



Expedition to the Hadramut: Discussion

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accomplish much more. As it is, thanks to Imam Sharif, we are now able to constitute a survey of a little-known district to the geographical world. Also Wm. Lunt, who accompanied us as botanist from Kew, with a grant from the Royal Society, worked indefatigably at his collections, which are now in the hands of Mr. Thiselton Dyer; and Mahmoud, the Egyptian naturalist, who was sent out by the British Museum, has, I am told, made a very satisfactory collection of reptiles, a complete set of which will be presented to the Museum.

The PRESIDENT made the following remarks before the reading of the paper:—

I am sure the meeting will cordially welcome the return amongst us of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Bent. It seems so short a time since they were here and since we bade them farewell, that it is difficult to believe they have gone through so many adventures, hardships, and perils, and have explored an almost unknown country to Europeans in the interval. I regret to say they have met with very serious and very wanton official obstruction at Aden, which very much increased their difficulties and also the danger of their undertaking. I will not detain you any longer, but will now request Mr. Bent to read us his communication.

After the reading of the paper the following discussion took place:—

MR. THISELTON DYER: I cannot imagine that the Royal Geographical Society can often have listened to a more fascinating narrative of travel than that which has been laid before us to-night by Mr. Theodore Bent, and I think we must all have felt an agreeable kind of disillusion on hearing the account of what he had actually seen compared with what we thought before he started he might have to endure. I certainly for my part did not suppose that we should get such a glimpse as we have had of Oriental civilization as it seems to exist, with magnificent palaces and splendour, in the Hadramut valley. With regard to my interest in the result of Mr. Bent's journey, I shall not trouble you with more than a very few words. Of course, the geographer has to consider the world's surface from the point of view of its physical features and political divisions. The botanist, on the other hand, simply studies the vegetable productions of the soil and their relations in any one case to those of other areas which he has examined. I shall perhaps surprise you when I tell you that although undoubtedly in the geographical, and to a certain extent political, sense, Arabia belongs to Asia, yet if you study the vegetation, it is equally undoubtedly a part of Africa. It is a very extraordinary thing, and one which the scientific botanist has always felt some despair about, that, although Arabia confronts us at every point of the world's history, it is the one part of the world of which I may say at present we really, as far as natural history is concerned, know least. And even at the present time, although some amount of information has been obtained, it is almost entirely derived from the south-west corner, the province of Yemen. The botanical history of Arabia can be told almost in four words, beyond the little we read in the Bible about the myrrh and frankincense which former Phœnician commerce carried up the Red Sea and introduced into the Mediterranean. From that time until the end of the last century, we knew practically nothing more about the vegetable productions of this great peninsula. At that date an intrepid Dane, Forskal, spent some time in exploring the province of Yemen. He did admirable work, but unhappily left his bones in the country with which his name will ever be associated as the first botanical explorer. A hundred years later, Desfers, a Frenchman who had lived in Egypt, fired with enthusiasm to continue the work of Forskal, made an

admirable collection; and that distinguished traveller so well known in this Society, Schweinfurth, also more recently visited the same country.* But you will see that these latter journeys were made upon the same portion of Arabia, and practically completed what Forskal had done. I should not forget that our own Indian officials have carefully examined the peculiar but very limited flora round Aden (from which about 200 species are known); but Mr. Bent is absolutely the first person who has brought us any information as to the remarkable productions of the valley he has described to-night. Now, as you have had your imagination stirred with a glimpse of one of the most mysterious aspects of Oriental life which, since the 'Arabian Nights,' has ever been brought before an audience, I can scarcely expect you to listen to details interesting to the botanist. But what Mr. Bent has found out amply confirms the deductions made from preceding researches. The fact is that the vegetation of Arabia is practically that of Somali Land and Abyssinia, with the same myrrh and frankincense trees in one country as in the other. I ought not to have forgotten that Professor Bailey Balfour laid before the Society an account of an expedition he made to the remarkable island of Socotra. We had hoped that Mr. Bent would have found some extension on the mainland of the remarkable plants found on that island, but that expectation is to a certain extent disappointed. Mr. Bent, however, found a dragon tree, nearly allied to that which exists in Socotra, which is the source of the cinnabar of the ancients, the red colouring matter called dragon's blood in modern times. I have not as yet a detailed account of the scientific work of the collector whom Mr. Bent was so kind as to allow to accompany him from Kew, but it will be published in due course. I do not know that I should be justified in detaining you any longer by going into details. Surgeon-Major Carter was the first man to make a careful study of the distribution of the frankincense tree about which we have heard so much to-night. It is a curious fact that there appear to be two districts in Southern Arabia, one to the south-west producing myrrh, and the other more towards the Oman country producing frankincense. As far as I can make out, and from what Mr. Bent has told me in conversation, the route taken must have been on the boundary-line of the two districts. Upon the exact marking out of these two districts, I believe some extremely interesting points in ancient commercial history will be found to depend, and when we have discussed the material brought back by the expedition, we shall, I hope, be able to add a chapter not uninteresting in itself to the supremely interesting work of the expedition.

