

THE MISSION FIELD.

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JUNE 1, 1861.
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ZANZIBAR.

Missions of the Church of England have now been established on every side of Africa; and latterly, the island of Zanzibar, on the east coast, was pointed out as an important centre for missionary operations. As, however, before taking any step in this direction, it was incumbent on the Society to obtain the fullest information about the climate, physical features, and moral and social condition of the people, FRANCIS GALTON, Esq., F.R.G.S., was requested to read a paper on the subject at one of the Evening Meetings of the Society. With this request he kindly complied, and has since been good enough to allow the Society to print his address for the information of its friends throughout the country.

“Those who set sail from England may, in about eighty days, or in the same time it would take to reach Australia, find themselves in sight of the low green island of Zanzibar. Referring to the map, we see it lying near the equator, about twenty miles from the coast of Eastern Africa. It is a coral reef twice the size of the Isle of Wight, surrounded by many smaller ones, here fringing its outline, there raising their heads through the sparkling tropical sea.

It is especially a land of verdure—of dense tropical vegetation, where trees mass themselves along the sea-shore like green cliffs. The gently rounded low eminences of the interior are covered with

a continuous sheet of verdure, which the eye, at first reposing on that colour with eager pleasure, soon wearies of and begins to loathe in a manner hardly possible to describe. The perpetual greenness of the Elysian fields is the pleasant dream of poets, who lived in a land that had a winter and a summer contrast; but the never-ending reality of the oppressive vegetation of a tropical island, like Zanzibar, is very different to a poet's pleasant dream. Moreover, a fatal mangrove swamp indents the shore; the coral reefs form a fringe of still lagoon, where a fetid and irresistible vegetation chokes the water.

I believe no European writer has seen much more of Zanzibar than the town, and the way thence to the Sultan's country residence, which occupies one of the most elevated rises of ground in this low island. The interior is largely laid out in clove plantations and gardens of tropical produce, but no roads exist in the island; there are only footways, broad and well trodden near the town, and mere garden paths elsewhere. No person of any means lives in the interior, on account of the solitude and the malaria; the gardens are tilled by slaves, their masters live in the town. The water-courses are choked with fever-producing vegetation, even slight hollows will retain the rain water, and becoming overgrown with rush, form hot-beds of malaria. In fact, the island, as we now find it, is pestilential. I presume the insurance value of an European's life would be as low there as in any other place in the world.

Where, then, lies the interest of Zanzibar? What attracts Indians and Arabs and negroes to its town, and gives it a population of 50,000 souls, and what is it that now induces us to gather facts about it?

It is because it is the heart, the seat of commercial activity in Eastern Africa, north of the Portuguese. Politically speaking, Zanzibar is an offshoot of that part of Arabia which is in the closest connexion with India, and here it is planted by the side of the continent of Africa, opposite villages whence long lines of traffic extend through far distant negro communities to fully one-third of the entire distance across that continent. It is essentially an Arab country, for its education, its creed, and dominant races come from

Arabia, although its population is chiefly negroid and negro, due to a long intermingling of the Arab with the Black. On the one side, its merchants are in intimate relationship with Muscat and Bombay; on the other, with the absolute savagery of Eastern Africa.

Again, Zanzibar is not only a channel of commerce, but is in itself a kingdom of some wealth, and it might be of strength. There is a squadron—a wretchedly dilapidated one, I willingly concede—but still a squadron of eight ships floating in her harbour: one corvette, at least, is serviceable. The flag of Zanzibar flies over many settlements that dot the Eastern African coast, and she claims the entire littoral far away down south, to Cape Delgado. A fringe of Moslems, to whom Zanzibar is a metropolis and a home, skirts the shores all the way between that Cape and the equator, and even farther. Zanzibar can coerce somewhat; she can influence widely and largely. In proof of this, we find that in no place is the Moslem so tolerant, of those not his co-religionists, as here; and it is acknowledged that this feeling dates from the personal influence of the late estimable ruler of the country, Sultan Sayid Said, commonly called the Imaum of Muscat.

It is, then, on the grounds of the influential position of Zanzibar that it has been recommended as a centre of Missionary labour. I trust nothing will be done blindly; and it is with the desire of giving accurate information upon this almost unknown island, that I have undertaken here to address you.

