

BRITISH EAST AFRICA



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P. L. McDERMOTT

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OR

I B E A

A HISTORY OF THE FORMATION AND WORK OF

THE IMPERIAL BRITISH EAST AFRICA COMPANY

COMPILED WITH THE AUTHORITY OF THE DIRECTORS FROM
OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS AND THE RECORDS OF THE COMPANY

BY

P. L. M^cDERMOTT

ACTING SECRETARY

WITH MAP AND FRONTISPIECE

NEW EDITION

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THIS work was undertaken at the express desire of the late Sir William Mackinnon, who, to the last moments of his life, was impressed with the responsibilities of an enterprise promoted under his auspices; and was well advanced at the period of his death.

Hence the obligation incumbent on his fellow-directors, in conformity with the wishes of their late President, to place on record a concise and authoritative account of the circumstances which led to the formation of the Imperial British East Africa Company, by way of explaining its constitution and character, and of vindicating its aims and ends.

If, from a Shareholder's point of view, the success of its operations has fallen short of expectation, the causes are herein narrated, upon evidence, it is believed, that cannot be gainsaid. It was recognised that large preliminary measures directed to the security of administrative occupation, on the lines prescribed by the Charter, would be indispensable; and as their extension to the far interior constituted, in the main, national purposes, the degree to which these have been attained must be the measure of the value of the work accomplished by the Company.

That these purposes would eventually conduce to the legitimate advantage of the Company was the consideration that prompted its action, relying, as it did, upon the support to which it was entitled in the exercise of rights and privileges conferred by the Sultan's concession, or foreshadowed by international Agreements. For their realisation the Company's resources could not otherwise be rendered adequate, without prejudice to the progress of commercial, agricultural, and industrial development.

On the other hand, failing such action, it was evident that neither could the Company fulfil its mandate as the pioneer of the country's Colonial policy, while confessedly advancing its own interests; nor could the acquisition of the vast unexplored territory 'ceded to it,' and destined to form the British sphere of influence, be secured to the State.

Whether, politically speaking, the constitution of the Company by Royal Charter was or was not expedient, is a question with which the Company is not concerned. One thing is certain, that whether, or not, the end justified the method, the responsibility of its adoption rests with equal weight upon all parties alike. To the Liberal party belongs the merit of initiating it. Equally certain is it, that no other means could be made available by either party for the creation of the new field that presented itself for the extension of British trade and colonisation in the immediate future.

The following pages record the results of private efforts

and the outlay of private capital in attaining a common object, to the prosecution of which Foreign States were content to devote the expenditure of large sums of public money; and in surmounting obstacles from the burden of which the enterprise of the latter was wholly free.

In this connexion it may be noted that the Royal Niger Company was authorised to impose taxes and duties to meet administrative charges; and, further, was empowered, on receiving its Charter, to treat, as Capital expenditure incurred for national purposes, a part of the great outlay which had been forced upon it owing to the rivalry of France and Germany. The stipulated amount was £260,000, upon which interest was to be secured at a fixed rate per annum by the levy of special dues to be devoted to this purpose. The quarter of a million, thus provided for, constitutes the recognition by her Majesty's Government of services done and outlay incurred by the said Company in effecting territorial expansion in the Niger basin, and represents a grant in aid of costly expeditions identical in nature with those undertaken by the Imperial British East Africa Company for the like ends, and with the like results.

In her Majesty's Niger Coast Protectorate the administration is permitted to collect a revenue, which, by the last accounts,* amounted to no less a sum than £73,000 for the year, on spirits imported into the country. The Imperial British East Africa Company,

* Foreign Office, 1893, Annual Series, No. 1215.

on the other hand, has voluntarily prohibited all importation or sale of spirits to natives in its territories, and has applied in the most rigorous form, the rules embodied in the Brussels Act, in order to benefit the native races in the British sphere of influence.

Such conditions of prosperity and thrift, enjoyed by other Administrations similarly situated, may be contrasted with the disabilities imposed on the Imperial British East Africa Company in respect to the ordinary sources of revenue. Some of these disabilities, as the exemption of foreigners from liability to taxation, were incidental to the suzerainty of the Sultan of Zanzibar whilst an independent Mahomedan sovereign bound by essential treaty obligations; but they are not necessarily incidental to an altered condition resulting from the declaration of a British Protectorate, and they must not only lapse to the advantage of the general administration of the future, but other adventitious aids will accrue to provide those resources which were withheld from the Company.

A. B. KEMBALL,

Chairman of the Court of Directors.

29th August, 1893.

PREFACE TO THE NEW EDITION

THIS edition completes the record of the Company to the date of acceptance of the proposals of Government for the transfer of the Company's administration and property, namely April 1895. In connection with the Resolution passed by the shareholders on the 11th of that month, formally confirming the acceptance of the proposed terms, particulars are added of the result of a final appeal made by the shareholders to receive from her Majesty's Government due consideration (expressly excluded from the settlement accepted) on account of the Company's expenditure in acquiring Uganda and the rest of the interior for the benefit of the nation.

The present volume is a considerable enlargement of the original one, which practically carried the narrative only as far as 1892. Nine chapters, and some Appendices, altogether new, have been added, and the two concluding chapters of the old volume have been revised and completed. Every care has been taken to authenticate the facts of this history by reference, where necessary, to the original documents and to any other authoritative sources of information occasionally consulted.

