

AFRICAN EXPLORATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I hope that you will find space in your valuable columns for these lines, which will be interesting to African travellers.

Mrs. Beke, the widow of my highly distinguished and lamented friend, Dr. Beke, writes to me as follows concerning the expedition about to be despatched by the Italian Geographical Society, and commanded by its able secretary, Marchese Antinori:—

“It will doubtless have occurred to you, as it has to me that such an exploration could not take place without going over much of the ground so carefully and thoroughly explored by Dr. Beke, when in Shoa and Godjam (1840-41-42) Any expedition to that and to the surrounding countries south of Abyssinia must be materially assisted by Dr. Beke's labours, the results of which have for the last 30 years been before the world. The Italian Expedition, intended to visit Kaffa and Shoa, and to connect with the line of Chinese Gordon, is announced as going to a country hitherto unexplored! Yet Dr. Beke's papers were communicated to Her Majesty's Government and to various literary societies, while he published largely in the Journals of the Royal Geographical Society. It therefore appears to me that it would be only a just and gracious tribute of respect to the memory of Dr. Beke, that his share in the work of opening up that country should be acknowledged. My only object is that justice should be done, and not to detract in any way from the merits of the proposed expedition. It has my best wishes—the more so, as it can only tend to confirm all that Dr. Beke has already done, and to advance his life-long wish for the regeneration of Africa. Perhaps you know some publisher who would be willing to reprint Dr. Beke's 'Three Years' Travels in Abyssinia,' which the contemplated expedition to Shoa would render popular.”

Mrs. Beke, as you are aware, is herself a traveller, and a writer of travels of no mean note. At present, I regret to say, her health still suffers severely from the shock occasioned by her loss, and the generous and hospitable disposition of my late friend has left her in a position from which her well-wishers should hasten to rescue her. The “Beke Testimonial Fund” will be merely a temporary relief. A permanent pension is the thing required, and let us hope that the wealthy and influential “Royal Geographical Society” will see justice done to the memory of one of its best secretaries.

To Mrs. Beke's remarks I may add the purport of sundry conversations at Turin with my friends, the Commendatore Cristoforo Negri, and Guido Cora of the *Cosmos Review*. The Antinori Expedition is reported to have for its ultimate object the wholly unvisited section to the south-west of Christian Abyssinia and the Abai River, connecting known countries with the so-called Victoria Nyanza Lake. The labours of Colonel Long and others only tend to prove the assertion which I have made for the last 15 years—namely, that the Victoria Nyanza is not a lake, but a lake region. The Italian Expedition, however, should be warned that it is about to traverse south of N. lat. 10 deg., the fiercest tribes known to us in Africa—namely, the Southern Gallas, the Wamassi, and their congeners. I only hope that we shall not hear in this case of the *cœur léger*.

Yours obediently,

RICHARD F. BURTON.