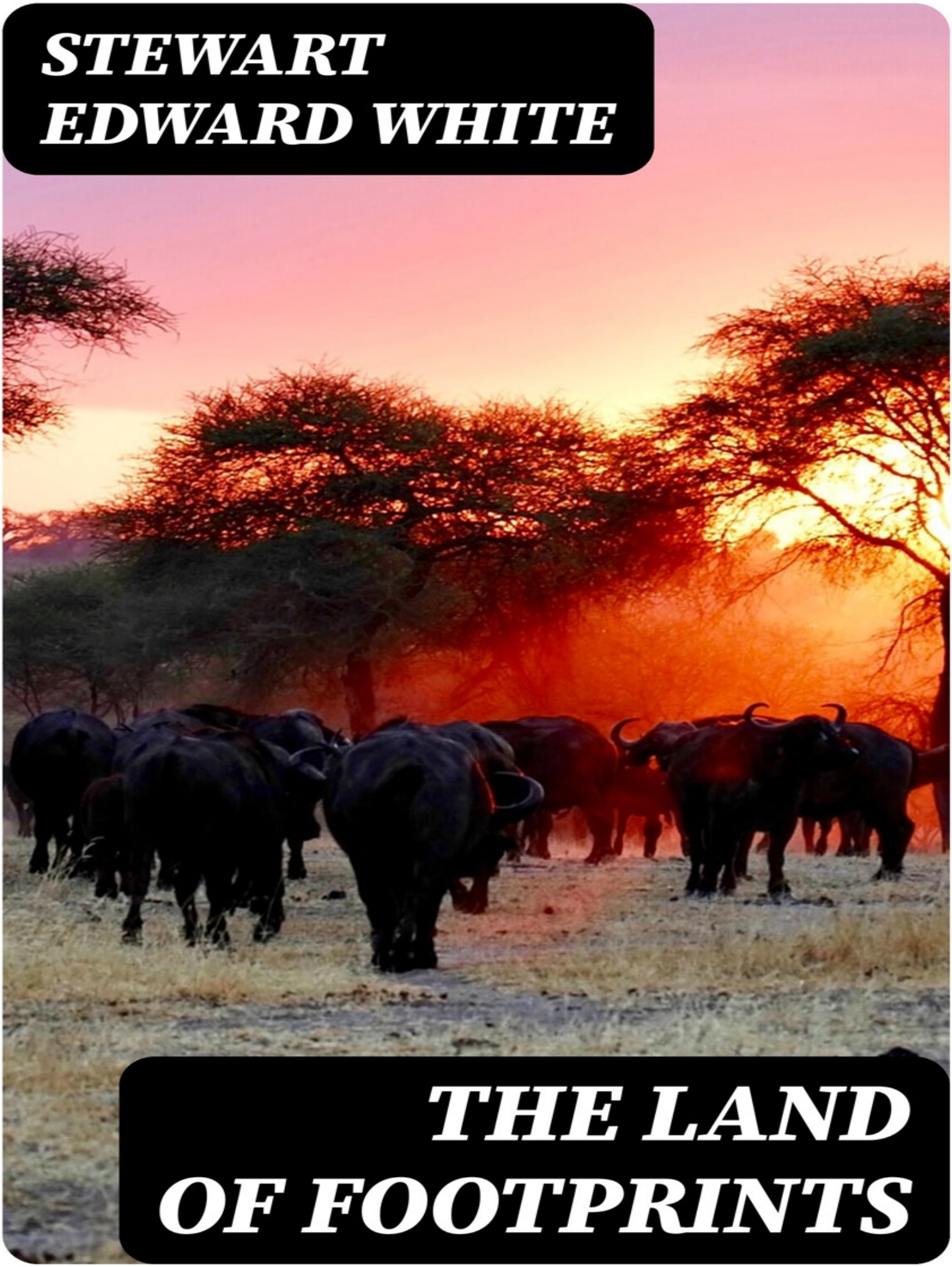
STEWART EDWARD WHITE



THE LAND OF FOOTPRINTS

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EAN 8596547384052

DigiCat, 2022
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I. ON BOOKS OF ADVENTURE

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Books of sporting, travel, and adventure in countries little known to the average reader naturally fall in two classes-neither, with a very few exceptions, of great value. One class is perhaps the logical result of the other.

