

THE SEARCH

FOR THE

SOURCE OF THE NILE



the highly civilized man

THE SEARCH
FOR THE
SOURCE OF THE NILE :

*Correspondence between Captain Richard Burton, Captain John Speke
and others, from Burton's unpublished East African Letter Book ;*

TOGETHER WITH OTHER RELATED LETTERS
AND PAPERS IN THE COLLECTION OF

Quentin Keynes, ESQ.

NOW PRINTED FOR THE FIRST TIME.

Edited, with a Biographical Commentary, by

Donald Young ;

and with a Preface by Quentin Keynes.

The Roxburghe Club.

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TO THE

PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS

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ROXBURGHE CLUB

BY

QUENTIN KEYNES

1999

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MARCH 1999

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*Portrait photograph of R. F. Burton
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“Since you appear desirous of shunning me...”

*Manuscript letter from J. H. Speke
to R. F. Burton, with Burton’s draft reply.*

Map of Burton and Speke’s Journey, 1857–1859

*From The Lake Regions of Central Africa,
R. F. Burton ; Longman, 1860.*

PREFACE

BY QUENTIN KEYNES

Explorers have always excited my curiosity, but none more so than Sir Richard Burton. I first became interested in Burton when I read about his adventures with John Speke in Alan Moorehead's book, *The White Nile*. Having myself travelled extensively in eastern and southern Africa, I already had an interest in the explorers Livingstone and Stanley, and had started collecting their books and manuscripts, but now, suddenly, Burton captured my imagination more than any of the others, and I began a frantic search for anything concerning this fascinating man.

Here was an immensely talented individual, who lived and experienced enough for a dozen lives: a true hero and, at the same time, an extraordinarily enigmatic person. It was this aspect of his character that intrigued me most. His life was so amazingly diverse, and ran off in so many odd directions, that it sometimes seems that there was hardly a single subject which failed to interest him in an intense way.

It was not long after I started to collect Burton that some very tempting manuscripts and books came up at auction, consigned for sale by John Arundell of Wardour Castle, heir to Lord Arundell of Wardour, who was a favourite cousin of Burton's wife Isabel.

Following Isabel's death in 1896, her sister "Dilly" Fitzgerald had arranged with Lord Arundell that a major part of her property should be stored in the ample attics of Wardour Castle in perpetuity. The centrepiece of this treasure-trove turned out to be a battered volume known as a "Letter Book", which Burton had stuffed full of extremely important papers over the years he was travelling in East Africa from 1854 to 1859. It contained the handwritten drafts of letters which he eventually despatched to various correspondents, as well as the originals of many letters he had received from traders, helpful friends, the Royal Geographical Society, and many official communications from his nominal superiors at the Honourable East India Company. Included also were letters of introduction to various people who might have been able to help him during his expeditions, interspersed with Burton's own notes about the logistical details of his travels—porters, their loads and wages, supplies and expenses, and so on.

Richard Burton was known to have put together several such volumes, but this particular one appears to be the sole one to survive to the present day. It is well known that Isabel, in the years following her husband's death, herself burned or ordered her sister and secretary Minnie Plowman to incinerate many intriguing manuscripts, but clearly she must have decided that this messy Letter Book should be spared from the flames, owing to its contents being too precious to destroy. Thank goodness she did.

I felt that this relic, and much other material in the auction, seemed to have, as it were, "my name on them," and were essential for me to try to acquire. There was one major problem: at the time of the appearance of the auction catalogue, I happened to be on an expedition in the jungles of British Honduras (now Belize). Luckily, however, my old friend Anthony Hobson of Sotheby's had directed urgent cables to me there. In the steamy heat of Central America, I convinced myself to act quickly, and entrusted Anthony with many bids, which he kindly executed on my behalf.

Happily I have spent many years savouring my good fortune in having secured a large number of the Arundell lots for my collection, and now, having slowly

digested this cache of Burton's notes and thoughts, I am able to have many of them, as well as various other manuscripts from my collection, appear in print on the following pages.

Burton was indeed one of the most intellectual and sophisticated of all adventurers. He spoke twenty-nine languages and a dozen additional dialects, and translated any number of erudite works, written by various European, Arabic and Indian scholars, during his long life. At the same time, however, he enjoyed a life of nearly continuous action, delving into so many dark corners of the lives of other peoples that one simply cannot catalogue these aspects of his character in a short preface such as this.

As Donald Young will relate, in 1855 Richard Burton decided to set out in search of that Holy Grail of Victorian exploration, the source of the River Nile. So far as he and many of his fellow explorers and geographers were concerned, this was Africa's last great secret, and this is precisely the period covered by the Letter Book. Although I have many other Burton letters in my collection, covering most of his life and travels, I have elected to include in this volume only those which relate to his explorations through East Africa,

arguably one of the most dramatic periods of his life. This material not only tells an amazing story of daring and fortitude, but also reveals the essence of the man.

The contents of this Letter Book are among the most exciting of all the gems I own in Burton's difficult hand-writing. In his published works Burton sometimes affected a somewhat formal tone which, unfortunately, can dull the interest and excitement of his adventures. His letters, on the other hand, are a very different matter. Even while in remote and unknown parts of Africa, and even when addressing a government official, he is still wonderfully concise, sharp and to the point, and occasionally manages to slip in some cynical and amusing comment. By reading Burton's letters one gets his true voice.

Incidentally, this book came extremely close to never being published at all. While I was on safari with Donald Young in Africa in 1988 I suffered a horrendous burglary at my London house: hundreds of rare books, on all subjects, were stolen. The only *manuscript* material which disappeared in the theft was the Letter Book itself, possibly the single most important surviving collection of his letters and papers and quite irreplaceable.

About six months or so after the burglary, Sotheby's telephoned me one morning to say that they had just had consigned to them for sale a very exciting volume of manuscript material pertaining to Sir Richard Burton. Knowing as they did of my extreme interest in anything connected with the explorer, they wondered if I would like to examine it straight away? After hearing a detailed description of the item over the telephone, I almost shouted that, Yes! I *was* exceedingly interested in so doing, because, in fact, I owned it.

I hurtled down to New Bond Street, and was met there by Sotheby's top manuscript expert, their security man and a policeman. One look across the counter told me the book was indeed my property. The manuscript expert explained that he had been prompted to contact me immediately because he had noticed a small slip of paper marking a certain place in the middle of the volume, on which was scribbled, "This writing is definitely in Speke's hand. QK." He pointed out that the two initials "Q" and "K" were somewhat rare in themselves, and that a combination of them could therefore scarcely belong to any other person than "Quentin Keynes".

After several weeks of investigation, the police

reported that the consignor was a certain obscure part-time art dealer in Kent, who claimed that his real job was being in charge of lost property at Waterloo Station in London. The man had said that he acted as the "pricer" for items which, not having been claimed within the statutory three-month period, were liable to be sold to the public. He claimed that Burton's Letter Book had come into his office via London Bridge Underground Station. He priced it at £5, and sold it—to himself.

On examining the book, he had noticed that Burton's name appeared frequently in its pages. Asked by the police what Burton's name meant to him, the hopeful vendor replied that he had seen posters advertising a new film called *The Mountains of the Moon*, which concerned the explorers Burton and Speke, and because of this he imagined that the tattered volume must be worth at least his stated price.

Months later, after the police had confiscated the Letter Book and returned it to me, Sotheby's told me that the man had written to them that he expected his £5 to be refunded!

I want to include a note in this preface concerning Burton's fellow explorer John Speke. We have

made comments which, at times, may seem critical of him, but the descriptions of events are factual and fair in the circumstances, and are not made out of malice or bias.

Ironically, another serendipitous situation occurred following my introduction to Peter Speke some years back, which I will relate as succinctly as possible. Peter is the great grandson of the explorer's brother Ben, and—since none of their other brothers had heirs—is thus the nearest living descendant of the bachelor John Speke. Peter and I immediately became fast friends, and we keep in close contact for a multitude of reasons. I feel honoured to know such a fine person.

A prime reason we became so close is because of Peter's passionate interest in his notable relative. He inherited two family estates in Somerset from his forbears, and lives on one of them, in a fifteenth-century stone house. Over lunch on the first occasion that we met, as we sat at his huge, solid oak table my attention was caught by the various family coats of arms embedded in the leaded window panes opposite me, one of which incorporated the rare and intriguing heraldic detail of a porcupine.

Then I noticed something more familiar: into the

glass of the window was set a blue shield with an argent bar running diagonally across it, and it dawned on me that here were the arms of my own family!

Jestingly, I queried Peter about the propriety of including *my* armorial bearings in *his* window, to which he immediately replied: "Hold on. After lunch I'll take you down to our church. That will explain all." When we arrived at the charming mediæval church in the village of Dowlish Wake, Peter led me straight up to the large and elaborate Victorian monument to John Speke himself, and then drew me to the altar. To the left of it stood the splendid tomb of a knight and his lady: the knight lay with his arms crossed, toes upturned, a sword by his side, and my guide pulled me over to the right, and indicated an inscription where I read the name *John Speke*, and two dates which stretched from the mid-fourteenth to the early fifteenth centuries. Then he dragged me over to the left side of the tomb, and I looked at the eËgy of the knight's lady beside him. Peter announced, rather dramatically, "You know, her name was Joan Keynes!"

There the two of us stood, gazing upon a tomb which contained the mortal remains of a married couple who had lived some 600 years earlier, who were

related to each of us, with our same very rare surnames. I was astonished and delighted to find that, although I had always been primarily an admirer of Richard Burton, I was actually a kinsman of John Speke. To celebrate this discovery, and to cement my new friendship with Peter, I later took two of his sons on expeditions to Africa.

* * * * *

There are several friends whom I would like to thank for the help they have given me in making this book a reality: Anthony Hobson, for having made it possible for me to acquire Burton's East African Letter Book as well as a great deal of additional Burton material; Peter Speke, for kindly allowing me to include his ancestor's letters to Burton; Lord Talbot of Malahide, for releasing such superb manuscripts and books for me to add to my collection; Mary Lovell, author of the recent and most thoroughly detailed biography of Burton; and David Colvin, for guiding the manuscript through the press with such patience, and for designing this elegant volume. I am also grateful to Henrietta Webb for her beautiful binding design.

I am delighted that Bernard Quaritch Ltd. are handling the book, since Bernard Quaritch himself was a friend of Burton's, and the publisher of his celebrated poem *The Kasidah of Haji Abdul El-Yezdi*. I wish particularly to thank Jenny Allsworth and Anthony Payne at the firm for their involvement.

Finally, my thanks are due to Donald Young, who spent so many hours deciphering Burton's spidery handwriting and diligently collating the letters. He first became involved with these manuscripts when I loaned many of them to him in 1979 to use for his Master's thesis. For this volume he has written what truly amounts to a mini-biography of Burton to accompany the papers, and without his stalwart encouragement at all times, it would have been impossible to produce this book.

Q. K.

London, 1999.

A NOTE ON THE LETTERS

The letters selected for this collection span ten years in the lives of Richard Burton and John Speke, during which time their lives were to change profoundly. Between 1854 and 1864 Speke rose from a relative obscurity to glory, and passed on to an ambiguous immortality, while the same period saw Burton's star continue to rise, then dim just short of its zenith and fall. These ten years also encompass the first chapter of one of the most dramatic and important events in nineteenth-century geography: the search for the source of the Nile River.

Nineteen letters have been transcribed directly from Burton's Letter Book, and the others were collected individually, from far-flung corners of the world. Burton carried his Letter Book with him from 1854-1859, and in its pages drafted all the official correspondence he sent from Somalia, Zanzibar, and the lake regions of central Africa. Here also he attached all the important letters and other papers he received during the course of his explorations.

Although Burton is known to have kept many such letter books and personal diaries, this is the only one of its kind known extant: all the rest were either burned at the insistence of his wife or have yet to be discovered. This survivor has had its own adventures, as Quentin Keynes has related in his Preface.

Some of the finished, official versions of the letters which Burton drafted in this Letter Book have survived, but they are scattered among various archives and collections. Thus, these rough-draft letters allow a unique opportunity to read all of the letters together, in sequence and as they first flowed from Burton's mind.

Speke was a poor writer, and Burton affected a somewhat stilted writing style in his published works. So often their books fail to convey the excitement and immediacy of their adventures. These letters, however, present the unfolding drama of the search for the source of the Nile in a more vivid way than either Burton's or Speke's books were able to, because they chronicle the first impressions—the raw data, as it were—of each man's reaction to events as they occurred.

In order to preserve the spontaneity and flavour of the originals, we have transcribed the letters to follow

as closely as possible the manuscripts. Where the punctuation of a hastily-composed note tends to obscure or alter the intended meaning of a phrase or sentence, however, it has been silently corrected, as have inconsistencies in the spelling of proper names. Any of Burton's own marginal notes, comments and corrections have been retained and are printed in italics at the same place on the page where Burton had written them. Each letter is numbered by date, and the date, writer and recipient are printed above the body of the letter itself. Editorial comments sometimes precede the individual letters, and, additionally, an historical narrative is interspersed throughout the book to aid the reader in following the action of the story.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

It was often said that Richard Burton was born in the wrong century. His wife and friends all had their various opinions as to which era he really belonged to, and in which time his talents would have best been appreciated and rewarded.

Perhaps Burton's skill with a sword, his flair for disguise, his mastery of languages, his appetite for exploration and the sciences, all might better have served him had he lived during the sixteenth century. In the England of Elizabeth I, when a new age was dawning in exploration and the sciences, he might have been a swashbuckling hybrid of Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Francis Bacon. Or perhaps Burton would have been better appreciated had he been born in the twenty-first century? Certainly his fluency in 29 languages, his knowledge of the varieties of Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Mysticism and the Occult, his willingness to experiment with various intoxicants, hallucinogens and opiates, and his encyclopaedic knowledge of human sexuality, would make him a New Age hero, a rogue guru for the New Millennium.

Burton's wife and his friends used to say that he even *looked* as if he belonged to another age. With his defiant, almost Oriental features, blazing dark eyes and rakish moustaches, his face, its battle-scars as visible as the heraldry on a knight's shield, and his wide-shouldered athletic physique, he seemed more to belong to some species of Renaissance gypsy-pirate. Swinburne wrote that Burton had "the brow of a god and the jaw of a devil." The novelist Ouida made a typical comment about her friend in the obituary she wrote on him: Burton looked, she said, "like Othello, and lived like the three Musketeers blended into one."

However much Burton may have seemed out of place in his own era, he was, nevertheless, very much a product of—as well as an enthusiastic participant in—the Victorian era. The diversity of the exotic countries, cultures and races embraced by the British Empire at its height were a feast for Burton's curiosity, and provided him with the stage upon which he could live out the dramas of his complex personality.

In his life-long quest to experience the unknown, the unknowable and the forbidden, Burton travelled to every continent except Australia and Antarctica, and made studies of the geography, languages,

religions and customs of any number of peoples, recording their rituals of procreation, life and death. After his journeys, Burton turned his travel diaries into massive books which mixed erudition with adventure, and which subsequent travellers praised for their accuracy and usefulness.

By the end of his life Burton had published more than thirty books on travel, two volumes of poetry, and well over a hundred articles, for diverse journals, on subjects as varied as mineralogy, archaeology, anthropology, spiritualism and hypnosis. His ethnographic studies in India and Africa were pioneering works, still considered to be among the best ever written. His aptitude for languages made him an able translator, resulting in translations of works out of Latin, Ancient Greek, Hindustani, Italian, and Portuguese, as well as his unexpurgated version of the classic Arabic texts known collectively as *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*—better known as “The Arabian Nights”. Burton was also the first to translate and publish in English the ancient Indian sexual treatises, the *Kama Sutra* and the *Ananga Ranga*, and thus became, somewhat by accident, one of England’s leading exponents of erotic literature. Ironically, the most

money he ever made was from his translation of *The Arabian Nights* which, although widely condemned for its explicitness, quickly sold out.

Burton was considered one of the best swordsmen in Europe, having invented two sword strokes, the *une-deux* and the *manchette*, and earned the coveted title of *Maître d'Armes*. He also invented a simple and practical cavalry pistol which would have enabled English cavalymen to shoot with greater accuracy while mounted, but his design was ignored by the British military. He developed new systems for teaching the use of both the bayonet and the sword, and published two handbooks demonstrating his ideas. Here, too, the British Army largely ignored his innovations, though the bayonet book was quickly purchased and put to use by the Prussian Army.

In another age, perhaps, Burton's inventions and innovations, his eccentricities and his suggestions to "improve" the military would have been to his credit. In his day, however, they merely wounded and angered his superiors, and set in train a series of retaliations that would have tragic repercussions on his career.

Burton liked to shock. He loved stirring up controversies and making literary and epistolary skirmishes

against what he saw as the blind bureaucracy and moral hypocrisy around him.

In his "Introduction" to *First Footsteps in East Africa*, published in 1856, Burton criticised British policy in the region, suggesting, among other things, that the English garrison would be better moved from sweltering Aden, on the Arabian side of the Red Sea, to Berbera, with its better climate, on the African side. However accurate Burton's various criticisms may have been, they were perceived as being impudent and insubordinate by resentful bureaucrats, who did all they could to make Burton suffer for his opinions.

However much a modern observer might applaud Burton's audacity and the rightness of his criticisms, one must remember what he himself never seemed to realise: that in Queen Victoria's England, even intellectual rebels had to pay for their rebellion.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ENIGMA

THE SEARCH
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ONE

Richard Burton was born at Torquay, in England, in 1821, but spent most of his boyhood in France and Italy. His father was a soldier, retired on half-pay, whose need to economise kept his family on the move, searching for a house with the right combination of healthy climate and good value for money. By the time that Burton's parents decided to send their children to England for their education, it was too late: their nomadic existence, the bright sun of southern Europe, and the relaxed ways of the continent had spoiled the children's tolerance for English weather, English food and English schools. The family fled back to Europe,

and Richard Burton remained there until it was time for him to go to university.

Restless and unhappy at Oxford, Burton stayed there only fourteen months before convincing his father to buy him a commission in the 18th Regiment of the Bombay Native Infantry, Indian Army, and on 28 October 1842, Richard Burton arrived in Bombay.

He thrived in India as he would nowhere else. There he discovered his innate talents, and learnt the necessity of matching brilliance with diligence. In India, Burton had at his fingertips a multitude of languages and religions, and customs which were virtually unknown to most Europeans. Wandering the markets and side-streets in disguise, he studied the country's languages, learnt the arts of Oriental lovemaking, wrote his earliest ethnographic articles, and began his first travel books.

In the process, Burton set for himself a pattern of mixing adventure with scholarship which he would follow for the rest of his life. When he turned to learning India's languages, he hired a tutor to instruct him by day, and took mistresses to teach him by night. Soon, he was sitting for official exams in Hindustani and Gujarati, and followed these with Persian,

Scindi, Punjabi and Marathi, in a linguistic *tour de force* virtually unmatched in the Indian Army. The only other officer as talented as Burton in languages was Lt. Christopher Palmer Rigby who, having been bested by Burton in the Gujarati exam, became a jealous rival, whom fate would, years later, put in his path at Zanzibar.

Yet, in spite of his many achievements in India, Burton still thirsted for another prize—military glory. In 1847 that glory was to be had in the Sikh Wars, with General Auchmuty's army, and he applied to join the General's staff as a regimental interpreter. The application, however, was rejected, and another officer, who knew only Hindustani, was chosen instead. Burton blamed his rejection on the prejudice aroused by a secret report he had written for General Sir Charles Napier.

While serving under Napier in Scinde in 1844–45, Burton had been ordered to go out, in disguise, to investigate such Indian customs as infanticide, *suttee*, the suicide of the widow by throwing herself—or being thrown—on her husband's funeral pyre, and *baddee*, the practice whereby a criminal, condemned to death, hired a poorer man to take his place.

All of these and more were customs Napier was determined to outlaw.

Another area which the General wanted to know about was the use of homosexual brothels by the English officers of the Indian Army. Burton dutifully carried out his investigations, wrote a detailed report—for Napier's eyes only—and turned it over to the General. This report has never been found in any archive or collection, and Burton scholars crave to know what exactly he had written. Whatever it was, it seems the "brothel report" was to have a greater negative impact on Burton's career than anything else he ever did.

When Napier left India in 1847, Burton's secret report was discovered by his successor, and word went round that Burton had broken ranks; he had dared to reveal one of the dark secrets of the Indian Army. His fellow officers took to referring to him as "the white nigger"—an eccentric outsider. The rejection of his application to join General Auchmuty's staff seemed to Burton to be a clear indication that his career in India would always be hampered by the cloud of controversy that clung to his name. Disappointed, depressed, and seriously ill, Burton was granted medical home leave. In 1849 he joined his family at Boulogne.

Burton spent four years on leave, during which time he wrote and published four books, perfected his fencing, studied more languages, and met Isabel Arundell, his future wife, whom he would finally marry in 1861. In spite of all this activity, however, life in Europe palled, and in the autumn of 1852 he began to request permission of the Indian Army for leave to study Arabic, having decided that the best place to perfect his studies was "where the language is best learned," in Arabia itself. Burton had determined to test his linguistic abilities under the most demanding possible circumstances, by performing the pilgrimage to Mecca in disguise.

The Arab holy city of Mecca was forbidden to non-Muslims in those days (as, technically, it is today), but especially so during the annual pilgrimage. The accepted wisdom was that any foreigner caught observing these holy rites would be put to death by Muslim fanatics, and an Englishman making the pilgrimage to Mecca would put his life at daily risk. Thus, few in the West knew anything about the most important event in a Muslim's life.

