

BURALLEH ROBLEH AND HIS EXCELLENCY.

(*"Personages."*) [*Frontispiece.*

SUN, SAND AND SOMALS

LEAVES FROM THE NOTE-BOOK
OF A DISTRICT COMMISSIONER
IN BRITISH SOMALILAND

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WITH 12 PLATES FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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INTRODUCTION

AFRICA is gradually becoming so civilised that there are few places left where the adventurer (the man who holds a human life as cheaply as the sportsman holds that of a wild pheasant) may hope to flourish. But for such an individual there remains on the Eastern Abyssinian border a territory, difficult to penetrate, inhabited by wild warlike tribes, through whom can be carried out a policy of murder and rapine against the peaceful native tribes under British protection. And on the Abyssinian borders you may find him, ever ready to organise a wild raid South or East (or West for that matter) into the administered territories of the British, whose sentinel-outposts are ever watching and waiting to turn him from his prey. Of the tribes inhabiting this wild border-land I have selected from many but one to speak of—the Somali of British Somaliland.

The Somali has deeply religious tendencies and is the stoutest of Mussulmans. In addition to the Mahomedan code, which he obeys implicitly, he has a complicated tribal code of his own. He knows much, and practises what he knows, of the old Jewish

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and Biblical hygienic laws. He recognises the right of man to slay, providing he pays—one hundred camels for a man, fifty for a woman. The Somali respects a woman, and reverences chastity.

The Somali wanders afar. You will find him working as deck hand, fireman, or steward, on all the great liners trading to the East. I know of a Somali tobacconist in Cardiff, a Somali mechanic in New York, and a Somali trader in Bombay, the latter of whom speaks French, English, and Italian fluently. The Somali considers that British magistrates are appointed to his country solely to relieve the monotony of his life, and he pesters theirs with all kinds of cases, both petty and intricate.

The Somali in his own country is conservative. He has little time for men not of his own race, excepting perhaps the Arab Mullahs, a few of whom wander amongst his people teaching the great "Mahomedan truths." He is never internally at rest. His tribe is divided into sections, sub-sections and clans, and the clans are for ever disagreeing amongst themselves. The sub-sections then interfere, and it may so happen that quarrels extend to the sections. If these are not settled the result may be much bloodshed. But it is always here that the British administration steps in, and to it nowadays the Somali turns to settle his domestic affairs when they get beyond his control.

In 1920 I was privileged to take part in the successful operations carried out against that great adventurer, Hassan Abdullah, the Mad Mullah, and with him these pages end. They portray only the human side of life on a wild African outpost, and describe the men and incidents recorded exactly as I have seen them, and as they have occurred. For fuller information I refer the reader to the official reports and the works of more conventional writers.

H. R.

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SUN, SAND AND SOMALS

CHAPTER I

ZEILA

Early history—Slave trade—Gen. Gordon—Somali tribes.

Zeila is a port on the British Somaliland coast. It lies some twenty-eight miles South of the French port of Djibouti, and is one hundred and seventy miles North-East of the Abyssinian town of Harrar. Little is known of its history, but here is the story of the " oldest inhabitant " for what it is worth. In essential details it is fairly accurate.

Sheikh Sa'du-d-din was the first Arab of importance to visit the place. He occupied the island named after him, situated a few miles North of the present town. There he built stone houses, and a large tank to preserve and store the rain water. The island is a dreary, waterless waste of sand, so what more natural than that the good man, who was a strict Mahomedan and a great warrior, should vary the monotony of existence by crossing to the mainland to raid and convert the heathen Galla, who grazed their herds in the vicinity of the present town.

The Sheikh married a woman from the Dowa

people who lived between the Danakils and the Abyssinians. When he was killed his progeny found their way back to their mother's town, where their descendants are still to be found. This town of Dowa or Daoua has, according to my informant, a custom or law that forbids any unmarried Mahomedan man to sleep within its precincts for even one night. Immediately on arrival the stranger is provided with a wife, who remains with him as long as he lives in the town. Should he leave it he may take neither wife nor children away.

For many years after the Sheikh's death no one knows what happened, but it would appear that Arab traders began regularly to visit the Somali coast, where they carried on a lucrative trade by exchanging grain and cloth for coffee, ivory, and other products, brought in from the high country round Harrar. At first these Arabs did not make their homes on the coast, but returned at the end of every season to Arabia. Probably the first residents at Zeila were renegade Arabs, guilty of some unpurged offence in their own country, to which they were afraid to return. When the other traders went away these men built huts and settled down. As nothing happened to them, and they probably did very well, their more honest brethren followed their example in taking up their permanent residence on the coast. In this way began the town of Zeila.

The first Arab Governor, "headman" would be a more correct title, known to my informant was called Syyed. He cannot remember his full name. Syyed it was who built a wall around the town for purposes of defence, and his great-grandson, a carpenter by profession, lives in Zeila to-day. One fine day there came to Syyed the Governor, a Somal, by name Sharmarki Ali, to report his arrival and intention of relieving the former of his arduous duties. They were very casual in those days, and as this was the first Syyed had heard of Sharmarki Ali he exerted himself with such success to procure Sharmarki's departure that the latter found it most expedient to revisit Hodeida, from which port he had come, on urgent private affairs.

These attended to—they included the fitting out of a force of fifty Somals, armed with muzzle loading guns and two cannon—Sharmarki chartered two dhows and returned with his army to Zeila. This time nothing would induce him to go away. There was a violent argument which Sharmarki settled by loading up his two cannon to the muzzle with powder and sand and firing them close to the walls of the town. Syyed and his followers, who had never heard anything like the tremendous explosions made by these guns in their lives before, became afraid and ran away.

Sharmarki entered the town in triumph, assumed

the governorship, made overtures to the friendly disposed tribes in the surrounding district, and was comfortably lining his pockets when history made arrangements to repeat itself. The Governor of Hodeida, ever short of cash, was bribed by one Abubakr Ibrahim Shebani, nowadays better known as Abubakr Basha, a Danakil, to fit him out with a small force of good soldiers which would be unlikely to run away from a big noise, for the purpose of taking Zeila. Without doubt the Governor of Hodeida considered he was leasing Zeila by contract, as he was quite entitled to do. Abubakr Basha convinced Sharmarki Ali that for his health's sake he required a change of air, and was left in charge of the town. This he proceeded to exploit in much the same way that all his adventurer-predecessors had done.

The next person of importance to put in an appearance came with no less than five hundred soldiers and ten cannon. He was an Egyptian Basha, and proceeded to take charge of Zeila in the name of his government. He called in all the Somal headmen with their followers from the district, and as many of these as arrived he placed under restraint; setting them to build a stone pier, which is still standing, though much improved upon. The townsmen were also forced to assist in this work. Even Abubakr Basha was employed in carrying

stones. The pier completed a fort, now demolished, also a customs-house, were constructed, as a great trade had sprung up between the town and the interior; particularly with the town of Harrar, which now sent ivory, coffee, and slaves in exchange for the commodities it required, and which were procurable at Zeila from the many merchants who were beginning to settle there.

Having organised affairs at Zeila the Basha marched inland to Gildessa with three hundred soldiers. My informant says he went there to make friends with the Galla. Anyway, after he had been gone three months a large steamer landed one thousand Egyptian soldiers at Zeila. These troops marched up country and joined the Basha. He then attacked the Galla. The latter's losses were heavy, but the Egyptians' could have been none too light as they were obliged to send for a reinforcement of five hundred men. Fighting continued for some months ere the Basha reached and captured his objective, Harrar. It is stated that after his arrival in this town he sent for the Amir of Harrar and caused him to be secretly put to death by having his neck broken. But the Gallas found out all about it and were so exasperated that hardly a day passed without one of the Egyptian soldiers being murdered.

To put an end to such a state of affairs the Basha ordered two hundred Galla prisoners to be nailed

to the ground, crucifix fashion. Over some of these poor wretches boiling water was poured; then, if not already dead, they were killed, their heads cut off and these hung by the ears to a large tree, which, I am given to understand, survives to this day outside Harrar. And here ends the story as related to me by the old man of Zeila.

Meanwhile Abubakr Basha had been employed by the Egyptians as headman of Zeila, and when they evacuated the East coast, and the British established themselves in their stead in 1884, Abubakr was still living in the town, but died soon afterwards. Shortly before the evacuation General Gordon passed through the town on his way to Harrar. He made a great impression on the people, and is well remembered by the older people, who take a special delight in pointing out the house where he stayed.

Of course the first thing the British thought of was the suppression of the slave trade, and they took very thorough steps to this end. In its place they built up a trade in cloth and natural products, until, under their regime, Zeila reached the pinnacle of its prosperity. Had this trade not been with Abyssinia she would have remained prosperous, but, being so, other influences crept in and Zeila went under. After the Egyptians went away Harrar was handed over to the Amir Abdillahai who was responsible, in



GENERAL GORDON'S HOUSE AT ZEILA.

1886, for the massacre of seven Italian gentlemen with their two servants, members of an Italian commercial and scientific expedition to Abyssinia. In 1887 Menelik marched on Harrar, met and put to flight the forces of the Amir some eight miles outside the town, which has remained in Abyssinian hands ever since. In 1888 the French landed at Djibouti, and the fate of Zeila was sealed. By constructing a railway to Dire Daouwa—now completed close to Adas Ababa—they captured the bulk of the Zeila trade, which remains in their hands until, perhaps, some day the spin of fortune's wheel may render again to Zeila all she has lost.

The inhabitants are called Zeilawi, and are a mixed race of Arabs, Gallas, Abyssinians, Somals, Danakils, Soudanese, and others. They live by trade, but are gradually falling, like their houses, into decay. Related by marriage to the Somal tribes outside the town they have naturally a considerable influence over them, and lucky is he who in the old palmy days invested some of his trade profits in cattle, handing them over to his relations-at-law to be taken care of.

The first representative of our government was a consular agent appointed by the government of India. He built a fort—now in ruins—widened the pier, and made many other improvements. Water had to be carried from the wells of Tokusha, three

miles away, so a fine masonry tank was built inside the fort, and in it our water is still stored.

The two Somal tribes coming directly under the Zeila agency were the Gadabursi and the Issa, both with "unenviable reputations" for treachery. As is the Somal custom each tribe is divided into sections; each section into sub-sections and the sub-sections are subdivided into *rers* or families. The Somal is proud of his pedigree, the average man being able to rattle off his family tree without drawing breath, right back to his presumed Arab ancestors. As a family of four or five brothers may marry four wives each, as they often do, it follows, if they band together and have many children, that quite a new *rer* or Jilib may be formed. In this way new and powerful *rers* spring into existence, whilst old ones are often wiped out. But the sections, and in a lesser degree the sub-sections, rarely change. For this reason the British found it convenient to continue the Egyptian system of employing representatives of the various clans, or families, to act as agents or go-betweens for the government among their own people. These men are called Akils, and as, to-day, we have thirty-six Issa and thirty-seven Gadabursi Akils on the district books, some idea of the number of clans and families into which these tribes are divided may be gathered.

The government utilises the system roughly thus: In Somaliland instead of giving a man's address you state (*a*) his tribe, (*b*) his tribal section, (*c*) his sub-section, (*d*) his *rer* if necessary. If he is wanted at court a biladier is sent to fetch him; with the above information concerning his tribal history no difficulty will be experienced in finding him, although the Somals are the most nomadic of people, and continually on the move. He is as well placed as Private Brown, of No. 1 Company, 1st Battalion, fortieth Regiment of General Green's army in the X Y Z campaign. Sometimes instead of sending a biladier to call him a wanted man's Akil may be ordered to produce him.

He may, or may not, refuse to accompany the biladier. The Akil may, or may not, produce him, but that does not affect the idea of the system, which is quite sound in theory and as satisfactory in practice as may be expected in a wild country like Somaliland. A biladier is a man employed as a special constable on any odd job. When sent into the district to call a man he is given a red ticket, stamped with the court seal as a badge of authority, and the meaning of this all Somals know. A man refusing to accompany him is nearly always caught in the long run; often when visiting the town in the belief that the affair has been forgotten and that he is safe; and, in addition to the matter he was originally

wanted for, he has to answer the serious charge of refusing a biladier.

. . . . . .

I sit on the veranda of the government house at Zeila. I look across at the pier and see, in imagination, men of many races, whose deeds are chronicled in the records stored in the office below. Of our own race Burton and Gordon appeal to me most of all. But they have gone, the men I am thinking of who walked along that pier into the town. Gone years ago, and their bare memory remains. But the Akils, the biladiers, and the old tribal troubles still exist. It is of these latter I would speak.

CHAPTER II

"ALL IN THE DAY'S WORK"

The staff—Office work—The "Poor Fund" and its distribution—A tale of woe—The D.C. on inspection rounds—Petitions.

THE staff at Zeila consists of the District Commissioner, the District Clerk—an Indian gentleman—his Indian assistant, an Arab clerk and petition writer, an Indian sub-assistant surgeon, Mahomed the Somal interpreter, Buralli, or Buralleh, the sub-inspector of police—also a Somal—an Indian superintendent of customs, and an Arab outdoor collector of customs fees. There are half a dozen mounted police, thirty odd foot police, and a round dozen or so of water police under an Arab jemadar. Besides these we have many smaller fry, such as conservancy sweepers, messengers, a lamplighter, etc., etc. The Akils I have already spoken of. The foot police supply or furnish a guard for the jail, which is under the care of the jail-master, an ex-slave.

There is also a Kathi, or native magistrate, and an Arab schoolmaster. Further, we boast quite a number of pensioners, amongst whom are the keeper of *the* Sheikh's tomb, and Ferjallah Alone, an old Soudanese jemadar who accompanied Gordon from

Egypt to Zeila, and subsequently took service in this country. Ferjallah is very old and feeble, and, as regards Gordon, most disappointing. To him Gordon is " Gordon," the greatest soldier that ever was. " What more than that do you want to know about him," says Ferjallah.

The D.C.'s office combines the work of treasury, court-house, post office, administration, tax collection, and every other public work of the town and district. It keeps an eye on trade, customs, shipping —such as there is (mostly dhows)—police, prisons, political and other situations. For all of these the District Commissioner is directly responsible to His Excellency the Governor of Somaliland. In addition he takes an interest in social matters, and may even, besides being sole guardian and presiding angel of the " Poor Fund," be called upon to assume the duties of food controller. Strangely enough he is not overworked.

Monday morning is usually the busiest time of the week. Since my arrival here I have arranged on that morning that all the poor people seeking relief shall come to the office. Such an arrangement is looked upon by the scallywags of the town as being tantamount to an invitation to parade with the paupers. Not only the scallywags but shameless old men and women of independent means take the opportunity—trusting to luck or an oversight on my

part—to line up with the crowd and beg for a four-anna bit; something for nothing is always worth acquiring. But there is such a collection of cripples and genuine "masakins" (poor people), well known to the police, and ready to eat up our slender fund, that the impostors stand little chance of getting anything. Of course, the first thing to be done is to weed out these latter gentry and send them off with a word or two of discouragement. Then the people who have friends, or whose sections belong to the district, are separated from the absolutely friendless. The former are assisted to make representations to their people of their necessity. Caravans from the interior are approached and asked to help their tribal brethren. The bush Somals, if they have any money, often respond to such an appeal, giving their dole with a pious hope at the back of their minds that "Rubbama"[1] will book it up against them for the future good of their souls.

And the people who are left are cripples, some of whom crawl on all fours, frail bent old men and women, deformed children, the sight of whose withered twisted limbs and pathetic eyes would wring the last sixpence from anyone but a hard-hearted D.C., who is so used to looking at and seeing these things. Amongst these people we endeavour to divide, as fairly as possible, the moneys of our

[1] God.

fund. Four annas, fourpence, will fill those empty stomachs for at least one day, and with care for two. One need have no fear that the money will go in drink; such things are not done here. When our fund is all gone we have a "whip-round" amongst the merchants of the town, who are, according to their means, a very charitable lot. Human nature is human nature all the world over, and who knows but that the D.C. secretly notes a generous donor as a man to be helped when the occasion arises. Some of the subscriptions are consequently very large; even as much as two or three rupees. Here, amongst these simple people, one realises that the Lord loveth a cheerful giver; provided, of course, that he is an "aggressively" cheerful giver—otherwise he might be overlooked.

Unlike other parts of Africa life in Somaliland is very hard for the poor and indigent, but is not, of course, comparable with life in Europe. Here, on the coast, no one is ever cold. The scantiest rags suffice for clothing, and the sand makes a comfortable bed. Poor though many of the people are they will not see a man die of starvation unless by helping him they are going to suffer themselves. It is necessary to remember that no ultra-humane, or excessively sensitive, race could hope to survive in this country. But there are always to be found people who seem to be perfectly incapable of taking

care of themselves, just as there are people who are incapable of doing anything else.

The other day a poor tired woman, dressed in rags, and carrying a child on her back, complained that she had tramped the interior in a futile attempt to beg assistance for her child, and blind husband who was present in court. This old rascal then took up the tale of woe. He had a brother in the town, he said, who was perfectly well able to support him, and he hoped the D.C. would put the matter to the brother without delay.

"What about the woman," I asked. "I hear you have divorced her."

"Yes, I have divorced her, but she is looking after me as I am blind."

"And is this your child?" I asked.

"Yes," replied the old man who was not really blind.

"Well, we shall send for your brother, and meanwhile, as the woman is carrying this child and is tired out, you can have a rupee to buy food."

The couple then left the court.

The following day the woman reappeared to complain she was starving and tired out.

"I've carried this child for hundreds of miles. I am its mother, but I'm so tired I can't carry it any more—never again."

"But you had a rupee yesterday to buy food."

"Did you expect me to get anything out of that?" she said. "I am used to getting nothing. The man took the rupee and spent it on himself."

We sent at once for the man. Sure enough he had given the woman nothing at all. She had been divorced, he said, and was entitled to nothing from him.

"So—very well—if that is your explanation you can look after yourself in future. Your brother who can afford to do so will pay the woman a few rupees each month for the maintenance of your child. As for you, make your own arrangements."

And so it was.

But to return to the day's work. We are early risers, and six o'clock every morning finds the people astir. After a cup of tea I commence the day by walking round the town. Just now we have an Indian superintendent of public works engaged in repairing buildings, and transforming an old police-lines into a hospital. There is a sum of money allotted for the completion of each piece of work, and this amount must on no account be exceeded. It behoves one to keep both eyes open that this latter proviso is not lost sight of. From the superintendent I wander through the streets and note that the sweepers are doing their work in keeping the town clean. If the environments of a house are found to be in a filthy state—this happens seldom—



A STREET IN ZEILA.

I just say: "Tell the owner to come to the office." This means that he is "for it" later on in the day. We do not argue about such matters in the street.

I generally visit the pier last of all, and anxiously look to see if the sea is attacking its foundations in any way. The D.C. is responsible for the pier, and there is always something going wrong with it. At present one Indian merchant has several thousand bags of salt stacked at one end, and I am in terror that this great weight will cause the foundations to collapse. When interviewed the merchant is always trying to do something about it, and something else is preventing him from doing it. He is undefeatable. I can only hope that when a big sea comes it will wash away the salt without doing any further damage.

Breakfast time comes at eight or eight-thirty o'clock, and at nine, sometimes earlier, one is in the office. First of all the cases come on. Divorce and matrimonial affairs are, as a rule, after a preliminary hearing, sent to the Kathi; but the aftermath of all such cases, such as the failure to pay mehr, or maintenance, is always cleared up by the poor D.C. Other cases are of a great variety, comprising political, civil, and criminal matters. There are also many petitions. Probably the contractor who controls the meat market complains that he cannot carry on any longer unless the dues payable by him to government are reduced. He is really the market

master, and recoups himself for the expenses incurred by charging the butchers a small fee for each animal killed and sold. This man makes as much fuss over the small fee he is called on to pay as if it were millions of rupees instead of tens. Therefore, we must check the animals slaughtered daily, over a given period, to enable us to compare his receipts with the fees we collect, plus his other expenditure. We do not take his word; we send our own man to collect these figures.

Then there are other petitions. One such from the daughter of a deceased pensioner, describing herself as a lone woman, lies before me as I write. "I am a poor orphan and have no one to turn to but God and your honour; I pray that you will assist me and I will always pray for your long life and prosperity." Rather overwhelming, but one reads that sort of thing without a quiver of the eyelid. Here is my note under the petition: "Petitioner is a good character; the daughter of a sepoy who accompanied Ferjallah Alone on General Gordon's escort from Egypt to Zeila. She makes a living by selling cakes of bread in the bazaar."

The petitions attended to, the District Clerk calls for some attention. The customs receipts have arrived and must be checked and locked away in the safe. A receipt is then signed for the amount and the peon goes off. After this, if the cases are

finished, miscellaneous work is attended to, such as the issuing of passes to natives desirous of visiting Aden or other places; the settling of applications for leave from police and other matters. In the afternoon correspondence is attended to, and last of all the balance shown in the cash book is compared with the cash actually in the safe. If the two amounts agree I sign the cash book. The last day of the month is pay day, and as I dole the wages out, an old man, who lives like a hermit on all other days at Sheikh Amar's tomb near my house, comes to the window grating and literally howls for pice. I shall never give that old humbug a pie.

After office hours one inspects the jail and arranges for the release of time-expired prisoners. We have no long sentence men so this happens frequently. Afterwards a long walk or a game of hockey or football: then home, a bath, dinner, and a lonely evening. To-night I occupied myself by writing this very imperfect account of how the days are filled. Of the cases one tries more anon.

CHAPTER III

PERSONAGES

Mahomed the Interpreter—Mahomed as magistrate—Mahomed as author—Mahomed's reason for Ramathan—Mahomed as fighting man—Buralli Robleh, policeman and gentleman—Buralli's domestic affairs—Mohamed Auwit, petition writer.

I

Mahomed is the court interpreter, a personage of considerable importance and would-be dignity. In spite of a decidedly perverse sense of proportion, leading him at times to confuse the duties of interpreter with those of magistrate, he is not a bad fellow. He has certain peculiarities and some aggravating ways, all of which I readily condone by admitting that Mahomed means well. But though meaning well a man may still do badly, and I suspect that our Mahomed is not the tremendous success he imagines himself to be. The day may come—though I doubt it—when he will decide to discard the turban for a hat, in which case, should he find one large enough to fit his head, and if by any chance there lies within his nature a spark of humour capable of asserting itself, the great Mahomed will become quite a human, lovable character.

I have learned much from him; among other things the respect and honour due to a court inter-

preter. Upon these points my education, I regret to say, had been sadly neglected, but Mahomed has done his best. My first mistake was regrettable. I had occasion to interview an Indian shopkeeper. Mahomed was not present, and I did not send for him. I plead in self-defence that the matter was trivial, but, later on in the day, Mahomed pointed out what a serious thing it would be if magistrates were allowed to glean information through other than the official channel, the interpreter. I felt that to apologise, as I should like to have done, would show Mahomed how deeply ashamed I was of myself, and, that out of consideration for my feelings, he might never reprimand me again. But I wanted to learn.

An occasion arose for him to speak to me a second time. Mahomed was trying a case in his official capacity as interpreter, I was assisting in mine of magistrate. An old Arab had died, leaving some property to be divided amongst several sons; as yet this had not been done; the property was in charge of the deceased's brother and stored in his house. One of the heirs was in a hurry to pouch his share, and removed a hubble-bubble without mentioning the matter to the others. He was ordered to return it, and to wait until a proper distribution of the property could be made. But the fellow was a bad lot; he broke into his uncle's house and stole a beautifully carved old bed, and some mats. I was

examining a witness, concerning this theft, who had apparently contradicted herself. It was all about the bed—these people know everything concerning one another's beds, which are heirlooms. The woman giving evidence stated, in the first instance, that the bed produced in court had been given to the accused's aunt by her father-in-law as a wedding present. The father-in-law was the accused's grandfather. Further on in her statement the witness said it had been given to the accused's aunt by a woman. I asked her, through Mahomed, to explain the discrepancy. Mahomed refused to put the question. It was quite unnecessary, he said. He knew the woman referred to was the accused's grandmother, and the bed was a joint present from her and her husband—quite simple.

"But," I said quietly, "I should like the witness, who is on oath, to tell me that, not you. Please put my question!"

"But I have already explained to you, it is quite unnecessary to ask the woman!"

I insisted.

Mahomed turned to the inspector of police and said in aggrieved tones, "The Sahib doubts my word. It is useless my interpreting in this court."

I felt that on this occasion I must apologise. I cleared the court and asked Mahomed to stand in the prisoner's cage so that he could hear every word

I said. I told him how sorry I was—for him. He accepted my apology. He begged that I would not give the matter another thought, that I would forget all about it. He realised that his reputation would suffer if people knew how badly I had been trained at his hands. To save his reputation I agreed to push my apology no further. But I know Mahomed will not trouble to teach me any more. I am hopeless.

Mahomed has written a book. He told me so himself. Later on in the conversation he said that he had written it in collaboration with a European Sahib. He told the Sahib the names of all the insects and animals in Somaliland, the Sahib wrote them down, and they are in the book.

Mahomed has psychic powers. I asked him the other day why he, and all good Mahomedans, fasted during the month of Ramathan. He did not know. I expressed surprise. Up to that moment I believed Mahomed knew everything. He said he would find out and let me know, as he was sure my version of the origin of the fast was a wrong one. That evening he came to me and said that, during his midday's siesta, it had come to him in a dream why he and his friends fasted. When Adam eat the apple in the garden of Eden it disagreed with him; it was a green apple and stayed in his belly. Mahomed never uses other than good old English words.

When Adam went to heaven he fasted for a month, at the end of which time the apple was digested. That is why all good Mahomedans fast at Ramathan —according to Mahomed's vision. I advised him to write another book; it would be interesting.

But I have said Mahomed is not a bad fellow. I really meant that. I have only been depicting a type, taking Mahomed as a sample, Mahomed the interpreter. Mahomed the private individual holds testimonials of faithful service, rendered over long periods to European masters, that any man might well be proud to hold. Once, when he was very young, in the fight against the Mad Mullah at Erego, he was placed in charge of the camel carrying the British officers' water chaguls. In the course of the action he and the camel got into a very warm corner, and the poor camel lost its life. Mahomed was only a servant, but he removed a couple of water bags from the corpse, together with a bottle of whisky someone had stowed away in the pack, and made his way back to the British line, where, sitting under a tree, he found his thirsty master and some friends. To them he quietly presented the water and whisky he had risked his life to bring them. Of course they were grateful, but that was a long, long time ago, and most of the officers who sat under that tree are dead. I wonder if those who are alive still remember Mahomed.

