

OUR AMBASSADOR KING

*His Majesty King Edward VIII's Life of Devotion
and Service as Prince of Wales*

by

BASIL MAINE

With a Foreword by

SIR HARRY BRITTAIN, K.B.E., C.M.G., LL.D.

WITH 32 ILLUSTRATIONS

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CHAPTER 12

MAN OF THE WIDE WORLD (*continued*)

To East Africa again. A 70-mile trek after a wild elephant. Two film stars. Flying with Campbell Black round Kilimanjaro. The Masai arena. A touch of malaria. The natives dance for the Prince. Safari into the Sudan. Flying home with the R.A.F.

SEVERAL months later, when the King had recovered, the Prince called to mind the various appointments that von Blixen had planned for him and began to consider how he might keep them. In addition there was an invitation from the King of the Belgians to visit the Belgian Congo. So a new tour was mapped out—first to the Cape on a visit to the Prince's uncle, Lord Athlone; then to Rhodesia; then to Beira; then to Dar-es-Salaam, Zanzibar and Mombasa. After that, the safari could be resumed.

The Prince started from London on 3 January, 1930, and sailed from Southampton on the *Kenilworth*. Normal variations helped to keep the Prince on this side of boredom during the long voyage—a rough passage through the Bay of Biscay, Madeira's gardens, inoculations, songs and duets from Clara Butt and Kennerley Rumford, the Equatorial horse-play once again, a whale, more songs and duets, an albatross and the slow *tempo* marked throughout by regular and rigorous exercise. The ship reached Table Bay on January 20. This was an unofficial visit to Capetown, but it was none the less exhausting for that. The celebrations the Prince attended were only equalled in number by the rounds of golf he played. Indeed, it was only by the strict alternation of pleasure and exercise that he was able to keep up with the calendar. The outstanding occasions perhaps were Lady May

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Cambridge's birthday party and the Navy's evening when Admiral Burmester gave a banquet at Simonstown and afterwards entertained the Prince on board H.M.S. *Calcutta*.

To Rhodesia the Prince travelled in the private coach of Prime Minister Hertzog, and from that easeful vantage-point watched the changing face of the country between Capteown and the high veld, from the friendliness of valleys with woods and vineyards and orchards to the dramatic ravines and mountain spurs. After the first night of this journey the Prince found that the high veld and a cold in the head had arrived together. At Belmont he was met and taken over the Boer War battle-fields. He was far from pleased at the sight of the memorials to fallen soldiers, so sadly neglected were they. The result of his visit was that provision was made for more regular and decent attention to these monuments.

Johannesburg from the train is not the most cheerful of prospects for a man with a heavy cold. The pleasure of descending Shaft No. 14 of the Crown Mine—that had been the first intention—was postponed, for the Prince recalled the time, five years earlier, when he had descended the Village Deep Mine, and the terrific and increasing heat as he travelled down. When the journey was resumed, the heat of the train seemed to be not much less than at the bottom of that mine. The Prince was ill and depressed. But Bulawayo's delightful aspect began to charm away his cold and to enliven his spirits. He went on to Beira and, by the S.S. *Modassa*, to Dar-es-Salaam.

At Zanzibar the Prince called once again on the Sultan. It was here that he decided to carry out an experiment which he had conceived in London before starting for Africa, a most delicate experiment, one that could only be attempted in a mood of utter dauntlessness. Is there anything more immutable than that tradition we call English Cricket? Nothing unless it be that we call

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English Golf. Let us agree that these two Immutabilities are equal ; for to propose a new kind of club is hardly less an effrontery than to suggest a wider bat or that the bails in future should be nailed to the stumps. The Prince had not actually proposed a new kind of club, but he had brought one from England and no doubt was hoping that, after trying it out "on tour," he would be emboldened to use it at home. This club was a patent, unbreakable driver made of steel. If any there had been disposed to heed the omens, the experiment could never have been carried out. When the Prince appeared on the links, there was a free and very determined fight among the native caddy-boys for his golf bag. Nor did the intervention of the fat caddy-master settle the point but rather delayed decision. We, knowing what followed, may suppose that the noisy conflict had robbed the Prince of the confidence which was necessary for so momentous a test. Whatever we may suppose cannot alter the fact that that unbreakable driver, made of steel, broke into two clean pieces at the very first tee.

