

of this expedition were important, while the openings for missionary effort seemed most encouraging.

In the summer of 1857 Samuel Crowther again ascended the river with Dr. Baikie in the *Dayspring*. He posted teachers at Onitsha and Ghebe, and they steamed up beyond Rabbah, intending presently to start on the land journey of 300 miles to the great Mohammedan city of Sokoto. But the very day after leaving Rabbah, the *Dayspring* struck on the rocks and became a total wreck, and after some delay, caused by the difficulty of communicating the news to the outer world, which delay however was made excellent use of by Crowther, the party was taken back by a steamer sent for that purpose. From this expedition practically dates the beginning of what is known as the Niger Mission.

About 140 miles inland from the sea, the Niger divides into twenty-two diverging branches, connected by intersecting channels, and so forming an immense delta. This extends along some 130 miles of coast in the Gulf of Guinea. Its coast, once called the "Gold Coast," is the most dangerous part of Africa,—“the white man's grave.” It forms a maze of canals forking into the lagoon and creek running up to and connected with Lagos waters on the one hand, and into the creeks of the old Calabar River on the other. This triangular region occupied by the Delta forms a vast mangrove swamp. A mangrove swamp, for its awful solitude and dreariness, its monotony and vile smells, wants to be seen to be realized. Seen from the ocean, these river mouths appear only as breaks in the continuous green line of mangrove jungle, fringing the coast to the water's edge.

The tribes of the Niger Delta have little, if any, civilization and are extremely degraded and superstitious. There are still cannibals on the Delta; twins are destroyed; and the river and the spirits of ancestors are worshipped. Human sacrifices are still offered on the Lower Niger, although it is forbidden where the English have power. Slaves, sometimes alive, their bones broken with clubs, are buried with rich persons, that the latter may be attended in the world of spirits.

The whole of the Lower Niger was in 1885 taken under the Protectorate of Great Britain. The Royal Niger Company has fifty-seven factories here, and large steamers. The produce of the country—palm oil, cotton, etc.—is reckoned by millions. Mr. Venn calculated that when a missionary had been out twenty years, he was worth £10,000 a year to British Commerce. Till the missionaries came the traders did not venture to live on land, but lived in old hulks on the river.

The stations on the Delta are interesting and important, the best known, probably, being

Bonny and Brass and are under the superintendence of Archdeacon Crowther, the Bishop's son.

We may realize the struggle that is going on in the Delta when we hear that Mr. Allan, sailing between Bonny and Brass, anchored at a good distance from shore, to keep out of the way of cannibals, and at another time, on the same journey, he heard “faint sounds of worship wafted from the shore.”

But when the Niger Mission was started in 1857, it was not the Lower Niger and the Delta that were chiefly aimed at, one main object was to reach the Sūdān.

The Sūdān is the name given to the vast region which stretches right across Africa from the Red Sea to the Atlantic, and contains from 60,000,000 to 80,000,000 inhabitants.

The name Sūdān, “Blacks,” is borrowed from the Arabs. “Country of the Blacks,” is the name given by the light-skinned inhabitants of the Sahara to the chain of partly-civilized kingdoms lying to the south of the Great Desert. Their north boundary may be very roughly indicated by a line joining Cape Verde to Khartoum, and the southern boundary may be said to be about the 8th parallel of north latitude. This gives us a vast region, 3,500 miles by 500, inhabited mostly by negro nations, nearly all of them calling themselves Moslem.

Though the tribes and dialects that are found in this vast territory are legion, yet three great races, three great languages, dominate the whole and govern the petty negro tribes. A fourth race, very large and important, the Mandingos of the west, lies south of the great stream of traffic from east to west, and may therefore be considered quite separately from the three others. On the east are the Arabs, who, having almost exterminated the negro tribes down to the swamp lands of the Upper Nile, have now passed these in their steamers, and from Darfur on the west and Wadelai on the south, all the marauding armies of the slave-hunters acknowledge the suzerainty of the Khalifa at Khartoum, who virtually rules the whole Eastern Sūdān.

Far away on the other side of Africa, on the west, we find the other great crusading race that is propagating Islam, the Fulani or Fulas, the brave herdsmen of the Upper Senegal and Gambia, ever ready to throng around the standard of any adventurer who will lead an army eastward to burn the pagan hamlets as service to God, or to sack some rich commercial city in the service of man. Owing to the restless fighting propensities of this race we find Fulani colonies scattered through the whole Central Sūdān, and holding the reins of power, and it is the Muslim fanaticism of these Fulani colonies which forms the one serious difficulty in evangelizing the great cities of the Central Sūdān.

(To be continued.)