

BY THE SAME AUTHOR  
TREKKING THE GREAT THIRST:  
TRAVEL AND SPORT IN THE KALAHARI DESERT  
(T. Fisher Unwin, 1912).

AN ELEMENTARY AND PRACTICAL  
GRAMMAR OF THE GALLA OR OROMO  
LANGUAGE. In Collaboration with CRAVEN  
H. WALKER (S.P.C.K., 1922).

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# SEVEN YEARS IN SOUTHERN ABYSSINIA

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*Consuls for Ethiopia 1914-1927*      Edited by  
C. LEONARD LEESE

1081-154



T. FISHER UNWIN LTD  
BOUVERIE HOUSE, FLEET STREET

1927

XV, 277

Galla, the language which will take one over practically the whole of Abyssinia and a good deal of the country to the south and south-east as well. By this time, after a year's study, I had become proficient enough to carry on a conversation without an interpreter. Obviously it is essential to be able to do this in case one's interpreter should fall sick or get killed or turn out untrustworthy. Interviewing members of the Abyssinian aristocracy, however, is no picnic. I notice that I have described every conversation recorded so far in this book as 'long'. The word is inadequate. A chief will come to see you and sit for hours and hours, discoursing upon anything under the sun and consuming all the whisky you care to put in front of him. With an interpreter to help out the conversation, the ordeal is bad enough, but when you have to do it all yourself the strain is terrific. You have to be very tactful so as not to tread on any of your guest's corns, and very discreet so as not to disclose anything you do not want him to know. After an hour and a half you seem to have exhausted all conceivable topics of conversation, you rack your mind for something fresh, and as likely as not you light upon some such subject as flying machines or bi-metallism, which your guest would not understand even if you could find words in the language to express your meaning. Then, in desperation, you say 'Have another drink', and away goes another strong peg from your last bottle of whisky. The only consolation is the hope that, as there is no more liquor, your next visitor will stay only two hours instead of three.

Shortly after Fitaurari Ashanafi's visit to Moyale, I received permission to go to Marsabit Mountain to hunt elephants. Marsabit is in British territory, six or seven days' journey from Moyale across the Dido Galgalla, a stony, shadeless, and absolutely waterless plain. One has to use camel transport and carry all the water required in tanks. I took with me, in

addition, one mule, which received only one bucket of water every other day. Just before reaching Marsabit, I met two runners proceeding as hard as they could go to Moyale with the sad news that the garrison at Serenli had been overwhelmed and destroyed by the Aulihan Somalis. It is simply wonderful how the Somali police do these journeys. They go through the long thirst as if it was nothing at all, and keep up a remarkably quick pace.

Marsabit Mountain stands out of the great desert like an island covered with forests. One suddenly passes from the flaming waste into the cool shade of beautiful trees, with a carpet of luscious turf to ease the feet, and one's mind goes back to deer forests in Scotland. On the top of the mountain there is a large lake. By February all the pools of water in the desert which are filled during the rains dry up, and the elephants are driven to frequent Marsabit to drink. At the time of my visit, the place was teeming with buffalo, rhinoceros, and elephant; in fact, there was far too much game to make hunting pleasant.

The first night in the forest, it is no exaggeration to say that, just as I was about to sit down to supper, I could see between thirty and forty buffaloes crossing the track less than a hundred yards from my camp. I did not shoot for fear of disturbing the elephants and spoiling the morrow's sport. In due course we turned in, and very delightful it was after the stony plains we had so recently traversed. In the middle of the night I was wakened by yells from my servants, and on getting up I discovered that a rhinoceros had charged right through the camp, fortunately hurting nobody. It was an eerie experience in the pitch darkness, with rhinoceros and lions all around and elephants audibly drinking close by. I set men on watch the rest of the night, and next day had a strong zareba built, as a rhinoceros has an unpleasant habit of charging a conspicuous object like a white tent.

> In the morning I went out with my men after elephants. Rhinoceros were as thick as flies. Two of them appeared in the middle of the path about ten yards ahead of us, and as they paid no heed to a polite request to get out of the way I was forced to shoot the first one, which luckily had a very fine head. Even then the other refused to budge until I fired at him. We passed through the thick forest, and then skirted its edge. Presently, in the distance we saw several elephants browsing on the open plain. We went towards them, taking care to prevent their getting our wind, and eventually came within two or three hundred yards of them. Here I hid the porters in some bushes and went on alone to pick out my beast. There were three of them, one with small tusks and the others with quite presentable ones, and they were browsing, entirely unsuspecting, down a small gully. I was shooting at that time with a double-barrelled '600 cordite rifle. I approached to a distance of about fifty yards, and then had a shot at the biggest elephant, hitting him just behind the shoulder. Immediately the beasts heard the report, they wheeled round and tore across the plain at full gallop. As they passed me, I had a second shot and actually heard the plop of the bullet as it struck. To my surprise, the elephant which I had twice hit did not fall but went straight on, and I thought I had lost him. However, we hastily followed up the spoor until we reached a ravine, where we saw all three elephants running on ahead. Suddenly, as we watched, the one I had hit staggered and fell right over with a crash. When we got up to him, he lay stone dead.