After this experience the Prince considered it about time that he turned to safari ; and when von Blixen and Finch-Hatton met him at Mombasa, they began at once to make plans. The result was the most arduous trek the Prince had known till then. Some natives brought news of a solitary bull elephant, the biggest they had ever seen. The spoor was discovered and off they went in pursuit. The country was a scorched plain. They covered ten miles in two hours and a half ; then, as if they had merely come out for a picnic, they had a leisurely lunch. They went on till dark without a glimpse of the beast. The Prince then had his first experience of camping on an open plain. Just before he went to sleep (if he slept at all) he heard a lion roar. Distant it was, but in the stillness it seemed all-too-near, especially when, following it, the antelope's alarm cry was raised. Through another burning day they tramped, following spoor that at one moment looked fresh, at

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the next, not so fresh. Light of head and very sore of foot they were at the end of that day. And after the next day, hunger began to discomfort them, for rations had been cut down.

Before the fourth day could be begun, boots had to be put on, and that was now an exceedingly painful business. They had food and water for another twelve hours. It was at least thirty miles to the railway, but no one knew the way; and as against an indefinitely placed railroad there was the mammoth elephant's track, tantalisingly plain to see. Lamely, they followed the spoor. They did not dare to stop for a midday meal lest the habit of trudging on should be irreparably broken. At the beginning of the afternoon they came to a thickly wooded hill-land. Here they took separate paths, keeping within hailing distance of each other. But none had anything to call out about except the increasing roughness of the going. They were beginning to think they had been gammoned. Then, in a moment, the whole scene was transfigured in their eyes. The Revelation came first to Finch-Hatton. On his right he heard a movement, carefully stalked, and there it was, moving like a cloud's shadow along the hill-side. He signed to the Prince to come and take the shot. The great shadow sailed on. As the Prince was coming across through the thick bush, the elephant stopped dead. Then, having gathered from the air all the information he required, he barged through the bushes and vanished. The Revelation was over. The three men sat down and gazed sympathetically at their feet. Was the game, nearly uneventful and cruelly protracted, worth the candle? You who have not the hunter's spirit, will hastily answer, "No." You have no way of understanding the nature of that Revelation, no way even of believing that it was one. To have gone on blistered feet for seventy roasting miles and to have been rewarded at last with the awe-inspiring sight of a 125-pounder—ah! how can the ecstasy be communicated!

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You, the non-hunter, will only sniff and say: "Better by far not to have seen those giant tusks than to be teased by the thought of having lost them." But the hunter thinks otherwise. The idea that he *might* have brought that ivory in triumph home but for that too-generous lunch on the first day or those blistering feet, but for the beast's prodigious ambling pace or the accident of stalking him down wind, but for this or that—the idea in itself fills the hunter, in his every sense, with sweet content, is in itself so rich an experience as almost to equal the very accomplishment.

How hard it was to remain pure naturalist can be illustrated by the Prince's encounter with a rhinoceros at this time. He had been enjoying an interval of golf and gaiety at Nairobi. Also he had done some trips over the Great Rift Valley in Campbell Black's Moth. At the end of one of those flights the party settled down to watch a rhino-movie which Legh had taken. A charging rhinoceros! The film was a good one and at the end their blood was roused. When the Prince started on a trek to the Masai Reserve he promised himself a film of a rhino whatever else might result. On 25 February the expedition went forth. This was a filming, not a shooting party. Cars and lorries were in attendance and the Game Warden acted as watchman and swift messenger. "I have a big elephant in there. I shall have some lions for you this afternoon. I have a mother rhinoceros and her calf at Mashuru." The Warden was as obliging as a salesman behind a counter, and as embarrassing with the multitude of things he offered. A decision was made. The Prince would take the Mashuru Mother and Calf.

It started to rain. This was another kind of experience—to meet with the sort of rain which stormed your track into mud and, after twenty minutes, into nothing. But the guide knew where the track ought to be running, and the cars ploughed and lumbered on. They camped in something like a lake, but during the night the rain

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ceased. The next day dawned upon a translucent world. It seemed wholly composed of light, water and the greeny golden gleam of lizards. They walked four miles from camp. In the middle of a shallow river they found a great elephant just standing there and musing. You would have said he knew the camera-men were coming. To help them in their work he began quietly to rock himself. If he could have smiled for the gentlemen, no doubt he would have done so, for clearly he was vastly pleased with himself and the sight of that watery world. They left him standing there.

