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Mr. J. M. Hildebrandt on His Travels in East Africa

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ADDITIONAL NOTICES.

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1. *Mr. J. M. Hildebrandt on his Travels in East Africa.* From the 'Proceedings' of the Geographical Society of Berlin, vol. iv. (1877), read at the Meeting of the Society on December 8th, 1877.*

UPWARDS of three years ago I had the honour to describe at a Meeting of this Society my first Travels on the Coast of Arabia; in the border lands of Abyssinia and Egypt; in the volcanic districts of the Danakil; in Somali land; and in the territories of Zanzibar—travels which extended over the period between the beginning of the year 1872 and the month of August, 1874.

To-day it is permitted me to give you a short summary of my wanderings which I have performed since the commencement of the year 1875.

Whilst other travellers have been engaged in bold efforts to enlighten the geographical darkness of the black Continent, and whilst these, pushing on with restless activity, would not permit, as it were, the grass to grow under their feet, the task fell to me to collect this grass, and through collections and observations regarding natural history to paint in characteristic features a topographical sketch of the countries visited.

In the month of February, 1875, I arrived at Aden, and employed myself for some time in collecting and arranging anthropological information.

After engaging men and procuring articles of barter, I returned to Somali land.

In March, 1873, I penetrated from Lasgori to the Ahl Mountains, as far as the Pass of Yafir: on this last occasion I landed at Meith, in the territory of the Habr-Gir-Hajis Somalis, and advanced into the interior to the Serrat hills, in the country where frankincense and myrrh (and probably gold also) are produced.

I found the Habr-Gir-Hajis Somalis in great commotion in consequence of the Egyptians having a short time previously taken military possession of the market-towns Zeila, Tajurra, and Berbera, having also seized upon the City of Hurrur, which is situated further in the interior. The freedom and independence of the Somal, never previously threatened, were subdued by means of Bakshish and "Kurbatsch" (rhinoceros-hide whips).

The Habr-Gir-Hajis saw the enemy advancing nearer and nearer, and considered me a forerunner of the Egyptians, who, under the lambskin of a collector of plants, concealed a bloodthirsty heart.

It was not easy to convince them of my friendly disposition, so far as to obtain their permission to travel into the interior.

The Great Eastern Horn of Africa, on which the strong stream of the Indian Ocean breaks, and on which, in the neighbourhood of Cape Guardafui and Ras Hafoon—the Scylla and Charybdis of East Africa—so many ships have found a grave, is of Limestone formation.

Many of the ranges of mountains running parallel to the coast rise to a height of about 2000 metres. Their fantastic, broken summits, standing out in bold

* Translated by General C. P. Rigby.

relief against the deep blue of a tropical sky, possess a vegetation essentially different from that of the granitic mountains of Abyssinia. Especially are they rich in gum- and resin-producing plants.

The ancients named Cape Guardafui, or rather perhaps the entire peninsula, "Promontorium aromatum." During my exploration of these mountains, I found many species and genera of various botanical families previously unknown. So that the mysterious origin of the frankincense and myrrh is now cleared up. There also are found the wonderful "Dracænæ," or dragon-trees, which produce the dragon's-blood; and the aloe, which, however, does not here, as in the neighbouring island of Socotra, produce the bitter resin used in medicine. Here is also found the "Gekar," a tree nearly allied to the true botanical frankincense. It produces a resin which, like gum mastic, is used for chewing. It is not an article of commerce, but is sometimes brought through Egypt to Marseilles, where it is cleaned and perfumed, and then exported to Eastern harems to beautify the teeth. This resin would doubtless command a ready sale, and in its cheapness possesses the greatest virtue of commerce. This district is also rich in tanning plants. The leather garments of the Somal are as soft as linen, and a few days' tanning are sufficient to produce this result. The dry leaves of the aloe also produce a dye of deep violet colour.

We know from ancient authors that these districts, at present so desert, were formerly populous and civilised. I also discovered ancient ruins and rock-inscriptions both in pictures and characters. These have hitherto not been deciphered. But as the Mahomedan Somalis of the present day place a cross at the head of their graves, it can easily be imagined that here, as likewise in Socotra, Christian colonies were established.

