

On birds observed in the Goolis Mountains in Northern Somali-land / by E. Lort Phillips.

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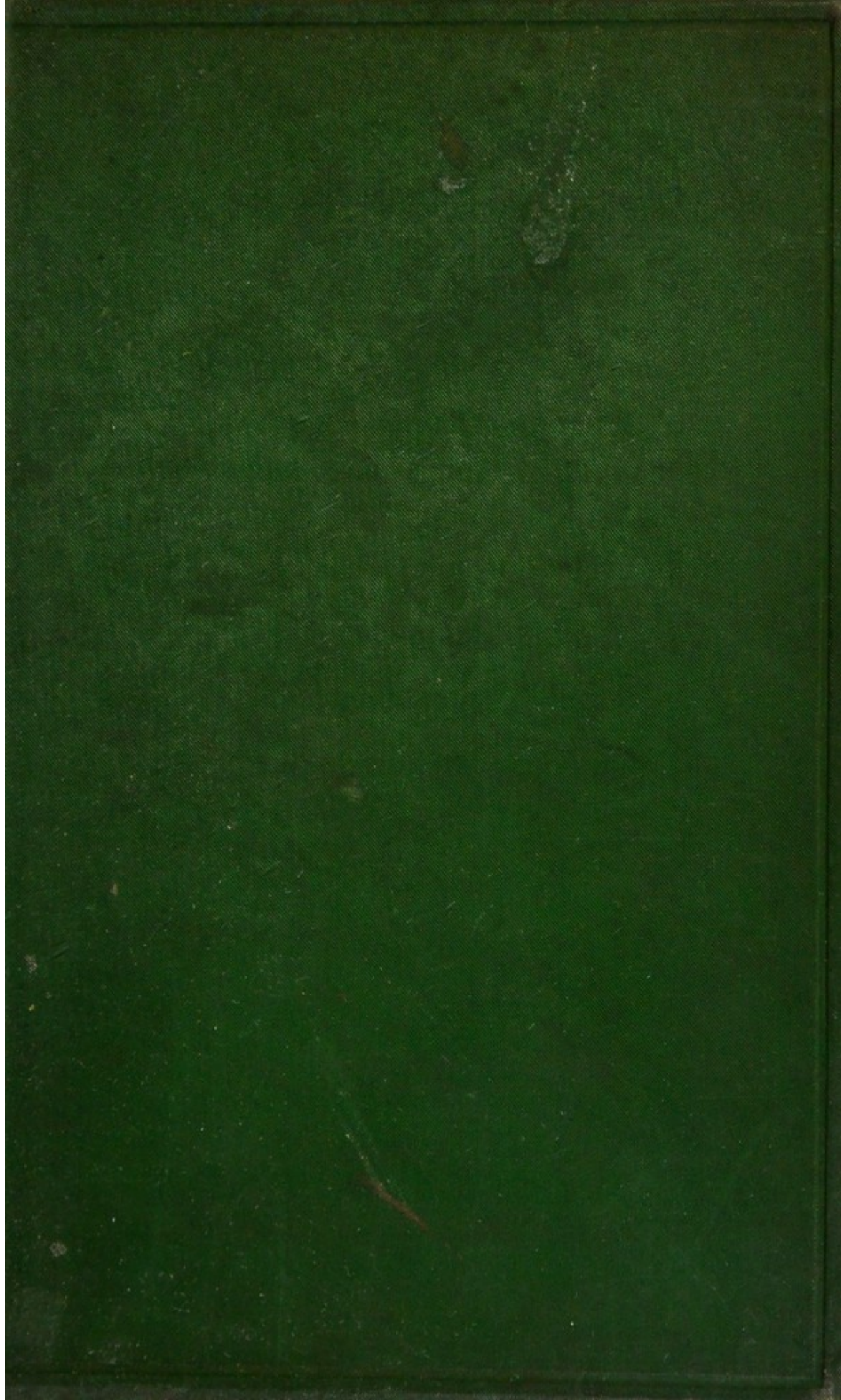
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To Mr. Seaman Streafeldt.

