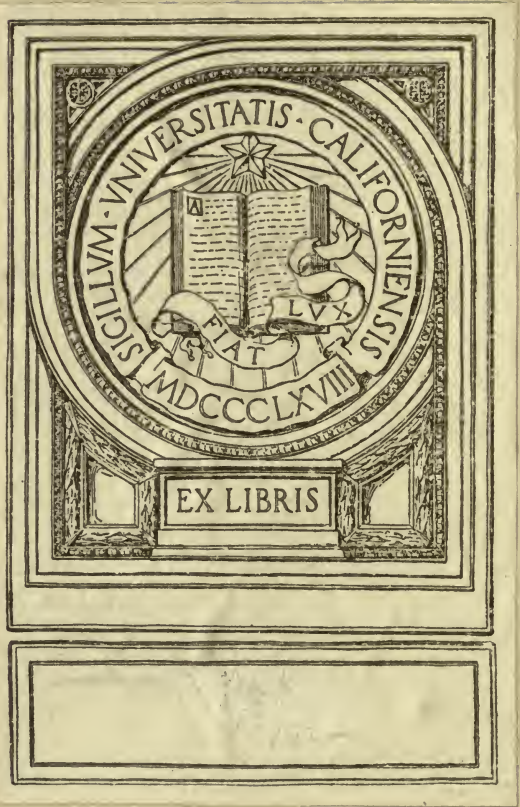


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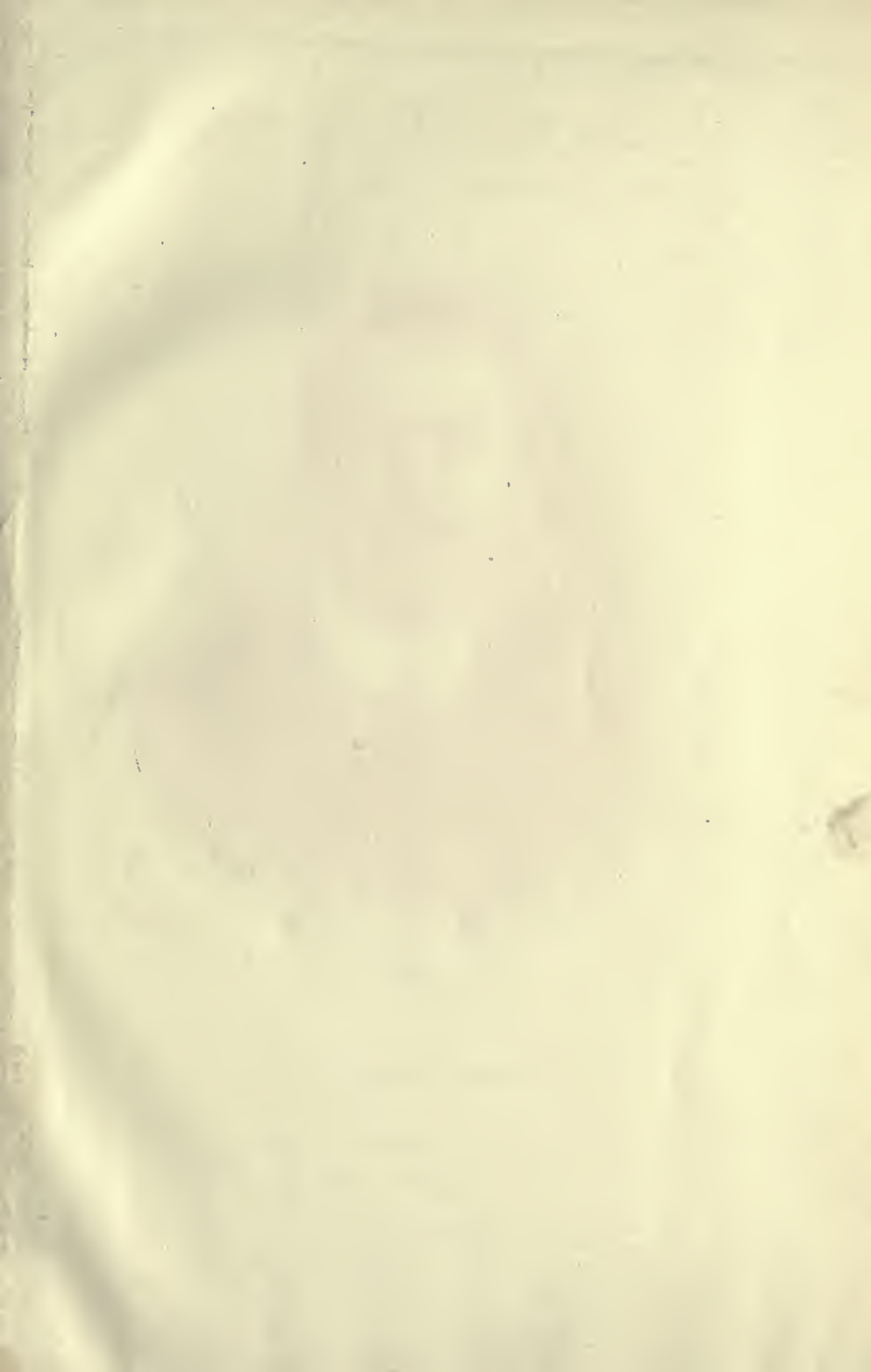
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BY

STANLEY PORTAL HYATT

AUTHOR OF

"THE DIARY OF A SOLDIER OF FORTUNE"

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DEDICATION

—

TO

*THAT GOOD COMRADE,  
WHO IS ALSO MY WIFE*

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## OFF THE MAIN TRACK

### CHAPTER I

#### THE TOWNSHIPS OF THE FRONTIER

THERE is a curious fascination about a country in the making. Modern civilisation usually results in the production of ugly, or at least unlovely, things—what could be more inartistic than the average flourishing town?—whilst sheer barbarism is often depressing by reason of its monotony and its dirt; but the transition stage, the stage of tin-roofed townships and canvas camps, is always intensely interesting.

In the nineties, Southern Rhodesia was still the frontier, so far as South Africa was concerned. One would have expected, perhaps, to find the same general characteristics in every one of its little scattered settlements, but such was not the case. You seldom came across two alike, at least in tone. Fort Victoria was as different from Bulawayo as Bulawayo was from Salisbury; there was little in common between Gwelo

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and Enkeldoorn. Even mining camps varied as greatly.

In many ways, Victoria was the best settlement in the country, though a strict moralist, not knowing the ways of the frontier, and striking the place at an unfortunate moment—on a Saturday night, for instance—might have formed a different impression. Victoria was the first settlement founded in Mashonaland by the Pioneer Column, and it never forgot the fact. It was really the premier town of the country, its inhabitants declared, and they looked with scorn on mere mushroom places like Bulawayo or Salisbury.

The people of Victoria—they consisted of seventy whites, including the Mounted Police, and a large Boer family which usually camped in an old waggon tent—had infinite faith in the possibilities of their district, and they resented fiercely the attitude of the Government and the big companies, which persisted in regarding Victoria as being of no importance—merely a little outpost, dumped down far away from everybody and everything.

The Pioneers entered the country from the East; but immediately the Matabele power was broken, the stream of civilisation naturally followed the northern road, through Bulawayo and on to Salisbury. As a result, Victoria became a mere vague name to the vast majority



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of the later settlers. The old inhabitants, however, stayed on in the place, believing in its future, loving it for itself, taking as a personal insult anything which seemed like a slur on its past, present, or future.

My brother, Malcolm, and myself struck it first when on our way to start a trading station in the low veld. The previous night we had outspanned our waggon only about a couple of miles out; consequently, we reached the township rather early. It seemed to be still asleep. A Kaffir dog was busy with his insect friends in the main street; two native women were taking snuff, squatting outside a little store; and through the open gate of the Fort—a very rickety gate, which looked as though a well-placed kick would knock its rotten woodwork to pieces—we caught a glimpse of some black police playing cards. Beyond these we saw no one, until we strolled into the hotel, the “Thatched House,” where we found the barman explaining to a police trooper that his credit had run out.

We expected Victoria would awaken before long, but the barman shook his head at the suggestion. It was already awake, he said, but it had been celebrating a birthday recently, and it was not feeling very fit. Perhaps it was the most beautiful point about Victoria that it did everything collectively. If there was a celebration, every one celebrated it—at the

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“Thatched House,” of course. Almost everybody had his meals there, and the whole life of the town centered in the canteen. True, men had offices, where they kept old saddles, and reims, and bags of unclassified samples of alleged gold-bearing quartz; but when they wanted to do business they went to the “Thatched” and when they had no business to do, they waited for it to come along to the “Thatched.”

There was not much money about, and the minimum price of a drink was a shilling, but every one—excepting always the Mounted Police—had credit up to thirty or forty pounds at least; so you just signed good-fors, and, before the limit was reached, something lucky usually happened. At any rate you assumed it would happen, and so were on the safe side.

When you grew tired of the bar itself you went out into the veranda and contemplated the beauties of the surrounding veld. You looked right over Victoria—you could not help doing so. Certainly, if you took the town in the theoretical sense and studied it on the official map, you found that it possessed about six streets, crossed, at right angles, by seven avenues; but when you came down to crude facts, you found only one well-marked street, leading from the “Thatched House” to the Drift, containing four or five shanties of various kinds and sizes, whilst the rest of the town site consisted of a tin-and-

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bottle-strewn waste, with odd buildings dumped here and there. That same official map showed a market square, a church, and even a museum. I discovered, after I had been in the district a couple of years, that the ragged patch of veld next to the "Thatched" was the market square, but I never found the museum. I thought at one time, when the blacksmith showed me the springs of Lord Randolph Churchill's travelling waggon, that it might be in his yard, but both he and the Oldest Inhabitant ridiculed the suggestion. The museum site was, they declared, in Abercorn or Charter Street, near the remains of Geldenhuis' Scotch cart.

Victoria was a town of one idea—it believed in the Boom, the wonderful burst of prosperity which was coming to the district sooner or later. The gold reefs in the neighbourhood were the richest in the whole of Rhodesia, the veld the most productive, the cattle the best strain—such was the creed of every loyal inhabitant. Of course, it was a pity that financiers, led astray by the promoters in Bulawayo and Salisbury, had squandered hundreds of thousands on buying inferior farms and gold reefs, but still it must all come right in the end. So Victoria not only held on to every scrap of property it possessed in the district, but bought more whenever a chance occurred, and passed the greater part of its time in the "Thatched House," talking about

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the Boom, and discussing plans for the spending the fortunes which would come as a result of the Boom.

So far as concrete business was concerned, the grain trade was the only real thing. There was a considerable number of traders scattered round within a radius of forty miles, whose business it was to buy grain with Kaffir truck, and sell it in the township, whence it was sent to the mines in Matabeleland. The profits were not great—at least so far as the trader was concerned. The price per bag varied in a wild and wholly unreasonable manner, and the lion's share of the spoils usually went to the middleman; but everybody had a hand in it, and it served to provide a little interest in life, and incidentally a little ready cash, until the Boom should come. Then, of course, it would be left to the coolies and Germans, and the one or two wholesale trading companies.

There was one man in Victoria—poor fellow, he is now in the cemetery waiting, not for the Boom, but for the Last Trump—who had such infinite faith in the place that he would buy everything which was offered him for sale, from broken-down Cape carts to Chartered shares. I remember once coming in with a dozen or so live guinea-fowl in a crate on the waggon. I was going to take them down to the "Thatched," but he met me by the Drift and offered me

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six shillings each—they had cost me about fourpence each—he was going to keep them “till things bucked up.” Unfortunately, the guinea-fowl themselves did the bucking up. I suppose the air of the high veld proved too invigorating; at any rate, they had a general fight, which lasted throughout the night, and there were only two battered survivors left in the morning.

I used to visit Victoria once every three months or so—our nearest trading station was eighty miles away—and, as a rule, I heard much concerning the Boom. I was a newcomer, of course, so my part was to sit on a pile of whisky cases and listen to the opinions of men who had been there since the founding of the township, men who had grown grey, and perhaps a little weary, waiting for things to buck up. They might have been cranks in some ways—you are apt to become a crank when you have one post a week and are hundreds of miles from a railway, when you have nowhere to go but the canteen, and speak to a white woman, with luck, once a month—but, with very few exceptions, they were thoroughly honourable, and generous, and kind-hearted. No stranger, not even one who had scoffed at the mere idea of the Boom, was ever allowed to go hungry, much less thirsty. Even old inhabitants, who had proved unfaithful or impatient at the long delays, and then had wandered back, were received, not as traitors,

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but as prodigal sons, and were given jobs, if there were any going, or at least food and lodging.

The town drank too much whisky, or so the doctor and the matron of the hospital, who were in a position to know, declared; as a result, the death-rate was rather high. Ten years after it had been founded—and it must be remembered that the population seldom reached eighty—there were over a hundred graves in the cemetery, the majority due to blackwater fever, combined with alcohol. I know it sounds wicked, but it is not half so wicked as it sounds, because there was every excuse for it.

I am not sure how a teetotaller would have got on; I cannot really give an opinion on the point, for I do not remember a single specimen of the kind remaining in the township. Some came up and were converted, others fled. One example remains fixed in my memory. He was a youth belonging to one of the Public Departments—the Agricultural, I think—the Home for Lost Dogs, it was called in Salisbury—and he arrived in state, on official business. He announced his creed rather loudly in the “Thatched House,” and the town, as a whole, hearing of him, closed its stores and its offices and came to see. About midnight, at the urgent request of the barman, he was carried to bed. He was declaring that he had both rinderpest

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and lung sickness ; certainly he was sick. His stay in Victoria was short.

One man who seemed to hold a very poor opinion of the town was the judge, who used to come down for the assizes. It was the great festival of the year. Every one living within thirty-five miles was liable for jury service, and was duly summoned to attend. That meant an addition of some twenty or thirty to the population, traders, farmers, and transport riders—a great and glorious reunion.

The judge used to complain he could not sleep. His room was a kind of annexe to the hotel, and he heard the whole of the noise, or, at any rate, the best of it. He used to complain, too, about the demeanour of the juries in the box. Some jurymen could not keep awake, the rest seemed to take not the slightest interest in the proceedings, until it came to acquitting the prisoners. That result followed in almost every case, as a matter of course. The Chartered government was not popular, and to acquit those whom it prosecuted was considered to be a delicate way of showing the trend of public feeling. I can recall only one case of a white man who was found guilty ; he was the post-master, and he stole the mail-bag, and started off with it for the Transvaal border, naturally making us all rather indignant, as the letters belonged to us, not to the Chartered Company.

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The most exciting case ever tried before the Resident Magistrate was a Game Law prosecution. We were all accustomed to make our own game laws, or rather game law, for it had only one clause. When we wanted meat, we shot a buck, if we could find one. It was simple, and it acted very well. No one thought of objecting to it, until one day there arrived an inspector of licenses, who had severe ideas of duty.

He inspected all the licenses he could find—it must have been a dull job—and then, as was but natural, he went to the “Thatched,” where he overheard one of the most popular men in Victoria remark that he had shot a rietbok that morning. There was no secrecy, no idea of concealment, certainly no expectation of a report being made; but, none the less, the inspector went to the magistrate—who was known locally as the “Hottentot God,” on account of his supposed likeness to a Stick Insect—and the Hottentot God granted a summons.

There were many witnesses, of course, but they had made up their minds beforehand. They were quite simple and stolid. They had neither seen nor heard of any rietbok. Then the prosecution produced its trump card in the form of the police captain, a big, handsome man with the ways of an overgrown school-boy. He was known to have had a hind-quarter of the buck, and it was impossible for him to deny



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the presence of the meat in his house. He admitted, quite cheerfully, that the accused had given him the hind-quarter of an animal. Asked what animal it was, he shook his head smilingly. He had not asked, he said; he was glad enough of any fresh meat, especially when he got it for nothing. Asked if he could distinguish between the quarter of a buck the size of a donkey and that of a Mashona sheep, he shook his head again. He was afraid not, he replied. The magistrate glared at him for a moment, and then dismissed the case. I am afraid that inspector of licenses did not relish greatly what Victoria had to say to him and concerning him.

When things were very dull in Victoria they used to start whisky poker, and the game would sometimes continue, with only very short breaks, for six weeks or so. It has the merit of simplicity—after each hand, the loser merely pays for drinks round. It seemed to keep the township happy and occupied; and yet it was rather annoying for an outside man, a trader or a transport rider, to come in on business and find everything suspended indefinitely. I have heard quite strong language used over the matter.

The great Faro Game will live long in the memory of the township. A police officer—not the same one who gave evidence in the Rietbok case, but a similar one—finding time hanging

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heavily on his hands, had an inspiration to start a faro bank in the canteen. Everybody played, of course, and the originator of the scheme lost steadily, first his money, then his borrowing powers, then his furniture, and finally his house. The sequel came a little later, when the Government auditor happened to come down and point out that the house in question was an official residence, and therefore could neither be won nor lost at faro by any less august person than a director of the Chartered Company. The police force had to do without the services of one of its most popular officers a week or so afterwards.

There was one inhabitant of Victoria who used to puzzle, and perhaps annoy strangers. He was an old hyæna with a peculiarly loud voice, and his habit was to patrol the road between the "Thatched House" and the Drift from midnight till dawn. Newcomers could never understand why he was not shot or poisoned; and it was useless to explain to them that he was sanctioned by custom, that he was part of the town. They merely regarded him as a nuisance, not being able to understand the Victorian point of view.

Peter, my tame goat, was another person of importance at one time. I left him in the custody of the town as a whole whilst I was at Home, and the town looked after him loyally. He slept wherever he felt inclined, sometimes

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in one house, sometimes in another, but he spent most of his days in the bar, lying on a whisky case. He was very small, and he did not look in the least dangerous, but more than one stranger, who ventured to offend him, descended hurriedly over the edge of the veranda a moment later, swearing.

I remember once coming into Victoria with a big mob of cattle. It was during the Boer War, and, for some inscrutable reason, a regiment of Yeomanry had been quartered in the township, which was hundreds of miles from the scene of hostilities. Naturally enough, the presence of the soldiers had led to an unprecedented demand for fresh meat, and we were immediately asked to sell some of our beasts. My young brother, Amyas, and I talked it over, and we decided we could easily spare two, a very large and extremely old ox called Witkop, the mere framework of an animal, and an exceedingly poor little bull, who had been nicknamed Rinderpest.

Personally, I doubted whether any one would buy either, and I suggested that ten pounds represented the outside price for the two, as, in fact, it did. But Amyas was essentially business-like. He had the two animals driven up to the road in front of the "Thatched House," and the two Government buyers came to inspect them, whilst Victoria, as a whole, looked on from the veranda, and made rude remarks.

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In answer to a question as to price, Amyas calmly replied that we wanted thirty-two pounds, but in the end he yielded gracefully and accepted twenty-six pounds. A yeoman afterwards gave me a rather candid criticism on the taste and tenderness of Witkop's flesh.

Salisbury, the capital of Mashonaland, had little in common with Victoria. People have told me that it has good points, but they have never given detailed descriptions of these, so I cannot enumerate them. But I can give its bad points. To begin with, the situation is detestable, consisting mainly of a black mud vlei, round and across which the houses straggle. In my days, at any rate, most of the buildings were of the most shoddy character, as though they had been put up by men who knew that the town had been started in a totally wrong locality, and would be abandoned before long. The streets, like those of Victoria, were mostly indefinite, a house or a store here and there, with refuse-littered spaces between them.

But the greatest contrast to Victoria was in the people. Those of Salisbury did not belong to the type which builds up new countries. There was no sense of comradeship running throughout the community. Split into a number of tiny and mutually hostile cliques, it was generally as objectionable as it was vulgar. The most important sections consisted of officials,

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who spent their time intriguing for petty departmental advantages. As a class, they were wholly inefficient—the majority had never even been in England, much less had it had a public school training—and a very large proportion of the disasters which have fallen on the country are directly due to them. The unofficial element consisted of semi-solvent storekeepers, auctioneers whose probity was not even doubtful—two or three of the leading ones subsequently went to hard labour—second-rate mining men, who were too well known in Bulawayo, and a noble army of touts and loafers. You seldom met any one who was doing, or had done, anything useful.

Salisbury went in for "Society" and scandals, the one possibly being the result of the other. It was a curious place for a clean-minded English-woman to find herself in. She became at once the common foe of the majority of the other women, many of whom had only their wedding-rings to distinguish them from the demi-mondaines of Pioneer Street. In Victoria, one seldom heard scandals. Neither the men nor the women there were of the type which likes touching mud. Salisbury, on the other hand, had very different ideas. Metaphorically, it rolled daily in the vlei.

Most of the stories relating to Salisbury society are unprintable, but there is one which can, and ought, to be preserved. One of the leading store-

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keepers in the town, a pompous combination of grocer and draper, was very intimate at Government House during the war. In itself, considering the records of some of the other men who went there, this was not an overwhelming honour, but the storekeeper took an opposite view, and lost no opportunity of drawing attention to his own importance.

One night he was giving a large dinner party to the very *élite* of the town. The meal was half-way through when a decidedly inebriated Tommy knocked at the front door. He had lost his way, and wanted to be directed to the barracks. The house-boy, not understanding his questions, went into the dining-room and reported to his Baas that a soldier wished to see him.

The storekeeper swelled with importance. "You must excuse me a moment," he said to his guests. "It is a mounted messenger from His Honour. Probably some important news has come in."

He went out, leaving the door wide open, so that all might see and hear. When he found the true state of affairs, he assumed a stern attitude.

"You want to know the way to the barracks, my man? First turning to the right, second to the left."

The soldier gazed solemnly at the portly figure in evening dress, then something seemed to dawn on him. "Not so much blooming side, guv'nor," he

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said in a loud and thick voice, "my father was a butler, too."

At the time I first knew Bulawayo, in the days when it was still Railhead, it was distinctly busy, so busy that few people would realise, or admit to themselves, that the activity was simply a passing phase, that as soon as the railway construction was pushed on, the town, from being the main distributing centre, would become merely a station of the line. Geographically, it was in the same case as Salisbury—it had very little excuse for existing where it did. Both towns were well away from the important mining and farming districts, and most of the money sunk in them represents so much misapplied capital, if not so much sheer waste.

Still, that lesson had yet to be learned; and meanwhile, Bulawayo had been built up into a regular town, with enormously wide and dusty streets, expensive and comfortless hotels—will there ever be an hotel in South Africa where the food does not taste of a coolie's dirty hands?—some well-stocked stores, and a curiously mixed population.

The pioneer class was still strongly represented. You found it in force on the Market Square on Saturday mornings, coatless always, with flannel shirts and dungaree or khaki trousers, buying and selling cattle, borrowing or lending money, in a perfectly casual manner, drinking in the

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Maxim or the Exchange bars. The mining folk and civil servants affected puttee leggings and hunting stocks, the dress of the stage frontiersman, whom they resembled closely. Few of them could have gone out of sight of the town without being lost, and yet, possibly, they had some reason for the airs of importance they assumed. The future of the country was mainly with them and their kind. The rough and tumble days were over.

A few years later, when I passed through Bulawayo last, everything had changed. The waggons and the long spans of oxen had gone; the Saturday market had become merely a gathering of Greeks and coolies, haggling over insanitary piles of bedding and second-hand clothes, the whole of which ought to have been sent to the refuse destructor. All the old faces had disappeared. You no longer saw the men in the ragged dungarees and rolled-up shirt sleeves. The mining man, the official, and the clerk had everything their own way.

Every one complained of being broke; generally with good reason, for salaries were small. They missed the transport riders then, the men who made big money and spent it royally. The prospector coming in to "blue in" a large cheque, as a certain Alec Anderson and his friends had been wont to do, was quite a figure of the past. Consequently, all the shops and canteens were



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hard up, and the new inhabitants had to pay cash, which pleased me greatly, as I did not like them, any more than they liked me and my kind.

It was very dismal going back and seeing the change. Still, I suppose it was inevitable, and perhaps it was for the best. The old state of affairs could not well have continued. It was never more than a paper prosperity, built up on credit, false assumptions, and absurdly inflated values. The only men, beyond the mining experts, who ever got any cash out of it all seemed to be the transport riders, and most of those, like myself, lost it all at the time of the great cattle plague, the African coast fever. Yet, for a little while, it was very pleasant to have credit everywhere, never to be asked for money, even in hotels, to know that if you wanted to borrow a hundred any one you knew would back a bill for that amount, and that the bank would discount it. It was all very pleasant, and—I only wish I had got out of it in time.

Gwelo was different again from the other towns. It had, of course, the common characteristic of being situated in a mud flat, but, on the other hand, it was compact, and there was a reason for its existence, as it was near the industrial centre of the country. Yet it always seemed moribund, as though oppressed with the knowledge that both Salisbury and Bulawayo

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would combine to squeeze it out of existence. It did not expect booms, like Victoria; it did not go in for Society, like Salisbury, or for puttee leggings, like Bulawayo. It drank in rather a nasty, sodden sort of way; but it obeyed game laws and other foolish ordinances. Taken all round, it was dull and drab, without any redeeming feature, save the possession of one good hotel.

Umtali, on the Portuguese border, I never reckoned as a frontier town, because it existed almost entirely on the railway works, which are essentially products, almost refinements, of civilisation. The greater part of the population was, directly or indirectly, dependent on the railway for its living; consequently, the spirit of the place was wholly industrial and uninteresting.

I suppose all these places have changed since my time. Salisbury must have become more decent, or it would surely have met the fate of the cities of the plain; whilst Victoria, with a railway creeping out in its direction, has probably grown almost conventional. Never again will they dance war dances round the judge's quarters, or insist on the retirement of the local parson because he had four native wives, and they reckoned one was sufficient for a cleric.

Never again, I hope, in Salisbury will there be a scandal like that which occurred during the Boer War, when the Imperial Government

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property was stolen wholesale from an Imperial Army camp and sold openly in the Market Square in Salisbury by local magnates, or their nominees—new mounted infantry saddles fetched half-a-crown each in those days, and some eight hundred mules, worth from fifteen to forty pounds each, “went astray” between Beira and Salisbury. Never again will Bulawayo see fifty waggons outspanned at the old racecourse outspan on the Tuli road, and another fifty on the Gwelo side.

The old order has changed, and I am afraid I should not like the new ; so I think it is wiser to keep away from it all, and to cherish the memories of the good days.

## CHAPTER II

### THE HEATHEN IN HIS BLINDNESS

VERY few Home-born men who go out to South Africa ever learn anything about the natives; very few Boers and colonials ever manage to forget the prejudices which are bred in them. I lived amongst the natives long enough to grow to know them fairly well, not to understand them—no white man ever succeeded in doing that—and, as a result, I regard them neither as heroes nor as villains, but merely as savages, with all the good points and all the limitations of their kind.

The writers of South African novels have done an enormous amount of harm, so far as the settlement of the native question is concerned. The majority of people at Home have got their ideas of the African savage either from those books or from that other pernicious form of fiction, the missionary report. The black hero of the novelist, waving an assegai or chanting a song of his own composing, has as much, or as little existence, in fact, as has the earnest black Christian

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evangelist. The assegai may be right enough, but the song would certainly be too lewd to translate, whilst the evangelist would understand as much about the real meaning of Christianity as a baboon does about bill-discounting.

I do not believe it is possible to make a civilised man out of the South African native of to-day. You may veneer him with civilisation—that is a comparatively easy task—but the savage always remains underneath the covering. It is not a matter of prejudice or politics, but of natural laws. The savage is countless generations behind us in the scale of evolution, and no amount of teaching, or preaching, or legislation, can make up for what he lacks. We may hasten the process, and in the end produce an unhealthy growth, but even that will take centuries, and during those centuries the subjects, or the victims—call them which you will—will diminish rapidly in numbers from the effects of imported vices and imported diseases.

Take the case of the ordinary kraal Kaffir, the raw savage—I use the word Kaffir in the usual South African sense, to denote every kind of native, except the Hottentot and the Bushman. He is the descendant of a long line of forebears, whose sole interests in life have been tribal warfare and witchcraft, especially the latter. They have been foul feeders, so far as animal food is concerned, whilst their views on the

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subject of women have been utterly repulsive from the European point of view. They have killed off all twins by thrusting them into a huge pot of boiling water, because twins are unlucky. They have lived in an atmosphere of murder. Probably ten per cent., perhaps twenty per cent. of the population has always been poisoned by the witch doctors, and the others have acquiesced calmly because it was the custom. They have been born and brought up in parasite-infested wattle and dab huts, which they shared with the sheep and goats, with the fowls and the dogs, huts which were never cleaned out. They have had no idea of the love of woman, for woman to them is, first, a worker in the fields, secondly, a means of satisfying their purely animal lusts. Their languages contain no word expressing gratitude, not even a conventional form of thanks.

The product of these ancestors—and I have drawn a very charitable picture of them and their ways—is to be made into a civilised man—by Education! If it were not so pitiful, it would be delightfully Gilbertian. I know, of course, that education is supposed to be the cure for all evils nowadays. We all praise it up with our tongues in our cheeks, because it is a fad of the times, and because, after all, the next generation will suffer from it more than we do; but it is going to absurd lengths to

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suppose that the process can be of any use in South Africa until you have taught the savage the rudiments of cleanliness and decency. A knowledge of the qualities of an isosceles triangle is not very valuable to the native, so long as the native women remain mere slaves.

Of course, there are exceptional cases — Khama is one — but the number of these is very small, and, as a rule, the so-called education given to the natives is not only useless, but positively harmful. You cannot turn the barbarian into a civilised man in one generation, possibly not in ten generations. You may catch your Kaffir young, send him home, cut him off completely from all his old associations, send him to an English public school and then to the 'Varsity, ordain him a priest, even consecrate him as a bishop ; but if he goes back to his village when there is some great festival in progress, if he smells the blood of the newly - killed sacrificial bull, hears the rattles and the drums, the lewd chorus of the dancers, it is practically certain that, before many minutes have passed, he will have stripped himself of his European garments and will have joined the yelling crowd. It is a curious and significant fact that the clothed native always wears his loin cloth underneath his other garments ; it is a wholly unconscious tribute to the savage side of his nature.

The only use to which I ever knew an African

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native put his knowledge of reading and writing was the forging of white men's names, usually with a view to obtaining liquor.

The liquor laws in Rhodesia were excellent. If only the missionary-ridden colonies of the West Coast would follow the example of the Chartered Company in this respect, an enormous amount of crime might be averted, though the incomes of the missionaries might suffer. No native, no one who could be proved to have any African blood in his veins, could be supplied with white man's liquor. The penalties were very severe—as far as I can remember they were a four-hundred-pound fine for the first offence, twelve months hard labour for the second. I have no doubt that West Coast philanthropists would have held up their hands in holy horror at the idea of such a code—the man and brother there will pay handsomely for gin—but in Rhodesia, the Chartered policy had the whole-hearted support of the decent community; even the influence of the Cape wine-growers was insufficient to induce the Government to alter the law, though, as a rule, Cape politics were considered of far more importance than either Imperial or local concerns. There was no injustice to the native, and, as I have said, every one with a trace of black blood in him was a native in Rhodesia. He was at liberty to brew as much native beer as he liked, duty free, to



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drink as much as he liked ; and, whilst white man's spirits turned him into a homicidal maniac, his own liquor merely made him harmlessly joyous.

However, the educated savage wanted liquor. Just as the sense of being clothed seemed to bring out all the immoral instincts in the native girls—and most missionaries insist on clothing—so a knowledge of the alphabet seemed to turn the men into drunkards. A bottle of spirits could only be handed to a native if he could show a note, a "liquor pass," signed by his white employer. It was obviously impossible to expect the storekeepers to know the signatures of all the white men in the district ; consequently a well-written "pass" was almost certain to make them supply the spirits, especially as the order was usually accompanied by the money. The forging of passes soon became a profitable industry amongst the educated natives, practically the only industry in which they cared to engage, in which they could engage, perhaps, for it was extremely hard for them to find employment. No white man would risk having one in his house ; they were generally regarded as a gang of thieves and forgers, and were kept at arm's length by the whole white community. Possibly the prejudice against them was carried a little too far, but I do not think so. There were plenty of good, raw savages to be obtained, and it was

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absurd to run unnecessary risks by employing educated ones.

I have a great regard for the raw savage. I know that whilst I was in Africa I took, or thought I took, a very different view, but nowadays I suppose I see him in a truer perspective. He was not a model of all the virtues. He was unclean in his habits, and grossly untruthful; he would poison you cheerfully if the witch-doctors declared that your death would be an auspicious event. On the other hand, he was honest, so far as his employer's property was concerned; he would work hard, so long as his task was something he understood; and he often developed a kind of dog-like fidelity—in short, for a savage, his good qualities certainly outweighed his bad ones. The savage on the war-path is, of course, a different being altogether. He “sees red” all the time, ceasing really to have any of the attributes of a human being. The same native who has served you faithfully for years, cooked your food, looked after your clothes, nursed you through fever and dysentery, may suddenly turn round and become one of a band thirsting for your blood: but, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the change is not due to any personal feeling; it is merely that the temporary truce between barbarism and civilisation has come to an end, and that, as a result, your particular barbarian has gone back to his

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own side. When the trouble is all over, the truce re-established, he would consider it perfectly natural to come back to you, as though nothing had happened,

There are, of course, certain differences, very great differences between the various tribes, yet I think the essential characteristics are the same in all. The Basutu is intelligent and dangerous ; the Zulu is boastful and indolent ; the Mangwatu timid and inefficient ; the "Mashona" filthy in his personal habits ; the Cape native dishonest and drunken ; yet these are, comparatively speaking, superficial qualities. They strike the white man who knows the native superficially, who has only seen him in the towns or on the mines, who knows him merely in his relations with the ruling race ; but behind these qualities, far more important than these qualities, is that indefinable something which forms the great difference between African and European. I cannot explain what it is. It has always baffled me completely. It is as elusive as it is apparent.

You know that the whole outlook on life of the native is totally different from our own, yet after years of experience of him, you cannot say what his outlook is. The more you know him, the more convinced you become that you will never understand him. He is not mysterious, in the ordinary sense of the word ; "baffling" is the only term I know to apply to him. Possibly,

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if he were "mysterious," in the way in which some Eastern races are mysterious, it would be better for South Africa, for then politicians would approach the native problem in a very different spirit. They would not be so ready to propose measures for dealing with the Black Peril.

I came into contact with natives of every tribe from the Zambesi to the Cape, and with a good many from the north of the great river, but I knew the so-called Mashona better than any of the others.

The very use of that word "Mashona" in itself shows how much the average white man knows about the savages with whom he comes into contact. The natives first heard the word from the white men, most of whom imagine it to be the correct name of the tribe. As a matter of fact, however, it is a corruption of a Matabele word "Amaswena," literally "the dirty folk." The real name of the tribe is "Makalanga," the "children of the sun." Sometimes one hears this used also in a corrupt form, as "Makalaka," or more often "Makolakie." "Matabele" is another corruption, this time from "Amandebele." All these are fairly vile, but I think the worst is "Shangaans," the name by which the northern section of the Zulu race that settled in the Portuguese territory is known. Nothing could be more hideous and more unlike a native word,

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yet it is invariably used instead of the proper term "MaTchangana."

"Mashona" has now passed into common usage, and so, I suppose, a writer is justified in employing it. There is no sense in kicking against these things once they have become sanctified by custom.

The Mashona is by far the crudest form of Kaffir found south of the Zambesi. The district in which I was trading—I had a virtual monopoly throughout a territory, roughly, 250 miles in width by 300 miles in length—was practically untouched by the white man. Not one woman in a hundred, perhaps not one in five hundred, had ever seen one of the conquering race, and the same could be said of all the males who were too young, or too old, to have been to the mines.

You got humanity in the raw down there, and it was profoundly interesting. I liked the older men best. They had all been through a rough training. The Matabele from the high veld, the MaTchangana from the east, had looked on their country as the ideal raiding ground, and there were few who had not actually taken part in the warfare amongst the kopjes.

They had a dignity which was entirely lacking amongst the younger men. They had no wish to change any of their ways; they were perfectly content to remain savages. They would buy beads, because the tribe had used beads of its

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own manufacture for generations past, and now they found that the white man's beads were better. The same applied to hoes and blankets, but it was a very rare thing for one to buy a coat of any sort. Why should he? A blanket would keep him warm on a cold night, whilst by day he preferred to have his arms untrammelled.

Many of the older men took a very gloomy view of the future of their race. Formerly, the Matabele and the MaTchangana between them used to keep the numbers down, they explained, but since the coming of the white man, the birth-rate, or, rather, the percentage of children which survived, had increased enormously; already the greater proportion of the land available for cultivation amongst the kopjes—a very small proportion of the whole area—was fully cultivated. They could not spread towards the east, for in the low bush veld, not only is water very scarce, and the soil very poor, but the Mashona seem to stand the climate even worse than the white men, which is saying a good deal.

On the other hand, the moment they turned towards the high veld, they found that all the land had been sold to white men, and if they wished to settle on any of the so-called farms they had to pay what was, from their point of view, a very high rent. There is no doubt that, within a very few years, this question of over population in the kopje country will become



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MA' TCHANGANA.





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a very grave one, unless, in the meantime, some new factor comes into the situation, or what is now the Unknown Factor, venereal disease, has the effect which, I fear greatly, it will have.

The old men used to tell me—and I never had the slightest reason to suppose they were lying; in fact I never knew them to lie deliberately on such points—that it was quite unknown prior to about 1857; then they began to hear of it vaguely from the Transvaal, and shortly afterwards it actually appeared, isolated cases over a wide area; by 1899, however, it was in every village, and increasing at a terrible rate.

It was not introduced directly by white men, of that I am positive, and it is difficult to imagine that it was spread by actual contact. My own idea—I may be propounding an impossible theory from a medical point of view—is that the flies were responsible for its spread. Whenever a Mashona has an open sore, due to any cause whatsoever, he lies in the sun and allows the flies to get on it—a hideous sight; whilst the flies are afterwards permitted to settle where they like, on food, in the corners of babies' mouths, anywhere.

Whatever the explanation, however, the fact remains that the disease has got a thorough hold on the race. The next few years will show whether it is destined to destroy the Mashona slowly, or whether they will gradually

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become more or less immune. In the latter case, I imagine, succeeding generations will show a distinct decline in physique and mental powers. I should like greatly to see the question tackled openly by the authorities. Discreet references, buried in annual reports, are of very little practical use.