Of the first type is the book that is written to make the most of far travels, to extract from adventure the last thrill, to impress the awestricken reader with a full sense of the danger and hardship the writer has undergone. Thus, if the latter takes out quite an ordinary routine permit to go into certain districts, he makes the most of travelling in “closed territory,” implying that he has obtained an especial privilege, and has penetrated where few have gone before him. As a matter of fact, the permit is issued merely that the authorities may keep track of who is where. Anybody can get one. This class of writer tells of shooting beasts at customary ranges of four and five hundred yards. I remember one in especial who airily and as a matter of fact killed all his antelope at such ranges. Most men have shot occasional beasts at a quarter mile or so, but not airily nor as a matter of fact: rather with thanksgiving and a certain amount of surprise. The gentleman of whom I speak mentioned getting an eland at seven hundred and fifty yards. By chance I happened to mention this to a native Africander.

“Yes,” said he, “I remember that; I was there.”

This interested me-and I said so.

“He made a long shot,” said I.

“A GOOD long shot,” replied the Africander.

“Did you pace the distance?”

He laughed. “No,” said he, “the old chap was immensely delighted. 'Eight hundred yards if it was an inch!' he cried.”

“How far was it?”

“About three hundred and fifty. But it was a long shot, all right.”

And it was! Three hundred and fifty yards is a very long shot. It is over four city blocks-New York size. But if you talk often enough and glibly enough of “four and five hundred yards,” it does not sound like much, does it?

The same class of writer always gets all the thrills. He speaks of “blanched cheeks,” of the “thrilling suspense,” and so on down the gamut of the shilling shocker. His stuff makes good reading; there is no doubt of that. The spellbound public likes it, and to that extent it has fulfilled its mission. Also, the reader believes it to the letter-why should he not? Only there is this curious result: he carries away in his mind the impression of unreality, of a country impossible to be understood and gauged and savoured by the ordinary human mental equipment. It is interesting, just as are historical novels, or the copper-riveted heroes of modern fiction, but it has no real relation with human life. In the last analysis the inherent untruth of the thing forces itself on him. He believes, but he does not apprehend; he acknowledges the fact, but he cannot grasp its human quality. The affair is interesting, but it is more or less concocted of pasteboard for his amusement. Thus essential truth asserts its right.

All this, you must understand, is probably not a deliberate attempt to deceive. It is merely the recrudescence under the stimulus of a brand-new environment of the boyish desire to be a hero. When a man jumps back into the Pleistocene he digs up some of his ancestors' cave-qualities. Among these is the desire for personal adornment. His modern development of taste precludes skewers in the ears and polished wire around the neck; so he adorns himself in qualities instead. It is quite an engaging and diverting trait of character. The attitude of mind it both presupposes and helps to bring about is too complicated for my brief analysis. In itself it is no more blameworthy than the small boy's pretence at Indians in the back yard; and no more praiseworthy than infantile decoration with feathers.

In its results, however, we are more concerned. Probably each of us has his mental picture that passes as a symbol rather than an idea of the different continents. This is usually a single picture-a deep river, with forest, hanging snaky vines, anacondas and monkeys for the east coast of South America, for example. It is built up in youth by chance reading and chance pictures, and does as well as a pink place on the map to stand for a part of the world concerning which we know nothing at all. As time goes on we extend, expand, and modify this picture in the light of what knowledge we may acquire. So the reading of many books modifies and expands our first crude notions of Equatorial Africa. And the result is, if we read enough of the sort I describe above, we build the idea of an exciting, dangerous, extra-human continent, visited by half-real people of the

texture of the historical-fiction hero, who have strange and interesting adventures which we could not possibly imagine happening to ourselves.

This type of book is directly responsible for the second sort. The author of this is deadly afraid of being thought to brag of his adventures. He feels constantly on him the amusedly critical eye of the old-timer. When he comes to describe the first time a rhino dashed in his direction, he remembers that old hunters, who have been so charged hundreds of times, may read the book. Suddenly, in that light, the adventure becomes pitifully unimportant. He sets down the fact that “we met a rhino that turned a bit nasty, but after a shot in the shoulder decided to leave us alone.” Throughout he keeps before his mind's eye the imaginary audience of those who have done. He writes for them, to please them, to convince them that he is not “swelled head,” nor “cocky,” nor “fancies himself,” nor thinks he has done, been, or seen anything wonderful. It is a good, healthy frame of mind to be in; but it, no more than the other type, can produce books that leave on the minds of the general public any impression of a country in relation to a real human being.

As a matter of fact, the same trouble is at the bottom of both failures. The adventure writer, half unconsciously perhaps, has been too much occupied play-acting himself into half-forgotten boyhood heroics. The more modest man, with even more self-consciousness, has been thinking of how he is going to appear in the eyes of the expert. Both have thought of themselves before their work. This aspect

of the matter would probably vastly astonish the modest writer.

