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CLASSICS

# Victorian Explorers and Travellers

Collected Works



Series Thirteen

*The Collected Works of*  
**VICTORIAN EXPLORERS AND TRAVELLERS**

(19<sup>th</sup> - early 20<sup>th</sup> century)



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Version 1

*The Collected Works of*  
**VICTORIAN EXPLORERS AND TRAVELLERS**



*By Delphi Classics, 2023*

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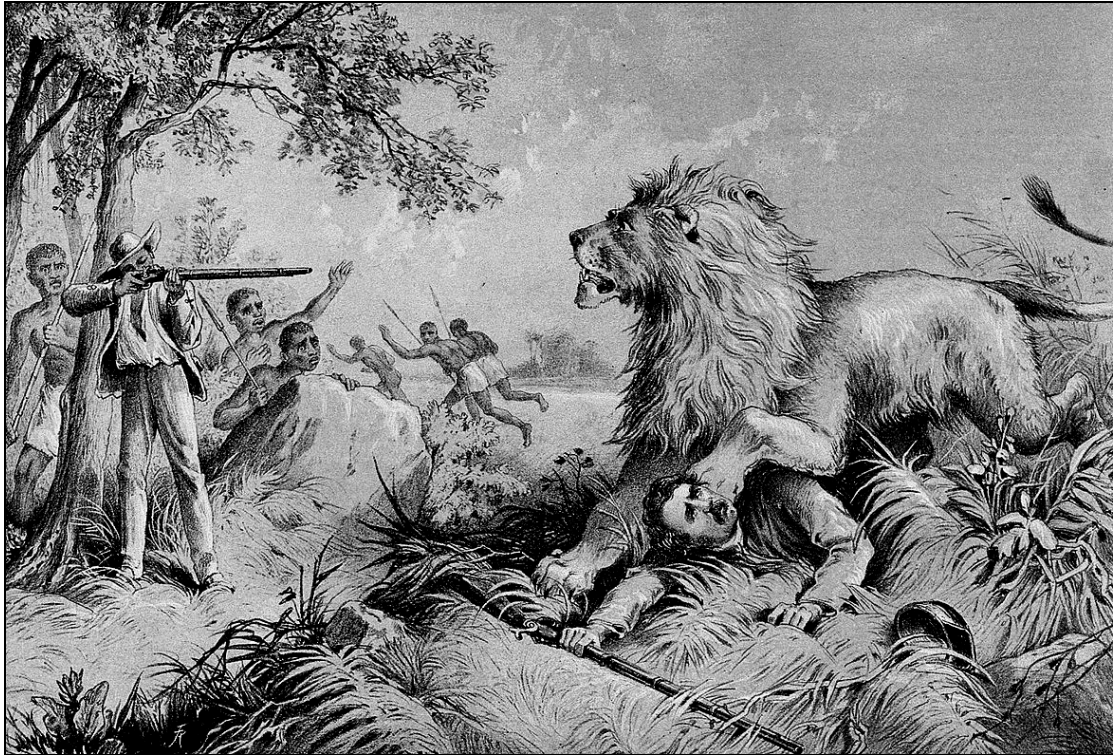
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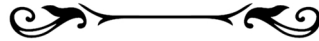
## Part I: Explorers of Africa and the Middle East



*'David Livingstone attacked by a lion in Africa', lithograph, Newcastle upon Tyne: Adam and Co., 1874*



## James Richardson (1809-1851)



James Richardson was a British explorer known for his expeditions into the Sahel region of the Saharan desert. He was educated for the evangelical ministry and his early training and enterprising character fostered an ambition to propagate Christianity and suppress the slave trade in Africa. Richardson joined the British Anti-Slavery Society and under its auspices he sailed out to Malta, where he contributed to the editing of a newspaper and also engaged in the study of the Arabic language and of geography, with a view to systematic exploration.

In 1845 Richardson made an expedition from Tunis and Tripoli in Libya to Ghadames and Ghat in Libya, situated in the middle of the Sahara Desert. Here he collected information about the Tuareg and returned in nine months to Tripoli. After he had published an account of his travels into the Sahara, he convinced the British government to equip an expedition into Sudan and to Lake Chad. In March 1850, the intrepid explorer went for the second time to Ghat, accompanied by Heinrich Barth and Adolf Overweg. They were the first Europeans to cross the stony elevated plain of the Hammada. Richardson died of an unknown illness on this expedition on 4 March 1851 in Ngurutua, a six-day journey away from Kukawa near Lake Chad. His travel notes and diaries were published by Bayle Saint John as *Narrative of a Mission to Central Africa* (1853) and *Travels in Morocco* (1859).



