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The ancient civilisation, trade, and commerce of Eastern Africa

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Asia being to link and bind together India and China. It was, he thought, most fortunate for us that at the present time we happened to have in India as Viceroy a diplomatist of the very first order, one of our most capable governors, and one of the most far-seeing statesmen not only, he believed, of this country, but of Europe—he referred to Lord Dufferin. He had found that Lord Dufferin possessed the confidence not only of his countrymen of all shades of political feeling, but that the leading statesmen in China, who had closely watched his career, had placed great confidence in him, and looked on the term of office he might hold in India as likely to bring about quietly but surely a great development of intercourse and communication between India and China, and by that means the development of commercial relations between the two countries, which was so essential for the welfare of both, and which would form the most effectual barrier against the aggression of Russia on every hand.

THE ANCIENT CIVILISATION, TRADE, AND COMMERCE OF EASTERN AFRICA.

Read before the Society, at Glasgow and Aberdeen, January 1886.

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I NEED hardly say that, when invited to address the Geographical Society of this great city, I felt it a high honour, and gladly accepted the invitation. But for some time I was much perplexed to choose a subject. Some would, I know, expect me to talk of my own travels; but, in truth, African travel, like many other things worth doing, involves much patient and monotonous labour, and is not so vastly interesting and adventurous as to provide matter for an endless series of lectures. To repeat one's-self again and again is to confess to a sad lack of fertility; whilst to provide an ever-varying and attractive dress for a well-worn subject suggests a little of that imaginative fertility common to tellers of "travellers' tales." Therefore I cast about me for something either entirely new, or only so far connected with the old as to give me some right to speak upon it. The subject I have decided upon I hope you will consider not ill-chosen. It is that of the "Ancient Civilisation, Trade, and Commerce of Eastern Africa."

I hope that an inquiry of this nature may not only be theoretically interesting, but also practically useful. It ought surely to be useful to follow up the lines of ancient activity; for, from the experience of the past—bare though the record of it is—we may gain something to guide us in our efforts to develop this country at the present day.

Very little investigation will, I think, be sufficient to show us that East Africa, more than 2000 years back, was the scene of considerable commercial activity. The import of articles of high value and of refined use betoken the presence there of a people whose demands far exceeded those of a primitive or savage race; and though the exports are not so minutely

handed down to us, they are sufficiently clear to prove the existence of a capable and industrious people.

To many of you, I have no doubt, there will be no more interesting point in connection with East Africa than what I will call the mon-

mental evidence which exists of a settled occupation in ancient times of parts of this country by a people far advanced in civilisation. This evidence consists chiefly of the ruins of buildings, of curious shape and structure, very unlike anything erected by the Arabs or Portuguese, who

have dwelt for centuries past upon the coast. In Zanzibar territory, as well as in Mozambique, these ruins may be seen ; but they are met with in greatest abundance and best preservation in the country south of the Zambesi, and a little distance in the interior. I will describe them more minutely hereafter ; sufficient now to say that I allude to the "ruined cities" in that portion of Eastern Africa to which Sofala is the natural outlet.

Respecting the origin of these cities there has been plentiful speculation. None of the early records of geography or commerce upon this coast make any allusion to them, and no inscriptions have been found to throw light upon them. The absence of all clue to their origin, together with the fact that the ruins are situated in the heart of the country reported by the natives to be the richest of all South Africa in gold, and the discovery of old surface gold mines in the district in which they stand, have not tended to diminish speculation regarding them.

Some, you doubtless know, have gone so far as to place the site of the Ophir of the age of Solomon here. Such an assertion is founded upon little but conjecture. It is, however, well to bear in mind the extreme divergence of opinion, even amongst experts, as to the site of Ophir. The Himalayas, the coast of Malabar, Ceylon, Arabia Felix, even Peru, have respectively found advocates in regard to this site. Those who have added East Central Africa to the countries I have just enumerated, no doubt have felt that its claims were at least equal to some of these.

I have, however, no intention of entering, as an advocate of East Africa, into that well-thrashed-out field of contention, the site of Ophir. That question is purely one of archæological interest, and may be left for archæologists to determine. The subject of the early civilisation of East Africa is interesting to us for other and more practical reasons. The country south of the Zambesi may never have been the site of the Biblical Ophir ; but, with fair reason, I believe we may conclude that it formed in ancient days one of the sources of the supply of gold. Wherever the mines of Ophir, and whatever their richness, it is impossible to think they formed more than one of the sources whence that metal was extracted. And when we consider the great abundance of gold in early ages, and remember that the great gold-producing countries of the present day were then unknown, we feel more than ever convinced that the sources of that immense supply are not all known to us.

The proofs in Holy Writ that the ancients held gold amongst the precious metals in at least as high estimation as the moderns do, are too numerous and well known to every reader of Scripture for me to quote many of them here. More than 1500 years before the Christian era, gold appears to have been plentiful in Egypt, for we are told that the Israelites, "their wives, their sons, and their daughters," even when they went out from their captivity, wore earrings of pure gold.¹ Not five centuries

¹ Exodus xxxii. 2.

