

MY AFRICAN TRAVELS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I propose to present you to-night with a short history of events that have transpired since 1870 in Equatorial Africa, and it may be, if you are devoid of prejudice in the matter, you will be able to perceive that the outcome of them may in time result in great good to the Dark Continent, and to its myriads of dark nations. By mere reiteration of the more uncomplimentary terms, people have sometimes half persuaded me that my enthusiasm has undermined my better judgment, and that I am an altogether unpractical man. However that may be, I will endeavour to place the more salient facts before you to-night in such a manner that each of the more attentive amongst you may be able to form a judgment upon the matter in much quicker time than I confess to have been able to form mine.

In 1869, while pursuing the avocations of a newspaper correspondent, dabbling in politics and other high matters with that self-sufficiency usual with young journalists, I was summoned by a brief telegram from my chief, Mr. Bennett, of the 'New York Herald,' to come to Paris without delay. On the second evening after the receipt of the telegraphic command, a personal

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(2)

interview took place at the Grand Hotel. With characteristic abruptness, he informed me that the object for which he had sent for me was the search for an old traveller named David Livingstone, who, three years before, had disappeared in the wilds of Africa. Being naturally, by my profession, an omnivorous reader of all things with the least tincture of human interest in them, I immediately recollected that I had heard of the former existence of such a man, but beyond that he had been a missionary and traveller in Africa I possessed no knowledge of him. Mr. Bennett appeared to me to be much better informed, and in brief terms he condescended to enlighten me, and declared his conviction that the traveller was alive somewhere in the middle of the continent, and said he, in an electrifying manner, "I want you to proceed to Africa, and find him."

Let any young man here, however ambitious, try and put himself in my place. For instance, let him be a type-setter or daily reporter, clerk or cobbler, and let him fancy his employer declaring with the same startling abruptness his intention of sending him into the Polar Regions to discover the bones of Franklin, or into the middle of Africa to discover the relics of Hicks Pasha, and he will have an idea of the state of wonder I was in when I asked the great newspaper proprietor, "Right into the heart of Africa, Mr. Bennett?"

I have told the story frequently. I daresay you know it well. You know that I was rash enough to undertake the adventurous commission; that Mr. Bennett, with a prodigal generosity, placed thousands of pounds at my disposal; that he communicated some of his

(3)

own enthusiasm into me, and that, in the white heat of it, I started the next day, with a budget of instructions which I look upon even to this day with dismay.

One after another I executed each of them : first, the Suez Canal reports; second, Upper Egypt and Baker's expedition; third, underground Jerusalem; fourth, politics in Syria; fifth, Turkish politics at Stamboul; sixth, archeological explorations in the Crimea; seventh, politics and progress in the Caucasus; eighth, projects of Russia; ninth, Trans-Caspian affairs; tenth, Persian politics and geography, and present condition; eleventh, Indian matters; twelfth, search for Dr. Livingstone throughout Equatorial Africa.

It was January 1871 before I arrived at Zanzibar to commence executing my last commission. Up to that date Livingstone had been fifty-eight months in the interior of Africa, and during nearly fifty months of which he had been lost to the ken of those who professed regard for him. Now cast your eyes over that huge configuration called Africa, or take the Equatorial portion of it. I knew he had entered it near S. lat. 10°; that he intended, after arriving at Nyassa Lake, to turn north-westerly. In fifty-eight months one might travel far, for even at a mile per day one could march 1750 miles. Measure about 1600 miles north-west, even from the south end of Nyassa Lake, and you will find a prong of your compasses resting on a point somewhere near 10° N. lat. But supposing that the traveller had marched at an average of two miles per day within the same period, he would have traversed as many degrees as he had been months away from the

(4)

sea. Now fifty-eight degrees in a north-westerly direction from the southern end of Nyassa, would take one near the desert frontier of Algeria or Morocco, and the time I might occupy getting within a decent distance inland, he might utilize in reaching the Mediterranean Sea or some port on the North Atlantic Ocean.

Probably this method of describing the difficulty that now confronted me will suffice to bring the matter vividly home to your minds. I should also tell you that before arriving at Zanzibar it had not impressed itself sufficiently on my mind, that I should have to travel for many months, perhaps years, through lands inhabited by people whose complexion was of an alarming blackness, that the cream-coloured man would be more of a rarity with them than a coal-black man would be with us in England.

