

VOL: IV



About 400 burghers were assembled there, mounted on their rough  
hardy Irish ponies, each man carrying his rifle, with his bandolier  
slung over his shoulder. All the men ~~were~~ <sup>wore</sup> rough homespun clothes  
& they looked very workmanlike, just the type for quick guerrilla  
fighting. At their head was a fine looking, bearded Boer whom we  
all recognized instantly as Louis Botha. He & General Bruce  
Hamilton exchanged a polite cordial "Good morning," with a  
salute, then Botha turned his horse and addressed the  
assembled burghers in Afrikaans. They had made a splendid  
fight, he said, but now everything was over, and he hoped they would  
be as loyal to their new country as they had been to the old, and  
would fight for it if necessary as they had fought for the old; and  
he ended, to my surprise, by getting them to sing the first verse  
of "God Save the King." Bruce-Hamilton then made a short and  
very nice little speech, in which he said he hoped there would  
be no bitterness on either side - there certainly would be none on  
ours - and with that the ceremony ended. The burghers filed past  
and threw their rifles in one big heap and their bandoliers  
on another, and everything was over. Botha & Smuts, who was  
with him, rode past where the Colonel & the rest of us were  
standing and exchanged a cordial "Good morning," with us. In a  
letter I wrote to my sister a day or two later I find that I  
commented "He is a fine man, with a very gentle and manly  
face," & so I remember him, oddly enough I made no comment  
about Smuts. I suppose I had no eyes for anyone but Botha.  
Had I been enabled to see into the future I should have paid  
more attention to his companion.

The Colonel & the Chaplain rode off with Botha & Smuts on their  
return journey to Volksrust where the latter were to take train  
for Pretoria - Wright & I fed our horses, and <sup>after eating</sup> ~~with~~ our scratch  
lunch in a little blockhouse close at hand, we started homeward



Some of whom rode into us a short way. They all looked very happy, but said that they would cheerfully have gone on fight, indefinitely, for they had grown used to the rough, simple life and constant movement; but they trusted their leaders implicitly, and knew that whatever decision they made was the best for the country, that was all that mattered.

We had rather a weary ride home, with an icy wind blowing in our faces, the sun set just as we reached Volkovost, & by the time we made camp it was almost dark. But the sight we had witnessed was well worth a 45 mile ride.

Here is another extract from the letter to my sister: - "Magnificently five miles away, stands magnificently overlooking us, there is peace all round. But I am not in good spirits - one must have moods --- It is only because the war is over and I fear officers and men (who are only, after all, amateur soldiers enlisted for the war) will get slack & lose keenness. And the horses we have taken over from the ...<sup>th</sup> I.Y. are such ragged, unkempt, lame, skin & bone animals. And the saddles! Heaps of broken, dirty, rusty gear, all patterns, enough to break one's heart. Still, we must evolve order out of chaos. The Colonel is not so keen at present as I had hoped, but Cochrane (the adjutant) who on board ship was tenaciously about-minded is now working like a brick: and only I am lazy!"

Certainly the first week or two at Volkovost were somewhat disheartening to a keen soldier. I felt that I was doomed to insist into a lot of civilians, joined together with the intention of becoming temporary soldiers in an active campaign, a spirit of discipline & keenness when everyone knew that all the fighting was over, & all they now had to do was to kick their heels until they could return to civil life: and my Commanding Officer - a temporary soldier himself - was obviously not going to



was nothing but a lot of junk, disbanded by a battalion which had finished its service, then home to resume civil life.

My first job was to get the camp into some sort of order, and to see that each squadron commander got his men busy in sorting out the equipment and cleaning & polishing it, getting the horses fit and properly groomed, and generally evading order out of chaos. Then we received orders to send some small detachments to various points in the ~~surrounding~~ <sup>district</sup> ~~territory~~ to occupy blockhouses and ~~patrol~~ <sup>patrol</sup> the adjacent country so as to prevent the barbed wire and the corrugated iron & other material from being stolen before steps had been taken by HQ to have it collected and stored or sold. The Colonel had gone to Johannesburg on matters connected with his patent rifle carrier, and indeed I don't remember his being with us at all after we had been a week or two at Volksrust. ~~and~~ So far as I can recall, I remained practically uninterupted in command of the Battalion till it was, to all intents & purposes, disbanded the following October, except ~~when~~ <sup>when he returned for</sup> ~~when~~ we march back from Walakwini to the Mooi River in Natal some time in September as I shall relate presently.

My mood of depression could not have lasted more than a few days, indeed it passed the moment that the Colonel went to Johannesburg and I found myself in charge with a mountain of work & responsibility on my shoulders. There is no time for low spirits like hard work and responsibility, as I have found by experience over & over again. My squadron commanders, galvanised into activity, set their officers' men to work with a will, & very soon the horses began to look fit & well groomed, the old saddles & bridles were polished up, the bits & metal work began to shine in the sun, and I could turn out quite a smart well drilled battalion on parade in no time. If a Co. is keen, sets a high standard, makes big demands on his men and sees that they are met, & above all does not spare himself but is always on the spot when he is needed (~~though~~ <sup>though</sup> never lurking or fussing round when he is not), & has charge & control of



encouragement for any officer or man who works hard & does his best, he ~~will~~ always be sure of getting the best out of his men and of having a keen & efficient unit under his command.

For recreation, I got some good polo at Volkswort, as there was the greater part of the Brigade there, & the H.Q. staff of the Brigade. From the H.Q. of the Brigade I bought a couple of ponies, one an imm. grey Argentine, the other a bay <sup>mare</sup> out from England, the latter rather above the convenient height for polo, as she stood nearly 15" hands high, but handy enough for all that: incidentally she made me a very handsome charger, though as a matter of fact we all rode, as our chargers, ~~was~~ as the officers were not called upon to provide their own. But I was glad to have my own, and used to ride the mare the Argentine alternately. It was rather a foolish extravagance, buy, them - I paid if I remember rightly £40 for the pair, £30 for the Argentine & £100 for the English mare - for we left Volkswort a few days after I bought them, & I had no more polo: but I liked to have my own horses, & never regretted the extravagance.

From the day I arrived at Volkswort I determined to climb to the top of Majuba, which as I have said, overlooked our camp, towering against the skyline. I had read as a subaltern in India about the Boer War of 1880-81 and how we had attacked the Boers at Laing's Nek and been defeated, & how General Colley had then moved to the top of Majuba Hill: how the Boers had attacked him there, & had taken the hill by storm, Colley himself being amongst those killed. But I had always pictured Majuba as a comparatively low kopie, <sup>a few hundred feet</sup> rising out of the veldt, and flat-topped. Imagine my surprise then when I found it to be in reality, a great mass rising above the huge Drakensberg range some 2000 feet above the lake, which is up over 5000 feet above ~~the~~ sea level.

As soon as I had managed to get things more or less ship-



shop in camp I made plans to scale the height, and on a fine  
sunny ~~afternoon~~ <sup>morning</sup> I started off, taking a couple of officers my gun with  
me. Our route lay first through Charleston, then for about 8 miles,  
mounting steadily, to a blockhouse on a rock called Sketene. Here  
we had to leave our horses and continue the climb on foot. It  
was stiff going, & there was a succession of plateaux, like enormous  
steps, till we finally reached the top, a cup-shaped expanse  
large enough to hold a considerable force. This is where Colley  
made his stand, with a force of about 600 men - <sup>belonging mainly to</sup>  
the Gordon Highlanders and the Northampton's. <sup>occupying it on the night of 2d Dec 1801.</sup> The graves of the  
men who fell are enclosed by a little wire fence, and the spot where  
Colley himself was killed is marked by a stone. How it was that  
a force of trained soldiers came to ~~be surrounded~~ surround this seemingly  
so impregnable position is a mystery to me. On one side is a  
sheer precipitous drop of some 2000 feet, and on the remaining  
sides the ground falls steeply down - a difficult & strenuous  
climb for ~~the~~ anyone attempting to reach the top, as I had  
found out for myself, with no cover except for a few scattered  
rocks scattered at intervals on the hillside. To scale the position  
in the face of even half a dozen riflemen would have appeared  
~~impossible~~ almost a hopeless task: against 600, impossible.  
Yet the Boers did it, under Piet Joubert. The explanation  
I think is that none of our men could fire down the hillside  
at the attackers <sup>without</sup> ~~without~~ exposing their heads, & indeed half their  
bodies, against the skyline, thus offering a perfect target, which  
~~attracted~~ the Boers, skilled marksmen and used to take cover  
behind every available rock, could pick off any man thus ex-  
posing themselves and yet remain themselves under <sup>perfect</sup> cover. Any  
show Colley's force after suffering heavy casualties & their  
commander killed, surrendered, and the Boers gained a total  
and complete victory. ~~over our forces~~ no wonder they despised  
the English after the latter's South defeat, first at Laing's



Nek and then at Majuba, both in attack & defence. No wonder they had defied us 18 years later. And even now it had taken 3 1/2 years for the entire British Empire in all its might to defeat them. I felt sad and humbled: but my respect for the Boers as tough & stubborn fighters, which had been high since I had first come out to fight them 3 years before, grew become higher still as I stood on the top of Majuba amongst the British graves.

The view is magnificent. Natal stretches away southward for miles and the country ~~stretches~~ <sup>lies</sup> like a map at one's feet, while all round is the gloomy, humbled mass of the Drakensberg. Going to the edge where the cliff falls precipitously I could see Laing's Nek below. All along it lay the trenches which the Boers had dug three years <sup>before</sup> to resist Buller's advances. It took them, I reflected, six months to dig them, and just three days to excavate them. Let, set that against Majuba, I thought, and call it quits. Here are some extracts from letters to my <sup>Wister.</sup>

Volkstrust  
July 14th 1902

My dearest L....

....I have just returned from a tour of our outposts which are scattered about amongst the Drakensberg and the Free State, guarding the blockhouse line which runs from here along the Natal border and past Vrede to Heilbron. It was a most interesting trip. I started off on Thursday morning, a bright sunny day with cloudless sky and the most exhilarating breeze imaginable. I rode "Taffy" the Govt horse which I have ridden ever since we arrived here: my servant Harris rode my spare horse, and I had my valise and blankets, cooking pots and supplies for three days on a two-wheeled Cape cart drawn by two mules driven by a Kaffir. I worked by the map, and intended to cut round by a new way to our outpost on the Klip River. Shortly after mid-day I reached a pass called Alleman's Nek, and hoped to see the Klip beneath me, but instead there was only a magnificent view of rolling veldt and great mountains on all sides, but no sign of a river. I halted for 20 minutes and gave the horses some water and a mouthful of corn, and then pushed on down the pass. After going about an hour I saw a Boer waggon loaded with sacks of wool, so I asked the old Boer in charge about my way. The "Kleef Rivère" he said was a long way off, and our blockhouse line was 25 miles away. It was then past two o'clock, and much as I hated giving up what I meant to do I decided to make instead for another post of ours which lay almost due east. I therefore struck off right across the veldt, and reaching a nice little spruit about three I outspanned for an

but no sign of a river. I halted for about 20 minutes then the  
boer gave water & a mouthful of corn & then pushed on down







I must say I am supremely happy here, the climate is so ideal and my work so interesting. I am training the officers and men in a way to develop their powers of observation and their individuality. I made a young subaltern take his troop out the other day and told him to ride up a valley and bring back a written report of a farm he would find at the end, taking all precautions as if there were Boers about in the hills. I let him act entirely on his own, and then after he had come back he brought me his report, and I pointed out where he had gone wrong and why.

At other times when I take a squadron out reconnoitring I halt and water the horses and let the men sit about and smoke and I sit with them and ask questions about where the railway runs, what they noticed on the way out from camp, how many head of cattle are grazing in the distance and so on. It gives rise to endless discussions and exchanges of ideas, and the men like it. This is the best and nicest soldiering I have ever done, and I know how absolutely impossible it would be for me ever to go back to the Gosport-Weymouth routine, and even for the Staff College is hateful to contemplate. I'm glad the time is going slowly. I am just off to polo so won't add more.

Ever yr affte brother  
C.