II

A human head sculptured from a block of Welsh slate, an exact miniature replica of a sphinx, and you have sub-inspector of police, Buralli Robleh, to the life. Inscrutable but kindly; gentlemanly, with just a touch of fire to warn careless people that he is not a man to be played with. Buralli is one of the most likeable natives I have met in Zeila. For thirty years he has served the government faithfully and well, and the general impression is that even when he be retired on pension he will continue so to serve. He is the terror of all criminals, and the despair of people who intrigue. He sees that the caravans, as they approach the town, are not besieged by a crowd of howling brokers and their satellites, but are allowed to enter the market-place in peace; that the police are doing their duty, and that their lines and equipment are kept clean; that the D.C. hears the other side of the story as opposed to that presented by careless and lazy Akils. He knows the private history of all the litigants who appear in the District Court, and whether they are trying to bring up a claim that has been tried fourteen years ago. He knows whether the poor woman in rags, pleading for a rupee to buy food for her starving child, is what she seems to be, or a humbug

who is quite well off. Rarely does he give an opinion until asked, more rarely still is that opinion challenged, and never on the ground that it is not an honest opinion. During his service Buralli has served under many Sahibs, some of whom are now famous men; and Buralli has learned much, among other things the psychology of the Sahib.

He is not a detective; criminal investigation is not in his line; but the prevention of crime is. Yet I have heard him confess that, under certain circumstances, he is prepared to break the law himself. These were the circumstances. Last night a man returning home at midnight found a stranger in his house talking to his wife. He beat the trespasser on the head with a stick, and was arrested by Buralli. Buralli pressed his case hard. "Unless you punish this man, Sahib, there will be trouble between his section and the injured man's section!"

"Buralli," I said, "had you been in the accused's place what would you have done?"

"I should have put my knife into the other fellow," said Buralli, "but, had I done so, I should have deserved punishment."

To-day a mail arrived bringing a circular instructing the sons of all Somal notabilities desirous of undergoing a course of instruction at Gordon College, Khartoum, to present themselves at Berbera, not later than the end of the month, for

examination as to fitness for selection. The only candidate in this district is Buralli's eldest son.

"Better get that boy away at once, Buralli," I said, "or he will be too late."

"He must wait," said Buralli.

"Why, don't you wish him to go?"

"Ha, Sahib, I wish him to go more than anything else in the world, but his mother is very ill. She is deeply attached to the boy, and it would upset her to part with him just now. When she is a little better I shall tell her, and the boy can go."

And, do you know, I believe Buralli is deeply attached to his sick wife. He is the first Somal I have ever met who could show such tender consideration for a woman.

III

Mahomed Auwit, Arab, is the court petition writer. The son of an influential Arab resident of Aden, who died many years ago leaving Mahomed a handsome legacy. He belongs to the upper ten of Zeila society. Rumour has it that the residuum of Mahomed's legacy is buried in the floor of his house. He is a scholar, and reads and writes not only Arabic but also English passing well.

It is customary for people with a plaint to engage the services of Mahomed to write it all down in English, in what is called a petition. The defendant

and plaintiff in the same case may each write a petition, which is handed up, with the other documents, when the case comes on for trial. A very excellent plan, giving the magistrate some idea of what the dispute is all about. Mahomed is a past master at writing petitions, and some of his epistles might well have been taken straight out of the Old Testament.

He is a most estimable, unassuming character, wears glasses, has a pronounced stoop, and in appearance is not at all unlike a tall thin old woman with a large nose, dressed only in a turban, her night-dress, and a pair of sandals.

Mahomed the interpreter, Buralli, and Mahomed Auwit are the three most important personages in Zeila district court.

CHAPTER IV

COURT WORK

The Court opens—Sultan Mahomed Haji Dideh—Petitions—A case of "being found out"—Gambling—Mr Gandhi.

As I enter the office there is a slight commotion: Buralli, Mahomed the interpreter, and Mahomed Auwit have already arrived, and hurry from the desk of the last named to bid me good morning. We are a polite community. Mahomed Auwit has practically finished his morning's work, as a small pile of petitions prepared by his hand, and placed ready in my basket, testify. When I have taken my seat Buralli informs me that the Sultan of Zeila is waiting to be received. I assent, and a fine old grey-beard is ushered in. His feet are innocent of shoes or sandals, but his cotton shirt and pantaloons are spotlessly clean. A pleasant intelligent looking man is my mental note. He fumbles with a bundle of papers, from which he extracts one and hands it to me.

"Sultan Mahomed Haji Dideh," I read, "was born at Zeila, and is not in a sound state of mind.

He is under the delusion that he is king of all the kings. His dominions, he says, extend even beyond the limits of this earthly planet.

"(Signed) ISHER DASS,

"*Sub-assistant Surgeon.*"

What can I do for you I asked the old man. Buralli explains that the Sultan sometimes visits the custom-house on an imaginary tour of inspection. As a rule Harrichand, the customs superintendent, is very good natured and puts up with the old man's nonsense. This morning Harrichand was busy, and when the Sultan called could spare him no time and became cross. Sultan Mahomed Haji Dideh was summarily ejected onto the street.

Concerning this insubordinate conduct on the part of one of his officers the old man is here now to complain. I look round the court for inspiration. A crowd has collected near the door hoping to hear the old fellow baited. He himself looks so dignified, so like what he professes to be, that I have not the heart to hurt his feelings. I seize his certificate of insanity, copy it, and hand it back, saying that I have made a note of his complaint, and that it will be attended to. The Sultan is sane enough to realise there is nothing to be gained by prolonging the interview; he accepts his paper, bows condescendingly, and, turning about, struts majestically out of court.

I turn to the petitions.

"I most humbly beg to state," I read, "that one Abokr Fahia of the Gadabursi, Abrian, had looted a pregnant she-camel from Wais Kurmaneh of the Issa Rer Kul. And then, instead of this she-camel, Issa Rer Kul had taken a camel from Abokr Fahia. Now the Gadabursi Abrian want their camel from the Issa Rer Kul and do not wish to settle the claim of the she-camel Issa Rer Kul. I therefore pray your honour to order him, Akil Wairreh Yunis, who filed the complaint, to restore the camel of the Issa Rer Kul. By doing me this act of kindness I shall ever remain grateful. Signed, Hersi Ahamed, his mark, of the Issa Rer Kul."

Now Wairreh Yunis is the Akil of the Abrian section of the Gadabursi tribe, and Hersi Ahamed is the Akil of the Rer Kul Issa tribe. In Political Case No. 17, of 1918, judgment was given against the Rer Kul in favour of the Abrian for two camels, one of which had been paid according to the Abrian statement, and the other remained as yet unsettled for. This camel Wairreh Yunis was now demanding, and Hersi Ahamed in his petition pleaded it was paid for by one camel owed to the Rer Kul by the Abrian. Rather confusing but that was what was meant. It will be observed in the petition above

that the camel taken from Wais Kurmaneh is described as having been pregnant.

When case No. 17, of 1918, was heard neither Hersi Ahamed nor Wais Kurmaneh attended to defend it, hence judgment was given against them in default. The present case, numbered sixty-seven of 1919, however, brought some facts to light concerning this old case. It would be hopeless to attempt to write down the tortuous statements made by the various witnesses, and the following is what we arrived at, after sifting the evidence, as a correct appreciation of the origin of the dispute.

Last year drought conditions obtained in Somaliland, and many people, among others Abokr Fahia, were hard put to it to procure food. All Abokr's milk camels were dry, and it was a case of having to slaughter an animal. His choice fell on Wais Kurmaneh's she-camel, which he looted and killed. He does not attempt to deny that he looted this camel, but he denies it was pregnant. Wais Kurmaneh says it was, but how is he going to prove it; the camel is dead. When the latter found out what had happened to his she-camel he lay in wait near Abokr Fahia's kurria until a favourable opportunity presented itself, when he looted one of his she-camels in revenge. But this camel he did not kill, and, shortly after he had seized it, it gave birth to a baby camel; therefore the Gadabursi claim that the Rer

Kul man looted two camels from their man and must return the baby, which they have claimed for as one camel. They consider they hold a strong position as the original camel looted being dead (and dead camels tell no tales) it cannot be proved to have been pregnant.

But their reasoning is not my reasoning. They find it hard to explain why they hid the true facts of the case a year ago, and neglected to explain, until it was dragged out of them, that the whole case was trumped up on an affair of cross-looting. Nevertheless both parties considered they had a *bonâ fide* case, and both parties felt aggrieved that they got nothing out of it all but a sound wigging. Never mind, better luck next time.

I go through the rest of the petitions; nearly all claims for ordinary debt, and settled in much the same way as similar cases are settled in England. There are the usual petitions from divorced women for payment of their mehr, or maintenance, for their children, with a request that the D.C. will put the screw on, and, as an inducement to do so, he is assured of the lifelong prayers of the petitioners in reward.

Buralli has one or two criminal cases to settle. A small boy about five years old is placed in the dock, and charged with the theft of two rupees from the old lady who makes the earthenware pots. Accord-

ing to her the baby prisoner is a desperado of the deepest dye. Has he not been the cause of her losing two silver rupees? But when we turn him upside down, and the stolen money falls with a jingle on the floor, she says: "He is only a child, Sahib, let him go." And I let him go. He is branded for ever, child as he is, as a sneak thief. Had he waited until he was older, and held up an old woman on the road with his spear, threatening to take her life unless she handed over her one and only camel on which was packed all her worldly possessions, he would have been regarded as a hero, and might lord it with the best of his brigand friends in the mosque or in the town. But now he is only a thief who stole two rupees, and was arrested by the police. Decent people will hound him from their doors. A strange thing, public opinion!

Then comes a "grievous hurt" case. Husband, wife, and the other man. How the wife fights to save her reputation. She is prepared to sacrifice her husband if only that can be spared. But facts are too strong for her. One after the other they are uncovered, and shred by shred the woman's reputation goes, until only rags are left. Yesterday how highly she held her head, and how disdainfully she scorned her more unfortunate sisters, whose ranks she joins to-day. But she fights on, as no queen ever fought for her crown, until she is forcibly



SCENE OUTSIDE ZEILA COURT-HOUSE.

removed. Her morals have nothing to do with the present case beyond having provided a provocation for her husband's offence. And yet, serious as is the matter for her, she is no worse than hundreds of the other townswomen. She has only committed the unpardonable offence of having been found out.

The last case of any importance is one in which a number of lads are charged with gambling. There has been a police raid, and the usual paraphernalia of such cases is produced. A dirty old pack of cards, some small silver coins, and a number of coppers. Police Constable No. 13—unlucky number, he has a beautiful black eye—deposes that he caught the prisoners red-handed, playing cards in one of the numerous coffee shops in the town; seized the cards and the coins, and arrested the men.

"And did they come quietly, Constable?"

"Yes, Sahib."

"Then whatever on earth has happened to your eye?"

No answer, and I do not press the question. As a matter of fact P.C. No. 13 set out last night to administer a little corporal punishment to his wife. His wife chastised him instead.

The prisoners plead guilty to playing cards, but state they were only playing for cups of coffee. That is an old yarn, and does not go down. Fined one

rupee each, and cautioned that they will not get off so lightly next time.

And now comes Mr Gandhi, the public works superintendent. His coolies have actually gone out on strike. For what? More pay? No. Then for what? More water. Well, Mr Gandhi, you can settle this strike by giving them as much water as they want, and hang the expense.

The court work is over; I go to count picks and shovels at the prison, and say " salaam " to the by no means unhappy wretches I have sentenced to terms of durance vile.

CHAPTER V

THE TWO WIVES

Indelicate expressions—The narrative of No. 1—Interruptions—The narrative of No. 2—Buralli speaks the epilogue.

This is a truthful record of a scene that occurred in my court to-day. If some of the expressions used are rather indelicate I can only excuse myself for repeating them on the plea that they are not to be compared with some other expressions used, but not repeated. Africans call spades "spades," and talk without embarrassment about subjects that are taboo in our drawing-rooms. This morning, without any warning, two Somal ladies were ushered into my presence at court. Ushered, did I say? Rather, two ladies burst into the court dragging at their tails a squad of perspiring policemen, who showed signs of having been engaged in an unsuccessful argument with the women.

The imperturbable Somal sub-inspector of police guided one woman into the witness-box, the other into the prisoners' stand.

"Well, madam," said I to the one in the witness-box, "what is your trouble?"

Both women began to shout. Cries of " Silence " interrupted them, and Buralli, the police inspector, was able to make a little speech.

" Sahib, these two women have been fighting like devils. At first I thought the town was afire. We have put this one in the witness-box to keep them apart. As sure as they are within reach of one another they fight like tigers, and attack anyone attempting to drag them apart. They are both prisoners."

" Very good. This," pointing my finger at the fat woman in the prisoners' stand, " is accused No. 1. This," at the long gaunt woman in the witness-box, " is accused No. 2. No. 2 will explain what she means by such outrageous conduct."

Meanwhile No. 1 lets down her petticoat, which I observe is girded round her loins for other than peaceful, housekeeping purposes. No. 1, with a snort and a toss of her head, allowed the petticoat to fall, and made other adjustments to her dress and person which enabled me to have a closer look at her without blushing. No. 2 proceeded with her story.

" My second last husband died some two years ago, since when, until a few months ago, I have been a lone respectable widow. Never a word of scandal has been breathed against me until to-day. Four months it is since Ali Hosh began to take an

interest in me, and asked my hand in marriage. I refused at first to have anything to do with him, but he pestered me so, that, for the sake of peace, I married him. He had already one wife, the woman present in court, who resented the marriage, and laid herself out to make my life unbearable. At the end of one month I was tired of the perpetual bickering, and begged Ali to divorce me. Though loath to part with me he saw it was the best thing to do, and agreed. Three times he renounced me before witnesses, and I am now a single woman again. This morning his wife came to my house and made use of the most shocking language. She called me a —— and many other bad names. I begged her to go away, but on her making use of the bad expression I have told you of, for a second time, in connection with myself—Me! Me! Me! a most respectable woman—I lost my temper and sailed into her in fine style. I made use of no bad language whatever, and I am at a loss to understand why I have been arrested. I wish you to realise I am the complainant in this case. I demand that this woman be sent to chowky.[1] She is a bad woman, ripe for murder, and my life is unsafe whilst she is at large. What's the use of the British government if it can be flouted by one fat old woman like this!"

Further remarks of accused No. 2 were interrupted

[1] Prison.

by a perfect howl of vituperation from No. 1. Feminine flesh and blood could not stand such a remark as the last to pass unchallenged. I quite understood. There's a time and place for everything. If I wanted to call a woman "a fat old thing" I'd wait until she was sailing for Australia and break it to her gently when the gangway was up and she was too far from the pier—on which I'd be standing—to jump ashore. Women are really braver than men.

Shrieks and hysterical screams. "Ha, you baggage!" "Strumpet yourself; everyone knows you are no better than you ought to be." Interspersed with yells from the policemen to the women to hold their tongues. The row continued: I became quite excited myself, and joined in the mêlée by beating on the table with a heavy ruler and shouting out: "Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!" Buralli closed this incident by threatening to duck both women in the sea. I ordered No. 2 to proceed. She repeated herself again and again. Mahomed the interpreter gave it as his opinion that she was only wasting my time. I replied that he was much too fond of expressing his opinion, and asked him to keep it to himself. The woman, I said, was to talk until she was tired out, if I sat there all night to listen to her. At it she went again until she had to admit there was nothing more to be said. Meanwhile the other

woman was on the verge of a fit. Whenever she opened her mouth three policemen shouted into it. A most effective way of quietening her, but trying to my nerves. Remember the temperature was ninety-eight degrees in the shade.

"Accused No. 2! Have you really finished?"

"Yes, Sahib!"

"Bring a Koran and make her swear she has nothing more to say; and, madam, before you pass your oath, let me assure you that you cannot, like Hastings Sahib, stand astounded at your own moderation. For blasphemous, immodest, immoderate language I have, in the course of a vast experience, only once met your equal, and by a strange coincidence she happens to be accused No. 1. I would caution you that if, in the depths of your bowels, there are any bad words or scurrilous statements left unsaid they had better remain there. One more word from you and I will send you to jail for a month without the option of a fine. Now swear and be careful afterwards to keep your mouth shut!"

She swore.

"Constables! Cast off accused No. 1—let her talk!"

And she did talk. It was like a mad woman praying.

"I have been married to Ali for nineteen years. Some few months ago he became infatuated with

this objectionable person, and married her. I called my neighbours and pointed out that Ali was not earning sufficient money to support me and his two children, let alone a new wife, a strumpet who was stealing my husband, and the bread from my children's mouths."

"Madam," I interrupted, seeing that No. 2 was on the verge of hysterics, "try and tell your sad story without calling the other lady names."

"She is everything I have called her and worse, Sahib. Wait until I tell you her private history!"

"No! no! Please get on with your story."

"She is a——"

"Will you be quiet?"

"And every day before she married Ali, and every day since he divorced her——"

"Buralli, for God's sake make this awful woman behave."

Buralli used a few expressions to the lady that I pretended not to understand, but which secretly gave me the greatest inward satisfaction. The woman was actually shocked into getting on with her story. She proceeded:

"Well, the neighbours talked Ali round. He did the right thing, and divorced her. Yesterday I heard he had sent to her for a praying mat. 'What does he want with a praying mat from her,' I said to myself; 'I'll go and see about it.' He works in

a little hut beyond the market, and there, sure enough, I found the mat. I took it away and cut it into strips. I carried the strips to this woman's house and I said, ' There's your mat.' I threw the pieces in her face like this—I wish they had been stones. I said to her: ' Take your mat; when my husband wants a praying mat I'll make him a better one than you can. When he wants good food I'll prepare it for him better than you can. When he wants——' "

" Buralli! Stop her!"

" No, Sahib, who can stop a Somal woman? Drown her. Murder her—yes, but as long as she has breath in her body she'll talk."

" Well," I said, " I am going to finish this case. Let her proceed."

On and on she raved. " This is a government office, and here I hope to get justice from an English Sahib, etc., etc." At last she was talked out. I seized my opportunity.

" Do these women live in the same quarter of the town? "

" No, Sahib, in different quarters."

" Well the order of this court is that they be each escorted forth from this building by three police constables to their separate homes. The part of the town in which accused No. 1 lives is out of bounds to No. 2, and she enters therein at peril of being

arrested. Vice versâ, the quarter where No. 2 lives is out of bounds to No. 1, and if found there she will be arrested. Take them out!"

I watched No. 2 being led down the road that runs straight away from my office door. No. 1 was escorted across the square to the left. At intervals the women paused to wave their arms and shout abuse at one another, but were ever hustled on by the policemen. At last the stout lady sat on the road and defied her escort to shift her. They did not try, and there she sat until her rival was out of sight, when she arose and went quietly to her home.

"When a Mussulman has been married to one woman for years," says Buralli, "and then marries a second wife he has spoiled the first one."

"In this particular instance, which calls forth your words of wisdom, Buralli, it appears to me that it was the second wife alone who was in danger of being spoiled—by the old wife," I replied.

"Oh, she is all right," said Buralli, "she'll marry again!"

"A bachelor this time, I think, Buralli."

"Sahib," said Mahomed the interpreter, "he was a wise king who passed the law that a European gentleman should have only one wife."

"Perhaps it was a queen, Mahomed!"

"Sure, it must have been a queen!" said the wise Mahomed.

CHAPTER VI

CONCERNING SOMALS

Tribal location—European Protectorates—Characteristics—The old Akil—A tale of treachery.

From Egypt to the Juba River the whole north-east African coast is held by three powers, Italy, France, and England. The Italian colony, now known as Eritrea, grew from a small settlement at, or near, Assab, where the Italian flag was hoisted for the first time in 1879. Excepting that most of the coast-line in this colony is populated—in places very sparsely—by the Danakil, a tribe closely resembling the Somal tribe in temperament, customs, and religion, it has no concern with Somaliland. The Danakil territory extends as far south as the Issa Somal's northern grazing grounds, near Tajura in French territory. From Tajura to almost the mouth of the Tana River, in British East Africa, the coast lands, and much of the interior, are held by the Somals.

In 1888 the Italians turned their attention to Southern Somaliland, and by 1894 had established a protectorate over the whole coast between Biaso,

on the Gulf of Aden, and the mouth of the Juba River. The Somal tribes south of the mouth of the Juba, and west of that river, ultimately came under the jurisdiction of the British East African government; so that, nowadays, we have, from north to south, Eritrea, French Somaliland, British Somaliland, Italian Somaliland, and that part of East Africa inhabited by Somals and known as Jubaland.

Somaliland, French, English, and Italian, is peopled by a race possessed of such peculiar and contradictory temperamental characteristics, that, were the accident or influence of environment entirely ignored, and this people judged by purely European standards, it might well be classed as a race of maniacs. To bear out the truth of this statement is Burton's description of the Somals who live in the vicinity of Zeila. "In character the Esa are childish and docile, cunning and deficient in judgment, kind and fickle, good-humoured and irascible, warm-hearted and infamous for cruelty and treachery." This description, which cannot be contradicted, might well be applied to the whole Somal race, and it describes a people whose psychology it is impossible for a European mind, with no experience of them, to understand and explain. To the average European, and nearly all other African tribes, the name of Somal is anathema.

It follows that Somals are a people who require very careful handling, and, fortunately for them, the three powers with whom they are most directly concerned have followed the more humane method, when dealing with these brave *difficile* people, of interfering as little as possible with native custom —even where this custom is sometimes contrary to European ideas of right—so long as it affects only themselves, in preference to an endeavour to enforce European standards by the employment of force.

As Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Italians alike have lost their lives by acts of treachery that can only be described as the acts of madmen, the lesson learned has been that, no matter how safe things may appear on the surface, it is never wise to relax ordinary precaution. The Somal has no sense of reverence, if I may use the expression, and considers himself as good a man, and, like all madmen, as sane a man as anyone else in the world. One may expect no supine servility from him, and the man who looks for it will only find trouble instead. In dealing with Eastern natives the European is not unlikely to become somewhat "spoiled," and, unless he has a very level head, may quite easily lose a due sense of proportion as to his relative importance with other peoples in this world.

To-day I received this note from an Indian clerk:

"SIR,—I respectfully request your merciful honour to arrange for myself and Mr —— two riding camels to go to the garden this Saturday at three p.m. For which act of kindness we shall be highly obliged."

Of course I let him have the camels, and was thanked so profusely that I began to feel I was a rather wonderful fellow, and had done something really magnanimous. But my conceit was about to receive a rude shock.

Shortly after the camel incident a dirty old Akil walked into my office, and, with an abrupt "salaam," held out a grimy paw for me to shake. I shook.

The old gentleman had come in from the bush to draw his salary, which I was prepared to pay him as condescendingly as I had lent camels to the clerk. It is hard to explain what a pleasant sensation of exaltation even the most modest of men may feel when seated on a daïs behind a desk, with an inspector of police—who bows every time he is looked at—on his left; an interpreter on his right, who would lick his boots for a rise of pay; a clerk who stands up, and says "Sir" as if he meant it, every time he is spoken to; and a real live savage in front of him who has come to ask for pay, and who is an inferior to whom one can grant favours.

I asked after the Akil's health and his cattle,

endeavouring to convey I was not above taking an interest in his affairs. Had there been good rain, and was the grazing good out his way? Was the political situation quite satisfactory? He answered all my questions with civility, and after some little time turned to the interpreter and said: " I've been nearly thirty years an Akil and this is the first time I have been asked immediately on arrival in Zeila for the news of the district. This officer is unlike the other sahibs."

I took this remark as a great compliment to my keenness. For there have been some very clever sahibs stationed here during the past thirty years, all of whom the old boy before me must have met and had dealings with. I was so flattered that I fairly oozed condescension.

" Ask him why I am different to the other sahibs," I said.

" You are different to the other sahibs," explained the old man, " because they knew their work and you don't know yours. They knew that when a man comes from the interior he is tired and thirsty. They gave me my pay immediately I arrived. They did not keep me standing about answering questions, but said: ' Here is a rupee bakshish, go and drink tea with it, and when you are rested and refreshed come back and tell us all the news.' "

That sort of thing may be very trying, but it *does*

keep one from over-developing a sense of self-importance.

The old gentleman was paid his salary, which he counted carefully as if he were making sure we had not cheated him nor given him a bad rupee, then, with an independent "salaam," and a salute that might quite easily have been an attempt to brush a fly off his ear, he went off to drink tea—at his own expense! My one miserable score.

That there have been some exciting incidents in dealing with such people can easily be imagined, and the following description of one such, that happened a few years ago to a European, is illustrative of their treachery. He had left his camp and escort, and with his orderly had gone to shoot birds. Having fired away all his cartridges he was returning to camp, when he met, amongst a party of Somals, a man who had some petty personal grievance against him. I shall let him tell the story in his own words, and, if I may hazard an opinion, he was a lucky man to live to write the lines I quote.

"In a small clearing, perhaps about a hundred yards away, we came upon a party of some fifteen armed Somals who stood directly in our path. For a moment I hesitated. I was completely unarmed, and it struck me that these might be hostile. I questioned my orderly, and he drew my attention to the fact that an Akil, whom I knew, led the

party. Recognising the Akil I felt reassured, exchanged with him the salutation of 'peace,' and stepped forward to shake hands.

"As I did this, and addressed an inquiry in the vernacular with regard to his health, a man who was standing behind him drove at me with his spear. The point took me on the right side of the ribs, inflicting a bad but not serious wound, while the force of the blow sent me to my knees. My assailant still pressed me backwards, and I instinctively grasped the blade with both hands. My orderly caught the shaft. The weapon was instantly withdrawn, lacerating both my hands severely and slightly grazing that of the orderly. The latter then passed me my empty shot gun and drew his bilawa.[1]

"All this was the work of a moment. Of what happened next I have but a hazy recollection. I lost sight of my orderly, who was doubtless being attended to. I saw the Akil's face, and it was that of a man who knew what was afoot. But I was, then, too busy parrying spear-thrusts to think of anything else. Finally I got away into the bush."

This incident is one of many that have occurred to Europeans, French, English, and Italians, aye, and even Greeks and Russians, in Greater Somaliland. But few such incidents have ended like this one, and there have, nearly always, been no

[1] Dagger.

survivors to tell tales. Such are generally affairs of a few seconds—seconds in which death is dealt out with lightning speed by madmen who are incapable of counting the cost and consequences of their deed.

CHAPTER VII

MAHOMED FARA

As body servant—Safari troubles—Mahomed of the lion's heart—Mahomed to the rescue—The duel—Mahomed on field service—The parting.