3rd May, 1895.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE, to the First Edition	v
PREFACE, to the New Edition	ix

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

Separation of Zanzibar and Muscat—Lord Canning's Award— Trade of East Africa—Concession offered to Sir W. Mac- kinnon—Why declined—German treaties—Uneasiness in England—Lord Granville's action—Proposals for delimita- tion of territory—the Delimitation of 1886—Concession granted, May 1887—Treaties made on behalf of British Company—Formation of Company—Agreement with Ger- many as to spheres west and south of Victoria Nyanza— Charter granted—German aims—Necessity of clearer de- finition of boundaries—Death of Barghash.	1
--	---

CHAPTER II.

THE NAVAL BLOCKADE—RUNAWAY SLAVES.

Outbreak on German Coast—Inauguration of British Company —British and German blockade of coast—Declared objects of—Effects apprehended on British coast—Runaway slaves at mission stations—Dangerous situation—Mr. Mackenzie's action—Colonel Euan-Smith's official testimony—Attitude of missionaries	18
---	----

CHAPTER III.

THE LAMU CONCESSION.

Scope of original concession offered—Limited grant accepted with promise of Lamu and Northern Ports—Witu—Action	
--	--

	PAGE
of Germans in—Designs on Lamu—Efforts to obtain concession—Sultan decides to grant concession to British Company, but is withheld by German threats—Nature of German pretension—Of British claims—Sultan's right to grant concession referred to arbitration of Baron Lambertmont—Respective cases and award—Concession granted to British Company, 31st August 1889—Witu Company offer to sell their rights	33

CHAPTER IV.

BELESONI CANAL—MANDA AND PATTI.

Origin of Canal—Custom-house placed on it by Sultan of Witu—Sultan of Zanzibar not permitted to protect his rights against Witu—German Government decline to interfere—British Company informed by Lord Salisbury it would be justified in protecting its territory against usurpation—Inconsistency of German policy—Arms and gunpowder brought to Witu by Herr Toeppen—Company's ultimatum to Witu—Expedition despatched—Witu troops, etc., now withdrawn by German Consul-General's orders—Sultan of Witu's desire of alliance with British—Germans now contest Company's right to Manda and Patta—Inconsistency of their pretensions	47
--	----

CHAPTER V.

THE NEW GERMAN PROTECTORATE—MANDA AND PATTI QUESTION.

Coast between Witu and Kismayu placed under German protectorate—British Company's rights in same region—Question of British protectorate being declared between Tana and Juba—Opinion in <i>Times</i> — <i>Note Verbale</i> from German Ambassador maintaining right of Sultan of Witu to Manda and Patta, and denying Zanzibar sovereignty—Nature of respective claims—Harsh treatment of Company—Compelled to withdraw from islands—Concession of British Government to German demands—Sultan of Zanzibar compelled by Germany to suspend the concession of Manda and Patta, having refused to cancel it	63
--	----

CHAPTER VI.

WANGA BOUNDARY QUESTION—DR. PETERS' EXPEDITION.

- German objection to inclusion of Wanga in British Company's concession—Grounds of objection—Refuted by terms of German concession and official records and declarations—Company's rights established by Naval survey—Company nevertheless compelled to withdraw from the administration of Wanga—The German Emin Pasha Expedition—Avowed objects of—Departure of Dr. Peters to lead—Proceedings of, in East Africa—Opinion of the *Times* on German action—Conduct of Dr. Peters on way up the Tana—Report of his death 79

CHAPTER VII.

THE NORTHERN PORTS AND THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT.

- British Company compelled to accept the Northern Ports prematurely—Extent of concession—Relations of Italy and Zanzibar—Intermediary offices of the Company—Italian Government desirous of ports north of Kismayu—Agreement between Italian Government and Company, 3rd August 1889—Deed of Transfer—Negotiations between Great Britain and Italy for a delimitation of boundaries—Terms of delimitation—Extinction of Company's responsibilities north of Kismayu 96

CHAPTER VIII.

UGANDA.

- Peculiar importance of 'hinterland' in East Africa—Uganda a country of special interest to Europeans, and particularly to Great Britain—Duty imposed on the Company—British Consul-General takes steps to open up friendly relations with Uganda—Arab hostility to European influence—Overthrow of Arab power—Despatch of Mr. Jackson's caravan—Not to enter Uganda—The 'race for Uganda'—Emin Pasha enters the German service—Arrival of Dr. Peters at Kavirondo—Feeling in Great Britain—Company urged to occupy Uganda in British interest—Difficult position of Directors—Views of the *Times*. 105

CHAPTER IX.

THE ADVANCE TO UGANDA.

Consul-General strongly presses the Company to despatch expedition immediately to Uganda—Foreign Office urges importance of friendly understanding, and sends presents to the king—Government warns Company of danger of delay—Influence of Mr. Stanley on public mind—Company compelled to yield to united pressure of Government and public opinion—Captain Lugard instructed to proceed to Uganda—Mr. Jackson's proceedings in Uganda—The French missionaries unfriendly—Their aims—Action of Cardinal Lavignerie in regard to Brussels conference—Flag accepted by Mwanga—Account of Dr. Peters' expedition by his followers—Mr. Jackson invited to Uganda by king and missionaries—Peters precedes him and makes a treaty by the aid of the French priests—End of Dr. Peters' enterprise 122

CHAPTER X.

THE BRITISH SPHERE OF INFLUENCE—WITU EXPEDITION.