Wakkerstrom  
E. Transvaal  
July 27th 1902

My dearest L...

I haven't written you a letter - a decent one any way - for a long time. To-day is my opportunity, for a more glorious day never shone, one of these perfect African winter days, bright warm sun, cloudless sky, pure clear perfectly transparent air and invigorating breeze. Our camp here is almost ideal. We are nearly two miles outside the town and can't see it. The beautiful smooth rolling veldt runs down to a small stream, and one can get nearly a three mile gallop over it. On all sides we are shut in by hills, and the stream widens into a vlei ("flay" please) or swamp which is almost dry now but holds a few duck and snipe. There isn't a farm in the neighbourhood, and one feels one is living a grand open air life away from all the shams and artificialities of civilization, and health of mind and body is simply forced on one and can't be avoided even if one wished to. Here is my day: - Reveille wakes me at six. I tumble out of my blankets shortly afterwards - having the luxury of a ten or fifteen minutes "think", as I have no temptation to sleep, though I admit I should sometimes like to lie on and think - pull on some warm clothes and sally out in the bitter air of sunrise to early morning stables at 6.30. We finish at 7.30 and I have a cup of coffeesometimes, or go for a bit of a run on extra cold mornings with Judy, then shave wash and dress and have breakfast. Parade ordinarily lasts from about 8.45 to 10.45, and perhaps consists in my taking a squadron or two out some miles to scout or drill. Stables, orderly room etc. etc. carry me on very busily till lunch about 1.15. More work, and then I go out with my gun to look for a few partridges or duck, or else go for a gallop, or ride into the town to get something for the Mess, returning to camp at dark. I have an hour to read or write in my tent, then dinner at seven, Bridge till 10.30, or 11, then go and see my horses are all right for the night, then tumble into bed and sleep peacefully under my blankets till the trumpets sound Reveille. Can you imagine a more healthy or delightful life? It is varied of course in many ways - I often attend evening stables from 4 to 5, getting my exercise over between 2 and 4, but I generally am busy till about 3.30, and then go out either riding or



with my gun till dark about 5.30. It sounds as if I had lots of spare time, but I really haven't. There are so many things to settle, and when I calculate on an hour to myself, someone comes to my tent to ask me about a point of routine or discipline, and the hour is gone before I know where I am.

Under the circumstances I feel perfectly wicked when I hear of other people's troubles and ill-health, and I feel as if I was having much more than my fair share of the world's goods and happiness.....

I have certainly grown more in the last six months than in the previous six years. And I have only just discovered the reason. Up to the time when I joined the I.Y. I was either actually a subaltern, or practically one (for with pompoms I had my own show, but no one under me), and I had got into the way of copying other people and only thinking of my own individuality as a thing I ought to alter in accordance with good qualities I noticed from time to time in others. That my individuality had any effect on others I never dreamed - was I not a subaltern whose sole duty it was to obey orders and be taught what was right and wrong? Then I joined the I.Y. and suddenly I realized that what I did and said was being accepted as gospel by dozens of other beings and was being copied in every detail. I only really discovered this a month or two ago, and then I realized that it had been going on for months. It gave me a shock from which I am only just recovering because it suddenly thrust on my shoulders a huge burden of responsibility. It is pleasant to feel one can take credit for instilling ideas of honour, keenness, conscientiousness, duty etc into others by one's example and words, but the other side of the picture is appalling - the feeling that one's own bad qualities have been multiplied times over by imitation. It is an awful responsibility to have a tremendous influence over anyone and to feel that they are like a piece of wax in one's hands, ready to be moulded into anything one pleases; and yet this is a bad simile, for they take your shape of their own accord, and all you can do is so to regulate your own shape that the imitation may have most chance of being of good value and not bad.....

Sunday. I have just come in from a long gallop across the veldt. I think I am happier than I have ever been before. Away from artificial civilization one seems to live in a cleaner, purer atmosphere. I am happy in my work. It has grown under my eyes and I have seen definite results. Of course we have our trials, and I often lose heart for a bit. There are young subalterns who seem destitute of honour and conscientiousness: to whom one doesn't seem able to appeal in any way: who do their work, not cheerfully from a sense of duty, but grudgingly, and from fear of being "caught out". We have had subalterns in arrest over money matters and over rows in the town, subalterns with their wine bills stopped etc., but I like every one of them and have helped some with their mess bills, and talked to others, and altogether I see improvements and I mean yet to have the best regiment of I.Y. in the country. Indeed I believe it is the best now!

Ever yr affte brother  
C.

These letters give a far better account of my life & thoughts during those first few weeks in South Africa than any I could give merely by calling upon my memory. Indeed, many of the events chronicled in them I had quite forgotten though they come back vividly enough to me when I re-read the letters. Once more they make me marvel at the singular good fortune which seems to have stood by me all through my life; for whatever the work was that I was doing and whatever the life I was leading from the



day I joined "The Ship" at Woolwich. I always seem to have been almost passionately in love with it. These letters breathe an almost exultant happiness, and I think dealing with human beings was always the real passion of my life. Soldiering is largely dealing with human beings, and so is civil administration, and my great good fortune consisted largely in my more or less chance selection, first of one or then of the other, as my life's work.

As the letters show, we were moved from Volkovsk to Lockers from towards the end of July, & we were in camp there for something like 2 months, during the whole of which time, so far as I remember, Colonel Patterson was away on leave and I was in command. Our camp was situated some 3 miles from the town of Watterstone on a ~~bit~~<sup>stretch</sup> of open veldt by the side of a stream, with hills all round and not a building in sight - as pretty a site for a camp as one could imagine. I kept the men hard at work with drills, scouting, manoeuvres, riding school, stables, saddle inspections and so on, because I knew well that if ever I let up, the men would get out of hand, for there was nothing for them to do in that lonely spot unless one could provide them with work & some kind of amusement. And all I could provide in the way of amusement was a couple of footballs. I must say the men gave me, strange enough, no trouble, mixed grill as they were. [In one squadron there was as a subaltern an ex-midshipman who had been present in that rank at the battle of Magersfontein & had subsequently left the Navy and ~~subsequently~~<sup>later</sup> joined the Germans; and in his troop was an ex-Lieut-Commander of the Navy, serving as a Corporal.] I heard though by Squadron Commanders of occasional grumbles amongst the men, and complaints that I, as a regular officer, expected them to sweat away at spit & polish as if they were regulars, instead of civilians who had voluntarily joined up for the war, which was now over. But men will always grumble,



I found them always willing & cheery, & I think they liked the life, and they probably realized themselves that without constant work & employment they would have been bored and miserable.

And then at last, in September, we received orders to march down to Mooi River in Natal, where huts would be provided for us, pending demobilization. Never were orders more welcome, for after our long period of inaction it was exhilarating to be on the move once more: and marching with a mounted corps through a country and scenery such as was provided by Natal was an experience to which we all looked forward with the utmost keenness. Not only that, but our route lay through Ladysmith and Colenso where all the bitterest fighting had taken place in the early days of the war when Buller had been trying to relieve the besieged garrison of Ladysmith.

That march from Wakkerstroom in the eastern Transvaal to Mooi River in Natal exceeded in interest and excitement my most sanguine expectations. Not an hour, hardly a minute indeed from Revelle to Last Post, was without its interest. I made each Squadron Commander and his Troop leaders keep an eagle eye on every horse in the Squadron, and watch for any sign of a saddle sore, a girth gale, or a stone in the hoof. At every halt I went round myself and made each Squadron Commander report that he had inspected his horses, received reports from the four troop leaders, and that all was correct (or otherwise). At evening stables when we got into camp, a thorough inspection of every horse was made by the trooper in charge of it, and the Veterinary Surgeon was at once called to examine any horse that showed signs of lameness, saddle sore, girth gale, or any ailment. In this way I managed to instil into my four Squadron Commanders a healthy rivalry as to who should have the fewest casualties, the fittest &



the best mounted horses, the best polished saddles, bridles, bits and equipment. And because the officers were keen, the men were keen, in spite of the fact that the war was a thing of the past and we were about to be demobilized, that many would be reverting at once to their civilian life.

But besides the constant interest of keeping these officers and men up to a high standard of keenness, efficiency and horsemanship, and the exhilaration of being on trek in that invigorating South African climate, I had the additional excitement of studying the country, and of passing the very spots where the toughest fighting had taken place. ~~Our~~ Our route lay first through the Drakensberg Mountains and over the ill-fated Laings Nek where our men had been defeated by the Boers 25 years previously, before the - to me - crowning disgrace of Majuba. Then we came to Glangolaghe where Sir John French (later to become Earl of Ypres) fought the only successful battle against the Boers before Ladysmith was surrounded and besieged: and then Ladysmith itself. I had heard stories of the siege from many of the officers who had been through it 2½ years before, and as we camped for two nights there I was able to wander about and visit several of the places where famous episodes of the siege had taken place. I climbed Waggon Hill which had been held by my old Rawal Pindi friends, the Devans, against fierce attacks of the Boers a short time before Ladysmith had been relieved, & when several of my old friends had been killed. "The siege of Ladysmith" had impressed itself so much on my mind, with all its drama and heroism, that to be camped in the town itself and able to explore the various spots of which I had heard so much was to me almost incredibly thrilling. Then followed the march from Ladysmith to the Tugela River and Colenso, with trenches and shell holes all the way. I was puzzled at



one place near the river, where the fighting had been most sustained and bitter, to find parallel trenches on a slope within 50 yards of one another facing in opposite directions: that is to say, the earth thrown up as a parapet & protection was in some cases on the upper side of the trench, in others, on the lower. Why our men or the Boers had dug their trenches facing both ways, both up and down the slope, I could not conceive, till at last, exploring the ground a little more fully, the explanation dawned on me. Some of the trenches had been dug by our men, and some by the Boers: and so fierce had been the fighting that the men had dug themselves in within fifty yards of each other!

We camped that night at Colenso, where Buller has been held up so long by the Boers who timed the rugged heights on the other bank of the Tugela River and picked off our men without ~~missing~~ exposing themselves at all. I found too the place on the railway where my friend Arthur Haldane of the Lydie High Landers, in charge of a detachment on reconnaissance in an armoured train, had been ambushed by the Boers, who blocked the line in rear of the train with rocks, attacked it with artillery & rifle fire, and took Haldane & the whole detachment prisoners, including Winston Churchill, then acting as correspondent to the Morning Post. Winston behaved with great gallantry on the occasion - as he would - and was lucky to escape with his life, and indeed unscathed. It was less than 2 years before that Haldane had brought Winston to our battery mess in the Khyber Pass, as I have already recorded. Winston subsequently made a sensational escape from the building in which he and others were confined in Pretoria, & found his way down to Lorenzo Marques. So, a little later, did Haldane. I examined the building with great interest when I went up to Pretoria & Johannesburg a little later, taking a few days leave for the



purpose.

Those early days of the Boer War have been mostly forgotten now, but a few people still recall "Black Week" about Dec 15<sup>th</sup> 1899 when our Colenso force seemed to suffer disaster after disaster. Certainly there was something, incredibly, stupid about both our strategy and tactics, and the highly mobile Boers, lightly armed and easily supplied, were far more than a match for our clumsy formations, trained for an entirely different kind of warfare - the Crimea perhaps. The night we spent at Colenso brought back to my memory all that I had read and heard of Buller's futile attempts to cross the Tugela river in the face of the Boer opposition. In particular, I was pointed out, a few miles to the east, a rugged hill called <sup>(primarily Skanqwanis)</sup> Skanqwanis which seemed to form part of the rocky hills lining the northern bank. In actual fact the river here gave a sharp bend to the north and this hill was on our side - the southern bank - of the river. I was assured that Buller's Intelligence Dep<sup>t</sup> was so ~~poor~~ <sup>inefficient</sup> that he and his staff did not realize this, but imagined that the hill was on the northern bank and allowed the Boers to cross the river & occupy it, driving off the small force of our men which had at first seized it. Had we occupied the hill in force we could have enfiladed the whole of the Boer position on the northern bank. Whether this story is true or not I cannot say. It was told me at Colenso by a local farmer.

