

[Burton, Athenaeum, No 1912, June 18, 1864]

African Discoveries.

Buena Vista, Fernando Po, April 18, 1864.

The accidental delay of a package, which should have reached me on March 28, prevented my noticing ere this the two communications bearing date January 14 and January 26, and addressed to your paper.

In the first, it is stated that "Capt. Burton feared to go on that line (viz. the southern or Kilwa route to the Nyanza lake), and instead took the one leading to Ujijji in preference, for safety's sake. This I declare to be wholly untrue.

The author of the above fabrication cannot help owning that to the choice of the Unyamwezi or middle road is due what he (and he only) calls the "Settlement of the Nile"; and with a truly characteristic generosity and good taste, he can find for the motive nothing worthier than 'fear.' I am not aware that such emotion has, in the performance of my duty, more weight with *me* than it has with *him*. Let me briefly state the facts of the case.

In my paper, published by the Royal Geographical Society in 1860, my instructions (p. 4) ran thus: "The great object of the Expedition is to penetrate inland from Kilwa or some other place on the east coast of Africa." In the same volume (p. 14) may be seen my reasons for not entering the continent via Kilwa: firstly, the decided preference shown by the late Lieut. Col. Hammerton, H. M.'s Consul at Zanzibar; and, secondly, my conviction, after a week's conversation with the Arabs, that two lakes had been thrown into one in the 'Mombas Mission' map.

It is not my wish "to have anything to do with" Capt. Speke – least of all to touch one of his by no means honourably won laurels. The future "Regenerator of Africa" has, you are informed by him, taught me geography. I would return the courtesy by inculcating a little common honesty. His various hints about me in 'The Sources of the Nile' (!), and his sundry mis-statements in the "Taunton Speech," I can afford to pass over in silence. The future shall judge between us.

With respect to the new "Montes Lunae," which Dr. Beke (in a paper now mislaid) observes to have been introduced in opposition to my opinion, I beg leave to repeat my statement. The horse-shoe of highlands, which first appeared – sadly against my wish – in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and which has since been copied into 'The Sources of the Nile,' is a simple elimination, like Goethe's well-worn camel. The furthest part of the arc is at least 150 miles from the most northern point yet visited in that mountain-girt trough, the Tanganyika Lake. That the settler of the Source of the Nile never saw them in 1858, and that no one can see them from the point then reached, or from any other point, I am equally sure. In the discoverer's last publication (p. 263), we find that the said horse-shoe depends for existence, not upon ocular proof, but "wholly on scientific and

geographical reasonings.” Conceding to him, though some perhaps may not, the possession of the high qualifications which he so modestly claims, I submit that, in laying down so exceptional a feature, and in distorting the views of the Alexandrian school, he has made undue use of his rare powers.

I wish Dr. Beke all success in his proposed expedition. The last discovery has placed the “Niliacos Fontes” further than ever – viz., *in nubibus*. Jestings apart, if laughter at such assertions can be refrained from, it has shown us that the Nyanza reservoir can no more be considered the true source than the Dembra lake or Bruce’s Abyssinian swamp. It simply opens up a new question, “Is the great stream to be derived from Dr. Krapf’s ‘Tubiri River’ and the Baringo Lake, - in fact, from the north-western water-shed of Kenia, Kilima-njaro, and the Lunar Mountains of Ptolemy? If not, “Must we seek its origin in the Bahr el Ghazal or in the highlands to the south-west of the Nyanza which discharge the Kitangule River? I incline to the theory first mentioned, and I am induced to believe that the Nyanza water will prove to be a huge lagoon, fed by a number of (for Africa) first-rate streams. It is only indeed by such a supposition that a plurality of issues can be explained.

The Holy River has lost some 300 miles of his mystery. The discovery of the true sources, however, is deferred until the south-eastern and the south-western extremities, including, of course, the southern semi-circle of the Nilotic Basin, shall have been examined by a competent observer. I venture to hope that the Coming Man will refrain from allusion to the Pauranic Geography of Africa for the reason that not a word concerning it was ever found by Lieut. Wilford in the Puranas. Moreover, that the next explorer will not confound Kafir-speaking peoples like the Wahuma and the Waganda with the Galla, whose dialect is purely Semitic. Finally, it is desirable that future travellers, after perambulating a mere shoulder of the Lake, should not return with such a maximum of “cry” and a minimum of “wool” as were brought home by the latest self-styled discoverer of the Nilotic sources.

Richard F. Burton.

[Nov. 19 1864 No. 1934 p. 677]

Just a notice of Burton’s paper, read at the geographical, ‘On Lake Tanganyika’.