The manners and customs of the Somali race are of the highest interest, and I gained sufficient insight into them to enable me to add considerably to my previous remarks upon this race, published in the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* (Journal of Ethnology). I believe that I have also collected all the utensils and implements used by them in their housekeeping.

I had, however, a very narrow escape from entirely losing my so painfully accumulated collections, for one day several hundred warriors assembled around me, calling for the goods and life of the hated stranger. However, the rattling of the needle-gun somewhat cooled their ardour, so that after bargaining for several hours they agreed to accept a compensation, to be paid at Kautabak, for the loss and injury they sustained by the witchcraft my visit would entail. On this opportunity I had the honour of entertaining seventy-four "sultans" who invited themselves as my guests. Although the reddest republicans, instead of styling themselves citizens, as with us, they all called themselves "sultan."

After many unsuccessful attempts to penetrate further into Somali land, I found myself obliged to return to Aden. I forwarded all my collections to Europe, and then returned to my former head-quarters at Zanzibar, where I was met on the shore by the black companions of my former travels, and accompanied to my dwelling, which was named by my friends the "Poison booth." I did not remain long in Zanzibar, and at the beginning of June, 1875, I went to Johanna, one of the Comoro Islands, in order to explore its natural history.

Although situated so near to Madagascar, and similar to the pillars of a bridge between that island and the African Continent, the settlers in the Comoro Isles are a distinct race from the people on either side, owing to the hindrances to communication caused by the great equatorial ocean stream. This flows with full force past these islands, and breaks against Cape Delgado on the mainland, and thence flows rapidly through the Mozambique Channel, removing both the Comoro Isles and Madagascar far from African influence.

Johanna is certainly one of the most beautiful islands in the world. The

Tingidyu Peak, an extinct volcano, rises in bold outline 5172 feet above the sea. The dampness of the sea breezes is condensed into almost perpetual rain on its forest-clad summit. Here the mischievous hand of man has not hitherto, as in Mauritius and Reunion, disturbed the relations between precipitation and vegetation by cutting down the forests. The trees attain an immense growth. The dense foliage covers the masses of rock. Like giant rigging stretch the creepers, as thick as one's thigh, from tree to tree, to the highest points, with beautiful orchids and many other Epiphytes displaying their bright blossoms. Like a forest beneath the forest, spread the fans of many species of rare ferns. No rough blasts destroy the beauties of these most elegant of all the vegetable kingdom, no dazzling sunbeams scorch their fresh shoots, being protected by the dense groves which cover them. The fern world is only at times agitated by light breezes, the light-green leaves harmonising with the dark-brown trunks of the giants of the forest. My botanical booty collected in the Island of Johanna may be described as very rich. It is already in part classified by approved authorities.

In common with most oceanic islands, few species of mammiferous animals are found. And few birds and insects are met with.

Considerably the greater portion of the population consists of African slaves, who are employed in the coffee and sugar plantations. The "Amatsáha" who inhabit the mountains appear to be the aborigines of the island. Like the inhabitants of Madagascar, they have not yet lost the Malay type, which is chiefly marked by the roundness of the skull, so characteristic of this race.

A vocabulary of the Chinzuani is printed in the *Journal of Ethnology*, and in the 'Journal' of our Berlin Society, *Zeitschrift d. Geo. f. Erdk.*, vol. xi., 1876, page 37 to 52) are some very original stories of animals contained in a sketch of the natural history of the island.

The small-pox having broken out in Johanna, rendered it impossible to hold any communication with the other islands of the Comoro group. In consequence, after a stay of three months, I returned in September, 1875, to Zanzibar.

My task was now to explore the snowy mountains of Eastern Africa. I engaged men, exchanged my money for articles of barter, and went by ship to Pangani. Here was equipped a caravan of 2000 men, comprising the united traders in ivory, for a journey through the Masai country to the Bahariya-pili (literally, "the second ocean"), the Victoria Nyanza of the Maps.

I was invited to join this caravan, but I declined the offer, as this route did not lead to the termination I had in view. A year later I learnt that this very caravan was attacked by the Masai, and that very few of the number escaped their deadly spears. Generally, during the last two years nearly all the ivory caravans have been destroyed by these savage hordes. They burst like a hurricane among the peaceable Negro races, destroying all who oppose their sudden rush. Cattle robbery is their chief object in these warlike undertakings. According to their savage habits, they must acquire cattle in war, with which to purchase wives.

