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A SOLDIER'S SHIKAR TRIPS

BY

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(24th Regiment)*

WITH PHOTOGRAPHS OF SOMALILAND

BY

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SOMALILAND

1894

In my humble opinion the anticipation of and preparation for a big-game shooting trip are almost as enjoyable as the expedition itself.

At least that was my feeling when, in the early spring of 1894, being then quartered in Cairo with my regiment, I commenced to make arrangements for a shooting expedition into Somaliland.

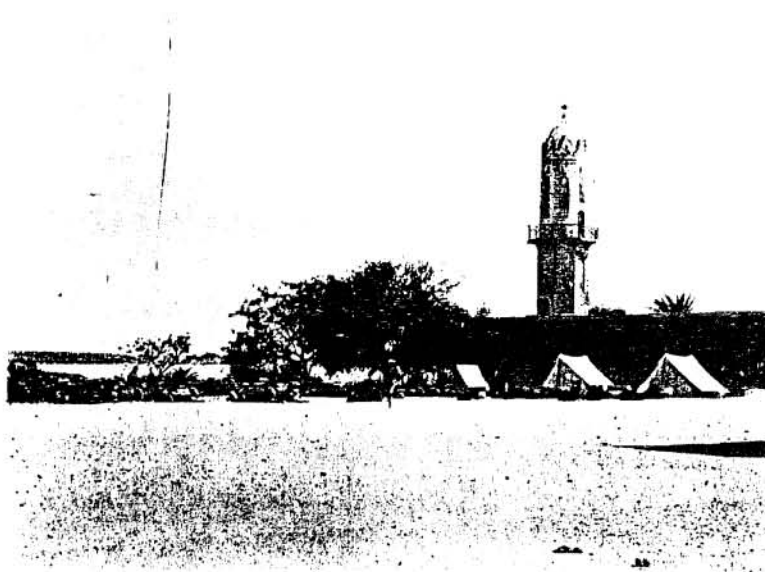
Our party was to consist of three: my old friend, Major B. C., S. of the 7th Dragoon Guards, and myself. S. and myself were stationed together in Cairo, but B. C. was in England.

We had already purchased some of our camels. For this we employed a native, by name Hadji Duella Idris, a noted headman. He went over from Aden to Berbera to make our purchases, but could not take service with us as he was already engaged for another expedition (Mr Donaldson Smith).

Owing to the fact that we had on our route to cross the *haud* (or waterless plain) of Somaliland,



THE RESIDENCY, BERBERA



OUR CAMP NEAR OLD MOSQUE, BERBERA

game at this spot. Passed the spoor of rhino about five days old, also the spoor of lion (yesterday). The country began to improve in appearance. Up to this point it had been black and bare-looking. High hills on either side, covered with leafless bushes. Now patches of lovely green appeared, which our ponies—poor beasts—seemed to appreciate. The valley widened and assumed a park-like appearance, with fine trees. This valley led down to the River Fafan.

At 4.45 p.m. we halted at Tumpso, and soon heard that there were rhino about—two were seen that day—also that a lion killed a child

Temperature

8.30 p.m. 63° few days ago at the village close by.

5.45 a.m. 61° *August 12th.*—We three drew straws for choice of direction. I got third place, unfortunately for myself. Started from camp about 6.30 a.m. My direction led away from the River Fafan. I found the spoor of rhino in a nullah, and followed them for some time, but after walking for three or four hours the shikári (Nur Farrar), my headman, said it was useless, as the nullah was too dry, so I returned to camp.

C. went down to the river to the left—S. to the right. The latter returned at 1 p.m., having been unsuccessful. At 2.15 p.m. C. returned with the good luck of having shot his first rhino, which he said was a fine specimen. After something to eat, he started with a camel, intending to spend



C.'S RHINO

the night out by the beast, and to return in the morning with the skin. S. and myself went out to two villages near where zeribas for lion had been made for us, my village being the one where the unfortunate child was killed by a lion a few nights ago.

August 13th.—Nothing came of sitting up last night.

On arriving at the zeriba I found a large bonfire burning 300 yards off, and was informed that it had been made by a party of Abyssinians just arrived to hunt rhino. The fire was most provoking, as it spoilt the little chance I had of seeing a lion. After returning to camp at daylight—and a wash and cup of chocolate—I went out again and soon came on the fresh tracks of lion. These we followed for some distance, after which we lost all trace in the long grass.

Next we came on fresh spoor of rhino, but the same result—we followed for three hours and finally gave it up.

Moved camp at 8.10 P.M., and outspanned at 5.30 P.M.—“Gollarbiah.” Just before arriving I again found fresh spoor of a rhino, but the noise of the caravan must have frightened the beast.