The journey across the desert would be physically demanding; to live in disguise among the Arabs

would require not only a complete mastery of Arabic, but an intimate, fluent knowledge of Arab customs and a rare mixture of stamina, courage, and high intelligence. The journey would be as fascinating as it would be dangerous: only a hero—or a fool—would ever try such a thing. The whole idea appealed to Burton perfectly.

By April, 1853, he was on his way to Arabia, and his successful completion of that hazardous Arabian journey, masterfully described in *A Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El Medinah and Meccah* (1855–7), made him the rising star among English geographers.

After all his great journeys Burton suffered from depression and ennui, as well as physical collapse, and because of this his career often suffered while he failed to capitalise on his achievements. In 1848, on leaving India, where his distinctions in linguistics and surveying could have formed the foundations on which to re-build his career, he had described himself as “sick, sorry and with tears of rage.” Likewise after Arabia in 1853 he shunned public acclaim, and described himself as a “poor devil who has failed,” even though he could have turned himself into an explorer as celebrated as David Livingstone.

A fine raconteur, had Burton returned home immediately after his Arabian odyssey, he would have been wildly successful in lecture halls, and would have been among the most sought-after guests of the season at private parties. Here was Burton's great opportunity to secure his status as a celebrated explorer and gain a popularity that would have overcome the rumours from India. Just as importantly, a successful "public relations" tour would have stood him well for future financial support, and perhaps have gained him a public stature as great as Livingstone would enjoy a few years later.

Strangely, however, he passed up that chance, and chose instead to stay in Cairo and Bombay. In a letter to his friend Dr. Norton Shaw, Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society, he confessed he was depressed by the strain of his journey and oppressed by a sense of failure and anti-climax.

Thus in 1853 England waited in vain for Burton's return. Public acclaim for the Arabian adventurer quieted down; a war with Russia threatened, and he became yesterday's hero. Burton did not seem to mind, for he had found a new goal, and an even greater challenge. The greatest geographical mystery

in the world had captured his imagination: he was in thrall to the mystery of the Nile.

Burton's search for the source of the Nile had really begun in Arabia in 1853. Around the desert campfires, disguised as a Muslim pilgrim bound for Mecca, he had spent many nights listening to the conversations of his fellow pilgrims. One of them had been a spy for Mohammed Ali Pasha of Egypt, and had travelled the slave-caravan routes across central Africa. He told Burton of the central African lakes: Nyassa, Chama and Ujiji, and of a vast, northern lake, called Ukerewe. All of this information had for years been kept a jealously guarded secret by the Arabs, for fear of foreign intervention in the slave trade. In the darkness of the desert, Burton wrote down everything he heard on strips of paper, and, risking instant death if he was discovered, hid his notes in the hem of his robe.

Months later in Cairo, as he was writing up his report on the Arabian journey, Burton's thoughts returned to the caravan routes across the lake regions of central Africa. Having read a report, in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, by Colonel William Sykes of the East India Company about the urgent need for British exploration of central Africa, he

realised that an expedition there was inevitable. He also believed that no one in Britain was more qualified than he to lead such an expedition, and applied immediately to the Royal Geographical Society for the job. Richard Burton, who had once described himself as a “blaze of light without a focus,” now had a goal that required all of his talents to be fully focussed.

Exploration in unknown Africa demanded not only physical courage, but intellectual and martial prowess and equal skill as linguist, observer, geographer and ethnographer, a combination of talents few in history have owned so completely as Richard Burton. The quest to solve the mystery of the Nile would be his obsession for the next decade, and his failure in that quest would haunt him for the rest of his life.

CHAPTER TWO

IN THRALL TO
THE GREAT RIVER

1821 - 1854

TWO

For thousands of years, the annual flooding of the Nile had brought bounty to the people who lived along its banks. Glossy silt, carried by floods from somewhere deep in central Africa, nourished the fields that fuelled the building of the greatest civilisation of the ancient world. Ancient Egypt had grown mighty by the grace of the great river.

The Egyptians worshipped the river, but never discovered its source, nor could they properly understand how the annual flooding of the Nile took place during the dry season, when no rain fell anywhere within their ken. The great generals of Egypt and Rome had sent whole armies up the Nile, which either had to turn back, perished in the lethal, floating islands of sedge called “the Sudd” or, died in the desert when they tried to go around the Sudd.

Just as the ancient rulers of Egypt feared their ignorance of the Nile’s mysterious ways, so the British—*de facto* rulers of Egypt in the mid-nineteenth century—feared that a rival power might discover

the Nile's sources and take control of that vital artery to Egypt and thence India. Maps of Africa in 1855 still showed the Nile disappearing into an empty space, marked only with illustrations of mythical beasts and savage tribes and vague notations of such landmarks as the "Coy Fountains" and the "Mountains of the Moon".

Burton's first priority, according to the Royal Geographical Society and the East India Company, his sponsors, was to explore the Somali country from the Red Sea shore through to Genana, the Ogaden, and on to Zanzibar. Once this area was mapped, the next step would be to locate the chain of lakes Burton had written about, and establish their relationship to the Nile. Finally, if enough money could be raised and enough time was left, he could extend his explorations across Africa to the Atlantic.

However necessary the first phase was, it was not exciting enough for Burton, so he added to the programme an exploration of another forbidden city, Harar, the Muslim holy city of Somalia, and the major trading town of the region. It had been closed to Europeans throughout its history, and legends held that should a "Frank" (a European) enter the gates,

the city would fall. Rumour had it that all unwanted visitors would be killed.

Burton's plan was to go alone to Harar, while his companions, Lts. G. E. Herne, William Stroyan and J. E. Stocks, would pursue other explorations along the Red Sea littoral. Herne and Stroyan were to study the Berbera area, and collect camels for transport, while Stocks's assignment was to explore the Wady Nogal and look for evidence of gold there. Having completed their individual missions, the four men were to rendezvous at Berbera, where they would observe the annual Berbera Fair together before joining a caravan through the Ogaden. From there, they would proceed to Zanzibar, and continue, as Burton said, "Nile-wards".

It was essential to the success of the expedition that each man in the party accomplished the complex and potentially dangerous tasks they were undertaking in the time available. Burton's fellow explorers were tested and trusted friends from the Indian Army: this was especially true of Stocks, who had worked extensively with Burton on ethnographic studies in Sind. Thus when word reached him that Stocks had died suddenly just as he was setting out to join the expedition, the news was not only a great personal shock

to Burton but, moreover, left a critical gap in the make-up of the party. It was at that moment that Burton was introduced to another Indian Army lieutenant who immediately volunteered to take Stocks's place. His name was John Hanning Speke.

At this point in the story one is tempted to wonder whether Burton, four years later in London during the bitter spring of 1859, might have looked back on the day he met Speke in Aden and seen the hand of *kismet* at work. *Kismet* is the Arabic word for fate, a concept in which most Arabs believe deeply. It was, indeed, a strange and fateful coincidence that John Speke should have turned up in Aden in 1854, at the very moment Burton needed to replace Stocks, in the same way that in 1856, when Burton's best friend Dr. John Steinhäuser found himself suddenly unable to join him, only Speke was left to accompany Burton to central Africa. *Kismet* seems to have been a real and powerful element in Burton's beliefs, and his acceptance of it may explain his later passivity, when he should have been doing his utmost to counteract the damage done to his reputation and achievements by Speke.

John Speke was born at Orleigh Court, in Devon,

in 1827, and joined the Indian Army in 1844. An exceptionally good soldier, tough and brave, Speke had distinguished himself in a number of battles and engagements, but when there were no battles to fight, he became restless and bored with barracks life, and spent his periods of leave hunting game and surveying little-known areas of Tibet and Chinese Tartary. On his solo hunts, Speke prided himself on his ability to live off the land with only minimal rations and kit, and sometimes walked barefoot to toughen his feet. His pride in his physical hardiness was almost obsessive, and went so far as to include the practice of killing pregnant female antelopes in order to eat the foetus.

Speke's controlling passion was for hunting: he had little interest in native cultures or languages. He was, though, an experienced, if somewhat eccentric, surveyor. When presenting to the Royal Geographical Society a set of maps of a journey he made through Tibet, for example, it was pointed out to him that his drawings of the mountain passes had omitted any sign of the mountains themselves. "This much given," he retorted, "anybody [with an] understanding [of] physical geography could fill in the mountains."

In 1854, Speke had been granted three years'

furlough from the Indian Army, and with it he was determined to spend two years hunting in Africa, and the third year organising his collections for his house in England. He planned to travel first to the Indian Army base at Aden, then embark from there across to the African mainland. Upon arriving in Aden, however, he was told that the increasing instability in Somaliland made travel there extremely dangerous, and his request to hunt in Africa was rejected by Sir James Outram, the Political Resident. Under pressure from Speke, however, Outram suggested he should go to see Burton, whose party, having previously been granted permission to enter Somalia, was about to embark for the mainland and needed an extra man.

Burton's first impressions of Speke were not favourable:

He was ignorant of the native races in Africa, he had brought with him almost £400 worth of cheap and useless guns and revolvers... which the Africans would have rejected with disdain. He did not know any of the manners of the East.

Not only was Burton unimpressed by Speke's lack of interest in languages, he was even more dismayed when Speke confided that, being bored with life, "he

had come to Africa to be killed." Still, without someone to explore the Wady Nogal the mission would not succeed as planned, and Burton was desperate for another European to join his party. With time running out, and despite his misgivings, Burton was impressed enough with Speke's energy and determination to allow him to join the expedition.

CHAPTER THREE

TO SOMALILAND, HARAR
AND “NILEWARDS”

OCTOBER 1854 - DECEMBER 1856

THREE

The first letter from Quentin Keynes's collection is one from Speke to a friend in India, written on 10 October 1854, just after Speke and Burton met for the first time. Speke's remark in it that he had "got the finest Yak there ever shot," defines him as a competitive sportsman and collector of trophies, but there is a more important aspect to this earliest known description of Speke's plans. Years later, when he was trying to minimise the influence Burton had had on his life, Speke implied, both in his books and lectures, that before he had ever met Burton he had come out to Africa not only to hunt big game, but also to look for the source of the Nile. Alexander Maitland, Speke's biographer, examined Speke's claims, and found nothing to substantiate them. Any mention of such pre-Burton plans about the Nile are conspicuously absent in this letter as well.

* * * * *

I

10 October 1854.

*J. H. Speke to Captain Hay.*¹

Aden.

10 October, 1854.

My dear Hay,

I don't remember whether I wrote to you last or even whether I told you of my trip to Thibet from the Lerai, so here goes with the principle events. I got the finest Yak (bull) there ever shot and have sent it to the French Exhibition to be finally deposited, of course, at my house in England. I got my three years leave and came away here prepared for a shooting tour of two years but on arrival I found a party going into the same country on Govt. account but was opposed by Old Outram² here & he, of course, sticking to his former expressed opinion, objected to my going as he said because the risk of life would not be compensated for by any discoveries that would be made, so I set too [*sic*] & talked over the Captain of the Expedition, Burton, who went in disguise to Mekka, that done there was very little difficulty in getting myself put on duty to go with them. So now

instead of a three years Furlo' I am on an unlimited duty drawing all of my allowances & doing what I of all other things most desired. Burton goes on the 20th to Harrur, a place of curiosity as the natives say "if that place is once entered by a European, it will fall into other hands" and has in consequence been without hermetically sealed. Of course, he goes in disguise & cannot return till March next. I go on the 15th to Bunder Gorie [*sic*] strike south west & make a tour of 600 miles collecting specimens of Zoology & mapping my route, whilst the other two squat on their haunches at Berbera & make notes till we join them...

[*manuscript damaged*]...all set oĩ together for an unlimited period, God only knows where.

In haste,

J. H. Speke.

1. Captain Hay was Assistant Commissioner in the Punjab, India. Speke sent an exact copy of this letter to another Indian Army friend, Lt. James Grant, who would later accompany him to Africa in 1860.
2. Colonel Sir James Outram was Political Resident in Aden in 1854.

* * * * *

Burton's journey to Harar was a success, as was Herne's and Stroyan's survey of the Berbera area; the expedition seemed to be going well. But Speke had failed even to achieve his main goal, which had been to locate Wady Nogal, and it was at this juncture that things started to fall apart. He had had endless quarrels with his Somali guide, Sumunter, and confessed he had come close to murdering the man. Speke blamed Sumunter's interferences for his failure to locate the Wady Nogal. This resulted in such an uproar between Speke and Sumunter that when Burton arrived in Aden he was forced to order a trial. Sumunter was found guilty, and Burton, in order to maintain respect for English law, had no choice but to recommend that he be fined and banished from Aden. The action, however necessary, was to have grave repercussions.

When Burton and his party returned to the African mainland in April 1855 to begin the next phase of the journey, they found the atmosphere there tense and volatile. In anticipation of unrest, Burton had requested extra police from Aden to come with him, as well as for the gunboat *Mahi* to stand offshore and guard his camp till they could depart safely with the Ogaden caravan. Burton also requested that their April

mail and important instruments be hurried along so the party would not be delayed. But the mails never arrived, and the Ogaden caravan went on without them; the extra police were not available, the captain of the gunboat had business elsewhere, and Burton and his party were left alone on the beach at Berbera.

* * * * *

II (a)

23 April 1855.

*R. F. Burton to Colonel W. Coughlin.*¹ Letter Book.

The Bt. Resident,
Aden, Arabia.

Sir,

I have the honour to enclose a report from Lt. Herne & a statement from Lt. Speke concerning the melancholy occurrence of the 19th *inst.* I also forward for the information of the Rt. Honbl. the Gov. in Council, this account of particulars which fell under my personal observation.

2. On the 15th *inst.* the Berberah Fair concluded and the last vessel left the Port. Our party remained behind awaiting the mid-April mail. In their utter security, the Abbans, or Protectors, accompanied their families and property to the highlands leaving with us their sons and other representatives. Beyond the rumours of raids & forays which daily abound in the Somali country we heard of no hostile intention and, as a body, the people were decidedly friendly to us. One of the most learned Somalis, the Shaykh Jami whom I had met at Harar, called repeatedly upon us, ate with us and gave us abundant good advice concerning our future movements.

3. About noon on the 18th *inst.*, a buggalow² belonging to the Port of Aynterad entered the deserted creek & brought from Aden a letter written by Mohammed the Interpreter, together with 10 Somalis who desired to accompany us to Ogadayn. Not able to afford food for such a number of extra mouths we objected to take more than four of these men. It is fortunate, however, that I ordered our people to give dinner to the Nacoda & crew of the buggalow or it would have left that very evening.

4. About sunset on the same day (18th *inst.*),

I heard a discharge of musketry behind the tents which were pitched about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile S. of Berberah and near the site of the proposed Agency. The cause proved to be the arrival of 3 horsemen, one Dublay of the Ayyal Ahmad, another Mohammed of the Eesa Musa and the 3rd a youth whose name has not yet been found out. Our people, mistaking them for a foraging party, had fired over their heads. Through Lt. Speke, I reprimanded them sharply for this folly, ordered them to reserve their fire in future, and when necessary to fire *into*, not *above* a crowd. To this they all listened attentively. Then not particularly liking the sudden appearance of the strangers, I caused "Balyuz", the Ras Kafilah, or Commander of the Caravan to enquire what their business was. Their reply was so plausible that it completely deceived even Balyuz, one of the acutest of the Somal. The people of the coast had forged a report some days before, that the Haj Sharmarkey of Zayla was awaiting at Siyaro (a port not 20 miles E. of Berberah) with 4 vessels, a favourable opportunity of seizing Berbera and of erecting a fort there.

Our visitors swore by the oath of divorce—the most solemn which a Somali knows—that seeing a buggalow

visit the port at such unusual season, they had come down to ascertain whether it had brought Sharmarkey's men & material for building. They concluded by asking if we could possibly be in apprehension of them who belonged to our Abbans' tribe and laughed at the idea as ridiculous. Briefly, these spies not only deceived us but deceived even their own fellow countrymen. Accordingly, the usual 2 sentries were posted for the night & the usual orders were issued.

5. Between 2 & 3 a.m. on the morning of the 19th *inst.*, I was aroused by "Balyuz", who cried out that the enemy was upon us. My first impulse was to request Lt. Herne to go out with his revolver in the direction of the danger. Secondly, I answered Lts. Speke & Stroyan, who both asked if "any shooting were going on," that they must arm & ready, and then with no particular hurry—such incidents are but too common in the countries through which I have travelled—drew my sabre & prepared for work. Meanwhile, Lt. Herne returned hurriedly from the back of the Rowtie, pistol in hand & declared that our servants had run and that the enemy was in great force. We three, Lt. Speke, Herne & I, defended the entrance of the Rowtie during which I saw both these officers pistol

their men with revolvers. Presently their fire being exhausted, and the enemy pressing on, I perceived that our position was untenable, the Rowtie was nearly knocked down by clubs and had we been entangled in its folds, we should have been speared like rats. I then gave the word for a rush and sallied out with my sabre, closely followed by Lt. Herne with Lt. Speke in the rear. The former oÈcer was happily allowed to pass through the enemy with no severer injury than a few stiï blows with a war club. The latter was thrown down by a stone hurled at his chest *“Struck by clubs.”* and taken prisoner—which I did not witness.

6. On our leaving the Rowtie, I thought that I had perceived the form of the late Lt. Stroyan lying upon the ground, close to the camels. This oÈcer had not joined us in the tent at first and the noise of the skirmish, together with the darkness of the night, prevented our discovering where he was or what he was doing. I was surrounded at the time by about a dozen Somalis and felt the blows of their clubs rattling upon me without mercy, and at the same time Balyuz, who was energetically pushing me out of the fray, rendered the strokes of my sabre uncertain. As I was cutting my way toward the prostrate form, a Somali stepped

forward, threw his spear so as to traverse my face and split the palate and then retired before he could be punished. Upon this I fell back for assistance. Many of our Somalis and servants were lurking in the darkness about 100 yards from the fray; but nothing could persuade them to advance. Presently, Balyuz appeared and told me that he would take me to a place where I should find Lts. Herne & Speke. I followed him, sending one of the bravest of the Somalis, "Golab" of the Yusuf tribe, to run in search of the buggalow & if she had not started to bring her back from the Ras or Spit into the centre of the harbour.

7. I spent the time from the hour of our separation sometimes wandering about in search of the other officers & sometimes lying down when overpowered by the faintness & pain of my wound. As dawn approached, I could distinguish the form of the buggalow making sail, as it appeared, out of the harbour. With my little remaining strength, I reached the Spit at the head of the creek, was carried into the vessel and persuaded the crew to arm themselves & repair to the scene of our disasters. Presently, Lt. Herne appeared & closely following him, Lt. Speke was supported in, badly wounded.

Lastly, the body of Lt. Stroyan, I. N., was brought on board, speared through the heart, with the mark of a lance through the epigastrium & a frightful gash apparent in the top of the forehead. The lamented officer had ceased to exist. His body was stark & cold; we preserved it till the morning of the 20th *inst.*, when we were compelled to sew it up & cast it loaded into the sea, Lt. Herne reading the funeral service over it. This is the severest blow of all that occurred to us; we had lived together like brothers, Lt. Stroyan was a universal favourite & truly melancholy was the contrast between the hour when he lay down to rest, full of life & spirits & the ensuing morning when we saw him, a livid corpse. As regards the circumstance of his decease—I am personally ignorant of everything, never having been able to see him that fatal night, but I should suggest that his servant, Mohammed, & the other attendants who have accompanied us to Aden, be examined at the Asst. Pol. Resident's Office & that the result should be communicated to Govt. Bombay.

8. Yusuf, the Nacoda or Capt. of the buggalow having, at my request, armed his men, proceeded to our camp. I was unable to accompany them. Presently,

they returned, reporting that the enemy had fled, carrying off all our cloth, tobacco, swords & other weapons. The rice, part of the dates, our books & broken boxes together with injured instruments and other articles remained on the ground. I spent that day at Berberah bringing off our property & firing guns to recall our 6 servants who had run away. In the evening, unable to bring off any more kit, I ordered the remainder to be set on fire.

9. I trust it may not be considered superfluous for me to remark that the officers under my charge fought well & with energy. But of our 12 men armed with swords & muskets, 1 only, Sáad, a black slave, is severely wounded—there are three slightly hurt, Abdul Rahman, an Egyptian, Abdullah & Farhan, two other Negroes. The others behaved with the vilest cowardice, the effect of the coast being open to them—they threw down their weapons & ran, after firing only 3 shots high up in the air. A party of 6 men left us at the very first & went their way safely to Kurrum & Aynterad. It is also a significant fact, that of the many Somali who formed our party, not a single man, as far as I can learn, was hurt. Moreover, they all deserted to the enemy and the son of one of

our Abbans, Boorhali Nuh, was seen carrying off plundered cloth.

10. The melancholy occurrence above detailed was the act of a troop of Bedouin brigands & it will be reprobated as severely in Africa as in Europe. It is in every way opposed to the custom of the country and a flagrant infraction of the people's code of honour. True, the brigands did not appear at the first blush of the affair to be determined upon bloodshed; this is proved by the fact that they used bludgeons at the beginning. But the passions of the Somal are easily aroused and when they saw their kinsmen—4 or 5 in number—it is stated by Lt. Speke—laid out washed & unable to eat the plundered dates, they proceeded to the cold-blooded & dastardly act detailed in the accompanying statement. As a proof that their primary object was plunder, they even carried off the camels & a little merchandise belonging to some Ogadayn travellers who had stayed behind to accompany us.

