

**TWO DIANAS IN
SOMALILAND;
THE RECORD OF
A SHOOTING TRIP**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649726370

Two Dianas in Somaliland; The Record of a Shooting Trip by Agnes Herbert

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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AGNES HERBERT

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TWO DIANAS IN
SOMALILAND

CHAPTER I

WE SET OUT FOR SOMALILAND

This weaves itself perforce into my business

King Lear

It is not that I imagine the world is panting for another tale about a shoot. I am aware that of the making of sporting books there is no end. Simply—I want to write. And in this unassuming record of a big shoot, engineered and successfully carried through by two women, there may be something of interest; it is surely worth more than a slight endeavour to engage the even passing interest of one person of average intelligence in these days of universal boredom.

I don't know whether the idea of our big shoot first emanated from my cousin or myself. I was not exactly a tenderfoot, neither was she. We had both been an expedition to the Rockies at a time when big game there was not so hard to find, but yet less easy to get at. We did not go to the Rockies with the idea of shooting, our sole *raison d'être* being to show the heathen Chinee how not to cook; but incidentally the charm of the chase captured us, and we exchanged the

gridiron for the gun. So at the end of March 190— we planned a sporting trip to Somaliland—very secretly and to ourselves, for women hate being laughed at quite as much as men do, and that is very much indeed.

My cousin is a wonderful shot, and I am by no means a duffer with a rifle. As to our courage—well, we could only trust we had sufficient to carry us through. We felt we had, and with a woman intuition is everything. If she feels she is not going to fail, you may take it from me she won't. Certainly it is one thing to look a lion in the face from England to gazing at him in Somaliland. But we meant to meet him somehow.

Gradually and very carefully we amassed our stores, and arranged for their meeting us in due course. We collected our kit, medicines, and a thousand and one needful things, and at last felt we had almost everything, and yet as little as possible. Even the little seemed too much as we reflected on the transport difficulty. We sorted our things most carefully—I longed for the floor-space of a cathedral to use as a spreading-out ground—and glued a list of the contents of each packing-case into each lid.

To real sportsmen I shall seem to be leaving the most important point to the last—the rifles, guns, and ammunition. But, you see, I am only a sportswoman by chance, not habit. I know it is the custom with your born sportsman to place his weapons first, minor details last. "Nice customs curtesy to great kings," they say, and so it must be here. For King Circum-

stance has made us the possessors of such wondrous modern rifles, &c., as to leave us no reason to think of endeavouring to supply ourselves with better. We, fortunately, have an uncle who is one of the greatest shikáris of his day, and his day has only just passed, his sun but newly set. A terribly bad mauling from a lion set up troubles in his thigh, and blood poisoning finally ended his active career. He will never hunt again, but he placed at our disposal every beautiful and costly weapon he owned, together with his boundless knowledge. He insisted on our taking many things that would otherwise have been left behind, and his great trust in our powers inspired us with confidence. It is to his help we owe the entire success of our expedition.

It would be an impertinence for a tyro like myself to offer any remarks on the merits or demerits of any rifle. Not only do the fashions change almost as quickly as in millinery, not only do great shikáris advise, advertise, and adventure with any weapon that could possibly be of service to anyone, but my knowledge, even after the experience gained in our long shoot, is confined to the very few firearms we had with us. They might not have met with unqualified approval from all men ; they certainly served us well. After all, that is the main point.

Our battery consisted of :

Three 12-bore rifles.

Two double-barrelled hammerless ejecting .500 Expresses.

One .35 Winchester.

Two small .22 Winchesters.

One single-barrel .350.

One 410 bore collector's gun.

A regular *olla podrida* in rifles.

My uncle selected these from his armoury as being the ones of all others he would feel safest in sending us out with. There may, in the opinion of many, be much more suitable ones for women to use, but, speaking as one who had the using of them, I must say I think the old shikári did the right thing, and if I went again the same rifles would accompany me.

My uncle is a small man, with a shortish arm, and therefore his reach about equalled ours, and his rifles might have been made for us.

We also towed about with us two immensely heavy shot guns. They were a great nuisance, merely adding to the baggage, and we never used them as far as I remember.

As we meant frequently to go about unescorted, a revolver or pistol seemed indispensable in the belt, and under any conditions such a weapon would be handy and give one a sense of security. On the advice of another great sportsman we equipped ourselves with a good shikár pistol apiece, 12-bore; and I used mine on one occasion very effectively at close quarters with an ard-wolf, so can speak to the usefulness and efficiency of the weapon.

It was the "cutting the ivy" season in Suburbia when we drove through it early one afternoon, and in front of every pill-box villa the suburban husband stood on a swaying ladder as he snipped away, all