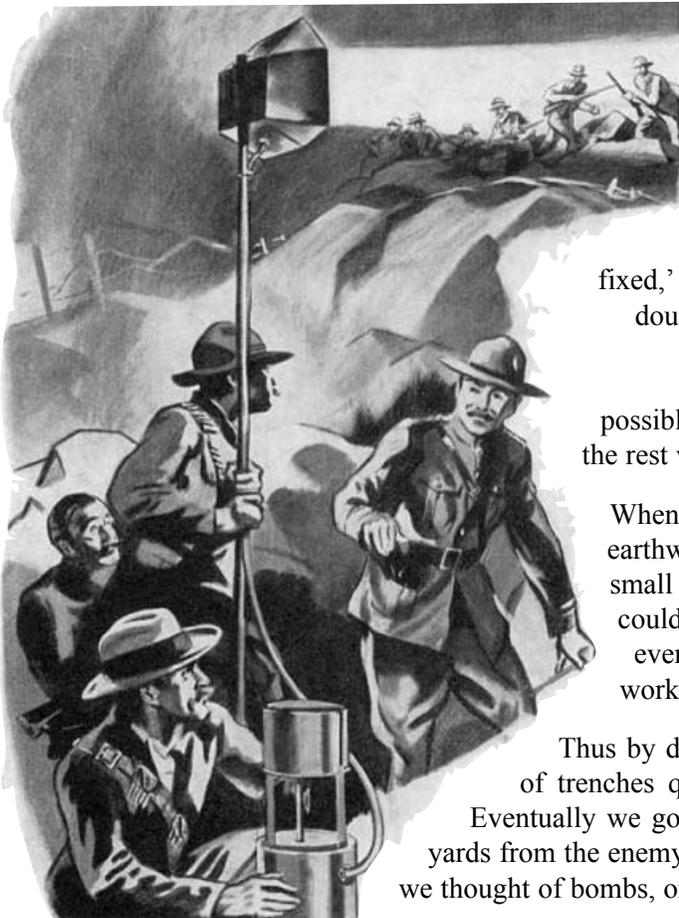
After a few half-hearted attempts under Cronje the Boers sat down to shell us into submission, and in the whole of the remaining seven months they only made one really determined attack—under Eloff—and that came late in the siege when our defences were perfected.

I was always expecting a night attack, and in order to discourage this we started searchlights in every fort. That is to say, we made one searchlight with a big cowl made of biscuit tins on top of a pole, which we stood on the ground and turned gently round in the direction required.

There was a man in Mafeking who was a commercial traveller in acetylene lamps, and he had a few of these and a small supply of acetylene with him, so he fitted into this reflector a lamp with an acetylene burner, and one night showed a great flare from our fort at Cannon Kopje, with a splendid searching beam that quietly traversed the country round. Later in the night the same lamp appeared in a fort in a totally different part of the defences, and this was repeated for several nights, every time in a different fort, so that the enemy believed we were well supplied with searchlights which would be turned on the moment they attempted any attack. As a matter of fact, we soon ran out of acetylene.

Then I had another joyous little dodge of my own.

I had a big megaphone made out of tin, with which I could proceed to one of our advance trenches in the night and play a ventriloquist stunt upon the enemy.



SEARCHLIGHTS IN ENTRY FORT

These we made out of old meat- and jam-tins filled with dynamite or powder with a fuse attached, and we hurled them into the Boers' trenches. They soon replied with more artistically made hand-grenades and they withdrew their advance trench a few yards; and there we stuck for a fortnight at sixty-eight yards apart.

Our methods of trench warfare and bombs were laughed at as medieval, and no one thought that within a few years the most modernized armies would be fighting on the same lines.

I found that my voice carried easily twelve hundred yards, and I would command an imaginary attacking party, giving in the voice of the officer orders to advance very silently, and asking Sergeant Jackson if his men were all ready. 'Sergeant Jackson' would then reply: 'Tell Private Thomas to get his bayonet fixed,' etc. Presently this would draw tremendous rifle fire as the Boers took the alarm.

We always tried to make the night lively for our foes, and as quiet as possible for ourselves, for the men needed all the rest we could give them.

When our enemy entrenched themselves in earthworks close to the town, we pushed out small works towards them, where the men could be under cover to harass them and eventually drive them back. To get to these works we had to dig deep pathways.

Thus by degrees we established a regular system of trenches quite on the lines of old-time warfare. Eventually we got to a point where we were only thirty yards from the enemy, and here we stuck for some days until we thought of bombs, or hand-grenades.

As time went on we naturally began to get anxious about our food-supplies. Everybody was strictly rationed, and the staff had to live on a lower ration than the men, so that we could judge how little was necessary to keep us going. incidentally we learned to economize very rigidly in the matter of food, and also to devise food substitutes.

When a horse was killed his mane and tail were cut off and sent to the hospital for stuffing mattresses and pillows. His shoes went to the foundry for making shells. His skin, after having the hair scalded off, was boiled with his head and feet for many hours, chopped up small, and with the addition of a little saltpetre served out as 'brawn'. The flesh was taken from his bones and minced in a great mincing-machine, and from his inside were made skins into which the meat was crammed and so became sausages. The bones were boiled into a rich soup which was dealt out at the different soup-kitchens; and they were eventually pounded into powder with which to adulterate the flour. So not much of that horse was wasted.

Our flour was made from the horses' oats, pounded and as far as possible winnowed. But it made a bristly form of bread at the best.

Every man had thus a large biscuit of oatmeal daily.

The husks of the oats were put to soak in large tubs of water for a number of hours, at the end of which the scum was scraped off and given as food to the hospital chickens, while the residue formed a paste known as 'sowens'-very healthy and filling, but looking and tasting like bill-stickers' paste, if you have ever tried that.

For the invalids in the hospital we managed to supply a special blancmange made from the 'Poudre de Riz' commandeered from the chemists' and hairdressers' shops!

As money was necessary for paying wages and for stocks commandeered, we took over the cash in the Standard Bank, but also we issued some paper money of our own, in the shape of pound and ten-shilling notes, for which I drew the designs. These could be exchanged for cash if presented within six months of the end of the siege. But none of them were presented, as people kept them for mementoes. So the government were some six thousand pounds to the good and could not understand the reason for it.

We also found it necessary to issue postage stamps for the letters within the defences. My staff, in designing some of these stamps, issued a set with my head on them, without my knowledge. As they were entirely for local and temporary use it was not a matter of importance, but later I heard that it was considered a piece of gross lèse-majesté on my part-if not of treason-to print my own head on the stamps, and that the Queen was very annoyed with me.

Well, if she was, Her Majesty did not show it, but on the contrary sent me most gracious and appreciative messages both during and after the siege and personally directed my promotion to Major-General.

The Boer commandant, Sarel Eloff, sent a message one day to say that he and his friends proposed coming into Mafeking shortly to play cricket with us. I replied that our side was in at present and he must bowl us out before his side could have an innings.

He made an effort to do so shortly afterwards, but failed, and we captured him together with a hundred officers and men.

A week later Mafeking was relieved.

The relief column under Colonels Mahon and Plumer came into the place at two o'clock in the morning, and we were mightily glad to see them. It would have been a thrilling moment, but we

were all so tired that all we wanted was to have a good sleep.

The Queen's telegram, drafted by herself at the dinner-table, was inspiring reading: 'I and my whole Empire rejoice greatly at the Relief of Mafeking, after the splendid defence made by you through all these months. I heartily congratulate you and all under you, military and civil, British and native, for the heroism and devotion you have shown.'

VII

BUSH STRATEGY

'Softly, softly, catchee monkey' is a West Coast proverb, meaning that patience wins the day.

The experience which I am about to relate of a strike in the bush shows it to be a precept most valuable in practice.

'Them dam-blood Krobos say no going work to-day.'

'Why?'

'Him no got salt for belly.'

This was the announcement by my Haussa orderly as he brought to my hammock my early morning cocoa.

'Salt?' I asked.

'Yas, sah. Him dam fella no can work if he no getting salt in belly.'

'Well, what can we do about it?'

'My thinking, master's talking whip make plenty good for salt'; and he said this with the slightest extra twinkling wrinkle to the corner of his wrinkled eye—the little ramrod.

'Call the King here.' (Without undue swank, there is a great joy in cursing a real live king, especially when one is merely in one's pyjamas.)

So I talked to Matikoli, the King of the Krobos. I told him that in any case he himself would be fined one shilling and that he must explain to his men that they would get no salt at this camp, partly because there was no salt for them to get, and partly because they threatened to strike for it; but at the next camp, that evening, there would be plenty of salt, but only for those who had worked well during the day. Meantime the other companies in the corps, the Adansis, the Mumfords, the Elminas, the Winnebabs, and the rest were all doing their work, and if the Krobos were absent from work when I came round later on, their day's pay would be divided among the other companies.

Then, having swigged my cocoa, I started out lightly clad in pyjamas and moccasins, to look into the trouble.

The camp was empty except for the Krobos—some three hundred of them. These were squatting in studied unconcern, with their backs towards my hut, listening politely but unresponsively to their King's report of his interview with me.

The proposed solution evidently held little appeal in it to the strikers, and the backward squint at me out of the corner of more than one eye, to see how I took it, gave me a line to go upon.

So I called aloud to the King to warn his men that I was now going to fetch our old friend, the 'whip-that-talks', and that the last man in camp would be the one he would talk to.

I moved with joyous step to my tent, and when I came out again a minute later and gave one resounding crack with my hunting-crop, the whole party had scrambled to their feet and were already humping their packs onto shoulders or heads as they ran, laughing and jabbering like a lot of boys just let out from school.

Strikes of this kind were an everyday occurrence in the native contingent, but having no less than seven or eight different tribes in it-some of them unable to speak the others' language-it was possible for two white men to control the lot, since we always had a balance of 'blacklegs' on our side.

In addition to the 'whip-that-talks' I had also another moral persuader in the shape of Jsiqwaqwa, a Colt repeating carbine. This little weapon could bang away from its magazine a dozen rounds if need be as fast as a man could fire. On the first day of my command I gave to my force a little demonstration of its powers. Taking a paw-paw tree as my objective a tall, thin, bare tree with a crown of leaves at the top and a bunch of fruit like small melons-I let fly continuous rapid fire, splashing the fruit unmercifully into the air.

As the last cartridge left the magazine I flung the rifle down with dramatic force, saying: 'There, he can go on for ever like that. That is what will make us safe from the Ashantis. Woe betide the man to whom the little gun speaks. Do you hear?' (With intention.) 'Woe betide the man to whom the little gun speaks.'

The repetition was allowed to sink in with its special meaning for them, and it did. The warning was remembered later on.

As an insurance against mutiny a paternal government had supplied me with a special bodyguard of eight hammock-men from Sierra Leone. Their country, manners, customs and language, being entirely alien to those of my contingent, would keep them as a corps d'élite, a thing apart, a reliable guard for me.

We were having a day's halt, a day's rest for all. (Here, incidentally, I would give a tip to any tenderfoot going out to the coast. Experience shows that the rest day on a march is the day for getting fever, so whenever you have a day's halt, make a point of going in for some strenuous form of activity to keep the pores open to their usual extent.) We were having a day's halt and I went for my bit of health exercise, accompanied by my Hausa orderly carrying Jsiqwaqwa.

I took a wide circle in the thick bush round the camp, which brought me eventually onto the path by which our force had moved up from the coast, and I went back along this for some distance to see how our bridges, etc., were standing. On returning towards camp whom should we meet round a bend but my bodyguard, the whole eight of them, coming down the path.

There was a startled halt among them; the front man-and there was only room for one, or at most two abreast, in the path-tried to back out of his position, but his mates in the rear urged him forward.

Thus pressed, he grasped his cudgel tightly and put on a look of determination that he was evidently not feeling; he bent his knees and prepared to attack.

I noticed that his mates had also furnished themselves with bamboo clubs. They evidently meant

business.

At this moment my orderly from behind me thrust Jsiqwaqwa into my hands, saying: 'Blood dam fella. Shoot him, master.'

But there was no need to shoot. The very sight of the little gun crumpled up the party.

'Drop your sticks!' was my order to them. 'Hands up. About turn. Quick march.'

And so we proceeded all the way back to camp, to the astonished, grinning gaze of the whole regiment. My pampered, alien eight had few friends among that crowd, and this was soon made evident.

With a few strokes of his axe my orderly felled a young tree so that, supported by its butt at one end and its branches at the other, it lay along the ground at the height of a foot or so above it.

He made our prisoners sit down side by side on the ground facing the tree, with their legs pushed forward under it; then he made each in turn bend over the trunk till his hands touched his feet. With tapes made of bark fibre he then fastened each man's thumbs to his big toes, and in this improvised form of stocks he left the eight mutineers to be jeered at by the rest of the contingent.

To these it was the most joyous evening's entertainment they had had for a long time; it gave opportunity for every aspiring humorist to exhibit whatever he possessed in the way of a turn of wit or sarcasm, and none failed to take advantage of it. They properly flailed those wretched Sierra Leoners.

When night came on and the camp retired to sleep the prisoners saw their chance for turning the tables and getting a bit of their own back; if they were to be uncomfortable so should we be. They arranged between them to start yowling and to maintain a dismal howling through the night, two of them taking it in turn to keep it up.

When the dirge first broke out it certainly startled me out of my first sleep, and I was furiously meditating how best to stop it; but before I could take any definite steps it abruptly ended of itself as suddenly as it had begun.

But the last chord was rendered con amore with a sharp yell as a finale. On looking out to see what was happening I saw that my faithful henchman, directly the duet began, had crept up behind the performers with a stout whippy cane and had delivered cuts one and two on their bended backs, with the assurance that he would go on beating the time in this way so long as they continued to sing.

That stopped the serenade for the night, and for the rest of the campaign my bodyguard men were the most trusted and the least lazy in my little army.

This contingent, of which I have been talking, formed the advance guard of a British force about a hundred miles up country advancing from the Gold Coast into the country of the Ashantis.

The object of the expedition was to compel the King of those people to carry out his treaty engagements, one of which was to put a stop to human sacrifices and to cease slave-raiding among neighbouring tribes which were under British protection.

This advance guard comprised a levy of eight hundred friendly natives of different tribes, under two white officers. Its main duty was to act as a reconnoitring force of scouts and of pioneers to clear a path for the main body through the dense forests which covered the whole tract of country in which we were operating.

A point which is not often realized by those who have no experience of a forest wilderness is that not only is there a tangle of underwood and creepers to be got through, but there are also almost as many fallen trees as trees standing, and in this particular forest many of those were trees of two hundred feet in height, with a diameter of six or eight feet; so that to climb over them was more arduous work than to walk round them, and that was bad enough.

Added to this the ground underfoot was generally wet and often boggy, while the atmosphere in which one worked was heavy, hot and steamy, with an aroma like that of an old cabbage garden.

The duty of my crew, then, was to make a way for the British troops and for the trains of supply-carriers coming along behind.

We cut our path straight through the jungle by compass direction, taking it over the fallen tree-trunks by earthen ramps piled up on either side; boggy places were 'corduroyed' with logs, and the frequent streams and watercourses were bridged over.

At stated distances, clearings of several acres were made in the undergrowth, sheds were erected and thatched, to form rest-camps for the troops; store-huts were also built for reception of supplies, and forts were made round them for their protection.

And all the time this was being done we had to keep a crowd of scouts and outposts ahead and around us to guard against surprise, and to gain what news they could of our enemies' moves and intentions.

We had plenty of occupation for our men if only they could be kept to their work. But work was not habitually in their line at all. It was only by treating them cheerily and like children that work could be got out of them. They were quite ready to laugh and sing, but equally ready to sulk and to mutiny, according to the cue you gave them.

