

BAKER, Sir SAMUEL WHITE (1821-1893), traveller and sportsman, born in London on 8 June 1821, was the second son of Samuel Baker of Lypiatt Park, Gloucestershire, by Mary, daughter of Thomas Dobson of Enfield. His father was a West India merchant, possessing considerable property in Jamaica and Mauritius, and his grandfather, Captain Valentine Baker of Bristol, won fame by nearly capturing with his privateer sloop the *Cesar*, a French frigate of 32 guns, on 27 June 1782. Valentine Baker [q. v. Suppl.] was his younger brother. The early years of Sir Samuel's life were spent at Enfield, and after 1833 in Gloucestershire, where his father for a time rented Highnam Court from Sir John Guise. He was educated first at a private school at Rottingdean, between 1833 and 1835 at the College school, Gloucester, and subsequently, in 1838, by a private tutor, Henry Peter Dunster, at Tottenham. This somewhat desultory course of education was completed in 1841 at Frankfurt, where he attended lectures and learned German. Early in life he was interested in natural history and geography, and exhibited a remarkable power

of observation. His father at first intended that he should be his successor in business, but a very short experience of office work was enough to show that such a career would be unsuitable. Probably the only reason which kept Baker from engaging in travel sooner than he did was his early marriage (3 Aug. 1842) to Henrietta Biddulph, daughter of Charles Martin, rector of Maiseamore. He now spent some months in Mauritius, assisting his brother, John Baker, in the management of his father's estate, but it was not till 1845 that the 'spirit of wandering' seized on him in a fashion not to be denied (BAKER, *Eight Years in Ceylon*, p. 374). Possessed of moderate independent means, his ardour for sport led him first to direct his attention to Ceylon. His first visit in 1846, in which he was accompanied by his wife, was mainly spent in big game hunting, but he was so fascinated by the fine country and the joys of a hunter's life that he went home in 1847 determined to return as a colonist. Persuading his brothers John and Valentine to follow his lead, he set about the establishment of an English colony at Newera Eliya, a station 6,000 feet above sea level and 115 miles distant from Colombo by road. He purchased land from the government, and chartered a vessel for the conveyance of his party, consisting of eighteen adults, who sailed from London in September 1848 *en route* for the new settlement. Initial difficulties were overcome by the spirit of the leader, a somewhat barren soil was in course of time rendered fertile, and some of the original settlers long remained on what became a flourishing estate.

During nine years spent in Ceylon Baker explored, in the course of most adventurous hunting expeditions, many of the more difficult and unknown tracts of the island, and established for himself a remarkable reputation as a hunter of big game. His first book, entitled 'The Rifle and Hound in Ceylon', which appeared in 1853, is a vivid narrative of incidents in the sport in which he was so constantly engaged. Fever from exposure in the jungle began, however, in 1854 seriously to affect his health, and was the immediate cause of his return with his family to England in 1855. After the shock occasioned by the sudden death of his wife from typhus fever at Baginnes-de-Bigorre (29 Dec. 1855), Baker sought to lighten his trouble by travelling to Constantinople and the east of Europe.

In March 1859 he undertook the management of the construction of a railway connecting the Danube with the Black Sea

across the Dobrudsha, and threw himself with all his energy into the task (letter from Baker to Lord Wharncliffe, 30 March 1859, quoted in 'Sir S. Baker: a Memoir'). About this period, when travelling in Hungary, he first met Florence, daughter of Herr Taniah von Saas, whom he married in 1860, and who became his devoted *en route* traveller. On the completion of the Black Sea railway he for a time travelled in Asia Minor, spending several months in the neighbourhood of Sabanga at the end of 1860 and beginning of 1861 mainly for purposes of sport.

Stimulated, doubtless, by the example of John Hanning Speke [q. v.], with whom he was acquainted, he now determined on travel of more ambitious nature. In a letter to his sister, 26 Jan. 1861 (*ib.* p. 41), he stated his project, which was to push on into Central Africa from Khartoum, making for the high ranges from which he believed the Nile to derive its source. 'For the last few years,' he wrote, 'my dreams have been of Africa. Love of adventure and the shooting of big game impelled him on his course, and without seeking it Baker may be said to have stumbled on his mission in life (*Sir Samuel Baker: a Memoir*, p. 41). His first object was to meet Speke and James Augustus Grant [q. v. Suppl.], who were expected to reach the White Nile some time in 1863. As Baker arrived at Cairo 21 March 1861, he decided to occupy his time and fit himself for his task by a preliminary expedition in exploration of the Nile tributaries of Abyssinia. Starting from Berber with his wife and but a small following, he made for Kasala, where he engaged camels and carriers. He crossed the Atbara at Korrasi and fixed his headquarters at Sofi, just above the confluence of that river and the Setit. Here he made a stay of five months, and explored the Setit river, but most of the time was spent in big game hunting. His prowess in the field won for him the friendship and admiration of the Hamran Arabs, themselves mighty hunters. He explored other tributaries of the Atbara, including the Bahr-er-Salam and the Angareb, and followed up the course of the Rehad to its confluence with the Blue Nile. Thence he marched to Khartoum, where he arrived on 31 June 1862. The value of the work of exploration during this fourteen months' journey and of the observations proving the Nile sediment to be due to the Abyssinian tributaries was publicly recognised by Sir Roderick Murchison [q. v.], president of the Royal Geographical Society. Baker had also during the period gained for himself experience as



