

CHAPTER XIX

ON TREK

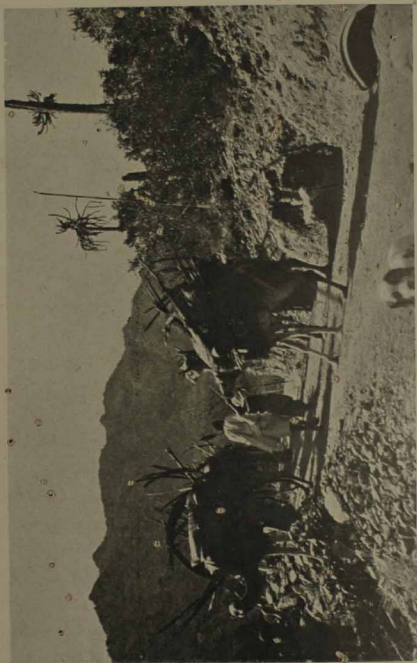
Orders for Hargeisa—Salvage and propositions—A camel, a girl and my policeman—Bokh and water—The sin of water wangling—Camel-packing—The "White Running Water"—Mahomed Gaileh's sheep—Four Sahibs—A Somal dance—Hargeisa and flowers.

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



A SOMALI HOUSEHOLD ON THE MOVE.

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

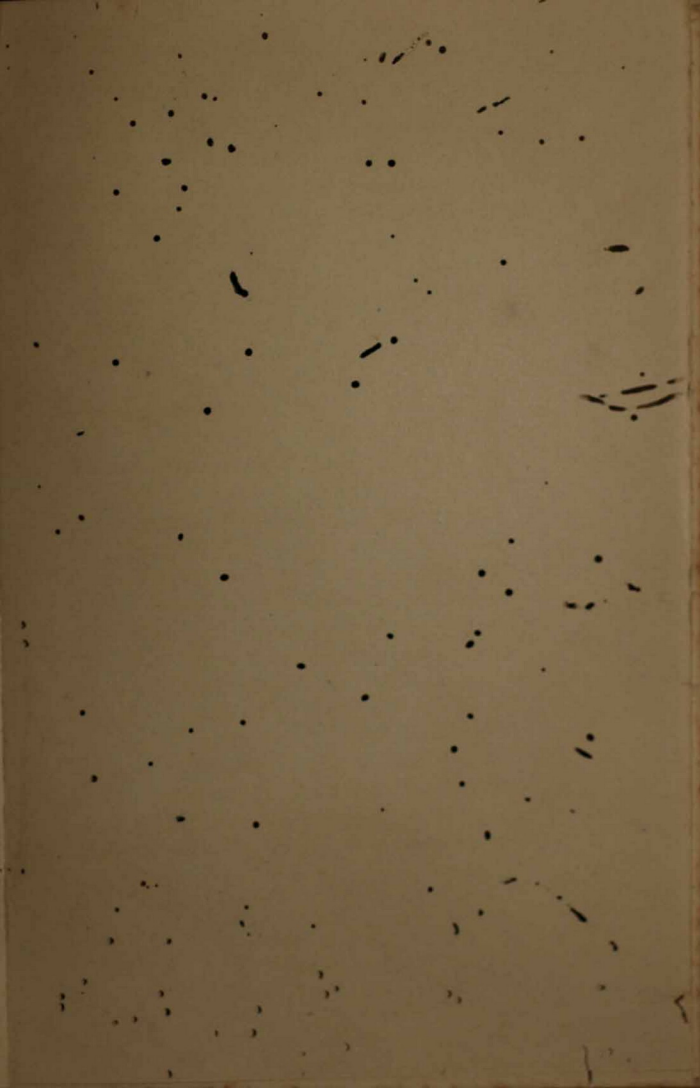
"It is a very hot time of day, Inspector Baralli," I say, "to set out on a journey."

"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 male 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;



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

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. Five caravans hail us as we pass, "Salaam, aleikum!" (Peace be on you!) To which we reply, "Wa aleikum, 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

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 Somali 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

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.

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-oo!" 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.

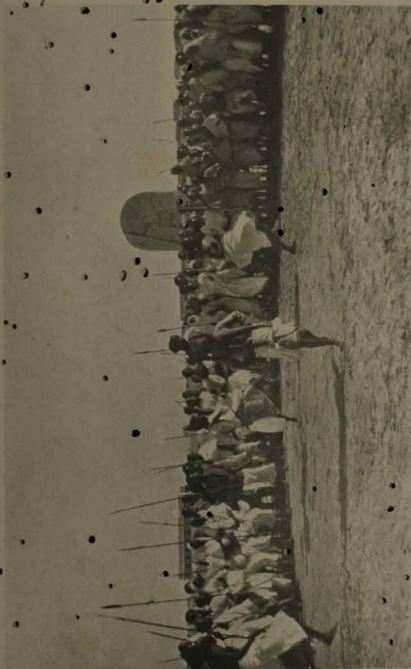
And is this the Hargeisa road? No, it is not; we have left it, but there is another road from the police camp.

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



SOMAL DANCE.

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

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 stoffe. 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,