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On the Somali Country

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a man as Livingstone. It had been said by some that he was quite capable of taking care of himself, and no doubt if any man could take care of himself in Africa he could; but after all he was but human, and his constitution was to a certain extent impaired by the remarkable journey he formerly took across the continent. He had, too, never failed to impress on those who were with him the necessity of carrying certain medicines about with them, while he had frequently declared that it was impossible for a European to travel any length of time in the interior of Africa without something better to fall back upon than native food. He must also have been for some time without boots or shoes, and under such circumstances he must have suffered the greatest privations. The late Lord Clyde used to say that a bamboo could be procured anywhere in tropical countries, but to make it into a spear the steel head at the top of it was required. So any expedition going into the interior of Africa without a European at the head, as the steel tip, would never push through the difficulties of a search like this. He never had expected much result from the previous expeditions, but he believed the proposed one would accomplish the desired end. It had been said, not only that Livingstone could take care of himself, but that it would be paying him, to a certain extent, an equivocal compliment to go in search of him; but anyone who reached him with a despatch, bearing the signatures of such dear friends as Sir Roderick Murchison and Sir Bartle Frere, would be received with the sincerest love and regard.

Mr. FRANCIS S. DUTTON recommended that in the choice of a leader for the expedition the Council should not confine themselves to the applications made to them, but should reserve to themselves the liberty of going beyond the circle of volunteers. Ex-Governor Eyre, the distinguished Australian explorer, would be eminently fitted for directing the proposed expedition, and if the Council could prevail on him to accept the post he would no doubt carry the enterprise to a successful issue. If undertaken at all, the expedition should be on such a scale as to leave no possible room for doubt hereafter.

Dr. PURCELL thought the expedition ought not to be limited to a search for Dr. Livingstone, but should include in its object the exploration of that part of Africa as yet unknown.

The CHAIRMAN reminded the Society that in a matter of this kind it was necessary to any efficient action that the choice of agents should be left to a comparatively small body whom the Society could trust. It would, too, be hardly just to any great traveller, some years after his achievements in travelling, to call him out of his retirement, when perhaps he was greatly in need of rest. With regard to the other question, he was of opinion that the Society would be wise to limit itself to one thing at a time, and he believed the Council were unanimous in wishing to confine the objects of the expedition to the search for Dr. Livingstone.

The following paper was then read:—

On the Somali Country. By Captain S. B. MILES.

[ABSTRACT.]

CAPTAIN MILES, who recently gave an interesting account of a journey into the interior of Yemen in company with M. Munzinger, has this year visited the portion of the African coast in the vicinity of Bunder Marayah, and has made an excursion into the interior as far as a valley called the Wady Jael. His valuable report is accom-

panied by a vocabulary of Somali words, and a list of useful trees and plants with their botanical names.

Captain Miles reports that Bunder Marayah, in latitude $11^{\circ} 43' N.$, is the chief fort of the Mijjertheyn, or Majartein, tribe of Somalis. It is situated at the foot of a range of hills bearing the same name, which rises, about a mile behind the town, to a height of 4000 feet. The town extends along the beach for nearly half a mile, and contains upwards of 200 houses. The permanent population is only some 600 or 700; but during the trading season, when the *kafilas* arrive from the interior with gums and other produce, and the Arab merchants come across from the opposite coast, this estimate must be quite doubled.

The ranges of hills, of which Jebel Marayah forms part, correspond almost exactly, in their formation and composition, with those in some parts of the opposite coast of Arabia. They are of the same cream-coloured limestone, with sandstone, shale, and quartz, and the strata have the same confused appearance. The low, narrow, maritime plain, in which Marayah lies, extends eastward until it meets the spur forming Ras Feeluk. The soil of the plain is principally coral, with sand and fragments of rock washed down from the hills. It is well wooded with acacias and mimosas, and a few date-palms have been planted near the town. The Wady Hakêr—the Rio de San Pedro of the Portuguese—about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the east of the town, is fed by many torrents, and forms the natural pass into the interior. The chain of hills is described as extending three days' journey into the interior, when the country slopes down southwards and eastwards until it merges into an extensive hilly plateau, well wooded and grassy, and full of large game. No corn is raised and but little eaten, the people being purely nomadic, subsisting on their flocks and herds, and moving about for the convenience of pasturage. The country is but thinly peopled, and there are few permanent villages, the Mijjertheyn being amongst the poorest of the Somâl, and not possessing the countless flocks of sheep owned by the Gullêdh tribes.

