

# FIVE YEARS IN THE SUDAN

BY  
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“When Allah made the Sudan he laughed”  
Native saying

WITH 32 ILLUSTRATIONS

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THE AUTHOR WITH HIS RECORD TUSKS

Frontispiece

later I saw the silhouette of a *tuckel* (hut) against the sky. We were greeted with demonstrations of affection by its inhabitants. I suppose it was the usual native hospitality, extended to any strangers, for it was a village that we had never touched at before. One old lady—she must have been ninety at least—embraced me fervently, and then offered me water, which was far more to be appreciated under the circumstances. I could feel the mud of it as it went down my throat; but I was too thirsty to be particular, and I finished all that I could get. Our hosts did not want us to leave at all that night, but after a stay of nearly half an hour, we started to walk in the direction of the boat. It proved to be a very long way, and took us a good hour's fast walking.

We had one exciting moment on the way. My guides were walking about five yards ahead of me; it was intensely dark, but I could just see them. Suddenly they disappeared; one moment they were there before my eyes, the next they had vanished into thin air. I hastened on, thinking that perhaps they were tired and were trying to escape having to accompany me all the way back to the boat; but at almost the first step I went headlong over one of them who was lying face downward on the ground, silent as death. I uttered an ejaculation as I fell; he raised himself slightly, and motioned me to be quiet. I therefore lay quite still where I had fallen, and in another minute the reason for all this mystery was plain. I heard heavy breathing not ten yards from where I lay, and saw the outline of a rhinoceros

going slowly up from the river. It looked mountainous against the gleam of the water, but it evidently had not scented us, for it lumbered slowly up the bank and disappeared into the forest. The rhinoceros is about the only animal that will invariably charge on sight, so it was as well that we were not discovered, for in that darkness it would have been impossible to shoot with any degree of accuracy, and, not knowing the land, it would also have been extremely difficult to dodge.

The way seemed so long that I was beginning to think that we must be going in the wrong direction, and that we were moving away from the boat instead of towards it; but at last we heard one of the ship's guns, and in another ten minutes we were on board again. I found a search party on the point of leaving the boat; and it turned out that they had been firing the cannon at intervals for some hours, although we only heard it when we were not a quarter of a mile away. Even now I can remember the taste of the whisky and soda that I drank as I sat waiting for my bath to be prepared.

The following morning I sent men out as I had intended, but whether they did not go far enough, or whether they went in the wrong direction, I do not know. In any case, they returned with the news that no trace of the elephant which I had wounded the day before was to be found. I therefore took advantage of another chance which offered the same afternoon. Elephant were again reported in the neighbourhood, and I went out. Captain Borton

came with me to watch the sport, though, as he had killed his second elephant a few days before, by moonlight, he could not shoot. The regulations of that year allowed each man only two elephants. It was a brutal day ; there was no breeze to speak of, and it was very difficult to work round always to the lee side. When at last I did get a chance, I mulled it by shooting with my sight up to the two hundred yards, the bullet consequently going yards above the animal's back and only having the effect of scaring him away. We walked for miles, and I was on the point of giving up hope, when, mounting an ant-hill to take a last look round, I saw one of the bulls we had been stalking, calmly strolling along in front of me not a hundred yards away. I worked cautiously round to get a broadside shot, and took up my position behind some dwarf palms, which he must pass if he continued the direction he was then taking. He came as close as I could desire, and was not more than ten yards away when he stopped and gave me my chance. I had time to take steady aim at his heart, and fired. He went down on his knees to the shot, and I was sure of him. But as I advanced from one direction, his companion, with ears spread and trunk waving, crashed in from the other side of the clearing, and for a moment things looked as though they were going to be lively. However, one shot discharged with the intention of turning him had the desired effect, and he disappeared into the surrounding forest. The one I killed proved to be quite a fine tusker, though not nearly so big

as the one I first shot in the Bahr-el-Ghazal. We had the tusks cut out, and the natives of the surrounding district, scenting the blood like birds of prey, swooped down almost as soon as the beast was dead to appropriate this unaccustomed and welcome addition to their ordinary menu. We were leaving Bor for a few days, so I left the tusks to be cleaned and dried, and gave instructions for the preservation of the feet, which if properly cured make very good trophies. Incidentally, these of mine were *not* properly cured; so my longsuffering family assured me some months later.

On my return to the station, after an absence of some days, jubilant natives came with news, which, considering the severity of the game laws, was less welcome to me than they had anticipated. They had discovered two dead elephants, in addition to the one from which I had taken the tusks before I left. The one I had wounded and left as only slightly hurt on the night I had been lost, had been found dead, and the second one, which had charged into the clearing, and which I had fired at only to turn, had avenged himself by dying, about a mile away. It was a most unfortunate affair, but I had to make the best of it, and I wrote a lengthy report on the subject, which was duly forwarded to the Governor-General. I was not fined, but the Government confiscated two pairs of the tusks. I suppose I should be grateful for the mercy of not being fined; but on thinking of the laxity of the law as applied to some of the high officials of the Government, and as