

THE NIGER EXPEDITION.

REPORT OF CAPTAIN TROTTER TO THE SECRETARY OF THE ADMIRALTY.

SIR,—I have only time, on landing from the Warre merchant schooner (in order to save a post), to beg you will inform the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty of my arrival from Fernando Po, which I left on the 23d of November, at the recommendation of the medical officers, for the re-establishment of my health.

Although now almost entirely recovered, tendency to attacks of ague makes it advisable that I should not travel by night, but I hope to be able to report myself at the Admiralty the day after to-morrow at furthest.

I regret to be obliged to report the death of Lieutenant Stenhouse, Mr. Woodhouse, assistant-surgeon, and Mr. Wilmot, clerk of the Albert, and one seaman and a marine belonging to the same ship, since I last wrote to their lordships, on the 25th of October, besides a seaman of the Soudan, on the passage home with me from Africa; but the remainder of the crew of the Albert, I am happy to say, were all getting better, and are by this time, I hope, safely arrived at Ascension.

I am, sir, your most obedient servant,
H. D. TROTTER, Capt.

Liverpool, Jan. 25.

Her Majesty's Steam-vessel Albert,
Clarence Cove, Fernando Po, Oct. 25, 1841.

SIR,—My last letter to you, dated the 18th September, from the confluence of the Niger and Tchadda, would acquaint the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that fever had broken out on board the vessels of the expedition, and that I had found it necessary to despatch the Soudan to the sea with all the cases the surgeons deemed to require a change of climate, directing Lieutenant Fishbourne to take charge of her in the absence of Commander Bird Allen, engaged in his duty as commissioner.

I also informed their lordships, in the same letter, that the Albert was about to proceed up the Niger, and the Wilberforce up the Tchadda, in prosecution of the objects of the mission.

After the departure of the Soudan, however, two of the engineers of the Wilberforce were taken ill, and the crew had become so weakened by an increased number of cases of fever, that Commander William Allen found it impossible to proceed up the Tchadda, and I accordingly ordered him to take his vessel forthwith to the sea, and, if necessary, on to Ascension.

As there was still one engineer quite well on board the Albert, and another convalescent, I considered the ship in other respects quite able to continue longer up the river; and as Dr. M'William, the surgeon, thought the fever, when we reached higher up the stream, might probably assume a milder character, and the change of air might soon restore the patients still remaining on board, who were not desirous of going in the Wilberforce to the sea; and it being of importance to reach Rabbah this year, to finish the chain of treaties with chiefs on the banks of the Niger, I deemed it my duty to try the experiment, and accordingly I weighed at the same time with the Wilberforce, on the 21st of September, and the Albert proceeded up the river while she moved down.

The cases of sickness, however, continued to increase, till at length, when we got to Egga, on the 25th of September, the only remaining engineer was taken ill, and no officers, excepting Dr. M'William, Mr. Willie, mate, and myself, were free from fever. We continued wooding and preparing to return down the river till the 4th of October, when I was myself seized with fever, and Mr. Willie a day or two afterwards.

On the 5th of October, Mr. Willie weighed and dropped down the river, but was soon prevented by sickness from carrying on duty; and Dr. M'William, assisted by only one white seaman, lately recovered from fever, took charge of the vessel, not thinking it right, in my state of fever, to report Mr. Willie's illness.

From want of engineers, we should have had to drop down the whole length of the river without steam, had not Dr. Stranger, the geologist, in the most spirited manner, after consulting Tredgold's work on steam, and getting some little instruction from the convalescent engineer, undertaken to work the engine himself. The heat of the engine-room affected the engineer so much as to throw him back in his convalescence, and prevented him rendering any further assistance, but Dr. Stranger took the vessel safely below Eboc, without anything going wrong with the machinery; while Dr. M'William, in addition to his enormous press of duty as a medical officer, conducted the ship down the river in the most able and judicious manner. I may here remark, that the doctor steered the ship entirely by Commander William Allen's excellent chart of the Niger, of the correctness of which we had a good opportunity of judging on ascending the river, and which proved eminently useful on the passage down; and Mr. Brown, Clerk, a native of Africa, who had been up the river before, also rendered him considerable assistance in the pilotage.