Nor had I thought to any great extent that all these black men were in a manner lawless; that many of them were savage; that some might be ferocious as wild dogs; that Africa possessed no theatres, newspapers, or agreeable society; and that a wheaten loaf could not be purchased with Rothschild's wealth. When I came face to face with the semi-naked blacks of Zanzibar, these horrors flashed upon me like a revelation. I felt I had been betrayed by rashness into a perilous as well as most disagreeable undertaking. Yet it was impossible to retire without making an effort. There was also some consolation in the thought that if my heart became too feeble in resolution, that I could return the way I went without any one being able to accuse me of returning from mere cowardice.

In due time the expedition was organized, and there was only one person at Zanzibar

(5)

who understood the object of it. In a few weeks we began our march into the interior, and a few days later, despite the strangeness of the land and our surroundings, we had adjusted ourselves to our condition, and, after a manner, were content that fate had fixed us where it had. Very quickly the glamour that high and romantic expectations had cast over the country wore away. Game was not so plentiful as it might be; the forests and jungles were lovely to look at from the plain, but within they were full of creeping things and abominable insects, myriapedes and centipedes, ants and pismires, cobras and pythons. The branches distilled continually great drops of dew, which dripped on the road, the road became miry and slippery with the tread of many feet. Our bodies perspired intolerably in the warm air; our clothes galled us; our boots became limp and shapeless in the continual and everlasting mud. As we emerged from the jungle, and looked over the rolling plains, nothing could be more inviting than the prospect. We called it "park land" as we viewed it from a distance. But as we trod the too narrow path, meandering like a tortuous stream, and became hemmed in by tall coarse grass, with the fervid sun scorching our heads with its intolerable heat, attacked by gad-flies and hordes of persistent tsetse, our admiration of park land was not increased by our experience of its many discomforts; nor during the night, when with aching limbs, and half parboiled bodies, we sought well-earned repose, were we deprived of our quota of miseries, for red-water ants infested our bedding, mosquitos hung to our faces, crickets uttered their exasperatingly monotonous cricks, wood-ticks fastened on our bodies like

vampires, wild animals haunted the neighbourhood of our camp, hyænas laughed diabolically outdoors, the nitrous earth exhaled its mephitic vapours, until the night seemed to us to rival the day in producing mortifying incidents.

Added to these were increasing troubles with our carriers and animals. The stubborn pack-donkeys continually contrived to upset the loads of cloth in the mud; they sprawled over the greasy, slippery roads as though they were demented or drunk; the rain showered on us daily, either soon after commencing a march, or just before we could house ourselves and goods; the porters threw away their packs and deserted; the native chiefs took every occasion to exact toll and irritate us by unceasing demands on our store, and neither animate nor inanimate nature appeared to us to favour our wanderings.

We arrived at a great plain traversed by a river called the Wami. The plain had been inundated and was converted into a deadly swamp. During the transit our poor asses died daily; our porters and escort sickened and died; and finally the Europeans lost heart and became victims to the inclement season. There was a time, when camped on the slopes of the Usagara range, when the full sum of our troubles and miseries was so great that but small inducement was needed to cause us to abandon the heart-breaking journey there and then. After a little halt, however, on the mountain slopes, we felt somewhat renovated. But as yet we had penetrated only 150 miles, which had occupied us forty-three days in travelling.

We had not loitered on the way; on the contrary, the victims of the journey had been

(7)

numerous, man and beast had succumbed, but with the heartiest efforts to press on, the rate of travel did not exceed three and a half miles per day:

By this time the rainy season was over, the drenching rains had ceased, and a cool wind blew, the inundated plains and valleys of the maritime region were behind us. We were on the slopes of the mountain range, which when crossed would lead us into the more populous and drier regions of the African upland.

On the 8th May, 1871, we resumed our journey over the Usagara range, and in eight marches we arrived on the verge of the dry rolling plateau which continues almost without variety for nearly 600 miles westward. We soon after entered Ugogo, inhabited by a bumptious, full-chested, square-shouldered people, who exact heavy tribute on all caravans. Nine marches took us through their country, and when we finally shook the dust of its red soil off our feet, we were rich in the experience of native manners and arrogance, but considerably poorer in cloth.