With the Authors Compl^{ts}

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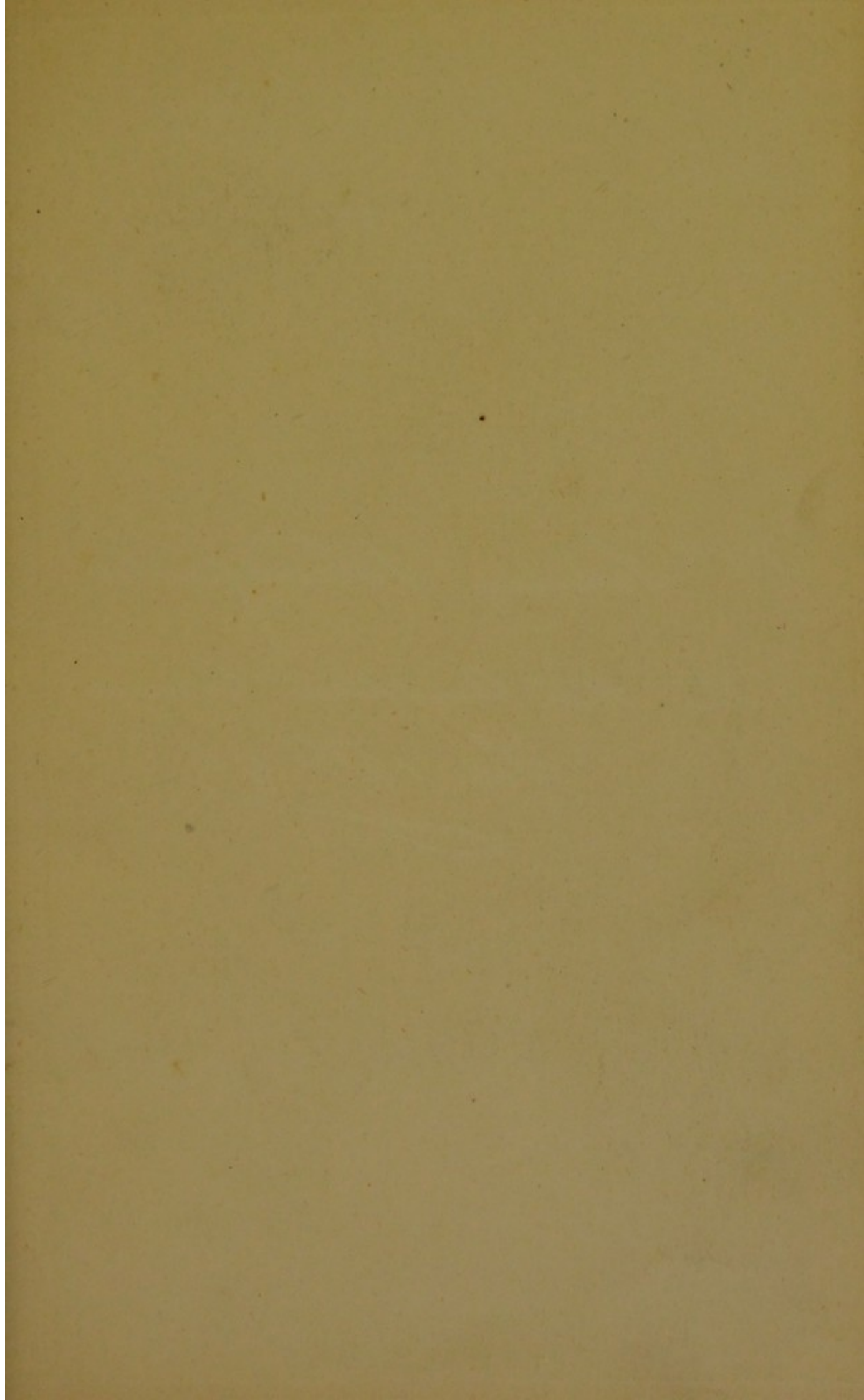
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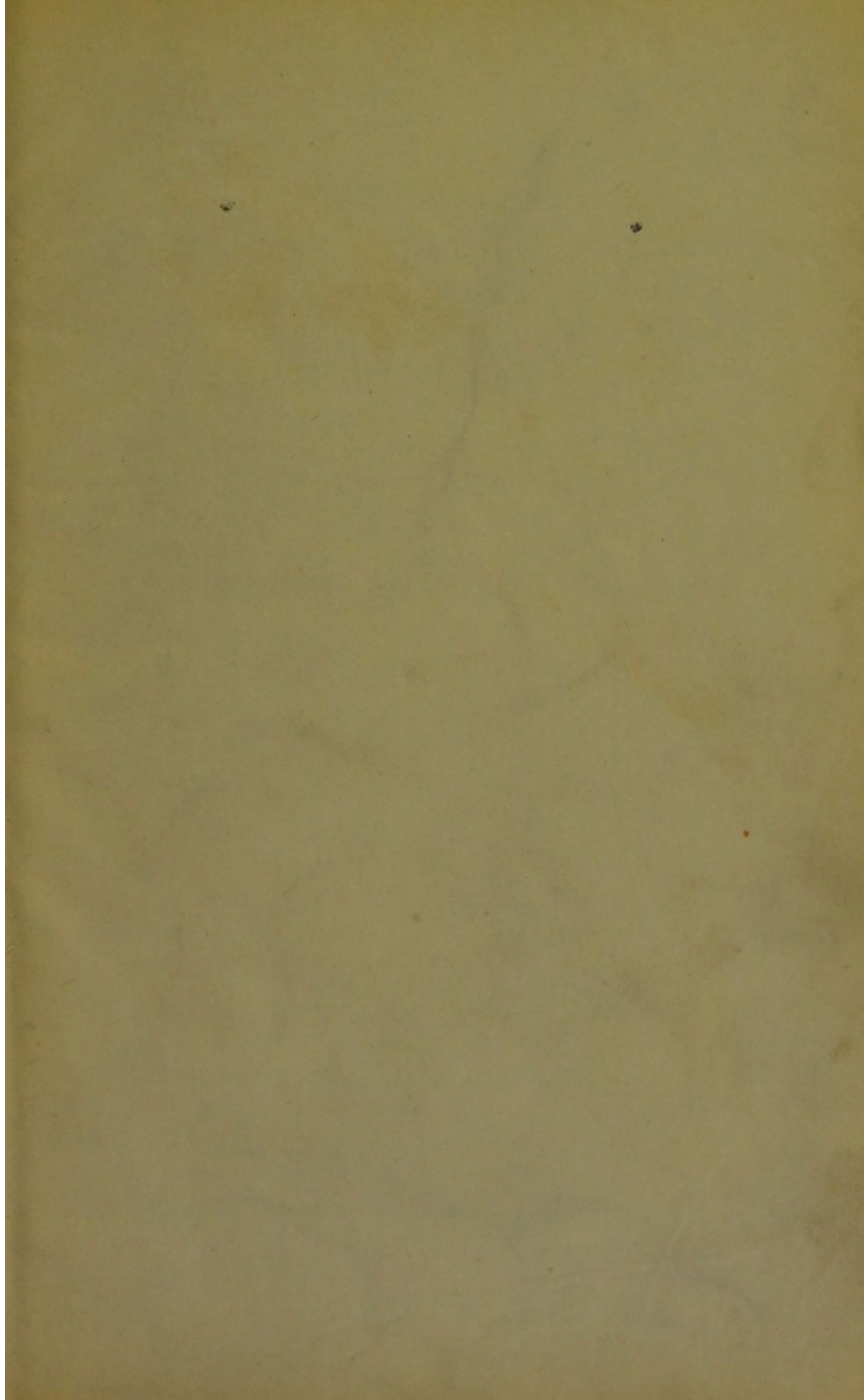


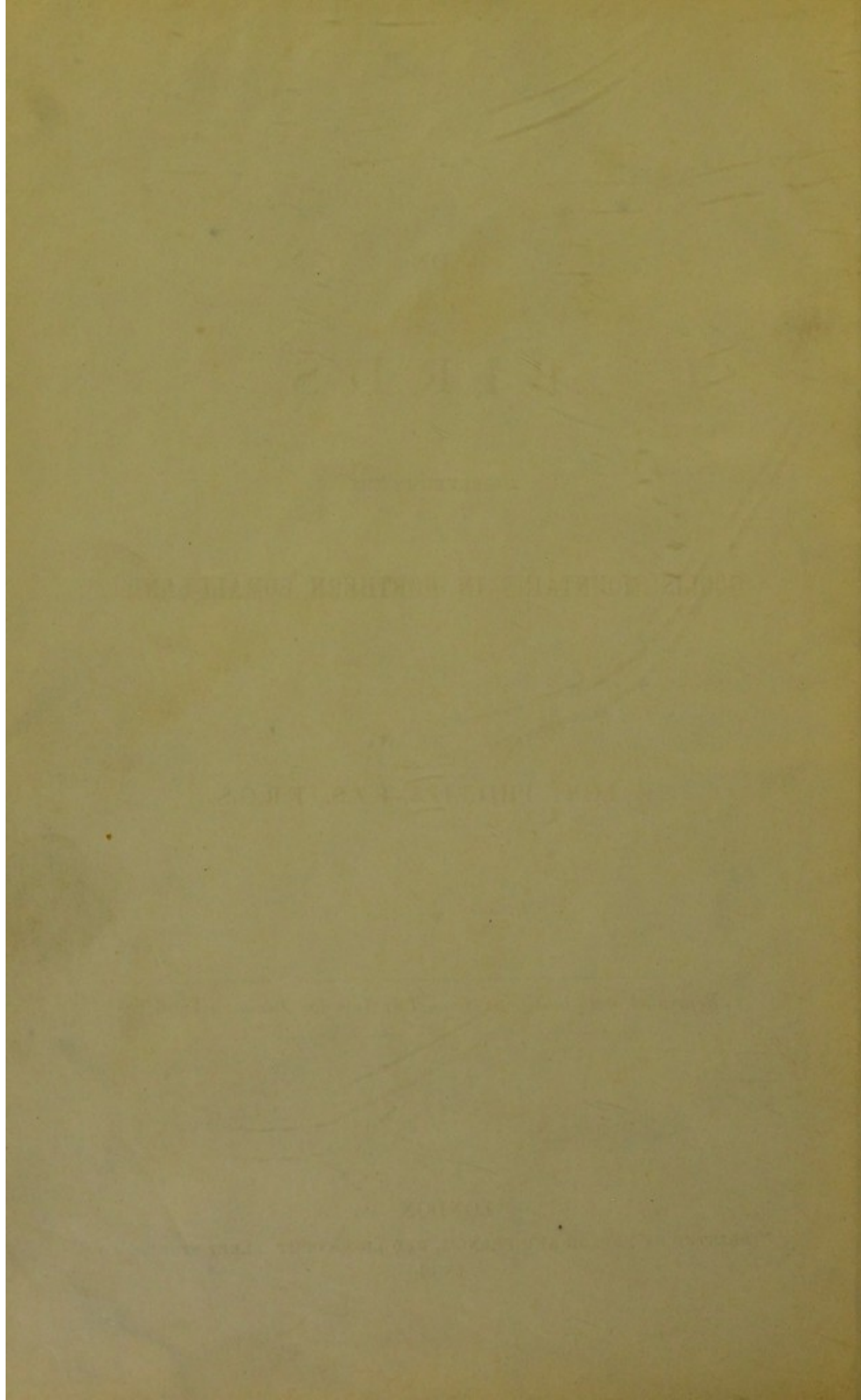


J. G. Keulemans del. et lith.

Mintern Bros. imp.