When about 100 miles from the sea, Captain Becroft happily made his appearance in the Æthiopia steamer, having been requested to ascend the river and communicate with us by Commander William Allen of the Wilberforce; and it was really a providential mercy that he arrived when he did, for had any accident happened to the engines, they could not have been worked any longer, as Dr. Stranger had no knowledge of the manner of rectifying it. Fever still prevented my going on deck, and there was no executive officer to take the vessel over the bar, and only one convalescent sailor doing duty, and no black sailor who could properly take the helm. Captain Becroft, however, came on board with an engineer, and not only took the vessel over the bar, but brought her all the way across to this anchorage, (a distance of 160 miles,) where we arrived in safety on the 17th inst.

The assistance rendered by Captain Becroft, independent of the services of his vessel, the Æthiopia, was, I can assure their lordships, almost indispensable to the safety of the Albert; and I consider it to have been so highly conducive to the preservation of many valuable lives, which might have been sacrificed had we run aground in the Delta, and remained there even for a few days, I shall present him with 105*l.*, and his engineer with 10*l.* 10*s.*, by bills on the Accountant-General of the Navy, and I trust their lordships will sanction this expenditure when they take the circumstances of the case and the highly meritorious conduct of Captain Becroft into consideration.

The morning after our arrival here, the sick were all landed in comfortable quarters, provided for the officers and men in the most kind and prompt manner by the agent of the West African Company; and we have reason to believe the climate to be healthy at present. The air is cooler than the Niger about 12 degrees.

I omitted to mention that off the bar of the Nun we met the Soudan, about to re-ascend the river, under the charge of Lieutenant Strange, in the absence of Lieut.

Fishbourne, who had been sent sick to Ascension. She was in a very inefficient state, and returned with us to this anchorage. Mr. Strange is at present in charge of the Albert, as well as the Soudan, the officers of this ship of every rank being in sick quarters, with the exception of Mr. Mouat, assistant-clerk, doing duty at the hospital.

I regret to state, that, in addition to the loss of Mr. Nightingale, assistant-surgeon, and four seamen, as mentioned in my letter of the 18th September, between the confluence and Egga, Mr. Lodge, the second engineer, threw himself overboard in a fit of delirium, and was drowned; and that afterwards two seamen and one marine of this ship died, and Mr. Kingdon, seamen's schoolmaster of the Soudan; and that Mr. Willie, mate, and the purser's steward, have died here since our arrival; and it is my painful duty to add that the death of Commander Bird Allen, of the Soudan, has been this moment reported to me, and that Mr. D. H. Stenhouse, acting lieutenant of the Albert, is lying in a most precarious state. For several days after Mr. Willie was taken ill, he insisted occasionally upon getting out of his cot (which was on deck) and giving orders, and I fear the extra exertions of this zealous young officer contributed much to aggravate his case.

I am happy to say there is a general improvement taking place in the remainder of the sick, with the exception of Dr. M'William, and Mr. Woodhouse, assistant surgeon, who have lately been taken ill, the latter with the "river fever," and Dr. M'William, it is feared, may prove to be so likewise; but these cases, I trust, will not prove severe, now that we are in a cooler climate. I hope all the patients will be so far improved, and the engineers so much recovered, as in a short time to be able to proceed with the Albert to Ascension.

I call the disease the "river fever," because the surgeons report it to be of a nature that is not treated of in any work on the subject, and it has such peculiarities as they appear never before to have witnessed either in African or West Indian fever.