Beyond Ugogo undulated the Land of the Moon or Unyamwezi, inhabited by a turbulent and combative race, who are as ready to work for those who can afford to pay as they are to fight those they consider unduly aggressive. Towards the middle of this land we came to a colony of Arab settlers and traders. Some of these have built excellent and spacious houses of sun-dried brick, and cultivate extensive gardens. The Arabs at that time were a hospitable people, and they made me welcome amongst them. We were now over 525 miles from the sea. The Arabs located here were

(8)

great travellers. Every region round about had been diligently searched for ivory. Caravans departed and entered the colony at frequent intervals, two or three times week. If Livingstone was anywhere within reach some of these people ought surely to have known. But although I questioned eagerly all whom I came across, or became acquainted with, no one could give me definite information of the missing man.

While we were preparing to leave the Arab colony in Unyanyembe war broke out between the settlers and a native chief named Mirambo, and a series of sanguinary contests followed. In the hope that by adding my force to them a route west might be opened I foolishly enough joined them. We did not succeed, however, and a disastrous retreat followed. The country became more and more disturbed; bandits infested every road leading from the colony; cruel massacres, destruction of villages, raids by predatory Watuta were daily reported to us, until it seemed to us that there was neither means for advance nor retreat left. As our expedition had become thoroughly disorganized, I might say annihilated, during our flight with the Arabs from the fatal campaign against Mirambo, I turned my attention first to form another which, whether we should continue our search for the lost traveller, or abandon it, and turn our faces homeward, would be equally necessary, and as during such an unquiet period it would be a task requiring much time and patience, I meanwhile consulted my charts and the best-informed natives as to the possibility of evading the hostile bands of Mirambo by taking a circuitous route round the disturbed territory.

(9)

I just now mentioned that the distance from the sea to Unyanyembe was about 525 miles. We were delayed altogether at or near the Arab colony from the 23rd of June, 1871, to the 20th of September, eighty-nine days.

On this last date we resumed our journey with a new expedition, much smaller in numbers, but much stronger in discipline and means of defence. We had weeded out all the incapables, and all the ordinary unarmed porters, and instead of them we had men accustomed to travel, and to the vicissitudes of an African journey. I had also changed for the better. The raw youth who left the coast with a straggling caravan of 192 men of many tribes, willing to be guided by every hint the veteran porters had been pleased to give him, had, through bitter experience, been taught to lead his own force, and to exact ready and immediate obedience. Discipline over such a lawless mob as I had gathered from among the wilder spirits of Unyanyembe could not be enforced, of course, without a few tempestuous scenes, but by exhibiting liberality to the deserving, and severity to the more turbulent, long before we arrived at Lake Tanganika our expedition was a trained force, able to cope with the varied difficulties which beset a traveller in such wild regions without instantly dissolving at sight or hint of danger.

Lake Tanganika, and the Arab colony on its eastern shore around the port of Ujiji, were the objective point of this second journey. The distance between the two colonies by the circuitous route adopted was 450 miles, which occupied us 51 days, inclusive of marches and

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halts. Our rate of travel had thus improved to nine miles per day. To reach Ujiji from the sea we had travelled 975 miles in 235 days, of which 89 days had been consumed in delays at Unyanyembe, notwithstanding which, if we divide the total mileage by the number of days employed, our quotient will be about four and one-seventh miles a day.

But all this time we had heard nothing definite about the object of our search, until a few days off the port of Ujiji, when we met a native caravan which stated that a white man had appeared from the westward of the lake.

When standing on the last hill of all, enjoying the splendid view of the lake and the village of Ujiji half hidden in palm-groves a few hundred yards away, we announced our presence with volleys of musketry, and then resumed the line of march. Presently the inhabitants, informed by the customary volleys of the presence of a caravan, rushed out at first with alarm, because, as I have stated, Mirambo and his bandits had disturbed the entire country, and then with glad confidence to greet us. Among these were two black men, who to my astonishment greeted me in English and declared themselves to be servants of Dr. Livingstone. A few minutes later the long-lost traveller stepped out from his verandah, wondering at the news his servants brought him, much the same as I wondered at this remarkable and sudden termination of my search.

For only two months before I had written from Unyanyembe to the 'New York Herald,' "Good-bye, I am off the day after to-morrow for