

651. c 92. 25

# WHERE LION REIGN

AN ACCOUNT OF  
LION HUNTING & EXPLORATION  
IN S.W. ABYSSINIA

BY  
ARNOLD HODSON  
C.M.C., F.R.G.S.

One of His Britannic Majesty's Consuls for Ethiopia, 1914-1927  
Author of "Seven Years in Southern Abyssinia"



ILLUSTRATED



LONDON:  
SKEFFINGTON & SON, LTD.  
34 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C. 4

1925

1-207



THE AUTHOR WITH GUN BEARERS

orders. Political affairs were very unsettled at this time. There were persistent rumours at Maji that the Empress Zauditu had died. It put me in mind of the famous despatch the Dutch Ambassador in London once sent to the Plenipotentiary at the Hague, when Cromwell was in power. It was as follows:—"There are some who assert that the Lord Protector is dead; others maintain that he is alive; for my part I believe neither one nor the other."

I left Maji in September to proceed via the Boma Plateau to Gambcila, thence to Khartoum. Travelling via Adikas, we reached the Kuron River just below Tomadur Mountain. It was my intention to travel down the Kuron River till it left the escarpment, and then to turn up sharp to the right in the direction of Boma. I wanted to do this for two reasons:—firstly to arrive in secret on the Boma Plateau, and secondly to make a survey of the country in order to add it to my map. As the Kuron had never been surveyed, it was only represented on maps by a dotted line.

On the banks of the Kuron River, I found some of the Tirma people who resemble the Maji natives in appearance, except that they have smaller and flatter noses. They told me that they had fled from Damme, to escape the oppression of the Abyssinians stationed there. All the Kuron River country a few miles further to the west of us was uninhabited and unknown. I climbed various hills and surveyed the country. A large plateau, with low hills here and there, was all that met the eye. Far away in the distance I could see the hills of the Boma Plateau. From the observations I took, the country appeared to offer no special difficulties. Never were appearances more deceptive, it turned out to be one of the most extraordinary terrains that I have ever travelled over!

The first part of the journey down the Kuron was easy. We found water in the pools, and the terrain, consisting of undulating country with ridges of low hills was pleasant travelling. One night, three lions came within forty yards

of my tent, and killed and ate a hartebeeste. We found the mangled remains in the morning. Strange to relate, not one of us had heard a sound during the night; a proof, I think, that lions kill their game mute, and do not roar immediately afterwards.

My postmen caught me up soon after with a miserable couple of letters, and with a message from Muhammed Ali, my mail agent in Jiren, telling me that no more had been received from Addis Ababa, and that he was telephoning. I was greatly annoyed, for I had been expecting three weeks' mail, and all the English papers. In addition to this, the agents in Jimma had not sent me the flour I had ordered, so I had to live on native meal for the whole of the trip—not a hardship, certainly, but a discomfort. Truly I had been unfortunate with my posts lately. There was no hope of getting any now till I reached Khartoum. The runners also brought me news that the day after I had left my camp at Maji, a party of Tishana, including several riflemen, had broken into the Consulate compound, evidently with the idea of capturing our cattle. Fortunately, the sentry heard them and the alarm was given, whereupon they made off, leaving one spear behind.

At the junction of the Cherosh Wonz and the Kuron, we found splendid rock pools, which I should imagine never dried up, and some fish we caught there made a welcome change in our diet. One afternoon we were camping in a gully with thickly wooded banks, and I had just given orders for my tent to be pitched, when suddenly a rifle shot rang out quite close to us. The men dropped the tent, and rushed to the place whence the shot had come. I seized my rifle and went after them, as I was uneasy in my mind, and thought that it might be an attack by hostile natives. It turned out, however, that one of the men had seen a rhinoceros within a few yards of our camp. The temptation had been too much for him, and he had fired at it, whereupon two or three others who were

with him rushed madly after the rhinoceros, which had bolted away over a small rise nearby. I was extremely annoyed, for it is one of my laws that none of my men shoots without permission. Presently, looking and feeling very guilty, the culprit returned, but with no rhinoceros. Of course the man had no chance of killing it with a small bore rifle, especially as he did not know how to shoot!

I was in doubt as to what punishment to administer. I intensely dislike having to beat my men, I consider they suffer quite enough on these long journeys, so I always try to invent a punishment which does not give physical pain, yet makes the culprit look ridiculous. At Maji the matter is fairly simple. I have there an empty water-tank, which I attach by means of a chain and handcuffs to any man who commits a fault. This tank is the "brother," and the man who is chained to it has to drag it about with him wherever he goes, much to the amusement of his companions. The tank is of course quite light. Another very effective punishment which I sometimes inflict, is to make a man stand for an hour on a box with a hen's egg poised on his head, in the sight of all the camp. If he drops the egg, he is sentenced the next day to double the time. This also creates intense amusement, and the man is afterwards known as the 'father of the eggs.' On this particular occasion, having no eggs or water-tanks to spare, I simply handcuffed the man and took away his rifle—a great disgrace! I made him walk thus for a few days.

There is always great difference of opinion among men who have to spend their lives in the wild, as to whether corporal punishment is, or is not, good. Personally, I am against it. I feel that it should never be given except for heinous offences. A native, and especially an Abyssinian, feels the indignity of corporal punishment just as much as a white man does, if not more. There is, too, always the

danger that if a man once gets into the habit of beating his servants, he will use the punishment for quite minor offences. I have known of one or two tragedies that have happened in the African bush as a result.