From Pangani I went to Lamu, to endeavour to penetrate along the Tana (River Dana) into the lands of the South Galla tribes, and thus to reach Mount Kenia. But all my efforts to form a caravan were in vain. The Somalis had burst into the lands of the Galla from the north, overpowered them, stolen their cattle, and threatened in the giddiness of their victory the destruction of all strangers. At the same time news arrived at Lamu of the seizure by the Egyptians of the south Somali towns of Brava and Merka and others under the Zanzibar dominion.

The inhabitants occupied themselves in erecting fortifications, dragging out ancient cannon covered with the rust of centuries, and planting them on the beach, day and night firing their muskets in the streets, and with threatening

war-songs prepared for bloody warfare. But on a sudden all the war-songs were silenced by the appearance of an Egyptian man-of-war which cast anchor in the roadstead. Several European officers landed from her, and after a short walk re-embarked, and the vessel sailed away. No sooner was she out of sight than the brave people of Lamu commenced firing rounds in honour of victory, and uttering their wild war-cries. This nervous state of the population was in the highest degree obstructive to my plans.

From Lamu I made several trips towards the interior country, as far as the boundaries of Arab influence. I also visited the ruins of an ancient city near the mouth of the River Ozi, which is mentioned under the name of "Jaca," in an inscription in the fort of Mombassa, and which some travellers have pointed out as "Chagga" of Kilimanjaro. I everywhere met with invincible obstructions to my further progress. I was confined to my encampment by an attack of fever and scorbutic ulcers on the legs. With a heavy heart I left Lamu in December, 1875, and took ship for Mombassa, trusting to be restored to health through the aid of the doctor attached to the English Mission station, and also to ascertain the possibility of penetrating into the interior from that city.

On my arrival at Mombassa, I made inquiries regarding the state of affairs in the interior, and also employed my time in noting down and acquiring the requisite languages, and also, carried in a hammock, made several excursions in pursuit of natural history.

My health, nevertheless, got much worse, and as the doctor of the mission was obliged, by the state of his own health, to return to Europe, I found myself compelled to return to Zanzibar to obtain medical aid. After some time, in the hope that the medicines I had obtained would restore my health, I returned to Mombassa, where I had left all my people.

Lieutenant von Kalkreuth, whom I met in Zanzibar, accompanied me. He intended to go on a hunting expedition in the interior, and wished me to assist him in equipping a caravan. However, he gave up his intention, and assisted me in collecting birds, which I preserved whilst confined by illness. At length I became aware that I could not recover my health in the unhealthy climate of the coast, where Lieutenant von Kalkreuth also suffered from an attack of fever. We therefore returned to Zanzibar, and I was admitted into the hospital of the stationary English man-of-war *London*.

Most earnestly do I thank the honoured African Company for the welcome aid afforded me during my misfortunes.

The excellent nursing I received on board the *London* and the fresh sea air completely restored me to health, so that in November, 1876, I was again able to start on my travels. I only delayed a few days in the city of Zanzibar. I despatched my collections of natural history, engaged followers, and fitted out another expedition. I had gained sufficient knowledge during my travels regarding the articles of barter requisite for a journey to the snowy mountains. After my arrival at Mombassa, I first undertook a short trip to Maweni in Duruma, in order to try my own strength, and the value of my newly engaged men. Here I visited the so-called antimony mines, visited without result by former travellers. I found Potter's ore, specimens of which I sent to the Sultan of Zanzibar, and requested that they might be sent with other collections to Berlin. Through inadvertence these were detained in Zanzibar until I found them there on my final return.

It is often made a reproach to travellers that they do not sufficiently turn their attention to technical articles of produce. I have myself forwarded to the mercantile houses there, and also to the museums of Europe, several very important articles of raw produce, and have always received this reply, "We will inquire into the matter," and there the subject has dropped.

On the 10th January, 1877, I left Mombassa, accompanied by about fifty

natives, who acted both as escort and porters. It was a happy day. In front waved the white flag with inscriptions from the Koran. Friends and relations escorted the porters, relieving them of their loads, whilst the latter joyously advanced, dancing, singing, and discharging their fire-arms.