Patience, and always patience, was the only way. But patience and cheeriness are not such easy virtues to come by in that soggy heat, with fever knocking you out and anxiety and responsibility ever weighing on your shoulders.

But somehow things shaped themselves.

Then, on a blessed day, there came creeping through the bush two messengers from the enemy in front. They were emissaries from the King of Bekwai, one of the tributary chiefs of the King of Ashanti, whose territory lay close to the line of our approach.

Within a day or so our road, as we were cutting it, would bring us to an Ashanti village called Essian Qwanta, and at this point a branch path led off to Bekwai town, some twelve miles to the north-west. The King of Bekwai, realizing that he would be the first to get it in the neck from the British, sent these messengers to say that he was anxious to surrender and to come under the British flag, but he added that if this were known to Prempeh, the Ashanti King, it would mean a very prompt end to him, unless we could be there to save him.

Of course, our simplest way would be to press on and hold Essian Qwanta, and so be in touch with him. But our scouts now reported that the Ashantis had a strong force waiting for us at that point, and ready to resist our advance.

And my written orders from headquarters were that I was on no account to attack or to provoke a fight.

Here was a dilemma and a problem. I wonder how you, reader, would solve it.

Anyway, this is what we did.

Collecting all our force from outlying detachments including two companies of Haussas who were not far from us on the road-together with all available food-supplies, we made everything ready with the expressed purpose of making an advance towards Essian Qwanta at early dawn next day.

However, as soon as darkness set in, when there was no longer any fear of men deserting to the enemy or of hostile scouts coming to look at us (since no native would go alone in the bush after dark), to everybody's surprise the order went round quietly to fall in; simple but full instructions were given to every man; loads were distributed, ammunition cast loose, and, as my diary says: 'The word was given to march; not that any word was heard, but the long line of men, standing like a wall in the gloom, was seen to be slipping quietly along to where it was lost in the dark tunnel of the bush.'

But this was not in the direction of Essian Qwanta. Our plan was to leave a few scouts to 'tickle' the enemy's front at that point, and meanwhile to make a secret night march with our whole force through the bush to Heman, and so to pass by the flank of the force at Essian Qwanta, and to be in position next day, both to ensure the safety of Bekwai and to have his support, while, if necessary, we could attack Essian Qwanta from the rear and cut off the retreat of its garrison from Kumassi.

That was our plan; but we had that jungle and an active, watchful enemy to contend with. Could we do it?

It was nine miles as the crow flies from our camp, but such a nine miles! It lay through such jungle as I have just described, and in pitch darkness, for, although there was a moon, not a ray of its light could penetrate the screens of leafage overhead; and we could only advance in a single file of eight hundred men, and those men heavily loaded and very timid by nature.

However, nothing venture, nothing win.

Fortunately, we had the assistance of the two companies of regular Haussa armed police to give backbone to the force. Cheery, disciplined fellows they were too, reminding one very much of our little fighting friends, the Gurkhas, in India.

So we went forward on our adventure. The only guide for each man was the white patch of cloth or bark worn for that purpose on the back of the man in front of him, each man feeling his footing with a light staff.

This was important, for at every step you stumbled over a hummock, tripped on a root, or were tangled in a creeper or were ploughing in a swamp.

All around was the deep, dark silence of the forest, only broken at rare intervals by the crack of a trodden stick. One could scarcely believe that several hundred people were moving through it—slowly it is true; but still moving ever forward.

Fallen trees were frequent, and tangled bush and streams combined to check the pace and break the continuity of the column.

Each man took his several seconds to negotiate the obstacle and lost a few yards in doing so, and thus every minute saw the column growing longer and more disconnected. This could only be remedied by frequent halts and slow marching at the head.

Occasionally a check would come from the head itself. Marching in file, you would suddenly

come bump up against the man in front of you, and, like a goods train of loaded trucks, the whole party would bump itself in succession to a standstill.

It was past two in the morning before our advanced scouts sent back word that they were at Heman village, where all was quiet; and it was past four o'clock before the whole of our force was safely collected there.

Our native scouts, backed by a party of Haussas, crept quietly down the path towards Essian Qwanta, to watch against surprise from that direction.

Meanwhile, the people of the little hamlet of Heman, who were Bekwais, surprised by our sudden invasion, were quickly calmed when they found us friendly, and they informed us that the Ashantis had as yet made no move against their King, and had evidently no suspicion of his defection.

So here we rested awhile.

Then with daylight came good news. Excited runners brought us messages from the Hausa officer who had gone to watch Essian Qwanta. The Ashanti scouts had somehow got wind of our move, and the garrison of that post, realizing that we had got round their flank, were now hurriedly making good their retreat towards Kumasi.

So without a fight we had gained our point and cleared a road for our main body.

Once more it was a case of patience having her victories no less renowned than attack.

At the same time it enabled us to join hands with Bekwai. Nor did we delay to do it. We sent runners on to tell the King we were coming.

Ten miles' further marching, tired though our men were, was fairly easy, since it was along a path and in broad daylight; and the whole force emerged at length from the forest into the clearing which, with its four streets of native houses, constituted the town of Bekwai.

Without delay I proceeded to the so-called palace, a collection of neatly made wattle-anddaub buildings with thatched roofs, and was at once received by the King in council with his chief men.

I read to him a letter from my general, assuring him of British protection, and received his evidently earnest thanks for the prompt coming of the protecting force.

The following morning was devoted to the ceremony of hoisting the British flag, and small as the matter seemed to be at first it developed into a very impressive function.

African monarchs are very hard to hurry, but there was much business to be done, and business on an expedition such as this has to be done quickly. So that, after several messages requesting the King's wishes as to where and when the ceremony of hoisting the flag should take place, I had the staff set up in a spot of my own choosing, paraded my force, and sent to tell the King that all was ready. This had the desired effect in the end, although the guard of honour of Haussas and scouts had some time to wait before the din of drums and horns and the roaring of the crowd told that the royal procession was on the move.

Presently it came in sight—a vast black crowd of some thousands surging and yelling round the litters on which the King and his chiefs were borne. Above and around them twirled the great state umbrellas. In front were bands of drummers with small drums, then dancing men who leapt and whirled along, fetish men in quaint headdresses, drummers with kettledrums, trumpeters

with their human-jaw-bedecked ivory horns, and then the great war drums carried shoulder high and hung with skulls (which latter were, however, for this occasion covered with a strip of cloth, signifying that it was a peace ceremony). There were the King's court criers with their tiny black and white caps, and running before and behind there rushed the crowd of slave boys carrying their masters' stools upon their heads. The roar and the drumming became intense as the procession came rushing up the road-for it moved at a fast pace-and the umbrellas whirling and leaping gave a great amount of life and bustle to the scene.

At last the throne and chairs were set, and the people marshalled by degrees into some sort of order. I then offered to the King the flag with all its advantages, which the King, with much spirit in his words, eagerly accepted; every phrase he used, besides being formally applauded by the chorus of court criers, was evidently approved by the general concourse.

The King then moved from his seat to the flagstaff. Though it was but a few paces the move involved no small amount of ceremony. The umbrella had to be kept twirling over him while the bearer of it moved only on the ball of his foot. Men went before to clear every stick and straw from the royal path. The fetish man, in a handsome Red Indian kind of feather head-dress and a splendid silver belt, appeared to bless the scene. One man supported the King by holding his waist and was himself similarly supported by two or three others in succession behind. Another mopped the King with a handkerchief, while boys, armed with elephants' tails, kept off stray flies from the royal presence.

The King was dressed in a kind of patchwork toga with a green silk scarf; on his head a small tortoiseshell cap, and on his wrists, among the pendent fetish charms, he wore some splendid bracelets of rough gold nuggets and human teeth.

In all his barbaric splendour the King moved up to the flagstaff. The flag was at the masthead in a ball, and as he pulled the halyard that let it fall out in long, gaudy folds, the band of the Haussas struck up 'God Save the Queen' and the troops presented arms.

The King made a gesture as of going to sleep, with his head on his hand, and said that under the flag he would rest in peace until he died.

If I were to close the incident here as if all was successfully completed it would not be true to general experience with native rulers, nor true to the history of this particular case. So here is an addendum.

It was only right and proper that, after saving the King's life and kingdom, we should ask something tangible of him in return.

The expedition was being delayed by want of carriers and pioneers, so I put it to him that the men whom he would otherwise have had to supply as his contingent to the Ashanti army to fight against us, numbering some three thousand, should now be transferred to our aid.

'Certainly. Of course,' was his reply. 'Which kind is most needed?'

'Carriers.'

'How many and when?'

'A thousand in two days' time.'

Well, yes. He couldn't quite do that, but we could rely upon two hundred in six days from now.

'Well, what about soldiers?' (We knew that he had two thousand already mustered under arms

for the Ashanti army.)

Yes, he could supply those, that is one thousand to-morrow.

‘All right,’ said I. ‘I will take those and use them as carriers till the carriers are available.’

Oh, no, that would never do. Soldiers did not know how to carry loads. ‘In that case no men will be available.’

‘Very good,’ said I. ‘In that case, to-morrow I take down the British flag and march my force away.’

This threat, of course, immediately reversed the whole thing, and he suddenly estimated that he could manage all that we had asked, and only wanted another day or two in which to palaver with his chiefs.

One felt inclined to stop this eternal palaver by doing something very desperate and playing the high hand on him. But again the refrain whispered in one's ears: ‘Softly, softly; patience wins the day.’

While we made pause my good spies, who were keeping their eyes open all the time, reported that two civilized natives had just secretly arrived from the coast and gone into the palace.

Almost simultaneously two Ashantis had quietly slipped in from the direction of Kumasi.

This gave me the excuse for ‘direct action’.

The Haussas were paraded forthwith, and in double quick time formed a cordon round the palace so that none could enter or go out. The time had come to show that under our velvet glove there was some iron.

I called forth the King and presented quite a new face to him. I told him at once to hand over the four messengers to me as prisoners, which, after a little futile denying, he did.

Then, pressing my advantage, for those Haussas round the palace gave a wonderful moral effect, I now repeated my full demands and ordered instead of suggesting his immediate compliance.

There was no longer any hesitation. He carried out our orders to the full. And that was the end of all delay and shiftiness on the part of Bekwai. He played up and whole-heartedly played the game for us for the rest of the campaign.

Thus the door to Kumasi was opened without bloodshed: ‘Softly, softly’ had caught the monkey.

VIII

HADJ ANO

The sun had set and darkness was coming on apace by the time we sighted the welcome lights of Brown's farm.

It was the second evening after landing in Tunisia, and the previous two days had been spent in journeying hither from Bizerta, through delays incident to mud, swollen rivers, poor mounts, and

erratic guides.

'We' consisted of my interpreter-servant and myself. He was a Maltese whom I had taken on at Bizerta on the recommendation that he knew Arabic, and had been a fireman on board an English steamer.

He joined me just as I was starting on the march with my two ponies. I presently found that his Arabic was merely the Maltese dialect of it and his English was limited entirely to such words as he had been accustomed to hear in his capacity as stoker; he had a very fairly complete vocabulary of oaths, and a few such phrases as 'Stoke up', 'Bank the fires', 'Go ahead', 'Stop her', and so on. It is true that he had one extraneous sentence-'She walks in the street'-but this he used more as a form of salutation than anything else.

'Stoke up' came to mean, with us, 'Pack up and march'; 'Bank the fires' meant we might halt and encamp; and with this limited language, eked out with signs, we got along very well, all things considered. At any rate we succeeded in arriving at the right place-wet and tired, it is true, but satisfied in the result.

On reaching the farm I found a note from Brown bidding me welcome, and explaining that in his enforced absence in Tunis two French officers, who were also guests of his, would be glad to help me in the matter of sport. The officers, in fact, received me at the door, and did the honours of the house with the greatest goodwill; but I missed from the scene the familiar form of Lladj Ano, whom I had known there on previous visits. He was an educated, high-caste Arab, who acted as farm bailiff to Brown. He was an Algerian Arab, and therefore a sportsman and a gentleman, and very far superior to the more servile local Tunisian natives.

The following morning, soon after dawn, saw us on our way to the snipe ground which lay at the foot of Jebel Ishkel. This was a mountain whose purple crags rose high above the plain; in appearance very much like Gibraltar.

What curiosities to me my French companions were! And I no doubt was equally an object of interest to them. Their get-up for snipe-shooting was their uniform kepi and jacket, with baggy linen overalls, and capacious game-bags and guns slung on their backs, and they rode their corky, half-bred stallions in regimental saddles.

The open, yellow grass plains, and the distant rounded mountains, in the crisp, clear atmosphere of the early morning brought out a strong resemblance between the northernmost part of Africa and its southern extremity. As I jogged along with my two foreign companions I seemed to be once more with my old Boer friends starting out on shooting-horses for the veldt. But instead of the silent whiffing of Boer tobacco there came from my companions an incessant jabber and a string of questions as to whether, in passing through Paris and Marseilles, I had seen this or that singer or danseuse, and what were the latest stories now being told.

This seemed to be the only interest, not only of this pair, but of half the officers one met in the colony. My present friends were a captain and a subaltern, both of them far older than would be the case in the similar grades in our army, and the captain was pretty well furnished with adipose tissue. Probably both of them had risen from the ranks; at any rate their intellectual training was not of a very high order and their ability as horsemen was on a par with it.

Presently we reached a river which had to be crossed before we came to our ground; it was about fifty yards wide, and just fordable by a man on horseback.

The captain, who was leading, pushed in first, while Pierre, the subaltern, jibbed on the bank.

As the captain's horse began to clamber up the far bank he placed his back at such an inconsiderate angle as to permit of the rider's slipping off over his tail into the muddy stream. Having thus deposited his burden the horse turned round and recrossed to join us. As he ranged up near me I caught him and led him over again.

Meantime Pierre was still niggling vainly at his mount, which steadily declined to brave the water, and eventually I had to go back and fetch him along.

At last we arrived near the snipe ground, and when we had off-saddled and tied up our horses we started to walk the bog in line.

We had hardly taken our places before the birds began jumping up in front of us, and the promise of sport raised our spirits to the highest; still, the birds were wild, and at first my shots were few and far between. Not so those of the Frenchmen, who fired on sight at every bird, distance being no object.

But suddenly our sport was interrupted; a fiendish noise of neighing, screams, and snorting, rose from the group of bushes where we had left our horses. The captain, who was nearest to that point, climbed onto the intervening bank, and, giving a mighty yell, dashed forward in the direction of the noise, quickly followed by Pierre and myself. And then we found that Pierre's horse had slipped his head-collar and the captain's had broken away from the twig to which he had been tied, and the pair of them were now having a good set-to- hoof and tooth-as hard as they could go.

It was a great fight, and was all the more amusing to watch as the two owners kept skipping round, at a very safe distance, hurling stones and abuse with equal futility at their pugilistic quads.

At length, by using large branches, we succeeded in separating and securing the combatants; and although they were covered with scratches, bites and contusions-happily none of them were very serious-having tied them up properly and out of sight of one another, we once more resumed our shoot. But it was in reality a hopeless game, for as we walked on we had to wait continually for one or other of the Frenchmen. The fat one was a slow mover and the other was desperately afraid of getting bogged; both talked incessantly at the top of their voices, and fired whenever they could find an excuse; consequently the snipe, of which there appeared to be any number, kept jumping up at eighty yards in front of us in a most disgusting manner. However, I noticed with great satisfaction that they did not go far, the majority of them pitching again in the end of the long, narrow bog we were walking.

Presently Pierre, through excessive caution, got bogged; finding the ground on which he was standing quaky and yielding, he had stood still, fearing to move in any direction, instead of stepping off, and when he felt himself sinking his first act was to jam his gun muzzle downwards into the mud, and his second to issue a succession of piercing yells which speedily brought us to his assistance. We soon lugged him and his gun from the slime-which after all was not by any means a dangerous bog-and deposited him on the bank to recover. Presently he reported himself fit to proceed, but he elected to move in line with us, remaining himself on terra firma.