Foresight of Sir W. Mackinnon in regard to boundaries—Value of Company's agency in securing territory to Great Britain, which would otherwise have been seized by Germany—Delimitation Treaty of 1st July 1890—Murder of Germans in Witu—Punitive Expedition—Administration of Witu accepted by Company 139

CHAPTER XI.

THE COMPANY IN UGANDA.

Organisation of expedition of Captain Lugard—Anxiety of Consul-General that the expedition should be hastened—Lugard's arrival in Uganda—Treaty signed—Improvement in affairs of country—Return of envoys from coast—Expedition against the Mahomedans, and their defeat—Lugard's expedition to Buddu, Ankole, and Albert Nyanza—Enlistment of Sudanese soldiers of Emin Pasha's late province—Lugard's return to Uganda—Outbreak in January 1892; particulars of—Settlement with Roman Catholics; with Mahomedans—New treaty with Mwanga 153

CONTENTS

xv.

CHAPTER XII.

PAGE

QUESTION OF STATE CO-OPERATION.

- Unaided efforts of the Company in Imperial interests—Responsibilities assumed by Government at Brussels conference—Brussels Act—Lord Salisbury's attention drawn to State obligations imposed upon Company—Railway Policy—Lord Salisbury's action—Correspondence with Treasury—Proposal of Government to guarantee interest on capital—Indirect interest of the Company in the railway . 171

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RAILWAY QUESTION AND UGANDA.

- Estimates of cost of railway—Speech of Lord Salisbury at Glasgow—Vote for survey to be asked for—Arrangement with Company as to cost of survey—Vote opposed by Sir William Harcourt in July 1891, and postponed; disappointment of Company—Resolution to withdraw from Uganda—Opinion of *Times*—Subscription to continue occupation till end of December 1892—The Company consents; but advises Government in May 1892 that it will retire in December—Change of ministry—Company pressed to continue longer—Decision of Government to bear expense of occupation for three months longer—Dispatch of Sir Gerald Portal to Uganda as Imperial Commissioner . 185

CHAPTER XIV.

WITU.

- Circumstances under which Company undertook administration—Condition of country—Terms of peace—Contumacy of Chiefs Fumo Omari and Avatula—Rebels attacked by Company's troops—Another submission—Expiration of engagement of Indian troops—Company declines to continue in charge of Witu—Placed under Zanzibar . 209

CHAPTER XV.

KISMAYU.

- Administration assumed by Company—Treaties with Somalis

	PAGE
—Importance of district—Somalis visit Kismayu to meet Company's officers—Nature of Somali interest—Subsidies given by Company—Mr. Berkeley's report—Discontent and disaffection—Mr. Todd wounded—Subsidies withdrawn—Mutiny of Hyderabad troops, and death of Mr. Hamilton—Mr. Craufurd placed in charge—His reports on question of engagements with Gosha colony—Defeats Somalis—Mr. Craufurd recovers cannon—Mr. Hamilton's murderers arrested—Disturbed state of interior districts	229

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RAILWAY SURVEY.

Survey entrusted to engineer officers—Treasury instructions—Progress expedited by Company—Debate on Vote in House of Commons—The survey completed—The report—The railway and slave trade	253
--	-----

CHAPTER XVII.

THE UGANDA MISSION.

Connection of, with Company's proposals—Origin and history of these—Negotiations with Company for a prolonged occupation of Uganda at Government expense—Failure of these, and appointment of a Special Commissioner—Departure of Sir G. Portal—Rapid march—Reports received from—Arrival in Uganda—Treaty made, return of mission—Mr. Berkeley sent home with report—Death of Sir W. Mackinnon	275
---	-----

CHAPTER XVIII.

SIR GERALD PORTAL'S REPORT.

History of Company's proposals for withdrawal—Specific offer invited by Foreign Office in 1893—Offer of 23rd June 1893—Why made—Decision of Government delayed awaiting Sir G. Portal's report—This report received in August—Why it was suppressed—New administration in Witu under Sultan of Zanzibar—Opinion of <i>Times</i> —Sir G. Portal's arrival—Still no decision—Death of Sir G. Portal—Report at length produced—Summary of recommendations	294
--	-----

CONTENTS

xvii.

PAGE

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SETTLEMENT OF UGANDA.

- Company's offer of 1893 withdrawn as no decision could be obtained—Events in Uganda—Anglo-Congo Agreement of May 1894—History and origin of—Protectorate over Uganda—Debates in Parliament 312

CHAPTER XX.

FISCAL CONDITIONS OF CONCESSIONS.

- Nature of fiscal system under which the Company received concession—Terms of contract between Company and Sultan—Liberal arrangement agreed to by Company—Refused right of commutation—Zanzibar declared a free port—British administration instituted at Zanzibar—Brussels Act—Zanzibar dominions placed within Free Zone under Berlin Act—The act a breach of contract with the Company—Attitude taken by her Majesty's Government—Decision of Lord Salisbury in 1890 as to obligation of Sultan consulting the Company before issuing decrees—Failure of Company to obtain redress 327

CHAPTER XXI.

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE COMPANY.

- Question of taxation—Scheme prepared by Sir C. Bernard—Judicial administration—Anomalies and disabilities—Invasion of Company's Charter rights between Kikuyu and Uganda—Freeland Association—Land regulations—Neutralisation of ports 351

CHAPTER XXII.

SETTLEMENT WITH GOVERNMENT.

