

Blackwoods, Tales from the Outposts

Volume 1 – Frontiers of Empire

A Country Postman, Lieut-Col R. L. Kennion

Prior to the Younghusband expedition, Lord Curzon had attempted to open negotiations with Tibet by sending them a letter – a letter covered with seals and crests and looking generally important, to be delivered to the Dalai Lama himself. Kennion was the one deputed to take it, so he calls himself 'a country postman'!. In fact, the letter was returned unopened from Lhasa, the seals unbroken. Not long after followed the Younghusband expedition which was, of course, a forcible entry into Tibet and ultimately to Lhasa.

A Footnote, Pousse Cailloux (Leonard Arthur Bethell)

This is Bethell's personal account of his place in the Younghusband Expedition. It is favourable to Younghusband, whom he praises for getting the small army across the impossible territory of Tibet, including Tibet in winter. He notes that the Tibetans initially offered no resistance, assuming that the cold and the barren land would drive the invading force back – as it had done others – but it didn't. It is written as a response to the views of the day which were that the Younghusband Expedition had been an imperial atrocity – a view which drove Younghusband out of public life and his wife into depression.

A Quiet Day in Tibet, Lieut-Col F. M. Bailey

Bailey was part of the Younghusband expedition to Tibet, and remained there afterwards for several years, as an explorer and as British Agent in Tibet. As the title indicates, this is his own account of a quiet day in Tibet – routine admin, letters, discussions, social occasions, sports and watching wildlife.

The People of the Camel, Fulanain

Fulanain is the joint pseudonym of Stuart Edwin and his wife Monica Grace Hedgecock, who wrote their stories jointly. (It is easy to detect their two styles – one lyrical, one practical). Edwin was a political administrator in British Mesopotamia – later to become Iraq. The story is a powerful one about a dispute between an Arab chieftain and a British irrigation officer – the old ways and the new. The Arab, ruthless and effective, is the eventual winner.

Then a separate story follows about investigating the theft of two camels.

Fantasia, Sartek

The pseudonym is unknown. Story of an inspection of an up-river station in Egypt by their commanding officer.

A Border Affair, Pousse Cailloux (Leonard Arthur Bethell)

Bethell's personal account of an expedition through the jungles of North-Eastern Assam to discover and challenge what the Chinese were doing on the other side of the frontier. They find a small fortified and armed force, and a

notice announcing that this is the limit of the Celestial Empire. A sad and emotional ending follows – the Chinese force is exhausted and starving, and surrender to the expedition. They are taken back through the jungle, and return to China by sea.

Tales of the Ma'adan, Fulanain (Stuart Edwin and Monica Hedgcock)

Various tales from the time of the British administration of Mesopotamia, now Iraq. Problems with the Marsh Arab tribes stealing government property from steamships crossing the marshes, problems resolving long-standing blood feuds between tribes (usually by handing over women between the feuding parties). Boundary disputes, the history of a lone widow living in the marshes – etc.

Living on top of the World, Herbert Patrick Lee

Life in an extreme outpost of Northern Canada, within the Arctic circle.

Echoes from the Marshes 1, Fulanain (Stuart Edwin and Monica Hedgcock)

Further entertaining tales of British administration of the Arab tribes of Mesopotamia, around about 1920.

Echoes from the Marshes 2, Fulanain (Stuart Edwin and Monica Hedgcock)

As above.

The Silver Hand of Alexander, Pousse Cailloux (Leonard Arthur Bethell)

A very curious and interesting discussion of the Conolly and Stoddart affair – both were imprisoned by the Emir of Bokhara in appalling conditions for nearly a year, then publicly beheaded in the market square. Based on archives of the Great Game he has seen, Bethell theorises that the Emir may have believed the two to have taken the 'Silver Hand of Alexander' – a totem of immense political value in that area. He suggests that the publicly stated offence of espionage was inadequate to explain their treatment by the Emir.

Volume 2 – Small Wars of the Empire

The Burden and the Heat, Linesman (Maurice Harold Grant)

A collection of exceptional instances of courage and significant events from British military history, and a rant against the ignorance of modern (1930s) Britain, that knows nothing of such things.

The Baptism of a Battery, Brig-Gen Cosmo Stewart

Chithral, Kashmir, India 1894 – a battle against Afghan tribal invasions on the North Western frontier of India.

Dies Irae, Linesman (Maurice Harold Grant)

The disaster of Spion Kop by a soldier who was present, told under a pseudonym. Spion Kop, January 1900, was the worst disaster for the British

during the Second Boer War in South Africa. The Liverpool regiment suffered particularly, and the Liverpool football stadium is still named 'The Kop' in its honour.

From Argin to Toski (no author stated)

The Nile campaign of 1889. After the "Mad Mahdi" conquered Khartoum and killed General Gordon, the Mahdi made a move to invade Egypt as well. This is the account of the successful military resistance made against him by Wodehouse Pasha. (Wodehouse was English – members of the army took Egyptian military ranks as technically Egypt was governed by the Egyptian Khedive and not by the British).

Saragarhi, E. F. K. (E. Karskij Masanov)

Battles on the North-Western frontier of India, against sporadic uprisings by Afghan tribesman

Mist, Salmon and Crocodiles, Shalimar (Frank Coutts Hendry)

A recollection of military service in Egypt in the 1890s, told against a background of salmon fishing in Scotland

Night, Linesman (Maurice Harold Grant)

Incidents from the Second Boer War in South Africa – destruction of a farm used as a base by Boer soldiers

Day, Linesman (Maurice Harold Grant)

Further incidents from the Second Boer War, South Africa. A scouting mission is attacked and surrounded by Boer soldiers.

The Taming of the Bait Hashim, Fulanain (Stuart Edwin Hedgcock)

Incidents during British control of Mesopotamia – work controlling the refractory Marshland tribes, living in the large and relatively impenetrable marshes of southern Iraq.

Campaigning with Kitchener, A Staff Officer

Manners and methods of Kitchener, by an officer on his staff, during the reconquest of the Sudan, and the battles, including Omdurman, against the "Mad Mahdi" in 1898

Methods of Barbarism, Ole Luk-Oie (Ernest Dunlop Swinton)

Destruction of a Boer farmhouse/military base during the Second Boer War, South Africa 1902

His Daisy, W. H. H.

A poem – a soldier thinking about his return home.

'The Border' here refers to the North-Western frontier of India – a constantly troubled frontier with Afghanistan.

Border Manners, E. F. Knox

An account of cross-border raiding from Afghanistan into North-Western India – making an interesting comparison with Scottish border raiding into England in the 16th century.

Going North, Edmund Candler

A lyrical description of a journey North into the hills of Afghanistan – leaving behind the modern civilisation of India, probably in the 1930s, and going back into the mediaeval culture of Afghanistan.

Zur, Zun, Zumeen, Lieut-Gen Sir George McMunn

Narrative of various attempts to manage and control the tribes North of the North-West border – written with both affection and humour.

Fort Drouthy, X.

The history and troubles of a fort on the extreme Northern border or North-West India.

