The Old Kingdom of Kongo: Discussion

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African himself. The native must be rediscovered. Hitherto the labour demanded from the black man has been mainly of a servile nature, and much of it "forced service." The "gospel of labour" will have no attraction for him as long as it is void of dignity. Industry is not restricted to mines. The great wealth of the country is in the soil, and if the African can be made to believe this, a new era will soon dawn upon the race. But the native conception of labour must be utterly changed. At present the bulk of the people are middlemen—acting as collectors and distributors of the wild produce of the land to the white men. The cultivation of the soil is left to the women; the men, during the intervals between trading expeditions, spend their time in fishing, hunting, and talking palavers. Now that white men are entering the interior markets, the occupation of these middlemen is taken away, and what is needed at the present juncture is a mighty prophet of labour who will inspire the people with dignity and self-respect, and show them that honest labour put into the soil will bring its own reward. Let the native know that his cultivated piece of ground is secured to him and his family, without extortionate taxes in kind on the produce, and he will immediately begin to plant rubber trees, cotton, and coffee, and the prosperity of the land will be secured. Then, instead of "rubber" being considered the sign of death and of cruelty, it will become the means of bringing prosperity and gladness into the lives of millions of the sons of Africa.

Before the paper, the PRESIDENT: Those of you who were present at our meetings in the spring of 1902 will remember that the Rev. Thomas Lewis read to us then a valuable paper on the Portuguese Congo. It is on a portion of that region with which he did not then deal that he is going to read us a paper to-night. Mr. Lewis is one of the highest authorities we have on the region in question, as he has lived there for some twenty-one years. That is not the whole of his record in Africa. Mr. Lewis went originally to the Cameroons a quarter of a century ago, and he was there at that interesting time when the German flag was hoisted. I also understand that Mrs. Lewis has lived in West Africa for twenty-four years, so that it cannot be so black as it is painted. Mr. Lewis is a Baptist missionary, and I think that all of you who know anything about equatorial Africa will agree, without going into any question of religion, that missionary effort there has been an unmingled blessing. Mr. Lewis has been engaged in work that involved his travelling extensively in various parts of the country, some of which had never before been visited by Europeans. I will now invite him to read his paper.

After the paper, the PRESIDENT: The discussion to-night will be short, owing partly to the influenza, and partly, I suppose, to the weather. I propose to open that discussion, not with any remarks of my own, but by reading an interesting letter from one of the best authorities on the Congo we have in this country, our distinguished Vice-President, Sir Harry Johnston.

"I much regret that ill health prevents my being present at the reading of Mr. Lewis's paper to-night. I shall look forward with interest to reading that paper when it appears in the *Geographical Journal*.

"I am shortly publishing a comprehensive work on the regions of the Congo,

derived largely from the researches and notes of the late George Grenfell, Holman Bentley, Thomas Comber, and W. H. Stapleton, together with the work of other members of the great Baptist Mission on the Congo, happily still alive, such as William Forfeitt, John Whitehead, J. H. Weeks, H. Sutton-Smith, and R. Glennie. This accumulation of ethnographical and linguistic material has been placed in my hands by the Secretary of the Baptist Mission for analysis and publication. The maps are mostly due to the accurate surveys of George Grenfell, and nearly all the beautiful photographs which will so aptly illustrate these researches are by Grenfell and William Forfeitt. The result will be such as to surprise such foolish people as do not realize that nowadays most missionaries are at the same time men of science, in one direction or another, earnestly anxious, at no profit to themselves, to place before the world as much accurate information as they can obtain concerning the countries in which they dwell.

"I have, of course, been personally acquainted with the work of the Baptist Mission in West Africa from 1882 onwards, in the Cameroons and in the Congo. I have generally found that it was better known, understood, and appreciated in Belgium, Germany, and the United States than it has ever been in Great Britain. So far, it has only been the Scottish University of Glasgow that has had the sagacity and discrimination to confer a public distinction on a member of the English Baptist Missionary Society. This Society, it must be remembered, produced probably the first accurate philologist in African languages, the Rev. James Clarke, who illustrated the native speech of the island of Fernando Pô in 1848, but who was writing on West African languages as early as 1841, and whose ideas and theories are singularly modern when read in the light of more recent discoveries.

"The late Richard Burton, not by any means over-indulgent in his estimate of missionaries, and that equally celebrated writer on Africa, Winwood Reade, wrote quite as cordially forty years ago of the practical results and the scientific achievements of the Baptist Mission in the Cameroons.

"I have every reason to believe that Mr. Lewis's paper read to-night will be up to the standard set by Grenfell and Bentley.

"H. H. JOHNSTON."