MERULA LUDOVICÆ.
THE LOUISA BLACKBIRD.





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ON
B I R D S

OBSERVED IN THE

GOOLIS MOUNTAINS IN NORTHERN SOMALI-LAND.

BY

E. LORT PHILLIPS, F.Z.S., F.R.G.S.

[Reprinted, with additions, from THE IBIS for January 1896.]

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1896.

On Birds observed in the Goolis Mountains in Northern Somali-land. By E. LORT PHILLIPS, F.Z.S., F.R.G.S.

ON January 4th, 1895, we left London in the P. and O. s.s. 'Rome,' bound for Aden, thence to Somali-land, where we hoped to spend a very pleasant three months, away from the cold and damp of an English winter. Of our party of five persons: my wife, Miss Edith Cole, and my brother-in-law, Mr. Frank Gunnis, were about to make their first trial of camp-life in Africa, while Mr. G. P. V. Aylmer and I were fairly old hands, having made several shooting-trips together. Arriving at Aden on the 21st, we were most hospitably entertained at Government House by General and Mrs. Jopp, and the A.D.C., Capt. J. O. Mennie, rendered us the most welcome assistance in getting together our servants and horses, for which we were very grateful.

Aden is not a particularly cheerful spot to make a prolonged stay at, and we were lucky enough to find that a small steamer, belonging to the great Parsee firm of Cowasjee and Dinshaw, was due to start for the Somali coast two days after our arrival. This just gave us time to make our necessary arrangements, and no more; so we embarked on the steam "cockle-shell" 'Tuna' on the evening of the 23rd, hoping to arrive at Berbera the following morning about 10; but, alas! our hopes were doomed to disappointment, and it was five in the evening before we sighted the Berbera lighthouse. Thoroughly as we subsequently enjoyed ourselves, none of us care to dwell on the horrors of that crossing.

I had crossed from Aden to Berbera three times previously in Arab dhows, but do not remember the discomforts being so great. Doubtless they were in reality greater; but, on this

occasion, the presence of ladies made one more alive to them; but be it said to the credit of our ladies that they bore the frightful rolling of the little tub and its attendant sea-sickness without a murmur—sitting up in their chairs on deck the whole time, as sleeping accommodation was entirely wanting. Arrived at Berbera, we at once called on the Resident, Captain Cox, and Mrs. Cox most kindly had rooms prepared for my wife and Miss Cole, while Aylmer, Gunnis, and I had our tents pitched on the Maidan and spent the night under canvas. The next day was devoted to hiring camels, horses, and men, and we should have got off to the hills with very little delay, had not we three men been attacked with a violent sort of sickness which we attributed to “tinned provision poisoning,” our cook, with economic zeal, having used for breakfast the contents of a tin that had been opened the day before. I had a very sharp attack, but used strong measures with myself, with the result that I was about again the next day, while the other two, who could not, at first, be prevailed upon to follow my example, were laid up for several days. For the benefit of those who may be similarly attacked, I will venture to give the secret of my treatment,—repeated doses of castor oil, with hot-water emetics. Having hired our camels and camp-followers, and an excellent lot of men they proved themselves to be, I started with the ladies for Dobar, a place about eight miles from Berbera, where we awaited our invalids, who joined us two days later. Dobar is a little oasis nestling among barren-looking hills, but it is of the utmost importance to Berbera; for it is from here that the latter place draws its water supply.

Tiny threads of the precious liquid, quite hot, ooze out of the rock in all directions, and would soon be absorbed by the parched ground around, were they not carefully conducted into cisterns, whence the water finds its way by gravitation to Berbera through iron pipes laid down by the Egyptians during their occupation of the country. Remains of ancient stone culverts also exist belonging to a far earlier period. Around the cisterns trees have been planted and gardens laid out, the whole being enclosed within a strong

zareeba, and from here weekly consignments of fresh vegetables are sent to Aden for the use of the troops. The garden is worked by an old ex-Egyptian soldier, Farragh by name, a native of the White Nile, assisted by about a dozen Berbera jail-birds who are "doing their bit of time," and a very easy "bit" too from all appearances; indeed, but for the fact of their having chains on their legs, one would hardly take them for convicts. At night they sleep in a ruined fort on a hill above the gardens built by the Egyptians as protection to the place.

Here we spent two very pleasant days collecting, and during the midday heat we made ourselves very comfortable with table, chairs, and books, under a spreading tamarind-tree which cast a shadow, "as that of a great rock," on the thirsty ground beneath. Above our heads the little Yellow Weaver-birds were very busy with their hanging ball-shaped nests, and it was delightful to watch them working with long streamers of grass or strips of palm-leaf. Grasping the half-completed structure firmly with their claws, they would poke one end of the material through the side, then they would run inside themselves and pull it through and poke the end out again and then come out and pull it, repeating the operation all round. Butterflies (Arabic "Birds of Paradise") and beetles were fairly plentiful, and it was most amusing to watch old Farragh's almost contemptuous astonishment with which he viewed the delight of the ladies at every new specimen. "What will the mem-sahibs do with these things?" he asked; "they are useless even for food!!"; but nevertheless he managed to catch a few himself, and brought them fluttering with one wing grasped firmly between a horny thumb and forefinger. From Dobar we marched to Bihen, passing the night at a waterless spot called Boosti. We started again the next morning before the sun was up, reaching Bihen at tea-time, where we found the tents already pitched, for we ourselves had taken it easy on the march, and had rested for some hours in the shade of a large tree covered with creepers, where butterflies and Sun-birds were very plentiful.

Bihen is another oasis, caused by a strong spring of

delicious water that comes bubbling out of the rock at the root of a large fig-tree. After forming two large pools, which, by the way, are full of small turtles, it loses itself in a dense mass of tall rushes, a favourite resort of lions a few years back. The bright green of the close-cropped sward and of the tall rushes is very grateful to the eye after the arid country through which the road from Berbera passes, so we decided to stay here for a few days. The following morning Aylmer started off to a sugar-loaf mountain called "Dimoleh." It has hitherto been marked on the maps as "Inaccessible Peak," the natives saying that no man had ever been known to reach the top. However, Aylmer and his two "boys" succeeded in reaching the summit after a stiffish climb. Hersi, one of the natives, gave a most amusing account of the horrors of the ascent in Somali-English, and finished up by saying: "If Mr. Elmer give me two hundred pound to go up again, I don't take him; what use two hundred pound if you no live to spend him?" Hersi was a great wag. While at Bihen we were visited by hundreds of baboons, who barked at us from the rocks above; they have a secure and safe sleeping-place close by, which has all the appearances of having been thus used for ages. It is an overhanging cliff, inaccessible from below; here on the upper ledges sleep the young ones and females, while the old males form a semicircle about the top, and woe to any prowling leopard which attempts a midnight raid.