But I am not writing history: I am merely jelling down my own personal memories. I ~~now~~ record these incidents <sup>only</sup> to show the immense interest which that march down from the eastern Transvaal into Natal held for me.

We reached the Mooi River at last & found a huddled camp awaiting us there, a great luxury after so many months living in tents. But what a dull place it was, and



how unhappy I felt during the few weeks I was destined to stay there. We were in process of being demobilized, and we had to hand over our horses to a Remount Depot some miles or half from our camp. About half the officers and men opted to remain on for the year for which they had contracted to serve: the remainder preferred to take their discharge and go home. Only one incident can I remember which lightened those few dreary weeks that I spent at Moor River. The Remount Depot had made a polo ground of sorts out of a bit of green turf that lay just outside their camp, and hearing that there were some polo-playing hotel farmers in the neighbourhood I challenged the latter to a friendly match, as there were about half a dozen of us who knew what played the game and I found I could just manage to make up a team of four. I had <sup>my own</sup> two horses, <sup>that</sup> I had bought some months before <sup>as always, related,</sup> at Volkmans; the others picked out some likely mounts from our troop horses - which were all of the light cob variety. My challenge was readily accepted, and an afternoon fixed. When I arrived on the ground I found four young farmers who had ridden over from their farms - in some cases as much as twenty miles distant - and I had a good look at the sturdy little Cape ponies they had brought with them, and made a mental note that we should have an work out out to out gallop them. But I imagined that hotel farmers would be novices at the game and I confidently looked forward to a fairly even game. I was playing in my favourite place, number 3, + Wright, the commander of the Squadron was to play back, Nos 1 & 2 being a couple of subalterns who had played a little polo somewhere in the Transvaal. We tossed for place, the ball was thrown in, & the game began. What a surprise I got! Those hotel farmers would have put up a good performance against any of our crack teams at Hurlingham. Their strokes were marvellous, their eyes unerring, & they could ride like professionals. They just did



what they liked with us, collared the ball, rode us off, passed the ball to one another with dead accuracy and the greatest precision, and had scored three goals in almost as many minutes. The moment the first chucker was over I went up to the charming young farmer who was acting then captain and admitted frankly that we were hopelessly outclassed and couldn't give them a game that was worth playing: and I suggested that the right thing to do was to split up, two of us playing with two of them against the other four. He with a charming smile agreed, and the remaining chucks were more or less evenly contested and I for one enjoyed them immensely. Then we all had tea together & the farmers rode off home again on their sturdy and trusty little ponies, carrying with them my respect and admiration not only for their first-class exhibition of really good polo but for their modesty & charm.

And so at last my service with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Imperial German came to an end and I said goodbye to the officers & men for whom I had come to have a real affection, took the train for Durban & there embarked on a small troopship bound for Capetown. At Capetown I was kept for 4 or 5 days awaiting transport back to England, and what I remember best was the sight of the lovely white arum lilies growing profusely on either side of the road from Capetown to Simon's Town. My voyage home was entirely uneventful, ~~and~~ I travelled on a small troopship on which there were not more than about half a dozen officers besides myself, and I had of course no man to look after and nothing to do - for spare dull voyages give me that from Capetown to England. Fortunately there was a library on board, which contained, besides the usual trash, some books of real interest. One of these enthralled me. It was the account, written by a young man called Groves, of an expedition made by him with an older man, an elephant hunter, named I think Sharpe, from South Africa to Egypt, taking in fact the "Cape to Cairo" route of which Cecil Rhodes had dreamed.



The two men had of course been months on the journey, and had passed through districts in Africa never before explored, inhabited by tribes who had never previously seen a white man. They had had many adventures, & seen strange people and strange things. As I read I felt a strong urge to follow their lead and explore some of the strange and unknown territories in Central Africa. I thought what it must be like to arrive at a village in the centre of Africa where no white man had ever been before. The book started a train of thought in me that was to have momentous consequences.

Landing in England late in November I went straight to my mother & sisters in the charming little home they had made for themselves at Frimley Green which I had only left 6 months before, though it seemed much longer. I was told by the War Office that I was to consider myself on leave until I was "re-absorbed" into the Regiment (for which of course I had been seconded on joining the Yeomanry), & posted to a battery, which they said might be in 2 or 3 months' time. I had therefore nothing to do but kick my heels for the present, to which I had no objection as Christmas was not far off and I was happy at home, my sisters had made many friends in the neighbourhood, and now that the Boer War was over, there was nothing to do but enjoy ourselves. And we started off to rehearse for a little play, drama: I got my notes & hints from one of Austen's stories, under the title "The Tinted Venues."

But all the time I was turning over in my mind what I was going to do when this short holiday interval was over. With the exception of a few brief intervals I had been on active service almost continuously since March 1875 - nearly eight years - <sup>first</sup> on the Indian frontier, <sup>then</sup> in South Africa and <sup>after that</sup> in China, <sup>then in S. Africa again</sup> and in the course of my service I had been round the world, and seen many strange countries and many people. The idea of going back to peace time, barrack square soldiering, was absolutely



attracted to me, and I shuddered at the mere remembrance  
of the few weeks spent <sup>on garrison duty</sup> at Gosport and Weymouth. I could  
not get out of my mind what I had read during the voyage home  
of the vast unexplored spaces in Central Africa, and I felt an  
insupportable longing to get out to those parts myself and see  
something of them and their inhabitants. I recalled stories  
which Patterson had told me of East Africa with its fauna and  
flora, and I thought of the book "The Man-Eaters of Tsavo" in  
which he ~~was~~ <sup>had written</sup> of the man-eating lions and how he had dealt  
with them. "The Uganda Railway" - the very name Uganda  
had a fascination <sup>which</sup> acted on my mind like a magnet. I  
had met men too who had been on the other side of Africa,  
in Nigeria, <sup>and I had heard from them</sup> of their adventures and experiences there.  
Was there no way in which I could get out to those wild  
parts of Tropical Africa? Nothing on earth, I vowed, would  
induce me to stay at home and stagnate, and give up my life  
to the dull, monotonous, humdrum work of peace time soldiering.

Somebody of the sort I must often have said during those  
holiday weeks with my mother & sisters, when one day my sister  
Harriette said, "Would Sir Frederick Lugard be any use to you?  
Because a very great friend of mine, Hilda Brackenbury, is his  
niece, or rather Lady Lugard's niece, & lives with her not far  
away, at Abinger. I could easily ask ~~her~~ <sup>her</sup> ~~me~~ <sup>me</sup> over to lunch  
one day, & you could talk to her about Nigeria." "Why", I said,  
"Lugard is one of the very men I have had in mind. He  
is High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria which is a huge  
area just ~~being~~ taken under the British flag - one of the very  
places I should like to go to." "Very well" my sister replied "I'll  
write to ask Hilda Brackenbury to come over to lunch"

A few days afterwards she came, and I had a talk with her  
about Northern Nigeria & the work that Sir Frederick Lugard was doing  
there. In the end she said she was sure her aunt would like me



to come to lunch one day, and next week I found myself at  
lunch with Lady Lugard and her niece in the charming little home  
which the former  
had made from two cottages amongst the trees of Leitch Hill.  
Lady Lugard gave me a brief description of Nigeria, of the  
slave-raiding Mahomedan Emirs, of the peasants, of the task  
before Sir Frederick of putting an end to the slave-raiding and intro-  
ducing law and order, and ended by saying that she thought the work  
was "the most interesting and most worth while that any young English  
man could put his hand to." She certainly found me an eager  
listener, and before I left she said that if I liked she would  
mention my name in her next letter to Sir Frederick and suggest  
to him that he should ask the Colonial Office for me to be sent  
out. I thanked her warmly, took my leave, my imagination  
on fire with the thought of going out to this country of slave-  
raiding Emirs, and rescuing the unfortunate <sup>inhabitants</sup> ~~peasants~~ from  
their depredations.

Next day I went hot-foot up to London and called at the  
Colonial Office and expressed my wish to go out at once and  
join Lugard in Nigeria. The C.O. official whom I saw smiled in  
a somewhat sarcastic way at my enthusiasm and explained  
in a superior manner that it was impossible for me to go  
out when there was no vacancy, but that if I would send in  
an application in writing it would receive due consideration with  
that of others on the occurrence of a vacancy. How I loathed  
that cold, bureaucratic phrase, so much beloved by all Govt.  
Departments, so damping to all eager enthusiasts, I remarked  
that I understood that Sir Frederick Lugard was much in need  
of young men to go out to help him and was greatly understaffed, to  
which I received the chilling reply, "He may be; but he can't get men  
for whom there are no salaries." I retorted that I was quite ready  
to go out at once without any salary, but a shudder and a  
withering look was the only reply vouchsafed: and with a curt



"You can send in an application", and an admonition that I should in any case need to obtain permission from the War Office to be seconded for a non-military appointment, I was politely bowed out.

I then went to the War Office and said I wanted to go out to Khatem Kiyais to serve under Lugard and asked if there would be any difficulty about my being seconded for the purpose. "You know, I suppose" was the reply of the Staff Officer to whom I had been directed "that there are three or four <sup>Artillery</sup> ~~passant~~ Officers in Khatem Kiyais attached to the West African Frontier Force for service with the guns? ~~Nevertheless~~ There are no vacancies at the moment, but they occur from time to time, and if you like to put your name down for one of them, <sup>with your record</sup> you'll stand a good chance ~~of getting one~~ of getting one." I did not, as a matter of fact, know anything about this, and was ignorant even of the existence of such a body as the West African Frontier Force. At the moment I didn't care particularly whether I went out to Khatem Kiyais as a soldier or a civilian, so long as I got out there, and soon. But it seemed far better to stick to my original intention, since Lugard himself seemed likely to be asking the Colonial Office for my services almost at once, whereas I might have months to wait before a vacancy occurred in the WAAF. I therefore said that I preferred to go out in a civil capacity if I could be seconded from the Army for the purpose, and the Staff Officer replied that he would make a note of this, and that if and when the Colonial Office asked for the loan of my services, he was sure that no objection would be raised by the War Office.

With these preliminaries I had to be content, and after sending in to the Colonial Office a formal application for an administrative appointment in N.N. there was nothing to do but wait for a reply, and damp down my impatience as best I could. Meanwhile I read up every book I could get



hold of on West Africa.

It did cross my mind to wonder whether I was doing the right thing in getting seconded from the Army for a civil appointment just when I ought to be working for the Staff College. For there would be no real future for any Army Officer who had not passed the two years' course at the Staff College which entitled him to the magic letters P.S.C. <sup>(passed Staff College)</sup> after his name in the Army List: and if I were to spend 5 years in the wilds of Africa doing civil work, what chance should I have in the Army afterwards? I told myself that before taking the important step that I was contemplating it would be well for me to get the advice of one or two of my soldier friends on whose judgment I placed great reliance. <sup>Before sending my application</sup> So I asked my old Gordon Highlanders friend, Aylmer Haldane and an old Queens friend Arthur Murray, both some years older than myself and who had both passed the Staff College, if they would lunch with me at my Club; after lunch I invited them up to a quiet room upstairs, & over a cup of coffee & some excellent liqueur brandy, I laid my personal problem before them & asked their advice. Both with one accord said "Don't be an ass. You've got a good record of service behind you & have your feet already in the first rung of the ladder. Go for the Staff College at once: when you've passed that the other rungs will be easy. If you follow this silly idea of going out as a civilian to Nigeria you will forfeit all the advantages you have gained <sup>your</sup> by 1 1/2 years in the Army and you will begin at the very bottom of an entirely new ladder which leads nowhere." The logic of all this was of course unassailable. But the moment they had spoken, I knew that I had already made <sup>up</sup> my mind. ~~My~~ I was not, I said to myself, going to allow my life to be governed by pettifogging ideas of my personal prospects and promotion and pay, nicely calculated by weighing up pros and cons of personal advantage. I re-



I remembered the picture that Longhurst had drawn for me of a District Officer's life and duties in Nigeria, and her comment, "I do not think there is any finer work for an Englishman to-day." That seemed good enough for me. "I don't go a fellow as right", I said, "and I'm awfully grateful to you for listening to my long yarn. But I realize now that my mind is made up. I'm going to Lufard in Northern Nigeria."

