

big as had been counted upon, the Darien Company proceeded to carry out the chief purpose of its formation.

But all these disappointments and difficulties had, of course, meant delay, and consequently it was not until the year 1698 that the first expedition was made ready to start.

Among those most warmly interested in William Paterson's project was Alexander Blane, of Leith, a worthy and enterprising shipowner, who had won a snug fortune in the service of that fickle mistress, the sea. After working his way up from cabin-boy to captain, he had settled down on shore, while others commanded his craft for him, and being a shrewd, far-sighted, close-fisted man of business, had prospered from year to year, in spite of occasional inevitable losses.

He had held aloof from the Darien scheme at the start, as was indeed characteristic of him, but when the London folk acted so shabbily his Scottish blood was set a-boiling.

"Hech!" he exclaimed, in high indignation, "the Southrons would have the world to themselves, eh? They're just dogs in the manger, and we Scots