The Soudan, as alluded to before, left the confluence, on her passage down the river, on the 19th of September, under charge of Lieutenant Fishbourne, with the master, a mate, and the second engineer able to do a little duty; but on the following day these officers were too ill to afford Mr. Fishbourne any assistance. He had, however, two stokers able to drive the engines, who were for a time well enough to do duty, and he reached the Nun in the short space of two days afterwards. During the last 24 hours before reaching Fernando Po he was compelled to work the engines and to do every other duty himself. Such exertions could not fail to hurt his health, and he was seized with fever at this place after his arrival, though I am happy to say he was doing well on board the Wilberforce when she sailed for Ascension.

I beg strongly to recommend the zeal and exertions of this officer for the favourable consideration of their lordships.

The Soudan opportunely met the Dolphin at the mouth of the Nun, and received prompt assistance from her commander, who embarked 35 patients, (all that were fit to be removed,) and sailed with them for Ascension under the charge of Mr. Sterling, assistant-surgeon of the Wilberforce.

Before the Soudan reached Fernando Po, Mr. Marshall, acting-surgeon, and Mr. Waters, clerk in charge, fell a sacrifice to the climate; and a stoker of the Soudan, and the seamen's schoolmaster of the Albert died after their arrival.

Mr. Thompson, assistant-surgeon of the Wilberforce, had charge of the sick on board the Soudan on her passage down the river, and his exertions and fatigue, from which he is now suffering, were only equalled by those of Mr. Fishbourne.

The Wilberforce left the confluence on the 21st of September, but, owing to the necessity for cutting fuel, did not reach the mouth of the Nun until the 25th, nor Fernando Po till the 1st of October. Dr. Pritchett, the acting-surgeon of that ship, had 26 cases under treatment when she left the confluence, and the number increased afterwards; and I can assure their lordships that the exertions of that officer were of no ordinary kind, and his duties on the way to Ascension, now that he has no assistant, are likely to be still more arduous. This officer's services, as well as those of Mr. Thompson, acting-surgeon of the Soudan, render them highly deserving of their lordships' consideration for promotion. The inspector of fleets and naval hospitals will, when he receives their reports, be able to judge of their merits and arduous services on this expedition.

The Wilberforce, during her passage down to Fernando Po, had the misfortune to lose her purser, Mr. Cyrus Wakeham, and Peter Fitzgerald, a stoker; also Mr. Harvey, acting-master of the Albert; and Mr. Coleman, acting assistant-surgeon of the Soudan.

I have before mentioned the exertions and judgment displayed by Dr. M'William, the surgeon of this vessel, in bringing her down the greater part of the Niger in safety; but this would be considered the more remarkable if it were possible to convey to their lordships the exertions and fatigue he had to go through in his attendance upon the sick. I cannot speak too much in praise of this valuable officer, nor feel thankful enough that a man of so much talent and energy was appointed to this expedition.

I have already alluded to Dr. Stranger's praiseworthy conduct in his acquiring a knowledge of the steam-engine, by which we were enabled to get down the river so much more speedily than we otherwise could have done; but this gentleman was, if possible, still more useful in the medical assistance which he rendered to Dr. M'William, who latterly had no assistant-surgeon to relieve him in his duties. I am sorry to say that Dr. Stranger is beginning to feel the effect of his exertions, having had fever (although slightly) within the last two days.

I must also mention Mr. Mouat, assistant clerk, who, having served several years with a surgeon in London, was able to render great assistance in the medical department up the river, and is particularly of use at this moment, when Dr. M'William and Mr. Woodhouse, assistant-surgeon, are ill. I beg to recommend to their lordships' consideration the propriety of remunerating this gentleman for his services, more particularly as his pay as clerk's assistant is so very small.