- Delay caused by Foreign Office—Statements of Lord Kimberley—Criticisms of *Times*—Sir Arnold Kembal's statement at meeting of Shareholders—Remarks of *Times*—Question in House of Commons by Mr. W. F. Lawrence—Criticisms of *Times* cause Foreign Office to move—Offer of 14th

	PAGE
November 1894—Further delays—Dispute over assets— Interview of Directors with Lord Kimberley—The <i>Times</i> speaks again—Question of assets—Offer finally accepted— Claim on account of Uganda refused	368

CHAPTER XXIII.

EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT.

Progress of exploration by Company's caravans—Cost of— Works of development at the coast—Navigation of Tana and Juba rivers—Transport—Communications—Mac- kinnon Road—Kibwezi mission—Railway—Telegraph line —Fertility of soil and suitability for Indian agriculturists Meteorological notes—Labour question—Company's anti- slavery proceedings—Effects of—Question of extinction of slavery	391
--	-----

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TRIBES OF EAST AFRICA.

Wa-Pokomo and other Tana tribes—Gallas—Rendile—Boran Gallas—Wa-Kikuyu—Wa-Kamba—Masai	411
---	-----

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I.

CONCESSION GIVEN BY THE SULTAN OF ZANZIBAR TO THE BRITISH EAST AFRICAN ASSOCIATION	457
CONCESSION OF 9TH OCTOBER 1888	462

APPENDIX II.

FOUNDERS' AGREEMENT, 1888	470
-------------------------------------	-----

APPENDICES

xix

PAGE

APPENDIX III.

ROYAL CHARTER, 3RD SEPTEMBER 1888 476

APPENDIX IV.

BARON LAMBERMONT'S AWARD, 17TH AUGUST 1889 486

APPENDIX V.

LAMU CONCESSION, 31ST AUGUST 1889 497

APPENDIX VI.

MANDA AND PATA CONCESSION—CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO 499

APPENDIX VII.

ITALIAN AGREEMENT, 3RD AUGUST 1889 503

APPENDIX VIII.

ANGLO-GERMAN AGREEMENT, 1ST JULY 1890 507

APPENDIX IX.

SETTLEMENT OF WITU : TERMS OF PEACE, ETC., AND AGREEMENT
BETWEEN HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT AND THE COMPANY 514

APPENDIX X.

TREATY WITH KING OF UGANDA, MARCH 30TH, 1892 523

APPENDIX XI.

CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO COMPANY'S WITHDRAWAL FROM
UGANDA 526

APPENDIX XII.

WITHDRAWAL FROM WITU 541

APPENDIX XIII.

SIR GERALD PORTAL'S REPORT, ETC. 554

	PAGE
APPENDIX XIV.	
ARTICLE IX. OF THE GERMAN COMPANY'S CONCESSION	583
APPENDIX XV.	
CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO THE PLACING OF THE COMPANY'S CONCESSION TERRITORY WITHIN THE FREE ZONE UNDER THE BERLIN ACT	585
APPENDIX XVI.	
NEUTRALISATION OF PORTS UNDER THE BERLIN ACT	599
APPENDIX XVII.	
EXTRACT FROM REPORT ON METEOROLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS IN BRITISH EAST AFRICA FOR 1893	604
APPENDIX XVIII.	
DECREES, ETC., RELATING TO SLAVERY AND THE SLAVE TRADE	609
LIST OF COMPANY'S STAFF	438
MEMORANDUM BY SIR J. KIRK ON OPERATION OF BERLIN ACT (FREE ZONE)	446
INDEX	623

ILLUSTRATIONS.

FRONTISPIECE—Sir William Mackinnon, Bart., Founder of the
Imperial British East Africa Company.

Presenting Papers of Freedom to 1422 Runaway Slaves.

INDEX.

ARMS AND AMMUNITION.—

Quantities imported on East Coast in 1888, 21 ; Stoppage of, an object of blockade, 20, 21.

BELESONI CANAL.—Origin and situation, 47, 48 ; Custom-house established by Sultan of Witu, 48 ; Sultan of Zanzibar afraid to protect his rights, 49 ; Representations to Foreign Office by Company, 50 ; Lord Salisbury's reply authorising Company to protect its rights, 50 ; German Government refuses to interfere, 50 ; Inconsistency of German action, 51 ; Commander Pullen's survey, 52 ; Company decides to act, 53 ; Company's ultimatum to Witu, 54 ; German Consul-General orders Sultan of Witu to evacuate, 55.

Berkeley, E. J. L.—Administrator, 219 ; Measures in Witu, 219 ; Visit to Kismayu, and report, 235 ; Second visit to Kismayu, 241 ; Assistant Commissioner to Uganda, 284 ; Sent home with Uganda Report and Dispatches, 291.

Berlin Act.—Sultan's reservation under, 328 ; Free Zone system applied to Company's territory, 341 ; Memorandum by Sir J. Kirk, 446.

Bernard, Sir C. E.—Scheme of Revenue and Taxation drawn up by, 353 ; Lord Salisbury's appreciation of scheme, 353.

Blockade.—Joint Blockade agreed on by Great Britain and Germany, 19 ; Representation to Lord Salisbury against, 22, 23 ; Proclamation issued, 23 ; Memorandum issued by Consul-General, 24 ; Report by Colonel Euan-Smith on effects of, 24.

Boundaries, Delimitation of.—Agreement of 1886, 6 ; Correspondence of July 1887, 11 ; Sir W. Mackinnon urges further delimitation west of Victoria Nyanza, 15, 16, 139 ; Services of Company in extending British sphere, 141, etc. ; Anglo-German agreement, July 1890, 143-147.