an explorer, mastered Arabic, and acquired the use of astronomical instruments. He now spent six months at Khartoum in preparation for his greater effort.

Failing to secure government troops as an escort, he started on 18 Dec. 1862 up the Nile with three vessels, twenty-nine transport animals, and a party of ninety-six, including forty-five armed men. Gondokoro was reached on 2 Feb. 1863, and information was there received of two white men who were detained on the Upper Nile. On the arrival of Speke and Grant on 15 Feb. Baker supplied them with stores and placed his three vessels at their disposal for their journey down the Nile; no less generous were they in informing him of what remained to be discovered. Speke gave his own maps, in which he had inserted the supposed position of the lake into which he had been informed the Nile flowed, and from which it issued again, and urged his friend to complete the discovery of the Nile source. Baker's first difficulties were due to the active hostility of the slave-dealers, to whose caravan he attempted to attach himself. Despite a dangerous mutiny of his men he was not deterred, but, accompanied by only fifteen of his original party, whom he forced to obey orders, he followed another company of ivory and slave traders returning to the Latuka country, regardless of their threats. From Latomé, where another mutiny among his men was only quelled by his own courageous decision, he marched to Tarrangolé, the capital of the Latuka country. He now found all progress much hampered owing to his dependence on the slave-trader Ibrahim, which had become complete because of the continued desertion of his men. For a time he was practically a captive at Tarrangolé and the unwilling companion of a slave-dealer engaged in harrying the country in all directions. In May 1863 he made a short reconnaissance to the south, leaving his wife with a friendly chief at Obbo, when he secured some valuable information with regard to the sought-for lake; but it was not till 3 Jan. 1864 that he was able to persuade Ibrahim to direct the course of the caravan towards Kamrasi's country and the Karame falls. He arrived at the White Nile on 22 Jan., and at the Karame falls on the next day, but experienced great difficulty in his dealings with King Kamrasi, from whose country it was as difficult to get away as in the first instance to approach. For carriers, as well as for permission to pass through his country, Baker was completely dependent on the will of this grasping potentate, whose extortion reached its

climax in a demand for the explorer's wife. Leaving the Nile towards the end of February with an escort of three hundred of Kamrasi's men, whom he was soon glad enough to be rid of, Baker pursued his way along the right bank of the Kaja river with only twelve male followers. Here his troubles were enhanced by the dangerous illness of his intrepid wife from sunstroke. Threatened with her loss at a moment when the journey was most toilsome, yet the end near, his own health and spirit were well nigh broken; with unconquerable resolution he struggled forward—his wife, in a state of coma, being carried in a litter—and on 14 March 1864 he reached at Mbakovia, a south-eastern point of the lake, the object of his quest. He records in his journal how he went to the water's edge, drank a deep draught, and thanked God most sincerely for having guided him when all hope of success was lost. . . . and named the lake the 'Albert Nyanza.' Baker's observations of the lake proved to be curiously inaccurate; misled probably by the haze on the surface (VANDELUR's account in *Geog. Journal*, ix. 369) and native reports, he subsequently in error described the lake as extending a vast distance to the south (STANLEY in *Darkest Africa*, ii. 326). He now coasted along the eastern shore for thirteen days, when he reached Magungo, the entrance of the Victoria Nile. Obligated to abandon his intention of tracing the river northwards from its exit from the Albert Nyanza on account of the savage nature of the tribes in the Madi and Koshi districts, he explored the portion of the stream over which Speke had been unable to pass, from Magungo to the Island of Patoon, and named the Murchison Falls after his friend Sir Roderick, the president of the Royal Geographical Society. At Patoon he remained for two months, dangerously ill from fever, and again dependent for transport on King Kamrasi, by whom he was detained for several months at Kisuna and constantly harassed for further gifts and for assistance against the king's enemies. It was not until 17 Nov. 1864 that Baker was able to start on his return journey north, again in the company of the trader Ibrahim. He arrived at Gondokoro on 17 March, and at Khartoum on 3 May 1865, after an absence of two years and a half.