It is more than twelve years ago now since I first met him at Adas-Ababa. I wanted a servant, a strong fellow. Mahomed Fara, Somal, was nineteen years of age, tall and slender; looked delicate, and bore traces of having suffered from smallpox; not enough to disfigure him, for he was a nice looking boy. He wanted to get out of Abyssinia; I do not know how he came there. He also wanted to see the world. I was going on to the Bahr-En-Nil, which was new country to him, and whether that was the chief attraction, or whether, as I like to believe, he had acquired a sneaking regard for my person, only Mahomed knows, but he asked for the vacant post. Physically he was far from the type of man I required, but he had good manners and impressed me. Looking back on the years that have passed I know now why Mahomed impressed me sufficiently to engage him for a trip I feared he

might not be up to. It was because he was a gentleman at heart; there was more in him than the good manners I liked so well.

My impression that he was delicate soon became a certainty, but the boy had the heart of a lion, and whatever he turned his hand to was done with the best that was in him. We had a rough trip. Crossing the low Abyssinian territory that borders on the Soudan we found the whole country in flood, and covered with elephant grass ten to fifteen feet high. The transport animals could not, and the transport drivers would not, go on. Somals and Abyssinians alike put their feet down and said we were mad to continue. We only replied that, as far as we were concerned, there was no turning back, but that if they wished to do so we acquiesced. My friend, with whom I was travelling, had some Bantu servants, and a couple of Arabs, who stayed by him, and of all the others I was left only with Mahomed Fara. There was no hesitation or doubt on his part.

"Do you wish to return or will you follow me, Mahomed? You have a free choice."

"I shall follow you," said Mahomed.

Stores were thrown away and burnt, and our sadly diminished little party pushed on. What happened does not greatly concern this story, but, among other things, we ran short of food, and passed through

mostly uninhabited country. It was a miserable trek, and we were nearly always hungry. Once, when we met with natives, we purchased dug-out canoes, and as the country was one mass of waterways it looked as if our troubles might be nearing an end. But the canoes were heavy and there was little current to help them along. Sometimes, when worn out with the day's paddling and we wished to camp, not a dry spot could be found for miles and miles. When we found it it was nearly always infested with red ants that resented our intrusion, and made our lives a hell upon earth. When there were no red ants there were mosquitoes. As we pushed through the long grass, seeking something dry to burn, these latter attacked us in swarms. Then the day came when we were all on edge, and little unimportant things began to look out of all proportion to their size. As for Mahomed he was nearing collapse.

We were paddling down stream, my friend with a couple of Bantu in one canoe, Mahomed, an Arab, and I in another. The canoes were almost side by side, and the Bantus jeeringly called our attention to Mahomed, who, with closed eyes and limp body, was automatically dipping his paddle in-and-out of the water.

I looked at him. When a man has been suffering pure, unadulterated misery for days and nights on

end the devils that are in his heart wax strong, and on the slightest excuse take charge. The sight of the forlorn, delicate Mahomed, instead of exciting pity within my breast, made me see red. Why should my man be flopping about like a dying duck in a thunderstorm, whilst these other fellows were still putting their backs into it? It was disgraceful!

"Curse you, and curse you, and curse you again! Pull yourself together, you apology for a man, and try at least to look like one!"

Mahomed was done—all in—but there was a something in the fellow that kept those lean arms moving spasmodically, and gripped the thin fingers to the paddle-handle. There was no gallery there to play to remember. If he had put the paddle down and said, "I am beaten; I can't go on," nothing would have happened. But he just carried on. That there was no change in his attitude annoyed me, and the Bantus laughed. Then, to my eternal shame, I sprang forward and struck him; struck him savagely as I would not strike a horse were it as tired as he. He did not flinch from the blow, but just pulled himself together and looked at me. The incident is twelve years old, but I have never forgotten that look. When I think of it I feel as ashamed of myself now as I did when I faced it.

The next day we camped on a dry piece of ground, and it was a case of shooting something for the pot. We had our choice of two varieties of game, doves and elephant, both with the rifle. There was no other animal-life fit for food. Mahomed and I found an elephant standing near an ant heap in long grass. I could not shoot from the side as the grass hid the animal when I stood on the ground, and when I sat on the ant heap his head was at an angle slightly pointing away from me. The one shot offering any hope of success was the frontal head one. This offered but a poor chance of success, but I wanted to get it over, and decided to take it. Mahomed stood behind me with a spare .303, and I, with a .318 in my hand, watched the big brute swaying on his legs as he dozed in the sun. On his head lay a great bunch of grass, which now and then fell to the ground, only to be picked up in his trunk and sleepily returned to its place as head-covering.

Then I fired, and as I had feared, the bullet struck at too great an angle and lodged harmlessly in the mass of forehead-bone. Then things moved. The brute saw me: I whipped back the bolt of my magazine rifle, and, as I pushed it home, the end of a bandage I was wearing on my hand fouled, with the inevitable consequence—a jam. So there I was, perched on an ant heap, in full view of an infuriated

elephant, who, with uplifted trunk, came to investigate. The rifle was worse than jammed, because it was fast to my hand with a bandage that seemed to have the strength of a hundred ropes. Mahomed was behind and below with the spare rifle, and could neither see nor do anything. There was room for but one man on the heap to which I stuck, trying frantically to clear my hand. With a shout of " Hold on," Mahomed reached up, tore clear the rifle, bandage and all, and passed the .303 just in time. When it was all over—it was a matter of seconds—I came down and looked at him. Just looked at him, for I could not speak. Mahomed Fara looked back and smiled. We were even. In return for the cowardly blow I had dealt him yesterday he had, by his coolness and presence of mind, saved my life. When I did find my tongue I said, " By God, you are a man," and that closed the incident between us for ever.

Long afterwards, whilst Mahomed was still my servant, we met again one of the Bantus who had laughed at him from the canoe. It was Christmas day, I remember, but he and Mahomed broke the peace outside my bungalow. My friend, he of the canoe, and I ran out together to separate them, but the native head-man told us we would only delay matters by interfering. They had to fight until one was broken.

"Let them fight," said my friend, "let them fight it out."

I looked at Mahomed and saw that he was as thin and delicate as ever, and, to my mind, it seemed his nine stone of flesh and blood must be beaten to pulp by the fourteen stone brute who stood before him.

"Aye, let us fight it out, Sahib," said Mahomed, reading my thoughts, "things have gone too far; we *must* fight."

"Very well," I reluctantly assented, "but your blood be on your own head."

As I expected the Bantu simply smothered the Somal. Although we barred sticks, knives, or stone-throwing (don't smile, Africans use those things in preference to bare fists) there were many foul blows given and received—more often received by Mahomed—until at last the weaker man was in dire straits. Again and again he staggered to his feet only to hit the ground immediately afterwards.

"Stop. Give in, Mahomed. He's a better man physically, and he'll kill you!"

"I shall never give in," replied Mahomed. "He is a slave and I am his master!"

And then the spirit in him began to triumph over his adversary, who, though quite unhurt, now showed signs of fear. Once he fell to the ground, and seizing Mahomed's leg bit it to the bone. For this

act he was rewarded by a kick on the face that gave him the wished-for excuse to "play possum." The battered Mahomed now began to kick his adversary feebly on the body with bare feet, and the latter cried out to us to save him.

"Admit you are beaten!" said Mahomed.

"I am beaten!" said the Bantu.

Afterwards I married. The change of life from the single to the blessed state affects not only the European dweller in Africa, but also his servant. Where a wipe here and a flick there with a duster, in the old days, constituted tidying up the house, everything now must be cleaned and polished with scrupulous care. There are also ever so many things that were never done in the old times more than twice a year—and that a record year—that now call for attention every day. A bachelor's servants rarely remain long with him after he marries. But Mahomed was one of the exceptions. When the first baby came he was as delighted as I, and when others followed he seemed to share the heavy cares of family life equally with me. I can pay him the greatest compliment a white man can pay the native. Wherever the children might be I felt that if Mahomed were there, and alive, they were safe. His own marriage to an older woman was unhappy, and one day, yielding to her importunities, he allowed her to go. She left him a young son. His

mother had been rendered destitute as the outcome of a wild raid by the Mad Mullah, and Mahomed brought her, and a young brother, to Jubaland, where we lived. I had then an opportunity of learning that he was a good son.

When war broke out in August, 1914, Mahomed and I, for the first few days, took little heed. We were too far removed from the European world to realise what was coming. But, soon afterwards, I left Mahomed to help bring up the children, whilst I went off to join the King's African Rifles.

Later it was so arranged, by collusion with *someone* who ought not to have been so unselfish, that he might again taste the joys and discomforts of the old wild free life on the veldt. So Mahomed came to be my servant in the M.I. Wherever I went he followed, though he was cautioned again and again that his duty was with the horses, or in the column, and not in following me round like a dog, even to the firing line. M.I. work in the early days of the G.E.A. campaign was more than exciting, and the men could not understand why Mahomed never failed to accompany them if he had the chance, instead of staying behind with the crowd. But we had a secret, he and I. It was something about a letter that had to be delivered by him under certain contingencies; contingencies that occurred in the

careers of many good men, alas, only too often in those days.

Then, one day in March, 1915, at Mwaika Hill in German East Africa, the M.I. ran right into it. For five minutes it was touch and go. I was commanding Somals, and it was the first doubtful corner we had been in together. I was not sure of them for the moment. Let me hasten to say that I am now, sure of, and proud to have commanded them. But on that occasion we were a bit mixed, just a little in the air, and it was vital that we should hold a bad position whilst the column behind deployed for action. There were swarms of bullets about, and I had a suspicion that, mixed up as we were with the Hun askaris, some of those same bullets were coming from our own side. I had joined in a short rush, and was lying ready to order another, when someone came with a run and threw himself beside me. It was Mahomed, and a fine old storm of bullets he brought with him.

"What are you doing here, Mahomed? You ought to be back at the horses."

"Sahib, I promised the Mem-Sahib to look after you, and I've come to warn you that you are not taking cover properly. These people are shooting straight and shooting to kill the officers. It is foolish for you to keep moving about. Please take cover properly."

"Well, now you are here at the Mem-Sahib's orders, do you think you can do anything? Can you catch one of these bullets in your hand? It is you who are foolish."

But all the same after that warning I was more careful to take cover.

We were sending back for ammunition, and Mahomed was told off to accompany the messenger, more to get him out of danger than anything else. But the messenger was killed on the way, and, meanwhile, we were relieved, and received orders to get back to the horses and mount. On our way we met Mahomed again, returning with an ammunition mule whose syce had also been killed; and it seemed to him as if the German and British forces had combined to pick him off, and the wretched mule with him. He had been "through it," and there was a look on his face that reminded me of the day I had struck him on the river. Two men relieved him of his charge, and we dragged the disobedient Mahomed back with us, the men keeping an eye on him to see that he ran into no further danger. He was not a soldier, but he was out to risk his life to keep a promise he had made to the Mem-Sahib, and no one would want to accuse him of being a medal-hunter for doing it.

Then Mahomed and I parted, and it was a great breaking-up. The kiddies to England, and he and

I missed one another, and did not meet again for more than two years. It was just luck. After the armistice I was on my way home, and, as the train was about to pull out of Nairobi station, we met again. Mahomed hurried on to the platform with a basket of fruit, for he had heard I was ill. He jumped into the carriage, and in a few seconds had arranged my few belongings comfortably. It was a kindly thought, that little service, and worth to me more than the gift of fruit. The memory of it is still sweet. Mahomed, even in the stress and rush of a railway parting, where he had to stand back whilst I spoke to more important people than him, could find pleasure in doing little things for his old master. He had a long memory, had Mahomed.

"If you return I wish to enter your service again," he said, when I had time to give him a moment.

"You are a millionaire now, Mahomed. You are drawing exactly twice the pay I can afford to give you."

"Never mind that; I want to come back on the old pay."

But Mahomed and I are getting on in life, and he has responsibilities. I could not permit him to make such a sacrifice, and so we parted.

Such is the tale of Mahomed Fara, Mahomed the

Somal. I do not deny that there were occasions when he kicked over the traces; that he had within him the wild strain of his breed responsive to injury, real or imagined, even as a barrel of gunpowder to a red-hot poker. But I have just pictured him as I found him, and, although he is black and I am white, I am proud to call him " friend."

CHAPTER VIII

COMMERCE

Trade sources and commodities—A typical manifest—The old Jew goldsmith.

I CALL this chapter commerce. Not the commerce so dryly described in the mass of Zeila tabulated customs' returns that lie before me on the desk as I write. Into these figures, at a first glance, it would seem almost impossible to weave the slightest suspicion of adventure or romance. Yet the pursuit of our trade is not without adventure; often adventure of the good old-fashioned kind—well spiced with danger. But the main, and practically the only, industry of Somaliland is cattle raising, unless one includes the pursuit of war as an industry. If so it is a dying one. With the proceeds of the sale of his surplus cattle the Somal buys goods from all parts of the world. Cloth from America, Europe, Arabia, and India; bowls and other knick-knacks from Japan; the bulk, or all, of which comes to him through the great clearing house of the near east, Aden.

Although a couple of small coastal steamers

owned by an Aden firm visit our port at stated intervals, most of our sea-borne trade is carried in the holds of dhows. The Zeila fleet is not a large one, and plies between the comparatively near ports of Berbera, Aden, Jibouti, Perim, towns on the Arabian coast; Assab, an Italian port in the Red Sea, and several other unimportant places. From Assab come mats for covering the huts and tents; string, and the leaf of the doum palm. This latter the women of Zeila plait in their spare time, as our women do knitting, into long flat strips, which are afterwards sewn into bags and mats. But the best mat grass comes from Berbera, and I have one mat plaited from this grass which is truly a work of art. Interwoven with the plaited grass are thin strips of red and blue cloth, forming a diamond pattern of tasteful design; the result being an article that pleases the most fastidious eye.

Apart from cloth, dates, rice, and sugar are our chief imports. Dates are a splendid and highly nutritious food, eaten daily if procurable. They come to us from Mokulla, Muscat, and Basra, and are, more often than not, transhipped at Aden. But our dhows are enterprising craft and go a-trading themselves. Here is the manifest of one that arrived home to-day:

"Dhow Fathal Kheir, Master Said Musa; cargo:

250 packages of dates
30 bags of lime
2 bundles of mat bags
1 package of sweets
6 bundles of coir rope

—all from Mokulla."

From Basra come, in addition to the dates, grain, carpets, and sweetmeats, the latter being the well-known Turkish delight. The carpets are disappointing, and it is to be feared that, though they actually come from Basra, the majority are made in Europe. I have only been able to secure one drugget of undoubtedly eastern manufacture, but it is so fiercely coloured that it will swear at everything in a civilised room. In the old days real, genuine carpets found their way here from Basra, and other ports. I have seen one such, though over fifty years of age, whose colours are as bright and fresh now as on the day it was made.

The dhows bring all sorts of delightful things to gladden the heart of the European collector. I picked up two lovely old brass-bound chests made from a rich black wood, finely carved by a delicate hand. None of your barbarous eastern designs. I have seen many old chests, but these of mine are, in my opinion, incomparable. They are to me a perfect joy, but can only be described by an artist,

and I am not one. Sometimes I turn the massive brass key of one, and throw open the lid, when the faintest and most delicate smell of incense steals forth to tell how, long before these boxes came into my hands, they were used by Arab ladies to store their delicate silks and fripperies. What is their history? I know not. I was lucky to acquire them, for the old Arab families rarely part with such heirlooms, for heirlooms they are, or were.

And then, sometimes, one finds the most wonderful old pottery. Plates that the old Arab grandmothers, years ago, hung upon their walls for ornament, and, incidentally, to prove their very good taste. That these people do have good taste, and some cultivation, is shown by their high appreciation of such articles, all of which came to our shores in the dhow holds. Who dares to say that our commerce has not its spice of romance?

Of our exports skins are the most important. Horned cattle come next. From Abyssinia has been known to come, in one consignment, ivory, coffee, and civet. The coffee is from Harrar; famous for its long berry and delicate flavour. For the latter quality I can vouch. My cook buys the berries at eightpence the pound and has them roasted and ground by a woman expert in the town. Gums and frankincense, gathered from the wild trees, are also

valuable products that find their way hither in small parcels, hidden among the camel loads of grain and skins. Large caravans of the "ships of the desert" enter the town daily, and many are the stories of "loots" and wild doings they report of the hinterland through which they have passed. With the exception of a little of the coffee, incense, ghee (rancid butter), and grain, this latter from Abyssinia, all they bring goes to the dhows for export.

The incense is used by Somal and all Mahomedan women to perfume themselves. A small earthenware brazier is filled with burning charcoal, on which is sprinkled the incense. Over the brazier the lady stands, covering it and the smoke with her petticoat, should she wear one, or the sheet-like robe that drapes her body. As a result she is well fumigated, and if, afterwards, to the European nostrils she exhales a sickly smell of stale incense what matters it; for European prejudices she cares but little, and her husband has, I regret to state, an abominable taste in scents, and thinks she smells fine. Perhaps she does.

In our town the manufactures are few but interesting. There is the old Midgan woman who makes the earthenware pots and water ewers. She is a marvel of expertness. With her fingers she will mould a pot from a piece of mud whilst you are

looking at her. There is no wheel, no model; it is all done with the fingers alone. A water vessel with a slender neck appears as if by magic. It is as if she were making passes in the air with her hands, and the thing appears like the Indian conjurer's mango tree. Our pot woman would make her fortune on a London music-hall stage, and she is such a friendly soul; her smile is like a tonic.

Then we have iron, silver, and goldsmiths. The former make knives, daggers, spearheads and arrowheads for men, and little household utensils for the women. The silversmiths squat on their mud floors and mould and hammer out all kinds of ornaments: silver anklets, chains, bracelets, neck-amulets, and huge silver beads for the women; silver rings set with huge moon and other cheap stones, the bigger the better, for the men. Terrible affairs these rings, that set one's teeth on edge; but the other ornaments are well made and not at all inartistic. The little silver vessels, covered with filigree work, used to hold the black paint with which the women accentuate their eyebrows, and the henna for staining their fingers, always appeal to me. One silversmith has a box full of every kind of second-hand ornament. One day I was present when he turned it out and I pounced upon one of these paint vessels which he refused to sell. It was in pawn, as were the other articles.

The old Jew goldsmith has bars of gold shaped like small sticks of solder. Pure Abyssinian gold it is, too. He has old, old dies for making medallions, the inscriptions on which neither he nor anyone else in Zeila can read. These medallions, always of gold, are fashioned with tiny connecting links of chain into handsome necklaces. How I'd love to rummage through his boxes, but he is discouraging, and barely allows me a glimpse of the wonderful old things he owns, or perhaps holds in trust. He is our fashionable jeweller, but he, too, squats on his haunches on the floor to beat out the most beautiful things with his hammer, on an anvil no bigger than six inches of steel railway rail. He is anxious that I should commission him to make a pair of ear-rings for " Madam." I am to provide pearls and design, he the gold and craftsmanship. But then I am no draughtsman, and I am not sure whether " Madam " would after all appreciate our combined efforts! I have suggested that we let the matter stand over until I hear from " Madam," to whom I have referred it. He says it is a waste of time to wait. " Madam " is sure to say " Yes," and, if she does, I shall get good value for my money. If all is as it appears to be I most certainly shall. A golden trinket, when completed, he places in one balance of a tiny pair of scales, and balances it with silver four anna-bits. For every silver coin in the scale one pays him three

and a half rupees in settlement for the gold; then, for every rupee you have paid for the gold you add a quarter rupee for his work—and the article is yours . . . or " Madam's."

CHAPTER IX

SOMETHING ABOUT DHOWS

Timber—Navigation—The dhow and the slave trade—Dhow captains.

THERE is no good timber on the Somaliland coast. The wood from which our dhows are built is imported. By far the best comes from the famous forests of Witu and Malindi on the British East African coast. This latter, called Bamba Kofi by the natives of Witu and Lamu, is nowadays very rare and worth its weight in gold. The work put into the dhows is rough and good. There is never any hurry or rush in their construction, and the only tools used are the adze, the brace and bit, the saw and hammer. The boats are painted with the brightest colours procurable, but at a pinch porpoise fat and lime make a passable substitute for paint.

We have no monster craft like the Basra dhow, carrying two thousand packages of dates, such as was wrecked off Berbera some years ago. The biggest boat we have, and we are indeed proud of her, barely carries her three hundred sacks of rice,

and boasts no compass. Her captain does not require one; he knows the fourteen stars of the hot season and the fourteen stars of the cold season, each of which he will tell you is seen for thirteen days or nights only. As for NUT and THURAYA in the cool season, AKIL, KALEH, SHOLE, SUOD, and SUHAIL, though they be of the twenty-eight stars used by dhow-men to steer by when they are in the heavens, beware! High winds may be expected. "And if it is so dark that you cannot see the stars?" I once asked a dhow captain. "Unless we are dangerously near to the shore, or there are reefs about, we just go on. One can't get lost in the Gulf of Aden."

But often dhows do get lost in the Gulf of Aden; and I mean it in the literal sense. A few years ago the Zeila dhow, *Sahalla*, in charge of an Arab named Mahomed Hussain, bound from Berbera to Zeila with mail, a cargo of one hundred bags of jowari and thirteen passengers from Bulhar, capsized about four miles out to sea at half-past three of an August afternoon. Three men and one woman were drowned, and several persons clinging to a mast were in the sea for three days. A small boy seized the tail of a sheep and clung on until the animal dragged him ashore. As a rule sheep are poor swimmers, but luckily for the youngster, who could not swim, this beast was an exception.

In years gone by Zeila dhows saw exciting service in the slave trade, but the old dhow captains are naturally reticent concerning any part they may have taken in it. Even the ex-slaves, all of whom profess to be devout Mahomedans, prefer to keep secret, if possible, the story of their adventures and release. According to the jail-master, who is one of the latter, he was nothing but the adopted son of a slave-master, who spent much of his time in teaching his protégé the intricacies and mysteries of the true faith. He holds such a good position nowadays, does our jail-master, that people are charitable enough to forget that he was once "only a slave and a heretic." Human nature is like that.

In the old records, which I am never tired of reading, there is a copy of a statement, made on oath, twenty-five years ago by two slaves who made their escape from an Assab pearling dhow working on the Arabian coast. In the dead of night they slipped away with the dhow's one and only boat, and were lost for days. In the last extremity of thirst and hunger they made Perim. From thence a kindly British Resident sent them on to Zeila, where they told a tale of such brutal ill-treatment at the hands of their late masters, that it called forth the practical sympathy of the officer-in-charge, who helped them in every possible way. One of these men is dead, and the other has become one of our



A NAKHODA (CAPTAIN) AND HIS FAMILY.

leading petty traders. It would be considered by this latter to be the height of bad form to rake up the old story concerning his past. He likes to think that the older generation has almost forgotten his humble origin, and that the younger may in time come to believe that his children are descended from one of the old Arab sheikhs, to whom all respectable Zeilawis are related. I wonder if they are?

The dhow captains are ever ready for an adventure, and, until recently, many came their way. Towards the end of 1916 a number of German secret service men, who had been endeavouring to stir up trouble for the allies by interfering in the politics of the ex-King of Abyssinia, Lij Yassu, and even of the Mad Mullah, determined to leave Africa, as fate was against them. One of these men walked from Abyssinia, and keeping to the French and British Somaliland border approached the coast, where he had arranged with the captain of a dhow to pick him up and take him to Arabia. But the Zeila and Djibouti police were on the look out, and acting on "information received" the dhow was arrested. Shortly afterwards the despondent German was only too glad to give himself up at Djibouti. His chance of escaping to Arabia was hopeless, and he was a lucky man to have reached the coast alive. Others of his ilk did not succeed in doing so, and it is on record

that one of them perished miserably of thirst in the bush.

Nowadays, thanks to the British Navy, slave-running and gun-running are "industries" of the past, and the dhow captains, whose hearts are still unchanged, confine their activities, in the illegitimate line, to landing a parcel of silk or cloth at night when the coast is clear. A party of conservancy sweepers has even been known to find, hidden in the garbage that strews our beach, a parcel of firearms landed by some fire-eater who is now repenting his venture in Berbera jail. The dhow men unanimously agree that life is becoming decidedly dull. That it is still sweet is sometimes brought home to them as they fight their open craft through the sudden storms that often take them unawares in these waters; or when, as has been known to happen, a dhow laden with live stock has a hole knocked through her bottom by a restless bullock. The hole has been stopped with the clothes torn from the backs of the crew, and the water that found its way in, and threatened to send all hands to the bottom, bailed out by desperate men armed with bowls, scoops, cups, and any other utensil that came to hand. For, be it known, our Arab and Somal sailormen never dream of danger, and when danger comes it always finds them unprepared, but full of fight whilst they consider there is

a chance. When they realise they must face the worst no vain regrets are wasted on might-have-beens. They humbly bow the neck to fate, and, like their fathers of old, comfort themselves with the thought that what is to be will be—" Inshallah."

CHAPTER X

SOMETHING ABOUT THE SLAVE TRADE

British and French pressure—The general question—A naval narrative.

But though dhow captains and ex-slaves keep their mouths shut, the old records, fortunately, tell us something concerning the slave trade, which, thirty odd years ago, the British took such effective measures to stamp out in all territory coming under their influence. I am speaking of the Red Sea and Somali coast. Before the French began to make their presence felt in what is now French Somaliland, and whilst that territory was still a sort of no man's land between British territory on the south and Italian territory on the north, the principal port for the exportation of slaves was at Tajura on the gulf of that name, a small Danakil native town north-west of Djibouti. Danakil territory extends far north of Tajura along the coast into Italian territory, past Asab, another small port on the Red Sea.

The trade was in the hands of the Sultan of Tajura, his friends and a few other influential natives. These people owned dhows flying the Arab flag, and were in the habit of running their human cargo

into the port of Hodeidah. As British pressure was more and more brought to bear from the south, and similar Italian pressure from the north, it is easy to understand that the trade at Tajura increased greatly, particularly after that port, held for some time by a small Egyptian garrison, was finally abandoned by the Egyptian government, thus removing the slight restraint caused by the necessity of bribing the Egyptian officials.

But, simultaneously with their effective occupation of the Southern Danakil coast, stern measures were taken by the French against the Sultan of Tajura and his friends, whose activities were, in consequence, gradually curtailed, and finally forced to cease altogether. The Italians experienced the greatest difficulty of all in destroying the trade as their ports were situated in the Red Sea, and nearer to the slave markets. Dhows from there ran less risk of capture than those from the French and British ports, which had to pass through the straits of Perim. But the Italians were keenly alive to this fact, and spared no efforts to stamp out the nefarious trade.

In regard to the general question—the best means of suppressing slavery in this part of Africa, at the time of which I speak—the minds of the various authorities were much concerned, some advocating one course of procedure, others another.

