CAMPAIGNING

ON THE

UPPER NILE AND NIGER

BY

SEYMOUR VANDELEUR, D.S.O.
LIEUTENANT, SCOTS GUARDS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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WITH MAPS, ILLUSTRATIONS, AND PLANS

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then missed them. Several search-parties were afterwards sent out, without success. It was on our march from Kibwezi that we first viewed the deliciously cool-looking snow-peaks of Kilimanjaro, peeping over the wreaths of cloud and mist which concealed the base; and on the following day, at sunrise, the whole mass of the mountain appeared delicately outlined against the sky, the two snow-peaks, like the large and small horns of a rhinoceros, being now tinged with red by the rapidly rising sun.

It is wonderful, in Africa, to watch the great orb of fire—which becomes so unpleasant later in the day—suddenly shooting up above the horizon as it starts on its long journey across the heavens. An eclipse of the sun, such as occurred at sunrise on the 29th September 1894, had indeed a curious effect, and, though not quite total, the heavens were obscured, and the birds and antelopes had not realised that the night was past. It was on this morning I shot my first water-buck, a very fine buck, with horns just over 27 inches in length, almost a record in East Africa. We reached our first important point—Machako's—on 5th October, meeting there Mr. Ainsworth, who was in charge of the post, and through his hospitality we enjoyed all sorts of luxuries again. The whole of the country, from the coast to Lake Victoria, was still in the hands of the East African Company, and had not yet been taken over by the Government. Major Smith, Captain Arthur of the Rifle Brigade, and Captain Gibbs met us here on their way down to the coast. The latter was being carried down in a hammock, and looked very ill. As may be imagined, he did not give us an inspiriting account of Uganda, and his only advice was to turn back and go the other way.

The Wa-Kamba, among whom we now were, were the funniest-looking people I have ever seen, the fashion being to cover themselves and the little toga which they wear over the shoulders with red grease, to put vermilion round the eyes, and fix between them a sort of brass two-shilling-piece, which was fastened by a band round the head. The "mashers" also wore spats made of strings of white and red beads round the ankles, and a profusion of brass wire bands round their arms and legs. The whole effect was admirable, especially when the men were standing together with bows and arrows. Their costume was scanty, to say the least of it, and the women only wore girdles of blue beads.

We had already risen 5400 feet since leaving the coast, and were now in the highlands of East Africa, where the days were often cool and cloudy, and it was a pleasure to live.

We stayed five days at Machako's, and then continued our march to Kikuyu across the Athi plains, a great sea of gentle grass-covered undulations, intersected by watercourses, and in places teeming with game—a perfect sportsman's paradise. After my expedition in Somaliland, at the beginning of the year, I was naturally very keen about the shooting, and was fortunate to get a good deal during the next few days. Captain Montgomerie, R.N., and Mr. Charrington, were encamped on the Athi River, having come to East Africa on a shooting-trip two months before. They were kind enough to ask Ashburnham and myself to go with them for two days to the westward, a little away from the caravan road, where there was more chance of finding game. On the very first day I was lucky enough to shoot a big male lion soon after leaving

camp. He came out towards me from some bushes in which he was lying, and received a shot from my 10-bore close to the eye, which stopped him; but it required two more shots to finish him.

One day three lions were marked down in some grass in the morning, and a lion-drive was organised after lunch. After the guns had taken up their position the grass was fired, and the beaters advanced behind the line of flame and smoke, mingling their shouts and yells with the crackling of the burning grass and dried-up wood, and the dull roar of the fire. It was an exciting moment as they drew near. Now and then a frightened antelope would dash past, but, sad to relate, the lions had already moved away, and a male lion was seen at the same time just out of shot on the other side of the Athi River, near to which the left gun was posted.

Ashburnham and I had to strike across country to reach the caravan road to Kikuyu, and on our way passed a valley where the fresh green grass was just sprouting. This was literally covered with game of all sorts; thousands of zebra were placidly feeding with innumerable herds of antelope of different species—wildebeest, hartebeest, a few mpala, and many gazelles (*G. thomsonii* and *G. grantii*), whilst away in the distance there were a few stately giraffe. Secure in their numbers, they seemed to scorn the presence of three lions which were eagerly watching them from one flank, whilst in the middle of the moving mass stood two great unwieldy rhinoceros, which contrasted strangely with the diminutive gazelles.

