



Captain Benjamin Wood's Expedition of 1596

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Educational Exhibition in 1885. Dr. Gladstone, who was educated at University College, London, and at Giessen University, was Fullerian Professor of Chemistry at the Royal Institution from 1874 to 1877, President of the Physical Society from 1874 to 1876, and of the Chemical Society from 1877 to 1879, and was the author of various scientific papers, chiefly on chemical subjects.

Dr. James Stevenson.

The death occurred on January 28 of Mr. James Stevenson, LL.D. Born in 1822, Mr. Stevenson passed through Glasgow University, where he displayed mathematical abilities of a very high order. His sympathies, however, were not confined to that branch of scholarship, and in later years he assisted the University substantially in the promotion of various studies. His generous and instructed interest in the progress of education was recognized by the University a short time ago, when his doctor's degree was conferred upon him. In the geographical world Mr. Stevenson was best known for his connection with British Central Africa, where his name will be preserved so long as the Stevenson road endures and bears that designation. He was one of the many caught into the current of the great outburst of missionary zeal, and of enthusiasm for the work of opening up the Dark Continent by exploration, which followed the death of Dr. Livingstone. He joined the Royal Geographical Society in 1877, and was closely associated with the African Lakes Company, founded a year later, of which he was Chairman at the time of his death. Early in the eighties, Mr. Stevenson vigorously pressed a scheme for the construction of a road between Lakes Nyasa and Tanganyika. He himself subscribed some thousands of pounds to enable the necessary surveys to be carried out. The road was never properly laid down, but a path was cleared through a considerable stretch of difficult country, and a route opened up which not only will long preserve Mr. Stevenson's name on our maps, but has not been without importance in the diplomatic negotiations that accompanied the partition of the continent.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Captain Benjamin Wood's Expedition of 1596.

IN my Introduction to 'The Travels of Pedro Teixeira' (Hakluyt Society, 1902), I have given, on pp. xliii.-lviii., some details, mostly from Portuguese sources, of the voyage and ultimate fate of the three ships—*Bear*, *Bear's Whelp*, and *Benjamin*—of Captain Benjamin Wood's Expedition, which left England for the Far East in the latter part of 1596, and respecting which there has been much confusion and misstatement owing to a blunder of Purchas's. I have there shown that one of the ships was lost somewhere off the south coast of Africa; and that the other two ships, after acts of piracy on the Malabar coast, encountered, in the Malacca strait, a Portuguese fleet, with which they carried on a running fight for eight days, at the end of which time, owing to the blowing up of the gunpowder on board the "admiral," the two English ships retired to Old Kedah to repair and refresh. Owing to their diminished numbers, however, the Englishmen abandoned the smaller vessel at this port, and set sail for home in the "admiral," which shortly afterwards foundered in a storm off Martaban.

Although Couto, who supplies us with this information, erroneously calls these ships "Hollander," and records a precisely similar fate as having befallen the Dutch ships *Leeuw* and *Leeuwien* (on one of which John Davis was pilot) in 1599, I

could find no reason to doubt the accuracy of his account of the ending of Wood's expedition. Now, through the kindness of Mr. William Foster, B.A., of the India Office, I am able to substantiate the general accuracy of Couto's narrative, and to carry the story a step further. Mr. Foster has drawn my attention to a passage in the English translation, by John Davies, of Mandelslo's *Travels* (London, 1662), pp. 246-247, which occurs in connection with a description of Mauritius, and reads as follows:—