11. The people chiefly implicated in this outrage are the Mikahil, the Ayyal Ahmad, & the Eesa Musa—all 3 sub-tribes of the great clan, Habr Awal. The 2 Jomu, however, are but little concerned, the Eesa Musa is the principal actor. This tribe is celebrated

even among the Somal & on 2 or 3 petty occasions had shown us ill will. They had vainly opposed in Febr. *ult.* my visit to Biza Gora near Berberah; they had a dispute with Lts. Stroyan & Herne about pay for their services during a trip to the hills, & even after my 2nd landing in Africa, I had to resist an extortionate demand as regards our camels.

12. The easiest & most effectual way of punishing these ruffians in my humble opinion, is this. In the first place, all the Eesa Musa, the Ayyal Ahmad & the Mikahil Somal should at once be expelled from Aden with orders never to return until compensation be made & the murderers delivered. Secondly, that the merchants of Cutch, Bombay & Aden be warned of our intention to blockade the Somali Coast from Aynterad to Zayla (not included). Thus the ports of Siyaro, Berberah & Bulhar will remain deserted & our supplies would be drawn exclusively from Zayla, Aynterad, Kurrum & Mocha in Arabia. The rest of the Habr Awal will arise furious at their losses and the Eesa Musa will receive at the hands of their kinsmen the severest punishment. By means of a small steamer armed with a single quarter-deck gun, this could be done efficiently and the same vessel might be

rendered most useful in crushing slavery & in building, if such measure be deemed necessary, an agency at Berberah. And before raising the blockade, we should propose the sum of C.'s R.'s* 13,800 indemnity according to the following scale.

Loss of Govt.'s in cloth, provisions, camels, C's. R's. horses, mules & commensurate stores	5500
Loss of Lt. Speke's private property	4100
Loss of Lt. Herne's " "	500
Loss of Lt. Stroyan's " "	1700
Loss of Lt. Burton's " "	1950

Which does not include the claims of Arab & Somali servants who should register their losses at the Police Office, Aden.

Nothing will be easier than to identify the man who murdered Lt. Stroyan & the ruÉans who attempted in cold blood to spear Lt. Speke. They will wear the ostrich feather in their hair, boast of their exploits throughout the tribe & call every one to witness their heroic deeds. These men should be peremptorily demanded; the witnesses would be the

* C's. R's. : [*East India*] *Company's Rupees.*

other members of the plundering party allowed to come forward as "Queen's Evidence". I would urge with due modesty the advisability of hanging these men upon the very spot where the outrage took place & after burning their bodies, that the ashes should be thrown into the sea, otherwise, the felons will become mere martyrs. It is about 25 years since the last outrage of the kind took place in the Somali country, if the above detailed project be carried out with energy, at least a generation will fall before the murder of strangers & guests is repeated.

13. I would venture to request that Lt. Herne be detained at Aden for the purpose of contributing his experience of the Somali coast & by being present at any conferences and sessions which may take place in Africa & of giving a personal interest to the proceedings. He would be assisted in his enquiries about the still unknown details of the late outrage by our Ras Kafilah, a Mijjartheyn Somali named Mahmud, but popularly known as the Balyuz, during his short service, we had every reason to be contented with him. They could arrange together the derivation of our supplies from Zayla, Kurrum & Aynterad.

14. As we are under obligations to the following

individuals, it might be wise to give them several presents together with a public acknowledgement of their services. Yusuf, the Nacoda of the buggalow, assisted us to the utmost of his power & another Somali—Farih Debani—showed us much kindness. We brought over with us to Aden the Somali Golab, an escaped convict, and we venture to hope that in consequence of his brave conduct, his past offences may be pardoned. And finally, we have sent to hospital Saad, the old Negro whose arm was cut through in fighting for us, & we will take care to reward him.

15. In conclusion, I cannot refrain from remarking that as I took upon myself the responsibility of the expedition, so I have discharged it to the utmost of my ability. Our arrangements were hurriedly made. We could not draw from Aden the number of well-trained Somali policemen upon which I originally calculated & had to depend upon raw recruits who fled at the first charge. But we had been even led by all to believe that the coast about Berberah was as safe as Bombay itself, and calculated that by the time of our reaching the interior, the new party would have fallen into good order. Political events at Aden also prevented our detaining the H. E. I. C.'s Schooner

Mahi, whose presence would have rendered the start safe, and once in the interior, we were secure from the Bedouins who have a horror of fire-arms. Had our letters, sent from Aden, arrived within a moderate time, we should have been enabled to leave Berberah with the Ogadayn caravan. Such & a multitude of similar little combinations, have given rise to our late disaster. Yet, my opinion of the Somal is unchanged, nor would I assume the act of a band of brigands to be the expression of a people's animus. My wound will, for the present, compel me to return for a while home.

But the officers whom I have had the honour to command, profess themselves willing to accompany me once more on the task of African exploration & the next time we could start from Kurrum; a safe though a less interesting road. Should we be deterred by the loss of a single life, however valuable, from prosecuting plans now made public, we shall not rise in the estimation of the races around us. On the contrary, should we, after duly chastising them, carry out our original projects, we shall win the respect of the people & prevent the re-occurrence of these fatal scenes. The sum of money which will be recovered from the Eesa Musa will enable us to start once more,

and should the Court of Directors grant us a year's additional leave, as already applied for, that time would be ample for us to reach the Southern Webbis. In fact, permission to carry out our original plans is the sole recompense we hope for the sufferings we are now enduring.

Trusting that my present state of hurry & confusion may be admitted as an excuse for the various deficiencies of this hasty report,

I have, etc.,

Richd. F. Burton, Lt.

Aden, 23rd. April, 1855.

1. Colonel William Coughlin had succeeded Colonel Outram as British Resident at Aden.
2. A *buggalow*, or *bar'ghalla*, elsewhere called a *sambuk*, is a two-masted, half-decked sailing ship, then common in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.

II (b)

[April 1855].

G. E. Herne to R. F. Burton. Letter Book.*Transcript in Burton's hand, appended to his own report to Coughlin.*

18th Regt.

Commg. Somali Exped.

Sir,

Agreeably to your request, I have the honour to report that on the morning of the 19th, between the hours of 2 & 3, we were attacked by a body of men, about 200, said to belong to the Eesa Musa & Aea Ahmed portions of the Habr Awal. The first notice I had of the attack was from you, who awoke me & told me that we were about to be attacked. I immediately got up, seizing my revolver, and went to the rear & left side of the encampment from whence the attack first appeared to be made, I had just time to get to the front, where I joined some of our men, when I heard a rush of men & fired two shots. Finding myself left alone, I fell back upon the tent, in so doing I was upset either by the ropes or some other thing which

caused the revolver to go off. Upon rising, I saw a man in the act of striking me with a club, at whom I fired and he fell back, wounded. Arriving at the tent where I met you & Lt. Speke, I again shot a man who was in the act of entering the tent, he also fell back. After this, I endeavoured to find my powder horn, but not being successful, endeavoured to find some spears that used always to be tied to the pole of the Rowtie, whilst you & Lt. Speke were defending the entrance, but these had been taken away. I again made another attempt to find my powder horn when I observed men entering in rear of the Rowtie. I levelled my revolver, it snapped. When I again came to the front of the Rowtie, which was evidently being let down upon us, you requested us to make a dash through them, which I did, as you well know.

When we reached the sand below, I saw you attacking a man who gave you a wound in the mouth. Upon your falling back, I, having nothing but what I thought at the time an unloaded pistol, & as they did not attempt to renew the attack, I fell back. In so doing, I came upon a body of 10 or 12 men who made way for me & allowed me to pass. I then went & took up a position some 30 yards from the attack & seeing

no one, I again retreated to the rear, where I and Emam, with whom I retreated to the empty huts of the town, hoping to fall in with you & Lt. Speke, but not doing so, I took up a position on a sand mound, where I remained till nearly dawn, & upon Balyuz the Ras Kafilah, calling out, I went to him, & he took me where he said we had left you. There I remained till morning when, seeing the only Buggalow in the harbour as, I thought, about to leave, I first sent the Seedy Farhan to stay it & quickly followed, having sent Balyuz to gain information of what had become of the others belonging to our party.

With regard to the death of Lt. Stroyan, I did not see anything of that officer till he was brought on board the Buggalow, dead. It was my intention to have brought his body to Aden, but on the 20th, it having become offensive & the men of the Buggalow complaining, I had him sewn up & buried him at sea, having read the service over his body.

In conclusion, I beg to remark that the attack which occurred was an accident, not to be avoided by any of the ordinary methods of prudence. Two sentries had been duly placed, one in front, the other in rear & the men had been especially ordered not to fire

over the heads of their enemies. Had any of the Guard or Somalis stood, we should have resisted the attack, but under such overpowering numbers, we had no chance. I beg leave to remark that I have sustained a loss of some 400 or 500 Rs. I sincerely hope that this accident may not interfere with our hopes of African travel & profess my willingness to form one of the party as before.

(Sd.) *Herne*.

II (c)

[April 1855].

J. H. Speke to R. F. Burton. Letter Book.

Transcript in Burton's hand, appended to his own report to Coughlin.

Statement of Lt. Speke of the 46th Regt.

Bomy. N. I. on special duty under the orders of Lt. Burton, 18th Regt. N. I.

I retired to rest in my tent, which was situated on the extreme left of our encampment & distant from the tent

in which Lts. Burton & Herne were about 10 paces. I was awoken about 3 a.m. on the morning of the 19th *inst.*, by hearing Lt. Burton crying out to Lt. Stroyan, "Get up, old fellow," almost at the same instant, I heard the report of 3 discharges from fire-arms, as if fired in a volley, the sound proceeded from the rear of my tent. Conceiving it to be nothing but firing to keep off persons supposed to be prowling about the camp, or, in other words, a false alarm, I remained in my tent. Immediately after, I heard, as it were, a beating of clubs on my tent (a Sepoy's No. 1 Rowtie) & a shuÒing of feet outside. On this I ran across to Lt. Burton's tent & asked him if there was "any shooting," meaning, were we attacked? He replied, "I should *rather* think that there is." I then took my revolver & went outside the tent, receiving a smart blow on the knee from a stone, but could see nothing. I put myself in position to watch whoever might approach, & soon saw 2 heads peeping over our ammunition boxes about 7 or 8 yards to my left, but I did not fire at them, not being certain of my shot. Shortly after, I saw other 2 Somalis bent down or crouching along, advancing with their shields before their bodies & their spears ready poised in their hands, either to throw or strike. I fired my pistol and,

apparently, wounded a man, as he staggered back. These men were about 7 paces from me, they were followed by other men behind them. I fired twice at these men, but am unable to state with what effect, they fell back but not as the first party at whom I had fired, being mere regulars. I then rushed amongst them & found that the pistol, a "Dean & Adams", would no longer revolve. Whilst holding it within 2 yards of a man's breast, I rec'd a wound on my shoulder from either a spear or knife & a smart blow on my lungs from a club, which took away my breath & felled me to the earth, & whilst down, 2 or 3 men pounced on me & pinioned my hands behind my back, & then led me away, as Prisoner, toward my tent, which was almost down, & seeing a number of people were there, they led me away to the rear of Lt. Burton's tent.

I should have said that, whilst I was being pinioned, they felt my private parts, as if searching if I had any arms concealed about me. Then, we being stationary in rear of the camp, the Somali who was leading me said, "none of the party had been killed & that they would not kill me." I then felt faint from the effect of the blow of the cudgel, which caused me great pain, & prevented my breathing without difficulty.

I, therefore, asked them in the Somali tongue, to unloose my hands from behind & to tie them in front instead, as I could not breathe & was in great pain, they complied with my request & made me kneel down, & a number of Somalis came around & threatened to drive their spears through me, but the person who held me bound would not allow them to do so. They then tried to compel me to lie down, but I was unable to do so from the pain of the wound I had received. They then brought a coverlet for me to lie on, on which I cast myself down & at my request, they immediately brought me water to drink. I remained thus till daylight. About this time, a Somali who spoke Hindustani came up, & asked me what business I had coming into his country. I replied that I was going to Zanzibar, he then asked me whether I was a Musselman or a Christian, that if I was a Mus. he would spare my life, but if a Chr., he would kill me. I replied that I was a Chr. & that he had better kill me. On this he laughed & went away. Shortly after my first custodian left me to join in the general plunder of our late encampment, which at this time, commenced. I was then left bound by myself. About 5 " [minutes] after my captor had left me, I saw the whole body of the Somalis move oĩ to some little distance as

if in apprehension of an attack upon them, but they shortly after returned & commenced fighting & wrangling about division of our property. Another party made a rush on our cattle & drove them away before them to encampment, thus to add the cattle with our property, 'til all was nearly cleared oġ. During this time, a Somali approached me & whirling a sword round him, pretended to strike me, as if with the intention of killing me but refrained from actually striking me. He acted thus twice & then left me to join in the plunder. He was succeeded by a man with a spear, who commenced spearing me. Once I caught his spear, but he pulled a club out of his girdle & gave me a such a violent blow, that it quite paralysed my arm & caused me to drop the spear.

He tried to spear my heart, but I caught it with my hand, which was severely cut on the back, he speared me also in the right shoulder & in my left thigh & then paused a little & came round to my right side & passed his spear sharply through my right thigh. Seeing that he was determined to kill me, I jumped up, with a menacing look at the man, which caused him to fall back a little. I seized the opportunity of his being thrown oġ his guard & ran toward the sea & looking

round, I saw that he had cast his spear at me, which I managed to avoid, & picking my way amongst the Somalis, who flung a shower of 12 to 15 spears at me, which I avoided & ran on, till I found out that I was not pursued. And I then lay down under a sand hill, exhausted from loss of blood, but after I had recovered a little, I wobbled on to Berberah, where some old women directed me to go on. I did so & met some of our party coming to meet me. These were the first of ours that I had seen since I was knocked down. By the assistance of these people, I managed to wobble down to the vessel about 3 miles away at the head of the reef, the entrance to the harbour.

During the whole affair, I did not see Lt. Stroyan once & can therefore give no information concerning his fate. The Somalis plundered me of about 4100 Rs. worth of personal property. I am perfectly willing to start again as soon as my wounds are healed & I sincerely hope that the Govt. will not think of putting an end to the expedition.

(Sd.) *J. H. Speke.*

Aden, Apr.

* * * * *

The death of his friend Stroyan, the loss of his money and property, and the harm done to his reputation (a Court of Inquiry ruled that Burton had been negligent in not posting a sufficient number of guards around the camp), were a severe blow to Burton, but the most serious repercussion of the Somali Expedition would prove to be in its effect on his relationship with Speke.

During the height of the Somali raid on the camp, as Herne, Speke and Burton stood facing their attackers in front of Burton's tent, Speke had stepped back towards the entrance of the tent in order to get a better view of his targets. Seeing this out of the corner of his eye, Burton had called out: "Don't step back, or they will think we are retiring!" Speke, who had proven himself in more military actions than Burton ever had, took this as a rebuke and launched himself back into the fray. Burton was wounded in the face immediately afterwards, and later forgot what he had said in the heat of battle, but Speke did not. This brave, proud, and hypersensitive man never forgave Burton for his comment and nursed a growing resentment which would tragically affect both their lives.

To make matters worse, believing that any

collections made by a member of the expedition should become the property of the Government, without first securing permission Burton gave the collection of animal and bird skins which Speke had intended for his own private collection to the Bengal Museum. Furthermore, when Burton published his own account of the ill-fated expedition in the *Journal* of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal (vol. XXIV, 1855), he included Speke's notes in an appendix entitled "Diary and Observations Made by Lieutenant Speke, When Attempting to Reach the Wady Nogal," without having first asked permission of his lieutenant. Although Burton gave Speke full credit for his role in the expedition, as well as for the faunal collections—writing that "Lieut. Speke has been himself most zealous in collecting and preserving skins, even under the most adverse circumstances"—the usurpation by Burton of both his intellectual and temporal "property" rankled with Speke. In none of these situations, however, did Speke express his feelings—which would have given Burton the chance to apologise and make redress—but kept his anger and resentment bottled up inside.

At the end of April 1855, Burton and Speke were both invalided home, and they recovered from their

wounds remarkably quickly. War had broken out in the Crimea, and both men volunteered for duty. Neither saw as much action as they might have wished, and after the end of hostilities Burton returned to his original plans for the exploration of central Africa.

That Speke had temporarily given up on his own inclinations towards Africa is suggested by the fact that, immediately after his release from active duty in the Crimea, he arranged for an extended hunting trip to the Caucasus Mountains. He had already booked his passage (travelling with another young Englishman called Laurence Oliphant, who comes into the story later), and purchased his hunting rifles when a letter from Burton arrived with an invitation to join a new expedition.

Later, in the introduction to his book *The Lake Regions of Central Africa* (1860), Burton would explain his reasons for again asking Speke to accompany him:

As he had suffered with me in purse and person at Berberah in 1855, I thought it but just to offer him an opportunity of renewing an attempt to penetrate into Africa.

Speke's motives for accepting Burton's invitation are more complex, however, and in the light of later events

warrant close examination. We can see, both from letters included in this volume (*see XII and XXIV*) as well as from various passages in his published books and articles, that even before the two men set out on their march to the lake regions in 1857 Speke resented Burton, felt cheated by him, and thought him a "rotten person" who had lied about his famous journeys to Mecca and Harar.

If Speke felt such strong dislike for Burton, one wonders what made him decide to join him again, rather than organising his own expedition or waiting to join someone else's? Certainly he was drawn to the question of the Nile source, and he must have reasoned that Burton's expedition was likely to discover it. But he may have also harboured a hope that by going with Burton he would, by accident or otherwise, find himself to the fore on the path to glory.

In all probability, Speke himself probably never fully understood his own motivations, or the tangled and volatile mixture of ambition and desire for revenge that led him to join Burton on his expedition to the lake regions of central Africa.

* * * * *

III

April 1856.

*R. F. Burton to N. Shaw.*¹ Letter Book.

Norton Shaw Esq.,
Sec. Roy. Geog. Soc.

Sir,

I venture to request through you that the Roy. Geog. Soc. of Great Brit. will afford me their powerful aid in carrying out my original project of penetrating into Eastern Africa. But lately Col. Sykes,² Dep. Chairman of the Honourable E. I. C. [East India Company], informed me that the plan might be revived by a recommendation from the Roy. Geog. Soc. I doubt not that my humble efforts to advance the cause of East. Geog. will, in the estimation of that learned body, be admitted as a reason for permitting me to extend my researches now into perhaps the most interesting region in the world.

I am prepared to start alone & if proofed [*sic*] necessary disguised as an Arab merchant.

Should, however, the R. Geog. Soc. incline toward

an expedit., under the idea that a virgin country of such extent as the line proposed could scarcely be investigated satisfactorily by a single traveller, I shall be happy to place before them a detailed scheme for operations in the interior, combined with a survey of the imperfectly charted coast from Ras Hafun to the Mozambique. The latter object being made subsequent to the main plan.

“1st mistake—go further north.”

Hoping to receive from you a line in reply. I have the honour to subscribe myself. etc., etc.

[*unsigned*].

April 1856.

1. Dr. Norton Shaw was Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society from 1848–63, see *Journal*, vol. 39, p. cxlvii (1869), and vol. 50, pp. 44–45, (1880).
2. Col. William Sykes, had written in the *Journal*, vol. xxxiii, p. 101 (1852), “Notes on the Possessions of the Imam of Muskat, on the Climate and Production of Zanzibar, and on the Prospects of African Discovery from Mombas.”

IV

19 April 1856.

R F. Burton to N. Shaw. Letter Book.

The Secretary,
Royal Geog. Soc.

Sir,

I have the honour to return thanks for the communication forwarded to me through you by the Council of the Royal ꞑ, informing me that my offer of services shall be duly considered.

As further information upon the subject of my present project may come at this stage of the proceedings be deemed necessary, I have the honour to propose the following outline which shall be filled up when required.

The want of precise information concerning Zanzibar & the East Coast of Afr. has been noticed in a paper published by Col. Sykes (June '52) in the *Tr[ansactions]* of the Royal ꞑ. The scientific author remarks that a country mentioned in the *Periplus* & *Pliny*, subjugated by the Portuguese, visited successively by English, Frank & Americans, & still having diplomatic relations with those powers, is almost a geographical blank.

The , desire, I believe, to form an expedition primarily for the 1) purpose of ascertaining the limits of the Ujiji Lake, 2) secondarily to determine the exportable produce of the interior & the ethnography of the tribes.

I have had the honour to volunteer my services, with permission of the Honble. Court of Dir. of the E. I. C. & now submit for the better judgement of the Council the steps which appear likely to forward the views of the Expedition.

Proceeding to India, at the close of next Sept., I would there make preparations for the journey. An order from Govt. would enable me to collect from the vessels in Bo[mbay] Harbour a sufficient number (from 10–12) of the Swahili blacks used in our steamers as lascars & coal-trimmers. Having prepared my outfit & instruments & armed the men with muskets, my next step would be to repair, with the first of the N. E. Monsoon, to the island of Zanzibar.

*“Not Swahilis—
runaway slaves.”*

Strong letters from the House, or the Indian, or other Govts. having Consuls, would ensure the co-operation of the several oÑcials, and through them, of H. H. the Imam of M[uskat], who claims the

mainland. At Zanz., the party would be augmented to the number of 20 Swahili *porters*, as advised by the Revd. Mr. Erhardt.¹ There too,

“We had about
60 (50-75),
besides guns.”

final arrangements could be made for the caravan, the beads—always a delicate article of trade—should be purchased, a few beasts of burden—asses or mules provided for riding in case of sickness or accident & the wages of the porters (fr. 4 to 6 pence *per diem*), be made payable on return.