As the caravan went along, the zebra, followed by the rhinoceros, galloped off in a cloud of dust, and, as they so often do, swung past the head of the caravan. One of the rhinoceros took up a position almost

directly in front of us, and, crawling to within 60 yards of him, I had an easy shot, but unfortunately only wounded him.

We rejoined Mr. Jackson at Kikuyu on the 15th, and found that fifteen askaris (soldiers) had been sent to reinforce us for the march through the forest, owing to the still uncertain temper of the natives. Here arrangements had to be made for a twenty-four days' march across a foodless district, and the loads were curtailed as much as possible so that more food could be carried. The boxes of Martini-Henry rifles were opened, and seven rifles were packed together in sacking so as to form one load, instead of three in a case as before. Some extra porters and donkeys were engaged, and each man had to carry twelve days' food besides his load.

Making our way through what is known as the meridional trough or rift, which has been so thoroughly described by previous travellers,—a series of valleys with three lakes, Naivasha, Elmenteita, and Nakuro, bounded by high ranges on each side,—we reached the Eldoma Ravine on 27th October, and the next day commenced the ascent of the Mau escarpment. One unfortunate porter who had lagged behind, and had hidden himself away in the grass at the side of the road, was devoured by hyænas during the night. These animals were voracious and daring; and the camp was aroused by a fearful commotion one night—a hyæna having seized a porter by the foot as he was lying asleep near the fire; another got inside the circle of fires, and went off with a man's food and part of his tent.

It rained usually every day now, commencing about 2 p.m., and the road was in consequence in very

and had lost all his women and possessions, besides receiving a bad spear wound in a place which showed he was ignominiously flying from the enemy. The fame of our medicine spread rapidly, and on our return journey a canoe suddenly shot out from the bank bringing another chief suffering from several old spear wounds, and evidently in the last stages of decay. His head was supported by his wife, who was fanning him with a bunch of green leaves to keep the flies off, and it was altogether quite a touching scene, but, alas! we could do little for him.

We camped on the high bank overhanging the river near Mgerenin, and I was reading in my tent in the evening when my servant suddenly rushed up to say a big animal had emerged from some swampy ground near the river and could be seen from the camp. Taking my 10-bore rifle, I started out after him, and soon made out it was a huge rhinoceros. When about 200 yards from him a shot rang out from the opposite side, and I made the unpleasant discovery that I was exactly in the line of fire, so, thinking prudence the better part of valour, I retired on all-fours as I had come. Cunningham had seen the rhinoceros as he was returning to camp from shooting, and was, curiously enough, stalking the animal at the same time from the other side, but unfortunately did not kill him.

An enormous amount of floating vegetation passes down the Nile in this part of its course. It is gradually broken off from the sides of the river by the force of the current, and floats down until it attaches itself to the sides again, or reaches the cataracts below Dufile, where it is broken up into little pieces. The size of the floating islands or rafts, principally composed of papyrus rushes, and little green plants (*Pistia Stratiotes*),