Brussels Conference.—Originated by British Government, 172 ; Recommendations of, 173 ; Government responsibility under,

- 175 ; Representation to Government by Company, 175 ; Government Railway policy, 181 ; General act, operation of, 340.
- CANNING, LORD.—Award of, 1861, 2.
- Charter granted to Company, 12.
- Commutation. *See* 'Concession.' Company's Proposals.—Originated July 1892, 275-278 ; Renewed March 1893, 294 ; Meeting of Company, 29th May 1893, 295 ; Offer made 23rd June, 296 ; Government decision postponed pending Sir G. Portal's Report, 298 ; Promised prompt consideration, 304 ; Decision deferred until issue of Sir G. Portal's Report, 305 ; Further deferred, 312 ; Withdrawn 8th May 1894, 325 ; Staff in Africa and England, 438.
- Concession.—Offered by Sultan Barghash to Sir W. Mackinnon in 1877, 3 ; Why declined, 3 ; Granted in 1887 by Sultan Barghash, 8 ; to German Company, 9 ; Conditions of 9, 10 ; Concession of 1888 by Sultan Khalifa, 18 ; Further concessions promised to British Company by Sultan, 33 ; of Lamu refused to Germans, 37 ; granted to British, 45 ; Fiscal conditions of, 327 ; Sources of revenue, 328 ; Settlement of Sultan's rent, 329, 334 ;
- Commutation question, 335 ; Right to commute barred by Government, 336 ; Right acknowledged by Sultan Khalifa, 337 ; Concession in perpetuity, 335 ; Free Zone, 340 ; Position of Company under new order, 341, etc. ; View of Foreign Office, 344 ; Lord Salisbury's definition of Company's relations to Sultan's government, 346.
- Craufurd, Mr. Clifford, in command of Belesoni expedition, 55 ; Sent out to take charge of Kismayu, 248 ; Questions to be dealt with, 249 ; Defeats Somali raid in February, 1894, 250 ; captures cannon, restores stolen property, and arrests murderers of Mr. Hamilton, 250 ; Report on state of district, 251.
- DENHARDT, MR. CLEMENS.—Agent of Sultan of Witu, 49 ; Places custom-houses at Kau, 49 ; Displaced by Herr Toeppen, 53.
- Development and Exploration of Territory.—Explorations, 390, etc. ; Cost of Caravans, 392 ; Coast works, 392 ; Steamers, 393 ; Transport, 394 ; Mackinnon Road, 395 ; Railway, 397 ; Telegraph, 401 ; Agriculture, 401 ; Labour question, 403.
- De Winton, Sir Francis.—Appointed Administrator, 153 ; To command Uganda Expedition, 153 ; Retained

- at coast, 157; Witu administration, 211.
- EMIN PASHA.**—Stanley expedition for relief of, 12; Proposed German expedition, 14; Wissmann and Peters to be leaders of, 86; Real objects of expedition, 86, 87; Dr. Peters to have sole command, 88; Expedition not to pass through German sphere, 88; Not countenanced by German Government, 89; Progress of Peters' expedition, 89-95; Enters German service, 113; Expedition to Victoria Nyanza, 114; Marches towards Uganda with Peters' treaty, 137.
- FITZGERALD, Mr. W. W. A.**—Reports on Coast Lands, 401, 402.
- Freeland Association.**—Objects of, 361; Applications for land, 362; Relations of Austrian Government to, 363.
- Freemantle, Admiral Sir E.**—Cordial support to Company given by, 19, 90.
- GEDGE, Mr. E.**—Left in Uganda, 136; Communications with Emin Pasha, 137; Agreement relating to trade in arms and gunpowder, 159.
- German East African Company.**—Concession granted to, 9; Designs west of Victoria Nyanza, 14, 15; Takes charge of concession, 18; Rising against, 18.
- Germans (Germany).**—First appearance on East Coast-3; Charter granted to German Colonisation Society, 4; Lord Granville's action, 4; Concession to, 9; Aims in interior, 14, 15; Emin Pasha expedition, 9; Reported abandonment of, 17; Stop Zanzibar expedition to Witu, 35; Protectorate of Witu, 35; German Witu Company formed, 36; Designs in Lamu, 37; Demand for concession refused, 37; Threaten Sultan, 39; Claim referred to arbitration, 39, 40; Decision, 43, 45; Continued hostility of, 45; Witu Company offers to sell out, 46; Refuse to interfere with Witu usurpation at Belesoni Canal, 50; Inconsistency of their action, 51; Order Sultan of Witu to evacuate Belesoni Canal, 55; Support Witu claims to Manda and Patta, 57; Declaration of Northern Protectorate, 63; *Note Verbale* on Witu claims to Manda and Patta, 68; Company's contention against, 70; Compel Sultan to suspend concession, 76; Dispute Company's rights to Wanga, 80, etc.; The boundary defined in their own proclamation, 80, 81; Emin Pasha expedition, 85.
- HARBOURS.** See 'Ports.'
- IMPERIAL INTERESTS.**—Declared by Foreign office to be paramount, 67, 84.

Italian Government.—Negotiations with Company regarding ports (See 'Northern Ports'); Boundary agreement with Great Britain, 101, 102.

JACKSON, Mr. F. J.—See 'Uganda.'

Johnston, Mr. H. H.—Treaties at Taveta, 5.

