

A Doctor in the Wilds.

BY COL. F. T. POLLOK.

Colonel Pollok's missionary host first relates some hunting adventures, and then tells how a desperately-wounded Masai warrior was brought to him to be cured. And if the missionary medico failed to effect a cure, the whole mission station was to be wiped out!



IN one of my wanderings in East Africa, about two days' journey inland from Mombasa, I found myself on the top of a range of hills. Here was a mission-house, in which a lay missionary resided with his wife and family. He very kindly allowed me and my followers to sleep in a portion of the house

too—three of them in the heart of the town of Mombasa! He wouldn't shoot one there now! We used to sit outside and chat of an evening, and as I was new to that part of Africa, and also an ardent sportsman, I never tired of asking my host questions, which he was ever ready to answer.

"You were at Mpwapwa, were you not?" I



From a] THE AUTHOR IN EAST AFRICA—COLONEL POLLOK IS RECLINING ON THE LEFT.

[Photo.

set apart for the daily services, but we had to clear out each day at 6 a.m., at which hour service was carried on by the incumbent in a native dialect, which neither I nor my comrades understood. However, as we left at daylight to roam the jungle in search of game, and did not return until the evening, that entailed no inconvenience on us.

I found the pastor a gentleman and a man of culture—an M.D. of Edinburgh and London—who, out of pure philanthropy, had volunteered his services as lay brother to the East African Mission. He was a powerful, determined-looking man, a great athlete, and a first-rate shot. He was very fond of natural history, and possessed many specimens of rare birds and some very small antelope. He had shot a good many lions,

inquired. "I am told there is good sport to be had there."

"Yes," replied my host. "A friend of mine was tossed by a buffalo, there; and, if you like to hear the details, I'll relate them as nearly in his own words as I can."

"Pray do so," I replied.

Accordingly, my host, lighting a fresh cheroot, commenced: "About six months after my adventure with the lions in Mombasa, I was ordered off to Mpwapwa (which was then one of our principal stations in this part of Africa—that was before it was handed over to Germany), where there was a good deal of sickness just then. Although I hurried over the ground, as I was anxious to get to my destination, I had good sport *en route*. And I had one rather

narrow escape. I had knocked down an oryx, and, on going up to cut its throat, the antelope sprang up suddenly and prodded at me with his long, sharp horns. So sudden was his attack, that he managed to knock the rifle out of my hand, and one horn actually went through my waistcoat sideways, grazing the flesh. I seized him by both horns, however, and then we *had* a tussle, I can tell you. Fortunately, I was tolerably strong in the arms, for I was given to athletics and boating in my college days, and do a little gymnastics even now, whenever I get the chance. I was in prime condition and hard as nails on this occasion. The poor brute, though as big as a pony, was severely wounded, and had lost much blood, or the encounter might have ended very differently. After a tough struggle—which lasted, I should say, for nearly five minutes—I succeeded in throwing him over on his side. Then, kneeling down, I got one

round Mpwapwa is a high table-land. It is a lovely country, with every diversity of forest and prairie. Our hunting-ground was from two to three miles off. It was about 4 p.m. when our friend started. Our dinner hour was seven. As he did not return, we waited till eight, and then, fearing some accident had happened, we went in the direction he had indicated. Taking with us some boys with torches, we searched for over two hours, every now and then firing off guns, but we got no reply of any sort; and it was nearly midnight before we came across poor B——, more dead than alive. He was in a truly shocking condition, and unable to articulate. We made a stretcher and carried him home, where for three weeks he hovered between life and death. At last, thanks to a good constitution, sober habits, and an all-powerful Providence, he began to mend; but it was nearly six weeks before he was able to relate



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knee on to his head, and having my right arm free, I soon put him out of his misery with my shikar knife.

"I had been at Mpwapwa about two months, and some of us generally went out daily to get game for the larder; we seldom came back empty-handed. One day B—— took his smooth-bore, saying he had heard guinea-fowl calling in a nullah not far off, and that he would try and secure a brace or two. The country

what had happened. I may say here that we knew from the marks on his body, and an examination of the ground next day, that he had been mauled by a buffalo.