If, then, one is to formulate an ideal toward which to write, he might express it exactly in terms of man and environment. Those readers desiring sheer exploration can get it in any library: those in search of sheer romantic adventure can purchase plenty of it at any book-stall. But the majority want something different from either of these. They want, first of all, to know what the country is like-not in vague and grandiose “word paintings,” nor in strange and foreign sounding words and phrases, but in comparison with something they know. What is it nearest like-Arizona? Surrey? Upper New York? Canada? Mexico? Or is it totally different from anything, as is the Grand Canyon? When you look out from your camp-any one camp-how far do you see, and what do you see?-mountains in the distance, or a screen of vines or bamboo near hand, or what? When you get up in the morning, what is the first thing to do? What does a rhino look like, where he lives, and what did you do the first time one came at you? I don't want you to tell me as though I were either an old hunter or an admiring audience, or as though you were afraid somebody might think you were making too much of the matter. I want to know how you REALLY felt. Were you scared or nervous? or did you become cool? Tell me frankly just how it was, so I can see the thing as happening to a common everyday human being. Then, even at second-hand and at ten thousand miles distance, I can enjoy it actually, humanly, even though vicariously, speculating a bit over my pipe as to how I would have liked it myself.

Obviously, to write such a book the author must at the same time sink his ego and exhibit frankly his personality. The paradox in this is only apparent. He must forget either to strut or to blush with diffidence. Neither audience should be forgotten, and neither should be exclusively addressed. Never should he lose sight of the wholesome fact that old hunters are to read and to weigh; never should he for a moment slip into the belief that he is justified in addressing the expert alone. His attitude should be that many men know more and have done more than he, but that for one reason or another these men are not ready to transmit their knowledge and experience.

To set down the formulation of an ideal is one thing: to fulfil it is another. In the following pages I cannot claim a fulfilment, but only an attempt. The foregoing dissertation must be considered not as a promise, but as an explanation. No one knows better than I how limited my African experience is, both in time and extent, bounded as it is by East Equatorial Africa and a year. Hundreds of men are better qualified than myself to write just this book; but unfortunately they will not do it.

II. AFRICA

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In looking back on the multitudinous pictures that the word Africa bids rise in my memory, four stand out more

distinctly than the others. Strangely enough, these are by no means all pictures of average country-the sort of thing one would describe as typical. Perhaps, in a way, they symbolize more the spirit of the country to me, for certainly they represent but a small minority of its infinitely varied aspects. But since we must make a start somewhere, and since for some reason these four crowd most insistently in the recollection it might be well to begin with them.

Our camp was pitched under a single large mimosa tree near the edge of a deep and narrow ravine down which a stream flowed. A semicircle of low mountains hemmed us in at the distance of several miles. The other side of the semicircle was occupied by the upthrow of a low rise blocking off an horizon at its nearest point but a few hundred yards away. Trees marked the course of the stream; low scattered bushes alternated with open plain. The grass grew high. We had to cut it out to make camp.

Nothing indicated that we were otherwise situated than in a very pleasant, rather wide grass valley in the embrace of the mountains. Only a walk of a few hundred yards atop the upthrow of the low rise revealed the fact that it was in reality the lip of a bench, and that beyond it the country fell away in sheer cliffs whose ultimate drop was some fifteen hundred feet. One could sit atop and dangle his feet over unguessed abysses.

For a week we had been hunting for greater kudu. Each day Memba Sasa and I went in one direction, while Mavrouki and Kongoni took another line. We looked carefully for signs, but found none fresher than the month before. Plenty of other game made the country interesting; but we were after

a shy and valuable prize, so dared not shoot lesser things. At last, at the end of the week, Mavrouki came in with a tale of eight lions seen in the low scrub across the stream. The kudu business was about finished, as far as this place went, so we decided to take a look for the lions.

We ate by lantern and at the first light were ready to start. But at that moment, across the slope of the rim a few hundred yards away, appeared a small group of sing-sing. These are a beautiful big beast, with widespread horns, proud and wonderful, like Landseer's stags, and I wanted one of them very much. So I took the Springfield, and dropped behind the line of some bushes. The stalk was of the ordinary sort. One has to remain behind cover, to keep down wind, to make no quick movements. Sometimes this takes considerable manoeuvring; especially, as now, in the case of a small band fairly well scattered out for feeding. Often after one has succeeded in placing them all safely behind the scattered cover, a straggler will step out into view. Then the hunter must stop short, must slowly, oh very, very slowly, sink down out of sight; so slowly, in fact, that he must not seem to move, but rather to melt imperceptibly away. Then he must take up his progress at a lower plane of elevation. Perhaps he needs merely to stoop; or he may crawl on hands and knees; or he may lie flat and hitch himself forward by his toes, pushing his gun ahead. If one of the beasts suddenly looks very intently in his direction, he must freeze into no matter what uncomfortable position, and so remain an indefinite time. Even a hotel-bred child to whom you have rashly made advances stares no longer nor more intently than a buck that cannot make you out.