Judicial Administration.—Rights possessed by Company under concession, 354; Urged by Lord Salisbury to establish for benefit of British subjects, 354; Disabilities in interior, 356, 357.

KAU.—Belesoni Canal, 48.

Kemball, Sir Arnold B.—Notifies Government of withdrawal from Uganda, 196; Letter to *Times* on the Witu arrangement under Sultan of Zanzibar, 299; Statement at Shareholders' Meeting, 22nd August 1894, 371.

Kenia, Mount.—Visited by Captain Dundas's expedition, 393.

Kenia Sternwheel Steamer.—Exploration of Tana and Juba, 393.

Kibwezi Mission, 395.

Kikuyu.—Temporary withdrawal to, from Uganda, 359, 360; Re-occupation of country beyond forbidden by Government, 360; Mr. Hall's report on, 421.

Kirk, Sir John.—Decrees against slave trade, 404;

Memorandum on Berlin Act, 446.

Kismayu.—Situation and importance of, 229; Treaties with Somalis, 230, 231; Mr. Simons takes charge, 231; Attitude and interests of Somalis, 232; Objects of the Company, 232, 233; Somali assemblage at Kismayu, 233, etc.; Result of negotiations, 234, 235, etc.; Mr. Berkeley's report, 235; Claim of Somalis for 'blood money' against Sultan of Zanzibar, 239; Administrative charges, 241; Mr. Berkeley's second visit, 241; Outbreak in January 1893, 243; Murder of Mr. Hamilton, 246; Responsibility of Government for control of Somalis, 247; Mr. Craufurd sent out to take charge, 248; Question of treaty obligations to Watoro, 249; Somalis raiding in February 1894, 250; defeated, property and cannon restored, and rebels arrested, 250; State of district, 251.

LAMU.—Concession promised to British Company, 33; Importance of, to Witu, 37; German designs on, 37; Demand concession, 37; Refused, 37; Sultan agrees to give it to British Company, 38; Threatened by Germans, 39; British and German claims referred to arbitration, 39, 40; Evidence submitted, 41, 42; Arbitration

- decision, 43, 45 ; Concession to British Company signed by Sultan, 45.
- Land Regulations. — Framed and issued by Company, 363 ; Nullified by Government, 363.
- Lawrence, Mr. W. F., M. P.— Defends Company in Parliament, 323 ; Question in House of Commons relative to negotiations for a settlement with Company, 373 ; *Times* article on question, 373.
- Lugard, Captain F. D. See 'Uganda.'
- MACKENZIE, MR. GEORGE S.— Arrival in Zanzibar, 18 ; Action in regard to runaway slaves at mission stations, 25-32 ; Testimony of Consul-General, 28 ; Circular to mission stations, 29 ; Steps taken to abolish slavery, 405, 406 ; Witu Settlement, 213 ; Views on abolition of slavery, Appendix 18.
- Mackinnon, Sir W.—Offered in 1877 a concession, 3 ; declines from want of support by Government, 3 ; Accepts in 1887, 8 ; Urges further delimitation of boundaries, 15, 16 ; Representations against blockade, 22, 23 ; Agreement with Italian Government, 98 ; Remonstrance *re* Soudanese recruiting, 154 ; Brussels Act, 175 ; On Railway Survey, 255 ; Negotiations with Foreign Office as to continued occupation of Uganda, 278-284, Death, 291 ; The 'Mackinnon Road' and Kibwezi Mission, 395.
- Manda and Patta.—Sultan of Witu's wish to obtain, 56 ; Witu pretensions supported by Germany, 57 ; Zanzibar sovereignty already acknowledged by Germany, 57 ; British Company's representation to Foreign Office, 59 ; Company notifies intention to occupy, 60 ; German *Note Verbale* supporting Witu claims, 68 ; Action of her Majesty's Government regarding, 71 ; Company ordered to withdraw from, 73 ; Great Britain abandons Sultan's title, 73 ; Concession suspended, 76.
- Missionary Stations.—Established near Mombasa at suggestion of her Majesty's Government, 26 ; Arab hostility against, for harbouring runaways, 26 ; Mr. Mackenzie's circular to missions, 29 ; Colonel Euan-Smith's opinion of, 30, 31 ; Consul-General's circular to missions regarding runaway slaves, 31.
- NORTHERN PORTS.—Concession promised to Company, 33 ; Granted by Sultan, 45, 97 ; Italian protectorate, 98 ; Agreement between Company and Italian Government, 98 ; Deed of transfer, 99 ; Anglo-Italian boundary agreement,

101, 102 ; Company released from all obligations relating to ports, 103 ; Notification to Sultan, 104.

OSI RIVER.—Navigable, 48 ; Belesoni Canal made, 48.

PELLEY, SIR LEWIS.—Interview with Treasury regarding Railway, 192 ; Speech in House of Commons, 263.

Peters, Dr. Carl.—Leader under Wissmann of Emin Pasha Expedition, 85 ; Sole leader, 70 ; Departure from Berlin, 88 ; Protest by Company, 88 ; Disavowed by German Government, 89 ; Arrival at Zanzibar and subsequent proceedings, 89-95 ; Progress up Tana as related by followers, 95, 96 ; Subsequent proceedings, 130 ; In Uganda, 134, 135 ; Makes treaty with Mwanga, 137 ; Gives it to Emin Pasha, 138.

Pigott, J. R. W.—Report on Witu affairs, 222 ; Expedition up Tana, 391, 409 ; Acting Administrator, 441.