I do not think I am inclined to be squeamish, and I should not associate myself with those humanitarians who care more for the 'rights' of animals than for the needs of human beings; but I confess that the sight of the great brute lying dead before me gave me cause to think. Looking at the huge

carcase, which but a few minutes ago was the very embodiment of life and strength, and then at the tusks which seemed so small beside it, I felt as though I had committed something very near to crime. However, in nine cases out of ten one shoots elephants for pecuniary profit rather than for pleasure.

It was not long before the porters arrived with their axes, and began to chop out the tusks. Meanwhile I sat down and had my breakfast. This chopping-up process takes a considerable time before it is all completed; it is the part I most object to in elephant shooting. But once the tusks are cut out and loaded up on the porters, I always find that displeasure gives way to a lively sense of satisfaction as I trudge back to camp with the day's trophies.

The next morning we again left camp very early, but kept to the forest this time instead of going out on the plains. We had not gone far when we almost walked into a cow elephant with a little calf. She was standing absolutely motionless in the forest, and must have been asleep, I think. We made a detour and did not disturb her. Shortly afterwards we heard elephants trumpeting, and upon going in the direction from which the noise came, we discovered a very large herd. Wherever one looked, one saw elephants, and all the time, as some disappeared in the forest, fresh ones kept arriving on the scene. There were too many for me to count accurately, but I should say there must have been between fifty and sixty. In this part of the forest there were numbers of ravines, and we followed the herd from one to another without coming up to it. I noticed that my men seemed nervous and were not keen to continue the chase. In the light of what happened, I am not surprised, for hunting elephants in Marsabit forest is too risky to be pleasant. I did not realise this at the time, and paid no attention to my men's fears. As we reached the top of one of the ravines, the

elephants made a turn and came slowly across our front in single file. I suddenly saw an elephant with magnificent tusks and ran as hard as I could through the trees to have a shot at him. I got, I suppose, within twenty yards and then fired both barrels. I certainly heard the bullets hit; it was impossible to miss at that distance. However, it did not stop him, and I had too many things to think about immediately afterwards to speculate about his fate. As I fired, the whole herd, instead of running away, turned round and tore down on us, screaming and shrieking with rage. I thought my number was up and wished I had never seen or heard an elephant. Luckily, I kept my head, and jumped into a small bush which was handy. It was only a slender little tree, but sufficient to hide me for the time being. I had hardly done this before two elephants passed on my right within a few feet. Then, almost immediately, a third appeared, charging straight for my bush. I let him have both barrels, and he turned off to the left. For the next four or five minutes I saw nothing but these great beasts rushing past at top speed. I kept quite still in the bush, much too frightened to do anything. I had a horrible sensation of utter helplessness, as I realised that even with a '600 express it is impossible to stop an elephant at close quarters. One might as well try to stop a runaway locomotive with a pea-shooter.

When the elephants had all passed by, my men began to return one by one. They had climbed up into the trees like monkeys. My gun-bearer, however, had disappeared, which was not to be wondered at. The elephant which had so nearly got me we found close by. He was nearly dead, and we soon finished him off. But the big tusker that I had shot at first we could not find, nor could we see any spoor with signs of blood. I suppose that I must have hit him very high up in the body and not given him a mortal



CUTTING OUT THE TUSKS.



wound. We spent the rest of the day searching for this animal, but we could find nothing but rhinoceros, of which the forest seemed to be full. By the time we returned to camp we had all had our fill of elephant and rhinoceros. Two of my boys, whom I had lost in the forest, came in very late and scared to death, saying they had been chased by elephants.

The next day I rested. In the evening I sent out two of the men to the carcass of the rhinoceros which I had shot two days before to see whether there was any lion spoor in the vicinity. Upon returning they reported that, when they had reached the place, they had seen two lions actually eating the carcass. As can be imagined, I was extremely annoyed and disappointed at missing this opportunity, but it was a merited punishment for my laziness in not going out myself.

I was not satisfied with the tusks I had got, so after the day's rest I went out once more to hunt elephant. Soon after leaving camp, I found a fine old bull browsing by himself on the plain. I got up within firing distance easily enough, and secured him with a lucky shot. Even then, although hit in a vital spot, he ran for fully a hundred yards before he dropped. Personally I have always used the heart shot instead of the brain shot. The great objection to the former seems to be that, however accurate, it seldom brings an elephant down immediately, whereas with a brain shot the animal falls dead in his tracks. Of course, the advantage of the heart shot is that it gives you more confidence, as it does not seem nearly so difficult as the smaller target afforded by the brain.

