

THE EAST AFRICA
PROTECTORATE

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A STREAM IN ULU.

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THE EAST AFRICA
PROTECTORATE

DEPARTMENTS OF
GOVERNMENT
POONA

BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS

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PREFACE

IN the following pages I have endeavoured to give some account of the British East Africa Protectorate, that is, roughly speaking, our territories between Lake Victoria and the Indian Ocean, whose value is only now beginning to be understood. While omitting no aspect of the country which seemed likely to prove interesting, my special object has been to point out the opportunity which it offers for European colonisation and the interesting effect which such a colony may have on the future development of Africa.

After a brief historical retrospect, I have devoted three chapters to an account of the physical features of the country. Much of the territory is still imperfectly known, and even those who have claims to special knowledge are continually surprised by the discovery of new districts, healthy, fertile, and suitable as a residence for Europeans. In this year, though six weeks of it have not yet elapsed, I have received reports of two such districts in parts of the Protectorate which were supposed to be barren, one in the north of the Rift Valley, and one near the western extremity of the German boundary. After giving some account of the country, I have touched on the various tribes which compose the somewhat scanty native population, and then, assuming that the reader has acquired a sufficient acquaintance with the lie of the land and the character of its inhabitants, have proceeded to discuss the prospects which it holds out to intending colonists, and such questions as climate, health, and products. I have next examined some problems connected with our administration, and suggested some improvements in the present somewhat imperfect system. Chapters follow on the Uganda

Railway, trade, and missionary work, which has formed so large and bright a feature in the history of these possessions; and since no country can be isolated from its surroundings, I have added some account of the Italian and German possessions in East Africa, as well as of Uganda and its connection with Egypt through the Sudan.

My best thanks are due to many friends in East Africa for information or photographs, which I hope will add much to the value of this book, and particularly to Mr. Ainsworth, H.M. Sub-Commissioner at Nairobi; Mr. Bowring, Treasurer of the Protectorate; Mr. Hinde, Sub-Commissioner of the Kenya Province (to whom I am indebted for a map of the environs of Mount Kenya); Mr. Marsden, Chief of Customs; and Mr. Powter, of the Treasury Department. I must also specially thank Mr. Hollis, Secretary to the Administration, whose assistance materially lightened my labours when I was Commissioner of the Protectorate, and who has given me much valuable information respecting native tribes and historical questions.

I was H.M. Commissioner for the East Africa Protectorate from January 1901 till June 1904, and these were perhaps the happiest and most interesting years of my life, but to my deep regret I felt obliged to resign my post. I have thought it well to exclude personal matter from the present book, and not to give any account of the events connected with this step. I take this opportunity, however, of saying that the official papers published on the subject,¹ give, in my opinion, a very erroneous impression both of the issues involved and of what actually occurred. No opportunity was given me of making any statement, and the two summaries prepared in the Foreign Office² can easily be shown to be full of inaccuracies in dates, geography, and facts. The selection of papers obscures the important aspects of the question at issue, and gives unnecessary prominence to subsidiary points.

¹ "Africa," No. 8, 1904.

² The prefatory minute in the Parliamentary paper, and Despatch No. 27.

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I tendered my resignation because I was ordered to cancel grants made by me to private persons in conformity with my general instructions, and to cancel them in a way which seemed to me wholly unjust and liable to accusations of favouritism, for I was at the same time directed to give the East Africa Syndicate a grant of ten times the size of the others, and in the same district, on unusually favourable terms, which were in themselves disadvantageous to the general interests of the Protectorate. The reason assigned for these instructions was that the relatively small private grants were an infringement of native rights, because the district in which they were situated was to be made a native reserve. If no grants whatever had been made in this area, the decision would have been just, though its wisdom might be doubted; but it appeared (and still appears) to me that the position of an officer who revokes a grant which he has made on the ground that it interferes with native rights, and at the same time gives in the same district a large concession to a Syndicate which must interfere far more with native rights, is untenable. I would gladly have reasoned with the Foreign Office, but it was not possible. I telegraphed home that the instructions sent me were based on incorrect information, but they were maintained and repeated in a more categorical form. I could not go to England and discuss matters, because the Deputy-Commissioner who should have replaced me was on leave, and as the Foreign Office were not disposed to pay any attention to the arguments which I submitted, I do not see what alternative I had but to resign.

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APPENDIX A

LATEST INFORMATION RESPECTING THE PROTECTORATE

MANY readers will probably think that in this book I have taken an unduly sanguine view of the financial and commercial prospects of East Africa, of the chances that the Uganda Railway will pay its way, and that any considerable number of settlers will be willing to occupy land. The latest available information will therefore perhaps be of interest as enabling us to judge what deductions may be drawn from the data furnished by the year 1904.