I earnestly begged silence now, as we were drawing up to the end of the beat, and for a short distance all went well save for the noisy floundering of the captain, who was rapidly getting rather done in spite of our slow pace through the hummocky reeds.

Presently a great common heavy hawk flapped his way lazily over: a shout of warning from Pierre and bang! bang! bang! bang!-four barrels of snipe-shot at fifty yards' distance had the effect of making him smile as he winked the other eye. It did not make me smile, especially when

one of them, noticing that I had not taken part in the volley, said in a tone of remonstrance: 'Surely it amuses to shoot the large bird.' But I had my eye the while on the smaller bird, Mr. Snipe, and I could see him slipping away in twos and threes and soaring high for a distant flight.

At length step by step we drew up towards the end of the beat-it would soon be a matter for standing still to let the birds get up one by one; slower and slower we went.

Suddenly Pierre on the bank began a hurried appeal at the top of his voice to us to come for a real chance of gibier, and he started running along the bank past the end of the bog; a moment later and the captain was pounding and splashing after him straight through the middle of the cover. Snipe were rising like a cloud of flies all around him; the air was full of their 'scape' of alarm. For a moment or two I could not find words adequate to the occasion, and then I took myself, figuratively speaking, by the throat, and held myself down till I was calmer.

And what were these two idiots after? I looked over the bank to see them stalking with elaborate precision and precaution towards a bush on which were perched a flock of starlings! I left them to their fun and walked back myself through the bog, and succeeded in getting a few shots at birds we had walked over, and found myself with three couple in the bag by the time I got back to the horses.

Here I was presently joined by my friends, who had succeeded in getting a brace and a half of starlings, half a couple of snipe and the same number of greenfinches.

Then we saddled up and recrossed the river, this time without accident. Then when I proposed trying another little bog I knew of the Frenchmen would not hear of it: for one thing they were evidently quite beaten with their exercise up to date, and for another they argued that dejeuner would now be awaiting us at the farm. So I determined to try the bog by myself, in reality much relieved by their decision.

I had not turned from them many minutes ere I noticed a small Arab evidently trying to overtake me. I waited for him, expecting he might have marked down some game near by, but he said not a word until he had come up sufficiently close to touch my stirrup. Then in a low voice he asked in Arabic if I were English; on my satisfying him on that score, he merely said, in a lower voice than before, 'Hadj Ano', and pointed to a distant clump of trees. I guessed that my friend must be there and had sent this mysterious little messenger to tell me.

So, accompanied by the boy, I rode in that direction, and as we approached the place a figure came out to meet us which I soon recognized as Hadj Ano himself. He was a fine, tall, well-proportioned man of about forty, with the typical high-caste Arab features. Except for a turban, he was dressed in European shooting-clothes, and carried in his hand a gun belonging to Brown. He cordially greeted me (he spoke French like a Frenchman) and led the way to the grove. Here I found a delightful little camp of two Arab tents, one of which was occupied by the Hadj himself, the other by some three or four Arabs who were with him.

In a few minutes some of these men had taken my horse and were grooming and feeding him, while another was preparing some food for me.

After some mutual inquiries I asked the Hadj how he came to be camped out here instead of living in the farm as usual, whereat he laughed and said that he did not care for French officers, and while they occupied the farm-house he preferred to camp outside; and, knowing the dislike that the Algerians had for their French masters, I thought no more of the matter. He said that he had heard of my arrival and had sent the boy to bring me to him if I should be working alone.

We had an excellent dejeuner of Arab dishes, in which khus-khus (a kind of semolina-and-chick-

en curry) figured as the piece de résistance, and after a short rest we started out for a bit of ground which Hadj Ano recommended—open, stony ground with patches of tufty, coarse grass and clumps of thornbushes, through which there meandered a stream which every now and then opened out into a green tussocky bog.

It was ground that might, and as we soon found out, did, contain many varieties of game. Shortly after commencing our beat, with two Arab boys as game-carriers, we put up a fine little covey of partridges some distance out of shot, and almost immediately afterwards the Hadj knocked over a hare very neatly. Then there fluttered up from a bush between us a woodcock, and crossing me gave me an easy shot which brought him into the larder. A little farther on another hare fell to my companion.

Then we came to a small hollow, evidently well watered, filled with thorn hush, rank yellow grass, and a few green bushes which looked like holly. Hadj Ano and I stationed ourselves outside this cover and sent the boys in to act as spaniels. Presently, with a silent whisk, a rich brown woodcock flitted past me, and then so suddenly changed his course as to escape the shower of shot with which I saluted him. But no less than three more birds came out of the same spinney, two to me and one to the Hadj, and these were all accounted for. As we went, on a tempting reach of reedy swamp received our attention, and here we had some very pretty snipe-shooting. Alert they were as in the morning, but they did not fly far on the first rise, and my present companions, keen and silent, were very different from the noisy Frenchmen. As a consequence we soon began to run up quite a little bag. We had no dog, but slow and careful walking got the birds up nicely, and the Arab boys were as sharp as needles in marking and retrieving fallen game.

Anon we came to a long and narrow belt of thorn-bushes lining both banks of the streamlet. Hadj Ano took one side and I the other, the boys working along in the bush, tapping as they went. Four shots at intervals from Hadj Ano's gun began to make me impatient of my own silence, but at last a longbill rose within the thorns and came to my side, and gave an easy shot as he turned to wing along the side of the cover; almost where he fell another rose and gave a long shot for my left barrel. I should probably have missed him had it been my right, but, as it was, he too bit the dust.

On and on we went, getting every now and then a shot at cock, until at last the sun began to sink towards his setting, and we had wandered far from camp. Then we turned, and as far as the light would allow us, shot our way back towards the tents. Out of a reedy pool we got a mallard and his mate, and a little farther on a woodcock, probably a wounded one, rose from bare ground at our approach, and fell, after a twisty flight, to my second barrel. Soon after the sun had set, a whistle of golden plover sounded suddenly near, and as they rushed overhead we stopped a couple and a half.

This was our last and perhaps most satisfactory shot of what had been in the end a very satisfactory day.

Darkness had set in before we reached the trees where lay our camp. As this was still some five miles from the farm, and my pony was feeling one of his legs after the marching from Bizerta, I gave way to the suggestion of Hadj Ano, and made up my mind to spend the night in camp.

A note to this effect was dispatched by one of his men to quiet the anxiety of my French friends at the farm, and I sat down with a clear conscience and an appreciative appetite to the repast prepared by the Hadj's cook-boy. Hadj Ano had meantime changed his shooting-clothes for his native Arab dress, which he always wore at home.

Then followed one of those delights which come only too seldom into one's experience—to lie at

one's ease in the cold, clear night by a warm and cheerful camp-fire. The restfulness of it appeals to every joint in the tired sportsman's frame, while his mind is amused by the quaint tales and plaintive songs with which the Arabs pass away an hour or two.

Then, warm and sleepy, one rolls into his blanket to sleep off all fatigue and gather fresh energy from the pure, fresh air of his bedroom under the stars.

Often during the night, as is my wont, I awoke to glance around, and every time I did so I saw a watchful figure sitting near, or standing looking out across the plain beyond the trees. It was only later on that I found out the reason for this vigil.

Early in the morning I shot my way back to the farm alone, for Hadj Ano laughingly refused to accompany me to see the Frenchmen. We parted with a cheery hand-wave, meaning soon to meet again.

But we have never met.

A few months after this I chanced to read *La De'peche Tunisienne*, and came across a column describing how the police had made a raid on Brown's farm with the object of capturing 'the renowned convict Hadj Ano'. My friend, it appeared, had been a chief of high standing in Algeria, where, in accordance with a tribal custom, he had worked off an old family blood-feud with a neighbouring tribe, and, after a well-fought single combat, had slain his man. But he had forgotten that Algeria was now a civilized country—a part of France in fact—and the result was

*The coroner he came and the justice too
With a hue and a cry and a hullabaloo*

and poor Hadj Ano was sent across the seas to expiate his crime on board the hulks in New Caledonia.

By some means he ultimately effected his escape and returned to his people; but finding Algeria too dangerous to live in, he moved across the mountains into Tunisia with a few trusted followers. Here he had made the acquaintance of Brown, and his sportsmanlike and gentlemanly character, combined with his intelligence and education, made him at once a useful bailiff and a pleasant companion on the farm. His faithful people watched over and guarded him, and the country Arabs for miles around knew his story and passed him warning when French officials of any kind were moving in the direction of Brown's farm.

At length fate went against him. Somehow, whether by bribery or other means I have never heard, the police managed to keep their movements secret, and having surrounded the farm during the night, seized poor Hadj Ano at the dawn of day and took him back to prison.

What was his subsequent fate I never heard.

IX

AN AMBUSCADE

It wasn't such a very formidable river to look at. you could hardly call it a river, for it was only between thirty and forty yards wide, but it was deep and rapid and liable to sudden rises after rain. Anyway it had to be bridged to make it easily passable for the force at all times.

Of course the Sappers (Royal Engineers) would come and draw plans and make estimates of materials, tools, working-parties, etc., and would put up a double-lock or triple-expansion or some high-class bridge of that kind.

But meantime all this would want protecting. We weren't a dozen miles from Kumasi, where our enemy was, we knew, assembling his forces. So my little command, the native levy of some eight hundred, must occupy the far side of the stream and clear a good space of forest and bush in front, so that no cover remained for any attackers; and we proposed also to build a good fort on the far side to act as a bridge-head to defend the crossing from all assaults of our enemies.

All this necessitated an interim bridge of our own. But this was no great undertaking for us. We had one company of specialists at that work, and they were the Mampons-great hulking fellows, fishermen from the coast. They were the only lot among our eight companies who knew how to use ropes and to tie knots.

Moreover we found by experience among the West Coast natives that the bigger the men the smaller their hearts. The tribe of little wizened forest men, the Adansis, were full of pluck and go, but the big burly 'seedy boys' were as averse to fighting as any 'conchies'. So they were not armed, but formed the 'Bridging Company', and under protection of the others did their work well and skilfully.

They had made pretty nearly two hundred bridges or causeways of sorts in the course of the expedition, and so had gained an experience that made them quick and efficient at their job.

But at this last stream we found it simplest not even to call upon them, but upon the axemen of the 'Felling Company'. Selecting a likely-looking cotton tree growing near to the bank, with its great thick trunk running straight up, with scarcely a branch, to a height of some 180 feet, we felled him so that he dropped neatly across the stream and with his own weight plunked himself securely in position.

The adze men got to work and in a very short time had squared off his topside into a flat and level roadway, while the Bridgers rigged a handrail to give extra security. And the thing was done.

It may be added, *sotto voce*, that events rather rushed themselves in the next few hours, and before the 'regulation' bridge could be made ready, the main column had to be hurried to the front over our improvised arrangement.

Later on, when the return march was to be carried out, there came a tornado, and a rush of water which carried away the official bridge, but made no impression on the solid old tree-trunk, and this was therefore called upon again to transport the whole expedition on its homeward journey.

But this is beside the question and another story.

I want to tell you how we got to Kumasi and what we did with the King.

For a hundred years or more the Ashantis had been a thorn in the side of the British Protectorate of the Gold Coast. They were a powerful and fairly bloodthirsty tribe living a hundred miles inland in dense forest country. They not only waylaid all rubber- and ivory-traders coming from the interior to the coast, but also raided the harmless coast tribes whenever they were in want of slaves.

And this was more or less generally the case, as slaves were needed in goodly numbers to take the title-role in human-sacrifice performances.

More than one expedition, notably that of Lord Wolseley, had gone to Kumasi, and had made treaties and exacted promises from the King of Ashanti that human sacrifices should cease, and the road be kept open for peaceful trading with the coast.

But the existing King, Prempeh, just like his predecessors, had ignored all such agreements, and things were as bad as ever.

So this expedition, under Sir Francis Scott, was sent up to remedy matters.

The main body of the force consisted of white troops and a large contingent of native carriers for its supply of food and ammunition.

My little lot was a native levy, raised among friendly tribes, which acted as an advance guard of scouts and pioneers, a few days ahead of the main body.

And now we were within a day's march of the capital, a hundred and fifty miles from the coast.

Needless to say, these last few miles of our long march through the dense forest, as we advanced to the great denouement, were full of intense excitement for us.

Was the enemy going to fight us or not? We did not know. What we did know from our spies and deserting slaves was that the King had summoned to the capital his ten chiefs and their contingents to go through the fetish ceremonial that was customary before war, and which usually took some fourteen days to complete.

Our object was to rush them before they could complete this. Our orders were that moral force, rather than Maxim guns, was to be used if possible; i.e., quickness and display of strength were likely to be successful.

So my advance force was divided up into three columns, operating by separate paths in such a way as to appear simultaneously, on a fixed day and hour, on three sides of the capital.

Warily we went, with scouts creeping and cutting their way through the undergrowth in front and on either side of us. Ambuscades were a positive disease with our enemy.

We were now on a regular track leading to the town. Here we presently found a whole line of little wooden dolls planted in the ground facing towards the coast. This was a fetish and gentle hint to us to turn about and go the same way, otherwise their gods would be exceedingly unkind to us-if not absolutely brutal.

Had we been a normal enemy, and had they not been on the defensive in the matter of human sacrifice, they would not have placed wooden dolls there, but slaves planted alive in the ground up to their necks, and left for the ants to do the rest.

The appearance of victims executed in this way was generally sufficient to deter any enemy from pursuing that path.

It was nearing the hour at which our detachment was due to arrive at the front of Kumasi in co-operation with the two other wings of our column, working from either flank.

Presently we passed a group of huts, empty at the moment, but evidently of recent occupation: the owners had fled at our coming. Then more huts and openings among the trees, with a high thick jungle of elephant grass all round.

Suddenly there came a weird sound in the air, the throbbing and boom of drums ahead; some of them far away, some of them near at hand. This sounded like business!

In a moment every one seemed to be grinning; eyes sparkled; men hurried their pace; expectation and excitement were in the air. The enemy's drums were calling the alarm. It was exactly as though a swarm of bees in a hive was being disturbed. Evidently our approach, or that of our flanking party, had been observed.

Then some of our leading scouts came running back to tell us that we had reached the place.

Suddenly we all stood listening; there was a marked pause in the drumming, and a change of rhythm or cadence. It was 'drum-talk', the wireless of the woods.

Our men were listening in with all their ears. A moment later my Haussa orderly, Musa, grumbled out: 'Ah! Him dam blood fella Ashanti say in talking to white fella don' wanten fight, he want sit down and make palaver-talk; my saying him dam blood fella'; and he spat neatly between his teeth to show what he thought of them.

Out of the dark, soggy depths of the forest we came, for the first time for weeks, into the open sunshine. There lay before us a clear space like a parade ground, a quarter of a mile wide, and beyond it, on a gentle slope in a hollow, a mass of thatched roofs, stretching away into the jungle beyond.

Kumasi! Just a vast village, nothing imposing about it; no walls or ramparts, no spires or minarets; yet a place with a long and lurid history of its own; the key to a vast hinterland.

With an eye to due effect, we paraded our force along one side of the parade ground, while on the opposite edge of it the Ashantis were beginning to throng from the town to look at us. We had marshalled ourselves into some sort of order, and after a body of advanced scouts came our political officer and staff (of two white officers) with the Union Jack on a hog-spear. These were followed by some companies of the native levy in their uniform of brown skin (provided by Nature) and red skull-caps (provided by the Government). Then a company of the Gold Coast Haussas, headed by a small band of drums and fifes.

This force formed up in line facing the town.