Wana, no author given

A mapping expedition to determine the Northern boundary of North-West India. Needless to say, the expedition is attacked.

Our Friend the Mule, J. K. (Dum Dum)

A humorous essay on the virtues of the mule as a beast of burden, especially as used for carrying artillery equipment into the field.

Grit, Ballam

The history of a family feud between tribes in Afghanistan – such feuds are bitter and long-lasting, and can go on for generations. It is often observed that the Afghans make a hobby of feuds, fighting and killing.

Outside the Pale of the Law, (no author given)

Laying siege to a stone building in a graveyard where some escaping bandits have hidden after raiding into India. A brief reference to 'the Siege of Sidney Street' dates it to around 1912.

Retaliation, Pousse Cailloux (Leonard Arthur Bethell)

A story of the blood feuds of the Afghans – one warrior who is happy to die, provided he can get his retaliation against the opposing family

Babuji Bahadur.!, Antony Gordon

The story of a small fat Bengali clerk, victimised and insulted by his Punjabi colleagues, until he performs an act of extraordinary courage in laying a

telegraph wire through enemy country to allow news of their predicament to reach headquarters

Old Forever, Alfred Ollivant

The history of Tom Oliver, ADC to John Nicholson, and one who took part in relieving the siege of Delhi along with Nicholson.

The Capture, Hathi

Policing the border between India and Afghanistan – the story recounts the capture of a group of raiders who have disguised themselves as a funeral party, carrying a corpse across the border out of India.

A Regrettable Incident, E. B. M.

An account of a disastrous foray into cross-border territory.

The Counter Raiders, no author given

The use of air power and parachute regiments in controlling the border, presumably in the 1930s, in the later time of British India

Volume 4 – Pioneering

Love of Life, Jack London

Two gold prospectors, somewhere in the Arctic Circle in Canada, struggle to get back to civilisation as the winter closes in on them. Only one of them makes it – his automatic love of life overcomes his willingness to die.

Indomitable, J. Stanley Hughes

Probably around 1912, a gold prospecting party in Mashonaland, struggling to return to the safety of the fort, is attacked by crocodiles when crossing a river. One man loses a leg. The doctor is sent out from the fort – alcoholic though he is, he is redeemed by attending to the needs of this party and to the dying man – whom unfortunately he is unable to save.

In Chains, Sir Hugh Clifford

Clifford's nostalgic look back at the country of Malaysia when he first knew it, when all was farms and villages and nature, and the impact of civilisation had not yet reached it.

The period described would have been around 1885.

"An Educated Bloke", A. J. Reynolds

An expedition to relieve an upriver pioneering party in Nigeria. One of the party has gone mad, has taken on the behaviour of an animal, and eventually kills himself.

Sheep Droving, J. Stanley Hughes

Moving a herd of 10,000 sheep on a four-month journey to new grazing grounds.

The Basin, Humfrey Jordan

A powerful story of the long struggles, loneliness, and near insanity of a tin mine manager, living alone in the hills of Malaysia.

The Affair at the Green River Mine, Ernest Dawson

A copper mine in Australia is closed by instruction from London, due to some financial failure. The residual staff left on to look after the property deteriorate into squabbles, alcoholism and eventually murder.

The Bridge, Gordon Lloyd

Rebuilding a railway bridge, washed away by sudden flooding in Nigeria.

Cattle Droving in Central Africa, L. S. Norman

As the title, the story of moving 1000 head of cattle, 600 miles through Central to Southern Africa to take them to market in Rhodesia

A Well is Shot, Lieut-Col N. L. Craig

An uncharacteristic story of opening an oil well in the early days of the American oil industry. After drilling down to the oil-bearing strata, explosives are used to release the oil.

Volume 5 – Jobs of Work

Akso Wad Dok, no author

A curious story from the colonial administrator in charge of a part of Numidia – nowadays split into Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. Circumstantial evidence forces him to sentence his own servant, gardener and friend, Akso Wad Dok, to death for the murder of Mackay, a white man. At the last moment of the hanging, the gathered village tell the administrator that it wasn't Akso's fault that the white ants ate the cabbages, and when the murder is mentioned, it appears that the whole village know that Akso did not kill Mackay. A good story, well told, of the incomprehension that can exist between different cultures.

Speech Day in Crocodile Country, R. E. Vernede

A recollection of a school speech day, and of the crocodiles seen on the way to the school. The school speeches themselves are found to be rather less memorable than the crocodiles.!

The Abu Zait Conspiracy, S. Lyle Cummins

Set in Egypt, probably in the time of the 'Mad Mahdi's' conquest of Sudan in 1885, and the resulting nervousness within Egypt. The Abu Zait conspiracy

turns out to be a phantom – something that has arisen due to false information supplied by an embittered government clerk.

Piloting Princes, Sir Hugh Clifford

Clifford gives a character sketch of some of the extraordinary Malayan rulers that he attended before Malaya was taken over by British rule. The last ruler in his list, the Sultan of Perak, he describes with real affection and respect, born of a long friendship between them.

The story also gives background to Clifford's own career, which began at the age of 17 in Malaya. Clifford seems to have been Governor of about half the British colonies of the world – The Straits Settlements (Singapore and other islands), Ceylon, Nigeria, The Gold Coast, Ceylon again, and North Borneo.

Experiences in a Quarantine Camp, no author

Quarantine was being enforced in Khanpur, in the Bahawalpur State, to prevent passengers from Sindh, which had plague, carrying it on to the Punjab and starting it there. The quarantine process was severe but did prevent the plague from reaching the Punjab. Descriptions include the vast diversity of the Indian population.

Silhouettes from the Sudan 1, Lieut-Col J. H. Grieve

Description of the land and people of Sudan, with much praise given to the Arab races of Sudan. Set after the reconquest of the Sudan by the British, and probably around 1905 – the clue there being that Lord Salisbury is mentioned as recently deceased. Various topics within –

- The preternatural ability of Arab trackers to read footprints.
- The fight against Malaria
- Methods of bribery
- Religion, and holy men
- The history of Turkish rule
- The 'Mad Mahdi'
- Tourism and big game hunting

Silhouettes from the Sudan 2, Lieut-Col J. H. Grieve

Continued from above.

Lustral Waters, C. G. C. T.

Riding through the beautiful countryside around Ahrora, Uttar Pradesh, the narrator, a District Commissioner, meets an old Indian who has been seven years on the road on foot on pilgrimage around the sacred sites of India. He is near the end of his pilgrimage now, after which he says he will rest and never wear shoes again.

As they talk on, the narrator realises that they have met before long ago – he remembers the man being tried for murder of his own daughter and acquitted.

He is now atoning for that murder on his pilgrimage around India. At the end of his pilgrimage, he dies.

The House of Healing, no author

A rabies hospital, using Pasteur's method for controlling the disease after the patient has been bitten. The diversity of India is a theme of the narrative.

Murder and Magic, Sir Hugh Clifford

Sir Hugh Clifford, Governor of Nigeria from 1919 to 1925, writing in about 1923 on the problem of dealing in legal courts with crimes that involve magic and superstition, or the firm belief in magic and superstition.

