

the overall cover price of the journal at a reasonable level.

Directors and Interests in Shares

The names of the present Directors of the company are given at the head of this report. No Director has any beneficial

interest in the company's shares or received any financial remuneration for their work.

Auditors

A resolution will be proposed at the Annual General Meeting to re-appoint Messrs. Hilton, Sharp & Clarke as auditors.

By order of the Board, A. N. Gibb, Chairman.

The Honey Guide and the Badger

By R. Harper

The Honey Guide (*Piceformes indicator*), a brown and white sparrow-like non-migratory bird found in central Africa, has the same habit as the cuckoo in not building a nest but relying on other birds to rear its young, but it is chiefly notable for its unique and extraordinary habit of leading man and other animals through the forest to bees' nests.

As a consequence of their millennia of natural co-existence, it seems to know that the bushmen could be tempted to follow it and harvest the honey which they both are so keen to have.

I recently came across an amusing description of this happening in a book by Sir Laurens Van der Post entitled "A Far Off Place". A small party of bush people were proceeding through the forest when a Honey Guide perched in front of them making a persistent twittering (here I quote) "Quick, quick! Honey, quick!". After a while it began to call even more frantically and beating its wings hysterically against its side. Then there came, bursting into view, a robust grey-dark animal trotting fast on sturdy somewhat curved legs with a distinct business-like air which would not be inappropriate on the face of someone who was something in a great city, determined to catch a bus. "Good God! a ratel—a honey-badger" Francois began in a whisper to Nonnie.

From then on the Honey Guide paid no more attention to their little group but took off at great speed and they had to hasten after the ratel.

They arrived at a vast termite hill. The termites had long since been driven out by an ant bear who had clawed a hole at its base and so made it a fitting home for an immense concourse of bees. They watched the Honey Guide perch itself silent on the top of the termite summit, but strangest of all was the behaviour of the ratel.

No sooner had he arrived at the mound than he whisked about and thrust his sturdy behind into the opening of the vast hive.

"He must be mad!" exclaimed Nonnie, mystified and aghast, "to do a thing like that to bees". "Oh no", said Francois. "You see he's gassing all the bees inside so that they can't sting anyone getting the honey".

Almost at once there died away the steady reverberating murmur of bees.

Immediately the bushman went forward, pushed his hand gently and slowly through the dark opening pulled out a long broad comb.

Held out towards the Honey Guide, it went translucent with morning sun and looked more like a dream of honey than any honey found on earth. "Oh person of wings with a heart of honey—take and eat", he said. Then he went back and pulled out another great comb. "Oh bravest of persons, who knows how to put the bees to sleep", he said, as he handed it to the watchful badger. "Take, oh please take and eat".

"A Far Off Place" by Sir Laurens Van der Post is published by Chatto & Windus who have kindly given permission for it to be quoted.