Portal, Sir Gerald.—Negotiates Lamu Concession, 45 ; Commissioner to Uganda, 284 ; Report on Witu, 218 ; Mission to Uganda, 208 ; Progress of Mission, 285 ; Dispatches, 286, 287, 288 ; Arrival in Uganda, and Treaty with Mwanga, 289 ; Leaves Uganda, 290 ; Detained on route, 290 ; Arrival in England, 304 ; Death, 305 ; Delay in producing Report of, 304,

305, 306 ; Report of, 307, etc. Ports.—Value and description of ports acquired by Company, 365 ; Their neutralisation under Berlin Act refused, 367.

Pullen, Commander, R.N.—Survey of Belesoni Canal, 52.

RAILWAY.—Recommended by Brussels Conference, 174 ; Policy adopted by Government, 181 ; Proposals of Treasury, 183 ; Opinions of Engineers, 186 ; Lord Salisbury's speech at Glasgow, 187 ; Survey Vote decided upon, 182 ; Conditions of, 191 ; Opposed by Sir W. Harcourt, 192 ; Arrangement with Treasury, 193 ; Disappointment of Company, 194 ; Survey entrusted to Captain Macdonald, R.E., 253 ; Instructions, 253, 254 ; Rapidity of work due to Company, 254, etc. ; Vote proposed in House of Commons, 3rd March 1892, 256 ; Completion of survey, 266 ; Estimate of cost of railway, 266 ; Report of Captain Pringle, 267, etc. ; Effects of railway on slave trade, 269, etc. ; No further action taken, 274 ; Company's railway works, 397.

SETTLEMENT WITH GOVERNMENT.—Statements in House of Lords, 369 ; *Times* articles, 369, 371, 373, 383 ; Proposals made by Government, 378 ; Lord Kimberley receives a

- deputation of Directors, 381 ; Question of assets, 382 ; Final offer of Government, 386 ; Offer accepted, 388 ; Claim on account of Uganda rejected, 390.
- Simons, Mr. R. T.—Negotiates treaties with Somalis, 230, 231 ; Sent to take charge of Kismayu, 231 ; Negotiations with Somalis, 233, etc. ; Remarks on Gallas, 418.
- Slavery.—Slave trade assigned as cause of blockade, 19 ; Encouraged by German officials, 90 ; Runaway slaves at Rabai, 24, 25 ; Action of Mr. Mackenzie regarding, 25-32 ; Colonel Euan-Smith's report, 28 ; Attitude of Mission Stations, 29, 30, 31 ; Brussels conference, 173, etc. ; Railway policy, 181 ; Company's policy, 404 ; Conditions at coast, 405 ; Mr. Mackenzie's action, 405 ; Sir John Kirk's decrees, 404 ; Impending abolition of, 406, etc. ; Decrees relating to, Appendix 18.
- Soudanese.—Difficulty of recruiting in Egypt for Company, 154 ; Remonstrance of Sir W. Mackinnon, 154, 155 ; Permission granted to enlist, 202 ; 153 of Emin Pasha's late province, enlisted by Captain Lugard, 162.
- Stanley, Mr. H. M.—Apprehensions of German Company regarding expedition of, 13.
- Stokes, Mr. C.—Caravan with gunpowder, etc., expected in Uganda, 156.
- TANA RIVER.—Not navigable at mouth, 47 ; Commerce carried to sea through Osi, 48 ; Mr. Pigott's expedition, 391 ; Navigation by Captain Dundas, 393.
- Tana and Juba, territory between.—Government requested to declare a protectorate over, 65 ; German claims, 66 ; Placed under Sultan of Zanzibar, 227.
- Taxation.—Immunity of foreigners in Zanzibar from, 352 ; Application to Lord Salisbury, 352 ; Scheme drawn up by Sir C. Bernard, 353 ; Judicial system established with view of securing rights of taxation, 355 ; Failure of this object, 355.
- Toeppen, Herr. — Succeeds Denhardt as agent to Witu Sultan, 53 ; Brings gunpowder and guns to Witu, 54.
- Treaties made by Company with tribes, 10.
- Tribes.—Pokomo, 409 ; Gallas, 415 ; Upper Tana, 416 ; Rendile, 419 ; Boran Gallas, 420 ; Kikuyu, 423 ; Ukambani, 427.
- UGANDA.—Value in connection with hinterland doctrine, 105 ; Importance of position, 108 ; Special interest of Great Britain in, 108 ; Why Company undertook to secure for Great Britain, 107, 110 ;

Steps taken by British Consul-General to open friendly relations, 111 ; Revolution in, 112 ; Overthrow of Arab power, 112 ; Public interest aroused, 112 ; Concurrent movements of Dr. Peters and Emin Pasha towards, 114, 115 ; Company expected to safeguard national interests, 115 ; Why unwilling to undertake the work, 116 ; Pressure applied to Company, 117 ; By the *Times*, 117, 121 ; By British Consul-General, 122 ; By Foreign Office, 122, 123 ; By Mr. H. M. Stanley, 123 ; Public opinion excited, 123 ; Captain Lugard ordered to proceed, 124 ; Mr. A. M. Mackay's opinion, 124 ; Mr. Jackson's caravan, 113, 114, *et seq.* ; Jackson's negotiations with Mwanga, 126, 127, etc. ; Influence of French priests, 128 ; Cardinal Lavigerie's action in Europe, 128 ; Jackson refuses to enter Uganda, 128 ; Arrival of Peters in Kavirondo, and his proceedings, 130 ; His treaty with Mwanga, 136 ; Emin Pasha's designs, 137 ; Jackson marches for Uganda, 135 ; attitude of French priests, 136 ; Envoys sent to coast, 136 ; Mr. Gedge and Emin Pasha, 137 ; Agreement with Emin Pasha relating to arms and gunpowder, 159 ; Company's preparation to establish British authority in,