He gives various examples of fake fetish magic practised upon gullible villagers – much of what he says is closely paralleled by Mary Kingsley in her earlier account of travels in the region.

An Indian Sensation, H. C. E. Ward

Probably around 1880 in Adigaon – an area between Nagpur and Jabulpore – a case of a land tenure succession, disputed between the local Raja and a Hindu monastery. The outcome of the dispute is a murder, solved by a capable and clever Sikh police chief.

Dacoity, Kukado

Story of a botched robbery, and the success of a Brahman police inspector, who is also a holy man, in locating the criminals and getting them to confess.

Volume 6 – Tales of the Sea

A Song of England, Alfred Noyes

Poem.

Her Captivity, Joseph Conrad

Reflections on the West India Dock and the New South dock, and their former trade, tinged with a nostalgia for the old days of sail, and the beauty of the tall masted tea clippers. Perhaps sometime around 1905, not long after Conrad had retired from the sea.

Includes a description of Sydney Harbour in similar times, and various encounters as he did duty as nightwatchman on his ship when in port.

Initiation, Joseph Conrad

Conrad looks back on an experience of saving nine men from off a sinking brig, and how it changed him and his attitude to the sea. One of the best stories of the 'Outposts' collection – as might be expected from Conrad's later reputation.

Salvage, E. G. M.

The rescue of the 'Lancastrian' off the Scilly Isles, Cornwall, by the steam tug 'St. George', probably set around 1910. 'Lancastrian' has been in a collision, has lost way, and is part submerged. 'St. George' goes out in a severe storm, and tows her back to the larger port of Falmouth. The rescue of a stricken ship entitles the crew of the 'St. George' to make a salvage claim.

Predestination, C. G. Learoyd

A lawyer, receiving a diagnosis of terminal cancer, and horrified by the prospect of a hospital death bed, decides to buy a boat and sail off alone into the ocean. His intent is plain. Crossing the Atlantic, he is hit by a storm, but he is able to save two lads adrift in a small boat – the last survivors of the wreck of a trawler. He takes them back, and himself dies as his boat reaches land. The story does have an underlying religious theme, God having given purpose to his life in these final days.

The Timber Drogher, Shalimar (Frank Coutts Hendry)

(Drogher – a sailing barge. A clumsy type of boat).

A difficult rescue of a stricken ship, largely submerged, in difficult weather and sea conditions. Only one man and his dog are left on the derelict, where they have survived for a week or so. The story includes many nautical and technical issues, including the practice of pouring oil on troubled waters. Set around Rockall, off the west coast of Ireland, sometime after 1915 due to comments on the Irish situation.

Probably autobiographical – Hendry spent time in the Merchant Navy.

A Man in the Making, Bartimeus

(Captain Lewis Anselm da Costa Ricci/Ritchie)

A 16 year old cadet, taking on his first commission with the Royal Navy, from Portsmouth to Hong Kong. Pleasant descriptions of the ports they stop at on the way. Around 1905 ?

Written with insight and sensitivity.

Shipwrecked, Geo, Forbes, F. R. S.

Autumn, 1911. The shipwreck of poorly loaded tramp steamer in bad weather of the Gulf of Lyons (sic) – an autobiographical account, as stated in the fore note.

A painfully slow sinking – sixteen un-rescued hours in an appalling storm in the Mediterranean, the ship holed in the bottom by the breaking loose of its own internal equipment. The steam operated pumps keep them afloat, but not indefinitely, and finally the boilers give out due to the rising water. The crew get into the lifeboats, they get out of the boats, they get back into the boats. Finally the ship sinks, the long and painful process ends, and they take the lifeboats under sail to the Spanish coast.

An extraordinary story by an extraordinary man. Forbes was a scientist and explorer – engineer on Niagara Falls hydro-electric system, adviser to London

Underground, and noted for important electrical inventions, including the carbon brush, still universal in electric generators and motors to this day.

The Rollers of Cloghmor, Rufus

There is a narrow passage between the mainland and the island at Cloghmor – a narrow passage with a lagoon in the middle and sheer cliffs on either side. A party set out for a pleasure sail to view the lagoon but, once inside, are hit by a tsunami wave, smashing the boat onto the cliffs. All survive but are stranded on the cliffs. The central character (the story is told in third person) climbs the cliffs and walks back to the farmhouse where he gets help. All the crew of the small boat are saved – though with some nasty injuries.

The Epic of the S. S. Sunning, W. J. Sprintall

A story of piracy on the South China Seas – Autumn, 1926.

As the writer observes, we picture piracy as attack ships carrying the skull and crossbones – but in this new world of steam navigation – where cargo and passengers are carried together – the pirates simply book passage on the vessel, and hijack it on voyage. A battle ensues, and – losing – the pirates set the ship on fire. Things are eventually brought under control, with loss of life on both sides.

The tale ends with a diatribe against the UK government produced ‘anti-piracy legislation’.

The story is confirmed factual – from various Hong Kong newspaper sites. The pirates were captured, and hanged in public execution in Hong Kong.

(Note – Stories in ‘Tales from the Outposts’ are normally factual – it is not always possible to provide proof.)

Around the Horn and Home Again, Shalimar (Frank Cou tts Hendry)

For the assistance of landlubbers, rounding the Horn is extremely difficult in a sailing vessel. The wind and tide are always against you – the Pacific Ocean being about 1 foot higher than the Atlantic. It is very cold that far south – snow and sleet are common. It could even take months in those old times to get around the Horn and up into the Pacific.

The Ocean Racers, L. Luard

An account of the 1927 Fastnet race from one of the crew of Maitenes.

The weather was diabolically atrocious and – damaged beyond immediate repair – they give up the race. After that disastrous year – nearly all the boats were damaged or sunk – the rules were changed to prevent smaller boats entering.

Two Typhoons, Shalimar (Frank Cou tts Hendry)

The steamer Dulnain, bound for Java from Hong Kong leaves port in a hurry to avoid an approaching typhoon. They take a risk – many other ships retreat into shelter in Hong Kong – but what the Dulnain did not know was that a

second typhoon was brewing out at sea. Nor are their troubles over when they have passed that typhoon: the engines break down, and leave them uncontrolled and drifting onto a reef.

As with all sea stories, there are violent motions of the ship, huge waves and howling winds in quantity. They survive – but we know that because they have lived to tell the tale.

The Far Islands, John Buchan

An odd, mystical, tale of a boy, distracted and entranced by his visions of the Far Islands. He sees them off the Scottish coast, where he lives and where his ancestors have lived for many generations. The Far Islands are the Isles of the Blessed, the Hesperides, The Isles of the Dead, Insula Pomorum, which feature in folk tales around the world. The boy grows up to be a man, passes successfully through Eton and Oxford, joins the Guards, and dies – shot by a sniper when out on a reconnaissance mission. As he dies, he enters into the vision of his Elysian Island

Volume 7 – Soldiers Tales

Ode to One of the Old Indian Troopships, J. K.

Poem – style of Kipling.

The Green Curve, Ole Luk-Oie (Ernest Dunlop Swinton)

The story of a siege, and final surrender. Not an actual historical siege, a fiction – used primarily as a diatribe against politicians and financiers in the background, who hamstringing the efforts of soldiers in the field.