I had no great difficulty with this lot, but slipped up quite successfully to within one hundred and fifty yards. There I raised my head behind a little bush to look. Three does grazed nearest me, their coats rough against the chill of early morning. Up the slope were two more does and two funny, fuzzy babies. An immature buck occupied the extreme left with three young ladies. But the big buck, the leader, the boss of the lot, I could not see anywhere. Of course he must be about, and I craned my neck cautiously here and there trying to make him out.

Suddenly, with one accord, all turned and began to trot rapidly away to the right, their heads high. In the strange manner of animals, they had received telepathic alarm, and had instantly obeyed. Then beyond and far to the right I at last saw the beast I had been looking for. The old villain had been watching me all the time!

The little herd in single file made their way rapidly along the face of the rise. They were headed in the direction of the stream. Now, I happened to know that at this point the stream-canyon was bordered by sheer cliffs. Therefore, the sing-sing must round the hill, and not cross the stream. By running to the top of the hill I might catch a glimpse of them somewhere below. So I started on a jog trot, trying to hit the golden mean of speed that would still leave me breath to shoot. This was an affair of some nicety in the tall grass. Just before I reached the actual slope, however, I revised my schedule. The reason was supplied by a rhino that came grunting to his feet about seventy yards away. He had not seen me, and he had not smelled me, but the general disturbance of all these events had broken into his early

morning nap. He looked to me like a person who is cross before breakfast, so I ducked low and ran around him. The last I saw of him he was still standing there, quite disgruntled, and evidently intending to write to the directors about it.

Arriving at the top, I looked eagerly down. The cliff fell away at an impossible angle, but sheer below ran out a narrow bench fifty yards wide. Around the point of the hill to my right-where the herd had gone-a game trail dropped steeply to this bench. I arrived just in time to see the sing-sing, still trotting, file across the bench and over its edge, on some other invisible game trail, to continue their descent of the cliff. The big buck brought up the rear. At the very edge he came to a halt, and looked back, throwing his head up and his nose out so that the heavy fur on his neck stood forward like a ruff. It was a last glimpse of him, so I held my little best, and pulled trigger.

This happened to be one of those shots I spoke of-which the perpetrator accepts with a thankful and humble spirit. The sing-sing leaped high in the air and plunged over the edge of the bench. I signalled the camp-in plain sight-to come and get the head and meat, and sat down to wait. And while waiting, I looked out on a scene that has since been to me one of my four symbolizations of Africa.

The morning was dull, with gray clouds through which at wide intervals streamed broad bands of misty light. Below me the cliff fell away clear to a gorge in the depths of which flowed a river. Then the land began to rise, broken, sharp, tumbled, terrible, tier after tier, gorge after gorge, one twisted range after the other, across a breathlessly

immeasurable distance. The prospect was full of shadows thrown by the tumult of lava. In those shadows one imagined stranger abysses. Far down to the right a long narrow lake inaugurated a flatter, alkali-whitened country of low cliffs in long straight lines. Across the distances proper to a dozen horizons the tumbled chaos heaved and fell. The eye sought rest at the bounds usual to its accustomed world-and went on. There was no roundness to the earth, no grateful curve to drop this great fierce country beyond a healing horizon out of sight. The immensity of primal space was in it, and the simplicity of primal things-rough, unfinished, full of mystery. There was no colour. The scene was done in slate gray, darkening to the opaque where a tiny distant rain squall started; lightening in the nearer shadows to reveal half-guessed peaks; brightening unexpectedly into broad short bands of misty gray light slanting from the gray heavens above to the sombre tortured immensity beneath. It was such a thing as Gustave Dore might have imaged to serve as an abiding place for the fierce chaotic spirit of the African wilderness.

I sat there for some time hugging my knees, waiting for the men to come. The tremendous landscape seemed to have been willed to immobility. The rain squalls forty miles or more away did not appear to shift their shadows; the rare slanting bands of light from the clouds were as constant as though they were falling through cathedral windows. But nearer at hand other things were forward. The birds, thousands of them, were doing their best to cheer things up. The roucoulements of doves rose from the bushes down the face of the cliffs; the bell bird uttered his clear ringing note;

the chime bird gave his celebrated imitation of a really gentlemanly sixty-horse power touring car hinting you out of the way with the mellowness of a chimed horn; the bottle bird poured gallons of guggling essence of happiness from his silver jug. From the direction of camp, evidently jumped by the boys, a steinbuck loped gracefully, pausing every few minutes to look back, his dainty legs tense, his sensitive ears pointed toward the direction of disturbance.