REV. LAWSON FORFEITT: I regard it as a great honour to be invited to say a few words from the platform of the Royal Geographical Society. As secretary on the Congo for many years of the mission of which Mr. Lewis has been a distinguished member for over a quarter of a century, I may, perhaps, be permitted to express the great pleasure it affords his colleagues that his work as an explorer, and as a careful student of African problems, receives such gratifying recognition from this great Society. Such appreciation is, I am sure, a source of encouragement to Mr. Lewis himself, and to all those who seek to emulate his example. We do not forget the great honour conferred upon another member of the same mission: I refer to the late Rev. George Grenfell, who was awarded the Patron's Gold Medal some years ago. His great work in Central Africa is well known, and his lamented death was the occasion of a valuable and much appreciated tribute from the pen of Dr. Keltie, who, I may say, always receives us with the greatest kindness on our return from abroad. Perhaps I may be allowed to express the great pleasure I have experienced in being present this evening, and in listening to the interesting and valuable paper of my friend Mr. Lewis. His views on the question of slavery—on domestic slavery, as well as of the slave trade—are, I venture to think, of great importance, and are deserving of careful consideration by all those who are devoting attention to African problems. I entirely agree with what he has said on this subject. With reference to the cruel system for providing forced

labour for the cocoa plantations in the islands of San Thomé and Principe, it has been my painful experience to travel on Portuguese ships which have conveyed large numbers of these Africans from Angola, and the hopelessness and blank despair on their faces as the steamer carried them further and further from their homes will ever remain graven on my memory and on my heart. As Mr. Lewis has said, we greatly rejoice that the important firms in England who are interested in the cultivation of cocoa in those islands have taken up this question. I had the opportunity of conversing with the special commissioner who was sent out by those firms when he visited my station on the Congo, and of expressing very strongly our views on this subject. Mr. Lewis has given us a graphic account of a native lawsuit. I have never witnessed such a trial as he describes, but I was once present at the ceremony of appointing chiefs over certain towns by the principal chief of the district, and the extraordinary proceedings were intensely interesting to the two Europeans who were observers on the occasion. The frantic rushing to and fro in the circle formed by the excited crowd of natives, the brandished sword which had evidently been handed down from generation to generation from the time of the early Portuguese explorers, and the wild shouting and dancing, were enough to make one fear for the mental balance of the performers, as well as for the safety of those sitting and standing near. Mr. Lewis's statement that to properly understand native problems, one must try to understand them from the native point of view, and to study the black man's mind, is one upon which he rightly places great emphasis. I am also a firm believer in the view that it is not difficult to induce the African to work, and to teach him the dignity of labour, provided he is permitted to reap a fair share of the proceeds of his toil. I believe that the general public in this country are coming more and more to recognize that the views of such men as Mr. Lewis, and of distinguished administrators such as the honoured President of this Society, who have spent many years in Africa, are at least as worthy of respect as the views of those travellers who spend a few weeks in rushing through a country, and then hasten to give their valuable opinions to the world. When Mr. Lewis returns to the Congo, I am sure he will go with happy recollections of the way in which he has been received by this important Society, and we may look forward, if his valuable life is spared, to hearing further from him on those questions in which the Society takes so deep an interest, and concerning those regions the highest welfare of whose inhabitants both Mr. and Mrs. Lewis have done so much to promote.

Sir T. FOWELL BUXTON: I very much appreciate the opportunity of expressing my admiration of the paper to which we have just listened, and the beauty of the pictures which have been thrown upon the sheet, and which have gone so far to illustrate the scenery among which the author has been living for so long. I think he is to be congratulated upon his paper. He has touched upon that very difficult and complicated question of the difference between the slave trade and slavery. We never can dwell too much upon that, because it is a constant source of confusion and embarrassment when these matters come under consideration, but I think we owe him a debt for what he has told us upon that. He has also told us, what some of us have known already, that there is a great deal of domestic slavery which is of a very innocent kind. We may like, as a matter of prejudice, to get rid of the name where we can; but it must be remembered, too, that there are other experiences. Now, I think the experience of Uganda bears upon it. In that case questions arose as to runaway slaves, and the chiefs came to the bishop, and they consulted him as to the right or wrong of retaining slaves. He took rather a conservative view; he appealed to the law, and to the duty of obeying the law. Well, they went away, but he told them to consider it among themselves

with the best light which they could derive from the Christian instruction which they had received. They went away, and they conferred among themselves without any direct leadership from English missionaries, and they arrived at the conclusion that slavery was contrary to the laws which they had derived from their study of the Bible, and they among themselves arranged to alter the laws of their country, and to abolish slavery. And then, again, we are often told, from the dwellers in South Africa, that no black man will work unless he is driven. Well, now there has been this experience going on in Uganda and in East Africa, and in other parts too—that certain work, like weeding, is looked upon as women's work; but if it is ploughing a field, that is regarded, I think, as suitable for a man. This has been known to be the case in Uganda. Some missionaries, some commercial persons in sympathy with the missionaries, have done much to introduce the growing of cotton, and its growth has gone on month after month steadily at the most extraordinary pace; the chief and the tribes and the villagers have embarked upon the cultivation of cotton with the utmost industry, and where they see that they are carrying on cultivation in which they are interested, and from which they derive a profit, they are perfectly able to carry on the work with such zeal as you might find anywhere else. I do not know if cotton has been introduced in that part about which we have heard to-night, but that has been the recent experience in Uganda with the cultivation of cotton, and the growing of rubber trees is becoming a considerable industry. Well, I am sure we are greatly indebted to Mr. Thomas Lewis for what we have heard, and are all prepared to express our appreciation of his lecture.

