

**ZANZIBAR TALES TOLD BY  
NATIVES OF THE EAST COAST  
OF AFRICA: TRANSLATED  
FROM THE ORIGINAL SWAHILI**

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Zanzibar tales told by natives of the east coast of Africa: translated from the original Swahili by George W. Bateman

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**GEORGE W. BATEMAN**

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ILLUSTRATED BY WALTER BOBBETT



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## TO MY READERS.

**T**HIRTY years ago Central Africa was what people who are fond of airing their learning would call a *terra incognita*. To-day its general characteristics are pretty well known. Then, as now, the little island of Zanzibar, situated just south of the equator, on the east coast, was the starting place of all expeditions into the interior, and Unguja (pronounced Oon-goo'jah), the big town of that island, the place where the preparations for plunging into the unknown were made.

At that period these expeditions consisted, almost without exception, of caravans loaded with beads and cotton cloth, which were exchanged among the inland tribes for elephants' tusks and slaves —

for Unguja boasted the only, and the last, open slave-market in the world then.

The few exceptions were a would-be discoverer now and then, or a party of rich white men going to hunt "big game;" that is, travelling hundreds—aye, thousands—of miles, and enduring many hardships, for the momentary pleasure of holding a gun in such a position that when they pulled the trigger the bullet hit such a prominent mark as an elephant or a lion, which was living in its natural surroundings and interfering with no one.

Between you and me, I don't mind remarking that many of their expeditions ended, on their return to Unguja, in the purchase of a few elephants' tusks and wild animal skins in the bazaars of that thriving city, after the method pursued by unsuccessful anglers in civilized countries.

But even the most successful of these hunters, by reason of having followed the

few beaten paths known to their guides, never came within miles of such wonderful animals as those described by the tribesmen from the very center of the dark continent. If you have read any accounts of adventure in Africa, you will know that travelers never mention animals of any kind that are gifted with the faculty of speech, or gazelles that are overseers for native princes, or hares that eat flesh. No, indeed; only the native-born know of these; and, judging by the immense and rapid strides civilization is making in those parts, it will not be long before such wonderful specimens of zoölogy will be as extinct as the ichthyosaurus, dinornis, and other poor creatures who never dreamed of the awful names that would be applied to them when they were too long dead to show their resentment.

As to the truth of these tales, I can only say that they were told to me, in