after this we read, in 1 Chron. xxii. 14, that David had "prepared for the house of the Lord one hundred thousand talents of gold;" and we further learn that of this he himself contributed "three thousand talents of gold of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of silver," and that, of gold five thousand more talents, and of silver ten thousand more talents were presented "by the princes of the house of Israel." Again Solomon received gold from Hiram, king of Tyre,¹ from the Queen of Sheba;² from all the kings of Arabia,³ and, in addition to this, obtained periodical supplies⁴ from Ophir in his own ships, guided by "shipmen that had a knowledge of the sea," sent from Tyre.⁵ Ezekiel, who prophesied about the year 595 B.C., gives a most detailed and picturesque account of the wealth of the Phœnician city of Tyre,⁶ and most of the other prophets refer to the wealth and prosperity of this nation. Solomon, we know, called to his aid Tyrian artists and mechanics in building the Temple at Jerusalem,⁷ and made a special treaty with King Hiram, by which he procured in exchange for the products of his country⁸—wheat, barley, wine, and oil—the costly timbers, cedar, fir, and oak, of the forests of Lebanon and Bashan. A simple enumeration of the articles imported by Tyre will be sufficient to convince the most sceptical of the vastness and wealth of her commerce, and the variety of countries and climes visited by the Phœnician vessels for the purpose of trade. Silver, tin, lead, and vessels of brass; slaves, horses, mules; carpets, ivory, ebony; pearls and silks; wheat, barley, honey, oil, and gums; wine, wool, and iron, were chief amongst the products which were carried to Tyre by sea or to its fairs by land. When to this profusion we find Tyre re-exporting a portion of the gold brought by her fleets from the East, we are better able to realise the truth of the saying, that "Tyre heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of streets."⁹

Silver, we are very frequently told by ancient writers, was to be had in such abundance that it even ceased to be highly prized. Strabo mentions that in Rome the mangers of the horses of the patricians were often made of this metal, and Carthaginian recorders tell us that the anchors of their ships were not unseldom cast with it. Spain appears to have been the country from which the greatest quantity of silver was drawn. Pliny describes one mine of such richness that the output was 300 lbs. of silver per day, and even after the annexation of the country by the Romans (202 B.C.), the Roman Governors extracted from it, in the short space of nine years, 111,542 lbs. weight of the same metal. One Prætor of Further Spain is said to have returned to Rome with 50,000 lbs. The reports of the wealth of Spain in silver strictly confirm the statement made in Scripture that "silver was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon,"¹⁰ who, it is also said in the 27th verse of the same chapter, "made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones."

¹ 1 Kings ix. 11, 14.² 1 Kings x. 10.³ 1 Kings x. 15.⁴ 1 Kings x. 22.⁵ 2 Chron. ix. 13-21.⁶ Ezek. xxvii. et seq.⁷ 1 Kings v. and 2 Chron. ii.⁸ 1 Kings v., 2 Chron. ii.⁹ Zech. ix. 3.¹⁰ 1 Kings x. 21.

I should not have mentioned silver in connection with East African exports, if it were not that the enormous quantities indicated in these writings lead one to doubt if all came from the countries adjacent to the Mediterranean. Certain it is that the early Portuguese, with the reports they received, upon arrival on the East African coast, of the extraordinary richness of the gold country of Monomotapa, heard also much of the silver mines of Chicova, said to be situated in the same region, and these formed for long an object of their inquiry and search.

Agatharchides, who lived about 120 B.C., and, as President of the Alexandrian Library, had the best sources of information of the day at his command, gives a circumstantial account of the gold-mining carried on by order of the Kings of Egypt—prior to the conquest of that country by the Persians—on the shores of the Red Sea; but he does not say much of their wealth, and confines himself chiefly to describing the sufferings of the miners, whose use of copper implements he also mentions. Cosmas—of whose work Gibbon observes that “it displays the practical knowledge of a merchant, though tainted with the prejudices of a monk”—informs us that the King of the Axumites, on the east coast of Africa, exchanged “iron, salt, and cattle for gold, with an inland nation of Ethiopia.” Now, the Ethiopia of that age had literally a considerable latitude, and its southern limits have been placed by the geographer Marinus under the Tropic of Capricorn, and by Ptolemy, in $15^{\circ} 30' S.$, or in the latitude of Mozambique.

This, therefore, is an important item of information; for our contention is that a considerable proportion of the gold which was poured into the markets of the great nations of that age came from the rich gold country lying upon the southern bank of the Zambesi. It cannot be denied that several ancient writers speak of Arabia as enormously rich in gold. But nowhere is the exact site of the Arabian mines named, and modern research has only revealed to us the remarkable poverty of the country in that metal. Is it not probable that the assertions of such writers as Agatharchides of the wealth of Arabia in gold, arose from the fact that enormous quantities were carried there in Arabian ships from the mines of Eastern Africa, which would be peculiarly accessible to Arabian navigators, who doubtless were acquainted, from the very earliest periods, with the nature and regularity of the monsoons—for their vessels, unchanged in type for more than 2000 years past, were especially constructed to run before favourable winds—and to whom the waters of East Africa would be as their native seas? Much that the Arabian needed, his “durra,” rice, ivory, and more especially *his slaves*, could only have been obtained from Eastern Africa, and we have every reason to believe that from the earliest ages he formed settlements there, and traded with African tribes for these articles and for gold.

The wealth of the port and kingdom of Sabæa, upon the south-east shore of the Red Sea, and within the straits, has been painted in most brilliant colours by many old writers, who have also attributed its remark-

able prosperity to the fact that it occupied the position of a middle-mart to which were carried by sea the products of Asia and Eastern Africa. To it, we are told, many merchants of the Syrian, Greek, and Phœnician nations came, and the products and manufactures of the East were here commonly exchanged for those of the great cities of the West. Sabæa appears to have taken a similar place, with respect to the sea-trade, to that occupied by Gerrha, upon the western shore of the Persian Gulf, with regard to the land trade. As the merchants of the East met at Sabæa the traders of the West, and transferred their produce there for conveyance by water to the Egyptian ports at the head of the Red Sea, or to Petra or Æla in Idumea, thence to be scattered through Alexandria and Gaza to the great markets of Syria, Greece, and Rome; so in Gerrha huge caravans were organised which traversed the whole breadth of the Arabian Peninsula, carrying the commodities of Asia to Jerusalem, Damascus, Tyre, and other great commercial cities of Judæa, Palestine, and Syria. It is worthy of notice that both Isaiah and Ezekiel, 800 and 600 years before Christ, respectively refer to the wealth of the city of Sabæa, and attribute it to the same cause as later historians do.