I have never regretted my decision, except possibly on a few occasions during the 1914-18 War when the Colonial Office definitely refused to allow me to rejoin the Army. At the time I thought they were wrong, but I am not so sure when I look back. In any case when war broke out in August 1914 I accepted their decision without demur (though I fear with rather a bad grace) because I felt that it was the duty of every individual to subordinate his own wishes and ideas wholly to the Government, and go (or stay) where it wanted him.

As soon as I <sup>came</sup> had a definite decision and sent in my application I looked round for something which would be of definite use to me in Nigeria, and it occurred to me at once that I should do well to learn something more of surveying than the rather elementary knowledge I had acquired at Woolwich and later on when preparing for my examination for promotion to Captain. I had never learnt the use of the sextant, and I had an idea that if one learnt its use and took one into the depths of Africa it would be possible at any moment to find one's precise latitude and longitude by it. So I obtained permission to go to the School of Surveying attached to the HQ of the Royal Engineers at Chatham. When however I presented myself to the Major in charge of the School and explained my idea, he smiled and said that he feared it was hardly as easy as all that: and after testing my knowledge - or rather my ignorance - of the science of surveying by a few shrewd questions, he informed me



that it would be best before putting me on to the sextant, to give me a  
little practice in triangulation with a plane table, for which purpose  
he proceeded to detain a Sapper subaltern to instruct me. Then fol-  
lowed some days which I shall not easily forget. Chatham is a cold,  
wind-swept spot at the best of times, and in mid-February (it is now  
usually bitter. It certainly was that year; and Russell Browne & I  
spent four or five days tramping round Chatham, carrying a clumsy  
plane table, on which with aching frozen fingers I did my best to ~~draw~~<sup>mark</sup>  
out various triangulation points, aligning my ruler carefully on them -  
a task which I had learned long before at Woolwich. But the major  
was adamant and insisted that until I had become really profici-  
ent in triangulation it was useless to teach me the sextant. How  
I welcomed the approach of darkness each day when Russell Browne  
and I knocked off work and ~~the~~ <sup>we</sup> ~~gathered~~ <sup>gathered</sup> with a number of other  
Sapper Officers in front of a blazing fire in the spacious ante-room  
of that lovely old R.E. mess! At last the day arrived when I was  
to begin on the sextant: and <sup>by an odd chance</sup> the morning post brought me an  
official looking envelope from the Colonial Office. I tore it open and  
found that Mr Joseph Chamberlain (who signed himself by  
"obedient humble servant") was pleased to inform me that I  
had been selected for appointment as "a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Resident in  
Western Nigeria" at a salary of (I think) £480 pa. and that  
I should be expected to sail for West Africa as soon as I could make  
the necessary arrangements. That evening I was home again with  
my people at daylight, having said farewell for good to the R.E.  
School of Surveying and all my kind friends at Chatham.

There followed a hectic time getting my outfit necessary. I had  
been warned to take out supplies for 18 months - the then tour of ser-  
vice - and someone had given me the name of a firm in London which  
would not only advise me as to what was required but would also  
provide, pack, & send on board everything I chose to order, from  
cases of whisky & champagne to tins of biscuits, anchovy sauce,







beautiful enough in its way, but to my mind, ~~and~~ overpowering.  
I saw little of my host the day, for my ship was due to sail at noon,  
so I took my leave directly breakfast was over, & was conducted on  
board again by the charming, mannered Ansi. Freetown itself is a  
busy looking town, with crowds of negroes & Europeans in their best &  
highest clothes who behaved rather as if the town belonged to them.  
The whitefolk were more interested. The harbour is pretty, and  
capacious, but there is no dock; ships have to lie in midstream  
and their cargo landed in lighters & the passengers in small launches  
or rowboats. The rock, ~~paradoxically~~ shaped like a lion couchant,  
from which the port takes its name, overhangs the harbour with  
the town nestling at its foot, and looks as hot as it feels.

After Sierra Leone we turned eastwards, heading for what our  
geography books tell us is the "Bight of Benin" where few come  
over, though many go in." Off the coast of Liberia we picked up a  
berth of Kru boys, so essential to every ship in these sultry latitudes  
and then we made our way past the French Ivory Coast till we  
came to the Gold Coast, anchoring off those deadly looking places Axim,  
Cape Coast Castle and Accra to land our passengers. "The Coast", as

it is usually called, certainly did not look inviting. <sup>We saw a</sup> long low  
sandy beach <sup>was</sup> fringed with mangrove trees, <sup>which</sup> the surf continually <sup>was</sup> breaking,  
although the sea appeared smooth & stilled. A few  
palms <sup>we could just discern</sup> were here & there broke the monotony, <sup>in the distance, inland,</sup> a  
line of hills, dim in the sultry haze.

The passengers on the <sup>(TARQUAN)</sup> were for the most part District  
Officers going out to their appointments in one or other of the West  
African colonies: a few "old hands" - traders, or men <sup>employed in</sup>  
since the gold industry: one or two nurses going <sup>to join the staff of</sup> hospitals  
at Accra or Lagos: and one officer <sup>on first appointment to</sup> the West African  
Frontier Force. I struck up a great friendship with a young  
man in the Public Works Department of Northern Nigeria, Cyril  
Riddell by name, a friendship destined to last undiminished







the Tarquach when we felt the little steamer bump and  
shiver as it made its way over the nine-foot bar, and we  
found ourselves steaming slowly up a wide, muddy-look, river  
with dense mangrove growth on either side, ~~bordering~~ <sup>lining</sup> the  
water's edge - the Forçados branch of the Niger delta. ~~Soon~~  
a clearing in the bush appeared ahead of us on our right,  
with a cluster of sheds, ~~their~~ sides and roofs of corrugated  
iron, and ~~an~~ <sup>a</sup> ~~small~~ <sup>wooded</sup> landing stage, alongside which our  
skipper proceeded to moor his ship. This was Forçados, an  
important ~~station~~ <sup>station</sup> of the Niger Company. But our stay here  
was short, and before long we were once more heading up-  
stream for Buriutu, another of the Niger Company's stations,  
where we were to embark on the stern-wheeler which was  
to take us up to Lokoja, where the river Bérinè flows  
into the Niger, and which had been the capital of ~~the~~  
Nigeria when the latter first became a Government Pro-  
tectorate. As we approached Buriutu we saw on the  
wharf a cluster of eagerly expectant natives watching  
our arrival - the "boys", i.e. cooks & houseboys with a  
smattering of pidgin English and <sup>knowledge</sup> of the "whiteman's ways",  
who were on the look-out for new masters to replace  
those who had gone home on leave and left them behind.  
Directly we landed we were surrounded by these "boys"  
who thrust into our hands somewhat ragged & dirty,  
pieces of paper, usually known as "chits", purporting  
to be recommendations from previous masters with whom  
they had served. I say "purporting to be" advisedly,  
since some of these "chits" were found on examination  
to be anything but recommendations - I need hardly <sup>all</sup>  
say that none of the owners could read a word of them and  
were therefore necessarily ignorant of what was written on  
them. "One very good cook," said one of the boys, making up



to me excitedly. "You see my chit." I glanced at the dirty bit of paper which he thrust into my hand. "The bearer of this," I read, "is the biggest rogue I have struck in this country, and that says a lot. He is a thief and a liar, and dirty to boot. Cave canem." Riddale and other two companions were of course being similarly assailed, but in due course all four of us had made the selection which seemed most promising, and the disappointed candidates melted away, to try their luck with the next batch of new animals. I had engaged as cook a cheery looking man who claimed to be a pagan from the Bauchi Province, <sup>and</sup> who spoke tolerable English and fluent Hausa; and as houseboy a kupa whose language qualifications were similar. Both produced quite good "chits," and indeed I found them as satisfactory as could be expected, and I kept them both throughout that fourteen months tour, and was in many ways sorry to part with them when my time came to go home on leave.

Having engaged servants our next job was to get them to sort out our personal belongings for the huge pile of baggage put ashore, and carry them to the stern-wheeler "KAMPALA" moored a little further upstream, waiting to take us and the mails and cargo to Lokoja. These <sup>vessels</sup> ~~steamers~~, propelled by two great paddle wheels at the stern, draw ~~only~~ <sup>but</sup> 3 or 4 feet of water, and are the only type capable of navigating the Niger, at any rate in the dry season when the water is low; for this river, notwithstanding its length - it rises at the back of Sierra Leone - is for the most part shallow in its lower reaches, and sand banks abound. For this reason it is impossible to travel by night. During the hours of darkness <sup>the stern-wheeler</sup> ~~they~~ anchor under lee of the river bank, resuming their journey directly the first ray of daylight enables the pilot to see his way. Long experience ~~usually~~ gives these native pilots an almost uncanny ability to sense







line, but the rest of the cargo was stowed below deck as is cus-  
tomary. It was about 9 o'clock in the morning, and I had just  
shaved & had my bath & dressed & was enjoying a cigarette while my  
boy was preparing breakfast. It was a lovely sunny morning,  
and we were in a pretty reach of the river with picturesque  
forest on either bank, & I was admiring the scenery and thro-  
roughly enjoying myself. Suddenly there was a crash, and I  
was almost thrown on to my feet. The captain gave a quick  
order to the engineer, & a great hubbub rose from all the natives  
below deck. Fortunately, there was a sand bank just ahead  
on our port bow, and the captain was just able to run the  
ship on to this <sup>and beach her</sup> ~~low water mark~~, the water pouring in through a  
great hole that had been torn in the bows by a submerged tree trunk.  
~~Although the explosion was very powerful, the damage was not serious.~~  
~~Fortunately, the~~  
~~ammunition we were carrying was, as I have said,~~  
~~stowed on the upper deck, so no harm~~  
was done to it. With a speed which astonished me the captain set  
about repairing the damage, passing a tarpaulin under the bows so as to  
cover the gaping hole, getting the crew on the pumps to empty out the  
water. Fortunately, another sternwheeler was coming up-river  
only an hour or so behind us, and we were able to transfer our  
elves & all the cargo on to her and continue our journey to Lokoja  
leaving the crippled ship to make such <sup>temporary</sup> repairs as were possible and  
make her way to Lokoja where she could be docked and made fit  
once more for service. The Marine Department of Northern Nigeria  
had a difficult task in keeping river communications - in which  
at that time Northern Nigeria was wholly dependent - running  
with any sort of regularity, especially in view of the fact that  
it was, like every other Govt. Dep't, necessarily kept very short  
of funds, and had to "make do" as best it could, on the ex-  
iguous sum allotted to it. In those early years, the <sup>local</sup> revenues  
of Northern Nigeria was altogether insufficient to meet the



administrative expenses, and an annual grant was made by the Imperial Government to bridge the gap between revenue and expenditure, and the Imperial Treasury naturally took every care that this grant should be as small as possible. Sir Frederick Lugard, with a loyalty characteristic of him, accepted the situation and imposed on the Protectorate and every Department in it, the most rigid economy down to the smallest detail, and cut all the estimates of expenditure down to the bone. Carelessness and extravagance on the part either of a Department or an individual were visited with his utmost displeasure, and woe betide the official found guilty of either: he might find his prospects of promotion seriously jeopardized.

To return to my narrative after this long digression, the four of us managed to get settled in on S.W. KAMPALA shortly after 4 o'clock, and our boys made us some very welcome tea; and about 5 o'clock, passengers and cargo being "all aboard", we loosed our moorings, the Captain gave the order "Slow ahead", the paddles began to revolve and thrash the water, and in a few minutes we found ourselves in mid-stream, making our way up the channel, with dense forest on either side of us. When darkness fell, the Captain selected a suitable spot under lee of a high bank where we anchored for the night. Our boys prepared a meal of a sort for us, and afterwards set up our camp beds in a row on the deck, each with its indispensable mosquito net, and we turned in early after our long and exciting day.