"I could not leave my patient, but two of our party took up the trail and, after following the brute a long way, came up with him. He proved to be a solitary bull. They came upon him suddenly, and after a stubborn fight killed him. They brought home the head as a present for

B——. It is one of the finest I have ever seen, the horns at the broadest part measuring 51 in. and very thick. Our injured friend gave the following account of his adventure :—

“‘After leaving you,’ he said, ‘I took a broad path to the north-west, and followed it for about two miles. I had seen only a small antelope or two, for there is seldom anything bigger so near the station. I had ball cartridges in my pocket, but my gun was loaded with No. 4 shot only. The nullah I told you of was then about half a mile off, and I was walking quietly along the narrow pathway, skirted with longish grass, when I heard footsteps behind me, and had only partially turned round, when, without the slightest warning, I was tossed high into the air and flung to a considerable distance. There were no preliminaries (exciting or otherwise) such as one reads about. Of course I was much shaken, but no bones were broken, nor was I wounded. Had I lain quiet, I have no doubt I should have escaped further injury; but, in the excitement of the moment, I jumped up to recover my gun—only, however, to find a fiend in the shape of a buffalo of the largest size down upon me again. This time the monster severely wounded me, and threw me with great violence. Following me up closely, he thrust his huge horns forward, and rolled me backwards and forwards, mauling me dreadfully. I did not lose consciousness, but remained as quiet as I could, feigning death. I was afraid he would kneel on me and knead me to a jelly; indeed, twice he essayed to do so, but seemed to change his mind each time.

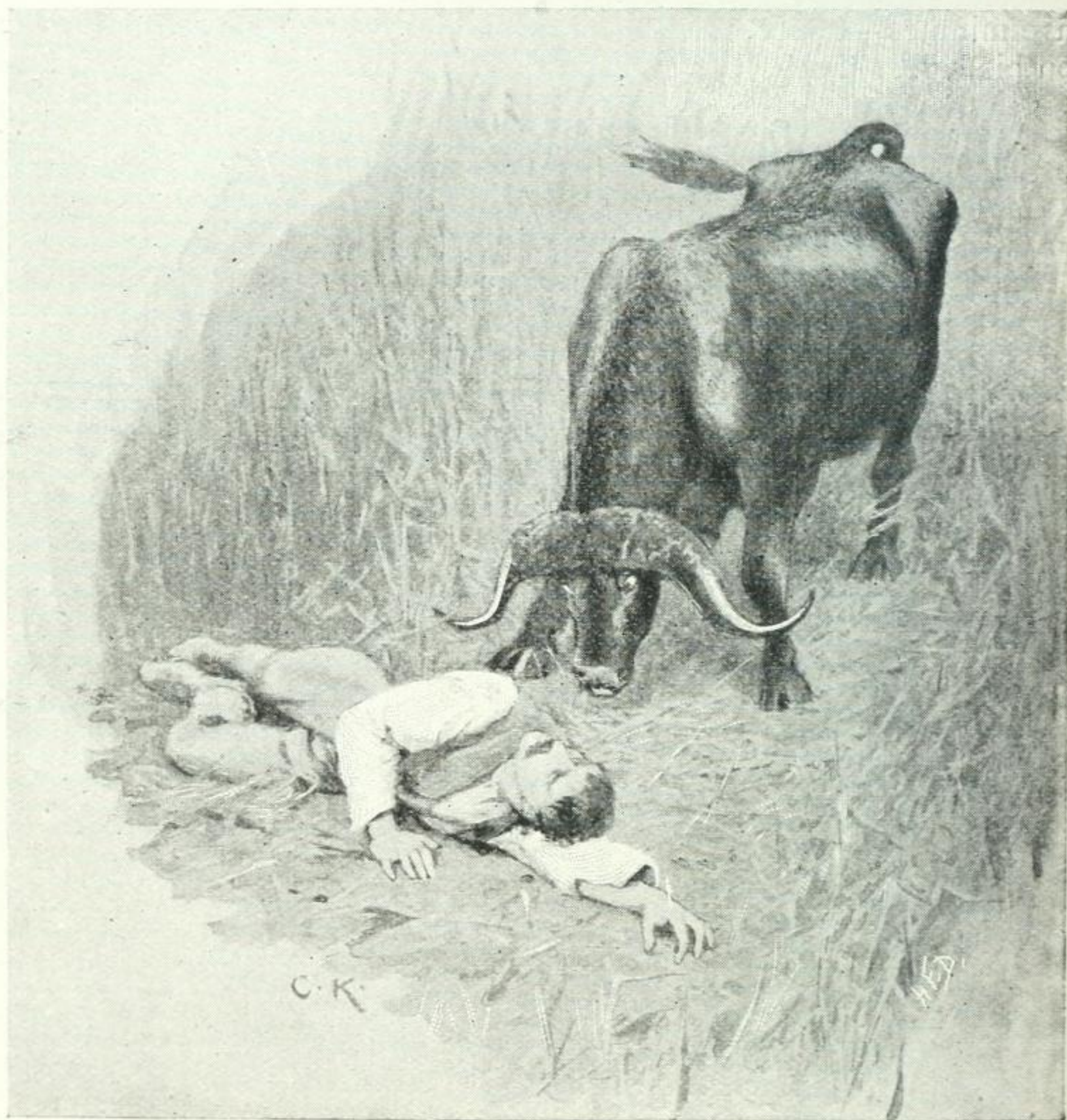
It was dreadful to feel the hot breath from his nostrils, and see his diabolical eyes glaring at me only a few inches off.

