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TRAVELS

IN THE

TIMANNEE, KOORANKO, AND SOOLIMA
COUNTRIES,

IN

WESTERN AFRICA.

BY

MAJOR ALEXANDER GORDON LAING.

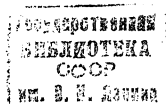
WITH PLATES AND A MAP.

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TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL BATHURST, K.G.,

*HIS MAJESTY'S PRINCIPAL SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR THE COLONIES*

UNDER WHOSE AUSPICES, THE INTERIOR OF AFRICA

IS BECOMING

PROGRESSIVELY AND RAPIDLY KNOWN;

THIS WORK

IS, WITH HIS LORDSHIP'S PERMISSION, RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY

HIS LORDSHIP'S

GRATEFUL AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

ALEXANDER GORDON LAING.

ADVERTISEMENT.

It had been Major Laing's intention, on his return to Sierra Leone from the mission related in the following pages, to have lost no time in completing his Journal from the rough notes and memoranda which he had kept whilst in the interior, and to have transmitted it to his friend Captain Sabine in London, who had engaged, on their parting at Sierra Leone in April 1822, to superintend its publication, should circumstances prevent Major Laing from doing so for himself.

The execution of this intention was delayed by the hostilities which commenced between the British Government and the King of Ashantee, in the Autumn of 1822, in consequence of which Major Laing received an order, on his arrival at Sierra Leone, to join his regiment on the Gold Coast without delay. He contented himself, therefore, with transmitting the details

of the geographical determinations of the latitude, longitude, and elevation of places which he had visited, and deferred the completion of his Journal until a period of more leisure. On his arrival on the Gold Coast, Major Laing was employed in the organization and command of a very considerable native force, designed to be auxiliary to a small British detachment, which was then expected from England. During the greater part of the year 1823, this native force was stationed on the frontier of the Fantee and Ashantee countries, and was frequently engaged, and always successfully, with detachments of the Ashantee army. During this period, in the intervals of active operation, the first five chapters were written nearly as they are now printed.

On the fall of Sir Charles M'Carthy, which took place early in 1824, Lieutenant-Colonel Chisholm, on whom the command of the Gold Coast devolved, deemed it expedient to send Major Laing to England, for the purpose of acquainting Government, more fully than could be done by despatch, with the existing circumstances of the command. Soon after his arrival in England, *i. e.* in August, he obtained a short leave of absence to visit Scotland for the

recovery of his health, which had been seriously affected by so many months of such constant and extreme exposure in Africa, as it is probable few constitutions would have supported.

Major Laing returned to London in October, designing to complete his Journal, which had considerably advanced in Scotland, and to publish it in the Spring of the present year. An opportunity, however, unexpectedly presented itself to him, of proceeding under Lord Bathurst's auspices, in the discovery of the yet unknown course and termination of the Niger; an undertaking which, as the reader will perceive, he had long and anxiously desired. It being designed that Major Laing should accompany the caravan from Tripoli to Timbuctoo in the Summer of the present year, his departure from England very early in the year became necessary, and the intervening time was scarcely sufficient for the necessary preparation for the journey. Under these circumstances, he again requested his friend to superintend the printing of the present Journal, with which request, as it appeared the only means of laying before the public much interesting information respecting a country, which is suffering, because so little is known concerning its capabilities and wants, his friend most readily complied.

It has been considered proper to advertize the reader of the circumstances under which the work thus submitted to his notice was written and published, as an apology for defects which may be observed, and particularly for those which would have been remedied, had the whole of the sheets received the advantage of the author's own revision in the press.

Major Laing quitted London for Tripoli on the 5th of February, at which time the printing had advanced to the 144th page : so far, therefore, the reader will have the satisfaction of knowing that the Journal was seen in print by the author ; the whole of the remainder, as prepared for the press, was read by him the day before his departure.

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THE term "bar" which frequently occurs in this volume, expresses a quantity of goods, of any description, of a certain exchangeable value. The term originated in the early commerce of Europeans with the natives of Western Africa, when the bar implied an equivalent to a bar of iron; the merchandise which now constitutes a bar at Sierra Leone, is of the average value of 3s. 6d. sterling.

ERRATUM.

Page 318, first line of note, *for* N.E. *read* S.E.

TRAVELS
THROUGH
TIMANNEE, KOORANKO,
AND
SOOLIMANA.

INTRODUCTION.

ON the return of His Excellency Brigadier-General Sir Charles M'Carthy, Governor of Western Africa, to Sierra Leone, in November, 1821, from an absence in Europe, His Excellency learnt with regret that a war, which had commenced a short time previous to his departure, between Amara, the Alimamee, or King of the Mandingo nation, and Sannasee, an inferior Mandingo chief, not only remained as yet unsettled, but that it had gradually assumed a more serious character, and had

latterly entirely interrupted the trade between the Mandingo country and the colony of Sierra Leone. The importance of the trade, in respect to its present extent and commercial value, was inconsiderable, compared with the influence which might be expected from it, in promoting the habits of industry, and of settled and civilized life, amongst the Mandingo nation, who had already advanced in these respects beyond the other nations in the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone ; and, previously to the war, had shown a rapidly increasing desire to obtain the luxuries of Europeans in exchange for the produce of their labour.

His Excellency considered that his mediation might prove beneficial, in producing a reconciliation between the belligerent chiefs ; and being desirous, at the same time, to recommend the natives of the circumjacent countries to direct their

attention towards the cultivation of white rice, he thought it advisable to despatch a small embassy (of which he was pleased to put me in charge) to Kambia, on the river Scarcies, and from thence to Malacouri and the Mandingo camp; but as its objects were, with one exception, *viz.*, the sentiments of the natives regarding the abolition of the slave-trade*, entirely of a local nature, and unconnected with general interest, I shall do little more than give a copy of my instructions, and observe that His Excellency was perfectly satisfied with the manner in which they were executed, and with the information he received on the different heads:—

* On this subject the native is so reserved, that little real information could be obtained in so short a time. In the course of my journey to Soolimana, some occasional observations may occur, from which (as the subject will not be generally treated of) the reader will be left to form his own deductions.