Next morning we resumed our journey as soon as it was light enough to see, and I was out of bed the moment I heard the first movements of the crew, anxious to miss nothing of this new and, to me, thrilling experience. A splash in my little canvas bath in the tiny room allotted for the purpose, a hasty shave, and I was ready for anything, especially for my breakfast which my boy had been preparing while I was dressing. A thin silk shirt and a pair of khaki slacks formed I found an ideal costume for the occasion, for the atmosphere was sultry even at that time of the morning, and



our rate of progression was not sufficient to create much breeze. Soon we had left the Forcados branch of the delta and we were now in the main stream of the ~~Niger~~<sup>river</sup>, still with thick forest on either bank. From time to time we reached a clearing in the forest and came upon a village, consisting of a cluster of circular thatched huts: directly the inhabitants sighted our steamer they would jump into their canoes and swarm round our ship, shouting & gesticulating, & we would throw them empty bottles, empty tins - anything in fact that we had done with and didn't want - and they would either catch them or dive into the river to recover them. Often their canoes would capsize but this was nothing to the occupants, for all these villages are as much at home in the water as out. The scene was one of which I never tired on that first journey of mine up the Niger, though subsequently its novelty wore off and I regarded such episodes with the same indifference that Ridsdale displayed on this occasion.

I think it was on the morning of the fourth day after our departure for Benin that we reached Lokoja and tied up alongside the wharf. Here was what looked like a vast expanse of water, for ~~this~~ Lokoja lies at the confluence of <sup>two great rivers -</sup> the Niger, flowing from north to south, with the Benue, a broad river coming in from the east and mixing its waters with those of the Niger.

Leaving my two boys to collect my belongings, I landed and walked up to the Court house where I was told I should find the Resident of the Province, Kabba, of which Lokoja is the capital, my instructions being to report to him on my arrival. The Court house I found to be a fair-sized house, built, native-wise, of wattle & mud with a large thatched roof. The floor was of beaten mud, and at the end farthest from the door was a kind of dais, also of mud, standing 2 or 3 feet above the level of the rest of the room. Outside, the thatched roof was brought down well below the walls so as to form a kind of verandah all round the house, well protected from sun and rain. The building itself stood at one end of



of a large grassy open space, such as in India would be called a "maidan", and on either side of this were rows of bungalows, ~~with~~ with wide intervals between them, and at the far end I could see a large rectangular building with thatched roof which I guessed - correctly as it turned out - to be the Officers Mess of the battalion of the Northern Nigerian Regiment of the W.A.A.F. which had its depot and Headquarters at Lokoja. The bungalows seemed to be all of one pattern, with sides and roofs of corrugated iron, raised on iron uprights about 5 feet above the ground. A narrow flight of wooden steps led up to a broad verandah, looking on to which were the 2, or in some cases 3 rooms of which the bungalows were composed. Behind each bungalow and a short distance from it was a small kitchen of corrugated iron, and quarters for the native boys and their women-folk.

I found the Resident at the Court-house, sitting at a table on the dais, with a native clerk in European clothes and an interpreter in native clothes in attendance, whilst on the verandah were a couple of native policemen in dark blue uniform and a crowd of natives of both sexes and all kinds. The Resident, whom I will call M., greeted me cordially when I introduced myself, and said that he was expecting me, and that he had orders to keep me in Lokoja until instructions were sent as to my posting. Sir Frederick Lugard, he explained, had gone up to Kano and Sokoto to install the new Emirs, and the Deputy High Commissioner, Sir William Wallace, was temporarily in charge of the Protectorate at the capital, Zungeru, but could not send any orders about my posting until he had got in touch with Sir Frederick and received his instructions. M. told me that he had arranged for my temporary accommodation in a spare bungalow, and would send a messenger with me to show ~~me~~ me where it was. He added that when I had sent for my boys &



my belongings from the wharf and settled in, he would be very glad if I would walk across and have lunch with him at his bungalow, which he pointed out to me. It took me no time to summon my boys and get them to bring up all my belongings and unpack my bed & bedding and such clothes & necessities as I wanted, and by the time we had settled ourselves in, it was just on one o'clock, and time to walk across to Mr. bungalow for lunch.

M. was waiting for me, & we sat down to lunch in his comparatively furnished bungalow. Somewhat to my surprise I learnt that he had been only a few weeks in the country, for he looked as if he were between 40 and 50 and seemed therefore to be rather old for a new recruit. It appeared that Lugard had wanted a lawyer for Lokoja, as several trading firms were established there and he thought it advisable to appoint someone with legal knowledge. It did not take long to dawn on me however that no more unsuitable man than M. could possibly have been selected for what was in fact pioneering work in a new country. M. had lived most of his life in London and had never been abroad. What legal practice he had had after being called to the bar - and I gather it had been very little - was of an academic nature, & the worst possible training for work amongst primitive African natives. He was also of a timid nature, nervous and easily scared, and the most gullible man that I have ever met. On the voyage out he had been <sup>regaled</sup> with all sorts of absurd stories about "life in the African bush", about lions & wild animals in general, about the climate & conditions of living, and about the natives, <sup>most of them concocted for his special benefit.</sup> On arrival at Lokoja he had been the object of all sorts of practical jokes on the part of young subalterns in the W.A.A.F. and others. Partly as the result of this and partly because he had no interest in anything but legal technicalities and the dignity of the magistrature bench he



had never attempted to tour his District or go outside Lokoja and its Courthouse, and it is hardly too much to say that he was the best - innocent and unsuspecting - of everyone in Lokoja, more especially the military. I tried my best during lunch to get from him some idea of ~~the~~ the duties of a Political Officer in Nigeria, and what his daily routine was, but I had no success. He did tell me however that every Resident in charge of a Province had to send to the High Commissioner at the end of each month a Report giving particulars of all the work done in his Province during the month under separate heads - Administrative, Judicial, Public Works, Medical, Police, &c. I asked him therefore if he would mind letting me see the copies of the last few monthly Reports <sup>of his Province,</sup> as I thought that by reading them through I might get some idea of the work that I should have to do. <sup>For, being</sup> ~~entirely ignorant~~ <sup>entirely ignorant</sup> of civil administrative affairs, my training & experience up to date having been solely military, I was anxious to learn what I could of the nature of the duties I should be called upon to perform. M. replied ~~with some diffidence~~ that he would certainly send me over that afternoon the office copy of the only two Reports that he had so far sent in, but he added with some diffidence, I thought, that he feared there wasn't much in them.

He was as good as his word, for the same afternoon when I had returned to my bungalow, a uniformed messenger came over from the Courthouse and handed me a file of papers "with the Resident's compliments." I seized them with avidity and started on the Reports. But M. had told the stark truth when he said he feared there wasn't much in them. Apart from a few dry and unimportant facts and dull statistics, all that he had found to report to the High Commissioner concerning Katsina Province and Lokoja was that the lock of the Courthouse door was out of order and that he had not yet been able to find anyone to mend it; and that he



had given much thought as to what "forensic habit" he should wear when taking cases in Court, since he considered that his barrister wig would be too hot for the Lokoja climate, and had finally decided to wear a short black alpaca coat when on the bench, and "trusted that His Excellency would approve." On reading these extraordinary trivialities I sat back and tried to imagine what Lugard, immersed in the countless & intricate problems involved in setting up an efficient administration in a tract of African country about the size of Prussia <sup>combined,</sup> ~~Prussia~~, would think of this Report of one of the fourteen Provinces - many of them as big as or bigger than Ireland - into which he had divided the Protectorate. Lugard, as I found when I came to know him, suffered fools with marvellous patience, but not gladly.

Some days passed at Lokoja before the eagerly expected news of my posting arrived. The W.A.F. extended much hospitality to me, making me an honorary member of their mess and inviting me to dinner as a honor Guest on their Guest night. But at long last a telegram arrived from the Secretary to the Govt at Zungeru informing me that I was posted to the Province of Zaria and was to proceed at once to Wushishi in that Province and take over from the Hon. A. Bailey who was going home on leave. Wushishi, I found, was the headquarters of a small District in the south of Zaria Province, and was only a few miles from Zungeru, the capital of the Protectorate. To get there, one travelled up the Niger by a small steamer - whichever until one reached the spot where the river Kaduna, coming from the north, joined the ~~Niger~~ Niger. Here one embarked in a native canoe which was poled & paddled up this shallow stream for several days till a place called Bari Tuko was reached, & from here a tiny two-foot gauge railway had been built to Zungeru, a distance of about 26 miles. Wushishi was about <sup>eight</sup> 8 miles from Zungeru.



When I went to the Marine Dept<sup>s</sup> to make arrangements for my journey upstream I found that a passage had already been booked for me on ~~the~~ one of the tiny stern wheelers, <sup>the "Black Swan"</sup> flying up the Niger beyond Lokofa, and to my great delight I learnt that Ridsdale was to be my companion and that we were to start next day. I ordered my boys to get my things together and make all preparations for our move, and I spent the afternoon saying farewell to M. and the W.A.A.F. officers <sup>next</sup> who had shown me hospitality in Lokofa. ~~Next morning~~ <sup>morning</sup> Ridsdale and I met on the little "Black Swan" and were soon thrashing our way upstream. It took us I think 3 days to get up to Murreji, where the shallow Kaduna, flowing in from the north, joins the Niger, which here runs from west to east; and here Ridsdale and I changed from the "Black Swan" to native canoes which were to take us up the Kaduna to Banijoko. March is <sup>nearly</sup> the end of the dry season, and all the rivers are then at their lowest. The flat-bottomed dug-out canoes to which we proceeded to transfer ourselves, our boys, and our belongings, hardly drew more than a foot of water, and were propelled by means of long poles, after the fashion of a punt ~~on~~ the Thames. A ~~straw~~ straw mat tied to four upright sticks protected the middle of the canoe - where there was just room for 2 deck chairs - from the sun and rain. One stalwart native worked his pole in the bow, the other in the stern, and the men would cheerfully keep at this ~~exhaustive~~ <sup>exhaustive</sup> work for hours at a time, often bursting into song, or crack jokes with their companions, whilst Ridsdale and I sat in our deck chairs in the scantiest of clothing, chatting, reading, writing, or just idly watching the scenery. Our boys, with our cooking utensils, our stores and our motley accumulation of boxes and baggage, followed us in another canoe. At meal times we would usually make a halt by a sandbank, when the boys would jump ashore, cook our meal, shove it to us in our deck chairs. At dusk we would select a suitable







station caused over wide tracts of these Northern Provinces of Nigeria by the habitual slave-raiding carried out by the Mahomedan Emir who had, previous to our arrival, ruled the land. Most of the Emirs spent a great part of the dry season roaming the country with their hordes of horsemen, raiding the pagan tribes for slaves and living at the expense of the Mahomedan inhabitants. Slave-raiding was in fact the chief occupation of most of the Emirs & their henchmen during something like half the year, and their principal means of livelihood. Slaves were property, slaves were currency, ~~wealth~~ and the ownership of slaves meant wealth and ease. Slavery was the basis of the social organization of those parts: it was recognized in the Koran as a part of the natural order of human society. Nor was the state of slavery in itself by any means wholly evil. The Koran prescribes the duties and responsibilities which the owner owes to his slave; ~~should~~ <sup>hence</sup> if he ~~fails~~ <sup>fails</sup> to carry them out the slave <sup>is</sup> ~~was~~ entitled to lay his complaint before the Judge, who <sup>is</sup> ~~was~~ bound to decide the case according to Koranic law. The slave <sup>in Nigeria</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> therefore had no need to take thought for the morrow, being assured of food, clothing and accommodation, provided by his master, as well as care and medicine in case of sickness. True, he or she was a chattel, and could be sent to the market place and there exposed for sale, examined in the crudest manner by likely buyers, and finally sold to some entire stranger and put to any sort of work that his or her purchaser might ordain. But in the last analysis the state of slavery was by no means as bad as most people in this country imagined and still imagine it to be. What was insupportably savage and cruel was the enslavement of free men & women, and the bloodshed, devastation, and ruthlessness with which this was effected by means of slave raids, and the callousness with which slaves were transported to the slave markets and there exposed for sale. It was this aspect of slavery which aroused the humanitarian feelings



of every decent man and woman who learned the conditions under which slavery in Africa was carried on, and which Livingstone ~~was~~ brought so passionately to the notice of the British people and the British Government. This it was that stired the feelings of men like Sir John Kirk and Captain Lugard in East Africa, and Sir George Goldie in West Africa, and led <sup>to</sup> so much of the territory of tropical Africa being brought under British control.