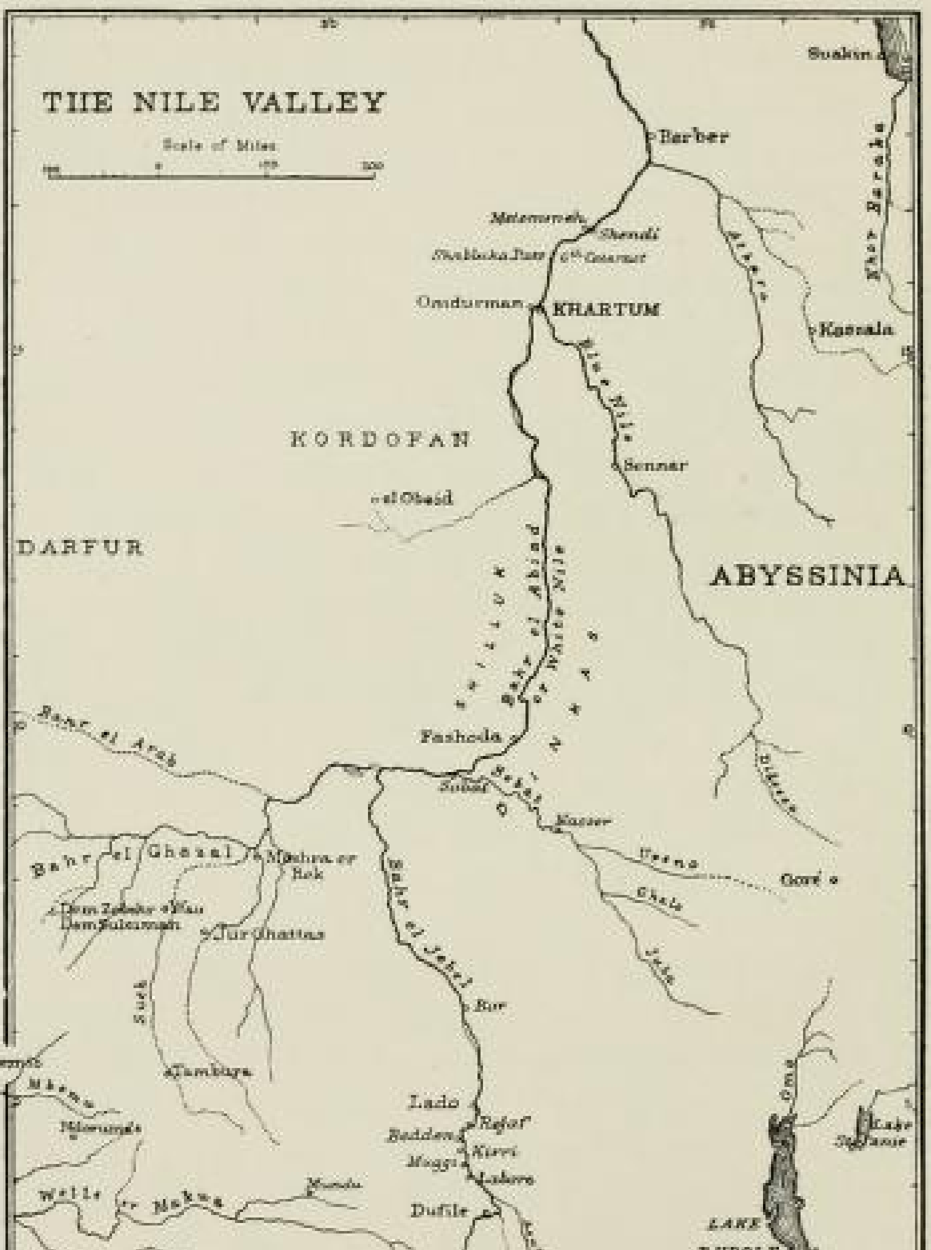
is quite extraordinary, and I have seen one fully 100 yards long with a small hut ensconced in the papyrus.

Care has to be taken in a strong stream not to be carried away by one of these islands, or to be jammed between two of them. They are to be met with in the middle of the Albert Nyanza making their way towards the Nile, having, I suppose, drifted from the *sudd* at the mouth of the Semliki.

There is a great deal of floating vegetation also on the Victoria Nile between Lake Kioja and the Karuma Falls. During one expedition a Waganda chief informed us that Kabarega was having a march-past of his army on the opposite bank, about 1100 yards off. One could apparently see the soldiers, or Wara-sura, as they are called, passing through the trees in their white cloths; and the deception was perfect until, on looking through the glasses, it was discovered that they were really a flock of white birds sitting on the top of a large papyrus raft floating rapidly past under the far bank.

After passing Bora, an old Egyptian fort on the right bank, the river is very broad — about 1½ miles—though the actual channel through the *sudd* is only about 500 yards in breadth. A place was pointed out to us close to Bora where the last of Emin Pasha's steamers had sunk, simply from old age and want of repair.

A Sudanese soldier had been pilot on board one of the steamers, and it was to him we trusted for directions as to the right channel, and it was wonderful how seldom he was at fault. He was able to talk the Madi language, and was consequently of the greatest value to us. When passing a village he used to stand up in the bows and shout out, *ana Murgan*—I am Murgan;


