

A Notice of the Progress of the Expedition lately sent out from Liverpool to trade in the Niger. Extracted from a private Letter, dated 18th June 1833.

[Read at the South African Institution.]

THE two steamers destined for the Niger, in company with a brig carrying the provisions and merchandise, touched on their way out, first at Sierra Leone, and then at York, one of the villages attached to that colony, where they wooded and watered. Shortly after leaving the latter place some of the crew fell sick and died, and by the time the vessels reached Cape Coast disease had begun to make such ravages amongst both officers and men that discontent, approaching to mutiny, was actually excited. After leaving Cape Coast they proceeded to Accra, there remained a few days and then moved on to Cape Formosa, where they again wooded and watered.

Whilst so employed fresh sickness was contracted, in consequence of the great exposure of both officers and men to sun and rain, the latter of which was very abundant, it having been the rainy season. With the exception of Mr. Lander, not one either of the officers or men had ever been on the coast before, and were consequently not acquainted with the necessity of employing *Kroomen* to perform work which demanded such exposure, and which could only be completed with impunity by them. This it is understood was an express arrangement made by the owners, under an impression that trade would thrive better in the hands of strangers or novices than in those of persons who were acquainted with the secret.

The vessels arrived at the river *Nun* in the beginning of October, where, after a week's sickness, the master of the iron steam boat died, and also several of the men. The brig was left at the entrance of the river from there not being sufficient water to enable her to proceed farther, and the two steam boats only ascended. Prior to their starting a dispute arose as to who should be the director, and which was eventually decided by it being discovered that the management of the Expedition, after entering the river was to devolve on the son of one of the principal owners. Thus Lander was deprived of a controul which he did not expect should happen before his arrival at Fundah, or some other place from whence he was to return to England. This, with many other occurrences on board, is understood to have excited much bad feeling amongst the officers.

Lander nevertheless continued to distribute presents and carry on trade with the natives, who seemed to understand him better than they did the others. In their progress up the river

they reached the town of the chief who had formerly bought him and his brother out of slavery, and who had received but a very small recompense for so good an action. There he went on shore, and was greeted by the old chief, who was delighted with the different presents he brought for him, and which were purchased with a hundred pounds which had been assigned by Government for that purpose. Amongst the articles were a general's full uniform, twenty suits of regimentals, twenty muskets, and a quantity of bali cartridge. The chief immediately dressed himself and caused some of his head men to do the same, after which he paraded them before Lander, and made them fire three salutes.

Here they remained only a short time, and then proceeded further up the river, which in some parts was so shallow that the steam boats stirred up the mud at a depth of six feet. After having wooded and watered afresh, they advanced towards the town of a very considerable king or chief, who had received information of their intended visit from the Bonney people who keep up a constant communication with the towns on the river, and supply them with ivory and palm oil. These people brought presents with them for that chief, in hopes of inducing him to oppose the progress of the vessel which they considered encroaching upon their trade. This sort of bribery appears to have originated with some —— merchants, who, it is understood, have instructed the masters of their vessels, trading with the Bonneys, to throw every obstacle in the way of the expedition, and to give presents to the different chiefs to encourage their opposition to it.

As soon as the vessels had arrived within a day's sail of the town, the chief sent down a great number of canoes, and in one of them a messenger with information, that if they proceeded farther the king would make "war palaver." Lander returned for answer that they had come to trade, and not to make war; that he did not fear the king, yet nevertheless wished friendship and not enmity to exist. He sent him also some presents, and according to the custom of the country, two rings which he was to place on the fourth finger of the right hand, if he was inclined for peace, but if for war they were to be returned, when he would make "war palaver—white man's war palaver." The messenger with the canoes returned armed to the town, upon which all the head men were called together to decide whether there should be war or peace. The accomplishment of that required two days; and was in favor of peace, as was declared by the king placing the rings upon his fourth finger, and dispatching several chiefs with 4 cwt. of ivory, and a request to see Lander. The vessels were now moved up in front of the town, and he went on shore with additional presents.

He was received by a guard of about three hundred men, almost all armed with muskets, and some dressed like British soldiers. After arranging matters and establishing themselves upon an amicable footing, they transacted a good deal of business; acquired a few tons of ivory and some skins of tigers, lions, leopards, &c.: the ivory was bought at the rate of 4d. per pound.

They did not remain here long, but proceeded higher up, and in their way passed several small villages and towns, some of the inhabitants of which annoyed them so much by their firing that they were necessitated to burn many of them. They had been up the river four or five months*, during which period many had died and almost all had been sick, amongst them the surgeon, whose duty Lander performed as long as he was able. A dysentery attack, however, soon deprived all of what assistance he had been able to afford, and in consequence of the utter want of proper attendance all were reduced to a most wretched condition.

Lander became at last so unwell that he made up his mind to return down the river to the brig, and try what could be done. This he accomplished with the greatest difficulty and at great risk, having passed fourteen days and nights in a canoe, descending by means of a rapid current at the rate of ten miles an hour. After he arrived at the brig he found himself to be so much worse that he determined upon going to Fernando Po to recruit. That he reached about the 27th of April without tornadoes or rain, which was a fortunate circumstance, as had he been exposed to either he must have perished, being in an open boat.

Every proper attention was paid him on his arrival, and I am happy to say that when I left he appeared rallying fast. Since that I have received a letter, informing me that Captain Trotter was about to take him over to the *Nun* again, to join the expedition. He told me he would take 30 days at least to reach the steamer, as there would be a strong current to contend with.

He seemed to think the expedition would answer, with a few alterations; he considered that *Kroomen* should be employed in the boat work, such as wooding and watering, which seemed to constitute the chief of their work. It is understood he is to have one-fifth of the profits of the voyage. But he does not expect to return to the coast again, although the company should still continue to send out vessels, there being no provision whatever for his family in the event of his death. The government have held out employment to him on his return to England, which he intends to accept in preference to venturing again on this coast.

* Probably when Lander left them to return to the brig.—*Eds.*