I was constantly asked for medicine, offered quite high fees, in the shape of goats and sheep, if I would only prescribe, but, needless to say, I could do nothing. I wonder if it would be presumptuous in me to suggest that some of that money which is now spent on conversion and education might be applied to fighting this hideous danger. I suppose the retort would be that, as it came from the Rand, as it is part of the price of the Rand gold, it is the duty of the Rand millionaires to put up the funds. I have no doubt as to what the result of an appeal to those august persons would be.

I had a Matabele boy called Daniel, a very smart and very lazy youngster. He had one good point, however—he knew exactly what the rising generation of Mashona needed. Time after time, when he was store-boy, he would come to me literally quivering with wrath. “They cheek, chief, they cheek, these Amagomo (hill people),” he would say. “See what the white men have done, how they have spoilt these baboons. In the days of the Matabele there

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was discipline ; my people used to come down and kill off many, and burn the grain huts ; then there was no cheek left in the rest. Now, however——” and he would shrug his shoulders, sigh mournfully, and go on : “It would be well for me to beat them, chief, so as to stop all trouble.”

Daniel was not very popular in the store, and after a while I had to find him another job ; but there was quite a lot of commonsense in what he said. They were cheeky, horribly cheeky, at least during the first few months we were there, and all the efforts of the old men seemed powerless to make them behave themselves. A favourite form of insolence was to bring in a calf, announce he was for sale, and demand ten pounds for him, whereas his value would be about three pounds. We had several instances of this, wasted a good deal of time in trying to buy the animals, and invariably ended by ordering our boys to drive the owners out of the camp. After a while we noticed that two calves kept coming back, each time with different owners, so Daniel was sent out to investigate. He found out that both came from a kraal about three-quarters of a mile away, where they were, as he said, very, very cheeky. We did the only thing possible then—we announced that under no conditions whatsoever would any one belonging to that kraal be allowed to buy or sell at our store. The

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ringleader of the mischief was an educated native, and I heard a couple of days later from my boys that he had expressed the greatest contempt for our decision. Whether he really felt that way, I do not know, but in all probability he found himself suddenly unpopular and had to do something. At any rate, he was unwise enough to come swaggering into the camp again. I think he regretted it afterwards. There was a very large, dead mahogany tree outside the store hut, an immense trunk, hard as bone. Our visitor was captured, given a very blunt axe, and for four sweltering hours he had to hack away at that tree, whilst Amous, our Basutu driver, sat on a boulder beside him with a big sjambok across his knees, in case the prisoner should feel tired. We never had any more trouble with him, or with his village. Officially, the ban was never taken off them, but once they began to behave themselves they were allowed to come back; and finally we bought their two "ten pound" calves for about two pounds each.

I shall never forget one idiot who came in. He was quite a stranger, and he hurried up the kopje carrying a large pumpkin. As a matter of fact, I had in stock a couple of hundred pumpkins, which had cost me about an egg-cupful of beads each. Possibly the customer had peculiar ideas as to the value of a pumpkin,

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in fact, he must have had, for he deposited his in the doorway of the store, squatted down, took snuff, then remarked: "Five shillings."

I looked at him in amazement. "Five shillings; it is very large," he repeated.

It is no good arguing with a person of that kind, so I reached out for the knobsticks, which were always at hand. He understood, and seized his pumpkin.

The first knobstick just missed him at about ten yards range—I never really learned to throw the wretched things; he was going pretty fast, but he managed to shout back, "Four shillings." At the foot of the kopje the price had fallen to three shillings; then he encountered Amous, who was just coming up from the cattle kraal. The Basutu had not the slightest idea what the matter was, but he acted on general principles, and gave the visitor a cut across the back with his sjambok. We never saw him again, but in all probability I bought that pumpkin next day for a measure of beads which had cost me about twopence.

I could never understand what made Kaffirs occasionally behave in that way. There was no deliberate idea of being insolent, as a rule, for when a native wants to score off a white man he makes sure of his audience beforehand; yet it is impossible to think that they expected to get the absurd prices they demanded.

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Still, it was no use wondering over it, because, as I have said, no white man will ever get at the workings of a Kaffir's mind.

During one dry season, when grain was extremely scarce in the district, the local headmen asked me to help their people by buying all the grain I could from the surrounding district and retailing it locally. They themselves proposed that I should charge a sovereign for a bag, two hundred pounds weight, explaining that that was the recognised price. I started to buy, and immediately found that I could not meet a quarter of the demand; consequently, though I could not raise the price I decided not to take cash, but cattle, an arrangement which suited me much better, for, besides the profit on the grain, I made a second profit of about seventy per cent. on the oxen. The price of a beast was always discussed, not in terms of bags of grain, but in pounds, then I would hand over the money, which was at once handed back to me. It was a curiously involved way of doing business, but it paid us enormously, and the natives were well satisfied. I asked them once why those who wanted grain did not buy direct from those who had grain to sell. The answer was characteristic—that in that case they would swindle each other.

I refused to sell grain for cash as soon as the cattle began to come in so freely, and I

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must have turned away hundreds of pounds every week; before long, however, the supply of grain began to get very small, and I raised the price which I was giving for it. The usual grain trader's measure runs about six to the bag, each measureful being reckoned at a shilling, in trade goods. In the end, however, I was using a very small measure, running twelve to the bag, and giving on each bag a present of a shilling's worth of calico; consequently, the nominal cost of a bag was thirteen shillings, which meant an actual cost of about seven shillings. In these circumstances, my surprise may be imagined when, early one morning, a youngster arrived, followed by a couple of women; between them they had just a bag of grain, which, according to the boy, they were willing to sell to me for trading goods, if I would agree to sell it back to them for a pound. Naturally enough, I was a little suspicious at first, as the net result of the deal would be that they would have had the labour of carrying their grain from their kraal and back again, some thirty miles in all, and would be paying me a sovereign for goods which they could otherwise have bought for thirteen shillings. Still, the youngster was very much in earnest, so I agreed. The grain was measured out, and poured into one of my bags, each measure was paid for separately, and the present of a shilling's

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worth of limbo given; then I was handed a sovereign, the grain was poured back into their own sacks, and they departed with it, apparently well pleased with themselves. It was such an amazingly foolish deal from the purchaser's point of view that I looked on the youngster as a stray idiot; but early next morning I had two more customers anxious to do the same thing, in fact, after that we went through the same extraordinary performance two or three times every day. One man brought back the same bag of grain time after time, and, of course, on each occasion lost seven shillings, besides having the trouble of carrying a huge load nearly forty miles.

I never found out what the underlying idea was. It was supposed to be something very clever; in some strange way they imagined they were getting the better of the white man, and no amount of argument would have convinced them that they were making a loss. Yet some white men boast that they understand the workings of the native mind.

One of the strangest customers I ever had was a youngster who came in accompanied by two old men. The three wasted no time in talking to my boys, the usual preliminary to a deal, but squatted down in the doorway of the hut.

"I want four hoes for a pound, chief," the



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youngster said. It was the ordinary price, and within a few minutes he had selected his four hoes and paid for them; then he squatted down again. "Four hoes for a pound, chief," he repeated; then the process was gone over again and again, until he had spent five pounds. After that, he consulted for a moment with the old men, bought a single hoe for five shillings, ten shillings' worth of limbo, ten shillings' worth of white beads, received another hoe as a present, and hurried off. From the time he arrived to the time he left it was only about a quarter of an hour, whereas the ordinary Mashona would have spread the deal over a whole day, and then spent the night at the camp, for it was one of our rules that any one who bought a sovereign's worth of goods and upwards could have free board and lodging for at least one day.

I could not imagine what any sane person could want with twenty-two hoes, especially an unmarried youngster; even a big chief with half a dozen wives would not have bought so many; but Daniel explained matters. This youth was about to be married, he said, and the hoes were presents for his future relations by marriage. The two old men were his future father-in-law and that person's brother, and they had come to make sure that he bought really good ones. I pitied that boy.

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I used to get some extraordinary requests made to me, but I think that the pick of them all was from a half-bred Matabele, who wanted me to give him "two good shillings for two bad ones." On the face of it, it seemed like cheek, but when I looked at his "bad shillings," and found that they were merely new Edward VII. coins, I gave him a couple of Victoria coins for them. He was immensely pleased. He squatted down under the shelter of the grain hut, and told all comers how he had swindled the white man. I don't think he had come intending to buy anything, but I suppose, seeing others buying, he was tempted; at any rate, before he left he had spent, not only the "good shillings," but a sovereign as well. I liked customers of that kind.

One very complicated deal, the details of which I have forgotten, resulted in a considerable profit to me. A travelling native missionary, a Fingo, I think, turned up and asked me to change some money for him. I could tell from his manner that he thought he was going to swindle me—all these Kaffir money-changing schemes are conceived in a spirit of pure fraud—and I refused at first to have anything to do with him. However, he returned again next day and showed me the coins. They were a queer collection. Heaven only knows how he had picked them up—five hundred reis pieces, rupees which had

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been stamped P.M. or C.M. by the Portuguese Government, Transvaal silver, and a few German coins—though I presume he had been telling the local savages that they were of no value, and had got them for next to nothing. I made him a fair offer for the lot—I should have had to send them to the bank at Bulawayo, three hundred miles away—but he would not have that. He wanted to deal with each one separately, and when I added up what I had given him, after various manœuvres on his part, the total came to less than half what I had already offered.

As far as our own natives—those who belonged to villages in our district—were concerned, we used to take a very wide view when foreign coins were in question. Money changed hands so rapidly, and was always converted into cattle in the end, that it was not worth while raising objections over trifles. For instance, I would always accept a five hundred reis piece from a Mashona as worth two shillings, which it was not, and a hundred reis as sixpence; a German twenty mark piece I used to take as a sovereign, trusting to get rid of it again, and we did not even refuse half-sovereigns with holes bored through them. As for Transvaal money, we invariably took that just as if it had been British coin, as we relied on the strength of Lord Robert's proclamation, a proclamation covering

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Rhodesia as well as the other territories, making Transvaal money legal tender.

However, both the natives and ourselves had to pay rather dearly for our faith in the power or willingness of the Imperial Government to enforce its decrees in Rhodesia. Transvaal money, though intrinsically worth a trifle more than British coin, was put down to a huge discount, ten per cent. in the case of gold, as much as fifty per cent. for silver. The banks, and those officials who had to receive payments in coin, made immense profits over the business. As for the banks, they were, I suppose, justified, their only concern being to earn dividends—honestly if they could, but to earn them; as for the officials, the case was very different; still, they acted in accordance with their traditions, though, as the country was under Martial Law, they would have fared very badly had "K. of K." had the time to come up and investigate them. He would have found a good many other things to investigate, too, including high treason. It must have been an immense relief to thousands in South Africa, when, instead of appointing the conqueror of the Sudan military dictator of the sub-continent, with a free hand for ten years, a policy which would have wrought an enormous amount of good throughout the sub-continent, the Imperial Government went in for the sloppy system of conciliation and repre-

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sentative government. It was the sort of thing which Rome did when the decline had begun, and, though I hate proverbs, there is one in which I do believe, namely, "History repeats itself."

That question of Transvaal coin left me very sore; in fact, I am very sore still. A reviewer wrote of me once that I "cherish a vendetta like a Corsican." Possibly he was right. I have never forgiven an insult, and never forgotten an injury—a very sound rule; and I was both insulted and injured over that matter of the Kruger money.

For three years I had been buying cattle from the Mashona for gold, getting most of my cash from the bank in Bulawayo, and never noticing whether I got British, Transvaal, or Australian coins, knowing that all were of practically the same value, though I believe that a Transvaal pound contained a shade more gold than the others. In our trading business—and we were the largest independent traders in Mashonaland—our chief asset was our reputation for straight dealing. The natives knew us from Umtali to Pietersburg in the North Transvaal, from Victoria to the Indian Ocean. We were, I believe, the only white men who could buy cattle from a Kaffir without paying cash. Often we had a rush of cattle for sale, and ran out of gold; but it was always sufficient

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if we gave the owner of a beast an I.O.U., which he could not read, and told him to come back in a few weeks time for his money. I suppose that in three years we must have put well over a thousand pounds in Kruger gold into circulation throughout the district; possibly the real figure was double this. We had acted in perfect good faith, never imagining for one moment that white men could stoop to the depths to which they did stoop; consequently, when, during the collection of the hut tax, which, for some inscrutable reason, must be paid in gold, we heard that a Native Commissioner was refusing to take the Transvaal gold we had circulated, we felt pretty sick; but we felt more than sick when we found that he had in his camp a native confederate, who would change a Transvaal sovereign—which was legal tender—for a British half-sovereign, so enabling the unfortunate savage to “pay his tax.” It was one of those tricks which is so utterly low that it cannot adequately be described in print. Still, we hurried into Victoria, and we described it verbally to the Civil Commissioner, and to the township at large. Naturally enough, the natives had been to us by scores, accusing us of having supplied them with bad money. So far as possible we gave them British gold for their Transvaal coins, but many had already paid the Native Commissioner his ten shillings in the pound profit.

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We did not trouble greatly about his feelings, except in so far as making him smart was concerned. We did not expect to get up a prosecution—that Native Commissioner belonged to a South African family—but we wanted to get him on the raw, and in that we succeeded. He hurried into the township, raging, had an interview with the Civil Commissioner, who was a gentleman, and returned to his camp with the dignity of a burst air-ball, no longer talking of bringing a slander action against us. In the end, he was removed from his post—and given a more congenial and highly paid one.

Of course, the affair was only a minor one. It merely affected a few thousand natives, who became, in consequence, deadly enemies of the white man. From an official point of view it did not count; in fact, I was already becoming known as a dangerously independent Englishman who believed in direct Imperial control, and the business had certainly been a big set-back to me, so it had some admirable features; but if “cherishing a vendetta like a Corsican” is remembering these things, and storing those memories up for future use, then I accept that reviewer’s description unreservedly. I do not see why, because a Mashona is a savage and a polygamist, because he shares a hut with his sheep and goats, because he has never washed himself and never will wash himself, he should

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be robbed, any more than I can see why he should be demoralised by education.

I never pretended to admire the African savage. Even my most savage critics—and I have had some fairly savage ones, as, for instance, a Bond paper in Cape Town, which began a review of one of my books with these impressive words, “This is a most pernicious book”—cannot say that I am a negrophil; but at the same time I like to see the negro, especially the raw negro, get a square deal. He cannot help himself, and those fanatics—perfectly honest fanatics in most cases—who wish to help him, allow the educated Kaffirs to direct their efforts. Often I used to get very hot, and, incidentally, make a good many enemies, over the treatment of the natives.

The Labour Bureau system was one of the things I detested. I was a labour agent myself, and it may be said that I was prejudiced in consequence; but such was not the case, for I supplied only boys from the Portuguese territories. The regular labour agent, official or semi-official, caught whom he could. He had his own police, and the Native Commissioner helped him. In many cases, he lived at the Native Commissioner's own camp, and used the Native Commissioner's authority. The natives simply dared not disobey when they were ordered to send so many boys per kraal, because, so far as they were concerned, the Commissioner was





WHERE ONLY MAN IS VILE.



THE PADDY FIELD.



## The Heathen in His Blindness

both the Law and the Prophets. He flogged, fined, or imprisoned them just as he liked, and there was no appeal. The Government might, and did, allege that the Labour Bureau was an independent institution, but it could not disprove that it was a slave-raiding organisation pure and simple, which could not have existed for a day without official support, one of the most evil things which has been permitted to flourish under the shadow of the Union Jack since the British Parliament made slave-raiding a crime. Yet I suppose mining companies, even fraudulent ones, must have native labour. It is part of the great game, and, after all, the savage has no vote—more important still, he has no voice, so he cannot count in the scheme of things.

One very vile practice which was carried on largely in the mining camps, especially in the Selukwe district, was that of paying natives in paper money. For the benefit of those who do not know South Africa, I should explain that there are three London banks whose notes are legal tender in Rhodesia, and that these notes, ranging from ten shillings upwards, differ greatly in size, shape, and colouring. Consequently, it is quite impossible to the average Kaffir to tell one from the other, to know if he is receiving half a sovereign or five pounds.

Possibly it was this fact which led those who framed the mining laws to make it illegal to

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pay wages in paper money. The provision was a very sound one, but, unfortunately, it was not enforced very strictly. On many mines the natives were paid in banknotes, and though these were generally of the correct face value, the native was a heavy loser. He would not take the paper home to his village. He might get it destroyed, and, moreover, he did not reckon it as money; it was no use for hut tax, and what he wanted was coin. The mining company would not cash the notes, so he had to take them down to the store, and discount them for eighteen shillings in the pound, out of which the store-keeper made a shilling and the mine secretary and compound manager, between them, a shilling, no small item when a company is employing four or five hundred boys. It was a very mean form of fraud—for all I know it is practised still, for some of the old gang are still alive—and it led to a great deal of bitterness on the part of the natives.

There used to be a nauseous amount of talk about the wickedness of the savage, who remained unmindful of the blessings conferred on him under the new *régime*, and refused to take up the Black Man's burden, and work in the mines. Personally, my sympathies were with the native. Why should he want to work on the mines, when, in return for a small wage, which he was not certain of getting, he would probably contract chest and

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stomach complaints. He had his own home, his own land. He looked to the land to provide him with food, and if he went to work for a white man, it was merely because he wanted luxuries which his ancestors had not had. To talk of teaching him the dignity of toil was the most blatant and repulsive hypocrisy. Already he and his wives toiled on the land, toiled as much as was necessary. It was the fashion to describe him as utterly lazy, to proclaim, with tears in one's eyes, that it was a sacred duty to rouse him from his slothfulness and force him to learn how noble it was to labour in a mine, where, in addition to being underfed, he would be able to learn all the vices which the white man and the Indian—particularly the latter—have introduced into the Sub-continent of Sunny Fountains.

The feeding on the mines was atrocious. Heaven knows, the white employés came off sufficiently badly; but the natives fared even worse. At some time or other, some congenital idiot, probably a Rand mining expert, became obsessed with the idea that the natural food of the Kaffir was mealie meal, half-ground and not winnowed, and I suppose he bit all his brother experts, infecting them with the same form of mania. This theory may be wrong—there may have been no biting necessary—but the fact remains that ninety-nine per cent. of the mining folk held the absurd mealie theory, regardless of the

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fact that the Basutu are about the only people who eat dried mealies to any extent, and that even with them the mealies are first freed from dirt and husk, and then pounded most carefully in a wooden mortar. No race between the Crocodile River and the Zambesi lives on mealies, no race grows them to any extent, unless with a view to selling them to white traders; whilst the mealie meal which is ground in Rhodesia, the grain being merely broken up between the plates of a rough type of mill, is practically always unfit for human consumption. The extraordinary part of the whole business was that the mining people could have bought proper grain or meal, the natural food of the people—*zapoko*, *m'bari*, *n'yaouti*—at much lower rates, and could have kept their labourers healthy; but they would never listen to reason. They learned nothing and they forgot nothing, with the result that most mines were chronically short of labour, not because the natives did not want to earn money, but because they could not work on the food supplied to them. Then came the outcry against the immoral laziness of the native.

Of course, for the majority of the companies the shortness of labour was a most convenient thing. It furnished them with an excuse when shareholders complained of the lack of dividends, and thousands of small investors at Home must have shaken their heads in sorrow over the indolence

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of the Matabele and Mashona tribes. The proposed increase of native taxation, from a ten-shilling hut tax to a two-pound hut tax, was, nominally, designed to convert the wicked, home-staying native agriculturalist into an estimable mine labourer, who might, in course of time, rise to the dignity of having a Trade Union of his own—all political parties were considered—and would meanwhile spend his earnings at the stores belonging to, or controlled by, his employers.

This was the charitable, official view of the new tax which was solemnly passed by the futile little Legislative Council, and acclaimed by the equally futile local Press as a great measure of constructive statesmanship, worthy of the highest intellects of Berlin, Johannesburg, and Jerusalem. Personally, I did not share this view. I saw in it merely an utterly discreditable financial move. The country was virtually bankrupt; there seemed no chance of raising fresh capital to bolster up the moribund mining companies; the cattle disease, allowed to spread through gross official incompetence, had ruined all the transport riders and traders. A native rising—and the new tax could have resulted only in that—would have been an absolute boon to the majority of the financiers. Even though they had had to arrange for the destruction of their own special mine buildings, the result would have been the same. Everything would have been put down to the

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wicked natives, and after the rising was over—the war in itself would have given great chances for heroism and those romantic episodes which appeal so greatly to the British investor—it would have been possible to write off the old, wasted capital, and start afresh, with a new lot of shareholders.

I was pretty young then, and, probably, pretty foolish—I always used to have a fancy for tilting at windmills—and I attacked the new taxation scheme in the London Press. It was curious that my articles should have been inserted—I was absolutely unknown then—but it was amazing that I should have won. I had a good deal of mud—the sticky, black, official mud of Salisbury and the red, slimy, mining-company mud of Bulawayo—slung at me, but the fact remains that, as a result of my articles, His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies ordered that new Taxation Ordinance to be expunged from the Rhodesian Statute Book.

Still, though I scored that time, I shall never score again, at least so far as the African native question is concerned. I have grown weary of crying out in the wilderness. As, perhaps, I have shown, my views would suit neither the negrophils of Little Bethel nor those pseudo-Imperialists who regard the native as a counter in the game of Bull and Bear. I know that



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the native question — the problem of what is to be the future position of the coloured man in South Africa, whether he is to live his life apart from the white man, whether he is eventually to become the political equal of the white man, or whether he is to disappear altogether — must be settled before long, and that the settlement will involve an enormous amount of bloodshed, almost an infinite amount of misery ; but I am quite certain that the whole thing is preordained, and that it is no use trying to bring the public to a sense of the impending tragedy. It is in a Gadarene frame of mind.

Everything has changed in the sub-continent during the last twelve years. Old tribal differences have ceased to be of any importance, old tribal feuds have been forgotten. Instead of having to deal with so many comparatively small, and mutually hostile, races, we are faced by one great Black Nation, the Kaffir Nation. The cessation of tribal warfare, the facilities of railway travel, the meeting of all the different tribes in the town locations or the mine compounds, have combined to bring about the change, and now that detestable institution, the Ethiopian Church, the “Afrikander Bond of the Kaffirs,” is getting a hold on the Black Nation, directing its energies, preaching the doctrine of “Africa for the African” ; whilst the white men

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of South Africa themselves seem so fully occupied with the pitiful local squabbles of the much-vaunted Union that they cannot, or will not, spare the time and thought to deal with this deadly peril.

It may be heresy to say so, I suppose it is heresy, but I am certain that, had South Africa remained for ten years under military rule, and had afterwards been put under direct Imperial control, this native question would have been settled long since. India is an example of what the Imperial Government can do—no cry was ever more false or more feeble than that oft-repeated protest against Downing Street methods—and it was not until the Imperial authorities began to listen to the voices of the fanatics and the cranks that there was any trouble in our Eastern Empire. We might have settled South Africa in the same way; but we, or rather that majority which is supposed to be all-wise, has decided not to do so, and, consequently, we shall have to pay the price. The only question seems to be whether the third Boer War or the Native War comes first.

## CHAPTER III

### THE TRADER

IN my day, the outside traders, those who had stores far away in the native districts, were regarded with a good deal of suspicion by the general public. I am not sure that there was not a certain amount of reason for this attitude. As a rule, they were hardly the salt of the earth. I know, because for three years I myself was a trader, and so had many chances of learning. On the other hand, the majority of our critics were hardly in a position to throw stones; and, moreover, they would have fared badly without us.

The traders in the townships—storekeepers is a better term—belonged to a totally different class. They varied in degree from the owner of a huge, galvanised iron shed, stocked with all manner of stuff, from shoddy female attire to wire cable, down to the coolie or Greek in a wattle-and-dab shanty on the edge of the native location; but they were all intensely commercial, shop-keepers and nothing else.

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There was nothing of the pioneer about them. Competition was keen, and they had to give their whole attention to their business. They were a mixed lot, all nationalities, all creeds, only a very small proportion being of British birth.

At the outset, the Hebrews and the Teutons, or in many cases a combination of both, had matters their own way, but after a time the Indian came in and gradually got the greater part of the native trade into his hands; then he began to tackle the wholesale trade, and it seemed as though, before long, he might control that as well. He was reputed to live on the smell of an oily rag; at any rate, so far as one could see, he never spent a farthing on himself. But his triumph was short-lived, for the Greek came up, and the sight of an oily rag is sufficient nutriment for that unwholesome race. I do not like Greeks—who does?—but I think the Greek did the country a good turn. He cut into the Indian's business to such an extent that the Asiatic had a hard fight to maintain his footing, and there was no longer any question of his launching out into bigger enterprises. True, both the Briton and the German were now permanently ousted from the native trade in the towns; but this was really no disaster, as the business was so cut that it would have attracted only the lowest class, men

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who might have done a good deal of harm amongst the Kaffirs, and were, therefore, better away from them.

The white storekeepers in the towns were, as a whole, distinctly above the average of the English shopkeeper, in fact it would be an insult to compare the two classes; at least it would have been until after the war, but a good many things changed about that time, and the storekeeper who was also a gentleman, and was received as such, began to be replaced by a far lower type, imported from London or Cape Town.

The outside trader was a different person altogether. As a rule, he was British-born—you found curiously few colonials or foreigners trading in the native districts—and he was usually anything but business-like. He had drifted into the life, and then, only too often, he had drifted away from all the restraints and decencies of civilisation. In nine cases out of ten, it was safe to prophesy that he would remain a trader until he died, equally safe to prophesy that that period would not be a long one.

It was an absolutely demoralising existence in most ways. The average trading station consisted of three or four grass huts, usually more or less dilapidated, perched on a small kopje down in the granite country. A few hundred yards away was a native village, a collection of dirty hovels inhabited by dirty savages, who

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were ever on the lookout for a chance to rob you. When they were not doing that, they were beating their tom-toms and nearly driving you mad with the noise. Lower down the valley you could see another village, where they also had drums, and beyond that more villages and more drums.

The savages formed the only society you had. The nearest township was sixty miles away, and though there was a native commissioner but thirty miles from you, the tramp across the hills to his camp was certain to knock you up—when you are down with malaria twice a week regularly you have to be careful of what little energy you have left, or else you will get blackwater and die unnecessarily soon.

One hut you use for your own purposes. Its furniture consists of a table made out of a packing-case lid, supported on four posts, which, for greater security, are driven into the mud floor. There is a bed made of grass and sticks, on top of which you have a mattress formed of your stock of limbo (trade calico). Your pillow is a roll of trade blankets which, having been damaged by the rats, are unsaleable. The chair is an empty condensed milk case; the candlestick a black dop-bottle. Your washstand is outside the door, another milk case with a small tin bowl on it. There is nothing else in the place, except a shot-gun, a rifle, and a battered little tin trunk

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containing some ragged clothes, your cartridges, and perhaps, wrapped up very carefully, a few photographs. You dare not put the latter up on the walls, for in a very few days the rats and the flies would have combined to spoil them. And they are too precious for that, being the sole link with the world at Home, the world where you used to associate with women of your own race, put on a clean collar every morning, and dress for dinner every night.

Women of your own race! How long is it since you have spoken to one? Could you, would you dare to speak to one now? You glance out of the door at a native girl nursing a brown baby, and you shudder. The Curse of Africa is on you.

A clean collar! You change your flannel shirt now and then, when the boy happens to have the other one clean. You sleep in the shirt, as a rule, because it is too much trouble to change; but if you do chance to get into pyjamas, the probability is that you will not worry to dress for two or three days. Why should you? No one sees except the niggers, who do not count.

Dress for dinner! Pah! It's better, after all, to keep those old photos wrapped up, at the very bottom of the tin trunk. There is still a bottle of dop left out of the case which Van Riet's waggons brought down when they came to fetch your last lot of grain.

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One day is exactly like the next, at least if you are merely a grain trader, as are nine out of ten. Soon after dawn a sleepy boy brings in your early coffee. There is, of course, no door to your hut, and he creeps in quietly and puts the cup down on the milk case which serves you as chair. As a rule you are awake, and drink off the muddy liquid at once, but if you happen to be dozing, the flies will begin to commit suicide at the rate of about two a minute.

At sunrise, your first batch of customers comes in—a couple of men, followed by half a dozen women. The men have long, tightly-packed bags, made of bark string, on their shoulders, the women are balancing heavy baskets of grain on their heads. Altogether they have well over a sack of grain to sell.

You unlock the door of the store hut—that is the only door and the only lock in the camp—and sit down on a pile of shoddy blankets, whilst the store-boy measures out the grain. The measure, a native basket, represents a shilling's worth of trade goods. The customers murmur at its size. It is too large, they say, the white man sells very meanly; whereupon the store-boy insists on the basket being filled to overflowing.

You crumble up a piece of native-grown twist tobacco and fill your pipe. The proceedings do not interest you; you have seen it all so often



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before; but you dare not trust the store-boy. There is not much in that store hut. When you first started you intended to put up proper shelves all round, but then you also intended to do a great many other things to make the place comfortable; still, you did finish about a third of the shelves, and the best of your limbo and blankets are on those, but the remainder of the stuff, the hoes and beads and the cheaper blankets, are on the floor. It's not worth finishing those shelves; it's not worth doing anything. That wretched malaria is coming on again, and it's quite a chance whether by nine o'clock—breakfast time at home—it has not knocked you over.

Breakfast time at home! A white tablecloth and a silver urn with a little spirit-lamp under it; a big wolf-hound who comes up to you for a pat; two girls with laughing eyes; and a grey-haired lady at the head of the table. Breakfast time—pah! What a fool you are! The brown baby is crying fretfully, and the store-boy is telling you how many measures of grain there are to be paid for, how many stretches of white limbo are wanted, how many blankets!

Breakfast time at home! Your customers have departed and you go back to your breakfast in that uncleanly hut. No tablecloth, enamelled iron plates and an enamelled iron cup, the remains of yesterday's guinea-fowl and some

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baking-powder bread. Two or three hungry-looking chickens are feeding greedily on the table when you enter, and there are already half a dozen flies struggling in the condensed milk.

You can eat nothing, and so you turn in under the blankets, shivering with ague and stay there until the next big batch of natives comes in, when you are forced to get up again, risking a chill. By noon, trade has slackened off, and there will be no more until an hour before sundown. You have nothing to do, nothing to read, so you return to your blankets, still shivering, cursing your luck, hating everything and every one, above all, hating yourself.

Every two or three weeks waggons come down from the township and fetch away your grain. The storekeeper in the town quotes the price he is going to give for your grain—it is always twenty per cent. below the market rate, but what can you do? You have bought your trading goods from him on credit, and it is useless to quarrel, because his company is a big one, in which the Chartered Company, the Government, is interested. You are in the grip of that heartless machine which grinds down the individual to form the bone manure for the corporation. What is the use of striving, wearing yourself out, in a country which is governed by a company for the benefit of companies. If you worry you will die all the sooner.



A POOL OF SILENCE.



UP THE KLOOF.



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You will never handle your profit in cash—the wholesale people see to that. They will let you have more goods, or ptomained tinned goods, or, better still, Port Elizabeth whisky, but never actual money if they can possibly avoid it, for in that case you might be tempted to clear off, to go back to your own clean and wholesome land, instead of dying in the attempt to earn dividends for them.

And all those wholesale firms are moribund, that is the rotten part of them—I am writing of ten years back, though I suppose the same conditions still obtain. Moribund, and, mortification having set in, they stink in the nostrils of all decent folk; yet their directors wax fatter and more flourishing every month, and are received, if not with honour—that term would be absurd—at least with enthusiasm in Government circles. Are they not Apostles of Empire, in the latter day sense of the term? When they launch out on the higher scale, with capitals of half a million sterling, does not the Chartered Company lend them a director—a slightly shop-soiled one, perhaps—as a chairman, to make impressive speeches, and beat the Drum Imperial?

I am an Imperialist. I believe we should be, and we could be, the paramount power of the world; but when I see the hyænas of the City dragging round in their ill-fitting and

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mud-stained lion's skins, I feel like becoming a Little Englander. They are just as sordid in their aims as are the screaming prophets of Little Bethel. Each is gunning after the dollar. Each has his axe to grind; each has his tongue in his cheek; each is avaricious, ambitious, unpatriotic, lecherous often. The blood of martyrs may have been the seed of the Church; but I am quite certain that the blood of the traders of Rhodesia has been the fertilising agent in the growth of the fortune of more than one Rhodesian pillar of finance.

I think of one now, grave and goat-like in appearance. He never took any risks—his social position protected him even from the risk of prosecution at Home—but many traders, who had got into the clutches of his companies, died in building up his fortune, and when he reconstructed his company for the last time, all his shareholders lost their money; but he had resigned at the psychological moment. He directs larger, safer things now, and objects strongly when, at general meetings, shareholders make references to the past. He feels, rightly, perhaps, that the past might, and ought, to have been buried with the traders.

It may be said—in fact, I feel absolutely certain that it will be said—that I have drawn an exaggerated picture of a trader's life; yet how many of my critics will really be qualified

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to judge? How many of them will be men who have even seen an outside trading station, much less lived on one? I am writing of the things I know, which I have learned by bitter experience. The majority of the traders of my day are long since dead. They cannot contradict me, and they would not if they could.

Sometimes it is not a bad thing to write the truth, to draw an ugly picture. We have had so many pretty pictures of frontier life, drawn by men who know only the stage side of the thing, utterly false, utterly misleading, the work of men who go out to get copy, and, being in search of the Picturesque, miss the Sordid; but I got my copy long before I ever thought of writing, and for that reason I am sure that my perspective is right.

Romance is a splendid thing, the very salt of life, and the frontier of civilisation should be the home of Romance; but when you are rotten with fever, when you have been years without a really decent dinner, or a really decent drink, when the rain is dripping through your thatched roof, forming mud puddles on your floor, when there are two or three hyænas howling in the vlei, apparently waiting for a chance to feed on your corpse, when, despite all the risks you have taken, all the bitterly hard work you have done, you are still hopelessly in debt to the human hyænas in the town-

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ship, you somehow forget all about Romance. You have got down to crude truths.

There are, of course, trading camps of a type very different from the one I have drawn above. Many of the "missionary stations" are extremely comfortable, and, with the aid of grants from the Faithful at Home, the owners contrive to lead pleasant and orthodox lives. My own principal camp, at Chivamba's Kraal, in South Eastern Mashonaland, was the best equipped non-missionary station I ever saw; but then I was a cattle trader, not a grain trader, and until the disease swept my oxen away I was extremely successful from a financial point of view.

The Chivamba camp was on a small kopje about four hundred yards from the village itself, but as the latter was behind the spur of a larger kopje, we could hardly hear the drums. In a small mealie field beside the kopje we built our cattle-scherm, a huge, lion-proof erection capable of holding a hundred and fifty beasts, representing a huge amount of labour, for all the poles were about ten feet high, whilst the whole was bound together, not with the ordinary bark rope, but with raw hide. No lion ever managed to get into that scherm, though many attempted to do so; but the calf-scherm, which was just beside it, was raided once by leopards, who climbed up the poles and killed our two best



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calves. True, a judicious dose of strychnine sent the leopards to their own place the following night, but that did not compensate us; still, we had learned our lesson, and after that the calves used to sleep in a hut in the camp.

The goat draal—I have had as many as four hundred sheep and goats in the place at one time—was on the kopje itself, and though the hyænas used to visit it constantly, the lions and leopards left it alone. I kept a permanent hyæna trap at the back of the camp, an old rifle with its muzzle just protruding through the mouth of a very fully flavoured sheep's head, the whole arranged so that, when the visitor gave a tug at the head, he got the bullet into his own mouth. I fixed up quite a number of the brutes that way.

Our store building was of galvanised iron; rather a blot on the landscape, certainly, though a necessary one, for during our first season the rats and the white ants had cost us over a hundred pounds. No other trader in the district had an iron store, and, despite its ugliness, we were proud of it; but we were more than proud of our big living hut. This was, I believe, the best round hut in Rhodesia. It was eighteen feet in diameter, with walls six feet high, built of poles none of which was less than five inches in diameter at the smaller end, whilst every one had been trimmed up with the adze.

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Most large huts have a centre pole, but ours had not. The roof was constructed scientifically, all the binds being of raw hide, instead of the usual bark. The thatching was done by experts, whilst the mud plaster on the walls was so smooth that we were able to give it a couple of coats of distemper. We had glass in the windows; a proper door and door frame. Moreover, we had furniture, proper iron bedsteads and mattresses, chairs, a real table with turned legs, and some framed pictures, whilst in the kitchen we had a real cooking range; but what amazed visitors most, and made them predict our downfall, was that we had sheets on our beds. They used to say, probably with truth, that no other trader north of the Crocodile River had ever gone in for such luxuries, and that no business could stand such extravagance. Of course, any one of our critics would have thought nothing of spending twice the cost of those sheets over the bar of the "Thatched House" in one evening; but that was not a fair argument. Whisky was part, a very large part, of the custom of the country; sheets were dangerous innovations.

On the other hand, no native woman was ever allowed in our camp, unless she came to trade, accompanied by her own menkind. That was another of our innovations over which people shook their heads. Native women are also part of the custom of the country. I leave the moral

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side of that question to moralists at home—most missionaries are hardly qualified to speak on it, being, metaphorically, dwellers in miniature Crystal Palaces—but from the practical point of view, the custom is deplorable. If the woman belongs to another tribe, it is not so bad; it is when she comes from the neighbourhood, when her relatives haunt the white man's camp, learn all the white man's secrets, and the white man cannot, or dare not, drive them away, that the effects are so disastrous. The whole neighbourhood begins to despise the ruling race, often with reason; whilst what can be more horrible than the fate of a half-caste child, especially of a girl? It has the instincts of both races, and is debarred from the society of its father's people, save in the worst of capacities. It is born an outcast, and an outcast it must remain. It has instincts, longings, which can never be satisfied. Its position is even worse, far worse, perhaps, than that of the English labourer's child, who, having been educated at the expense of the State, taught to want things which are unattainable, things of which his parents never even heard, has in the end to go back and toil on land as his parents did, soured, disappointed at the outset, a victim of modern political fads.