The unhealthy season at Zanzibar was supposed, as in India, to follow the monsoon. It is now believed that the best time for travelling would be in July, A., or Sept. The worst months being M. & June. I have, however, little fear of the climate, being convinced from the appearance of the natives, that the interior is healthy, & would prefer setting out at a time when water—the great want—is, in these regions, in abundance.

“Error, food is
the great want.”

As regards outfit, I may observe that the caravan commerce of Zanz. exactly resembles that of the Som. country, namely, American sheeting (Domestics), Sa’uda Wilayati, or indigo-dyed cotton, & beads of sorts.

“Hardware,
knives, needles,
etc. for presents.”

I have already had the honour to record my

willingness to proceed alone to E. Africa. Yet, it would scarcely be wise to stake success upon a single life, when 2 or 3 travellers would, at all times, be safer, & in case of accident, more likely to preserve the results of their labours. I should therefore propose as my companion, Lt. Speke of the B. A., if added with a sergeant or non-commissioned officer for the purpose of assisting us in observations & sundries, we should be enabled to perform a more perfect work.

The would doubtless not be contented with a mere exploration of the U[jiji] Lake. It is gen. believed [by Arab merchants] that the sources of the White R. [*i.e.* the Nile] are to be found in the mass of mountains lying between 1° S. & 1° N. lat., & 32° & 36° E. long. Moreover, the routes of Arab caravans who in 18 mths. have traversed Africa returning from Benguela to Mozambique, force upon us the
“Prevented by coin.” feasibility of extensive exploration. These two are separate & distinct objects. They would, however, be greatly facilitated by a preparatory exped. to the U. Lakes, as the information there procured by an intelligent eyewitness, would serve for the better guidance of his successors.

The increased attention now paid by Europe to

E. Africa renders, in my humble opinion, another exertion on our part necessary.

The surveys of the late Lt. Carless, I. N., did not extend beyond Ras Hafun, about 90m. S. of Guard[afui]. From that point to the Mozambique the coast is still known by Capt. Owens's *Voy. to Survey the Eastn. C. of Africa*.² The greater part of this work, from Ras H. through the Mozambique Channel, was merely a running survey which, to the present day, has not been completed. Indeed, in a return made to the House of Commons from the Hydrographic Dept. of the Admiralty in 1848, it is stated that, "many researches might profitably be made from Delgoa Bay to the Red Sea." The prospects of Eastern intercourse, moreover, warrant our believing that a line of steamers will soon be established from the Cape of G. Hope to Aden, passing by the Mauritius and Zanz., the Key of the E. coast. An accurate hydrography and geography of the African seaboard would, as in the case of the Red Sea, be the fittest purpose to a new navigation.

At Bo[mbay] there are several vessels convertible to this use, the surveying Brig *Euphrates* & 3 small schooners, the *Tigris*, *Nubia* & *Constann* which, at a trifling expense, could be made available. One of these,

commanded by an experienced naval surveyor, as for instance Lt. Grieve, Lt. Taylor or Lt. Constable, with a full compliment of competent officers, after conveying *the personnel* & material of the expedition to Zanz., could commence operations from Ras Hafun southwards. It would serve as a store ship for presents and provisions, keep open the communication, & as the rate of naval surveying in these latitudes is mostly uniform (2 m. *per d.* being a fair average on a difficult coast), it would be easy to find, if forced to fall back upon it for support. At the same time, the commander & crew would be employed upon the eminently useful task of surveying the coast, whose reefs, currents & islands are still perilous to navigation, & the invaluable effect of Brit. cruisers in these Seas, establish amicable intercourse with the tribes & secure to us advantages political as well as commercial.

With apology for the haste in which this paper has been drawn up. I have the honour to subscribe myself, Sir, Yr. mst. obt. serv.,

R. F. B., Bo. A.

14 St. J. Sq.

19 April, 1856.

1. In Erhardt and Rebmann's reports to the in 1855, they recommended the use of only 20 porters and an amount of \$300 as sufficient for a year's expedition to the lake regions. These estimates were totally inadequate for an effective expedition, and the resultant underfunding by the created severe problems for Burton's expedition.
2. Captain W. F. W. Owens, author of *Narrative of Voyages to Explore the Shores of Africa, Arabia and Madagascar; performed in H. M. Ships Leven and Barracouta* (1833).

v

13 September 1856.

[*Hon. East India Company*] to *R. F. Burton*. Letter Book.

This is an official letter pasted into the Letter Book. The writer's name was indecipherable even to Burton, who wrote "illegible" beside the signature.

East India House.

13th September, 1856.

Sir,

I am commanded by the Court of Directors of the East India Company to inform you that in compliance with the request of the Royal Geographical Society, you are

permitted to be absent from your duties as a regimental officer whilst employed with an expedition under the patronage of Her Majesty's Government to be dispatched into Equatorial Africa, for the exploration of that country, for a period not exceeding two years. I am directed to add that you are permitted to draw the pay and allowances of your rank during the period of your absence, which will be calculated from the date of your departure from Bombay.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

[*illegible*].

VI

30 September 1856.

*H. Barth*¹ to *R. F. Burton*.

Sept. 30 '56.

My dear Captain,

I can, of course, not expect you to undertake another journey to St. John's Wood before you start on your

great expedition, although if you had an hour to spare, I would have liked very much to see you & your companion Capt. Speke. Should I not have the pleasure of seeing you again, I beg you to remember Ngombo, a commercial place, the southern part of the E. shore of lake Nyassa, where, I am sure, there is, or, at least, was at the time, considerable trade going on and canoes in considerable quantity; the lake being here, as it seems, about fifty miles across.

“*Ngombe.*”

“*Certainly not.*”

Opposite, on the W. shore, but not as close to the lake as it seems, is the residence of a chief, who is styled “king of Nyassa”: The place is called Rongwe. Whatever be the nature of the Northern part of the lake, I am sure you will find signs of Commercial activity in their Southern part.

With the most ardent wishes for your success,
yours most truly,

H. Barth.

1. Henry Barth travelled in Africa from 1849 to 1855, and wrote five volumes of *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa* (1857).

VII

25 November 1856.

*R. F. Burton to H. L. Anderson.*¹ Letter Book.

Eden Hall.

25 Novr. '56.

Sir,

I have the honour to request that you will, at your earliest convenience, bring the following circumstances to the notice of his Lordship in Council.

1. Lt. Speke, 46 B. N. I., now on furlough, has volunteered to accompany me to Zanzibar. In 1854, under similar circumstances, Sir J. Outram placed Lt. Speke on duty with the Som. Exped. under my command, pending the sanction of the Gov. of India by whom the measure was at once confirmed. I have the honour to request that his Lord. in Coun. will, on this occasion, do the same for Lt. Speke, as that oÈcer, from his experience & energy, will be of material use to the Exploring Exped. in E. A.

2. Asst. Surg. Steinh[aeuser]² C. S. [Company Surgeon] Aden, also expressed his wish to accompany us on the pay & allowances of his rank. I left directions

with him to join us at Zanzibar as soon as he receives an order enabling him to leave Aden. Should a medical officer be sent up to act for him, Dr. Steinh. would start at once, or he might deliver over charge to someone at Aden. His L. in Counc. would thus materially forward our interests, as Dr. Steinh. is as proficient in Nat. Hist., & will be a most useful companion, where fevers abound & medical knowledge is at a premium. I have, etc.

R. F. B.

The Pol. Sec. to Gov.,
Bombay.

1. H. L. Anderson was Political Secretary to the Indian Army Government, Bombay.
2. Assistant Surgeon John Steinhæuser met Burton in India and became one of his closest friends. The two men discussed making a literal translation of the *Arabian Nights* stories; a project Burton would finally complete in 1885. Steinhæuser was Burton's first choice as assistant for the East African expedition but at the last minute was unable to join due to illness. One can only imagine how the outcome of this story would have changed had Steinhæuser been able to join Burton and Speke.

CHAPTER FOUR

ZANZIBAR, PANGANI
AND MOMBASA

JANUARY - JUNE 1857

FOUR

Richard Burton's expedition from Zanzibar to the lake regions of central Africa was a pioneering effort. His was the first in a series of explorations which would later include those led by Speke, Livingstone, Stanley, Cameron, Thomson and others. Burton himself was keenly aware that being a pioneer also meant that any mistakes he made would have repercussions for the expeditions that followed.

One area of which few travellers had any experience was the selection and hiring of bearers and staff: Burton chose to rely on the advice of the British Consul to Zanzibar, Lt.-Col. Atkins Hamerton. Hamerton, who had been "Resident" on the island for fifteen years, knew better than anyone the going rate for bearers, and personally negotiated and guaranteed their salaries. However, when Burton added up the money promised by Hamerton to the bearers, he found it came to more than he had been granted by the Royal Geographical Society.

Burton wrote to the about the problem of salary

payments throughout the two years of his expedition, but the question was never resolved, and tragically, Hamerton, the one person who would have seen to it that his promises were honoured, died just after Burton and Speke had left for the mainland. Christopher Rigby, Hamerton's successor, should have honoured his predecessor's promises, but deliberately chose not to, leaving Burton with a major problem on his hands when his expedition returned to Zanzibar. Later, we will see how the repercussions of this situation bedevilled Burton for long afterwards.

* * * * *

VIII

5 January 1857.

R. F. Burton to N. Shaw. Letter Book.

Zanzibar.

5 Jan. 1857.

Sir,

I have the honour to report for the information of the Expeditions Committee of the Royal Geographical

Society, that we arrived at Zanzibar on the 19th Dec., that I forwarded to your address on the 27th Dec., an account of our proceedings and that, today, we leave this island for the East African coast.

The excessive dryness of the season in the interior and the unsettled state of affairs consequent upon the decease of H. H. the late Imam of Muskat, have rendered a preparatory visit to the mainland advisable. I propose therefore to touch at the different harbours and especially to ascertain from Mr. Rebmann,¹ the cause which has prevented his acknowledging in any way, whether by letter or message, the communication of his employers, the Missionary Society.

I have hired a *Bdau*, or Arab craft, at an expense of 32 dollars *per mensem*, our expenses at Zanzibar including provisions for two months and hire of vessel for one month, amount to dollars [*left blank*] = £ [*left blank*].

A detailed account of outlay shall be forwarded to you as soon as we return from the coast.

I propose submitting to the Society, at the close of our preparatory excursion, a detailed report concerning the island of Zanzibar, and an account of our proceedings while visiting the harbours of the mainland.

In conclusion, we have to acknowledge the kindest & most hospitable reception by H. B. M.'s Consul Col. Hamerton, & expressions of goodwill forwarded by H. H. Sayyid Said's son & successor, the Sayyid Majid.² This Prince is confined to the house, by the consequences of small pox; he has, however, sent with us a confidential person to facilitate our enquiry's, and has provided us with an official letter to his employees on the E. coast of Africa.

I am, Sir,

[*unsigned*].

The Secretary,
Roy. Geog. Soc.

1. Johann Rebmann (1820–1876), joined the Church Missionary Society at Mombasa in 1846. With Johann Ludwig Krapf (1810–1881) he was the first European to see Mt. Kilimanjaro in 1846.
2. His Highness, Sayyid Said, Sultan of Zanzibar and Imam of Muscat, moved his headquarters from Oman to Zanzibar in 1840, and on his death his son Sayyid Majid became Sultan of Zanzibar.

IX

2 February 1857.

N. Shaw to R. F. Burton. Letter Book.

“*Received*
5th Dec. '58
Ugogo.”

15 Whitehall Place, London.

2nd February, 1857.

My dear Sir,

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated Bombay, Dec. 1st, 1856, informing me of your departure on that day for Zanzibar, and to express my regret that you are not able to procure the officer of the Indian Navy and the Sergeant from the Bombay Observatory, whose assistance you required in making the necessary astronomical observations.

Let me hope that Captain Speke will be able to join and assist you. The Instructions, which were duly forwarded for you to Lord Elphinston, through Colonel Sykes, will be your guidance, and the Council are glad to be informed by you that you have obtained the necessary supply of Instruments from the Bombay Government. This supply, in addition to the Chronometer from the Hydrographic Office, and the

Barometer from Dr. Buist will probably suffice; but should more be necessary, they can be transmitted at once for this, upon application from you. I trust the Francis Metallic Life Boat and other necessaries mentioned by you for the Expedition have arrived with you safely at Zanzibar.

Should the £750 cash received by you not prove sufficient, you are aware that you will be empowered to draw on the Society for a further sum of 250£ *next year*.

In conclusion, let me wish you every possible success, and hoping often to hear good news from you, I remain, in haste, my dear Sir, very truly yours,

Norton Shaw.

Present my compliments to Col. Hamerton.

X

March or April 1857.

R. F. Burton to [unknown correspondent]. Letter Book.

This is the last paragraph only of a fragment of a letter. If it was originally intended for either Anderson or Shaw, the letter's facetious tone would indicate that Burton never did send a final copy which included these remarks.

... willing therefore, as I would win that highest of rewards, the gratitude of my fellow-countrymen, by reducing the price of carriage varnish, I must fairly confess it to be beyond my powers. The sole remedy for the manifold diseases of this *Bona terra* with its *mala gens* is "Time"—perhaps an occasional East African expedition might be administered to advantage.

We have, I am happy to say, shaken off the miasmatic fever of the coast & are ready to set out again when the Rains show any sign of abating. Dr. Steinhæuser has not joined us, but we are in hourly hopes of the welcome event: his presence will be no small comfort in a sickly climate and where we must expect to suffer from the hardships, expense and various incidents of African exploration. I have the honour etc.,

Richd. F. Burton.

H. B. M.'s Consulate, Zanzibar.

22 April 1857.

R. F. Burton to N. Shaw. Letter Book.

The Secretary,
Royal Geographical Society.

Sir,

I have the honour to forward for the information of the Expeditionary Committee of the Royal Geographical Society of Gt. Britain, a field book containing our route survey from Pangani to Fuga, our remarks upon the coast, and an account of our expenditure.

On the 5th Janry. 1857, I intimated to you our intention of visiting the E. African mainland. The death of H. H. Sayyid Said, the undecided succession, and the troubled state of the interior, then suffering from famine, war, and draught rendered a preparatory expedition advisable. We could obtain no useful information from the European merchants of Zanzibar, who are mostly ignorant of everything beyond the Island. The Arabs and Sawahilis, ever averse to, and fearful of, white travellers, did give us

information, but it was worse than none. We had not heard from the Revd. Mr. Rebmann, who still remained at the Mission house near Mombas. And finally, it was judged expedient to be seasoned by fever on the Coast before attempting the far lake.

Arrived at Mombas, we visited Mr. Rebmann, who had not received the communication of the Church Missionary Society. The Revd. Gentleman is now at Zanzibar. I have been strongly advised by Colonel Atkins Hamerton, H. B. M.'s Consul, by whose long experiences and friendly council I have been and shall be guided in all points, on no account to associate this missionary with the expedition. He suffers from enlarged spleen, he is unfit for walking and hard work. He has never used a gun and he is ignorant of the language and localities beyond Mombas. Finally, though I have personally the highest respect for Mr. Rebmann, his presence would give a missionary semblance to the Expedition and prove a real calamity. Certain unwarrantable political interferences on the part of the Revd. Dr. Krapf have rendered the estimable body to which he belongs particularly unpopular at Zanzibar.

Returning to Pangani, I received from Mr. Henry L. Anderson, the Political Secretary to Govt., Bombay,

a copy of a letter from the Medical Board, Bombay, recommending that Asst. Surgeon Steinhæuser, B. A., for whose services I had applied, should be furnished with such medicines & surgical instruments as he may consider necessary. Further, that to assist in the advancement of scientific research, these Meteorological instruments may be obtained from the Medical Stores, Bombay, and placed at his disposal.

Mountain Barometer—2.

Samuel's Hygrometer—2.

Ether— $\frac{1}{2}$ lb.

Common Thermometers—6.

B. P. [boiling point] Do. [dozen]—1.

Max. & min. self-registering Thermometers —2 Sets.

Under the same enclosure was transmitted, for my information, copies of a letter from Dr. George Buist, Secretary Bombay Geographical Society, dated 8th Dec., 1856, conveying certain useful suggestions with regard to the expedition. I am about to supply the Bombay Geo. Soc. with a few geological specimens and an account of copal digging in these regions, in consequence of Mr. Secretary Anderson's letter & hope that the Royal Geo. Society will approve of the step.

I am most grateful for this supply of extra instruments. We have, at present, the following articles, some of which, as will be seen, are unsound. Dr. Buist (*Manual of Physical Research*) feelingly complains of “the unskilfulness, not to say, gross negligence with which instruments exported to India, are put up.” I have frequently had occasion to lament the carelessness, not to say the dishonesty, with which those supplied to Govt. in India are constructed. Cheapness appears the sole desideratum. A showy article is turned out and after a week hard work becomes useless...

Returning to Pangani on the 21st Febr., we lost no time in catching fever. Capt. Speke, my Portuguese servant and I were attacked by the disorder—a severe bilious remittent—on the same day. My companions were comparatively fortunate: the fever clung to me for a week and left me in the condition of a hard-ridden old woman. Under the circumstances, it was judged advisable to postpone the remainder of our coasting voyage and to seek medical aid at Zanzibar without delay. We arrived here on the 6th March and were received with his usual kindness and hospitality by Col. Hamerton. We are both recovering by degrees from the consequences of fever, and hope soon to be

duly seasoned for travel into the interior. The rainy season and S. W. Monsoon have finally set in: we shall, therefore, be confined to the Island for some time. We are now engaged in providing ourselves with an outfit, which for economy's sake must be purchased before the season opens, in applying to the Prince for an escort, and in making ready the hundred impediments which belong to African travel...

The accounts promulgated in Europe about the facility of penetrating inland from Kiloa [Quiloa] and the economy of travel in that region, are fabulous. The Southern Sawahilis are most [*sic*] hostile to explorers than the inhabitants of the Northern Maritime towns, and their distance from the seat of Govt. renders them daring by impunity. But last year, they persuaded the Wagindo tribe of the interior to murder a peaceful Arab merchant, so that strangers might be detained from interfering with their commerce. Messrs. Krapf & Erhardt, of the Mombas Mission, spent a few hours at Kiloa: they were civilly received by the Governor and citizens, but they sadly deceived themselves in imagining that they could make that post their starting point. Lieut. Christopher, I. N., who visited the coast about 1843,

in the H. E. I. Co. Brig *Tigris*, more wisely advises the Neighbourhood of Kiloa to be avoided.

We shall probably land at Bagamoyo, as yet, however, this point cannot be determined. I scarcely anticipate being able to set out before the middle of June *prox.*, as the Moslem feast month intervenes. This is a loss of time but I will endeavour to utilise my residence upon the Island by drawing up a description of it and an ethnographical account of the slave races on the neighbouring mainland.

On the 24th March 1857, I received from the Secretary to Govt. Bombay, an official letter transmitting copy of a communication from the Secretary to Govt. Bengal (No. 170 of 5 Janry. '57). according permission to Capt. Speke, B. A., and Asst. Surgeon Steinhaeuser, Civil Surgeon Aden, to accompany the expedition, on the pay and allowances of their rank. I cannot but express the warmest gratitude to H. E. Lord Elphinstone, to the Honble. Mr. Lumsden, and to other members of the local Govt., who added to a long list of former favours by providing me with these staunch & valued companions. The Virgin ground of E. Africa is a field far too extensive for a single observer: the coast climate does not yield in fatality to that of the

Western coast, and the jealousy of Arab & Sawahili traders may assume a more virulent form in the interior. Under these circumstances, the presence of an able Surgeon and two tried men is by no means to be despised. Dr. Steinhæuser has not joined us yet, but we still indulge hopes that he may be on his way. Before leaving Zanzibar, I shall not fail to send for Mr. Francis Galton¹ a list of what articles we take with us and, on our return—should it happen—an account of what we bring back. Trusting that the Expeditionary Committee of the Royal Geo. Society will approve of our past proceedings and of our future plans.

I have the honour to subscribe myself,

Sir,

R. F. Burton.

H. B. M.'s Consulate, Zanzibar.

22 April '57.

1. Francis Galton (1822–1911), a cousin of Charles Darwin, was a pioneer in the studies of genetics, psychology, meteorology and anthropology. He was also an authority on travel and exploration equipment and kit.

XII

[June 1857].

J. H. Speke to his mother.

This is a battered fragment of a single-leaf, two page letter, originally folded into thirds, of which all but the bottom third of the front page, and the bottom third of the reverse page are missing. The letter, referring in part to Speke's conversations with Burton and Colonel Hamerton, is clear evidence that before the two men ever set out on their journey inland Speke had taken a dislike to Burton, resented his patronising attitude toward him, and was cynical about his leader's achievements. We must assume that Burton was, at this point, unaware of Speke's hostility.

[*recto*] ...preaches to me in the evening what I say to the Colonel in morning. It is truly laughable to watch the progress of this circular communication. I have now had ample analogous proof that B. never went to Mecca & Harar in the common acceptation of that word but got artful natives to take him to those places, & I won't swear he did many a trick at their instigation that would...

[*verso*] ...harm. We received a truly kind & warm reception when we visited the [Mombasa] mission house. Wishing I could find something more amusing

to communicate than such rot about a rotten person,
and with much love to Father & the three Graces,¹
believe me to be,

Yr. most aŕect. Son,

J. H. Speke.

N.B. Thank God we have at last fixed on the 10th
June as the day for starting, and such luck for Burton,
the Colonel has agreed to furnish some money so now
we ought to be able to move as he intended, but with
the means instead of without.