The following narrative by the commander of a British man-o'-war not only provides a vivid description of how the work was done, but throws some light on the horrors of the trade itself. It is headed "Successful capture of slaves off Moka in the Red Sea," and runs as follows:—

"On the morning of 16th September, 1888, at daylight, three dhows were sighted from the ship, steering to the northward with a fair breeze. The ship took up a position to cut them off from the shore, some five miles distant, and having closed them to about half a mile she hoisted the British flag, and fired blank charges from her guns as a signal to them to lower their sails. They paid no attention to the signals, but separating from each other tried to run past the ship and get inshore of her. It becoming evident now that they were slavers, shots were fired across their bows as a further warning, and they were hailed also to lower their sails. Their only reply was a jeering shout, as they were running very fast, and it appeared as though two at least must escape capture; but they reckoned without their host, as will be seen further on.

"The ship beat to quarters, and orders were given to fire at the masts of the dhows. Shots from the seven inch and the sixty-four prs. passed repeatedly through their sails, but masts and halyards were not



A GOVERNMENT CHARTERED DHOW, ZEILA.

struck and the dhows held on their courses, rapidly diminishing the distance between them and the shore, now only about two miles distant. The order was then given to open fire with the Gardner guns in the Tops, at the dhows' poops where the steersman sits. The effect of the showers of bullets was instantaneous; the captain of the largest dhow was killed at once, and, no one caring to take his place at the helm, she came to the wind and the crew lowered her sail. An armed boat was sent to take charge of her.

"The ship then chased No. 2 dhow, who seeing the first dhow had given in lowered her sail and gave in also. In the meanwhile No. 3 dhow had got far away, and an exciting chase took place, the ship firing from all her guns at every possible chance, the dhow doing her best to get away; but a lucky hit brought her to, her captain, being struck while steering her by a shot from the Gardner gun, sprang up and fell overboard; she then gave in. While chasing this dhow, dhow No. 2 had tried to hoist her sail and get away, but the boat's crew promptly opened fire on her with their rifles; she then finally gave in. The crews and owners of the slaves were then brought on board (thirty-three in number). These men were in charge of the slaves, but the real owners are large merchants in Jeddah, Mecca, Hodeida, and other Turkish ports in the Red Sea.

The slaves, two hundred and four in number, were then brought on board; they were chiefly from the district of Goojan in Abyssinia; the females especially seemed to have been well taken care of as they fetch a high price. The dhows were then taken in tow and the ship proceeded to Aden.

"The greater part of the rescued slaves were Christians, amongst whom were some very clean, tidy, and intelligent girls varying from six to eighteen years of age. It seems monstrous that they should be taken to satisfy the lusts of Turkish Mahomedans. They were all well looked after on board, and seemed to recognise that they were among friends, for they were soon laughing and chatting; parties among them who had been separated in the dhows were hugging and kissing each other in a very affectionate manner. Whatever their future may be it cannot be worse than that from which they have escaped. A great many Europeans at Aden are offering to take care of them, and there seems every chance of the greater part at least having happy homes."

That report was written thirty-one years ago, and the slave trade is a thing of the past. At least, just so long as civilised nations continue to hold and administer this wild country. But the hearts of the men who are now our subjects are the hearts

of the slavers their fathers, fierce, cruel, and unchanged. I think the story told by the gallant sailor is sufficient justification for our coming here, and for our remaining here. It certainly convinces me.

CHAPTER XI

RAMATHAN

The Kharif—The month of Ramathan—The Sahib's gift and others.

It is June, the season of the "Kharif"; the Kharif that has three elements—wind, dust, and heat. Zeila sky reminds me, this morning, of a Sheffield sky, covered at dawn with a pall of yesterday's foul smoke. The atmosphere is such as that near a huge furnace whose fires have burned out during the night. One can still feel the dead heat that will, later, take on a new, fierce life, as old Sol, then tipping the eastern horizon with a dull glow, rises higher into the heavens.

The sea is grey and dull, the dullness of a cooling mass of molten metal sprinkled with fine ash. Not the greyness, or dullness, that heralds a change of weather, but that of tired burned-out nature, waking unrefreshed from her night's sleep. All night long Nature has tossed in troubled dreams, and now wakes to life, haunted by a vague wild feeling of oppression; an undefinable oppression almost akin to despair.

There is no bright awakening here, with coloured

cheeks and sparkling eyes. The face that nature turns towards the pitilessness of the new-born day is drawn and anxious. She is too tired to plead for mercy; too listless to try anew the thousand wiles that she alone is mistress of. Here is the stokehold of the world, and the devils who control it are lighting the fires.

At midday the town of Zeila is fast asleep, for this is the month of Ramathan; the month that all good Mahomedans give up to prayer and fasting. The average Zeilawi, or Somal, cannot tell you why. The "Book" says it must be done, and that is all about it. They have heard and read something of Mahomed's son, or was it Mahomed himself, being poisoned by a Jew, and perhaps that is the reason. They will look it up and see. So, whilst the fast is on, they turn night into day and day into night. All those who can sleep through the day and pray and feast at night. The fast is observed between the hours of four a.m. and sunset. Others less fortunate, who must work through the day, have a hard time. Not a sup of water nor bite of bread will pass their lips until dusk.

It follows that the work suffers. The chairs and tables in my bungalow are thick with dust: the house is untidy and uncomfortable. My servants are fasting. At sundown they come to life, and, after prayer, break their fast. When they have administered to

my wants they go to the town where they play, pray, and feast all night with their friends.

To-night I heard the cannon fired at Jibouti by the French authorities to warn their Mahomedan subjects that the day had passed. I had been to the sports ground where a few of the keener lads had turned up to play hockey. Syyed Khudar the Arab, and his brother-in-law, were there, also Sub-inspector Buralli. Just before I arrived Syyed and the brother-in-law had quarrelled. Hungry men are angry men; blows followed words, and Buralli arrested them.

Buralli explained to me that the trouble between the two men was of long standing—"rooted deep down in their stomachs!" Syyed is an independent trader, his brother-in-law is a carpenter. The latter's wife continually twits him with his poverty, comparing her own hard lot with the easy one of her sister. In consequence, when the carpenter sees Syyed the whole world turns black—according to Buralli. But then Buralli is fasting too. After a good meal the whole world will be lighter coloured for them all. But there was no hockey.

As the sun sank in the west nature bestirred herself in a half-hearted effort to brighten up the skies. But all the colours fell from her tired hands into the sea, and spread across the face of the waters. Old gold, gold, vermilion, purples, a mad riot of

tones, shades, and natural colours floated bewilderingly on the dull surface for a few fleeting moments, and were gone. Then the wind rose and lashed the sea into sullen anger, the while the crescent moon —symbol of Mahomedanism—smiled down complacently. Oh, Moon, well may you smile; *you* "that rule the night and see us not by day." But the moon smiles on. Perhaps she can see a fairer land than this. On she goes, through a sky, now clear, and covered with a million flecks of gold dust.

A chant breaks out in the centre of the town. Farther away a crowd of men are reciting a kind of litany on two notes, "Allah" on a high note and "Allah" on a low note; Allah-Allah; Allah-Allah; a harsh breathing sound. Suddenly a horn sounds from one of the dhows at anchor. Toot-toot-too-too-t-toot-too! There is a hush, the town is listening. Something is wrong. Lights appear at the end of the pier, and a boat puts off. A policeman runs to tell me that a dhow has broken loose. There is no one aboard except one small boy, and he it is who has sounded the alarm.

The chanting, praying, and singing in the town re-commences. Again there is an interruption. This time a woman screams. Scream follows scream, until I send to inquire what is happening. My orderly returns and informs me, with a grin, that a "bint" is being soundly spanked by her mother.

The young lady has been gallivanting without permission, and the sound of her cries heard all over the town will doubtless deter other young ladies from keeping their appointments this night. How the disappointed swains will bless her!

For a little while longer I sit listening to the noises of the night. The wind falls abruptly, and the sea calms down. Shoals of fish dash through the shallow waters with a noise like the splashing of cattle crossing a ford. I lie down at last on my camp bed, placed for coolness on the veranda, and dose off. I am awakened by the maddening throbbing of a drum, beaten to warn the faithful to pray and prepare the last meal of the night. I look at the time; it is only one o'clock and people may eat up to four. Oh, why do they beat that wretched drum at this hour? On, on it throbs. In despair I take my pencil, and write until the throbbing ceases. It has ceased now.

To-day, the 29th June, is the last evening of Ramathan, that is if we see the new moon. Yesterday evening the townspeople failed to catch a glimpse of her, and even though one man came from El Kori to say he had seen her in the western sky for a few seconds, and though the big gun at Djibouti fired ever so many shots at sundown, our Kathi must needs have four witnesses sworn on the Koran ere he could grant permission to the people to break their

fast. As for the big gun, have we not heard, but a few days ago, that the peace treaty has been signed, and might not the firing we hear from the French side be on that score. So all this day the Zeilawis have fasted, and at intervals the French gun has boomed out. I am certain we are a day behind, but the Kathi was quite right to run no risks.

Just now Buralli, and Mahomed the interpreter, came to ask for permission to bury an Arab close to the Sheikh's tomb. He was a very influential man who has died, according to the sub-assistant-surgeon's diagnosis, of carbuncle on the neck. Of all days in the year this is the best one to die, for on it the gates of Paradise are unlocked—no one is denied—and the Arab is considered to be a very fortunate man. Not that he had ever done anything to make his reception at heaven's gate in any way doubtful, but the accident of the day makes things certain. My servant, who is something of a radical, was much impressed with the fact, after I had granted permission for the body to be interred near the tomb (which, being near to the town, is closed to the public as a burying ground) that a distinction could still be made between a rich man and a poor man, even after death.

Well, to-day ends the Mahomedan old year, and it is, practically, in this part of the world, New Year's Eve.

I have been astonished to-day to discover how popular I have become, and I have met with nothing but thoughtfulness and consideration for my convenience and comfort shown by people, some of whom I hardly knew by name. This morning the jail-master came, personally, to see with his own eyes that the one and only cocoanut tree in front of my bungalow was properly watered by the prisoners. Again this evening he came, and, although fresh water is as precious here as beer in England, this jolly good-hearted fellow had that tree watered again. I was touched, but not to the extent of more than half a rupee.

It is New Year's Eve, you know, and one can show one's appreciation of thoughtfulness and kindness in others in the shape of a small gift—silver rupees preferred—without hurting the recipient's feelings. All the sahibs make small gifts at this time. My servant taught me that. He said that, although he had never yet asked his master for a present on the Yom-el-'Id, and never would, he had never yet failed to receive one on that day. Being in a strong position to do so I felt tempted to break his record, but no ordinary mortal likes to be an exception to the rule, and I have fallen into line. The people expect it.

Haji Abdi Kheiri, a Somal trader, and by way of being one of our Napoleons of finance, called on me

this evening to donate twenty rupees to the poor fund, a good way of ending the old year. He has made some profitable deals in cattle at Djibouti, and assures me that God expects it of him to come down handsomely for the wretched poor. He has already one wife, and is reputed to be looking round for another, with the result that there is much excitement amongst the ladies of the town. He is a stout man, and, compared with the slim handsome bedouin Somal, is rather coarse looking, but the majority of the townswomen would overlook that, and would jump at the opportunity of getting their pretty fingers inside his money boxes. Good luck to him I say. May Allah prosper him further; it will help the poor fund.

Unfortunately, the peace of this day has been upset by people whose nerves have gone a little wrong on account of the long fast and the broken nights. The Midgan, sandal-maker, passed from the hut of one of his wives, where he had been visiting, to that of another, who said to him, "You never take off your shoes when you come to *this* house," meaning by that he was paying too much attention to the other wife. As the shoemaker made no reply the woman took off her sandal and beat him with it, screaming the while for the police. When the police came she said: "You must lock us both up as we have been fighting." The police did, and

at this moment the Midgan is spending some time in the same compartment as his neglected wife—and has his shoes off. Then Fatuma binti Ahamed, aged fourteen, was sent by her mother to buy milk in the bazaar from a woman who measured it out in a dirty cup. Fatuma, being a clean little person, objected, and, as the woman refused to clean the cup, she called her some names, which, by the way, are quite unprintable. But the milk woman had a lusty daughter, and between the pair of them they dealt severely with Fatuma. An Arab says he found them playing at tug-o'-war with her; one pulling at her neck and the other at her legs, also it was a very frightened little girl who ran home half naked to report why the milk was delayed. Her father has been making a great fuss, and the law, as represented by the D.C. right down to the office boy, and even the jail-master, has been called upon by him to vindicate itself. He was so unreasonable that I was strongly tempted to put him in with the Midgan and his wife until he cooled down. But then, some European daddies are just as silly when their little girls get into trouble through their own foolishness, and I have overlooked his nonsense.

. . . . . .

The people have now seen the moon. It is nearly seven o'clock, and, though the sky is grey, the waters of the full tide are tinted with gorgeous

colours, a phenomenon I have not yet seen in any part of Africa but here. Policemen, sailors, rich men, poor men, beggarmen, thieves, are all at this moment out in the open praying aloud to Allah. Strangely enough at this hour, and for the first time since I have been in Zeila, I hear the voices of children at play, above the prayers of the adults. The Jibouti gun is booming away, and, as if to mock it, someone is firing an old blunderbuss outside the town. There is, as usual, not a woman in sight, but I can hear a few girls' voices thrilling out the wild African call, " Lu-lu-lu-lu-luuh! "

The praying is over, and now to food. We have killed the fat sheep and prepared the tastiest of dishes. Neither little child, old woman, nor any single soul need go hungry to bed in this town to-night. The people are rejoicing, and all must share in their joy.

CHAPTER XII

A NAUGHTY STORY

A remedy for loneliness—Mohamed's Story—Buralli's "unfinished" story.

The first day of the Mahomedan New Year is nearing its close without anything unusual having occurred, for which let us touch wood and be duly thankful. At four o'clock this morning the people were astir, and afterwards, from my veranda, I watched the town beauties bathing in the sea. Perhaps I ought not to have looked, but I *did* notice that some of them had extraordinary fine figures, of which they were not ashamed. By half-past five all the bathers had gone to don their "glad rags," and the men and boys marched onto the sports ground behind my house, where a service was held in the open. Afterwards, the day long, there was dancing, singing, and feasting, in all of which the women were very much in evidence. At sunset another burst of prayer, more feasting, followed by general dancing and rejoicing, marred by only one fight. Fatuma Fareh, a divorced lady, invited to dance in a friend's compound, had patiently watched all the other women guests dance in their turn. When hers came



the dance broke up, and poor Fatuma, who loves dancing, was given no opportunity of showing what she could do on her feet. What she had to say about it must have been to the point for one of the women came back and smacked her face. Then the fight started.

I thought it better to keep away from the town, and Buralli and Mahomed, pitying my loneliness, came after dinner and sat with me in front of the bungalow.

"Please tell me one of your stories, Mahomed," I asked.

"Once upon a time," said Mahomed, "a man came to a Somal encampment, and at the entrance met a woman to whom he said: 'I do not talk with women, and am in a conversational mood. Is there ever a man here with whom I can have a chat?'

"'In this encampment,' said the woman, 'is only one man, and he lies asleep inside the tent.'

"'Well, wake him up,' said the man.

"'I am ashamed to wake him,' said the woman.

"'For what reason?' says he.

"'Because his mother is my mother's child and I am his father's wife,' she replied.

"That is my story," said Mahomed, "and sometimes a Somal will sit for two days trying to find out what relation that woman was to the sleeping man."

" I'll tell you a real story, Sahib," said the disgusted Buralli, " but it is naughty. Do you mind? "

Now what does it matter what I answered for Buralli told the story.

" Once upon a time," said he (it wouldn't be a real story if it did not start like that), " there was a very rich Somal who had a lovely daughter, and he swore on the Koran a hundred ' By Gods ' that he would kill the first man who asked for her hand in marriage. He was a powerful Sheiba,[1] very handy with his spear or dagger, so, though many a youth loved the girl, not one dared approach her father with an offer of marriage. Now, the old man had large flocks and employed many herds to shepherd them, but it was his custom every morning to drive the animals himself forth from the kraal, allowing the herds, who had to be out all day in the sun, to sit until eight o'clock preparing their food and water for the day. On such occasions he went quite unarmed, and left his spear, shield, and dagger in his gurgi;[2] when his herds relieved him he walked back alone to his camp.

" A certain young man noticed the old man's habit and thought to himself, if I go armed in the morning to intercept and ask him for his daughter he cannot kill me because he carries no arms, therefore I will do this thing.

[1] Old man. [2] Somal tent or wigwam.

" So one morning the father found a young man awaiting him on the road.

" ' What do you want? ' he asked.

" ' The hand of your daughter in marriage,' was the bold reply.

" ' Have you not heard,' said the old man, ' what I have sworn to do with anyone making that request? Get out of my way! '

" ' Not a bit of it, Old Man. I refuse to leave the path or to allow you to pass until you consent to my marriage with your daughter.'

" The old man raved and stormed, but, seeing he was cornered, said, ' Very well, let us go to the kurria together.'

" Now what did he want, this wise old man, but to lay hands on his dagger? Being deeply religious, and having passed his oath before all the big men of his section, he felt it would be impossible to break it by allowing this young man to live. But, as he walked along, the thought came to him: ' Why does this fellow, knowing me to be a man of my word, risk his life by asking for my daughter, when every other young man has held back? There can be no doubt that he has a stout heart, and would make a good husband for my girl.' So he stopped and asked the youth for an explanation.

" ' Well,' said the young man, ' be it not hidden from you that I am renowned amongst my own

people, who live far from here, for three things. Firstly, I am shameless; no matter what I do I shall never be ashamed of it. Secondly, I am fearless; the man who can frighten me is not yet born. Thirdly, if a man ask me for anything I can give, even for my life, I cannot refuse him, and I always give with both hands and a glad heart.'

" So the old man was interested, and said to himself, ' I wonder if this fellow is speaking the truth. I shall try to find out, and, if he is not telling lies, I shall break my oath and spare his life.'

" And thus it came to pass that the couple returned to the gurgi together, and after the arrangements were completed the young man married the girl and prepared to settle down with her people.

" But his father-in-law said to him, ' You must take your wife and return to your own tribe! '

" ' Very good, I am ready,' said he.

" The old man had three camels laden with mats and rich presents, and giving his son-in-law three days' food he said to him, ' I know you are poor, take these camels and set forth on your journey, but bear in mind this is all the property, you see packed on these camels' backs, that you can expect to receive from me.'

" When the man and his wife had gone his father-in-law sent for fifty of his boldest warriors and said to them, ' My son-in-law and his wife have taken the

road towards his own people. You must wait until he has been gone three days, and on the morning of the fourth day, when the food I have given him will be finished, you are to make an attack on his camp. Should he run away you are to kill him and tell my daughter to come home, but should he fight he must on no account be hurt, and you are then to bring him back to me, watching carefully on the road how he acts.'

" The warriors departed, and on the morning of the fourth day, when the young man was sitting under a tree feeling very weak and hungry, he saw them approaching in fighting array. He promptly saddled up his horse, and taking his shield and spear from his wife's hand, galloped amongst them and made a splendid fight.

" Seeing this the warriors held up their hands and called out: ' Hoi, hoi! Aman! Peace! We are your father-in-law's people and bear a message from him.'

" He listened to them, and agreed to return to his wife's people.

" That night there was no food, and the young man gave orders that one of his three camels should be killed.

" ' You are foolish,' said his wife, ' for if you do this thing we must throw away the load the beast carries; don't forget we are very poor and may not expect any further presents from my father.'

"'I cannot see fifty men go hungry to save the load,' said her husband. 'I shall have the camel killed.'

"On the following night another camel was killed and its load thrown away, and again on the third night the last camel was killed, and the last of the old man's rich presents was thrown away into the bush.

"On the morning of the fourth day the party came to the old man's camp, to whom a true account of all that had happened was given by the warriors. He was delighted, and made much of his son-in-law, feasting him and paying him great honour.

"One day, after the evening prayer, the old man said: 'My son, it is time you explained to me why you are shameless, fearless, and generous beyond all men.'

"'That is easily done,' said the youth. 'Once I went with my section into battle; we were heavily outnumbered, and I was in the front rank. I noticed that of the men who were afraid and stayed a little behind many were killed by the spears that went over the heads of us who were doing the fighting. Thus I learned the lesson that man's life is not in his own keeping but in God's hands. When our time comes to die we cannot escape by running away or refusing to fight. So I know that God will call me

at His own good time, and I leave it to Him, never worrying about my life. For this reason I am fearless.

" ' As for being generous, I am not really so as everything I give away I believe belongs to God, even as I told you my life is His. Once when my brothers and I were rich two poor men came to our camp and asked for food. We refused, and drove them forth into the bush. Near us lived a poor man and his wife, and to this couple the poor men went for shelter and a bite of food. They had but a few goats, of which they killed one, and gave the strangers to eat and made them welcome. We laughed and said it was meet the poor should help the poor. Soon after that the cattle plague came and swept off all our stock; we were left beggars, without a bite to eat. The stock of the poor man who had killed his goat for the poor men, sent to his gate by God, escaped the plague and multiplied so that he became rich. Thus I learned that we but hold the world's riches on trust, and God to Whom they belong can take them away from us in a single night. The good things that come my way I share with my less fortunate brethren whilst I have the opportunity, lest it should pass from my hands for ever.'

" And that is the end of the story," said Buralli.

" But you said it was a naughty story, Buralli, and

you have not explained why the young man was shameless."

Buralli's eye twinkled.

"That is the naughty part, Sahib."

Like Mark Twain's "indelicate story," but for a different reason, as Buralli did tell me why the young man was shameless, this story must remain incomplete.

CHAPTER XIII

THE YIBIR

His characteristics—Gulaid Abokr and his Yibir—The first Yibir and his talents—A "makran."

BEFORE the war I lived in Southern Somaliland, where the "Sab," or outcast tribes of Northern Somaliland, are seldom met with, and it so happened that the first representative of the hunter people—the Midgans—whom I came across was the old pot-woman of Zeila. And as for my first Yibir, it was here I met and nearly passed him by. It is customary for the Midgan, who live by hunting, to attach themselves to a Somal family for protection, for which they pay by acting as hewers of wood and drawers of water. The Yibirs are much more sophisticated, and prefer, if possible, to live by their wits instead of soiling their hands by honest toil. Somals will not mix, or inter-marry, with either tribe, and look upon them as of inferior caste to themselves.

This is how I nearly missed my Yibir.

My cook and I had been going through the weekly accounts. He accused me of eating twelve eggs

and three pounds of meat every single day of my life, and I accused him of carelessness in his method of handling the truth, and of extravagance in managing my commissariat. One ever gets but little change out of a cook, and when mine proved he was an honest man, and that I was a glutton, to his own satisfaction and my stupefaction, it was a bad moment for Gulaid Abokr to choose to come to me to borrow money. He came and stood below my veranda, coughing to attract my attention. He did —but he would *not* go away.

" Sahib, I am in trouble, I *must* see you."

" Gulaid Abokr," I replied, " the trouble you are in now is nothing to that you'll find yourself in presently if you don't go right now and take that villainous-looking companion of yours with you right out of my compound."

" I can't take him away, Sahib, he is a Yibir and is the cause of my trouble. I *must* see you."

I was so foolishly angry that I nearly fell over the veranda. I had barely recovered myself when I heard Gulaid say, " Sahib, I've just had a baby." It was really so funny that I had to forget the cook and my bad temper in a hearty laugh.

" Come up here, you freak," I said, " and tell me all about it."

He came.

" Sahib," he said, " I've just had a baby boy, and

the Yibir has come. I have not a rupee in the house: will you lend me four, please?"

Now, thanks to the cook episode I was in a suspicious mood and not inclined to part with four silver rupees without proper investigation, so I called Mahomed the interpreter at once, together with Buralli, who came with several other uninvited guests, to assist in providing me with the following true *facts*. Even Buralli is prepared to take a divorce oath that they are true.

The first Yibir that ever was, was a sorcerer, and used to say there was nothing God would not do for him, nor enable him to do. He lived ever so long ago, in the time of Sheikh Ishaak, a noble Arab who fled to Somaliland from Mecca six hundred years ago, and who is the founder of one of the most powerful Somal divisions. The Yibir did so many wonderful things that the Sheikh sent for him to come to a small hill between Berbera and Hargeisa, but nearer to Hargeisa than Berbera, and there the two men met.

Said Sheikh Ishaak to the Yibir, "Is this true, all I hear concerning you, that there is nothing you cannot do?"

"It is true," said the Yibir.

"Now I am not disputing with you," said the Sheikh, "but I'd like to see a demonstration. Can you go through that hill?"

" I can," said the Yibir, and he went into the hill and came out on the other side.

The Sheikh was astounded, and said, " Let me see you do it again," and the obliging Yibir did it again.

The Sheikh thought and thought, and scratched his head, but could think of nothing better to say than, " Let me see you do it once more," and of course the Yibir, who was highly flattered by the impression he had made on such a great man as the Sheikh, went into the hill again, but, before he could get through, the Sheikh held up his hands to heaven and said quickly, " Oh God, don't let him come out."

And the Yibir never came out.

Now the Yibir had a son who came to the Sheikh and said, " What's this I hear about you and my father? Is it true? "

" It is quite true, my boy," said the Sheikh.

" Well now you have killed him, what about the compensation, dia, that is coming to me for his death? "

The Sheikh agreed the boy ought to receive some compensation, and further that as he had killed the sorcerer in the interests of the community the community ought to pay. So he decreed, this holy man, that whenever a Somal married he was to pay a skin to a Yibir as part of the dia due to that people for the killing of their ancestor. Further, when-

ever a male child was born its father was to pay another skin. Now in those days there was no money, that was why the Sheikh said the Yibirs were to be paid in skins, but nowadays it is more convenient to give them money. "*Four* rupees——*six* rupees, something like that."

So, when a baby boy is born a Yibir comes along with a long stick, which he balances on the back of his hand. Then the stick runs along his arm and balances on his shoulder. When the father of the baby sees this, he knows the man before him is a Yibir, without doubt, and he pays him, "four rupees —six rupees, something like that." After some incantations the Yibir goes to the bush and cuts some tiny sticks, which he sews up in a bit of skin. He is very particular as to the number of these sticks, they must be more than two and less than four, and when they are made up in the skin he hands them to the child's parents, who tie the package on baby's arm. It is called a "makran," and if any other Yibir come along the mother shows it to them and they know they will not get anything more for *that* baby. But if a new baby boy comes, and the parents cheat the Yibir out of his dues, something dreadful is bound to happen.

Now as Gulaid Abokr's wife has just presented him with a bouncing boy, and as Gulaid and all his friends have spent more this New Year than they

can afford, and are out of cash, and as, after a careful search, I find the cook has left me with four rupees in hand, it would be a pity if anything were to happen to the baby, so I lend the money.

Mahomed then confides a tremendous secret to me.