The man who brings a half-caste into the world undertakes a terrible responsibility; but—what would you do, what can you do? It is

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human nature, perhaps ; certainly it is the custom of the country. Probably, too, the man will have died, or have left, long before the child reaches maturity. Anyway, we are almost as bad at home, if one makes allowances for the different climatic and social conditions—quite as bad, worse perhaps. We actually encourage thoughtless, beast-like breeding. If a bishop or a politician wishes to advertise himself effectively, he has only to set up and thunder out the old, immoral platitudes about “increase and multiply.” Breed! Breed! Breed, as the lower animals do, without any thought as to whether your children will be fit, mentally and physically, whether you can feed them, whether they will ever have a chance in the ghastly struggle of life. Only breed, and you will have deserved well of the State, which will educate your children, feed them, provide workhouses and prisons for them, all at the expense of the classes which should be breeding, which are fit to breed and bring into the world children as good, or better, than themselves, but cannot do so now, because of the grinding burden of taxation for the great cause of the Propagation of the Unfit.

It is very interesting—and very depressing—when you have lived abroad for many years, when you have gone away too young to be deeply imbued with conventional ideas, or when you have seen crude things,—mankind in the making,

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social systems in the melting-pot—to come Home and try and get into touch with Home ideas. You think at first that politicians and writers have their tongues in their cheeks when they go over the old, worn-out formulæ; you cannot understand how sane men can say, or write, such blatant rubbish, which would rouse the scorn even of a Mashona. Yet, after a time, you find that it is all very serious and very important. Both the great political parties, and the little jackal parties as well, say the same things, phrasing them a little differently to suit their audiences, in most cases believing them too. Nature's greatest law, her supreme law, is that of the Survival of the Fittest, yet the whole tendency of modern legislation, no matter which party is in power, is to try and nullify the effects of that law.

Because I have written plainly of half-castes, I do not wish to imply that the native women are naturally immoral. Far from that. In the kraals the standard of morality is very much higher than amongst the whites in the townships, and, in the average village, it is by no means easy—in fact it is often impossible—for a white man to get possession of a native girl; but, unfortunately, it is always easy to secure one in the neighbourhood of the mission stations. The moment a native woman is taught to wear clothes, she seems to develop immoral tendencies,

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or it may be that those with such tendencies gravitate to the missions.

Our big trading camp at Chivamba's soon became famous amongst the itinerant cattle buyers, of whom there was always a fair number knocking about the veld. These men were not traders in the ordinary sense of the word. They had no stations, paid no licenses. As a rule, they were a pretty poor lot, and many of them went in for very questionable practices. Their capital seldom exceeded fifty pounds in gold, and, generally, three or four boys sufficed to carry all their kit. They bought cattle from the natives—usually at far higher prices than I should have given—then drove them into one of the big mining centres and sold them to the butchers. It was a miserable job, considering the risks and toil involved, and those engaged in it generally lived very hard when on the veld; consequently, it was a God-send for them to come to our well-stocked camp and get two or three days of decent feeding.

Our point of view was, however, different. We did not want any competitors in the district, though we could not, of course, refuse any white man hospitality for as long as he cared to stay; and after a while we had such influence amongst the natives that they would sell cattle to no one but ourselves. I have seen a Kaffir in my own camp refuse ten pounds for a heifer from one of

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these wandering buyers, and immediately afterwards offer the same beast to me for eight pounds. He knew me, he explained, my money was "good," it would bring him luck.

Yet though these "tramps," as we used to call them, might not affect us directly in our business, they were a distinct nuisance in other ways. They generally managed to outstay their welcome. They would contract fever, or dysentery, or something like that, usually something which needed spirits to cure it, and they had a habit of remaining ill until they were convinced that the supply of whisky or dop was finished.

You cannot have strangers in your camp for days at a time without their getting an insight into your business, the prices you pay for cattle and goats, the prices you get for your trading stuff; and these were matters we were not over-anxious to make public. If I bought a bull for seven pounds and sold him in Victoria for sixteen pounds, I did not want the news slobbered out in the bar of the "Thatched House." Another favourite trick of my guests, too, was to endeavour to entice away my boys, especially my cook-boys. One great lout of a Boer treated me very badly in this respect. He had been quartered on me for three weeks, alleging fever. During that time he had consumed well over a case of dop, and had given me unlimited trouble by lying on my own bed groaning—certainly that dop was

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extremely bad, but he drank it of his own free will—and all the time, as I found out afterwards, he was trying to decoy away my best driver, my cook-boy, and my store-boy. He had a very nice black mare with him, and in the end I got rid of him by remarking that, as he seemed so ill, I would send one of my own savages on that mare with a message to the Dutch Reformed Mission Station, with which institution my visitor declared he was connected. The mere idea of his precious mount being given over to the tender mercies of a Mashona was enough. That Boer was quite well early next morning.

After one or two experiences of that kind, we started what we called “tramp’s diet.” As a rule, we lived very well. There was always guinea-fowl, hot and cold, cold guinea-fowl pie, buck-meat, and chicken, in the larder, whilst our bread and scones and biscuits were far better than any you could get from a baker in Bulawayo ; but as soon as an obvious loafer came down, all these were kept out of sight. Bully-beef, baking-powder bread, and tea without milk or sugar three times a day became the order. Naturally, we used to sneak off to the kitchen when the visitor was not looking and feed ourselves, but he was kept severely to his “tramp’s diet.” The plan acted admirably. The reputation of our hospitality went down with a rush, and we ceased to be worried with uninvited guests. It



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was not meanness—as a matter of fact, the bully-beef cost more than the guinea-fowl—it was merely a question of self-protection.

At Chivamba's we had no other trader within about seventy miles of us, though there were three abandoned stores in the first forty miles of our road out of Victoria. These had been built by two brothers, both of whom had died on the veld. The case of Maurice, the younger one, was a particularly gruesome story. The brothers had quarrelled over some money matter, but when Maurice found he had blackwater fever coming on, and was practically without medicine and white man's food, he naturally sent to his brother for help. But the elder man ignored the message. Maurice grew worse rapidly. His boys, seeing him dying, promptly ran away, fearing his spirit would haunt them. On the sixth morning his life flickered out—at least the natives in the kraal on the kopje never had a glimpse of him after that. Still there was no sign of a messenger from the other store, which was only a day's walk away. Ten days later, a mounted policeman, riding up to the huts, saw a hyæna dash out. Inside, he found only a skull, and some rags of clothing. A couple of years later the elder brother also died of blackwater, though during those years he saw his two nephews, and a third brother who had just come out, die of the same complaint.

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Undoubtedly, the loneliness was the worst part of a trader's existence. Week after week, he would never see a white man, his only company would be a crowd of evil-smelling natives, who held his life absolutely in their hands. What wonder, then, that men grew suicidal, that they lost all sense of decency and self-respect, or that, when they did manage to get into the township, they went off on a wild burst. Often, I have seen a trader tramp in, followed by a string of carriers, fully intending to take back a new stock of blankets and limbo; and then I have seen him a week later, with yellow, bloodshot eyes, shamble down to the Drift on his way back, with a single case of whisky in place of the goods he had meant to buy. His money was finished, his credit exhausted.

The romance of a trader's life is all in the novels.

## CHAPTER IV

### SCALLYWAGS AND OTHERS

I HAVE a great and sincere affection for scallywags. A good many people, I know, put me into that class, but I resent this. Above all things, I am respectable. I am a householder—I have a real lease for a real house in England. I have contributed largely to the fees of county courts, and have been fleeced unmercifully by tradesmen. I help to maintain those whom some grim and long-dead humorist named officially “The Guardians of the Poor”—at least I pay rates to them, and in return get an occasional glimpse of their plethoric persons entering licensed premises. True, I have not got a vote, because I have never lived long enough in one place to qualify for that priceless privilege, and if I had one I doubt if I should use it, as I have never yet met a candidate in the division where I was living whom I considered fit to be in Parliament, or even on a borough council. I pay many dog licenses, and subscribe to a parish magazine, so, even without the vote,

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I am sure I am not a scallywag. Still, I have mixed with them a good deal, and perhaps I can claim to write of them with authority.

I can recall many splendid specimens of the breed, some of them splendid men in every way ; but most have now gone across the Border Line, and so their memory is sacred, whilst the rest might not thank me for putting them in print.

I think the best of them all, the Scallywag in Excelsis, was a certain Rhodesian magistrate. He was, probably, the most able man who was ever in the Chartered Service, though, in itself, that is not an enormously high compliment, as any one who knows the mental and social level of the average Rhodesian civil servant will realise. None the less, he was brilliant—I trust he is still alive, so that I can say he is brilliant ; but he had a way of kicking over the traces. I suppose he used to grow weary of endeavouring to mould the local fashion in respectability, of setting an example to other men. He had been a trooper in the police, a barman, a Jameson Raider. Men used to say that it was owing to the latter fact that he became a magistrate and civil commissioner, and not owing to his undoubted ability, which was reckoned rather a disadvantage. The statement may have been true ; personally, I am inclined to think it was

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so, because he certainly knew a good deal concerning the inner history of the Raid, and it was the custom to give the Raiders jobs when their mouths could be kept closed. The Company was, and still is, very "sticky" on the subject of that pitiful excursion.

This particular scallywag, who was also a magistrate, used, as I say, to kick over the traces; in fact, on more than one occasion he, metaphorically, damaged the cart as well. He cleared a bar in Bulawayo with a chair once, and appearing next day on the Bench with a black eye, fined all his opponents five shillings each. The Company looked over that, and various other exploits of the same kind, but when he rode a horse into the bar of the "Grand Hotel," that sacred place where the mining magnates and the Chosen People foregather, and insisted on being served on horseback, the Powers-that-were decided that his nerves were out of order, and that he required a long, quiet holiday, on full pay.

It was during the days of the Boer War, and he and I were the only passengers on the south-bound train, which took six days and seven nights crawling down to Cape Town. Our brother Boer, or rather his illegitimate relations, the colonial rebels, were putting dynamite on the line, in the hope of securing that loot without which the rebellion could never have gone on—it is

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curious that whenever you hear a rebel prating about his high patriotic motives, he is always looking round for a chance to rob and murder his neighbour. The journey was a dreary one, or it would have been had I had any other companion, but we managed to get through it very pleasantly.

I was on my way home, but I met my friend again a year later, when he was magistrate in one of the smaller townships. I should not like to say that the long rest had steadied him greatly. It was about 11 A.M. when I trekked into the town, but he closed the office at once, closed it for the day, and we went off together. Next time I came in, though it was close season, I found he was out on the veld, shooting; and once I remember seeing him at three o'clock in the morning acting as barman in the one hotel, whilst on the stoep outside his own serjeant of police was pacing to and fro, wondering how he could enforce the Closing Act. When he put his head in the door to protest, his chief offered him the choice between a drink and a licking. Being wise, he chose the former.

Cattle inspectors were generally ex-Raiders, or similar folk who had a claim on the Chartered Company, or could work on the fears of that august though timid corporation. Most of them were qualified for their posts, in so far as they

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could tell a bull from a cow, but they relied on the transport riders themselves for other information. The result was that they had surprisingly few cases of infectious disease to report. As a rule, they never saw the spans at all, but merely signed the cattle pass, allowing the teams to go on the road, in the canteen; but if there was any suspicion, and one or two of the oxen looked sick, it was no uncommon thing for some other man's spans to be driven up to be inspected—and passed.

I don't think that we ever took any officials very seriously. The rank and file was not corrupt—I cannot remember ever having heard a whisper of suspicion against the Chartered employés in the smaller towns, and, of course, those heads of departments, who were supposed to have been implicated in the Marandellas scandal, when the Imperial Government was robbed on the higher scale, were all Salisbury folk, with whom we had no concern—but they were not inspired either with wisdom or with a sense of duty. So most men did what seemed good in their own eyes—an admirable state of affairs.

Still, I think that, all things considered, the Government was treated very fairly. There was extraordinarily little crime amongst the white population, and very few attempts were made to evade the laws relating to licenses. I never

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considered that the latter were fair, as regarded the trader, but still we always paid up—perhaps because we were doing very well, and did not want trouble.

When we started trading, a dealer's license was ten pounds per annum; but the second year the Company increased this to twenty pounds, or, rather, charged us ten pounds rent for about a quarter of an acre of land. We had four stores, so we had to pay eighty pounds for these, and seven pounds ten for a hawker's license. One would have thought that would have been enough, considering that the big companies were practically untaxed; but we were in the country of government by company for the benefit of companies. The Chartered people were more interested in the subsidiaries than in the parent concern, and, consequently, the individual who was unconnected with companies had to find the revenue for the country. He was the milch cow. He was wanted because he was indispensable; but he had to be kept down by high taxation, lest, like Jeshurun of old, he might wax fat and kick.

We paid eighty-seven pounds ten in licenses, as I have said, but this represented only a small proportion of our contribution towards reducing the deficit in the Chartered balance sheet. All our trading goods were heavily taxed, and we paid the taxes.



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I am not an expert on these vexed questions, so I have not the least idea whether I am preaching a Tariff Reform or a Free Trade sermon. I can only state crude facts. When I first went to Rhodesia there were no duties at all—a most excellent arrangement from our point of view. Unfortunately, however, in 1899, just before the Boer War, Cecil Rhodes and his co-directors hit on the brilliant scheme of taxing everything which came from overseas, and admitting Cape produce and productions free. We were essentially a British community; but, to please the Cape people—and Rhodes was always the Cape politician before everything else—their wretched stuff, their rot-gut spirits, their ptomained tinned goods, their alleged flour, all these were to come in duty free, whilst the imports from our own country were to be taxed outrageously. It was a quaint form of Imperialism, and—I suppose we were poor Imperialists—we did not like it at all. True, as far as possible we boycotted colonial stuff and insisted on British goods, not desiring to die before our time; but we had to pay enormously for these, and a terrible blow was dealt to the prosperity of the country.

That part was bad enough, but there was a more serious side still for the trader. The mining machinery for the companies—Imperialistic concerns must not be taxed—came in duty

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free, but trading goods had to pay right up to the limit. It would not have been so bad had the duties been arranged when the country was first settled, but, as it was, the natives had learned to expect certain goods at certain prices, and, as any one who knows the African savage will understand, it was quite impossible for the trader ever to raise his price, no matter how heavy the duties might be. He had to pay the duties himself, out of his own pocket. We ourselves used to pay in this way some five or six hundred a year to the Chartered Company, in addition to our licenses, and we got absolutely nothing in return. We had to police our own district; we had no sort of protection; we could get no redress when we were robbed; and if we had wanted to go to law, we must have brought our case before a colonial-born Chartered judge, an employé of the Company.

The consumer did not pay those duties. We paid them, every cent of them. I do not know whether this is an argument for Free Trade or for Protection. I have no taste for subtleties of that kind, though I like the idea of taxing the foreigner, especially as far as copyright law is concerned, but I used to feel, and I think I feel still, that it was a strong argument for the abrogation of the Charter. I shall never forget the colonial tinned jams, and the horrible Cape brandy, with which the stores were filled as a

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result of the new duties. Moreover—and I think this must be a Tariff Reform argument—the price of this rubbish was put up just as though it had had to pay duty, just as though it had been taxed British produce. The storekeeper got the extra profits, and Rhodes and his friends secured extra political support in the Cape Colony; whilst, of course, the mining companies were well-satisfied, because all their stuff came in duty free. Nothing has done Rhodesia so much solid harm as that fatal idea of subordinating it to the Cape, treating it as a pawn in the sordid game of Cape politics. We used to think that, after Rhodes' death, there would be a change, and that the British element would get a chance; but recent events have been deeply disappointing to those who, like myself, believe that colonies should exist for the benefit of the Mother Country, not that the Mother Country should be the milch-cow for colonials.

Chartered officials never came down to our trading stations. I do not think that there was one who even knew where they were situated; certainly, in the event of a rising, we should have had no succour from the police. I only invoked the aid of the authorities once, and on that occasion they proved so hopeless and helpless that we decided to run the district ourselves in future. The circumstances were rather

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interesting. We had always found the local natives absolutely honest when placed in a position of responsibility, and, perhaps, we had grown careless. At any rate, wanting a new store-boy for one of our smaller stations, we engaged what seemed to be a very smart youngster, without troubling greatly about his antecedents. As it happened, I got a severe dose of fever, and my young brother, Amyas, had to leave that same small station and hurry down to our big store at Chivamba's. He stayed three weeks, and during that time the new boy robbed us of about sixty pounds' worth of stuff. He was a cunning young brute. He had come to us clad only in a loin cloth and a string of beads, but, as a matter of fact, he was an educated mission boy, from a Dutch Reformed Missionary Station, a professional thief and forger. Had we known where he came from, that he came from any mission station, he would have been turned out of the camp promptly, for no white man would risk employing mission Kaffirs.

He stole, as I have said, sixty pounds' worth of trading stuff, and really I suppose he let us down lightly, because he left at least as much behind. The moment Amyas got back and started to make enquiries, the whole story came out. We traced him back to the mission station, and then asked the Native Commissioner to take

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up the case. There was, of course, no defence ; but at the same time the thief was not arrested. After a long delay he was fined a bullock, and, finally, he delivered at Chivamba's a calf which was certainly not worth more than three pounds ; consequently, he was able to boast that he had scored over the white man. In all probability he is now a clerk in Holy Orders, if that term can be applied to a Dutch Reformed preacher ; and, considering his peculiar fitness for the post, he will, I expect, end up as a bishop of the Ethiopian Church, that wholly detestable body which gathers unto itself all that is worst amongst the black races, and preaches the doctrine of "Africa for the African."

After that one experience, we worried no more about the Chartered officials and their laws, but started our own administration, with excellent results. When we imposed a fine, it was paid promptly. Usually it took the form of a goat, which was at once handed over to our own boys for their use, so that there should be no question of our having a personal interest in the matter. Even when a young Afrikander, whom we had employed as waggon conductor, robbed us, again of about sixty pounds' worth of stuff, I did not go to the authorities, but ran him to earth in Victoria, and got about thirty pounds' worth of cattle out of him — a bad bargain perhaps, though it was better than

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waiting for the law to act. I was an Englishman, and the case would have come before an Afrikander.

For some reason or other, I suppose with the idea of giving a sop to the people of the country, the Chartered Company started a foolish little legislative council, a wholly Gilbertian affair, in which the nominated members had a permanent majority over the elected ones. The Home-born men received the scheme with cold scorn, and, not only refused to vote, but refused even to register themselves as voters. They took up the very proper attitude of "Civis Romanus sum." A Roman citizen looked to Rome to rule him. He was not going to bring himself down to the level of the provincials.

The Government did not like this state of affairs. It might be Imperialistic so far as the British Press and the London Board was concerned, but in local affairs it was almost pitifully South African, or rather Afrikander, in spirit; consequently, a considerable amount of pressure was brought to bear on men to make them register. The magistrate's clerk in Victoria tackled me about the matter, but I happened to be busy, so I just stood him a drink, and told him to take his register to a very much hotter climate; then he got hold of Amyas, who was more patient, or had more time to waste at the moment. The clerk explained the official

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attitude at great length—he was a very decent fellow, though perfectly uninspired—and then he added that, unless we would register ourselves, we could not count on the assistance of the police in the event of trouble at our store. Amyas pointed out that we paid considerably more taxes than any one else in the district, and that therefore we had the first claim to the services of the police, if we wanted them, which we most emphatically did not. He said we would waive our claim gladly, as it was an expense to feed mounted policemen down at our stores, and a nuisance to have to go out and spoor their horses when, as so often happened, they got lost on the veld. But that clerk was, as I have said, uninspired; moreover, he had been told to get voters on to the register, so he would not take Amyas' refusal.

In the end, Amyas gave way. "I shall vote against both candidates," he said, "because both are certain to be rotters."

The clerk smiled feebly, and pointed out the difficulties of this course; then he solemnly inscribed Amyas' name on the register. When they were having a drink afterwards—everything in Victoria began and ended in the "Thatched House"—Amyas remarked casually that he hoped his vote would invalidate the election, as he was then only nineteen years of age, though he looked much older.

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I started this chapter intending to make it all about scallywags, but I fear I have drifted away from my subject. That is the worst of writing rambling reminiscences, especially when, as in my case, the author has become a writer by accident. I always reckon myself a transport rider, because I can handle bullocks better than I can do anything else, and also because it was the most congenial occupation I ever took up; still, over here they do not know what a transport rider is—at least, rate people and insurance companies and dull folk of that sort do not—so I have to describe myself as an author, which, I think, damages my credit, or would damage it if I had any.

I wish I could write of more of the scallywags I have known, but, in many cases, it would not be fair; they were my friends, and, therefore, I cannot regard them as copy. As for those who do not come into this class, they were, too often, grossly uninteresting, and so it would be a waste of space to deal with them. Generally speaking, they addressed you as “man,” spoke with a Cape Dutch intonation, and bored you with recitals of their own great deeds, things which they had done, stories of natives and game they had shot, in the dim past. I used to grow very, very tired of them, and now I want to forget them. They tell me I am prejudiced against Afrikanders. The charge is unfair. It is not



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prejudice, it is sheer weariness. They all seemed to come from Grahamstown, and to have been at some sort of elementary school they appear to have there. If you mentioned London, or San Francisco, or Paris, any of those cities where there is life, they would invariably retort: "Man, you should see Grahamstown with the lamps lit!"

They are not copy ; they were just bores ; and so I cannot see that they ever served any useful purpose, that they ever established their claims to exist ; but Cecil Rhodes brought them up by scores to Rhodesia — surely Warren Hastings would have brought Englishmen — and so we had to make the best of them, and try to follow the great Pauline precept, to suffer fools gladly. We suffered them certainly—we had to do so—but I never saw many signs of gladness amongst the English public school men who formed the majority of the decent set. Why should we have been glad? What was there to be glad about? On the other hand, we rejoiced when we heard how the Lancers had charged home at Elandslaagte, and when we heard of the hanging of colonial rebels.

I suppose I am taking an unpopular line in writing the truth. The cocoa-fed Pro-Boers already regard me as a son of Belial ; the worshippers of Cecil Rhodes look on me in much the same light, though they phrase

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it differently. They cannot forgive me for attempting to do justice to the memory of John Mackenzie, the man who made Rhodes' work possible, who forced Rhodes to become an Imperialist despite himself, despite that speech about "eliminating the Imperial factor." Still, it is a sporting proposition, and here in England I have no longer what I had in Umtali, when I had been fighting, and had beaten, the Chartered Company over its native policy—the threat of a shot in the darkness.

To go back to scallywags—we had some in Umtali, some beauties. The best specimen was first cousin to the most popular duke in England, bore the same name, and was extraordinarily like him in appearance. He had been in a crack British regiment, and had been forced to leave over some scandal. His people made him an allowance of three hundred a year, which was paid quarterly. As a rule, Captain X—the local officials, holding commissions in Chartered Volunteer Corps, used to make a point of ignoring the British officer's rank—used to come in and draw his allowance; then he would go all round the township and pay off every cent he owed, pay a good deal more than he owed as a rule, for commercial morality was an unknown quality in Umtali; then, with the balance, he would go on the burst. Yet even then, when he was at his very worst, he was more of a gentleman

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than were any of those officials who affected to scoff at him. It was born in him, and was not even bred in them. I liked him immensely, and I used often to wonder what his real story was. I fancy he must have done in real life what so many men do in fiction—sacrificed himself to save a woman. I am perfectly certain he had never been guilty of an ungentlemanly action. When I heard of him last, he had a post at five pounds a month as instructor to some local volunteer corps, and an American “Bishop,” the African head of some weird, schismatic body, was trying to oust him, and get the post for one of his own missionaries. It would have been immensely funny, had it not been so horribly sad.

We had two other peers' sons in Umtali, both of whom had gone under through whisky. One—he is dead now—was an exceedingly good fellow, and deserved a better fate; the other—the only white man I ever forbade to come again to my place—was an absolute outsider. I stood him for a long time, but at last he reached the limit. He would come down to my house at breakfast time, and start in on my whisky, drinking fast and steadily, until he reached the quarrelsome stage, when I would lead him out gently, and tumble him over the edge of the veranda.

I have seen him once since, sitting on a seat

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in Finsbury Circus, outside the Chartered Company's offices, looking the picture of dishevelled misery; yet there is only one life between him and the succession to an earldom.

The term "scallywag" has always seemed to me rather a nice one. It suggests unpractical, though wholly decent, qualities. I expect a scallywag to be a public school man, and so those of whom I am now going to write do not come into that class.

It was, as far as I can remember, in 1901 that two horsemen arrived at Chivamba's store, coming, greatly to our surprise, from the east. They were a queer-looking pair. One, obviously the leader, was a yellow-bearded German, stooping, hollow-chested, yet active in the extreme; his companion was a Boer—a Cape Colony Boer, I think, because he evidently had a streak of native blood in him; in fact, had not the German introduced him as a white man, I should have treated him as a Kaffir.

In passing, I might mention that that same question of Cape Colonials led to a good deal of difficulty in Rhodesia. In the Cape—where they sell dop to natives and give them a vote—they are by no means particular on the subject of colour. True, they protest that they are, but then they still protest that they are loyal, so their protestations are not of great value, for they proved this measure of their "loyalty"

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during the Boer War. In Rhodesia we were pretty sound on the colour question, yet we had case after case of Cape Colonials whom we were certain had black blood in them. Amyas and I solved the problem by ignoring them, but many men did not, or could not, go so far. Still, we never went in for holding the candle to the devil; we knew who we were. I won't say, however, that it added to our popularity in official circles, that is, in Afrikaner circles. In Umtali one of the leading officials of my day was undoubtedly a half-caste—one glance would tell you that—yet Umtali, being a pretty degenerate place, the population used to fawn round this hulking, ugly "Cape boy," and professed not to notice the black stain, and to see nothing horrible in his being married to a white girl. Yet all the time, over its whisky, it used to slobber out about the terrible and heroic things—every one was a valiant volunteer—the terrible and heroic things it had done, or was going to do, to the poor, wretched Mashona.

The German and the dusky Boer came to my camp, and, of course, I told them to off-saddle. As it happened, Amyas was with me at the time. They were very dirty, and very hungry, so we fed them on guinea-fowl pie—if I can't do anything else, I can cook—and cold chicken, and curried steinbok haunch, and suet

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pudding. They appreciated that part, though they showed no enthusiasm when the house-boy placed two large jugs of hot water on the wash-hand stand. Amyas said afterwards that they seemed afraid of catching cold.

They ate largely, and drank dop, and then they began to talk. They had been down almost to the Portuguese border, they said, and they had found both coal and copper in large quantities. They showed us samples, and, later on, we found that their story was true, so far as that part went. They were dead-broke—they admitted that frankly; they had not a sou wherewith to secure the mining rights over their discoveries. When they got into Victoria, they would not even be able to pay their hotel bills. Would we go into partnership with them? If we would give them our red span of cattle and its waggon, they were ready, there and then, to make over to us half their interest in the claims. The red span was worth about four hundred pounds, as cattle went then, and the idea wanted some consideration.

I left Amyas talking to them in the big hut, and went across to the kitchen. There I found the chief herd-boy on the jump with anxiety. These white men were schelm, he said; every black man knew them by reputation. The Germans had been fighting General for Gungunhana, the Ma'Tchangana chief, during the war against the

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Portuguese, and, subsequently, had killed three Portuguese police who had attempted to arrest him. In itself this seemed a very minor crime—there are too many Portuguese, anyway—but they told me other things concerning him and his companion which made me very uneasy, because I felt certain they were true, and I decided to have nothing whatever to do with their proposed bargain.

I said so next morning, and they rode off; but a man in Victoria, our own agent, was wiser, or more rash. He let them have about five hundred in cash, and within a year netted some fourteen thousand in cash and shares. A company was brought out with a great flourish of trumpets. It was going to supply half the world with coal and copper. It had the Chartered blessing, and the Chartered Company received a very large interest in return. The capital made a large hole in a million pounds, and for a time every one was happy. We knew, of course—every one in the district knew—that it was quite out of the question to construct a railway down to the mines, and that no white man could live there for more than two or three months at a time; but the public was not worried with petty details of that kind. I do not know where that great corporation is now. I no longer see its shares quoted anywhere, so I suppose it has gone the way of most Rhodesian

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companies ; yet I always feel sore when I think that we threw away the chance of making fourteen thousand out of it. Still, practically the whole of the money which the partners made was lost a year or so later over the African Coast fever, and, I suppose, had we had it, we should have lost it in the same way. There was no luck in the country in those days, except for the company promoters.

Two or three years later, in Umtali, we missed another chance. There was a minor official there who, though the two great self-advertisers of to-day would have called him a success, because he had a wholly unreasonable number of children whom he could not support, was generally reckoned an absolute failure. Everything he touched went wrong, and no one would have anything to do with him in business. He was straight, straight as a die, but he seemed foredoomed to failure.

Yet, despite his ill-luck, he was always full of schemes for making fortunes. His salary was, of course, wretchedly poor, and, consequently, when he had an inspiration, which was about every second day, he had to endeavour to find some one to finance it ; usually he failed, in fact he had about reached the end of things when he came to us. We were doing nothing at the moment, though we had prospecting kit and a portable assay plant. He wanted us to go half



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shares with him over a gold reef he had found about three miles outside the township. We agreed, camped on his reef, stuck up discovery notices, and began to look for the gold, which our partner declared existed in solid lumps. We dug holes and put in cross-cuts, or rather our boys did, but we found no gold—in fact, we did not even find a continuous reef, so after a week or so we gave it best, and decided that the community was right when it said that the poor little man was hoodooed. He had driven us nearly mad by worrying round, and we swore we would never have business dealings with him again.

We went away prospecting then, struck what seemed a good proposition, spent a lot of money in sinking a shaft, found our reef was only a "fault," then came back to Umtali feeling a bit tired with most things. Our little man was waiting for us, looking very haggard and earnest. We imagined at first that his family had increased, and he had received a telegram from Mr Roosevelt; but such was not the case. He had found another gold reef, and no one would finance him. In proof of his statement he produced a bag of the most hungry-looking quartz I have ever seen. Certainly, it was flecked with visible gold, but it was the sort of stuff that no practical mining man would think of handling, at least if, as in our case, he wanted

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to work the mine himself. We made a few enquiries, and found that two practical men had already pegged out, and abandoned, this particular ground.

Our little official offered us a half share, and we refused it; then he offered us two-thirds, and we refused that. A few days later we left the country for good, and I forgot all about him, forgot there was such a person, until a year or so ago, when I heard casually, from a man who knew nothing of our negotiations, that the half share had just fetched about ten thousand pounds in cash and shares, mainly in cash. It was just our luck.

There were plenty of scallywags, good scallywags, in the Mounted Police. The officer who started the Faro bank in Victoria was one, as was also his predecessor, who came to grief through trusting to the honour of the managers of two of the big trading companies. I often wondered he did not go in search of them with a sjambok. They had used him as a tool in a dirty business—it was an offshoot of the Marandellas scandal, and the High Gods of Salisbury dare not, of course, prosecute them—but they certainly deserved a flogging. Instead, they waxed fat and wealthy, whilst he went down to the Transvaal to be shot by the Boers. That was the way of things in Rhodesia, all the decent fellows seemed to go under.

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As a rule, the police were not popular. The Force generally was looked down upon by civilians, and, I must admit, there was good reason for this attitude. In a country where the minimum wage for an unskilled white man was a pound a day, there was something wrong, at least we assumed there must be something wrong, about a trooper who would sign on at five shillings a day. In many cases, of course, a youngster had been recruited at home—it was very hard to recruit them in South Africa—and had come out knowing nothing of the conditions, never suspecting that the Force had a thoroughly bad name, and that, once he had been in it, he was practically debarred from getting a civilian appointment afterwards.

I was very sorry for many of the boys who were sent out. They had expected a romantic life, and they found they had let themselves in for the most sordid and demoralising one possible. They were sent to an out-station, some forsaken spot on the veld, where there was absolutely nothing to do. They were mounted police, yet they had no horses; they were a military force, yet they had no drill, no duties of any sort. Their lives were spent loafing about a sweltering little camp, their only relaxation being a tramp to a native village in search of Kaffir beer. They were not welcome guests in other camps; they were the only class which got no credit at stores

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or canteens. They were the outcasts of the community, the pariahs, and they generally managed before long to justify their reputation.

It used to be said that joining the police in Rhodesia was equivalent to going to the workhouse at Home, personally, I think it was worse; it was so utterly demoralising. The Force never got a chance. It was a case of the dog with a bad name.

It comprised numbers of exceedingly nice fellows, men who might have done well, but most of them joined before their characters were formed, and the lack of work, combined with the feeling of being ostracised, proved too much for them. It seemed a terrible shame to see so many fine lives ruined, but the Government would not, or could not, pay and equip them properly, whilst, considering the unpopularity of the Chartered Company, there was, naturally, a prejudice against any one in its employ.

When the police went out on patrol they usually got lost, and natives had to be sent to find them and bring them back. As a body, they were extraordinarily inefficient on the veld, possibly because they had so few chances of learning the ways of the veld.

I do not know that they were much more efficient when on duty in the mining camps. I remember how, on one mine where I was working, the storekeeper went out for a week's

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shooting, leaving his cousin in charge. The cousin promptly developed *delirium tremens*, and, in trying to shoot a rat which did not exist, destroyed the best part of a case of whisky, and set fire to the straw envelops. Two or three customers who were in the place, gathered him up, and tied him down in bed; then the mine manager suggested that the police—we had a corporal and two troopers—had better take charge of the store.

They agreed gladly. For two days they had quite a great time; then the manager, noticing that an unusually high percentage of his own men were off work, went down to investigate. As he reached the store, the corporal and one trooper stumbled off the stoep. Their shirts were filled with tins of provisions, whilst they themselves were filled with whisky. The third man was asleep behind the bar, whilst two Cornish miners and an amalgamator were helping themselves.

The police had charge of the telephone system—we had telephones instead of telegraphs, on account of the difficulty in getting operators—and I am afraid they did not do much towards rendering the service popular. Of course, the lines were put up in a disgraceful manner, with bottle necks for insulators, a truly Rhodesian touch, and any sort of poles, often soft wood ones, which the borers and white ants quickly

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ate away ; as a result, communications were often interrupted for weeks at a time ; but that was not the main objection to the service. What we kicked at was the absolute lack of secrecy. In their guileless intemperance, the police would usually allow any one to look through the file of messages, would even save you that trouble and repeat any particularly interesting communication. The mining companies could always learn what wires their employés were sending, a fact which was of great assistance to them in the detestable system of espionage they maintained. Still, I suppose, when all your letters were liable to be opened, and were opened frequently, to see that you were not sending home disparaging accounts of the Land of Promises, this was quite a minor point.

I happened to spend the Christmas following the outbreak of the Boer War at a fort in the Matoppo Hills. I was waiting for a waggon of mine, and the police, an unusually nice lot of fellows, invited me to stay over the festivities with them. There were about eight of them in all, and they began to celebrate as soon as the stores arrived. I always had a very strong head for liquor, and, moreover, I was going very quietly as a result of much malaria ; consequently, on the second night I was the one sober member of the party.

They were snoring in the big hut, so I went

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across to the smaller one, where the corporal in charge of the telephone lived. The telephone bell was ringing, and the corporal was sitting back in his chair wagging his finger at it. I took the receiver off the hook and jotted down the message for him. Heavens! It was a message. News was a very long time coming through in those days, and this was the first that had reached us from the front for days—the news of Colenso, Stormberg, and Magersfontein all together. It spoilt that Christmas, at least for me.

The police usually played the game with us very well as regarded shooting. They wanted meat, we wanted meat, and we all objected to the *soi-disant* sportsmen from home or from the United States, who came out to slaughter the game which was of such vital importance to us. The best game preserver is always the frontiersman, who has to live on game meat; he regards it as an asset which must not be wasted. Occasionally, however, you found an officious N.C.O. who tried to be nasty. There was a corporal at Manzimnyama, south of Bulawayo, who had a leaning that way, a small, fair man, who had to remain in the police because he knew that, as soon as he left it, he would have got a long overdue licking from every transport rider who found him. He was great on game prosecutions, and he had managed to get more than

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one man fined ; consequently, there were several people waiting for him.

They got him in the end, beautifully, artistically. The story is rather an interesting one. A good many men used to go in for "shooting" fish, that is dynamiting the pools on the sand rivers, and stunning, or killing, all the fish by the concussion. I know it is a hatefully unsportsmanlike practice ; but when the fish will not bite, and you and your natives are hungry, there is a certain excuse for it. Besides being unsportsmanlike, it is illegal, and the corporal was very down on it ; consequently, when a transport rider strolled into the canteen, and mentioned casually that a party was going down to dynamite a certain pool the following morning, the little man pricked up his ears.

He was out before dawn, and hid himself in the bushes close beside the pool, where he could watch everything. Presently a couple of white men came down, followed by some boys carrying dynamite and fuse. The corporal began mentally to rehearse the evidence he would give before the court. He must have known very little about the process of "shooting" fish, or he must have been greatly preoccupied with the legal aspect of the affair ; otherwise he would have left his hiding-place hurriedly. As it was, however, he stayed, watched the white men light their fuses and dash for cover, then, a few



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seconds later, he found himself amidst a regular hail of rocks. It was a marvel that he was not killed. The "fish shooters" were, as a matter of fact, two miners employed in blowing away a bar of granite across the end of the pool. Possibly, it was not a very pleasant trick to play on that corporal, but the general opinion was that he fully deserved the scare he got.

That same police fort of Manzimnyama—Black Water is the translation of the name—had a most unsavoury reputation for fever. I remember one occasion, I think it was in 1897, when out of seventeen men who were there at the beginning of the fever season, only three remained at the end. The rest were either dead, or had been invalidated up to Bulawayo.

There have been many changes since those days. A railway now runs down to the district, and a township has been started somewhere in the neighbourhood of the old police camp. It would be rather curious to go there and see the changes which have taken place, rather curious, and very depressing. Probably I should not meet a single man I knew. The road, the old Tuli-Bulawayo track, is, I suppose, overgrown, the old wayside stores have probably disappeared. The men of to-day belong to an entirely different class to those of my days, and I expect I should not like them. At any rate, I am not at all keen on making the experiment.