Patrick Brade, Murderer, Linesman (Maurice Harold Grant)

A story set in South Africa during the Boer war. Patrick Brade has a grievance against his commanding officer – many grievances, in fact, accumulated over the years. The worst of the grievances is that this war is a disaster, it is badly run, it is going nowhere, his comrades are dying – and for no good reason.

During the chaos of a firefight, he shoots his commanding officer. In fact – he misses, but doesn't know it – it was enemy fire killed the Colonel. Convinced of his guilt, Patrick confesses, is court-martialled and executed.

The moral of the story.? I don't know. Keep quiet until they charge you.?

Five – Four – Eight, Jeffery Marston

A story of courage, chaos, and insubordination in a gunnery regiment in the Great War. The right side wins.!

The Regimental Durbar, Sir George Younghusband

Various events, stories and tales of discipline methods in Indian regiments.

The Shunting Puzzle, C. V.

Complications of running a rail head depot in a desert, trying to supply an army at war. As it happens, in the complications of shunting and sidings, they are unable to get supplies through on time and this particular operation is unsuccessful.

A Return to Discipline, Lancer

A tale of the Indian mutiny, 1857, of the guilt, and the ghostly hauntings thereafter.

The Kite, Ole Luk-Oie (Ernest Dunlop Swinton)

A story of gunnery tactics in the First World War. Barrage balloons are sent aloft to observe the field and disposition and movements of troops

A Winter Venture, X.

Stories and incidents of a regimental recruiting tour through the Sikh villages of the Punjab, told with humour, insight and understanding.

The Second Degree, Ole Luk-Oie (Ernest Dunlop Swinton)

The 'second degree' is a double bluff – in this case, in the theatre of war. The story is probably set in the First World War, but no specific indication is given. The opposing commanders were at the same school together as youngsters – unlikely this would happen in any war, except the European one. It is the memory of the other boy's actions and nature which is the clue to victory for the side on which the story focuses.

At the end, the two boys see each other again – old scores from school are settled!

A Camp of Instruction, X.

Military exercises in India – mock battles for training. The writer observes that this is not what used to be – they relaxed and got drunk then when there was no fighting to do.

Snatty, Jeffery Marston

A disreputable and drunken private is redeemed by his love of horses. Eventually becomes a hero in an action involving gunnery transport during what is presumably the First World War.

Subadar Sher Ali Khan, E. F. Knox

A short story written in respect and admiration for Subadar Sher Ali Khan – a Euzufzai Pathan, and a long-term servant of the British Raj (the Sirkar, as known to him).

The Brindian, no author

'The Brindian', in this story, referring to the modern, often young, often wealthy Indian, often European educated, but at least familiar with Western liberal ideology and changes in the mood of Britain and its colonial empire. He

is compared to old-fashioned warrior Indians – Sikhs and Pathans – who the British had connected so well with over the last few hundred years in India. Needless to say the author – from his background – prefers the old-fashioned warrior Indian.

The story is told through the experience of a new Sandhurst educated Indian officer joining a regiment in India, and almost inevitably it doesn't work out. He is married already, with children, with a wife who lives in total purdah, and is under various religious restrictions. The regiment is just not geared up to accommodate him. In addition to that, people from his own village who know him and his background, spread stories about him and the necessary respect for the officer class is not accorded to him.

Volume 8 – Jungle Tales

Mankind and the Jungle, Sir Hugh Clifford

Clifford analyses the 'apathy of Asia' in terms of the dominance of the jungle. Whatever you do to try and clear the jungle and cultivate, the jungle will win back again as soon as you look away. The jungle defeats the human efforts to civilise. (He should see what is happening to the Amazon now!)

He makes a strong recommendation for Leonard Woolf's 'The Village in the Jungle' as the best analysis of mankind's relation to the jungle that he knows. (Leonard Woolf was a colonial administrator in Ceylon, subordinate to Clifford, and husband to Virginia Woolf, née Stevens)

Written around Clifford's second governorship of Ceylon, 1925 – 1927 .

True Foresters, John Still

An account of life in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) by an archaeologist working to uncover the lost and buried cities of Anuradhapura. The 'true foresters' are the Vedda people of Sri Lanka – forest dwelling gypsies who make money from demonstrating snake charming. Difficult to date the story – he mentions he is living 30 miles from the railway station, which would date it before the line reached Anuradhapura in 1904.

He recounts stories from the extraordinary menagerie of pets he has kept over the years – leopards, bears, an otter, a python even a tame Cobra. The description of his house would fit with the old, now demolished, No. 5, Old Puttalam Road, and its nearby, previously derelict, Mirisawetiya Dagoba. (Just an idea!)

The Governor's wife he refers to is probably Lady Edith Blake, wife of Sir Henry Arthur Blake.

Tanks, John Still

Experiences in the life of an archaeologist in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), excavating and restoring the relics of the great days of Sri Lankan civilisation in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa.

Lost Sepoys, Pousse Cailloux (Leonard Arthur Bethell)

Around 1912, in the jungles of Assam, on India's North-Eastern border.

A powerful tale, told against the background of the Lakhimpur Military Police maintaining order in the Abor jungle regions after their conquest by the Abor Expedition.

How easy it is to get lost in the jungle – two soldiers go hunting in the jungle and fail to return at nightfall. The search continues for several days. As the searchers go to sleep at base on the last night, they hear the extraordinary, almost human wailing of a chorus of jackals. A sound they have never heard before in that part of the jungle.

The remains of the two Gurkhas are found some months later, only yards from where one of the search parties was looking for them.

In the Heart of Kalamantan, Sir Hugh Clifford

A powerful story of loneliness, isolation and despair in a lone English administrator in one of the inland districts of Borneo. He is eventually redeemed through his friendship with one of the 'old hands' who selflessly keeps his courage up even when dying himself.

Clifford speaks with sympathy and understanding of the struggles of a young colonial officer in a remote district of the Malay states – an area where he himself started his working life, aged 17, in 1883.

Hpa-N-Khrit, Sinjab

Burma, 1915. The English officer who investigated a murder is on his way down to Rangoon to give evidence. He has never met the murderer – his police staff had located the man and sent him down to the capital.

On his way, the Englishman meets a raft going down river and requests the travellers to take him along. The raft encounters rapids, one of the crew is lost overboard, never to be seen again, and another of the passengers takes over handling the raft.

At the cost of personal injury and real danger, he saves the raft from almost inevitable destruction in a whirl pool. When they arrive at Rangoon, the officer wants him to come to hospital and be looked after, but he says no, he must go on because he killed a man, and he has to appear in court.!

The rest of the story may be guessed. The trial is a non-event as the accused confesses, and says if that is the law, he's willing to die – but he says 'The man stole my wife. Is it not legal to kill a thief.?'

The Englishman steps in and tells the story of the raft and the judge decides that – against all the rules – they can pass this case over to the native elders of the man's village.

Highbrows and Lowbrows, Pousse Cailloux (Leonard Arthur Bethell)

Around 1912, in the jungles of Assam, on India's North-Eastern border.