But we were not leaving things to chance. The drum-talk of peace and goodwill might have been but a blind to disarm suspicion while they sent out surprise packets against our flanks or rear. So, as we formed up on our parade ground, we detached pickets to act as outposts to watch and guard our flanks.

While we were still busy forming up, there appeared from both sides of the town simultaneously connecting parties from our two flanking columns, which meantime had arrived on the tick, in their allotted places.

Kumasi was surrounded.

Now the drumming from the town boomed louder, and the roar of voices filled the air. Great coloured umbrellas were soon seen dancing and bobbing above the heads of the surging crowds of natives as they poured onto the parade ground. Stool-bearers ran before their masters, followed by whirling dancers with their yellow skirts flying around them. Great drums like beer barrels, decked with human skulls and carried on the heads of the slaves, were booming out their notes, while bands of elephant-tusk horns added to the din. The King and his chiefs were borne on elevated chairs and arranged themselves in a dense line along the edge of the parade ground to see the troops arrive. The umbrellas formed a row of booths beneath which the chiefs sat on their brass-nailed chairs, with their courtiers round them.

Often had they sat like this before upon that spot, but never had their sitting been without the

sight of blood.

The object of this open space had not been for parading troops, but for use as the theatre of human sacrifice.

A long wait ensued, during which two minor incidents occurred which, small as they were, had their import. The first was when a little party of our force, consisting of three white soldiers, with four natives, came hurriedly across the ground, carrying a reel and winding off the field telegraph. Thus, within a few minutes of the arrival of the advance force before Kumasi the fact was known all the way down to the coast and thence to England.

We could not help a cheer of admiration for those gallant fellows of the Engineers for their plucky and determined work. But incidentally their arrival had a particular effect on the Ashantis, since, as Musa explained, 'they dam fella not liking white fellas' fetish string; they talking him bring devil'.

Just after this the white officer with me, by way of whiling away his time, strolled towards a clump of huge cotton trees just behind us. As he did so I noticed a sudden liveliness among the Ashantis. Several of them jumped to their feet and, talking anxiously among themselves, watched his movement, as it were with pricked ears.

Suspecting an ambush, I promptly called him back and ordered a few scouts to go and investigate. In a few moments they were back, grinning broadly, to report that the whole copse was full of dead men. And it was. A nasty sight, but at the same time a useful one for our purpose; it disclosed, without need of further proof, that human sacrifice, though denied by the King, was still prevalent, and our expedition was therefore not made without good reason.

(Incidentally, a day later, a number of my varlets obtained leave of absence to 'visit the city', and reappeared in the evening, much to the envy of those who had remained in camp, with strings of human teeth round their necks. And human teeth, to the ladies of that country, were as diamonds to their society sisters in Belgravia.)

Presently our general and his staff were seen approaching, followed by the main body of the white troops in military array.

The King, under instruction, came forward to salute the general, but on starting to question why the troops had come was told in other words to 'dry up' until the arrival of His Excellency the Governor on the morrow: he would then learn why we were there.

Meantime the troops were billeted at different points round the outskirts of the town.

A short reconnaissance of the palace of the King showed it to be a collection of buildings, with high-pitched thatched roofs in many layers, contained within a high-walled enclosure. A few back-doors in this wall gave on a jungle of elephant grass and undergrowth' and beyond this lay the forest.

Having a free hand to take such steps as I thought desirable, I soon set my little army to work to cut down this undergrowth so as to isolate the palace and leave a clear space round it which could easily be watched by day or night- and I set pickets there to watch it.

One path in particular, which led from a postern in the palace wall, was difficult to clear, being hidden in a tunnel of thick thorn-bush. So here, after nightfall, I laid an ambush.

A council had been summoned by the King at the palace, and sat there far into the night. Presently our watch was rewarded, when a gleam of light came from the palace doorway, and a

procession with torches issued forth. Could it be Prempeh making off?

The time was now three o'clock, and there was a thick wet mist. The string of white-robed figures, looking most picturesque in the strong light of the torches, drew silently near, and then we saw by the big hand-screens carried by the attendants that the Queen Mother was the leading notability in the group.

Silently they passed within twenty yards of us, and very softly we followed them until we had marked them down into the Queen's residence. This we picketed.

Then back to our ambush.

A few minutes later a councillor on his way home, attended by a slave boy carrying his stool, walked into our midst. He was too startled to speak before he had been told that silence would save his life.

Before long we saw a shadow creeping through the wood. A man went close past, his form silhouetted against the stars.

As soon as he had passed me I gave our little call, the whistle of a frog, 'quit-quit-quit', but rendered long-short-long, as the quail sounds it. This gave warning to the ambushing picket which lay alongside the path a few yards farther on, and as he reached that point he was quietly embraced, gagged, bound, and removed for safe keeping.

Another and another of these men came at intervals, only to be disposed of in the same way. They were scouts from the palace to see whether the path was clear.

After a pause, a movement among the shadows showed two men coming very slowly and stealthily one behind the other. Nearer and nearer they came, till at last the leader was close-quite close-in front of me. Here he checked himself, poised and tense, looking forward, trying to pierce the darkness which hid our ambushed party.

For hours, it seemed, he stood like this, all of us in a state of suspended animation, hardly daring to breathe, as if performing a tableau vivant.

The tension was almost painful. What was going to be the outcome? Whose move next?

When the end came to the situation, it came quite suddenly, and this enforced restraint relieved itself in the surprising energy which marked the dog-fight that followed. My friend turned to whisper to his assistant; he had evidently seen something suspicious. It was time to act. I had only to stand up where I was and reach out to grip him round the neck with one arm, and with my knee in the small of his back to get him down.

Then we had a rare old rough-and-tumble. He tried to get his gun to work on me, and I grasped by chance the cock, which, providentially, like the housemaid's proverbial jug-handle, 'come away in my 'and'.

We then both rolled over together into the ditch. Fortunately his assistant had sufficient sense of fair play to bolt away and to leave us to have it out between us; and I rather think that my opponent would have had the best of it if it hadn't been that the faithful Musa slipped in at the exact moment when the Ashanti, having drawn a knife from the back of his belt, was searching for my liver with it.

All ended well, however. We soon had the man gagged and trussed. His assistant had meantime been tripped up and captured by some of my Adansis. After that no more scouts came our way

before the day began to dawn.

A big parade had been ordered for the next morning. The troops formed three sides of a square, and the whole of Kumasi flocked to the spot and stood round to watch the scene.

The fourth side of the square was a space reserved for the King and councillors, but when the parade was formed they were not there. The rumour got abroad that both the King and the Queen Mother had succeeded in getting away in the night.

But we knew better. Messengers were sent to them, but they showed some hesitation about coming. Thereupon Donald Stewart, the Civil Commissioner, paid an early morning call upon the lady. His unpleasantly direct manner astonished but at the same time impressed her and her attendants. He was not content to wait upon the mat in the hall, but walked straight into Her Majesty's bedroom. There he lit a cigarette, and told her that if she was not dressed and ready to start by the time his cigarette was finished, she would be taken, just as she was, by force to the parade ground.

I have never known a lady complete her toilet so quickly as did that Queen.

The King too got an equally peremptory message; but as he rather resented it, a company of the West Yorks appeared on the scene to act as his escort and he came.

There was something pathetic in the parade that followed. From the descriptions by Bowditch of the daily displays and ceremonial at the court of the King of Kumasi over a hundred years ago, one realized that these had altered very little till this day.

Here were the same heralds, dwarfs, councillors, stool-bearers, medicine men, and tributary chiefs, and all the display of dress and jewellery, under the great whirling umbrellas which now filled the fourth side of the square, three sides of which were formed by the troops of the expedition.

To us it was a novel display of barbaric ceremonial; to the Ashantis it was a familiar and often a dreaded spectacle, since it nearly always involved some of them being tortured and executed. It had always been so.

But to-day they saw it for the last time. No sooner had the row of royal umbrellas and crowd of courtiers taken up its position than a body of troops marched rigidly into place behind it and completed the enclosure.

Their indictment was then read out to the King and his chiefs, showing how the Ashantis had failed to honour their treaty obligations.

No argument was necessary. The dead bodies lying in the sacred grove yonder were evidence enough.



CAPTURE OF THE KING'S SCOUT



PLAN OF PREMPEH'S PALACE AND NATIVE LEVY GUARDING IT
AFTER CUTTING AWAY THE BUSH

The King and the Queen Mother were told to come forward and do obeisance to the Governor of the Gold Coast, as representative of the Great White Queen.

There, in the presence of his chiefs and people, Prempeh had to kneel and do penance, a thing never before done by an Ashanti monarch.

Then the sentence of banishment was pronounced upon him, while freedom and protection were offered to the Ashanti people.

The deposition of their King moved the onlookers visibly. They had been accustomed to look upon him as all-powerful, and here he was bowing himself in the dust for mercy, as doubtless many a victim to his lust for blood had bowed in vain to him.

When Prempeh and his mother left the square at the end of the conference, it was no longer as King and Queen Mother that they went, but as exiles to be ultimately located in far-off lands.

To-day Kumasi has its railway and its trade and commercial prosperity, its schools and its Boy Scouts.

X

AN ELEPHANT HUNT

I once got into the middle of a herd of wild elephants. It was in a vast forest in South Africa, and, coming to the opening on the side of a valley, we saw the great rounded grey backs of about a dozen elephants, feeding among the bush on the far slope. So, taking our bearings by the sun, wind and trees, we crept down into the ravine in order to get to them unseen.

We got into a thick tangle of undergrowth- thorn-bushes overgrown with creepers, and a long, fine grass so thick that it would have been impossible to work one's way through, had it not been that elephants had been there before us: from continually shoving their way backwards and forwards through it they had worn paths for themselves which made our progress comparatively easy.

The danger of these paths is that if the elephants suddenly get frightened they come tearing down them, and you might just as well be in a narrow alley with a motor-bus running away down it. There is no getting out to either side, and the elephant, in his fright or rage, is delighted to trample you under his great feet. So it was with some relief that we at last got out of this tangle into undergrowth that was less thick. This was composed chiefly of tree ferns-that is, ferns growing in great branches on the top of short, thick stems, but about six feet high. This was splendid cover for us, as we could walk between the stems, but were completely hidden from view by the thick roof of ferns above us.

Moreover, by looking between the stems, we had a chance of seeing the elephants' legs before their owners saw us. But the elephant does not see very well, and like many other wild animals seldom discovers you if you stand perfectly still; you must be careful, however, to keep down wind of him; he is very quick to smell you, even at some distance away. In the forest, of course, it is very difficult to tell which way the air is blowing, as it feels dead still down in all that undergrowth; so one cannot easily tell when one is down wind.

Gradually, as we crept on, we began to hear the elephants in front of us at work tearing down branches of trees to eat the leaves. There was a lot of crashing and cracking of timber, and a regular kind of conversation going on of gurgling, rumbling sounds, with an occasional snort or blast like a trumpet. Suddenly there was a noise to our right, then a crash to our left, close by. As yet we could see nothing. Then there was a rumbling gurgle behind us! We were right in among them.

Still we could see nothing, and yet the animals sounded, some of them, as if quite close. We crouched low and waited and listened to the curious noises made by the herd, which was evidently quite unconscious of our close presence. We could hear the little young ones with their shriller cries evidently asking for a higher branch to be pulled for them, and then would follow a tearing, swishing crash as old mother elephant reached up with her great strong trunk and dragged down a leafy tree-top. Then followed such a mumbling, gurgling and munching by the hungry youngsters.

Presently, as we were creeping forward towards a dark point in the undergrowth, which looked like a shady tunnel in the jungle, it moved! It was the leg of an elephant close in front of us, not more than ten or twelve yards away, just the other side of a big thick bush.

This bush he was tearing at with his trunk— the branches over our heads were jerking and swishing about; we were staring expectantly to get a sight of his body or head, and suddenly we got

it—only for a moment! But it was not in the place where we had been looking—it was much nearer. Right over us there suddenly came a dark mass of trunk, and a gleam of great tusks, and then the bushes closed again and hid the vision.

With hearts in our mouths, we waited for the next appearance, our rifles ready to shoot the

moment that we saw any vital spot to aim at. But there was a pause. Even the crashing of the bush ceased.

All round us the gurgling and more distant sounds of tearing timber ceased. All was still, and so were we.

We waited and waited for the next move or sound, but there was none! The elephants had gone! They had winded us and then without a sound, without a rustle or crack of a stick, they had slipped quickly and quietly away. It is perfectly marvellous how, without a sound, the danger signal is given instantaneously through the herd and how the whole lot of these huge creatures can quickly get away, on tiptoe as it were.

We got on the spoor, but found that they had started off at a great pace and, as elephants when alarmed run for thirty or forty miles without a stop, we gave up the chase as hopeless.

I admit that I was not very sorry, for I could not help feeling that to shoot one of these splendid creatures—which was probably 150 years old when I was born—would have been almost impertinent of me; I would almost as soon go and blow up the Tower of London with dynamite.

XI

THE VALUE OF SKIRT-DANCING

It was in Matabeleland in 1896.

We knew that the enemy was amongst some mountains about fifteen miles away from us, and my duty was to go and find out exactly whereabouts they were, and in what strength, and if possible to discover where they had hidden their women and cattle.

I was allowed to take any troops I wanted; but I found that it was generally best to go alone, with one good, reliable native to help me. If I went with troops the enemy was bound to discover us at once and so would hide away in the mountains where we could discover nothing about him.

So I started off overnight with a first-rate Zulu, both of us riding ponies.

Soon we came to a line of broken hills, beyond which lay a broad valley of long grass and bush, and on the far side of this rose the tumbled mass of mountains which formed the enemy's stronghold.

On the first line of hills they had small parties of men stationed as outposts, ready to give the alarm should our army advance to attack them.

As we approached the hills we could see the glow and smoke of fires here and there among the rocks; so it was fairly easy for us to take a line which passed between the outposts.

It was exciting work.

Dismounting, we tied up our horses' feet in bits of old blanket which we had brought with us for the purpose, both to deaden the sound and to prevent foot-tracks. And then, cautiously feeling our way and leading the nags, we crept silently through the line of watchers.

Once safely through, we gaily mounted and rode on, guided by the stars bright above us, towards the mountains across the plain. Presently these began to loom up in the darkness, gloomy and silent. Yet we knew that hundreds of our enemies were concealed there.

Nearer and nearer we came, till the mountains seemed to tower over us.

Now at last we left our horses, giving them a drink and some corn and tethering them in a well-hidden spot. Then we continued our way on foot, going more and more cautiously and silently as we got among the rocks and foot-hills of the range. We had to be specially careful not to leave more footmarks than necessary, because we had been at this game once or twice before and the enemy had found our spoor in the daytime, followed it up and tried to cut off our line of retreat. So we did our best to give no clue to our movements.

At length we reached a place from which we judged that when daylight came we might have a good view of the stronghold, and here we hid ourselves in the bushes and waited for dawn.

If the Matabele got no signal of alarm from the outposts on the advanced hills, it was their custom to begin to light their fires and cook their food shortly before dawn, and that was our one opportunity of seeing exactly where they were camped. Then we could creep close to the spot, hide somewhere for the day, and watch their movements. From there we might possibly see the women bringing their food and thus discover their hidingplace.

A dull light began to appear in the eastern sky, accompanied by a chilly feel in the air-dawn was at hand.

Suddenly on the dark mountain-side before us there came a spark and a glimmer and a fire began to burn. Another was lit, another, and then another.

The enemy was there right before us. I was thinking to myself: 'You fools; you little know you are giving away your position'; but scarcely had the thought crossed my mind when Jan, my Zulu, laid his hand excitedly on my arm and, quietly chuckling, whispered: 'They have laid a trap for us. 'Wait here and I'll go and see.'