"I tell you, sir, what I am going to tell you now is a fact, and I am prepared to pass my oath on the Koran that it is true. This same Yibir came to my house last night and said, 'Let me tell you your luck!' I said, 'Good!' He told me to take a new loin cloth and four rupees from my box and accompany him to another house. I went with him, taking the articles, for I feared a trick. When we entered a house he said, 'Spread the cloth on the ground.' I spread it on the ground, and he said, 'Now put the four rupees on it.' I put them on.

"He then took a thread from the cloth I was wearing and rolled it into a ball, which he kept in the palm of his hand. He said, 'If your luck is good this thread will turn into a lock of human hair. If it is bad it will turn into a human eye.' I watched him very closely, for I still feared a trick. He closed his hand, opened it quickly, and, 'Wallahi,' the thread had turned into human hair. Then he picked up the new cloth and the four rupees saying, 'As your luck is good this is my commission.' Now what do you think of that, sir?"

" I think, Mahomed," said I, " that there are as indifferent rascals, and just as big fools, in Somaliland as any other part of the world."

This morning I passed Gulaid Abokr's slim young wife, and noticed the baby she carried on her back was wearing a neat new " makran " on his arm. Said I to myself, " I wonder who pays the Yibir his fee for that makran—baby's father or I? I have my doubts." But baby's mother looked so happy, and smiled so sweetly, that I'll forgive Gulaid Abokr if he never pays me back.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ISLAND

The trip to the island—Fishing—Frenchmen, Greeks and Chinamen—Sharks and bêche-de-mer—El Kori.

"Is the boat ready, Buralli?" I ask the Somal sub-inspector of police.

"Ha! Sahib, it is ready."

"Who are coming with me?"

"A sergeant of the water police, two boatmen, your orderly, your cook, your servant, and the Arab Syyed. I am sending the riding camels to El Kori to-night and they will await you there in the morning. You can cross from the island, where the Chinamen are, to the mainland near El Kori in half an hour."

"Thank you, Buralli. Good-bye!"

"Salaam, Sahib!"

Half an hour later we are all aboard, bound for the island near the French Somaliland border, where a party of Chinamen are collecting bêche-de-mer and shark's fins. With her nose pointing North of West, her dhow-rigged sail bellying to the fresh north-east breeze, the little government boat is soon making her seven knots. Syyed, the Arab,

has brought lines and hooks and is busy adjusting the bait. A small fish, a little bigger than a sardine, is attached to the hook at a special angle, so that it will spin as it glides over the water. Syyed, who works with the assurance of a past master of his art, binds the bait with a piece of palm-grass as a finishing touch. There is a twist of his arm and the line is trailing far out to the stern, where it ends in a little silver streak on the surface of the blue water. The boat is small, the breeze is fresh, and the cook is feeling both afraid and unwell. He droops like a tired plant and all expression fades from his face until, with a sharp jerk of his line, Syyed begins to haul in. In a second he gives a cry of pain and almost drops the line: it has cut his finger to the bone. I grab in time to save the situation, and there is an exciting tussle. The line swings out left and back again right like a huge pendulum. I can feel it biting into the flesh of my hand, but haul away, and, with a swing, land a huge barracouta in the bottom of the boat. Then it is I learn that the cook, alarmed by Syyed's cry, and thinking the boat was going over, had attempted to jump overboard. A heavy blow on the head from the water police sergeant's fist had caused him to change his mind. My remarks on his foolishness soothed him back to his former state of lethargic misery. The bait is bent again, the

line spins out, but nothing happens for some time. Syyed tells me of a fine box he hopes to sell me when we return to Zeila, and I am very interested, when whir-r-r-r goes the line. Syyed is not napping this time; he has the affair well in hand, but the line is all out, and he is making no headway.

"It cannot hold on much longer, Syyed, or something is going to break," I say, as I take a hand.

There is a sharp tussle and the line comes away. I watch Syyed hauling it in.

As soon as we can see we both ejaculate, "hook gone!"

"That was a whopper, Syyed."

"Yes, sir, a ray; they run to over three hundred pounds sometimes on this coast. The best way to get them is with a harpoon. One day I will take you off Sa'ad-d-din and show you sport."

We are running near an island now and the water is shallow, so the line is stowed away. Bump, bump, bump, we are aground. The men spring overboard and push her over a hundred yards of shallows and spring in as we reach the deep water. Syyed is making ready more bait when crash goes the bamboo yard and the sail collapses. It is lowered and freed as quickly as possible. Meanwhile I keep a stern eye on the cook, who informs me nothing in the world will

induce him to return in this boat on the morrow. A splint of sticks, evidently kept for such an emergency, makes a temporary repair of the broken bamboo, and a smaller sail is bent instead of the large one we have been using. No more fishing now; we anxiously watch the bamboo as the breeze stiffens, and we fairly fly through the water. At four-fifteen p.m. we are close to the Chinamen's island, just two and a quarter hours since leaving Zeila. It is a low sandy island, so narrow that I could almost throw a stone across it. From it, when the tide is out, it is possible to walk along a narrow winding riband of sand to the mainland.

As we come alongside the beach a dhow passes us a few yards away. It is from Jibouti, and a white man in the stern stands up to doff his cap. Syyed informs me he is a Greek fishing for a Frenchman who is camped on the island. Sure enough there is his camp, and a tall figure rises from a chair to give me a salute. Two Chinamen are waiting on the beach and ask me to drink tea, but, much as I dislike hurting their feelings, I cannot face the interior of their hovel, a construction of grass mats and driftwood. My own table is set up outside, and I drink their excellent tea and enjoy some very good cake. After that I talk for some little time before walking to the Frenchman's camp to pay my respects and satisfy my curiosity.

They have a nice clean little encampment, in which I enjoy the drink so hospitably offered. The Frenchman informs me that he employs natives to net fish, and pays them by the pound for what they bring to him. He provides the nets, of which he shows me a wonderful collection, ranging from drag nets imported from Marseilles to the African circular throwing net. A sporting little affair this latter. They cut up the fish—nearly all sharks—into strips, which they cover with salt for twenty-four hours, then wash in the sea and hang in the sun to dry. The shark skins, fins, and tails are saved. The venture is as yet unproved, and the Frenchman informed me he hoped to find a market for the bulk of his dried shark's flesh at Zanzibar. I am doubtful if he will. Their catch to-day, they tell me, consisted of one hundred and thirty sharks. My face must have betrayed my inward doubt of this statement for I was conducted to a heap of tails and fins fresh enough to convince me of its truth.

It is getting dark and we sit down and chat.

"It is peaceful, Monsieur," said the tall Frenchman. "It is difficult to believe there is so much unrest in the world when one sits here at eventide."

I look round. Two natives are wading through the shallow water towards our island, and as they come they stop occasionally to throw the circular

nets they carry. They are making a good haul. Syyed is talking to the Chinamen, a hundred yards away; my servant and orderly are erecting my camp bed. A few fishermen are kneeling round camp fires cooking their evening meal. I can see all over the tiny island. Along the coast a red light, and then a white, becomes visible as the darkness closes quickly round us.

That is Jibouti. Perhaps there is a liner lying in the harbour, homeward bound, full of passengers going to Europe. There will be ladies and little children, and now it is nearly dinner-time. How far away and unreal it all seems. There is scarcely a sound. My companion is very silent. I am aroused from my reverie by the splash, splash, splosh, splosh in the water of small fish trying to escape from some monster who seeks his evening meal.

"You have not answered my question, Monsieur," says the tall Frenchman. "It is peaceful here?"

"Pardon," I reply, "I did not realise it was a question, but even here there is war."

"How? Where?"

"In the waters!"

"True, and never ending war!"

"Were you fighting in France, Monsieur?"

"Yes!"

"Well, doubtless you find it peaceful here."

Again a very long silence, then, "Monsieur, my companion has just returned from Jibouti. Have you heard any news?"

"No! my European news is seventeen days old. What is it?"

Later I sit down to dinner, and, as I must be up betimes, I call the Chinamen to ask some questions concerning their work.

"You are collecting bêche-de-mer and shark fins?"

"We were, but our master has gone to China, and there are only two of us left; until he returns we have ceased work."

"So I cannot see you at work in the morning."

"No! we are not working now."

I am bitterly disappointed as I have come purposely to see them catching and preparing the bêche-de-mer for market, but I turn in determined to find out all I possibly can, under the circumstances, on the morrow.

Next morning I woke up to find Syyed and an Arab standing near my bed with lines out. With prawns for bait they were having splendid sport. The waters were swarming with fish.

Dressing hurriedly I saw the first of the Frenchman's boats coming in with a load of fish, and I ran along to meet it. Over seventy sharks was the

haul, but the biggest one was not more than three feet long. There were very few other fish, and they were mostly gurram. There was some talk between my men and the fishermen.

" This," said the water police sergeant, picking up a shark eighteen inches long, " is a Sheiba (old man), he will not grow another inch! "

" Certainly not, he is dead," I remark.

" I mean he is full grown," replied the sergeant.

The fishermen said that was a fact.

" This," said someone else, picking up a shark with a head like a plane, on the sides of which projected his eyes, " is a youngster, and of all the sharks he is the worst kind."

In the centre of his flat head (and underneath) was his mouth, and it was easy to understand that he must, as the men explained, turn on his back to seize his prey.

For a solid half-hour I listened to yarns that would have given any writer of sporting fiction valuable material to work on, yet I believe they were in the main true. There was one of a pearl diver, attacked by one of these flat-headed monsters, which seized him by the face. How he struck out wildly with a pearl oyster he was holding in his hand, and by sheer good luck hit the fish on the eye, causing it to let go. Like a flash he struck out for the surface and was pulled out, just in time, by his mates in the

boat. Not one gruesome detail was omitted, from the first attack to the ending, when the doctor sewed up the wounds. I heard of fights with sword fish caught up in nets. How the men's faces showed their hatred of these brutes that throw their cruel swords about in their struggles to get free, and woe betide the obstacle of flesh and blood that stops a blow. When they find a sword fish in the net the fishermen drop a noose over his sword and, hauling him close against the boat, beat him with poles until there is no fight left in him, when they haul him aboard and cut off his head.

But breakfast is ready and the sun comes up like a great ball of molten metal to remind me that the day will be too hot to allow of any waste of the precious morning hours.

Breakfast over a Chinaman produces a specimen of the sea slug (bêche-de-mer) in which I am so interested. It might quite easily be a banana turning black from over ripeness, judged from appearances at least. The skin appears to be rough, but is not exceptionally so to the touch. The Chinaman conducts me to a furnace of plastered mud in which is set a flat-bottomed pan which might once have been a low bath of the kind used in bedrooms. In this pan, he explains, the fresh slugs are roasted before being buried in the sand for twenty-four hours. They are then washed in the



SYYED KHUDAR THROWING THE CIRCULAR NET.

sea, roasted again, and finally hung out in the sun to dry. When quite dry they are shipped by dhow to Aden; thence to China by steamship. Fortunately, he had a few specimens of the dried slugs, and again they might quite easily have been mistaken for dried bananas.

The Chinaman could speak no English, but his Arabic, though ungrammatical, was fluent enough to enable me to extract much interesting information. The slugs like shallow water with a sandy bottom. On hot, sunny days when the sea is calm they lie on top of the sand, and, though they have no fins, can swim quite well. If the weather is cloudy and the sea rough they burrow into the sand and lie low. They are most easily caught on clear calm days with a circular throwing net, smaller than the ordinary throwing net but of precisely similar construction. This net is of the same shape as a spider's web, is weighted all round the outside with small pieces of lead. When the net, which is of fine cotton string, is held in the centre by the hand lifted as high as the head of a medium-sized man the weights are well on the ground. The net is doubled over and over on the back of the right hand until the pieces of lead are just clear of the fingers. A few of the lead weights are caught lightly in the fingers of the left hand and with a circular sweep of the right arm the net is thrown. The left hand at

the same moment being drawn gently back as its fingers release their hold. This ensures the full spread of the net, which opens out like the loop of a well-thrown lasso, the lead weights lying in a circle on the sandy bottom of the shallow water in which alone it is used. The right hand retains hold of a cord in the centre of the net which gradually takes the form of a spherical cone (as the hand is raised), the base of which is held to the bottom by the weights. The net is then gradually raised and these weights drag along the bottom until, at last, they meet, and in the folds of the net above them is the quarry that has been unwary enough to allow the near approach of the fisherman.

Before leaving the island I was curious to hear to what use the dried sharks' tails and fins are put. A Chinaman picked at a dried fin with his knife, exposing a number of white fibres within. These, he said, were what were eaten, and I was shown a biscuit tin full of the prepared article that was exactly like transparent shredded gelatine. It is used for thickening soups and giving a highly appreciated flavour to meat dishes. Nothing is wasted, I am informed, even the shark's liver being boiled down for oil, and good skins saved for fancy work. Yes! I heartily agree with that statement. In neither the French nor Chinese camp is there any sign of waste.

Saying good-bye I sailed away from one of the most sporting little communities it has ever been my lot to visit. Syyed is of the same opinion.

A half-hour's sail and a two mile walk, in an unbearably fierce sun, brought us to El Kori, a small police post on the Anglo-French border. What a barren spot! One small police hut and the gurgi [1] of an old man employed to pack water on his donkey for the police here, and the men on the island. There is a Somal burial ground, and the graves are well cared for. Some are ringed round with stones, on which are laid sea shells and the mounds made of red, blue, black, and white coloured stones. The graveyard is the cheeriest spot at El Kori.

By three o'clock I had finished my business, the camels were saddled, and we were soon wending our way home along a good hard track. Three miles outside Zeila we stopped at Tokusha, where are the wells that supply the town with water. Here are several native gardens, the best one being owned by an ex-Pathan soldier, who, after taking his discharge in India, returned to Zeila where lived his Somal wife, whom he had married whilst serving in her country. His garden of lime and orange trees, flowering shrubs and vegetables, irrigated from the wells, is a beautiful little spot, which the old man

[1] Somal wigwam, a shelter of mats.

loves with heart and soul. 'Tis a pity there are not more of his kind in Somaliland.

Home from the wells to find the boat has returned hours ago. Syyed is waiting with a beautiful old Arab box, the like of which I have been hunting after for years, and, when it changes owners at a reasonable price, I feel that I have spent a perfect day.

The waters of the Somaliland coast literally team with fish. At one spot in particular it would be possible to load a ship with crabs. I once saw His Majesty's Commissioner send two servants with a bucket each to bring crabs from this place. He might have been ordering them to bring sand from the seashore, so certain he seemed they would find crabs. Within three-quarters of an hour the men were back with both buckets brim full. For such a splendid supply surely there must be a market somewhere in the world. But I think I have written enough about fish for one day.

CHAPTER XV

PEARLS

Pearl dhows and finance—Methods and materials—"God alone knows"—Pearl divers—A pearl story—Juma Bana, pearl merchant.

PEARLING dhows look romantic enough in all conscience—from a distance—but at close quarters the smell—ugh! They are of all sizes, and the ordinary Zeila pearler may ship a crew of anything from five up to twelve men, under a nachoda or native captain. The equipment required is simple. A small canoe or boat, a paraffin-tin cut in half, with a pane of glass soldered in the bottom, a few pieces of bent iron wire to close the divers' nostrils when they dive. Such comprises the outfit. A very primitive one indeed.

When a dhow wishes to fit out the following is the procedure. The captain—who, like the majority of his class, is generally up to his neck in debt—waits on a pearl buyer to ask for an advance. The latter makes inquiries as to the size of the dhow, the crew, and other particulars. These completed to his satisfaction he issues supplies of rice, dates, and other food, with perhaps a dash in the way of solid cash, and in return the nachoda agrees that the

buyer will participate in the profits of the dhow over a given period. The arrangement is generally thus: to the buyer, or financier, the return of all moneys expended, and after that one third of what remains; the remaining two thirds are divided equally between the captain on the one hand and the crew on the other.

All preliminaries arranged the dhow puts to sea. There are no sleeping quarters provided for the crew, who sleep as best they can. But what does that matter in a climate where man for choice always sleeps in the open air, with the sky for roof. Cooking is done over a wood fire burning in an old barrel filled with mud or sand. When the pearling ground is reached the dhow is anchored from time to time and the canoe lowered. Into it descend a couple of divers armed with their nostril-closing devices, and the paraffin-tin with the glass bottom. One of the men presses this latter about an inch below the surface of the water, keeping his head inside the tin. The glass gives a clear unruffled surface through which he can see the bottom of the sea, on which he keeps a sharp look out for shells, or likely ledges. Should his trained eye sight anything, a motion of his hand to the other man, who is gently paddling, brings the canoe to a standstill. The diver adjusts his nose-iron, stands up and dives. Down, down, down he goes from ten to fifteen times the depth of

water that could be measured between the tips of his fingers—from right hand to left—when the arms are extended at right angles to the body; for it is thus the divers measure depth.

With a knife he quickly severs three pearl oysters from the rock, arranging them one under the left arm, one in the left hand, and one in the right palm, so that it will not interfere with the raising stroke of his arm, as he strikes out for the surface. Then up he comes, bringing with him what one diver graphically described to me as, "God alone knows." He may have found a pearl worth thousands of rupees; he may have two good pearls; he may have three bad ones, or, as often happens, he may have no pearls at all.

When a good patch is found a line is lowered with a basket attached. Into this the divers place the shells they have gathered, sending up a great many at one time to the surface. During such operation some divers descend on the rope by means of a stone weight. When an oyster becomes sensible of the approach or touch of an enemy it closes its shell, should it be open, with a powerful snap. It often happens, therefore, that a diver's fingers are caught, in which case they are badly pinched, and often severely cut.

Of course, there are divers who own their own boats and work independently of the buyers. The

majority of these are Soudanese, who, though clever at their profession, show anything but business-like aptitude in disposing of their spoils. I know of one man who dived for a pearl worth some thousands of rupees, and which he finally disposed of to a wily trader for ten sovereigns, a small canoe, and a wife. When the money had all been spent on clothes for the woman's back she left her husband, who was not in the least perturbed. To Syyed Khudar, the Arab, who remonstrated with him on his folly, he replied, " Never mind, I shall go back and dive for another pearl."

" Just," Syyed remarked, " as if he owned the sea and all the pearls that are in it."

The divers are fearless, stout-hearted fellows, and be there, to their certain knowledge, ever so many sharks in the vicinity, once they have located shell down they go. For their temerity they may have to pay with their lives, but no such thought deters them. " Who knows but that this dive I am going to make will make my fortune or end my life. If either way it has already been written in the book of fate, so be it," is the diver's philosophy. But more lives are lost than fortunes are found by the men who dive. When the gods smile upon them, and their pockets are lined with rupees, they fritter their money away without a thought. Sanguine in the extreme, by very virtue of their calling, they

give no thought to the future. Deep in their hearts is an invincible belief that they are bound to strike lucky again.

A pearl from our waters may change hands many times ere at last it adorns the neck of some fair lady in Europe, or a darker sister in Bombay. What stories some pearls could tell if they could only speak of the cut-throats and "*sharks*" in whose pockets and waist bands they have travelled. Many a story of treachery and blood letting, too, I warrant, that would disturb the dreams not a little of their gentle owners. Even in dealing with the stones there is as much excitement as in diving for them. The tale goes that once upon a time a diver entered a cloth-dealer's shop in Aden, the proprietor of which was absent. He approached a young Indian assistant, and drawing a pearl from the folds of his waist-cloth offered it for sale. The Indian was so struck by the size and beauty of the stone that, although he knew nothing whatever of pearls, he agreed to purchase it for five hundred rupees. But how to pay for it? He had not a penny in the world. Ah, his master's safe was full of rupees. He helped himself, paid for the stone and repaired hurriedly to the house of a dealer whom he knew, where he offered the stone for sale, hoping to make at least a hundred rupees clear profit for himself, and to replace his master's money.

The buyer examined the stone and said: " I shall give you two thousand rupees for it."

The Indian thought the other was having a little joke at his expense and said, " Ah, my friend, do not laugh at me."

The buyer thought he had to do with a man who knew a little about pearls and said, " Very well, I'll give you three thousand rupees for it."

" Come, come, be serious! " said the Indian, " and do not waste my time with your jokes."

" Very well," replied the other, " I shall give you four thousand rupees for the stone."

The Indian, at last perceiving the dealer was in earnest, and very excited, wisely stood out for more. He sold for seven thousand rupees. Drawing five hundred rupees on account he raced back to the shop in time to replace the money he had extracted from the safe before its disappearance had been discovered. He considered he had done a very good day's work, and set up a shop of his own. The pearl was re-sold in Bombay for twenty-four thousand rupees!

Nowadays Zeila pearls, or most of them, are supposed to find their way into the hands of the only buyer, an Indian, who finances the divers on a large scale. But when the dhows are working they remain out for days, with the result that the shells open in the sun. The result is that many a

stone is extracted and hidden away, the buyer's share thus being not so large. Of course, for every stone so concealed, one third its value is practically stolen from the buyer, but, apart from the ethics of such action it is very bad policy on the part of the diver. Stones so kept back are always sold to rogues who give only about one-third their real local value. Thus, all the thieves gain out of it is a bad conscience and a doubtful reputation.

Juma Bana, the Indian merchant I speak of, has always a little assortment of stones, wrapped up according to quality, in small pieces of red or white cloth. He is by way of being the local expert, and, by aid of his magnifying glass, will pick out the better grade stones from the inferior, telling you what is wrong with the latter as he does so. To please Juma a stone must be perfectly round, of a good colour, and without flaw. An almost microscopic scratch or spot constitutes a flaw. And yet it is Juma's misshapen collection of pearls that I love best to examine, even though he assures me that they are of no value at all. To my mind their very irregularity accentuates the beauty of their delicate indescribable lights. What happens to them I know not, but one can buy dozens of the smaller kinds for a song. Poor stones!

The pearl shells are worthy homes for the stones.

They are very beautiful. It is as if they were lined with dissolved pearl to provide tiny baths for the fairies. They are, however, used for less romantic purposes, being madè into buttons and ornaments for every day mortals. But no ornament could possibly be more beautiful than a plain mother-o'-pearl shell with its cool, pure lining of ice-white, bordered with delicate and deep greens, as the colour of the tropical sea in certain changing lights.

CHAPTER XVI

A PEARL DIVER AT HOME

Adan Abdallah and his story—Another story in which I play a part.

Adan Abdallah was born somewhere in the Soudan, and belongs to the class formed from mixed tribes belonging to that country, and known in North and East Africa as Soudanese. This means that he is Mahomedan, and has severed all connection with his mother tribe, whatever it may have been. Many years ago a rich Arab, making the holy pilgrimage from Khartoum to Mecca, was accompanied by Adan in the capacity of servant. On the return journey the Arab succumbed to smallpox at Jeddah, and Adan, being without a penny in the world, and having had some experience on the large sailing boats of the Nile, shipped as a sailor on a dhow trading between the Arabian coast and Zeila. At Zeila he left the Arab boat and joined a pearler. In the course of time he did so well that he was able to purchase a dhow of his own, marry a Somal girl and make a little home for himself and wife in the town.

That is many years ago, and nowadays there are

as many young Adans running about as years have passed since he married. Once he changed his place of residence from Zeila to Djibouti, but left the latter place in disgust for the following reason. He had sailed his dhow from the French port down the British coast to Wakderia, beyond Berbera, where anchor was cast and the dhow's crew, as usual, set off in canoes and boats to dive for pearl shell. Adan with one small boy remained aboard to keep guard. Not far away lay an Arab dhow, which, seeing the pearlers put off, sent a boat manned by six stalwart Arabs to hail Adan and ask how many people he had left aboard.

" Myself and one small boy," he replied.

" Then we are coming aboard," said they.

" That you are not," answered Adan, reaching for his rifle and pointing the business end of it straight and plump at the centre of their boat.

" Well, hand us over that small boy, and we shall go away quietly. Otherwise, we will take you too."

Adan says now that he was foolish not to have got in the first shot when he had the chance, but being off the British coast, and being possessed of a healthy fear of our laws, he parleyed, thus giving the Arabs an opportunity to pick up the rifles they had concealed in the bottom of their boat, and open fire. Of course he replied, and, by good luck, some of his men, who were not far away, heard the shoot-

ing and fired off their rifles as a sign they were returning to the rescue. Hearing this the Arabs ran for their dhow, but not before they had killed the small boy, and a couple of their own number were lying prostrate in the bottom of the boat.

Adan returned to Djibouti, calling in at Zeila on his way to report the occurrence.

Some time after his arrival at Djibouti the same Arab dhow put in there, and Adan, thinking Allah had delivered the murderers into his hands, went quickly to the French officer and laid a charge against them. He was informed, as the occurrence took place off the British coast, the French authorities could do nothing. Adan felt very sore and was under the impression that his story was not believed.

" All right," said he, using the expression that comes so handy to greater men than he when they are up against a stone wall, " wait and see! "

As the Arabs hung around Djibouti for some time Adan was convinced they were waiting for him to put to sea, in order that they might attack him, and so avenge themselves for the loss of a couple of their number, whom he now learned had died from wounds received at his hands.

Again he repaired to the French authorities to report his suspicions, but they, having no corroborative evidence, would take no action.

" All right," said he again, " wait and see! "

Whether the Arabs were tired of waiting for Adan, or had no actual designs upon him at all, and had finished their business, they, at any rate, put to sea at last. Only a few miles outside the harbour they attacked a French dhow, killing five of the crew of eight. Of the remaining three two were too old to be of any use, so they were run ashore on a small island, with their dhow, and abandoned. The two old men got safely back to Djibouti, where they reported what had happened. The third was carried off to Arabia as a slave.

Then the French Hakim sent for Adan and asked, " What's this story you have been telling concerning these piratical Arabs? "

Said Adan, " As you would not believe me when you had a chance to lay these fellows by the heels, what's the use of troubling me now that they have gone? "

The French Hakim smiled—Adan claims that smile was a graceful admission of the mistake he had made—and pointed out how hard it was for him to act on a vague opinion formed by Adan that some, seemingly harmless, Arabs were going to kill him.

Adan replied that if men in his trade did not take strict heed of what their wits tell them may happen, that thing is sure to happen, as bad men do not

write letters to the people they wish to kill, but just kill them, and when they least expect it. He concluded this piece of wisdom by asking the French Hakim, "What about the fight at Wakderia?"

"Yes, what about it?" said the Hakim, "it took place in British waters, and, in any case, we could take no action on your evidence. Why, you admit yourself, you killed two Arabs."

"If that is the case," said Adan, "I am going back to Zeila, and if ever those Arabs come there I'll have them punished. Should I stay here you'll let them come and kill me before you raise a hand."

And at Zeila he has made his home ever since.

