



In Pursuit of the "Mad" Mullah: Service and Sport in the Somali Protectorate (1902)

Malcolm MacNeill

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'In Pursuit of the "Mad" Mullah: Service and Sport in the Somali Protectorate,' by Captain Malcolm McNeill (1866-1917).

This volume comes at an opportune moment, and is likely to attract attention. The author vividly brings before his readers the aspects of war under novel surroundings, and in the matter of sport is evidently particularly keen scented and enthusiastic. Captain McNeill served under Colonel Swayne in the Somaliland Field Force of 1901, and subsequently had command of one of the two columns into which the expedition was divided. He has much to say of the exciting times that followed, and his relation is interwoven with a simple but glowing account of the sport he enjoyed during his hours of relaxation. His description of the stalking of four lions quite fires the blood, and when he expresses his satisfaction that one of them, a lioness, managed to escape, because he has no sympathy with the sportsman whose sole object is to make a bag, we feel we are in the presence of a hero indeed. One turns with interest to Captain McNeill's opinion of the character of the Somalis. It would appear that the Somali can stand long marches well, is plucky and cheerful, and, so long as a camel (for which he has an irresistible weakness) is not placed within his reach, is fairly honest. All this and much more Captain McNeill tells us in his unpretentiously written volume, which, in addition to its readable attributes, is brightened by several illustrations, reproduced from photographs.

A very useful and opportune book, which is concerned at times as much with the pursuit of big game as of the Mullah. Captain McNeill does not explain how Mahomed Abdullah came to be considered mad, though he uses the adjective throughout. He served with the Expedition of 1901, after having had a good deal to do with the raising of the Somali Levy. His account of the country, the difficulties it presents for the movement of troops, and the character of the people whether on the side of the Mullah or of the British will add much the knowledge of history. The special value of Captain McNeill's book consists in the first-hand record which it gives of the situation in 1901.

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