August 14th.—Moved camp at 5 A.M. and outspanned for morning halt at Berdiesa, having passed over the dried-up bed of the River Galdire.

We went through one valley which had acres of splendid green grass, with a background of lovely blue hills. But for the trees it might have been English meadowland. This we soon passed, however, and entered a hilly, sterile country, nothing but rocks and scattered bushes.

Moved again at 2 P.M., rode after a couple of aoul, but without success. Our route now wound round the head of a valley. We could see an immense plain at our feet stretching for miles, covered with dense bush. This we thought was the commencement of the Bourka country.

Halted for the night at 5.20 P.M. at Tentomee, by which time we had descended to the plain. I left the caravan at 4 P.M. and went after some gerenook. Killed two. I ought to have killed a third, but was unsteady from running. I used the .303 service rifle with the split bullet and found it most successful.

On returning to camp I heard that C. had shot a splendid bustard—28 lb.

Have been again unlucky with my horse (the one I bought from C.). I shall have to leave off riding him for two days to avoid a sore back. The other horse's back is also in a bad way. C. has taken it in hand and is going to treat it.

August 15th.—We started at 5.20 A.M. and marched for only one hour—about 6.30 A.M.—when we came to a good well cut out of the solid

rock—at least, the upper part was. It must have been made years and years ago.

We stayed here the best part of the day, waiting for S., whom we supposed at last to be lost. Lighted fires and fired shots, but without result.

We moved on at 4.30 P.M. and halted in an hour's time on a plain. We heard of rhino in all directions. It looked a likely game country.

S. turned up in camp about 7 P.M., having shot a fine bull lesser koodoo, with a good head. He had been for six hours on a rhino track without coming across him. Halting-place to-night is Anna Kooloo.

August 16th.—Again I was unlucky last night in drawing for places. I drew "third." As I did not think my "beat" worth trying, I remained in camp all day.

C. returned about 2 P.M., having been again successful in shooting a rhino. S. appeared about 5 P.M., not having fired a shot, nor had any chance.

Temperature
1.30 P.M. 88°
7.45 P.M. 72°
(in the tent)

August 17th.—At 6 A.M. we started, my shikáris and myself, and at 6.40 came on fresh spoor of rhino. We passed quite close to a herd of thirty oryx, but I did not fire for fear of disturbing the rhino. It was then, for the first time, I noticed the rhino birds, annoying little beasts, which flew ahead, uttering notes of alarm.

3.40 P.M. 84°

After tracking about ten minutes my gun-bearer, Moosa, stopped, crouched down, caught me by the wrist and pointed to a rhino feeding in an open grass patch about 100 yards off.

We went round and got behind him, then through some bushes succeeded in approaching within 50 yards.

Nur Farrar, the head shikári, handed me C.'s 8-bore, borrowed for the day. I fired at the shoulder, but hit low down. He turned and came in our direction, passing about 20 yards off, and as he went by I let him have the left barrel. The shot got home and, following, we found him lying down. It took another shot from the 8-bore and one from my .577 Express to finish him.

He proved to be an old bull. They told me his age was about seventy years! His horn was not very long—1 ft. 2 inches—but thick at the base—1 ft. 9 inches in circumference.

C. and S. were unsuccessful with rhino, but the former returned to camp about 4.30 P.M. with a cow oryx.

I went out in the afternoon round the camp and

Temperature

8.20 P.M. 69° shot two guinea-fowl and one francolin.

4.30 A.M. 62°
(in tent)

August 18th.—We moved camp at 5.5 A.M. and halted at 10 A.M. at Diggerieleh. I went on the left of the road and saw nothing to speak of. C. went on the right and had an exciting adventure with a rhino. He had wounded it and was follow-

ing the beast up when it suddenly charged him from behind a bush.

He and his shikári succeeded in dodging, and the rhino retreated. They followed, and then discovered that S., who had stayed behind at the last camp, was following the tracks of the same wounded beast.

S. having overtaken it was also charged, but succeeded in finishing him with the 8-bore.

Our usual time for continuing the journey—viz. 2 P.M.—arrived, when Hadji Jama reported ten camels missing. A camel man who had been sent out to search for them came in with the report that they had been stolen by Midgans. I sent off Hadji Jama with six armed men in pursuit, with orders to bring in any prisoner they captured with his hands tied behind him. So off they started, but returned to camp about 5.30 P.M., having found the camels 10 miles away, going like “smoke” of their own accord. Something must have frightened them. So here we were stuck for the night. Dense bush all round, leafless trees, burnt-up grass and nothing to shoot.

August 19th.—Started from camp at 5 A.M. A most disappointing day. C. and self and the shikáris moved off in the direction pointed out by the guide, but after walking till 12 noon we halted—no sign of a caravan. About 2 P.M. the caravan guide appeared and took us off to where the morning