1. The "three Graces" undoubtedly refer to Speke's
sisters, Matilda, Sophia and Georgina.

XIII

25 June 1857.

Receipt from A. Hamerton. Letter Book.

Burton and Speke are now on their way from Zanzibar to Bagamoyo.

At Sea,
on board H. H. Corvette *Artemise*
oĭ Koali Bunder, 25 June, 1857.

Received from Captain Burton, 18th B. N. I., the under-mentioned articles, property belonging to the Honourable E. I. Company Government.

- 1—Tool chest containing sundry tools.
- 1—Thermometer, boiling, broken.
- 1—Pot boiling thermometer with handles.
- 1—Anchor & Chain Cable.
- 1—Chronometer in box (by Edward Baker, London).

A. Hamerton, Lt.-Col.

H. M.'s Consul.

H. E. Agent, Zanzibar.

CHAPTER FIVE
TO THE LAKE REGIONS

JULY 1857 - JUNE 1858

FIVE

Few explorers suffered more from fever, injury and loss of property—and lived to tell about it—than Burton and Speke. Their illnesses, and continual trouble with their porters and crew, severely limited their achievements, and this fact is painfully evident in Burton's letters.

Anyone who has ever had malaria while on safari will be able to appreciate what it was like for them to try to conduct their expedition into uncharted regions, while their crew either would not co-operate, stole from them or simply deserted. Both Burton and Speke experienced numbing headaches and aching muscles, episodes of raging fever alternating with chills and convulsive shivering, often followed by delirium. After the worst of their malaria had passed, there was still the aftermath: the body weakened by fever, lips covered in blisters (made more painful by the hot sun), eyes irritated and bloodshot from the violence of vomiting and convulsions, and a

maddening high-pitched ringing in the ears, caused by the quinine they took to fight malaria.

During the course of the East African Expedition Burton would suffer—by his count—twenty-one attacks of fever and, although Speke did not have as many, his attacks were worse, and he suffered not only from prolonged episodes of delirium but also from the dreaded “little irons”, whose pain was so intense that it felt as though hundreds of hot iron hooks were tearing away at one’s flesh. Compounding their almost continual malarial fevers were painful ulcers on their feet and legs caused by the extremes of damp and cold air and searing heat. Both men suffered from partial and sometimes total paralysis of the feet, legs and hands brought about by the repeated fevers, and had to be carried by their bearers. A persistent inflammation of the eye (the explorers called it “ophthalmia”), aggravated by the burning sun, also left each of them partially blind for long periods of time.

When, on 13 February 1858, they became the first Europeans to see Lake Tanganyika (also known as the Sea of Ujiji), Speke was undergoing a bout of

paralysis and riding an ailing donkey, which collapsed and died under him at the moment it crested the hill overlooking the lake. He also had such bad "ophthalmia" that he was only able to see a hazy, painful glare in the distance. Burton had just recovered from an attack of malaria, and, unable to walk, had to be carried on a litter.

Once they had recovered their health enough to begin an exploration of the lake, Burton and Speke were unable to hire a sailing *dhow* large enough for their party, and consequently had to set out in two open canoes which leaked and were in constant danger of swamping. Quite apart from their health, the weather conditions grew so appallingly bad, and their crew members were so fearful of the cannibals who lived along the lake shore, that they had to give up in their attempt to explore the entire lake.

This was a grave disappointment to Burton, as he had wanted to sail along the entire northern shoreline to see if the Rusizi River flowed *into* the lake or out of it. Had the Rusizi issued from the lake, it would have given them reason to theorise that Lake Tanganyika might be a source for the Nile. Before turning back,

however, they heard from three Arab traders that the Rusizi did indeed flow into Lake Tanganyika.

On May 26 1858, Burton and Speke left Ujiji on the return march to Kazeh. Once there, they would decide whether to return to the coast or to press on in search of the northern lake, variously known as Ukerewe and Nyanza.

* * * * *

XIV

6 September 1857.

R. F. Burton to N. Shaw. Letter Book.

The two letters which follow are written in an even more fragmented scrawl than Burton's usual handwriting, evidence of his illnesses and the difficult conditions which the expedition encountered.

Inengey, Sund., 6th Sept.

10 Marches from Ugogo.

Sir,

I have the hr. to report for the infor. of the Exp. Com. of the Royal ‡, that on the 22nd July, finding a

good opportunity, I forwarded from Duthumy a general acct. of our finances.

On the 7th Augst., I sent by means of a slave—a dangerous trial—4 papers drawn up by Capt. Speke, *viz.*, 2 sheets of map, 1 Appendix. to map, 1 Official letter.

I also transmitted a list of outfit for F. Galton, Esq., & a box of geolog. & botan. specimens, directed to the Sec. G. Soc., Bombay. The step was taken to give the collection a chance of reaching its destination before being reduced to a pulpy mass.

We left Zung[omero] on the 7th Augst., still weak. The first march led us, after passing through a long alluvial track with dry rocky & uninhabited hills, in my humble opinion, the 1st gradient to the highland of Ugogo. With considerable trouble, on acct. of our asses, we ascended the Goma Pass—about 2200 ft. by Boiling Point Thermometer above the sealine.

We are now within 10 marches of Ug., and hope to reach it in due time. Both of us still suffer from the fatal air of the Kingany Valley, but the cool nights and dry days are gradually working improvement.

Our party has hitherto behaved tolerably well. I humbly suggest that H. B. M. Con. Zanz. should receive directives to reward them liberally in case of

good conduct. This will greatly facilitate the ingress of future travellers.

I hv. etc.

[*unsigned*].

The Sec.[]
Under Cover to the Sec. of State,
Foreign OÈce.

XV

6 September 1857.

*R. F. Burton to A. Hamerton.*¹ Letter Book.

Inengey, 6 Sept.

10 marches from Ugogo.

My dear Balyuz,²

S[peke] wrote to you from Duthumy & Zungomero and I from Duthumy. A scoundrel, Salim bin Sayf (said to have been engaged in M. Maizan's murder),³ spread all manner of reports about you to turn us back. He also interfered with our engaging porters. If a Govt. letter were sent ordering his return from Duthumy to Zanzibar & some punishment awaited him there, it would be a useful lesson to the Arab.

We have recd. the greatest civility from Isa bin Hijji & Thamy bin Said and Sayf bin Masud, the leaders of the caravan which carries this letter.

By Jumada Yaruk, I wrote to you for some more quinine (we sadly require it), Chiretta roots, Warburg's drops,⁴ pickles, etc. Our tea has also been destroyed & we want 10 lbs. tea each soldered in its tin case. $\frac{1}{2}$ Fr. coffee & $\frac{1}{2}$ Frazilah sugar, Ladha has some \$ of ours, & Messrs Forbes & Co. will always refund this expense, recovering the money from my uncle & executor, Robt. Bagshaw Esq., Dover Court, Essex.

"Also Seidlitz powder & cigars."

We are still suffering from consequences of fever, and look with horror upon our diminishing medicine.

In case of yr. having left Zanzibar, dear Balyuz, I have directed this also to Mr. Cochet, the only person that can & will befriend us.

S. joins with me in best love. It is too late to write much, as evening draws on and the caravan starts tomorrow. *Adieu, portez vous bien.*

[*unsigned*].

To: Lt.-Col. Hamerton, H. B. M.'s Consul Zanzibar—
in case of his departure To: M. Ladislas Cochet,
Consul de France, Zanzibar.

1. Hamerton had died at Zanzibar on 5 July 1857, after returning from escorting Burton and Speke to the mainland.
2. Balyuz is also an Arab/Swahili term for "Consul".
3. M. Maizan, a French explorer who was tortured and killed by Mzungero, chief of the Wakamba, near Bagamoyo, in 1845.
4. "Warburg's Drops", Burton's preferred anti-malarial remedy, were compounded of sloes, quinine and opium, relatively ineffective against malaria, but not unpleasant to take.

XVI

[October 1858].

*R. F. Burton to [C. P. Rigby].*¹ Letter Book.

H. B. M. Consul Zanzibar.

To await arrival.

Sir,

I have taken the liberty to address you without even knowing your name. Our necessities may excuse this proceeding.

Since the death of our lamented friend Col. Ham.,

we have been entirely neglected by those who promised fairest. Not a letter or paper has reached us, altho' Arabs & others have repeatedly received theirs from the coast.

Worse still, Before leaving Zanzibar, we paid for a full supply of goods to be carried by 22 porters. We are in actual want of them. Ladha D., Coll. of Cus. [Collector of Customs], Zanzibar, promised to start them in a few days after us. It is now nearly 5 months and not even a line of tidings about the caravan has reached us. If the Banyan's excuse is that porters were not procurable, we can only reply that at least a dozen caravans have caught us up from the coast. Moreover, by paying a little more than the Arab, he could always secure portorage. He has not been limited as to expenditures & he has a small sum at his hand to meet emergencies.

I wrote on the 28 Sept. *ult.*, for a second supply of \$, giving a draft upon Messrs. Forbes & Co. of Bombay. Unless some exertion on the part of Govt. is made, we shall never have this order executed.

As early as July last, I wrote for some medicines & supplies, of which a list is enclosed. Like our other affairs, the request has been wholly neglected. We are

ever suffering from fever, and our supply of Quinine is so low, that we must reserve it for emergencies.

In conclusion, Sir, I have the honour to express my conviction that you will not allow Officers esp. employed under the patronage of H. B. M.'s Foreign Office, to suffer any longer from such undeserved & disgraceful neglect.

Before leaving Zanzibar, I entrusted 2 manuscripts to Mr. Frost, the Consular Apothecary, & should much like to hear whether he has forwarded them according to my direction to London.²

[*unsigned*].

1. Christopher P. Rigby succeeded Hamerton as Consul to Zanzibar on 27 July 1858.
2. One of the manuscripts Burton refers to is undoubtedly that of *Zanzibar*, which he wrote from December 1856 to June 1857. Rigby did not, in fact, forward it to London, but rather sent it to the Bombay Offices of the Indian Army for censoring, where it disappeared until it was returned to Burton by Bartle Frere in 1871, and was published the next year.

XVII

14 January 1858.

R. F. Burton and J. H. Speke. Letter Book.

This letter is written in Speke's hand.

Msemory District.

January 14th 1858.

The full term of engagement for which we took the slaves Vidoko, Jako, Mbaruk, Walaydas, Mbong, Mohinna, Bruynas, Mayja, having now expired, we give them their discharge. From the commencement, their impudence of manner & action has been so troublesome to us, & disastrous to our progress, we now feel no compunction in thus summarily dismissing them.

Captains Burton, Speke¹ & Co.

1. Speke had been promoted to Captain as of setting out on the expedition. Burton, however, remained the senior and commanding officer.

XVIII

24 June 1858.

*R. F. Burton to N. Shaw. Letter Book.**Written in an exceptionally shaky and fragmented hand.*

Unyanyembi, Central Africa.

24 June 1858.

Sir,

I have the honor to transmit, for the information of the Expedition, a copy of the field book, & a Map by Capt. Speke. The details contained in the map render all remarks upon the country superfluous, till such time as we may be able to communicate them in person. Neither of them are intended for publication, which we venture to request, may be deferred until our return. They are forwarded in case of accidents.

We left the Lake of Ujiji about a month ago, & are now halted at this main depot of Arab trade. Capt. Speke has volunteered, when he & the rest of the party are sufficiently recovered from their present state of universal sickness, to visit the Ukerewe Lake, of which the Arabs give grand accounts. It lies nearly due N. of

Unyanyembi, at a distance of from 12 to 15 marches. There we shall be enabled to bring home authentic details of the 4 grt. waters which drain E. & Cent. Africa, *viz.*, the Nyassa, the Chama, the Ujiji Lake & the Ukerewe. On his return, we shall lose no time in repairing to the coast which, if we pass safely through dangerous Ugogo, we may hope *d.v.* to reach about Dec. next.

We have both suffered severely from sickness. We were compelled to travel from Un. [Unyanyembi] to Ujiji during the evil monsoon &, in the same season, to embark in open canoes, exposed to wind & rain, sun & dew, and when on shore, sleeping in mud, to explore the Lake—a labour of about a month. During this time, we endured great hardships & ran not a few risks.

Our limits on the Lake were laid down by the savagery of the tribes—as it was a man was unfortunately shot by my Port[uguese] servant during an attack.

Capt. Speke has suffered from the sequela of fever, having lost his sight so as to be unable to read, write, or observe for some time. In addition to which, during his first voyage, some venomous insect crept into his ear, producing violent pain, glandular swellings, suppuration, & finally, deafness. Both I and my Port. servt., have been subject to the distressing blindness.

In addition to this, I have had a kind of paralytic numbness in the arms, hands, & lower extremities, & am still unable to walk or ride, except in a hammock carried by Wanyamwezi porters. Still, we are slowly improving, & the thought of finishing our labours with what we hope will be considered most valuable results has much diminished the terrible wear & tear of mind caused by events during our journey W[estwar]d. Our asses (30 in number) all died, our porters ran away, our goods were left behind, our black escort became so unmanageable as to require dismissal, the weakness of our party invited attacks, & our wretched Belochis deserted us once in the jungle, & throughout, have occasioned an infinity of trouble.

We deeply regret that the arrangements for the Exp. were not upon a more liberal scale, with £5000 we might, I believe, without difficulty have spanned Africa fr. E. to W. However, the similarity of the two coasts, & the accounts of travellers who have penetrated the W. regions, lead to the conclusion that the other half of the continent just reflects the portions, of which we hope to lay before you, exact as to details.

On the 20th Novr., 1857, Capt. Speke addressed to you a letter urging the necessity of arrangements

for rewarding our guide & attendants. The late Lt.-Col. Ham., H. B. M.'s Consul & H. E. I. C.'s Agent at Zanzibar, advanced out of the public money no less a sum than \$500 to our guide & promised him an ample reward & a gold watch, in case he brought us home alive, an event then considered highly improbable. To the Jemadar of Belochis, he gave \$25, and to each soldier, \$20. These are sums which we could not afford, nor can we on our return pay the high salaries promised in our presence to these men. By S. bin Salim, the guide, \$1000 would be expected, by each Beloch—13 in number—\$100, and by each slave—in all 15—about \$60. We have already expended at least £500 out of our private resources. Expecting that a six months march would take us to the Lake of Ujiji & back, ignoring also the Ukerewe Lake, we thought to come within the limits of the meagre sum allotted to us. But our exploration, delayed by sickness, accidents, & the non-arrival of supplies, cannot be concluded under 18 months. I venture to urge, most forcibly, this subject upon the Exp. C. of the as, unless Col. Ham.'s promises be fulfilled by his successor, we shall be placed in a most disagreeable position at Zanzibar.

H. H. the Prince Majid, & his Native, & Indian

Officials, have taken the greatest interest in our progress—we have reason to be truly grateful to them. They were, however, urged on by the Consul de France, M. Lad. Cochet, who after Lt.-Col. Ham.'s unfortunate decease, has proved himself an active & energetic friend.

I regret to inform you that I have recd. an official expression of disapprobation from the Rt. Hon., the Gov. in C. Bom., for “want of discretion & due respect for the authorities to whom I am subordinate,” in consequence of some remarks addressed to you upon the subject of pol. affairs in the Red Sea. The document in question was forwarded, not for publication, but, as expressly stated, for the info., C. of Drs. of the F. O. I have expressed my regrets for having offended a Govt. to which I am so much indebted, at the same time, I am at a loss to understand how I have offended.

In conclusion, I have the h. to request that this account of our ill health may be kept from our family & friends, & to subscribe myself, etc.

[*unsigned*].

The Sec., R. G. Soc.

CHAPTER SIX

KAZEH TO ZANZIBAR

JULY 1858 - FEBRUARY 1859

SIX

By 10 July 1858, after two weeks in the relative comfort of Kazeh, Speke had recovered from his infected ear, blindness, and malaria, and was getting restless. Burton, however, was not yet over his malaria, ulcerated jaw and paralysis of the legs. He still could not move about unless carried in a litter by porters.

In spite of his handicaps, Burton busied himself with reconditioning what little was left of their equipment in preparation for the return leg of the journey. He also spent his time completing what had been one of the primary objectives of the expedition: a written report on the geography, tribes, and languages of the region. Burton's finished manuscript (in the Royal Geographical Society Archives) was so detailed and massive it would later require an entire issue of the *Journal* to contain it, and it would stand forever afterwards as a masterpiece of exploration scholarship.

It is clear from the comments both explorers later made about each other that, by now, they had started

to scratch each other's nerves. Burton, completely absorbed in his studies, was dismissive of Speke's seeming lack of interest in his surroundings; Speke, on the other hand, finding nothing in the neighbourhood to hunt, and having no one with whom to speak English but Burton, was suffering torture by tedium. Thoroughly bored with Burton's preoccupations, and impatient with his leader's persistently poor health, the stress of the journey had exacerbated the grudges, jealousies and other grievances which Speke already held against his companion. All of this combined to reinforce Speke's determination both to get away from Burton, and to do some exploring on his own.

Burton had first mentioned the existence of a northern lake—the Ukerewe, or Nyanza—and suggested it as a possible source of the Nile in a letter to the of 19 April 1856 (*printed here as Letter IV*). When he and Speke had first arrived in Kazeh en route to Tanganyika in 1858, they had been tempted to abandon their original destination to look for the northern lake instead. Speke had been keen to try it, but Burton theorised that if Ukerewe was but one of a chain of lakes feeding the Nile, the

chances were good that Tanganyika was the first in a line of such feeders, and thus the more important goal.

Now, with Burton employing both his fluent Arabic and rapidly improving Kiswahili, and Speke using their African guide, Sidi Bombay, as an interpreter, they interviewed Arab traders about the northern lake, and were certain they knew the way there. If it were as large as the Arabs said, however, the lake would have to be the goal of the next expedition, for by now there were barely enough supplies for even a small group to make it to the lake and back. The explorers were completely out of money, living on credit and barter; their respective periods of leave from the Indian Army were about to run out; most critical of all, their medicine was finished, and they faced the next attacks of malaria without a remedy. Had Burton ordered an extended survey of the northern lake with a large party, he might have jeopardised the expedition's safe return to the coast, for, without sufficient food and medicine, they might have easily been caught in the approaching rainy season, with disastrous consequences.

When Speke volunteered to lead a small party to the lake, Burton was only too pleased to agree, partly

because he wanted more information about it, and partly because he wanted to give his restless junior officer something to do. Thus, when Speke left Kazeh at midday on 10 July, both men must have heaved a sigh of relief. Burton had good reason to expect that Speke might find the Ukerewe lake, but what he seems not to have anticipated was that Speke would use this solo reconnaissance to justify a personal claim to the discovery of the source of the Nile.

In hindsight, of course, although Burton should never have allowed Speke to go to the lake without him it should not have mattered. Under normal circumstances, it is a responsible and correct decision for a senior officer and commander of a government-sponsored expedition to send a subordinate on an independent mission, and there is no question but that any information gained is for the good of the expedition, not the glory of an individual. But Burton had evidently still not fully recognised that Speke was *not* an ordinary subordinate, but a potential rival whose ambition was fuelled by suppressed animosity toward the very man whose friendship had brought him to that moment of supreme opportunity.

In the event, Speke did find the lake where they

had expected it to be, but camped on its shore for only three days. Using Sidi Bombay as interpreter, Speke questioned any local Africans he could find about the size of the lake and any rivers that flowed into or out of it. The information gathered from these interviews convinced him that the lake was perhaps 80–100 miles wide, and its length, according to his sources, “extended to the world’s end.” Lake Victoria is actually 255 miles at its widest point by 270 miles at its longest, and when Speke later published his estimates as to the northern extent of the lake at 4°–5° North latitude—when it is actually 1° N.—the glaring error would expose him to much criticism.

Most importantly, although Speke heard that a river flowed out of the opposite side of the lake, he did not personally see one of any substance either entering or leaving the lake.

Speke arrived back at Kazeh at sunrise on 25 August. According to his account, as soon as he joined his commander for breakfast, he announced how sorry he was that Burton had not gone with him on the journey, because he was sure he had discovered the source of the Nile. When Burton questioned him about specifics, Speke had to admit that he had seen only a

small part of the lake, and had not obtained any reliable information about its extent. Still, Speke said, he felt in his heart, and the apparent size of the lake convinced him, that he had been the discoverer of the source of the Nile.

There was danger in the air that morning at Kazeh, and one wonders if Burton fully appreciated just how important his handling of that potentially volatile situation would prove to be. If he had hitherto been unaware of, or had ignored, the evidence of Speke's ambition, it was now too obvious to miss. If Speke had, in fact, been waiting for a chance to overtake Burton in a race for personal glory, that opportunity was at hand.

Although Speke urged Burton to go back with him immediately to the lake, both men knew that, under the circumstances, such an undertaking was nearly impossible. Speke's challenge to return to the lake presented Burton with a serious dilemma. If he ordered an exploration of Ukerewe, he risked having the expedition caught in the rainy season without supplies. If, on the other hand, he did not see the lake himself, he risked leaving Speke with the option to press a personal claim to discovery which Burton

himself could not yet officially endorse. In other words, Speke could afford to gamble, while Burton could not.