We advanced over the wonderfully fruitful undulating coast lands of the "Wanika" and "Waduruma." Plantation succeeded plantation; but most of the cattle had been plundered a short time previously by the Masai. But as soon as the land sinks towards the interior and loses the moist sea breezes in the immense plains, the scenery acquires the true African type. The dazzling red or yellow earth, baked hard by the heat, is covered with dense thickets of succulent poisonous euphorbias, interspersed with thorny and prickly foliage of various other families of plants, which make the paths difficult for both man and beast. Here and there are large umbrella-shaped trees, covering the path with their shady branches. Only at the widest intervals is water met with in this desolate wilderness. It is preserved in cavities in the rocks from the former rainfalls. At these water-holes lurk the "Ariangulo," wild bushrangers of the Galla race, to fall upon the trading caravans.

Scratched and flayed by these terrible thorn-trees, with empty stomachs and empty water-casks, for it was the height of the dry season, after six forced marches we reached "Taita," and pitched our camp at the foot of the "Ndara Mountain," in the territory of the Chief Yakuti. The difficulties which the haughty mountaineers—the Wataita—are in the habit of placing in the way of white travellers, were more easily overcome by me, as I had assumed the character of a trading Beloochi. But in my further journeys I could not expect to sustain this character, as the fable of a coming European, arising from the sea, like a Messiah, had preceded me, through the sorcerers, the prophets of the land. These regarded me as a colleague, a powerful sorcerer, who commanded the rain and the drought, life and death.

On this mountain-tower the natives, at my orders, brought me specimens of every species of plant and animal, which I of course added to my collections, and consulted as an oracle. After much opposition the Wataita permitted me to ascend the mountain, "to make medicine," with which to fructify their fields. These would be rendered more fruitful by the use of cow-dung, yet so extraordinary did this appear to them that they really followed my advice, and I had the pleasure on my later return to see them all bright with verdure.

From "N'dara" we wandered in a north-westerly direction, and arrived at the river "Voi," which, coming from Muali, a portion of the N'dara range, flows into the sea to the north of Mombassa under the name of "Tanganyiko." At this dry season the stream was only knee-deep, and about 8 metres broad. After the rainfall it overflows its low banks, and consequently they produce rich crops of sugar-cane.

I also ascended the "Ndi," another mountain of Taita, and measured its altitude with my magic instruments. It is about 4600 feet in height, and 2000 above the wide plains surrounding it. In relation to natural history these tropical mountains are in the highest degree interesting. My booty was very considerable, but I was unable to remain long in Taita, as in consequence of the failure of the autumnal rains there was a famine raging. It was only at a most exorbitant price that I could obtain a very scanty supply of provisions for our eleven days' march through the uninhabited desert between Taita and Ukamba. It is owing to the camel-like nature of the Africans that they are enabled to travel, thirsty and with gnawing stomachs, along those thorny paths in a burning sun, carrying from 80 to 90 pounds (German) weight, for 8 to 10 hours daily, and withal be merry and jovial. We followed a war-path of the "Wataita" across the desert, on which, a short

time before, they had fallen on a caravan of the Wakamba. The far-reaching renown of my needle-gun fortunately preserved us from a similar fate.

On the second day we reached the "Tsavo," a river fed by the snow-water from Kilimanjaro, and consequently always containing a flow, as also the neighbouring river, the "Adi." This latter has its source on the snowy mountain "Kenia in Kikuyu," flows to Ukamba on the west, and on the south forms the boundary between "Ukamba and Taita." It falls into the Indian Ocean as the "Sabaki" near Malindi. During the rainy season the natives cannot ford it. It rises to a height of 20 to 25 feet, and overflows its banks to a great distance. At this time, in the height of the dry season, only small channels of water trickled down its sandy bed (about 150 paces broad). However, it continually provided us with a sufficient supply of water, and its friendly green banks produced Dom-palm, lofty, thickly foliaged sycamores, tamarinds, and acacias. Monkeys and many species of song-birds also abounded. Wild animals of all descriptions come from afar to this point to drink. Seldom, however, are human beings met with. Only the Wakamba hunters frequent this part, to shoot elephants, rhinoceroses, and buffaloes, with their poisoned arrows. Formerly the fruitful banks of this river were cultivated by the Wakamba, but the savage Masai have destroyed everything.