Not of secondary importance to either Sabæa or Gerrha, and more nearly affecting us in our description of the outlets of East African trade, was the great port of Aduli, upon the western shore of the Red Sea, near to, if not actually, Massowah or Annesley Bay of modern charts. This city formed another of the terminal points of African maritime commerce, more especially with those Arab traders who frequented the ports of the East African coast. To it also was directed the inland trade of Ethiopia, and caravans bearing spices, precious stones, and even gold, resorted to it. I say even gold, for though this metal is mentioned as one of its exports, it is hardly probable, when its weight be considered, that it would be carried very great distances by land. The anxiety of Solomon to build a fleet for the express purpose of conveying to his country large quantities of gold indicates an insufficiency of the land supply.

You remember those passages in Kings in which we are told that "King Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to King Solomon."¹ "For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks."²

So great was the commercial prosperity of the two ports of Sabæa and Aduli that much of the enormous wealth accumulated by the Ptolemies is said to have been derived from their possession of them. You know that it was under the first of the Ptolemies—320 to 210 B.C.—that

¹ 1 Kings ix. 26-28.

² 1 Kings x. 22.

Egypt attained, perhaps, the pinnacle of her commercial prosperity, and that, after the death of Ptolemy Philadelphus, the Egyptian treasury contained a sum of not less than £200,000,000 sterling. This monarch maintained two powerful fleets in the Mediterranean and Red Seas, and strove by every means to excite the commercial activity of his subjects and to rid the Egyptians of their traditional dislike both to trade and the sea. It is easy to understand how valuable to Egypt were the ports of Aduli and Sabæa, for through them the commerce which passed between India, Ethiopia or Eastern Africa, and Europe was chiefly controlled.

The geographical position of Egypt, which makes it likely that much of the immense wealth accumulated by her proceeded from Africa, together with the strong probability that so vast an accumulation of "hard cash" could only have been derived through large imports of gold, seem to us to provide another argument in favour of Africa as a gold-producing country.

Ceylon and the coast of Malabar have both been named as countries from which it is probable gold was exported in ancient times. But neither of these countries, now well known and surveyed, provide gold in quantities over and above that required for their own manufactures; and the art of gold-working in them may be said to date back to the earliest age of commerce.

There does not, either, seem to have been in Northern Ethiopia—that is to say, in the kingdoms of Abyssinia, Shoa, Somal-land and Ormania, or the Galla Country—sufficient gold to justify their being considered important sources of supply. True, our knowledge of the last of these countries is still very meagre, and Gallaland, at least, is as yet untrodden by European foot. But they are so well traversed by Arabs and other native merchants of the coast, who are fully alive to the value of gold, and their actual commerce is so well known, that it is impossible to think this precious metal was ever worked in them to any extent, or, if it was, that a knowledge of the localities should remain unknown to us. It is therefore in the very southernmost parts of Ethiopia that we must look for the gold country of the ancients.

We have now to ask ourselves if any obstacles existed of a sufficiently serious nature to prevent the early navigators from reaching the latitude of those cities, the ruins of which, together with the mines about them, betoken their population by an ingenious and energetic people, or to account for the utter separation of those cities from the then known world. We are not inclined to admit that distance, or any obstacles in the space that intervened between them and the known routes of trade would, even if they existed, be sufficient to account for their isolation, for commerce has in the most primitive ages triumphed over difficulties by land and sea, compared to which those met with in Eastern waters are insignificant.

There are some striking instances of this disregard to danger and difficulty in the age of which we are speaking, which are really worthy

of notice. The silk merchants who traded to China, left Samarkand and Bokhara (Khiva), the Indian ports of Baraguz and Guzerat (Scinde), or the Mediterranean port of Issus in Cilicia; traversed wide stretches of desert, and crossed mighty mountain ranges, besides encountering innumerable annoyances and impositions from the peoples of the countries through which they passed, before they reached the great market of Pekin, where they were accustomed to make their purchases. The Phœnician merchants who left Carthage and Gades (Cadiz) in search of tin, braving the storms and starless nights of the Bay of Biscay and the British Channel, encountered real dangers, which never, however, deterred them from pursuing their quest. The waters of Eastern Africa present no such impediments to navigation as these.

If the commerce which connected the cities of the Lower Zambesi with the cities and ports of ancient Ethiopia was, at any period, carried by land throughout its whole length, it passed through countries easy of travel, abundant in food, and touched at settlements which were, probably, plentifully scattered along the coast. For we have good reason for believing that East Africa had, at many points favourable to commerce, been colonised by Arabs from Hadramaut and Oman.

The voyage by sea was even easier than the passage by land. Regular monsoons enabled navigators, then as now, to reckon with certainty upon the direction and force of the wind, and insured them favourable breezes at fixed times of the year. That the Arabs were well versed in these changes, it is impossible to doubt, not only because they dwelt within range of their influence, but also because frequent reference is made by early writers to a direct communication between Africa, Arabia, and India, which could only have been carried on by taking advantage of them. That the Phœnicians and Egyptians were also conversant with them, as far back as 600 and 800 years before Christ, we have fair reason to conclude. To the well-known narrative given us by Herodotus of the circumnavigation of Africa by Phœnicians in the service of Necho, the Egyptian king, I will only just allude, with the object of pointing out that the very circumstance which caused it to be discredited by Herodotus, provides the best proof to us of its veracity. I refer to the statement of those who performed the voyage, that the sun was seen by them to the northward. Strabo tells us that one Eudoxus, a native of Cyzicus—an island of Propontis on the sea of Marmora—was also induced, from information he had gained upon the East African coast, to attempt the circumnavigation of Africa; but, as he commenced his voyage from the westward, and therefore met with the same obstacles that, even in the Middle Ages, rendered the progress of the Portuguese on that coast slow and uncertain, he not unnaturally failed. There are also some other notices of the navigation by Greek merchants of East African seas. The geographer, Marinus of Tyre, mentions that one Theophilus, who traded upon the coast of Azania—the classic name of the coast of Africa south of Cape Guardafui—was driven during the south-west monsoon “from