## CHAPTER V

### MINES AND MINING WAYS

RHODESIA was conquered and exploited, primarily as a mining country. It was, we were told, possibly with truth, certainly with a sufficient amount of truth for a company prospectus, the Ophir of the Old Testament. Some enthusiasts even went so far as to identify the Sabi River with Sheba, regardless of the fact that, in that case, the Queen of Sheba would have been black, and would probably have had red ochre rubbed in her wool. On that point, I fear, the whole theory must fall to the ground, for Solomon, as an expert in womankind, perhaps one of the greatest experts in history, could never have lavished his favours on her.

Still, Ophir and Sheba were very useful. They brought millions of capital, if not into the country, at least into the promoters' pockets; and of that capital the Chartered Company took a very large proportion, so it became something very like *lese majesté* to doubt the Ophir theory.

No one can deny, of course, the existence of

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an enormous number of ancient gold workings ; whilst the total of ancient buildings, ranging from an enclosure fifty feet square to the gigantic edifice at Zimbabwe, is far greater than most people think. When out shooting, I myself have stumbled on at least ten whose existence had not been suspected before. Moreover, I fully believe that somewhere in the Sabi Valley there is a ruin larger even than the great Zimbabwe. I lived three years in the neighbourhood of the Sabi, and I heard of it constantly from the natives, although I could never get precise information as to its position. Men jeer at "nigger stories," men who know only the natives of the townships ; but I seldom, if ever, found any of those stories which had not a certain amount of truth in it. I feel certain that, some day, a prospector or a hunter will stumble across the great ruin in the Sabi Valley, and then Zimbabwe will have to take the second place.

Everybody used to have theories about the Ancients, though the official Sheba-Ophir one was always the favourite. Personally, I too believe that those invaders were a people of Semitic origin, who worked their way southwards about the time of Solomon, and it is quite possible that the gold used in the Temple at Jerusalem came from Rhodesia ; but on one point I cannot agree with the majority—I do not believe that the Ancients abandoned the country altogether. Go

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where you will in Eastern Mashonaland, and you will find descendants of those Ancients, men with high cheek-bones and long beards, utterly different in those respects from the ordinary natives. Yet, none the less, they are ordinary natives in everything else. Their fathers, their mothers, their brothers, are probably just like the rest of the community; only, these men are atavisms, they revert to some old strain. Then, too, you get Semitic customs, especially as regards the selection and killing of sacrificial beasts. Many of the regulations might have been taken straight out of the Mosaic Law, though the remainder are sheer, gross savagery.

The whole subject is an intensely interesting one, and it is a matter of great regret that it has never been investigated by an expert of undoubted standing. Possibly, the next few years may see it taken up by some independent scientific body. The Chartered Company could have no objection now, any more than it could object to the use of diamond drills to discover the real value of the gold reefs. Fifteen years ago, ten years ago even, a slur on the Ancients might have led to a slump on the Stock Exchange. Nowadays, fortunately, the investor has learnt wisdom, or rather, has bought wisdom, at a very high price, and, though it may sound callous, I believe the market cares little whether the ruins and the mines were the work of the Portuguese

THE  
HOME OF THE  
ROCK RABBITS.



THE HOME OF THE ROCK RABBITS.



GREAT ZIMBABWE.



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or of Og, King of Bashan, whether Zimbabwe was a giant smelting house or merely a place of storage for King Solomon's surplus wives.

The ancient mine workings are, naturally, of far greater practical interest than the ruins. The country had evidently been prospected with the greatest care, by men who knew their work thoroughly. Very few properties worth developing had been missed; the vast majority of those worked to-day had been worked by the Ancients thousands of years ago. True, the old workings seldom extend more than sixty feet down, and at first it was assumed, very naturally, that the appliances of those prehistoric miners would not allow them to go any deeper; yet subsequent experience has led to a modification of this idea. The ancient workings stop, as a rule, where the rich surface pocket of gold ends. Those Ancients picked the very eyes out of the reefs, being, apparently, far better gold-miners than their twentieth-century successors.

It would be interesting to know how many million pounds would have been saved had the Chartered Company allowed, or insisted upon, mining companies putting down diamond drill holes, before launching out an enormous expenditure on machinery and development work. The diamond drill would have shown exactly what was the value of the reef below the ancient workings, and in that case it is safe to say that

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nine out of ten of the companies would never have been floated. But in those days the real gold mine was at Home, in the pocket of the British Public, and it would have been most inconvenient, and injudicious, to stop the flow of capital.

Knowing what conditions really were, it is difficult to write of the matter with patience. In the nineties people at home must have been mesmerised in some weird manner. The Press had taken up Cecil Rhodes, just as it had ignored that far greater statesman, John Mackenzie. Rhodesia had been boomed, as no colony, fortunately, had ever been boomed before. Rhodes was a new Warren Hastings—at least the Press said so, though the verdict of History may be slightly different. Lobingula was a bloodthirsty villain; the Matabele had to be wiped out; Mashonaland first, then Matabeleland, was the Land of Promise; gold was to be found everywhere; and, so far as natural disadvantages were concerned, these could easily be counteracted by sufficient Mounted Policemen and Chincona bark.

When the Land of Promise turned out to be merely the Land of Promises, the country became unfashionable, and as a result at once began to go ahead. The spasmodic attempts which have been made of recent years to boom it on the old unsound lines, the beating of the



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big drum of pseudo-Imperialism, and the trotting out again of the now decrepit titled Guinea-Pigs, have failed to do any solid harm. Conditions have changed entirely; the mining industry has reconstituted itself, and is now on a solid basis. It is the day of the small mine run on economical lines, a mine—a mere pocket in many cases—with a short life, and, therefore, not warranting any great expenditure on machinery or development. The vast capitals beloved of the professional Rhodesian promoter are things of the past. A few companies have recently been floated on this basis, but I look forward hopefully to the time when further attempts in this direction will lead, not to impressive mansions in the West End, but to that even more impressive building at the corner of Newgate Street and the Old Bailey.

The marvel is that the mining industry managed to survive at all. "Wild Cat" would be a mild term to apply to the majority of the earlier ventures, for, after all, a wild cat is a concrete thing—it can scratch and bite, and do other objectionable tricks of that kind; but a very large number of those mines did not exist at all as such. There were so many rods, poles, and perches, or so many morgen, of stony ground; there were outcrops of hungry-looking quartz, but in the majority of cases there was no reef worth the expenditure of a single charge of

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dynamite. Looking at many of those places, one would never have imagined that it needed a full Board of Directors to manage their affairs.

Quartz reefs—and Rhodesia is essentially a quartz country—are notoriously patchy. The man who puts his money into them is as much a gambler as the man who plunks down his dollar on the matting-covered table of a fan-tan den. Possibly, probably I might say, he would resent the comparison. He would declare, truthfully, that fan-tan is an unholy invention of the Heathen Chinee; and he would draw back in horror at the door of the fan-tan den, being, of course, respectable, or he would not have money to invest. Yet, none the less, fan-tan is run on straight lines—the bank takes its chance all the time—whilst Rhodesian mining was like a poker game in which the dealer had seen all the cards, whilst the other players had to go it blind.

I wonder how many people would speculate in mining shares if they knew even a quarter as much as I do about the game. It is such a childish way of losing your money. A very small group of men who know everything, two or three perhaps, are playing against the mob which knows nothing. The price of the shares, in the majority of cases, rests entirely in the hands of the Board at Home. Even the mine manager, or the consulting engineer, can do little. They may send cables to London, report-

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ing rich strikes, or telling of a fault in the reef; but it is the directors who decide whether those cables are to be made public. The output from the mill may be three thousand ounces, but, as is very often done, the Board may declare it as two thousand, keeping a thousand in hand "to steady the figures in case of a bad month." The mine may be shut down suddenly through shortage of native labour or water, or something of that kind, when there is labour and water in abundance. When I was labour agent, one mine I was supplying shut down suddenly *for lack of boys*, though I was ready to supply it with twice as many as it needed. The bears were growling.

These and similar things are done every day of the year. Why not? Who can prove anything? Who suspects anything, even? The directors pull all the strings: the shareholders are scattered, and, in most cases, unsuspecting. The Board puts the shares up or down as it likes—provided, of course, there is still a market—and the speculator's only chance of a profit is to disregard every tip he gets, and to go ahead blindly, hoping he will blunder on to the right line of policy. Still, it is essentially a pursuit for the feeble-minded.

Many men, and women too, have told me harrowing tales of the money they have lost through Rhodesian mines; yet I cannot say that I ever managed to work up a great measure of

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sympathy for any of them. They were offered ridiculous profits, and their greed got the better of their commonsense. That was the whole story. They may have been—many of them were—country parsons and elderly ladies; but they were also wild gamblers. The plea of ignorance was a pitifully mean one. Practically speaking, they wanted to set up the Gaming Act as a defence; though, had they won, their consciences would not have prevented them from scooping in their winnings.

What is the future of Rhodesian mining? The big company is doomed. Many of these companies are dead, the majority of the remainder are moribund. True, a few appear to be showing a profit, because the value of a month's gold exceeds the month's working expenses, but in most cases these figures will not bear investigation. It is so easy to put expenses down as capital expenditure, so easy to over-estimate the life of the mine, and to under-estimate the depreciation. Once the reef pinches out, development work which has cost fifty thousand pounds is not worth fifty pence. The moment the mill stops, the machinery would not fetch the price of scrap-iron. With patchy quartz reefs like those in Rhodesia, a mine becomes a paying proposition when the capital expenditure has been repaid—and not till then. How many of the big companies can fulfil that condition to-day?

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Yet I believe Rhodesian mining has a bright future before it, even though it will eventually be a phase in the history of the country, rather than a regular industry. A reef, which is an absolute failure with a capital of a quarter of a million, will pay enormously when worked by half a dozen men with a five-stamp portable mill. There are thousands of such reefs in the country, offering a splendid opening for the small capitalist—the capitalist who has technical knowledge as well as money, I mean—and for some years to come, perhaps for a generation, vast quantities of gold should be extracted; but it would be a great mistake to regard this form of mining as a permanent factor in the future of the country. It is merely a most useful aid to the development of the country.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE WOMEN OF THE FRONTIER

IT is no easy matter to write about the women of the frontier, because their number was, comparatively speaking, so small, that one may be accused of drawing pictures of individuals. I am going to try and avoid doing that, in fact I think I can avoid it, because, though I liked several women I met immensely, I was always in love, or thought I was in love, with some one or other outside the country; as a result, I could take a more or less unprejudiced view.

If you are going to build up a colony with wholesome ways and wholesome ideals, you must have wholesome women of British birth, not strong-minded women, or "pioneer women" who can make butter, or hammer a native, or cut up a pig, but nice, dainty women who will serve to remind men of things at Home, and so keep them up to the mark. I like a woman who can do things, womanly things; but I have no respect for the woman who wants to do the work of a man, at least on the frontier.

## The Women of the Frontier

There was once a certain mining camp in Matabeleland—I am not going into particulars because the first woman would not like it—which was about as soddenly drunken a place as you would find in the British Empire. Men drank there, or, rather, they laid their souls in soak. There was nothing else to do. Now and then they washed, occasionally they shaved, less frequently they changed their clothes. They were overworked, under-fed, and the fear of death was always on them, for they had grown to know, only too well, the perfect poetry of that service which begins, "I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord."

It was a rotten camp, a putrid camp if you will, and that wet season the tale of dead would probably have been, not as it was, twelve per cent., but sixty per cent.; only there came down an American lady, a gentle Southern woman, wife of one of the contractors, and in a week or so she had pulled the camp together. I don't think she ever said anything to any one about their habits—certainly she never did to me, and I was not exactly a Shining Light—but, somehow, almost without knowing why, we began to wash, and shave, and put on clean clothes after we had finished work, and, instead of going to the canteen, stay in our huts on the off-chance of being invited down to tea with her husband and herself. She was so entirely

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straight, and so entirely sweet and clean, that she shamed us back into a sense of decency, and one or two colonials, who made foul remarks concerning her, were given what they had probably needed for years, what they had missed during their school training—thoroughly good kickings.

She stayed just long enough to get us through the worst of the fever season, and then she and her husband left the camp for good. I have never heard of her again, but I have never forgotten her, or forgotten the splendid work she did. True, she had fine material on which to work, plastic stuff which could be moulded into something very evil or something very good; but, unfortunately, she had gone before that material had set, and I am afraid that before long we had begun to go back to our old ways.

Then there came another woman, a Free State Boer woman who had lived in England, with all the ways of her kind, and those ways are not nice ones. She revelled in the flogging of a native, even of a native child, and she had a sufficiently strong personality to infect several of the youngsters with Afrikaner ideas, clean youngsters of British birth. The camp drank as heavily as it had done before that gentle Southern lady came down, but now, in its drunkenness, it took to kicking its Kaffirs.



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Other women came after that, one or two at a time. Cornishwomen who helped their husbands in blackmail schemes; Colonial women, who never counted at all; German women who were members, as most German women in South Africa are, of the oldest profession on earth—foul members though, human hyænas.

Had that American girl stayed, had we had another to take her place, we might have become a decent community; we should have become one; as it was, however, we grew to be a by-word, even in Matabeleland—which was saying a great deal.

You can't keep Englishmen straight—I use the term "Englishmen" because "Briton" seems to suggest a person in a patriotic song—you can't keep them straight, unless there are straight women of their own race about, unless they get to the point of feeling that they are ashamed to go wrong in an animal-like way. Moral codes are mere dead letters on the frontier. Somehow, they get thrown to the winds, and you come down to crude truths. Yet I think I should qualify this statement, in fact I know I should, because some of those women who are not straight in the ordinary sense of the word, Women on the Wall, members of Rahab's profession, have exercised a splendid influence on the men of the frontier. Unfortunately, or fortunately—I do not know which way to put

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it—their number has been small, because all the good ones were Home-born, and for one of these there were twenty foul creatures who had been born in Germany, or Austria, or Russia, and looked on Yiddish as their natural language.

Women could have done so much in Rhodesia, and they did so little—that was the pity of it all. So few of the right women came up there, not because they were unwilling to come, but because they never had a chance to come. It was fairly tragic, when you came to think what it all meant. We had a splendid lot of men there, from every Public School in the United Kingdom—the British Public School man made Rhodesia, and no one else counted greatly from a practical point of view—but they had not enough women of their own kind. I can quite understand how it came about. The Afrikanders, and most officials were Afrikanders, got their women-folk up cheaply and easily, and the Englishman did not care to bring his sister or his wife into that society. I would not have dreamed of doing so myself. Consequently, the average Englishman had no female society, so was forced to put in his spare time at the canteens. Yet I think he was, after all, better there than mixing with the society of Salisbury and Bulawayo. A Rhodesian canteen might reek of liquor, bad liquor manufactured by Teutonic patriots, naturalised patriots, in Port Elizabeth, but in

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it a youngster only risked alcoholic poisoning, and, possibly, a course of *delirium tremens*, whilst he risked infinitely more if he mixed in the society of those horrible little townships.

Rhodes made an appalling mistake when he gave an Afrikaner tone to the newly-acquired territories. Had he recruited his civil service at Home, from amongst his own people, he would have left behind him a land of clean ideals, the nucleus of an Empire, a potential India. As it is now, Rhodesia will never be more than a mere South African colony.

The Englishwoman was never given a chance to make her influence felt in Rhodesia. She was always overshadowed by the Boers and colonials, whose husbands had the pick of the official billets. Is it to be wondered at, then, that few Englishwomen cared to remain in the country, or that, if they did remain, they kept entirely to themselves. They were not addicted to handling pitch, and you had to have a taste that way to become popular in Salisbury and Bulawayo. Victoria, of course, was different; it was always an English town, but, unfortunately, it was very, very small.

I often think how very different the history of the country might have been, how many fine lives might have been saved, what a different type of white population there would have been to-day, if only there had been more Home-born

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women. I know that, in a way, the territories are going ahead now ; but I do not think they are going ahead in the right way. Instead of being part of Great Britain, with men and women who regarded Great Britain as their home, who sent their children Home to be educated, and looked forward to finishing their own days at home, it has just become part of South Africa, the land on which the starting-point of social life is the three-legged stool beside a cow-dung fire. I have said that the British Public School men made Rhodesia, at least they did all the solid, hard work, whilst the others did the talking, and, incidentally, got both the credit and the financial rewards ; but, as soon as the rough-hewing was over, there was not much scope for those same Public School men, or, rather, for the few of them who had escaped from the fever and the natives ; and they began to drift away to other lands, where there was a chance of meeting women of their own race and class.

After all, women are the main factor, the only factor of any importance, in life. The ambitious man is popularly supposed to be striving after power, but, in practically every case, he wants power really because it will bring him the love, or the admiration, or the favours of women. The mining magnate gropes about in the mire and slime of High Finance with the same object. He may not be aware of it ; he might scoff at

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the notion; but in the vast majority of cases the sexual instinct is the force which drives him on. The man who has ruled women absolutely out of his life, who never gives them a thought, is an entirely abnormal creature. Holding these views, I feel certain that the lack of Englishwomen was of immense disadvantage to Rhodesia. There was little scope for chivalry in the lives of the men on the frontier. They were, as a rule, thoroughly good to one another; but that is a very different matter from having opportunities of showing how decent they could be towards white women. It did not make them shave, and wash, and keep away from the canteen; whilst the majority of the white women they did meet were of a kind calculated to send the average Englishman to the canteen, in the hope of forgetting them and their ways.

The hospital nurses formed a very large proportion of the Home-born women in the country. I never remember meeting one who was not a lady—clean, and sweet, and wholesome. Their influence was so good, they pulled so many fellows together, that it always seemed a shame when one got married—they seldom remained single long—and so curtailed her own power of doing good to the community at large. In those days, when malaria was rife, when every man expected to have blackwater fever

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sooner or later, a very large percentage of the population passed through the hands of the nurses, more than half the population probably, and, as a result, the nurses had plenty of material on which to work. The country owes them an enormous debt of gratitude—which it will never dream of repaying. When Salisbury gets its black mud vlel drained and becomes moderately solvent, it will probably think of putting up some public statues; but I feel certain—I would say I am ready to bet on it, were it not that I fear that, by that time, betting will have become a crime to be expiated by the hideous penalty of many attendances at chapel—I feel certain that, though there will be statues to Chartered directors, administrators, mining experts, and other great men who have made fortunes out of the country, there will be no memorial to the nurses who did the finest work of all, whose name was never touched by the breath of scandal.

Somehow, the term "demi-mondaine" seems an absurd one to apply to those women in Rhodesia who were not in society; it suggests a certain amount of brightness, and sparkle, and supposed gaiety, whereas the open vice of the country, as distinct from its society vice, was very sordid, dreary, and unpleasant. The majority of the demi-mondaines of Rhodesia were Germans, or German Jewesses, foul-

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mouthed, shameless, utterly coarse and unsexed. I do not think that it was the life which had made them so, I think it was born in them. They were as heartless as they were dishonest. It used to make us feel ashamed of our colour for the natives to see them. To the savage they were just "Ma Borno"—Boers—and, as he knew what an enormous part the Dutch-speaking element played in the control of the country, our own women came in for a portion of his scorn.

On the other hand, it was always pleasant to know that the number of Englishwomen leading this life in Rhodesia was very small. I daresay I shall outrage some people's ideas of what is right, when I say that most of them, despite their profession, were thoroughly good women, womanly women, far more worthy of respect than many of those who formed the society of the country. True, there was the all-important difference of a wedding ring on the one side, whilst on the other side was the fact that no husband was being betrayed. When they sinned—and perhaps it was not always sin, if one really understood—the consequences fell only on themselves.

I am perfectly well aware of the opinions which the Pharisees hold on this point. Did they not scream themselves hoarse at me when I wrote "Black Sheep"? Did not they

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endeavour to have it banned everywhere, because I wrote of the salvation of a Magdalen, not of her damnation ; because I told—and the story was true—how she saved a man from himself? Our latter-day “Protestants” would crucify the Saviour afresh if He came back to earth and dared to say that the sinless should cast the first stone. The beauty of His teaching makes even less appeal to them than it did to the Jews of old. Their God is the God of Wrath, with whose name they can terrify the ignorant ; their conception of the Saviour of Mankind is some one who would mouth out political platitudes at a Pleasant Sunday Afternoon in a conventicle which did not pay rates. I am not going to pretend that I write for those folk. Why should I? They would never buy my books, and I like neither them nor their ways. I fail to understand their point of view, and I am certain that they will never understand mine. I want to write for my own people, the men and women who, like myself, have been down to the Bottom, have been down to Hell, if you will, have passed through the fire, and have come back, scorched and scarred perhaps, but knowing things which remain hidden from the Sons of Smugness.

As a result of this attitude of mine, or rather of the attitude of the pious towards me, I am not at all afraid to say that amongst the Women on



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the Wall in Rhodesia were some for whom I had, and still have, a whole-hearted respect. A good many of them married, and I do not remember one case in which the marriage turned out a failure. It spoke eloquently for the chivalry of the British-born element that it always rallied round them as soon as they were married, giving them every chance, trying, with infinite delicacy, to show that the memory of the past was blotted out entirely, and, incidentally, hammering severely any one who was sufficiently ill-advised to try and rake up that past.

Yet I cannot remember any of the foreign women getting married. It was their profession, not their misfortune. It seemed to come quite naturally to them, especially to the Germans, and so we hated and despised them, and would gladly have seen them all put out of the country, because, somehow, they seemed to be injuring the women of our own race. Most of them had been imported, or induced to come up, by the German storekeepers; and, needless to say, Englishmen were not backward in reminding those storekeepers of the fact, occasionally emphasising the reminder with a heavy boot, an entirely wholesome measure.

It is comparatively easy to write of these matters—when one is at home, when one has left the country for good. I have been fortunate—I think I have been more fortunate than any

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other man I know in Rhodesia—in my marriage ; but that has only served to confirm, not to alter in the least degree, my ideas on the part played, and on the part which might have been played, by the women of the frontier.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PROSPECTOR

OF all the romantic, or pseudo-romantic ways of life on the frontier, the prospector's is probably the one which makes the keenest appeal to the home-staying man. There is something very fascinating in the idea of going out on to the veld or into the mountains, finding a gold reef, and at once becoming enormously rich. I was as keen on excitement as most men, keener perhaps, and so were my brothers. I think the gambling spirit is in us. None of us has, I believe, ever staked a shilling on a horse race, save in the form of a sweep, none of us has ever played cards, except as a board-ship pastime; yet we were always ready enough, idiotically ready, to stake our lives in a gamble with Fate, which is, after all, the highest, or at least the most interesting, form of gambling.

But we never got bitten by the microbe of the gold fever. We were years on the veld before we ever thought of going prospecting; and even then we only took it up because the bottom

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seemed to have fallen out of everything else. Possibly it was because we had seen so few successful prospectors; but, somehow, I don't think that was the reason. I believe it was because cattle were so much more interesting. When we finally started prospecting, we did, or tried to do, the thing properly. We had a portable fire assay kit, so that we were able to get at the real value of the reefs we struck, and we thought we were going to do very great things. We failed, of course—our luck was dead out in those days—but still we had the satisfaction of knowing that we had made a good try, and had lost quite a respectable amount of money over it.

The average Rhodesian prospector has no assay kit, and very little technical knowledge. He relies on the prospecting pan to show him if there is any gold in the reef, and so succeeds in missing a very large proportion of the "good propositions." He pounds up a sample of quartz in a mortar, or his boys pound it for him; then he washes it in a large flat pan, washes all the dust and sand away, and trusts to find a tiny residue of gold in the bottom. If there is coarse, free gold he will see it, but if the gold is finely divided, it will possibly be invisible, even under a magnifying glass. Moreover, as every mining expert knows, though it is not always policy to say so, the best reefs are always those which

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carry no "visible" gold. Big lumps of visible are invariably a bad sign; your reef will be patchy and unreliable. Consequently, the "pan" prospector, if he had no other guide, would usually pick out the showy, second- and third-rate things, and miss the really good ones. Fortunately for him, however, he has a far more reliable guide—the Ancient workings. The Ancients must have prospected the country with the most minute care, and the surest guide to a good reef is the fact that the Ancients had worked on it. Prospectors were not long in realising this fact, especially as the mining companies made a rule of buying no properties that had not Ancient workings on them—the shareholders liked to be told that they were the heirs of the Queen of Sheba, even though, in most cases, the gold came, not from the mine, but from their own pockets—consequently a new form of gold-seeking came into vogue. "Blanket-prospecting," the term by which it was known, expressed it exactly. You gave, or at least you promised to give, a native a blanket for every Ancient working he showed you; then you pegged out the place, took some samples—if you could find any worth taking—hurried into Bulawayo, and tried to sell it.

Practically speaking, the prospector was forced to sell as soon as possible. The mining laws were framed with that object. If he wished to

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hold on to his claims—I am writing of the early days, when Rhodesia was in the making—he had to pay absolutely outrageous protection fees, and then, in the end, the Company could claim fifty per cent. of his gold. The code was not only unjust, it was absolutely immoral. It was designed expressly to make the position of the individual impossible, to give the companies, which meant the Chartered Company as well, the benefit of his work. The prospector was to take all the risks—from fever, from the lions, from the natives—and the companies were to rake in the spoils. Yet all the time the Drum Imperial was being banged vigorously at home, drowning the protests of the real Imperialists, the men who were actually doing the work of the Empire. Cecil Rhodes was the new Warren Hastings, the directors new Clives and Chathams, all tempered, of course, by the Companies Acts, Limited Liability Empire-builders. The Press said so; consequently, it must have been true, and the public followed the Press. Still, there must have been times when the situation was a little strained, when it was touch and go whether the farce, or the tragedy—call it which you will—could be carried on much longer. Yet the luck was with the Company to the end. Men growled and cursed freely; but what does much growling and cursing matter when those who are doing it are six or seven thousand miles from

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London, scattered over the veld, out of touch of civilisation, dying off rapidly? Even when their growls were put on paper and sent Home, what weight would they have against the word of a Mighty Corporation, especially when that Corporation had so many pleasant things to give away to its friends? None the less, the pioneers had grievances, very great grievances, and had they been able to get their case stated in the Press, the history of the Chartered Company, the history of South Africa, perhaps, would have been very different.

It is an ugly story, that of the ruthless campaign of the Company against the Individual, after the latter had acquired the country for the former, a black page filled with a tale of broken faith and gross ingratitude. The real Warren Hastings and the real Clive never stooped to such things; but then, of course, they were not "registered under the Companies Act," and they had nothing to do with Capel Court. If they sinned, they sinned as great gentlemen, as great Englishmen; they did not want to soil their hands in the flotation of Wild Cat companies.

I know I ought not to write these things. I shall inevitably be called a Little Englander by the one side, just as the other side is always calling me a blatant Jingo. I suppose it is a great mistake to try and adopt a non-party attitude. Every one who has tried to do that

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in connection with South African affairs has come to grief. The word "Imperialism" has been annexed by the exponents of discreditable finance; the opposite party has usually been more or less tainted with treason, not intentionally, but because its fanaticism has blinded it to all considerations of commonsense and patriotism. History will probably condemn the British Pro-Boers of the days of the South African War, the preachers, pastors, and pseudo-doctors of divinity, the self-advertisers and the paid politicians, even more severely than their contemporaries have done; but in that case it will condemn them too severely, because most of them sinned through egotism and ignorance, and though they wrought an incalculable amount of harm, they were to be despised rather than blamed.

The men who took the middle course, who believed in the British Empire as a great influence for good, the one good influence in Africa, and as a result of this view were anxious to see direct Imperial control extended right up to the Equator, irrespective of company considerations, regardless of the screechings of the Little Englanders, have always been in a minority. From a practical point of view it is the worst attitude to adopt, because it ensures your having two sets of enemies; on the other hand, if you belong to that party you have the satisfaction



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of feeling that you are following the lead of the two greatest Britons who ever set foot in South Africa—Sir Bartle Frere and John MacKenzie.

The Chartered mining laws were iniquitous. Not one prospector in fifty could hold on to the properties he had pegged out, because not one in fifty had any capital, and even if he had the capital, the fifty per cent. clause would have rendered his position impossible. So he had to sell—in fact he hurried to sell—at almost any price. If he dared to try and hold out for an adequate sum, the mining company, after inspecting his claims, and finding out exactly where they were situated, would simply wait until shortness of money caused him to abandon them, when they could be repegged at once, in the company's name. It was a delightful arrangement—for the companies.

Of course, there were exceptions—at least I know of one exception, and there may have been more. Major Heany, of the Matabele Gold Reefs and Estates Company, always treated prospectors with the most scrupulous honesty, making their interests his personal concern; but then the major himself was that finest of all things, a Virginian gentleman, and could hardly be classed with the other mining magnates, or, I should say, they could not be classed with him.

Prospectors used to be very fond of pack

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donkeys, though I could never understand the reason. Personally, I found the pack donkey an unmitigated nuisance, the slowest and least efficient form of transport; but possibly his leisurely habits appealed to the prospector, who was seldom in a hurry himself. A couple of donkeys would be loaded, in untidy fashion, with blankets, prospecting pan, and mortar, flour, tea, and sugar. Sometimes, but not often, there would be a small tent; but as a rule the frontiersman did not worry himself with tents, leaving them to the amateurs of the veld, the explorers, the mining experts, and the big game hunters. If it rained, the prospector made his boys construct a tiny grass shelter, or, if grass was scarce, he slept in the wet. What matter? It was all part of the game.

Usually he had a couple of boys with him—raw savages, as a rule, naked, save for their loin cloths. They were not much good, they had barely sufficient sense to look after the donkeys, but he could afford no better ones, until luck turned. Then, of course, he would need no boys, but would go home at once, in style, to spend his money in a white man's land. Meanwhile, it was a question of making the best of things. He was always cheerful, optimistic even, save when the fever was on him. There were lots of splendid things to be pegged out, if only one could light on them—ounce,

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two ounce, even five ounce propositions. So he wandered on, from one disappointment to another, striking a township every now and then to get a fresh supply of flour, tea, and coffee, and, if he happened to have any money, to indulge in the burst which is the natural result of a white man living alone too long.

He cooked his own food—"You can't eat bread which has been kneaded by a Kaffir's snuffy paws," he explained—and he shot all his own meat, mostly with an old bottom-lever shot-gun, although the cut-down Service Martini had done much useful work. He seldom shot a partridge—"Cartridges cost threepence each," he was wont to growl—and he never fired at a bird on the wing. "Give me guinea-fowl in a bunch, when one charge of Number Three with Ballistite behind it will provide you with several days' skoff," represented his notion of shot-gun shooting. Like most frontiersmen, he despised the shot-gun. To him, it was a pot-filler, nothing more. When he wanted sport—and he was always a sportsman—he went out with that old Martini of his and took his chance amongst the animals which can defend themselves. He lived very hard, and he carried his life in his hands all the time. If the natives were to rise, his chance would be *nil*. He would get no word of warning, because he was out of touch with civilisation. He would just

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be murdered, and no white man would ever be any the wiser. If he got blackwater, his boys would certainly run away as soon as they saw he was dying, fearing that, if they remained, his spirit might haunt them.

The professional prospector—as distinct from the amateur, who went out when there was nothing else doing—belonged to a class by himself. Probably he had prospected, unsuccessfully, in half a dozen other lands already, and, despite all his past disappointments, he would never dream of taking up any other occupation. Professionally, his qualifications were seldom great. His knowledge of geology was very slight, and his mind was crammed with weird ideas, superstitions in many cases, regarding the way in which reefs did, or should, run. His own outstanding characteristic was optimism. Things would pan out in the end; he would find the greatest reef in the country, and the companies should not swindle him over it; then he would go home, and make up for all the lean years. They had probably forgotten him in the old town. His people had died—at least he thought they had—and he had got out of the way of writing letters. Still, he would look them up. He had just missed a fortune in California, had another slip through his hands at Charters Towers, lost a splendid opportunity in New Guinea for want of ten pounds—ten

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pounds!—but Rhodesia was going to make up for it all, by and bye.

By and bye! Most prospectors reckoned to be rich in the by and bye, were rich—in hopes of what the by and bye will bring to them. Meanwhile, the companies were able, with the aid of that most iniquitous gold law, to buy, for fifty pounds, properties which were destined to be floated for two hundred and fifty thousand pounds. That, I suppose, is High Finance—but Warren Hastings and Clive would not have stooped to it, though, of course, the conquerors of India never had Press agents, never needed them, perhaps, as they did not live in a shoddy age of newspaper heroes.

Most of the old prospectors are dead. Many were murdered by the natives, more died of black-water fever, combined, perhaps, with alcoholic poisoning. You would find very few of them nowadays, though the men, the mining magnates, I should say, who bought the properties from them seem to live on and on and on. I do not often look at the financial columns of a daily, but when I do I always see the same old names, see that the same hopeful platitudes which have done duty for the last twenty years have been repeated—and then I think of the prospectors, my own friends, who got nothing out of Africa, except a grave.

There were several famous, or at least notorious

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prospectors in Rhodesia in my day; but of these Alec Anderson—"Champagne" Anderson—was certainly the best known. His fame will outlast that of most of the mining experts. Indeed, I look forward hopefully to the day when he will be something very nearly akin to a solar myth.

Anderson got a name for being a successful prospector in the early days, and the reputation stuck to him. Everything he pegged out was supposed to be good, at least it was good enough for the mining companies, and he never had any difficulty in disposing of a property; moreover, he managed to secure some very fair prices—fair, compared with what other men got. As soon as he had cashed his cheque he would proceed to paint the town a vivid shade of vermilion. One thing you could always find in Bulawayo—I believe you can find it still—was a crowd of sponging loafers, and immediately it became known that Alec was in funds, these formed themselves into his retinue. He never minded how many there were, probably he never even knew, but all who cared to reel along in his train from one bar to the next were welcome to drink at his expense until his money was exhausted, when they would slink away, leaving him to sleep off the effects. He usually got through everything, not only his cash, but his other property as well. His

Days of  
California



WHEN THE VELD IS POOR.



RUINS OF LOBENGULA'S KRAAL.





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donkeys, blankets, prospecting kit would be sold to some saloon keeper for about a quarter of their value, and at once converted into whisky, with the result that, when he grew sober again, he had to get some one to finance him, usually on outrageous terms, before he could start on a new prospecting trip.

He acquired his nickname of "Champagne" after he had sold a property called "The Ancients" to one of Major Heany's companies. He got an unusually large price—three thousand pounds, I believe—and immediately cashed his cheque. Within an hour or two every bar-loafer in the town was soaking at his expense; but still Alec Anderson was not satisfied. The money was not going sufficiently fast to suit him. Then suddenly he had a brilliant inspiration. He would bathe in liquor, he would bathe in champagne, or what passed as champagne in Bulawayo. It cost twenty-five shillings a bottle, and it would take many bottles to fill the hotel bath. The idea was immediately carried out; a large hole was made in the remainder of the three thousand pounds; and, in a few weeks, from being a purely local celebrity, Anderson's fame had spread far outside the boundaries of Matabeleland.

Personally, I am afraid I had not a very great regard for "Champagne Anderson." I was constantly coming across him in wayside stores when

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I was riding transport, and he was usually an unmitigated nuisance. If he had money, he wanted every one else to drink with him, and grew abusive if a man refused to do so; if he had no money, he cadged in a barefaced manner.

I saw the end of him. He was down at a store on the Makukukupene Road; his money had run out, so had his borrowing powers, whilst the storekeeper had refused to take his donkeys and cart as security, knowing that they had only been lent to Anderson. "Champagne" was very surly and quarrelsome the night I arrived, and, in the hope of getting rid of him, the storekeeper gave him two bottles of whisky, and told him to clear. At dawn next morning we heard shots being fired at the back of the store—I was outspanned near by—and going round I found that the prospector had got into the fowl-house, and was shooting the storekeeper's prize fowls. The fowls had rinderpest, Anderson explained.

We gathered him in—whatever might be the matter with the fowls, he obviously had black-water fever—and we got a passing mule waggon to hurry him in to Bulawayo. But it was too late; he died soon after reaching hospital.

After "Champagne's" death, one seemed to meet no more of his class, the absolutely devil-may-care type of prospector. I fancy he must have been one of the last of them. The other

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type, the old plodding optimists, was dying out too when I left the country, and I have no idea what the latter-day prospector is like; and judging by the specimens of "settlers" and "colonists" I have seen being sent out to Rhodesia, dull and serious folk who read pamphlets and statistics, I fear I am not very anxious to find out what he is like.

I always disliked those words "settlers" and "colonists." They remind you of the Swiss Family Robinson; moreover, the people themselves seem to ooze with virtue and respectability. What can be more grossly uninteresting than a "good citizen"? And the colonial governments select only the very good ones, those who are deeply in earnest, who intend to "carve a home out of wilderness," or do something equally estimable. You know, looking at them, that they will succeed on a small scale, and you know, too, that they will want to have votes in the colony, and before long will be so absorbed in petty local affairs that they will lose all interest in Home affairs, at least lose all sense of proportion, and will become "colonial" in sentiment—a most undesirable result.

It is a heterodox thing to say, though perhaps only mildly heterodox for me, but I think the scallywags are infinitely more useful to the Empire, and infinitely more amusing, and therefore more valuable, to mankind generally, than

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the "good citizens." The latter are all very well when the scallywags have done the dangerous work for them, have broken down the road, but I fear that the virtue, the innate sense of goodness of the others, would render them bad pioneers. They would know their own value to humanity too well to go into danger cheerfully, at least when there was no chance of a financial reward. A sporting proposition, a game of dice with Death, would not appeal to them.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE GAME AND THE SPORTSMAN

I HAVE never been a big game hunter in the heroic sense—that is to say, I have never gone out to slay the beasts of the field in the Rocky Mountains, or in Central Africa, because I had been crossed in love. I have been “crossed in love,” I am glad to say—otherwise I should not have met the One Woman, and been made entirely happy—and I have shot quite a considerable amount of big game, breaking a number of rather fragile game laws, but there was absolutely no connection between the love episodes and the shooting. The latter part was almost, if not quite, prosaic—I used to shoot because I wanted meat. I can boast that I never killed a buck unnecessarily, that I never shot an animal, save for the sake of its meat.

I know, of course, that the confession is one which will shock, or even disgust, a good many people, for the latter-day sportsman thinks of

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nothing so gross and vulgar as meat. He goes out on to the veld to kill, with a view to talking or writing about it afterwards. It is nothing to him that, by destroying the game, he is rendering the task of the real pioneers infinitely harder, as well as committing a gross crime against Nature. Why should he worry? He looks on pioneers as common persons, who have no tents and folding chairs and indiarubber baths; whilst he regards himself as of vastly more importance than anything Nature ever did, or ever will, produce.