153, etc. ; Soudanese for, 154, 155 ; Mwanga's envoys at coast, 155 ; Stokes' caravan of gunpowder, etc., 156 ; Consul - General hopes Lugard's expedition may be hastened, 157 ; Lugard's departure, 157 ; Enters Uganda, 157 ; Treaty signed, 158 ; Attitude of rival parties, 160 ; Return of envoys, 161 ; Expedition against Mahomedan party, 161 ; Lugard's proceedings in the west, 161-163 ; Return to Uganda, 163 ; Outbreak in January 1892, 165 ; Causes of, 166 ; Settlement with Roman Catholics, 168 ; Settlement with Mahomedans, 169 ; New treaty with Mwanga, 169 ; Company's occupation continued on account of Government railway policy, 183 ; Resolution to withdraw, 195 ; Letter to Foreign Office, 196 ; Effect on country, 197 ; *Times* on, 201 ; Orders to Captain Lugard, 204 ; Subscription made, 205 ; Withdrawal postponed for one year, 205 ; Action of new Government, 206 ; Reply of Directors, 207 ; Connection of Mission with proposals of Company, 275-278 ; Negotiations for continued occupation, 278-284 ; Progress of Sir G. Portal's Mission, 285 ; Dispatches from Sir G. Portal, 286, 287, 288 ; Company's flag taken down, new treaty

with Mwanga, 289; Mission leaves Uganda, 290; Disturbances with Mahomedans, 290; Sir G. Portal's report, 307; Government decision announced 12th April 1894, 312; Debate postponed, 313; Debates, 319; Protectorate declared, 319.

WANGA BOUNDARY.—Contested by Germans, 80, etc.; Boundary as defined by treaty of 1886, 79; As defined in German proclamations, etc., 80, 81; Commission appointed to settle, 82; Inquiry completed 9th Nov. '83; Company compelled to quit Wanga, and report of Commission suppressed, 83-85.

Wissmann, Lieut.—To lead Emin Pasha expedition, 86; Appointed Imperial Commissioner in East Africa, 88.

Witu.—Coast limits defined, 7; Extent and character of, 34; Vice-Consul Haggard's report on, 34; Zanzibar expedition stopped, 35; German protectorate, 35; German Witu Company formed, 36; Commercial dependence on Lamu, 36; Designs on Lamu, 37; German Witu Company offer to withdraw, 46; Usurpation on Belesoni Canal, 08; C. Denhardt displaced by Herr Toeppen, 53; Germany refuses to interfere with Witu, 50; Toeppen imports gunpowder and guns, 54; Com-

pany's ultimatum, 54; German Consul-General orders Sultan of Witu to evacuate Belesoni, 55; Sultan's overtures of friendship to British Company, 55; Asks for Manda and Patta, 56; Resentment against Germans, 56; Pretensions to Manda and Patta supported by Germany, 57; German *Note Verbale*, 68; Transfer to Great Britain, 150; Murder of German subjects, 149; Feeling against Germans, 150; Punitive expedition against, 151; Administration undertaken by Company, 152; Circumstances under which Administration was undertaken, 209; Connection with Lamu, 210; Report by Sir C. Euan-Smith, 213; Captain Rogers placed in charge, 214; Fumo Omari and Avatula in rebellion, 216; Jongeni attacked by Company's force, 217; Mr. Portal's report, 218; Mr. Berkeley's measures, 219; Pacification of district, 219, 220; Fumo Omari still disaffected, 220, 221; Indian troops leaving on expiration of their engagement, 221; Return of deported rebel Sulieman bin Abdulla, 222; Joins Fumo Omari, 223; Company decides to withdraw, 225; Witu placed under Sultan of Zanzibar, 227; Changes made in law and status of slavery, 299; Action

- of Anti-slavery Society, 300; Opinions of *Times*, 301; Effect on Sir G. Portal's Uganda report, 305.
- ZANZIBAR.—Separation from Muscat, 1, 2; Extent of dominion under Seyyid Said, 1; Mail steamers established 3; Death of Sultan Majeed and accession of Barghash, 3; German designs apprehended, Lord Granville's action, 4; Delimitation of boundaries suggested by Lord Granville, 5; Boundaries defined in 1886, 7; Death of Sultan Barghash, 17; Khalifa grants new concession, 18; Further concession promised, 33; Expedition to Witu stopped by Germany, 35; British protectorate, 146; Declared a free port, 338; British administration instituted, 340;
- Placed within Free Zone, 341; Position of Company, 342; View of Foreign Office, 344; Lord Salisbury's definition of Company's relations to Sultan's Government, 346; Anomalous relations between Company and, under new régime, 348; Witu placed under, 227; Changes in Witu in consequence, 299; Action of Anti-slavery Society, 300; *Times* on Witu question, 301; Effect on Sir G. Portal's Uganda report, 306; Zanzibar scheme relative to Uganda rejected, 307; Withdraws reserves under Berlin Act, 348; Redress withheld from Company for violated contract, 349; Immunity of foreigners in, from taxation, 352; Application to Lord Salisbury, 352.