THE NILE VALLEY
Scale of Miles
Suakin
Berber
Metemmeh
Shendi
Shabluka Pass
6th Cataract
Omdurman
KHARTUM
Kassala
Blue Nile
KORDOFAN
Sennar
el Obeid
DARFUR
ABYSSINIA
Bahr el Abiad or White Nile
Fashoda
Bahr el Arab
Sobat
Nasser
Bahr el Ghazal
Meshra er Rek
Dem Suleiman
Jur Ghattas
Gore
Bahr el Jebel
Bor
Tambura
Lado
Rejaf
Bedden
Kirri
Muggi
Labore
Dufile
Wadelai
CONGO FREE STATE
ALBERT NYANZA
L. Kioga
LAKE RUDOLF
Omo

often against us. If there was time I used to go out shooting in the evening, and saw plenty of game, though the dried-up grass with which the country was covered to a height of 4 or 5 feet made shooting difficult. One day I killed two water-buck, which came in very useful, as provisions were running short. A species of hartebeest and a smaller antelope with short curved horns were seen, but to my great regret I never succeeded in killing any.

Curiously enough, on our return to Mgerenin, where Cunningham had a bad attack of fever, I walked about 2 miles inland, and suddenly came upon what I am convinced was the very same rhinoceros which had emerged from the marsh the last time we camped at Mgerenin. He seemed to bear a charmed life, and again got away wounded into the bush, where it was impossible to follow him.

Just before reaching Wadelai the body of a wretched woman floated past us, with her hands tied above her head and a spear wound in her abdomen.

On inquiry afterwards it appeared that the chief, Wadelai, had charged her with witchcraft and poisoning his daughter, who had died a few days before, and she was then speared and thrown into the river. As the chief knew we were returning at that time, it may also have been meant as a defiance to us.

The people of these countries, as also the Sudanese soldiers, have the most implicit belief in witchcraft, and it was a common occurrence for a soldier to be put under arrest by the black officers and brought up on a charge of bewitching and causing the death of others. They do not seem to be able to take in the idea of a natural death.

We met with a hostile demonstration at Wadelai

and there could have been little connection between the riff-raff at Lado and the Khalifa in the north.

Two brass cannons, 700 rifles, two magazines filled with arms and ammunition, drums and other musical instruments, were found at Rejaf. On pushing forward to the old site of Lado the place was found quite deserted, and surrounded by swamps. The Belgians have now established a small post at Muggi farther south.

The Madi tribe extend to a distance of about three days' journey to the east of Dufile; then come the Umiro, a tribe of the Lango; then the real light-coloured Lango (Galla), who breed donkeys and camels (*Emin Pasha in Central Africa*, edited by Felkin and Schweinfurth). The natives are a fine strong-looking race, and we tried to persuade two of them to enlist, but they were afraid of leaving their homes for the unknown. They were very friendly, and helped to take our loads out of the boat. They wear little or no clothes, and have no wants except beads and iron wire.

At Umia's village at the bend of the river we met a representative of Abu Sulla, an important chief living one day's march below Dufile on the right bank. He wore a fez, and was dressed in white cloth, probably obtained from the Arabs or Mahdists to the north. Most of the villages are reached by narrow channels cut through the *sudd*, and almost impossible to find. We attempted to pay the chief of the village at Dufile a visit in the boat, and he had the channel enlarged for us, but after hard work for half an hour we found we had only advanced a few yards, and gave it up as hopeless.

Our return journey to the Albert Nyanza was rather tedious owing to the strong stream, and the wind was

called Mitete, in the valley, surrounded by houses and cultivation.

At the head of the valley we commenced the ascent of Mau by a native track through the forest, which commences almost immediately. After a climb of 2860 feet, very trying for loaded porters, we eventually camped in an open space almost at the top, surrounded by clumps of bamboo forest, and 8900 feet above the sea. It was bitterly cold, and we were glad of big fires outside our tents. Although at this height, we were not safe from the Wa-Nandi, who hung round the column, and killed one woman and wounded another who had gone out a short way to draw water.

The top of Mau consists of an undulating plateau, broken up in places by deep ravines covered with short grass, and in places by clumps of forest. There are no inhabitants, except some occasional Wanderobbo hunters, and the few tracks we saw were the paths used by Nandi raiding-parties.

The next day we ascended for a mile or so more through the forest, and then entered a series of small valleys covered with short grass, passing at times through clumps of forest and over swampy streams. It was a miserable day both for man and beast, and there was a cold sleet driving in our faces all the morning, which completely petrified the unfortunate porters and caused a few of them to collapse by the roadside.

