

Easy Chair Geography vs. Field Geography, 25 November 1856

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[0001]

Steam Ship Candia

In Mediterranean

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To the Editor of the Athenaeum

Easy chair[,]geography[-] versus Field geography

In coming up the Red Sea about week ago in the P. & O. Co^y steamer Nubia was favoured by M^r Latouche the Admiralty on board with a sight of a late number your widely circulated journal containing paper by M^r Cooley the author of a pamphlet "Inner Africa laid open", in which he lugubriously complains because I not thrown a "flood of light" on what his pamphlet is what its name implies, needed not any glimmerings I could . He asserts that when I went to

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Loanda I got my head "stuffed full" of Portuguese notions respecting

" Inner Africa" which (observe) I not they nor he visited, and then he modestly mouths at Sir Roderick for not inflicting the whole these "notions" in one dose upon the of the British Association Cheltenham. Excuse a stupid story. was formerly the custom at what are sacramental occasions in Scotland the assembled ministers to have a feast the Mondays when the entire services over. A worthy grazier & butcher Tom by name having, on account of influential position in the parish, been to share in the conviviality, sat of the time dumb, But one of the observing him several times "making his mouth" as if to edge in an

[0003] , interrupted the others by saying

M^r T. wishes to make some remark, when

Tom burst forth with "My brown bull the best that ever came out of the isle Mull". the explosion that followed be imagined. Now M^r Cooley considers Sir Roderick [^][Murchison] and as a pair of " Tom Trummels". could not, he modestly avers, open my in Loanda, except about the ~~Zambesi~~[Interior] he is disappointed because Sir Roderick not sustain fully the Trummel - bore the members to death what he proceeds to shew is my "nonsense" and enable the erudite of "Inner Africa laid open" opportunity of snuffing out my before I should reach my shores or utter one squeak for

[0004] mercy. For some time I thought unnecessary to notice such an ebullition killing modesty on the part of a who never left his easy in London to settle one single in geography or in anything else. must make some allowance for crochets of our elders, and we can excuse M^r Cooley in feeling the of keeping up the eclat he gained by his exposé of Douville's bungling attempt to appear an actual traveller in Angola, by a muck against every one traveller or no traveller. We can feel kindly to him though he used the same means of getting some of "Inner Africa" as Douville did, then boldly publishing "Inner Africa laid open"

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2^d Sheet without even pretending to have visited the scenes the title seems to promise, for, does not

Carlyle declare that the whole world is a

"huge sham" but I must crave leave to a gentle protest against putting Easychair on a level with that of actual . Field geography need not lower than Field geology, and if progress of the former in Africa should all improvements bring the unavoidable with it of addling some ingenious and theories, our comfortable need not despair. they may indulge their cacoethes scribendi by "Inner laid open". Inner [^][Ant]Arctic circle open" and if they wish to avoid twitted about not having seen the they patronize they may give us "Inner Lunar lands laid open" as well.

In excuse for wasting time in answering

[0006] geographical twaddle contained in the referred to I have several things to plead, as, a dislike to being represented as discovered marvels I never saw being quoted as authority for things I said. My easychair friends are so fond of garbling matters on the plea of "right ". (a favourite phrase with such) I fear I must soon make out a of things I did not see. One of who is excessively fond of the , "unknown to themselves", actually up in a meeting of the Geographical in which the discovery of Lake by M^rOswel and myself in 1849 communicated, and declared that had been discovered by me alone many before. I was obliged to deny the . then here comes another and that a large river discovered

[0007] the same parties in 1851 runs not on the but underground. Now I cannot to deal largely in travellers' wonders intend to return, and even supposing were no other considerations, it be rather inconvenient to be by a companion who may me with his company "Where you meet the men with tails? was the Phoenix's nest the running underground? Or where you drink the milk of she unicorns your coffee?" the return difficulties all avoided by those who neither go come again.

