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Letter from Sir S. Baker

Author(s): White Nile and Samuel W. Baker

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The following letter, from Sir Samuel Baker to Sir Roderick Murchison, was read :—

“Tewfikéeya, White Nile, N. Lat. 9° 26',
“6th December, 1870.

“MY DEAR SIR RODERICK,

“I write you a few lines to explain my movements.

“In October, I returned to Khartoum (680 miles by river) to assure myself that the requisite preparations were made, according to my previous instructions to the Governor. I then came on here by steamer, and, upon the commencement of the north wind, my vessels from Khartoum arrived with supplies and fresh troops, according to the plans I had laid down.

“Having sent back all my sick, I started off, on the 1st inst. the first division in eight vessels—followed daily by sections of the flotilla, which numbers in all fifty-nine, including one steamer.

“During my stay at this station, I have entirely suppressed the slave-trade of the White Nile—not one slave having passed down the river to Khartoum. The steps that I took upon my immediate arrival completely intimidated the traders, and the traffic no longer exists.

“I trust that England will appreciate the sincerity of purpose displayed by His Highness the Khedive in thus purifying the river from the abominable trade. My acts naturally raised much indignation in the Soudan; but His Highness has supported me unflinchingly, and has dismissed the Governor whom I had reported, as a kidnapper of women and children under the plea of collecting taxes. His Highness also forwarded me the Firman of Pacha from His Majesty the Sultan, together with a very complimentary autograph letter.

“I have now two of Samuda's steamers with me, in sections, together with all stores, merchandise, ammunition, &c., in excellent order, thanks to my galvanized-iron magazine. The station appears quite deserted, as only four companies of troops remain, with which I shall bring up the rear on 9th inst.

“During my stay here, I have made every preparation for cutting through the dams of vegetation in the Bahr Giraffe. Three hundred bill-hooks, &c., are beautifully sharpened; and several new rowing-boats have been built by our English workmen, the want of which caused great inconvenience last season.

“The White Nile is exceedingly high this year, which is all in our favour. It rose from the lowest level of the dry season to a maximum 14 feet 3 inches, and has only fallen 2 inches. Thus, as we start with a powerful force and a strong and steady north wind, I do not fear the impediments of the river. I have also armed the men with some hundreds of hoes, fitted with long handles, so as to cut a channel through shallow places, should they obstruct the passage.

“I shall write to you upon my arrival at Gondokoro, whence I shall push on with the 80-foot steamer, in sections, and the two steel lifeboats (sailing). Fortunately, I have all I require, including fifty wagons, in which all cumbrous sections will be conveyed.

“I shall leave everything that is not absolutely necessary at the main dépôt at Gondokoro, to be brought up by degrees in carts, when the permanent road shall have been completed.

“When at Ibrahiméya, the 2nd dépôt (3° 22' N. lat.), with the steamer and boats, I shall be all right. I shall then put together the two lifeboats, and examine the river to the Albert N'yanza. If all is clear, I shall hurry back, and set all hands to work in constructing the 80-foot steamer.

“Monsieur de Bigemont, who was to represent the French Geographical Society, arrived at Khartoum, but immediately returned to France upon the news of the war and the fall of the Empire. Thus I lose a very intelligent and charming companion. Lieut. J. A. Baker, R.N., is a most able representative of the British Navy in activity and energy. He is unremitting at his

work, and will bring home for the Society most valuable results of careful observations.

"The chronometers went very wild after the land journey from the Red Sea, therefore they were allowed to run down, and remained dormant for some months. They have been wound up and rated, carefully corrected by numerous observations within the last two months, and one is now going remarkably well.

"We have had much sickness in camp during the rainy season. Poor Dr. Gedge lost his reason entirely, and became very violent. There was no hope, and I had him conveyed to Khartoum. After some weeks, during which he frequently refused nourishment, his unhappy malady ended in death. Thank God, we have been free from all ailments, and my wife and I are as well as when in Europe. With love from us both,

"Ever affectionately yours,

"SAMUEL W. BAKER."

The following paper was then read by the author :—

On the Chinese Province of Yunnan and its Borders.—By T. T. COOPER.

At the present time the Chinese province of Yunnan is attracting attention in its geographical, commercial, and political relations with the adjacent countries. It has been, so to speak, attacked from three sides, and that almost at the same time, by explorers acting independently of each other; viz. :—the French expedition from Saigon, on the south; Major Sladen's party, on the Burmese or western side; and, last and not least, an attempt was made by myself to reach Tali-foo from Atenze, on the northern frontier.

Its capital, the city of Yunnan-foo was formerly the residence of a viceroy who directed the Chinese political relations with Thibet and Burmah; and out of the early intercourse between Yunnan and these two countries, arose the events which led to the partial subjugation and consequent political relations which have heretofore existed between the Chinese Government and the numerous tribes inhabiting the western and northern borders of Yunnan.

As if to compensate for the wildness of her borders, the interior of the province may be said to form a beautiful picture, having for its centrepiece the great Lake of Tali-foo, 45 miles long and 15 wide, navigable for vessels drawing 6 feet, and abounding in fish; while nine so-called plains are famous for their various agricultural and mineral productions. The Plain of Tali-foo, surrounding the lake, on the banks of which lies the city of that name, ranks first in area and population, which latter numbered, some thirty years ago, no less than 430,000 souls, distributed in more than 150 towns and villages. The next in importance is the Plain of Yuin-chang, lying to the west of Tali and extending nearly to Ten-yua-chew. This plain is called the rice-field of Yunnan, producing an exceedingly fine quality of grain. It is, however, cursed with malaria,