Life of Sir Samuel Baker. Review

'Sir Samuel Baker:' A Memoir by T. Douglas Murray; A. Silva White

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in unfavourable weather; but they succeeded in making 20 sections of a total length of $8\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and including 218 soundings. The soundings were thus about 26 to the mile of section, or 194 to the square mile. The volume of the lake was found to be 1,978,000,000 cubic feet, somewhat less than Crummock, and the mean depth appeared to be 62 feet.

The lower half-mile of the lake, including most of the semicircular portion, was a shallow flat, averaging about 18 feet in depth, and the island was connected to the right shore by depths under 25 feet, that contour-line running only a small distance further down the lake. The upper part of the lake was entirely different, forming a single deep trough with steeply sloping sides and flat floor. The average steepness from the shore to a depth of 100 feet was 1 in 3 along the left or southern side, and 1 in 4 along the right or northern shore. The steepest gradients found were a little steeper than 1 in 2 from the shore to 125 feet at Angler's Crag, and 1 in 1.2 from the depth of 25 feet to 100 feet on the slope of the delta off the mouth of the main river as it enters. An indication is shown by the 25-foot contour-line of a former entrance of the river considerably to the south of the present one. The central plain is $1\frac{1}{4}$ mile long, and in places 500 yards wide at depths below 125 feet, the greatest depth on the plain being 148 feet near Angler's Crag. There are 163 acres below 125 feet.

Sections 1 and 2 are typical sections across the shallow lower end and the middle of the deep trough. The longitudinal section follows the axis of maximum depth in the deep part, but strikes straight across the shallow lower end.

In the case of this lake again, we find that the subaqueous slopes are quite comparable with those of the free hillside for steepness.

(To be continued.)

LIFE OF SIR SAMUEL BAKER.*—REVIEW.

By E. G. RAVENSTEIN.

SIR SAMUEL BAKER has deserved well of geographers. A man of wide sympathies and varied activities, bold as a hunter, persevering as the founder of a European settlement in a tropical country, ardent in his patriotism, it is yet as a geographical explorer that Baker's name has enjoyed, and will enjoy among posterity, the greatest admiration, and it is as an explorer and geographer alone that we have to deal with him in these pages.

When Baker first turned his attention to African exploration, he was already a man of forty years of age, for he was born in 1821, and it

* 'Sir Samuel Baker;' A Memoir by T. Douglas Murray and A. Silva White. Maps and Portraits. Macmillan & Co.

was only in 1861 that he “determined to commence an expedition to discover the sources of the Nile, with the hope of meeting the East African expedition under Captains Speke and Grant somewhere about the Victoria Lake.” The authors, on entering upon the subject of the Nile, introduce a sketch of previous Nilotic exploration, with reference to which it may be stated that, long before the days of Delisle and D’Anville, a few geographers had recognized the fact that the lakes and intricate rivers occupying on our maps the whole of Southern Africa were mere figments of imagination, or the doubles of Abyssinian lakes; that it was Michael Hey, the companion of Rüppell, who first among Europeans sailed up the Bahr el Abiad; and that Petherick never reached the low latitude claimed by him. Miani, too, who cut his name in a tree ($33^{\circ} 35' N.$), subsequently discovered by Speke, might have been mentioned.

When Baker entered upon the path of an African explorer, the opportunities for gaining distinction by making discoveries of importance, such as would strike the imagination of the public, and effect changes in our maps visible even to the least observant of observers, were much greater than they are now. As Speke was not expected to reach the Upper Nile before the beginning of 1863, Baker spent the interval allowed him in making an experimental trip, which would serve him as a training, and make him thoroughly acquainted with the language and character of the people, upon whom his success in future would be mainly dependent. He acquired, too, the use of astronomical instruments, which enabled him subsequently to lay down his routes with satisfactory accuracy. In this he acted wisely. He chose for the field of his experience the wide steppe region which extends from Berber and Khartum, across the Atbara, and to the foot of the Abyssinian highlands, which possessed in his eyes the additional advantage of being a very sportsman’s paradise. On this occasion, as well as subsequently, he was accompanied by his heroic wife, whose benign influence can be traced in many a passage of Baker’s books of travels.

On December 18, 1862, Baker left Khartum for the Upper Nile, not by any means attended by the good wishes of the people, nor even of the Egyptian officials, who not unnaturally looked upon this intruder as one likely to interfere with the slave-trade, which was yielding them large profits. It is well known that Baker met Speke and Grant at Gondokoro on February 15, 1863, anticipating Petherick’s relief expedition by five days.

While the successful “settlers of the Head of the Nile” sailed away in Baker’s boats to Khartum, Baker himself started in quest of a reported lake, which constitutes an important feature in the Nilotic system, although reported to be much smaller than the Victoria Nyanza. By a circuitous route, which led through the country of the Latuka, an interesting tribe whose language is akin to that of the Masai, surmounting the obstacles placed in his way by the leaders of slave-caravans,

and breaking the mutinous spirit of his own men, Baker at length reached the Somerset Nile near the Karuma falls. Crossing Unyoro, he looked down upon the sought-for lake, weary and toil-worn, but sustained by the quenchless enthusiasm that had carried them to the goal of their ambition. This was on March 14, 1864, in lat. $1^{\circ} 14' S$. The authors very fully discuss the geographical results of this important journey, not inappropriately referred to as the "crowning achievement" of Baker's life. And here, once more, it is proved that we cannot always trust the evidence of our own eyes. Baker, who stood close to the southern extremity of the lake, conceived that it extended for 200 miles to the southward, or to about $1^{\circ} S$. lat. And Baker obstinately adhered to his view, even after Colonel Mason had made a survey of the lake; and as recently as 1878 he wrote to Mr. H. M. Stanley that the "Beatrice gulf [now merged in Albert Edward Nyanza] is, of course, a portion of the Albert." Thus do we cling to the delusions of our youth!

After a prolonged stay in England (1865-69), in the course of which Baker's services to geography were fully recognized, he accepted the lead of an expedition expressly fitted out for the suppression of the slave-hunters, and the establishment of legitimate commerce in the regions of the Upper Nile. The work attempted by Baker during these four years of hardship is ably set forth under the appropriate heading of "The Task of Sisyphus." Baker himself recognized the fact that he had not gone the right way to work, in order to effect any permanent results. "Measures of forcible repression were all very well for punitive or police purposes, but they did not strike at the root of the mischief; they simply lopped off vicious excrescences, and left the main supports untouched." These errors of judgment, however, might have been repaired by Baker himself, or his successors, had he enjoyed the support of a strong Government, really in earnest. Baker, at all events, had driven off the slave-hunters, and "had planted in the countries annexed to Egypt the rudimentary structure of an administration, which had for its object the creation of law and order, of legitimate commerce, and of havens of refuge against slave-hunters."

The authors must be congratulated upon the impartial manner in which they have sought to perform the task of writing the life of a deservedly popular Englishman. They have given us more than a mere biography, for they have enabled us to form a true estimate of their hero by showing us the environment which impelled his thoughts and actions. Their book is, indeed, one which persons interested in the true welfare of Africa will do well to study. Perhaps, too, it may again direct attention to Baker's great works of African travel—'The Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia,' 'The Albert Nyanza,' and 'Ismailia.'