“‘Having rolled me about, the buffalo presently stood still and eyed me suspiciously. He then walked off a few paces and paused. Whether I unwittingly moved a limb, I know not, but that fearful brute rushed back again and tossed me as though I had been a rag doll. Never can I

hope to describe the stunning thrust of the powerful horn, the giddy sensation of flying through the air, and the final crash as my poor maimed body struck the earth. This time I lost consciousness, and knew nothing more until I found myself here in bed.’”

“What a perfectly miraculous escape!” I exclaimed, as the doctor concluded the story of his friend.

“Yes,” he replied; “but after I married, and my wife and I went to live at a solitary station of the mission, I think we had an even narrower escape from those mighty warriors, the Masai. The people of the surrounding country were all communicants. We had built a large chapel, and it was daily well attended. The inhabitants



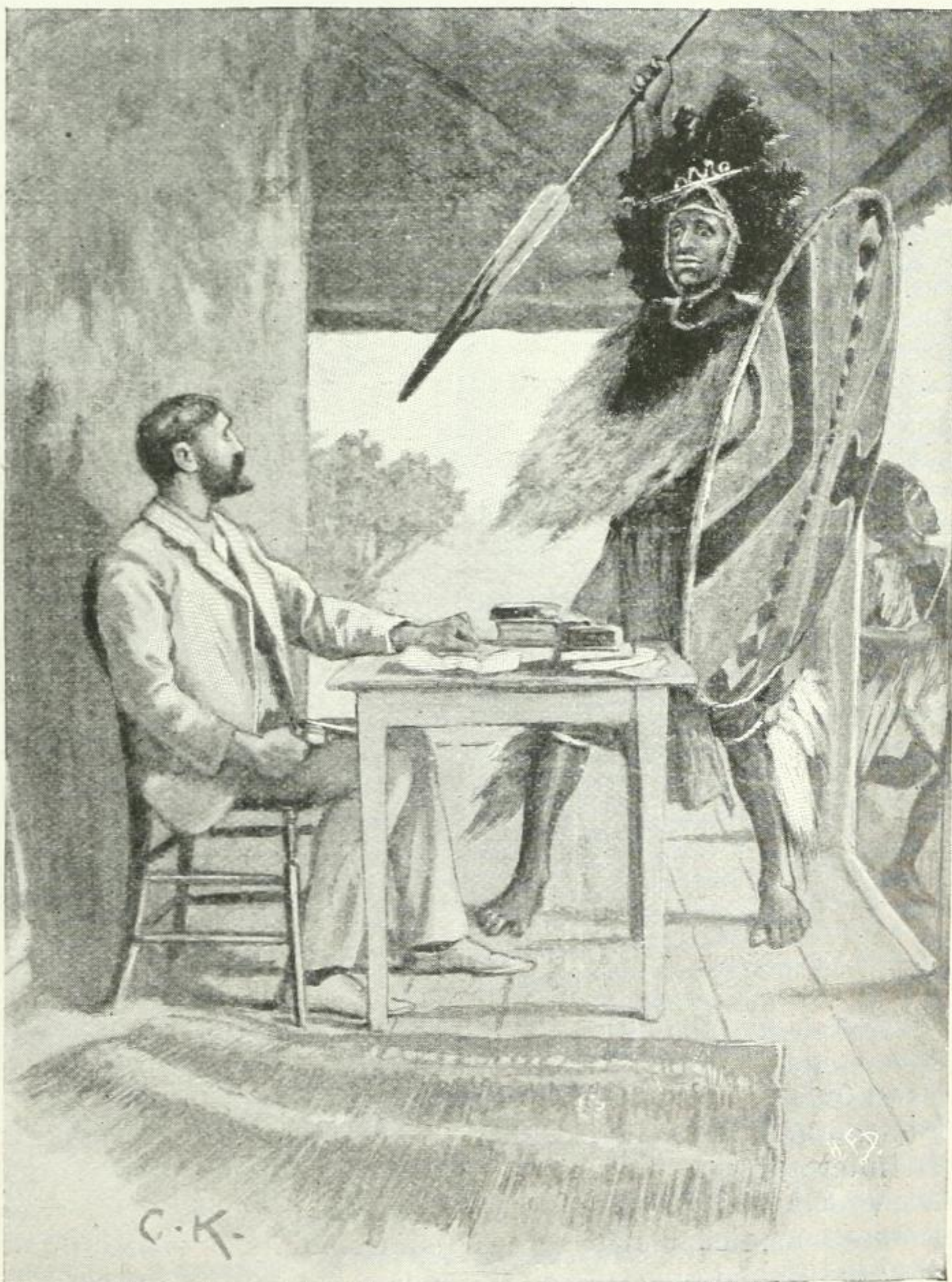
“HAVING ROLLED ME ABOUT, THE BUFFALO PRESENTLY STOOD STILL AND EYED ME SUSPICIOUSLY.”