I formed an intrenched camp on the banks of the "Adi," and wandered about the surrounding country making collections, and at the same time despatched people to "Kikumbulyu" to procure provisions, for, with the exception of the few fish we were able to catch, we had nothing to eat. Afterwards we forded the "Adi," and travelled N.N.W. over the chain of Ndungu Mountains to Ukamba, where we rested several days near the village of "Malembao," in order to obtain a supply of provisions, to which a few fat sheep and goats were found a most welcome addition. We then travelled, still to the N.N.W., past the village of "Kipopotuë" to the Tiva, also a branch of the Adi, and thence to Jkanga on the Ndeo, which, like the Tiva, into which it flows, rises in the desert between Kitui and the Tana. The flat bed of the Ndeo is utilised for the cultivation of sugar-cane and other plants, but, owing to the laziness and want of foresight of the inhabitants, only to a small extent.

Following the course of the Ndeo, I arrived on the 12th of March of this year, 1877, with my remaining followers (eight having deserted) at "Kitui," and formed a fortified camp, according to the most approved method of African warfare, near the village of the Chief Milu.

In Kitui I had to overcome the greatest prejudice against my person and objects, because after Dr. Krapf's unfortunate journey to the Tana, which he undertook in the year 1851 in company with the then chief, Kiwoi, the latter was murdered by robbers of Kitui. The blame of this murder fell upon the missionary, who was said to practise necromancy with a black instrument (probably his pocket Bible). Now it was imperative that I, a brother European, should pay the penalty of guilt, which Krapf escaped by his flight. Like my predecessor, I was said to practise the same murderous plans, by collecting specimens of rocks, plants, and animals, to destroy the entire land. My beard, said they, was longer than that of any he-goat, my hair hung like cows' tails over my head; such an extraordinary man could only possess the most wicked intentions. If I were, nevertheless, a friend of the Wakamba, I should open my heart to them, that is, I should expose to them the contents of my bales of goods, and give them a great present as tribute. I considered it prudent, under the circumstances, to satisfy in some degree the demands of the natives, to make clear to them my friendly views, and at the same time to open my "heart" to them as little as possible, for more than the half of my

African money, viz. cloth, glass, beads, iron, and brass wire, had been already expended on the march to appease our hunger.

Bartering with goods is a terrible business. In Europe it is generally thought that the savages of Inner Africa accept a string of beads or a yard of cotton cloth as a sufficient recompense for dozens of elephants' teeth, and that the nourishment of a caravan is repaid by the honour of the visit. These happy days are long since passed. The savages have advanced from the state of childhood to the years of hobble-de-hoyhood.

After I had arranged all the difficulties regarding my reception in Kitui, and had relieved the people of Ukamba from the fear of my stopping the rainfall, and other dangers which they thought I could cause by witchcraft, and I had paid in many yards of cloth for having the whole road by which I had come strewn with sheep's entrails, I was but little disturbed in making collections and acquiring information. The rainy season, which had now set in, brought abundant materials for collections; first sprouted the bulbous plants and showed their fleshlike roots; soon the period of their growth ended, and they made way for the grasses and plants which succeeded; then followed shrubs and trees, the latter with leather-like leaves in bloom. The animal world was also in animation. The forest resounded with the songs of the birds. Amongst the latter, the African honey-suckers, with green or violet plumage, glistening brightly in the sun, and, above all, the thrush, the Jenny Lind among birds. The concert of the weaver-birds which build their villages of nests in the hamlets of the Wakamba was also very lively. The African sparrow, "*Passer Swainsoni*," chirps merrily like his European brother. Far away, in the thick forest, may be heard the note of the woodpecker, from which the Wakamba, according to its position to the right or left of the road, or in front or rear of the traveller, foretell good or ill luck, peace or war.

Woodpeckers are to them hated neighbours, and they hang earthen pots on the branches of trees in order to frighten them away from the neighbourhood of the villages.

