

**MORE
GREAT TRAVEL STORIES**

Edited by
ELIZABETH D'OYLEY



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INTRODUCTION

TRAVELLERS' tales were among the first tales men told to men; which means that the oldest, and probably the best, of them have been forgotten. We shall never recover the story of the man lost in primeval forest who found his way back to fire and cave after days of dreadful loneliness, watched by lurking beasts and by trees that whispered to him in the darkness. We have lost the tale of the shepherd who took his flock to new pasture, farther than any man then had wandered, and saw strange hills upon the horizon. There is no record of the first human creatures who crept through to the sea, and stood gazing at its empty, shifting blueness; but they had a great tale to tell if ever they went back to forest or cave. There have been men, ever since men stood upright, who were driven to look beyond the hills and to change the familiar for the unknown; and they gathered for themselves the stuff of travellers' tales even though they may have died on the edge of the sunset, with their story untold.

The wish to be gone—though in many lives it leads no farther than a bank holiday will take them, or, at best, to ventures abroad under the protection of Mr Cook—is common and insistent. It may be the stir of prehistoric memory, compelling migration, movement, the search for something better than the bird in hand—that infinitely dull fowl. Or it may be a deep awareness that birds in the bush, though you never catch them, sing sweeter and fly higher than the one you hold. Yet few turn longing into action: few compared with the millions afraid or indolent or kept close by circumstance or clogged by the stupidities of experience that make the bird in the hand a thing to hold for ever and bid you go farther and fare worse.

There are persons so sure of the virtue of home that they refuse to leave it. The great Lord Burleigh limited the Land of Promise very neatly. "Suffer not thy sons to pass the Alps," he wrote, "for they shall learn nothing there but pride, blasphemy, and atheism." There are others of a kind that M. Paul Morand describes as *ennemi du risque*—fathers of families, hampered by a wish for security. There are others, again, who are best pleased to be travellers only in fancy; and these, besides being the safest, are the least confined and the least disillusioned of wanderers. They can travel in "realms of gold" and on "viewless wings" and everywhere and every when that other men have gone. They can hear the dark ice thundering in the polar seas, and stand with Columbus on the deck of the *Santa Maria* (lonely as the Ark itself in the waste of waters), and see the



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