An Exploration in the Hadhramaut and Journey to the Coast: Discussion

William Goodenough; Stewart Perowne; Lord Wakefield; Lady Leconfield


Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0016-7398%28193901%2993%3A1%3C14%3AEEITHA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-2

*The Geographical Journal* is currently published by The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers).

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR’s Terms and Conditions of Use, available at http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html. JSTOR’s Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at http://www.jstor.org/journals/rgs.html.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

---

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.
There were only six of them altogether, but the prospect of taking on the enemy town did not seem to bother the Badawin. All they did was to clean and load their rifles in case of being waylaid at a vulnerable point of the road in the darkness, and we moved off, a rather sad little procession in that immense landscape. My sayyid here parted from me, in tears; his holiness allowed him to enter the enemy town. Five men lined up and danced a dance of defiance, shooting off their pieces, as we passed the walls at a little distance; while the sixth led my camel, frightened by the flashes. No one attacked us, but even the men, and I far more so, were completely exhausted when, after eight hours' riding over black cinders, we reached Balhaf again at 2 a.m.

DISCUSSION

Before the paper the Chairman (Admiral Sir William Goodenough) said: Things change in Arabia as elsewhere. The motor car may be seen on her roads and sometimes in her deserts, the aeroplane may be seen in her skies, but in the main mankind remains much the same. The Sultan and the rich man still live in those great houses, six storeys high, built of mud brick, and from there carry out business with some astuteness. The peasant still drives his flocks from place to place in search of pasture and tills the scanty soil with primitive hoe and plough for sustenance.

Of those things we are to hear to-night from a valued friend. Freya Stark—I speak of her without conventional prefix—has travelled much in Eastern lands and has observed and, what is much more important, has comprehended. The Southern Gates of Arabia are open to her, and through them she has shown us only to-day in picture and in charming writing what she has "Seen in the Hadhramaut." We are even more privileged, for to-night we are to hear of those things from her own lips in a lecture which I now invite her to deliver.

Miss Freya Stark then gave the paper printed above, and a discussion followed.

Mr. Stewart Perowne: The Geographical Club have put me under a double debt to-night. First, they have entertained me royally, and secondly, they have given me the opportunity of hearing a lecture by Miss Freya Stark. All who have listened to her lively, entertaining, and humorous narrative must have been moved with admiration for Miss Stark and have felt proud that they are of the same race as she.

It has been my privilege not merely to listen to her record but to be in a position to bear witness that it is true. I have had the honour of serving with the Government of Aden as a political officer. I have seen Miss Stark on the job, and I have heard what those among whom she and I lived thought of her. I assure you that it halved the burden of one's task to be able to say, when criticized as a minion of the British Government, "But there is Miss Stark."

I approach her doings from the point of view of the ordinary administrative officer, but I hope that in this august assembly I shall not appear unconscious of the benefits which Miss Stark has conferred upon science. I cannot claim to be a geographer or scientist, but in the course of my official wanderings I have found myself from time to time amid surroundings which suggested to me that I was on a soil which had seen the domination of another and an earlier empire. Miss Stark mentioned the town of Beihan. Six months ago I found myself in that town and took the opportunity of securing photographs of what I took to be an ancient site. I do not know very much about antiquity or what constitutes
an important site, but I felt that if in my daily travels I wandered across ancient masonry and that if in the drifting sands which I knew to be not far from the route over which had passed the "precious ointments" of Arabia Felix I came across fragments of alabaster, then in that locality and that context I felt I might be in the presence of something about which I had learned in my youngest days. When the Badawin brought me a beautiful box made of the same alabaster and obviously designed to contain that very same ointment, I felt that here was something about which scientists might be interested to know. I believe that in the Protectorate of Aden there are secrets which should be and, I am sure, will be deciphered by British scientists and which will yield information of great value to the anthropologist, the archaeologist, and the historian. If so, it will be largely due to the pioneer efforts of Miss Stark.

In closing, may I say that next to Miss Stark must come the Royal Air Force. Without them it would be impossible for us to visit and to control these remote strongholds: they represent most truly and efficiently imperium et libertas. Southern Arabia and the frankincense trade route were linked in antiquity with Nineveh and with Tyre. Now those civilizations which once flourished amid the sands are "one with Nineveh and Tyre." But I am sometimes tempted to wonder whether it was not to the Royal Air Force that Ezekiel was prophetically referring when he said: "The suburbs shall shake at the sound of the cry of thy pilots."

The centenary of Aden will fall in a little more than a month's time. I hope that it may stir anew in the citizens of that country, which is now responsible for the destinies of regions bordering on the lands once famous as Sheba and Arabia Felix, a lively interest in their modern inhabitants, for it is not only to the sands but also to the souls of men that we should direct the resources of the twentieth century. Miss Stark has told you of the past, but I assure you that it is the present which is grateful to Miss Stark.

The CHAIRMAN: You have heard, and many of you know without being told, that Lord Wakefield has been a great benefactor to Miss Stark's expedition and also to other expeditions. He is a Fellow of the Society and is with us this evening. I will ask him to say a word or two on how he regards these endeavours.