And now to return to my journey with Ridsdale up the Kaduna. Notwithstanding the efforts of the men pulling at their poles from dawn till dusk day after day, progress was incredibly slow. Not only did we have to make our way against the current, but the river itself, flowing through that flat, open country, twisted and turned uncessantly, so that to make one mile's advance as the crow flies we often had to ~~cross~~ <sup>push our way through</sup> two or even three miles of water. To Ridsdale, who was doing his third tour, I think, the journey was frankly boring: but to me, a novice, it was supremely interesting and exciting, and I revelled in every moment of it. Lying in my camp chair under the mat awning, watching the banks go by, chatting, reading, writing, and every now and then slipping over the side of the canoe and wading off with my gun, all under a blue sky and a hot sun, - this to me was fascinating and I never tired of it. And, perhaps best of all were the nights, camping on a sandbank, when we had had our hot bath and a good dinner under a gorgeous clear sky, sparkling with stars, and we sat and chatted before turning in still under that marvellous canopy of stars, with the cool air gently blowing over our mosquito nets, soothing & fresh after the heat of the day. I would generally fall into a deep sleep within a few minutes of putting my head on the pillow, and only wake at dawn when the camp began to stir. If by chance I did wake during the night, there would be the semi-glorious galaxy of stars overhead, the same cool breeze rustling my mosquito net, and the



faint ripple of the river as it flowed quietly past the sandbank.

At long last we reached the spot where the river was no longer navigable, even in shallow, dug-out canoes. And there, on the top of a twenty foot high cliff, was a quaint little train awaiting our arrival. It consisted of a small locomotive and four trucks, the one nearest the engine covered in by a roof of canvas with flaps of the same material forming the sides, the other three being open, similar to the usual railway truck at home. The latter were already loaded up with building materials and Public Works stores of all kinds. A galvanized iron tank raised some ten feet above the permanent way on iron supports, and several stacks of log-wood neatly arranged alongside the track, served <sup>to supply</sup> the tiny locomotive with ~~water~~ <sup>water</sup> and fuel. A rough platform, with a small corrugated iron hut, and a few open sheds with corrugated iron roofs, completed the picture of this modest railway "terminus" which met my eyes as I clambered up from the canoe. I greeted the white engine driver, who was raising steam on his engine, with a cheery "Good morning" and received a curt and rather gruff "mornin'" in reply. Very soon Ridsdale's boys and mine had carried our deck chairs out of the canoes and placed them in the covered-in truck where they formed the sole seating accommodation, and ~~they~~ <sup>the boys</sup> then transferred the whole of our belongings to the same truck, piling them neatly at the end not occupied by our chairs. By the time this was completed the engine driver had managed to get steam up, and with a piercing scream from the whistle, the train moved slowly off on its way to Zungern along the single-track, two-foot gauge line. My own destination was, I knew, Wushiki, some 8 or 9 miles short of Zungern, & here I was to part with Ridsdale whose destination was the capital itself. Our route lay over open country, mostly covered with scrub, but occasionally we came across a collection of mud huts with thatched roofs - insignificant villages with a certain amount of cultivation round them. Our rate of progress was certainly not fast - I reckoned that our best pace was little more than twenty miles an hour, and whenever an incline, no matter how slight, had to



be negotiated, it fell to considerably less. At long last, when we had been travelling for almost three quarters of an hour, I saw a solitary figure standing by the side of the track ahead of us: the engine driver slackened speed, applied his brakes, & pulled up. This was Wushishi, & the solitary figure awaiting me was Arthur Bailey, whom I was to relieve. He gave me a cheery welcome, and said he had brought a few carriers to take charge of my loads & transport them to the bungalow, which, he told me, was only a few hundred yards away. I said farewell to Riddick as soon as all my possessions had been lifted down for the train, and promised to come & see him in Zungwa at the earliest opportunity: the whistle screamed, the train moved slowly off, and before I knew where I was I found myself walking with Bailey to the bungalow which I could now see at no distance. On arrival I found it was exactly like those with which I had become so familiar in Lokoja - raised 4 or 5 feet on iron supports, roof sides of corrugated iron, & steps leading up to a broad verandah on to which it 2 rooms opened. Bailey had a good meal ready for me, and while we ate it on the verandah, my boys had collected all my possessions in the room I was to occupy, had put together my camp bed, ~~made~~ <sup>set</sup> out my camp furniture and immediate necessities, and made the little room look quite comfortable.

That night Bailey & I sat up till long after midnight, exchanging our news, such as it was, sitting in long chairs in the verandah, and it wasn't till close on one o'clock that we turned in. He was going home on leave directly he had handed over to me, and he gave me some sort of idea of the work which lay ahead of me. Wushishi, I found, was not a village of any importance itself, and had in fact, prior to our arrival, been merely a fair-sized slave camp, a sort of base for slave-raiding expeditions. All the surrounding district was inhabited by pagans, mostly belonging to a tribe called Gwari: but these Gwaris were themselves split up into small ~~groups~~ <sup>communities</sup>, each independent, under its own Chief or headman, chosen by the people. These autonomous communities they would usually - though not always - combine for war, if attacked.



but in times of peace each guarded its independence jealously and brooked no interference. All this made administration somewhat difficult, since each Gwari tribe - generally consisting of one fair sized walled town, with a few insignificant villages nearby - had to be dealt with separately. There was no Head Chief with whom one could deal. Wushishi - this old slave-camp - had a polyglot population at whose head was a Fulani who claimed a shadowy kind of suzerainty over the surrounding Gwaris, which however none of them admitted: indeed, all of them hotly contested any such claim.

I must explain that the Fulanis are a race whose origin is obscure and history unknown. The pure Fulani is light-skinned, almost red-skinned, and, so far from being negroid, is Asiatic or Semitic in feature, and I was often struck by the odd likeness between the pure Fulani and the Afghans, or the Pathan tribes of the N.W. frontier of India. Many ~~theories~~ <sup>theories</sup> have been ~~made~~ <sup>put forward</sup> as to their origin, and it has been suggested that they are descended from the Hyksos or Shepherd Kings <sup>of</sup> ~~the~~ ~~ancient~~ ~~Egypt~~ Egypt. And it is curious that to-day the pure Fulani is to be found leading a nomadic life in the northern States of Nigeria, tending his cattle. Our earliest history of them however shows them as living in the far west of Africa in the hinterland of what is now known as Sierra Leone, and from here they seem to have made their way gradually, with their herds of cattle, eastwards towards the Hausa States. They were early converts to Islam, and about 150 years ago they staged a semi-religious revolt against the then mainly pagan dynasties that reigned in the Hausa States. Their leader, one dan Fodio, made himself master of Sokoto, <sup>and</sup> assumed, or was given by his followers, the title of Seiki-n-musulmin, or Chief of the Muslims. <sup>Certain</sup> ~~Some~~ of his followers made themselves masters of the semi-independent Hausa States which composed the large tract of country which we call Hausa-land, and converted the inhabitants to Islam. When British explorers first made contact with this part of Africa, <sup>in the early part of the 19th century,</sup> crossing the Sahara desert from Tripoli, they found each of the Hausa States



ruled by the Fulani Emir, owing a shadowy allegiance to the Sultan of Sokoto, though in practice each State was independent and autonomous. The Fulani seems to possess a singular gift for leadership and also for administration, and the Hausas ~~never~~ <sup>appear</sup> to have from the first accepted the rule of the Fulani without demur. It was not altogether autocratic, for each Fulani Emir had around him a number of Hausa office-holders on whose support he largely relied and to whom he looked for advice and for the details of administration. On the death of any Fulani Emir his successor was chosen from among his relatives or descendants, mainly on merit: but the choice ~~was~~ <sup>was always restricted to</sup> the members of the "Royal house" <sup>in the family of the original Fulani ruler.</sup> San Jodio's astonishing victories synchronized fairly closely with those of Napoleon. But by the time we arrived in northern Nigeria the Fulani rulers had become so mixed with Hausa and negro blood that many were not easily distinguishable, either in colour or physiognomy from the Hausas. ~~Now~~ Their ability and their mental ~~alter-~~ <sup>however,</sup> alertness were <sup>strongly</sup> marked, and this was made evident by the excellent system of administration which prevailed under their rule. Courts of justice were in existence, presided over by a Judge, or Alkali as he was locally known, well versed in Koranic law. There were schools - although the pupils were taught little except learning portions of the Koran by heart - and there were jails of a sort for malefactors. There was a regular system of taxation - though this was spoiled by the existence of rapacious tax collectors and the custom of farming out taxes. On the whole, however, it may be said that when the British Government took over the administration of Nigeria, there was found in the northern Provinces under the Fulani Emirs a degree of civilization comparable with large parts of Morocco & North Africa. Injustice, extortion, cruelty, & rapacity of course existed - it would have been absurd to imagine that under the semi-autocratic rule of the Emirs they would not be found. But on the whole, the Moslem Hausas - traders, craftsmen and peasants - of the northern Emirates enjoyed a very fair share of freedom and justice, and were able to live their own lives in comparative



peace and comfort.

With the pagan population of Nigeria it was very different. There were <sup>pagan</sup> tribes and communities scattered over the greater part of Nigeria, in every stage of civilization from that of the Gwaris, which was little if at all inferior to the Hausas', down to the most primitive ~~types~~ type of cannibal. An immense number of languages were spoken by these tribesmen, and in a large majority of cases each village formed a separate and independent community, living its own life according to its own habits and customs under its own Headmen or Elders, and holding no intercourse with the ~~tribes~~ world outside its own boundaries. For centuries they had been subjected to sporadic slave raids. Many of the villages were hidden away in dense bush, many were situated on the tops of rocky hills out of the reach of slave-raiding horsemen. Some villages and even tribes had purchased a precarious security, from slave-raids by agreeing with the raiders to pay an annual tribute in slaves - mainly children, or persons suspected of witchcraft or who had in some way incurred the hostility of the community.

Obviously the administration of a country with such a social background presented a problem of first-class complexity. Only the barest outlines of its geographical features was known when we first occupied Northern Nigeria, and the approximate position of a few of its largest towns. The location of the various Hausa Emirates was known vaguely, <sup>but</sup> their boundaries were mostly a matter of guesswork. Outside these Emirates the only thing that was known was that the land <sup>as I have said, by natives in every stage of civilization,</sup> was inhabited ~~by~~ living in scattered villages for the most part hidden in dense bush, each village a law unto itself, and in many cases speaking its own language.



Where these villages were, what tribes lived in them, whether there was any tribal organization, what manner of social life existed in them - these and a score of other questions kept to one's mind when one began to think of making contact with the ~~prosperous~~ strange tangle of unknown and unmapped pagan districts which lay outside the established Emirates.

During my talks with Psailly, I found out something about the Province to which I had been posted and in which Wushishi - and only a few miles away, Zungern, the newly built capital of Northern Nigeria - lay. The Province of Zaria as it then existed was about the size of Ireland, and roughly much the same shape. The town of Zaria, where the Fulani Emir of Zaria lived, was in the north of the Province, only about 40 miles from the boundary of Kano Province and on the high road to the great market town of Kano. About half of the Province of Zaria composed the Emirates, and consisted mainly of a great plain some 2000 feet above sea level covered with prosperous villages, surrounded by their farms and inhabited by Moslem Hausas. The Emir claimed authority likewise over a number of pagan areas, a claim usually disputed by the inhabitants of the latter, though some villages had paid an annual tribute in slaves to the Emir as a guarantee against being subjected to slave-raids by him. The remainder of the Province - that is to say, the southern half - was inhabited by pagan tribes independent of and mostly hostile to each other, and as I have said before, themselves split up into groups of villages, each group - and sometimes even a single village - regarding itself as independent and autonomous.