Richard Burton, in the final reckoning, carried on his shoulders not only the weight of his position as commander of a Royal Geographical Society expedition, but also the burden of his personal reputation for exactitude. He dare not make rash and unproven assertions, while Speke, on the other hand, as a geographer of lesser stature, could rely on his intuition. If *his* claim to have found the source of the Nile was to be proved wrong, he had little to lose, while if his guess was correct, he would win for himself (and take from Burton) the greatest geographical prize of the century.

Aside from their personal tensions, the heart of the disagreement between Burton and Speke, then at least, was not actually about whether or not the lake—which Speke had now rechristened the “Victoria Nyanza”—was the source of the Nile. In fact, as he would state in a letter to the in April 1859, Burton thought the Ukerewe probably *was* the principal feeder of the White Nile, but what really concerned him was the fact that he had virtually

no verifiable data to prove it. From Burton's point of view, Speke's journey, although an admirable accomplishment, had done little more than confirm the lake's presence. Until they could to make a thorough survey, any claims would be premature and irresponsible.

Burton wrote in *The Lake Regions* that he had told Speke: "Let us go home, recruit our health, report what we have done, get some more money, return together, and finish our whole journey." Looking back, one can see that Burton's response to Speke's announcement, that morning at Kازه, was a reasonable and responsible one. Had they followed his suggestion, it would probably have led to honour and success for both men, but Speke now owned the stubborn conviction of the visionary, and Burton's objections to his claim only made him more obstinate. Burton also wrote that, after that first interview at breakfast when he had challenged Speke's impetuous claim,

Jack changed his manner to me from this date...
After a few days it became evident to me that not a word could be uttered upon the subject of the lake, the Nile, and his *trouvaille* generally, without offence. By a tacit agreement it was, therefore, avoided.

The battle-lines over the northern lake had now been

drawn, and the “tacit agreement” to avoid discussion of their differences nevertheless left an almost tangible cloud of tension hanging over the caravan as the two men set out from Kazeh on 6 September 1858, on the long march to Zanzibar. As expected, they were soon savaged by the lashing winds and cold rains of the monsoon season. A month after leaving Kazeh, Speke suffered his worst illness of the journey. It was then, in the throes of delirium and fever, that he blurted out his grievances over the Somali affair so long before.

Burton stood by Speke and nursed him back from death’s door.

* * * * *

XIX

1 January 1859.

R. F. Burton to N. Shaw. Letter Book.

Khutu, Eastern Africa.

1st Jan., 1859.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, dated 2nd Febr. 1857: no instructions subsequent have come to hand.

By the last down caravan which left Unyanyembi Central Africa on or about the 24th June 1858 I forwarded one copy of a Field Book & a Map by Capt. Speke, & I take this earliest opportunity of transmitting his road map & field book to the Nyanza Lake—or Ukerewe—which he has been successful in discovering—his general map of our exploration similar to those formerly supplied, but including our return route through Usagara, & by another Southern line, & his corrections of the Masai & Northern roads. These, however, demand further enquiry, & we particularly request that all documents now forwarded be not submitted to the public until they shall have received due revision at Zanzibar.

For the information of the Exped. Comm., I have the honour to report that in the total absence of all instructions, and in the want of the supplies necessary to open up or to pursue our researches on another path, our caravan has returned by the eastern road to Khutu distant about 13 marches from the coast. Here it is halted for a time. Our refractory porters refuse to march upon any port but Koali. We refuse to provision them for any other port than Kilwa, which we would visit for the purpose of inspecting the lower course of the Ruaha or Rufiji River. The most obstinate will win the day, but I cannot, at the moment, exactly decide which party is in that predicament.

In conclusion, I have the honour to inform the Exped. Committee, that on the 7th Dec., *ult.*, I applied Officially to the Gov. in C. Bombay for 6 mths. additional leave (on behalf of my companion and myself), after the conclusion of the 2 yrs. granted by the Ct. of Dir., & that I hope the Society will lend me their powerful aid in obtaining an extension, necessary to complete operations upon the base of exploration.

I have etc.,

R. F. B.

Commg. E. A. Ex.

XX

5 February 1859.

R. F. Burton to N. Shaw. Letter Book.

Konduchi on the Coast.

5th Febr., 1859.

Sir,

In continuation to a letter addressed to you from Khutu (Jan. 1st '59), I have the honour, for the information of the Exped. Committee of the , to report that, as we would not follow the porters, & the porters would not accompany us, that we parted suddenly. The savages went to Koale district and, after some days delay, we engaged men in a down caravan to carry our goods to this place.

Having thus been disappointed in striking the upper course of the Rufiji River by land, we have written to Zanzibar for a native craft, and intend visiting the coast as far south as Kilwa, with the express purpose of exploring the Delta of the great & almost unknown Rufiji. We expect, if not hindered by accidents, to reach Zanzibar at some time before the monsoons.

I have also the honour to transmit Capt. Speke's

route survey from the coast, to the Makutano, or a junction, of the several lines of road trending westwards to the Unyamwezi country, Konduchi and its islands, which do not appear in previous maps, have been laid down by observations of the stars & compass bearings.

On arrival at Zanzibar, I shall again report proceedings, for the information of the Committee, and,

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

[unsigned].

The Secy.

Royal Geograph. Soc.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ZANZIBAR AND ADEN

MARCH AND APRIL 1859

SEVEN

The explorers' joy at concluding their journey and returning to Zanzibar soon palled for Burton. His friend Hamerton was dead, and there lingered about the familiar streets and houses of the town the sad memory of a man Burton had grown fond of. Adding to his gloom was the discovery that Hamerton's replacement was Christopher Rigby, Burton's old rival from India. It was immediately obvious that Rigby had let his personal prejudices influence his official duties as Consul, and Burton suspected that he had been the reason that their supplies, post and other goods had been delayed or gone missing whilst they had been suffering on the mainland.

To make matters worse, Rigby was as friendly and solicitous of Speke as he was hostile to Burton. Rigby would later write that

Speke is a right good, jolly, resolute fellow. Burton is not fit to hold a candle to him and has done nothing in comparison with what Speke has, but Burton will blow his trumpet very loud and get all the credit for the discoveries. Speke works. Burton lies on his back all day and picks other people's brains.

On Zanzibar, with Rigby's encouragement, Speke must have come to fully realise how many enemies Burton had, and how such prejudices could work in his favour.

Burton's isolation was most apparent over the issue of the payment of salaries to the bearers and crew. He argued that, should they fail to penalise the men for their appallingly poor performance, desertions and thefts, a precedent would be set from which future expeditions would suffer. Rigby, for his part, refused to support that argument; furthermore, he denied Government responsibility for honouring Hamerton's financial guarantees, and insisted that it was up to Burton to pay as promised.

Speke had been present when Hamerton had guaranteed the salaries which Speke and Burton did not have enough money to pay. Having been a witness to the disgraceful behaviour of the crew, he knew how close the expedition had come to disaster because of them. He also knew how hard Burton had tried to solicit more money from the Royal Geographical Society in order to meet their obligations. In spite of all this, however, he now sided with Rigby, and forced Burton to bear the responsibility, and the blame, alone.

Weeks later in London, when Speke needed to pro-

mote the idea that he had not really been Burton's subordinate (and therefore had a right to make a claim for the discovery of the source of the Nile) he would write,

I am sure everyone at Zanzibar knows it, that I was the leader and Burton the second of the expedition...

But on Zanzibar, when it came to accepting any responsibility for this delicate issue, Speke left Burton to cope on his own. In the event, Burton had to leave Zanzibar without having paid his porters, and left himself open to a barrage of criticism from Rigby and others in the ensuing months.

* * * * *

XXI

21 March 1859.

Revd. J. Rebmann to R. F. Burton.

Zanzibar, March 21, '59.

My dear Captain Burton,

I received your kind note of today & felt quite pleased at the prospect of meeting you again, at some future

time in East Africa. I can, however, not let you go away without communicating to you a few points which, now & then, occupy my mind.

1. I am a little afraid, as you are rather a facetious writer, that you might misrepresent my view about the cause of colour, as indeed you have already done, though only in a joking way, when I was in conversation with you. Allow me, therefore, to state that I never thought the heat of the sun alone as sufficient to explain the cause, but only in connection with the particular climate, especially as to dryness or humidity, & the whole manner & habits of life of the people in question. The fact also of the so-called different races of human beings gliding into each other, must weaken the argument considerably which is taken from them against the doctrine of the Bible, of all mankind being the descendants of one pair.

2. You will remember, two years ago, when we sometimes spoke about Dr. Krapf, that I found fault with him in many things, especially about his linguistic labours, & you will, I hope, appreciate my anxiety to see nothing published about it. What I said was in confidence to you. You will understand that my feelings in this respect are very tender, from the fact of his

having been my fellow labourer for seven years. Of course, I have nothing to do with what you may say about him from your own resources.

3. I hope you will excuse me & take it kindly when I communicate to you what has been my prayer to God for both of you, all the time you have been on your enterprising journey into the Interior of Africa, namely that by so long witnessing the misery & darkness of heathenism you might be led to learn the truth & infinite value of Christianity, *i.e.*, Christianity in its purity, as it stands in the Bible, unmixed with human traditions—& I have not yet given up the prayer. You have done a great service to science, & I have no doubt it will also turn out a service for the moral & spiritual welfare of poor Africa, be your religious views what they may. But if your heart was moved with Christian compassion for benighted Africa, & if you felt convinced that there is no other remedy for her but the Gospel of Christ in connection with Christian civilisation, don't you think that then the benefit of your service would still be greater, & of a higher nature? But whatever you may think about this question, I am rejoiced at the fair prospect of Africa being at last *thrown open* to European

enterprise, the more so as I have learnt to see that this alone will also give a sure footing to the Christian missionary.

Wishing you a pleasant voyage homewards. Believe me to remain yours faithfully,

J. Rebmann.

P.S. Mrs. Rebmann wishes me to thank you for your kind offer & also begs to say that should you ever make your way up to our station again, she will make you more comfortable than she was able to do before.

* * * * *

On 22 March 1859, Burton and Speke sailed from Zanzibar on the *Dragon of Salem*, bound for Aden. After two years of travelling with Speke, and the tensions of Zanzibar, Burton must have relished getting to Aden and seeing his old friend Dr. John Steinhæuser again. Steinhæuser was Assistant Surgeon for the Indian Army garrison, and immediately invited Burton and Speke to stay at his house. Since he had narrowly missed joining the expedition, Steinhæuser

was naturally full of questions about the journey: he immediately recognised, however, that, "all was not right" with Speke, and warned Burton about it.

Shortly after the *Dragon of Salem* docked, the explorers learned that another ship, H. M. S. *Furious*, was just about to leave for England, and there was room for them aboard. Burton chose to stay in Aden and recover his health, but Speke took the opportunity to go home. Of course, Speke's desire to return to England was as natural as Burton's choice to stay in Aden, but both men realised that there would now be a twelve-day period when Speke would be in England without Burton. During that time he would have plenty of opportunities, if he wished, to promote his own interests. As Speke's departure approached, Burton must have wondered if his subordinate would wait for him, or steal a march on him. Speke must, also, have asked himself the same question.

It was a quick and strained farewell on the dock at Aden, and we have only Burton's version of what the two men said to each other: he held out his hand to Speke and said, "I shall hurry up, Jack, as soon as I can." They shook hands and Speke replied, "Good-bye old fellow; you may be quite sure I shall not go up to

the Royal Geographical Society until you come to the fore and we appear together. Make your mind quite easy about that." With these words, Speke turned and went aboard H. M. S. *Furious*. Burton would one day write that they never actually spoke directly to each other again after that moment.

While Burton convalesced in Aden, he carried on with his reports and correspondence. In a letter (*see* XXII *below*) which he sent to the Royal Geographical Society three days after Speke sailed, he stated his position regarding the source of the Nile. He believed, he wrote, that the lake which they had located, and which Speke had visited so briefly, was, "the source of the principle feeder of the White Nile."

At this point Burton assumed he would now return to England, recover his health, get more money to outfit a new expedition, and, as he had promised Speke, return to Africa to explore the lake thoroughly. He had no way of knowing, however, that he would never see the lake regions of central Africa again.

* * * * *

XXII

19 April 1859.

R. F. Burton to N. Shaw. Letter Book.

Aden.

19th April, 1859.

Sir,

On the 5th of Febry., 1859, I had the honour to address you from Konduchi (coast of E. Africa), stating for the information of the Expeditionary Committee of the Royal Geographical Society, that I had written to Zanzibar for a native craft and proposed visiting the coast as far South as Kilwa, with the express purpose of exploring the Delta of the great & almost unknown Rufiji.

We left Konduchi on the 10th of February 1859, and proceeding down the coast to Kilwa Kisiwani or the Island of Ancient Kilwa, made observations at the several settlements which have hitherto been incorrectly laid down. We had hoped to enter the upper mouth of the Rufiji River and to obtain correct notices of the course & capabilities of the stream. Our project was defeated by the state of Kilwa, which was nearly depopulated by the cholera, and we were

crippled by the loss of our crew. 5 out of the 7 died in the first 6 days. The season for ascending the River was ended by the inundation, consequently, we were compelled, most unwillingly, to return to Zanzibar, where we arrived on the 4th March.

When the alarm arising from the threatened invasion of H. H. Sayyid Suwayni of Muskat had subsided, we took leave of the Sultan of Zanzibar, & the Sawahil Sayyid Majid, a prince who, in addition to the greatest personal courtesy, has shown his regard for the recommendations with which we were honoured by forwarding all our views, and by munificently rewarding our Belochi escort—the means placed at our disposal rendering such an expense inadvisable. We left Zanzibar on the 22nd March, and on the 16th *instant* we arrived at Aden.

A fresh attack of fever & general debility will delay me for a short time on the route to England, where both Capt. Speke & I are about to proceed on medical certificate, given by the Civil Surgeon of Aden. Capt. Speke, however, will lay before you his maps & observations & two papers, one a diary of his passage of the Tanganyika between Ujiji & Kasenge, and the other, his exploration of the Nyanza, Ukerewe or

Northern Lake. To which I would respectfully direct the serious attention of the Committee, as there are grave reasons for believing it to be the source of the principal feeder of the White Nile. The position has hitherto been placed by almost universal consent in the region Northwards of Mt. Kenia. But as the S. W. Monsoon & the S. E. Trades both exhaust their stores of humidity upon the Southern slopes of that great line, the Lunar Mountains of the ancient geographers, of which Kenia is, as far as can now be ascertained, the Northern limit, we are entitled to believe that the Northern or leeward slopes of these mountains would not be so copiously watered as to send forth a surplus considerable enough to form the "White River."

I have the honour,

[*unsigned*].

CHAPTER EIGHT

ONE HERO TOO MANY

MAY 1859

EIGHT

Upon joining H. M. S. *Furious* on 18 April, Speke discovered that already on board was Laurence Oliphant, whom he had met in 1855 during the Crimean War. Oliphant was a gifted young man, whose exceptionally well-written reports about his extensive travels had earned him a fine reputation at the Royal Geographical Society. Both Speke and Oliphant were returning from extended and difficult journeys, so it was only natural that they would spend much of their time together and share stories of their travels.

Some biographers have speculated about the true nature of the relationship between the two men, and Oliphant has been blamed for having a negative effect on Speke's behaviour in the months to come. What is certain is that although Oliphant did have an important influence on Speke, he needed do little more than encourage a course of action which Speke was already predisposed to follow. If Speke had once vacillated between his desire for glory and his sense of honour and fair play, it is likely that his conversations

with Laurence Oliphant merely tipped the balance in favour of selfish glory.

Oliphant and Burton had also known each other for some years and while they appear to have been friendly, according to Anne Taylor—Oliphant's biographer—during the Crimean War Oliphant had experienced at first hand the power of Burton's personality. He needed only to remind Speke that if he waited for his commander's return, on the next expedition to the Victoria Nyanza lake Burton would, by right, be the leader, and Speke his subordinate. Thus, Burton and Speke together would share the credit for having proven that Lake Victoria was the source of the Nile, a glory Speke evidently wanted to keep for himself alone.

Speke would have further realised, from his conversations with Oliphant, that if he were to make his claim and leave it at that, Burton's status as one of England's greatest geographers, as well as his seniority as commander of the expedition, could still overshadow Speke's own assertions and achievements. Therefore it would not be enough to make the first claim; he must also fan the flames of Burton's unpopularity. He had to create enough doubt about Burton's suitability to

command, and suggest to members of the Royal Geographical Society some sufficiently compelling personal reasons to reject Burton and send Speke himself to command of the next expedition to Africa.

On 8 May H. M. S. *Furious* reached England, and on the next day Speke met with the President of the Royal Geographical Society. This in itself was an extraordinary turn of events. Setting aside, for the moment, Speke's personal pledge to wait for Burton, how was it possible that the second-in-command of an expedition whose commander had not even returned from the journey could be allowed to report to the ? Even more curiously, how could anyone, having heard only Speke's side of the story, and without first carefully examining the data to substantiate Speke's claim, so swiftly abandon Burton and take up his subordinate ? The better to understand these questions, we must take a closer look at the inner workings of the at that time, and at the personality of its President Sir Roderick Impey Murchison.

The Royal Geographical Society had been founded in 1830, for the purpose of promoting British geography, and to sponsor expeditions of discovery. Its Royal Charter was a great honour, but was not of itself any

guarantee of the considerable financial backing needed for the kind of explorations the Society wished to make.

expeditions required Government monies, in each case approved by the Foreign Office. Helpful for its cause was the enthusiastic support of the public and, additionally, the encouragement of Queen Victoria herself—Africa had captured the public's imagination more than any other field of exploration, but it was still always a struggle to raise the necessary funds.

A turning point in the fortunes of the came in 1856, when Sir Roderick Murchison became its President. Murchison had first achieved eminence for his geological researches in ancient rock layers, one section of which he named the "silurian". He was not only respected by his fellow geologists but popular with the public and the press. As a lecturer, Murchison had the ability to stir public interest in such obscure subjects as the age and order of succession of geological strata. He drew enthusiastic audiences whenever he lectured: the press dubbed him "the King of Siluria" and the "Father of British Geography." Murchison, then, understood from personal experience the critical importance of popular support in getting financial backing.

Upon assuming the leadership of the ,

Sir Roderick set about looking for a cause and a personality with which to galvanise the enthusiasm and support of the public. He found all he could ask for in Doctor David Livingstone and his explorations in southern Africa. Livingstone had been born poor, and through hard work and study had become a medical doctor. Moreover, Livingstone was a Christian missionary who took his message into the dangerous African wilderness, and his book about his adventures, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857), was a best-seller.

Livingstone described himself as a “missionary explorer,” and believed it was his sacred calling to blaze the trails that would allow Christianity and commerce to penetrate into darkest Africa. The public loved him, as did Queen Victoria, and the Royal Geographical Society found itself with a new hero.

The increased attention paid to the proved, however, to be a two-edged sword. By 1858, the heroic image of David Livingstone had started to tarnish. Reports coming back from the other British members of Livingstone’s Zambezi Expedition of 1858–64 accused him of deliberately misleading everyone about the Zambezi. He had claimed to have discovered that

the river could be navigated by steamboats all the way to the Batoka plateau, but it was now clearly seen that this was impossible. Moreover Livingstone himself was proving to be so mean tempered, obstinate and quarrelsome that he had fallen out with virtually everyone in his party. The Zambezi Expedition, having been financed with £5,000 of government money, was heading for disaster.

Other than Livingstone, Richard Burton was the most important English explorer at that time. His accomplishments were undeniable, and his reports from India, Arabia, and Africa were among the most detailed and erudite that anyone had ever written. The could not have asked for a more courageous, intelligent or productive explorer. Burton, however, had a major flaw. If Livingstone's image, as promoted by Murchison, had been of the very model of a Victorian hero, Burton's, as promoted by himself, was the total antithesis of that ideal. He not only went out of his way to shock the public in his writings and lectures, but cultivated a somewhat sinister and very un-English appearance. Most of all, as Murchison was painfully aware, Burton was his own worst enemy. Everywhere he travelled he seemed to leave a trail of indignant and

outraged Indian Army, Royal Navy and Foreign Office officials in his wake—the very agencies whose support Murchison and the needed most.

To make matters worse for the Society, most knowledgeable geographers were agreed that Burton's theories about the source of the Nile were probably correct, and that his current expedition should settle the mystery. Therefore, it was likely that the greatest glory for British geography in modern times was about to be achieved by a man who was, from Murchison's point of view, a "public relations" nightmare.

Such was the political climate at the Royal Geographical Society on 9 May, when John Speke presented himself to its President. Before Murchison stood the very image of God's own Englishman: a blue-eyed, fair-haired, sun-burned explorer claiming that he had just discovered the source of the Nile. Here was Murchison's opportunity—for the greater good of the —to brush aside the controversial Richard Burton, and at the same time promote a new and seemingly more fitting hero. John Speke would be Murchison's new Lion.

Murchison listened to Speke's account of the Nile Expedition with mounting enthusiasm, and when

Speke finished his report exclaimed: "Speke, we must send you there again." Within days plans for a new expedition, commanded by Speke, were set in motion, with £2,500 worth of funding promised by Murchison—all before Burton had even returned to England.

Although Speke had succeeded in his goal to lead his own expedition, a more delicate task faced him: that of creating such an atmosphere of suspicion and discredit around his former commander and companion that Burton would have difficulty claiming his right to lead the next expedition to central Africa, or succeed in mounting a rival one. We will never know what Speke said about Burton behind closed doors, but it was evidently effective. As W. H. Wilkins, Isabel Burton's biographer, later wrote,

Speke had spread all sorts of ugly—and I believe untrue—reports about Burton. These coming on top of certain other rumours—also, I believe untrue—which originated in India, were only too readily believed.