From Bihen we made a short march to Gelloker ("place of the Little Bustard"), the country becoming more and more interesting as we approached the Goolis Mountains, the tops of which (curiously enough for this time of year) had been veiled in mist ever since we started. Tall flat-topped mimosa-trees here take the place of the smaller bushes nearer the coast, while dense thickets of the ever-green arak, or toothbrush-tree, give shelter to Francolins, Guinea-fowls, and Lesser Bustards, as well as to many smaller birds, which seek seclusion in their dark recesses. It has been a matter of regret to us all that we only spent one day at Gelloker. Butterflies and birds were particularly abundant, and there were many tracks of antelopes. How-

ever, as water was very scarce, we decided to push on to Hammar, at the foot of the Sheik Pass, which we reached the next evening. Hammar is a really beautiful spot, but it is hardly a desirable camping-ground, having been used from time immemorial as a resting-place for caravans about to ascend the Pass. On a slight eminence in the rocky gorge stand three ancient tamarind-trees, the very soil beneath them consisting of the remains of countless campfires. Mountains rise abruptly on all sides, well clothed with timber, among which the giant, candelabra-like *Euphorbia* is most conspicuous. A tiny stream trickles down the gorge, forming pools at intervals, over which lovely butterflies hover for a moment and then sail away above the highest tree-tops, to the disgust of their would-be capturers. From crevices in the rocks hang clusters of the beautiful broad-leaved maidenhair fern. Near one of these pools I had an adventure, which might have had an ugly termination. I was waiting with a butterfly-net for the return of one of the aforesaid errant beauties, when I saw a snake gliding down over the smooth rock towards the water. To run forward and scoop him into the net was the work of a moment, and I congratulated myself on having obtained an unharmed specimen so easily. He struggled violently for a few minutes, but when he had quieted down I brought the net nearer my face to examine him, when suddenly I felt a slight spray upon my cheek and a sharp pain in my right eye. I flung down the net and went and bathed my face in the pool, then recaught my captive, which had escaped, and hurried home to camp, where I dropped him safely into spirit. The pain in my eye now became much worse, and I spent the rest of the afternoon in my darkened tent bathing it; however, towards sundown the pain lessened, and the next morning my eye was quite well again. Dr. Günther, to whom I subsequently showed the specimen, pronounced it to be a cobra, and said that had I had any abrasion of the skin, which would have allowed the poison to enter the system, the result might have been fatal. I feel that I have the greatest reason to be thankful for my escape, the more so as a few weeks later an old man came and begged

for some medicine that would restore the sight to one of his eyes, and when I asked him how he had lost it, he replied, "Ten years ago a snake spit into my eye." While at Hammar, Gunnis brought in a little baboon; it was a poor weakly little thing that had not had strength enough to hold on to its mother's back while she bounded over the rocks. We hardly thought it would live, but the ladies tended it with the greatest care, with the result that it is now, together with a little female that we obtained later, a most popular show at the Zoological Society's Gardens,—so much so, that one of the keepers in the Monkey-house said to a lady one day: "It's surprisin' how many people have been here this summer asking for those little baboons. One American lady came here every day for a week, and would play with them by the hour."

Leaving Hammar, we ascended the pass by a beautiful new road lately engineered since the British occupation, such a contrast to the old rocky "staircase" existing formerly, when on two occasions it took from sunrise to sunset to get our caravan up it. Now all is plain sailing, and in about three hours from starting the camels emerged on to the level plain at the top, which forms one of the upper ledges of the Goolis range, 4000 feet above the sea. The view was magnificent, whichever way we looked. Away to the north lay Berbera, with its shipping and minaret just discernible through the shimmering tropical haze, while long white lines of surf divided the faint yellow of the maritime plain from the even paler blue of the sea. The intervening country, with its gleaming dry watercourses accentuated by the green of the trees along their banks, and the small round-topped hills, reminds one forcibly of a raised map. To the west, as far as the eye can reach, stretch the precipitous bluffs of the upper Goolis, while to the east Wagga Mountain, over 7000 ft. in height, looms faintly in the distance. From the top of the pass the caravan route continues due south through an opening in the hills, past an ancient mosque-like tomb, or "Sheik," from which the pass derives its name.

Having travelled due south so far, we now turned sharply to the west along the Merzo ledge, our camps being Gooldoo Hamed, Geddiyari, Darra As, Darra Sarri, Woob, and finally we descended again to the head of the great Hainwaina plain, or bay-like inlet at Dooloob, and worked our way back along the base of the hills, arriving at Bihen on the 20th April, and passing close to the base of the no longer inaccessible Dimoleh peak. Of all our different camps we give the palm to Darra As. The huge cedar-like junipers (*Juniperus procera*) there attain a size which we noticed nowhere else, while the open glades, resembling park-like spaces, were in the evening often covered with countless Guinea-fowls. Birds and butterflies were particularly abundant, but alas! large game is scarcer than it was some years ago. It was here that some natives brought us a little koodoo calf, which we managed, after infinite trouble, to bring alive to London, where it is to be seen at the Zoological Gardens. They also brought us a little klipspringer, which Miss Cole tended with the utmost care; but, alas! the little thing died at Dooloob. Leopards we found particularly fearless; they came into our camp five times, killing sheep and goats, but, to our shame, we never succeeded in slaying one of them in return, though we tried every device. Both the ladies were thirsting for their blood, and were particularly anxious that a leopard should be killed in revenge. They sat up with us on several occasions; my wife even climbing a large tree, and remaining with me from sunset till the small hours of the morning. The natives were not the least surprised at our non-success, declaring, with the old 'Were-Wolf' superstition, that these leopards were "Orgoobas," or witchfolk, and that they always knew when they were being waited for and would not come, but that they would bide their time. This belief was borne out by the fact that on one occasion, when we were at dinner and the camp ablaze with light, a leopard had the audacity to spring into the sheep-pen—which was in the centre of the camp—and out again with one of our best milch-goats, but it got hung up in the tent-ropes, and had to relinquish its prey, which had its throat nearly bitten through.

At Dooloob we were brought two perfectly fresh Ostrich eggs, which proved delicious eating, one egg making both omelets and pancakes for five people. Wild Ostriches are getting very scarce, but there are a few on the Hainwaina plain. When the first egg was brought, Hersi said: "Sahib! you know what dat egg? Dat Oyster egg! Last time when I with Captain Mennie he shoot it one Oyster—not wild Oyster, tame Oyster; den, next day, Midgan man belonging Oyster come and sit outside zareeba and cry 'Oo-oo-oo! someone shoot my Oyster; Oo-oo-oo! someone shoot my Oyster.' Den Captain Mennie come sorry for him, and give him one Camel." When I told Captain Mennie this, he said it was a gross libel, and that it was really his friend that had done it. However, I give the story as Hersi told it to me. The Midgans (low-caste Somalis) keep tame Ostriches, and take the feathers to Berbera for sale.

The only bit of cultivation we saw the whole time after leaving Dobar was at Dooloob; here three brothers had cleverly laid out a garden with an irrigation-trench above it, so as to insure a constant supply of water. Their only tools were their spears, and they were so much struck with a spade and rake we had in camp that we promised to leave those articles for them with the Governor at Berbera when we quitted the country. So great, however, was their desire to possess these useful implements that one of the brothers appeared at Berbera the very day we arrived, having walked 50 miles in order that there should be no mistake about getting them; and there certainly was no mistake about his joy at becoming the proud possessor of them. After Dooloob our camps were Allareea, Djedanio, Oombayle, Gotten, Wadaba, Bihen, Faradairo, and then into Berbera. Gotten and Wadaba were both delightful spots; there had been several heavy local showers about a fortnight previously, so that when we arrived everything was wearing its brightest green, and the ladies made great botanical hauls. Of their dried specimens sent to the Herbarium at Kew 69 represent new species, including 3 new genera*, while their seeds, bulbs, and

* See "Diagnoses Africanæ," no. vii., in Kew Bull. 1895, p. 211.

orchids have not yet made sufficient growth to be finally pronounced upon. Among our other collections, we were fortunate enough to obtain two new lizards, two new scorpions, two new spiders, and one new fossil coral, as well as the new *Corvus* and *Merula* mentioned hereafter.