In bringing before their lordships' notice the admirable conduct of the surgeon and acting-surgeon of the expedition, I wish by no means to disparage the exertions of Mr. Woodhouse, the assistant-surgeon of this ship, or of Mr. Sterling, the assistant-surgeon of the Wilberforce, or those of the deceased medical officers, which were very great, though not of so responsible a nature as those of Dr. M'William and Dr. Pritchett, or of Mr. Thompson, who, before he descended the river with a large number of sick in the Soudan, was for a length of time doing duty in that vessel during the protracted illness of the late acting-surgeon, Mr. Marshall.

The number of deaths that happened after the vessels got through the Delta until the sailing of the Wilberforce, hence for Ascension, is shown in the enclosed paper. I have no exact return of the number taken ill in the Wilberforce, but I believe it may be stated, that only five white persons escaped the fever in that vessel, whilst there are only four who have not been attacked in the Albert up to the present time, and no white person in the Soudan escaped it; and when I add that Dr. M'William is of opinion that few, if any, will be fit to return to the coast of Africa who have had the fever, and that every lieutenant excepting Mr. Strange, all the medical officers but Dr. Pritchett and Mr. Thompson, (it is doubtful yet whether Dr. M'William has the river fever or not,) all the mates, masters, second-masters, and clerks, the whole of the engineers and stokers of the expedition, and the gunner of the Albert, (the only vessel that has had an officer of that rank,) have been attacked, their lordships will be able to form an idea of the paralysed state of the steam-vessels.

It will be impossible for me to inform their lordships as to the efficiency of the expedition for future operations until I can get to Ascension. I may, however, observe, that it will be found scarcely possible to officer and man more than one of the steam-vessels, unless assistance be sent from England, or obtained from the strength of the African squadron.

As the Æthiopia will probably go home in April next, I have obtained the promise of Captain Becroft to leave his surgeon behind, if he can be spared, who would take an acting order as assistant-surgeon, and willingly go up the Niger again, and if he can spare his black engineer also, he will endeavour to induce him to remain out with a view of joining the expedition.

Could their lordships obtain assistant-surgeons and black engineers in England to volunteer for the expedition, it would be most desirable, as it is quite a contingency our obtaining the individuals alluded to belonging to the Æthiopia.

Dr. M'William is quite of opinion, as far as he can judge, that the Niger is not fit for white constitutions, and I shall take care to keep this in view when making arrangements at Ascension, so that the fewest possible number of white men may be continued in the steam-vessels.

Captain Becroft, whose knowledge of the river exceeds that of any other person, is of opinion (and I quite concur with him on the subject) that the Niger should not be entered before the beginning of July, as it is doubtful whether the river will have sufficiently risen to insure the passage up without detention, so that their lordships may calculate upon the Albert and Wilberforce remaining at Ascension till the 1st of June.

It will be necessary for one steam-vessel to go up the Niger next year, as I left the Amelia tender at the confluence of the Niger and the Tchadda, for the protection of the people of the model farm. Not thinking it right to leave up the river any white person, after the fatal sickness we had experienced, I placed the vessel in charge of a trustworthy black, with twelve other natives of Africa under him, all intelligent steady men.

Their lordships will remember that they gave permission for the utensils of the model farm to be carried out by the expedition, which were landed, at the desire of Mr. Can, the superintendent, at a spot which he selected for the site of the farm, situated immediately opposite to the confluence; and as Mr. Can made a request for naval protection to his people in the absence of the steamers, which I considered very reasonable, I obtained volunteers to remain there in the Amelia before the Albert went to Egga; and on my return to the confluence I was too ill to do duty, but Dr. M'William, at my desire, sent nine months' provisions on board, and cowries were left to buy several months' more. In our distressed state it would have been impossible to tow the Amelia down the river, but, independently of that consideration, it was, I conceive, necessary to leave a vessel for the protection of the farm people.

It is also desirable that a vessel should get up to Rabbah, if possible, next year, not only to complete a series of treaties which have been already commenced, but to show the people of Rabbah that a man-of-war can get up to their town; and the presence of one of her Majesty's vessels there might, I conceive, have a beneficial effect in their future treatment of the Nufi nation, whom we found much oppressed by the Felatals, and also tend much to the extinction of the slave-trade in the upper part of the Niger. This, however, cannot be determined upon till I meet my brother commissioners at Ascension.