Rhapta to Cape Aromata in twenty days." Now the ancient port of Rhapta was in 8° or 10° S. lat., probably—as we shall endeavour afterwards to show—on the site of the later Arab settlement of Kilwa; and Aromata was the first name for Cape Guardafui. The same writer tells us that an Indian trader called Diogenes was caught, when off Aromata by a north-east wind, and carried down the African coast for twenty-five days, until he arrived at "the lakes from which the Nile issues." This navigator may not improbably have reached the marshes of the delta of the Zambesi; and there, hearing of its connection with a great inland lake, have concluded, in accordance with the geographical notions of that age, that the Nile issued thence. These are instances that African waters were not unknown to the Greek traders of the East. Far less, then, can we suppose that to the Arabs, whose country was contiguous to them, their navigation presented any difficulties, or that they were untraversed by them.

Our greatest authority regarding the seas of Eastern Africa twenty centuries back, and perhaps also of the Red Sea, is the author of the *Periplus of the Erythræan Sea*, or Indian Ocean of modern maps. This work, ascribed by some to a merchant of the age of Nero, by others to Arrian, the Governor of the Roman province of Pontus in Asia Minor, contains a circumstantial account of the voyage which would be made by an Egyptian, Greek, or Arab merchant trading in these seas. The articles forming his stock-in-trade are minutely detailed; the nature of the goods in demand at each of the ports touched at, and the produce laid in upon the return voyage are all carefully described.

To gain an accurate notion, then, of the early trade of Eastern Africa, we cannot do better than to follow this author upon one of his voyages, and watch his operations of trade. From the nature of the imports we shall gain an idea of the wants and necessities of East African nations and tribes of that day; while from the exports we shall be able to form a fair judgment of their ingenuity and progress, and of the comparative wealth or poverty of the countries they inhabited.

I will ask you to let me carry you back between 2200 to 2300 years, to a time when Egypt was at the greatest height of her celebrity, both for learning and wealth; and though the Phœnician city of New Tyre had been destroyed some decades before by Alexander, her younger sister, Carthage, was still flourishing, and may also be said to have attained the summit of her prosperity. At this period the cities of Carthage and Alexandria divided between them the commercial supremacy of the world; queens of the West and East respectively. Rome had not yet taken the central place amongst nations that she afterwards occupied, nor did she, until the termination of the Punic and Macedonian wars, and the destruction of Carthage and Corinth, rise to very great commercial eminence.

Tempting though it is to linger at Alexandria, then the great emporium in the East, and look over her markets, which contained men and merchandise of every country and clime, we cannot afford time, or

go far enough astray from our subject for this, and we will therefore take our departure for the South from the port of Myos Hormos, or from that of Berenice, upon the north-western shore of the Red Sea. Arsinoë, a manufacturing as well as a commercial town, upon the site of modern Suez, we will leave on our left: it was already beginning to decline, for as the Egyptian monarchs extended their conquests into Ethiopia and southward, along the shores of the Red Sea, the ports of Myos Hormos and Berenice were successively favoured as the starting-points of Eastern trade. Our goods have been obtained mostly at Alexandria, the ships and stores of which supplied every manufactured article of which the world could then boast. In their selection we have been guided by lists drawn up by previous traders—lists, we are told, which form “an assortment as specific as a modern invoice.”

To reach our starting-point upon the shore of the Red Sea, we do not carry our goods across the isthmus by land, but take boat at Alexandria, and pass up the Canopic branch of the Nile, touching at Memphis, the earliest metropolis of Egypt, and, even at the period in which we are travelling, one of the finest as well as the oldest cities of the globe. Commerce has its capital at Alexandria, to which Ptolemy I. has also transferred the seat of government; but the most magnificent temples and palaces are to be seen at Memphis and Thebes,—which cities still remain the home of the priesthood, and the great centres of Egyptian paganism.

Our voyage upon the Nile terminates at a point about 50 miles below Thebes. We turn off here to the eastward, and are towed through a canal connecting the Nile with the commercial city of Coptos. This canal has been cut by Egyptian monarchs for the express purpose of facilitating the Red Sea trade, and enabling traders to reach this city without disembarking their goods. We are now equi-distant from Myos Hormos and Berenice, and, as our voyage is southward, we naturally select the latter port for our point of departure. Hence to the coast our path lies across an arid desert, and all goods must be transported by camels; but this is the only land carriage that troubles the Egyptian trader. The Nile route, *via* Coptos—now Ghouft or Yoof—has saved, first a land journey across the isthmus, and, what is of more importance to trade, it has avoided the tedious and dangerous navigation of the western arm of the Red Sea or the present Gulf of Suez. It is for these reasons that the city of Berenice, the ruins of which may be seen at this day, was founded and so favoured by the Ptolemies.