Almost immediately the elephant was dead, vultures began to congregate in a most uncanny manner from every point of the compass, and within five minutes there were literally hundreds of these birds, sitting all round the carcass and not daring to approach

while my men were cutting out the tusks. As soon as they had finished, the vultures swooped down upon the carcase, covering it completely. There has been some controversy upon the question whether vultures find carcasses by sight or by scent. In my view the question admits of only one answer. When we visited the remains of the elephant which I had shot in the forest the day before, there was not a single vulture near it, and the carcase was practically in the same state as we had left it. Surely, if the vultures hunted by scent, they would have discovered this animal. I have noticed the same thing with other animals that I have shot. When they are brought down in the open, the vultures gather at once, but in thick forests the carcasses remain untouched for days.

I suppose there is no place in the world which so nearly resembles a hunter's paradise as Marsabit forest. The elephants there sometimes reach an enormous size. The four tusks which I had been lucky enough to get weighed altogether 240 lb., but Colonel Barrett, I believe, once bagged a pair of tusks weighing over 200 lb. Besides elephant, there are lions and plenty of rhinoceros, buffalo, and the smaller antelopes. I also saw prodigious numbers of giraffe, but of course did not shoot any.

On the way back from Marsabit over the Dido Galgalla, I again had bad luck with lions. One morning as I was going along with my caravan, I remembered that I had left something behind at the last camp, and sent one of my boys to fetch it. He was only away about a quarter of an hour, yet he met two lions quite close to the track. Later the same day I passed two mail runners, who had had one of their camels attacked and eaten during the night, but they were lucky and shot the lion. This only shews how much the element of chance enters into lion-shooting.

When I reached Moyale once more, I found that my carefully laid schemes for establishing semi-

permanent quarters on the site of my first camp, just outside the Abyssinian village, had come to nothing. I described earlier in this chapter how I chuckled when I got the Abyssinians to propose my removing thither. Almost immediately after this I had set out for Marsabit, leaving behind some of my men to build a house and an enclosure. The work was to be completed during my absence, and I was looking forward with unalloyed pleasure to the prospect of having tolerably decent quarters with room to turn round in after more than a year of the restrictions and discomforts of camping. Picture my dismay, therefore, when I returned to find that the local officials had interfered and stopped everything. The trouble came from the anti-British faction who took their cue from Fitaurari Waldi and were determined to prevent me from building a consulate anywhere in the south if they possibly could. Both Fitaurari Ashanafi and Gerazmach Gashi had given me permission to move my camp and put up huts and a fence on the new site; but as soon as they left, Waldi's representative at Moyale interfered and ordered my men to stay in the old camp. There was no real head, and each petty official played his own game and the most energetic (or the biggest bully) succeeded. Gashi's man was a weakling with no authority, and all the rest were either hostile to me or else sitting on the fence. The result was that Waldi's man had things pretty much his own way during my absence, and my new huts were not built. There was nothing to do but take the disappointment with philosophic resignation.

The question, however, was shelved for a time by my receiving instructions to return to Addis Ababa on official business. This was welcome news for all my party. I myself was glad to have the opportunity of visiting the sole dentist in Abyssinia (and incidentally of keeping my eye in at polo), and my

men were anxious to rejoin their wives and relations for a short spell. When I engaged them, I told them that I should probably be away about a year. They had worked well and loyally in spite of many a rough passage with illness and hard trekking. In fact they had far exceeded my expectations, and I did not want to run the risk of losing them, as I might have done if compelled to keep them away from their homes much longer. Good men are not easy to get, and once you have them it pays to keep them.

I returned to Addis Ababa in quick time by the main route through Sidamo. On such a journey one can cut the baggage down to what is actually required and yet travel fairly comfortably, for there is no need—as there is on some journeys—to carry large reserves of food and water. My caravan was a light one, consisting of three mules for myself and three for my men. Our only trouble was that, as the dry season was nearly at an end, there was practically no grass at all along the main caravan route. However, we managed to buy enough barley *en route* to keep the mules in fair condition, and reached Addis Ababa without incident early in April, 1916.

## CHAPTER VI

### SECOND JOURNEY SOUTH

Life at the Legation—first meeting with Ras Tafari—second journey south—organisation and equipment of a caravan—through Arusi and Bale—hunting mountain nyala—grottoes of the Webbe River—across the Arana Mountains—through Sidamo, Amaro, Alga, and Burji to Mega Mountain.

**O**FFICIAL calls, visits to the dentist, polo, and lawn tennis were the main items of the daily round during my stay in Addis Ababa. The life was pleasant, and not altogether uneventful. The Italian Legation, for example, was twice attacked by robbers, and on the second occasion the Minister, Count Colli, narrowly escaped with his life. He was reading in bed late at night when he heard a shot under his window. He went to look out and saw two men there. He asked what they were doing, and in reply they fired at him, missing him by a miracle. The Count ran round to the front door, where another man who was lying in wait shot at him through the door but also missed. A free fight then took place in the grounds, but unfortunately, in the darkness and confusion, all the would-be murderers made good their escape. The whole affair, we suspected, was a put-up job, probably engineered by Turkish and German agents.

While I was in Addis Ababa, the Abyssinian Easter was celebrated, and the European Legations attended the ceremony in full force. The highest ecclesiastical dignitary of the country, the *Abuna*, was present with a large number of priests, whose chief part, it appeared, was to dance in a slow, methodical