He stripped off the European clothes which he was wearing and, leaving them in a heap beside me, slipped away quietly into the darkness, taking with him his rifle and walking-staff.

As I lay there, wondering at his suggestion-for I could see no signs of a trap-the thought dawned upon me that perhaps he was going to make a trap for me. The Matabele are cousins of the Zulus and they talk the same language. It would have been quite easy for him to go to the enemy and

offer to hand me over to them for an adequate return in cattle. No Zulu can resist a chance of getting cattle!

So he had not been gone long before I, too, crept away from my hiding-place. My first idea was to make for the horses and be ready to bolt should circumstances require it; but on my way thither I passed a pile of rocks, and a better idea occurred to me, namely: to hide among these, where I could see our original hiding-place and still be in touch with the horses.

So there I lay, it seemed for hours, while the daylight gradually came on and the mountain grew alive with fires. Soon I could see men moving about amongst them, and eventually a number of warriors went up the hill-side out of the grass not very far from our position.

Suddenly there was a movement in the grass near my first hiding-place: one naked brown figure crept in alone.

It was Jan, and he had not brought the enemy with him.

He looked round in surprise at my absence, but as soon as I was sure that he was unaccompanied I gave the whistle of a night-bird, which was our signal, and he quickly joined me at the rocks.

Then he told me how, having noticed that the enemy's fires were lit up one by one in regular succession, it occurred to him that the job was being done by one man, not by several at once, and that possibly it was a ruse to lead us on- because the enemy knew that we were often watching them at night.

So he had gone forward, and very soon found himself among a whole lot of Matabele lying in ambush where they thought we might come. Of course, he pretended to be one of them and lay with them for a time, and managed to throw cold water on the idea that we were about to-night. Then before the daylight came on he took an opportunity of creeping away and so got back to me.

I felt heartily ashamed of my suspicion of him, but said nothing about it.

That day brought more excitement for us ere the sun went down.

Finding at daybreak that we were lying directly opposite the front of the enemy's position and might therefore be in the path of men coming or going therefrom, we thought best to get away more to a flank where we could see just as well and with less risk of being found out. So away we crawled and dodged among bush and boulder and long grass till we reached a suitable spot.

An old dead tree gave us a good landmark as to where our horses were hidden, should we at any time want to find them in a hurry. And, sure enough, before many hours had passed we had occasion to do so in a very great hurry.

After studying the enemy's position for some time through my telescope, I came to the conclusion that part of it was hidden from us by a projecting shoulder of rock on the mountain-side, and I thought that if I could climb up this without being seen I might get a real good look at their stronghold and find out exactly how best it might be attacked.

Meantime Jan also was thinking and restless, and at last he said that he thought he could find out exactly where the women and cattle were hidden if he made a short stalk away to our right; indeed we could hear the lowing of cattle and barking of dogs among the ravines in that direction.

So presently he crept away, agreeing with me that if there were any alarm we should make our

way as quickly as possible to the horses, each looking after himself.

Then I had breakfast, consisting of a few bites of an army biscuit and of a slab of chocolate taken alternately; after which I began to get anxious again to look into the stronghold. So I started off after having examined every inch of the way through my telescope and noted in my mind every peculiar stone or tree that would serve to guide me as I got on my way.

Nearer and nearer I got, until the shoulder of the hill shut out all sight of the enemy's position, and I felt comparatively safe from view. Onwards and upwards I climbed, silent in my rubber-soled boots, until at last my landmarks told me that I was nearing the top of the shoulder. Dragging myself like a lizard I reached a friendly bush between two rocks on the crest and pushing my head into the bush I looked down into the spot I had wanted to see.

A short distance below me, and quite unsuspecting of my presence, hundreds of Matabele were lounging about—some cooking and eating, others putting their blankets out in the sun. There were their little bivouac shelters, made of branches and grass, between the rocks. The small clefts and terraces of the mountain-side were strongly barricaded with stone breastworks and timber, and rough ladders made from tree-trunks led from one ledge to another; while caves here and there gave ample protection from shell-fire.

It was a nasty position to attack, and I lay for a long time noting the difficulties of an attacker. Then I thought it time to examine the rest of the mountain-side, to see where would be the best line for assaulting the place, and I slid quietly backwards out of my position and got once more among the great boulders in the ravine behind me.

Suddenly a wild yell far up above me on the mountain-side told me that I had been discovered, and I saw a number of Matabele running and jumping on the rocks—and they saw me.

There was nothing for it but to get out of the place as quickly as possible.

'Bang' went a gun. 'Smack' went a bullet (quite wide of me) on the face of a rock.

A hurried glance behind me showed a dozen or so of the warriors scuttling after me like a lot of hounds after a fox.

Concealment was useless. So I began to jump from one boulder to another instead of clambering down between them. My rubber-soled shoes clung to the rock as I landed and never let me slip. Years ago I had learned skirt-dancing, and the value of that was that I had command over my feet and was thus able to spring lightly and quickly from rock to rock without a mistake.

A glance behind me showed that my pursuers were getting strung out. They were lagging, and I realized that Matabele, not being used to mountains, were not as quick as I was in getting over boulders. My heart warmed up again. My wits came back to me, and instead of going straight down the hill-side I edged away to my left, still going downwards and gaining every stride on my pursuers.

At last I reached the level and got out of sight among the long grass. Then I changed my direction again and was lucky enough to find a dry watercourse running away to my right front in the direction of the tree where our horses stood.

I rushed along this, bending double all the way, while my jabbering enemies were still careering onward away to the left in the opposite direction. As I reached the bushes by the dead tree there was a movement among them. I dropped in my tracks and waited.



I BEGAN TO JUMP FROM ONE BOULDER TO ANOTHER

It was Jan; he emerged grinning and leading both horses and panting almost as hard as I. In a second we were on our nags and in a few minutes were well out of range of our enemies.

Jan told me that he had heard the Matabele shouting that they had seen me, and he heard the shots; but these had ceased because the chiefs called out 'It is the Wolf' (the name the Matabele gave me). 'Don't shoot him. Catch him alive. Catch him with your hands.'

If I had understood this at the time and had realized the fun they meant to have with me before they put me to death I think I should have run even faster than I did.

And if I had never learned skirt-dancing I should probably not be writing this yarn to-day.

XII

WHEN I WAS A SPY

As a child I was strongly addicted to the game of hide-and-peek, and the craft learned in that innocent field of sport has stood me in good stead in many a critical time since.

To lie flat in a furrow among the currant-bushes when I had not time to reach the neighbouring boxbushes before the pursuer came in sight, taught me the value of not using the most obvious cover which would at once be searched. The hunters went straight for the box-bushes as the likely spot, while I could watch their doings from among the stems of the currant-bushes.

Another secret picked up at the game of hideand-peek was, if possible, to get above the level of the hunter's eye and to 'freeze'—that is, to sit tight without a movement. Even although not in actual concealment you are very apt to escape notice by so doing. I found this out seventy years ago by lying flat along the top of an ivy-clad wall when my pursuers passed within a few feet of me without looking up. Later in life I put it to the proof again by sitting on a bank beside the road, just above the height of a man, but so near that I might have touched a passer-by with a fishing-rod. There I sat without any concealment and counted fifty-four wayfarers, of whom no more than eleven noticed me.

The knowledge of this fact came in useful on one of my investigating tours. Inside a great high wall lay a dockyard, in which, it was rumoured, a new power-house was being erected, and possibly a dry-dock was in course of preparation.

It was early morning. The gates were just opened; the workmen were beginning to arrive, and several carts of materials were waiting to come in.

Seizing the opportunity of the gates being open, I gave a hurried glance in as any ordinary passer-by might do.

I was promptly ejected by the policeman on duty in the lodge.

I did not go far. My intention was to get in somehow and to see what I could.

I watched the first of the carts go in, and noticed that the policeman was busily engaged in talking to the leading waggoner, while the second began to pass through the gate.

In a moment I jumped alongside it on the side opposite to the janitor, and so passed in and continued to walk with the vehicle as it turned to the right and wound its way round the new building in course of construction.

Then I noticed another policeman ahead of me, and so I kept my position by the cart, re-adapting its cover in order to avoid him. Unfortunately, in rounding the corner, I was espied by the first policeman, and he immediately began to shout to me.

I was deaf to his remarks, and walked on as unconcernedly as a guilty being could till I had placed the corner of the new building between him and me. Then I fairly hooked it along the back of the building and rounded the far corner of it.

As I did so I saw out of the tail of my eye that he was coming full speed after me and was calling Policeman No. 2 to his aid. I darted like a redshank round the next corner out of sight of both policemen, and looked for a method of escape.

The scaffolding of the new house towered above me, and a ladder led upwards onto it. Up this I went like a lamplighter, keeping one eye on the corner of the building lest I should be followed.

I was only half-way up when round the corner came one of the policemen.

I at once 'froze'.

I was about fifteen feet above sea-level and not twenty yards from him. He stood undecided with his legs well apart, peering from side to side in every direction to see where I had gone, very anxious and shifty. I was equally anxious and immovable.

Presently he drew nearer to my ladder and, strange as it may seem, I felt safer when he came right below me, and he passed almost under me, looking in at the doorways of the unfinished building. Then he doubtfully turned and looked back at a shed behind him, thinking I might have gone in there, and finally started off and ran on round the next corner of the building. The moment he disappeared I finished the rest of my run up the ladder and safely reached the platform of the scaffolding.



I WAS ONLY HALF-WAY UP WHEN ROUND THE CORNER CAME ONE OF THE POLICEMEN

The workmen were not yet upon the building, so I had the whole place to myself. My first action was to look for another ladder as a line of escape in case of being chased. It is always well to have a back-door to your hiding-place; that is one of the essentials in scouting.

Presently I found a short ladder leading from my platform from the stage below, but it did not go to the ground. Peering quietly over the scaffolding I saw my friend the policeman below, still at

fault. I blessed my stars that he was no tracker and therefore had not seen my footmarks leading to the foot of the ladder.

I then proceeded to take note of my surroundings and to gather information.

Judging from the design of the building, its great chimneys, etc., I was actually on the new power-house. From my post I had an excellent view over the dockyard, and within a hundred feet of me were the excavation works of the new dock, whose dimensions I could easily estimate.

I whipped out my prismatic compass and quickly took the bearings of two conspicuous points on the neighbouring hills, and so fixed the position which could be marked on a large-scale map.

Meantime my pursuer had called the other policeman to him and they were in close confabulation immediately below me, where I could watch them through a crack between two of the foot-boards. They had evidently come to the conclusion that I was not in the power-house as the interior was fully open to view, and they had had a good look into it.

Their next step was to examine the goods-shed close by, which was evidently full of building lumber, etc.

One man went into it while the other remained outside on the line that I should probably take for escaping, that is, between it and the boundary wall leading to the gateway.

By accident, rather than by design, he stood close to the foot of my ladder, and thus cut off my retreat in that direction.

While they were thus busy they were leaving the gate unguarded, and I thought it was too good a chance to be missed, so, returning along the scaffolding until I reached the small ladder, I climbed down this onto the lower story, and seeing no one about, I quickly swarmed down one of the scaffolding poles and landed safely on the ground close behind the big chimney of the building.

Here I was out of sight, although not far from the policeman guarding the ladder; and taking care to keep the corner of the building between us, I made my way round to the back of the lodge and then slipped out of the gate without being seen.

Undoubtedly spying would be an intensely interesting sport even if no great results were obtainable from it. There is a fascination which gets hold of any one who has tried the art. Each day brings fresh situations and conditions requiring quick change of action and originality to meet them.

The incident given above from actual experience is nothing out of the common, but it explains something of the sporting value of the work.

Yes, for any one who is tired of life the thrilling life of a spy should be the very finest recuperator!

XIII

THE BLOOD BOWL

The Kings and the Kings only are buried at Bantama, and the sacred gold is buried with them.

Opposite the building in which their bones are deposited is the largest brass pan I have ever seen (for sacrifices) being about five feet in diameter with four small lions on the edge. Here human sacrifices are frequent and customary to 'water the graves' of the Kings.

(Extract from *A Mission to Aslzanti*, by Bowditch, 1817.)

It was a warm, starlight night and we were out in the bush doing duty as a 'hanging patrol'. This does not mean we were going to lynch anybody, but were a small party of ten, acting neither as a fixed outpost to watch a given spot, nor as a reconnoitring party to search a definite line of country: our business lay betwixt and between the two. It was to hang about in likely places and keep a look-out for any moves on the part of the enemy.

We had his main body well cornered, anyway, in Kumasi, a mile or so away; but it just wanted watching: he might probably be sending out or receiving messages by runners, and these we were on the look-out to intercept.

As a rule the West Coast negro is not very reliable in the forest by night. He is too much concerned with ghosts and banshees to concentrate his mind on the work on hand. But my little lot were Adansis, a tribe given to hunting and night work in the jungle, and therefore in every way the men for this job. They could see in the dark, they could hear, and they could smell; they could move in absolute silence and unseen; they were cheery, wiry, little wild men, not far removed from the monkeys they hunted. I liked them.

There are people who will tell you that night scouting is no catch, but there are others for whom it has an everlasting fascination, and I happen to be one of these.

It is true it has its drawbacks in northern climes, in wind and sleet and mud, but on a balmy tropical night in the forest it is another matter. There is a mysterious hush around one, yet small voices seem to be speaking everywhere. The chirping of crickets, the drone of frogs, the drip and fall of the leaves, and the dim whispering of night breezes playing among the branches away up overhead.

Occasionally, at long intervals, the peaceful silence is broken suddenly by that most impressive of all forest sounds—the roaring, rending crash as a hoary old veteran among the giant trees yields up his life and falls from his pride of place clutching and tearing his smaller numbers as he thunders to earth.

There is a moment of tense and, as it were, respectful silence and then all the little voices of the forest begin again their whisperings.

This I was listening to, squatting between the huge buttress roots of a towering cotton tree, with five of my faithful varlets who formed the reserve of my patrol. These had already done their turn of creeping about for information and were now resting, but alert and ready if wanted. The halfflight of approaching dawn was showing itself in the air, and the mist of morning was beginning to rise among the trees. Our vigil would soon be over.

Presently a sound detached itself from the others of the forest. It was like the 'quit-quit-quit'

whistle of a frog. Yet not the same, for it was rendered long-short-long as the quail gives it. But quails don't grow in the forest. It was the password of our patrol, sounded by one of the outlying scouts.

Answering the call I crept quietly out in its direction, keeping in the shadows with eyes watching and trying to pierce the gloom, looking a little over, rather than directly at, any suspicious object.

And what a lot of these you see, moving when you move but still when you stop.

When creeping silently and stealthily about, ever ready for an enemy in the next bush, there is something which, as a Frenchman would say, 'gives you an emotion'.

Again I softly sounded the call. After a pause it was as softly answered, just close ahead.

In front of me was a pathway, one of those that we were watching, since it led from the fetish-place of Bantama to Kumasi, and the priests or medicine men of Bantama were the most trusted of King Prempeh's messengers.

An almost whispered call led me on across the road to where among the roots of a great banyan tree I could just discern two of my myrmidons squatting. One of these came silently forward and led me by the wrist into the deep shadow of the tree, and there he guided my hand until it touched the rim of a great metal bowl or cauldron. Again he gave the call, and before long more scouts like shadows had grouped themselves round us.

They crowded to the bowl, and their eager whisperings and movements showed that it had a more than common interest for them. Then one of them pointed out to me something among the lower branches of the tree above us. In the darkness I could see nothing, but going closer to the great gnarled tree-trunk he guided my hand as high as I could reach and I touched what quickly proved to be a human jaw-bone hanging there. And then another, and yet more.

It was a fetish tree.