Fitting out from there he proceeded to the Arabian coast, and, at a point between Sheikh Sa'eed and Khor Omeira, the dhow ran short of water. Adan, with half a dozen sailors, put off in a boat for the mainland, and having filled the goat-skins they had brought with them at a well, they were about to look for firewood when a party of Arabs armed with guns appeared, and asked who the devil had given them permission to land there.

"We are getting water and collecting firewood," explained Adan, "and have no intention of staying here or of doing any harm."

"Well, we want to collect something from you," said the Arab Sheikh in charge. "Thirty riales you'll pay us, and a good supply of jowari grain

must be landed for us from yonder dhow ere you ever set foot aboard her again."

"Ya, Sheikh," said poor Adan, "I have only three riales in the world. Here they are. Tie them up in your cloth like a good man, and in the name of God let us go in peace. We can do without the firewood to-day!"

"You pay us thirty riales, oh, sailor," said the Sheikh, "and you land the grain, or you die, together with these men who accompany you."

Well, Adan had no grain aboard his dhow, and would have been only too glad to get out of the position he found himself in by paying thirty riales had he had them.

"I was explaining this," he told me, "to the Sheikh, a very quick-tempered man, when without a word of warning, CHAP! he fired off his gun and hit me in the leg with the pieces of iron he'd loaded it with. I fell to the ground and lay like a log whilst my men took to their heels and made a run for the boat, with the Arab party hot on their tracks. Thinking I was dead the Sheikh paid no further attention to me. Aboard the dhow we had some Gras rifles, with which the sailors, who had not come ashore, opened fire, and easily drove off the Arabs, who were armed with old muzzle loaders. In the excitement that ensued I crawled the short distance to the beach, and the sailors seeing me,

sent off a boat and I got away. But when I came back to Zeila the doctor cut off my leg, and Gyyed the carpenter made me this wooden one, which I can get about on quite comfortably. Thank God, I can still dive!"

"Do you mean to tell me," I exclaimed in astonishment, "that you still dive?"

"What else do you think I could do?" replied Adan. "It is my bread and butter."

I should say Adan is a very shrewd man and knows how to look after his money, even though he no longer possesses a dhow of his own.

A few days since I had an opportunity of observing that his wife and children were as well dressed as any in the town.

As next-door neighbour he has a blind Arab, who lodged a complaint that Adan made a door through his compound. There was a lengthy argument in the court, which, in spite of the fact that of the two disputants one was blind and the other was minus a leg, led me to fear, unless the matter was settled, it might develop into something serious. I told both men to go away and keep quiet until the evening, when I should come myself to their houses and see for myself what was the matter. On arriving there later I found that these two men lived in houses of the same size, built side by side and so close together that I could neither walk nor

see between them. In front, as well as behind, was a street. From the centre of the Arab's house a grass and wood fence ran onto the street fence, dividing the space between the two houses and the street into two compounds. When Adan walked out of his door he was in a compound, one side of which was walled in by his own house and half the Arab's house. The width of the Arab's compound on the other side was only equal to half that of his own house; obviously a very unfair arrangement. Opening out of Adan's compound onto the street was a wooden door.

I was inclined to decide against Adan, but he pointed out that on the other side of the houses the arrangement was reversed, and that half his house-back was in the Arab's compound. This I found to be the case, and, pointing out to the Arab that what was sauce for the goose was sauce for the gander, said that he could not have matters changed on one side of the houses to suit his convenience, unless he conformed to similar changes on the other.

The old man did not like this idea, and then the true cause of complaint was revealed. He loves his afternoon nap, but is unfortunately a very light sleeper. Just at the time when his head touches the pillow it appears to be the busiest time of the day for Adan's thirteen children, who seem to be perpetually passing through that wooden gate.

Like all gates in Zeila it is latched on the inside, and every time a youngster comes to it from the outside he bangs it with a stick, until someone from the inside opens. Now, as bad luck will have it, the gate is in front of the Arab's half of the house that is in Adan's compound, and very near to the old man's head. So that with the everlasting procession of kiddies—sheitans he calls them, which means devils—passing to and fro, plus the banging of the gate, an afternoon siesta is out of the question. It was all right until Adan, but two weeks before, had bought the unlucky wooden door.

" But now," said the old man, pounding viciously on the ground with his long stick, " it is all wrong."

Adan agreed it was trying. He had noticed the nuisance himself, and if the old man had told him before, he would have had it remedied. He was quite prepared to have a muster now, and thirteen young imps of mischief—they were all there, every mother's son and daughter of them—were paraded and informed that, between the hours of two and four p.m. daily, the wooden door on side number one was barred to all children under pain of being flayed alive, cut to pieces, or sent to jail, or all three. There was a grass door on side number two, which no one could bang, and which was at their service. By which order and threats, I am sure, Adan made the wooden door near the old Arab's

head, when he is lying down, the most irresistible spot in the world to bang. There'll be more to come of it. "Wait and see!"

What with Arab pirates, Arab robbers, truculent Arab neighbours, a livelihood that requires diving for with only one leg—not to speak of sharks, and thirteen young sheitans requiring a strong right arm to keep them in order—I shall surely not be accused of exaggeration when I describe the life of Adan Abdallah, the Soudanese, as being an eventful one.

CHAPTER XVII

MANY TRIBES

Hayoun the Jew "At Home"—Hayoun's largesse—Hindus, Parsees and vaccination—Buralli's knowledge of legs.

The élite of our town is composed almost entirely of Arabs, Indians, and Jews, who mix little with the Somals. Of course, money talks, and Haji Abdi Kheiri, the rich Somal trader, is getting his foot into the higher circles, but as yet he is little at ease amid the gaiety of social gatherings. Yesterday Hayoun the Jew invited all the notabilities, of whom I am one—I must speak up for myself—to a gathering at his house. There were present the Indian customs superintendent, the Hindu assistant-surgeon, the District Clerk, two Parsees, a Goanese clerk, a few Arabs, Haji Abdi Kheiri, and myself. Everyone was courteous and polite, and all were most obsequious to me. As I climbed on to the flat open roof to join the party Haji Abdi Kheiri fired off his gun five times. This in my honour, but being unused to such displays I thought I had been drawn into an ambush placed ready to take my life, and, for a second, I had an instinct to jump back and down the steep steps. One acts hurriedly

on such occasions, I mean when one thinks there's danger, but, fortunately for my reputation, I caught a glimpse of Hayoun's face. He was cool and unexcited; so reasoning that he would not look like that were there any trouble, as his date of decease in such a case would not be many seconds later than mine, of which fact he would be well aware, I advanced with a laugh and said, " Good afternoon."

The party—after my arrival—being all present, and correct, and Haji Abdi Kheiri having put away his gun (much to my relief) festivities commenced. I sat at the head of a table where tea was served. The whole town had been ransacked for table-covers, the colours of which gave me a pain in the head. I opened the ball by drinking a bottle of ginger pop. My glass was at once replenished with lemonade. Fruit—out of tins—was served, and this partaken of Hayoun arose from his chair and made a speech, saying how rejoiced the whole community were the great British nation had emerged so successfully from the fiery ordeal of the greatest war in the history of the world, and pointing out that at that table sat men of five different creeds—Hindu, Parsee, Mahomedan, Jewish, and Christian—who were entirely in agreement with the sentiments he had expressed.

Then Haji Abdi went for his gun again.

" God knows," said I to myself, " whether, or not,

he is going to rectify the matter according to his lights, and make the party all one religion—his—by disposing of the other four. In any case it is time I took a hand."

"Haji Abdi Kheiri," said I, "put that gun down, sir, or you'll be shooting someone before we break up."

"But Djibouti is firing salutes, and we must also fire," said Hayoun the Jew. "I have especially arranged with Haji that he should do this in honour of the signing of peace. Will not your honour grant permission?"

As we listened we heard the Djibouti gun booming away, and what else was to be done but to allow the salute to be fired. It could not be heard as many hundreds of yards away as the French gun could be heard miles. But at last I insisted on Haji putting away his firearm for keeps, and thanked the party for the nice things their spokesman had said about our nation. I told them how proud I was to find men of five creeds, as far apart as five equal points of the circle, able to meet under one flag, in friendship and unity, and to pay it such a tribute.

After that a long silence, during which I drank another bottle of ginger pop and ate more fruit. Clearly I'd had as much as was good for me, so, jumping to my feet, I prepared to say "Good-bye."

But there were other things to be done. All the town's children had collected under the walls of the house, and Hayoun sent for ten rupees worth of pice, making a grand total of six hundred and forty coins to be distributed as largesse. Had I any suggestions to make?

Yes, I had. It was a clear case for a scramble. The coins were tossed from the roof, and you never saw such a confusion of legs and arms as that which followed. Little girls, little boys, all mixed up like fruit in a salad, and, with the usual luck that attends cats, drunken men and little children, no one was seriously hurt.

Describe the men I met at that party? As well set out to describe the ever-changing sea. Something about their worldly affairs. Yes, I could do that if I cared to abuse confidences; also something about their very private affairs. Whose wife is not above reproach; whose daughter is causing him some anxiety; the main causes of sleepless nights. But beneath it all—of the man's heart—I know nothing. What his outlook on life is. What he really thinks about is as a sealed book sewn up in canvas, weighted with lead and thrown into the ocean.

Sometimes I think I know, that I understand, but it is just at such times I am farthest from the truth. When I realise my abysmal ignorance, and trust to

blind instinct to guide me along a course inspired by a superficial knowledge, I know I am working on sound lines.

Haji Abdi Kheiri, the pure-blooded Somal, who has to-day fired off his gun in my honour, and who sat with me at table looking as harmless as a school miss about to partake of Holy Communion for the first time, is not the same man who came alone to my bungalow, puffed up with pride and prosperity, to donate twenty rupees to the poor fund, as a small boy might who takes one sugar plum from a full bag to present it to a street urchin, the while an admiring mamma looks on. Neither is he the same Haji Abdi Kheiri who yesterday, at the "Peace" sports, behaved like a maniac because the town team was beaten at its first pull by the police in the tug-o'-war. I had counted the men myself ere giving the signal, "Go," and was satisfied that it was a fair pull. But he insisted otherwise. He is no sportsman, and there were few of his breed at that sports meeting who could lay claim to be so called. The second pull I stopped. The spectators were surreptitiously giving a hand to whichever side they fancied, and Haji himself I caught in the act. Finally, when I gave the pull to the police, there was a scene I can liken to nothing else so much as a pack of mad dogs barking and snarling at one another, yet afraid to bite.

It is this sort of thing almost makes one lose heart. On this occasion I said to myself, " If I had a machine gun and turned it on to these canaille, no matter how guilty I might appear in the eyes of man, God, Who understands human nature as He meant it to be, and Who knows, would forgive and understand the act." At other times I say to myself, " I know these people are devils, but they are fascinating devils. I like them, and shall make allowances for their devilries."

Then, there is always Mahomed Fara, and he is not quite an uncommon type in Somaliland. To have met and known him makes one look for the good side in his tribal brethren.

But even I, who owe much to Somals and have always championed them, admit it is exasperating to have to watch them—hiding that better side away. But such they are ; in some cases men who will spend their day praying, and then rise from their knees to smash in a poor woman's skull—a woman who is within a month of giving birth to a child, and because she refuses to hand over the skin of water she has carried three miles on her back that her small children may drink. Such men are almost past redemption.

My pen has run away with me. Since I sat down to write such an incident as that of which I speak has been reported and so creeps into the page. As

for Hayoun the Jew, the Hindus, the Parsees and myself, we have one point in common. We are strangers in a strange land, so perforce try to understand one another, and work together. Even then there are barriers between us.

A few days ago the assistant-surgeon came to my office and reported smallpox in the town. I have already described Zeila so it is unnecessary to point out how serious this outbreak might become.

"Of course everyone must be vaccinated," I said. "Call the town-crier and let him tom-tom such an order through the town!"

"Women as well as men?" asked the surgeon.

"Women as well as men," I replied.

"We'll have trouble with the Indian and Arab purdah women," said the surgeon, who is a Brahmin.

"Yes," I said, "but surely there is some way of overcoming that difficulty."

"Let the doctor go in and vaccinate them all," said the helpful Buralli. "If they are not afraid to show their bare legs, there's no harm in showing their arms, and they need not unveil their faces to show their arms rather than their legs."

"And pray what do you know about their legs, Buralli?"

"Just this," said he, "that you can see for yourself, any day you like, that an Arab woman thinks nothing of tucking up her skirt above the

knees; and as she wears no stockings you can't help seeing her legs if you have eyes in your head. And, given half a chance, if you are a good-looking young fellow, she does not mind showing her face; and what harm does it do her or anyone else? Let the doctor go in and vaccinate them."

The District Clerk, a highly educated Indian Mahomedan, then said, "I prefer to go to prison before I allow the surgeon to vaccinate my wife."

"Here is a good subject to reason with," I reflected, and I produced every conceivable argument I could think of to prove how stupid he was to take up such a position. I might have been the Pope of Rome trying to convince an Ulsterman that "Home Rule" was the best thing that could happen to Ireland. It was left to me to solve the problem by suggesting an old woman should be trained to vaccinate, and sent in to the purdah women to operate on them. And this old lady is now hard at work. God alone knows what diseases she is spreading through the town with her dirty needles, for, of one thing I am convinced, once she is out of sight of the surgeon she will never trouble to clean them.

As for the clerk's wife, quite unknown to him, and possibly to her, I have seen her unveiled and have not heard she has suffered in consequence. I

am not hankering to see her face again, for of whatever charms she may be possessed this is most certainly not one. It is the sort of face that can only be improved upon by being covered up. She should therefore be encouraged to keep it well covered.

CHAPTER XVIII

SCANDAL

Mrs Kar Krishna and Saleha—Mrs Ibrahim and a few reasons —Whisperings and consequences—Saleha's statement.

Mrs Kar Krishna is the wife of a Hindu gentleman, and Mrs Krishna, who is a very nice woman, may be seen by common or garden Christians. She is very ill, and at times is in such pain that her screams may be heard all over the town. Saleha, an Arab purdah woman, the wife of a shop-keeper, lives near to Mrs Krishna, and, in the absence of her husband, has been known to run from her house, climb the stairs to Mrs Krishna's room and rub the poor woman's legs. That's what I have been told. As I happen to know the seat of Mrs Krishna's pain is situated higher up I can't conceive why Saleha should rub her legs instead of higher up. I'm not trying to be vulgar. I've heard exactly what is the matter with Mrs Krishna from Mr Kar Krishna. It's what you used to get when you were younger and ate of the apples that were green. It's a mysterious thing that she should suffer from a long protracted bout of "what you used to get," for there are no

apples to be had here for love or money; and it is still stranger that, though Saleha's massaging did apparently do some good, the only reliable remedy is an injection of morphine. At least so Mrs Krishna says, and if she does not get it the pain becomes unbearable, and she screams—when Saleha will come to rub her legs.

But Saleha's kindness of heart has brought bitter trouble into her own life. Of course other things —the wife of Ibrahim, the barber, is one—have helped matters along. Mrs Ibrahim is a Pathan woman, a Mahomedan, whose first husband died at Zeila years ago and left her with a small family, now grown up. She is still handsome, and Ibrahim, an Arabianised Indian, starting business in the town, fell a victim to her charms, and made her his very own. She is not afraid to show her face, and walks round the town like a Somal woman, or the poorer Arabs, but nevertheless has decided views as to the correct behaviour of purdah women, to which latter class Saleha belongs. Being a constant visitor at the Krishnas' house Mrs Ibrahim, an Arabianised Indian, starting business of running round to massage Mrs Krishna's—I shall not say it again.

Mr Krishna is a fine looking man, and it is whispered that ere Mrs Ibrahim met Ibrahim she was quite a friend of his; therefore what was more

natural than that she should resent the other woman entering his house. She knows Mr Krishna better than you or I do. Saleha is reported to be a very beautiful woman—I have not seen her unveiled, so speak from hearsay—and her husband is of a jealous, violent disposition. Once upon a time in Arabia, during the course of an argument with another Arab, he lost his temper so badly that he drew a knife, and *snick*! That was the end of the other fellow. It is also why Saleha's husband lives in Zeila; for the other man's relatives are waiting for him over there in Arabia. A bad man to upset.

However, Mrs Ibrahim did upset him by whispering in his ear that, during his absence in the day-time at the shop, his wife left the house to visit at the Krishnas'. Foolish Saleha had not asked his permission to do so, and when, one day on returning unexpectedly from the shop, her husband found her away he awaited her return, and, not liking her explanations, in a fit of mad fury tore the clothes from her back and drove her from the house. Saleha told me so herself. She said he had kept all her clothing, silken and other kinds, two amber armlets, two silver anklets, the property of her small daughter, a gold nose ring, forty rupees in cash, ten rupees' worth of rope she had plaited with her own hands, and her brass-bound chest. That is how she came to see me,

to ask me to get her things back, and accompanied by her daughter, aged seven, a pretty little child, who would have passed anywhere in Europe as a European.

Saleha talked sensibly, and told me she had been married three times. Her first husband, the girl's father, was dead. The second divorced her, and now the third had turned her out. Marriage she considered a failure. I sent for the husband, and, after seeing the pair together, realised it was a hopeless case. The man had conformed to Mahomedan law, since he had thrust his wife from his house, by sending her six annas daily, as musroof or maintenance. He did not want to take her back. She did not want to go; but they both professed otherwise. There was a reason.

Under Mahomedan law a woman, becoming openly disobedient, and forcing her husband to divorce her, may forfeit all right to her mehr or dowry. Therefore, in the court, and particularly in the Kathi's court where all matrimonial cases are sent, she must be careful what she says, and how she acts. Also, outside the courts she must walk circumspectly. Foolish conduct may be misunderstood, or seized upon as a pretext to deny her her rights.

If a man is tired of a woman he may, in sundry ways, lead her a dog's life, keeping well within the

sharia [1] himself. When she is tired of it all, and asks for a divorce, he can keep her dangling on until at last the woman, in desperation, will offer to give up her mehr for her liberty. That is, very often, the man's price; he will then divorce her three times before witnesses. In such a case, if she can prove his little game, she has still a remedy in the courts. This is the weakest point in the Mahomedan marriage laws, for the man may marry four wives, and, whilst the poor woman is kept hanging on as a grass widow, he may enjoy all the comforts of married life. She may not marry again until he has agreed to divorce her, or she has proved such outrageous conduct on his part that the Kathi will take the matter into his own hands. What is called " outrageous treatment " of a woman under European law is not always so defined under Mahomedan jurisdiction.

When I sent Saleha and her husband to the Kathi the man proved his wife was disobedient. Had she not left her house to go visiting without his permission? Did she not now refuse to return to him, prepared as he was to forgive her? The woman said she was willing to go back on the condition that he first returned her property. The man swore on the Koran she possessed nothing of that which she claimed, excepting the rope, the box,

[1] Mahomedan law.

the nose ring and her clothes. That settled it. She got these articles, but firmly refused to return to him until all were forthcoming. They were both playing a game.

We are now awaiting the return, from Perim, of her brother with whose wife she lives, in the hope that he will be able to patch up the trouble. Such is the history of this year's biggest divorce case in the high society in Zeila.

Meanwhile, I am informed that Mrs Ibrahim, Mrs Krishna, Saleha, and all the other great ladies, meet on fairly friendly terms; whilst Mrs Ibrahim declares hotly that it is quite untrue she ever dropped a hint in the ear of Saleha's husband that if he returned unexpectedly from the shop he might find his wife absent from the house.

CHAPTER XIX

ON TREK

Orders for Hargeisa—Salvage and propositions—A camel, a girl and my policeman—Bokh and water—The sin of water wangling—Camel-packing—The "White Running Water"—Mahomed Gaileh's sheep—Four Sahibs—A Somal dance—Hargeisa and flowers.

I

ORDERS to proceed to Hargeisa, hurrah! The work entailed in preparing for the journey is a pleasure to perform. We are to cross overland by camel transport. Boxes are overhauled, re-packed, and bound with cord. Calculations are made as to the number of rations required for our followers and escort, the water to be carried and tanks for the same. All is made ready, and all is checked; from the tin-opener to the forage for the riding animals; from the salt to the ammunition in the escort's belts.

On a Saturday afternoon the baggage camels move out. I, accompanied by mounted police, shall follow on riding camels two days later and catch them up.

. . . . . .

Every miserable man, woman and child who has an unsettled claim chooses this day to attend court and ventilate it. The D.C. cannot be allowed to go away without a reminder of the important matters

he is leaving behind. Patiently but quickly the people are heard; then a dreadful thing happens. A dhow, bound from Aden to Bulhar with merchandise, was wrecked off Sad-du-din more than a week ago. Such of her cargo as had been salved was brought here. As I near the end of my work there walk into the court the agents of the Bulhar merchants, armed with powers of attorney from their principals, to claim the salvaged goods. Some of these men have travelled from afar. It would be wiser for me to wait a day than to put them off. However, I know the affair by heart. Here are all the papers and accounts complete to date. They show, among many other things, that the identification marks on many of the salvaged goods have been washed off. But if the agents agree with a scheme I have already worked out in my mind we can finish the business in an hour. I propound it, they listen patiently, and make notes of what I say. As I finish they leave the court to talk over my proposition. I await their return—and watch the clock. A quarter to one—ten minutes to one—one o'clock! Ah! here they come. "We accept your scheme," they say. "Thanks very much." That is all. I sign the statement ready on my desk, hand it to the clerk, and leave the office.

At the bungalow the chowkar has a snack of lunch waiting. The cook and head boy have gone.

At two-thirty p.m. the riding camel and one mule, all saddled, are waiting at my door. I am ready.

" It is a very hot time of day, Inspector Buralli," I say, " to set out on a journey."

" It is," he replies, " but the road is long and there is no water. The camels will stand the heat better now, at the commencement of the journey, than to-morrow morning should the sun catch you when they are tired. Besides, there is a good breeze from the right direction that will help them."

" Good for you. But what about this miserable mule? "

" It will follow the camels. What they can do he is up to."

And that was saying little for the camels, for the mule did not look " up to " much. The box of carefully packed eggs produced at the last moment by the chowkar is strapped behind a camel saddle. My blanket is spread across my saddle tree, and as I take my seat the patient camel unfolds himself, and, with three sharp jerks, comes from the prone to the standing position. We pass through my compound gate, cross the square, and, with our backs to the town of Zeila, trot off due south, along a straight track, running through a sandy plain devoid of all vegetation. We meet a few women heading for the town; we pass a half-dozen more heading away from it; farther on a spearman, followed by a small girl;



A SOMAL HOUSEHOLD ON THE MOVE.

beyond him again a girl leading a young camel packed with a bulky, clumsy-looking load. She pulls to the side of the road, but her brute of a camel takes alarm at our approach, gives a circular run, tightening the head-rope, and thus taking the girl at a disadvantage, swings her off her feet and makes off with the clumsiest of springs and buck jumps. The girl clings pluckily to the rope; her light weight and slender form cannot restrain the truculent brute. She is thrown; she is down; she is being dragged. Is she caught in the rope or just holding on? Holding on, for now she has let go and is clear; during the last ten seconds she has narrowly escaped having her brains knocked out just as many times.

She is on her feet in a second, weeping and wringing her hands—with chagrin, not pain. The camel is unshipping his load backwards. He goes through the clumsiest of evolutions as mats, sticks, and the weirdest collection of parcels wrapped in skin, slide over his tail. And although he is going forward and all this paraphernalia is apparently slipping backwards, it becomes entangled with his legs and gets battered badly in consequence. Well may the girl weep and wring her hands. She has just covered three and a half miles of waterless plain from the town, and here, on this open stretch of sand, lie some two hundred pounds' weight of her father's goods and chattels. If the camel goes—

and there he is going—she must walk back to Zeila and leave all these things at the mercy of any passer-by.

The yards and yards of rope with which Somals pack their loads is all that is left to incommode her wretched beast, who is fast kicking that clear of his legs, and making for the interior, like Robinson Crusoe's " cove," the while. It is certainly impossible for the girl to catch him up between here and where he is going; but Abdullah, one of my mounted police, without waiting to make his riding camel lie down, springs to the ground and with a wonderful sprint, reaches and seizes the runaway, now thoroughly maddened, by the head-rope as he is in the act of clearing his legs from the last of the pack-rope. Abdullah is swung from his feet and hurtled through the air, but lands in the correct position. He is a determined fellow; he jerks at the camel's head; he is holding him, the brute has stopped but struggles, cursing and swearing as only a camel can. Abdullah, thoroughly roused, bounces round him like a ball, and soon has him in hand. He leads him back to the delighted girl, who takes no opportunity of expressing her gratitude in words. She is used to that sort of thing; we are all used to it, and there is no comment whatever. Had the incident happened in an English street, the following morning's papers would have been full of Abdullah's

gallantry: his picture would have appeared in the Sunday papers. As it is, it falls to my lot to record his fine action, and the story may never get beyond the pages of this manuscript.

But we have far to go, and the camel incident is unfortunate. More time is lost as that contrary brute refuses to lie down for his mistress. I am a delighted spectator of a two-round fight between it on the one side, and my policeman and the girl on the other. The latter has him by the tail; everything that is vixenish in her nature is aroused. Her hair is disarranged, her eyes sparkle and her nostrils dilate. As she clings to that camel's caudal appendage she is devil enough to want to bite it. The policemen have him by the head, and as their end goes up the girl's end and the girl come down. As her end goes up they and their end come down. First round—honours even. Second round—the camel, with a grunt of disgust, throws up the sponge, kneels down, has a rope slipped and knotted round his bent forelegs ere you can say "*knife!*" and the affair is over. We leave him being loaded by the girl, and two old women who happen to come up. His language is shocking, and the last sight I have of him is as he alternately has his ear "clipped" by the girl's small hand, and his ribs kicked by her bare foot, the while she bangs her goods, none too gently, on his back.

At six o'clock we halt at a well for ten minutes to give our mule a drink. This is last water before reaching our baggage camels. Riding camels may not be ridden for some time after they have drunk water. On from the wells until eight o'clock, when we halt for a cup of tea and a biscuit, overhaul the gear and give the camels an hour's rest. From nine until midnight we trot through the moonlight, passing many caravans travelling as we, at night; nothing can cross this plain when the sun is high. From twelve to one another halt, then up to catch our first glimpse of the hills to which we go. The caravans hail us as we pass, "Salaam, aleikum!" (Peace be on you!) To which we reply, "Wa aleikim, Salaam!" (And on you be peace!)

I am shown the spot where a policeman died of thirst, and another where a Midgan fell behind the caravan he was accompanying, and likewise perished. From four to five we halt once more, and, taking water from our well-filled chaguls (canvas water-bags), make a cup of sorely needed tea. Day is breaking so we must not loiter.

