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A Journey through Abyssinia to the Nile: Discussion

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collection is now being worked out by Mr. O. Grant." The whole collection has been presented to the British Museum.

It is always of interest to endeavour to forecast the destiny of a new country, and, without risking the dangers that beset a prophet, we may fairly take stock of the field laid open to future enterprise by the destruction of Mahdism. We have here, for no less than 10 degrees of latitude, an immense range of country, whose products are among the most valuable on earth—cotton, coffee, tobacco, and iron, copper, and gold, with a healthy climate, and above all an industrious population, with nothing wanted but greater inducements and improved communication to be brought within the circle of British commercial enterprise, and developed to the highest degree of prosperity.

The Cape to Cairo railway has generally been associated in the mind with the course of the Nile, but it is gradually being realized that this, in a great tract of country between lat. 6° and 10° , is not much better than an immense reservoir, and can scarcely be reckoned as even a waterway. The railway and telegraph will both have to leave the great catchment basin of the Nile, and tap the resources of the whole western side of Abyssinia to the Atbara. If we compare these frontier lands with the Sudan proper, I do not think it would be too much to say that there is more hope of prosperity and trade development immediately outside the Sudan than in it. The climate, soil, population, the capabilities of that great rich region of Galla land that has lately fallen under the dominion of Abyssinia, will some day prove a great accession, not only to the wealth of Abyssinia, but to bordering countries. We may safely say that an era has opened that gives hopes of a fairer destiny than has ever been the lot of these harassed regions in the stormy past, but we may add that the essential condition is a good and settled government, and that this is synonymous with friendly relations between the two powers, Great Britain and Abyssinia. In King Menelik we have as a neighbour a far-seeing and enlightened ruler, whose consolidated and extended empire we should regard with a perfectly friendly eye, so long as under his guidance it continues to advance along the path of peaceful progress and development.

Before the reading of the paper, Colonel Sir THOMAS HOLDICH (Vice-President) said: It will be a relief to us all to-night, I think, to turn our thoughts for a brief space from Southern Africa to Northern Africa. To-night we have to follow the footsteps of Mr. Weld Blundell and his companions through the most interesting regions of Southern Abyssinia. Of the political importance of Abyssinia, situated as it is between the Somali country and the Red sea on the one side, and the Nile valley on the other, it is not necessary to speak; but I am quite sure a more intimate acquaintance with the geography of the country, and a better understanding of the manners and customs of its interesting inhabitants, will lead us to form sounder conclusions as to what ancient Ethiopia should be to us, than we can otherwise obtain.

After the reading of the paper, Dr. KOETTLITZ gave a summary of the geological observations, which is printed in the Appendix.

Dr. BOWDLER SHARPE: At this late hour of the evening, when we have had a sort of supplementary paper from Dr. Koettlitz, I will merely say that probably this expedition of Mr. Weld Blundell and Lord Lovat will rank in the history of zoology as an extraordinary feat in expeditions. A most unfortunate occurrence deprived them of the bulk of their cartridges, but you have heard from Mr. Blundell to-night that we have had five hundred specimens of birds alone, in my department of the museum, on which Mr. Ogilvie Grant has written a paper. These specimens were collected during a journey which was adventurous in the highest degree, and besides that there were the difficulties of transport and the collecting of specimens. Three hundred different species of birds were collected and are represented by these five hundred specimens. When one knows that they were short of cartridges, and that they had to examine every bird with their field-glasses before they shot it, to make sure that it wasn't already in the collection, it is really a most wonderful exploit. I believe such a thing has never been done before in the history of zoology. If you have any number of cartridges of course you can collect all round, but when you go with the intention, as Mr. Weld Blundell and Lord Lovat did, to bring back as much as possible, and find yourself very short of ammunition, there is nothing more difficult than to make a splendid collection, as they have done. The great interest to us is that since Sir Cornwallis Harris, no Englishman has penetrated into Shoa. His collection went first to the Indian Museum, and then came to the British Museum, and our specimens through India, are very old and were mounted in the old-fashioned way and exposed to the sun and dust for many years, becoming very dilapidated indeed. The travellers have generously presented to the British Museum this beautiful collection, so that we now have representatives of numbers of species of birds unknown to English naturalists, the only other representatives being in the museum at Frankfort, collected by Rüppell in the early part of the century. In addition there are fifteen new species that have not been seen before, and it is interesting that, starting as they do in Somaliland, they carry the Somaliland fauna a certain distance into Eastern Abyssinia and the borderland of Shoa. It is interesting to compare this collection with that of Mr. Lort Phillips, made during his expedition into Somaliland. Perhaps one of the most interesting facts is that in this country there is a certain East African element; there are specimens of birds we have never seen before, but which have been discovered in German East Africa, so that when Mr. Grant has finished his account, I am sure we shall find there are relations between the ornithology of this corner of Eastern and North-Eastern Africa which we had not suspected before. I have only to say that it is very nice to be able to congratulate an English expedition on having done such good work in the cause of science, and it is a pity that, with all the energy our Government shows in different directions, it never does what the French and Germans do, *i.e.* appoint a naturalist in every country they explore. If it was not for the energy of our private subjects, like Mr. Weld Blundell, Sir Harry Johnston, Mr. F. J. Jackson, and Mr. Lort Phillips, we should be far behind in the race for scientific knowledge and discovery, in Africa at least. To point the truth of what I say, I may add that when Uganda was pacified and the "Pax Britannica" reigned there, the first person to take advantage of it was the German naturalist Oscar Neumann, and the first result of Mr. Blundell's good relations with Abyssinia is for Mr. Neumann again to follow in his steps. Why the English Government cannot do what private individuals and public-spirited societies of England do, is a mystery I shall never be able to solve while I am an Englishman.