Should only one of the steamers ascend the Niger next year, I would prefer one of the larger ones to be selected, from their superior velocity and stowage. Under present circumstances, I would countermand the coals which I requested might be forwarded to Bonny, though, if already shipped, they will, doubtless, prove very useful; for it is more difficult to procure wood in that than in most other African rivers, owing to the prejudice of the natives against the Kroomen cutting it.

I conceive it will be my duty to go to England by the first opportunity from Ascension after my arrival, in order to lay the exact condition of the expedition before their lordships, and I have every reason to think I shall be able to arrive in March, which would give me ample time to rejoin the expedition, should their lordships require my further services.

I may state, for their lordships' information, that the Albert and Wilberforce could not proceed to England with safety, excepting in the summer months; and I consider the Soudan as quite incapable of returning to Europe at all. I am preparing to leave the Soudan in this sheltered harbour, in charge of native ship-keepers; and as Capt. Becroft has promised to make his engineer light fires occasionally, and work the engine, and as Lieut. Bloom, of the Pluto, will be able to do the same when he comes into port, there is every probability of the machinery being kept in good order.

I am in daily expectation of the arrival of the Golden Spring with fuel from England, of which there is scarcely enough remaining here to fill the Albert's bunkers, the Pluto having used a large quantity of our store. I hope a supply of fuel may have been sent to Ascension before this time, so as to enable us to keep the machinery of the vessels in good order at this Island.—I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

H. D. TROTTER, Captain.

CHRISTENING EXTRAORDINARY.—On Sunday, the 23d Feb., a lady, 65 years of age, was christened in the village church of Keddington, near Louth.—*Lincoln Mercury.*

Persons in writing letters of business, and who use envelopes, should be careful to write the address of the party upon the letter, as the document cannot be made available in matters of legal proof without this, which is frequently the object of both the sender and the receiver.

QUEEN VICTORIA'S FATHER.—The mind of the Duke of Kent was cast in a peculiar mould; he was endowed with a vigorous understanding, to which a lofty and fearless independence of soul gave free scope, and whatsoever his hand found to do, it was pursued with a most investigating ardour and perseverance, and "with all his might," regardless of all those taunts and frowns he had encountered from many jealous of his superior talents and growing popularity. It cannot fail to be in the recollection of all who have heard him pleading the circulation of the mighty word of God and the promotion of education, as well as the circumstances of the wretched objects of his deep solicitude, how much his heart was in their cause, when his glowing eloquence was rousing and commanding, which made a deep impression on all around. No man, indeed, stood on higher ground than his Royal Highness in the estimation of the thinking class of mankind, or exhibited a brighter example to persons of all ranks. In him there was nothing of duplicity or worldly calculation, but an open, urbane frankness and straightforwardness characterised his department on all occasions. There was no haughty air of superiority assumed by him, or "bowing you out," but a kindness that won the hearts of all who approached him. He was strong in affection, never was the ruin of any one by a smile, and had a "hand open as day to melting charity," holding out a truly noble example to all ranks to "go and do likewise."—*W. Rae Wilson—Renfrewshire Annals.*

IMPROVEMENTS ON THE BANKS OF THE THAMES.—There is understood to be a plan in progress for materially improving and beautifying the banks of the Thames, from Vauxhall-bridge to some distance below the Tower, on the north side, and to Rotherhithe, or thereabouts, on the south; and this plan, if carried into effect, will give an opportunity for the construction of those public walks which are justly held to be necessary to the health and comfort of the inhabitants of the metropolis. The main purposes of the plan are to preserve the river from being polluted by the contents of the sewers, which are now discharged into it, and to collect those contents for manure—a manure of the most valuable kind, but at present lost, and at the same time productive of positive mischief. To effect this object it has been proposed to construct two large sewers, one on each bank, which shall receive all the matters now emptied into the Thames, and convey them to receptacles below the city, whence they may be taken in boats, properly contrived to prevent the escape of offensive effluvia, and conveyed by canal or river to the country. This certainly appears a better manner of getting rid of the subject-matter than drinking it.