A fictionalised version of the Abor expedition which Bethell was part of. Names and details are altered, but it seems probable that Dr Gregorson ("Grant" in the story) – is from life. Bethell blames him for creating the incomprehension and hostility that arose between the explorers and the tribes, creating a volatile situation. The most singular incident – of the colours on the envelopes being the cause of the massacre accords with the historical accounts of the time.

The conclusion of the story is really Bethell's view on how the Expedition should have been run.

The Quest of the Golden Fleece, Sir Hugh Clifford

Set in North Borneo, 1880s.? The natives described are the Muruts.

The has all the ingredients of the classic Boys Own story – the white man is bound hand and foot and tied to a pole and taken to the native village to be killed – then rescued at the last moment by the Gurkha soldiers. How realistic is it.? Well, Clifford was Governor of the country in which the story is set...

The details of native life are accurate, from other accounts and authors. The story is probably not directly true, in that Clifford did not know the narrator personally.

Primitive Socialists, Edward Irving

Manners and customs of the Sakai, or Mai Darat tribes living in the Upland areas of the Malay peninsula. They are likened to Rousseau's noble savage.

The Other Master, Sir Hugh Clifford

The Gold Coast (now Ghana) – c1910.

A tale of the supernatural, or of the fevered imagination of a lonely English administrator in a remote jungle district – or is it just collusion, and a simple deception by his native servants.?

The Death-March of Kulop Sumbing, Sir Hugh Clifford

Set in Perak and Pahang, among the Sakai tribes.

The raider travels to Sakai country to steal the large sum needed to pay the bride-price for his intended. Though successful in making the robbery, he is pursued as he tries to get back to his own country. As long as he keeps moving, and keeps alert, he can outwit and fend off his pursuers – but eventually the need for sleep overcomes him, and he is killed in his sleep. His loot, not comprehended by his pursuers, is left where it falls.

Movable Columns, Pousse Cailloux (Leonard Arthur Bethell)

Set around 1912, in the jungles of Assam, on India's North-Eastern border.

Strategy in jungle warfare, in particular the work by the Assam Military Police – of which Bethell was Commandant – to normalise relations with the tribes following the withdrawal of the Abor expedition.

Bethell himself was on the Abor expedition, whose methods he criticises – hence his preference for using a pseudonym in publication. ***here

White Man's ground, Selim

Southern Nigeria around 1890. A lone District Officer is looking after an area of jungle and tribes. One day, and for no clear reason, the tribes rise against him. As he speculates later, it was probably the priests or the witch doctors stirring up trouble.

The problem with fighting jungle tribes, as Bethell has observed, is that the "enemy" never comes forward to face a battle. They melt into the jungle, taking their possessions with them, then re-emerge when the army is gone. This story shows an unusual case where the tribal King says he would like to come out and fight a proper battle, so he sends a messenger to the District Officer and arranges a date and a time for the fight.

To equalise the odds, the battle is fought on 'White Man's Ground' – an open space, previously used for cotton crop – and the British side agree not to use the Maxim gun.

The battle ends with a defeated tribe cheerfully accepting failure and coming up to the District Officer's bungalow for a drink of gin. They get thoroughly drunk, agree to peace terms, pay various fines and all is settled. The district lives happily ever after – but just to clarify: this was not play fighting – there were deaths on both sides.

Volume 9 – Tales of Africa

Jokilobovu, Lord Baden-Powell

Zulu Natal in the early 1880s. Jokilobovu is the Royal executioner. The king has just died, so there is a plenty of work for him to do – people who have to be buried with the king, his wives, his ministers, his servants and so on. Apart from that, the story is a fairly light-hearted tale about relationships with the Zulus.

The Ngoloko, J. A. G. Elliot

Set in South Eastern Kenya, in the Malindi area. Accurately dated, because of a moon eclipse in July 1917

Tales around a midnight campfire of the Ngoloko – a ghostly visitor or evil spirit that eats human beings. The author concludes that it is a real creature, but not matching anything known. Hard to make sense of it. If there were even a small number of these odd creatures, one would have been identified sometime during the last hundred years.

The Tail Girl of Krobo Hill, W. H. Adams

The Gold Coast (now Ghana) in around 1890.

The British Empire, at the height of its power and confidence in Africa, abolishing a long-established native religion, or fetish, as they were known. The priests are executed, the shrines are blown up and cleared.

It was a fairly evil fetish.

The girl has only a supporting role, not even a speaking part. She is there just as an object of desire, and a motive for men's actions.

The Grove of Ashtaroth, John Buchan

Set in Zimbabwe where a happy, handsome, successful young man, who builds a house in an upland valley in the wonderful climate of this country, is gradually destroyed by a shrine to an ancient goddess on his land. The story is related to the Book of Kings, chapter 11, where the influence of alien gods on Solomon is described. The story reads rather like one of the supernatural tales of Conan Doyle – who submitted articles to Blackwoods, but the Strand Magazine got in an offer first.

Machiji, A. C. G. Hastings

Set in Hausa Land, currently Northern Nigeria.

All about snakes, fear of snakes, and a nasty, very nearly fatal incident with a snake in a bed.

The African Scorpion, Gaid Sakit

Set in Sudan, probably sometime in the 1920s

Story as per title. Description of scorpions, their habits, the danger of their stings, and the campaigns to rid two friends' bungalow of the menace.

My First Execution, no author

Set on the Cotton Coast of West Africa in Akia probably around 1905 ?

After some years of service in West Africa, the district officer is facing his first execution. He is dreading it, but he carries it out. The sentence is just, he knows, and the criminal's own village would've torn him to pieces – slowly.

The Second Class Passenger, Perceval Gibbon

A bizarre story,

The passenger from a ship calling at Lourenço Marques in Mozambique, goes ashore, get lost in dark and rain on the way back, gets involved in a murder, a flight from the police, and a brief, passionate romance with his accomplice and fellow fugitive.

Then, meeting other people from the ship, he decides to return to his normal respectable life.!

There is some indication that this is the act of a second class person, and a really courageous adventurer would've left the ship and built a new life in Mozambique.

A Day's Work with the Somaliland Camel Constabulary, Zeres

Around 1915 in British Somalia.

A convincing description of the Somaliland Camel Corps, seen on a particular day when they go out to recover camels stolen from a friendly native tribe.

The Somali troopers come in for a general paean of praise and approval – in his dress sense, physique, manners, sense of humour and his key usefulness within the Camel Corps.

The tale finishes up with a sad, and in retrospect, ironic note on the war in Europe, and how, when it is won, the Empire will be able to resume its destined course and British Somaliland will at last take its place among the successes of Empire. The lives sacrificed in conquering the territory and maintaining order, will be repaid in a new era of peace and prosperity in the country.

A Solo Flight from England to the Gold Coast in Cirrus-Moth G.EBZZ, Capt. R. S. Rattray

The story will mostly be of interest to those with knowledge of the history of flight, the technology of flying small planes, and the methods of navigation used before radar.