At nine o'clock, thoroughly tired out, we ride into Bokh, a watering-place at the foot of the Somaliland maritime hills. The road over the plain we have passed—we have covered sixty-five miles—should be passable for camels only, but the wonderful little mule carrying Mahomed, the interpreter, has trotted

beside us and enters camp as fresh as paint; that is to say he looks no more tired, for he always looks tired, than he did yesterday.

Bokh has wells, hence its importance. My tent is pitched on a flat, stony, open piece of ground at the foot of the hills and close to one of these wells. As I write two girls are leaving it with goat-skins, full of water, strapped to their shoulders. Three camels packed with hides emerge from the bush beyond the well, led by an elderly man who carries spear and circular shield. He is followed by an individual dressed in dirty cotton knickers, a French military coat, and with head and face almost hidden by a dirty cloak. This latter person is from Abyssinia, and carries a Gras carbine. The camel is laden with earthenware pots filled with ghee, cunningly packed in bent cane guards. Now a large kafila[1]—some half-dozen men and as many women—has arrived, and its owners are relieving the camels of skins and ghee they bring. Loads off, the men and a couple of women, lead the animals to the wells. In their hands they carry home-made wooden basins which they fill with water for the beasts to drink. The other women are arranging the loads, bringing firewood, or lighting the fires. Their clothes are dirty and they seem tired, though they set so briskly about their work.

[1] Caravan.

A lady, carrying her husband's spear and stick, has approached to look at me. She boasts silver ear-rings, has a string of amber beads around her neck, wears a dirty cloth, but in spite of her clothes looks, like all the women, clean and wholesome. She has gone and I still watch the well. Two young girls, unmarried—this is easily distinguished, as their hair is uncovered by the gauze affected by married women—have driven up some goats. It is a shallow well, and the nimble-footed goats can get down to the water. One black billy has already gone in, and, as the others come up, pokes his bearded face over the side of the well. His companions, mistaking him for a lion, dash wildly away. We all laugh. The two girls, with that gait peculiar to women all the world over, run after their goats and drive them back. Here come the sand-grouse in flocks. Before they came a few old crows were making themselves conspicuous, but now take a back seat. If you could sit with me and watch the endless procession of men, women, children, animals, and birds, coming and going, crossing and re-crossing, from apparently nowhere at all, you would realise how precious water really is, be it even as filthy and evil-smelling as from the wells here.

The police corporal has taken down our camel tanks, each holding twelve gallons, and is having them filled. To-morrow we camp at a waterless

spot. Our allowance of water will be one gallon each. Though not really important on this journey, woe betide the man who tries to wangle more. Better for him that he should steal a purse filled with gold than a bucket measure of water, the loss of which on some safaris might quite easily mean a man's life.

The shades of night are falling swiftly, as they always do in the tropics, but the wells are still crowded. It has been a hot day; there has been no shade, and my head aches; so, though the well fascinates me—I sit at my camp table facing it and can see every move—I shall lay down my pencil for to-day.

II

This morning the baggage camels marched at two a.m.; we aristocrats of the riding brigade moved out at four a.m., by which hour the numerous caravans, camped at the wells last night, had all gone. As we rode out of camp we passed, close to the wells, two huge piles of stone about sixty yards in circumference, and eight feet high. On to one of these I climbed to find it was crater shaped. Evidently there had been a chamber, or hollow, underneath, the roof of which collapsing had given the crater-shape to the top of the mound. My escort implored me to descend. There was, they

said, a great snake living amongst the stones whom it was wise to respect.

Did they know who had piled up these stones? I asked. They did not. Perhaps the Gallas, but no one knew.

There were things buried there, they said.

What sort of things? They could not say, but, as they evidently held the place in awe, I relieved their feelings by descending and mounting my camel. Then on through the moonlight—bright as day. On our left and right rough rocky kopjes, dotted here and there with the typical stunted thorn trees of Somaliland; a patch of grass here, a tuft there, accentuates the grey monotonous rocks and stones. Day broke to find us passing through a dry river bed, and we routed out an old hyena, whom we stopped to watch. He made off down the bed, then turned, came back a few yards, stood and looked at us; but not for long; he is suspicious and must keep on the move—a few yards to the right, again to the left, and halted. Now like a man bereft of sense, with no idea of his direction, he took the hill, rising straight out of the bed, climbed for twenty yards, stopped to look back at us, moved away along the side of the hill, changed his mind, came down half-way to the dry bed, stopped again, and took us all in with a long stare. Had we not followed the sneaky fellow's movements we should now

mistake him for a stone, so still he stands, so perfectly does his colour and shape harmonise with the rough grey boulders scattered on the hillside.

"Give him one shot," counsels my orderly.

"Not a bit of it," I reply. "He has done us no harm. Advance!"

At seven, by following an easily graded but stony track, we top the summit of the pass between the hills above last night's camp. There are hills and more hills ahead. A camel caravan is approaching from the south. At its head a young girl dressed in a cotton petticoat, with a robe draped from her shoulders and looped up round the loins, giving what, I believe, is described as a very full hip effect. As she comes close I can see this effect is accentuated by a number of parcels stored in the pocket-like folds. A Somal woman, true to her sex, is a perfect artist in the way she drapes, and gives effect to, the simple clothes that cover her body.

From now on we pass through a gorge-like valley over a stratum of greyish rotten rock tilted on edge. I amuse myself by pushing away with my stick the sharp points of rotten stone that stick up by the side of the track over which we walk and lead the camels. Between the grey layers of stone are occasionally sandwiched layers of white, and the rocks on the hillside above take on a reddish tinge, which, though there is the scantiest of vegetation, just saves

the scene from being depressing. We pass a loaded camel—one of ours—lying down. He insists, despite the vigorous persuasion of his syce, in remaining in that position. He is bored to death with the two water-tanks he is carrying; and when a camel makes up his mind to throw up the sponge nothing on earth will change it. I, therefore, give orders for the tanks to be emptied. Women from a passing kafila rush with their bowls and ask for the water. When it is all gone the camel is pleased to rise and proceeds grumblingly on his way.

By half-past eight we have headed the baggagers and descend onto a flat plain in a horse-shoe of hills. Here, thank God, on the banks of a dry water-course, are trees large enough to give us shade from the sun, and here we halt. As I select my tree some gerenauk run across the river-bed, and, for the sake of the pot, I chance a snapshot. By bad luck I wound a poor beast who disappears into the scrub. Cursing my luck and folly, I call on my orderly to follow with a water chagul, and come out from my shade to go and finish off the fell work. But luck is with me after all. Instead of a chase for hours, as I had expected, I come up with my quarry in ten minutes and administer the *coup de grâce.* My orderly—although I am sure the animal is stone dead, but tactfully refrain from saying so—makes a show of finishing him off in the orthodox

Mahomedan fashion, so that the flesh may be lawful to all true believers, and we return to camp. At two o'clock the baggage camels are loaded and sent off; we soon follow. We keep to the foot of the hills, follow a dry water-course, and pass through the most arid of country, leading our animals. At six-twenty we are well ahead of the baggage, so halt under a patch of low trees. There is water to be had for the digging; we need not have carried so much water after all.

Near this camp are many mounds like those at the wells of Bokh. There also is a circular hut, well built, the first of its kind I have seen in the interior of Somaliland. Once a Sheikh of real repute halted here for a few days and this hut was built for his comfort. I can call up the scene of the nomad Somals collecting from all sides to build the wretched structure. It is nevertheless, to me, a symbol of the fanatical religious fire that burns within their bosoms. That and nothing else, excepting perhaps an earthquake, could have moved them voluntarily to do what is called a job of work. They were doubtless fired by the same spirit that inspires us to raise up loftier, nobler buildings for the glory of God and our religion. That only a hut resulted is typical of the great difference between the willingness of their spirit and the strength of their flesh.

The name of this place is Yebil-Kên, "the place with no grazing." But there are more trees here; the tufts of grass are more numerous and you need not look far for one; all the same it is a dreary spot. Wonderful are the people who find a living for themselves and their cattle.

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Last night it rained, and I had my bed carried into the tent. We have climbed high, so the night was not hot; for once—the first time in months—I felt pleasantly cool. This morning the sky was cloudy, and we did not march until daybreak. Climbing, by an easily graded track over another pass, which we entered at the end of the horse-shoe plain between two steep hills, and following a water-course across rough stony ground, we came into camp, where cook had coffee, hot bacon and eggs, waiting on the table.

Until now nearly all the people we have met have been travelling to the coast with skins, ghee, and other commodities to sell. This morning the country passed through is being grazed by the Abrian section of the Gadabursi. Several kafilas of families on the move have passed the camp, and I was successful in obtaining permission from the owner of one to take a photograph. The women hid their faces when I pointed the camera, but I managed to get some good shots.

Somals are past masters in the art of packing. It is wonderful to behold the natty way in which a family on the move has stowed away its household goods and utensils. A Somal woman packs her effects on the camel's back as daintily as her more civilised sisters do theirs in wardrobes and chests of drawers. The wear and tear of hard travel, apart from the difficulty in procuring manufactured utensils suitable for the purposes required, has called into play the ingenuity of the aboriginal man and woman. Water vessels made from closely woven grass, and practically unbreakable, could not be bettered, for the work they are used for, by anything made in Europe. The thick mats, used as camel pads, when spread over the tent canes, packed away so neatly on the camel's loads, keep out the hot sun better than any canvas or cotton that has ever been produced by the looms of Europe.

Everything the Somal carries is made for utility's sake, but man's nature, be he civilised or savage, ever craves for a little comfort over and above the bare necessities of life. God knows these people meet with little enough of the former. Good shade from the hot sun should be properly classed as a necessity. In any case, Somal mats are the last word for the purpose.

Turn a European loose here, with his wife: give him a few head of cattle; spare him the children—

they would only make his lot the more impossible; cut him off from civilisation, and, in two months' time, he and his wife would either be dead or on the point of suicide. But here a Somal may thrive and be happy. His wife will plait mats and do practically all the work, besides bearing his children. The man will do all the praying to God—it is his pastime—but for it the woman has no time—and all the fighting, should there be any. He and his wife will wrest more than a living from this barren country I look across, provided always that he has the cattle. He can find everything else needed, from the means to make fire—two sticks—to medicine for his tummy—the leaves from a wild plant—where the European could find nothing but the acme of desolation and despair.

The Somal's life consists of one continual move from spot to spot in search of grazing and water. If good rains come they bring better grazing, more water, more milk, and less work—for the wife at least.

Words cannot be strung together to describe the, apparently, utter barrenness and sterility—to the European mind—of the hundred odd miles of country I have ridden across during the last four days. The soil is too poor and dry to produce anything in the nature of food for man, but Nature has provided—not too plentifully—shrubs with deep wide-spreading roots which store up the moisture

in bulb-like receptacles and so tide the plant over the worst and hottest days of the year. Thus there are green nourishing leaves for the hardy cattle to eat when all else is dead. Even the deep roots of the grass are provided with nodules to store up moisture that the plants may live. And all these plants know the secret of extracting from this apparently sterile earth the richest ingredient necessary for the sustenance of cattle and camels. Further, centuries of training and natural selection have evolved a beast, be it camel, cow, horse, sheep, or goat, that is capable of living through drought and conditions that would soon prove fatal to animals from fatter lands. These Somal-bred animals can pass over stretches necessitating several days' journey without water, carrying on their backs the water to drink, in their udders the rich milk—food as well as drink —for man, their master, and his children. In such country as this, it would be plagiarism to attempt to describe what has so often been described before. The rainy season, compared with that of more favoured parts of the world, appears as little short of a drought; and a drought here, similarly compared, might well be classed as " hell let loose."

To-day we are to commence a further ascent into a more favoured land. Why these plain-dwellers and low-hill men have not done the same, and stayed on the cool high plateaux, blessed with a compara-

tively fair soil and better watered, is one of those puzzles in life it is impossible to solve.

The camel sowars are packed, and ready to move on the afternoon's trek. The road is stony as we walk between the hills. Since that time recorded in the Book of Genesis God has not laid His hand here. The earth's crust has been burst through and over-run by a molten mass spewed forth from her bowels. Here one walks over rough sharp stones that play havoc with the boots; there on a concrete-like conglomerate of white or pinkish stone. The hills have been scoured in past ages by water-courses until their very vitals, masses of grey rock strata tilted on edge from which great lumps have been torn and tossed in broken fragments to the valley below, have been shamelessly exposed. Time has been pitilessly and steadily crumbling away these sharp, skeleton-like protrusions into a mantle of powder and small stones, now falling over, and gradually hiding, the gaping wounds. And, as the channels of the torrents that have worked this chaos fell lower and lower, the water, baulked of its prey, turned to vent its spite on the poor stones torn from the heights above. Over and over it has rolled them, ground them together, rubbed them with sand, worked around them until worn into smooth boulders. They are now barely recognisable as being of the mother rock above.

Then suddenly, from out of all this we come to a stream, Dur-dur-'ad, "the White Running Water." Exactly one year ago I sat on the banks of a stream that ran down the slopes of Mount Elgon. Since then I have been to England and seen running water—if I except the Thames—only from the windows of a railway carriage. What a joy is running water, and how many people know it? How many people living by streams take them for granted, and so miss more than the man who rarely sees them. For, believe me, it is to the latter that the babbling waters talk and tell most.

And the waters of Dur-dur-'ad, to-day, found a ready and willing listener, who drank with pleasure of their prattling music. Does it matter, excepting to me, what they said? Not long ago I read that a man should mark out his life's course with posts, keeping in sight only one at a time. And I, reading this, promised myself that the last goal-post on my course should be a spring. A spring shaded with cool willow trees; the waters to be not so clouded but that a man, or a little child, leaning over might see his image within.

III

Last night they told me that it was unsafe to march before daylight, as the camp vicinity was infested with lions, "bad lions." That meant that the men

were tired and wanted rest, so we arranged to march at daylight. And we marched at nine a.m. Dur-dur-'ad came down in spate during the night, and as the road crosses and recrosses beyond the camping place, we waited for the torrent to fall, which it did as suddenly as it had come.

We made up river for five miles; the road has certainly been constructed ages ago by a people possessing some degree of civilisation. Though rough and stony it is well graded. The scenery is wild and rugged but grand in its way. Once we passed a man and woman sitting on the rocks. The woman was unmarried, unusual at her age, which looked to be every second of twenty-seven years. She consented to stand for her photograph. I was, she said, the first European she had set eyes upon. I should have been better pleased had she made less fuss about it; for she covered her face with her hands, called out "Oo-oo-oo-ooh!" and shook with laughter at my appearance.

This neighbourhood is being grazed, and on all the hillsides we see as we pass young girls herding the sheep and goats, and hear them calling to each other. And now we come to the spot where we leave Dur-dur-'ad for good and here we shall loiter for an hour. The baggage camels arrive and halt just long enough to fill the water-tanks, then, on they go, leaving us alone.

Mahomed Gaileh, Akil of the Gadabursi Mahadasan, appears; he is accompanied by a Mullah, who carries a yellow flag on which is embroidered a crescent and five stars in crimson. We exchange greetings and news. Will I accept the sheep the Akil has brought as a present? "No," I answer, I regret to say I shall not, but thank Mahomed just the same. I most highly appreciate his kindness in thinking of our commissariat. Indeed, I convey to him the fact that I shall for ever after look upon him as a man who gave me a sheep that I was unfortunately unable to take away. The Mullah sits cross-legged, telling his beads, with his eyes ever on my face. He desists once to give me an interesting piece of information. Three hours' away from here, but off our road, is a ruined town. The walls of the houses are still standing, and the mortar used to bind the stones together, he says, has set very hard. He does not know what it is made of, but it looks like cement. Probably a town like Harrar. No one knows who built it.

"Good-bye! Thanks so much for the sheep," I call as I ride off, knowing quite well that Mahomed Gaileh is saying to himself, "And thank Allah you did not take it."

From now on we pass through rougher, wilder country, but there is more vegetation. Now the easily graded track drops precipitously into a dark

ravine, up which we turn and climb. There are steep rocky walls on our right and left. The floor of the ravine rises higher and higher; the walls come lower and lower, until we stand on the summit of a narrow ridge. Bearing to the left we follow the ridge for five minutes and come into camp. It is half-past six o'clock, and as the sun goes down the evening turns chilly. I sit wrapped up in a trench coat and order a fire. Mahomed, the interpreter, comes to say that as the lions are *very* bad, it will not be safe to leave camp before daybreak; to which, remembering how many lions came last night, I reply, " Bow-wow." The true reason, and one with which I am entirely in sympathy, is that, after the hot plains, they find the early morning air up here bitterly cold.

And why can't they tell me that is the reason? Because they like to pose as hardy fellows. Because, perhaps, they fear I might like to pose as a hardy fellow, too, and turn them all out to shiver whilst I walk round in my warm clothes. So it is arranged to the satisfaction of all parties that we march at daylight.

. . . . . .

" Two easy hours' riding from here there's a camp; and in that camp are four Sahibs, Wallah."

This to me at nine o'clock last night from Mahomed, the interpreter. Somals have no idea of

distance or time, and my experience has been that statements from them concerning the movements or whereabouts of other people are invariably unreliable. A simple statement like the foregoing could not be accepted without careful examination. Yet, should there really be four Sahibs ahead, they are undoubtedly the officers I am travelling to meet at Hargeisa, and I should go to their camp.

"You say there are four Sahibs?"

"Yes; people have arrived from their camp who saw them to-day."

"And are they on the Hargeisa road?"

"Yes."

At six a.m. this morning after a cup of hot tea we rode for two solid, steady hours till we came to the Hargeisa plateau. Turning sharp right we rode away from the Hargeisa track. I was suspicious, but said nothing until we met a Bedouin Somal. To my question he replied that he had come from a police camp about three hours' away; that with trotting camels we should arrive there in two hours, but the road was rough.

And had he seen anything of four Sahibs? No! He saw one, an officer with a troop of M.I., who went away yesterday morning.

And is this the Hargeisa road? No, it is not; we have left it, but there is another road from the police camp.

It was useless showing temper. I told Mahomed, the interpreter, we would ride back to the Hargeisa road and wait for the baggage camels. Mahomed, the interpreter, told me that that was impossible, because the baggage camels, having left the Hargeisa road at the camp, were following an entirely different road to the one we had come by. We went on to the police camp, as Mahomed had all along intended, and arrived at noon.

" And now," said I, " I shall have a cup of tea and some biscuits."

Every day since leaving Zeila we had carried the articles necessary for such a meal in our saddle-bags, but to-day they had been left behind. Why? Because Mahomed, the interpreter, and my boy arranged that I should lunch with the four Sahibs who are not here.

We are now on a high plateau. The country is undulating, the soil fair and the grazing good. There are many patches of cultivation, the first I have seen in Somaliland. Ughaz Elmi Warfa (Ughaz is a title), the head of the Gadabursi tribe, came to see me. He was accompanied by a party of horse and foot men. The Ughaz, a tall, crafty-looking old man, sat beside me on a deck chair, produced by the Somal jemadar in charge of the police post; whilst his men gave a demonstration. First, one by one, came the horsemen at full gallop

to about three yards away from where I sat, and just as a collision seemed inevitable the poor little brutes of ponies were pulled on to their haunches. For the horses' sake I begged this should stop. Then the horsemen advanced in line and at a walk, halting in front of me. One of them sang that they were the people who lived on the border, had been looted by the Amhara, had no peace; stood between two men, and should they talk to the man before them the other kicked them from behind. Theirs was indeed a hard lot. The man who sang was a wild-looking fellow with fuzzy-wuzzy hair. He carried a spear and shield. Personally speaking, I should not choose him as a good subject to kick from behind, but if I lived with him, and he sang much, I should be strongly tempted to do so.

The horsemen dismounted, came forward, shook hands, turned away and off-saddled. This done, they joined the footmen waiting a hundred paces away. There was a wait of some minutes whilst a warrior was being persuaded to come out and lead the dance. When I was sufficiently impressed with his importance he stepped out in front of his comrades who were standing in line. Stepping it nimbly up and down before them as they sang, he performed some quite clever evolutions. At regular intervals he would rush forward, stab his spear in the ground,

sink on his knees, and, bending his body right back, act the wounded warrior. Such was the signal for the line to advance towards him with a rush, and thus he led it close to my chair. Now and again a warrior carrying his spear at the charge would run forward, stop before me, and salute with the word "*Mutt*." All this for half an hour, when I politely requested it should cease.

"Just one more dance," said the Ughaz as he waved the line back.

It retired and various other people came before it to dance—quite well too. A number of women had collected behind the men. I could see them kneeling to look between the latter's legs at me. Soon after *the* dancer came out, when the women forgot to look at me, so interested were they in him. Up and down he pirouetted, juggling with his spear and shield. He rushed madly forward, stopped with a jerk, bent his body back to such an extent that it appeared as though his back-bone must snap, and I was really quite concerned. The dancer is supposed to be dying; his long black hair covers his face; it is suddenly brushed aside to show him in convulsions; his body writhes like a snake's; he is dying hard. A man runs out with drawn dagger in hand to finish the business. A tall fellow this. Straddling the body of the dying man he cuts his throat—in pantomime. The performance is



A SOMAL DANCE.

sufficiently realistic to make my blood curdle, and I am relieved when it ends.

There is a great gathering of people here. I have met a man who has just killed his own brother. A rascal, this latter, who, until a few weeks since, lived on the Abyssinian border, where he was able to raid and loot with impunity. His brother—this man whom I have just met—went out with his father to look for the robber, for they were tired of his escapades. They came upon him in Abyssinian territory, and as he showed fight the man now before me slashed him on the back of the neck with his dagger. The robber fell to the ground; the horror-stricken father rushed to the side of his fallen son, who, with his last breath, plunged his dagger in the old man's side. Such an incident excites no comment on this wild Somali-Abyssinian border, near which our camp now stands.

Up to now we have come due South except when wandering through the hills, and our road onward lies across sixty miles of plateau. The rains are here and the country is green. There is much that would tempt the artist to loiter with pencil or brush. That river bank, for instance, lined with trees. Beyond those trees are smaller trees, and shrubs covered with leaves. Aloes throw up miniature poles bedizened with red flowers. Beyond again, open ground, showing yellow through the patches of

green grass. Over there a Gadabursi or a Habr Awwal village, for here many natives have taken to growing jowari, and, after the manner of agriculturists, herd together. Near the village deep green leafless plants that point a thousand fingers at the sky, so blue overhead. What a beautiful picture it would all make!

But I, who know it, see beneath the beauty. Those aloes with the red-hot pikers are armed with spikes and sharp-hooked thorns to tear your flesh in ribands. Their very colour, if one looks closely, is suggestive of snakes and death, not brightness and life. The grass will soon die, and the yellow ground is but a crust of harsh sand that has no substance. The agriculturists who would wrest a living from out it have a hard row to hoe to procure even the bare wherewithal to live. Beautiful it is, yet withal a thin, harsh, cruel land.

We cover the sixty miles to Hargeisa in two clear days, and ride into the usual African up-country town. Here is the D.C.'s Court, the police lines, the prison and the D.C.'s house. Beyond them the native town; a town of sticks, straw and native mats, with a few sun-dried brick houses, and one of stone. Between all this is a natural park; a park on the banks of a waterless river-bed; a park filled with the thorn trees, the aloes in flower, and the plant with the thousands of fingers. Strangely enough,

here is a European lady as well, who sits beneath a huge mimosa tree and puts them all into a picture. She says they are beautiful.

It is one hundred and twenty miles as the crow flies to Zeila, and nearly two hundred by the road we have come. There is a mail waiting; it has arrived by Berbera, and links us up with the outer world, which after all, and in these days, is not so far away. Here, for the first time in four months, I speak to an Englishman, and, when it is time to pack up for the return journey to Zeila, I leave Hargeisa with regret.

CHAPTER XX

THE BREAKING OF THE MAD MULLAH

The Mullah's deeds—Supply and transport—Arrival of No. 2 Unit, R.A.F., at Berbera—Details and arrangements—Mullah miracles—Aeroplane scouting—Friendlies—R.A.F. reports—Post-bag bombing—To Medishe—The Mullah's birds—A Mullah victim—Tali and the last of the Mullah.

In 1919 British Somaliland was roughly divided—politically—into two separate territories, the East and the West. The former dominated by one saturnine personality, the Mad Mullah, who rarely (of late years never) intruded into the more peaceful, if more subtle, situation of the West.

Not one day since I landed in Somaliland has passed without my running up against one or more of the victims of the Mullah, now reported to be getting old, and so stout as to be almost inactive. On trek I could not sit down to breakfast without hearing the wail of some poor woman or child outside the encampment. "Sahib! Sahib! for the love of God! A bite of food for a poor meskin!" Daily in the Court Room wrecks of women and children came before me for relief. Almost invariably I found, on the strictest inquiries being made into their cases, that their villages had been destroyed, their property looted, their men-folk

killed, by the murdering gang of thieves who carried out incessantly the merciless policy of this awful man. In desperation they had roamed across country, ever making away from the territory where the terror reigned. How the Mullah had put to the sword the men, women, and children of one whole section of a tribe because, whilst being shown over a fort in the course of construction by their headman, a wooden beam had fallen and broken his arm, was related to me a few days before she died by a poor woman, one of the few survivors.

I had read much of the man before I came to Somaliland, and rather admired what I imagined to be his sporting character. But since I have learned enough about him at first hand, and have been so shocked at the misery, caused by this fiend, that is ever being brought to my notice, the very mention of his name causes my blood to boil.

It was in the West, and in the month of October, 1919, that I found myself deeply involved in nothing more exciting than the hearing of divorce cases, marriage disputes, petty loots, and homicides. In fact occupied with the thousand and one affairs, the settlement of which goes to make up the greater part of the routine work in the daily life of a District Commissioner in the Zeila District of British Somaliland.

Into the midst of all this came a mail, and in the

mail a letter addressed to me from the Officer Commanding Troops (also, at that moment, administering the Government) asking if I would take over the organisation of the supply and transport for certain contemplated operations against the " Mad Mullah." My reply, though couched in more official language, can be summed up briefly as, " *Rather!* "

In the course of this narrative, and after having thus explained my rôle in the expedition, I do not propose to do any more than set forth such events and happenings as came to my personal notice, or with which I naturally became conversant as being in close touch with the officers, or units, of whom I write. This is not a disquisition or treatise on how to run Supply and Transport in Somaliland, though a by-no-means unexciting subject.

On the 3rd of November there was landed at Berbera the first consignment of aerial bombs. These were followed, on the 13th of November, by Colonel R. Gordon, C.M.G., commanding No. 2 Unit, Royal Air Force, and Lieutenant-Colonel Tyrell, D.S.O., who was responsible for the R.A.F. medical arrangements. Shortly afterwards the first contingent of the 6th King's African Rifles, under Lieutenant-Colonel Wilkinson, D.S.O., landed at Las Khorai, where they were joined later by the remainder of the battalion; about eight hundred and fifty rifles all told. The temporary garrison at Las



BERBERA TOWN.

