

## 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

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 "Mohomedan 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.

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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.