When Burton arrived from Aden, he found London a-buzz with talk of Speke's "discovery" of the Lake now being called "Victoria". Piece by piece, the mosaic of events became clear to him: he had been betrayed by his former protégé and friend. He had been out-

manœuvred, and his reputation injured, by a man whom he had nursed through near-fatal illnesses, and whose presence on the expedition was a result of his own sponsorship.

Burton now had to face the greatest crisis of his life while still mentally and physically exhausted. Isabel Burton, in her *Life of Captain Richard F. Burton*, described meeting him the day he returned to London:

I shall never forget Richard as he was then. He had had twenty-one attacks of fever—had been partially paralysed and partially blind. He was a mere skeleton, with brown-yellow skin hanging in bags, his eyes protruding, and his lips drawn away from his teeth.

On 21 June 1859, Burton appeared before the Expedition Committee of the R. ‡ (it was actually an *ad hoc* sub-committee composed of John Crawford, Francis Galton and Laurence Oliphant). Although it is evident from the Minutes in the Archives that the Committee gave Burton a full and fair hearing, Burton made his report knowing that it was already been being proposed to send Speke in his place. Speke now commanded the expedition which Burton should have led, and, with £2,500 given to Speke, there would be

little money available for anyone else. It was probably for this reason that Burton made only a rather half-hearted proposal to go alone, in disguise, to explore the lake regions via the Mombasa route. The Committee encouraged Burton to re-apply for sponsorship once he had recovered his health, but Burton knew as well as anyone else that there was money for only one Nile Expedition, and room for only one Nile hero.

CHAPTER NINE

A DEBT OF HONOUR

MAY 1859 - APRIL 1860

NINE

To compound his troubles, Burton also had to deal with the financial troubles over his recently completed expedition. Despite repeated requests, he had not been granted the extra money required to pay the balance owed to the porters and crew on the journey, and the Government now demanded that Burton must pay this from his own pocket.

During the planning stages of the original expedition, Speke had agreed that if the Government money provided was inadequate, he would be willing to assist with his own funds rather than see the project fail. Burton himself had already advanced £1,400 for the journey, and now requested that Speke honour their agreement, by paying £600 toward the expenses. Speke, at least initially, refused to pay his share and accused Burton of not trying hard enough to get Government reimbursement.

The letters which Speke and Burton exchanged over the money issue are of special interest not only in that they are, as far as we know, the last they ever exchanged, but they are also where Speke finally put

into writing all the grievances he had harboured against Burton since 1855. What makes some of them even more dramatic is that in it was in their margins that Burton wrote his very blunt rough draft replies.

Reading through them, one can follow the inexorable deterioration of a doomed friendship.

* * * * *

XXIII

17 June 1859.

J. H. Speke to R. F. Burton.

31 Mount Street.

17th June.

My dear Burton,

I have just received your letter, dated Wednesday, stating that you look to me alone, according to our agreement, for any refundment of the monies spent by you in excess of the Govt. advance of £1000. And that "*the sooner this affair is settled the better.*"

In reply, I must again say that I am fully aware of my liabilities to you. The agreement between us was this. I said to you as soon as the Govt. money was all

expended that, rather than allow anyone's interest to be sacrificed by shortcomings, and rather than allow the whole weight of any further expenditure to fall entirely upon you, I would be answerable for the half of any sums that might be legitimately expended in prosecution of the travels before us and would pay it provided that the Govt. should refuse to admit our advancement. At present the Govt. has had no opportunity of refusing any refundment. You have not put it so before them. As soon as you have fulfilled your part of the engagement, if they (the Govt.) then decline to pay us, I shall consider it my duty-in-honour to pay you the half agreed to. Methinks I have not seen the bills, and, do not know *positively* what items contained in your bill constitute any portion of the total-of-monies for which I may be considered liable.

Taking this affair in a *l.s.d* point of view, I must say that your importunate demands has [*sic*] rather surprised me. Especially when I reflect to former relations between us. I mean the Somali affair. Then I spent *everything*—ready money—and received *nothing* in return. You, in virtue of your position as Commandant, took my diaries from me, published them, and never offered me even $\frac{1}{2}$ returns for your book in which they were contained. My specimens also,

which I had industriously collected, together with my notices of their habits, etc., etc., you took from me, and presented them to the Bengal Museum recording the appended "remarks" as originating from yourself, when very well knowing that I alone had collected everything, and that nobody but myself could possibly have known anything about them.¹

With your *permission*, I advanced large sums of money on account, to carry out my journey there on Govt. behalf, & not one farthing of this have you ever offered to refund me. Had I been aware at that time, that it was *never* your intention so to do, I most certainly would have *resisted* your appropriation of *my* papers and collections. I am sorry to bring any allusions to this *by-gone* matter before you, but, as I have said before, it is now a *l.s.d.* affair.

I must beg you now to be more moderate, until at least I get my pay from the Govt. for the time which I have been serving with you. As yet, I have not been able to draw one Penny.

Yours Truly,

J. H. Speke.

1. See p. 53-54 for an account of this dispute.

XXIV

20 June 1859.

J. H. Speke to R. F. Burton.

31 Mount Street.

20 June.

My dear Burton,

Your letter, June 18th, has come to hand. Since you do not intend to be importunate, I am sorry that I should have so considered the two letters you sent, in such rapid succession, as indicative on your part of immediate hastiness.

Your former letter led me to suppose that you had only sent in accounts up to date of the expiration of the Govt. funds.

I wish now look [*sic*] at them.

If you have sent in all the accounts of expenditures and have required refundment for at least half of it, you will have done your best. I have sent in my separate accounts & have asked for a refundment not only of it but of everything else. I could do no more, not being aware of my full liabilities to you.

About the by-gones I will fully enlighten you with my views, since you think it odd that I should not have

mention [*sic*] it before and then for God [*sic*] sake let the matter drop.

In the first place, you would never have heard a word about it from me unless I had not, *unfortunately*, misunderstood the cause of the rapid succession of your two notes. But should have [*sic*], as is my want, tried to make all easy. I was never "half returns", but only thought it odd, that you did not offer me anything, when, on the last expedition I understood you to say that you had made some 2 or 3 hundreds by your work. I put the question to you purposely, and thought it singular that so much matter could be produced, returning only so insignificant a sum, & felt wonderfully astonished in considering how scribblers made a livelihood. I should have published, had you not done so, as my parents were desirous of it.

But, considering your position as Commander, I did not demur, nor said a word, even at your appropriation of my dispatches to Playfair.¹ Neither did I resist your sending off my specimens, procured (as it turned out) with my private coin, and sent with *your remarks*. Notwithstanding, you knew me to be possessed of a private museum, up to that period I had spent much time, and many expenses; and had left India on

Furlough to carry on my collection, & enlist Africa with my completed India ones.

I thought this all the harder when on our trip to Fuga, at which time I brought your attention to what I thought an unfair appropriation of *my* remarks appearing in print as *your* remarks. You then added Gall to it by saying that you considered such appropriation legitimate & that anybody similarly circumstanced would do the same. After that confession, I felt to make any more collections, & especially remarks about them, labour in vain.

When I brought my outfit to journey (for the Govt.) alone in the Somali Country, I refused to take your Govt. money (then offered by yourself), for fear of hampering your (immediate) means. But obtaining your sanction to spend my own money on Govt. account, expected after the second year's adventures, when you hope to get a second thousand, that you would refund me the money. This was the verbal agreement as you must remember. You know, for I remember telling you, that I had been in the habit of writing remarks on specimens of Nat. His. to Blyth, & should have done so then, much more satisfactorily for science that it was done, so "*readably*",

second hand, by yourself. You did not ask my permission but hotly plunged into it, as I have always thought premeditatedly.

Yours truly,

J. H. Speke.

1. Lt.-Col. Robert Playfair was British Political Resident, Aden, at the time of Burton's expedition, having succeeded Outram and Coughlin.

XXV

13 October 1859.

R. F. Burton to the Royal Geographical Society.

This extract is reproduced by kind permission of the Royal Geographical Society.

13 October, 1859.

Sir,

Having submitted my accounts early in June, 1859, to the Council of the R. G. Society, I have been informed that they were refused, in order to have the accounts

which were roughly given in the Field Book carefully arranged & copied out. This has now been completed and the accounts forwarded by my agents, Messrs. Forbes & Co. of Bombay, have been sent in as vouchers.

As regards the pay of our escort, the Ras Kafilah Said bin Salim, \$50 reward for accompanying us to Mombasah, received from Lt.-Col. Hamerton in advance of \$500 (=£100), before departure to Ujiji, with a proviso of an additional reward in case of good conduct—he did not deserve more. H. H. the Sayyid Majid of Zanzibar sent with us an escort of irregulars, to each of whom Lt.-Col. Hamerton advanced \$20 (to the Jamadar or Commandant—\$25), with prospects of a remuneration in return, but no regular pay, as they were servants of the Prince. I had written home for the reward but their desertions and other acts of misconduct—they left Capt. Speke and myself to navigate the Tanganyika Lake for a whole month in the hands of the Wajiji barbarians—rendered it exceedingly inadvisable to show any liberality...

They, therefore, received nothing more from me, although H. H. thought proper to give them \$2300 (£460) on their return. Ramji, Hindoo merchant, sent with me 10 men who received upon departure the

extravagant sum of \$300 which would have purchased the whole gang in the bazaar.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Yr. mst. Obt. Servt.,

R. F. Burton.

Late Commanding,

E. A. Expedition

XXVI

3 November 1859.

J. H. Speke to R. F. Burton.

Lypiatt Park.

3 Nov.

My dear Burton,

I have just recd. yours of the 31st *ultimo* with its insinuations. I have given all my knowledge of African matters in the three numbers of *Blackwood*,¹ which I have desired him to send you. I have given my authority about the Bari,² the Kivira³ and all the other matters in them. You used to read and extract from my mss., and there is nothing in them than what

I believe you have read. You are at liberty to scratch any names you like out of my map. What Abdullah⁴ meant I am best judge of.

You can contradict anything that *you* do not think truthful in my diaries.

I don't want to be bothered any more with writing now that I have told my tale and published it for everybody to criticise as they may please.

Yours truly,

J. H. Speke.

1. "Journal of a Cruise on the Tanganyika Lake and Discovery of the Victoria Nyanza Lake," by John Speke, *Blackwood's Magazine*, vol. 86, pp.339-57, *et seq.*, 1859. Also "Captain Speke's Adventures in Somaliland," *Blackwood's Magazine*, vol. 87, pp.339-57 *et seq.*, 1860.
2. The Bari were an African tribal group which Speke had described in his book.
3. The Kivira River was at first described by Speke as being the local name for the Nile.
4. Abdullah bin Nasib, the youngest Son of Gerad, Sultan of Warsingali, who had accompanied Speke in his attempt to explore the Wadi Nogal during the Somali expedition of 1854-5. Speke blamed his failure in this mission to Abdullah's lack of co-operation. He had also been one of Speke's informants about the "northern lake."

XXVII

[November 1859].

J. H. Speke to R. F. Burton.

Jordans.

Thursday.

My dear Burton,

I enclose one of the late Zoological Society proceedings to show you what additions I have given to that establishment concerning the Somali collection. Blyth¹ is sending me a set paper of all the collection, when I intend to improve the whole at once or as many as I can from our collection. I have told Mr. Findlay² that I do not wish to have my name attached to the map I made on the last expedition, if he makes use of your considerate distances in connection with my well-timed estimates, as it could certainly do no good, and most likely would be productive of much harm by falsification. I have given the public all the matter which I know about Africa and desire nothing else either for myself or Geography. As you were so busy in objecting to my Bari people, I have given Shaw an account of the way in which I obtained the information

& desired at the same time that he would show it to anybody who might feel inclined to question me as you have done.

All I can say is that for the sake of Geography, it's a shocking pity you did not tell me of the Egyptian Expeditionist [*sic*] when on the journey,³ or this ridiculous exposé could never have happened, nor would Geography have suffered.

Yours truly,

J. H. Speke.

1. Edward Blyth was Curator of the Zoological Department of the Bengal Museum, to whom Burton had originally sent Speke's Somali collection.
2. A. G. Findlay was a member of the Council of the
3. The Egyptian Expedition Speke refers to was a party sent up the Nile in the 1830s by Mohammed Ali Pasha, which succeeded in reaching 3°22' North latitude, near Gondokoro. Speke had guessed the source of the Nile at 4°–5° North latitude (present-day Juba, Sudan): as Burton pointed out to him, this would have had the Egyptian expedition sailing for five miles on a lake they never saw. Speke was obviously feeling defensive over guess-work which had seriously undermined the integrity of his claims.

XXVIII

14 January 1860.

[Her Majesty's Government] to R. F. Burton.

India Office I. C.

14 January, 1860.

Sir,

I am directed by the Secretary of State for India in Council to inform you that, having taken into consideration the explanations afforded by you in your letter of the 11th November, together with the information on the same subject furnished by Captain Speke, he is of opinion that it was your duty, knowing as you did that demands for wages, on the part of certain Belches & others, who accompanied you into Equatorial Africa, existing against you, not to have left Zanzibar without bringing these claims before the British Consul there, with a view to their being adjudicated on their own merits, the more especially as the men had been originally engaged through the intervention or the influence of the British Authorities, whom therefore it was your duty to satisfy before leaving the country. Had this course been followed, the character

of the British Government would not have suffered & the adjustment of the dispute would in all probability have been effected at a comparatively small outlay.

Your letter & that of Capt. Speke will be forwarded to the Government of Bombay with whom it will rest to determine whether you shall be held pecuniarily responsible for the amount which has been paid in liquidation of the claims against you.

I am, Sir,

Your Obedient servant,

T. Cosmo Melvill.

XXIX

[February 1860].

R. F. Burton to J. H. Speke.

Very rough draft in Burton's hand, unsigned and undated.

My dear Speke,

In consequence of a letter recd. from Capt. Rigby, & forwarded to me by Sir Charles Wood,¹ and my reply thereto, & bearing in mind the many misunderstand-

ings wh. have lately occurred, I feel that any direct correspondence between us can not be productive of any good, & might lead to unseemly disputes, wh. in the cause of Geogl. Science, it is most desirable to avoid. I have therefore asked the Dr. S[haw] to communicate to you the existence of the letter above alluded to. Your note since recd., only tends to confirm me in my opinion that direct correspondence shd. cease between us, & I trust this letter of mine will close it. It is competent to you to send any remarks or information to the which you desire. It is competent to me to do the same, & that body will, of course, decide upon the use they will make of this information so afforded. Your impression of occurrences & conversations that took place is often totally opposed to any convictions of those points, that no possible good can come from the discussion of them, & as the only effect can be unseemly dispute, I hope that you will agree with me that all points of difference should be simply communicated to the , to be used by them as they shall think fit.

[*unsigned*].

1. Sir Charles Wood was Secretary of State for India at the time of this correspondence.

14th Jan^y's day

1st Feb^y 1858

Dear Sir

Since you appear desirous
of Shunning me -

I write to inform you that I have
this day received intelligence from
the Indian Govt: of their intention
to admit me the whole of my
Indian Pay & Allowances from the
2nd Dec^r 1856 to the 14th Dec^r
1859 -

In consequence of this announcement

I shall be prepared to pay you
the half of the excess of expenditure
which accrued on the Expedition
since the date when the Govt:
allowance of 1000 £, ceased
until the Expedition expired -
But this will only be the case when
your agreement to ask the Govt:
(the sanction on which we both
belong to) for refundment shall

on your part have been fulfilled:
and, as it is possible may in the
case they shall have expected to
require you - I remain dear Sir

Yours faithfully

J. M. Speke

P. S. - The passage money which
I have found had to pay for going
out to India since my return
home and the other expenses
which I advanced on account of
the Expedition will of course have

XXX (a)

1 February 1860.

J. H. Speke to R. F. Burton.

14 St. James's Square.

1st Febry., 1860.

Dear *Sir*,

Since you appear *desirous* of shunning me—I write to inform you that I have this day received intelligence from the Indian Govt. of their intention to admit me the whole of my Indian Pay & allowances from the 2nd Decr. 1856 to the 14th May 1859—

In consequence of this announcement, I shall be prepared to pay you the half of the excess of expenditure which accrued on the Expedition since the date when the Govt. allowance of 1000£s ceased until the expedition expired—

But this will only be the case when your agreement to ask the Gov't. (the Indian one which we both belong to) for refundment shall on your part have been fulfilled; and, as it's possible may be the case they shall have *refused* to requite you—I remain dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

J. H. Speke.

p.s. The passage money which I have had to pay for going out to India since my return home and the other expenses which I advanced on account of the Expedition will of course have to be considered in the account, as it was never my intention to have left England with you in the first instance, had I known it would have afterwards fallen to myself to pay that money.

J. H. Speke.

xxx (b)

3 February 1860.

R. F. Burton to J. H. Speke.

Burton's draft reply to the foregoing, written at the foot of Speke's letter.

Boulogne.

Sir,

I am not "desirous of shunning you."

As regards money, to any actions between us, the subject is distasteful to me in the extreme but you press it upon me. The debt was contracted unconditionally by you in Africa.

Since your return home, you have remembered an "agreement" which never existed, and you propose conditions which, allow me to say, are not exactly your affair. It is for me to decide if I choose to "ask the government for refundment." Had I known you then as well as I do now, I should have required receipts for what was left a debt of *honour*. I must be contented to pay the penalty of ignorance.

I am Sir,

yr. obedt.

Richd. F. Burton.

Boulogne, 3rd Feb. '60.

XXXI (a)

9 February 1860.

J. H. Speke to R. F. Burton.

This letter is unsigned, but clearly in Speke's hand.

9th Febr. 1860.

Sir,

Without offering any comments whatever on your last note, dated from Paris, 2nd Febr., I would

inform you that I have adopted the plan you advised yourself on a previous occasion, of conducting for the future, all differences between us through the Medium of the Royal Geog. Society, for their arbitration. Consequently in this decision, I have written a facsimile of the enclosed letter to Dr. Shaw, their Secretary.

[*unsigned*].

XXXI (b)

6 February 1860.

[*J. H. Speke to N. Shaw*].

14 St. James's Square.

6th Febr., 1860.

My dear Shaw,

I have just received a letter from Capt. Burton in which he says it's "distasteful" to him having any correspondence with me in regard to the money matters.

I am most anxious to come to some settlement with him in liquidation of the late E. A. Expedition debt, but cannot arrange it.

It was a voluntary action on my part offering to

assist him in defraying the expenses of that expedition, provided the Govt. would not refund him any money at the expiration of the journey. I am prepared to swear by the honour of a gentleman I made that provision with him, expecting him of course to ask our Govt. for it, and, as he concluded by accepting my proposal in this manner, I considered it an agreement between us. Now, however, he denies there was any agreement between us, but seems to expect I shall pay him my quota of the expenditures, without his trying to save me by any exertion on his part. This is virtually throwing me over, as the Govt. could not recognise any claims I might make upon them unless it came through him.

In conclusion: I accepted Captain Burton's invitation to go to Africa with him under the proviso I should not be called upon to pay any money whatever, not even my passage out, or I said I would not go with him.

He is fully aware of this fact. All arrangements I made after that even down with a visit [*sic*] to saving him, voluntarily on my part and without any formality in writing.

Excuse my troubling you with this affair but I don't

know how to act and wish you would favour me with your advice on the subject.

If Capt. Burton has no private reason for not writing to the India House, there certainly could be no harm in petitioning them and, out of justice to my feelings, I think he ought to do so.

Yrs.,

J. H. Speke.

XXXII

10 February 1860.

J. H. Speke to N. Shaw.

This extract is reproduced by kind permission of the Royal Geographical Society.

My dear Shaw,

...It must be obvious, as you yourself said, to everybody, from the fact of Capt. Burton's having applied to the R. G. Society for refundment of his expenditures that he had always intended to recover his money from the Govt. if possible. It is also obvious that I must have expected him to apply to the Govt. from the fact of my

having told Captain Burton on the line of march (which I cannot deny) that he ought to report our obligations to the Arab [*sic*] & men who travelled with us to them and as he did not do so that I told Capt. Rigby of it. Who concluding with myself in the inadvisability in leaving debts of honour unsettled, without any trial or debate at the consulate whence the men were engaged, reported the state of the circumstances to the Indian Govt. for adjustment.

I was induced to advise Capt. Burton to report our obligations to the men to the Indian Govt. because our funds were out, and at Zanzibar would be as well able to pay the men as Captain was, the expedition was a Govt. affair.

Pray excuse this further trouble, it's painful to me to have to ask you to arbitrate between us, but I feel it is the only recourse left me.

J. H. Speke.

XXXIII

7 February 1860.

N. Shaw to R. F. Burton.

My dear Burton,

The printers have just sent your note to them, together with the first portion of revise up to p.128, which shall be sent *at once* to 14 St. James's Sq., and the remainder forwarded as soon as it arrives. These things cannot proceed as speedily as you think, other papers having been directed to be printed in our Journal also.

Is it by your permission that Speke has published in *Peterman's Journal* a very full map of the proceedings of the Expedition under your command, containing, as it appears, more information than any yet given to Mr. Findlay, who must *now* have time to revise his map? On the next page you will find an extract from the Expedition Committee Report respecting your application for additional funds from the Foreign Office, and Speke has since informed me that he has received from the Indian Government his pay during his absence in Africa with you. He desires to take Capt. Grant with him.