Between Wadaba and Bihen we had a most exciting experience. We were now about to leave the foot-hills and strike out over the "red-hot" plain, so we decided to leave the camp before sunrise, and get over a good bit of ground before the great heat of the day, trusting to find some shady spot on our road, where we could rest till the evening. We passed several suitable places, but decided that they were not far enough on our way to warrant our stopping; however, the further we advanced the smaller we found the trees, which were decidedly dwindling as the distance from the hills increased. Our road lay along a glaring white water-course, and we were beginning to despair of finding a convenient place, when, far ahead, we spied a pillar of green apparently rising out of the white sand of the river's bed. We joyfully pressed forward and found, on a low flat island, two huge mimosa-trees completely covered with creepers, the rope-like stems of which hung down in festoons, nearly to the ground. We congratulated ourselves most heartily on this lucky find, and told the "boys" to get breakfast ready as soon as possible, as we were more than ready for it ourselves. On these occasions a camel always accompanied us, having on its back two large Scotch game-panniers, which not only held our food and drink for the day, but also books, papers, &c., as well as collecting-boxes, while on the top were tied folding chairs and table, and also ground-sheets; so we were able to make ourselves thoroughly comfortable. Breakfast over, we composed ourselves for a well-earned siesta. We had been asleep for about an hour, when Hersi came and touched me, saying, "Sahib, plenty rain comin'; can't you hear him shoutin' upstairs?" At the same moment I heard the roll of the thunder among the tops of the upper Goolis, accompanied by the peculiar hissing noise of a tropical downpour. I woke the others,

and we hastily converted the ground-sheet into a tent, using the chairs and table as a wall on the weather-side. We had barely completed our arrangements before the storm was upon us. In our anxiety to keep our things dry, the possibility of lightning seems to have escaped us, and it was only when we were cowering under our shelter that a loud burst of thunder over our heads reminded us of our rifles, upon which we were almost sitting. The situation was far from pleasant, for, apart from the fact of our having so much iron near us, the two tall trees under which we were sheltering were very likely conductors in themselves, being the only trees of their size for miles around. However, there was nothing to be done for it, as the only alternative was to stand outside and be drenched to the skin, and court an almost certain attack of fever. The storm raged overhead, and our trees, burdened as they were with their "top hamper" of creepers, seemed almost certain to crash down upon us. After about ten minutes' suspense the storm gradually moved off in an easterly direction. But now a new anxiety presented itself. We were encamped, as I said, on a little low island in the broad river-bed, and hardly had the storm abated when we heard the rush of advancing waters, which were hidden by a bend a little way above us. Soon a thick turbid flood came surging round the corner, and spread out on both sides of us from bank to bank. We were still two feet above the water; but masses of débris piled against the trees showed to what height previous floods had risen, and, as it was still raining in torrents among the hills, though it had ceased with us, we thought it wiser to put our things out of harm's way. So saddles, panniers, chairs, and rifles were lifted up into the loops of the creeper-stems above the highest flood-mark, we ourselves intending to follow when there was no longer any dry land left to stand on: however, we were spared this, and the water, having nearly deprived us of standing-room, began to abate. By 3 p.m. the river's bed was dry again, and we started on our way to Bihen, arriving there about 6.30. To our great relief, we found that the caravan had escaped the rain altogether. So very local are these tropical downpours that,

though the caravan had only passed a few miles to the south of us, on the other side of Dimoleh, it had entirely missed the storm. Aylmer, who was shooting in that direction, escaped a wetting, while Gunnis, who was with us, was thoroughly drenched, luckily, however, with no ill effects. Arriving at Berbera, we found the little Maidan all bustle and confusion; it was crowded with tents, as there were three shooting expeditions about to start for the far interior; while a gallant Colonel, lately commanding at Aden, had just arrived from beyond Hainwaina, having had his arm mauled by a lion. To our great joy we found the Royal Indian Marine troopship 'Mayo' in the harbour, and were kindly offered a passage over to Aden, which we gladly accepted. Captain Mennie again met us with an invitation to Government House, a delightful termination to a most charming expedition, which we had all of us thoroughly enjoyed.

In arranging the following field-notes, which give the results of our observations on the birds of the Goolis, I am gratefully indebted to my friend Dr. Bowdler Sharpe for his very kind assistance. In compiling them I have in most cases given references to Captain Shelley's paper on the birds of my former expedition (*Ibis*, 1885, pp. 389-418), and have followed nearly the order of classification adopted by him.

1. *PŒOCEPHALUS RUFIVENTRIS* (Rüpp.); Shelley, *Ibis*, 1885, p. 393.

These lively little Parrots are fairly common wherever the giant *Euphorbia* is to be found, and are often seen chasing each other with loud screams among the candelabra-like branches. The natives say that they breed in holes in the rotting stems; but I was never lucky enough to find a nest.

2. *IRRISOR ERYTHORHYNCHUS* (Lath.); Shelley, *Ibis*, 1885, p. 395.

These noisy, evil-smelling birds are fairly common both in the plains and on the Goolis range. They are gregarious, and small parties of 8 or 10 may be seen flying from one big tree to another. On the wing they are almost silent, but the moment they alight they set up a deafening chatter, and, holding tightly on to the bark, they throw themselves

backward till their heads are level with their feet. They then regain the upright position and, raising their beaks, all chatter in concert, repeating this performance at each fresh tree. They have a most disgusting smell, the cause of which I am unable to explain, and it was with the greatest repugnance that I managed to skin one specimen.

3. *UPUPA SOMALIENSIS*, Salvin, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. xvi. p. 13.

Upupa epops senegalensis, Shelley, Ibis, 1885, p. 397.

Very common, and does not seem to differ in its habits from the Hoopoe, which is such a familiar object along the banks of the Nile. It is quite fearless of man, and its great tameness may be accounted for by the fact that it is beloved by the Somalis, who look upon it as a harbinger of good times to come. One day, as I was watching one of the beautiful birds seated on an ant-hill close to the tents, a native who prided himself on his English said to me, "You know what he sayin'? He say hoot-hoot-hoot, plenty rain comin'; hoot-hoot-hoot, all the camels an' cows make young ones, all de goats an' sheep make young ones; hoot-hoot-hoot, plenty grass comin'." Who would not love the bearer of such good news?

4. *MEROPS NUBICUS* (Gm.); Shelley, Ibis, 1885, p. 397.

I was unable to obtain a specimen of this fine Bee-eater; but on the 7th of April I saw hundreds of them high in the air apparently making their way in a north-easterly direction. They were easily distinguishable by their bright carmine bellies.

5. *MELITTOPHAGUS CYANOSTICTUS* (Cab.).

Melittophagus pusillus cyanostictus, Shelley, Ibis, 1885, p. 398.

This little Bee-eater is one of the most familiar objects both on the march and in camp. It is to be seen everywhere perched on a prominent dry twig, or making its beautiful undulating flight in pursuit of some quickly-flying butterfly, which it invariably captures seemingly without an effort. Unless disturbed, it always returns with its prey to its own particular twig, in which it seems from long usage to have established a sort of vested right, to judge from

the droppings and insect "débris" which are to be found underneath.

6. *MELITTOPHAGUS REVOILI* (Oust.); Shelley, *Ibis*, 1885, p. 398.

Far from common. Only two pairs were noticed on the lower slopes.

7. *CORACIAS GARRULUS*, Linn.; Sharpe, *Cat. B. Brit. Mus.* xvii. p. 15 (1892).

One specimen of the Common Roller was shot by Aylmer at Gotten, at the foot of the Goolis, early in April.

8. *CORACIAS NÆVIUS* (Daud.); Shelley, *Ibis*, 1885, p. 399.