The detestation with which the men of the frontier regard the game butcher—the phrase is a far better one than that much misused word “sportsman”—is based, not on mere prejudice, but on solid grounds. We looked on the game animals as an essential part of our food-supplies, and we could not afford to have them slaughtered indiscriminately, and their carcasses left to feed the vultures and the hyænas. I think, too, that we managed to bring this home to most of our unwelcome visitors in Rhodesia. They heard crude facts, stated crudely; and during the last few years I was in the country there was very little game butchering. It is only to be regretted that that egregious person, Mr Roosevelt, the Apostle of Self-advertisement, did not choose Rhodesia as the scene of his vulgar and disgusting exploits. Then he would have found him-

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self amongst real frontiersmen, very different persons from his own comic-opera cowboys; and the official element would have been too small to protect him from the comments of coarse Englishmen, who could not see why a Yankee of Dutch extraction should be given a free hand to wipe out species, such as giraffe, which the pioneers of the country had been trying to preserve. True, he got a dollar a word for writing about it, and he employed some extremely good hunters, both British and native, to "*help*" him with his shooting; but even these facts would not have served to secure him respect in Rhodesia. On the other hand, I am afraid that, even though he got no nearer that country than Uganda, the general opinion held of him would have pained greatly those writers whose vapid outpourings in the Press have been so interesting and instructive a feature of British journalism during the last year.

The mighty hunter was boomed mightily by papers of all shades. His Press agents' fees must have been enormous, but I fear, or rather I hope, that the results were inadequate. The sporting instinct of the British public—the true sporting instinct, which has nothing whatever to do with professional footballers or horse-racing for money—was shocked at the tale of useless slaughter, though perhaps it would have been even more shocked had it known the ghastly story of the

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slaughter of human beings which took place in the Philippines under the Roosevelt *régime*. The whole story of the Roosevelt hunting trip is a nauseous one, and it is a matter for deep regret that the Imperial Government should have permitted it to have its scene laid in British territory. When one looks back on the scrupulous care with which the Englishman has always preserved the game on the African frontier, and compares it with this American politician's carnival of killing, which had not even the plea of "sport" urged in its justification, but was wholly commercial from start to finish, one comes to the conclusion that we must be about the most long-suffering and foolish people that ever existed, a nation delighting to ignore the men who have built up its Empire, and to slobber over any self-advertising alien who has a sufficiently astute Press agent.

I have said that the Home-born men were keen on game preservation; but the same cannot be said of the Boers and colonials. A great deal of rubbish has been written concerning the way in which the Afrikander can shoot. Possibly the Boer of the last generation, or the generation before the last, was a good shot; but my experience—a fairly wide one—of the South African born was that he is usually a very poor hand with both the rifle and the shot-gun. At least he is a poor hand on the veld. In the canteen, of course, he can—and will, if you give him the



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chance—tell you long stories of the marvellous shooting he has done in the dead past. I remember well how, on the Geelong mine, we had several of these Afrikaner sportsmen, Free Staters and Cape Colonials. They were always going to teach the Englishmen how to shoot, yet during the two years I was on the property I am certain that not five per cent. of the buck brought into camp were shot by South Africans. It was the same at the shooting range — they were outclassed completely ; the same in every other camp I was ever in. They could never hold their own against the men from home.

On the other hand, when the Afrikaner has got a beltful of cartridges, he must shoot them away, if only at bottles, his favourite target ; when he gets amongst a troop of buck he seems to run amok, blazing away madly, caring nothing about how many he wounds or kills. Generally he does not even trouble to skin his dead, but takes one, and leaves the rest on the veld, for the beasts of prey to eat ; though he may take the tails with him, as the pitiful trophies of his prowess. Time after time I have known this same thing done, especially with eland, beasts easily ridden down, though I am glad to say I never remember a case of an Englishman doing it. The culprits were always either Afrikanders or Americans—I should say Yankees, rather, for the Southerner

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and the Westerner usually have clean ideals as regards sport.

One has only to look at the list of game animals which have disappeared completely, or are disappearing, to realise the truth of what I have said. The black wilderbeeste and the quagga were literally wiped out in sheer wantonness, because they were there, and because the natural instinct of the Afrikaner is to kill. Several other species have become so rare as to be practically extinct. There was no sentiment, no respect for beauty and grace of form, not even a thought for future necessities. The animals came within range, and the Afrikaner had cartridges, so the game was destroyed, the jackals and hyænas grew fat, and the veld became a greater wilderness than ever.

I remember one perfect example of this spirit. A party of colonial-born transport riders had taken their oxen up the Umsingwane River from the Geelong in search of good grass. They camped at the junction of the Umsingwane and the Insiza Rivers, and, unfortunately, they came on a troop of twelve eland, which had been running there for some time past. They had good horses, and they rode the eland down, killing eleven of them. They were just about to trek, so they took part of the meat of one, and left the others for the niggers, the vultures, and the hyænas.

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I suppose the buck which a man remembers best is the first one he kills. My first was a rietbok. I left the river camp at the Geelong just after dawn, alone, and tramped through the wet grass for two or three miles without getting a chance of a shot; then I turned back, and was within a mile of the camp when I saw what seemed to me to be a very large buck standing about a hundred and sixty yards off. I suppose I was nervous, at any rate I had to take a rest for my rifle, using the fork of a small tree. The animal had its head away from me, behind a bush; but an instant after I fired I saw it collapse. I had broken its back. That was a good many years ago now, but I can still recall how I felt as I raced up to where it lay on the ground, kicking feebly, looking at me with great, pathetic eyes. I did not even know enough then to put a bullet through its neck, but sawed at its throat with my sheath knife. Despite my elation, I felt pretty bad; in fact, all the time I was on the veld I never quite got over that hatred of taking life.

I did not know at the time what kind of buck I had shot. It was too heavy for me to move, so in the end I hacked down some green boughs to keep the vultures off, then hurried back to camp for some boys, trailing a stick in order to leave a spoor on the ground, which was mainly sand. Curiously enough, my next two buck

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were also rietbok, which was possibly the reason why the Kaffirs nicknamed me "M'Ziki," the "rietbok," a name which stuck to me all the time I was in Africa, being adopted alike by the Makalanga, the M'Hlengwi, and the MaTchangana.

I was pretty lucky so far as big game was concerned, though I never managed to secure a lion, or that even greater prize, a buffalo. I know I ought to say I have shot many specimens of both. No one could ever contradict me; in fact I could get plenty of corroborative evidence, because I used to bring into Bulawayo both lions' skins and buffalo horns, which I had traded down in the low veld. Many a man has got the reputation of being a mighty hunter with far less evidence to show. Samson and Mr Roosevelt are not the only people who have understood the use of the jawbone of an ass.

I have seen good shooting done, but I have heard of marvellous shooting very often; also I have sat beside the camp-fire, and have heard my boys chuckling over lions killed with trap-guns, and borne home in triumph, to be photographed with the Baas standing behind them, rifle in hand, one foot on the carcase. I shall never forget the shooting of a lion near the river camp at the Geelong. It was stricken to death with a bullet from a trap-gun, and about

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six heroes went out to finish it, and, incidentally, nearly finished each other. The lion had still a good deal of fight left in him, and only the presence of a man called Lynch, who had wisely remained behind when the bullets were flying about wildly, averted a disaster. Lynch had shot lions before, and he finished this one off as soon as he got a chance, but all the others killed it—with their jawbones, afterwards. It was a very amusing incident. I photographed the carcass, surrounded by slayers. I sold over a hundred and twenty copies of the photo—it was no easy job to get photographic material in Rhodesia in 1897, and those copies cost me a great deal in both labour and money—I was paid for about twenty-five copies; without my knowledge or consent the photo was sent home and sold to one or two London papers, and I have since had the pleasure of seeing enlargements of it at Home. However, even if I did get out of pocket over it, I know that it has been the basis of many more or less harmless lies, and has been a source of immense pleasure and gratification to the liars. So I feel that I was quite a philanthropist in the matter. Still, I should like to know, for certain, who sent the photo to the now-defunct *African Review*. I have a pretty good idea, because I know who have got the enlargements. Of one thing I am sure, however—the man who got the half-guinea

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from that paper was one of those who never paid me for the original copy of the photo.

I should like to be able to say truthfully that I had shot a lion, or, failing that, I should like to be able to lie well about it, because it is most galling to hear other men telling shooting lies and getting all the admiration, and it is more than galling when you know that you yourself have shot more game than they have ever seen. However, I suppose it does not matter greatly. We have had Cook, and Peary, and De Rougemont, and we no longer take these stories too seriously. The age, rather than the men, must be blamed. People are content nowadays with such fame as a column in a halfpenny daily can give, and when a really big thing is done, it is usually overlooked by sapient chief sub-editors, because the man who has done it has omitted to have himself advertised properly beforehand, because he is not of the kind which worries about being advertised. Yet, undoubtedly, self-advertisement is a great and splendid thing; one has only to run over the list of the Good and Great and Famous of to-day to realise that. But for self-advertisement, the public would never even have heard the names of nine-tenths of them.

I should have liked to shoot a lion, but I would much rather have shot a buffalo. To do that is to put your nerve to the highest possible

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test outside actual warfare, for the buffalo is the King of Beasts, the most formidable, the most cunning, the most vindictive of all the animals of the veld.

The more you get to know a lion, the more you learn to despise him. You start with the conventional idea of him, a noble, awe-inspiring animal, not unlike the Zulu of the South African novelist, something to be admired as well as feared. Yet after a very little experience of him your point of view alters greatly. He comes worrying round your cattle scherm, keeping you awake at nights; he gets no cattle, but he steals half a dozen of your fowls, and then he or the hyænas—you are not sure which—carry off your best pair of boots and eat all but the nails. Probably it was the hyænas; but the following night it is certainly the lion who makes an abominable noise on the kopje across the vlei, a mile or so away, whilst his silent partner is trying to get your horse out of the stable. You set a trap-gun for him, and get only a foul-smelling hyæna. You follow his spoor up into the kopjes, across the Nek, into the next valley, where you lose it. Meanwhile, he has killed one of your heifers within sight of your own camp.

You soon lose all sense of his kingship, especially when you discover that one of his regal attributes is to sit for hours on a rock, waiting for a chance to kill field rats with his

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paw. Possibly you might take a little more kindly view of him did he only slay what he actually needed for his own consumption; but when he has got amongst your donkeys, killed half a dozen, and merely eaten the intestines of one, you begin to wonder whether he is not, after all, more like a municipal politician than a king—at the bottom, instead of at the top, of the social scale.

In one respect only is the lion regal—his strength is enormous. I have seen too many proofs to have any doubt on that point—a native's head crushed like a meringue by a single pat from one of those terrible paws; a bull's back broken in the same way. I have been told, and, personally, I am inclined to believe the story, though I never met with an actual instance myself, that a lion can take the carcase of a young bullock in his jaws, throw it on to his back, and jump a five-foot fence with it.

I know that a good many men who should speak with authority deny the possibility of this, yet I had a long experience of lions, a far longer experience than I desired. On at least five hundred nights I have had them round my camp, but they never managed actually to get an animal out of one of my scherms. On the other hand, they secured quite a considerable number outside the scherms, generally through the carelessness of the herd-boys; and, in every case, I





ON THE RED GROUND.



A MIXED BAG.



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found that the carcase had been dragged or carried some distance, usually carried. It was, of course, perfectly easy to see where the victim had been killed; then, usually about five or six hundred yards away, you would find the remains of the body. Sometimes, there was a spoor showing where it had been dragged along the ground; but, unless it happened to be a very large ox, you would find no spoor at all, save, of course, that of the lion himself. He must have carried the carcase on his back; there was no other explanation possible; and if he could do that, it was conceivable that he could also jump a fence with the same load. I should like greatly to know whether there really is proof of the story. A native is a liar in all things which affect a white man—he makes a rule of saying what he thinks will please the white man most—but I cannot say I have known him to lie generally when the ways of game or schelm are in question, and natives have often told me this story of how lions can leap out of a scherm with donkeys or young oxen on their backs.

A lion is not a supremely brave beast, in fact many people who know him well call him a coward. He takes no risks. He resembles closely a Guardian of the Poor. He likes to steal, but he likes also to be on the safe side, and he only gets nasty when he is cornered. Give him a chance, and, having done his stealing,

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he will slink away. The Guardian of the Poor goes to preach at his Pleasant Sunday Afternoon; the lion goes to some sheltered place amongst the rocks, each knowing that he has destroyed about five times as much as he can eat, and, therefore, feeling virtuous.

A lion cannot climb, and he will not jump into any sort of enclosure, unless he has been able to make sure what it is like inside. A paper fence would suffice to keep him away from a mob of cattle, provided that the cattle themselves did not break out in their terror. He will not show himself in the daylight, if he can possibly avoid so doing, and, in nine cases out of ten, he will retreat, so long as retreat is possible. You cannot admire him, you cannot even respect him. He is just a schelm, an evil beast, an unmitigated pest. No man living on the veld regards the lion as a game animal. The skin of a good male, at least in my days, was worth twenty-five pounds to sell to a sportsman from Home, but you seldom got a skin which was not mangy, and the lions often got your cattle, so, like the Guardian, the balance was always on their side.

The buffalo belongs to a different class. I have a whole-hearted respect and regard for him. He is the real King of Beasts, the bravest, the most cunning, the most vindictive. He never destroys life wantonly. He is always the avenger, never the aggressor. You may meet

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him on the veld, or in the jungle, and, so long as you leave him alone, he will leave you alone ; but if you shoot at him and fail to kill him, he becomes the very incarnation of revenge. You may merely graze him, you may even miss him entirely, but the probability is, that before night-fall he will have a try to repay you for your attempt on his life. He seldom charges at the time. Usually he thunders off, to turn back later, pick up your spoor, and rush at you from behind. Old hunters, men who have experienced both things, always say that a wounded lion is child's play compared to an angry buffalo bull. After all, the lion is not so very difficult to kill. Any well-placed shot will serve to put him out of action ; but it is a very different matter when a buffalo bull is coming for you, his immense mass of frontal bone protecting half his vital spots. If you cannot be sure of killing him, then the best thing to do is to climb a tree ; if there is no tree within reach, you ought to say your prayers—your last prayers, possibly.

The savages of the Mozambique jungle are great on hunting buffalo, and, though their methods may not be actually heroic, they are, at least, practical. They stalk their prey just after dawn, crawl up to within thirty or forty yards, loose a poisoned arrow, then bolt as fast as they can, never stopping until they reach some safe cover. Twenty-four hours later they sally out,

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pick up the spoor, and follow it until they find their quarry, dead.

Curiously enough, poisoned meat never seems to affect a savage. I suppose they have some special form of digestive organs. They can take Australian bully, German beef extracts, and mortified game flesh with equal impunity. I recollect well the first time I lost a bullock from snake-bite. I had the carcass skinned, and, seeing the horrible state in which it was, the mass of black jelly under the hide, I told Amous to inspan four bullocks, put a chain round the body, and drag it out into the vlei, where I was going to flavour it with strychnine, for the benefit of the local schelm. But the other boys objected. They would eat it, eat it all, they said; and so I left them to it, for, after all, Mashona are like missionaries — the supply always exceeds the demand. They knew what they were doing, of course. I watched the experiment with interest, but not one of them was even unwell; so in future I gave them a free hand, so far as snake-killed beasts were concerned. Once, and once only, did I interfere, and that was when I had killed a big male leopard with strychnine, and they proposed to eat the body. Strychnine poisoning is a most unpleasant thing to witness, and, though it may seem curious, almost incredible, I had a certain liking for the local savages. None of them could read or write, and

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when they stole or lied or tried to poison us, they did so in a rather nice, irresponsible sort of way, which left no feeling of bitterness behind it. Consequently, I took that leopard's carcase from them, kicked those who protested, and, incidentally, saved some twenty or thirty lives.

I know that when I was trading I was denounced freely, and prayed for, as being un-Christian. The Dutch Reformed missionaries—the Prince of Darkness alone knows what an unreformed Dutch missionary can be like—loathed me as being a high-handed Britisher, who would have no truck with disloyalty; the other missionaries—barring always the Catholics, who were clean, and unselfish, and honourable—objected to Amyas and myself because we had stated openly, even in the “Thatched House,” that a missionary who traded—and all save the Catholic Fathers did trade—should be made to take out a trading license; but I cannot recollect any time when we cared greatly for their strictures or their curses. It is, after all, quite a pleasant thing to have a clear issue in a feud. I have seen missionaries in most parts of the world, and I look on them, as a class, as dangerous nuisances, who live lazy, and often sensual, lives on money which ought to have been spent on bettering the condition of our failures at home. Possibly the statement is too sweeping—it does not include the Catholics as a whole, and,

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certainly, I would include not a single Jesuit. There are exceptions to every rule, and I have met splendid gentlemen, splendid fanatics if you will, belonging to both the Churches, and in one or two cases to Dissenting bodies, but the sum of the evil wrought infinitely exceeds the amount of good done.

Yet missionaries, after all, are not game animals, and I began this chapter with the fixed intention of writing only of game animals, so, having relieved my mind, and, I suppose, stored up a certain amount of trouble, or at least of excitement, for myself, I had better go on with the less contentious subject.

I have no claim whatsoever to be considered a shooting man in the ordinary English sense of the word. True, I have shot my fellow-men, in fair fight or self-defence, and various other schelm, as well as quite a number of antelope, ranging from the klipspringer to the eland; but I have never fired a shot-gun in England, and I am afraid I should cut rather a poor figure at a shooting party.

The shot-gun never really appealed to me. Of course, it is absolutely indispensable in Africa, really more valuable than the rifle, and I have killed many hundreds of birds with my old Army and Navy Stores bottom-lever 12-bore, but I always regarded shot-gun work as mere pot-filling business, to be left to a Kaffir, if you



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had one whom you could trust not to waste the cartridges, and I have never managed wholly to get over that prejudice. As for those who go after buck with shot-guns, I look on them as being quite without the pale. Nothing could be more grossly unsportsmanlike, and nothing could furnish a better proof of their inability to use the sportsman's weapon, the rifle—I wish there was an alternative word for “sportsman,” as the term has been appropriated by footballers and betting touts, who have not the vaguest idea of what sport is, as a glance at the “sporting press” will prove. The shot-gun is, I know, used largely in Cape Colony for buck-shooting, but that fact does not justify its use anywhere else. They have peculiar standards and ideas at the Cape. Nor can it be justified on the plea of utility. Nine buck out of ten wounded with a shot-gun are never found, save by the schelm.

Practically speaking, we used the shot-gun for two purposes only—to kill guinea-fowl by day, and to try and kill schelm by night. Cartridges cost twenty-five shillings a hundred, any kind, and, once the supply had run out, it was not easy to replenish it; consequently, we were apt to discourage promiscuous shooting. When the shooting-boy went out in the morning—it was clean against the laws to employ a native for this purpose, but that was not a matter of

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great importance—he took two cartridges, and had to return with at least two guinea-fowl. If he got more than two—and I have known Daniel secure five with one shot—he always had one for himself, whilst the heads and necks, delicacies beloved of the Kaffir, naturally went to him.

You shoot guinea-fowl sitting down, if possible, creeping as close as you can to them. Otherwise, you shoot them running, but seldom, if ever, does a sane man fire at them on the wing, because it is the rarest thing in the world for them to rise until they are at least sixty yards away.

Wild geese, the only other birds in Rhodesia really worth troubling about, you shoot with a rifle, and then, probably, you will find the remains too tough to eat. There is one immense bird—I never found out what it was, but Amyas and I used to call it the “Doum-bird,” from the noise it made—a great beast, bigger than a turkey, with black and white wings. You find it throughout the low bush veld, and its mission in life appears to be to dig holes in the ground, and murmur loudly, “Doum, doum.” You never get a shot at it, because it flies when you are just four hundred yards off. Many of the Kaffirs, the M'Hlengwi tribe especially, regard it as an M'Tagati, an evil influence; but as an elephant and an owl, in

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addition to a large number of other beasts, also come into the same class, the fact is not of very great value from a zoological point of view.

There is a large variety of animals which can be classed neither as schelm nor, properly, as game. We used to call them all "snarks," a term which suited them admirably. Some used to bite, some scratched, whilst others merely promenaded round the camp at nights and made wholly unnecessary noises. Our small trading station on the top of the M'Bendese, a huge kopje on the bank of the Lundi River, was a famous place for snarks. Their spoor was all round it, and hardly a night passed without the store boys trapping some kind of weird beast. Unfortunately, it was rarely that either Amyas or myself spent a night at the store—we had a kind of hunting camp some eight miles away—and we only saw the skins of the snarks. I think most of them were really badgers, or ratels, or ant-bears of some sort or another. It is a pity that all the skins were subsequently lost, for I am certain that many of the lesser animals of South East Africa are still unknown to naturalists. For instance, down in the Portuguese jungle there is what I believe to be a species of small wild pig. I have never seen one, but I have seen the spoor—they run in small herds of ten or a dozen—and I have

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seen the lower jaw of one, which is long, with two very sharp, curved tusks ; I know them only as the N'Dhowban', a name which does not tell one very much.

I suppose that, if I had possessed any scientific instincts, I should have investigated all these animals, preserved specimens, and named them after the great and good men of the country. I regret now that I did not do so, but when you are on the veld for business, you are apt to lose sight of these side issues. Time always seems very short, food for your carriers is probably running out, and you think only of the main issue. Possibly, as in my own case, you make up your mind to return later on, when you have made your pile, and do all the things you have left undone ; but it is a hundred to one against your going back. If you have succeeded, you want to shake the dust of Africa off your feet, and reap the reward of your success in a white man's land ; if you have failed, you are probably equally anxious to get away, to see no more of the country in which you failed.

I always regarded klipspringer as giving the best sport of any non-dangerous game in the country. True, they are practically the smallest buck, but I do not see that that fact matters in the least. They can only be got by accurate shooting—you see them high up above you on the kopje sides, generally perched on a big

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boulder—if you hit one, you are pretty certain to get him, whilst not only is the meat splendid eating, second only to wild pig, but even though you shoot two or three in a day, you will not have more meat than you and your boys can use.

On the other hand, when you have shot one big buck, a roan antelope, for instance, you have—if you have any sense of decency—finished your shooting for the day, possibly for several days. It is only “sportsmen” of the Roosevelt type who go on slaying everything they see, out of sheer lust of destruction. I have often been disappointed when I have gone out, intending to have a day’s shooting, and have brought it to a close with a single shot half an hour after leaving camp. I would much sooner have gone on, made several misses first, and only got my supply of meat after a long chase.

I remember well one hunt Malcolm and I had after some roan. We left the Geelong mine about three o’clock on a Saturday afternoon, intending to camp on a small kopje about six miles away. We had little expectation of getting any game until the morning, and we were walking together, followed by about fifteen boys. As we practically never came back without meat, we never had any difficulty in getting plenty of volunteers as carriers. We had gone some three miles, when I caught sight of a

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couple of roan antelope about two hundred and fifty yards off. Malcolm was a little to the left and could only see one, at which he fired, whilst I fired at the larger of two, which I took to be an immense bull. A moment afterwards they started off at a gallop; but as soon as we picked up the spoor, we knew that one bullet, at least, had got home, for there was blood almost in pints. We were under the impression that we had both fired at the same one, and we were a little surprised to find that, when the wounded animal slowed down to a walk, its mate stayed with it. After a while the blood began to grow less; a mile on, and there were no longer pools, merely drops; then nothing more than spots brushed off by the Mopani scrub. Still, it was perfectly easy to follow the spoor, for roan antelope are heavy beasts. Unfortunately, the sun was now very near the horizon, and it became a question of whether the light would last long enough, whether the hyænas or ourselves would eventually get the meat. Then, suddenly, we saw them again, standing under a big tree, and we saw, too, that both were hit very hard. A snap shot from Malcolm, and they were away again; but this time they only went some five hundred yards, into a big vlei, when they stood, right out in the open, facing us.

“They are going to charge, chief. Look out!”

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Tom, my own hunting-boy, cried, and even as he spoke they both started towards us; but before they had come half a dozen yards they fell, almost simultaneously, and when we reached them, neither needed the *coup-de-grace*, the shot in the neck.

It was a curious little episode, but perhaps the most curious part about it was that my "bull" turned out to be a gigantic cow, whilst Malcolm's, which I had taken to be the cow, was really the bull.

The spot where we had intended to camp, a kopje with a waterhole beside it, was only about half a mile off, so we sent three boys with the blankets and cooking kit across there, telling them to get things ready, collect firewood, and so on; for it was already getting dusk, and there was the promise of an ugly, wet night. Meanwhile, the other savages were skinning the roan, always a joyful task to a Kaffir. It was no easy job for twelve boys to carry the meat into camp, but they managed it somehow, not leaving even a scrap of intestines for the hyænas, who were rustling the leaves in the surrounding bush even as we started away.

We were pretty hungry and pretty thirsty when we reached the kopje, and it was quite pleasant to see a big fire going. One of the piccanins, a fat and solemn youth, had

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constituted himself cook-boy, and was evidently feeling the grave importance of his position.

"The bread has been left behind, chief," he announced to Malcolm, "but I have found some flour, and made bread."

The baking pot was lying with the other kit, and the only cooking utensil in use was the kettle; consequently, Malcolm demanded, "Where is the bread?"

The youngster pointed to the kettle, out of the spout and mouth of which a white foam had just begun to bubble. "There, chief," he answered, "the bread is in there."

The cook-boy fell from his high estate at once. He had merely mixed some flour and water, poured it into the kettle, and put it on to boil. It took an hour to get rid of the mess and make some tea.

It rained all that night, but, fortunately, on the kopje there were a couple of little watch-huts, which had been put up by the Matabele during the Rebellion, and these served to keep us and the meat fairly dry. In the morning, the veld was sodden with wet, and it would have been very difficult for our boys to get their loads back to the mine, but, fortunately, we remembered that a party of a dozen or so of the miners had started out on what they called a "shooting trip." They had a Scotch cart, loaded largely with alcoholic supplies; and



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we knew which spoor they had taken. We reckoned they would have camped not more than a mile and a half from us, at a certain sluit, so we set out to find them, intending to load our meat on their cart.

As we tramped through the soaking grass, we put up several small buck, and of course did not shoot; but then came one of the biggest temptations I have ever had. A rietbok bull, an absolute beauty, with a fine pair of horns, came trotting down a vlei towards us, then stood a bare forty yards off, watching us. I looked at Malcolm, and Malcolm looked at me—I would much sooner have had that rietbok than my roan cow—but it wasn't part of the game, and so we let him have a good look at us, and then trot off again.

We found the Scotch cart soon afterwards. They had made a tent out of a buck-sail, and had passed the night fairly comfortably under that, though a distant lion had rather tried the nerves of one or two of the party. They had shot nothing, except one partridge, but they had quite a large number of empty bottles, and when we arrived they were just preparing to shoot those—a typically South African form of sport which never made a great appeal to me, although it is the custom of the country, and I am certain that, at least amongst South Africans born, nine cartridges

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are used on, or at, bottles, to every one fired at game.

We loaded our meat on their cart and covered it over carefully. As it turned out afterwards, it was extremely fortunate we did so; for, had our own boys carried it into the mining camp, we should certainly have been held up by the police and prosecuted. It was the close season, and roan antelope were Royal game, so we had, as happened about once a week, committed a double offence. The Mounted Police did not want to interfere—they were glad enough of fresh meat in those days—but our own particular enemies, the little Afrikander clique connected with the mill, bitterly jealous that we could slay with our rifles the buck which they could only slay with their mouths, had reported us officially, and the police were bound to try and do something. But, thanks to the Scotch cart, our carriers came in empty-handed, and received their shares later on, under cover of darkness; also, a fore-quarter went down to the police camp; though the Afrikanders ate only bully-beef.

Water-buck are one of the most difficult species to shoot, because the colouring of the animals blends so perfectly with that of the surrounding veld. You may actually be staring at a troop, and never know it is there, until it breaks away; or you may see a dozen of them



A SURF BOAT.



IN THE NATIVE QUARTER.



## The Game and the Sportsman

running, see them perfectly clearly, but the moment they stand they seem to fade away. I know it is wrong to shoot cows, but, except in the case of the koodoo, it is almost always impossible to tell whether you are shooting at a cow or a bull. Roan, sable, eland, the various hartebeeste, wildebeeste — with all these both sexes carry horns; and even with water-buck, when the cow is hornless, it is extremely difficult to see whether there are horns or no, when the troop is in the thick bush.

Once, down in the Sabi Valley, not far from the Anglo-Portuguese border, I had a queer experience with a water-buck cow. We were all very hungry. Luck had been clean against us for days, and I was determined to shoot anything I could find. I came on the troop soon after sunrise, and fired at the nearest one. She went down—it was a young cow—scrambled to her feet again, and made off, alone. The spoor showed up that, not only was a hind leg broken, but the bullet had also gone on through the lungs—rather an unusual shot. I was very lame at the time, as a result of an encounter with a hippo bull, and it was quite impossible for me to run, so that, when my boys sighted the cow, dragging her broken leg and making into a thick clump of bush, I had to keep them back, as they only had useless little assegais.

When we got into the bush, we heard a

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curious noise, like a cross between a cough and a grunt, and, naturally enough, I put it down to the effect of the hole in the animal's lungs. The scrub was very dense, and we could only see a few yards. Suddenly the sound grew louder, there was a rending of twigs and small branches, and something broke away, heading towards the river, which was a full mile off. The boys lost their heads and dashed after it, leaving me to limp along alone. I had not gone ten yards before I came on my water-buck, at her last gasp, and finished her promptly. The report of the rifle brought the boys running back.

"We thought it was the buck blundering along," they explained, "but we soon saw that it was not."

"What was it?" I asked.

"An elephant," Tom answered. "See, there is a spoor like a road."

As a matter of fact, it was not an elephant at all, but a big hippo bull, though it is a most unusual thing to find one of those hideous brutes so far from water, at any rate during the daytime.

There is one aspect of shooting about which few men write, possibly because it is not a very pleasant subject, possibly because it never really comes home to them. I am not going to enlarge on it; I am just going to give two instances, and other people can draw the moral, if they think it worth while so to do.

## The Game and the Sportsman

Malcolm happened to go out alone near the Jesse Mine, more for a stroll than in the hope of getting a buck, but a mile or so from our camp he came across a pair of steinbok, and shot one, killing it on the spot. To his surprise, the other did not run away, but remained a few yards off, whilst Malcolm was tying its mate's legs together with his handkerchief, preparatory to slinging it on his shoulder. When Malcolm started back for camp, the second buck began to follow him. That was too much for my brother. He shouted at it first, then drove it off with stones, and came back with tears in his eyes. What would a sportsman of the Roosevelt school have done?

The second instance was an experience of my own, which occurred whilst we were prospecting. I was climbing a small kopje, looking for the continuation of a reef I had found the day before, when I saw a duiker standing at about a hundred and fifty yards. We wanted fresh meat badly, and I dropped him with a bullet through his shoulder-blades, completely paralysed. As I got up to him, I felt for my sheath knife, intending to finish him that way, but the sheath was empty. I had left the knife in the camp. Then I tried to reload — I had an old Martini rifle — but the cartridge case was jammed, and, though I jerked the ejector furiously, I could not shift it. Meanwhile, the

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duiker was lying at my feet, staring at me with the most ghastly expression of mingled pain and terror. I would have given anything not to have shot him, or to have shot him dead in the first case. I felt pretty bad over it, I think as bad as I have ever felt; finally, I picked him up, carried him to a sluit near by, and held his head under the water until he was drowned. Curiously enough, that was the last buck I ever shot; possibly, the last buck I ever shall shoot. It is a bad memory, and, if in this chapter I have been severe on the game-butchering fraternity, I think I have a certain amount of reason for my attitude.

I hold this as an article of faith—no gentleman ever has, or ever could, shoot a buck he did not actually intend to use as food. Slaughter can never be excused on the grounds of its being sport. Really, the unnecessary killing of a buck is almost as vile in its way as the action of those Welsh strikers who, whilst I am writing this, are endeavouring to starve to death three hundred colliery ponies.

I wonder whether, as a nation, we shall ever take up a civilised attitude with regard to cruelty to animals. I fear not, because the whole tendency of modern legislation is to crush out the Fit for the benefit of the Unfit, to destroy those classes which are born with civilised instincts in them, to sacrifice them to those whom Nature would have doomed to extinction under her



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greatest law, that of the Survival of the Fittest. And it is the educated classes alone which take any interest in this question.

If you want to raise a false cry about the wrongs of some down-trodden race—which involves subscriptions and paid officials, and so on—you can get all the cranks and faddists to take it up. We have had Balkan Committees, and Congo Committees, and committees to help those detestable revolutionaries, the Young Turks, committees to save Zulu murderers, and worse than murderers, from the gallows, and, of course, we have the missionary societies; but if you asked the people who run, and the weak-minded dupes who finance, these movements to help animals which cannot help themselves, they would turn away in amazement. The Law protects animals; it fines the man who beats a dog to death ten shillings, in good English coin, and only allows him a week in which to find, or steal, the money. If it were proposed to give him the lash—and he would have fifty lashes, if we were a civilised people with a sense of proportion—all those committee men and humanitarians would be up in arms.

The best part of big-game shooting is not the killing of the buck—though I admit I enjoy greatly the killing of any kind of schelm—the real pleasure is in the life itself. There is a wonderful sense of freedom out on the frontiers

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of civilisation, an indescribable something I have never experienced elsewhere. The unconventionality of the life, the knowledge that beyond you there is nothing but savagery, that you are far away from the lies and shams which are considered so important at Home, face to face with the crude realities of life, holding your position amongst the natives by sheer force of character, not through the support of a distant and little-heeded government—these are the things one never forgets, the memories which remain, clamorous and insistent at times, even after the lapse of years.

The creaking of the waggon as it jolts over the rough track, the swaying forms of the patient, tired oxen seen dimly in the moonlight during the long night trek, the sharp, purposeful crack of the long, giraffe-hide whips, the hoarse cries of the Kaffir drivers, the vicious note of the rifle, the dull thud of the bullet striking flesh, the smell of the fresh blood, the long rides through the silent bush, the nights by the blazing camp-fire, the growling of a lion up the valley mingling with the snarl of a hyæna just outside the circle of firelight, the picturesque squalor of the native villages, the drums, the rattles, and the dance, the shrill cries of the women rising high above the gutturals of the men, the voice of the guinea-fowl saluting the dawn with harsh, grating persistence, the anxious note of the wild goose

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calling to an absent mate, the acrid smoke of the cow-dung fires on the high veld where the wood is scarce, the sickening delays on the banks of the flooded rivers, the glad freshness of the morning air, the days when you went hungry and the days of plenty—what man who has known all these can ever forget them, or ever think of them without, at least, a momentary longing to be back on the veld?

Those who have really learned to hear the veld calling will hear it always. Other recollections may grow dim, or fade away entirely; new ideals and ambitions take the place of those of earlier days: but the man who has once heard the voice of the veld can never be quite the same again. He may leave it for ever, as I have done, shake its dust off his feet, perhaps full of fierce resentment against Africa; but every now and then, even amongst the most prosaic surroundings, all the old memories will surge up anew, and he will—if he be a real man—think gratefully, if perhaps sadly, of that distant Southern land, which usually takes so much, and gives so little in return—save these memories.

## CHAPTER IX

### SHELM

SHELM is a fine, comprehensive term. It includes every sort of noxious beast on the veld, from an owl to a lion. Some schelm, hyænas and owls for instance, are also M'Tagati—wizards ; whilst other animals, elephant and buffalo for example, can be M'Tagati without being schelm. Occasionally a lion is a M'Tagati, but in that case he is possessed by the spirit of a human wizard. It is all a little involved, and it takes time for one to learn to understand it.

The native's attitude towards schelm is very interesting. He has no objection to killing, or helping to kill, most schelm, and he rejoices when any schelm at all is sent to his account ; but nothing would induce him to raise a hand against a hyæna, or a snake, or an owl, or even to touch the bodies after they are dead. These belong to the unseen world, and are protected by the spirits ; consequently, the blame for killing them must fall on the white man, even though the village profits most by their deaths.

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The hyæna is the most dreaded of all, so far as the savages are concerned. He is the horse of the evil spirit, besides being an M'Tagati himself; and when you hear him raise his abominable voice, you may be quite certain he is bringing a wizard, or an evil spirit, up to your camp. Then, if you want to do the correct thing, you get up and shout "M'Tagati" at him, heaving anything which comes handy, stones or blazing brands by preference. His native name is "M'Pisi," and there is no more deadly insult than to call a Kaffir that. Most white men in Africa know this, consequently there was great delight when the Hero of Mafeking—I wonder no public houses have ever taken that as their sign—announced to his Scouts that his native name in Matabeleland had been "M'Pisi," "He-who-walks-by-night." I pity the Kaffir who had dared to call me that. As a matter of fact, "He-who-walks-by-night" would have been, in the Matabele language, "M'Hamba Basuko," which was one of the titles of Umtasa, the chief of Manicaland. A Chief Scout should not make mistakes of that kind.

I can quite understand the natives' loathing for a hyæna. He is one of the foulest creatures on earth. Nothing is too low and horrible for him to eat. It is, literally, pollution to touch his carcass. He is mean and sneaking in all

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his ways, and I never heard any one even hint that he had a redeeming quality, or that it was not justifiable to use any means whatsoever to kill him. He is a coward, as well as a beast of prey. He would never dream of attacking any animal which had the least chance of defending itself. It is he, and not the poor, inoffensive little jackal, who hangs round the lion. He has enormously strong jaws, and he can chew up the bones which the larger animal cannot even crack; whilst, in the case of a large buck, he always gets the skin as well. He will eat the uppers off a pair of boots, as readily as he will eat a piece of beef. When he is about, you have to put all your trek-gear up on the waggon, or he will chew up the neck-strops. When he can find nothing to eat, he relieves his feelings by making the most hideous row imaginable.

Our trading camp at Chivamba's was simply infested by M'Pisi. They grew to be such a nuisance after a while, actually entering our sleeping hut at night, that we had to fence in the whole place. Then they took to promenading round the outside of the fence, telling us what they thought of us and our ways.