Problems with weather, turbulence, politics, and the machine itself delay the journey, which takes about six weeks, stopping every night, and often several times during a day. Reading the story feels about as long – not recommended for anyone other than those especially interested in early aviation.

The Silent Ones, no author

West Africa, possibly 1890s, apparently a French territory – possibly Ivory Coast

An entertaining story and a quite serious one – of how one French Padre can out face 1000 tribesman, apparently intent on his murder and the looting of his mission station. After lecturing them for 10 minutes on their weakness and cowardice, he tells them to go – and they leave. Thereafter 'The Silent Ones' – the name of this band of murderers – do not terrorise the area again.

The Juju Rock, 'Lake Chad'

This story reads as fact, and historical research done by a District Officer out in Northern Nigeria.

It's based on an investigation into why tribes regard the juju rock with such fear and horror, and how it originally came to be established as a juju lock

The conclusion was, after conversations with the tribes and research at Lloyds Register in London, that a band of pirates had come ashore with treasure, one of them betrayed the others, fled, and finally died of sickness and starvation while hiding upon that rock.

The People without a Pillow, Zeres

The story reads largely as a complaint against Westminster, and its declining commitment to the Imperial adventure, especially in the socialist parliaments of the early 20th century. The contrary instructions issued to colonial administrators, the underlying loss of support from London, and how it felt to those who had committed their lives to the establishment of Empire.

Specifically, this is about parliament's decision to withdraw support from British Somaliland sometime in the 1920s, how the local officers were affected by it, the actions they took in circumventing it, and forgetting to implement directives.

'The people without a pillow' is a reference to the tribes – who can take no rest because of the threatening advance of the 'Mad Mullah' into their land.

Bricks without Straw, Zeres

More on the Somaliland withdrawal – around 1913.

Westminster finally realise that the problem has become too embarrassing, after the loss of a British expedition is reported by the press. Things improve, supplies and instructions to increase the force are given, and the British gain a victory. Things are then messed up by the start of the European War.

The Trader of Last Notch, Perceval Gibbon

Story set somewhere in Africa in the wild times – you live by the gun and watch your back. Murder is commonplace.

A Frenchman picks up with the trader while he's out hunting, and travelling back, saves him from being drowned in a crocodile infested quicksand. When they get back to the trader's store, the Frenchman admits that he is a fugitive from justice. The trader says he'll put him up for the night, and then guide him on his way with a couple of boys and provisions for a journey out of the country. In the night, the posse catches up with them, and a stand-off occurs in which the trader won't let them take him back immediately 'because he saved my life'. As a trade-off, he gives the Frenchman five minutes to escape – while holding off the posse at gunpoint.

Knowing the country, knowing the ranges, knowing his own rifle, he is able to join the hunt, and shoot the escaping Frenchman at a great distance. Result – everyone is all square at the end.!

The story is presumed fictional, though representative of its time.

The Marksman, L. A.

A story of individual courage by one long serving black soldier in repelling a raid on a tribal village somewhere in Africa.

Volume 10 – Shikar

The Finest Sport in the World, A. Blayney Perceval

The first line – "To my mind, there is no sport equal to galloping down lions" summarises the article. It includes much practical and technical details of the hunt, and various warnings.

The Great Boar of Birkatheli, no author

Set in a remote part of India in the hunting club of an undisclosed regiment.

The boar said to be the largest they had ever seen, and large by any standards. It is said to weigh 30 stone. Dimensions are not given "for fear of not being believed". (30 stone is not the largest boar ever recorded – quite a bit short in fact). A clever animal too – able to hide so effectively that some of the beaters insisted there was magic involved. Rationalists concluded that it must have given the slip.

In the end – of course – they find it, and get their kill.

The Hunting of Ngagi, Ashley Gibson, and H. F. Fenn

Ngagi – the local name for the mountain gorilla. Set in the Belgian Congo, 1927. Mount Katana.

After much bureaucracy, they get permission to kill one mountain gorilla for an exhibit at the Natural History Museum in London. There is a restriction – that the kill must be outside the Belgian National Park.

The hunt is long, the quarry dangerous, but they get him in the end. They had to shoot three times at three different points in the chase to kill him. Those mountain gorillas, they learn, delight to pull a human quarry apart – pulling off arms and legs, as a small boy might handle a fly.

They catch up with him where he has fallen – the gorilla dies slowly, no longer with anger or aggression in his red rimmed eye, but pleading.

Some Pig Sticking

Six separate tales of boar hunting – some in India and some in France during the Great War. Always by the traditional method of allowing the boar to run onto the spear.

Shooting Takin in Eastern Tibet, Lieut-Col F. M. Bailey

As described in the title.

A new method with the dry fly, Horace Hutchinson

The new method is a method of concealing or reducing visibility of the gut line attached to the fly. Surprisingly maybe, to non anglers, the trout can distinguish between a fly attached to a fishing line and a fly on its own. The method described seems similar to that seen in "A River Runs Through It"

Modern synthetic lines have probably superseded this discussion

Bare Forests, X.

A well written tale of a hunting expedition in a remote forest in a Native State in India. The game they go after is various, the people and incidents they meet on the way are always enjoyable and entertaining.

The Eyes of Masambo, J. P. Kay Robinson

Story set in Northern Rhodesia, time unspecified.

Masambo is a legendary tracker, able to follow a rabbit across a bare rock, to read leopard tracks and know from them what the leopard is thinking. By his own assertion, Masambo is also a witch, and uses magic to locate animals, but – as the writer says – of that you must judge yourself.

Ou-opp Sahib, R. E. Vernede

Set somewhere near the Naruhodo River in Bengal, a story of shikhar for leopard, but also the tale of the descendant of an ordinary soldier who went out to India to fight during The Mutiny, stayed, and took up his life in a village in Bengal. He is now dead, but he left behind him a son – a man called Ou-opp Sahib.

Lion Days, Bombardier

Mount Kenya, 1922

Maybe unusual for his time, the author shows vision – a recognition that the planet is overburdened by man, and that in time – he says confidently – wildlife will vanish from Africa, and be replaced by golf courses and towns and roads. He may well be right.

Seven lions in all are killed on his three-month journey in the Mount Kenya area. In his writing, the author shows real respect for the African guides, trackers and gun bearers who accompany him.

A Winter Shoot, no author

Late December, the plains of India in the 1920s. Hunting for stag, bear and incidentally panther. Also includes the legendary story of a Red Fort that they pass and the tyrant that used to hold court there.

The Burra Badmash Bagh, A. M.

Set in the tea gardens of Assam, probably around 1910 – at any rate “in those happy days before the war”.

The “very bad leopard” (the title of the story in Hindi) has attacked a child in a nearby village and the hunters go to deal with him. The chase ends up improbably in a vegetable garden where the leopard hides – and very nearly becomes the hunter rather than the hunted. It is only by luck that they survive his attack and manage to kill him – though he did kill one and severely wound five of the hunters before he dies. I guess if the leopard had won, we would not be reading the story

A Mixed Bag, X.

Set at a remote and sleepy railway station somewhere in the central plains of India, a tongue in cheek story about shooting the wildlife around the station while waiting some hours for a train. The two friends who are the hunters are the only passengers at the station, which appears to have only one train a day.