The commerce of this part of the coast is considerable. The exports are frankincense, gum-arabic, mulij (fruit of the *doun*), indigo, and mats; for which cloth, dates, rice, jowaree, and metals, are imported in return. There are six large *buglas*, belonging to these ports, trading across the ocean to Bombay, besides smaller craft that go to the opposite coast.

The Somâl divide gums into two classes—sweet and bitter: to the former belong gum-arabic, mastic, “lubon,” “mayeti;” and to the latter myrrh, “bodthai,” and others. They have at least

three species of acacia producing the Sumugh or gum-arabic, and they are all very abundant. The "bodthai" is a gum of peculiar quality. The tree is a thorny acacia, not unlike the babool, but with a smooth bark. The gum issues in a thick milky mass, and when dry it becomes brittle. The *lubon* tree, producing the Olibanum or frankincense, which is called by the Somál "Beyui," grows only on the limestone ranges of this and the opposite coast. The beautiful and singular appearance of this tree, with its tapering stem and crimped foliage, attached to the smooth surface of the marble rock by its large white bulbous mass, and dotting the tops of the hills, where often no other verdure is to be seen, is very striking. There are four different kinds of the tree, producing two distinct kinds of gum. The first and best kind, called *bedwi* or *sheheri* (*luban bedowi* of Cruttenden), comes from the Mohr Add and Mohr Madow: the second kind, called *mayeti* (*luban meyti*), is produced by the Yegaar. Numbers of the Somál go across to Hadramaut for the purpose of gathering the frankincense, paying the Arab tribes there for the privilege, the latter never attempting to collect it themselves. The Somalis usually settle there, selling the gum at Moculla, until they have amassed a competency. The Arab "*luban*" is considered inferior to the African, which is termed "*asli*" by the Arabs. Probably the tree was imported into Arabia, with the myrrh-tree, in very remote times. The season for gathering the gum lasts for four months—from May to September; the trees may be gashed any number of times without injury, provided that rain falls soon after. The gum is gathered fifteen days after the tree is cut, as it has then ceased to exude, and the bark, which heals rapidly, is again gashed. The trees, though growing wild, are carefully watched by the Somál; and, in some cases, they are said to plant and propagate saplings in their fields.

Captain Miles thinks it probable that the Somál are descended from a number of Arabs who immigrated into the country, and, mixing with the Galla inhabitants, soon multiplied and drove back into the interior all those who refused to conform to their religion, and thus occupied the country they now hold. Their language and religion both support this hypothesis. The former is composed almost wholly of words derived either from the Arabic or Galla tongues, the latter predominating, and their traditions universally refer to Arab ancestors, whom they hold in great veneration. They assign a period of between four and five centuries to this immigration, which was probably from Hadramaut, and they speak with pride of the readiness with which the Moslem faith was embraced.

The name of Somâl, and the time when they first began to be called by it, still remain in obscurity. The root of the word in Arabic is, in one of its significations, "lofty hills covered with trees," and this name may have been applied to the country by the Arabs. But it does not appear to have been so known to the ancient writers, and Captain Miles suggests the possibility of its being an anagram of the word *Mosyllon*, the ancient name of Berbera or Kurrum: for the whole region, as far as Cape Guardafui, was called the Mosyllitic coast. The Somâl distinguished between the two sides of their country, by the terms *Burri* (the eastern) and *Gulbêdh* (the western). Like the races north and south of them—the Afar and Sowahili—the Somâl are of the Shafeea school of Moslems. The Mijjertheyn is the only tribe under the sway of a sultan, the others having a chief, called *Ogass*, to reign over them.

There are three outcast tribes, named Tomal, Midgân, and Ebir. The first are blacksmiths exclusively, making arrow and spear heads, fish-hooks, and such-like requirements of the people. The second are usually servants or herdsmen; and the third are the Pariahs of the land, and professional jugglers.