This handsome bird seems to prefer the higher and more thickly wooded ledges of the Goolis to the open plain, where I only noticed it on two occasions. Among the euphorbias, however, it may be met with daily. Like its cousin, *C. lorti*, it is very noisy and pugnacious, often chasing Hawks, Crows, and even members of its own species to a great height, and then on its return earthward I have seen it turning over and over uttering loud cries as if in a paroxysm of delight at having vanquished its foe. Its food seems to consist of beetles and small lizards, and I have watched it catching the large yellow locust on the wing.

9. *CORACIAS LORTI*, Shelley, *Ibis*, 1885, p. 399.

This Roller, of which I obtained only two specimens in 1885, was very plentiful along the base of the hills, but I never noticed it on the upper "ledges" of the Goolis, where, however, *C. nævius* was fairly common. Like that species it was generally to be seen in pairs, and was far from shy, its harsh scolding cry seldom leaving one long in ignorance of its proximity. It is easily seen, as it loves to perch on the top of the highest tree, a dead branch being always preferred to a living one.

10. *SCHIZORHIS LEUCOGASTER* (Rüpp.); Shelley, *Ibis*, 1885, p. 400.

These handsome birds are fairly plentiful among the tall mimosas that grow along the banks of the "tugs" or water-courses, and have a curious habit of running about over the

flat interlaced thorny twigs, more after the manner of squirrels than of birds. Their cry strangely resembles the bleat of a goat, and I remember being bitterly disappointed in 1885, after a ten days' waterless march, to find that the welcome "baaing," which would have meant to us milk and water, proceeded only from a flock of these birds. Alas! the wells to which we had been pressing were dry and the herds had been moved elsewhere. The flight of this Touraco very much resembles that of the Magpie, and immediately on alighting they raise and lower their handsome crests.

11. *CENTROPUS SUPERCILIOSUS*, Hempr. et Ehr.; Shelley, Ibis, 1886, p. 400.

To this Cuckoo—so seldom seen, yet so often heard—the traveller is indebted for one of the most charming sounds heard on the march whenever the latter follows the course of running water, for the *Centropus* loves the dense masses of reeds which are always to be found in such localities. So shy, however, is it that it was only during last winter (my fifth spent in East Africa) that I was able to identify the beautiful familiar bell-like tones with the well-known bird occasionally seen scuttling away into covert at one's approach. Its song, if such it can be called, consists of ten clear distinct notes following each other down the scale with the utmost regularity. I had previously (I don't know why) attributed these sounds to a little bronze Dove, when to my delight and surprise, as I was waiting for large game, well hidden in a patch of reeds, I saw a Ground-Cuckoo steal out of another patch, when, doubtless thinking himself alone and unobserved, he mounted a stone and began to sing, repeating the song every few minutes; but he kept an anxious look-out from side to side as if in fear of being caught in the act, like a shy human amateur.

12. *CUCULUS GULARIS*, Steph.; Shelley, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. xix. p. 244 (1890).

Two Cuckoos were seen, at a place called Gotten, at the base of the Goolis range. Aylmer shot a specimen of *C. gularis*, so that the other Cuckoos observed were probably of this species.

13. TERPSIPHONE CRISTATA (Gm.) ; Shelley, Ibis, 1885, p. 400.

Fairly plentiful on the upper slopes in the euphorbias, among which the male endeavours to conceal himself, as if painfully conscious of his startling appearance; his movements seeming terribly handicapped by the long streaming white tail-feathers, which certainly give a most weird look. The little brown female, on the contrary, is extremely lively, flitting from bough to bough, uttering a sharp "chat-chat" the whole time. Though I have never actually seen her feeding her long-tailed mate, I feel almost sure that she must cater for him, as she is so incessantly active, while he remains hidden among the thick branches, and when he does take a short flight it is so laborious that the idea of fly-catching seems out of the question. I should, however, be very glad to have my theory corroborated.

14. PACHYPRORA ORIENTALIS (Heugl.).

Batis orientalis, Sharpe, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. iv. p. 136 (1879).

Always to be found in the neighbourhood of water.

15. BRADYORNIS PUMILUS, Sharpe, P. Z. S. 1895, p. 480.

This bird is generally seen in pairs. Its habits closely resemble those of the Redbreast.

16. BUCHANGA ASSIMILIS, Bechst.; Shelley, Ibis, 1885, p. 401.

This handsome Flycatcher is very plentiful in northern Somali-land, being found from Berbera itself to the top of the Goolis range. It is also very fearless, often taking up a position on the hedge of the zareeba, attracted, no doubt, by the quantities of flies which invariably infest a camp in hot climates.

17. LANIUS ANTINORII, Salvad.; Sharpe, P. Z. S. 1895, p. 477.

This specimen was unfortunately destroyed, but I managed to save the wings, and Dr. Sharpe says that there can be no doubt that the Shrike was of this species, with white

tips to the secondaries. On my former expedition I got a specimen of *L. dorsalis* (cf. Shelley, Ibis, 1885, p. 401), and now that *L. antinorii* is found in the same district of Somali-land, it is quite possible that Dr. Sharpe may be right, and that *L. dorsalis* and *L. antinorii* are merely sexes of the same species (cf. Sharpe, P. Z. S. 1895, p. 477).

18. *LANIUS PHENICUROIDES*, Sev.; Gadow, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. viii. p. 278 (1883).

Aylmer shot a specimen of this Shrike.

19. *DRYOSCOPUS FUNEBRIS*, Hartl.; Gadow, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. viii. p. 133.

This Bush-Shrike keeps well out of sight in the thickest clumps of the arak, or toothbrush-tree, among which its beautiful metallic note may be heard at any time of day. So shy, however, did I find it that it was only after a good deal of creeping about on my hands and knees that I was able to identify the bird with the note.

20. *LANIARIUS CRUENTUS* (Hempr. et Ehr.); Shelley, Ibis, 1885, p. 402.

This lovely Bush-Shrike is to be met with on all open spaces on the Goolis, as it seems to avoid the thickets altogether. It is far from shy and may be seen towards sundown in small parties, going through the most ridiculous antics. They chase each other solemnly round and round some big stone with outspread wings and tail, or else, perched on a dead bough, bob up and down to each other and all the time utter two metallic notes such as might be produced by a child's mouth-organ. During this pantomime they seem to be in a state of ecstasy, and may be approached within a few yards before they appear to be conscious of one's presence.

21. *PRIONOPS POLIOCEPHALUS* (Stanley); Shelley, Ibis, 1885, p. 403.

I only noticed one flock of these weird-looking "Camel-birds" during the whole trip, although in 1885 they seemed fairly common towards the Webbe river. This flock I saw early in April, at Gotten, at the foot of the Goolis, where it

may have been simply resting during the general migration which seemed to be taking place. I have called them "Camel-birds," as their flight and cry forcibly remind one of the Camel-bird, *Buphaga erythrorhyncha*; but I have never actually seen them feeding on the camels' backs, though I am nearly sure I saw them perched on the grazing cattle in 1885. The curious yellow fleshy excrescence around the eyes gives them a very "uncanny" appearance.

22. *EUROCEPHALUS RUEPPELLI*, Bp.; Shelley, *Ibis*, 1886, p. 303.

These birds are fairly numerous in the thickly-wooded districts, their white rumps making them very conspicuous when on the wing. Early in March I watched a pair for some time busily engaged on a nearly-completed nest, which was, for such large birds, a miracle of ingenuity. It was built almost entirely of spiders' webs with a foundation of moss, and looked like a magnified nest of a Humming-bird. It was stuck against the side of a tallish tree, about 12 feet from the ground, and at a little distance could scarcely be distinguished from the bark.