Still more do they fear the *Trachyphonus*; it is said to kill the cattle when it picks insects from their backs. The "*Schizorhis leucogaster*" is also a caravan bird. The Wasuaheli call it the "Gnoa" (forward), from the similarity of its cry. Often the weary porter rouses himself up on hearing the animating cry of the "Gnoa." The screech-owl is regarded everywhere in East Africa, as with us, as the death-bird. Other sounds peculiar to Africa are the ear-splitting screeches of the Guinea-fowl and Francolin, when they come of an evening to the water, or take up their night quarters on the branches of trees. One day, however, I heard the note of a bird which I cannot for a long time forget. It sounded exactly like the squeaking of the ungreased wheel of a barrow, and awakened in me a feeling, which I once experienced in Arabia, and which I am almost ashamed to confess, of home-sickness.

The men went singing and whistling merrily to the fields, hoping from the quickly growing crops to reap a rich harvest; in like manner the herdsmen saw with pleasure the swelling udders of the kine from the abundance of tender young grass. But where in the world does not one envy another the possession of peace and happiness? The Wakwafi, those pests of Eastern Africa, suddenly invaded the Wakamba villages in our close neighbourhood, drove away the cattle, and killed the herdsmen. They had pitched their wandering camp on the road to Kikuyu, where the snowy mountains lie, which I was endeavouring to reach.

Only three days' march from my station arose the snow-clad Mount Kenia. From one point I was even able to fix the important geographical angle of Kenia-Kilimanjaro. But these three marches were impracticable. A short time before my arrival the Wakwafi had to the last man destroyed a caravan of 1500 armed men. I could not therefore think of the possibility of forcing

with my small escort of armed men a road through their territory: I consequently endeavoured to open friendly intercourse with them, and with this object selected one of my guides, a native Wakwafi, who was joined by several volunteers, to convey to them a friendly offering of white beads, &c.

I myself was at that time suffering very much from an attempt to poison me, similar to that I have previously described.

On the third day my messengers returned to the camp, still out of breath with haste and anxiety. They came to the camp of the enemy, saw the Wakwafi, and fled, throwing away in their haste the friendly presents and even their own provisions.

In the meantime, the Wakamba sorcerers, and the relations of the murdered chief, Kiwoi, were not idle. They stirred up the people and summoned a secret assembly, in which I was condemned to death in expiation of Krapf's offence, and on a complaint that I had gathered stalks of sorghum from the plantations, and had likewise eaten young green beans instead of ripe ones.

One day between 400 to 500 armed Wakamba proceeded to my camp, but on my running towards them with my photographic camera they fled in all directions. They then endeavoured to poison me, but did not completely succeed in their attempts. I also escaped several arrows which were fired at me. One day a grandson of Kiwoi met me with an arrow fixed in his bow and demanded my life. I severed the string of his bow with a cut, and thus disarmed him.

The dread my people entertained for the Wakwafi on the one hand, and for the Wakamba on the other, increased to such a degree that at last they revolted. I succeeded indeed in reducing them to obedience, but I saw clearly that a further stay in Kitui would be quite useless, especially as during my three months' perseverance my stock of goods was very much reduced. I aspired to reach the Kilimanjaro from here, but this plan was also impracticable. The trade route, which was formerly comparatively safe, was now stopped by the Masai hordes. Even seven united caravans had already been detained four months in Taveta, shut in by the enemy.

Ill both in mind and body, I arrived at Mombassa in August, 1877, and discharged all my followers.

I afterwards undertook a short geological excursion, and sailed for Zanzibar in order to arrange and pack my tolerably rich collections. The state of my health continued to get worse. To dysentery, enlarged spleen, and shrunken liver began to be added dropsy in the stomach, so that the doctors earnestly advised me to visit a cold climate. I arrived here (in Berlin) recently, and hope to employ myself during the near future in forming from the mosaic-like ground-work of my experience a picture of the results of my travels hitherto. Then, when I have recovered sufficient strength of body, I look forward to returning to what I regard as my second home.

Perhaps I may then have the good fortune to realise the most eager desire of my life, viz., to open new kingdoms to science and culture.

2. *On Recent Surveys of the East Coast of Africa.* By Dr. J. KIRK.

[Communicated by the FOREIGN OFFICE.]

Zanzibar, December 10, 1877.

I HAVE the honour to report that Commander Wharton, of her Majesty's surveying vessel *Fawn*, has now completed the examination of the coast, including Kilwa, thus connecting his previous work here and on the adjacent coast with the surveys of late Commander Gray, of her Majesty's ship *Nassau*, begun further south.