The Somâli coast, from Marayah to Allooala, has three towns not laid down on the charts; namely, Gurso, Kesulli, and Habo. From Cape Guardafui to Ras Hafoon the coast is bleak and sterile, with two or three fertile valleys, and is very thinly peopled; but on the top of the square table-land of Hafoon there are extensive pastures, on which camels, cattle, horses, and sheep, are grazed in the season.

The eastern point of the country is formed of a series of tolerably well-wooded plateaux, rich in valuable gums. Captain Miles remarks that a very unnecessary puzzle has been made of the name given to this point or horn by the Portuguese—Cape Guardafui. Bruce insisted that it should be called Gardepan, or the "Straits of Burial," and others have derived it in ways equally fanciful—even the accurate Cruttenden was misled. It is, in fact, simply the native name for this part, and is the only one known to the inhabitants—Girdif or Girdifu. The only Europeans who have ever traversed this point were some of the troops belonging to the Bombay column of the army of Egypt in 1801. The transport, in which they were returning to India, having been wrecked near Ras Hafoon, they succeeded, after great hardships, in making their way along the coast to Bunder Allooala, where they were taken off, two months after.

The ancient geography of this coast, as given in the *Periplus* of the Erythræan Sea, has become more clear and intelligible since

our knowledge of it has increased, and we have had the accurate surveys of the Indian Navy to refer to for its elucidation. The first place mentioned in the territory now occupied by the Somalis, by the author of the 'Periplus,' is *Mundus*, which Captain Miles considers to be Zaila, on account of its description as a safe anchorage under the protection of an island—a circumstance that suits Zaila alone. The chief emporium on the coast, however, is said to have been Mosyllon; which Captain Miles places at Berbera. Hafoon is identified with Aphonè of the 'Periplus,' both from the similarity of the name, and the fact of its being called an emporium, a character it still deserves, as the whole produce of the valley of the Jaël is brought here. Cruttenden, who compares the fair at Hafoon to that of Berbera, testifies to the number of merchants resorting to it, and to the value and briskness of the trade carried on.

The luxuriant vegetation of the valley of Jaël having been described to Captain Miles in glowing terms, he hired a camel and started for it one evening in company with five Somalis. The road passed over a sterile plain, thinly grown here and there with acacias, until it reached the Wady Jaël. The wady appears, at a distance, like a bright green streak in a brown and hilly plain, and looks singularly pleasant and refreshing. The banks are high and precipitous, and the bed is in no place less than 700 yards wide, showing that a very considerable body of water is carried down in the monsoon. The bed is extremely well wooded with some large trees, especially in the centre, where the ground is high, forming islands in the flood. The wild date and doun were particularly abundant, the fruit and leaves being an important article of commerce. The people were very friendly, and appeared quiet and industrious, but miserably poor. The men were employed in splitting, drying, and stringing *mulijs* (doun fruit), and the women in mat-weaving. Their mat-huts were scattered along the valley, with thorn *kraals* for the few half-starved sheep and goats. There is no cultivation, and the fruit of the wild date seems the staple article of food. The river is said to have been the resort of wild elephants until three years ago; since then they have only re-appeared once. Captain Miles travelled up the valley for forty or fifty miles.

The Burel Somäl country, which has been described in this Report, is very interesting, and Captain Miles considers that there are not many which offer greater attractions for research and greater facilities for exploration to the traveller. It is true that we have had a few glimpses of it, and the writings of Cruttenden, Rigby, and others, have left little to be gleaned superficially; but how

little we know of the interior! and of the tribes beyond the sea-board absolutely nothing! The geography, resources, and productions of the country; the condition, distribution, and inner life of the people; have all yet to be written, and offer a wide field for inquiry to the first European who shall visit them.

Captain Miles's Report on the Somali country is dated at Aden, on April 17th, 1871.