In order however that your readers understand the assertions contained M^r Cooley's paper respecting the

Leeambye or Zambesi I may explain there are two main chains in the great valley neither of which nor

[0008] itself were ever dreamed of by the author "Inner Africa laid open". these drains are Congo on the North and the Zambesi on the . The rivers generally flow from the of the country into the centre to form mains referred to, and these run the one the other South till they find an to the sea the one on the West the on the East coast. the Zambesi which we have at present to do flows North to South from 14° to 18° South before it turns Eastwards, recieving that space, if my eyesight did not decieve , no fewer than ten large perennial , And if the native testimony may recieved, there is [^][in "Inner Africa"] a net work of waters "anastomoses" unequalled in the beside. The Zambesi however the main artery of the system. And the best test of the utter worthlessness easychair geography that could have selected. the great river in the

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3rd Sheet centre of the Continent is essentially an English . the Portuguese all imagined it rose in the South (vide all old maps)[and a jumble of the same in "Inner Africa laid open"] discovered a branch of it at Cazembes but supposed it went to Angola! seeing it flowing westwards. It is Luamegi (soft g) Luambeji

Luambesi, Iambeji, Zjambeji, Leeambye

Zambesei - Ojimbesi Zambesi at parts of its course, the name according to the dialect of the who live on its banks, But these words express one and the same idea . the Riverpar excellence,

and it is appropriately so called for it truly is cote = "mother of all rivers" to the inhabitants. When we discovered the portion we found it at its lowest
[^][state] yet there were from 300 to 500 yards deep flowing water, and during its inundation there is a perpendicular

[0010] of between twenty and thirty feet M^r Oswel never seen such a magnificent river in India. And the Nile at the spot the railway from Cairo to Alexandria it, lately seemed to me small in . It forms the southern line defence of the Makololo (from Sesheke near the Portuguese possessions) against Matibele of Mosilikatze. And they have stationed at different points its banks to prevent the original of the country from ferrying enemies over. But M^r Cooley your readers that this gigantic stream only an "undeveloped river" And as ideas of rivers all evidently formed the sight familiar in his travels of ragged boys letting crooked pins down grating into Cockney streams to four legged fish, he declares that the Leeambye or Luamegi or the river runs a grating somewhat larger

[0011] the whole French Empire. I only wish were true. I should then have a tale worth telling. But having it by travelling sometimes ~~by travelling~~ one bank sometimes on the other sailed hundreds of miles on its bosom, I am compelled to believe a geographer on an easy chair with bowl of Punch before him may see marvels than any traveller in field. If we fancy the scene in we have a clearer idea of the assertion the glorious river referred to "runs and supports the vegetation the Kalahari desert." The Thames London bridge to the best of my recollection considerably smaller than the

Leeambye at Sesheke, but let us it for illustration, and concieve another river (the Chobe) having

120 yards of deep flowing water ** 40 yards at the waggon stand of 1851 but 120 yards lower down all its branches are joined into one stream parallel to its right bank

[0012] intending to join it at Gravesend. then to M^r Cooley declaring to the thousands peruse the Athenaeum that the "Thames" the "Pool" are not the same river. That Thames doubles down beneath the soil flows underneath the other river at right angles to it to support the [of] England Scotland and the Orkney islands. then winding up the with another one about "sincerity"!

I have also to plead a desire to disabuse minds of your readers of the idea put by this gentleman that actual ~~gain~~ have no knowledge of country adjacent to their line of march must rely on "conjecture alone" Grant this and the Easychair geographer he has as good a right to put forth as any man who ever . the Field geologist glories in hammer but say that he is

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4th ignorant of everything but the hammer all the rest is conjecture, and you back philosophy to the dignified which Bacon exploded, As your must percieve by M^r C.'s confession such I regard it that conjecture holds prominent place in Easychair philosophy may give one instance of the value the actual travellers plan of gaining , and another of the folly trusting to "conjecture". We travel in company of men who are well with parts of the country personal observation. I had one man instance who had [^][formerly] travelled both of the Zambesi to near Tete another who had been present an attack on Senna. they soon see we are interested in the courses rivers, names of hills, tribes &c &c make enquiries among the

[0014] to whom we come. Drawings are on the ground and parts pointed that bearings may be taken and drawn from the views different individuals. We thus gain general idea of the whole country. We our obligations to native , We admit our liability to . It is discovery not a

survey.

[But] the self satisfied assurance of the Easychair pair of compasses, is not one of our besetting sins. the first time I on [^][giving] a large extent of country native information was in the case of this same Zambesi or Leeambye. And accurate has it been proved by my personal inspection of it from . 14° South to the Sea I have little to add the native map of 1851. this shews value of the plan usually followed.