“When the Dutch came thither in September 1601. they found there a French souldier, who had left his Countrie some three years before, with three English ships, which were the first in those parts that attempted sailing into the Indies upon the accompt of Piracy. Of these three ships one was cast away neer the Cape of Good hope, and sickness having consumed most of the men, they that remained set fire on the second, in regard for want of men, they were not able to govern it. The third was wrack'd upon the Coasts of the Indies, where all the men were lost, seven only excepted, to wit, four English men, two Negroes, and a French souldier, who attempted to return with some booty, which they disposed into a Cannow, wherein they set to Sea, and made a shift to get to Maurice-Island. The two Negroes had a design there to rid themselves of their Camerades, but being discovered they cast themselves into the Sea, and were drowned. The four English men would prosecute their Voyage, but the French souldier chose rather to continue in the Isle, then double the Cape, and expose himself to the mercy of the Sea, in so small a Vessel. Accordingly, of the English men, there was no more news heard. The French man had been 20 moneths in the Island, when the Dutch came thither. He was stark naked, in regard that having been in a burning Feaver, which heightened into a degree of madness, he had torn his cloaths; so that having not had any thing about him ever since his sickness, nor fed on any thing but the raw Tortoysses he took, they were not a little surpriz'd at the sight of him, and conceived it would be no easie matter to restore him to his senses, though he behaved himself well enough otherwise, and was in very good health.”

As Mr. Foster points out, the above story does not occur in the original (German) edition of Mandelslo's *Travels* (1665), but is an interpolation by Abraham van Wicquefort, who translated the Olearius-Mandelslo *Travels* into French and published his translation in 1659. There is no copy of this first French edition in the British Museum Library; but in the second edition, published in 1666, the passage occurs on pp. 523-524 of tom. ii. From a comparison of this with Davies's version, I find that the latter is a pretty faithful rendering of the French. Now, whence did Wicquefort obtain the details given above? Only one source, as far as I know was available to him, viz. the diary of the voyage of the fleet of five Dutch ships that sailed from the Texel for the East on April 23, 1601, under the command of Wolphert Harmanszoon. This diary was first printed in 1645, forming part of the collection of voyages entitled ‘*Begin ende Voortganch vande Vercenighde Nederlandtsche Geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie.*’ On p. 5 of this journal the diarist states that on August 20, 1601, the ships were in a calm in 33° 11' S. lat. There is then a strange (and regrettable) breach of continuity in the diary as printed; for the next entry reads:—*

“On 13 September [1601] the yacht named *Duyfken* came back † out of the harbour in Mauritius bringing with it some *koques*,‡ and a Frenchman named

* I have translated as literally as possible, and have retained the punctuation of the original.

† Owing to the gap in the diary, we have no record of the dispatch of the yacht, or of the date on which it left the fleet.

‡ Coconuts.

François, who some years before had sailed from England with a captain *in compagnie* of 2 ships, with a yacht, and, so the aforesaid Frenchman relates, after that they had captured some ships and junks on the coast of Melinde, were compelled (owing to the great loss of men, and deaths occurring daily, so that the aforesaid ships were as no more than one, for near the Cape of *Bonne Esperance* they lost their yacht, and owing to the loss of men they burnt their vice-admiral, on account of the continuance of the sickness) to strand the aforesaid ship (which was the third) near by Malaca on the island of Pulo Bontan,* where the aforesaid ship remained, and all the men died except seven, to wit, four Englishmen, and this Frenchman, with two blacks; which 7 persons bestowed themselves in an Indian junk with some booty, in order to cross over to England therewith, but on getting to sea, the two blacks, so he says, plotted some treachery, but their attempt failed, which seeing, out of desperation they leapt overboard, drowning themselves, so that the 4 Englishmen and this Frenchman arrived in the aforesaid junk at this roadstead where we lay: where they lay eight days, at which time, so it appears, they had a disagreement, because the Frenchman wished that they should remain there, hoping for the mercy of God, so that in time they might make their junk stronger and larger, but the Englishmen would not stay longer there; so the four of them put to sea in the aforesaid junk in order to get to England; so that this poor man had remained alone on the island for a period of 18 or 20 months, of which time he had been eight months without fire, going about all that time naked, sustaining himself with *palm*† and raw turtle‡ flesh, yet he was as corpulent [*sic!*] and robust as any of the fleet, both in running and otherwise, but was very muddle-headed when he was asked much, which is not to be wondered at, when one thinks, what manifold fancies such a man in so long a time might have, as also the heat of the sun, in which he had gone about always naked, because, so he says, in a severe illness that he had had, he had torn all the clothes from his body, may the Almighty God restore to him his former health, and preserve us all from such a calamity Amen.”