This recent visit to the Somali country has furnished some additional evidence on the subject of the frankincense or olibanum of commerce, which has been so ably and exhaustively discussed by Dr. Birdwood in the 'Transactions of the Linnean Society.' Early writers all described the precious incense as being obtained from Arabia and the Somali coast. But Bruce, who said that the frankincense country extended from Abyssinia to Cape Guardafui, described a tree called *Angouah* (the *Boswellia papyrifera* of Richard), as yielding a gum much resembling frankincense, and growing in the valley of the Takazzé in Abyssinia. In 1807, also, Colebrooke's description of the Indian plant (*Boswellia thurifera*) led to the theory that the olibanum of commerce was entirely derived from India. But the visits of Wellsted, Cruttenden, and other officers of the Indian Navy, to the Somali coast, and of Dr. Carter to Arabia, fully establish the existence of the true frankincense-trees of commerce in those countries. Captain Miles's account of the tree and its product, in the present Report, agrees very exactly with that of Cruttenden.

Dr. Birdwood has finally settled the controversy which has gone on for ages, respecting the trees from which frankincense is derived. He divides the *Boswellia* genus into five species; three of which, and the only ones which yield frankincense, being first described by himself:—

I. *Boswellia Carterii*, the kind found by Dr. Carter in Arabia, but also growing in the Somali country. It is the *Luban Bedowi* of Captain Miles's paper, yielding *Mohr Madow*.

II. *Boswellia Bhau Dajiana*, a species from the Somali coast, yielding the *Mohr Add* of Captain Miles. It is called after an eminent antiquary and physician in Bombay.

III. *Boswellia papyrifera*, the Abyssinian kind, first mentioned by Bruce, which yields none of the *olibanum* of commerce.

IV. *Boswellia thurifera* of Colebrook, the *B. serrata* and *glabra* of Roxburgh. An Indian kind, which also yields no olibanum.

V. *Boswellia Frerana*, the kind described by Captain Miles as

Yegaar, and as growing near Bunder Marayah. It is the source of the *Lubon Maitee*, as stated by Miles.

Dr. Birdwood believes that the use of frankincense and other sweet odours, in religious rites, originated in sanitary precautions. They do not merely mask bad smells, but correct them; they drive away vermin, and refresh the spirits from the depression which they fall into, in crowded places like churches. The churches in Bombay are infested by mosquitos, the ugly and irreverent punkas now in use are of no service; and the only remedy is the immemorial and most beautiful rite of burning frankincense.

The bulk of the olibanum of commerce is derived from the Somali coast; and it appears, from what Captain Miles tells us, that even the smaller quantity derived from Arabia is not gathered by natives of the country, but that the Somalis of the opposite coast go over for the purpose of collecting it, paying the Arab tribes for the privilege. The trade in these precious gems from the Somali coast is the most ancient on record. The produce of the *Boswellia* trees is not only frequently mentioned by the Latin poets, proving the universal trade of the nations of antiquity for centuries in frankincense; but it is also given as one of the ingredients for the holy perfume, in Exodus (xxx. 34-36). For this, among other reasons, the Somali coast is a country of peculiar interest, and one which, both for its own sake and for that of the unknown lands which lie beyond it, is well deserving of the attention of those who may hereafter engage in geographical exploration.

General RIGBY said Captain Miles's paper was important, not only in a commercial, but also in a political point of view. The Somali country was the district from which so many valuable gums were chiefly obtained. Politically it was important, as showing that now for the first time Englishmen, who had long occupied Aden, were able to penetrate this north-eastern part of Africa. Thirty years ago it would have been death to any European to have attempted such a journey as that which Captain Miles had performed. The whole of that vast tract of Africa was still a blank upon our maps: the interior was a thickly populated and very productive country. The incense-producing district extended along a range of limestone mountains for 150 miles, and to a great distance into the interior. Wady Marayah was known to be very rich indeed, containing the finest trees producing frankincense: it was occupied by the Majartein Somalis, who were a trading race, very amenable to civilization. From time immemorial natives of India had gone from Cutch and Surat, at the termination of the north-east monsoon, and settled at the east end of Africa for the purchase of gums, frankincense, and myrrh, from the natives. Formerly, when any vessel was wrecked on that coast, the survivors suffered great privations from the hostility of the natives; and now that the opening of the Suez Canal had greatly increased the commerce of the Red Sea, it was of great importance to secure their friendliness. The great Somali race extended right down to the Equator; and although there was no definite boundary between the Somali country and that of the negroes, there was a point near the Equator where the one race was some-

what sharply defined from the other. The Somalis were a long-haired race, with Semitic features. They were very enterprising, fond of trade, and did not mix with the negroes in any way whatever, but rather looked upon them as an inferior race. He never found a word common to the two races. Unlike Captain Miles, he thought the Somalis were originally an African people, as they inhabited such a vast extent of country, and had a language entirely different from Arabic, Gallas, or Abyssinian.