The Kano-Sokoto Expedition sent up by Lugard to Kano & Sokoto in the winter of 1902-3, <sup>to bring that northern part of the Protectorate under administrative control,</sup> and consisting entirely of native troops of the Northern Nigeria Regiment of the West Africa Frontier Force, with a handful of British officers and N.C.O.'s, had met with no opposition at Zaria itself, the Emir ~~himself~~ having fled to the



north and joined the Emir of <sup>Kano.</sup> ~~Zaria~~. Between Zaria & Kano - a distance of some 80 miles - it had met with slight opposition at one village only, and this had been overcome. The great city of Kano, surrounded by a high mud wall some 15 miles in circumference, put up a fight, but the Emir fled with his entourage when the W.A.F.F.'s stormed and carried the south gate, and the expedition moved on to Katsina & then to Sokoto, easily overcoming all resistance - Directly these towns had been occupied, Lugard himself went up and held a kind of Durbar in the capital city of each of the Emirates. Those Emirs who had remained at their posts and offered practically no resistance, Lugard confirmed in their offices and presented each with a handsome "staff of office" some 4 or 5 feet in length and with a heavily embossed silver head, the carrying of which was the sign that the bearer was endowed with full Government authority. Where an Emir had resisted and fled, or had absconded, Lugard after full enquiry as to who was the rightful heir, or was recognized as the most suitable successor, proclaimed him at a public function as Emir, installed him in office, and presented him with his "staff of office". Lugard invariably explained at these public ceremonies that the British came to introduce law and order and help the Chiefs in the development of their country, and that they had no intention of interfering at all with the religion of the inhabitants, nor with their customs and traditions so long as the latter were not contrary to humanitarian ideas; and that the authority of the Emirs and Chiefs would be respected and upheld by the British administration, provided it was exercised for the good of the people and in their interest. This was the beginning of what has since become known as "Indirect rule", and in order to show that <sup>the duty of</sup> administrative officers was to watch and guide the native rulers rather than instruct the latter in their duties, they were from the outset called "Residents", and not "District officers", <sup>or "District Commissioners"</sup> as had been the custom up to



them in our African and most of our other Colonies and Protectorates.

Bailey also told me that Lugard had appointed Captain Abadie as the first Resident of Zaria Province, with the rank of "2<sup>nd</sup> Class Resident" (there was then if I remember rightly only one "1<sup>st</sup> Class Resident" in Northern Nigeria, an officer taken over from the Niger Company which had administered Nigeria under the Company's Royal Charter until the Charter had been revoked and the administration of the whole country taken over by the British Gov<sup>t</sup>). Abadie, I learned, was with Lugard somewhere up-country, acting as his Chief Political Officer, and the Province was being administered by a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Resident now at Zaria, Reginald Popham-Lobb by name, who would in all probability be in charge for the next 6 months or so, as Lugard was going home on leave directly he returned for his tour of the Northern Emirates (which included the <sup>ceremonial</sup> installation of the various Emirs), and Abadie was to accompany him. Both would return, it was expected, about October. My own duties at Washishi were to administer, under Lobb's orders, the pagan districts in the neighbourhood. Though how precisely I was to "administer" these scattered and heterogeneous communities was not very clear to me. My long talk with Bailey that first night had indeed given me plenty to think of. The task ahead of me seemed alive with problems and difficulties, and I must confess to a feeling of some shame when I remembered that the motive which had caused me to throw up temporarily at any rate - my military career and come out somewhere light-heartedly to West Africa to take on a job <sup>for</sup> which I had <sup>no</sup> <sup>previous</sup> training or experience whatsoever, was ~~my~~ purely self-regarding longing for Romance and Adventure. Thinking it over, I now realized very clearly that I was not justified in taking up this task of the <sup>civil administration</sup> ~~administration~~ of a largely unknown and very extensive country in Africa unless I could devote my whole time and all my thoughts to doing something to benefit the inhabitants, to protect them from the horrors of slave-raiding, cruelty and injustice, and help



them to live their lives in peace and reasonable security and enjoy ultimately some part at least of the amenities and comforts which I felt sure that modern European civilization could bring to them.

The morning after my arrival at Wushishi, Bailey summoned the Emir of Wushishi to come to the bungalow - which served also as office and Court house - with his office bearers to be presented to me. The Emir was a tall, good looking Fulani, about 45 years of age I judged, wearing a long robe of local cotton, embroidered in front, and on his head a large white turban. He looked intelligent, though I thought I discerned a somewhat shifty ~~look~~ glance in his eyes as Bailey presented him to me and I clasped his hand and greeted him. He then called up his office bearers one by one and presented them to me, and after a few complimentary exchanges had taken place Bailey rose from his chair to signify that the interview was over. The Emir mounted his horse and rode back to the town accompanied by the large cortège with which he had arrived.

The following morning Bailey & I walked to the railway line and boarded the train as it came from Bai Jerko, and in about a quarter of an hour arrived at Zungeru.

Zungeru was a somewhat desolate spot which had been selected by Lugard about a year previously as the new capital for Northern Nigeria, mainly because it was as far north as could be reached by water transport; for during the rainy season the Kaduna river ~~could~~ carried enough water to render it navigable by the small stern wheelers and flat bottomed barges towed by them, whilst even at the end of the dry season native canoes - as I knew now by experience - could get up & down it. When Northern Nigeria had first come into existence as a British Protectorate - on the 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1900 - and Lugard had been appointed High Commissioner (the term "Governor" was avoided for political reasons), he made his first capital at Lokoja: after a few months he shifted it to Jebba on the Niger river where were the rapids that had caused the



death of the explorer Henry Park more than a hundred years previously. But he required for the capital of the new Protectorate a site more centrally located which would form a convenient base from which the great northern Emirates - Sokoto, Kano, Katsina, Zaria & Bauchi - could be administered, and after a few preliminary and rather hurried surveys had been made, Zungeru was chosen and a light 2 foot gauge railway, laid down to connect it with Beri-joko, the highest navigable point of the Kaduna. Building materials were hurriedly sent up, and bungalows for offices and as officers' residences were rapidly erected, banquets built, a hospital and a gaol. Government <sup>House</sup> was a long, low straggling <sup>building</sup> ~~house~~ of the usual bungalow style with corrugated iron roof and <sup>wooden</sup> sides, and a long deep verandah running the whole length. It was as simple & primitive as all the other bungalows, but Lugard never and for comfort, still less for any sort of pretentiousness, and refused to sanction anything but the simplest and least expensive building that would accommodate himself and his staff, his office, and an occasional guest or two.

Zungeru when I arrived there with Bailey that morning in early April 1903, struck me as a singularly uninviting spot. Corrugated iron bungalows covered a treeless, dusty <sup>rough and broken,</sup> expanse, and they seemed to be dotted about with a strange absence of plan, though in the centre of the "cantonment" <sup>(pronounced "cantonment")</sup> as it was called (following the custom in India) was an open square, three sides of which were formed by buildings of the usual monotonous pattern. This, I learnt from Bailey, was familiarly known as "Aiki Square", the word "aiki" being Hausa for "work", for the buildings were all offices where the various Departments of Government carried out their duties. Close to this was the one and only feature which redeemed Zungeru from pure sterility and ugliness - a stream which ran gaily through the Cantonment to the river Kaduna some



~~2~~ or ~~3~~ miles distant. At this time of year there was very little water in it, but it was bridged by an almost picturesque bridge of concrete, and in places it widened out into quite respectable pools. Government House was built on a <sup>low</sup> ridge not very far from "Aiki Square" and it was here that Bailey and I first directed our steps so that I might ~~pay~~ my duty call on the Deputy Governor, Sir William Wallace, who was living there during Lugard's absence up country. I contented myself with writing my name in the book, as I understood that Sir William was engaged in a conference with some of the Heads of Departments. Bailey and I then returned to "Aiki Square" in order that he might introduce me to the various Departments, and I was certainly ~~very~~ <sup>very</sup> agreeably surprised by the warm and cordial welcome we received everywhere. Cocktails were ordered, cigarettes offered, and these cheery officials whom I had imagined I should find with their noses to the grindstone seemed only too ready to knock off work, sit in their shirt sleeves at the edge of their tables and swap the latest yarns and exchange the newest jokes.

We got back to Wushishi in time for a late lunch, and I spent the afternoon going through the office files with Bailey, counting the official cash and seeing that it corresponded with the balance shown in the Cash Book, and generally "taking over." Next day he left by the litch train for Bari-juku where canoes were awaiting him to take him down the Kaduna to Mungiji, whence he would make his way down the Niger by way of Lokoja to Benin, and so home by the weekly Elda Steamer. My few days with him had been happy ones, and I said to myself that if all my fellow-officers were like him I should certainly enjoy my life and work in Nigeria.

The next day an <sup>official</sup> telegram arrived for me from Lord at Zaria. I have already said that he was in charge of the Province whilst Abadie was absent on Lugard's staff, and that it was intended that he should remain in charge until Abadie's



return from leave in October. What was my astonishment then to learn from the telegram that Lobb had been ordered home <sup>immediately</sup> by the Medical Dept. on account of ill health, and that I was to come up <sup>at once</sup> ~~immediately~~ to Zaria and take over the Province, closing down the Wushiki station for the time being as no one was available who could be sent there. Here was news indeed! I, an entirely inexperienced new-comer, was to take ~~over~~ charge of one of the largest and most important <sup>Provinces of the Protectorate</sup> ~~Provinces of the Protectorate~~, which had only been constituted a Province <sup>some months before</sup>, and accept full responsibility for its administration for a period of something like six months! Here indeed was an opportunity of which I had never dreamed. I decided to go at once into Zungern and hand over to the Treasury the government cash in the safe, prior to locking up the bungelows and closing down the station till some junior officer could be posted to the Province. I sent an urgent message to the Emir requesting him to send me the following morning the 40 carriers whom I reckoned I should need to carry all my personal possessions and stores up to Zaria, and I hurried to the railway line to await a signal the train bound from Bai-Tuko to Zungern. On arrival at the latter place I went straight for the office in "Aiki Square." But to my surprise instead of the cheery greetings with which I had been welcomed a few days before I found all the officers working apparently at high pressure at their desks with their heads buried in official files, and no offers of cigarettes or cocktails were made. What had come over them all, I wondered? I was not left long in doubt. It appeared that Lugard, whose return for his northern tour had not been expected for several days, had been making forced marches and covering the ground far more rapidly than anyone had anticipated, <sup>and</sup> was now on his march away and was expected the next day. Hence this sudden access of alarming industry and zeal. It gave me of an idea of the tremendous effect which his drive and energy and tireless passion for work had on all his subordinates, and I realized something of the fear which his attitude towards the slightest



slackness or lack of zeal or energy inspired. I got through my business as expeditiously as I could and was back in Washiki in time to pack and make all my preparations for my departure the next day.

I had requested the Emir to send the 40 carriers to me at the Bungalow at 10 o'clock, and by that hour I had everything packed, all the loads made ready, and had eaten a hearty breakfast so as to be thought ready for my first march. My destination was a rest-camp some 7 miles north of Zungera, <sup>and about 13 from Washiki,</sup> the first halting place for all convoys & travellers starting for the North - Zaria, Kano, Katsina & so on - from the Capital. Ten o'clock arrived, but no sign of carriers. I sent a messenger to Washiki to make enquiries. He returned with a message from the Emir informing me that he was experiencing great difficulties in collecting carriers, but would send them over directly he could procure them. Hour succeeded hour, and I sent message after message, each one more peremptory than the last, but it was not till close on one o'clock next day that a crowd of about 40 natives arrived under an escort from the Emir, and my boys & I were able to distribute the loads between them and send them off to the rest-camp. When I had seen all the carriers off and my boys with them, I locked up the Bungalow, mounted my horse, and set out on my journey. It was intolerably hot, and the 27 hours delay in procuring the carriers had somewhat exasperated me, together with all the fuss & trouble of getting the assortment of loads distributed - each carrier not unreasonably wished for the lightest and easiest-looking load, and the hub-bub caused by this had lasted a good half hour before a start could be made. However, I consoled myself by the thought that I had at least made a start, and that if all went well I should be in Zaria in Kwele Dapo's time. The total distance, I knew, was about 150 miles, and there were rest-camps roughly every 12 or 15 miles.