Whether the diarist's pious aspiration for the restoration to mental vigour of the unfortunate Frenchman was fulfilled, I do not know, as no further mention is made of him. But his affliction is a misfortune to us, for it vitiates to some extent the accuracy of his story. However, taking it as it stands, let us see how it compares with Couto's account; for that it refers to Wood's expedition there cannot be the least doubt.

According to the Frenchman § the fleet consisted of two ships and a yacht, and had sailed from England “some || years before.” This can apply only to Captain Wood's fleet, consisting of the *Bear* (of 180, 200, or 300 tons ¶), the *Bear's Whelp* (of 80 or 140 tons ¶), and the *Benjamin* (probably the yacht, tonnage unknown), which sailed, as I have said, in 1596.

The yacht, the Frenchman said, was lost off the Cape of Good Hope.** This

* A misprint for *Bouton*, probably.

† Portuguese *palm* = the palm “cabbage.”

‡ Or tortoise.

§ Whom Wicquefort, with no apparent authority, designates a “soldier.”

|| Wicquefort, it will be noticed, has quite unwarrantably and erroneously inserted “three.” He adds, that these were “the first [English ships] in those parts that attempted sailing into the Indies upon the account of Piracy,” which is also erroneous, as the Raymond-Lancaster expedition had preceded this one by more than five years.

¶ See ‘The Voyage of Robert Dudley’ (Hakluyt Soc.), Preface, p. xxxi., regarding these varying estimates.

** As I surmised (see p. xlv. of my Introduction referred to above).

accounts for the fact that when we first hear of the ships from Portuguese sources only two are mentioned.

So far, all is plain sailing; but now the two accounts vary in detail. The Frenchman is silent as regards the calling of the two ships at Quitangonha for water, but, on the other hand, informs us that they "captured some ships and junks on the coast of Melinde," a fact not mentioned by the Portuguese writers. It is possible, however, that the reference is really to the capture of Portuguese vessels off the Malabar coast, recorded by the Goa Chamber and by Couto, but not by the Frenchman. These discrepancies may fairly, I think, be charged to the latter's "muddle-headedness."

Far more unaccountable, however, is the utter silence of the Frenchman in regard to the engagement with the Portuguese fleet in the Strait of Malacca, of which Couto gives us such a graphic account. I can only once more attribute this silence to mental aberration.

The loss of men on the English ships Couto attributes entirely to the effect of the Portuguese artillery, but according to the Frenchman (and with much greater likelihood), it was due to sickness.*

According to the Frenchman, again, the English, on account of their diminished numbers, burnt their "vice-admiral;" † but where, he does not say. Couto tells us that the Englishmen "left in that port [Kedah] the ship of lesser burden." We may therefore take these two statements as agreeing.

Couto also states that after the Englishmen had abandoned their smaller ship, "in the other, which was the admiral, they embarked what they had, and went off in great haste, so much so, that they left on shore several wounded men, because the natives wished to attack them for various wrongs that they had done to them, and shaped their course for Bengalla; and in the latitude of Martavão on the coast of Pegu they were lost in that *macareo*." On the other hand, the Frenchman's version is, that the English were compelled, owing to their loss of men, to strand the remaining ship, the "admiral," ‡ on Pulo Butung, § which island is not "near by Malacca," as the diarist states, || but is on the west coast of the Malay peninsula, not far from Kedah. Now, it is probable that Couto's statement, that the "admiral" ¶ went down in a storm off the coast of Pegu, is based on mere surmise, and the Frenchman's account may be quite correct; there is, at any rate, nothing to justify our rejecting it.

The rest of the Frenchman's story we are obliged to take as we find it, having no other testimony to substantiate it or to contradict it. If it be true that when rescued by the *Duyfken* he had been "alone on the island for a period of 18 or 20 months," he and his companions must have arrived there early in the year 1600, and must therefore have set out from Pulo Butung towards the end of 1599. Now, according to Couto, the fight between the English ships and the Portuguese fleet took place in January, 1598; so that the survivors of this unfortunate expedition

* Compare the terrible mortality that took place on board the Raymond-Lancaster ships.