They go off to a more conventional hunting expedition, mostly wildfowl around a lake.

Rammu, C. G. C. T.

Set in central India around the area of the Vindhyan sandstone hills.

The narrator is woken in the middle of the night in the middle of a thunderstorm by a naked aboriginal, dripping, cold and wet. The aboriginal is clearly guilty and penitent about something. He is a Bhoi Gond and he has killed his wife.

Eventually he becomes a hunter guide to the narrator. The story is little about hunting, more an affectionate memoir of a guide who remained his companion for years – until taken by a fever.

The Scourge of the District, Pardesi

An ugly and nerve-racking story of hunting a man-eating panther, reckoned to have killed over 100 villagers in his reign of terror. The panther carries out his operations at widely separated points on different nights, making it difficult to track him. In the end, the hunter decides to sit up over the body of a boy that the panther has killed and wait for the animal's return.

The panther comes back in the darkest part of the night, in an area where it is impossible for the hunter to see him clearly. He is able to devour the whole of the boy's body, despite the hunter shouting, banging things, firing his rifle into the darkness and missing on several occasions. Nothing frightens the panther off until his meal is complete. His contempt for humanity is absolute.

Ultimately, the panther is killed by somebody else, a farmer, while the panther is attacking one of the farm goats.

"Beef.", Capt. J. Fitzpatrick

Set in central Nigeria, in the Benue river basin.

Assorted tales of tribal hunting methods, including events of extraordinary courage.

Volume 11 – From Strange Places

A Tight Place, Sir Hugh Clifford

Set in Periyakulam in Tamil Nadu, South India

A grim story of divers working at 40 foot depth in the river to construct the piles of a bridge. It does not have a happy ending.

God's Hill, Hilton Brown

Set in Barachi and Bandha in Andhra Pradesh in India.– a state including parts of the old Madras Presidency and Hyderabad.

A collection of bizarre and supernatural events occurring in the bungalow built on God's Hill, It also includes a description of a major cyclone which destroys the haunted bungalow – 'M'Gillivray's cyclone'.

The Poacher, A. G. Cummins

Told in a hotel in Palermo, and set on the border between Abyssinia and Sudan. The story of elephant poaching, and of one extraordinary rogue elephant.

The Left Hand of Abdulla the Beggar, Ibn-Sabil

Set in Persia probably around 1910 after the Constitutional Revolution. The author speaks dismissively of the veneer of western methods that this has overlaid onto an Oriental culture.

Abdullah has had his right hand and left foot amputated following a false charge of theft by a corrupt local official. He spends his days strengthening his left hand, preparing for his revenge.

The Flutes of Fear, C. G. C. T.

Set somewhere in Central India. The district of Chapur is mentioned, and a town of Kushti, but these names may be fictional.

A story of the supernatural – of how an accursed music can instil fear and horror.

An Enforced Descent, Rufus

An agonising account of climbing down the rock face of the Lohagad Hill fort in Maharashtra State in India to make an escape from a threatening herd of buffaloes. Climbing down may sound easier than up, but not so. A climb up usually involves reversible stages, but going down may not.

The Savage as Scientist, Fulahn (William Hichens)

1926, in Tanganyika, written by an administrative officer in the country. Medical knowledge within African culture prior to discoveries of the same facts by Western science.

The focus is on malaria – inevitably better known in Africa than Europe:

- The use of quinine to combat malaria
- The knowledge that mosquitoes carried the disease
- Surprisingly, the use of malaria to cure syphilis. Not a current cure, but a Nobel prize was awarded in 1927 for discovery of this effect.

- Vaccination
- Types of tick that attack, cattle, and people

Also stories on cursing, bewitching and faith healing that the author has witnessed. He makes the general recommendation of listening to traditional tribal wisdom.

A Tale Told by the Way, no author

Set in a tea growing, hill area of India, possibly in Himachal Pradesh in the 1920s. A story of the dangers of hunting a man-eating tiger, and of the greater perils of angering a sadhu.

Eldorado, Unlimited, Pousse Cailloux (Leonard Arthur Bethell)

An economic history of India, and its trading relations with the rest of the world from Medieval times onwards.

Bethell mixes a multitude of economic facts and figures with personal observations from his own experience in India. Society, trade, the merchant classes, uses of money – and the perpetual debt schemes which hold cultivators in servitude.

The Very Devil, Sir Hugh Clifford

Two explorers, Norris and Baring, pitch up in a couple of bamboo huts in North Borneo – taking one for themselves and one for their cooks and staff. The servants arrive in a panic in the middle of the night saying there is devil in their hut.

It is in the roof – in a hut lit by one candle in the utter darkness of the jungle. After the creature has been shot by Norris, it turns out to be a python, having bitten off more than it can chew in swallowing a whole cat. The cat's face remains visible, staring out of the snake's mouth, creating the bizarre animal which had terrified them.

Tantum Religio, E. B. Howell

A story told in the club at Simla in 1919 of events in the 1890s – well written, and later re-published by Leonard Scott of New York and also by the Indian website, MahaSuvi Tales.

The gods of the hills and valleys above Simla are angry. They have withheld rain and cursed the cattle and the people with diseases.

An attempt to appease them with human sacrifice is thwarted by the British District Commissioner, but in the end the sacrifice is completed in another way, and the anger of the gods appeased. There is a heavy storm that night – bringing the long-awaited, much needed rain.

The title, 'Tantum Religio', is a shortened quotation from Lucretius – "To such heights of evil has religion been able to drive men".

The Golden Mouse, A. G. Cummins

A story about an attempt to recover the Ark of the Covenant, supposedly located in Abyssinia, having been stolen from Solomon by the Queen of Sheba.

The title, 'The Golden Mouse', is a reference to KJV, 1 Samuel, Chapter 6, when the Philistines returned the Ark to the Israelites.

Fighting the Cholera Devil, T. H. S.

In 1928 in Travancore, now known as Trivandrum, part of the modern Indian state of Kerala.

Story as the title – and showing the good work done by the English in India.

Volume 12 – In Lighter Vein

The Swan, J. K. (Dum Dum)

Poem in blank verse, classical style, about a dying Swan, who sings

The Return to Nature, Ian Hay

Two people in a party on a private yacht, cruising the South Pacific, detest each other at parties and dances. When the yacht is wrecked, and those two alone end up on a desert island together, needless to say, over time, they come to like each other.

They end up married and return to England.

Four Annas Reward, Hilton Brown

The unintended consequences of offering a reward for rat corpses during an outbreak of plague in Kavutapur in South India, where rats are believed to be responsible for spreading it.

The result is that rats are imported from various distant parts of the country and presented to gain the reward. This leads the scientist to prove his theory that plague is spread because rats are coming from these more distant parts of the country!

The story claims to be true. The place names are real and the references to the records of the Royal Geographical Society of Calcutta appear plausible

Retribution at Nianazai, Raymond A. Coulson

Nianazai is a post on the supply lines feeding the front lines of a small war between the tribes of Afghanistan and the Northwest Frontier of Pakistan. The depot at Nianazai has a bad reputation for misappropriating stores along the supply route.