My knowledge of it is partly derived from sources of information open to all—that is to say, to the published works of Owen, Guillaum, Krapf, and Burton, besides the published reports of our Consul there, on slave-trade matters; but these give comparatively scanty information. Captain Burton accounts, in his narrative of travels in Eastern Africa, for having treated too lightly on Zanzibar, by the miscarriage of the MSS. he had written upon it, which were lost on their way to England. Fortunately, however, the exceedingly copious, rough notes, which that inquiring traveller and accomplished orientalist made on the spot, and which were the foundation of the missing MSS, have been preserved; they were kindly lent to

one by Captain Burton, and I hold them now in my hand, and I have read them with great interest and instruction. Again, Captain Speke, who, as many of you are aware, has returned on a second journey of exploration to Eastern Africa, has lately sent to the Geographical Society a series of photographs taken by his companions, Captain Grant. They are of no professed artistic value, but of exceeding interest in bringing accurately before us the features of the island and its inhabitants. Lastly, I owe much to conversations with Captains Speke and Burton, and also, some years ago, with the Rev. Mr. Ehardt of the Church Missionary Society, being a resident near Bombay, the vividness of whose verbal descriptions I have rarely heard equalled. All this testimony, from different men who have described Zanzibar as it is, and speculated on her possible future, taking their view from many different points of observation, has given me that information which I will endeavour to communicate. I have no personal knowledge whatever of the island.

Let us begin considering the climate. The following table will explain its peculiarities, better than any other description.

CLIMATE OF ZANZIBAR.

| Month | Wind in Bombay. | | | | | | | | | | | Variables. | | | |
|-------|-----------------|------|------|----------------|-----|------|-----------|------|-------|---------|------|-------------|--|------|--|
| | Jan. | Feb. | Mar. | April | May | June | July | Aug. | Sept. | Oct. | Nov. | Dec. | | | |
| | Monthly | | | Probability to | | | Seldom to | | | | | | | | |
| | Heavy Rain. | | | Moderate | | | to Heavy | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | Cold. | | | Spring. | | Light Rain. | | Hot. | |

The Thermometer ranges between 71° and 90°.

The population of Zanzibar, slaves included, is, as I have said, about 20,000. How they got there, I will endeavour shortly to describe. In the old classical times, Arabs were scattered hereabouts along the coast of Africa, under several chiefs, probably tributary to Arabia. They were more or less intermingled with the negroes, and had given rise to a sub-race, now called the Sawaheli. The communi-

cation between East Africa and Arabia seems to have been frequent and intimate, and, consequently, when Mahommedanism appeared, the East Africans were early converts.

Vasco da Gama touched at Zanzibar in 1499, where he was well received and supplied with provisions. Other Portuguese expeditions followed, and in their train came the usual results of the discovery of new lands by enterprising European nations. That is to say, misunderstandings arose, then an attack, and lastly the subjugation of the natives. In a very few years from Vasco da Gama's visit, the Portuguese had captured Mombas and Kiloa, on the mainland, and also the islands Pemba, Monfia, and Zanzibar. Their occupation of the latter was of a temporary character; they built barracoons and shipped slaves, but made no permanent lodgment. It appears that they were partly deterred by the exceeding unhealthiness of the climate. Zanzibar now dropped out of history. We hear nothing of it from Arab records, and very little from those of the Portuguese. Our British accounts date no further back than the visit of H.M.S. *Leopard*, at the beginning of the present century, the result of whose observations form the sailing directions still in use.

It is not clear, neither is it worth our while now to inquire, how and with what alternations the loose connexion between Zanzibar and Arabia became strengthened to its recent state. Suffice it to mention that, in about the year 1700, the then Sultan obtained a firm hold upon the coast; and also that, in 1804, the late Sultan, commonly styled the Imaum of Muscat, came into recognised possession of Muscat, Zanzibar, and the coast of East Africa, from about the equator to Cape Delgado. His authority was quite independent, save to the extent of an annual tribute of 2,500*l.* to the Chief of the Wahabees, to whose sect the Sultan belonged: that is to say, he and the majority of his people were of that austere, Puritanical dissenting class among the Moslems who refuse to believe in the efficacy of saints and the validity of tradition, but adhere to the letter of the Koran, as their ultimate authority; who, drinking no wine as Moslems, abstain also from tobacco, the great luxury of life in Eastern lands, because they are Wahabees.