*James Richardson in Ghadamsee costume, c. 1848*

# Narrative of a Mission to Central Africa (1853)



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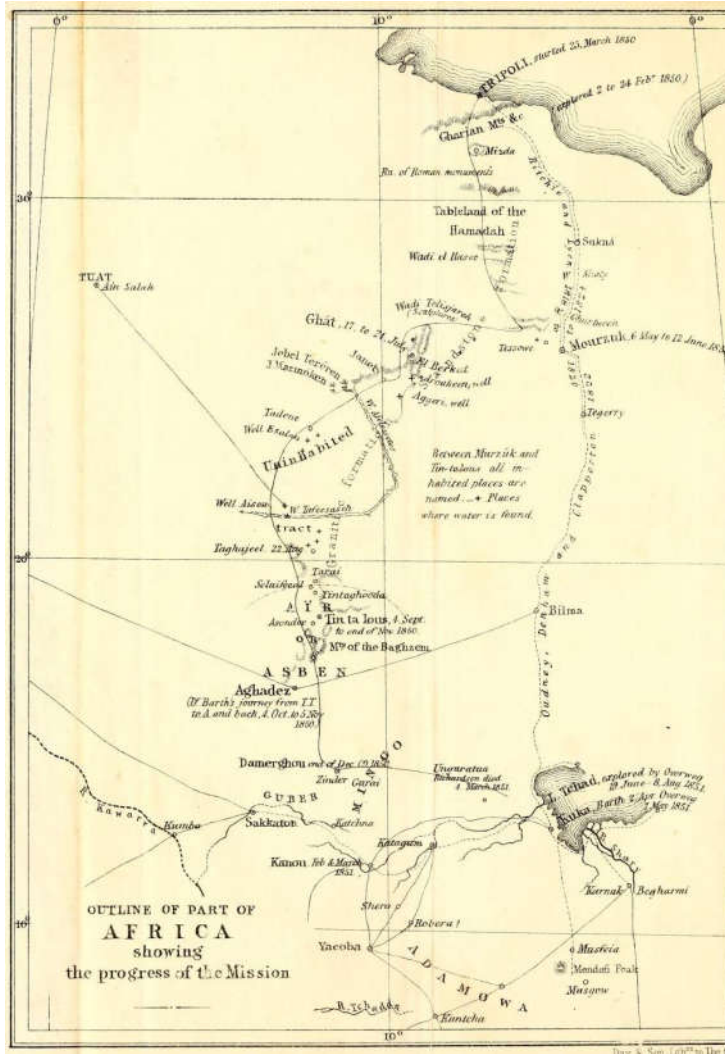
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NARRATIVE  
OF A  
MISSION TO CENTRAL AFRICA

PERFORMED IN THE YEARS 1850-51,  
UNDER THE ORDERS AND AT THE EXPENSE  
OF HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT.

BY THE LATE  
JAMES RICHARDSON,  
AUTHOR OF "TRAVELS IN THE GREAT DESERT OF SAHARA."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:  
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193 PICCADILLY.

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MDCCCLIII.

*The first edition's title page*

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# **VOLUME I.**



## PREFACE.



THE TASK OF the Editor of these volumes has been principally one of arrangement and compression. The late lamented Mr. James Richardson left behind him a copious journal, comprised in eight small but closely-written volumes, besides a vast heap of despatches and scattered memoranda; and, at first sight, it seemed to me that it would be necessary to melt the whole down into a narrative in the third person. On attentively studying the materials before me, however, I perceived that Mr. Richardson had written in most places with a view to publication; and that, had he lived, he would soon have brought what, on a cursory examination, appeared a mere chaotic mass, into a shape that would have accorded with his own idea of a book of travels. Such being the case, I thought it best — in order to leave the stamp of [vi] authenticity on this singular record of enterprise — to do little more than the author would himself have done. In the form of a diary, therefore — written sometimes with Oriental *naïveté* — the reader will here find what may be called the domestic history of one of the most successful expeditions undertaken for the exploration of Central Africa. I believe it would have been possible to get up a work of more temporary interest from the same materials; but this could only have been done by sacrificing truthfulness of detail. In the present form, Mr. Richardson's journal will always remain as an authority on the geography and present condition of a large portion of the Saharan desert, hitherto unvisited, at any rate undescribed.

As will be seen, the Mission was accompanied by two German gentlemen, Drs. Barth and Overweg — the former, of whom I had the pleasure of meeting in Egypt, after his enterprising ride along the coast of Libya. They are still in Central Africa, pushing their excursions on all sides, from Bornou into unknown tracts; and the accounts they may publish on their return will be anxiously looked for. The great traverse of the Saharan desert, however, with all its vicissitudes [vii] and dangers, the physical aspect of that wonderful region, and the manners of the various tribes that inhabit it, will, in the present volume, be found to be fully described — not, it is true, with much attempt at literary ornament, but in the vivid though simple language in which a man sets down impressions which he has just received. I have endeavoured to remove all the faults which may be supposed to have arisen from haste or carelessness, and have necessarily re-written several passages, and passed a correcting pen over the whole manuscript. But I think I may say with confidence, that there is no observation or statement in the following pages which cannot be justified by a reference to the original journals and scattered memoranda.

