Circumnavigation of Lake Bangweolo: Discussion

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perfect godsend to me, who love anything in the shape of a ball to play with. It has enlivened many an otherwise tedious hour—shooting at them with the rook rifle, when swinging by a string or balanced on the top of a reed; or playing at catch-ball with my boys. The temptation to pluck those hard green or yellow balls, which grow in hundreds on each tree, from the size of a tennis to a cricket ball, and as round as either, and shy them at something or some one, is perfectly irresistible. Their weight, especially the green ones, is perfect for throwing. I have seen many an apple fight, and have had ample opportunities of testing their hardness on different parts of my person, but for force on impact commend me to the fruit of the tumiowa tree.

But this is a digression. We were now near the headquarters camp whence I had started. At 1 p.m. we set out for home, the pace of the *Vigilant* being about 4 miles an hour. The prevailing wind of Bangweolo is from the east. In spite of the vast marshes surrounding this lake, and the constant visits of Arabs in past years, no rice is grown. There is cotton everywhere, but not in any large quantity, and the bark-cloth tree abounds.

At four we paddled in to the shore beneath the camp, amid a scene of the wildest enthusiasm and excitement. When I first saw the men, they were drawn up in two long lines, on either side of a broad road they had made from the camp to the lake, and the drums were beating merrily. Arriving fairly close, a man here and there would rush out of the line, and, after executing a dance, would return to his place. As soon as the *Vigilant's* bow touched the shore, all discipline was thrown to the winds. The crowd rushed down in a great wave, shouting and dancing. They surrounded the boat, and all endeavoured to seize my outstretched hands. I could not utter a word to save my life. From the boat to the sand my legs and arms were being caressed by scores of black hands, all anxious to touch me or something belonging to me.

I found that during my absence they had made a most excellent square boma on the site I had originally marked out. The huts all had mud floors and raised beds. Mine looked delightfully cool and clean. I told the men I was exceedingly pleased with their work, and with the way they had behaved themselves during my absence.

There was a huge gathering of natives from all round the district to welcome me back. This completes my account of the circumnavigation of Bangweolo and Chifumauli.

After the reading of the paper, the following discussion took place :—

Mr. ALFRED SHARPE: I am sure we have all listened with very much interest and pleasure to the paper which has just been read by the President, and which he has compiled from letters written by Mr. Poulett Weatherley. It has a special interest for myself, as I have travelled through a portion of the country described, viz. the Mweru district. With regard to the name "Bangweolo," I must confess I have always felt somewhat sceptical. As the President has said, I have

s 2

always believed the name to be simply "Pa-mwelo," which means "at the lake." In, at any rate, this part of Africa, there is no special name for any lake. "Tanganyika" does not really mean any particular lake, but simply a large piece of water. "Nyasa," "Nyanza," and others are the same. I cannot call to mind any lake that has a really distinctive name of its own. I am sure we cannot have listened to this paper without feeling that Mr. Weatherley possesses qualities necessary for successful travel in the regions he has described, patience, perseverance, sympathy with the natives, and consideration for their feelings. I know, from what I have experienced myself, that without some measure of these no one can travel successfully in Africa; but with an abundant supply of them, I believe that one can travel from north to south of the African continent. There is one point I should much like to allude to to-night, which has not been spoken of in the paper read. Mr. Weatherley visited the spot where Livingstone died. He was not the first to visit that spot since Livingstone's death. The first man who went there was Henry Glave, who crossed Africa and died on the West Coast. After him came Mr. Weatherley. Since then one or two others have visited the spot, the last being Mr. H. Genthe. From the accounts given by all these travellers, there is no doubt whatever that the mpundu tree, on which is the memorable inscription to Livingstone, is practically about to fall. Once that tree falls the inscription is lost for ever, because in Africa dead wood is destroyed almost immediately by white ants. That being the case, I should like to suggest that the Royal Geographical Society take steps to have cut out of the tree the section which contains the complete inscription, and that it should be sent home and placed among the other relics which the Royal Geographical Society possesses. It would not only be an interesting reminder of Livingstone, and the great work that he has done in Africa, but it would also be some evidence of what African natives can do; it would be a record of the love and regard which they must have had for Livingstone, when they carried him so many miles, and brought him to Kabenda, where he died. Should anything be done to carry out this suggestion, I may say that I am returning to Africa in a few months, and should be happy to aid in any way I can to carry out such plans.

THE PRESIDENT: Perhaps Mr. Sweet, who is the friend of Mr. Weatherley, and sent him out his steel boat, the *Vigilant*, may be induced to give us the interesting little incident concerning the smelling-salts.

MR. LESLIE SWEET: I expect the President could tell the story better than myself. It was on one of Mr. Weatherley's previous journeys in Central Africa that he was attacked by a hostile tribe, and he and his followers practically lost everything that they had got. Mr. Weatherley only just escaped with his life, and wandered about for some time with nine or a dozen of his followers. Ultimately he came to a settlement, where he was received in a very unfriendly spirit. But he happened, luckily, to have with him a small bottle of smelling-salts, and by means of this bottle he kept his followers and himself in food for a week or ten days. The natives would come to him for a sniff of the bottle; they seem to have considered it a charm of some kind, and for each sniff they had to pay a certain amount of food. That is the history of the bottle of smelling salts.

SIR HENRY H. HOWORTH: I did not come here this evening with the intention of speaking—indeed, I am hardly prepared to deal with the subject of the paper; but a remark made by my friend on the left (Mr. Sharpe) has tempted me to add a slight suggestion. It has always struck me that those who travel so much in Africa, and explore so many parts of the country, ought to do a little more than they do to try and bring us more knowledge of, and make more interesting to us, old African history. Then we are told that the inscription on this famous tree is

in danger of being destroyed, and that it should be removed and brought back to England and made a record in this Society. I think the Society would do well, also, to try and get the inscription replaced somewhere in the old ground. It would be very interesting to all visitors to the spot in days to come, and would form evidence of the history with which the spot is associated. We in this country are very much in want of a knowledge of the real history of Africa. We who are much interested in the ethnology of Africa are terribly puzzled by the want of real records.