That camp was a great place for schelm. I have been called out of bed seven times in one night to deal with various callers, including one lion and two leopards. Several times, men

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who came down to stay with us left early the following morning. They were always careful to explain that they were not nervous, but they added, feelingly, that there was a limit. I suppose it was fairly bad, but we had grown used to it gradually, and all our scherms were well-built.

It is not an easy matter to deal with hyænas, because I have found, by years of experiment, that every time you kill one, three more come to devour the carcase; consequently, it seems simpler to leave them alone. Still, you grow very, very weary of them after a time, and you literally sow the footpaths with lumps of poisoned meat. I remember once having a great row with Chivamba's people over this practice. They had been told to keep their dogs, a horrible tribe of mangy yellow ones, in their huts at night, and I think they did so; but, unfortunately, a few days later the dogs came on the poisoned and decomposing body of one of my hyænas, and promptly ate it. The mortality was considerable, eight or ten of the curs must have died, and, though it was a happy release for them, none of them ever having had a real feed in his life, Chivamba's people did not see it in that light. I forget now how we fixed matters, but as they had recently been trying to poison my head store-boy, they had not much right to complain.

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Correctly speaking, Kaffir dogs should be classed as schelm. Except in the Portuguese territory, where they are treated very differently, they are pitiable sights, always starving, covered with loathsome parasites. Jackals are clean and wholesome beasts compared to them. Still, for some inscrutable reason, their owners seem to set great store on them, though I hardly ever saw them put to any useful purpose. It is very seldom that they have any hunting sense, whilst as they, and their parasites, always spend the night in the huts with their owners, they are of no value as guards against schelm of a regular kind.

Wild dogs are, of course, schelm pure and simple. Fortunately, they are by no means common, and I know men who have been years in the country without seeing, or even hearing, a pack. The packs are often of considerable size—I have seen as many as thirty dogs pulling down a rietbok—and it is one of the ugliest experiences a man can have to be set on to by them. The only way to escape them is to climb a tree, and climb pretty quickly. Amyas and I once tackled a pack—at about a hundred yards range for a start, with a waggon just behind us. That time, too, they had got a rietbok, and within less than a minute of killing it, they had devoured the entrails and the greater part of the hind quarters and back.



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We fired, each killing one, and those we killed were immediately eaten by the others. We just found two white tails, that was all; but for those, we might have thought we had not really brought them down. Possibly, they had had enough then; at any rate, we drove them off, and our Mashona had a great feed on what remained of the buck.

The last time I saw a pack was in our prospecting camp near Umtali. They killed a duiker within twenty yards of our tent, tore it to pieces in a few seconds, then raced on to the bottom of the valley, where they met a big troop of baboons coming up from the water. The noise which followed was indescribable. We never knew which side got the better of the fight—I have a wholesome respect for a troop of baboons on the rampage—but I imagine the dogs got a good feed, for they remained in the valley two days longer. Unless a man has a perfectly safe line of retreat, they are beasts which are far better left alone. Kaffirs have told me that occasionally they will make an unprovoked attack on a human being, but I have never heard of a specific instance of their doing so. Still, on points like that I am always inclined to take the Kaffir's word. As a rule, he only tells deliberate lies on matters concerning white men.

Much of what I have said about wild dogs

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applies also to baboons, at least so far as their dangerous qualities are concerned. They usually do no more than sit on the tops of kopjes and bark at you in an offensive manner; but occasionally the leader of the troop will come forward, challenging you, whilst the others follow him down the hill slowly and cautiously. In those circumstances, the only wise plan is to hurry on your way. If you shoot at the "old man," you may be fairly certain that the whole troop will come to his rescue, and then your chances of escape will be very small. I once had a very unpleasant experience of this kind. The leader came up to within forty yards of me, and he had the best part of a hundred followers behind him. He was in an absolutely savage temper—he was an immense beast, as powerful as two men—and I was hugely relieved when he suddenly changed his mind, swung himself into a small tree, where he sat on a branch, howling defiance. I think the two Mashona I had with me were even more relieved than I was, because they knew the danger better than I did.

Leopards are a most objectionable form of schelm. They have the advantage over the lion and the hyæna of being able to climb. They destroyed more of our live stock than all the other schelm put together; though we, on our side, were fairly successful in destroying them, thus redressing the balance a little.

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Amyas had some curious experiences with leopards, the two most interesting taking place actually underneath our waggons. On the first occasion he had shot a sable bull, and the meat, cut into strips, was hanging under the red span's waggon, whilst Amyas was sleeping, some ten feet away, under the other waggon. About midnight he heard a crunching noise, and sat up in his blankets. It was very dark, and he could see nothing; but he knew it must be some schelm or other at work, so he just picked up his carbine, and, without even putting it to his shoulder, let drive. There was a deep growl, and the visitor bolted. In the morning they found, not only the spoor of a big leopard, but also a patch of his blood, and a fragment of bone which had been driven out by the bullet; but the spoor led into some very thick bush, so, being wise, Amyas decided to leave him alone.

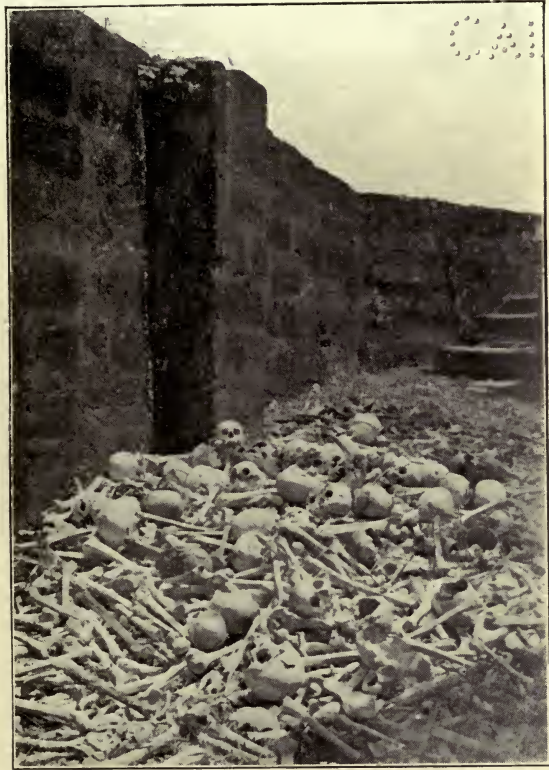
The second adventure happened one Christmas Eve. The waggons were outspanned a few miles from Victoria. It was a horrible night—Christmas in Rhodesia is usually a wet festival—and the buck-sail was right over the waggon, hanging down within a couple of inches of the ground. Amyas was sitting on a case, stroking a pointer belonging to a man who was spending the night with him. The atmosphere was, naturally, a trifle close, and the dog was hot, so he pushed it away towards the buck-sail. As

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he did so, whilst his hand was actually on the poor beast's head, a leopard's paw appeared, and in a flash the pointer was dragged out. He gave one yelp, that was all. The strange part was that a dog with such a keen sense of smell should not have known that his enemy was waiting a few inches away from him.

Lions were always a great worry to us, both at our trading stations and when we were on the road; but, on the whole, they did not do very well out of us, nothing like so well as the leopards did. One of the most anxious times we ever had was when we took a hundred young cattle down from Victoria to Bulawayo. It was the end of the dry season, and the grass was unusually bad. Our animals had never been on the high veld before, had never known what it was to be short of food and half-frozen at night, and if we had taken them along the main road, over the great wind-swept desolation of the central plateau, we should have lost most of them; consequently, we decided to go by a disused track, which led through the low country, where the pasture was certain to be good. Unfortunately, that road was also famous for the schelm which infested it, especially for lions. Still, it was the choice of two evils, and we took the lesser.

You can do something with trained cattle in a lion country. You can tie them round the waggon with double reims, and then, if you have



GRAVEYARD, OLD MANILA.





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time, or energy enough, make a thorn scherm outside the lot; but you cannot tie up a hundred young bulls and heifers every night, you cannot even catch them; all you can do is to make a scherm and trust that they will not break out in blind terror when they get a scent of the pseudo-King of Beasts.

We had, I think, a dozen boys, under the command of Amous, a redoubtable little Basutu, who almost made me readjust all my estimates of black humanity. I recollect well how we reduced the staff by one, very suddenly, the second day out. It was breakfast time, and as cow's milk was short—was there ever a place in Africa where this was not the case?—Amyas told the cook-boy to bring a tin of condensed milk. Unfortunately—unfortunately for the cook-boy, I mean—I happened to get up to fetch something from the waggon tent, and I caught him, with a spoon in his mouth, gobbling down about the fourth spoonful out of a newly-opened tin of milk. He left the camp hurriedly, with a hand pressed to the part I had touched, and the tin of milk was tossed on to the fire. We put his blankets in the fork of a tree when we inspanned, though when I learned that he had been at a local mission school I felt very much inclined to put his goods where I had put the tin of milk.

We made scherms every night on that road,

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drove the cattle into them, and then spent the rest of the night with shot-guns across our knees, praying that the lions would not come. It was not that we were afraid of the schelm for ourselves. There is a regular scale with lions. They will take a horse first, then a donkey, then a bullock, then a sheep or a goat. If they cannot get these, and they are very, very hungry, they may take a native, but they will never touch a white man whilst there is a black man left. This statement is not based only on personal experience, nor is it made with a view to discrediting missionary yarns. Every frontiersman will confirm it. The lion has no sense of the fitness of things, no sense of humour, I might say. He has nothing in common with that most noble and admirable of birds, the historic Cassowary on the Plains of Timbuctoo. I never met a cassowary in real life, but even as a small boy I had the deepest admiration for the breed, in fact we all had—I remember Amyas dropping a .303 cartridge into the bag at a missionary collection, a truly tactful and fitting gift from a boy of eight—though I have often wondered how that Bird managed to eat the missionary “Bible, bones, and hymn-book too.” Some day, when I have leisure, I shall found a “Society for the Propagation of Cassowaries in Foreign Parts,” and shall grow immensely rich as secretary, especially if I follow precedents



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and combine it with the sale of German potato spirits.

Unfortunately, there were no cassowaries in either Matabeleland or Mashonaland, but there were, as I have said, plenty of lions, who had no sense of humour. Still, the lions down that road seemed to have a respect for a shot-gun; for night after night went by without one of them coming anywhere near us. It was an extraordinary thing that we never even heard one until we were out of what was supposed to be the danger zone, and then he was a full two miles away, and apparently came no nearer. Still, we had the anxiety all the time, and I suppose if we had relaxed our vigilance for one night we might have lost ten or a dozen animals.

The lion's tactics in real life are, generally speaking, different from those of the lion in the books. He does not come along boldly, with head erect and mouth open, making straight for his prey, but slinks up, trusting to be able to frighten the oxen so much that they will break out of the scherm and scatter over the veld in blind terror, when he will be able to pick them up with the minimum of danger. He is as wasteful as a touring sportsman. He will kill four or five beasts, and merely eat the intestines of one. He is thoroughly hateful in every way, and after seven years' experience of him—you

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can get to know him pretty well without ever seeing him — I cannot recall a single instance when he showed any trace of kingly, or even decent, qualities.

Old hunters have told me that the lion seldom, if ever, tackles a buffalo single-handed, and that if he does do so he usually gets the worst of the encounter. I have also been told that he is afraid of a gemsbok bull, though I am a little inclined to doubt this. As far as my personal experience goes, I remember only two instances when other animals killed lions. The first time was near Gwelo, at the Vungu River, I think. We were outspanned there, and our oxen had gone down-stream to graze, whilst another man, who had two spans of old colonial cattle—quiet, solemn beasts, not a bull amongst them—had sent his up-stream.

About three o'clock in the afternoon we heard a fearful commotion from the direction in which the old cattle had gone, bellowing and roaring, and a few minutes later the herd-boy came tearing in to say that they were killing a lion, and had gone mad. The statement was literally true. A lion had come slinking down on them, and, for some extraordinary reason, instead of bolting, they had attacked him. He must have been taken completely by surprise, for he had put up no fight at all. In a few seconds they had gored him to death, and after that had

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trampled and tossed the carcase until it was little more than a vast, shapeless clot of mingled dust and blood.

There was no question of inspanning them that night, no question of going near them even. They were absolutely mad with the smell of the blood, and it was not until the following morning that they could be rounded up. I was very glad that our own spans, which consisted largely of bulls, were not with them; otherwise, as soon as the lion had been disposed of, there would certainly have been a tremendous fight, in which the clumsy colonial oxen would have come off worst.

It is curious how the smell of blood sends South African cattle mad. I suppose it is that they have more of the wild animal in them than the beasts at home. In England they can lead a bullock easily into a slaughter-house which reeks of fresh blood; whilst I have seen my spans go frantic when they struck the spot where one of their kind had been cut up five months previously.

The second time when I knew a lion to be killed by another animal was more extraordinary still, so extraordinary, in fact, that I have often been told bluntly that the story was untrue.

Amyas and I had been down shooting in the Lundi Valley, a place where, according to the local heathen, the rooibok were plentiful

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as goats, and you could shoot lions until you were tired. Possibly the statement was a little exaggerated. The lions certainly made you tired, but you never got a shot at them. As we were coming back we camped near a kraal, where we met the biggest Mashona bull I had ever seen, or, rather, he met us. He charged down on our Scotch cart span, roaring, dived under the trek chain, and got the full benefit of Amous' whip as he emerged on the other side. We decided there and then to buy him, and the deal was arranged by nightfall, quite quick work. We could not tie him up with our own beasts, of course, so he spent the night in the kraal belonging to the village.

They had told us that the place was not a bad one for schelm, and I have no doubt that they were speaking the truth, so far as ordinary conditions went—the state of their cattle kraal proved that—but during the night a schelm did arrive, in the shape of a big male lion, and from a huge rock which formed the back of the kraal he dropped on to a cow's back.

Naturally, the uproar was considerable; but it was a very dark night, and there was no possibility of doing anything, no possibility even of seeing what was going on. Above it all, however, we could hear the voice of the big bull, savage and defiant, then from the lion came a growl, which ended in a roar of agony;

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there was a sound as of something falling heavily outside the kraal, and after that, only the voices of the cattle.

We pulled handfuls of grass out of the thatches of the huts, twisted them into torches, and went to look. There was the cow, badly mauled about the shoulders, the other cattle huddled together in a corner, and the bull literally quivering with fury, one horn dripping with blood—the lion's blood. Outside was the mark where the lion had fallen. The bull had tossed him clean over the palisade.

In the morning we tried to follow the spoor, but there was very little blood, and we soon lost it altogether on a stony ridge. Five days later, however, some Kaffirs noticed the vultures circling overhead, and found what was left of the lion. The bull's horn had gone clean into his intestines; the wonder was he had not been killed outright.

He was a great bull, in the fullest sense of the word. Gentle as a sheep dog in his relations with mankind, a single day's training sufficed for breaking him into the yoke, and he proved a splendid hind-ox; but he met the common fate—the African Coast fever carried him off some eight months later, as it carried off all our other cattle.

Amongst the lesser schelm, wild cats, of which one seems to find a new variety about once a

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month, are a horrible nuisance with the poultry. Owls and hawks also levy a big toll on the chickens. Snakes are an ever-present curse. Roughly speaking, one species alone, the black mombas, used to cost us about fifty pounds a year by killing our cattle.

Vultures, of course, are not schelm, but simply detestably ugly scavengers. I have often wondered how they and the eagles manage to find their prey. In the case of the vulture, it is certainly not by sight. You shoot a buck, and he falls amongst the bush. Within a few minutes, low down on the horizon, you see the first vulture coming. Soon you may have a dozen, a score, fifty perhaps, seated on the trees round you, awaiting their chance. In the first instance, they could not possibly have seen the carcase, and yet it seems incredible that they could have got the scent of the blood miles away. They are loathsome birds in many ways. When they have the chance, they eat until they are too full to walk, much less to fly. I remember well one occasion when Malcolm shot a water-buck, and, having only two boys with him, was forced to leave the greater part of the meat on the veld, intending to send for it in the morning. He had it hoisted into the fork of a tree, but as the vultures had already arrived before he left, he had not much hope of finding more than half of it in the morning.

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Something — a leopard, I suppose — kindly fetched it down, and the vultures got to work on it. Later, evidently some time later, a lion came along to take his share, and the vultures must have annoyed him; for when we got back there in the morning there were eight of the great birds lying dead, simply crushed up by the blows from those terrible paws. Apparently, they had been too full even to stagger out of the lion's way, and he had just swept them to one side.

The eagle, I suppose, does see his prey. His eyesight must be absolutely marvellous. He is right up in the sky, invisible, or practically invisible, to the human eye, when he spots a snake on the ground. He poises directly over it, then closes his wings, and drops like a stone until comparatively close to the earth, when he opens his wings again and swoops on his victim. He never attempts to kill a snake outright, but takes it in his talons and soars upwards again, a thousand feet perhaps, then drops the reptile, usually so that it will fall on a rock.

I shall never forget the first time I saw a snake falling out of the sky. A man who had recently been on licensed premises might, reasonably, have felt anxious about his own health, but I had not been near a canteen for some months. Then, as I watched, I understood, for just above the snake, coming down with its wings closed,

## Off the Main Track

was an eagle. The snake struck a rock, and its career of evil was closed promptly; but the eagle swooped down gently, picked up what was practically four feet of pulp, and flew with it to a tree, where he quickly finished it off. I had a great affection for eagles after that. I only wish one could produce a similar bird, on a vastly larger scale, which would do the same with lions and hyænas.

The crocodile is, of course, a schelm, and I am by no means sure that, so far as human life is concerned, he does not levy the heaviest toll of all. No river can be said to be without crocodiles, and when you are trekking on foot you usually wade a river every few miles; consequently, it is wise to choose, not the most convenient, but the most shallow ford. A plan adopted largely is to send in the carriers first—to make a great splashing, rather than with a view to taking the edge off the crocodile's appetite. We used to make a rule of shooting at the brutes whenever we saw them, so I imagine that, from first to last, we must have destroyed a good many, though we never troubled to look for the bodies afterwards.

One of the strangest sights I remember seeing was down in the Portuguese territory. We were beside one of the many "pans," or shallow lakes which you find in the Sabi Valley, and as we walked along the edge, a big flight of wild duck



## Schelm

arose, and circled overhead. Amyas let drive amongst them. Some six fell around us—they had been almost in a solid lump—and at least eight more fluttered down into the water, winged. We were wondering whether we could get any of these—we had a lot of carriers to feed—when the question was solved for us. A crocodile's hideous nose appeared, and the nearest bird was gone. Within thirty seconds there was not one of them left. We decided at once that that pan was not a healthy place for wading.

I was surprised at one time to find that a good many Kaffirs regarded the honey-bird as a schelm. Considering that the poor little fellow's mission in life is to find bees' nests, and then search round for a man who will cut the tree open and expose the honey, leading him to it by a queer little twittering noise, flying on ahead, from one branch to the next, a few yards at a time, the classification seemed a very unjust one; but I discovered afterwards that those particular Kaffirs believed that, as often as not, the bird would lead them to a snake, that he was, in fact, in league with the snakes; yet when some more sensible savage returned with the honey, they were always eager enough for a share.

## CHAPTER X

### THREE TOWNS

GREAT cities never seem very interesting, save, perhaps, to people with tourist minds. I suppose the enormous increase in the facilities for travel has tended to do away with anything in the nature of individuality, to tone down any special characteristics. Business is the chief enemy of Romance, and big cities are essentially concerned with business.

If you want local colour nowadays, you must go off the main track, to the places where communication with the outside world is difficult, where the tourist is unknown, and, above all, where the climate is bad, where they live in accordance with standards of their own, and do what is right in their own eyes—which generally means something that is, or would be, evil in the eyes of the world at large.

I know many of these places off the main track, but there are three which have always seemed to me particularly interesting, because each typifies exactly the part of the world to

## Three Towns

which it belongs. Beira stands for the East Coast of Africa, Negapatam for Southern India, Catbalogan for the Philippine Islands.

Sand, mangrove swamps, and whisky, particularly whisky—those are the main features of Beira, the seaport of Mashonaland. A careless, thirsty, wholly improper little town, built on a strip of loose white sand, into which you sink ankle-deep at every step. It has no history—even the Arabs did not found a settlement there—and no title to fame, save its connection with that awful tragedy, the building of the Beira Railway, the line which, they say, cost a life for every sleeper laid.

The story of the Beira Railway has never been written, probably it never will be written now. Of the men who went right through the thing there are only one or two left, and possibly they want to forget the details. No one was to blame. If you wish to construct a line hurriedly through the most unhealthy strip of country in the world, you must pay a heavy toll in human life; and the wages offered were in themselves sufficient warning to the men who went to work there, and to die there. An engine-driver does not get sixty pounds a month in a healthy climate.

Looking back on it now, the amazing thing really is that the railway was ever finished. Any other race but our own would have abandoned the attempt before fifty miles had been con-

## Off the Main Track

structed. It was a triumph of British staying-power, but it was, above all things, the personal triumph of A. L. Lawley, the "King of Beira," general manager of the construction, the one man who is said to have been absolutely unafraid of Rhodes, and never to have given way to Rhodes. He had the Portuguese completely in hand—he had formed a perfectly just estimate of the value of that nation in the scale of humanity—and he allowed them to interfere neither with his railway nor with his men. One can only regret that he was not Administrator of Rhodesia during the critical days; in that case, the history of the territory would have been very different.

I knew Beira when the first rush of the construction work was over, and the reaction was beginning. It was not lively. German mail-boats loafed in occasionally, but their visits conferred no distinction, for they were merely filling in the sea-time necessary for them to draw the huge subsidies given by a rich and happy Fatherland. Their passengers seldom came ashore, and those unfortunates for whom it was the port of entry hurried through as quickly as they could. Beira had few attractions for a passing stranger; one needed to know the place to appreciate it.

It is an unbeautiful spot. Beyond the multitude of Bars, its most noticeable characteristic, there is nothing worth a second glance. The sandspit on which the town stands, or tries to

## Three Towns

stand, is merely a tongue jutting out from a long line of fever-haunted mangrove swamps, the most dreary and unwholesome of landscapes. The buildings, mainly undistinguished-looking shanties of galvanised iron, seem to quiver and palpitate under that awful tropical glare. One shudders at the thought of entering them. There are no trees, no grass, nothing underfoot but the horrible loose shingle. Wheeled traffic is impossible; though the difficulty has been partially met by little narrow-gauge tram lines, on which every white man runs a private car pushed by two perspiring natives.

The harbour is equally uninteresting. A steamer or two, with tramp written unmistakably in every line, may be lying at the anchorage, discharging part of the seemingly endless material for the Cape-to-Cairo Road. A decrepit tug, a score or two of small craft, a couple of decaying wrecks beached among the mangroves, a ruin of rusted iron which was once a river steamer, and half a dozen lighters—these constitute the shipping of the port. It looks merely prosaic at high water; but as the tide runs out and leaves a vast expanse of oozing black slime to reek and swelter under the merciless sun, you begin to see why men die so quickly in Beira.

Besides being unhealthy, Beira is always unbearably hot, not with the scorching parchedness of the high veld, but with a moist, enervating,

## Off the Main Track

vicious heat, a soul-destroying torment which, not content with wrecking a man physically, aims at ruining him morally as well, by driving him into every sort of excess. The place never cools down, day or night, winter or summer. If there is no heat coming from above, that abominable sand seems to have an endless reserve stock stored up within itself.

Yet, despite these drawbacks, Beira has a peculiar fascination of its own. But to feel this you must learn to know the place; and to accomplish that you must not be censorious, or even moral. It is frankly, undisguisedly wicked. It makes no pretence at being otherwise. It puts forward no excuses, although it might reasonably blame the climate, had it not got far beyond the point of self-exculpation. It sins because it finds in sin a relief to the tedium of existence; and because no one could be expected to be good in such a sultry little Gehenna. But at the same time it manages to infuse into its misdeeds a light-hearted Southern gaiety which the Northern nations can never imitate. Every second building is a Bar, presided over by some rouged deity with peroxide-dyed curls. You need never be thirsty in Beira, no matter how low your exchequer, for they will let you sign unlimited good-fors. You pay when you can; and you never reckon up your debts. Yesterday is gone, finished with: To-morrow



AFTER THE CYCLONE, PORT LOUIS.



WHAT THE CYCLONE LEFT.

1000  
900  
800  
700  
600  
500  
400  
300  
200  
100  
0



## Three Towns

may bring some stroke of good fortune, or it may see the Deluge: but To-day you have credit, so drink—that is the philosophy of Beira. It remembers nothing of the Past, cares nothing for the Future. It has seen so many die on that horrible East Coast that it thinks only of the Present.

The place is essentially cosmopolitan. With the exception of the dwindling Anglo-Saxon community and some of the higher Portuguese officials, the white inhabitants of Beira might be taken as a perfect sample of polyglot rascality, male and female. They are unclean, physically and morally, lazy, dishonest, and altogether abominable. How they came there, why they came there, are unsolved riddles; as is also the means of livelihood of the majority of the men. The latter remain either because they are too poor to leave, or because no decent country will take them. But the women make fortunes—if they live long enough.

The eternal German is much in evidence, of course—you will find him in any colony except his own—but Dagos predominate. Scores of Portuguese police and soldiers loaf about the streets in ill-fitting uniforms and rusty side-arms, even on sentry duty puffing at the eternal cigarette. Greeks, Italians, Turks, Levantines, Armenians, an unwashed and brigand-like crew, lounge round the quay, or gamble for infinitesimal

## Off the Main Track

sums in the numerous garlic-scented little eating-houses. Natives from every land between Suez and Yokohama, between Cape Agulhas and Cairo, swarm in the streets. It is a very Babel, although an extremely weary and apathetic one. Even the bottles in the Bars have a cosmopolitan look. Men soak up weird mixtures, the names of whose very ingredients sound strange to British ears. But absinthe is the favourite; for that evil-smelling poison is essentially a pick-me-up, and pick-me-ups are an ever-present need in Beira.

Latterly, the place has fallen on evil days. The rush of the railroad construction is over; business in Rhodesia has reached the nadir of depression; and in the Mozambique territory itself there is nothing being done. Consequently, the port is dull and languishing, with the air of a ballroom the morning after the dance, when all that remains is a few faded flowers and the unpaid bill. Times have been very bad in Beira of recent years; but the town has never reformed, it never will reform. It is still as it was in the halcyon days—thirsty, careless, rouged in the daylight. Yet none the less I always found Beira infinitely pleasanter, infinitely more amusing, than that city of smug hypocrisy—Durban.

It is a terrible pity that the British Government did not annex both Beira and Delagoa Bay

## Three Towns

at the time of the Revolution in Lisbon. It is quite unnecessary for the greatest naval power in the world to make excuses over such matters, though if an excuse had been needed the terrible misrule of the interior would have been sufficient. I have always been a trifle doubtful about some of the Congo atrocities, because of the characters of certain of the men connected with the agitation—somehow one seemed to get the foul smell of the native liquor trade as one read the speeches ; but I have actually seen what Portuguese rule on the East Coast means. It is rather curious that none of our philanthropists have ever taken up the question. Can it be anything to do with the attitude of the Transvaal and the Chartered Company towards the liquor trade? Of one thing I am certain, if the Government had been virile enough to annex Portuguese East Africa, its strongest, or at any rate its loudest, critics would have been the very people who were most violent in their denunciations of old King Leopold. I suppose they realise that the possession of Delagoa Bay and Beira would be of immense value to us in the event of another Boer War, and many of them still prefer their brother Boer to their own race.

There are a number of queer little ports scattered round the coast of Southern India, harbours whose polysyllabic names are known to none but geographers and the British India

## Off the Main Track

Company. No one ever visits them, save the officers of the latter corporation's steamers; and even they would not go if they could get the same pay on any other route. Sweltering, dusty, smelly, with bad anchorages and worse native stevedores, with cholera and plague on shore, and an ugly ground swell rolling over the bar—the smaller Indian coast towns are more than unattractive; they are places to be shunned.

Of this type of port Negapatam is a fair example. It lies some two hundred and fifty miles south of Madras, on the sea-board of a country rich in memories of the great struggle between Clive and Dupleix, the war which decided the future of the whole peninsula. These were stirring times then, and history was made rapidly; but they were soon over, and for the last hundred years or so nothing seems to have happened in this part of Hindustan. You can see that at a glance. The entire district has the air of belonging to a bygone age, of having stood still whilst the rest of the world went on. Negapatam conveys this impression in a peculiar degree. Except for an unobtrusive railway station and an occasional B.I. boat rolling heavily in the anchorage, the telephone wires and posts are the only outward signs that one is not back in the days when the names of Arcot and Trichinopoly were on every man's lips.

The place is essentially decayed and out of

## Three Towns

date. The buildings are of a type peculiar to the country—stucco-covered pillars and porticos crumbling into ruin, walls and balconies which look as though a touch would bring them down to the ground. Yet they have stood so for generations, through cyclone and rain and heat, and probably another century hence they will look little different. Time seems to lay his hand but once on those Indian houses, to age them with a single touch, and after that to trouble them no more. They are never new, yet never very old, merely a part of the Unchanging East.

The notice boards over the post and telegraph offices fail to introduce any hint of twentieth-century hurry and bustle; they are battered and awry, and, consequently, harmonise with the rest of the scene. In the quarter inhabited by the unfortunate Europeans, whose official duties chain them to that sweltering post, there is, perhaps, an air of cleanliness and comfort foreign to the habits of the mild, though objectionable Hindu, yet nothing is so aggressively Western that it might not easily be overlooked by a passing stranger.

In the native town there has probably been no change for centuries, certainly nothing has been cleaned for centuries. There is typically Oriental architecture, coupled with typically Oriental smells. Temples surmounted with hideous figures, their walls decorated with designs which none but a

## Off the Main Track

Hindu could perpetrate, announce the predominance of the religion of the futile and grotesque. A huge festival car, a hideously ugly monstrosity with garish colouring and worm-eaten wheels, stands in one of the main streets, protected from the weather by a rude thatch of straw, furnishing in itself a standard of the intellectual development of the Tamils of Southern India.

The little shops—the tinsmiths, the carpenters, the cake sellers, the larger business places of the grain merchants and bankers—all seem as though they had known no change since the days when John Company was establishing its first factory; although here and there a gaudy poster, advertising some one's sewing machine, or some one else's nauseous and useless patent medicine, stands out with startling incongruity.

The ungainly water-buffalo wallows wherever he can find a pool of slimy mud. The quaint little bullock carts rattle along the streets, their thin, half-starved cattle bearing eloquent testimony to the small measure of kindness which the pious Hindu bestows on his sacred animal. An anxious-eyed crowd chaffers and bargains in the bazaar, or stares with hungry faces at the piles of food-stuffs in the grain vendor's store. A dead body, borne high aloft on a flower-covered bier, the ghastly yellow brown face alone exposed, swings past, followed by a train of mourners. A beggar, covered with loathsome

## Three Towns

sores, extends a claw-like hand and moans piteously for alms. It is the Gorgeous East of which the poets have sung, gorgeous in its weird variety of smells, in its hints of bestiality, in the grinding poverty of its superfluous millions.

As a port Negapatam is laughable—except to those who have to use it. There is an open roadstead, entirely unprotected from the weather, in which the steamers anchor—if it is not blowing too hard. Ashore, a narrow creek, with a dangerous bar at its entrance, provides shelter for a number of rough, unwieldy surf-boats, and in the latter any cargo is painfully transported to the waiting vessel, some two or three miles out. Yet there is a considerable trade carried on with the Straits Settlements, cattle, vegetables, and coolie labourers forming the main exports. Of the last, the coolies, many thousands are shipped away to Penang every year for use in the plantations. Some are recruited by authorised agents, but the majority goes on its own account. Packed like sardines in a tin, sea-sick and wretched, they make the five days' journey under conditions which would be intolerable to a white man. But the coolie takes it all with the mute philosophy of his kind, ready to endure anything and face anything for the sake of earning a few rupees, which may save his children from starvation, and his home from the clutches of the money-lender.

## Off the Main Track

But perhaps the most typical things in Negapatam are some very ancient cannon which serve as posts at the street corners—long, thin, and deeply pitted with rust, yet stuck firmly in the ground. They must have been old when Clive was young, must have seen the European replace the native, the all-conquering British drive out the French, the liner replace the East Indiamen on which they themselves first came out. But, like their surroundings, they have remained unchanged, save that the rust has eaten in a little deeper. They are fixed firmly, and, having no value, no one will trouble to move them; in fact, they are representative of Negapatam itself.

It is a great pity that some of our Members of Parliament, whose vast mental qualifications enable them to grasp all the problems of Indian administration after a few weeks spent in the society of disloyal Babus, do not go down to places like Negapatam, and study the life of the Indian who ought to be considered—the peasant. The educated native is an anomaly and a nuisance; incidentally, too, he represents no one but his own class, an extremely small one compared with the total population. He is noisy, certainly, and because he is not treated in the proper way, as the Spaniards would treat him, he is becoming dangerous, but in no sense does he stand for India.



## Three Towns

I make not the slightest pretence of understanding problems. Possibly, I know no more about them than do the friends of Indian freedom in the House of Commons ; but I have seen the teeming millions of Southern India, the people who have always lived on the Hunger Line, whose ancestors died of starvation, and who expect to die of starvation themselves, who take things lying down, who do not resent their probable fate, because it is preordained. I have seen them, and I have seen, too, the marvellous work which the Government of India has done—the roads, the canals, the irrigation works, the provisions made to help a race which cannot, and will not, attempt to help itself. Perhaps, from a strictly economical point of view, the policy has been carried too far, for now the peasant breeds more freely, and there are more to die when a great famine comes ; but from the point of view of humanity the work done has been magnificent. I wonder would the be-spectacled Bengali be able to carry it on, especially when he had the Mussulman raiding his country ?

Few white races, and no native races, are fit to have representative government. Were we to allow India to have a parliament, we should be guilty of the most ghastly treason to the cause of civilisation. Surely the story of the American experiment in the Philippine Islands should be sufficient warning to us.

## Off the Main Track

I have taken Catbalogan, the capital of the Island of Samar, the third largest of the Philippines, as a good example of a Filipino town, well off the main track. There are a hundred more just like it in the Archipelago; and if you have seen one, there is no profit, and but little pleasure, to be gained from viewing the rest.

The palm-fringed bay is well sheltered, even when the monsoons are booming in their fiercest. Once inside, a vessel is as safe as if in dock; but it behoves her to enter cautiously, for, scattered around, are many ugly little reefs of jagged coral, reefs which can rip the bottom out of a steamer as easily and efficiently as a native can slice open the head of an enemy with his bolo, his terrible curved knife.

A rickety wooden pier, built years ago by some unusually energetic governor, and never repaired since, juts out from the beach. It stops just short of the deep water, and is, consequently, of little use to the infrequent steamers; but the native does not mind that, for he finds it an ideal lounging-place. Drawn up on the fore-shore are one or two fair-sized sailing-boats and a score or so of dugout canoes, queer little craft with unbeautiful lines and long, spidery outriggers. The town itself manages to straggle along a mile of beach, but inland it only extends some three hundred yards to the foot of a range

## Three Towns

of jungle-clad hill, which seems to forbid all communication with the interior. A decrepit gaol, surrounded by a low wall, a galvanised iron telegraph station, a painfully inartistic church, and some four or five very dilapidated stone buildings, are grouped irregularly round the plaza, the main square. In the centre of the latter stands the belfry, a great feature of all these Catholic towns, a rude framework of heavy timber, from which hang a dozen bells of divers sizes and inharmonious tones. The rest of the town consists of ordinary native shacks, strange, insubstantial little erections of bamboo and nipa-palm leaves, with floors raised some six or eight feet above the ground, picturesque at first sight, until one gets a glimpse of the piles of highly-scented garbage underneath.

In one of the larger buildings you will find a couple of weary-eyed white officials vainly trying to cope with the dilatory dishonesty of their native subordinates, who insist on using their positions to levy blackmail from the rest of their fellow-countrymen. The constabulary soldiers loaf outside their primitive barracks in tattered, ill-made uniforms. Their white officers, sore and disgusted at the impossibility of obtaining decent equipment, have long since ceased to worry about drill, and only require their men to do an occasional guard, and be handy at night in case of an attack from the hill-tribes.

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The elder natives do nothing during the week except sleep, or lounge in the doorways of the vile little grog-shops, smoking the eternal cigarette. On Sundays they awaken, and, dressed in their best, adjourn to the cock-pit, where they wax hot and clamorous over the manly national sport. The youngsters occupy their time in seeing to the wants of the feathered champions, who, every morning and evening, are taken for an airing, clasped tightly in the arms of their attendants. The women foregather in the squalid Chinese stores, talking scandal, chewing betel, or puffing at evil-smelling cigars. The only reasonably busy creatures are a multitude of lean, wolfish pigs, and an even greater number of dogs of undecided breed and objectionable tendencies, who pass the mornings fighting noisily on the foreshore, and the afternoons in nosing amongst the gutters and under the houses for stray pieces of offal.

Nothing ever seems to happen in Catbalogan. The insurgents are always on the point of attacking it, yet never come, preferring to remain in the background—a vague, intangible terror, which compels every white man to sleep with a loaded shot-gun beside his bed. Business is practically non-existent. The streets were paved with cobbles by some former governor—probably the same who built the quay—but all the carts have been allowed to rot away, and the buffalo which

## Three Towns

once drew them now spend their days wallowing happily in the stream which supplies the town with drinking water. If a native feels sufficiently energetic to repair his net with a view to fishing at some future date, he spreads it out over the middle of the main thoroughfare. If a woman has some rice to husk, she does it in the same place. Who but an unreasonable white man would dream of hurrying over the hot, dusty road in a cart, when it is possible to saunter along in the shade, and enjoy one's cigarette in peace? The day is long in Catbalogan; there is time enough to do everything calmly.

Now and then one of the trim little coast-guard steamers threads her way in between the reefs with mails. More rarely still, some shabby commercial boat, a veritable maritime curiosity which would be condemned to the scrap heap in any other latitudes, wheezes up to the anchorage in search of a cargo of hemp and copra. But except on these occasions, the waters of the bay are undisturbed, save by the dugouts of fishermen who, apparently, put to sea merely to escape the flies which disturb their rest on shore.