With the coming dawn our watch was ended. I realized that the bowl, a brass one about four feet across and eighteen inches deep, was just of a size to make a glorious tub for me. So with some lianas cut from the nearest trees we slung it on a pole and carried it off in triumph to camp, my ruffians grinning and whispering joyously among themselves.

Our camp was close around the sacred place or fetish buildings of Bantama.

This day we were ordered to open up the vaults among them in which are laid the great Kings of Ashanti. It was known that with each King was buried the treasure which he had accumulated during his life. Thus Bantama was the treasurehouse of the nation. And some of this treasure was overdue to us.

The reason for the presence of our force in Ashanti at this time was that King Prempeh had failed to carry out his treaty terms with the British. One of these was that there would be an end to all human sacrifice and slavery in the country, and another was that he should pay a stated indemnity due over the previous expedition against the country under Lord Wolseley, some twenty years previously.

The treasure-house was known to be under the charge of some eighty priests or medicine men, and the spells which according to repute they could cast over any would-be looter were quite sufficiently awful to make it decidedly thief-proof.

When we took the place and surrounded it we found it to consist of an unimposing group of thatched sheds and hovels with only one decrepit old boy in charge.

I was fortunate in having as guide a civilized native of the place who could speak English; he had received a modern education at Cape Coast Castle and wore European clothes, and also, incidentally, possessed a swollen head.

He explained that his compatriots were beneath contempt as 'damfool ignoramuses' who imagined that abayifo or red devils lived about the place who would force people to eat their own limbs if they trespassed there. This was what he said when we were at some distance from the place. As we approached it I noticed that he took off his hat and carried it in his hand and only spoke in a subdued whisper, and when we got quite near he advised me for my own good not to approach the building in an irreverent way, and for himself he retired a few paces with some concern when he saw that we were bent on going inside. And his concern gave way to abject horror when we proceeded to break into the royal mausoleum.

This was a kind of crypt whose entrance was bricked up. The plaster which sealed this doorway was evidently comparatively fresh, only a few weeks old, whereas the last King who had died had been buried there for some years.

This fact, coupled with the absence of the priests, prepared us to expect disappointment. A few blows of the pick, and the doorway was open. Within were ranged nine brass coffins or rather caskets in line, and on the top of each stood kuduos or cups and bowls containing food for the departed monarchs.

All looked in order. But when the bowls were removed and the lids of the caskets were opened there was nothing but emptiness within.

A few pieces of stiff tape with angular bends in them showed that recently there had been ingots of gold tied together there, but, as we afterwards learned, all of these, together with the bones of the Kings, had been removed a fortnight previous to the landing of the expedition by the guardian priests, who had dispersed into the jungle, each carrying a portion into safe concealment.

They had certainly done their work well and effectively. And we in our turn did ours. After setting fire to all that was burnable in the place we flattened the walls with improvised batteringrams made of saplings.

Thus we made an end of Bantama.

This was not done with any idea of sacrilege or want of respect for any religious convictions of the people, but because for well over a hundred years it had been the great centre for human sacrifice.

It was one of three such centres in Kumasi; the second was the execution place close to the King's palace, and in the market-place was yet a third.

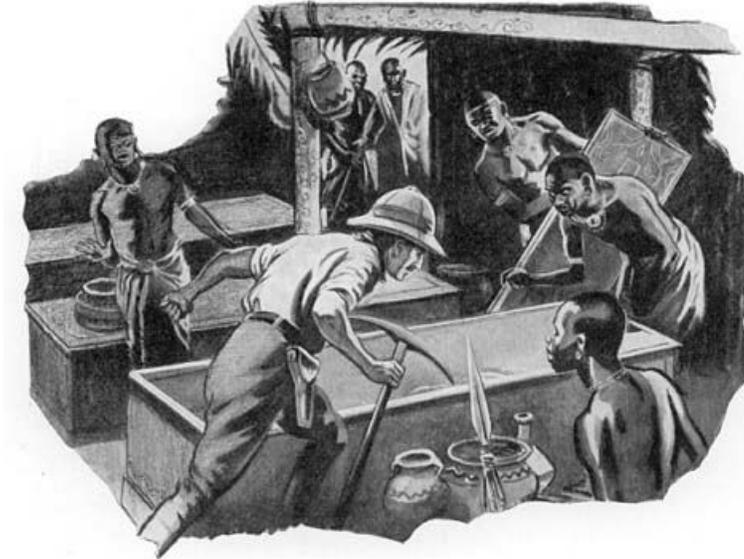
It was at this last place that within a few minutes of our first arrival at Kumasi my scouts discovered a mass of headless corpses hidden in a grove of trees.

Within the town three blocks of houses were set apart as the quarters of the executioners, which in itself implied a certain liveliness in that line of business.

Every big festival, or the funeral of any great man, was the occasion of human sacrifice. Executions were to the people what a bull-fight is to the Spaniards or a football match to the Briton. The executioners were as popular in the public eye as your film screen actors or Test

Match heroes.

Their humour was one of their great assets. Horrible-looking fellows they were, their heads shaggy with long ringlets where otherwise ordinary men had shaven scalps. And, worst of all, they each wore a life-like reproduction of a third eye in the centre of the forehead.



NOTHING BUT EMPTINESS WITHIN

Malefactors and slaves were generally the victims, but there were also a number of local by-laws the breaking of which involved capital punishment.

At Bantama, for instance, near the path by which travellers approached the town, some tempting-looking seats were placed in the shade of the trees. It was, however, a capital offence to sit on one of these. Unfortunately for travellers this by-law was an unwritten one, known only to the executioners, who were always on the watch to see that it was not abused by strangers with impunity.

I had an interview with one of the leading operators, who told me many interesting facts of this kind. And incidentally I found that his popularity was largely due to a chance incident where just as he was about to cut off a head the idea occurred to him to take a pinch of the victim's skin at the back of his shoulder-blade between finger and thumb and to slice it off; then, holding it up before the wretched fellow, he said: 'The last thing you will see is this, and you see it for the first time.'

This sally, as Mr. Boswell would put it, was the occasion of much laughter. Thus had torture and bloodshed become an established orgy in the country under the superstition of fetishism. Nothing short of heroic measures could stop it.

On returning to my camp after the destruction of the fetish house I found a crowd of soldiers of the Special Service Corps and the West Yorks Regiment assembled there. They were being addressed by one of their officers. I joined in, to find that my new bath-tub was the centre of interest, and the officer was explaining to his audience that this was the celebrated fetish bowl mentioned by Bowditch, who visited Ashanti in 1817. It was the great fetish of the country.

The King of the country was accustomed to visit Bantama every three months to perform his

devotions, and on such occasions twenty men were sacrificed by having their heads cut off over the bowl in order to fill it with blood. Eighty men a year was the complement required. But also at the 'Yam Custom' or Harvest Festival each year a further number were sacrificed. Also it was customary for the King occasionally to 'wash the bones' of his forebears by making further extensive libations of blood.

The blood thus obtained was allowed to coagulate in the bowl and was then cut into portions, sewn up in cloth, and sold as charms to those desiring immunity from witchcraft and other danczers.

As I heard all this my idea of using the bath received a rude shock which was accentuated when I came to look at my possession in broad daylight. It had a suggestive high-water mark of a horrible kind which quite put from me any desire to bathe in it.

But realizing now the identity of my prize I had it packed up without delay in a spare tent. It was then slung on a pole and within an hour was on its way down country in charge of six of my men, consigned to a friend of mine at our base at Cape Coast Castle.

Somehow the natives of the country got wind of its departure. All along its journey of 150 miles groups of them came to see it pass and just to touch it. Even after it had been packed in a crate and safely deposited on board ship, parties of them went off in boats to have a farewell glimpse at it.

One Ashanti explained to me that its loss to them was more than that of their King. 'A King we can replace but never the great Blood Bowl.'

It now stands in the museum of the Royal United Service Institute in Whitehall, London— and tramcars run in the streets of Kumasi.

XIV

THE BRAVEST MAN I EVER SAW

It was at the taking of the Tungi Pass in 1878, on the North-West Frontier of India. To General Sir Bindon Blood had been assigned the task of invading the country of the Bunerwals with his division.

The country is so strongly protected by natural defences, in the shape of impassable mountain ranges, that the Bunerwals had come to consider themselves entirely safe from invasion; nor was their confidence without good reason, for former expeditions had found the obstacles opposed to them too difficult to overcome.

There are actually three so-called passes leading over the mountains from India into Buner (pronounced 'Boonair'), and Sir Bindon Blood sent forces out to make simultaneous feints against all three, selecting one, the Tungi Pass, as the object of his real attack. In this way he hoped to cause the enemy to disseminate their force in order to provide garrisons to hold all three passes, and so weaken them at the important point; and in this he succeeded.

Nevertheless, when I arrived in his camp near the Tungi Pass, the night before the attack, hundreds of the enemy's watch-fires were burning on the heights all round, showing that they were there in pretty strong force; and if one wanted any proof of their 'uppishness' and feeling of con-

confidence in their power of resistance, one got it that night in the frequent whistle of their bullets as they kept up an intermittent fire on the camp from their posts of observation among the hills around it. To this night firing, or sniping as it was called, nobody in camp paid the slightest attention: it was of such constant nightly occurrence that things would have seemed unnaturally quiet had it not been going on.

Soon after dawn next morning the whole of our force was on the move to attack the pass, which was only a mile distant from the camp. The ground consisted of a deep valley with a high steep ridge of about two thousand feet on each side of it. The near ridge was occupied by us, the far one by the enemy, at a distance of about 1,200 yards. The pass was merely a footpath, very steep and stony, leading over the ridge held by the enemy. There we could see Bunerwals mustering under their standards, of which there were thirty-nine, and taking their places for defending the position. At every favourable point they had built stone breastworks or sungurs, which they now occupied with their riflemen, while their swordsmen took up positions out of fire behind the ridge, to await the time when our attack came near enough for them to make an effective charge with the cold steel.

But they were nonplussed by the form which the attack took: instead of advancing at once to the assault as they expected him to do, Sir Bindon Blood opened fire with two batteries of mountain artillery and one of field artillery, and for over two hours these kept up a continual hail of shells on the sungurs. So soon as they had demolished one they turned their aim onto the next in the line, making excellent practice all the time; and they gradually and systematically blew down all the breastworks.

The enemy, considering how little they were able to do in reply, behaved with great pluck and coolness. They continually endeavoured to rebuild their walls as fast as they were knocked down. You would see a number of them in a sungur: directly the flash of a gun appeared down they all went out of sight, then, a moment later, as the shell passed over them or stuck into their wall, up came all their heads again, and they went on calmly building as before.

In the meantime our infantry were forming in the valley below, ready to clamber up the face of the position to take it by storm; while a battalion scaled the mountain away to the west of the enemy to take them in flank.

As the attack began to develop the enemy tried to resist it with musketry and by rolling great rocks down the mountain-side. These latter were the worst kind of missile, as one of them in its career might crash through half a company at a time; but the troops were prepared for this, and the orders were for them to keep only on the projecting spurs of the mountain, since falling stones and rocks always take their course down the watercourses and gullies.

The enemy necessarily had to expose themselves somewhat to bring their fire to bear on the troops, and this gave the guns opportunities of opening upon them—opportunities which were very promptly taken, and with great success.

Under such an unrelenting storm of shell the enemy could do nothing; their defences were knocked to pieces, they themselves were losing heavily, and presently they realized that we were taking them in flank as well as in front. Many of their leaders had fallen, and others had begun to think that it was time to exercise discretion rather than valour, and to make their best way home. Thus gradually a retirement began. The standards were all kept flying at their different stations to make it appear as though the whole force were there, but in reality the retreat had begun before our infantry had come within reach of the defenders. And when our flanking force made good its attack, followed directly afterwards by the final rush of the main body on the front, the enemy's retreat became a rapid flight, and the position was ours.

It was, however, some time before this final climax that the courageous act took place of which I wish to tell you.

While the artillery were in the midst of pounding the *sungurs* we noticed three men, in one *sungur*, armed only with swords, and who disdained to take cover when the shots came near them, but coolly stood up, waving their curved glittering blades, and evidently encouraging their fellow-tribesmen to make a counter-attack on the British troops, who were now clambering up the face of the position.



IT WAS A SPLENDID SIGHT TO SEE HIS RUSH

In the midst of their harangue a well-aimed shell smashed down the wall that had so far protected the trio, and for the moment we thought that they too must have fallen. But out of the smoke and dust of the explosion the three leapt forth untouched. Then, instead of making for other shelter, they came running rapidly down the mountain-side as if to attack their would-be attackers. After coming a few yards one of them turned off on a side path, which led up the hill again and over the crest, and he soon disappeared out of sight. As he did so the second man also turned and made his way after him.

But the third came steadily on. There was something very much to be admired in the bold, determined way in which he advanced alone, without a single friend to help him, to attack a whole force of enemies. With all the coolness and agility of a trained mountaineer he came springing down the rock hill-side, his loose flowing robes flying in the wind, and his curved sword glitter-

ing in the sunlight as he waved it above his head.

Looking at him through glasses, I could see little spits of dust flicked up by bullets aimed at him—now above, now below, or to one side: closely, but never hitting him, nor causing him to falter for an instant.

Suddenly he stumbles and nearly falls, but he is up again in a moment: he is hit, evidently in the leg, for, tearing off a bit of his pugaree, he hastily binds up his thigh above the knee. Now, having felt the sting of lead, he will surely retire or lie by a friendly rock—but no; having tied up his leg, he came on again just as though he had merely stopped to tie up a shoe-lace in an ordinary way.

I noticed, however, that he kicked off his sandals at this moment: whether it was that they did not give him sufficient foothold, or that he felt that he was about to tread on holy ground—in death—I know not, but he now increased his pace. It was evident that he meant to die at the enemy's hands. Such an act, in his belief, gave him certain entry into Heaven; but if, in being killed, he could compass the death of an infidel, his entry would be enhanced by higher honours; and for this reason he was now rushing down through a spray of bullets to try to cut down one man ere he fell himself.

It was a splendid sight to see his rush; one only felt a longing to stop the merciless shots that were being aimed at him. It seemed a race between him and his fate. Would he live to reach our line, from which he was now but a hundred and fifty yards distant?

No—suddenly he pitches heavily forward onto his face, rolls over a couple of times and lies motionless. His fate has met him. He is dead.

Shortly after, I passed him where he lay: a fine bearded man in the prime of life. A few minutes before so very full of vitality and frenzy, now inert, and never again to be excited.

His face was very calm and solemn, almost as though he were looking away beyond our range of earthly vision, and could see before him the pleasures of eternal peace which he had won for himself by fighting this one short battle, in which earthly attractions and fear of death were deliberately set aside at the supposed call of his god.

P.S.—In connexion with the above episode I should like to add an incident that may be of interest. I was glad to see that one of our men, on coming to the spot, took the dead man's waistcloth and reverently covered him with it. It was a little act that showed a large heart and a respect for an enemy who had died for his faith—differ though it might from his own. It was a lesson, in its way, to many of us who are perhaps better educated, but less broad-minded than this simple soldier.

XV

THE EMOTION OF PIG-STICKING

‘Ça donne une emotion, n’est-ce pas?’ was the comment of my French friend when I told him of my little adventure with a pig in India.

Well, I must confess it does give one an ‘emotion’ to find oneself lying under a boar who is in a nasty temper and trying to get a dig at one’s innards. But that’s what happened to me on one important occasion.

The occasion was to me important because I had recently been transferred to a new regiment and I felt that as a new-corner I was being tested by my brother officers. It is quite possible to camouflage a plot under a veneer of apparent innocence, but in this case, in asking whether I would like to go pig-sticking, they just overdid the innocence touch so that I couldn’t help suspecting an underlying motive and that they wanted to see what I was worth in that line.