According to statistics just (January 1905) received from Mombasa, the calendar year 1904 (not the financial year ending March 31, which is the term generally selected for statistics), when compared with 1903, shows an increase of over fifty per cent. in exports and about thirty-three per cent. in imports. The value of exports from Mombasa was £159,809 as against £104,424 in the previous year, and the value of imports £484,294 as against £359,646. These figures refer to Mombasa only,¹ which is the principal, but not the only, port of the Protectorate, and the value of the whole trade for 1904 must be about £175,000 for exports and £575,000 for imports.

Taking the exports, the largest increase is in hides, which have risen £29,000 (£66,660 against £37,659), rubber about £4500, fibres about £2500, and copra about £2000. All the staple products show a more or less considerable increase, and there are some interesting additions to the lists of previous years. Ostrich feathers appear for the first time, with a value of £1312. This industry must be quite in its infancy, for it was not in existence in July last, but it is probably capable of great expansion; and the same may be said of beeswax, which is an important export from German East Africa, though in 1903 only £83 worth of it was exported from our part of the coast. In 1904 the value rose to £3467. Interesting, too, is the item

¹ Also they refer to trade goods only, and do not include imports on behalf of the Government and Uganda Railway or specie.

zebras and wild animals, £3467, which is no doubt chiefly made up by zebras exported to Germany. The only item which can be regarded as disappointing is cotton—£652 as against £128 in 1903. It may be hoped that far greater quantities of this product are in course of exportation.

In the imports the most remarkable increases are £30,000 in cotton piece goods and £14,000 in glass and hardware, doubtless representing the demand for these articles among the natives of the interior. Most articles used by Europeans show a small increase, but the tendency to replace imported articles by local products is also seen in such items as £528 for imported fruits and vegetables against £1829 for 1903. Though European imported provisions show a rise of £15,000, and spirits of £12,500, it is remarkable that tobacco has fallen £1700, which must mean that Europeans find the local varieties smokable.

This rise of 50 per cent. in exports and 33 per cent. in imports can only mean that, under the guidance of Sir Donald Stewart, which is highly spoken of, the Protectorate has not only continued its steady economic progress, but also shows signs of making that advance by leaps and bounds which I have foreshadowed in these pages. It must also mean that the Uganda Railway has materially decreased the deficit on its annual working, and is in a fair way to cover its annual expenditure by its annual earnings in a few years. I may remind the reader that the abolition of this deficit is a matter of great importance, not only because it is disadvantageous to run a Government railway at a loss, but because the money now expended in meeting the deficit ought, when no longer required for that purpose, to be available for improving the administration of the Protectorate. As the figures respecting trade, quoted above, refer only to the port of Mombasa, which has no production to speak of, it is probable that the down-traffic of the railway must have increased nearly 50 per cent. An increase of 33 per cent. in the Mombasa imports is probably equivalent to an increase of about 25 per cent. in the up-traffic.

I am also told that Europeans from South Africa continue to arrive in large numbers, and to bring money with them. The fact that East Africa is to be colonised from the south of the continent (if it proves to be a fact) is not without importance for the future of the country. It should tend to establish and develop a trade in grain and vegetables between the east and the south, and it might have a powerful influence on the communication between Lakes Tanganyika and Victoria. The weak point of the proposal to build the Cape to Cairo Railway is that so few people want to go from the Cape to Cairo, and in any case

the difficulties of constructing a railway through the swamps of the southern Sudan would be extreme. But the prospects of building the southern portion of the line will be greatly increased if the European colony in East Africa have commercial and other connections with the British possessions in the south. British territory touches the southern end of Lake Tanganyika, and the distance from its northern end to Uganda is not long, though the territory through which the future road or railway would pass is not British.

If the tide of European immigration continues to flow freely into East Africa from the south, it is to be hoped that the Government will reconsider the propriety of establishing a colony of foreign Jews on the Uasin Gishu plateau. If this project had any clear and real philanthropic value, I should raise no objection to it, but I cannot see that the sufferings of the indigent and persecuted Jews in eastern Europe would be appreciably alleviated by settling a few hundreds of them in the interior of Africa; for even if the experiment succeeded beyond all expectation, there is not room in the limits assigned to the colony for the reception of any number which would sensibly reduce the Jewish population of other countries. The application for land on behalf of this settlement was made, like many others, at a time when the resources of the Protectorate were little known and its future doubtful. Steps were not taken at once to profit by the permission granted to settle, and meanwhile all the circumstances of the case have changed so markedly that I think the offer should not be kept open longer than is necessary under our express obligations. In establishing this Zionist Colony we shall be devoting a fine piece of country, of which the ordinary British agriculturist could make good use, to an experiment whose success is more than doubtful, and which if successful is not likely to prove of any utility to those in whose interest it is made, but rather to provoke racial conflicts. I may add that as long as Mombasa remains part of the Sultan's dominions, in which foreign subjects are not justiciable by the British Courts, it is very unwise to encourage a large number of foreigners to enter the Protectorate; for though Mombasa is not supposed to be their destination, it is probable that many will stay there.