And now, along the face of the cliff, I make out the flashing of much movement, half glimpsed through the bushes. Soon a fine old-man baboon, his tail arched after the dandified fashion of the baboon aristocracy stepped out, looked around, and bounded forward. Other old men followed him, and then the young men, and a miscellaneous lot of half-grown youngsters. The ladies brought up the rear, with the babies. These rode their mothers' backs, clinging desperately while they leaped along, for all the world like the pathetic monkey “jockeys” one sees strapped to the backs of big dogs in circuses. When they had approached to within fifty yards, remarked “hullo!” to them. Instantly they all stopped. Those in front stood up on their hind legs; those behind clambered to points of vantage on rocks and the tops of small bushes: They all took a good long look at me. Then they told me what they thought about me personally, the fact of my being there, and the rude way I had startled them. Their remarks were neither complimentary nor refined. The old men, in especial, got quite profane, and screamed excited billingsgate. Finally they all stopped at once, dropped on all fours, and loped away, their ridiculous long tails curved in a half arc. Then for the first time I

noticed that, under cover of the insults, the women and children had silently retired. Once more I was left to the familiar gentle bird calls, and the vast silence of the wilderness beyond.

The second picture, also, was a view from a height, but of a totally different character. It was also, perhaps, more typical of a greater part of East Equatorial Africa. Four of us were hunting lions with natives-both wild and tame-and a scratch pack of dogs. More of that later. We had rummaged around all the morning without any results; and now at noon had climbed to the top of a butte to eat lunch and look abroad.

Our butte ran up a gentle but accelerating slope to a peak of big rounded rocks and slabs sticking out boldly from the soil of the hill. We made ourselves comfortable each after his fashion. The gunbearers leaned against rocks and rolled cigarettes. The savages squatted on their heels, planting their spears ceremonially in front of them. One of my friends lay on his back, resting a huge telescope over his crossed feet. With this he purposed seeing any lion that moved within ten miles. None of the rest of us could ever make out anything through the fearsome weapon. Therefore, relieved from responsibility by the presence of this Dreadnaught of a 'scope, we loafed and looked about us. This is what we saw:

Mountains at our backs, of course-at some distance; then plains in long low swells like the easy rise and fall of a tropical sea, wave after wave, and over the edge of the world beyond a distant horizon. Here and there on this plain, single hills lay becalmed, like ships at sea; some peaked,

some cliffed like buttes, some long and low like the hulls of battleships. The brown plain flowed up to wash their bases, liquid as the sea itself, its tides rising in the coves of the hills, and ebbing in the valleys between. Near at hand, in the middle distance, far away, these fleets of the plain sailed, until at last hull-down over the horizon their topmasts disappeared. Above them sailed too the phantom fleet of the clouds, shot with light, shining like silver, airy as racing yachts, yet casting here and there exaggerated shadows below.

The sky in Africa is always very wide, greater than any other skies. Between horizon and horizon is more space than any other world contains. It is as though the cup of heaven had been pressed a little flatter; so that while the boundaries have widened, the zenith, with its flaming sun, has come nearer. And yet that is not a constant quantity either. I have seen one edge of the sky raised straight up a few million miles, as though some one had stuck poles under its corners, so that the western heaven did not curve cup-wise over to the horizon at all as it did everywhere else, but rather formed the proscenium of a gigantic stage. On this stage they had piled great heaps of saffron yellow clouds, and struck shafts of yellow light, and filled the spaces with the lurid portent of a storm-while the twenty thousand foot mountains below, crouched whipped and insignificant to the earth.

We sat atop our butte for an hour while H. looked through his 'scope. After the soft silent immensity of the earth, running away to infinity, with its low waves, and its scattered fleet of hills, it was with difficulty that we brought

our gaze back to details and to things near at hand. Directly below us we could make out many different-hued specks. Looking closely, we could see that those specks were game animals. They fed here and there in bands of from ten to two hundred, with valleys and hills between. Within the radius of the eye they moved, nowhere crowded in big herds, but everywhere present. A band of zebras grazed the side of one of the earth waves, a group of gazelles walked on the skyline, a herd of kongoni rested in the hollow between. On the next rise was a similar grouping; across the valley a new variation. As far as the eye could strain its powers it could make out more and ever more beasts. I took up my field glasses, and brought them all to within a sixth of the distance. After amusing myself for some time in watching them, I swept the glasses farther on. Still the same animals grazing on the hills and in the hollows. I continued to look, and to look again, until even the powerful prismatic glasses failed to show things big enough to distinguish. At the limit of extreme vision I could still make out game, and yet more game. And as I took my glasses from my eyes, and realized how small a portion of this great land-sea I had been able to examine; as I looked away to the ship-hills hull-down over the horizon, and realized that over all that extent fed the Game; the ever-new wonder of Africa for the hundredth time filled my mind-the teeming fecundity of her bosom.

