

Hobley

the wonderful changes in Japan, one is surprised that the change has not spread over the subsidiary group, to which Japan will shortly, if it does not now, claim entire suzerainty. I had very little opportunity while there of examining or seeing much of the country; I travelled a little way, but not far. The admirable roads struck us all as marks of civilization. One would hardly have expected such a massive building as that in which the Prince of Luchu was concealed, like the Shogun of Japan, always invisible; it was a building of such massive structure that it would have required very heavy artillery to take it. However, that was not necessary, as they showed us the greatest possible civility, and were more than kind; but I must confess that that kindness was not extended by the ladies, who, although they may have seen us, did not take the opportunity of allowing us to see their charms. I thought, as one who had visited Luchu, it would be unfair if I did not thank Mr. Chamberlain for his paper.

The PRESIDENT: I am much obliged to Admiral Sir John Hay for having told us he has been to Luchu, for very few naval officers have the opportunity of visiting these islands. I am sure we have all listened to Mr. Chamberlain's paper with great interest; it is comprehensive, and when you have the opportunity of reading it you will find it exhaustive—such a paper as one would expect from the grandson of our old associate, who first gave us in our boyhood an account of these islands. Mr. Chamberlain's grandfather, Captain Basil Hall, the first modern writer on the Luchu Islands, was one of the earliest members of the Raleigh Club, which was the forerunner of this Society, and one of its most active members. He was also a member of the first Council of our Society, and I think that the occasion of this paper by his grandson being read before the Society should be taken as an opportunity for commemorating the great debt which geographical literature owes to Captain Basil Hall. That gallant officer and scientific seaman obtained for his books a place in the classics of British literature, through his admirable accounts of many distant lands, and through the thoroughness, elegance, and finish of his style. When I was a midshipman, and it was my all night in, I used to take Captain Hall's 'Fragments' into my hammock with me and read them by the light of the sentry's lantern. I think you will all feel it is an interesting coincidence that we should find his grandson following in his footsteps, in writing so graphic and lucid an account of the very islands the account of which served to build up the literary fame of his grandfather, Captain Basil Hall. We all, of course, regret that Mr. Chamberlain should not have been with us this evening, and I am sure that you will all join with me in a cordial vote of thanks for his valuable paper, and also a vote of thanks to Major Darwin for his kindness in taking so much trouble in preparing it and reading it to us.

UPON A VISIT TO TSAVO AND THE TAITA HIGHLANDS.

By C. W. HOBLEY.

WHAT follows is a short account of a journey to Tsavo and the mountain district of Taita, in the latter part of the year 1892. The start was made from Mombasa on September 21, with a small caravan of about 25 men all told. The ordinary route to the interior was taken by way of Mazera, Mwachi, and Taro. As there was at this season no water between Taro and Ndara, a distance of about 50 miles, a halt of one day was made at Taro in order to send on water ahead into the

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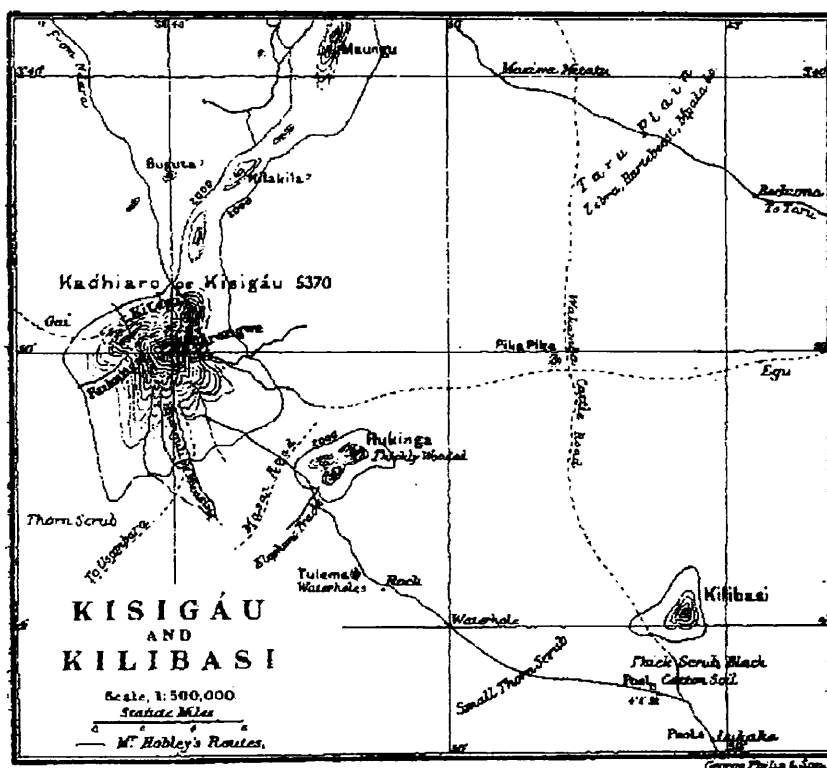
middle of the plain for the use of the caravan. A number of large tins containing water were sent on to near Maziwa Mitatu, and by the help of this water Maungu was passed, and the camp Mkuyuni on the east side of Ndara mountain was safely reached. This stretch between Taro and Ndara, commonly known as the Taro plain, is a vast area covered with fairly open thorn scrub, composed of varieties of the acacia and large numbers of very light sponge-wood trees. These sponge-wood trees have only one use: if an incision is made in the bark, a whitish treacly substance immediately exudes; this solidifies in the sun, and forms a bright amber-coloured bleb of gum arabic. Now, this supply is at present entirely untouched, though it doubtless will not be long before it is added to the list of products of the country.