I had been away from India for some years; indeed, it was nearly a decade since I had ridden after pig. In that time, what with one thing and another, one’s nerve and ‘no’ are quite liable to undergo a subtle change for the worse, though one may not realize it until some unexpected adventure puts them to the test. Thus it was that the night before our meet was for me a nervy and restless one.

Next morning the fact of being on a real handy mount in the old familiar atmosphere of a cool Indian dawn among good companions at the jungle-side tended to moderate panicky anticipations with happy reminiscences. Then when the yells of the native beaters suddenly burst into a chorus: ‘Wuh jata hai! Bara dant wallah!’ (There he goes! A big tusker!) and the sturdy, lumbering form of a fine boar loped away across the open, one forgot everything as one leaped in pursuit with a ‘Ha! You ugly old devil, I’ll get you!’ All promised well with a horse that was as eager as master to overtake the quarry: not a great raking strider that would slam you down into the first nullah, but quick to see traps in the ground and clever at dealing with them, leaving master to keep his eye solely on the pig (the only way to ride in trappy country). There was the pig in front and eager rivals on either side of me, racing to be the first to spear and go to win the honours of the run. For three-quarters of a mile going at our best ding-dong pace the old swine kept easily ahead of us, loping along at what looked like an easy canter for him. But he had been living too well to keep it up for ever. Gradually our distance from him began to lessen, and as we eventually drew nearer to him he gave an anxious look out of the tail of his eye, and slightly slackened his pace. The leading horseman of our trio put on an extra spurt and rushed forward with lowered spear-point to get him, but in a trice the old beggar was not there. With a sidelong bound he was off in an entirely different direction and was well out of reach before his pursuer could pull round on to his new line. This link enabled us two rear files to be in the hunt—indeed, my little horse had seen the jink coming and had practically turned to it of his own initiative. With fresh speed the boar galloped on till we began to overhaul him again.

After several more twists and turns the old tusker suddenly changed his tactics and his temper, and instead of trying to get another line of escape, he said as plainly as attitude and action could express, ‘Here, that’s enough of this! I’m through with you all! Get out!’ and he came round straight as a die for me with ears pricked and little red eyes gleaming with rage. ‘Hoof, hoof!’ he spat from his foaming jaws as he charged my horse. But the wise old nag knew a thing or two about charging pigs, and with a well-timed jump he cleared the pig as my spear went home into the attacker’s shoulders.

We were then close to a thick, isolated belt of jungle, and the boar, rather discouraged at this rebuff where he had expected a triumph, turned sharply, and quickly nipped into the cover before we could catch him again. It was impossible for horses to follow him in that tangled coppice. The chances were that he might slip through it and get away on the far side or might run down the length of it and escape at the end. Quickly, therefore, we riders distributed ourselves at different points where we could spot his exit. Since he failed, however, to show up anywhere, we assumed he had taken up cover and was lying low in the bush. So the beaters were called up and started to move in line through the cover to hustle him out. Right through it they went till they came out at the far end. Not a sign of him!

But we felt certain that he must be there somewhere, so it was a case of ‘about-turn’ for the beaters, and go through it again the reverse way. Anxiously we riders waited outside, on tiptoe, as it were, to see him come out. Nearer and nearer came the beaters till at length they emerged blankly into the open. No boar. ‘No. sahib. He is not in there. He must have run on through the jungle.’ ‘Rot,’ said we, and giving my horse to a man to hold I jumped off, and spear in hand, led the line back once more to the attack. I was about in the centre of the line and we surged slowly forward beating and poking each bush with our sticks. There was a jumpy kind of excitement about it that gave me quite a new ‘emotion’. We never knew at what moment the beggar might not spring out at us. We had passed more than halfway through, and I was beginning to lose hope, when I noticed that the neighbouring beater on my right hand had drifted rather farther away from me; looking to my left I found the same thing was happening there; both beaters were exceedingly busy in working outwards and leaving a gap in our centre. I was just calling to them to correct this when there was a crash and a snarl from the bush immediately in front of me and the boar bounded out at me, a vision of bristling, rugged fury. I just had time to turn my spear in his direction when he rushed onto it, receiving the point in his chest. The impetus of his charge, backed by his own heavy weight drove the spear deeply into him, but at the same time the impact threw me down onto my back. I was still gripping the spear-shaft with both hands and my only chance against him was to retain that grip. He was close over me, trying with all his force to push himself farther up the spear, regardless of any additional pain—if indeed he felt any at the moment—in order to get within reach of my belly with his tusks. Again and again he tried, but found he just could not manage it, and he heaved again with all the force of his powerful hindquarters to gain the extra few inches that would bring us into the desired contact. There was no shrinking on his part from the agony nor from the presence of man; no, he was in a blind rage, out for blood; if anything he was enjoying the fight and eager to kill.

No doubt, pig-sticking, analysed from an armchair, is a brutal sport—I cannot defend it. With us humans, primitive savagery lies close below the surface of our veneer of civilization. When you get the chance of really losing your temper with an adversary and of being able to consummate it by killing him, it is a luxury unknown to those who have never indulged their evil inclinations. Nor is it such cruelty as might be supposed for the quarry. I have fought with many a pig and I verily believe that he has exactly the same feeling where red-hot rage and desire to kill make him oblivious to anything in the way of panic or pain.

This certainly was the case with my friend on this occasion. He was as nasty and untiring as could be in his efforts to get me. He seemed really keen on the job, while I on my part was practically helpless. Meanwhile the beaters, gallant fellows, having vacated the jungle, passed the word to the other riders that the boar had been found all right and unfortunately had killed the Colonel, and so that was that.

My pals were quickly off their horses and, spear in hand, they came running to my rescue! In a few moments all was over for the gallant old boar fighting to the last. I shook hands with him; both he and I had at any rate ‘given an emotion’. though he died in the midst of it I have lived

never to forget it.

I would have given something to know what was the first thought in the minds of those young officers when they heard from the coolies that their new Colonel had been done in. Was it 'Rather a pity. I believe that in time he might have become fit for the Regiment', or was it 'Good egg!'?

Anyway, I got the impression later on that the general verdict on me was favourable. It was at Mess when we were talking over the incident and one of my judges asked discreetly, 'Do you always go in on foot Colonel, to finish the hoar?' Anxious to make a good impression in my defence, I replied in an off-hand sort of way, 'And why not?'

That seemed to settle matters in my favour. For the moment I felt jubilant, the situation was eased, I slid into the Regiment, as it were, on well greased wheels.

But in lubricating ointments there are sometimes flies. There was one in this case. I found mine on our next day after pig. We had had a gallop, and the boar, lightly speared, turned nasty. I was promptly asked, 'Do we go in on foot now, sir?'

This evidently meant that the place of honour was being offered to me, so whatever my inside feelings may have been, I was forced to accept and lead the way. Foul!

But, do you know, we found this method of pig-sticking so engaging that we actually adopted it after this as supplying an additional thrill to the sport.

If you, my reader, should be moved to try it, I would offer the warning that you will have to watch out and mind your step.

If you tackle the pig solo the odds are all in favour of the boar. If two of you take him on, working shoulder to shoulder, the chances are fairly even.

For safety first I recommend three working in co-operation as conducive to success.

In any case I can promise you that attacking on foot vous donnera une emotion.

So here's to the Boar, good to run and to fight, And who never says 'die' till you've killed him outright.

XVI

THE CANNIBAL OF THE SEA

He is a leery beggar, the shark. I have tried to catch him many times, but have caught only a few.

One uses a big iron fish-hook attached to a length of chain, as he would bite through a bit of rope as easily as you would a bit of cheese.

A good lump of pork or other meat is a sure bait for him, and it is a very pretty sight to see him rush for it far down in the depths of the clear, cool water. As he gets near it he slides over onto his side and slips it into his horrid semicircular mouth, which is down where his throat ought to be.

You know what it is when your float bobs at ordinary fishing and you get a good one on. What

a thrill it gives you! But the thrill when you get a shark on is a million times bigger. Then when your fish gets off, as he often does, how your heart sinks. But when a shark gets off your heart goes into your very boots. And that's the worst of a shark—he does so very often get off.

You may perhaps hold him and play him for a time, and then wind in on the winch and gradually get him to the surface. But the moment he feels that he is being drawn up out of the water he somehow manages to spit out the hook.

When we fished for sharks off Durban we found that the best way in the end was to have a rifle or two handy, and the moment one got the shark to the surface two or three shots were put into him, and so we got him where otherwise he would have disgorged and escaped.

Swimming about in the water a shark is a graceful beast, and yet somewhat uncanny. I remember when steaming down the Red Sea in a troop-ship one or two sharks used to follow us steadily all the way. At night one could see them clearly by the trail of phosphorus which they made in the water, and by day they kept steadily on at the same pace as the ship was going, generally keeping exactly in their place alongside it.

Both sailors and soldiers positively hated them because they had an idea that if a shark followed the ship somebody on board was going to die and the shark knew it!

At Cuba I was lucky enough to catch a shark and safely land him on the ship's deck, but knowing of old how clever he was at getting rid of the hook when one brought him to the surface, I tied another rope round the line in a big noose which then ran down the line over the shark's head, and when it got below his jaw we hauled it tight with the other end through a derrick and onto the steam winch, and so wound him in and hanged him.

He was a monster and a horribly ugly-looking brute as he hung there over the deck. He had on him a number of what are called pilot fish. These are little fellows about the size of a herring which always swim about with the shark, probably to get a share of the food that he catches. They have suckers on them, and when the shark is going too fast for them they stick themselves onto his side and so are carried along by him.

When the great breakwater was being built at Durban, the diver who had to go down every day to lay the concrete foundations told me that the first time he was down he was horrified to find a great shark approaching him, and he was so terrified that he stood stock still and made no attempt to escape, and the shark passed close by without taking any notice of him.

Immediately afterwards came another big shark, followed by two little ones, and, finding that by standing still he was not noticed, he took courage. Every day the same thing happened, the same procession came along at a certain time of the tide, so that the diver got to know almost to a minute when to expect them. After a time the sharks got to know him, and seeing him standing there quite immovable they imagined he was a post and took to rubbing their sides against him as they passed along.

I knew another diver at Aden, but he was not one of those who went down in diver's dress. He used to swim down to the bottom to get sponges. He always maintained that the shark was a coward, and that if you kicked and splashed about enough he would not touch you.

But this chap made a mistake. One day a shark proved to him that his ideas were wrong, and he goes about now on a wooden leg and has given up diving.

XVII

CANOE TRAVELLING IN CANADA

‘For your life sit quite still!’

This was said to me by my canoeman on Gull Lake. It is one thing to glide smoothly and noiselessly in your birch-bark canoe over the calm surface of one of the lakes, where the woods and sky are reflected on the dead smooth water as if it were a looking-glass, but it is quite another thing to be fought by the storm, with seething great waves which threaten at one moment to surge in over the end of your boat and at the next to roll it bodily over sideways.

That was what we were going through when Jim, my canoeman, made his remark to me, and a bigger wave than usual was curling and breaking towards us above the heads of the others as if to swamp us.

Jim was in the stern, and Ben was in the bow, while I sat tight in the middle.

They were old hands at the game. Both of them knelt facing forward to use their paddles— that is the regular way to do it. The man in the bow does the navigating, while the one in the stern helps him to steer the boat.

In this case, as the great wave came on, they almost stopped the canoe, and, with a quick turn, made her face the wave and thrust her gently forward to meet it; then, just as she reared up in front, Ben seemed to lean forward with his paddle over the bow and to cut the shock of the water, while somehow the seething monster subsided under us, and we had a wide view for an instant over the stormy surface of the lake, and there, behind us, was the wall of water rushing away to leeward.

But the canoemen did not pause to admire it; they twisted their boat round in a second, and, taking advantage of the rather smooth spell which immediately followed, they rushed the little boat along as if they were in for a race.

In this way they gained a good many yards before another curler began to show itself above the rest, bearing down upon our broadside, and when it got close they repeated their manoeuvre of slewing the canoe round to meet it. And that was the way we staggered along for mile after mile.

Never were two waves alike; they all wanted slightly different treatment. Sometimes they were short but steep ones, so that, as our bow went up, our stern went down, and was in danger of getting buried.

At other times a wave that had not been big enough to turn to, or which was not solid enough to lift us, would slip its top in over the gunwale, which was only four inches above the surface, and so add to the water that was swashing about in the bottom of the canoe, and which it was my duty to bale out again with a birch-bark dipper.

We had a lively time that journey; but cold and wet as it was, the work done by these two expert canoemen was so interesting to watch, as they took each wave in a different way, that it did not seem long, and I felt almost sorry when at length they ran her quietly in under the lee of some rocks, and we safely reached the end of our adventurous trip at the other side of the lake.

On another occasion we nearly had to swim for it. We were paddling gaily across a lake on which were several small islands, and were thinking of nothing in particular, when ‘bang! push!’ and

we ran onto a rock which was just below the surface of the water.

We soon shoved off again, but water began to trickle into the bottom of the canoe, and we found that we had dented the birch-bark and knocked a small hole in it.

So we paddled for all we were worth to one of the rocky islands close by; here we quickly bundled our baggage and ourselves ashore, and drew the canoe up out of the water and turned her upside down.

Then, with our knives, Ben and I scraped little spare bits of 'gum' off the seams of the canoe, while Jim lit a small fire of driftwood.

Ben, after flattening the dent and the hole, put a piece of rag over it (taken from his sore finger!) and, with a brand from the fire, melted the 'gum' over the rag, and so stuck it over the hole and made it water-tight.

It was all done so quickly and neatly that within ten minutes of our having run on the rock we were once more afloat and on our voyage, with our ship as buoyant and water-tight as ever.

A backwoodsman is not stopped by such a trifle as a hole in his boat; he quickly invents a way of mending it—that is what we call resourcefulness.

XVIII

A SCOUTING THRILL

The thrills of which I have hitherto written in this book have all been connected with what I call my 'first life'—a happy, eventful life of soldiering and pioneering, of sport and good comradeship.

In my 'second life', i.e. since leaving the Service, I have had moments no less thrilling to myself if less dramatic in the telling.

One such thrill came to me on the fourth of July 1911 when the first great rally of Boy Scouts—and the biggest meeting of boys then on record—was held in Windsor Great Park.

Only three years previously the first Scout camp had been held on Brownsea Island to try out the scheme of Scouting for boys. Eton boys had mingled there with boys from the East End, with members of the Boys' Brigade and shop boys.

A curious pudding in the pot, but the proof came with the eating, and it was good.

A mushroom wasn't in it for the rapidity of growth of the movement. Throughout the United Kingdom the Scouting disease caught on, and before long the Overseas Empire had got it too.

What was the secret of its attraction?

My own answer would be that the underlying feature is the spirit of the movement, and the key that unlocks this spirit is the romance of woodcraft and nature lore.

Where is there a boy, or for the matter of that a grown man, even in these materialistic times, to whom the call of the wild and the open road does not appeal?

Maybe it is a primitive instinct—anyway it is there. With that key a great door may be unlocked, if only to admit fresh air and sunshine into lives that were otherwise grey.

But generally it can do more than that.

The heroes of the wild, the frontiersmen and explorers, the rovers of the seas, the airmen of the clouds, are Pied Pipers to the boys. Where they lead the boys will follow, and these will dance to their tune when it sings of manliness and pluck, of adventure and high endeavour, of efficiency and skill, of cheerful sacrifice of self for others.

There's meat in this for the boy: there's soul in it.

Watch that lad going down the street, his eyes looking far out. Is his vision across the prairie or over the grey-backed seas? At any rate it isn't here. Don't I know it?

Have you never seen the buffaloes roaming in Kensington Gardens past that very spot where Gil Blas met the robbers behind the trees? Can't you see the smoke from the Sioux lodges under the shadow of the Albert Memorial? I have seen them there these sixty years.