Some "Jackson's hartebeest" were seen, and there were also a very few tracks of buffalo, rhinoceros, and elephant, which had been crossing the mountains. To the south there seemed to be some very thick forest.

Our next camp was 9122 feet above the sea, and from here the main body returned to warmer climes in

the Sagane Valley, whilst I was sent on with fifty men to try and reach the Eldoma Ravine, which it was known could not be far off.

Nearly a whole company of the Sudanese were unprovided with greatcoats, and it was dangerous to expose these and the scantily clad followers any longer to the rigour of the climate at this height.

It was intensely cold, and the mountains were enveloped in a dense mist, when my small party marched off on the morning of the 23rd, led by one of the Wa-Kwavi guides, who at best possessed only a vague notion of the country. The track passed close to a small lake, and, an hour after the start, became almost imperceptible as we dived into the forest on the eastern slope of the mountains. For the first 1000 feet of the descent masses of bamboos, replaced farther on by dense tropical forest, clothed the slopes, and the fallen trees and broken canes formed an intricate and rotten entanglement under foot, through which it was difficult to find a way. A perfect shower-bath descended at every wave of the delicate branches overhead, which were laden with moisture from the thick white mist. As we descended the bamboos disappeared, and huge trees festooned with creepers, and a perfect network of branches covered with white moss, did their best to keep out the meagre daylight above. Some of these fallen giants, surrounded by a labyrinth of small trees and sharp-pointed branches which had accompanied their fall, defied all attempts to force a passage. A man had then to crawl to the farther side of the obstacle, and, having been placed in the direction of our march by a compass bearing, we cut a way round to him. This was the only way to avoid being lost in this primæval forest, as the guide was no longer sure of

and Naivasha, where we met the great chief Terari with his old father, who weighed twenty stone.

The country was so completely dried up that there was little game to be seen. On the Athi plains I killed a rhinoceros, and ought to have shot a lioness, who walked past me among some rocks only forty yards away, but I was chagrined to find that my gun-bearer had taken out the cartridges from my rifle, and at the click of the hammers the lioness bounded off into the rocks with a growl, and was not seen again.

Three days from Mombasa we met a detachment of the 24th Beluchistan Regiment, under Captain Mellis, employed in hunting the rebel chief, Mbaruk, who shortly afterwards gave himself up to the Germans in their territory.

On arriving at the coast, it was astonishing to see the change which had taken place in Mombasa owing to the railway, work on which had just been begun. The place had increased very much in size, and now possessed a club, hotel, and various shops. The East African Company had been bought out, and a Protectorate established over the whole territory, from the coast to the Kedong Valley, north of Kikuyu, where it marches with the Uganda Protectorate. Limited to a diminutive area at first, the latter has now rapidly been extended to include the whole country bounded by the Victoria Nile, the Albert and Albert-Edward Nyanzas to the west and north-west, and a large extent of country southwards to the Kedong Valley, twenty miles south of Lake Naivasha.

Embarking on the mail steamer at Mombasa, I arrived in England at the end of May 1896, after nearly two years' absence.

As a result of the recent expeditions in Unyoro,

Elgon, but two or three of the El Moran were insulting, and brandished their spears as they went by. I counted 484 in all; and following the column, which had several long gaps in it, were some cattle and sheep, to provide food on their journey. On arriving at their destination, they collect together at nightfall for the attack, and in the early morn fall on their enemies, killing man, woman, and child; stabbing right and left with their long sharp spears.

The Masai are certainly a disturbing element in this part of Africa, and will have to be dealt with some day. As civilisation advances, and they are gradually enclosed by the advancing Protectorates, their happy hunting-grounds become smaller; and it is almost too much to expect the Masai El Moran to settle down as peaceful British subjects without a good deal of compulsion. They have been accustomed to roam over an enormous extent of country, and it is not so many years since their raids extended nearly to the East Coast. Latterly, they have been obliged to confine themselves more to the north and north-west.

The Nandi tribe, who resemble the Masai so much, have been always more than a match for them, and the Masai have never dared to raid into their country, preferring probably a less warlike and more defenceless enemy.

At Naivasha we met Captain Sclater and Lieutenant Smith of the Royal Engineers, with a party, making the waggon-road from Kikuyu to the lake. Their carts had reached this point from the coast. The road down the Kedong escarpment was nearly completed, having been cut with great labour out of the rock. There were many Masai kraals between the Gilgil River