Sir THOMAS HOLDICH: I have first of all to ask you to accord a welcome to a very distinguished traveller, who has returned amongst us from a far country—Captain Deasy. For months past we have only dimly heard of the excellent work he has been doing in a remote corner of the world, the south-west corner of Kashgar or the Chinese “New Dominion.” Next we have to deplore the absence of our President on this occasion. When the expedition to Magdala was undertaken in 1868, Mr. (now Sir) Clements Markham was appointed to accompany it as historian and geographer, and it is from his excellent book on the subject that we know as much as we do about the physiography of the northern parts, which seem to differ in no very essential degree from what Mr. Weld Blundell has told us about the southern. To me the most interesting feature about Abyssinia is the existence there of a Christian community, which has lasted so much longer in high Africa than any other similar community in high Asia; where such communities disappeared before Mohammedanism. I believe the Abyssinians date their Christianity from the teachings of that eunuch of Queen Candace, of whose conversion we read in the Bible. Historical evidence places it about the beginning of the fourth century. However that may be, it is certainly a Christianity which recognizes symbols and forms and ceremonies very much more than the ordinary practices of the Christian religion. One symbol in particular, I remember, is the exhibition of something blue as an indication of a bond of religious affinity; this claims an Abyssinian’s friendship and regard as to a brother Christian. The origin of this I have never been able to discover, but I observed in those very quaint pictures which decorate their churches, which are either caricatures of Byzantine works of very ancient date, or else, as I am inclined to think, of Portuguese works of later date, they carefully preserve the blue colour for the robe of the Madonna—exactly in the same way as you will see in the mediæval art of the old masters. I believe Colonel Conder also mentions, in one of his books on Syria, blue as a recognized symbol of Christianity amongst the communities there. No one, however, has been able to tell me what the origin may be. I asked my learned friend Sir Henry Yule about it, and he was unable to tell me exactly when it originated.*

Of the Abyssinian’s regard for observances I had an uncomfortable proof on one occasion when surveying the upper sources of the Atbara during the Abyssinian expedition. I happened to light one day on the same camping-ground as the well-known Tigre chief Yessus, who had made himself objectionable in many ways. I was so little inclined to take up my position alongside him, that I began to make tracks elsewhere; when he sent a deputation to remind me that next day was Easter Sunday, and asked me to join him in celebrating it. I thought I had better not refuse the invitation, and I attended. It was the crudest and rudest sort of banquet at which I have ever assisted. In the centre of a big red tent we sat on the ground to eat raw meat and drink raw “tej,” and my host got uncomfortably tipsy. I had misgivings as to how things would end, so I had stationed a guard outside to assist me out of difficulties, if necessary. Next day I meditated a return

* At the conclusion of the lecture, it was pointed out to me by Mr. Levi, a learned Oriental scholar, that blue was the national and religious colour symbol of the Hebrews (*vide* Numb. xv. 38, 39), and that in all probability it was borrowed from them by the Abyssinians or Ethiopians in very early days. As the colour representing the feminine principle in nature, it is at least as old as the myth of Venus rising from the sea, and in heraldry blue is denoted by horizontal lines representing the sea. Yet the colour symbol of the prototype of Venus (the goddess Ishtar) of the early Chaldæans appears to have been pale yellow.—TH. H.

call to say "thank you" for the entertainment of the day before, but my host had left, and in an absent-minded manner he had taken all my transport with him.

I must ask you to join with me in rendering thanks to Mr. Blundell for his admirable lecture, which has interested us exceedingly.

(*To be continued.*)

HUDSON'S VOYAGE TO SPITSBERGEN IN 1607.*

By SIR MARTIN CONWAY.

THE most puzzling of all the accounts of early voyages to Spitsbergen is that which describes Hudson's voyage of 1607. The fault was probably not Hudson's, for he is known to have been an accurate observer, but John Playse's. Playse (or Pleyce) was one of the ship's company, who kept a journal and seems to have copied into it extracts from Hudson's log. It is clear, however, that he either misunderstood what Hudson wrote, or altered it in the copying, for the purpose of claiming new discoveries beyond those made by Barents in 1596, as well as the attainment of a far higher latitude than was actually reached. In support of this contention I now proceed to analyze Playse's account, as printed by Purchas (vol. iii. p. 567), and reprinted by the Hakluyt Society in 1860 ('Henry Hudson the Navigator,' edited by G. M. Asher, pp. 1-22).

On May 1, 1607, the *Hopewell*, eighty tons, with Henry Hudson for master, John Colman mate, William Collins boatswain, and a crew of eight men and a boy, weighed anchor at Gravesend and sailed for the northern seas. After spending some time on the coast of Greenland, they sailed eastward for Spitsbergen, of whose discovery by Barents they were aware, and by whose chart they apparently directed their course. The claim that they independently rediscovered the island cannot be sustained. On June 27 (p. 8), "about one or two of the clocke in the morning, we made Newland [*i.e.* Spitsbergen], being cleere weather on the sea; but the land was covered with fogge, the ice lying very thick all along the shore for 15 or 16 leagues, which we saw. Having faire wind, we coasted it in a very pleasing smooth sea, and had no ground at an hundred fathoms foure leagues from the shoare. This day at noone, wee accounted we were in 78 degrees [*i.e.* near the mouth of Ice fiord], and we stood along the shoare. This day was so foggie, that we were hardly able to see the land many times, but by our account we were neare Vogel Hooke [the north end of Prince Charles foreland, lat.

* Not 1608, as misprinted on Hondius' chart of 1611 in Pontanus, and often elsewhere in the early literature of polar exploration.