Lord WAKEFIELD: At this late hour my words will be in tabloid form. I do not know that I have listened to a lecture that has gripped my heart and imagination more than that to which we have listened to-night. We are tremendous admirers of Miss Stark, and I would like to congratulate her not only upon her courage but upon what she has provided for us this evening.

In these days it is refreshing to find that in southern Arabia politeness pays and good will begets good will. Diplomacy of a high order expressed itself in Miss Stark's account of her journey. I feel that quite apart from the geographical significance of her travels Miss Stark has rendered a great service to the cause of civilization by her work amongst the inhabitants of southern Arabia. I see Lord Plender here, and that reminds me of balance-sheets. In the balance-sheet presented to-night you have much upon the asset side which will account for righteousness. Miss Stark will have left behind her in southern Arabia sentiments of good will towards her countrymen for which we ourselves may have reason to be deeply grateful.

The CHAIRMAN: Quite apart from those who can travel in Eastern places and go far, there are those who derive immense enjoyment and encouragement from reading and by being friends with those who do travel. I ask Lady Leconfield, a friend of Miss Stark and one who takes a great interest in the Society, if she will say a few words.

Lady LECONFIELD: I find it almost impossible to express the tremors I feel on
coming on to this platform for the first time in my life in a place where I have spent so many happy hours. Lowther Lodge means to me, first and foremost, the Lowther Lodge of the Lowthers, where we used to come to garden parties on the site of the hall in which we now meet. In after years, during the War, I found myself again spending happy hours in this place under the direction of Dr. Dickson, of the Admiralty Intelligence Department. My work culminated then in what was, I am afraid, a somewhat feeble attempt to help in indexing the two-volume Blue Handbook upon Arabia: I did not know one word of Arabic, and I can assure you that the problem of alphabetizing and card-indexing it called for far more intelligence than I had to put to it. And now I have the right to enter by the front door of Lowther Lodge by reason of being a co-Fellow with all of you here.

To-night however I am speaking only to those Fellows who will, I think, with me, class themselves as the armchair travellers of the world. I know there are many in this hall who for various reasons, be it lack of money, lack of opportunity, lack of time, or, more probably still, lack of health, have only been able to do their journeys in armchairs, who propel themselves mentally down the path where perhaps they were first placed in their youth, which started with 'Eothen,' continued with Curzon's 'Alps and sanctuaries,' with Huc and Gabet, followed by Sir Clements Markham, or Doughty's 'Arabia,' and all other such books in which our minds have found such happiness. Miss Stark has told us that she has, in southern Arabia, been dubbed 'The Beloved of Government.' Miss Stark, unlike myself, need have felt no tremors to-night, because for a long time she has unquestionably, as you all know, been the 'Beloved' of armchair travellers; of those who appreciate the exquisite way in which she has recorded her experiences and revealed to us some of her reflections thereupon; of those who appreciate the unbelievable liberties which Miss Stark takes with her camera, the results of which you have seen for yourselves upon the screen to-night.

The CHAIRMAN: We are accustomed in this hall to hear from men and women of what they have seen of places with a civilization different from our own: the impression that has been made on them, and what impression they have left among those among whom they have travelled; what they have gained in the broadest and widest sense, and what they have learned. I can imagine that there may have been passing through the minds of each one of you some particular instance such as I have referred to. Each instance adds to the immense amount of knowledge which we in this Society collect and distribute and in which every Fellow can take legitimate pride by his or her Fellowship of this Society.

Those whom I have referred to are and were a noble band, and to that band has been added in no uncertain way in recent years our lecturer this evening, Miss Stark. I have been asked, more than once, how it is that in countries in which woman is not as a rule regarded as a great factor in public affairs Miss Stark wields such an immense amount of power and is welcome wherever she goes. It is, I think, that added to an unsurpassed and quite unconscious courage, she only asks for one thing from those among whom she travels, and that is for their affection. Be it Lur, 'Iraqi, or Hadrami, that is all she asks for. I doubt if she would subscribe to the proverb well known among the last named. She may perhaps tell it to you; I will not. It is an honour to us that we should be addressed by one who possesses so clear a mind and so warm a heart. With these two qualities she has gained a knowledge of the countries which she has put into most delightful book form, very much to our advantage, and you may be quite sure that she has left an impression which, as Lord Wakefield has said,
is of the greatest use to our country and to those who may go on quests similar to her own.

Miss Stark has stirred our imagination, and we look forward to reading, when her book comes out, of the things of which she has spoken to-night, at greater length and with far greater freedom.

You have heard a good deal about the past. Mr. Perowne has spoken of the present. I would say two things as to the future. Mr. Ingrams hopes in the near future to have some sort of water survey made of southern Arabia. You have heard from Miss Stark of the difficulties, and have gathered from the photographs what water means in that country. You will therefore realize the advantage that can be derived from some kind of water survey. Secondly, I have suggested to the School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine the hope that some devoted doctor may be found who will be to Arabia what Manson was to the Far East, what Ronald Ross was to India, and what Walter Reed and Lazear were in their researches into yellow fever. These are the benefactions that come to a people as a result of sympathetic travel.

I will ask Miss Stark to accept from this great audience, from the whole of the Society, and I am sure I can say from the public at large, most sincere thanks and admiration for all she has done.