Khorai, composed of four hundred and forty rifles —the 101st Grenadiers, Indian Army—evacuated Las Khorai and proceeded by sea to Berbera, thence to Las Dureh. It had at first been decided to use Las Khorai as the base from which the R.A.F. should commence operations, but, owing to the prevalence of wind and dust storms at that port, this plan was given up, and the base was fixed on—much to my regret as it meant land transport—at EL-DUR-ELAN. By Christmas-time preparations were well advanced, and, in spite of the lack of facilities, the R.A.F. were well up to time in their preparations for the attack, planned to take place early in January.

On the 12th of January it was certain that the aeroplanes would be ready to commence operations on the 21st. The position was then as follows:—the Mullah was reported at Medishe, about eight miles North West of Jidali. The country he held can very roughly be summarised as that in the vicinity of his more important fortified posts, namely Garabghari, Jidali, Medishe and Baran, with a clear run to the East, water, which is scarce, permitting: and a clear run to the South, to Tale, the largest and most strongly fortified position of all. There were many other minor forts, but I believe I have mentioned the principal ones.

Up to this time the Military Policy had been to

make preparations as unostentatiously as possible, so that the Mullah would not take fright and move off from Medishe. His doing so would have necessitated a complete rearrangement of plans, so telling heavily on the transport arrangements—an important consideration. The assembling of the aeroplanes at Berbera was nearing completion, and trial flights to the West were being made. The reason why the planes were not tried to the Eastward is obvious, but the native population believed they were prevented from doing so by the supernatural power of the Mullah, who had, they said, cast a spell over the machines, so barring them from using the aerial route over the town of Berbera (East of the R.A.F. Camp) or above the hills to the South-East. As a proof of what the Mullah could do in this direction I have heard intelligent natives state that on a certain occasion the old man pointed out three crows, high in the air, to his followers, directing them to watch that which was about to happen. The three crows fell dead to the ground. A holy man, who could bring down birds by reciting a verse from the Koran, the method employed, was not likely to be troubled by aeroplanes. But to return to the disposition of the military forces on the 12th of January.

The 101st Grenadiers had occupied El-dur-Elan, where a dump of stores for all arms had been established. The Somaliland Camel Corps, leaving a

small dismounted detachment at headquarters, Burao, was moving on the same point, where a detachment of R.A.F. was busily preparing the aerodrome, workshops and camp necessary for their Corps. The Somaliland Field Force Field Hospital, and the R.A.F. Field Hospital, were likewise established at the same point. The King's African Rifles had established their base at Musha Aled, and, in spite of the fact that, owing to lack of steamer transport, great difficulty was experienced in supplying them with transport camels, they were practically ready to move.

At Berbera the R.A.F. were feverishly engaged in the assembling and tuning up of the ten fighting two-seaters, and the two ambulance planes that had been landed from H.M.S. *Ark Royal*. In addition to this work they had prepared emergency landing grounds and established dumps at Las Khorai, Burao, and Eil Dab.

The P.W.D., Somaliland, was pushing on as quickly as possible with the work of making the track between Berbera and Las Dureh passable for motor-cars, which were not, however, used for transport for the expedition. They were found most useful in carrying European ranks over the first, and worst, stage of the journey between Berbera and Las Dureh. A dry barren terrain, over which they were never able to proceed farther than within a few miles

of Hagal, about forty-five miles out. From here the almost impossible country for cars became quite impossible, unless most expensive works were undertaken.

On the 16th of January, His Excellency the Governor left Berbera for El-dur-Elan, and on the following day, accompanied by the Director of Public Works, I followed.

On the 20th of January and at seven a.m. I arrived at El-dur-Elan, to find that the Camel Corps and the 101st Grenadiers had moved on to El Afweina with the bulk of supplies intended for the land forces. The only troops at El-dur-Elan were seventy rifles of the 101st Grenadiers, and His Excellency's bodyguard. His Excellency would not grant me permission to proceed farther without an adequate escort, so that I had a good opportunity of seeing the first machines arrive at El-dur-Elan from Berbera, and likewise the first flight, timed for the 21st, that was to break for ever the power of the Mad Mullah in British Somaliland.

On the 21st, although the machines were not completely assembled, the R.A.F. preparations were sufficiently advanced to commence operations, the scheme of which was roughly as follows. Medishe, where the Mullah was known to be, was to be bombed first. The Camel Corps, which had left El-dur-Elan on the 19th, was to move forward and

take Jidali, thus cutting off any concerted move to the South. A large party of friendlies under Captain Gibb had been collected to the South, to keep a sharp look-out for scattered groups of fugitives and stock, and most particularly to intercept the Mullah himself should he succeed, as was considered highly probable, in breaking South for Tale. These friendlies had suffered severely at the Mullah's hands for years, and were dying to see the last of him. They, as subsequently transpired, gave a good account of themselves.

The transport of the Camel Corps, escorted by the 101st Grenadiers, was to move forward from El Afweina towards Jidali, when opportunity offered and the situation developed. The K.A.R., from Musha Aled, were to attend to the fortress of Baran, which they approached over a difficult and precipitous escarpment.

On Wednesday morning, the 21st, the first four aeroplanes got away from El-dur-Elan, and how anxiously their return was awaited at the Camp is beyond the power of my pen to describe. When the first faint drone of engines was heard there was a general rush for the "drome." Only two machines had returned and they reported as follows:—

On flying out four smoke signals, lit by Somali scouts to mark the vicinity of the dervish cattle, had been readily found, but, shortly afterwards, one of

the planes was seen to be in trouble and heading for the sea. This machine and the two pilots, who had returned, followed, until they were assured it had a good chance of landing either at Las Khorai or on the sea-coast, when they returned. We learned later it had landed safely at Las Khorai.

They had not seen Medishe, or any of the Mullah's forts. The fourth plane, which had not returned, left them when over the hills, and had swung Eastwards, after the first machine was in difficulty. All the men who listened to the report, and who knew Somaliland, offered up a silent prayer that her pilot and observer were safe or dead, and had not been delivered into the merciless hands of the Mad Mullah.

But soon the faint drone of the missing plane was heard. It landed safely, and reported that it had found and bombed Medishe. The observer said the place was strongly held, and defended by five stone tower-like forts. He could not say what damage had been done, but he had made direct hits, causing great confusion amongst the garrison. The group of officers broke up, now well satisfied, and there was a feeling all round that the aeroplanes were going to justify their existence.

But, on Thursday morning, when they started out again, the pilot who had bombed Medishe the day before was forced to descend, and the planes that

went on again failed to locate Medishe, for the very good reason, I believe, that it had only been fixed approximately (on native information) on the maps supplied to the expedition.

At this stage the wireless communications between the King's African Rifles, the O.C. Somaliland Field Force, and the R.A.F. at El-dur-Elan broke down, or were working badly. It was an anxious time, and when three aeroplanes, which went out in the afternoon, returned to report that they had located, and heavily bombed, the Mullah's stronghold, there was general rejoicing.

On Saturday the aeroplanes again visited Medishe, which they believed had been severely dealt with, went on and bombed Jidali.

On the same day I left by aeroplane for Al Afweina, where I assumed command of the transport and dismounted column, marched on Sunday for Jidali, which we reached on Thursday, the 29th, after a hard trek.

An incident during this trek, though it was not amusing at the moment, is not without its humorous side. The camel transport, consisting of fourteen companies, was able to march in fairly good formation—line of companies in single file—but, at one point, whilst crossing a narrow neck, was thrown into some confusion on the rough narrow track it was forced to converge upon, so that it looked not unlike

a mob of dervish pack-camels. At this particular moment an aeroplane glided over the hills on our right, and began to take some interest in our movements. It had been arranged that all troops should carry several pieces of white cloth which, when spread on the ground, would convey to the pilots of the R.A.F. who it was they were observing from the air. But, as so often happens with such arrangements, I found that, when we wanted our signalling apparatus, it was mixed up with the transport. The aeroplane, swooping right across us, had turned, and was coming up again for what appeared to our nervous minds might strike the pilot as the target of a lifetime. The 101st Grenadiers had brought a "Very Light" pistol with them. This weapon was hastily loaded, but before it could be discharged the observer dropped—not a bomb—but a letter containing orders from the O.C., Somaliland Field Force.

As the coloured post-bag with its gay streamers floated through the air, the semi-savage camel attendants, who had heard of the awful effect of bombs, stood rooted to the ground with terror. There was a gasp of relief when the bag harmlessly struck the earth without exploding. I believe we should have fired a green light, but just for luck, and to show our independence, we fired two red lights at the plane, which answered with a green as

it circled away. Speaking for myself, I realised for the first time what "wind up" really means. I had it!

At Jidali we were met by the O.C. Somaliland Field Force, Colonel Summers, in person, who showed us into camp and made us *au courant* with the situation. Jidali had been attacked by the Camel Corps. The three-inch Stokes guns were brought into play, and shells dropped on the roof of the fort in the late evening. Early next morning it was found that the enemy had disappeared.

Soon after our arrival orders were issued for a move on Medishe, to be followed by a drive through the hills, but, about midday, on Friday, the 30th January, as I was standing in our lines, the Colonel walked quietly up to me and stated that he had information which led him to believe the Mullah had escaped South towards Tale, and that he was launching the Camel Corps in pursuit. As he was accompanying them for a certain distance, until he was in a more central position owing to the change of situation, I was to command at Jidali until the arrival of the K.A.R., which had been ordered up from Baran. I could see that, though he was not going to commit himself as to the position at Jidali, he believed the dervish power on the Las Khorai escarpment was broken.

That evening the Camel Corps marched on what

was to end up in one of the finest rides, and most successful operations, in its history.

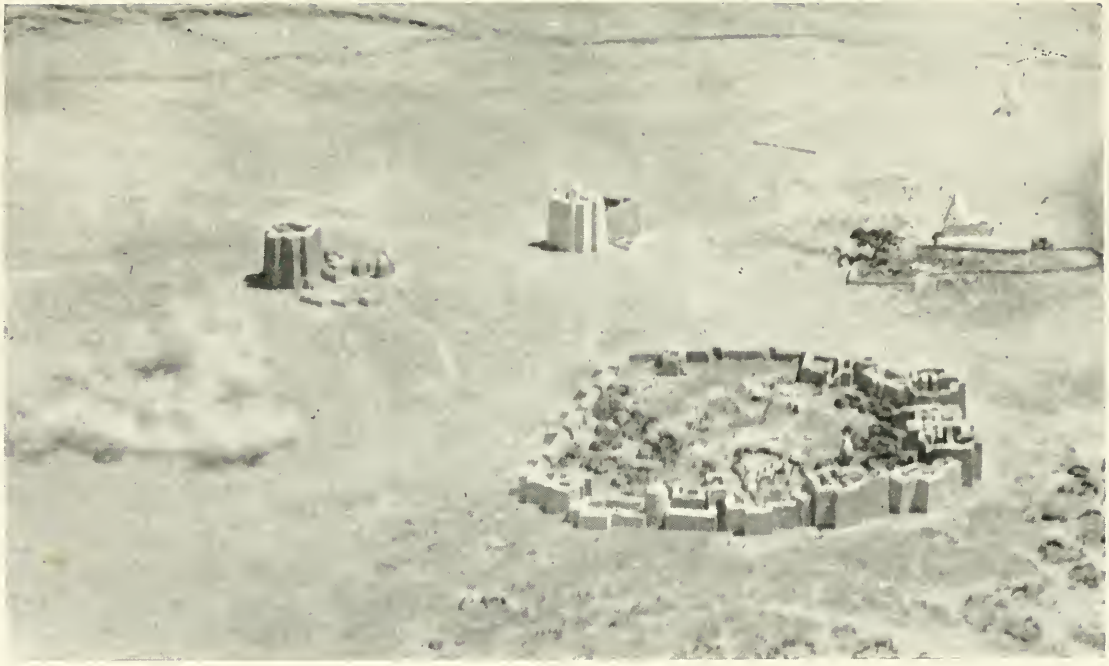
The next morning, following a consultation with the O.C. 101st Grenadiers, I decided to occupy Medishe. Accordingly, Captain Cross marched with a party of the Grenadiers, and about two hours later we received a helio message stating that he had entered the place, without much opposition, and captured vast quantities of stores. Meanwhile I busied myself with the prisoners left behind by the Camel Corps, from whom I learned the following facts:—

On the 21st instant the Mullah, who was well aware of the pending operations, heard the hum of the aeroplanes, and, with most of his head-men, went out in the open to observe them. Medishe, being in a narrow valley, was not " spotted " by the planes they passed to the West, but the dervishes had a clear view of the machines.

" Look," said the Mullah, " Allah has sent these great birds as a sign to me and the faithful," upon which the planes disappeared. But one came back, and again the Mullah addressed his followers.

" Indeed, but God has sent this one great bird back to me! "

Swish—whew-w-w bang! The observer above had pulled the lever, and the first bomb burst in Medishe.



"AT 1,000 FEET." BOMBS BURSTING N.W. OF TALE.
(By permission of the Air Ministry.)

The magic of the Mad Mullah, that had for so long held his followers together, was useless against the magic of the bird-men above. This was the first bomb that broke the dervish cause, for, though it did not kill the Mullah, it came so near doing so that the old villain was thoroughly demoralised, and completely lost his head. His nephew, the Amir Abdillai, a powerful dervish, was killed by his side, and his Madness's clothes catching fire, he turned and ran for his life to the funk-holes he had prepared in the caves of a ravine. From these he did not reappear until he fled, a few hours later, on learning that the Camel Corps had arrived at Jidali, a thoroughly broken and discredited man.

On the 22nd, the bulk of the dervish troops were frustrated in an attempt to get away their camels loaded with their worldly goods, by the reappearance of the aeroplanes, which put in some excellent work with the machine guns. It was then that the Mullah adopted the policy of every man for himself, and showed the others how to do it.

His baggage camels, loaded with personal effects and two Maxim guns captured from the British in past wars, he decided should follow on behind, whilst he made his way South with some of his wives and female relations, and a party of mounted fighting men. Among the latter was a man called Ibrahim, his wife and sister.

As the party left the hills at night for the open plateau, Ibrahim slipped off his pony, permitted his wife to pass, but as his sister rode up, silently pressed her big toe. The lady dismounted from her pony, allowing the cavalcade to move on.

Ibrahim, and his sister, reported to Colonel Summers that the Mullah had gone.

The lady informed me that the Mullah had changed his mind about the Maxim guns and had sent instructions that they were to be hidden in a cave at Helas, where they were later discovered by Somali scouts and handed to the O.C. King's African Rifles. It was discovered that one of these was the identical gun captured from the regiment when Colonel Plunkett met with disaster in 1906. Thus did Time bring revenge, and I was proud that my old regiment, fourteen years later, was there to receive back one of the very few guns it had lost in action.

On the 3rd February, Captain Cross returned from Medishe, bringing in as loot five hundred and twenty-two rifles and much native equipment and stores. As I had flown from El-dur-Elan to Al Afwenia I had been obliged to leave my camp equipment behind, and was overjoyed to find, amongst the latter, several pots, two good frying-pans and a tea kettle. There was also, amongst other things, a sextant marked with an R.N. officer's

name; part of the diary of the German, Emil Kirsch, who, in 1916, was sent by Lij Yassu, the fugitive ex-king of Abyssinia, to repair the Mullah's machine guns and rifles. Swords, revolvers, double-barrelled pistols, one of which bore the name of a well-known gunmaker in the Strand; every make of rifle known in Europe was there for the curio-hunter to annex. Cross reported that Medishe had been evacuated hurriedly, and there was no doubt that the dervishes were thoroughly demoralised. He was much impressed by the strength of the place, the excellent buildings and the general sanitary arrangements. A dam had been built across the stream, and an excellent garden had been laid out. There was no doubt about it, he stated, that the Mullah was a thoroughly capable man.

Before leaving Medishe the Grenadiers razed the forts to the ground with gun cotton. The fort at Jidali, however, was less easy to dispose of, and successfully resisted several attempts to blow it up. The stone walls were nine feet thick, solidly built, and it would have required heavy artillery to have made much impression upon it. The roof, the weakest part of the structure, successfully withstood the Stokes bombs aimed at it by the Camel Corps. Jidali Fort is similar to all other forts built by the Mullah. Inside it is a perfect rabbit warren among which it would have been highly dangerous to

the throwers themselves had hand-grenades been used.

In one of the forts at Medishe Cross found a particularly gruesome sight, and typical of the methods of the Mad Mullah. At the end of a rope, suspended from the roof over a slow fire, hung by the waist, were the remains of a dervish who had thus been done to death for some petty crime or neglect of duty.

Shortly after Cross's return Ibrahim's wife arrived. On learning of her husband's defection the dervishes had stripped and beaten her, but sighting the planes, had abandoned her to die. She was followed by a stream of dervish women and children who stated that the men refused to give them food, and had ordered them to shift for themselves. Amongst them were many slave women dragging at their ankles heavy chains with weights attached. They were soon set free, and though our commissariat arrangements were strained to breaking point we did the best we could for them, and all the women were cared for.

Meanwhile on the 2nd of February the King's African Rifles arrived at Jidali from Baran. This latter fort had put up a stiff fight. Finding that the loopholes of the fort restricted the line of fire to the front, and did not allow for angle fire, the officer commanding had advanced on each side at an angle,

suffering no serious casualties. For two days the beleaguered garrison held out under a heavy fire from Stokes guns, which dropped their bombs on the roof, though making no impression whatever. All loopholes, and the parapets, were commanded by the K.A.R. machine guns. Finding that the firing from the fort had weakened a party was pushed up to the door, against which a case of gun cotton was exploded, without effect. At last, apparently only one of the defenders was left alive, and the besiegers, who had drawn in, demanded his surrender, assuring him his life was safe.

" I shall surrender," he answered.

" Then throw your rifle and belt over the walls," he was ordered.

The dervish complied, but as an askari ran up to collect it, seized another rifle and shot the soldier through the back.

And that was the end of Baran. Clean fighters, enraged by this act of treachery, and as one man, the K.A.R. sprang to their feet, and no door built by the hand of man could deny them their revenge.

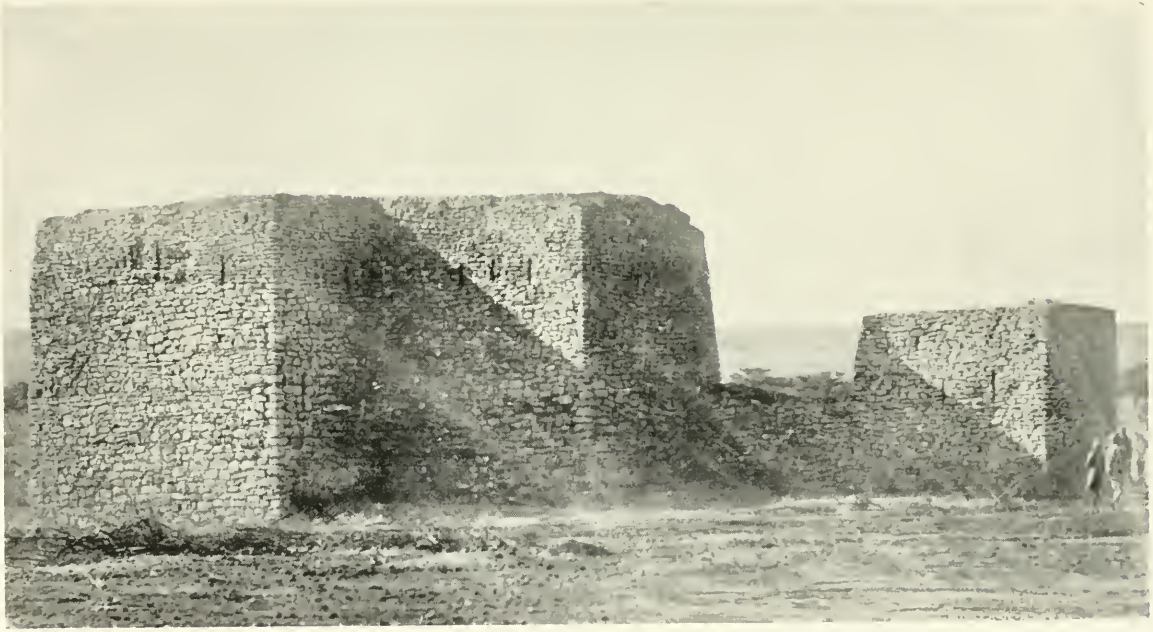
It was found later that, though the firing from inside the fort had slackened, it was not owing to the casualties suffered by the dervishes from direct hits. The concussion of the exploding Stokes bombs on the roof had stunned the defenders, who, though treacherous murderers of women and of little

children, apostles of the doctrine of frightfulness as we understand them, yet proved themselves, in this little fight, to be brave men.

After the arrival of the K.A.R., at Jidali, the dismounted column left on its return march. It was obvious that the escarpment above Las Khorai—the plateau around Jidali stretching far to the South which holds the best grazing grounds in Somaliland—was free of dervishes, and once more, after many years, accessible to the poor wretches of friendlies who had been driven forth like pariahs from their beloved haunts by that robber-tiger, Hassan Abdullah, the Mad Mullah. It is indeed a splendid country for the pastoralist, in spite of the burning days and the bitterly cold nights—nights during which the hardiest European, covered by three or four good blankets, finds it hard to keep warm.

Meanwhile, we learned from fugitives that the Mullah's baggage had been captured: that the aeroplanes had harassed his fleeing stock, which ran at last into a transport column, under Captain Allden, at Eil Der, and was ignominiously captured after a sharp fight. Tale the wretched old man had succeeded in entering, but the Camel Corps was hard on his heels, and the friendlies, under Captain Gibb, were at the gates.

From the wireless we learned, by intercepted



JID ALI FORT FROM THE GROUND.
(By permission of the Air Ministry.)

messages, that Tale had been attacked by the airmen, who reported it as a very strongly fortified centre, consisting of one very large and five other forts encircling the village, which was composed of native gurgis (Somal tents or wigwams) and a large number of huts. Letters and messages were dropped in its vicinity. Previously a machine had spotted about one hundred ponies and dervishes at Daringahiye, near Al Afweina, believed to belong to the Mullah's party, and, coming down to one hundred feet above, had scattered them in all directions. The country being intersected with deep nullahs favoured small parties of fugitives in their attempt to escape, but no large body of men could hope to get away unharassed.

We, who had seen Medishe, realised that it was now only a question of days before the "show" would be over, and when, on the 12th February, I entered Al Afweina I surmised correctly that the work concerning myself mostly was that of winding up the transport, and getting rid of the large dumps of stores collected there, and at El-dur-Elan. A few days later I received the necessary orders to proceed with this clearing up.

Meanwhile, to return to the Somaliland Camel Corps and the friendlies, the latter of whom were watching the gates of Tale, where the Mullah was now definitely located. On the night of the 5/6th

February, in a fight outside the walls, Haji Sudi and Ibrahim Boghl, two of the dervish leaders, right-hand men of the Mullah, were killed. No serious attack was made on the forts by our mounted men, as, had they been seriously held, the Government troops must have suffered heavy casualties; a most serious matter in a country like Somaliland, owing to the lack of conveniences and difficulty of transport.

The Camel Corps policy was to play a waiting game, and on Monday, the 9th February, when it was some miles away at a water hole, the dervishes, seizing their opportunity, launched an attack on the friendlies watching them. During the fighting the Mullah escaped, and shortly before the Camel Corps arrived on the scene, by which time it was too dark to follow on his tracks. Dismounted scouts were sent out and next morning, at dawn, the mounted troops picking up the tracks from the friendlies some four or five miles on, turned North East towards Lower Halin, which they passed, and arrived, on Tuesday evening, at an unknown well some forty-eight miles from their starting point. Starting early on Wednesday they arrived, at three-forty-five p.m., at Bihan on a hot scent, having captured en route the Mullah's wives, children and near relatives, during a sharp running fight with the escort of thirty mounted men, all of whom were

killed, their ponies and rifles being captured. It had been ascertained at Halin, on the previous day, that a party of dervishes had branched off from the main body; the Camel Corps therefore detached a party of fifteen rifles in pursuit.

On Thursday, having no information of the Mullah, a strong reconnaissance was made towards Gerrowei, and a patrol sent out to the South East. This latter party reported a body of dervishes advancing on Gerrowei; so the Camel Corps, leaving twenty rifles at Bihan, moved quickly out, and coming up with the dervishes in broken ground North of Gerrowei, attacked at once. The mounted dervishes fled; the footmen showed fight, and were galloped down by a pony company who were joined by the reconnoitring party from Gerrowei. The enemy horsemen were pursued, rounded up, and their horses captured, although some of the riders succeeded in escaping on foot. But few of the footmen, who broke at the first charge, escaped.

Shortly afterwards, before midday, a small party of enemy horsemen, with a few camels, moving towards the Haud were reported by scouts, so leaving the main body to mopping-up operations, the fittest ponies of the Camel Corps were sent in pursuit, a difficult one over rough country. This party accounted for the remainder, eight men killed

and two captured, one of the former being an Abyssinian of some rank.

It was then ascertained that the Mullah was still unaccounted for. He had slipped off to one side with three or four followers, and had arrived at a well. This was found to be almost dry, but sufficient water was obtained by the party to give the broken and tired old man, and his pony, a drink. He lay down on the desert to rest, whilst the few survivors of his bodyguard pushed on to find water. On their return the Mullah had gone. Where? No one knows!

Better that he had remained alive, and had pushed far South to join his brother Khalifa, and so to relate at first hand the tale of his own defeat, ruin, and utter degradation. For now the few surviving men who still believe in him will say, should he have perished in the desert, that Allah at the last sent angels to lift him up and bear him away to Paradise.

The men who carried back the water came into the British lines and surrendered, knowing that the game was up. Knowing, as all men who have knowledge of Somaliland know, that the Mad Mullah's career of cruelty, rapine and crime was at last at an end.

Garabghari had fallen to a naval landing party from H.M.S. *Odin*. The friendlies had entered Tale. Gibb, led by the Mullah's favourite son,

went round the forts and ordered the broken dervishes out. They came without firing a shot, marvelling that they, who had never shown mercy nor spared a life, should be so humanely treated.

The Camel Corps, leading their tired animals, returned on foot to Hudin. On the 24th February the last air-force load was cleared from El-dur-Elan on the return journey to Berbera, and the expedition was over. Somals of the West hearing, by the wonderful native system of communication, that the Mullah was broken, vied with one another in their expressions of loyalty to the Government. A man who attempted to murder an official in 1916 near Zeila, came in from Abyssinia and surrendered for fear that the terrible bird-men should come to find him. British prestige in Somaliland had been entirely restored and the country, after twenty years of unrest, is at last at peace.

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