The discovery of the Albert Nyanza was the most remarkable feat accomplished in Baker's adventurous career; the work of Speke and Grant was thus completed, and the source of the Nile freed from mystery. Though it was left to Stanley (15 Dec. 1887) to discover the third lake and to

correct the account of the extent of the Albert Nyanza to the south, Baker's name will ever be associated with the solution of the problem of the Nile source. The fact also that the whole expedition had been independently devised and the charges thereof defrayed by the traveller added not a little to the honour of his achievement. On his return to England in October 1865 he found that the gold medal of the Royal Geographical Society had already been awarded to him; and in the following year he was presented with the gold medal of the Paris Geographical Society, and his services were recognised in August 1866 by the honour of knighthood. Baker became an honorary M.A. of Cambridge in 1866, and was elected F.R.S. on 3 June 1869. He published his account of the expedition, entitled 'The Albert Nyanza, Great Basin of the Nile, and Explorations of the Nile Sources,' in 1866, and the work immediately became popular, and many editions have been issued.

Baker now spent a few quiet years in country life at Hedenham Hall, Norfolk, which he rented for a term. He here prepared his book on the Nile tributaries for the press, and wrote his tale of adventure, 'Cast up by the Sea,' which was published in 1868. He was, however, soon to be again actively employed; and at the beginning of 1869, by request, travelled in the suite of the Prince of Wales on his visit to Egypt and journey up the Nile. The Khedive Ismail entered into communication with him to secure his services under the Egyptian government, and on 1 April 1869 he was appointed governor-general of the Equatorial Nile basin for a term of four years, with the rank of pacha and major-general in the Ottoman army. The objects of his command were set forth under the firman by which he was appointed. They included the subjection to Egyptian authority of the countries situate to the south of Gondokoro, the suppression of the slave-trade and the introduction of regular commerce, and the opening to navigation of the great lakes about the Equator. To carry out this ambitious programme Baker was provided with some twelve hundred Egyptian and Soudanese troops, and a great quantity of supplies of all kinds. He was the first Englishman to undertake high office under the Egyptian government, and in accepting the command was in no way supported by the English foreign office. The first difficulty of the new governor was to arrive at his seat of government: his intention had been to proceed by the Nile from Khartoum to Gondo-

koro, but the period of high flood was lost owing to the transport vessels promised by the government not being ready, and after a fruitless struggle with the sudd-covered stream, he was obliged to fall back and wait for the next Nile flood. He started again with Lady Baker on 1 Dec. 1870, and the expedition passing through the Bahr Ez Zeraf branch of the river made its way with enormous difficulty by cutting canals through the sudd. Gondokoro was reached on 15 April 1871, and was formally annexed to Egyptian sovereignty on 26 May 1871. As the station was practically in the possession of the slave-traders, Baker was forced for a supply of porters and provisions to come to terms with the great dealer, Ahmed Akai, who leased from the Egyptian government the monopoly of the ivory trade. The hostility however, of the traders was hardly veiled, and the Bari tribesmen were by them incited to attack Baker's force, and were only partially subdued after very troublesome fighting. Leaving a garrison at Gondokoro the new governor started on 23 Jan. 1872 with 212 officers and men on his journey south; he established stations at Atundo and Faliko, and pushed on through Unyoro, which country he publicly declared at Masindi on 14 May 1872 to be under the protection of the Egyptian government. But the young king, Kabrega, behaved with a duplicity worthy of his father, Kamrasi, and, encouraged by the slave-traders, attacked Baker's force when incapacitated by drugged or poisoned plantain wine. Though able to beat off the attack through the devoted bravery of his Soudanese body-guard, Baker was obliged to abandon his position at Masindi on 14 June 1872, and only after seven days' fighting through constant ambuscades in the long grass on the line of march, and after being forced to abandon the bulk of his baggage, did he succeed in reaching Rionga's country. That sovereign's claim to the kingship of Unyoro the governor-general now supported, and also communicated with Mtesa, king of Uganda, who despatched troops to Unyoro in his support. On his return to Faliko he was attacked by Aba Saad, the slave-dealer, whom he defeated and captured after a pitched battle, and by this success again established his authority. He returned to Gondokoro on 1 April 1873, leaving garrisons at the stations which he had formed on behalf of the Egyptian government, and on 26 May, his period of command having expired, started on his return journey to Khartoum.