I rode at a leisurely pace, not more than 3 or 4 miles an hour, for I wanted my boys and all the carriers to get into camp before



me. If there chanced to be any stragglers, I ~~was~~ <sup>decided</sup> I could round them up. The road was nothing but a track running through the bush, and the scenery, though monotonous was not unattractive. I had not been riding for more than an hour or half, or possibly two hours, however, before I spied something lying on the track ahead of me - it was one of my wooden boxes of stores brought out from home. But there was no sign of a carrier. When I reached it I dismounted, and presently gave a shout, in case the carrier had laid down his load to have an afternoon snooze, & was somewhere near by. No answer came however, though I searched the bush all round I could find no signs of a carrier either awake or asleep, and I could not escape the conclusion that he had just laid down his load and done a bolt, probably back to his native village. There was no alternative but to ride on, & on reaching camp to send the Headman of the caravan back with one of the men to bring the load in. Before I reached camp however I had come upon at least three more of my loads abandoned by the roadside, so when I reached camp between five & six in the evening I sent back the Headman of the carriers with 3 or 4 of the latter, & by nightfall all the loads were all in.

It would be tiresome to tell the story of my twelve days on the march to Zaria and my constant trouble with deserting carriers. Poor devils, I didn't blame them, for I soon learnt that most of them were just villagers, farmers from a number of the Gwari & other villages round Wushishi. They had been impressed for this, to them, most distasteful job. The Emir of Wushishi had sent out messages to the Headmen of the surrounding villages, ordering <sup>them</sup> in the name of the ~~Emir~~ <sup>White</sup> Whiteman (Known in Hausa as the "Bature", <sup>(Pr. "Batoori")</sup> by which name I shall henceforth refer to him, as it is as universal through Northern Nigeria as the word "Sahib" is in India), to send in <sup>such & such a number</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> his villagers (the number demanded depended on the size of the village) to



carry the Batura's loads to Zaria. Now apart from their dislike of being used as carriers, the villagers ~~disliked~~ had the strongest objection to leaving their villages just when the first rains were expected and they wanted to prepare their farms for the sowing of their crops. Naturally then, these simple villagers dropped their loads as soon as opportunity occurred, & went straight back to their farms. How I managed to get my 40 odd loads up to Zaria I can't precisely remember, but it gave me, a novice, a pretty bad headache. Sometimes I would get the Headman of one of the villages where the Rest camps were, to give me a dozen or so men to carry my loads to the next village, where I would pay them off & let them return home at once. And about mid-way in my journey I came across a Sapper NCO in charge of a party erecting a telegraph line, and finding he had something like 100 professional carriers (some being M'ombas from Southern Nigeria) I asked him to dine with me, gave him as good a dinner as my cook could manage, and as much whisky & sodas as he wanted, and then got him to lend me 10 of his men to carry that number of loads - my personal necessities - to Zaria.

Had it not been for this perpetual worry about carriers I should have enjoyed that twelve-day march more than I can possibly say. The track wound its way for some distance through woods which threw welcome shadows across my path, and over streams which at that season carried not more than a foot or two of water, rippling over their stony beds, but which my boys told me became raging torrents in the rainy season. At distances varying from about 12 miles to 20 or more, Government had constructed rest camps, if that is not too flattering a name to give them. They consisted merely of a open space cleared in the bush, with one large circular mud hut of the pattern I had come to know so well, with large thatched



roof overhanging a mud-floored verandah, which was thus protected from sun and rain, & could accommodate all one's boxes & stores, and where one could have one's bed mosquito net placed if one didn't care to sleep inside the hut. Behind this hut were a couple of small mud huts for use as kitchen & boys' sleeping quarters, while some distance away were a couple of rows of little conical huts of reeds for the carriers, in case of rain - otherwise they usually preferred to sleep on the ground out of doors, with a camp fire to keep the mosquitoes off.

On arrival at the Rest camp one was met by a deputy for the Headman (or Séríkí as I shall henceforth call him) bringing a chicken or two, some eggs & possibly some sweet potatoes, for which one paid the prevalent price which was uncommonly small. The carriers would go off to the village and buy their own food. In the late afternoon I would probably go off with my gun in the hopes of getting a quincefowl or a partridge, either of which was always a welcome addition to one's larder. When darkness fell, my boy would bring in a huge kerosene tin full of hot water which he had been preparing for my bath, and I would enjoy the luxury, after the day's fatigues, of a glorious hot tub, then get into my pyjamas, pull on my mosquito boots, and in a short time my boy would bring me my dinner with the usual ceremonial announcement "Chop lib for table" - "Dinner (or food) is on ('lives for') the table". After dinner I would have my deck chair placed outside the hut, & wrapping a ~~blank~~ towel round my legs to keep off the mosquitoes, would light a pipe and read or write by the aid of a "hurricane lamp" (burning kerosene), or I would just sit in the dark under the gorgeous canopy of stars, and cogitate. I never felt lonely, indeed I enjoyed the solitude. I found plenty to think about, and I was keyed up with the thrilling realization that I was on my way to Zaria where I was to take over supreme charge of this new, large and important Province, and



that it was up to me to call upon all the energy and imagination and experience and brains that I possessed to this tremendous task which had so unexpectedly been entrusted to me.

On the ~~fourteenth~~ <sup>eleventh</sup> day after my departure from Zaria we suddenly emerged from the thick bush through which we had been travelling, and there before me lay a great open plain with a few rocky hills in the far distance. I have seldom felt more excited in my life. Here, I thought, is Hausaland, of which I have read so much, and which Denham and Clapperton were the first Europeans to visit and to describe to the British public <sup>after making their way to it from Tripoli</sup> ~~and returning by the same route,~~ across the vast Sahara Desert ~~to Tripoli~~ <sup>and returning by the same route,</sup> nearly a hundred years ago. The town of Zaria could not, I was sure, be more than 30 miles ahead of me, and the great city of Kano lay, I knew, only eighty miles beyond it, while away to the north west was Sokoto, and far to the north east was the Province of Borno, and Lake Tchad. The map shows Lake Tchad to be almost exactly half way between the east and west coasts of the vast land mass of Africa, itself some 4000 miles in width: and it lies roughly one third of the distance ~~Northwest~~ north and south - between Morocco and the Cape of Good Hope. I had indeed, I felt, attained the first part of my ambition - I had left the coast of Africa far behind and plunged into the very heart of the great Continent.

We arrived that afternoon at a village of considerable size, surrounded by a great mud wall some 20 feet high, after the fashion, I found later, of practically every town and village throughout Hausaland. I was met outside the gate by a handsome looking white-bearded old man wearing a long white robe of local manufacture and a white turban, who introduced himself as the Seriki of the village. With his escort he led me into the town through the main gate, and ~~soon~~ <sup>presently</sup> we came to a large circular hut of the usual pattern which constituted the Resthouse in which travellers were accommodated. Here I found 2 or 3 natives awaiting me with 15



usual supply of chickens, eggs and sweet potatoes, and also. My great delight. Two or three ripe pawpaws - almost the best fruit I know, and not unlike a Cantaloupe melon.

Next morning I was awakened just before dawn by that stirring and melodious sound one hears in every Moslem village, town or city throughout the world - the chant of the Muezzin who cries in liquid Arabic "Come to prayer, Come to prayer. Prayer is better than sleep. God is great, and Mahomed is his Prophet." I must have heard this pre-dawn chant scores and scores of times in <sup>the</sup> many ~~countries~~ Mohammedan countries in which I have lived or through which I have travelled, but the voice of the Muezzin has never failed to touch some emotional chord within me - I know not what it is - and when it ceases and silence falls once more, I find myself in the throes for a few seconds of some spiritual exaltation which I have never been able to understand or explain.

After my usual early breakfast I started off in high spirits, exhilarated by the thought that I was going to reach my destination, <sup>that day</sup> at last after my long journey up from the coast. The sky was a bright blue and the sun was hot, but the air was fresh and invigorating. The ~~any~~ open plain through which the road lay was largely under cultivation, and in many places the inhabitants were already clearing the ground and making it ready for the sowing of their crops directly the first rains fell - and we were now, in mid April, nearly at the end of the dry season. Presently I saw in the distance the great walls of a big town, and away to my left the rocky hills which I had seen in the dim distance the previous evening became clearer, and their shape, rising from the plain, reminded me forcibly of the Rock of Gibraltar as it stands out from the sea. Gradually there came into view some two miles west of the great walled town which I guessed rightly to be Zaira, a collection of mud houses of various shapes and sizes, which presently turned out to be the Residence, and the headquarters of the newly raised Regiment of Mountain Infantry, and



Before I had had time to take it all in I had arrived and was being greeted by Popham Lobb. He showed me the way to a big rectangular mud hut which had been allocated to me, and <sup>to</sup> which I told my boys to have all my goods stores taken, & he then invited me to another fair-sized rectangular hut which he said was "the mess". It is an residence was the oddest-looking building I had ever seen, rather like a bulky tower, built entirely of mud. It was his own design he said, and had been built under his personal supervision of a large batch of prisoners whom he had brought "as hostages" from a large pagan district in the south-east of the Province through which he had recently toured, taking with him a company of W.A.A.F. soldiers under a British officer. At the base of the tower was a big doorway through which we entered: from this one climbed up by <sup>dark</sup> a winding circular ramp till one reached an the door by which gave access to a huge room, some 15 feet above the ground level. Openings in the wall formed windows, for which a good view of the surrounding country was available, including the walls of Zaire Tan, some 2 miles away. This room formed Lobb's sleeping room, sitting room, & private office all in one. On the far side was a horizontal slit in the wall, about 6 inches wide, just alongside a solid table made of mud, on which scores of papers were spread out. He told me that a flight of rough steps cut in the <sup>outside of the</sup> mud wall of the house, led up for the ground ~~down~~ to this slit, and by means of these steps all communications were brought to him and passed through the slit, no order or messenger, and in fact no one except his intimate friends, or his boys, when he summoned them, being permitted to enter the building by way of the ramp. Thus he preserved his solitude & privacy. I may add that the circular ramp was so dark that one had to keep tapping the sides of the wall on either side with one's stick or one's hand to avoid running into the wall. The centre of this weird building was hollow, and infested by bats, whose squeaking was as obvious to me as their small stein filled.



It was <sup>clear</sup> ~~obvious~~ to me that Lobb was somewhat eccentric. In later years I came to know him well, and a more complicated character I have seldom met, a truly extraordinary mixture of delightful characteristics with others which were very much to reverse. He had an exceptionally good brain, and a great sense of humour. But his brain ran to theories rather than to practice, and he had a passion for writing long memoranda on administrative and other matters, excellent in their way, but rather unsuited to a new country like Nigeria (new to Europeans of course I mean), where rough and ready methods were essential at the outset, and rapid progress could only be achieved by constant trials and experiments which led in many cases to error, but more often to success. Lobb's treatment of the natives was in my opinion rather overbearing, and frequently unparliamentary harsh. He imagined, I fancy, that he could achieve order rapidly from chaos by the immediate introduction into a country steeped in its own traditions and for centuries cut off from all contact with <sup>the outside</sup> ~~the world~~ <sup>work</sup> ~~civilization~~, of modern views and European standards. And he was inclined to punish, and punish with, to my mind, undue severity, any actions which ran contrary to his own public school ideas of what was right & wrong, although according to local standards of ~~custom~~ and traditions they might be perfectly ethical & proper.

I need hardly say that I realized little or nothing of this on my first arrival at Zaria. My task was obviously to pick up as rapidly as I could the threads of administration; and as I was starting, so to speak, from scratch, I had to learn the ABC of civil administration from Lobb, and ~~was~~ <sup>had</sup> little or no time to consider the validity, <sup>or otherwise</sup> ~~of the~~ ~~principles~~ of the lessons I was trying hurriedly to learn, or to ponder on the qualifications of my teacher or the <sup>ethics</sup> ~~reliability~~ of the doctrines <sup>which</sup> ~~by~~ which his own actions and conduct appeared to be guided.