had few cattle, and there was nothing to attract the Masai to that district. Besides, we were far away from any of their usual haunts. Yet one morning these dreaded warriors rushed into the villages, killing men, women, and children in the most appalling manner. The few who escaped the first rush fled to us for protection, but were followed very quickly by the relentless savages. Our first child was then but a month

old, and my wife barely convalescent. Imagine my horror and despair when I found we were completely in the power of these dreadful savages, who had never been known to spare a soul. I had my battery at hand, and although I did not value so much my own life, I was determined to defend my family to the utmost of my power. At the same time, I knew that unless a Higher Power intervened, we were as good as dead; for what could one man do against a horde of bloodthirsty Masai? I had but little time to think, however. I fastened the doors of an inner room as well as I could upon my wife and child, and then, with my guns lying on the floor close to my feet and covered over with a mat, I sat with a small table in front of me in the veranda, which was raised about a foot and a half off the ground. Had we had secure fastenings to our doors and windows, I should have barricaded the house and fought it out; but living amongst the more simple Africans, we had acquired a sense of security, and our frail doors and windows had neither shutters, bolts, nor bars. Indeed, there was no need for them, living as we did, and trusting our people. In the ordinary way there was much greater danger to be apprehended from wild beasts than from men in that region. A few minutes after the first attack, a crowd of fugitives came running up the hill-path which led to our house, closely followed by the Masai.* It is impossible to describe with accuracy the savage appearance of these blood-stained monsters. Hideously ugly naturally, they adorn their persons with every device that can make them look still more repulsive. The extraordinary fringe of feathers that envelops their ugly countenances; the loose monkey skin, which, fastened by a string of beads round the throat, lies across the back, swaying to and fro with every movement of the body; their huge naked limbs, the great spear and shield, and the short sword carried at the waist

in a leather belt, with a formidable knob-kerry; and the bits of feathery skin tied below the knee which fly out as they trot along—all these render the Masai the most terrifying of human beings.

"Two or three of the poor villagers were speared and killed in front of where I sat, and my blood boiled at my own impotence. But for my wife and child I would have shot down some of the savages where they stood, regardless of the consequences to myself. As it was, I was obliged to sit still, quivering with rage and horror, my revolver grasped tightly in my hand and resting on my knees just under the ledge of the table. Suddenly one of the chiefs, a giant in stature, with blood dripping from the blade of his spear, sprang into the veranda, and with upraised weapon stood glaring at me, not a yard off. We were both, I believe, within an ace of death. Had he moved forward but an inch I should have shot him dead,



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* This strongly recalls the scene preceding the massacre of the missionaries—Mr. and Mrs. Houghton—by the Masai, as related in our May number by Mr. Walter Bone, now residing in Sydney. Mr. Bone afterwards visited the Masai country to inquire into the dreadful affair.

and been myself instantly speared by his numerous followers. Controlling my feelings, however, and speaking in one of the native dialects, I said, 'Well, chief, what is the matter? Sit down and tell me what brings you here, where there are no cattle and only a harmless people.' He appeared to understand what I said, but spoke so rapidly in return that I could not follow him. Lowering his spear, he again addressed me, this time more slowly, and I made out a part of what he said. We had, it appeared, a girl in the mission who had formerly been a slave among the Masai, and as the chief asked for her, I called out to my wife to send her to me at once. In the meanwhile the slaughter had ceased, and the warriors now assembled in great numbers in front of the house, and even in the veranda itself.