Through Scouting then, the boy was given the chance to deck himself in a frontier kit as one of the great Brotherhood of Backwoodsmen. He could track and follow signs; he could signal; he could light his fire and build his shack and cook his grub. He could turn his hand to many things in pioneering and campcraft.

His unit should be a band of six, commanded by their own boy leader. Here was the natural gang of the boy, whether for good or for mischief. Here was responsibility and self-discipline for the individual. Here was esprit de corps for the honour of the patrol, as strong as any house spirit in a public school.

To the outsider's eye the Scouts' staves are so many broomsticks, but to the Scout they are different. His staff, decorated with his own particular totem and signs, is typical. Like his staff, among a mass he is an individual, having his own traits, his own character, his own potentialities.

He may be one of a herd, but he has his own entity. He gets to know the joy of living through the out-of-doors.

Then there is a spiritual side.

Through sips of nature lore imbibed in woodland hikes, the puny soul grows up and looks around. The out-of-doors is par excellence the school for observation and for realizing the wonders of a wondrous universe.

It opens to the mind appreciation of the beautiful that lies before it day by day. It reveals to the city youngster that the stars are there beyond the city chimney-pots, and the sunset clouds gleaming in their glory far above the roof of the cinema theatre.

The study of nature brings into a harmonious whole the question of the infinite, the historic, and microscopic, as part of the great Creator's plan. And in these sex and reproduction play an honoured part.

Scoutcraft is a means whereby the veriest hooligan can be brought to higher thought and to the elements of faith in God; and, coupled with the Scout's obligation to his Promise and Law, it gives a base of duty to God and neighbour on which the parent or pastor can build with greater ease the form of belief desired.

I never thought it could be done through 'form fours'.

It is the spirit within, not the veneer without, that counts. And the spirit is there in every boy when you get him, only it has to be discovered and brought to light.

Such was my belief at any rate in offering this scheme of Scouting to the boys of England.

I have digressed from my story in order to try to explain something of the motives which brought thirty-three thousand boys to Windsor in 1911.

King Edward VII had been one of the first of all men to recognize that there was something in this curious impulse of Scouting.

Only the day before his death I had been at Buckingham Palace conferring with his private secretary on the subject of a big review of Scouts by His Majesty. The King was unwell, but had sent for me to let me know that he wished to have a rally of the Scouts at Windsor Great Park in June.

It was not to be, for he died the following evening, and in him the Boy Scout Movement lost a friend who had had a real appreciation of our aims and methods.

King George, on his accession, agreed to carry out the review which had been planned, and the date was duly fixed for the fourth of July.

A day of blazing sunshine dawned, and with it assembled the biggest and most representative gathering of boys that our country had yet seen.

Those of us who had been working in the movement during the three years of its existence, and had inspected small groups of scouts in various districts, knew that we had some good material; but even we were taken by surprise at the quantity and the quality of the Scouts who came to Windsor.

Out on the great grass plain under the shade of the oaks was arrayed an immense crowd of thousands upon thousands of boys all dressed alike— all the same type—all working under suppressed excitement, though many of them had been travelling the whole of the previous night.

Go where you would it was the same sight; after going through one enormous division of them you only realized that there were still three more similar divisions to be seen.

All were preparing themselves for the great moment when they were to see the King.

That was at midday.

Two hours later these same boys were all massed in solid ranks in a vast horseshoe in the open park, and facing them was a great crowd of spectators, watching and waiting for what they might do.

What struck one at the moment was the mysterious hush which seemed to pervade the whole scene, where these thousands of human beings were quietly waiting for something, and ready at any moment to burst out—in what direction none could quite tell.

Expectation had reached a kind of climax when at last the King and his staff arrived upon the scene. He had arranged that he himself should be seen by every boy—it was for this that they had come all these hundreds of miles.

This would not have been possible if they had marched past him in the usual fashion, where only

those on the flank could see him. He decided that the only way would be for him to ride round and show himself to all.

It was his own idea and when carried out proved how truly he had fathomed the wishes of the whole parade, for, steady as they were in the ranks, the King had not gone half-way round when the boys could no longer restrain themselves.

A sudden tornado of cheers broke out where the King was—and it spread like a prairie fire all round the great concourse in a moment, so that the whole scene was a mass of cheering lads and tossing hats—their enthusiasm knew no bounds, and it was a sight which cannot have failed to impress itself on all who were there.

The King himself remarked on another feature of the scene which also in its way impressed the thoughtful onlooker, and that was the massed body of men formed in rear of the boys.

These were the Scoutmasters—the men who pull the strings—the men who did the work—the men who were behind the scenes, in the background, and who had done so much to train these boys and to bring them for their sovereign's inspection.

When there were of every kind—young and old, rough and smooth, high and low, rich and poor— all shoulder to shoulder in one great cause, the cause of the future generation of their country.

Here was a distinguished colonel with cavalry bearing, many medals and orders on his breast; alongside him a pale curate from an East End slum, rubbing shoulders with an old bluejacket and a bank clerk from Canada.

The same sort of thing might be seen anywhere along that wonderful line. It was an indication of what there was in our fellow-countrymen of patriotism and goodwill for voluntary work—yes, even in those days before the Great War had stirred us up.

But these and many other impressive incidents were swallowed up in the great moment of the day, when the King took his place under the Royal Standard at the saluting point.

There was a moment's pause of dead silence, and then a sudden roar filled the air, and the whole mighty horseshoe of thirty-three thousand boys with one impulse leapt forward from either side, rushing as only boys can rush, gathering speed and force as they came, screaming out the rallying-cries of their different patrols as they came in a whole kaleidoscopic mass of colour with flags fluttering, hats waving, knees glinting, in the great charge towards the King.

Then, at a sign, the whole mass stopped its rush, up went a forest of staves and hats, and higher into the sky went the shrill screaming cheers of the boys in a cry that gripped the throat of every onlooker— 'God save the King!'—that apogee of patriotic fervour in young Britain: that surge of enthusiasm to do anything that might be demanded of them in the name of their country and King.

That was one of the most thrilling moments of my life.

I dislike delivering myself of personal impressions. They are generally presumptuous, often out of perspective, sometimes they are sacred. My impression of the Windsor Rally was probably something of all three.

To me it was like watching a flower bursting from the bud into bloom: a miracle of nature but none the less a miracle. A seed had been dropped but three years back. It had taken root and, tended by enthusiastic gardeners, was beginning to grow into a sturdy wide-spreading plant.

In that unique gathering at Windsor it was already blossoming forth and giving promise of fruits yet to follow.

The secret of its growth, as I have said, lay in that indeterminate force which we only know as the 'Scout spirit'.



THE KING ARRIVED UPON THE SCENE

It was a definite call to me when the movement was a seedling to leave what I was doing and come and help to tend it. It was a call which has since brought men of all countries, classes, colours, and creeds to work their souls out in cultivating it, from no personal motives but for the sake of one thing only—their younger brother, the boy.

XIX

GOOMING

I've been gooming. Don't you know what I gooming means? Well, it is another of those words, like 'Jamboree', that I can't quite explain, but this is what I did in order to goom.

I slipped out at an early hour this morning before any one was up—before even the sun was up or had thought of getting up. I loosed the dogs, and away we went.

Down the hill-side we trotted, through the meadow, unavoidably rousing up the dewy-backed sheep as we passed. Far away along the valley to the eastward the mist was lying across the marsh, while above it the rosy, tawny sky, showed where day was coming on.

And as one stood still to watch one felt the coolness and the freshness of the virgin air: it was palpitating with the songs of birds on every side—far and near.

In the wood, as we entered it, a thrush, sitting on the highest twig of the highest tree he could find, was pouring forth a continuous stream of loud thanksgiving. With head thrown up and facing to the east, he paid no attention to us as he sang:

'Fill a bean—fill a bean—quick—quick—quick! Stick to it!—stick to it!'

Close by, a bunting was delightfully ordering his breakfast in the shape of ‘A little bit of bread and no cheese, please!’

And what with chiff-chaffs and warblers, robins and wrens, mixing their notes with the mellow tones of a blackbird, it made one wonder whether or not it was a nightingale who was joining the chorus from the lower end of the wood.

‘Chibuk, chibuk, chibuk; chook-chook-chook!’

As we passed the holly-tree it gave out a queer quibbering as an old owl was settling himself down for his snooze after a night out.

Then we came out in the grass lane between the hedges, which gave us cover as we passed between the ploughland on the right and the great tussocky hill-side on our left, so that, if we trod lightly, we could do much successful stalking of birds. But stalkers often forget that, however silent or hidden they may be, a heavy footfall—even of a dog— gives warning to a wary bird while yet a long way off.

‘Hookoo—hookoo! Wuk-wuk-koo!’ Standing in the lane one hears, above the warbling chorus of the wood, the cuckoo’s call, answered like an echo by his friend across the valley.

And then the sharp challenge of old Roger, the pheasant, cuts harshly through the air— ‘Tararchock!’

We pass under a tree, and there is a tremendous explosion as three woodpigeons suddenly wake to find us there; they flutter panic-stricken through the branches and burst away in whistling flight.

Down the lane ahead of us bobs the white scut of a rabbit skipping home. At the stile, peering through our glasses in a straight line for the third post in the opposite fence across the plough, we look to see if Widow Plover is on her nest.

It is not yet bright enough to see well, but we recognize a tiny blob, that is her head, among the clods of earth.

She is there, and there she sticks, brave heart, when we pass not many yards away. ‘Widow’, I call her, because she has no husband, like the other three nesters in the grass field on the left, to warn her when there’s danger near.

Out over the marsh, on the deep lush grass among the rushes, the dew is frosted rime; and out of the mist the trees are silhouetted in pearly grey, like magic islands on a sea of milk.

Overhead, long streaks across the sky of goldentinted beams remind one of the Grecian poet’s phrase of ‘rosy-fingered dawn’. Then, in the lilac haze above the trees, the sun begins to show his upper half like a luminous cherry.

As we trudge across the plain, green plovers spring up and flip about in dire alarm, crying reproachfully to us, as they swoop close round, ‘Pirate—pirate—pirate!’ But we mean no harm, and soon they see it and subside again.

But they are scarcely silent ere the redshanks have their say, and a snipe suddenly bursts away and zigzags up into the sky.

As one turns to see from whence he came, one realizes that the rushes which just now were dirty brown are now a gorgeous red, and so, too, are the cattle which are following up the dogs.

Away across the marsh the castle now shows battlements of tawny pink, while yet its base is lost in blue-grey shadows and in mist. The sun is rising through a rose-pink, diaphanous haze and is putting colour everywhere.

Overhead across the clear lemon sky a wild duck wings his line—stout fellow! He is the only bird among them that has enough character to know his own mind.

In the tussock close by there is a sudden rustle, and a hare jumps out and scampers off—blippi-tyblip-blip!—with his black-tipped ears straight up on end.

For a moment the dogs think, ‘Here’s my chance!’ but a word of warning comes—and we all stand still and watch our hare quickly putting the distance between us.

He looks so big and red athwart the morning sun that the sheep near whom he runs mistake him for an Irish dog, and scamper off, their woolly coats all bumping up and down.

A few steps farther on we put up Mrs. Hare from her home in a warm grass-clump, and away she goes, exactly on the line of her lord and master.

I wonder if he told her which way he was going. How will they find each other again?

Brrrrr! Up jump a pair of partridges with a suddenness that makes one start, and away they whizz across the plough and then slide up the hill and out of sight beyond the copse.

‘Tok!’ A gun is fired in the distance, and at the same time a rattling click and rumble begins to make itself heard, and then sounds strangely near as a trolley swings along the railway over a mile away.

Man is awake—the sun is up—and gooming’s at an end.

We turn homewards. The woods are silent now except for the thrush and the cuckoo, and even they give their calls more languidly. New sounds have come in, but they are all domestic ones; cocks are crowing and re-crowing on every side, close at hand and far away, the bantams imitating their bigger brothers with cheeky, high-pitched crows.

The sheep are bleating to their lambs, the cows are lowing for their milkers, dogs are barking, boys are whistling, horses’ hoofs are on the road.

But—the birds are silent, the dew will soon be dry, the rosy colours of the dawn are even now fading into glaring day, men are getting up—let’s go in and have a cup of tea.

The goom is over.

XX

ALONE IN THE ANDES

I started out alone before dawn one morning, in the Andes of South America, to climb a mountain-side. The chill gloom of the early morning was deepened by the depth of the canyon in which I started and the heights loomed round one against the sky, but in the darkness it was difficult to judge of their heights or distance.

As I climbed the ascent before me, the light gradually opened out and cliffs and rock masses stood up more clearly defined. The air was very cold and clear and still, and the great tense silence around seemed to press itself upon me. Not a murmur of a brook, not a chirp of birds, not a whisper of a breeze. Stillness everywhere. Yet it did not seem altogether a dead stillness; it seemed rather as if everything—the mountains and the valleys, the peaks and the boulders—were all standing at attention—waiting—looking for the coming of day. It seemed almost sacrilegious to break that silence with the clicking of one's footsteps among the stones.

Immediately around me the mountain-side was bare. A short distance above me in front was the horizon to which I kept climbing as it continually kept receding. Looking backward behind me a similar horizon was only a few yards below leading down into the gloom I had left. One writer, describing the same climb, has compared the climber to an ant going up a water-butt. And that's what I felt like.

Then, above the shoulders of the cliffs that surrounded me, there began to arise the crests of higher crags and mountain-tops, like giants standing clearer in the morning light, but all cold and hard, peering at me over the shoulders of their lower neighbours. I was the only moving object in all that immensity of rigid rock and peak. I felt an intruder and so puny in that solemn domain.

Here the strata and variegated rocks spoke of thousands upon thousands of years, from the time when our earth was being fashioned in the melting-pot.

I was but as a short-lived insect among them.

I climbed higher and higher and breathing became more difficult; while the sense of loneliness and smallness grew upon me in that intense silence and among those vast gables of the roof of the world.

Suddenly above one of them I saw a great greenish-white peak of eternal snow, stark and clear-cut against the sky; and soon another and yet another, on the different sides. It seemed as though the greater giants of the range, on whose steep facets the foot of man had never trod, were standing up to overlook me, cold, stern and pitiless. The stupendous heights and the ghastly silence, and the loneliness and immensity of it all seemed to appal me. I was scarcely myself. There came upon me almost a desire to scream aloud to break the spell.

Yet the loudest human voice would have sounded there as feeble an effort as the piping of a wren as I once heard it among the vast ruins of the Colosseum at Rome.

I tried to shut my eyes to it, when suddenly a strange glow seemed to come in the air above me.

Looking back over my shoulder I saw that which made me gasp.

One of the great peaks which a moment before had been almost grey-blue now suddenly gleamed at its topmost points a dazzling orange-pink mass, with its lower parts in opalescent shadows of violet and blue and tinted green, the whole mass standing out with startling distinctness of outline and detail against the darkened sky behind it. And as one looked around peak after peak took up the rosy radiance of the dawn.

One felt it was too much for one little mortal mind to grasp—one was a trespasser in a holy place. It was something uncanny and beyond one's ken to be up here watching the morning toilet of Nature herself. There was nothing to connect the divine scene with the life of men that I had left down below there in the gloom.

I stumbled on, awed almost to horror by it all, when, at the moment just when I needed some touch with the human world, over the next rise there stood up before me a figure—the figure of

‘Christ the Redeemer.

It was not the usual pathetic body hanging on the Cross, but a big generous Being with wide flowing robes and with welcoming protective arms outspread.

A fine statue, happily placed for its purpose of marking the boundary and a sign of perpetual peace between the States of Argentine and Chile, but even more happily placed than its sculptor had designed, in giving at that spot a tangible link between the human and the divine—the link which Christ in His time had come on earth to give.

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