They had not gone far before they almost stumbled over a rhino, asleep in the sun. This was not that mother rhino which the Warden had in store at Mashuru. The party decided that the Prince must make his own personal copyright film of this beast. But where a sleeping rhinoceros is concerned, a cine-camera had no advantage over an ordinary one. Movement was wanted. Would the Warden see to that? If they were really sure they wanted movement, he would see to it. So the Prince took up his position and got ready to film. The Warden informed the rhino that he was wanted on the floor, yelled at him. The beast, perhaps before he was awake, pulled himself up on to his legs, then blinked while his brain slowly put right the disorders of time. The swinging of that grotesque and formidable head meant that his senses were returning, especially his sharpest sense of danger. He turned and saw the camera-man and in an instant decided to charge. The camera-man, trusting in a last-minute change of mind continued to turn the handle. Finch-Hatton and the Warden (Captain Ritchie) prepared for trouble, and just as the rhino was putting on his intensest close-up expression, they both fired. The rhino turned to the left, the Prince jumped to the right. Then Ritchie fired again and the "gallant old chap" fell.

That tribute to the rhino's gallantry came from the camera-man himself. He thought it real bad luck that

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they had been forced to kill. Especially as the film was not a complete success. Somehow it had been difficult to concentrate on that close-up.

Still to come was the witnessing of a lion hunt in Masai, boldest of all the East African tribes. While plans for this were being made, Campbell Black took the Prince on a flight round Mount Kilimanjaro. They looked down on Lake Amboseli, on Tsavo River, on great stretches of bush and swamp; they went on over the glaciers and among the mountain peaks; they rose still higher and looked down on the white summit of the great mountain itself. When they were back in camp the Prince was informed that, unwittingly, he had brought four lions into the scene. The hungry quartet had been drawn by the dead hero of his film. The Masai fighters were already closing in.

They all hurried out. Two of the lions were still gorging when they took their places above the arena. It was like that—they might have been arriving at the Albert Hall to watch a heavy-weight contest. A definite and neat plan of attack had been arranged; but it had been arranged by a white man, and a non-combatant,¹ and the natives soon made clear that they preferred going about it in their own way. Instinct and intrepidity formed the broad basis of their strategy which indeed included little else save spears, swords, shields and war-paint.

A centre group of natives marched straight towards the two lions. The beasts slipped away into the tangled bush. Two other groups of natives joined this one in a cacophonous chorus and all went beating about the bush. The Prince complained that the natives were having the best of the fun. He and his companions were seeing very little, for all that their seats had been booked. An occasional glimpse of a lion flashing across an open space, that was the most they ever saw. The Prince said he would rather be in the arena itself. If he could

¹ Lord Delamere.

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do nothing else, he could help in the bush-beating. So he, Finch-Hatton, Ritchie and von Blixen left their positions, followed the natives and, a little aimlessly, thwacked the thickets. They heard the chorus suddenly become more tense and strident. Over there to the side was a great confusion, and the four followers ran to see. The contest was over when they arrived. They saw only a dead lion with spears in its flesh. Then, immediately, that shrill chorus again, from another place. The spearmen ran towards the new arena, and the spectators struggled after them. They were in time to watch the next encounter. A lion came out into the open and, making for cover further on, was challenged by a tall native. The man was felled, but before the lion could kill him, the spears were flying again.

And now came the inevitable "touch" of malaria. It is one of the smaller mysteries of life that malaria should always be said to arrive in the manner or degree which is described as a touch. Whether this is due to any peculiarity of the fever itself, or to a sort of masonic understanding among White Men that the existence of the Thing must be as far as possible strenuously denied, that is hard to decide. What is certain is that no White Man, if he is truly White, is ever heard to boast that he once had a real big dose of malaria and no mistake. For the boast would be as good as a confession, a let-down. So we must be content to record that von Blixen had a touch of malaria, the merest flick we might call it. The Prince was next, and he was ill enough to make a return to Nairobi advisable. But perhaps his was but a touch after all, for a week later he was up and watching the races.

From now until his departure from Africa, the Prince became more and more active with the cine-camera. He was especially pleased with his success in stalking a sleeping crocodile on a slippery bank of the Aswar. But, of course, as in the case of the slumbering rhino, he wanted an action-picture. So he found a

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good view, shouted and then filmed the beast as it was plunging unenquiringly into the river. Later, there was an Aswar (that is as much as to say, an outsize) elephant which obliged him by waiting until he had put a new reel into his camera. Then there was a second obstreperous rhino, another charge at the camera, and once again Finch-Hatton was to the rescue. Finally, when they were on the way to the Belgian Congo, keen-eyed Finch-Hatton gave the Prince his opportunity of filming white rhinoceroses. He had spied a herd of twenty and out came the camera again. For once there was no danger. The Prince walked right up to the beasts. For all the heed they took, he might have been filming sheep. There seemed no reason why he should not attempt a close-up, they were so solid and untemperamental. But that was not so easy, after all. They were friendly, but shy. If the camera-man did not keep his distance, they kept theirs. They ran away, but only a few yards, then turned again in unruffled curiosity.