"The poor girl presently came out, trembling

but did not care about the latter, as he could not understand it. 'If you are a great medicine man,' said he, 'attend without delay to one of our principal men, who has been severely injured by a buffalo. If you can cure him, we will go away and never again molest this part of the country, nor allow anyone else to do so.'

"'Where is he?' I inquired; 'send for the sick man.' So saying I called out to my wife, telling her that she need not be afraid, but might show herself and the baby. I also told her to collect our servants and get a room ready for the expected patient. I then quietly pocketed the revolver, removed the guns and rifles from beneath the mat, and got together my medical instruments and appliances.

"About a quarter of an hour later a warrior was carried in, in a sort of native blanket, and I laid him down on the camp-cot and examined him



"I LAID THE WARRIOR DOWN ON THE CAMP-COT, AND EXAMINED HIM MOST CAREFULLY."

all over, and no doubt thinking her last hour had come. However, on seeing me sitting down quietly and unharmed, she became a little more tranquil, and proceeded at my request to interpret the interview. The chief then demanded what I was doing there. I told him I was a medicine man, who administered not only to the body but also to the soul. He said he could appreciate my usefulness in the former,

most carefully. I found a compound fracture of the thigh; several ribs and a collar-bone broken, and the body generally not only punctured in several places, but practically one vast bruise. A worse case I never saw, and as the wounds were several days old, I was afraid gangrene had, or would very soon, set in. I thought that in order to save the life of my savage patient I should have to amputate the broken leg close

to the hip; but when I suggested this, the patient and his comrades grew furious, and promptly denounced me as an impostor. 'What use,' they asked, 'would a warrior be with only one leg, even supposing he survived the disastrous operation?'

"The savages now became very threatening in their language and manner, when my suggestions were interpreted. May the sympathies of the respectable London family practitioner be with me!—for surely a doctor never had so amazing a 'kill or cure' case, so there was nothing for it but to do the very best I could for the desperately wounded man, and then trust to Providence. I desired all the Masai but two to retire, and before they went they promised a truly embarrassing truce. No man, woman, or child among our people was to be injured *while the wounded chief lived!* If I couldn't save him, however, we would all be wiped out. That was exactly the situation. In the meantime they appropriated the few cattle the villagers had, and feasted on them. My milch cow they spared, as we told them it was required for the baby. Turning to the patient on whom so much depended, I reduced the fracture, bound the man up *secundum artem*, washed his sores with diluted carbolic acid, and did all I possibly could. Then, giving him a mild opiate, I enjoined the greatest quietness and left Nature to do the rest. Now, although these Masai live on a meat diet exclusively, they are abstemious in every other respect, and taking, as they do, an immense deal of exercise, they are naturally healthy and hardy. In a week my patient was decidedly better, and if the improvement went on, I hoped to save not only his life but his limbs also. But it was an anxious time, as you may suppose. My wife attended on the savage assiduously, and fed him like a child. At first he objected to any diet but that to which he had been accustomed—that is to say, great pieces of half-cooked beef. But beef was scarce with us. We seldom tasted it, and lived mostly on dried antelope meat, which I either shot or purchased from the village shikarees. We fortunately had

just at this time a large stock of meat, as I had lately been unusually lucky in bagging a lot of deer and two buffaloes. Out of this store we made the strongest extract we could, and persuaded the sick man to take it. His progress was rapid and splendid. After ten days or a fortnight the greater part of his tribe, finding him doing so well, left our country—to my unspeakable relief—promising that we should not be molested again.

"In a month all but two had left; one was a brother of the chief who had threatened me on the day of the raid, and the other some relation of the wounded man. At the end of another month even these two left, asking when I thought the invalid would be able to get about again. I told them in about six weeks or two months more, and they promised to return then. They had noticed my fondness for natural history specimens, whether dead or alive, and when they did come back they actually brought with them (carried by people whom they had forced to act as porters) quite a small menagerie of birds and beasts, and also a lot of horns. Some of these I have been able to send home by men of the mission going back to England for a change of climate, but I have several rare birds, especially two live eagles, which I think are new to science, and which I greatly prize. It is, however, very difficult to get them food, as they will touch nothing but fresh raw meat, which is not always obtainable."

I told the good doctor I should be going home shortly and would, with pleasure, take charge of anything for him.

"But what became of the wounded man," I asked; "and did the Masai keep their promise?"

"The chief got quite well," was the reply; "he had a slight limp, but it was scarcely perceptible, and so grateful was he for my treatment and the care bestowed upon him by my wife, that he presented her with the full-dress costume worn by a Masai chief of the highest rank, together with all his implements of war. You can see the whole 'harness' hanging over there."

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