HOW TO BOARD AND LODGE IN AMERICA.—The Philadelphia Chronicle calls the hero of the following story a Yankee, but we will wager a sixpence that he was born in Pennsylvania. But no matter, it is a good joke: "What do you charge for board?" asked a tall Green Mountain boy, as he walked up to the bar of a second-rate hotel in New York—"what do you ask a week for board and lodging?" "Five dollars," "Five dollars! that's too much; but I s'pose you'll allow for the times I am absent from dinner and supper?" "Certainly—thirty-seven and a half cents each." Here the conversation ended, and the Yankee took up his quarters for two weeks. During this time he lodged and breakfasted at the hotel, but did not take either dinner or supper, saying his business detained him in another portion of the town. At the expiration of the two weeks he again walked up to the bar, and said, "S'pose we settle that account—I'm going in a few minutes." The landlord handed him his bill—"Two weeks' board at five dollars—ten dollars." "Here, stranger," said the Yankee, "this is wrong—you've not deducted the times I was absent from dinner and supper—14 days, two meals per day—28 meals, at 37½ cents each—10 dollars 50 cents. If you've not got the 50 cents change that's due me, I'll take a drink and the balance in cigars."—*New York paper.*

WHY ARE WOMEN LONGER LIVED THAN MEN?—It cannot fail to be remarked as a striking fact connected with human mortality, that notwithstanding the peculiar and more severe diseases to which females are necessarily exposed, and their most delicate constitution, they are longer lived than males. The average age of males in England and Wales in 1838 was 44, whilst that of females was 47, giving an average of 7 per cent. of mortality of males over females. To what are we to ascribe the circumstance, then, that the lives of females are three years more valuable than those of males? We believe that temperance and more regular habits are among the causes, and that our view will be borne out by the opinion of those who have considered the subject with attention.—*Lecture by Mr. R. D. Thompson.*

The Theatre of Bacchus, at Athens, stood on the south-eastern side of the eminence crowned by the noble buildings of the Acropolis. From the level of the plain a semi-circular excavation gradually ascended up the slope of the hill to a considerable height; round the concavity seats for an audience of thirty thousand persons arose, range above range, and the whole was enclosed by a lofty portico adorned by statues and surmounted by a balustraded terrace; the tiers of benches were divided into two or three broad belts by passages, and again transversely into wedge-like masses by several flights of steps, radiating upwards from the level below to the portico above. The lower seats, as being better adapted for hearing and seeing, were considered the most honourable, and therefore appropriated to the chief magistrates, the priests, and the senate; the great body of the citizens were probably arranged according to their tribes; the young men sat apart in a division by themselves. In this theatre it was that the masterpieces of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were exhibited; here, too, did Aristophanes pour forth his brilliant wit and his caustic sarcasm, and here were heard and seen the splendid contest of the Cyclian choruses.—*Smith's Grecian Antiquities.*

The naval force of Great Britain, the largest in the world, consists of 590 ships of war, carrying from 1 to 120 guns each, of different calibres, which are either in ordinary or commission; of this immense flotilla, 105 are armed steam-vessels, constructed on the most scientific and approved principles, for active sea service; to man this extensive fleet in time of peace, there are 23,000 able-bodied seamen, 2,000 lads, and 14,000 Royal Marines; this number will, however, be greatly augmented, as the vessels ordered to be put into commission for China, &c., are to have their full complement of able seamen.

The positive increase in the number of letters, since the reduction of the postage, and up to the 5th inst., is one hundred and twenty-one millions and thirty-one thousand letters.

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