Their retribution occurs the end, when Nianazai make a heroic stand against an attack by the tribals, attempting to loot their stores, especially ammunition. The attack is successfully repelled: the officers of Nianazai die heroic deaths

and are honoured by the army as contributing the crucial factor in the final victory over the tribes.

The Mystery of the Hibernia, no author

A girl who falls overboard in the Red Sea is followed by a man who jumps unnoticed over the railings to save her. He reaches her, they stay afloat together on a buoy, and are rescued by the ship's cutter. When the cutter returns to the ship, the man slips aboard, unnoticed again. He then creates the 'Mystery' by spreading false rumours about the man who saved the girl.

But the girl knows. They continue their relationship and – a happy ending – they end up married.

The Beetle Game, G. Warren

Set at a barracks in Khartoum, the Beetle Game, similar to roulette, involves a beetle running on to a random square of a board. After one soldier is confined to barracks for this gambling, the staff take it up – and the game catches on immensely. They are even able to brighten the inspection visit by a general – who, 50 piastres up on the betting.! gives them a glowing report.

The Beetle Game (II)

The Beetle Game, from the story in Blackwoods, spreads to other Outposts of Empire – Tibet in this case.

(The story is given without author, but in his letters Bethell attributes it to F. M. Bailey.)

"A Gold Mine", Weston Martyr

Set in the Johannesburg goldmine mania, probably around 1910 – after the Boer War and before the First World War.

The story includes a fraudulent mine promoter, stock market manipulators in Johannesburg, an old and capable miner, and a young greenhorn – the author – who is drawn into their schemes as an innocent witness.

The story is set at a dud mineshaft somewhere near Roodefontein.

In the past, the miner himself has been cheated out of a fortune by financiers and stock market manipulators. Suffice it to say, in the devious and crooked ways of boosting up a worthless mineshaft, the miner gets his own back on the financiers and makes 100-fold profit on his stock market investment. The greenhorn, taken under the wing of the old miner, makes the same profit.

Weston Martyr worked as a miner in South Africa, so the story maybe at least part autobiographical.

Weights and Scales, Pousse Cailloux (Leonard Arthur Bethell)

Set somewhere in the Punjab, on a river where the foothills of the Himalayas are visible in the distance. Bethell declines to give further details.

A fishing trip in happy holiday mode. Bethell manages to catch a huge mahseer with the help of two young Indian boys, sons of his Shikari, who lends little help in the process.

The Commandant's Goat, A. G. Cummins

Set in Sudan, the story involves a goat and a box of gelignite. Suffice it to say – the goat does not survive.

The Locusts, B.

A small story of how the Muslim copes with a plague of locusts – in Shalla.!

Corn in Egypt, Sir George MacMunn

A story of an Afghan soldier serving in the Great War in France. In his leisure time, he pursues his own feuds with other tribesmen. He recently managed to get home on leave, and kill his blood feud adversary – benefiting there from a number of useful coincidences.

Flood, A. W. Smith

Building a new bridge on the River Donda in Madhya Pradesh in India – on the Bombay to Calcutta Railway line

The story of the last bridge is told by a profiteer, who saw it collapse when the water rose 4 feet above the trackway. He bought a boat and made a large profit carrying stranded people off from the trees.

He got too greedy – and lost it in the end

A Rapid Survey, Pousse Cailloux (Leonard Arthur Bethell)

1912, in the jungles of Assam.

The column arrives at base camp from one of their long jungle expeditions – ragged, exhausted, leech bitten, and starved. The three officers decide to try the uncharted river back to headquarters while the Gurkhas take the main land route.

In their gear they have a Berthon boat – a collapsible lifeboat, which can be fixed together to carry four people – in their case, three people and baggage. Going down river, they encounter three major rapids – eventually their boat is wrecked and their baggage lost. (Though the Berthon boat does surprisingly well in the circumstances).

Luckily.!! They are not far from HQ at the final point.

This story is referred to in 'Letters' – where Bethell says that one of the men with him was F. M. Bailey, and the story is part fiction, part fact.

An Eclipse in Tibet, Ajax

As per the title – an eclipse of the Moon – on 8th December 1927. Lunar eclipses than solar, and an event which the Lamas accurately predict.

The author is given as 'Ajax' – an unknown pseudonym. Given the location of Tibet, F. M. Bailey is likely.

A Prelude to Enslavement, Weston Martyr

Pre-war – maybe around 1911

Weston Martyr – a famous yachtsman – when living in Japan, tries to interest his friend – an elderly dyspeptic, insomniac workaholic business man with heart trouble – that he would do well to get out of his business sometime and get fresh air and exercise. He decides to tempt him into yachting and finally gets him out on a sail to Vries Island, about 100 miles out of Yokohama. The sail out is wonderful – the weather calm, the wind fair behind them, and the sea flat. They anchor on the island, spend the day there – and then come back in the most terrible storm where the passenger is ill, cold, wet and thrown about in the storm. Despite all of this, the medicine works and his business man friend becomes a passionate sailor for years afterwards.

The title is a quote from Conrad – that there is nothing more enslaving than a life at sea.

The Resident Alien, Hilton Brown

An unpopular and unpleasant member of the European community suffers ostracism and eventual expulsion due to rumours among the native community of his being a German – this occurring just at the outbreak of the First World War, where Germans in India are being interned.

"Fiat Experimentum", Pousse Cailloux (Leonard Arthur Bethell)

Somewhere around 1902 or 1903, based on dates for Edward VII and Lord Curzon's time as Viceroy.

After Bethell suffers a polo accident in Assam, and is bitten by a rabid dog while recovering, he is sent for the requisite 21 days treatment at the Pasteur Institute at a hill station 4,000 feet up somewhere in North India.

Having a further automatic 5 weeks leave to complete the cure, he stays at the Institute and learns of the many experiments and investigations ongoing – which are recorded in his account.

Autres Temps, Autres Moeurs, H. E. Graham

1906, or shortly after in Southern Nigeria.

A young, new lieutenant is left in charge of the garrison of the West African Frontier Force at Bende. Among other things, the story recounts his problems of discipline when his experienced commanding officer goes away on leave, only one month after the new recruit has joined.

But he wins through, of course.

A Savage Island, Weston Martyr

A story of the conflict of cultures between an English man who has spent his working life in Africa, the South Pacific and the Aleutians, and the culture that he finds when he comes back to England in 1923.

Sitting in a railway carriage from Tilbury to Fenchurch Street, he finds he is sharing it with a Krooboy – a black man from South Africa. He naturally ejects the black man from the first-class carriage, and is astonished to find himself charged with assault, and damages to railway property.

His problems continue as he tries to come to terms with the new manners of his native land. His wonderful niece Ann sorts things out for him, but in the end, they agree he would be better off returning to Papua New Guinea.

The 'Savage Island' is England – of course.!

On Patrol, An Administrative Victory, Klaxon (John Graham Bower)

A poem about a battle at sea in the First World War – the destruction of a German cruiser and the capture of a German Admiral.