Entering here an Egyptian or Phœnician vessel, we commence our sea voyage, and standing, as at that time was the custom, boldly off shore, make for the port of Aduli, the first and only harbour which need engage our attention on the south-western shore of the Red Sea. It is the seaport of Northern Ethiopia, more definitely of the kingdom of Axuma, and the countries about the branches of the Blue Nile. Its imports are very numerous, and of a varied nature, and as they include many articles of the greatest luxury, we naturally conclude the people who draw their supplies

from it have reached a high degree of advancement and civilisation. If the modern reader of the year of grace 1885, or 2000 years after the period in which we are pursuing our imaginary voyage, were to walk inland for a few days from the coast town of Massowah, he would meet with the most convincing proofs of this. Ruined walls and obelisks, not built up, but hewn out of isolated hills, so as to transform in shape a massive granite rock into the delicate form of an obelisk, would meet his eye, having stood for nearly twenty-five centuries the wear-and-tear of time. Within a short distance of these will be shown him a massive work, said by the natives to have been executed by the Devil, and not by man, so incapable are the present inhabitants of realising the labours of those who have preceded them. This work consists of a stone temple, formerly dedicated to paganism, now a Coptic Christian church in which, according to Abyssinian tradition, is preserved the Ark of the Covenant of Moses, said to have been stolen from Jerusalem by the founder of the Abyssinian monarchy, Menelek, the son of Solomon by the Queen of Sheba. In such veneration is this church held, even at the present day, that it forms a sanctuary for criminals, whose persons, if they succeed in gaining it, are secure from hurt. The remains of the ancient city of Meroë, which lie scattered over the north-west corner of the island of that name, formed by the junction, by artificial means, of two branches of the Nile, are also sufficiently extensive to testify to the past civilisation of these countries, though, as its inscriptions have lately shown, at the time of our voyage it had not reached the period of its greatest splendour.

At Aduli, the commercial port of these countries, our trading companion supplies his agents with their goods, or delivers those which have been ordered by the resident merchants of the country. They consist chiefly of the following articles,—of which, I would remind you, this is no imaginary list, but a faithful copy of one drawn up by a merchant who himself traded in these seas nearly 2000 years ago:—Cloth unmilled, and of coarse texture, for the lower classes and the more primitive people who dwelt in the mountainous parts of the interior and the plains of the coast; cloth, dyed purple in imitation of the costly Tyrian dye; linens, fringed mantles, cloaks, and coverlets; glass or crystal, murrhine cups, orichalcum or mixed metal for trinkets and coin, brass bowls and cooking vessels, knives, daggers, and hatchets; oil and wine, gold and silver plate, and the Roman copper coin called Denarii, of the value of about 8d. each.

The cloths came from Egypt, where cotton and flax had been cultivated and cloth manufactured for many hundred years before. We are told, in the 10th chapter of Kings, 28th verse, that Solomon received linen yarn from Egypt, and that “the king’s merchants bought linen yarn at a price.” It is possible that the countries of Ethiopia formed also an extensive cotton-growing field; and, at the present day, the traveller will meet caravans of hundreds of camels and asses conveying this product

from Enarea and south-western Abyssinia to Sennâr, Khartûm, and other marts upon the Nile. Glass ware, there can be no doubt, came from Egypt; for upon the walls of the tombs, for which that country is famous, we have every trade and manufacture faithfully depicted, and glass-blowing is one of the clearest. Corinth was then celebrated for working in brass, and also for a description of fine coverlet, and these were probably contributed by her; whilst the wine and oil would come from Cyprus, Rhodes, Cos, and the Greek colonies scattered over the Ægean Sea, especially the little island, but great mart, of Delos, to which, we are told, a number of Tyrian traders had fled after the destruction of their city by Alexander. Carthage seems to have supplied the gold and silver plate, and articles of the greatest luxury.

Whence came the famous murrhine cups is a question which has never yet been satisfactorily settled; but that they were held in the highest estimation, and could only be purchased by the great and wealthy, you may safely infer from the well-authenticated fact that the Roman Emperor Nero gave for one £59,000, and that Augustus was content to select for his own share of all the spoils of Alexandria a single murrhine cup. It was not so much their intrinsic value as the reputation they had of revealing the presence of poison, if it were introduced into the liquor drunk from them, that these cups gained their extraordinary value.

But beyond these imports from the West, Aduli received from India—mostly in Arabian vessels, which sailed from the ancient port of Barygaza in Guzerat—"Indian cottons, coverlets, and sashes made of cotton, cotton cloth dyed the colour of the mallow flower, and a few muslins." The exports named are few in number, but they are very valuable. Ivory, brought in great quantities from the interior, rhinoceros horns, gold, and tortoise-shells from the East African coast. The latter article, Pliny tells us, sold at a little later date for its weight in silver in the streets of Rome. These, I hope, will not be uninteresting facts, for through a knowledge of them we are enabled to form a fair conception of the forward state and civilised condition of the people.

We have now to transport ourselves and goods to an Arabian vessel, for our Egyptian captain refuses to carry us outside the Straits. His unwillingness does not proceed from an ignorance of Eastern waters, for they have been frequently sailed upon by Phœnician and Greek navigators; but the Arabians have at this time a command of the trade outside the Straits, and have firmly established themselves as its carriers. Moreover, they have already begun to distinguish themselves upon the coasts of Oman and India, between Barygaza and Nelkundah, for their piratical tendencies, and the Egyptian, never a bold mariner, declines to face these risks. The fleet of his nation, by orders of the Ptolemies, Evergetes and Philadelphus, maintain the security of the Red Sea; and Timosthenes, who commanded the squadron of the latter in Eastern waters, has sailed down the African coast even to Madagascar; but a solitary merchantman will not venture beyond the Straits. Aduli is therefore his terminal port,

and we do but follow the custom of the age in transhipping there into an Arabian vessel.

There is no other port of any consequence upon the African shore of the Red Sea south of Aduli, and we therefore pass out of the Straits into the Arabian Gulf, hugging close its southern shore. We have now reached the Cinnamonifera Regio of classic writers. So great a quantity of this aromatic was exported hence that it gave its name to the whole southern coast of the Arabian Gulf; and the more general name of Aromata is applied to Cape Guardafui, for from its vicinity there is exported also myrrh, frankincense, and cassia.

