

FIVE MONTHS' SPORT

IN

SOMALI LAND

BY

LORD WOLVERTON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

BY

COLONEL PAGET

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A MAP
to illustrate
FIVE MONTHS SPORT IN
SOMALI LAND

Cloud Paper and Red Riverine lines ———
Blue Paper, R.N. and other Paper ———
R. James ———

Scale of English Miles.





LORD WOLVERTON.

they beat their ponies unmercifully, and pull them up on their haunches with a terrific bit, making their mouths a mass of blood and foam. We signify our disapproval by retiring to our zareba, and with orders that anybody disturbing us will be instantly dismissed.

We enjoy, after a most tiring morning, a delicious siesta. We have now killed five lions in six days, and, not getting any reports of lions either that night or the next morning, we move our camp again towards the country supposed to be thick with rhino. On the march that day Arthur shoots two fine wart hogs, and the next day shoots a rhino. He returns and tells me he is much pleased with the penetrating power of his 8-bore paradox, as, coming suddenly on the rhino, he fired at his heart, knocking him over on the spot, and on examination finding that the bullet had penetrated right through, and was embedded in the hide on the far side. The 8-bore paradox is much lighter than the ordinary 8-bore rifle, and seems, to judge from that day's exhibition, to be all that is required. My luck that day is bad, for, dropping on the same track, I follow it for some time until, looking up, I see the vultures circling round about

half a mile from where I am ; so, guessing that I am tracking a stiff-un, I go to the vultures and find the carcass of the rhino shot by Arthur.

Although we frequently get on these fresh tracks, we come to the conclusion that in this very dry weather they, the rhino, are very difficult of approach, the least noise disturbing them, and the distances they travel being very great. The next day we continue our march, about twelve miles N.N.W., and on Friday, 16th December, we march again about eight miles, and are glad to get two oryx for our men, one shot by Arthur with horns thirty-four inches, one by myself with horns of thirty-two inches. They are devoured by the natives in an incredibly short space of time, but we save by this one pound of rice and half a pound of dates per man. Finding only old tracks of rhino, we retrace our steps in the direction of Bolarli ; on the way Arthur gets a long shot at an ostrich, but misses him, pursuit being hopeless, as they literally go like the wind when disturbed.

That night, being 3600 feet above the sea, we are glad of a large fire and a chat with our Somalis. My syce amuses us by asking me if there are many lions and hyenas in England. The answer is obvious, that it is impossible in our country to go to

an evening tamasho for fear of meeting a lion, and that every big chief's table is surrounded by hyenas. The following morning I wake with a sore throat, a very painful thing in a hot climate. I fall across the fresh track of a lioness and two whelps, and have an interesting though painful pursuit, as I can see by the tracks that at times she is carrying one, at other times both, and sometimes the tracks of all three are visible. I, however, lose the track on stony ground, and return to camp and go to bed for two days, having, besides a sore throat, a slight attack of fever. Arthur returns very late, having shot a lioness, and having had a narrow shave. He had been after her and had disturbed her many times without being able to get a shot, until she became angry and charged straight out of a thick place at Arthur. In two bounds she cleared the interval between them, and Arthur killed her "clever" at his feet. After that we pursued the even tenor of our way due south towards the Shebeyli, a river rising, it is believed, in Southern Abyssinia, shooting as we marched a considerable number of sœmmeringi, a species of gazelle which lives on the open plains, and is, I fancy, only to be found in Abyssinia and Somali

stomachs as we had to do frequently, our hands, if not protected in that way, would have been lacerated by thorns, as every tree and bush is bristling with formidable spikes very often more than two inches long. In a tone of indifference, though really guessing what was coming, I ask the shikari why he wants my gloves? He answers that he proposes to make a litter for the dog, and that if I will take one end of it, he, provided with the gloves, will take the other, and by this means he will escape pollution. We make a stretcher and reach camp in about two hours. A consultation is held, and Arthur advises what he terms a friendly bullet for poor Jerry, and while reluctantly acquiescing, I take a stroll, alone with my feelings, in order to escape even the sound of the fatal shot. Revenge is sweet, for during the next three days Arthur kills two panthers and I kill one. We now leave the big camp to rest, and depart with a small flying camp about twenty miles to the westward, and come upon some fresh villages that are literally decimated by the depredations of the lions and panthers.

Having pitched our camp, we await the news, and as long as I live I shall never forget the four days

we spent there. Almost as soon as we arrived, a native brought us the news that a panther had rushed into the middle of his flock of sheep and killed one. Arthur, although suffering from fever, his temperature being 102, starts off, and, as it is quite close, returns in triumph with a fine panther. The next day he gets another, and the following day I also get one. We have now in a small degree begun to restore confidence to a community absolutely terrorized by lions and panthers, but the natives, as we gather, are still very doubtful as to our power of killing lions too. They are somewhat reassured by Arthur's performance next day, when he shoots the two lions depicted on page 69. Not having been present, I can give no account of what took place. I had moved on with a small camp about twelve miles, where, I had been told, some rhino had been seen; but on my return after an unsuccessful rhino pursuit, Arthur showed me the two skins, and we both agreed that they were two of the finest animals we had hitherto shot. At dinner, the conversation turned on the new partition of this enormous continent. In the south a vast industry in the production of gold

and diamonds will no doubt help home industries, as in return for the gold and diamonds we shall be able to send our manufactured goods at a profit. In Egypt the cotton crop is of great value, as it will enable the native growers to become, in prosperous years, large purchasers of commodities.

The equatorial district through which we are now travelling, must, we think, entirely depend, first, on its goats, which make very good skins; secondly, on its herds, which will in the future supply them with food; and thirdly, on such varieties as ostrich feathers and gum of a very superior quality.

The only indication of mineral wealth we have come across so far is the undoubted evidence of iron. In certain spots our compasses, when placed on the ground, begin to oscillate, thereby proving the presence of iron ore. With regard to our compasses, which we always have with us, it is very interesting, and I have myself done it on many occasions, to ask any of our natives to point out the direction of certain places, such as Berbera, our point of departure, Zeila, or other well-known points; they are invariably right, and their power of finding the way even to a quarter of a mile of the

line of march is wonderful. Being out to-day on the fresh track of rhino, and following it for at least four hours in what I had imagined to be a contrary direction to that in which the cafala was moving, I was surprised, when giving up a hopeless stern chase, to find from my shikari that we are quite close to camp.

I must here mention that the cafala is on the march. On asking him what grounds he has for what appears to me to be an impossibility, he informs me that he has smelt a wood fire. Off we start, and true enough, after about two miles we come upon the camp; it had halted ten miles earlier than had been arranged, owing to some of the camels having sore backs. By this wonderful perception on the part of my shikari, I am saved a twenty miles' tramp; but for him I should have had to go ten miles to where I knew the camp ought to be, and then ten miles more on the return journey.

Accustomed as we were by this time to the depredations of lions, I must confess that the sight we witnessed the following morning beat all our previous experiences. We were quietly riding along together in front of the line of march when