Baker's services to Egypt were recognised



by the bestowal of the imperial order of the Osmanie 2nd class. His period of government in the Soudan was too short to be successful; he, however, established the skeleton of an administration, and struck the first blow against a trade which he found to be legalised by the very authority under which he was commissioned to destroy it. On his return to England he was much fêted, and accorded an enthusiastic reception by the Geographical Society (8 Dec. 1873). He published in September 1874 an account of his journey and administration under the title 'Ismailia'; this account in two volumes was somewhat hastily written in sixty-four days (letter from Baker to Gordon, 8 July 1875, in *Sir S. Baker: a Memoir*, p. 227).

Baker's interest in the future of the Soudan never slackened; he corresponded constantly with Gordon, who succeeded him in April 1874. To the abandonment of the Soudan he was altogether opposed, and in the years following that event (1885) he never tired, by means of correspondence in the press and of communications to the ministers of the day, of advocating its resumption (*ib.* pp. 343-60), and with considerable foresight regarded Colonel (now Lord) Kitchener as the instrument most likely to bring this about (letter of Sir S. Baker to Kitchener, 29 April 1892, quoted in *Sir S. Baker: a Memoir*, p. 432).

In November 1874 he purchased the small estate of Sandford, Orleigh in South Devon, where he resided for a portion of each year during the remainder of his life. His passionate love of travel he, however, maintained; the greater part of the year 1879 he spent in Cyprus, and his impressions were recorded in his book 'Cyprus as I saw it in 1879.' He was constantly in Egypt, and between 1879 and 1892 visited India seven times, and almost to the end of life his vigorous health enabled him to maintain his reputation as the greatest living hunter of big game. In whatever quarter of the globe he chanced to be, whether in pursuit of elephants in Africa and Ceylon, tiger-hunting in the central provinces in India, deer-stalking in Japan, bear-shooting in the Rocky Mountains, this iron-nerved sportsman ever proved his ability to excel all others. He himself regarded the pursuit of dangerous game as the best training for either an explorer or a soldier (*True Tales for my Grandsons*, p. 176), and to his own experiences in the jungle and on the plain the development of his remarkable tenacity and resource as an explorer was doubtless in great part due.

Baker died on 30 Dec. 1893 at Sandford

Orleigh, near Newton Abbot; his body was cremated and his ashes buried at Grimley, near Worcester, on 5 Jan. 1894. By his first marriage there were seven children, of whom only three daughters survived their father. A portrait of Baker from a photograph is prefixed to the 'Memoir' by Douglas Murray, and medallion portraits of both the explorer and Lady Baker, engraved by C. H. Jeens, appear in his book the 'Albert Nyanza'; a reproduction of a photograph also appears in the 'Geographical Journal' (iii. 152). In appearance he was described by Lord Wharfedale, who had been his companion in big game hunting, as a man of very powerful build, of medium height, but with very broad shoulders and deep chest, and possessing an extraordinary capacity for enduring fatigue.

He wrote with rapidity and fluency, and the popularity of his various works is attested by the number of reprints and editions which have been issued. The following is a list of his chief writings: 1. 'The Rifle and the Hound in Ceylon,' 8vo, 1853; reprinted 1857, 1874, 1882, 1884, 1890, 1892. 2. 'Eight Years' Wanderings in Ceylon,' 8vo, 1855, and 1874, 1880, 1883, 1884, 1890, 1891, 1894. 3. 'The Albert Nyanza, Great Basin of the Nile, and Explorations of the Nile Sources,' 1866, 2 vols. 8vo; numerous subsequent editions and reprints. 4. 'The Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia and the Sword Hunters of the Hamran Arabs,' 1867, 8vo; four subsequent editions and numerous reprints. 5. 'Ismailia,' 1874, 2 vols. 8vo; 2nd ed. 1874; 3rd ed. 1878. 6. 'Cyprus as I saw it in 1879,' 1879, 8vo. 7. 'Wild Beasts and their Ways,' 1890. He also wrote two story books: 'Cast up by the Sea,' 1868, many times reprinted, and 'True Tales for my Grandsons,' 1883. In addition to the above Baker published numerous pamphlets and articles in reviews, in particular in the 'Nineteenth Century,' 1884; 'Fortnightly,' 1886, 1888; 'National Review,' 1888.

[Baker's works; Sir Samuel Baker, a Memoir, by T. Douglas Murray and A. S. White, 1895; Times 31 Dec. 1893; Geographical Journal, January 1894.] W. C.-r.