The Sultan we are speaking of was a prince after the heart of his Arab subjects; he was the principal ship-builder, merchant, and cultivator in the island. Cloves were largely grown by him, and became a most important produce. Cocoa-nut oil was largely exported for candles: even at this moment the reek of Zanzibar town, from the drying of this oil previous to exportation, is wholly insupportable at times. In that land of ill-health, where trifling causes bring on an ailment, the horrid oily smell causes vomiting and disease, as well as simple nausea. The Sultan was a shrewd, sensible man, who, being abundantly troubled by European impostors of all classes, showed considerable tact in disembarassing himself of them, and in maintaining his position as an independent Moslem ruler: showing every tolerance, but no subservience, to representatives or subjects of stronger Christian nations. His probity, generosity, and great tolerance, unusual in an Arab, together with his willingness to treat loyally for the suppression of slave exportation, made him a favourite with European powers. Princely gifts were exchanged with him. At this moment, a ship that he presented to the English sovereign, and called the *Imaum*, is now at a West Indian station as a guard-ship. Undoubtedly she is not worth much; but there she is—an eighty-gun man-of-war. Consuls were sent to him by America, England, and France; while to the cordial and sensible support that he received from our late lamented representative, Colonel Hamerton, a vast amount of good effected, and evil averted, may be justly ascribed. The Sultan died four years since, and is succeeded by his two sons, who, after some struggle for supremacy, have settled in peace,—the elder taking the Arabian possessions, and the younger Zanzibar and East Africa. The latter follows, as ably as he can, the footsteps of his father: clinging to the English, and firmly resisting the French, with their restless interferences and free labour movements, directed from Réunion.

I have already stated the population of the island at about 50,000. These consist of pure Arabs, of numerous negroid half-castes, of black slaves from the mainland, of 600 Indians (British subjects), from the mouth of the Indus, and about twenty-four Europeans;

part of the latter are members of three consular establishments—English, French, and American—and the rest are agents of Hamburg, French, and American trading establishments. They are the only Christians on the island, except a few Portuguese servants. As to the Indians, it has been their custom for centuries to frequent this coast of Africa. Vasco da Gama found Banyans from Cutch settled hereabouts; but there is not a single Hindu woman. The men expatriate themselves for a term of years, and by their probity and commercial skill have become indispensable to the Moslems. They have monopolized the trade on the mainland on whose coast they live, making use of the Arabs and their caravans into the interior, but never going there themselves. It is stated that they show themselves hostile to Europeans penetrating into Africa and opening lines of commerce.

Now, as to the Europeans in Zanzibar, they do not appear to unite well: there is little society among them, and few opportunities of rational pleasure. A lassitude of body, due to the climate, brings with it a want of mental energy, besides which, the frequent ailments have generally a cerebral tendency. Sleep is heavy. Any organic defect in Europeans soon makes itself felt irresistibly. Life in Zanzibar is living under difficulties.

Native schools exist in abundance, where boys learn to write and read the Koran; but more advanced learning is unrepresented, far otherwise to what it used to be in Arab countries.

Zanzibar itself is a wealthy, commercial town, whose prosperity is based entirely on Arab principles. It resembles Jeddah and such like towns that are dotted along the shores of the Red Sea, more nearly than any others that could be mentioned. It is an exceedingly expensive place to live in. A dollar goes no further there than a shilling in England.

The productions of the island, on which its prosperity mainly depend, are the cocoa and clove-trees. The clove plantations have begun to be badly managed, and their produce is falling off. There are no dates. The people are too lazy to attend to sugar. Some garden experiments have been tried in this productive island: for instance, bread-fruit was planted and grew well, but the negroes pulled

it up; indeed, a garden cannot be kept without a guard of slaves, or, some day, everything will be pulled up, in mere wantonness of destruction.

Before making any remarks on the manner in which English influences might most wisely be brought to bear on these regions, let me next call your attention to the populous mainland of which Zanzibar is the key, and without which that island would have no more claim to your consideration than as a mere speck on the broad surface of the globe.

