

THE AFRICAN CLIMATE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I venture to hope that in the cause of suffering humanity you will find space for these lines, though forwarded at so full a season.

When I landed at Fernando Po, in September, 1860, Santa Isabel, the harbour town, was the only settlement of the new Spanish colony. Pallid men were to be seen sitting languid in their verandahs, or occasionally crawling about the grassy streets, each with a cigarette hanging to the lower lip. My lodgings being unpleasantly near a military hospital, the breakfast table was frequently enlivened by the spectacle of something covered with a blanket being carried in, and something within a deal box being carried out on four men's shoulders. The Europeans died persistently in the dry season from November to April. After three years' service, out of 155 picked young linesmen, only 47 returned to Spain, the rest being either invalided or having fallen victims to the climate. The rains witnessed the destruction of the negro *liberados* and the ex-English colonists. At length, in March, 1862, yellow fever, the gift of the Grand Bonny River, fell upon us, and in two months swept off 78 out of a grand total of 250 whites.

Already the Fathers of the Jesuit Mission had built an out-station at Banapa, a native village about two direct miles from the harbour and 500 feet above sea level. During the last three years the principal, S. Padre Campillo, has kept his health, and he may still be seen working in his garden as alert and vigorous as though he had never left the *natale solum*. The example of the Fathers was presently followed by my friend Major Noeli y White. In 1862, when Her Majesty's ship Griffin, Commander Perry, touched at this island, two of her officers, young and powerful men, were prostrated by coast fever; they were carried up in hammocks to Major Noeli's lumber cottages at Banapa, and in less than a week they walked down the hill convalescents. As Banapa abounds in sandflies and wants level ground, D. Pellon, an *employé* of the Woods and Forests, preferred a higher site, where he also built for himself a bungalow of boarding at a place which he justly called "Buena Vista."

Seeing that the yellow fever did not abate at Santa Isabel, his Excellency Governor de la Gandara resolved to beat it by altitude. In June, 1862, he ran up a timber house, and transported to his temporary hospital 19 patients, of whom at least half would certainly have died in the lowlands. Of these men only two were lost. Encouraged by the success of his predecessor, the present Governor, his Excellency Señor Brigadier D. Pantalion Lopez de Ayllon, thought Santa Cecilia (such is the name of the charming spot) worthy of a *Maison Caserne*, containing quarters for the men on the ground-floor, rooms for himself and five officers on the first story, and a chapel in the loft. It was opened in November, 1863.

Since that time Fernando Po has changed its deadly nature, as the coming chocolate and coffee planters will find. Whenever a Spanish soldier or sailor falls ill he is carried up to the station, the altitude of which is about 1,200 feet. These figures, borrowed from official returns, show the result:—

	Dec., '63.	Jan.	Feb.	March, '64.
Fever, simple intermittent ..	14	16	11	1
Do., remittent malignant ..	3	2	2	0
Do., intermittent malignant ..	0	0	1	0
Dysentery	3	1	2	0
Minor	2	3	2	0
Totals	22	22	18	1

It may be observed of this list that all the disease, except the mildest simple intermittents, was brought up from below; moreover, that among a total of 63 not a single death has occurred. Invalids soon recover at Santa Cecilia. Healthy men, wearing the thinnest forage caps, and showing the ruddy hue of health, may be seen working in the sun at all hours. The officer commanding (a man of delicate constitution) has never had a day's sickness. The excellent Governor, not content with showing the effete West African coast what can be done—even in the Bight of Biafra—by not letting ill alone, proposes carrying on the road to the Santa Isabel or by Clarence Peak. It rises upwards of 10,000 feet above sea level. Champagne is there *self-frappé*, and all the materials for mint juleps abound.

Nothing can be more genial than the aspect or the atmosphere of the place from which I now address you. After sunrise the temperature is often 68 deg. Fahrenheit, reddening the hands and cheeks of the white man. Few views are softer or more pleasing than the bird's-eye prospect of the lowland regions when no longer forced to feel them. Nothing is more encouraging than the power of taking exercise without the sudden burst of perspiration which attends every movement on the seaboard.

Though pleased to see the Spanish authorities taking sanitary measures which no other nation on this coast has thought proper to attempt, I regret that we are not following, however humbly, in their steps. An English sanitarium on the Camaroons mountain was proposed a score of years ago; nothing has yet been done for the preservation of health and life. We have lately lost during one month in the Brass River six whites out of a total of 60. Lagos, the European population of which does not exceed 70, has disposed of eight men in a single fortnight. Cape Coast Castle, not to be beaten, kills in two months, besides two staff officers, four officers of a single corps (4th West India Regiment). Verily it is not in all things good to be an Englishman!

The importance of the subject must be my excuse for this lengthiness.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

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

Buena Vista, Fernando Po, West Africa, April 18.