To a spectator from seaward there is something very incongruous in the title given to this region by the ancients, and the appearance it presents to the eye, for so fragrant a name implies a land of some fertility and verdure, and it would be difficult to conceive a more barren belt of country than that which borders this coast.

Nevertheless, in early days, vessels flocked to it for cargoes of the spices and aromatics which the ancients loved. From the Straits to Cape Aromata there were no less than three important ports of call—Abalitis, Malao, and Mossyllun. The reader will find upon the map the names Tajurreh, Berbereh, and Bunder Akula, and Marrayeh, which probably correspond with the above. At Abalitis we learn there is a demand for “unripe grapes from Diospolis, which were used to make the rob of grapes, unmilled cloths, corn, wine, and tin.” The last named must have come from Britain. The exports are “gums, a small quantity of ivory, tortoise-shell, and myrrh of the finest quality.” At the next place we touch at, the imports are the same, with the addition of “cloaks, milled and dyed, iron, and a small quantity of specie;” whilst the exports consist of “myrrh, frankincense, cassia, inferior cinnamon, gum, and a few slaves.”

But Mossyllun, the last of these three ports, is by far the most important. The export of cinnamon from here is so great that it has given its name to a particular species, respecting the quality of which, however, there is a difference of opinion, one writer particularising it as of the best quality, whereas the author of the *Periplus* speaks of it as inferior. The other exports are “gums, drugs, tortoise-shell, incense, frankincense *brought from distant places*, ivory, and a small quantity of myrrh.” The imports at Mossyllun denote a certain amount of luxury at the places whence came the caravans which traded to it, as vessels of silver and flint-glass are added to those delivered at the previously mentioned ports.

There is no more remarkable point in the descriptions given us of the trade of this portion of the coast than that each port has some special and separate demand in its imports, and some export peculiar to itself. There can be no doubt that they are all terminal points to caravan routes which lead from different parts of the country, each possessing its distinct natural characteristics; and we need not hesitate to say that the easternmost or chief of these was connected with the East African coast.

The constant mention made of aromatics and spices, and the great value attached to them, both in Holy Writ and by the Egyptians and Romans, is interesting and curious. In Genesis¹ we have the earliest allusion to this trade, when, at least seventeen centuries before the Christian era, the brethren of Joseph met a caravan "from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt." And later on, upon the death of Jacob,² we are told that Joseph "commanded the physicians to embalm his father." It is in this act that we have the key to the great demand by the Egyptians for aromatics. Their belief in the immortality and transmigration of the soul, and its course through a predestined cycle of the bodies of various animals, before it could return to its sepulchre and gain eternal rest, led them to bestow the greatest skill and care upon the preservation of their dead. For, if a body were allowed to putrefy, the migration of its soul was suspended, and its return indefinitely prolonged.

With the Romans the use of aromatics was equally constant, and they reached at times of scarcity the most extraordinary prices. Pliny informs us, that no less than 210 bundles of spices were burned over the grave of the poet Sylla, and that Nero, at the funeral of his wife Poppœa, "consumed more cinnamon and cassia than the countries from which they were imported produced in one year. Vespasian consecrated crowns of cinnamon, enclosed in gold filigree, in the Capitol and the Temple of Peace.

So great was the demand for these aromatics, that at Gaza, the terminal point of the caravan route which led across the Arabian desert from Sabæa and Gerrha, each camel's load sold for £22, and frankincense was retailed in the shops of Rome for 10s. per lb., whilst the same measure of spikenard—a species of Valerian used then, as now, medicinally—cost £3.

These high prices make it evident that at Rome they could only be regarded as articles of luxury, and in the first customs tariff upon record we find them taxed as such. In a rescript of the Emperor Commodus (A.D. 190), we find that upon the following imports duties are leviable:—"Cinnamon, myrrh, pepper, ginger, and aromatics, precious stones, Parthian and Babylonian leather; cottons, silks, raw and manufactured, ebony, ivory, and eunuchs.

In nothing does the author whose pages and guidance we are following show more convincingly his personal knowledge of East African seas, than in the directions he gives us respecting the monsoon winds and the times to be observed, if we desire to take advantage of them. We should sail, he tells us, from Egypt in the months of June and July, and so time our movements as to reach Mossyllun about the middle of October. Rounding Cape Aromata in November, we shall find the north-east breezes setting in, and carry favourable winds down the African coast. These are directions which Arab captains will strictly adhere to at the present day.

¹ Gen. xxxvii. 25.

² Gen. l. 2.

Let us assume, then, that we also have followed them, that Aromata is passed, and our prows turned southward for Cape Prasum,—the last point upon the East African coast known to the Greeks and Romans. The merchant writer of the *Periplus* would carry us at once to the commercial town of Opone, which is distant seven days' voyage; but Ptolemy mentions an intermediate port—that of Pans—one day's sail from Aromata, and probably corresponding with the Khor Hashera of to-day. It is situated, however, north of a formidable headland, called by us Ras Hafun, and provides a poor anchorage in the north-east winds, and no doubt for this reason the author of the *Periplus* passes it by. For the same cause, and that it offers little trade, we also will leave it and sail for six days down the coast called in classic works Azan or Azania,—said to be a corruption of the Arab word Hazine, or "rough ground." The coast is barren and rocky, and fully bears out its name.

