

EARLY DAYS IN EAST AFRICA



SIR FREDERICK JACKSON, K.C.M.G.

Frontispiece.

EARLY DAYS IN EAST AFRICA

BY THE LATE
SIR FREDERICK JACKSON
K.C.M.G., C.B.

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR FOR EAST AFRICA PROTECTORATE (1907-1911)
GOVERNOR AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, UGANDA (1911-1917)

WITH A FOREWORD BY
LORD CRANWORTH

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FOREWORD

BY LORD CRANWORTH

I cannot but deeply appreciate the privilege of being allowed to contribute a foreword to this volume containing the earlier reminiscences of my old friend Sir Frederick Jackson. Moreover, that appreciation is the stronger because I am aware that there are yet older friends and comrades with an even greater claim. Nevertheless, though my friendship dates back only twenty-five years I can yield to no man in an admiration for a character which was in many respects unique.

Sir Frederick Jackson has had a great career. His achievements have been many and varied. Filled from his youth with the spirit of adventure, he has, as this volume will show, won his niche among the notable pioneers and explorers of Africa. He was a naturalist of the very front rank. Indeed, no one has done so much to extend our knowledge of the mammals, insects and more especially of the birds of Eastern Africa. Again, as a student of native tribes and their customs and characteristics Sir Frederick stands high. He loved the native, or rather all that is good in him because he never allowed his partiality to blind him to a fault, and no one was a greater enemy to the cruelty and vice inherent in many tribes. Among the men whose names have ranked really great in native estimation—and the list is short—there has in East Africa been none that out-topped Jackson. Such estimation is not lightly won. It is gained neither by wealth nor ostentation, neither by a dominant personality nor yet by the championship of the native; perhaps no definite qualities will necessarily acquire it. Nevertheless, one can say that it has never been won save by a man with many of the elements of a lofty character and with a full share of high courage.

As a sportsman Sir Frederick has left an example of which there is to-day a real need. Many have been better shots, many have killed vastly greater collections of trophies ; but few indeed have left a higher name as one who never killed an animal which was not required, or whose percentage of wounded animals that got away was so small. To lose a wounded animal was with him a disgrace, and it was to avoid it that he became a stalker of such skill and patience as would stagger many a modern sportsman who is satisfied if he can obtain a shot within two hundred yards.

As an official and administrator Sir Frederick had a long and highly successful career both in British East Africa and Uganda, which culminated, as was indeed fitting, in the position of Governor of the latter territory which he had done so much to bring under our flag. Here most emphatically he was a round peg in a round hole, and the period of his administration showed in all probability greater material progress than that of any other Governor, and certainly none acquired anything like the same personal popularity with all classes in the Protectorate.

To turn to the book itself : I venture to think that it will prove, if my own experience be any criterion, of absorbing interest to many. It deals with the earliest days of the association of the British race with this vast territory, and it shows incidentally how nearly a large portion of it fell into other hands and how great a share the author had in preventing such a consummation. Perhaps there is one fact which stands out more distinctly than any other, and that is the amazing achievement that has been accomplished by our fellow-countrymen on behalf of the native races for whose control and advancement we have become responsible. Any man who doubts this, and I am well aware that such doubts are fashionable, should read this book. The date of Jackson's first landing in Lamu is but forty-five years ago, and yet we read of his righteous indignation at the sight of the gangs of child slaves yoked to poles in the streets. Later we learn at first hand of Masai raids on peaceful villages and of the pillage and slaughter that ensued ; while throughout the pages famine,

disease and cruelty stalk rampant. Contrast conditions to-day and let us be proud and not ashamed that Britain bred the men that wrought that transformation.

Many classes of readers will find interest in a volume through which flit the names of men both white and black whose reputations have been famous and sometimes infamous to hundreds of thousands in their day. The student of native history will find matter that will throw a new and illuminating light on a period fraught with striking development. Adventurous youth will find its imagination thrilled by such episodes as the shipwreck off Lamu and the battle of Luba's Hill. The sportsman will find it hard to lay down the chapters that tell of the *safaris* over the plains teeming with herds of game, or through the vast elephant-haunted forests. The naturalist will not read a chapter without finding some shrewd comments of a fellow-mind. One class of reader only had best leave this book alone. Those who seek to find pleasure in unsavoury stories of fellow-countrymen and comrades; who look for the venting of personal spleen on superiors or subordinates will search in vain. The Author had, as I well know, his disagreements and differences of opinion—and who has not?—but never for one moment did he allow them to interfere with his appreciation of another's merits or respect for his point of view.

To me one characteristic appears to run through these chapters. They seem to breathe of happiness; and that though they cover a period during which the writer lost, through no fault of his own, all his personal fortune, and also incurred a terrible wound from which he suffered, sometimes acutely, till the day of his death.

But, indeed, happiness was a characteristic of the man. He was happy, supremely happy, in his domestic life. He was happy in his work. He was happy in his natural history whether he was tracking some new species through an unknown forest, or hearing the song of some freshly arrived migrant in an English lane. Happy in his sport, whether following a wounded elephant over the Mau Escarpment or catching a salmon in a Highland stream. Happy

in his mass of friends, and even happy in his few enemies, for if you could be an enemy of *Bwana* Jackson, who would want you for a friend? Happy in his life, happy even in his illness and his death, and happiest in the memories he has left behind.

This volume suffers, I think undeniably, from one defect, from which indeed I would that more such volumes suffered: that is its almost excessive modesty. Yet do I think that not only those who knew him will realize something of the cool courage, the unswerving determination and the high heart which led him through dangers and difficulties that must appear almost incredible to those who travel in comfort by rail or car through the erstwhile wild and dangerous regions that he and his like have won for their successors.

Sir Frederick Jackson has once more gone ahead. May this volume do something to keep his memory green. There have been greater pioneers and administrators. If there have been greater naturalists and finer sportsmen I have not met them. But to all who knew him as a friend his abiding memory will be this: The Whitest Gentleman who ever crossed the shores of Africa.

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The illustrations are from photographs taken by Mr. Ernest Gedge, who accompanied the author on his first expedition to Kenya and Uganda, and has most kindly placed them at our disposal. Sir Frederick Jackson's own photographs of his earlier journeys near the coast were unfortunately lost when his dhow was wrecked off Lamu.

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