"White" is a far from accurate description of this beast. Rather should he be called the major rhinoceros. Only the elephant surpasses him for size. If you were hoping to pick him out by his colour, you would perhaps fail to see very much difference between him and the black rhino. He is, however, at least a foot taller.¹ His preference for company perhaps indicates a lack of self-confidence; or perhaps instinct tells him he is becoming scarce and bids him fall back on the family group; or perhaps he still remembers the blundering raids made by President Theodore Roosevelt and his party a quarter of a century ago. In any case, he rarely wanders from the herd. And now—although it is unlikely that the information has yet percolated through to him—man has come to his aid with a law for his protection.

In the Belgian Congo the Prince photographed a herd of red buffalo. The photography was a smaller feat than

¹ Here again the author is indebted to Mr. Patrick Chalmers.

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the stalking, for this is a more dangerous animal than his black relations and must on no account be made suspicious. The problem was increased by the leeches—of land and of water—and since the Prince was wearing shorts, he became fully acquainted with their ways and means of attack. Indeed, this part of Africa is probably remembered by him as much for its little leeches as for its little people. The naturalist in him was discouraged for a time, and no pictures of leeches were taken. The pygmies, on the other hand, provided subjects for many admirable camera-studies, as the writer can testify. One that he saw has left a particularly clear impression. It shows two of these little people, both above the average age of their tribe, one wearing a loin-cloth, the other wearing a kind of bowler hat, a shirt and a kilt. He of the bowler is smoking through a stick which is twice his own height, while the nearly naked one is holding up the other end of the pipe. They have the air of being about to carry out a music-hall turn. Chopped grass is their tobacco and the more pungent it is, the better they are pleased. In fact, smoking is intended to be a direct assault upon the smoker's own throat and eyes. Tobacco is judged by the amount of coughing it can bring on.

The music-hall was suggested more than once to these Englishmen travelling through the Belgian Congo. The pygmies' *ngoma* was such an occasion, as the Prince's film of the ceremony faithfully shows. The *ngoma* at Okodengwe, too, was an entertaining event and resulted in one of the finest of the Prince's African films. Okodengwe is the name of the tribe's chief and after him the village where they live is called. The chief is a broad-shouldered, big-chested, serious-looking fellow who is obviously out to be admired and not at all to be laughed at. But the Prince had some difficulty in finding the native point of view. He did his best, more especially as the *ngoma* was held to honour him, to discover what precisely the dancers were at; yet it was well-nigh

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impossible to connect their drilled but frenzied movements with anything but low comedy. Age counted for nothing in these performances. The whole tribe took part and, if anything, the village's oldest inhabitant was a little more remarkable than the rest for the extreme fantasy of his choreography.

Thus were homage and high-jinks mingled. As it happened Okodengwe provided the last high-light of the tour. Thereafter the journey was comparatively uneventful. The Prince was due in England on April 25, and on the first of the month he set out for the Sudan. For a hundred and fifty miles nothing more interesting than a stray elephant was spied. The Prince photographed the elephant. It was best to make sure. For all he knew, that might be the last he was to see in Africa. Then the party ran into the "long rains" which had arrived before their time. By air they reached Mongalla where the *Omdurman* was waiting. On the way to Bor the ship provided matter for the diary by running beautifully on to a mud-bank. This was not only an incident in itself but also introduced the incidental and nocturnal music of Mosquito. Next day the ship went leisurely on down the stream of the Bahr-el-Jebel, so leisurely indeed that the Prince was able to take exercise by walking the last ten miles to Bor. Nothing in the way of game rewarded him for his pains, but on the following morning they landed and after two miles came upon a congress of about two hundred elephants. Now, here is an instance of the Prince's aversion to killing game for the sake merely of killing. From the beginning he had made plain his intention of being naturalist first and slayer last. Only in the case of a genuine trophy would he be tempted to pit his life against the beast's. And, with a few exceptions and accidents and emergencies, that intention was carried out to the end. Among these two hundred elephants, for example, the Prince saw no tusks big enough to justify a kill, none big enough to persuade him to throw away a fine picture. He