

At last the determined and cowardly hostility of Kabba Réga and the thousands at his command became so unmistakable and dangerous, that after exercising astonishing forbearance and withstanding bravely several attempts at destruction, the handful of men, having set fire to all their property and their pretty little station, started on their march back to Foweera, the headquarters of Rionga, on June 14, 1872. This march of about fifty miles, we are sure, is unparalleled in history. It was mostly through thick grass reaching far above the head, through a continuous ambuscade of thousands of savage enemies, who kept up an almost continuous shower of spears within a few yards on each side of the short line of weak, hungry, but courageous men, who, notwithstanding, managed to reach Foweera with comparatively little loss. The brave Lady Baker performed most of the journey on foot, and Sir Samuel in the end pays a just tribute to his noble wife, who in many ways showed herself the ever-watchful good genius of the expedition.

We have only space to say further that Gondokoro was reached on April 1, 1873, when Sir Samuel found that his Englishmen had built a beautiful little steamer, and that the engineer, Edwin Higginbotham, was dead. Arrangements having been made to maintain Gondokoro as a station, Sir Samuel started homeward in the new steamer *Khedive* on the 25th of May, and after a swift and easy passage, reached Khartoum on June 29 and Cairo on August 24. Here the Khedive received Sir Samuel and his companions with well-merited honours, although we regret to say that he seems to have been powerless to act with the uncompromising decisiveness necessary to complete what Sir Samuel had so well begun. The latter had rid nearly the whole of the district through which the expedition journeyed, of the iniquitous slave-hunters, and justly expected that an end would have been put to the wickedness of the inhuman Abou Saood. The final sentence of the narrative is almost crushing:—"After my departure from Egypt, Abou Saood was released and was appointed assistant to my successor." We can only hope that this may not turn out so disastrous as it seems, but that Colonel Gordon may succeed, in spite of this suspicious companionship, in completing the work which it cost Sir Samuel and his party so much trouble to initiate.

One shuts the book with but a low idea of the natives whom the courageous Englishman tried to benefit; it would seem as if they had no single characteristically human quality which could be appealed to and used as a basis on which to rear the virtues of civilisation; and one is very much inclined to believe with Sir Samuel that some modification of the method which he found so successful in training the "Forty Thieves" might be more likely to succeed in raising these Africans from their slough than any appeal to their moral natures.

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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##### Endowment of Research

IN the article on "Endowment of Research," in NATURE, vol. xi. p. 2, the following passage occurs:—

"It does not appear from the Report of the Commission that the Cambridge Colleges have yet taken any steps to appropriate definitely any portion of their endowments to the encouragement of scientific research; but it is a matter of common notoriety that at the October election to Fellowships at Trinity College, a candidate was successful whose chief qualification was that he had already accomplished good original work in embryological investigation."

Although it may not appear in the Report, it is nevertheless the fact, that in December 1872 the Master and Fellows of Trinity adopted a revised set of statutes, wherein are distinct provisions for the endowment of research, very like those commended in the case of New College, Oxford. The Privy Council has, however, deferred since January 1873 the consideration of these statutes, until the late Commission should have reported. This delay seems now all the more vexatious and unjustifiable, inasmuch as it appears from the Appendix to the Report, that changes of statutes were proposed at Oriel and New Colleges five months after the date of our proposal, and that these changes were ratified by the Privy Council within a few months in the ordinary manner.

If in the future the Government should desire to make any changes in this direction in the constitutions of the Colleges, it should be remembered to the credit of this College that two years ago a complete scheme was offered which made liberal provision for the endowment of research. It is due to external authority alone, that in the meanwhile vested interests have accrued, far heavier than any which would have arisen under the proposed statutes, and that nearly one-third of the University has been prevented from enjoying during the interval, statutes in accordance with the prevailing opinion inside, and certainly, as to scientific research, meeting with the approval of the outside world.

GEORGE DARWIN

Trinity College, Cambridge, Nov. 8

#### The University of London

IN justice to the graduates of the University of London and to the Annual Committee of Convocation, I trust you will allow me to offer a few remarks with respect to Prof. Foster's opening address delivered at University College and published in your columns, vol. x. pp. 506 and 525.

Prof. Foster very justly complains that in the present regulations for the Matriculation Natural Philosophy Examination there is not "a tittle of internal evidence to show that they were drawn up in the present century," that there is a want of connection between the subjects required from candidates, and that the freedom of teachers in the instruction of their pupils is seriously interfered with, by the necessity of adapting lectures to the requirements of the examination.

None have shown themselves more sensible of the justice of these views than the graduates of the University; and, in a report which was drawn up by a sub-committee and adopted by Convocation, with reference to certain proposed modifications of the matriculation, the attention of the Senate was respectfully called to this portion of the examination. That report states:—"Your committee are strongly of opinion that no revision of the matriculation examination would be satisfactory which did not effect some improvement in that part of it which relates to Natural Philosophy. In proposing the following alterations, their objects have been to adapt this examination to the courses of lectures and to the most approved text-books on Physics."

It will be seen from this extract that Convocation was desirous that the examination should be brought into harmony with the best methods of instruction, and that the greatest possible freedom should be left to teachers. It was further suggested that the subjects of examination should include Mechanics, Hydrostatics, Heat, and Light, and that the first only of these subjects should be compulsory.

In the new regulations issued by the Senate, which will come into operation in June 1875, some improvements in this examination have been effected. The antiquated syllabus of subjects has been retained, but the whole character of the examination has been modified. Heat has been introduced; and it has been resolved that in the Natural Philosophy paper double as many questions shall be set as are required to be answered, and that candidates shall be free to choose any of them up to the required number. This alteration will effect a great improvement on the old system, which encouraged superficial knowledge by requiring candidates to answer one question at least out of certain