The whole place is a study in apathy, a revelation of indolence. Life seems so purposeless, so absolutely monotonous, that one is surprised at the inhabitants troubling to support existence at all. Yet they seem to enjoy it in

## Off the Main Track

their own dull way. And perhaps they are not so badly off after all; for at least they have the sunshine, the fresh air, and enough to eat, and even our boasted civilisation could not always provide them with those.

## CHAPTER XI

### WANDERING—AND AFTERWARDS

I DO not think I have ever really been a wanderer, because I generally had a definite object when I went to a place. As a rule, I did not achieve that object; often it ended in my going off after something totally different, but that was because conditions had changed before I reached my destination.

Of course, we all know that respectable people, who model their lives on copy-book maxims, stick to their point through thick and thin, and in the end achieve wealth and greatness; but copy books never appealed very much to any of us—at least not to Malcolm, Amyas, and myself—so, though we may have enjoyed ourselves, we never seemed to achieve anything. When we did make money, we lost it promptly, through no fault of our own, however.

It is frequently a good plan, especially if you are stranded in a small, out-of-the-way port, not to be too particular as to where you are going. Amyas and I once arrived in Beira

## Off the Main Track

with an idea of going to Madagascar. We could not get across there; then, in turn, we tried to go to Zanzibar, Colombo, and Mauritius, but in the end we had to be content with reaching Durban.

Again, some months later, when we had struck Mauritius, and had grown very tired of the place, I remember sitting on a chain on the quay at Port Louis, and discussing whether we should make for Aden, Karachi, or Calcutta. In that case, however, we split the difference, and went to Colombo. Amyas decided that. He said he had always had a desire to discover how vile the people of Ceylon really were. As a matter of fact, they must have changed since the Hymn was written, for we found them quite nice and hospitable.

People often ask me, people who have not met my wife, how I can settle down to a prosaic life at Home. There is the one answer; but there is also another—my wanderings were brought to an abrupt end by the tragic death of Amyas, the brother whom, at that time, I cared for more than the whole of the rest of the world put together, and I had not the heart to start out again alone. The break with the past was so complete that it seemed quite natural to drift back to England, and to stay there.

Now and then the longing to go abroad again





AFTER THE GREAT FIRE, PORT LOUIS.



STREET SCENE, PORT LOUIS.



## Wandering—and Afterwards

comes back to me, especially during a sleepless night; but, in my case, it has no great force. You can get quite a lot of excitement out of life at Home if you know how to set about it. You only need to espouse some unpopular cause, to tilt at some sacred windmill, and, as I have reason to know, you find all the trouble you want. I admit it lacks certain elements which you find on the frontier. You seldom come face to face with your adversaries, and in civilised countries men have a fancy for stabbing you in the dark, never coming into the open at all; but that, I suppose, is part of the game.

Still, as one grows older, one becomes more wise, or more cautious, and I have given up all forms of fighting now. For instance, I might have put a whole quantity of controversial matter into this book.

It is a good thing to wander about the world—a good thing for the few, a very bad thing for the majority. Wandering unfits a man for most occupations at home, and the chances are that, unless he has the good fortune which has been mine, unless he meets the One Woman, the Good Comrade, that after a brief and miserable sojourn in civilisation he will drift back to the frontier, to fret away the rest of his days, longing for the peace which Death alone can bring him.

If, as in my case, you spend the best years of your youth abroad, you get hopelessly out of

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touch with Home ideals. You grow to hate platitudes, especially political platitudes, and you are apt to grow impatient with those who enunciate them. When you have been up against the crude realities of life, when for years past you have practically made your own laws, you can have but little sympathy with the idea of making people moral by Act of Parliament. You have seen Nature at work, eliminating the unfit, and you cannot understand why we should want, not only to preserve them, but to give them every opportunity of propagating, by relieving them of all sense of parental responsibility. Possibly you have been more or less of an autocrat in your own district, and so you have not much reverence for the "Vox Populi" idea—personally, I have no reverence at all for it.

The phrase I dislike most is "Social Reform." Both the great parties, and the little ones as well, use it freely; it seems to have some magic quality, so far as evoking enthusiasm is concerned, but I have never yet been able to find out what it means. I gather that a tariff will provide money for this mysterious purpose, and also that by sacrificing our naval supremacy we can achieve the same end. Personally, though I do not profess to understand all the arguments—does any one understand them?—I see little good in reform schemes which are to come into operation after we have lost control of the great

## Wandering—and Afterwards

trade routes, when the flag of the Fatherland is flying over Hongkong and Singapore, so I prefer the tariff scheme, especially if the first thing in it is, as it ought to be, a revision of the law with regard to imported books.

I believe I like the Imperialist, who announces himself loudly as such, as little as I like the Little Englander. The former is usually so blatant, and so very, very silly. He means well, but Nature served him badly in the matter of providing him with brains. He has proved that by supporting the idea of the South African Union. He loves to prate about Daughter States, Britains Overseas, and such-like fluffy nonsense. It is nothing to him that the Daughter States are virtually independent, and love us chiefly because we provide them with naval defence gratuitously. If you tell him this, he points to their handful of destroyers and police boats, and imagines he has answered you, never thinking of the defence of the trade routes, for which half our navy exists. He is not interested in little places like Singapore, or Hongkong, or Aden, and he would laugh in a superior manner if you told him that they were of more value to us than all the self-governing colonies. How can that be? he asks. They are mere dots on the map, and the other colonies are great red blotches.

In a way, the Little Englander is more con-

## Off the Main Track

sistent. He hates big things, because they make himself look so very small. I do not think that, as a rule, he is really unpatriotic. He is merely vain, foolish, and bigoted, essentially parochial-minded. He has been born without a sense of proportion, and as, in most cases, he has not been to a Public School, he has never had anything of the kind kicked into him. He is a nuisance, and a dangerous nuisance, as was proved in the Boer War, which, but for the support given to the Cape rebels by the Little Englanders, would have been over two years earlier. In that case his humanitarianism, his horror at the idea of treating those rebels in the proper way—which meant giving them no quarter—led to the deaths of tens of thousands of British soldiers.

You find no Little Englanders on the frontier. The atmosphere does not suit them. They like to keep within touch of their chapel and their county councillor. Wise men, like themselves, take no foolish risks from fever, natives, and wild beasts. The most serious risk most of them ever run is that of prosecution over a municipal contract.

The longing to go abroad again may be strong at times, but I think that it is as nothing compared with the longing to be at Home which comes to you when you are abroad. You are hungry, and wet, and tired. A lion may be

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prowling round your camp, just outside the circle of firelight; you may be crouching amongst the shivering mob of black humanity on the open deck of a coolie emigrant ship; or the jungle round you may be full of insurrectos, waiting for a chance to rush in and cut your throat. It is in circumstances like these that the longing for Home comes most strongly. You think of London, the lights, the warm restaurants, where there is plenty to eat and plenty to drink, as much to drink as you like to order, real whisky, not potato spirit; and you think of the women, above all, of the women, possibly of one particular woman, who may never know of your fate. You curse your own luck, or your own folly, and then, resolutely, you try to get back to a sense of the grim realities of your present position, for the thoughts you have conjured up have made you feel more hungry, thirsty, and wretched than you were before. I have been through it all, and I know it so well—too well.

The first time I came home from Africa, after nearly five years of fever, was in November or December. There was sunshine in Southampton, and quite a charming little blizzard by the time our train reached Waterloo. I shivered in Waterloo Station for an hour or so, whilst waiting for a train down to my people's place, and landed there finally with a dose of fever

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on me. I was in England four months, and I had fever three days out of every week. I had left Africa feeling I hated it, and its people, and its ways, but when I went aboard the *Scot* at Southampton, all I was thinking about was the sunshine, and the cool freshness of the morning air, and the guinea-fowl calling in the mealie-lands. I had forgotten the Kaffirs, and the Afrikanders, and the fever.

A year later I was home again, sore and disappointed and broken financially. During that year the African Coast fever, the greatest of all cattle plagues, far more deadly than the Rinderpest, had been allowed to spread through the country. "It must have its run," the officials in Salisbury declared. They made no attempt to check it; and they succeeded in turning the financial depression then existing in Rhodesia into absolute disaster. I was one of the first, and one of the heaviest, losers.

I left the country feeling that I never wanted to set foot in it again. I was determined that I would never do so. There was far better land, far better prospects, in Portuguese East Africa—I still hold to this view, despite the fact that it is heterodox, almost to the point of *lese majesté* against the Chartered Company—and I intended to go to the Mozambique territory, and work a rubber concession which had been granted me provisionally. Yet in



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the end the concession lapsed, because I could get no capital for it, and I had to go back to Rhodesia. Some of those men to whom I offered shares in that rubber venture must have been feeling a little sore about their own folly recently, in view of the boom in rubber properties. If they would have put up two thousand pounds, and guaranteed another four thousand to be spread over the next four years, we should have had twenty square miles of the finest rubber-growing land on the East Coast—I had had the first pick of the whole territory—and that land would have been worth a hundred and fifty thousand to-day. Moreover, the wild rubber in itself would have paid a dividend on the capital from the outset. But they were typical City men, and they had to do after the manner of their kind. They tried to go behind my back and obtain the concession for themselves, in order to escape the wrench of paying me for my work. I suppose they felt they could not violate City traditions to the extent of being even moderately straight. The result was, of course, that my concession lapsed, and they did not get it for themselves. The gentle Portuguese, having found out its value, resumed possession—which showed an unusual degree of wisdom on their part.

So, having lost my concession, I had to go back to South Africa after all, as engineer to

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a cold storage concern, and, curiously enough, that time, too, I went gladly, because England seemed so chilly and inhospitable, and because in the land to which I was returning, one never knew what might turn up. There was always a chance of the luck changing.

The third time I came back it was different. I had brought my brother's ashes half round the world, smuggling them aboard ship, smuggling them through the Customs, to bring them to his own country. He had been with me since he was a boy of seventeen; together we had got into five or six years more than most men do in a lifetime; and his death seemed to break all the links with the past. We had been thinking of making our next venture in Nyassaland, then practically unexplored; failing that, we were going to try Brazil or Borneo; but I had no heart to carry out any of these plans alone, and I had never met another man whom I would take with me on a quest of that kind. Consequently, I decided that I would stay at Home, and see what luck might bring me there.

I will give one piece of advice to those who, like myself, come home to settle down—do not try to do so in villages or small country towns. People in those will not understand you, and in the end they will do their best to make your life a burden to you. I tried first, soon after I was

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married, in an Essex village, on the hills above Tilbury. We were very hard up in those days, and we were glad enough to take a tiny bungalow, though even that was too large in comparison with our household goods.

The place did not like us from the outset. Barring the parson, who was dull and snobbish, there was no one of our own social position for miles round. The larger houses belonged to retired tradesmen, whom we did not want to know, though they, in their turn, professed, and I think felt, all the British tradesman's contempt for a man who lives by his brains, instead of living on his fellow-men. The rest of the population consisted of cottagers, poor, weary wretches, living in the most miserable of hovels, where they bred large families of children, which, however, were thinned off rapidly by typhoid and other diseases due to their surroundings. I found out later on that the desire to get rid of us from the village was due largely to a fear that I might expose the landlords of those cottages in the Press. In a way the fear was well-founded. I am going to pillory some of those landlords when the right time comes. I have a fairly good memory for such things, and I have one or two personal scores to pay off yet.

When the Scout movement was started, the small boys of the village, labourers' sons, came to us timidly one evening and asked if we could

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help them to be Scouts. Poor little wretches! Their lot was a very miserable one. Nine out of ten of them were foredoomed to be labourers, at a wage of about twelve shillings a week, yet the education which had been forced on them had filled them with vague, unattainable longings. You had there the whole tragedy of State education.

Life in that village was hopelessly dull for those youngsters; their only recreations were bird's-nesting and similar forms of mischief, so we enrolled three patrols of them, and, relying on a promise of assistance from the rich people of the village, we got uniforms for the eighteen boys. In the end, though we absolutely could not afford it, we had to pay the whole cost of the uniforms ourselves, in addition to other expenses, such as the hire of the drill hall.

The whole thing broke up rather suddenly. We took the youngsters for a paper chase one evening, and finding that some of them were exhausted—most of the poor little beggars had never had enough to eat in their lives—we took them to an off-license beer-house, and gave them mineral waters and bread and cheese in the garden. It never occurred to us that we were doing any harm, but the following day there was a murmur through the village about our taking innocent lads to public-houses, with a view to selling them as soldiers later on; and next

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Sunday the local Dissenting preacher denounced us roundly, comparing us with Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. That was the end of the Scout movement in that village.

Our next move—a foolish one—was to a most unwholesome little town near Ipswich. There also they seemed afraid of me, for a most deliberate attempt was made to ruin us, an attempt which very nearly succeeded. Whilst I was away, a local solicitor—he is also on my list, as is also one of the local doctors—collected particulars of everything I owed—there were some heavy furniture accounts—and fired in summonses for the lot the day I returned. I was just able to meet them, but it cost me something I can never replace, the thing I longed for most of all. So I have a long score to settle with those folk.

They are all tradesmen, or tradesmen's sons, in that town, and all work hand in hand to rob the stranger. Were they not so dishonest, they would be ludicrous. Every second man sports some sort of military title—the draper is a colonel, the grocer a major, and so on—but, in no single case, can one speak of “an officer and a gentleman.”

The only treatment which would really meet their deserts is that which Rehoboam proposed to do to the people of Israel, though I fear

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greatly that, before a start could be made, the scorpions would have been stolen, and sold in Ipswich as a new species of lobster. One of these days, if I can manage to mix a little gall with my ink, I will write faithfully concerning that place and its ways.

## CHAPTER XII

### ON THE ROAD

THERE is some curious fascination about the great transport roads of South Africa, some quality which is lacking in the highways of other countries. On the veld, the road stands for civilisation. It is the outward, visible sign of white occupation, for hundreds of miles often the only sign. No sensation can be more curious than that of suddenly coming on a waggon road when for weeks past you have been tramping through country absolutely untouched by the hand of the dominant race. The road may, probably will, be just a track, a wheel spoor running through a narrow clearing, but still the mere sight of it seems suddenly to bring you back from barbarism, to put you once again in touch with your own kind.

Every man who has lived in the Road—as distinct from those who have merely travelled on it—loves it. He must love it, or he would never have remained on it. The passenger views it in a different light altogether. To him waggon-

## Off the Main Track

trekking is merely a tedious and uncomfortable way of reaching his journey's end, of getting to the place where he hopes to make sufficient money to repay him for the hardships he has undergone in reaching it. He never knows the road, he has not time to learn to know it, and if he is of the storekeeping or mining type, the chances are that he could never, in any circumstances, learn to know it. His will not be the nature which understands such things.

Life on the Transport Road was different from any other form of existence. It was the journey-which-always-went-on. Treks came to an end, trips came to an end, there were loadings and off-loadings, long halts every now and then to give the cattle a chance to pick up flesh after the rigours of the winter on the high veld; but, none the less, it was always the same journey, to and fro, backwards and forwards.

The waggon was the transport rider's home. As a rule, at least in Rhodesia, he had no fixed abode of any kind. They tell me that all this has changed now, that the transport rider of to-day is merely a man who, finding he cannot make a living on the barren stretch of high veld he calls his farm, does odd carriers' work from Railhead to the neighbouring mines. I suppose this is so. That abominable railway killed transport work. There are no longer trips of three or four months' duration, at the end of which you might have



## On the Road

five hundred pounds to draw. A hundred miles is a very long journey nowadays, and rates are cut very fine, for they count shillings in these times, when formerly they counted only gold.

I should be very sorry to see the old Roads again. I can picture them, mournful, disused, overgrown, the ruts washed into great ditches by the rains, the drifts utterly uncrossable, because the banks have caved in. I can picture the old wayside stores, roofless, their mud walls rapidly crumbling away, and beside them a heap of black ashes which shows you where the stable for the coach mules used to be. It was inevitable that the railway should cut out all the great Roads, which it followed so closely—it was always the transport riders who showed the way to the engineers—and the new roads, leading from the railway stations, are quite insignificant affairs, utterly devoid of all hint of romance. You can no longer turn your cattle loose to graze anywhere, because you are probably on some one's farm; you can no longer shoot wherever you like, because of that same reason, and because nowadays there are plenty of low-down informers to help the police secure convictions under the Game Laws.

How could one go back, how could one want to go back? Everybody who counted is either dead or has disappeared, and the new men, the settlers or colonists or whatever else they call

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themselves, are grossly uninteresting. They go out to plant tobacco or to grow mealies on a capital of five hundred pounds. They could not, at least most of them could not, tell you the difference between a mealie leaf and a tobacco leaf when they left England, and they certainly could not tell a hind yoke from a lang-wagon, a neck-strop from a reim. Yet they are the folk who now run the transport side of things, and so I do not want to go back to the Road, or rather to the roads. I would sooner cherish my memories at Home, and laugh, or curse, according to the fit that is on me, when I see the advertisements for settlers. You did not have to advertise for the right men, the men who build up Empires. They just came, naturally; and those who had not died from the climate, or at the hands of the natives, left, just as naturally, when they found that they were no longer needed, that their day was over.

On the Transport Road one got down to the heart of things. There were no shams there. Men who did not know—mining men, and German storekeepers, and Bulawayo colonels—used to complain that we transport riders made our money too easily, and I think they were all pleased when the Chartered Company's officials allowed the African Coast fever to spread through the country, and so ruined us all. Too easily! We worked for our money, digging our waggons



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## On the Road

out of the mud, risking our lives in flooded rivers, chancing blackwater fever all the time, fighting our way along the Transport Road, not only for the sake of what we were to be paid, but also for the sheer joy of getting forward. We were the people who made Rhodesia, and we were the only people who never got, and never asked for, recognition. We kept the country going during the Boer War, and, as a mark of gratitude, Cecil Rhodes brought in four hundred Refugee waggons belonging to trek-Boers who had lately been in arms against us, and will be in arms against us again soon, a foul and insanitary crew, in order to knock down the rates we were getting. That is latter-day Imperialism. I suppose if we had a real Imperialist, a man who put the honour of his country first and floated no companies, subscribed to no party funds, Parnellite or otherwise, we should indict him of high treason. Really, in a way, he would be guilty of high treason, for he would be trying to lead the nation back to the dangerous ideals of the elder Pitt and Warren Hastings, quite impossible persons from the modern point of view.

The transport riders stood head and shoulders above every other class in Rhodesia. They were the one independent class. The storekeepers depended on the mining folk, the mining folk depended on the Chartered Company, or, I

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should say, on the Chartered financiers—the Chartered shareholder was just a kind of amiable milch-cow—and the men on the mines dared not call their souls their own; even their letters and telegrams were censored, and if they managed to survive the combined effects of the climate and the abominable conditions on the mines, they usually left the country too broken to protest. But the transport riders led a wholesome life, and they had nothing to fear. The mining companies could not do without them, and they were in a position to demand a fair return for their work. Transport rates were never too high. Personally, I think they were never high enough, considering the risks and hardships of the life.

Transport riders were the only people who paid their way, the only class which was never in debt. Possibly this was due to the fact that, greatly to the disgust of the companies, we always insisted on being paid in cash at the journey's end.

I was perfectly certain in those days, and I am perfectly certain still, that we were the salt of the earth so far as Rhodesia was concerned. True, officially and semi-officially—companies are semi-official—we were detested as a dangerously independent body of men, but until the railway had reached the Zambesi we were too strong, or too necessary, to be attacked openly; then

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the introduction of African Coast fever, that most deadly of cattle plagues, which was brought into the country and allowed to spread through the grossest of official incompetence, gave the authorities their chance. Practically every one of the old transport riders was ruined, and it became an easy matter to put such transport work as remained to be done into the hands of trek-Boers from the Northern Transvaal and raw "settlers" from home, men who, living, as they usually do, on the "Hunger Line," are glad enough to accept any rates offered them.

The full-sized waggon is eighteen feet long and is capable of carrying a load of eight thousand pounds over almost any track. As a matter of fact, I once saw fifteen thousand pounds, a single casting, part of an air compressor, on a waggon. The forwarding agent—I ought really to have dealt with forwarding agents in the chapter on "Schelm"—had offered it to us, speaking of it vaguely as being about ten thousand, not knowing that I had once been an engineer, and so had some idea of weights. It only had to go thirty-five miles, and the road was all right, he said. I knew what that road was like, and I went up to have a look at the casting. Very foolishly, they had not obliterated the shipping weight, which was painted on it, in two-inch figures.

I went back to the office, and I told him

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first about the road, which was vile, then about the casting, then I added a few things about himself, which, though perfectly true, did not seem to please him. Our parting was not marked by any excess of cordiality. Recently I have seen by the Bulawayo papers that he is still a leading light in that town, but I expect he has long since forgotten both myself and what I said to him that day.

I went back to the outspan—we always used to stay on our waggon at the outspan on the Tuli Road, for Bulawayo hotels were, and probably are still, about the limit—and next morning I saw a waggon coming down the road, with that same compressor casting on it. Though it was on the level, the Dutchman who owned the waggon had got twenty-two oxen inspanned. He had been bluffed with the ten-thousand-pound weight story, and not until it was loaded up was he told the real weight. He asked me if I knew the road, and I told him what it was like—pretty bad most of the way, with an absolute terror of a drift just before you reached the mine. He ran his hands through his hair, and then he said various unprintable things in both English and Dutch.

At the Nine-mile Water he broke a hind wheel; at the Twelve-mile Water a front axle went; for three days he was in a mud hole, and though he negotiated the drift safely, he



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was twenty-two days doing the thirty-five miles, whilst his bill for repairs left him with a heavy loss on the trip. When he got back to Bulawayo he went straight into hospital and very nearly died. I heard later that practically every other transport rider round Bulawayo had already refused to take that load.

We would never take any of those very heavy articles on our waggons. Five hundred pounds was the biggest thing we cared to load, and I am sure our policy was a very sound one. You got no higher rate for loading machinery, and if you did upset your waggon on the road—no uncommon occurrence—your only plan was to dig a pit, get your waggon into it, roll or drag your load back on to the waggon, and then try and pull it out of the pit again. Time after time I have known this to be done, and as the pits were seldom filled in again afterwards, they were rather nasty traps for the next comer, especially when the rains had filled them up with mud. Two or three times during a night trek our waggons blundered into them, and I need hardly say we did not bless the diggers of those “graves,” as we used to call them.

Personally, for bad roads, like those of Mashonaland, I prefer the sixteen-foot waggon to the eighteen-foot. You may not be able to load quite so much, but you travel more quickly, and you save your cattle enormously. In the same

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way I consider the small native cattle, especially the black Mashona, infinitely superior to the vast, lumbering, colonial cattle, superior even to the Matabele and Zulu cattle.

We were the first transport riders really to go in for Mashona cattle. Other men had used a few of them, in a half-hearted sort of way, knowing they were going against the "custom of the country"; but we went in for Mashona and nothing else, breaking in all our own beasts, and after a while there were plenty who followed our lead. We always passed every one else on the road, our cattle were never thin, even during winter on that ghastly high veld, and even if, as was the case, we did load a few hundred pounds, a thousand pounds perhaps, less than other men, we made more in the year than they did.

The colonial, or Afrikander, bullock is a monstrosity, huge, gaunt, hideous. He is a very slow feeder, and, being the descendant of imported stock, he is very liable to disease. It takes him the greater part of the day to fill himself, even when the veld is good; and when the veld is rich with young, green grass, he will very likely get over-full and die. In the yoke, he uses his weight, not his strength, and he soon loses heart in a bad place.

The Mashona ox, on the other hand, short-legged, thick-set, perfectly proportioned for strength, is the true type of South African

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bullock. He feeds very quickly, knowing exactly what grass to select. He certainly does not take half as long as the colonial bullock in getting full; consequently, he has far more time for rest. Naturally, being a low veld animal, he feels the bitter cold of the high plateau when he first goes up there, but, if he is looked after properly during the first few months, he will quickly become acclimatised. Even if he does get ill and develops gall-sickness, an enlargement of the gall bladder, a dose of hydrochloric acid, the equivalent of a tablespoonful in a whisky bottle of water, will certainly cure him.

In the yoke he is splendid, absolutely full of grit. He does not lean against the yoke like the colonial ox, he pushes at it, fights at it if necessary, seeming to take a joy in his work. He never gives up, never loses heart. He seems to know that, sooner or later, that waggon must come out of the drift or the mud hole in which it is stuck. He is easily trained, perfectly gentle in the yoke or in the scherm, and though he may have a taste for fighting other bullocks—usually he has a passion for it, rather than a taste—it is merely a trial of strength, and no harm is ever done.

From the butcher's point of view he is equally good. His fine, rounded quarters are far more economical—it is a hideous, though necessary, point of view—far more economical than the

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huge, thinly-covered framework of the ox from the South.

The Mashona bullock is the type which Nature has evolved in Rhodesia—the Matabele cattle, which were practically wiped out by the Rinderpest, were a mixed breed—and it stands to reason that it is the type best suited to the country. Yet that strange contempt for local things, native things, that extraordinary and fatal predilection for Cape ideas, has, so far, prevented the Chartered Company and the stock owners from realising this fact. The attempts made to import cattle from the South have usually resulted in failure. The cattle brought lung sickness with them, and died, after infecting the healthy local cattle; if they were free of lung sickness, they almost invariably managed to develop some other fatal complaint. Rhodes' experiment of importing a thousand Australian cows dealt almost as great a blow to the prosperity of the country as did the Boer War, for those cows brought the African Coast fever with them, and the officials in Salisbury allowed that horrible disease to spread unchecked.

If Rhodesia is ever to be a cattle country, the herds must be raised from Mashona stock; of that I am certain. Personally, I am sorry to say that I can see not the slightest reason for supposing that the Chartered territory is likely to rank amongst the cattle-raising countries, either

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in the near, or in the distant, future. There has never yet, in the whole of South Africa, been a real herd of cattle in the sense in which the term is used in Australia or America. They do not know what a herd is, any more than they know what a flock of sheep is. They have always done these things on such a petty scale that they now seem unable to grasp the question of competition against countries where the industries are carried on on a grand scale. It is the spirit of the colonial who, when he is told about London or New York, answers: "Man, you should see Grahamstown with the lamps lit!"

You cannot isolate any part of Africa, you cannot cut it off from the rest of the continent, at least so far as infectious diseases are concerned. Within the last fifteen years we have had the two terrible cattle plagues, the Rinderpest and the Coast fever. The former was the more striking, the more theatrical if you will; the latter, which killed ninety-seven per cent. of the white men's cattle, the more fatal. I know it may be argued that Rinderpest is not likely to recur, and that the Coast fever could easily have been checked at the outset; but still there is no reason why two other new plagues should not appear during the next fifteen years. Then, too, the greater part of the high veld is valueless as pasturage, just as

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it is valueless for agricultural purposes, whilst the area available in the low veld is very small. A nomadic people, travelling from one district to another, from one level to another, always on the move, would probably manage in time to get together some large mobs of cattle; but there will never be real cattle stations, such as you find in Queensland. I fear greatly that the shareholders in those meat extract companies, whose Teutonic directors have recently become such strong converts to British Imperialism, will find some distressing figures in the balance sheets of a few years hence.

I love every kind of animal—save, of course, schelm—but, after dogs, I love cattle best of all. To me they are infinitely more interesting than horses. Here in England men never learn to know their cattle. The cows are hideous monstrosities, bred solely with a view to their giving an unnatural quantity of milk; the bulls are, for some reason which I could never divine, wholly savage, or at least have the reputation of being so; oxen are merely so many pounds of meat. No regard seems to be paid to hardiness or strength. The beast which takes the most prizes is usually the one which has managed to eat the most food, not in the open, but in a stall. The whole idea of English cattle-breeding seems to me to be wrong, for the valuable animal, valuable to the country in an economic sense,

## On the Road

would be one which could live on what is now regarded as mere waste land. Grass which is considered too poor for the English ox would, by its richness, kill the average South African bullock.

Still, considering the view taken of cattle here, it is quite natural that they should awaken little affection in their owners. The personal element never comes in. The bullock never learns to answer to a name; his owner studies his size, computes how much he will scale, cleaned, and cares nothing about his character. He is potential beef—that is all.

On the veld, the reverse is the case. At any rate in my days, the bullock was primarily a working animal; only when he proved too old, or too lazy, for the yoke did he become meat. We broke in all our own cattle, and so we got to know each one in a personal sort of way, and, knowing them, we grew to love them. No two cattle are ever quite alike, any more than two Mashona are alike. We had one span of sixteen absolutely black cattle, and, to the average man, it might have seemed impossible to tell them apart; but Amyas and I could tell them instantly, by the look in their eyes.

They were faithful beasts, those cattle of ours. They served us splendidly on the Road, and when the disease killed them all I think we grieved more for them than for the money we

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had lost. It hit us very hard, and the wound has not healed yet. I have never forgotten, I never shall forget, that the African Coast fever was introduced into the country through culpable ignorance, allowed to spread through culpable negligence, and that, so far, those guilty have never been punished.



## CHAPTER XIII

### RIFLES AND OTHER THINGS

I HAVE always had a taste for the rather unprofitable occupation of tilting at wind-mills. I suppose, as a matter of fact, it does no good, and I know, from practical experience, that it is apt to land one in lots of trouble. I found that out when I wrote "Black Sheep," and broke a lance against the wind-mill of mid-Victorian smugness; possibly I shall find it again later on, though now I have schooled myself to write with restraint. I am, as I have mentioned, a householder and I pay rates—most unwillingly, I admit—and, in course of time, I shall get a vote, so I have to take a staid and judicial view of things, as every voter does, or is assumed to do.

I have run out of lances—I had run out of them before I reached the end of my "Soldier of Fortune"—and I have decided to leave wind-mills severely alone; but I must say some controversial things concerning rifles, even if I have to say them in a very mild way,

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just criticising the wind-mill, instead of riding at it.

I believe that nothing has done more towards the destruction of game in Africa than the introduction of the small-bore rifle. If I could have my way, I would forbid its use entirely. It has its good points—every one will admit that. It is light and handy, it is usually extremely accurate, the cartridges for it are always obtainable, and it has practically no recoil. I believe the latter quality has done as much, or more, than all the others put together to render it popular. Nineteen men out of twenty who go on the veld to shoot have no idea of how to use a rifle. I do not mean that they cannot hit the object they aim at, but that they hit merely because they have a rifle which helps them in every way, and that, if they had any other sort of rifle, they would probably miss through "pulling off" out of fear of the recoil. They stand rigid when they fire, braced up, so that they get the full benefit of the "kick," whereas they should have every muscle slack, and the rifle held loosely, just against the shoulder, so that both man and weapon go back together.

The recoil from a small-bore is so slight that it does not matter greatly how a man stands when he fires it, but it is very different when he is using a cordite rifle of decent bore, .400

## Rifles and other Things

or '450. If he stands rigid when he fires one of those, he will most assuredly get a bruised shoulder. I know a number of men who, having used them once, declare they will never use them again; and I know even more men who have made all sorts of excuses for not even trying a heavy rifle. On the other hand, I never remember having been kicked by any rifle, though during the last year or two I was in Africa I always used a heavy-bore cordite.

The small bore is a very deadly weapon, even in the hands of a raw beginner. It is an easy rifle to hit with, and a difficult one to kill with. The percentage of buck which are wounded and not secured must be enormous, and of those buck the majority either die or are run down by the schelm. I should think it is perfectly safe to say that the average man, using a small bore, destroys five buck for every one he brings into camp; possibly the proportion is even greater than that.

With a rifle of decent bore a man can shoot to kill. The actual blow of a '400 or '450 cordite bullet is so great that all but the largest game are knocked over by it, whilst, even if they do scramble to their feet again, they are bound to leave a good blood spoor.

The question of cartridges is almost as important as that of rifles. I think I tried every make of bullet and smokeless powder on the

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market. So far as powder was concerned, I soon learned the wisdom of sticking to cordite. All the other makes seemed unreliable. You never knew whether they were going to throw high or low. As for bullets, it is impossible to lay down a hard and fast rule, except in the case of the hollow-nosed and the lead-nosed. The former is liable to strip in the barrel, the nickel covering remaining, the lead going on, with the result that your next shot blows your breech block out into your face. The lead-pointed bullet leads up your barrel, choking your rifling, just enough to make the weapon kick heavily and render the shooting inaccurate. If you are after hippo or rhino, the solid covered nickel bullet is, naturally, the only one you can use. For small antelope I prefer the split, with long cuts down the nickel case; for larger buck a "solid" with a cross filed on the nose is undoubtedly the best.

I have often wondered where certain novelists and journalists can have got the idea that big game hunters use explosive bullets. I have never seen such a thing, never met any one who had seen such a thing. It is useless to point out to these people that a bullet which exploded on contact with the skin would do very little harm in the case of a big animal; they stick to the notion. It would be as hard to get it out of their heads as it would be to induce them to spell veld without a final "t".



THE MILD HINDOO AT HOME.



IN THE CANE FIELD.



## Rifles and Other Things

The 12-bore is, of course, the only shot-gun to take, and the simpler it is the better. Personally, I prefer a hammer gun, as the native, who will probably carry it the greater part of the time—this is against one of their silly laws, but it is always done—is far less likely to have an accident with it than with a hammerless. I found, after pretty varied experiments, that Ballistite cartridges with Number Three shot were by far the best. After all, you only want to shoot guinea-fowl for the pot, and guinea-fowl's constitutions need Number Three.

Revolvers I loathe and detest. No sensible man ever carries one. A shot-gun is infinitely more useful and certain for slaying at short range. If you hang your revolver holster at the head of your bed, four men out of five who come into your hut will want to play with it, "to see if it is loaded"; if you put it away, out of their reach, you might as well not possess it. Therefore, my advice to any one who has taken a revolver to Africa is—sell it as soon as you can to some newer chum than yourself.

There is no greater mistake than to take a lot of stores and kit on to the veld. They will merely be a nuisance to you. The only form of tent which is necessary—and I speak from long experience—is the little patrol tent, weighing, complete, about nineteen pounds. That is sufficient for two white men. A large waterproof

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sheet is essential, but the "valises" which so many men love to drag about serve no purpose, save to make their owners look ridiculous. I remember seeing them by the hundred during the Boer War, and marvelling at the system which would allow them to be taken even as far as Cape Town. Tables, chairs, bedsteads are all so much lumber, and no man who is out on the veld for any serious purpose ever dreams of including them in his kit.

It is hopeless and absurd to prate about game preservation so long as the use of the small-bore is permitted. A man is given a license allowing him to shoot so many head of game, and I believe there are now officials whose duty it is to count the trophies exported, and to levy duty on them; but nothing is said, or known, about the wounded animals left to die on the veld. Those are mere incidentals.

If the small-bore were prohibited entirely, if the .400 were made the minimum, there would be very few wounded animals, and I am inclined to think there would be a decided falling-off in the number of would-be big-game hunters—which would be another advantage to Africa generally.

As for food stuffs—flour, tea, coffee, sugar, and salt are absolutely indispensable. Sago is extremely valuable, especially on cold nights, as are also the "pea-soup sausages" similar to



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those served out to the German Army; they are amazingly nutritious, and amazingly nice—moreover, they contain a very great amount of food for their weight. Alcohol is a mistake on the veld. If you take a sufficient supply to last out the trip the weight is too great; if you take a little, you probably finish it the first cold night—at least that was my experience—and then all the rest of the journey you are wishing you had not done so.

Expensive brands of tinned provisions make you bilious, and you call it malaria; tinned fish gives you mild attacks of ptomaine poisoning, and you call the makers bad names. If you must take tinned meat, take bully-beef—Chicago bully, jungle or no jungle; it is far more palatable and more wholesome than any other kinds. Avoid all South African made goods; they are rarely worth the cost of carriage. It is far better to pay the extra price and get British or American stuff; moreover, by paying the duty you are playing a part in the great Tariff Reform problem, and later on you will be able to draw all sorts of deductions from your experience, and inflict those deductions on your friends.

I know that my ideas on the subject of carriers are almost painfully heterodox; consequently, I have some hesitation in putting them forward. I hold that, if you want to be sure of reaching your journey's end, you must make your carriers

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your first consideration. You must load them lightly and feed them well. When I first went to Africa, all I knew about carriers was what I had gleaned from a book of travels written by a missionary, who ultimately made his way right across the continent. He started, I remember, from Zanzibar with five hundred boys, each carrying about sixty-five pounds weight, and, apparently, he forgot to take any food for them—he did not explain what the nature of the loads was, but one can guess. After a few days those carriers began to drop out pretty freely. He admitted that their complaint was starvation, and he deeply regretted the loss of—their loads.

I found out afterwards that that missionary was by no means the only traveller holding similar views. I have known men who could barely stand the fatigue of carrying a rifle through a day's tramp in the sun, think nothing of giving a carrier seventy pounds to carry, the equivalent of ten rifles, and still forget that the carrier would be hungry at the end of the march.

We did a good many thousand miles with carriers, and I can say truthfully that we never lost a single one, that we hardly ever had one footsore, and that none ever went hungry unless it was absolutely impossible to procure food, in which case we were generally hungry as well.

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It was mainly a question of loads. For a long journey we never gave a boy more than forty pounds, even when the load was a convenient one to carry, and when it was a question of some awkward article, such as a bake-pot, the weight might be as low as twenty pounds. Then one boy in five carried nothing but carriers' food, so that, with any decent luck, we always had several days' supply of meal on hand, and, if we did happen to strike a famine belt, or a long stretch without any kraals in it, we could usually get through in safety.

Water is a far more difficult question than food. The native requires a great deal of water for cooking his porridge, and he also drinks a good deal; moreover, the information one gets concerning the water-holes ahead is usually of the vaguest character. We tackled the matter in what proved to be a very satisfactory manner. Our own piccanin always carried one water-bag for our use, whilst every carrier was supposed to have his own calabash. If we heard that water was scarce ahead, the carriers were told of the fact, and each man was then free to decide whether or no he would carry a calabash of water with him. If he went thirsty and hungry that night, it was entirely his own fault. He had always had fair warning.

## CHAPTER XIV

### BY ROAD AND RAIL AND SEA

MOST people dislike railway travelling, but if they want to change this dislike into absolute detestation, they should make a long journey in a South African train. There they will reach the very nadir of discomfort—dust and heat by day, dust and cold by night, wretched food, objectionable company, perpetual jolting and swaying, despite the snail's pace at which you travel.