“Look here,” said H. without removing his eye from the 'scope, “just beyond the edge of that shadow to the left of the bushes in the donga-I've been watching them ten

minutes, and I can't make 'em out yet. They're either hyenas acting mighty queer, or else two lionesses."

We snatched our glasses and concentrated on that important detail.

To catch the third experience you must have journeyed with us across the "Thirst," as the natives picturesquely name the waterless tract of two days and a half. Our very start had been delayed by a breakage of some Dutch-sounding essential to our ox wagon, caused by the confusion of a night attack by lions: almost every night we had lain awake as long as we could to enjoy the deep-breathed grumbling or the vibrating roars of these beasts. Now at last, having pushed through the dry country to the river in the great plain, we were able to take breath from our mad hurry, and to give our attention to affairs beyond the limits of mere expediency. One of these was getting Billy a shot at a lion.

Billy had never before wanted to shoot anything except a python. Why a python we could not quite fathom. Personally, I think she had some vague idea of getting even for that Garden of Eden affair. But lately, pythons proving scarcer than in that favoured locality, she had switched to a lion. She wanted, she said, to give the skin to her sister. In vain we pointed out that a zebra hide was very decorative, that lions go to absurd lengths in retaining possession of their own skins, and other equally convincing facts. It must be a lion or nothing; so naturally we had to make a try.

There are several ways of getting lions, only one of which is at all likely to afford a steady pot shot to a very small person trying to manipulate an over-size gun. That is to lay

out a kill. The idea is to catch the lion at it in the early morning before he has departed for home. The best kill is a zebra: first, because lions like zebra; second, because zebra are fairly large; third, because zebra are very numerous.

Accordingly, after we had pitched camp just within a fringe of mimosa trees and of red-flowering aloes near the river; had eaten lunch, smoked a pipe and issued necessary orders to the men, C. and I set about the serious work of getting an appropriate bait in an appropriate place.

The plains stretched straight away from the river bank to some indefinite and unknown distance to the south. A low range of mountains lay blue to the left; and a mantle of scrub thornbush closed the view to the right. This did not imply that we could see far straight ahead, for the surface of the plain rose slowly to the top of a swell about two miles away. Beyond it reared a single butte peak at four or five times that distance.

We stepped from the fringe of red aloes and squinted through the dancing heat shimmer. Near the limit of vision showed a very faint glimmering whitish streak. A newcomer to Africa would not have looked at it twice: nevertheless, it could be nothing but zebra. These gaudily marked beasts take queer aspects even on an open plain. Most often they show pure white; sometimes a jet black; only when within a few hundred yards does one distinguish the stripes. Almost always they are very easily made out. Only when very distant and in heat shimmer, or in certain half lights of evening, does their so-called “protective colouration” seem to be in working order, and even then they are always quite visible to the least expert hunter's scrutiny.

It is not difficult to kill a zebra, though sometimes it has to be done at a fairly long range. If all you want is meat for the porters, the matter is simple enough. But when you require bait for a lion, that; is another affair entirely. In the first place, you must be able to stalk within a hundred yards of your kill without being seen; in the second place, you must provide two or three good lying-down places for your prospective trophy within fifteen yards of the carcass-and no more than two or three; in the third place, you must judge the direction of the probable morning wind, and must be able to approach from leeward. It is evidently pretty good luck to find an accommodating zebra in just such a spot. It is a matter of still greater nicety to drop him absolutely in his tracks. In a case of porters' meat it does not make any particular difference if he runs a hundred yards before he dies. With lion bait even fifty yards makes all the difference in the world.

C. and I talked it over and resolved to press Scallywattamus into service. Scallywattamus is a small white mule who is firmly convinced that each and every bush in Africa conceals a mule-eating rhinoceros, and who does not intend to be one of the number so eaten. But we had noticed that at times zebra would be so struck with the strange sight of Scallywattamus carrying a man, that they would let us get quite close. C. was to ride Scallywattamus while I trudged along under his lee ready to shoot.