A card to Earl de Grey's *soirées* for Wednesday 8th, 15th & 29th has been delivered at your Club by direction of,

Yours, my dear Burton,
always sincerely,

Norton Shaw.

P.S. Upon second thoughts, I will write to the printers to do as you wished, & send the revise at once to you. I shall therefore not send them to St James's Sq.

[The following note in Shaw's hand is enclosed].

Dr. Shaw has been requested to inform Capt. Burton that, in the opinion of the Committee, the Society has no claim on the Foreign Office for any sum beyond the £1000 already advanced towards defraying the expenses of the East Africa Expedition but that the Committee will be gratified to learn that Capt. Burton had been reimbursed the extra sum laid out by him.

XXXIV (a)

10 April 1860.

J. H. Speke to R. F. Burton.

Jordans, Ilminster.

10th April 1860.

Dear Sir,

The Geographical Society is shut up and I cannot get at the exact amount for which I am liable to you, whatever it is I shall be happy to pay, as I've said before, and have now asked my brother, the Revd. Ben Speke, to arrange for me whilst I am away. This is surmising that the Govt. refuse to pay you, of which I have not yet been fully made acquainted.

I am sorry it is not in my power to pay you the money directly in England, but will either do so to Grindley's branch agency in India or, if more advantageous to you, would make over my pay as it was deposited in Govt. security in India, bearing interest at $5\frac{1}{2}$ percent, since the time when the Govt. paid me my pay and I bought shares of them.

As I expect to leave England at the end of this week, I wish you would tell me which way would be most agreeable to you, by return of post. My

pay having been paid in India is the cause of this inconvenience.

I remain, Dear Sir,
Yours Faithfully,

J. H. Speke.

XXXIV (b)

[April 1860].

R. F. Burton to J. H. Speke.

Burton's draft reply, scribbled at the bottom of the preceding letter.

Sir,

Mr. Wheeler, the Librarian of the , has shown me yr. letter, and I have authorised him to inform you that your request respecting various items shall meet with no opposition on my part.

As regards yr. comm. of the 10th April—which I have just received—I shall place it in the hands of the Messrs. Grindley, as I also am on the point of leaving England, and shall direct them to receive the money at your earliest convenience.

I am, Sir, yr. obt. Svt.

R. F. B.

XXXV (a)

16 April 1860.

J. H. Speke to R. F. Burton.

Jordans,
Ilminster, Somerset.
16 April.

My dear Burton,

I cannot leave England addressing you so coldly as you have hitherto been corresponding, the more especially as you have condescended to make an amiable arrangement with me about the debt I owe to you. I have heard from a branch of the Indian Government that no decision has yet been passed on your bill to them, therefore cannot settle with you at once, as I otherwise should have wished to do.

I am happy to say I have succeeded in accumulating money sufficient to meet my debt to you and have, therefore authorised my brother (Revd. Ben Speke) to pay you the money into Messrs. Grindley's hand, as you first proposed, immediately after the refusal has been received to refund you from the Govt. Treasury. Hoping this will meet your wishes, as I anticipate it might do.

Believe me,

Yours Faithfully,

J. H. Speke.

I have written to Grindley's about this final determination.

xxxv (b)

[April 1860].

R. F. Burton to J. H. Speke.

Draft reply in Burton's hand, written on the final page of Speke's letter.

Sir,

I have received your note of the 16th April. With regard to the question of debts I have no objection to make.

I cannot however accept your offer concerning our corresponding less coldly—any other tone would be extremely distasteful to me.

I am, Sir,

[unsigned].

14 S. James's Square.

CHAPTER TEN

“HIS HEARTLESSNESS
WILL RECOIL UPON HIM YET...”

MAY 1860 - SEPTEMBER 1864

TEN

John Speke left England on his second expedition to Africa in April 1860, taking with him James Grant, a friend from his Indian Army days who was as competent, stalwart and loyal a companion as any explorer could ask for. The two men retraced Burton and Speke's earlier route as far as Kazeh, then struck north-northwest into new territory. They marched through the kingdoms of Karagwe and Buganda—then unknown to the outside world. Speke and Grant's descriptions are the earliest detailed reports extant of the region and these first-hand accounts have proven to be their greatest legacy.

Speke had chosen not to attempt to circumnavigate the shoreline of Lake Victoria Nyanza, but opted rather to march his caravan over more open ground away from the lake itself, but parallel to what he surmised was the outline of the shore. In doing this, however, he lost sight of the lake for significant stretches and was thus unable not only to accurately account for the countryside surrounding it, but even to

tell whether the area supported one large lake (as he assumed) or a number of smaller ones.

Both Speke and Grant suffered repeated illnesses, the expedition was once again nearly ruined by mass-desertions of their porters, and the explorers were compelled to spend far more time than expected as "guests" in the kingdoms of Karagwe and Buganda. All of these circumstances caused them to become nearly fourteen months delayed in their plans to rendezvous at Gondokoro with Charles and Katherine Petherick, the British Consul and his wife, who were leading a re-supply expedition up the Nile.

Thus when, in July 1862, Speke finally made his march to the lake and located a waterfall issuing from it (which he named Ripon Falls), he spent too little time exploring the immediate area to be able accurately to describe the course of the river, and in order to make the best possible time getting to Gondokoro he also by-passed two other lakes—Kyoga and Luta Nzige—which undoubtedly had an important relationship to the Nile.

When hostile tribesmen made it difficult for the party to follow the river, Speke's party moved inland, where marching was easier, and continued on, but once again, in doing this Speke left important lengths

of the river uncharted, opening himself up for still more criticism in later years.

Having met up at Gondokoro with the Pethericks (and the explorers Sam and Florence Baker, who went on to survey the Luta Nzige at Speke's suggestion), the party proceeded to Khartoum, from where Speke sent his telegram with the famous phrase: "the Nile is settled."

But it was not settled at all. For all his heroism and solid achievements, Speke had still not proven conclusively that Lake Nyanza was the source of the Nile. He had failed to explore the lake's shoreline for over two hundred miles—a gap large enough for whole lakes to have existed undiscovered; he had failed to follow the Nile from Ripon Falls all the way to Khartoum, and his table of elevations, as his biographer Alexander Maitland has pointed out, "appeared to make a ninety mile stretch of the river flow uphill!"

From Khartoum, Speke's expedition travelled to Cairo, then to Alexandria and finally reached England in September 1863. Although he received a well-deserved hero's welcome from the public, there were, almost immediately, many who began to have second thoughts about his achievements and character. It did not go unnoticed, for instance that, just as he had

done after his journey with Burton, Speke came back from his expedition slandering another man's reputation—this time it was Consul Petherick. Newspapers were soon full of Speke's accusations that Petherick had been derelict in his duty, and had left Speke's supplies locked up at Gondokoro while he went off trading for ivory and other commodities. Speke even implied that Petherick had been involved in the slave trade. The fact was that the British Government expected their consuls to earn part of their living by trade in the region, and when Speke and Grant were over a year delayed in arriving at Gondokoro, Petherick and his wife had by necessity gone out trading. Although they returned to their base as soon as they heard Speke and Grant had arrived and made every effort to afford hospitality, Speke was so affronted that the Pethericks had not waited for him that he refused to use the stores for which Mr. and Mrs. Petherick had risked their lives to bring him (two other Europeans had died on the journey) and treated both Petherick and his wife very coldly in spite of all their efforts.

At dinner one night, when Mrs. Petherick tried to convince Speke to understand their position and to use the supplies that were, after all, still safely intact,

Speke said "I do not wish to recognise the succour-dodge." To which Mrs. Petherick said "Never mind, his heartlessness will recoil upon him yet."

It also had not gone unnoticed by the public that when Speke and Grant had arrived at Urundogani, near where their information indicated that a river issued from the lake, Speke had sent Grant away on a different route while he went on to see the falls alone. While Speke's explanation for his action was that Grant had been ill and would have slowed him down, it was suspected by many that the real reason was that he could not bring himself to share glory even with this amiable and loyal friend.

Equally disturbing for Murchison and the Royal Geographical Society was Speke's refusal to turn over to them his expedition notes for publication in the *Journal*. Where Burton had rewarded the with a wealth of material, Speke snubbed the official publication and would only sell his written information to *Blackwood's Magazine*.

Speke's accomplishments had been laudatory, but his behaviour fell embarrassingly short of expectations. By 1864, he was fighting battles on many fronts and his short-lived fame was on the wane. This, then, might

have been a opportune moment for Burton to re-enter the lists against the man who had once so damaged him, but it was too late.

In 1856, before sailing for Africa, Burton had proposed marriage to Isabel Arundell, and she had accepted him. When he returned from Africa in 1859, however, Isabel's parents refused to bless their marriage, and Isabel herself refused to elope. Devastated by Speke's betrayal, and frustrated by his stalled courtship, he left England abruptly in April 1860, travelled to the United States and took a stage-coach overland through the wild west, where he made his famous study of the Mormons of Salt Lake City, Utah Territory.

When he returned to London, Isabel must have realised that she could no longer expect Burton to wait for her parent's approbation, and the couple married, in a secret ceremony, on 22 January 1861. Thus he found himself with a new wife, but with his former career as soldier and explorer in tatters. Isabel's family had connections in the Foreign Office, however, and it was arranged for Burton take up the post of Consul to Fernando Po, considered "the bottom rung on the Foreign Office ladder." Like much of the region, Fernando Po was considered a "white man's

grave”, and out of fear for his new wife’s health, Burton refused to let Isabel join him there. He was Consul at Fernando Po from 1861–1864, with a young man called Frank Wilson as his Vice-Consul.

Burton tried to remain as involved in the continuing Nile debate as his remote Foreign Office postings in West Africa and South America would allow. Unfortunately, his contributions to this question after 1859 did his historical legacy more harm than good. We have seen how the letters in the Letter Book establish that it was Burton who had been the first to hypothesise, and that for a time he believed, that the Ukerewe/Victoria Nyanza Lake was the principal feeder of the Nile. We have also seen how, had he been able to go back to central Africa, he would have sought to prove the exact relationship of the lake to the Nile itself.

Had he stood by his theories, and limited his comments to criticism of the weaknesses in Speke’s evidence, the wheels of fortune might well have begun to turn back in Burton’s favour. His peers might have come to acknowledge his pre-eminent role in the discovery of the Nile sources, as well as for his enormous contribution to the world’s knowledge about central Africa. He might even have come to be recognised, in

his own lifetime, as, at the very least, the co-discoverer of the source of the Nile.

But Burton's betrayal by Speke had cast over him a pall of bitterness from which he could not detach himself, and this caused him to make a grave mistake. By abandoning his original instinctive conclusions about Lake Victoria, and by later countering Speke's claims with suggestions that Lake Tanganyika was the source of the Nile, Burton sabotaged his chance for vindication.

Unduly influenced by fellow geographers such as James MacQueen who wished Speke ill, and by his own animosity towards his former comrade, Burton patched together a new theory that the Arab and African sources he had spoken to may have been wrong, and that the Rusizi River *did* actually flow out of Lake Tanganyika, rather than into it. Therefore it was just as possible that Lake Tanganyika, situated to the south and west of Lake Victoria, might yet prove to be the true source of the Nile.

These theories were first published in book form in Burton's *The Nile Basin* (1865), a book which does him no credit. It is at once mean-spirited and wrong, and is a sad chapter in what had been a noble story. By allowing bitterness to influence his judgement, Burton

was betrayed once again, but this time he had only himself to blame.

By September 1864 the Nile debate had begun to resemble a three-ring circus. Not only was there the Speke and Burton controversy in one arena, there were also Speke's battles with Petherick and his critics in another. The discovery of the Murchison Falls and Lake Albert by Sam and Florence Baker in 1861 added more controversy to the debate over where the true Nile source lay. Meanwhile, David Livingstone was also showing increasing interest in the greatest question of the day.

Murchison, whose good opinion of Speke had been tested considerably since May 1859, decided to organise a debate on the Nile as part of the Annual Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science to be held at Bath on 16 September 1864. He invited Burton and Speke each to address the issue, and asked Livingstone to be the moderator. When he heard of the plan Speke said: "If Burton appears on the platform at Bath, I shall kick him!" Laurence Oliphant relayed this message to Burton, who retorted: "Well, that settles it. By God he shall kick me!"

On 15 September, the day before the Nile debate itself, Richard and Isabel Burton attended the

Association's afternoon session. As they entered the hall, the couple found themselves face to face with Speke. No-one spoke, but, once seated, Speke was seen to grow restless and agitated. He was heard to say: "Oh, I cannot stand this any longer!" and lunged up from his seat. When someone asked him if he would be returning for his chair, he exclaimed: "I hope not!"

Speke left the meeting and later in the afternoon joined a shooting party composed of George Fuller, his cousin, Thomas Fitzherbert Snow, a surgeon, and Daniel Davis, the game-keeper, at the Fuller estate at Neston Park, near Box in Wiltshire.

Speke was heard to fire twice, and then at about 4 p.m. Fuller heard another blast from Speke's gun. Turning round, he saw Speke fall from a low stone wall and, running to his cousin's side, he found Speke lying on the ground with a great and fatal wound in his chest. Seemingly, Speke's shotgun had discharged while he was climbing the stone wall.

As Fuller knelt beside him, Speke murmured "don't move me." He remained conscious for a time, but by the time the surgeon arrived, John Hanning Speke was dead.

Thus ended the life of a courageous and intrepid

man, whose equal can hardly be found in our time. For all his faults, Speke must surely be counted among the greatest and most important of all African explorers. The mystery of his death, and the unexplained way that his gun had fired into his heart, left room for speculation as to whether he took his own life, and in some respects overshadowed his contemporaries' estimation of Speke's achievements and the whole Nile question itself. That one of the most celebrated of British hunters could have accidentally shot himself in the chest with his own gun seemed unlikely, and the fact that the incident occurred on the eve of an event which must have been causing Speke tremendous anxiety also suggested that there might have been more to the affair than the mere accidental discharge of a firearm, as the coroner eventually decided.

It cannot be discounted that seeing Burton again that morning might have kindled in Speke a dormant sense of guilt over his betrayal of a man who had been his sponsor, friend and teacher five years earlier. The further knowledge that, on the morrow, he would have to face one of the most articulate and powerful debaters in Britain must also have filled him with dread. Self-murder was not John Speke's way, but the

double-headed spectre of guilt and dread must surely have stalked him that September afternoon.

Burton's brusque, almost casual comments about Speke's death in his letter to Frank Wilson, below, were typical of his public reaction, but, as Isabel Burton relates in her book *The Life*, they do not reflect his true feelings: "When we got home he wept long and bitterly, and I was for many a day trying to comfort him."

* * * * *

XXXVI

21 September 1864.

R. F. Burton to F. Wilson.

Royal Hotel, Bath.

Sept. 21, 1864.

My dear youth,

Yours of Augst. 3 with enclosures just recd. Box also came. I have been to Glasgow & have seen your governor & sister, missed Mrs. Frank¹ . . . Then ran down to Bath.

Capt. Speke came to a bad end, but no one knows anything about it...

For the present also my dear Wilson,

A longer letter by the next mail.

Ev. yr. friend,

[*unsigned*].

1. *i.e.* Wilson's wife.

EPILOGUE

THE HARD-WILLED MAN

EPILOGUE

If there was a place that most suited Burton professionally, and a time when he and his wife were happiest together, it must have been Damascus, where he was stationed as H. B. M. Consul from 1869–71. His familiarity with middle-eastern customs and religions, and his fluency in the languages of the region made him a perfect choice for a post in which he could use his talents to best advantage and where, at last, Richard and Isabel could have the life together that they had always longed for.

The centre of their domestic life was a house beside a river in the village of Salihiyay, outside the walls of Damascus. Across the street from the main house they had a garden with jasmine and rose bushes, and an orchard with lemon, orange and apricot trees. They kept a dozen horses in their stables and their menagerie of pets included an orphaned leopard. Here the Burtons entertained guests from every religion, culture and walk of life, and became immersed in the daily rhythm of a city that still possessed the exotic atmosphere from the days of the “Arabian Nights”.

Notwithstanding, it was their safaris into the deserts of Syria and Palestine that captured Richard and Isabel's hearts, and most perfectly fulfilled their dreams of a romantic and adventurous life together. Isabel described their sorties off the beaten track in *The Life*:

Camping out is the most charming thing in the world, and its scenes will always live in my memory. It is a very picturesque life, although hard...

I can never forget some of those lovely nights in the desert, as after supper we all sat round in circles; the mules, donkeys, camels, horses, and mares picketed about, screaming, kicking, and hollowing; the stacked loads, the big fires, the black tents, the Turkish soldiers, the picturesque figures in every garb, and wild and fierce looking men in wonderful costumes lying here and there, singing and dancing barbarous dances, or Richard reciting the "Arabian Nights"...

At the end of one of these long days of travelling, after a meal and music and stories around the fire, the Burtons would retire to their tent, where cushions and carpets would be spread upon the ground. Some of the camels' harnesses had been hung from the tent poles, so that when the breeze blew through the tent, the

little brass camel bells would tinkle, and they would be lulled asleep by this desert version of "wind chimes." Both Richard and Isabel specifically mentioned in their books how "the tinkling of the camel bells" became a symbol of the happiest time of their lives.

But, as with so many episodes in his life, Burton's tenure at Damascus was sabotaged by the political manoeuvrings of jealous rivals, and as a result he was recalled to London after only two years *en poste*.

After his recall from Damascus, Burton returned to England to find that the streets of London were a depressing contrast to the exotic bazaars and the desert campfires of Syria. His family found him irritable and humourless and devoid of his old enthusiasm; unemployed for months and almost penniless, Richard and Isabel existed upon the charitable hospitality of Isabel's relatives and friends such as Lord Gerard of Garswood and Lord Stanley at Knowsley Park. Burton's greatest dreams of achievement having been dashed, he toyed with lesser schemes; a return to West Africa, a lecture tour of the United States, or mining in Iceland, but these came to nothing or withered away, only half conceived.

During the summer of 1872, the consular post

of Trieste fell vacant and Lord Granville urged the Burtons to take it. Those who understood the workings of the Foreign Office knew that Burton would never be granted another position equal to Damascus in prestige or salary, yet Burton accepted Trieste while still hoping to be given a posting to Tangiers or Teheran.

If Trieste was not a prestigious post, at least it gave the Burtons a steady income, of £600 per year, time to pursue their studies, and unlimited travel opportunities. Whenever the spirit moved them, they locked up their palazzo in Trieste and escaped to their favourite retreat, an inn at Opcina, Yugoslavia, or to Venice or Rome, Germany or England.

In 1876, Burton was granted six months' official leave. With it he and Isabel made a voyage back to Africa and India to revisit the scenes of Richard's early adventures, and while outward bound for India Richard began to dictate to Isabel the beginnings of his unfinished memoirs.

Once back in Trieste Burton dedicated himself to translations of *The Lusiads* and *The Thousand Nights and A Night*, as well as publishing his monumental poem, *The Kasidah*. In 1873, he had described in a letter to his friend Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton)

his daily routine "I keep up muscle by fencing, work at Romaic and Slavonic and attend lectures on chemistry... I know every stone about Trieste..." Burton usually began his day at four or five in the morning, and, in addition to the activities he had described to Lord Houghton, attended to his consular duties in the city, did his correspondence and worked at one of the several articles on archaeology, anthropology, folklore, religion, travel and mining which he published during this period.

One of the eyewitness accounts of Burton at work was by Mr. H. R. Tedder, Secretary of the Athenæum Club in London, whose description of Burton was included in Thomas Wright's biography:

He would work at the round table in the library for hours with nothing for refreshment except a cup of coffee and a box of snuff. He had an athletic appearance and a military carriage, and yet more the look of a literary man than of a soldier—a compound of a Benedictine monk, a Crusader and a Buccaneer.

In a letter to Gerald Massey in 1881, Burton, after listing the work he had done recently, had added a post-script: "Hard-willed men have time for all things." Indeed Burton seems to have become almost obsessive

in his pursuit of all the things that his many talents allowed him. It was as if, through innumerable small successes, he might assuage the great disappointment of his search for the source of the Nile.

Immediately after the final publication of the full sixteen volumes of the "Arabian Nights", Burton turned to making other translations, such as *Il Pentamerone*, *The Priapeia* and *The Scented Garden*, all of which were meant to serve the same function as the *Arabian Nights*: to occupy his restless intellect, to serve as vehicles of publication for his overflowing fund of esoteric knowledge, and, perhaps, to make as much money for their translator as had the *Arabian Nights*.

Burton was still hard at work when the end came. In the last years of his life, he had kept, for each of the several books he was working on, a separate table in his upstairs study. Burton was writing at one of these tables on Sunday, 19 October 1890, when he announced to Isabel that on the morrow he would finish his manuscript of *The Scented Garden* and begin work on the book she had long begged him to write, the story of his life.

In the pre-dawn hours of 20 October, Burton began to have trouble breathing. Dr. Baker was

called, but Burton was clearly dying. At 4 a.m. the blaze of energy that had animated one of the greatest personalities of the nineteenth century fell still. Isabel was at his side and a priest was called to give the extreme unction.

Later in the morning, when there was enough light in the house, Dr. Baker set up a camera and took photographs of the great man on his deathbed. We have these pictures today and one can study the details of the scene. Around Burton's neck is a rosary and a medallion, on the headboard of his bed is a crucifix, and hanging from a peg on the wall beside him is one of his swords. On the walls around him are maps of his journeys to Arabia, India and Africa; and above the bed, pinned to the wall, is an Islamic verse written in Persian.

It reads :

“This too shall pass.”

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