MR. HEAWOOD: So many points of practical importance have been raised by Mr. Lewis's paper, that I cannot help feeling it is somewhat to be regretted that the discussion should be narrowed down to what is, after all, a single point of interest out of many, namely, the historical point on which I have been asked to say a few words. Mr. Lewis has shown us a most interesting inscription, and I think that all students of early voyages will feel what a great interest attaches to its discovery. We must all have been struck with the wonderful state of preservation of the inscription, which has made its interpretation a comparatively easy task. That it can so easily be read is, I think, due first of all, to the hardness of the rock in which it was cut; in the second place, to the thoroughness with which the old Portuguese workman did his work; and last, but not least, to the excellence of the photograph which Mr. Lewis has put before us. The amount that we know from history of these Portuguese voyages is so scanty, that the information that we have received from this inscription is of distinct value. Unfortunately, no date is given. We know that there were two voyages of Diogo Cão—the first in 1482, and the second in 1485—and various considerations seem to point rather to the second, in which, as we are told by at least two writers, Cão was in command of a fleet. It is of great interest to have recorded the names of Cão's companions on this voyage. There are some ten names that can be read. They are very much contracted, but I think we can guess at them very closely, and at least three of them are known to have taken part in the Portuguese African voyages of the time—two in that of Bartholomew Dias, and one in that of Vasco da Gama. I cannot help wishing that Mr. Ravenstein, who is present to-night, had been called upon to speak first on this question, for I am but a humble disciple of his in these matters, and he is far more competent to deal with them. One thing, I think, has been brought out by the paper, viz. that it is not necessary to rush into the very heart of the continent to do good work, and this might supply a useful hint to those in search of a field for work in the future. I can only say, in conclusion, what an advantage I feel it to be to listen to one who, like Mr. Lewis, has lived the

best years of a lifetime in a little-known region, and can speak with such intimate knowledge of the inner life, manners, and customs of the inhabitants.

MR. RAVENSTEIN: We have listened with much profit to Mr. Lewis's paper, for his long residence in the country, his extended travels, and his knowledge of the native language enabled him to secure an amount of information on the geography of the country and the character of its inhabitants which is beyond the reach of travellers who merely rush through a country. There is one question, already referred to by Mr. Heawood, which interests me more especially. It is many years since I took up the study of the Portuguese discoveries, and about ten years ago, when Mr. Lewis was here before, I wrote a short history of Congo, which has been published by the Hakluyt Society. Since that time I have been hard at work upon a life of Martin Behaim, who claims to have commanded a ship in one of Cão's expeditions. During his first expedition Cão discovered the Congo, and erected a padrao at its mouth, which has been broken, and the pieces bearing the inscriptions carried off by the natives, who look upon these fragments as potent fetishes. An indefatigable traveller like Mr. Lewis might yet succeed in recovering these fragments. Fortunately, Cão set up a second padrao further south, which has been recovered intact, and from which we learn that his first voyage was undertaken in 1482—that is, at a time when Behaim was still at Antwerp. We may surmise that one Ferrão Vaz, a pilot, whose name is given to a river on the coast discovered by Cão, was a member of it. Our knowledge of Cão's second expedition is rather vague. We know, however, from a padrao at Cape Cross, that it took place in 1485. The rock inscriptions brought home by Mr. Lewis, as far as I can judge from the photograph thrown upon the screen, refer to this second expedition. The Portuguese coat-of-arms is that adopted in 1485, a short time before Cão started on his second voyage.* The inscription is most valuable, for, although it contains no date, it gives the names of a number of persons associated with Cão in this voyage. Among these names are those of three pilots and two masters whom we know to have been connected with other expeditions of the time, and five names of other persons; but among these names we look in vain for that of Martino de Bohemia, who claims to have been the captain of one of the ships. Of course I have been abused for doubting Behaim's share in this work, and I only wish one of our pretentious spiritualists would summon him amongst us, so that he might be cross-examined. I am aware, of course, that the discovery of this inscription is of no practical importance, however interesting it may be to myself and others who are interested in the history of geography.

THE PRESIDENT: I will now propose a vote of thanks to the lecturer for his paper, which I am sure you will agree has been of a most vivid character. I heartily endorse all that Mr. Lewis has said about the character of the African, the treatment of slavery, and the possibility of getting the African to work.

* For designs of the two coats-of-arms see Mr. Ravenstein's paper on "The voyages of Diogo Cão and Bartholomeu Dias," in the *Geographical Journal* for December, 1900.