

Sir,—Before leaving, and for long leaving I hope, this delectable land, allow me once more to raise my voice in favour of my adopted home—Africa.

The question has frequently been put to me—“What would be the probable future of a penal settlement on the Camaroon Mountains, in the Bight of Biafra, Gulf of Guinea, West Africa?”

I reply that such establishment would work out the general rule of convict settlements—general from America to Australia—and that in due season its convicts would yield due place to colonists. We, who believe in the future of Africa, ever look forward to the *experimentum crucis* being tried upon her. Were England or any other land a mass of moss and morass, were her houses clay and thatch huts, her food raw game and poor herbs, and her garments the hides of beasts, England would be deleterious to civilized immigrants. Doubtless, many a Roman *voltigeur* has in confabulation with his *camarads* characterized Great Britain as the “legionary’s grave.” So this year of grace 1863 sees West Africa obtain in books the same ominous name. But we, who believe in the future of the dark continent and of every other continent, who hold the might of nature to be feebleness in front of the force of man, desire with due humility to try the humble experiment whether bush-clearing and swamp-drainage, house-building and comfort-creating will not render one quarter of the globe equal in point of salubriety to the other three quarters of the globe.

At present the state of Africa—except in places few and far between—is that of Europe in the days of Cheops and Cephren. It is a land of semi-starvation, of lenten diet, in which lean goat, fibrous yams, and plantains form the *ménu*. The family does not and cannot exist. The home is distant 5,000 miles. The house in the regions beyond the “forts and settlements” of James I. is a caricature of the East Indian bungalow, itself the *dolce memoria* of an English cow-house; and to it most men, for safety and comfort, prefer a hulk. The primæval forest, the impenetrable bush, and the stagnant swamp still stand triumphant in the presence of an undeveloped humanity, and in the wantonness of superiority reduce animated nature to a *minimum*.

Thus will the things of old endure till the Caucasian race, the sons of Japhet, find their way into the heart of Africa and occupy the tents of Ham;—not in colonies like those of Bulama and Sierra Leone, but in penal settlements where the severest and the most dangerous labour will fall upon those who least merit compassion. When the land shall have been prepared for civilization, when the criminal squatters can be moved to the north-east, and when their encampments can be converted into permanent centres of improvement, then the great day of Africa will begin. At present, also, while in the cession of what was once ours the beginning of the end of “our colonies” already dawns, it might be worth some trouble to clear new foundation-ground, in case the crumbling old outhouses of the empire require rebuilding.

I have been asked what would become of the Mulatto race which might appear in such an establishment on the Camaroon Mountains. My reply is that it would not be permanent. Without entering into a deep anthropological question, I am convinced that the Mulatto is a *quasi-mule*, whose offspring is generally infecund, and who must presently become extinct or return to the type of either ancestor.

I have hitherto said nothing upon the subject of cotton in West Africa. It is a popular topic, and as such to be guarded against. That excellent medium-staple can be grown in any quantities near the noble Niger, on the Bimbria hills, and in many other localities, there is no doubt; that it will be grown there is. But those who desire such consummation cannot exert themselves more beneficially than in supplying us with convict labour, which will take the rough edge off the work of bush-clearing, swamp-draining, and road-making, and in helping us to establish some healthy point within reasonable distance of the centre of sickness.

As a *sanitarium*, then, I would commend the Camaroon Mountains to your notice. It is, indeed, hard that the white man should die in the “pest-houses” of the coast, within cannon-shot of a healthy region; that he should be parched with fever within sight of frost and snow. As yellow fever level is, on an average, below 500 feet above sea level, ague and fever below 2,500, and tropical diseases generally below 7,000, and as such sites are profusely scattered over Asia, Africa, and America, there is no reason why the European should be less long-lived out of than in Europe. The only difficulty is to know how and where to begin. I lay down my pen in the confidence that by your favour this much has been done. I am, &c.,

RICHARD F. BURTON, F.R.G.S.

Garswood, Lancashire, Jan. 23.