In the *Geographical Journal* for February 1905, Lieutenant-Colonel G. E. Smith says of the country on the German frontier 80 miles from Lake Victoria: "By that time we had risen some 6000 feet above sea-level, and had reached an excellent climate with fine open grass country—some brush, but not much. Population was sparse." He adds that the Dabash is a fine river, 70 yards broad in the dry season, and that the whole country is well watered and affords excellent grazing.

APPENDIX B

THE TEMPORARY BRITISH PROTECTORATE OVER MOMBASA IN 1824

THERE is some discrepancy in details as to this Protectorate. Local information, as represented by the "Handbook to East Africa," published in Mombasa, and by Burton ("Zanzibar," vol. i. p. 296), ascribes its proclamation to Captain Vidal, of H.M.S. *Barracouta*, whereas those who have written elsewhere, and with access to official sources, such as Badger ("Imâms and Seyyids of Oman") and Lucas ("Geography of South and East Africa"), ascribe it to Captain Owen, of H.M.S. *Leven*. The facts seem to be that in December 1823 Captain Vidal was asked to hoist the British flag at Mombasa, but refused. Nevertheless the Mazrui hoisted it on their own authority; Captain Owen found it flying on February 1824, and established a provisional Protectorate. Hence, though the Protectorate was really Owen's work, it is very natural that it should be attributed to Vidal, since the flag was hoisted after his visit, and not taken down till the British Government declined to recognise the Protectorate.

The "Narrative of Voyages to Explore the Shores of Africa, Arabia, and Madagascar, performed in H.M. ships *Leven* and *Barracouta*, under the direction of Captain W. F. N. Owen" (London, 1833), consists of various journals edited and partly cast into narrative form by H. B. Robinson. The arrangement of this work is not always chronological, as the doings of the *Barracouta* and *Leven* are recorded separately, and as a rule only the day of the month is given. Also it is often hard to make out whether the editor or one of the naval officers is speaking, the changes between the first and the third person being most perplexing. The last three chapters of vol. i. (xx.-xxii.) are extracts from, or founded on, the journal of Lieutenant Boteler of the *Barracouta*, and terminate with

January 1824, so that the events previously reported happened at the end of 1823.

“On the 3rd of December (1823) we arrived at the celebrated port of Mombasa. . . . In the morning the nephew of the Sheikh or Sultan . . . begged Captain Vidal to authorise them to hoist the English flag, and place their town and territory in the hands of his Britannic Majesty.”

Captain Vidal was ill, and next day sent Lieutenant Boteler with his answer. Lieutenant Boteler was much interested by the petition of the Mazrui chief, who had already made overtures to Bombay, but, according to his instructions from Captain Vidal, refused to hoist the British flag. “But they used so many arguments,” he says, “and were so earnest in their solicitations, that I began to think they intended to make me hoist the English flag either with or without my consent. . . . However . . . they begged that if the captain could possibly leave his bed he would pay them a visit. Accordingly Captain Vidal and myself again attended upon them the following day, but, as may be supposed, the result was the same.” The *Barracouta* left on December 7, and the British flag must have been hoisted soon after.

Earlier in the book (vol. i. p. 367) we have an account of the chronologically later proceedings of Captain Owen of the *Leven*, Captain Vidal's commanding officer. He left Maskat on January 1, 1824, and “on the 7th (February) we saw the British colours flying on the fort of Mombas. A son of the Sheikh's . . . recapitulated all the arguments before used to Captain Vidal, and concluded by requesting Captain Owen's permission to place themselves under the British Government. . . . The following morning (February 8) Captain Owen went on shore. . . . The members of the council . . . acknowledged having hoisted the English colours without any authority, but unanimously craved permission to place the whole country under the protection of the British nation. Captain Owen informed them that provided they would assent to the abolition of the slave trade he would transmit their proposal to his Government for their decision, and that he should have no objection to hold the place in the meantime. To these conditions they readily assented, and made a formal cession of their island, that of Pemba, and the country from Melinda to Panghany. Our third lieutenant, Mr. John James Reitz, was made commandant.”

Reitz died on “the 29th,” that is, May 29, 1824, as it would seem, though the chronology is hard to follow, and some phrases leave the impression that it was May 29, 1825. “In

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the September following this melancholy event, Commodore Nourse . . . appointed two midshipmen named Emery and Wilson . . . to act, the one in the place of Lieutenant Reitz at Mombas, and the other . . . in the *Leven*." (Vol. ii. pp. 147-8.)

It is certain that Owen's action was disallowed, and the Protectorate repudiated. It is generally said that it lasted about two years, but I have not been able to find any record of its formal termination. It would appear that Seyyid Said attacked Mombasa with the consent of the Indian Government in 1829. (Badger, "Imâms of Oman," p. 349.)

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