† The *Bear's Whelp*, probably.

‡ The *Bear*, doubtless.

§ While the English ships were at Kedah, Couto states, the Portuguese captain of Malacca sent a couple of vessels to look for them, which went as far as Pulo Butung, but did not find them.

|| The Wicquefort-Davies version has it that the third ship "was wrack'd upon the Coasts of the Indies [?], where all the men were lost [*sic*], seven only excepted."

¶ Compare what I have said above as to Couto's attributing the same ending to two Dutch ships.

must have spent nearly two years at Kedah and Pulo Butung. Although this is not beyond the bounds of possibility, it may well be that the Frenchman's memory had played him false, and that his sojourn on the island had been longer than is stated. That the junk with the four Englishmen and the "booty" was lost at sea, or cast away on some wild coast of Africa, is evident; otherwise we should have some record of their foolhardy voyage.

Owing to the above-mentioned lacuna in the Dutch diary, and the general vagueness of the bearings recorded, it seems impossible to identify the "harbour" in Mauritius where the unfortunate Frenchman was rescued from a living death; and as the original manuscript of the diary no longer exists,* the omission from the printed edition of 1645 cannot now be supplied.

DONALD FERGUSON.

20, Beech House Road, Croydon,
January 24, 1903.

MEETINGS OF THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY, SESSION 1902-1903.

Sixth Ordinary Meeting, January 26, 1903.—Colonel G. EARL CHURCH,
Vice-President, in the Chair.

ELECTIONS.—*Captain W. E. Bailey, East Yorks Regt.; William Singer Barclay; Sidney Barton; Harlan P. Beach; George Alexander McLean Buckley; Cuthbert John Burgoyne; George Bush, M.I.C.E., F.S.A.; Gillmore T. Carter; Bertram Chaplin; Captain James K. Cochrane, Leinster Regt. W.A.F.F.; David Delbanco; William Francis Farrer; Colonel George Malcolm Fox; William Fry; James William Gorson; Willie Henry Gibbings; Colonel Robert Edmund Golightly; Robert Joseph Hardie; Captain Ralph Henvey, R.F.A.; Major E. H. Hills, R.E., C.M.G.; Charles Kennedy Hoghton; Major William Campbell Hyslop, R.F.A.; Henry H. Joseph; John H. Leveson-Gower, Grenadier Guards; James Compton Merryweather; Lieut. Richard John Noal, R.N.R.; Captain Charles William Orr, R.A.; Captain R. C. R. Owen, Oxford Light Infantry; Daniel Thomas Phillips; Joseph Purvis; Ernest John Reid; James Christie Reid; Robert Lyons Scott; Rev. Henry John Shirley; William Hillman Shockley; Lieut. Roderick McKenzie Skinner, R.A.M.C.; H. Cecil Sotheran; Thomas Spinks; Edmund Storie.*

The Paper read was:—

"Irrigation and Colonization in British East Africa." By R. B. Buckley, Esq.,
C.S.I.

Seventh Ordinary Meeting, February 9, 1903.—Sir CLEMENTS MARKHAM,
K.C.B., F.R.S., President, in the Chair.

ELECTIONS:—*William Whitehorn Bakewell; John Foster Bass; Lionel Cohen; Robert Evans; Dr. Joaquín Gonzales; John Harley Harley-Mason; Right Hon. Lord Headley; Captain Thomas Nairne S. M. Howard, King's African Rifles; Lieut. Philip Howell, Queen's Own Corps of Guides; Lieut. Richard Meinertzhagen, King's African Rifles; Frederick T. Miller; Major Oswald Henry Pedley, Connaught Rangers; W. G. Richardson; S. H. Soper; W. T. Taylor, B.A.; Edward Valpy, B.A.; Sir Henry Wardlaw, Bart.; W. Ritchie Wickson.*

The Paper read was:—

"Changes in the Neapolitan Coast-line." By R. T. Günther, Esq., M.A.

* At least, no mention is made of it by Tiele in his 'Mémoire Bibliographique sur es Journaux des Navigateurs Néerlandais,' pp. 203-204.