23. *HYPOLAIS LANGUIDA* (H. & E.); Seebohm, *Cat. B. Brit. Mus.* v. p. 80 (1881).

Of this species only one was seen, which was shot near Berbera on Feb. 1st.

24. *MERULA LUDOVICIÆ*. (Plate II.)

Merula ludoviciæ, Lort Phillips, *Bull. B. O. C.* iv. p. xxxvi; *Ibis*, 1895, p. 383.

I was delightfully reminded of our English Blackbird when I first saw an example of this new species. It was early morning, the bushes and grass were glistening with dew, and under a gigantic cedar I caught sight of a dark grey bird with yellow bill and feet hunting for worms in the truly orthodox manner, whilst on the topmost bough another was pouring forth his morning song. I watched them for some time and then continued my way, as I only had my rifle with me. It was, however, some days before I was able to

obtain a specimen, and then I was lucky enough to find a nest containing two eggs in a thick bush, much resembling a box-tree. I also shot both the male and the female, which have been admirably figured in Plate II.

I have named this new species after my wife, who is a keen observer, and was a very great help to me with my collection.

The nest is a coarsely-made structure of small twigs and bark, peeled off in strips and intertwined with the sticks and a few straws. The lining is of dried grass with a few leaves, and there is a little moss on the outside of the nest. The eggs were two in number, of a very delicate type for a Blackbird. The ground-colour is a very pale greenish blue, plentifully sprinkled with tiny spots of rufous, clouding together at the longer ends; the underlying markings and spots are faint purplish grey. Axis 1.1 inch, diam. 0.75.

25. *MONTICOLA RUFOCINEREA* (Rüpp.) ; Seebohm, Cat. B. v. p. 327 (1881).

An adult male was procured.

26. *MYRMECOCICHLA MELANURA* (Temm.).

Myrmecocichla cinerea, Seebohm, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. v. p. 358.

I met with a couple of these birds on the bare hills at Dobar. They consisted of an old bird and a young one, and the latter was being fed by the parent. The nestling plumage is thoroughly Chat-like, and the feathers are tipped with sandy buff.

27. *SAXICOLA PHILLIPSI*, Shelley, Ibis, 1885, p. 404.

Fairly common both on the Berbera plain and on the upper ledges of the Goolis, wherever open spaces are to be found. Its habits do not seem to differ from those of other Chats.

28. *SAXICOLA DESERTI*, Temm. ; Shelley, Ibis, 1885, p. 405.

Plentiful on the Berbera plains.

29. *SAXICOLA ISABELLINA*, Rüpp.; Shelley, Ibis, 1885, p. 405.

This Chat, like the *S. deserti*, was plentiful on the Berbera plains in February.

30. *RUTICILLA PHÆNICURUS* (Linn.).

An adult male bird was procured. The Redstart was fairly common on the higher ground where, on March 15th, I found a pair nesting in a hole of a tree overhanging the path. The same day I saw a Bluethroat but failed to get it.

31. *ERYTHROPYGIA LEUCOPTERA* (Rüpp.); Shelley, Ibis, 1885, p. 406.

This species frequents the open plains, and may be seen dodging about among the low mimosa-bushes. When on the wing it spreads out its tail like a fan, but for which peculiarity it would often escape notice.

32. *CALAMONASTES SIMPLEX* (Cab.); Sharpe, Ibis, 1892, p. 154.

This remarkable little bird is fairly plentiful among the low foot-hills, but I never noticed it on the upper ledges of the Goolis. For so small a bird, it has a loud and almost startling note, resembling the sound that would be produced by striking two thin pieces of very hard dry wood together. When first I followed up the sharp "click-clack, click-clack," I was quite prepared to see a largish bird, but instead of this, there was a tiny creature in an ecstasy of excitement emphasising the two loud notes by raising itself up on the first and coming sharply down on the second. The peculiar up-and-down movement of our common Dipper when perched upon a rock after a short flight will serve well as an illustration of this bird's antics.

33. *CRATEROPUS SMITHI*, Sharpe, Bull. B. O. C. iv. p. xli; id. P. Z. S. 1895, p. 487.

This noisy bird is far oftener heard than seen, as it keeps out of sight in the thick bushes. I have never noticed it on the plain, but on the upper ledges of the Goolis it must be fairly common. Its usual cry is a sort of harsh chattering,

but it is also gifted with mimicry, imitating the call of the Guinea-fowl so well that on several occasions members of our party were completely deceived, not to say horribly disappointed, after a stealthy creep through the bushes. For, instead of the expected "family shot" and subsequent luscious roast for which the hungry soul yearned, behold a flock of useless chatterers, which fly off, evidently delighted with their little joke.

34. *ANTHUS SORDIDUS*, Rüpp. ; Sharpe, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. x. p. 560 (1885).

A female bird shot by Aylmer at Durra Surri.

35. *ANTHUS RUFULUS*, Vieill. ; Sharpe, Cat. B. x. p. 574 (1885).

A male, also shot by Aylmer at Woob.

36. *MOTACILLA BOREALIS*, Sundev. ; Sharpe, Cat. B. x. p. 522 (1885).

Fairly common, and seen hunting for insects among the feet of the feeding cattle, as at home.

37. *CINNYRIS HABESSINICUS* (Hempr. & Ehr.) ; Shelley, Ibis, 1885, p. 406.

This living gem is extremely common in the Goolis range, and both high up and low down it is one of the most familiar objects of bird-life. Whilst on the wing it utters continually a sharp "chat-chat-chat," as if to draw attention to its flashing colours. That it was breeding I feel sure, but we looked for its nest in vain. Miss Cole found a beautiful little hanging nest resembling a "Bottle Tit's," made of cobwebs, with a regular pent-house protecting the entrance ; but we failed to identify its owner, though we strongly suspected it belonged to *C. habessinicus*.

38. *CINNYRIS OSIRIS*, Finsch ; Shelley, Mon. Sunb. p. 215.

This specimen was first seen by my wife, and was the only one obtained. It was among the large-leaved colchicums (?), where it was feeding in company with *C. habessinicus*. We had great hopes that it would prove a new species, for I had

never seen one before, though both *C. habessinicus* and *C. albiventris* were exceedingly numerous.

39. CINNYRIS ALBIVENTRIS (Strickl.); Shelley, Mon. Sunb. p. 233, pl. lxxiii.

This exquisite Sun-bird is common both on the hills and on the plains, where it may be seen in company with its dowdy little mate wherever the mimosa is in blossom or the aloe hangs its crimson and yellow bells. It is very fearless, and does not seem to mind being watched in the least.

40. TEXTOR DINEMELLI, Horsf.; Shelley, Ibis, 1885, p. 409.

Only seen along the foot of the Goolis range, where it was breeding in small colonies in March and April. The nests are huge clumsy affairs placed at the extremity of the boughs of the taller mimosa trees and look like flat masses of the sharpest thorns; the entrance, however, is from below, and the interior is lined with soft grasses. The eggs are pale blue, dotted with dark brown spots.

41. BUPHAGA ERYTHORHYNCHA, Stanley; Shelley, Ibis, 1885, p. 410.

Somali name "*Hoorie*."

As soon as the camping-ground has been reached and the camels turned out to graze, these noisy plagues put in an appearance, and, swooping down upon the tired beasts, commence a systematic hunt all over their bodies for ticks &c., running with the greatest ease over the backs and under the bellies of the camels, which, far from appearing pleased at their attentions and at being rid of their disgusting parasites, try to knock the birds off, wherever they can reach them with their long necks. The movements, and the facility with which the birds run up and down the camels' sides, remind one of the Woodpecker, and, like the latter, who always tries to keep a tree-trunk between himself and the observer, they will also, on the near approach of man, run round to the further side and peep at him over the ridge of the camel's back. The natives detest them, declaring that they not only worry the feeding camels, but also aggravate their sores and,

by pecking away at the exposed flesh, prevent their healing. Surely the baggage-camel's lot is not a happy one!