The PRESIDENT: It remains for me to express your thanks to Mr. Theodore Bent for his admirable paper and his sketches, and to Mrs. Theodore Bent for her photographs, which together have given us a very clear idea of the country which was almost, if not quite, unknown to us. I have several times looked over the work of Halévy, and never been able to get any clear idea of the country from him. Of course, we have already the journey of General Miles, and my dear old friend Munzinger, afterwards murdered by the Gallas on the other side of the Red Sea, but their route was considerably to the westward and nearer the coast than that penetrated by Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Bent. You will all agree that they have done their work in a most admirable way, and brought back to us descriptions of a most romantic country of which we have only before heard rumours, and I hope you will allow me, and I am sure they will be glad, if I couple with them the name of the native surveyor from India, Imam Sharif, for the geographical work he did, above all for his great usefulness and helpfulness to Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Bent,

* Schweinfurth estimated the known plants of Yemen at 1500, of which three-fourths are also common to Abyssinia. He himself collected half of the species in the Italian colony of Eritrea, which he had previously collected in Arabia.

in the absence of official help, which they had a right to expect from Aden, most improperly withheld from them. It is very much to Imam Sharif they owe not only what they have done, but their safety. I beg Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Bent will accept the very grateful thanks of this meeting for their admirable paper they have communicated to us.

MAP OF HADRAMUT.—The positions of many important places on this map, such as Mokalla, Hajarein, Shiham, and Sheher, were fixed by astronomical observations taken with a theodolite. The survey was made with a plane-table and prismatic compass, and the heights determined with an aneroid.

THE VOYAGE OF THE "JASON" TO THE ANTARCTIC REGIONS.

Abstract of Journal kept by Capt. C. A. LARSEN.

ON *Friday, November 17* (1893), we had a gale from N.W., veering in the evening to W., and moderating. The sea was very high. The ship was kept under sail all day. No ice was seen in the places where we had been hunting seals before. The water was quite clear in the E. and towards Graham's Land, but the ice-fields seem to lie in the same place where we saw them during our last cruise. Position at midday, $64^{\circ} 24'$ S. lat., $55^{\circ} 14'$ W. long. Barometer, 743 mm.*

Saturday, November 18.—To-day a breeze with clear sky and sunshine. At 6 a.m. we began to steam W.N.W. and N.W., and caught ten seals (*Fiskesel*). At 5.30 p.m. we lowered two boats and went ashore on Cape Seymour. We landed about the middle part of the island. The second mate was sent with one boat to a little bay for reconnoitring; and the first mate with two men went in another direction inland; while I, with two other men, went in a third direction.

The land is hilly and intersected by deep valleys. Some of the hills are conical, and consist of sand, small gravel, and cement; here and there is some petrified wood. Upon the hilltops we occasionally found eggs of sea-birds.

We saw here a species of land-bird, belonging to the Rapaces, which resembles our hawk; it occasionally came down and pecked some eggs. When we were a quarter of a Norwegian mile from shore, and stood about 300 feet above the sea, the petrified wood became more and more frequent, and we took several specimens, which looked as if they were of deciduous trees; the bark and branches, as also the year-rings, were seen in the logs, which lay slantingly in the soil. The wood seemed not to have been thrown out of water; on the contrary, it could have never been in water, because, in the first case, we found petrified worms, while there were none in the second. At other places we saw balls made of sand and cement resting upon pillars composed of the same constituents. We

* The ship's journal gives 74.3, which evidently means 743 mm.—TRANS. NOTE.