In answer to a question regarding their religion, General Rigby replied that they were Moslems, and were very strict indeed in the observance of their religious duties.

The Rev. G. P. BADGER said that he agreed with Captain Miles that the Somalis were the descendants of Arabs who had settled on the coast of Africa and intermarried with the people of the country. Captain Cruttenden, in his admirable reports, mentions the tradition existing among them that their forefathers had come over from Hadhramaut, and that the graves of the principal immigrants were still revered by the inhabitants. There could be little doubt that intercourse had been carried on between the two coasts from very remote times, for Captain Miles's careful transcript of the Himyaritic inscriptions at Hisn-Ghorâb recorded the arrival there of a large colony of Abyssinians from the region about the Lake Hâik. With regard to the name "Somâly,"—supposing it to be of Arabic origin,—the predominant idea of the etymon was "dryness," "aridity," which was the characteristic feature of the country, although it produces so many incense-bearing trees. "Saumal," or "Somal," one of its derivatives, meant "dry-skinned," and, judging from the fact that the Somalis expend a great quantity of oil in greasing their bodies, it is presumable that the term was aptly applied! He did not think that Captain Miles had given any additional information respecting the frankincense. About fifteen years ago, Dr. Vaughan, formerly Port Surgeon at Aden, had drawn up a long descriptive catalogue of all the gums and shrubs which had been brought over to that settlement from the Somâli country, and it was published by the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, with some valuable notes. He did not agree with Captain Miles that the greater part of the frankincense used came from the Somâli country, but believed that it was still obtained from the district north of Hadhramaut. This gum was highly prized in olden times. Pliny gives a detailed account of the manner in which the rough frankincense imported into Alexandria was garbled there. "They need not to set any keepers for to looke unto those Trees that be cut, for no man will rob from his fellow if he might so, so just and true are they in Arabia. [How the Arabs must have changed since Pliny's time!] But believe me, at Alexandria where Frankincense is tried, refined,*and made for sale, men cannot look surely ynough to their shops and work-houses, but they will be robbed. The workman that is emloyd about it is all naked, save that hee hath a paire of trouses or breeches to cover his shame, and those are sowed up and sealed too, for feare of thrusting any into them. Hookwinked he is sure ynough for seeing the way too and fro, and hath a thick coife or maske about his head, for doubt that hee should bestow away in mouth or eares. And when these workmen be let forth againe, they be stripped starke naked, as ever they were borne, and sent away." (Pliny's 'Natural History,' *Holland's translation*. London, 1601, tom. i. p. 367.) Frankincense is much less esteemed now. Dr. Birdwood mentions its value in correcting bad odours; but, according to a Muslim author of the 13th century, Zakariyya-bin-Muhammad, el-Kazwîni, who rivals Solomon as a naturalist, its virtues are curative of moral as well as physical disorders. He describes the *Lubân*, or frankincense, as "a thorny shrub, not more than two cubits high, growing in the mountains of Shehr, of 'Omân, having leaves like the myrtle, and the gum of which is called *Kândar*. The gum is taken from the upper parts of the

stem, and being left to settle it becomes the *Kándar*, and is also called *Lubân*. Whosoever perseveres in chewing it, his heart [or his stomach] will be purified, and he will be able to recall to mind what he has forgotten. It also cicatrises fresh wounds and prevents sloughing. Applied, with duck's grease, to itch, it causes it to disappear. It also invigorates the intellect, and arrests bleeding at the nose." (*Ajáyib-el-Makhlukát*. Gottingen, 1848.)

Fifth Meeting, 22nd January, 1872.

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR HENRY C. RAWLINSON, K.C.B., PRESIDENT,
in the Chair.