Opone is often placed in the immediate vicinity of Ras Hafun, but it seems to us more probable that its situation was further south. No safe anchorages are found upon the coast between Ras Hafun and the ports of Mukdishah and Barava, nor is the country, as its name testifies, such as would have attracted settlers to it. The six days' sail from Pans, said by Ptolemy as necessary to reach Opone, would also bring a vessel to the vicinity of these ports. Again, we are told that there were exported from Opone, besides aromatics and tortoise-shell, "slaves of a superior description, chiefly for the Egyptian markets." Now, although the Gallas had not then reached the coast so far north, it is probable they inhabited a country not very distant from it, and that the slaves mentioned as of a superior description were of that tribe. At the present day Galla women are prized above all others in Zanzibar and Arabia, and command the highest prices in their slave-markets.

The author of the *Periplus* tells us, at this stage, of the direct trade which existed in that age between the East African Coast and Western India, carried on in Arabian vessels; and we believe we may here trace the introduction of several products which are at this day grown in great abundance in Eastern Africa. The imports from India are named as "corn, rice, butter, oil of sesamum, cotton (raw and manufactured), and honey from the cane, called sugar." The cultivation of *sesamum orientale* now forms one of the chief agricultural industries of the coast, and both cotton and the sugar-cane are widely cultivated by the natives. These products would hardly have been numbered amongst the imports, if, at the time the author of the *Periplus* visited the coast, they had been long introduced or extensively grown.

We may now continue our course to the commercial mart of Rhapta, for, though Ptolemy names Essina, Særapion, and Niki as intermediate ports of call, we know little of their trade, and in this respect Rhapta apparently surpasses all. That Rhapta was an important place of trade nineteen centuries ago is evident from the fact that its customs were farmed by merchants of Moosa in the country of the Sabæi, although

the natives of the place are said to have owned allegiance to a prince of Yemen. The imports are numerous, and include "lances, axes, knives, awls, and various kinds of glass;" the exports named are "ivory, cheap and very abundant, rhinoceros horns, tortoise-shell, superior to any on the coast, and *nauplius*,"—of the nature of which we are ignorant.

The exact site of Rhapta is still uncertain. The fact that it received its name from a peculiar dhow, in which the timbers were not nailed but sewed together, and the whole calked and covered with a fibre and gum of the country, tells us nothing, for these vessels were probably only traders to it.¹ But it may be determined with fair accuracy by the number of days the early navigators occupied in sailing thither from Cape Aromata. The time required, according to Ptolemy, was twenty-one days, and two instances have already been given in which twenty and twenty-five days were respectively taken to reach its neighbourhood. If we fix twenty days for the average passage, and allow from 80 to 100 miles each day—a fair allowance when the constant current to the northward be considered—we shall run over an average distance of 1800 miles. Allowing for the windings of the coast and deviations of course, this distance will probably represent between 1200 and 1300 miles in a straight line, which will lay Rhapta in between 8° and 10° south latitude, or the latitude of Kilwa.

We know that a few centuries after, Kilwa became a place of great importance, and it is not unreasonable to conclude that the later city was an extension of the lesser but older settlement. We also know that at many points the coast had been colonised by Arabs. It is surely only natural and just to suppose that those who fled to it a few centuries later, betook themselves to points previously occupied by men of their own race and blood, by whom they would have been received with open arms. Moreover, Kilwa has from time immemorial occupied an important position with regard to the trade of the interior, and has formed the terminal points to one of the oldest caravan routes in Eastern Africa—I mean that which stretches away in a south-westerly direction, through the valley of the Lujenda, towards southern Nyassa.

If we extend our voyage beyond Rhapta and visit Prasum, we have reached the southernmost point of the East African coast known to the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans. Ptolemy tells us that a Greek pilot, called Dioscorus, places Prasum, "5003 stadia south of Rhapta," which would give it a latitude of 15° 30' S., or near to Mozambique. Some have fixed it at Cape Delgado, but it is not easy to think that if the early navigators reached that cape, they did not proceed further down the coast. South of that point the coast-line is most favourable for the navigation of small vessels, presenting an outlying fringe of islands, within which are smooth seas and secure and easy channels. South of Mozambique, however, Bajoni Point, with the dangerous shoals and rocky

¹ A vessel of precisely similar construction, called by the Swahili, *Mtepe*, may be met with now on the coast, chiefly coming from the neighbourhood of Lamu.

patches which run to the seaward from it, may possibly have deterred the Arabs from venturing past.

I will add one small point, gained from my personal experience of the coast, which seems to me to strengthen the probability that Prasum was the last Arab settlement, and that it was situated in the neighbourhood of Mozambique. I have often, in my wanderings upon the East African seaboard, met with ruins, differing from the Portuguese buildings in structure, and said by the natives to have been the work of the Arabs long anterior to the Portuguese invasion. These cease in the neighbourhood of Mozambique. The southernmost of them is situated in Fernão Veloso Bay. Nowhere have I been able to hear of any south of Mozambique, although I have visited every part of the coast between it and the Zambesi.

We have now terminated our voyage. Step by step I have led you southward from Egypt along the coast of Ethiopia, the Cinnamonifera Regio, around Aromata Cape, and down the coast of Azania, to the country of the "Caffres Anthropophagi." In sketching the condition of commerce in early historic days, we have striven to show the connection that existed between Eastern Africa and the civilised world, and to prove that trade and industry were then fairly advanced upon it, and that Africa contributed on insignificant share of the products which poured into the markets of the great States of antiquity. In doing this I have carried you to the southernmost limit of Africa as known to the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans at the time the author, whose guidance we have been following, lived.