In that same year I was guilty of
"conjecturing" that certain wells south

[0015] the river system was probably supplied percolation through soft calcareous from the North. this was seized upon amplified in "Inner Africa laid open" into the whole Zambesi going underground If a little water percolates a hundred a great river will percolate hundred, and if it flows the soil it cannot run on surface, therefore the Thames & the are two distinct rivers. You I am trifling.[do you?] No one would argue in that way or if he should find an individual to believe him. When M^rOswel and I discovered Lake in 1849 we believed that short to the Royal Geographical Society all that need be published about . M^rAnderson who succeeded in it from the west adopted another and published a book, wishing see what his predecessors thought

[0016] it he seems to have turned to "Inner laid open" and not suspecting the statements had been garbled by

"right interpretation" made several blunders. He thinks [^][for instance] we estimate extent of the Lake too highly and then his own estimate at a higher , 70 geographical miles being that 75 statute miles. He verifies observation of Lake Ngami being 2000 ft above the level of the and though he was present when

M^r Galton ascertained the country west Libebe & the Lake to be about 6000 ft he has no hesitation in "inserting the authority of M^r Cooley the river " which to flow at all must run uphill four feet. I quote from memory with not the smallest intention depreciate the merits of such an & enterprising traveller as

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5th M^rAnderson, Indeed I feel a little sorry that must refer to him at all as some may my reference into that. But we find fairly deceived by this same curious logic then quoted triumphantly by M^r Cooley in the same style as a boy who had been on all fools day might be quoted to the number of dupes. M^rAnderson would never have said that " M^r Cooley proves that the Leeambye runs south." he had known that I and about half a Europeans had travelled North on land in what is said to be its bed and

M^r Moffat had been prevented by want of water [^][in the same] from reaching me because that would imply the of the doctrine that the goodly was all the while gurgling beneath

M^r M's feet. I sailed along the noble right to the cleft by which it bursts the Eastern ridge. And as M^r Cooley scraped together all the little the Portuguese of Interior geography his meanderings

[0018] thoroughly demonstrate that the fact a great Interior valley & the Zambesi in it is a genuine English discovery the point which proves the connection the new and the old ought to have name of our Queen in the way of .

It may now be seen whether M^r Cooley's assertion that I did not travel from River to Loanda means more than whether is less or more than half a dozen but adds a mistake was made about the

Chikapa. "there is a difference of forty miles going and returning, this is very ." Now I did make a mistake when on my return I crossed this forty miles further down I found out mistake and hastened to correct it. Could man do more? I was determined succeed in opening "Inner Africa" and as there [^][were] some very formidable probabilities living through the enterprise

- some of death which an easychair geographer

[0019] of course gladly dare. I sent home accounts by every opportunity of important point. these were fragmentary, and without on M^r C's good taste in eagerly a mistake corrected not by him myself as "very unsatisfactory" I shall notice the logic and then favour M^r Cooley with a proposition. the mistake is declared to be unsatisfactory to prepare the mind of the reader believing his own mistake about Zambesi flowing underground He could not mean if a mistake was made ought to stick to it, like the man who eat his asparagus hard end , but simply this if he made mistake in the Chikapa he has also one with Leeambye, and if he wrong I am right. It would scarcely to add and if D^r L. corrected his error one case he would do the same the other? O dear No, that would be
[Nigger logic]

[0020]

When M^r Gordon Cumming was forming well known collection around and beyond house at Kolobeng I had somewhat to do in the way of furnishing guides, and being considered by them as a sort of father they me with a minute account the movements and adventures which since been published by the "Lionslayer" . Sometimes the narrators were forward with presents of game. At times they came for assistance to their master out of difficulties, it generally happened that I had to listen the stories from unsophisticated witnesses considerable time before we had the of listening to the same from M^r 's lips at our own fireside. I have two reasons for referring to this. One is I have frequently been if M^r Cumming's book were true wish [^][to] give a general answer to those may wish to put the question again without approving everything

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6th in it the book is essentially a truthful one statements with respect to the abundance game at the time he was in the country from exaggerated, and it gives a idea of African hunting, The other may be seen in the following as I had it in my power had collected these hunting adventures and "rightly interpreted" and them in the manner of "Inner laid open". Could I honestly have myself a "lion slayer"? My antecedents seem to say if I had made such mistake so far from pronouncing it

"very unsatisfactory" and trying to write

M^r Cumming down before he could a connected statement, I instantly have confessed my by transferring the profits my work to the true "Lion slayer". as my hopes are excited by the about "sincerity" if M^r

[0022] will take the hint I hereby to give a good account of the of "Inner Africa laid open"

David Livingston[1856 .^d D^r Livingston]