42. *COSMOPSARUS REGIUS*, Reichen. ; Shelley, *Ibis*, 1885, p. 411.

This bird is far from plentiful, but is to be met with on the open plains in small parties of three or four. I never noticed it in the thickly-wooded parts of the Goolis, nor could I find out where it nested. A flock of these gorgeous birds in the dazzling sunshine is a sight not to be forgotten.

43. *AMYDRUS MORIO* (Linn.) ; Sharpe, *Cat. B. Brit. Mus.* xiii. p. 161.

These Grakles frequent the highest part of the Goolis range, and are always to be found in the neighbourhood of the precipitous cliffs which crown the range and are in many places quite perpendicular for some hundreds of feet. These cliffs are studded with wind-worn cavities varying in size from a pigeon-hole to a good-sized cavern. In the former the "Morios" make their homes, flying in and out after the manner of Jackdaws, and indeed, when seen from above, lying flat at the edge of the cliffs, the male (?) bird, with his grey head and noisy cry, greatly resembles our familiar "Jack." The larger holes are tenanted by Vultures, Hawks, Eagles, and Owls, and seem to be a general breeding-place for Northern Somali-land, as from the top of the cliffs the land slopes away southwards hundreds of miles, and forms a vast undulating plain, while towards the north there is a rapid fall of 6000 feet in the short space of 40 miles which intervenes between the Goolis and the sea.

44. *NOTAUGES SUPERBUS* (Rüpp.) ; Shelley, *Ibis*, 1885, p. 412.

This lovely Starling is one of the most familiar objects of bird-life in Somali-land. It is a persistent camp-follower, showing little or no fear of man, hopping about over bales and boxes and peering into the tents, its little white eyes gleaming with intelligence all the while. We found it breeding in small colonies during March and April, the nests being placed far out on the boughs of the taller

mimosas. Like those of *Textor dinemelli*, they are protected from above by a covering of the sharpest thorns, the entrance being from below.

45. *LAMPROCOLIUS CHALYBEUS* (Ehr.); Sharpe, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. xiii. p. 176.

This Starling—unlike *Notauges superbus*, which was always with us—was met with only at one place on the upper Goolis, called “Darra As,” where there was a small plateau covered with a short heath, among which I saw about twenty pairs daily while we camped there. That they were so local was all the more extraordinary as we came across several of such plateaux. The birds differ again from *Notauges superbus*, to which they must be closely allied, in their choice of breeding-places, for while the latter species, like *Textor dinemelli*, makes huge thorny structures at the ends of the mimosa boughs, *L. chalybeus* prefers holes in the trunk of some big tree. Indeed, a pair had a nest in a cleft of a cedar under which we were encamped, and reminded us forcibly of our common Starling in their noisy attendance on their young.

46. *CORVUS EDITHÆ*, Lort Phillips, Bull. B. O. C. iv. p. xxxvi; Ibis, 1895, p. 383.

Only four of these birds were seen during the whole trip. At Dejamio, in the Hainwaina Plain, I was writing in my tent, and, hearing a distinctly different caw-caw to that of our usual camp-followers, I went out and saw two brown Crows seated on a koodoo head that had been put outside the zareeba hedge for the birds to clean. Directly they saw me they flew away, but came circling back over the camp nearly out of shot. However, I was lucky enough to drop one, to the huge delight of the natives, who never cease to wonder at a bird being shot flying. The other bird flew straight away. Three days later I saw another pair about five miles from camp, but as I only had a heavy rifle with me I could not get one. Was this a fresh pair, or had the survivor mysteriously supplied itself with a mate, as Ravens have been reported to have done in districts where only a solitary pair

was previously known to exist, one of them having come to an untimely end?

I have named this new Crow after Miss Edith Cole, who accompanied our party to Somali-land.

47. *VINAGO WAALIA* (Gm.) ; Salvad. Cat. B. Brit. Mus. xxi. p. 15.

Wherever the huge fig-tree is to be found these lovely Pigeons make their home in the thick branches, finding not only a plentiful supply of food, but also the grateful shade which seems essential to them. I have never seen them flying about except in the cool of the evening or when disturbed. Indeed, so loath are they to leave the shade that I have often known them to sit motionless without betraying their presence for more than an hour while we have been eating luncheon below, when suddenly, as if unable to bear their enforced stillness any longer, they would dash out with a whirr-r-r of wings that was quite startling.

48. *PTERNISTES LEUCOSCEPUS* (Gray) ; Ogilvie Grant, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. xxii. p. 181, pl. viii. (1893).

Fairly common wherever there is thick undergrowth. It is very noisy at sunrise and sunset, its cry being a harsh grating sound, which it repeats over and over again. At such times it may be seen in the little open glades, but it will take covert again the moment it thinks itself observed. It is capital eating, and will rise well once, but is difficult to flush a second time. We found several nests in March and April containing from seven to ten eggs, the shells of which are so hard that one can rattle them about together without the least fear of their breaking. When once caught these birds are very easily tamed, and I was fortunate enough in 1884 to bring home alive a pair of this species as well as a pair of *Francolinus granti*, which were, I believe, the first ever received by the Zoological Society.

49. *FRANCOLINUS GRANTI*, Hartl. ; Ogilvie Grant, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. xxii. p. 148 (1893).

This little "Partridge" is far oftener seen than *Pter-*

nistes leucoscepus, as thick covert does not seem to be so essential to it. Like the latter, it is very noisy in the morning and evening, and has a surprisingly loud, harsh cry for so small a bird. It affords capital sport, as it rises well, and its flesh, though rather dry, is always a welcome change.

50. *LOPHOTIS GINDIANA* (Oust.) ; Sharpe, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. xxiii. p. 292 (1894).

This little Bustard, called "Gello" by the Somalis, is very plentiful on the flat ground, where, however, it is much oftener heard than seen. Its cry is rather mournful; beginning low down, it mounts the scale in a series of double notes, the bird itself not infrequently, at the end of its "song," rising high into the air with rapid beating of the wings, and when a sufficient height has been gained it will throw back its head and neck till they seem to rest on its back, and then flutter slowly to the ground, as if in a dying condition. We found them breeding in March and April, and several beautifully-marked round eggs were brought in by the boys; in each case the nest contained two.

Of the Great Somali Bustard, called "Saramudly" by the natives, Aylmer obtained one specimen, which was too much damaged by the bullet to make a 'skin' of: its flesh, however, proved excellent for the table. In 1887 I flushed a female from a nest containing two eggs.

51. *CURSORIUS SOMALENSIS*, Shelley.

Cursorius gallicus somalensis, Shelley, Ibis, 1885, p. 415.

Having reached the top of the Sheik Pass, I started off with my 'boy,' Aden Arrali, in the hope of falling in with another flock of the Somali Courser, as I had done 10 years previously. In vain he tried to assure me that no birds were to be found on the arid ground to which we made our way. At last I reached the well-remembered spot, but, alas! no Coursers were to be seen, and I sat down, hot and tired. I was almost smiling to myself that I should have been sanguine enough to expect to find in the identical place the descendants of the flock out of which I obtained my first specimens, when suddenly something moving among the

stones caught my eye, and there, within a few yards, were three Coursers, the colour of which so exactly matched the surrounding objects that they had even escaped the sharp eyes of my boy, till one of them stretched out its wing over its extended leg. I promptly secured all three of these victims of misplaced confidence, and returned to camp well pleased with myself. These were the first and the last that I met with during the whole trip.





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