ELECTIONS.—*William Frederick Alphonse Archibald; Peter Henry Berthon; Clifford James Brookes; Lieut. Reginald Beavan; James Alexander Christie; Colonel George Earl Church; Lieut. William Collingwood; His Highness Maharaja Dhuleep Singh; Charles F. T. Drake; Frederick Ralph Hart; Richard Helme; Joseph Palmer; Robert Charles Paxton; John H. Puleston; Henry Robinson; Abraham Scott; John Watts; Thomas Westall; John Peter Wilson.*

ACCESSIONS TO THE LIBRARY FROM JAN. 8TH TO JAN. 22ND.—'North China Campaign of 1860.' By R. Swinhoe. Donor K. Murchison, Esq. 'Two Months in Palestine.' Donor the author. 'Solucion de la Cuestion de Limites entre Chili e Bolivia.' Por J. A. Torres. Santiago, 1863. Donors the University of Chili. 'Camp Life and its Requirements.' By H. A. L. 1871. Donor the author. 'Proverbia Communia Syriaca.' By Capt. R. F. Burton. Donor the author.

ACCESSIONS TO THE MAP-ROOM SINCE THE LAST MEETING, JANUARY 8TH.—The Public Schools Atlas of Modern Geography, in thirty-one maps. By the Rev. George Butler, M.A. Presented by Messrs. Longmans and Co. Sketch of Eastern Bengal and Burmah, with the Country of the Looshai Expedition. Presented by the Editor of the 'Arakan News.' Map of the Eastern British Frontier, bordering on Burmah and Munneepoor. Map of the Country round Delhi, showing the position of the Camps of Exercise. Compiled in the Surveyor-General's Office, Calcutta, 1871. Presented by the India Office, through Mr. C. R. Markham, C.B. Map of the Pongo de Manseriche (Upper Marañon). By J. Smales, Engineer to the Peruvian Government. Presented by W. Chandless, Esq.

The PRESIDENT introduced to the Meeting Lieutenant Llewellyn S. Dawson, R.N., as the officer who had been selected to lead the expedition into Africa in

search of Dr. Livingstone. He also announced that Dr. Livingstone's second son, Mr. Oswald Livingstone, had volunteered to accompany the expedition, and that his offer had been accepted by the Council.

Mr. C. R. MARKHAM read the following Paper on the proposed Livingstone Expedition :—

The Livingstone Search and Relief Expedition.

LIVINGSTONE, the great traveller whose name is famous throughout the civilised world, and in whose welfare all Britons feel the warmest interest, needs our aid. It has not been the wont of the people of this country to let such need remain uncared for. When our great explorers have gone forth to achieve famous discoveries, they have done so in the sure faith that, if their difficulties became insurmountable, their countrymen would send them aid. When have they been disappointed? Not when our veteran Vice-President, Sir George Back, forced his way down the Great Fish River to the Frozen Ocean in search of the Rosses. Not when expedition after expedition sailed in search of Franklin and his gallant followers; nor when the search was continued by McClintock, with private means, in spite of discouragement from the Government. Not when help was sent, with unstinting hand, to Speke and Grant. Not when our late beloved President, firm and steadfast in his loyal friendship, sent Mr. Young to succour our lost traveller Livingstone, or to ascertain his fate. Sir Roderick has left his spirit among us, and the Geographical Society, the honour and reputation of which he loved so well, will not fail in its duty now.

It is no ordinary traveller who needs our aid. It is no ordinary discovery that will be disclosed to us, and perpetuated by his safety. Livingstone, since he landed in Africa in April, 1866, has performed one of the most remarkable journeys this age will have to record. In the first seven months he discovered the whole course of the Rovuma, traversed the mountain range which encloses Lake Nyassa on the east, and reached the southern extremity of that lake. This journey alone would establish the fame of any ordinary man; but, with Livingstone, it was but a commencement. It was followed by a series of discoveries of the first geographical importance, achieved in the face of dangers and hardships which only the most undaunted courage and resolution could have overcome. Ascending the mountain range to the west of Lake Nyassa, he reached a very elevated plateau in the heart of the African continent. Here he found a cold moist climate, a country covered with forests, and a growth of mushrooms on which his people subsisted for several days. A few passages in his letters give a vivid idea of these