From Ndara a track running round the north end of the mountain to Ndi was followed, and from Ndi the Tsavo river was reached in one day. Around the north end of Ndara there are vast thickets of the Nkongwe aloe, each leaf being a long fleshy spike almost circular in section and often 4 feet in length; the fibre prepared from the leaf of this plant, beaten out and dried, makes beautiful silky rope largely used by the natives, and one day this product of the desert will also be utilized. It is very happily situated, for there are large numbers of the Taita people resident near by who would readily gather and dry this substance if they could find a market for the fibre.

From Tsavo a three days' journey was made to the upper course of the river in the direction of Kilimanjaro; around Tsavo station on all sides is dense, thorny jungle, so that it may be imagined it was not an easy matter to follow the course of the river. At one time there was a very well-marked Masai track, but naturally, since the building of the station, this track has fallen into disuse and become almost obliterated. At intervals of a few miles, prominent rocky ridges of pink gneiss traversed the country in a north and south direction, the river having cut for itself a channel through which to pass, with steep walls of rock on either side; each of these ridges meant a step in general contour of the country—a series of rapids of small falls being present in the river at these points. The river is usually only 70 or 80 feet wide, and abounds in fish of three kinds—a flat mud-fish of the Siluroid family, similar to those found in the Tana; silvery scaled fish something like perch; and occasionally eels are seen. Crocodiles inhabit the river, but not in large numbers. Water-buck abound along the banks, and numerous rhinoceros tracks lead down from the bush to the river. The banks of the river are fringed with dense groves of the hyphæne branching palm, the baobab (*Adansonia*), the mkindu or *Phoenix* palm, the miware or *Raphia* palm, and the large umbrella-shaped acacia is also found along the banks of the river. The baobabs are nearly all stripped of their bark by the Wakamba, who carry it away to make their beautiful woven baskets for carrying grain, known as chondos. The whole of

mountain, but in the famine year they were foolishly cut down that the owners might eat the soft, tender, undeveloped shoots at the crown of the tree. The camp is very completely shaded by a fine grove of trees with beautifully silver bark; they are known as *Meassi*. They have a very rough leaf, which can upon occasion be used as sandpaper.

The Kisigau people in many ways appear to be more enterprising than the other Wataita. They have, for instance, introduced from the coast, limes, coconuts, papaws, pine-apples, and one or two other



products, which as yet are quite unique among these tribes. All the importations seem to flourish.

The people on the south side of the mountain seem to live in considerable fear of the Masai raiders, who occasionally pass on their way from Arusha, Useri, etc., and camp here for the sake of the water; on this account the inhabitants of the mountain are afraid to open up for cultivation the plains around the base. As long as they confine their operations to the steep slopes they are safe, for the Masai will not venture upon the intricacies of the mountain-paths. There is a considerable amount of game in the plains south of Kisigau, and the rare antelopes,

The whole of this district is the hunting ground of the Walangulo tribe, who live in the vicinity of Taro. These people are, like the Waboni, hereditary slaves of the Wagalla, and they are supposed to hand over to the Gallas half the ivory they kill; they formerly lived in the jungle around Taro, but have now moved to near Samburu, where they are intermixing a good deal with the Wanyika, and thus evading the authorities of the Gallas. The Walangulo are marvellously keen hunters and clever trackers. The Wanyika told me that the Walangulo prepare a drug from certain plants which enables them to track game by means of scent. This drug being swallowed by the hunter, renders his smell so acute that it enables him to follow up the game in the same way as the hound; in fact, I was even shown two plants said to be ingredients of this mixture. Of course, this idea may be accepted for what it is worth. It may have arisen from people having seen those hunters following up tracks which were to the ordinary native quite invisible. In appearance they are very similar to Wanyika, but they carry very long powerful bows. Parties of these hunters are often hired out by the chiefs of Chagga to hunt elephants; their method of dealing with thick-skinned animals, like the elephant and rhino, is to shoot them with a poisoned arrow in the comparative thin skin at the back of the foot just above the heel.

In the bush to the south of Kilibasi a considerable number of the lesser koodoo (*Stepsiceros imberbis*) are to be found, but between Kilibasi and Kisigau very little game is to be seen, a few giraffes, mpala, and hartebeest. Some little distance to the north of this road a curious sight was seen—namely, that of a pack of wild hunting dogs engaged in pursuing a solitary zebra; the zebra was flecked with foam, and evidently, being very hard pressed, could not possibly hold out much longer from its bloodthirsty pursuers.

Leaving Birikani, we marched on another 4 miles, and camped in a small valley with abundant water-holes. However, before reaching camp we passed through a very desolate-looking stretch, too stony to grow much vegetation. On the 16th a short march of about 5 miles brought us to Ada, and we camped here with the idea of purchasing food, but to our surprise found the Wadigo villages one and all deserted, at some comparative distant period. I afterwards found that all the inhabitants had moved coastwards soon after the year of the big famine. This discovery was rather serious, as the caravan was short of food, but later in the day I was fortunate enough to obtain some game to supply the deficiency. The country to the north of Ada is of a very desolate, stony character, and also seems to suffer from a chronic state of drought; even the trees are all dead and shrivelled from want of moisture, and grass there is absolutely none. However, from later observations I find this barren belt is not of very great extent. On the 18th, after about 8 miles' march, we entered the Digo country proper, and thenceforward