We are becoming well acquainted with that interior which a few years ago was the subject of wild speculation. Krapf, Rebmann, and Erhardt's stay at Mombas, and their short journeyings and reports, excited an interest which induced the Geographical Society to obtain the appointment of Burton and Speke's very successful exploring expedition. The latter of these gentlemen is again returned to the country in a still more arduous undertaking. Now, there are two very different estimates of the character of the negroes of these parts, so far as it is possible to group many different races under one general description. Those who look at them from an Arab's point of view are wholly disgusted with their character. Burton's description, and I believe I am justified in adding the late Consul Hamerton's ideas, are of this description. Burton's account conveys a repulsive picture of a vulgar, boisterous, and drunken savagery overspreading the land. The missionaries' accounts appear to confirm this. Krapf talks of them (p. 50, in the preface) as "a crooked and perverse generation," and Rebmann (p. 507) stigmatizes them as "profitable in nothing, either to God or to the world." On the other hand, Speke and the present Consul take the negroes' part. The latter describes them, to the disparagement of the Arabs, in a letter recently published in the newspapers, as "a most good-natured, docile, merry race, who soon become very much attached to Europeans." This picture may possibly be true of the Waniamesi, but I confess myself staggered by the Consul's sweeping and flattering statement. My own belief leans strongly towards the unfavourable view, and I feel alarm lest an unreflecting leaning on the part of England towards the blacks

should end by weakening the power of the Arabs over their rightful subjects, and introducing discord and revolt where a strong and just rule is an absolute necessity for any kind of civilization. I say I lean to the unfavourable view of the character of these blacks, because, leaving aside sentiments which we cannot estimate at a distance, and dormant capacities which cannot be judged of even on the spot, unless evoked, I find that in the overt matters of murder, falsity, cowardice, drunkenness, and the like, there can be no shadow of a doubt that these East Africans are as bad as any on the Continent. There is not even a tendency to political aggregation among them; there is no stirring activity, even for evil, among them. Their very slave-hunts have the cruelty and the guilt without the dash that accompanies the slave-hunts of North-west Africa. Of the four travellers who have penetrated into the country,—Maizan, Burton, Speke, and Roscher, two have already been murdered: Maizan some years back, and Roscher quite lately.

However, what is much to our purpose is this, that small communities of Arabs do hold themselves in security in the very midst of the negroes. Whether they are protected on commercial grounds, for it is the consistent aim of the more reflecting class of savages to plunder just up to the point where fear begins to tell on the amount of caravan traffic and not further, or whether it is that these Africans have not enough power of organization to unite in sufficient numbers for a serious attack, or, whatever else be the cause, we find that not only on the sea-shore but also far in the interior, as at Kazeh, a village of a few substantial, half-fortified Arab houses, never containing more than fifteen, and sometimes not more than four Arabs, with their slaves, and full of valuables, are never overmastered.

As to matters of health, the low lands are pestilential. In the Mombas Mission of eleven individuals, every one suffered from severe fever within three weeks of their arrival; on the whole, two of them were sent back invalided to Germany after a very short stay, and four died. This is a deplorable result; but on the high lands the case would be different. There certainly seems no reason why missionary stations, if armed themselves, or protected by those who

were armed, should not exist there in health and security; but what as to their influence and utility? The natives are most assuredly no inquiring race, open to influence, but the very contrary. Again, their countries are intersected by commercial routes through which a tide of Moslem ideas is constantly flowing, and how could a handful of Missionaries, looking at past and present history to guide us in our speculations, be supposed to avail against it? It strikes me, too, as something not quite generous to avail ourselves of the courtesy and the unusual tolerance of a Moslem power to sow seeds of a certain harvest of discord. What we find in Zanzibar is a far-reaching and far-influencing, but not a strong power; anxious to do well, seeking to consolidate itself, amenable to a good English influence, but above all things, the *sine qua non* of its existence is that it should be Moslem. With our very limited Missionary agency, it seems to me that we should divert its current to healthier and more hopeful fields than Zanzibar, and that England, so far as she may interfere at all, whether through her representative or by any other agency, should try to effect the following results:—To relieve the Sultan, by means of our moral support, from the embarrassment of foreign pressure; to promote safe lines of legitimate and civilizing traffic into the far interior of Africa; and to open better communication between Zanzibar and the more civilized world, than now exists. This is the schedule of what England is actually doing, and I further believe it is all she ought, for the present, to undertake in Zanzibar."

THE PONGAS MISSION.

Mr. Lewis Wilkinson, in a letter of April 8th, informs us that he is coming to England by the July steamer, with the view of entering St. Augustine's. He says, "Mr. Phillips's house at Domingia is finished. It is well built on a rising ground fronting the sea, the spot having been marked out by Mr. Phillips himself, and the building commenced previous to his leaving. The chief,