Records of Captain Clapperton's last expedition to Africa, Vol. 1 (of 2)

Richard Lander

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RECORDS

OF

CAPTAIN CLAPPERTON'S

LAST EXPEDITION

TO

=AFRICA:=

BY RICHARD LANDER,

HIS FAITHFUL ATTENDANT, AND THE ONLY SURVIVING

MEMBER OF THE EXPEDITION:

WITH THE SUBSEQUENT ADVENTURES OF THE AUTHOR.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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HENRY COLBURN AND RICHARD BENTLEY,

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INTRODUCTION.

* * * * *

On my return from Africa in the summer of 1828, I was so ill with fever and debility, that I had neither spirit nor inclination to devote much time to the compilation and arrangement of my notes, and of the short sketches of character taken by stealth in the heart of that continent. My duty and sole design, in laying my Journal before the British Government, were to satisfy Ministers with regard to my conduct after the decease of Captain Clapperton, my lamented master; and to make them acquainted with the manner in which the property left in my charge at Soccatoo had been disposed of, in my hazardous journey back to the sea- coast. Besides, I had not seen my friends in Cornwall for a period little short of thirteen years; and it is quite natural to suppose that I should have felt a longing to re-visit the place of my nativity, after so protracted and painful an absence. It is not to be wondered at, when all this is considered, that my printed Narrative, drawn up in haste, and without having received the benefit of even the slightest assistance, except from a younger brother, should be incomplete, and in many instances carelessly expressed.

To remedy, if possible, these defects, and to insert the relation of a thousand amusing incidents which had been overlooked, I have in the following pages given my Narrative a new and a more complete dress; and I sincerely hope that my countrymen will not be displeased

at my humble but persevering attempts to depict, in true colours, the customs and ceremonies of the powerful nations or tribes inhabiting that vast tract of country lying between Badagry and the beautiful kingdom of Houssa.

The natives of the regions traversed by Captain Clapperton and myself ever regarded our writing apparatus with mingled sensations of alarm and jealousy; and fancied, when they observed us using them, that we were making _fetishes_ (charms) and enchantments prejudicial to their lives and interests. To this cause is attributable the absence of many particulars, both in my master's Journal and my own, which, though unimportant in themselves, serve to pourtray, and to place in a natural and lively point of view, the most conspicuous touches in the character of the African, and gradually to develope his passions, prejudices, and remarkable superstitions. We were unwilling to raise up enemies against us in a strange land, by continuing, in presence of the people, a practice which awakened their jealousy, and served only to make us objects of distrust and hatred to them all. Hence we were obliged to cherish in our memory various particulars which we were unable, at that period, to put on paper; contenting ourselves with the hope that, on our return to England, we should have ample leisure to devote to the accomplishment of that object; this was, however, unfortunately frustrated by the decease of Captain Clapperton. I myself have consequently taken the liberty, in the following pages, of attempting to carry into execution the project which that intrepid officer had in view—when alive, and in the full hope of returning to his native land.

The recreations and songs of the people, as well as their wars, laws, religion and government, I have endeavoured faithfully to describe.

Of course it cannot be expected that a person in my humble situation of life should have powers of language sufficient to give these descriptions the fullest charm of which they may be susceptible: yet I have done the best my poor abilities would allow me. I have translated several songs from the figurative language of the natives into the English tongue, adopting the similes, and copying the mode of expression, as nearly as the idiom of the former would permit; while, in the absence of technical terms relative to law, &c., I have chosen words which have appeared to me the simplest, and which indeed occur most easily to me.

The engagements of the Falatahs with their sable neighbours can scarcely fail of being interesting in many points of view; and their manner of making war is characteristic of African customs. That aggrandizing power, like the government of Russia in Europe, is making rapid and gigantic strides towards an enormous despotism; and should it hereafter possess so martial and enterprising a ruler as its founder, Dandfodio, in the course of a very few years the whole of Central and Northern, if not of Western Africa, will be under the _surveillance_ of the restless Falatah; and the worship of snakes and idols be supplanted by the fanatical tenets of Islamism.

The history of the far-famed Borghoo-Arabian lady, widow Zuma, is correct in every particular; the elopement of that most bulky individual will, it is trusted, be found amusing in the extreme; and the whole train of her adventures—her passionate fondness for white men—the marvel of her extraordinary plumpness—her excessive hospitality—the splendour of her retinue and domestic establishment—her inordinate ambition in attempting to dethrone her lawful sovereign, the innocent and facetious Mohammed—her

mournful reverse of fortune—her confinement—the song of her maidens—and her last request,—are singularly remarkable, and strongly pourtray the disposition and habits of an eminent African belle.

The narrative of Pasko, or rather, I should say, of _Abbu Becr_, our Houssa interpreter, contrasted with that of the amiable and accomplished Zuma, will not be found to be altogether destitute of attraction, insomuch as it shows the manners and superstitions of his countrymen much more pleasingly than a laboured description of them would do; while the archness, drollery, and dishonesty of the old scoundrel, together with his warm and deep attachment to the gentler sex, and his entire devotedness to their service, are accurately related, as the circumstances which called those various passions into action took place.

After the decease of Captain Pearce and Dr. Morrison, when my late valued master and myself were the only Europeans left of the mission, Captain Clapperton for various reasons thought proper to style me his son, and the natives ever after regarded that gallant officer as my father. Surrounded as we were by strange faces and strange scenes, cut off from all communication with civilized society, and wandering, far from our native country, and all that was truly dear to us, in barbarous regions, and oftentimes through long dismal woods, and awful solitudes; we became linked to each other by the strongest of all ties. Ours, if I may so express myself, were kindred spirits; we entered into each other’s views, shared each other’s gladness and melancholy, hope and despair, and participated in each other’s feelings and amusements. It was for the interest of both to do so. It would not have been well for any haughtiness or reserve to be

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