And now may I digress for a moment to say, Mr. President, how pleased we all of us are to see you here again in your place looking so well, and to hear again that vigorous voice that we all like so much to hear? It pleases us all to see you again in good health. And now let me go back to what I was saying. In the old days when we were all children, we used to read the 'Arabian Nights' with the greatest delight, and especially the story of Sinbad the Sailor, which occurs in the 'Arabian Nights,' and occurs also as a separate Arabic book altogether. It is a wonderful and interesting book, because it is a narrative—an account and a description of the travels of the old Arabs in the time of Haroun-Alraschid. It was upon the shores of some of these African lakes and on parts of the eastern coast of Africa whence the Arabs drew most of their slaves. They travelled from the coast of the Mediterranean right down to the Zambezi, and they seem to have gone across country as far as these lakes. We have really a great deal more information about these Arabs and their travels than most people suppose, and I think it would be an important and interesting thing for a rich body like the Royal Geographical Society to make a collection of the old Arabic accounts of the different parts of Africa which have been explored by Englishmen. There are some wonderful stories about all this coast, and some of the old African slave-dealers went further inland from the coast than some of us now suppose. All down this coast we find a peculiar dialect, which is really a mixture of the old Arabic with the old native languages. I have recently been staying in a country house with a gentleman who has spent twenty-five years on the East Coast of Africa, and has gone up to these lakes frequently, and he tells me that in nearly all the huts of the natives can be seen some memorials of the old Arabian traders in these parts. I think he can date the voyages of many of these Arab traders by the remains we have now left, which are in the hands of the chiefs. There are to be seen some very curious old pieces of Chinese porcelain, which were brought over in the tenth or twelfth century by these Arabian traders. Of these Sir John Kirk has made a curious collection, hardly any of them being later than the twelfth or thirteenth century, when the Arabs ceased to have the command of the Indian ocean. From what I have said, it would appear that it would be undoubtedly most interesting for this Society to make a collection of the Arabian accounts of the eastern parts of Africa, and especially of the country reaching up to the lakes. I have felt very much that we are apt to forget the human interest that attaches to these districts. There is a famous old Arab writer who wrote a history of Egypt, and gave a very extraordinary account of the migration of the Zulus(?) from a country much further to the north. It is so detailed and interesting a work, with such graphic narratives, that I think it would be well worth our while to get together the whole of the stories as told by these Arabs. They would certainly help our own explorers in their discoveries in these regions of Africa. We have had a wonderfully graphic account in this paper to-night, but I do think it would be interesting if we could make a little headway into the earlier history of this great continent, which really enshrines the first phases of all human history, for all the earlier history of the white people, the brown people, and the olive-coloured

people is derived from the black races. Traces of this can easily be found down this coast and partly across the whole continent, and through the Sudan and part of Egypt. I do feel that the human element is often a little too much forgotten. I am sure we are all very grateful to Mr. Weatherley for the most interesting paper he has given us to-night.

THE PRESIDENT: I shall have great pleasure in bringing to the notice of the Council Mr. Sharpe's interesting suggestion and Sir Henry Howorth's very supplementary remarks. I think we must have been all struck by the pre-eminent fitness of Mr. Weatherley for the work he undertook. First of all, I think we admire his kindness to the natives, his warm sympathy with them, and his keen anxiety for their welfare. We have also been equally struck by his perseverance. This perseverance is especially exemplified by the trouble he took with his observations, when he found himself without any quicksilver, and had to use a looking-glass levelled with shot. That was an operation that would require more patience than any other that, I think, we can imagine. It may appear to be a very small thing, but it is one among many proofs of his perseverance. He was absolutely fearless, warm-hearted and kind to the natives, and he possesses most remarkable determination. We and all the Fellows of this Society are very pleased to reflect that the Council selected Mr. Weatherley for the grant of one of our awards this year, for his eminent services in the exploration of Lake Bangweolo. For when we ask Mr. Sweet to convey to Mr. Weatherley the cordial thanks of this meeting for the interesting paper he has forwarded to us, and for his most valuable collection of photographs, I hope it may be some comfort to him in his loneliness to know that he is not forgotten by the Fellows of this Society, and that we take the first opportunity of recognizing his valuable geographical researches.

THROUGH TIBET TO CHINA.*

By Captain M. S. WELLBY, 18th Hussars.

BEFORE telling of our journey, that is, of the journey that Mr. Malcolm, of the 93rd Highlanders, and I made together, in 1896, it will perhaps be well to compare our routes with those of other travellers. Colonel Prjevalsky had attempted to reach Lhasa, starting from the Tsaidam. Bower started from the west, at the pass Lanak La, and at once struck a direction south-east to Tengri Nor. Two years before this, in 1889, Prince Henry of Orleans and Bonvalot made a journey from Lob Nor to Tengri Nor. In 1894, the Littledales made their famous journey, starting from Cherchen, arrived within 50 miles of Lhasa. Rockhill's wanderings had been restricted to Eastern Tibet. Thus it will be seen that none had attempted Northern Tibet; it had only been crossed in the eastern portions, and there lay several hundred miles absolutely unexplored.

Our main object was to traverse this unknown land, and to try and discover what lay beneath that mysterious word, "unexplored." We also announced that we were bent on finding the source of the Chu

* Read at the Royal Geographical Society, June 9, 1898. Map, p. 336.