I know that, nowadays, most tourists go by the *trains-de-luxe*, and so manage to avoid some of these unpleasant experiences ; but even then they find they have had enough of it after a few hours, and, what is more important still, after one meal in the dining car. They cook on the trains as they cook everywhere else in South Africa—in accordance with the custom of the country. Food in the sub-continent is not considered palatable or digestible unless it seems to taste of a coolie's dirty hands. If you roast meat, you put water under it, and make

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it beautifully sodden ; if you boil it, you reduce it to rags, and throw away the resulting soup, which contains all the goodness. If you order coffee or tea, it will be served to you already sweetened to a disgusting extent.

The main cause of the wretchedness of a South African railway journey is, however, the narrowness of the gauge. There, again, you have the custom of the country. In a land of immense distances, where the cost of any sort of transport has always been enormous, railway charges have been made even more high than they need have been by the use of the little three-foot-six gauge, instead of the standard gauge. I never heard any explanation, any excuse, save, of course, that old and wearisome one, that it was sanctioned by custom. Had we been a sensible people, had we set out at the end of the Boer War to deal with South Africa on sensible lines, debiting the colonies with the cost of the war, and intending to get value for what we had expended, instead of fooling away tens of millions on gifts to our enemies, repatriation schemes and the like, we should have put some of that money into the widening of the great trunk lines. Perhaps it would not have paid, after all ; but at least it would have been more practical, and more patriotic, than the course which has been pursued. We should not have made ourselves the

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laughing-stock of the world, as we have done now by our sloppy sentimentality.

I have had some pretty rough journeys on those South African lines, but the worst was, unquestionably, during the war, a month or so after the relief of Mafeking. It was no easy matter then to get a pass to leave the country, but I managed to secure one from the military authorities. There was only one other passenger on the train, which consisted of several passenger coaches and a number of empty trucks. I was absolutely rotten with malaria—I do not think I ever went to Bulawayo without having a dose of fever—and I had a very bad cold into the bargain. We left late in the evening, and reached Francistown, the only place of any importance between Bulawayo and Mafeking, early in the morning. I had been coughing and shivering all night, and I was looking forward eagerly to getting something hot at the station; but the coffee on sale there was a nearly cold, muddy-looking liquid with dead flies in it. At the store, however, I found something far more useful. By some curious chance, they had a large stock of John Jameson's whisky, and I gladly gave fifteen shillings for a bottle; then I went back to my carriage, and proceeded to try and kill the germs. I was fairly successful. By sundown, when the bottle was empty, my cold had disappeared, and the

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fever was distinctly better. I cannot say I recommend the treatment for all cases of the kind, but it was about the only one possible in the circumstances.

At Crocodile Pools we entered the actual area of hostilities. At any time we might be fired on, whilst all along the line from there to Cape Town there was a chance of the train being wrecked. Our Brother Boer had been very busy, putting dynamite on the metals, a form of warfare which made a special appeal to his chivalrous and heroic temperament. From our point of view—possibly we were prejudiced—the practice seemed as detestable as it was cowardly. It is not nice to travel in a train which is likely to meet with disaster any moment. The only precaution taken, the only one possible, was to put a long bogie truck loaded with chopped firewood in front of the engine, and to hope that that would take out the worst of the explosion, the rest of the train being merely derailed.

There was an armoured train, quite a nice one, waiting on the siding at Crocodile Pools, and we thought we were going to have an efficient escort. So we had, in a way. But we went first, a mile or more ahead, to draw the Boers' fire. Personally, I thought it rather unsportsmanlike, especially as the authorities absolutely refused to let the civilians on the

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first train have any firearms, so that, in the event of disaster, we should have had our throats cut by the Cape rebels without a chance of sending even one of the brutes to his own place.

When we reached Magalapye, there was a large crowd of prisoners ready to be entrained. A more filthy, insanitary collection I have never seen. You could hardly count them as white men. They were just trek-Boers, as savage, perhaps more savage even, than the natives. In looking at them one wondered whether, after all, South Africa was really fit for European colonisation, whether there would ever be a proper white population—whether, in course of time, the descendants of the later comers would not sink as those trek-Boers had sunk—whether it was any use ignoring the laws of Nature, ignoring the fact that climatic and other influences in South Africa had led to the evolution of a low type of black savage, the type best suited to the country.

The women and children belonging to the prisoners were of the same degraded nature. The men were put in open trucks, the others were allowed the run of the coaches. They fouled everything, dropping vermin wherever they went; they were our enemies; they always will be our enemies; for the reason that their politicians and their preachers have instilled a



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hatred of us into them. We should have left them out on the veld, and let their own people have the anxiety of caring for them: they were no concern of ours. We were supposed to be carrying on a war, not carrying on a crank charitable enterprise. They and their kind had no sense of decency, no sense of honour, no sense of gratitude. Yet on that journey down they were fed infinitely better than our own soldiers; in the concentration camps the same course was pursued; we even sent English ladies out from Home to act as school teachers for them, taxing our own people enormously for the benefit of our foes. Could political folly go further?

A fatherly old militia officer met the train at Mafeking, and fussed over those women and children in correct philanthropic style. He had coffee and bread and tinned meat ready for them, and, had they not been so verminous, I believe he would have kissed some of the little girls. Meanwhile, the Tommies, who were cold and hungry, watched the proceedings with a kind of grim contempt. It was far better to be a Boer in those days, just as it is better to be one to-day. Then, as now, our policy in South Africa was not only pathetically foolish, it was dishonest, almost treasonable, towards the British taxpayers who have bought the country at such tremendous cost, and have a right to a return on

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their money. If a merchant, owning a branch abroad, cares to give all the profits, all the takings even, to his local employés, that is his own concern; but a government ought to be absolutely businesslike, absolutely above all sentimental considerations of any kind where other races are concerned.

We took six days and seven nights in all reaching Cape Town, a run of some thirteen hundred and fifty miles. I have always reckoned the capital of Cape Colony to be one of the dreariest and most unpleasant of colonial towns—which is saying a good deal—but I was glad to reach it that time. I had had quite enough of the railway, quite enough of the depressing scenery, quite enough of martial law. All the refreshment rooms were in the hands of the military. Many were closed altogether, others you could only enter after having got the permission of the Railway Staff Officer. At every stopping place you had to show your permit, and you were generally treated rudely. There was an immense amount of red-tape, an immense waste of time. An Englishman was an object of the greatest suspicion; and yet, as every one knows, the disloyal colonials got about much as they liked. The railways seemed open to them, even when they wanted to make their friends in the field presents of rifles and ammunition.

The Natal railways always filled me with admira-

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tion. They were the perfect type of government undertaking—a thoroughly inefficient service, a vast staff of employés, chosen, apparently, for their religious convictions, and a bewildering host of vexatious bye-laws, designed with a view to providing work for those same employés. Those who agitate for the nationalisation of British lines should spend a few days in Natal, studying the beautiful results of the system. Had the Natal railways been run by a commercial company, the probability is that Durban would have remained the port of the Transvaal, and that the bulk of the trade would not have gone to Delagoa Bay.

The chief impression of American railways which I retained after crossing from San Francisco to New York is one of noise, the eternal jolting of the cars on a badly-laid track. The second impression was the expense of it all, and the little you got in return for that expense. Your tips did not even purchase you the commonest civility, and it seemed to me that the giving of gratuities was a sheer waste of money. You were insulted in any case by the free and independent citizens, who appear to consider that independence means a total lack of manners.

I shall never forget coming down from Liverpool one Sunday morning in the Cunard express. It was a perfect, moonlight night, but for some reason the blinds in our compartment had

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been drawn down. After a while, one of the Americans in the carriage commented on the smoothness of the running, the lack of noise and vibration, and guessed that we should never do the run to London in scheduled time. I suggested that he should pull up the blind and look out of the window. His face was a study. He had thought that, because you could hear yourself speak, and were not being thrown from side to side, we must be travelling about twenty miles an hour, whereas we were doing a full sixty. He had never even heard of a properly laid line, with chairs instead of dog spikes to hold down the metals.

One mail steamer is very much like another. The routine of life is usually the same with all companies, and, taken as a whole, the passengers are the same. It is when you get away from the liners that you get variety. My most pleasant trips have been made on cargo-boats, where, by arrangement with the skipper, I was put on the ship's books, and paid him, personally, for my food. Incidentally, it is also the cheapest way of travelling, seldom costing one more than five shillings a day. For the benefit of those who want to try the method, I may say that it is no use going to the ship's agent. He may not want to be bothered with the matter, or, more likely, he is also interested in one of the regular passenger lines, and objects to the mere

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idea of irregular competition. The best way is to approach the skipper himself, not when he is busy, but during his moments of relaxation, to track him down to one of those bars where he and his kind congregate, and put the case plainly. I may have had unusual luck, but I have never yet had a refusal when I went about things in this way. There is almost always a spare cabin, opening out of the tiny saloon, and you may be certain that the food, though plain, will be good. At any rate, you will get full value for your money—which is not always the case on a liner. There will only be one steward to tip, and he will not expect much. True, there is a distinct lack of society, but to a good many that will not seem a very great drawback, considering the bickering and scandal-mongering which usually goes on during the later stages of a long voyage on a mail steamer.

I do not like intermediate steamers, those one stage below mail-boats. You get neither the gaiety of the latter nor the quietude of the cargo vessel. Instead, you usually find a number of more or less hateful children, who spend the whole day racing up and down the decks, banging against your chair, tumbling over your legs, even invading the smoking-room, whilst the mildest protest on your part will probably lead to a furious quarrel with their parents. Then, too, you get missionaries on intermediate steamers,

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and, from my point of view at least, these form the most undesirable class of fellow-passengers. They are always wishing to hold prayer meetings for the benefit of your soul; they frown when they see you smoking; they groan when you play bridge. The most depressing trip I ever made was from China to Vancouver on an intermediate steamer. Out of seventy passengers, some forty were connected with missionary enterprises, and we had a hard task to hold our own, especially as at least twelve on our side were children. Still, we managed to come out fairly well. We got the skipper to put a stop to the eternal strumming of hymn tunes on the saloon piano, and we made good our claim to play bridge anywhere we liked; but our real solace came on the last night when, without the slightest warning, one of those missionaries came into the smoking-room, ordered a bottle of whisky, which he shared generously with the company present, then ordered another bottle, and proceeded to drink it off by himself. In the end the steward called the chief officer, who in turn sent for four deck hands, and, after a long and arduous struggle, the converter of the Heathen Chinee was landed in his own cabin and the door locked.

Another intermediate steamer on which I was unfortunate enough to travel was the *Bundesrath*, whose seizure by the British during the Boer



IN THE MUD.



ON THE BEIRA LINE.





## By Road and Rail and Sea

War led to an insane outburst on the part of the German Press. Personally, I wished often during the trip from Beira to Marseilles that the cruiser which captured her had sunk her out of hand. She was small and old and dirty. Her tonnage was only about two thousand five hundred, yet, when we got to Chinde, we took on board seven hundred native soldiers and twenty-six British officers, who were on their way to Somaliland. It is unnecessary to say that we were overcrowded. Down on the main deck it was almost impossible to move; and inspection could only be carried out by sending half the companies below.

She loafed up the East Coast, putting into every little port she could find, taking on a few bags of produce, or landing a few cases of lager beer. Only at Zanzibar did there appear to be enough cargo even to pay for the coal used in providing steam for the winches, but, after all, that was no great matter. The German taxpayer had to make up the deficit in the form of shipping bounties.

They fed us as well as they could, and, without exception, her officers were extremely nice men, but they could not make up for the deficiencies of the ship herself, and they could not do away with the discomforts due to the presence of those seven hundred savages. We took about three weeks from Beira to Berbera, where we landed

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our troops, and then, as far as I can remember, we were about another three weeks in reaching Marseilles. I have never quitted a vessel more gladly, except a British India steamer, on which I once travelled from Mauritius to Colombo as a coolie emigrant.

During the 1904 campaign on the Philippines I travelled a good deal on the American coast-guard boats, smart little four - hundred - ton steamers. They had been built by a British firm in Shanghai, and were fit to stand any ordinary weather, but they were really too small for anything beyond inter-island work, and when they got out of the sheltered waters of the archipelago, into the Pacific itself, they were tossed about just like corks. I remember one occasion when everybody on board was sea-sick, with the exception of the skipper and myself. Even my young brother Amyas, who was pretty well as tough as I was in that respect, had to turn in for half an hour or so. That same coastguard steamer disappeared absolutely a few months later. No trace of her was ever found, and it was presumed that she had been caught in some unusually fierce typhoon.

A trip I often wished to make was up the Zambesi in one of the river steamers. We used to hear great tales of the difficulties of navigation amongst the ever - shifting sand-banks, of hippo and crocodile shooting from the decks,

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and adventures with both Portuguese and natives ; but, most of all, we heard of the ways of the steamers' officers themselves. One at least of the companies was very pious, being closely associated with missionary enterprise. It liked to have employés who were also pious, whilst the profession of teetotal principles was absolutely essential on the part of an applicant. Moreover, though whisky formed a very large proportion of the freight, no spirits were allowed to be sold aboard.

Now the profession of teetotalism in Central Africa is far easier than the practice, and you are apt to get very thirsty when you are hung up on a mud-bank, with the tropical sun beating down on you. Moreover, your thirst is apt to become greatly aggravated when, stored in front of you, right under your nose, are scores upon scores of whisky cases. However, you cannot broach a case without the consignee knowing, for each box is protected by wires, on which are lead seals. To most men the only solution of the problem would have been to broach a case and risk the consequences, but there was one teetotaller who was out of the ordinary. He put a tin bath on the main deck, then from the upper deck he dropped a case of whisky into that bath. The wires and seals were not broken, but most of the bottles were ; then, of course, it was just a question of filtering through a piece

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of limbo. I do not know whether the inventor of the system got a knighthood, or whether he merely got *delirium tremens*. There have been men in South Africa who have got both, as the study of a recent Honours List will show you, whilst one or two have at least qualified for the triple event, and have deserved to get time as well.

Mail-coach travelling is horrible. It is difficult to imagine anything more exhausting. A camel must be easy compared with one of those abominable vehicles. The bodies, discoloured, almost paintless, from the combined effects of dust and rainstorms, are hung on the springs by great leather straps. The least jolt—and there is seldom any cessation from jolting—sends them swinging to and fro, whilst an especially severe bump brings them up against the wheels with a whirr which sets your teeth on edge. If you have managed to secure a place on the back or the front seat you have something to lean against; but in the middle seats, where you sit back to back, there is only a broad leather strap against which you can lean.

The coach goes on day and night, stopping only when it overturns, or when it reaches one of the mule stables, which are about ten miles apart. At every third mule stable you will usually find a wayside store, a wattle-and-dab erection which seems, somehow, to harmonise

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perfectly with the grim and dreary nature of the high veld on which it is built. It is planned on the model of those Boer farmhouses, of which we heard so much during the war, over the burning of which so many pitiful cranks shed tears that might well have been kept for the men of our own race who had been murdered by the Cape rebels. It is long and narrow, with a badly-thatched roof—the native can only thatch a round hut properly—with three rooms, an earthen floor, mud-walls honeycombed with the workings of white ants, a narrow stoep in front, and a fine collection of miscellaneous rubbish behind.

One shilling is the standard charge for a cup of coffee, already sweetened, and rendered even more nasty than necessary by the addition of a teaspoonful of cheap condensed milk. A meal, consisting of bully-beef, baking powder bread, and that unwholesome yellow oil which is supposed to be tinned Danish butter, costs five shillings. Sometimes, for a change, you may get ptomained salmon instead of the bully, but in any case you are pretty certain to be sick within half an hour of eating that meal, so it does not matter greatly what you have. Africa gets even with you always. It is only the second generation, those who have never known what civilisation really means, who begin to be able to stand African food.

Through the whole twenty-four hours that

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abominable coach goes on. Every part of your body aches, your mouth is clogged with the dust. You perspire by day, shiver by night. You come to regard the mules with a kind of savage envy. At least, they only have ten miles of it at a stretch, and you, perhaps, have three hundred miles to cover at an average of less than six miles an hour.

I do not know which is really the worst—summer or winter. In winter the dust is absolutely appalling, the cold of the nights literally savage. In summer you have the chance of sticking in the black mud vleis—time after time I have hooked the coach out with one of my spans of oxen—whilst the wash-outs in the road, huge ruts often a couple of feet deep, make capsizes of frequent occurrence. I remember once, on the Salisbury-Bulawayo road, pulling the coach upright twice in four hundred yards with my bullocks, and I heard later that in the nine-mile stage between the mule stables it overturned fourteen times. That sort of thing is tough enough in the case of a man; but when you see Englishwomen, fresh out from home, starting on one of those horrible journeys, you feel—if you have any decent feeling at all—that the men who ask them to undertake those journeys are going too far.

North of the Crocodile River the horse does not play a very great part. One of the most

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fatal of the many diseases to be found in Rhodesia is the horse-sickness, which wipes out the vast majority of the horses imported, whilst even those which are salted, which have had the disease and recovered from it, are seldom of great use afterwards. They pay the toll of Rhodesia, all the fire and spirit has gone out of them. Moreover, when you travel on horse-back, you are simply asking for trouble. I do not mean to refer to those who travel in the Salisbury or Bulawayo sense—ride to a store, or a farm a few miles out, finish the whisky, and then come straight back; but I mean those who really go out on the veld with a definite motive, go clear away from the townships, into the low country. Any one who does this is not long in finding out the disadvantages of taking a horse. To begin with, every lion for miles round gets on his spoor, for the lion loves a horse above everything. It is necessary to build a lion-proof scherm every night, and then to sit up the greater part of the night with a shot-gun across your knees, waiting to scare the brutes away. You have got to feed your horse, too. That wonderful South African veld does not carry grass sufficiently good even to sustain life in a horse or a mule, much less to enable him to work; therefore, you have the continual anxiety of finding a supply of mealies, often no easy matter, especially when, as so

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often happens, the locusts have destroyed all the previous season's crops. But the main objection to the use of horses on a long journey is that you must have native carriers, and that your pace must be regulated by theirs. You intend to do, perhaps, twenty-five miles on a certain day, to camp for the night at a certain water-hole. You saddle up soon after dawn—assuming you know the track—and leave your carriers to follow you. The chances are that, as soon as you are out of sight, the savages will squat down again, and cook a fresh lot of porridge, not making a start for two or three hours. Perhaps, in the end, they will not reach the water-hole at all, and you will have to ride back to them; in any case, you will have a long and dreary wait, and infinitely more worry and anxiety than would have been the case had you travelled with them on foot. If you do not know the path, you have to regulate your horse's pace by that of your guide, a most wearisome business. Altogether, the man who is out on the veld for serious business will find it far better to rely entirely on his own legs.

Curiously few men know how to manage a string of carriers. In the vast majority of cases the loads are too heavy for day-after-day travelling, whilst the bearers themselves do not get enough to eat. Sixty-five pounds is supposed to be the standard load. Heaven knows why.



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My experience is that, for a long trip, forty pounds is quite enough, if you want to keep your men in condition. Moreover, your first consideration must be to see that the carriers have food—this is far more important than your own food—and, as far as possible, when you camp down for the night, you must spare them any extra work, such as the building of elaborate shelters, and the erection of tents for yourself. The moment you begin to treat them as mere machines, instead of regarding them as human beings, you risk disaster. When they reach the limit of endurance, they will simply leave you, running away in the night, and after that your own chances will be small.

I have tried both pack-bullocks and pack-donkeys, and found both unsatisfactory. I have no doubt they do very well for a prospector, who goes over the ground slowly, whose very occupation makes it impossible for him to hurry; but for any other man who wishes to reach a definite point, the slowness of pack animals is heart-breaking. Of the two, I think I prefer the bullock. He carries a heavier load, is more reliable in rugged country—he can climb the steepest of kopjes—and, moreover, he does not attract the lions to the same extent as the donkey, nor is he such an utter fool as the other. Still, I trust I shall never have practical experience of either again.

## CHAPTER XV

### FOOD ON THE FRONTIER

I HAVE had some experience of hard living, and at various times I have been glad enough to eat things which do not usually figure on menu cards at Home. The roughest experience of all was in the Philippine Islands, during the Samar revolt, when I was one of a little party holding an extremely crude stockade at a place called San Ramon. The town had been absolutely destroyed by the insurrectos, who had swept off everything eatable. Our stockade was on the beach, a few yards from high-water mark, whilst, a stone's throw behind us, was the dense jungle, which was literally infested by the enemy.

At the outset, when the coastguard steamer landed us there, our supply of stores was very small; at the end of a month these had dwindled down to some bags of mouldy rice and a little sugar. At first, risking having our throats cut by the insurrectos, we managed to shoot a few small toucans, which proved to be lean and tough. After a day or two, however, there were no more

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of these to be found, and we had to turn to the sea for our food. We had managed to capture a few dug-out canoes, and one of the party happened to possess three or four fish-hooks; but though there were plenty of fish—you could see them easily in that marvellously clear water—they would not bite. So far as I can remember, we never hooked a single one.

Like most Philippine towns, San Ramon had possessed a large fish corral, a great fence of bamboo stakes, over which the fish were swept by the high tide, to be left when the water receded. The insurgents had made an attempt to destroy this, and had succeeded fairly well, but our men set to work to patch it up, and, so far as we could see, got it into order again. Yet the catches of fish we got out of it were depressingly small. Except once, when we secured a young ground shark, I do not think we ever reached six pounds weight a day—and we had over a hundred and twenty men to feed.

It was the captain who suggested bats. He said he had had to eat them before in those forsaken Philippines, and that we should probably find plenty sleeping on the trees on a little island at the entrance of San Ramon Bay. We had found a huge dug-out, capable of holding fourteen men, and, though the insurrectos had done their best to destroy her, I had managed to make her seaworthy again, and we went out to the island

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in her. We had seen smoke rising from there once, and it was necessary to be pretty cautious ; but after a careful search all we discovered was a burned camp, some woman's hair, and a broken guitar stained with blood.

There were plenty of bats, thousands of them, hanging from the branches of the trees—not bats such as we have at Home, but creatures with wings over three feet across, and bodies as large as that of a cat. It was not a pleasant job shooting them. We had only buck-shot cartridges and very short Winchester shot-guns, whilst the trees were tall ; consequently, in most cases we only wounded them and they fell to the ground, when the native soldiers finished them off with the butt-ends of their carbines. They had hideous little faces, with sharp, white teeth, and I shall never forget the way they bit and clawed in their last desperate struggle. It is a bad memory to me.

The flesh of those bats was horrible, tough and greyish-white ; yet for the greater part of a month it was our principal food. Once, when a native soldier shot an iguana, we had a welcome change, though I cannot say I have any longing for iguana flesh now. We had one more change after that. A serjeant and two men, who had been out in one of the smaller canoes, returned with a ten-foot-long python they had shot. They seemed very proud of it, and it was

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hacked into pieces and boiled. The lump served up at the officers' mess was about eight inches in diameter and a foot long, of an unwholesome shade of white, exuding a horrible yellow grease. I was desperately hungry, but the sight of it was enough for me. I went out on to the platform of the stockade, feeling horribly bad, and, even whilst I was there, the long-expected coastguard steamer came in view round the point.

In the river camp of the Geelong mine we once lived for three weeks on sardines and baking powder bread—sardines three times a day, rank sardines, of the brands which are specially made for export to the colonies. I have hated the sight of the fish ever since. It was tragic, in a way, because we all got ill over it, and were thoroughly run down when the fever season came on us; and yet it had a foolish side, because the veld round us was swarming with game, and there were plenty of birds to be shot along the river banks; moreover, there was an ample supply of rifles, shot-guns, and cartridges. We had three or four colonials who put in a great deal of time telling us how splendidly they could shoot, what great feats they had accomplished in the past, but none of them even brought in as much as a partridge during that time, whilst the remainder of the mess consisted of newcomers like myself, who still had to learn to shoot.

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Relief came in the form of a herd of very aged goats which had travelled all the way from Palapye. We were glad enough to see them, and their leathery flesh seemed almost delicious by comparison with those hateful sardines. After a time we began to realise that the meat was tough, and that the price charged for it was enormous, at least according to Home standards; yet during the seven years I was in South Africa I seldom got anything better, or cheaper.

They speak of South Africa as a pastoral country. Enthusiasts wax eloquent about the great things which are to be accomplished in the future, about the vast herds which are to eat down the rank, sour grass of the high veld, the vast shipments of meat which are to supply all the wants of the public at Home. A pastoral country! When a man with a thousand skinny sheep is considered a regular station-owner, when a hundred head of cattle are a large mob, when every big town has its cold storage stocked with Australian meat, on which the majority of the population lives. A pastoral country! It has never yet, and probably never will, produce enough meat even to satisfy the needs of its own meagre white population, just as it has never been able to produce wheat and other food stuffs.

The ordinary price of meat in Rhodesia during

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my day was two shillings a pound. Home-killed beef was the flesh of trek-oxen which had grown too old for work, or of young bulls which did not look like shaping well in the yoke, beasts with thick necks, heavy dewlaps, and poor hind quarters. When I was cattle-trading I used to sell all my bulls of this type to the butcher, as well as any aged bulls which I happened to pick up cheap. Mutton was usually goats' flesh, and as the South African goat is chronically thin—in Rhodesia he seldom weighs clean over twenty-two pounds—the meat was fit for little more than stewing. The fat-tailed sheep is a trifle better, and not nearly so tough, but even from the very best veld in the country, that of Eastern Mashonaland, one which cleans forty-two pounds is a rarity. Up on the much-vaunted high veld, the "pastoral land" which youngsters from Home go out to work, the pasture is so poor during nine months of the year that sheep and goats can barely get a living, and as a result are ready to pick up any disease, such as scab or yellow-liver, which comes along. Perhaps this will be denied by those experts who go out for a few months, and see everything at its best, who meet selected settlers, nicely washed and tutored, and, most important of all, realise that their fee for expert advice will be regulated largely by the degree of optimism they express. I am not an expert

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in any way, but I speak from seven years' hard, practical experience, and I believe that I know more about stock-raising on the Chartered territory than any of those highly-paid persons who have been sent out to report on it. Of one thing I am certain—those who are induced to invest in Central African and South Central African meat extract ventures would get a far better run for their money at Monte Carlo. In the latter place they would have a chance of winning.

Nothing makes me so mad as to see the advertisements for settlers in new territories. In almost every case there is a fraud hidden behind these, at any rate, very few of the statements made will bear strict investigation, and, surely, it should not be necessary to advertise. Nothing could be more alluring than the prospect held out. There are photos of successful farmers riding, shooting, or playing with a little herd of their own children; there are samples of the apples and wheat and tobacco they are alleged to have grown. Land is to be had for nothing, or rather for a nominal rent, and all that is needed is a few hundred pounds of capital. The offer is accepted, the capital raised, and spent, on the land; returns do not even cover living expenses; various works, such as fencing, provided for in the agreement, cannot be carried out for lack of money, and the company finally





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resumes possession of a vastly-improved farm, whilst the temporary owner probably dies either of fever or *delirium tremens*. Such is High Finance, and the pursuit of the Imperial Idea as understood to-day.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE ONE THING WORTH HAVING

You learn many things whilst knocking about the world as I have done, some of them things which, perhaps, it is not desirable that a man should learn, for they leave behind them memories which nothing can ever efface, memories which haunt you. When you have been down to Hell, when you have passed through Hell, you can never be quite the same again.

Yet out in the wilderness I learned the Great Truth—that there is only one thing worth having, only one thing worth struggling for, only one thing which can compensate you for what you have lost, console you for what you have failed to do, repay you for what you have done—the Love of a Woman.

Many fine men may go through life without being loved by a woman; but no man who was worth his salt, no man who had a right to existence, ever went through life without loving, or wanting to love, a woman.

Men who have led ordered lives at Home, who have gone to the City every morning,

## The One Thing Worth Having

who have always had women as part of their lives, seldom understand anything of this kind. Business occupies most of their thoughts, and when they marry, even though they may be in love, marriage is still a form of business. They like that phrase "marriage contract." If they marry, as men should marry, solely because they have found the right woman, their relatives turn on them fiercely. They are breaking the sacred laws of conventionality, and we are essentially a people of conventions, revelling in them, wallowing in them.

We like to read of love and passion in books, especially when the writer has been sufficiently discreet to lay his scene some centuries, or at least some decades, back; but, in real life, we look on love and passion as things which come dangerously near to immorality. To most they seem to suggest immorality, for people who have been well brought up have all their emotions under control; they invariably consider the financial aspect first.

The Victorian Age left us many undesirable legacies—a love of false sentiment, false ideals of Art, false ideals of Literature, the Albert Memorial, and the Crystal Palace; but the worst thing it left us was its immoral "moral code," its crudely commercial theory of matrimony, the smug prudishness with which it attempted to ignore the real meaning of matri-

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mony. It rejoiced in seeing a marriage service carried out in a fashionable church, with a gaping, sniggering throng looking on—the acme of suggestiveness—and it frowned on the secret wedding of a couple who wanted to make their vows to their Maker, and to Him alone; but it was utterly shocked when a man and woman joined their lives together, not with any view to material advantage, but because Nature prompted them so to do. On the other hand, then, as now, the doctrine of “increase and multiply” was preached as a sacred commandment, which must be interpreted literally, though, at the same time, the child born out of wedlock was a pariah. He might have the makings of a splendid man in him, but the very sight of him was supposed to be shocking.

These ideas, or conventions, or principles—call them which you will—have little force in the Wilderness. You quickly forget all about them, and even if, as is probable, you have a hereditary sense of them, that becomes dulled, or disappears entirely in course of time. You may meet bad women—it is fairly certain that you will—but they seldom really come into your life, and as a rule their very badness makes you more than ever anxious to meet the good ones.

The more lonely your life, the more you think of these things. I was five years without

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meeting a woman of my own race socially, and at the end of that time I was ready to assume that every woman was a goddess. During the next five years I met many who were far from being divine; but then I met one, the One, and I knew that the things I had dreamed in the veld or in the jungle were right after all. I secured Life's great prize, the Love of Woman.

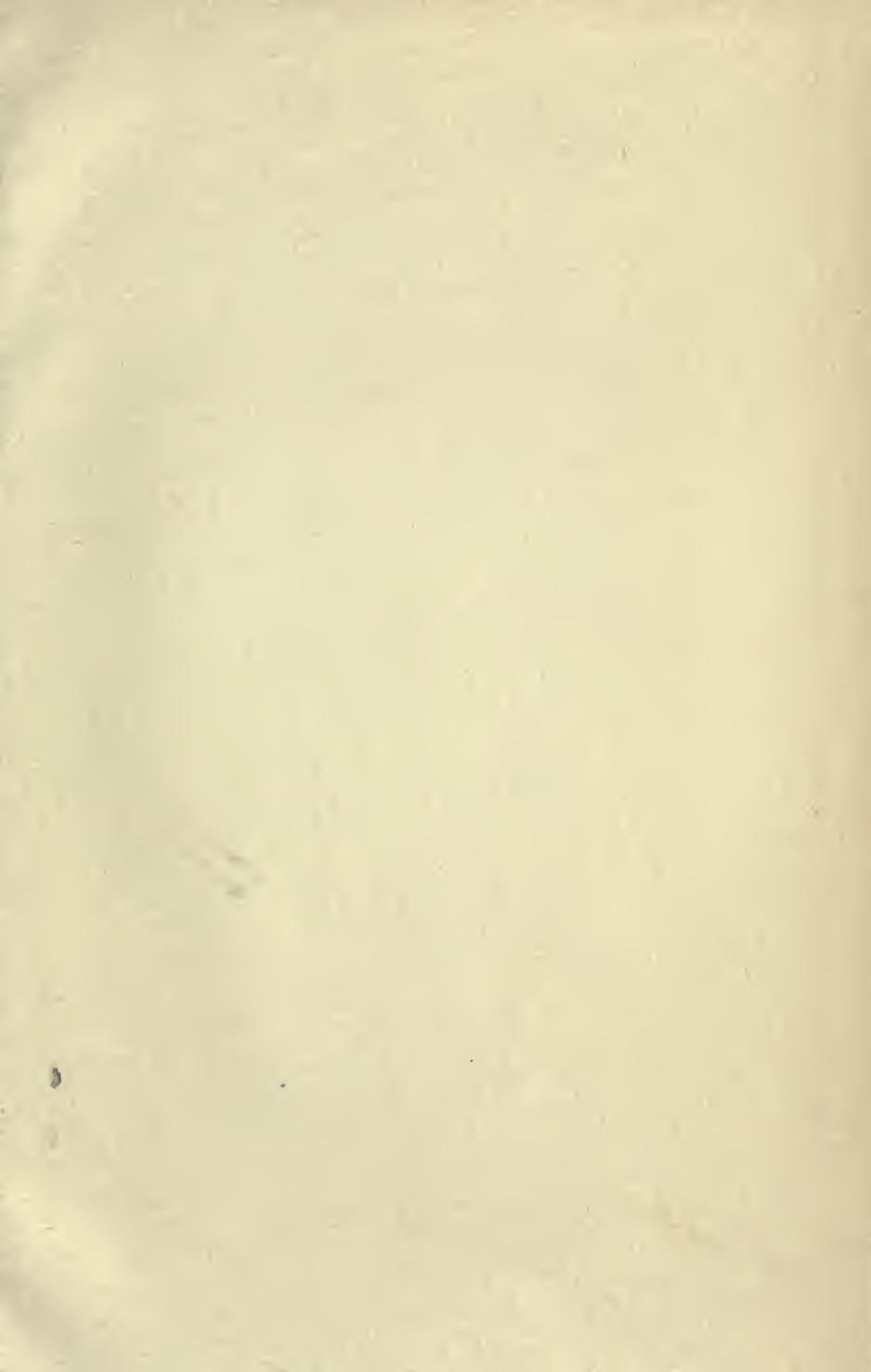
Every man who is of any value—I wonder if this description applies to the majority—wants to bring into the world a child who shall be better than himself. To put it brutally—and you can only drive these things home by being brutally outspoken — he wants quality, not quantity. But he wants the child of the woman he loves, and none other. None other could satisfy him. Yet to the man who loves, the child must always come second, and, if he had to make his choice, he would always choose the woman.

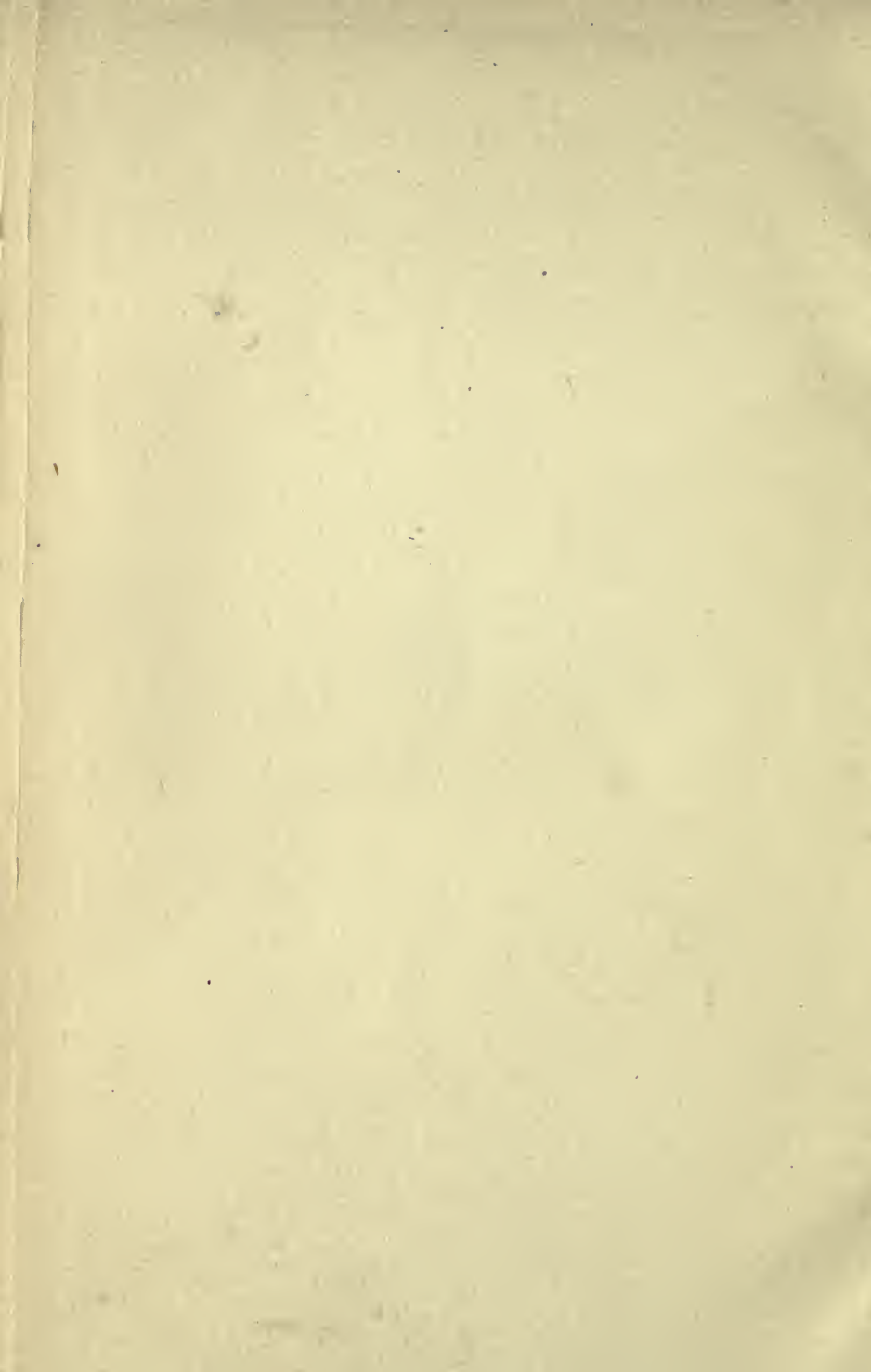
I have been told, frequently, that my own good fortune has warped my judgment, that there are other things worth having besides Love. Perhaps this is so. I am not prepared to argue it. I am quite content, more than content, to believe in my own theory, which my Good Comrade has proved to me is right, that the Love of Woman is all in all.

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