We set out through the heat shimmer, gradually rising as the plain slanted. Imperceptibly the camp and the trees marking the river's course fell below us and into the heat haze. In the distance, close to the stream, we made out a

blurred, brown-red solid mass which we knew for Masai cattle. Various little Thompson's gazelles skipped away to the left waggling their tails vigorously and continuously as Nature long since commanded “Tommies” to do. The heat haze steadied around the dim white line, so we could make out the individual animals. There were plenty of them, dozing in the sun. A single tiny treelet broke the plain just at the skyline of the rise. C. and I talked low-voiced as we went along. We agreed that the tree was an excellent landmark to come to, that the little rise afforded proper cover, and that in the morning the wind would in all likelihood blow toward the river. There were perhaps twenty zebra near enough to the chosen spot. Any of them would do.

But the zebra did not give a hoot for Scallywattamus. At five hundred yards three or four of them awoke with a start, stared at us a minute, and moved slowly away. They told all the zebra they happened upon that the three idiots approaching were at once uninteresting and dangerous. At four hundred and fifty yards a half dozen more made off at a trot. At three hundred and fifty yards the rest plunged away at a canter-all but one. He remained to stare, but his tail was up, and we knew he only stayed because he knew he could easily catch up in the next twenty seconds.

The chance was very slim of delivering a knockout at that distance, but we badly needed meat, anyway, after our march through the Thirst, so I tried him. We heard the well-known plunk of the bullet, but down went his head, up went his heels, and away went he. We watched him in vast disgust. He cavorted out into a bare open space without cover of any sort, and then flopped over. I thought I caught

a fleeting grin of delight on Mavrouki's face; but he knew enough instantly to conceal his satisfaction over sure meat.

There were now no zebra anywhere near; but since nobody ever thinks of omitting any chances in Africa, I sneaked up to the tree and took a perfunctory look. There stood another, providentially absent-minded, zebra!

We got that one. Everybody was now happy. The boys raced over to the first kill, which soon took its dismembered way toward camp. C. and I carefully organized our plan of campaign. We fixed in our memories the exact location of each and every bush; we determined compass direction from camp, and any other bearings likely to prove useful in finding so small a spot in the dark. Then we left a boy to keep carrion birds off until sunset; and returned home.

We were out in the morning before even the first sign of dawn. Billy rode her little mule, C. and I went afoot, Memba Sasa accompanied us because he could see whole lions where even C.'s trained eye could not make out an ear, and the syce went along to take care of the mule. The heavens were ablaze with the thronging stars of the tropics, so we found we could make out the skyline of the distant butte over the rise of the plains. The earth itself was a pool of absolute blackness. We could not see where we were placing our feet, and we were continually bringing up suddenly to walk around an unexpected aloe or thornbush. The night was quite still, but every once in a while from the blackness came rustlings, scamperings, low calls, and once or twice the startled barking of zebra very near at hand. The latter sounded as ridiculous as ever. It is one of the many incongruities of African life that Nature should have given so

large and so impressive a creature the petulant yapping of an exasperated Pomeranian lap dog. At the end of three quarters of an hour of more or less stumbling progress, we made out against the sky the twisted treelet that served as our landmark. Billy dismounted, turned the mule over to the syce, and we crept slowly forward until within a guessed two or three hundred yards of our kill.

Nothing remained now but to wait for the daylight. It had already begun to show. Over behind the distant mountains some one was kindling the fires, and the stars were flickering out. The splendid ferocity of the African sunrise was at hand. Long bands of slate dark clouds lay close along the horizon, and behind them glowed a heart of fire, as on a small scale the lamplight glows through a metal-worked shade. On either side the sky was pale green-blue, translucent and pure, deep as infinity itself. The earth was still black, and the top of the rise near at hand was clear edged. On that edge, and by a strange chance accurately in the centre of illumination, stood the uncouth massive form of a shaggy wildebeeste, his head raised, staring to the east. He did not move; nothing of that fire and black world moved; only instant by instant it changed, swelling in glory toward some climax until one expected at any moment a fanfare of trumpets, the burst of triumphant culmination.

Then very far down in the distance a lion roared. The wildebeeste, without moving, bellowed back an answer or a defiance. Down in the hollow an ostrich boomed. Zebra barked, and several birds chirped strongly. The tension was breaking not in the expected fanfare and burst of triumphal music, but in a manner instantly felt to be more fitting to

what was indeed a wonder, but a daily wonder for all that. At one and the same instant the rim of the sun appeared and the wildebeeste, after the sudden habit of his kind, made up his mind to go. He dropped his head and came thundering down past us at full speed. Straight to the west he headed, and so disappeared. We could hear the beat of his hoofs dying into the distance. He had gone like a Warder of the Morning whose task was finished. On the knife-edged skyline appeared the silhouette of slim-legged little Tommies, flirting their rails, sniffing at the dewy grass, dainty, slender, confiding, the open-day antithesis of the tremendous and awesome lord of the darkness that had roared its way to its lair, and to the massive shaggy herald of morning that had thundered down to the west.