I have yet to take you one step further—to the civilised State or colony upon the southern banks of the Zambesi, of whose existence in ancient times the ruined cities, of which I have before spoken, afford the clearest proofs. Whether we start from Rhapta or Prasum, the connection is a short and easy one. From Rhapta we shall follow the caravan route I have spoken of above as leading south-westwards from Kilwa up the Lujenda valley. Arriving in the neighbourhood of Shirwa, we should leave that lake and Milanji Mountain to the westward, and crossing the Ruu at its head, pass through the country called now Machingiri, and make for the Zambesi about the point of its junction with the Shiré. A traveller upon this route would encounter no physical obstacle whatever, and would pass over a country flat but richly productive. The whole journey might be performed in from thirty to forty days.

From Prasum, if we accept Mozambique as its locality, the connection is much shorter, and the country to be traversed almost as easy. I need not speak of this route here, for it has already been fully described in the narrative I have given of my journeys over it. Commerce in primitive countries is essentially conservative, and in nothing more than the routes it takes. There are special reasons also for the selection of those I have named, for by them certain physical obstacles are avoided. It is therefore most probable that these routes held a prominent place in the very earliest times.

By either of these roads, then, let us make for the Lower Zambesi, cross it, and enter the gold country. Ascending out of the valley of that river we gain mountainous plateaux which vary from 3000 to 5000 feet above sea-level. It is here, situated in climates cool and even bracing to European constitutions, and amidst scenery in parts of a very beautiful and picturesque description, that we find the ruined cities of which we are speaking. The country is almost a *terra incognita* even at this day, as it is only within the past few years that such travellers as Erskine, Mauch, Baines, and Selous have penetrated it. The records of Portuguese conquerors of the coast tell us little of it. But ruins have been lately discovered in parts widely distant from each other, and scattered over a district that extends from 34° E.—the longitude of Tete—to 27° E. long., and as far south as the latitude of 21°. There are numerous indications that the ancient colony did not consist merely of one or two cities, but that it included a large extent of country, and formed a fair-sized State.

In the imperfect state of our knowledge of the country, it is impossible to fix upon any particular spot and say with certainty that it was the capital. The ruins of Zimbabwe, which Carl Mauch has brought to light, are certainly of great extent, and most remarkable for the strange shapes they present, as well as for their enduring structure. We feel at once satisfied they could only have been erected by a people far advanced in the arts of civilisation. Walls 12 feet thick at the base, and tapering upwards to a height of 30 feet, at which height they are of a thickness of five or six feet—constructed wholly of small hewn blocks of stone put together without mortar, in which are partly imbedded blocks of stone 18 to 20 feet in length, apparently to support a gallery,—decisively prove the ingenuity and perseverance of their builders. North of these, about Manica, ruins are also to be found, and, no less than 350 miles west of these again, masses of masonry are to be seen like those I have described in solidity and singularity of shape.

I have no desire to discuss this evening the question of the probable origin of these cities. Indeed such a discussion can be—in our present state of ignorance regarding the country—but unfruitful and unsatisfactory work. Better confine ourselves for the present to efforts to lay open and increase our knowledge of the country. The one or two Englishmen who have travelled there can only be said to have passed through, and in no way to have explored it. The travellers who have reached the Zambesi from the south have almost all kept to the great trade route, which is far to the westward of the district of which I speak.

The country, the claims of which to exploration I wish to press forward, is that mountainous plateau which forms the water-parting between the rivers that fall into the sea about Sofala, and those which flow northward into the Zambesi—that is, the country which native tradition hands down to us as the richest of all East Africa in gold.

Arab geographers of the ninth and tenth centuries, frequently speak

of the gold of Sofala, and we have good reason to believe that the Arab colony found there by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century had existed for many hundred years before.

Reports of the wealth of this country in gold so excited the hopes of the earliest Portuguese, that their chief efforts for more than one hundred years, were directed towards reaching it. Upon Sofala their hopes centred, and the first Governors of their East African possessions were entitled Captains-General of Sofala. The gold of Monomotapa inflamed the spirits of Francisco Barreto and his predecessors as the wealth of Peru had incited Pizarro, and that of Mexico, Cortes and his followers.

Some of the earlier Portuguese writers state that 2,000,000 metigals of gold, estimated at over £1,000,000 sterling, were sent to Portugal from their possessions upon the Zambesi.

You know how report respecting this gold country has, for twenty years past, kept our South African Colonies in a state of expectancy and suspense, as each enterprise put forward has reported success or failure. These enterprises are still working steadily upward from the south, but the country declared by the natives to be the richest in gold has yet to be reached.

Portuguese interest in this country as a possible mine of wealth is again reviving; and only within the past two years a company has been incorporated at Lisbon, called the Ophir Company, with the object of working the mines around Manica. A letter I have just received from Mozambique tells me that the Governor-General has lately left the coast for that district to inspect it, and report upon the prospects it offers for development.

It is this country, then, that I put before you as well worth a careful and thorough exploration. It has been, I believe, in the past, and it may, I think, prove in the future, one of the richest and most productive parts of South-Eastern Africa.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SCOTTISH GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY.

MR. JOSEPH THOMSON, an Honorary Member of the Society, read his Paper on *East Central Africa and its Commercial Outlook*, which we give as our first article, to the Glasgow Branch of the Society, in the Hall of the Philosophical Society of Glasgow, on January 8th. Mr. Nathaniel Dunlop occupied the Chair. After the Paper, the meeting was addressed by the Rev. Mr. Auld, missionary from Caffraria, who said that, from what he knew of South Africa, he could agree with what Mr. Thomson had said with respect to the natives, among whom there was very much in common. If it was expected that the natives would work like ordinary workmen at home, we should certainly be disappointed. The natives of South Africa laboured to get a few cattle to buy a wife, and then they went home in the winter time to enjoy themselves. Africa could not be opened up so rapidly as many people seemed to suppose. He had often thought that the natives were not anxious to hold out their hands for Manchester goods, for, in his opinion, the clothing of the people in this country would not be suitable for them.—