III. THE CENTRAL PLATEAU

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Now is required a special quality of the imagination, not in myself, but in my readers, for it becomes necessary for them to grasp the logic of a whole country in one mental effort. The difficulties to me are very real. If I am to tell you it all in detail, your mind becomes confused to the point of mingling the ingredients of the description. The resultant mental picture is a composite; it mixes localities wide apart; it comes out, like the snake-creeper-swamp-forest thing of grammar-school South America, an unreal and deceitful

impression. If, on the other hand, I try to give you a bird's-eye view-saying, here is plain, and there follows upland, and yonder succeed mountains and hills-you lose the sense of breadth and space and the toil of many days. The feeling of onward outward extending distance is gone; and that impression so indispensable to finite understanding-“here am I, and what is beyond is to be measured by the length of my legs and the toil of my days.” You will not stop long enough on my plains to realize their physical extent nor their influence on the human soul. If I mention them in a sentence, you dismiss them in a thought. And that is something the plains themselves refuse to permit you to do. Yet sometimes one must become a guide-book, and bespeak his reader's imagination.

The country, then, wherein we travelled begins at the sea. Along the coast stretches a low rolling country of steaming tropics, grown with cocoanuts, bananas, mangoes, and populated by a happy, half-naked race of the Swahilis. Leaving the coast, the country rises through hills. These hills are at first fertile and green and wooded. Later they turn into an almost unbroken plateau of thorn scrub, cruel, monotonous, almost impenetrable. Fix thorn scrub in your mind, with rhino trails, and occasional openings for game, and a few rivers flowing through palms and narrow jungle strips; fix it in your mind until your mind is filled with it, until you are convinced that nothing else can exist in the world but more and more of the monotonous, terrible, dry, onstretching desert of thorn.

Then pass through this to the top of the hills inland, and journey over these hills to the highland plains.

Now sense and appreciate these wide seas of and the hills and ranges of mountains rising from them, and their infinite diversity of country-their rivers marked by ribbons of jungle, their scattered-bush and their thick-bush areas, their grass expanses, and their great distances extending far over exceedingly wide horizons. Realize how many weary hours you must travel to gain the nearest butte, what days of toil the view from its top will disclose. Savour the fact that you can spend months in its veriest corner without exhausting its possibilities. Then, and not until then, raise your eyes to the low rising transverse range that bands it to the west as the thorn desert bands it to the east.

And on these ranges are the forests, the great bewildering forests. In what looks like a grove lying athwart a little hill you can lose yourself for days. Here dwell millions of savages in an apparently untouched wilderness. Here rises a snow mountain on the equator. Here are tangles and labyrinths, great bamboo forests lost in folds of the mightiest hills. Here are the elephants. Here are the swinging vines, the jungle itself.

Yet finally it breaks. We come out on the edge of things and look down on a great gash in the earth. It is like a sunken kingdom in itself, miles wide, with its own mountain ranges, its own rivers, its own landscape features. Only on either side of it rise the escarpments which are the true level of the plateau. One can spend two months in this valley, too, and in the countries south to which it leads. And on its farther side are the high plateau plains again, or the forests, or the desert, or the great lakes that lie at the source of the Nile.

So now, perhaps, we are a little prepared to go ahead. The guide-book work is finished for good and all. There is the steaming hot low coast belt, and the hot dry thorn desert belt, and the varied immense plains, and the high mountain belt of the forests, and again the variegated wide country of the Rift Valley and the high plateau. To attempt to tell you seriatim and in detail just what they are like is the task of an encyclopaedist. Perhaps more indirectly you may be able to fill in the picture of the country, the people, and the beasts.

IV. THE FIRST CAMP

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Our very first start into the new country was made when we piled out from the little train standing patiently awaiting the good pleasure of our descent. That feature strikes me with ever new wonder-the accommodating way trains of the Uganda Railway have of waiting for you. One day, at a little wayside station, C. and I were idly exchanging remarks with the only white man in sight, killing time until the engine should whistle to a resumption of the journey. The guard lingered about just out of earshot. At the end of five minutes C. happened to catch his eye, whereupon he ventured to approach.

“When you have finished your conversation,” said he politely, “we are all ready to go on.”

On the morning in question there were a lot of us to disembark-one hundred and twenty-two, to be exact-of which four were white. We were not yet acquainted with our men, nor yet with our stores, nor with the methods of our travel. The train went off and left us in the middle of a high plateau, with low ridges running across it, and mountains in the distance. Men were squabbling earnestly for the most convenient loads to carry, and as fast as they had gained undisputed possession, they marked the loads with some private sign of their own. M'ganga, the headman, tall, fierce,