To me this simple record of daily occurrences seems highly interesting. It divides itself, naturally, into a succession of parts of unequal importance. First comes an account of the journey to Mourzuk, the capital of Fezzan, containing the traverse of the frightful Hamadah or plateau which separates that province from the regency of Tripoli. Then we have a residence at Mourzuk itself, Mr. Richardson being obliged to wait the arrival from Ghât of an [viii] escort of Tuarick chieftains, with whom he had partly made acquaintance during a former trip in the desert. This escort appeared after some delay; and the Mission proceeded across the Fezzan plains to the independent state of Ghât, through a very wild and picturesque country. At this point began, if not the most arduous, at any rate the most dangerous, and at the same time the most novel, part of the journey. Mr. Richardson had undertaken, on his way to Soudan

Proper (his first destination), to pass by the hitherto unexplored kingdom of Aheer or Asben, situated towards the southern limits of the Sahara. The march of the Mission across the deserts that lie between Ghât and that territory was rendered exciting by continual reports of danger from pursuing freebooters of the Hagher and Azgher tribes; but the enemy were outstripped, and no actual attack took place until the first inhabited districts of Aheer were reached. Here some lawless tribes levied black-mail, on the caravan, which was then permitted to proceed, though in doubt and alarm, until it arrived under the long-expected protection of Sheikh En-Noor, one of the great chiefs of the Kailouee tribes, at his town, or rather encampment,[ix] of Tintalous. Mr. Richardson's residence at this place was long and tedious. He suffered, besides, from the extortionate disposition of the Sheikh or Sultan, who, however, after considerable exactions, became his friend. This Saharan character is brought out by a succession of amusing touches. But our traveller was impatient to proceed, and seems to have hailed with delight the announcement that the great Salt-Caravan, which annually transports the necessary condiment from Bilma *viâ* Aheer to the south, was about to start, and that the Sheikh and the Christians were to accompany it. Some further disappointments occurred, but at length the Mission proceeded to Damerghou, whence Drs. Barth and Overweg went, one to Maradee and the other to Kanou, whilst Mr. Richardson proceeded alone to Zinder, situated in the province of Damagram. Here he was well received by the Sarkee, or Governor, and he dilates with well-founded exultation on his escape from the insolent and rapacious Tuaricks. Sad sights, however, connected with the slave-trade, checked his delight. During his stay the Sarkee went out in person to hunt down the subjects of his own sovereign,[x] that he might pay his debts by selling them into captivity. After another considerable delay Mr. Richardson was enabled to start once more, and being obliged to change his original plan proceeded to Kuka, the capital of Bornou, by way of Minyo. Shortly after leaving Gurai, the chief town of that province, the unfortunate traveller found his strength to be gradually giving way. He had already previously complained of the heat and fatigue, but did not seem to have felt any great alarm. Now, however, the climate seems to have told upon him with sudden and fatal violence. His last moments are described in a letter from his fellow-traveller, Dr. Barth, who hastened to the spot with laudable energy as soon as he heard of the melancholy catastrophe that had taken place. Mr. Richardson died at Ungurutua, about six days' journey from Kuka, the capital of Bornou, on the 4th of March, 1851, eleven months after his departure from Tripoli.

I have observed that the Mission, the first transactions of which are described in these volumes, is entitled to be called successful. Although the original promoter and director died just as he was on the point of reaching[xi] the termination of his journey, his enterprising companions, Drs. Barth and Overweg, seem to have carried on and developed admirably the plan at first laid down. If they be spared to return to Europe they will bring home, no doubt, geographical information so valuable that all Mr. Richardson's predictions will be found to be amply fulfilled. As it is, however, the object of our practical fellow-countryman may be said to have been accomplished. He did not lay so much stress on the accurate determination of latitude and longitude, of the heights of mountains and the courses of valleys, as on matters that come more nearly home to human sympathies. The abolition of the system of slavery — many affecting illustrations of which will be found in these volumes — seems to have engaged the chief of his attention. It was with this benevolent object that he originally turned his attention to Africa; and he had become convinced that the best means of effecting it was to encourage legitimate traffic between Europe and the great nurseries

of slaves. Among other things, he wished to show the possibility of entering into treaties of amity and commerce with the most important states of Central Africa; and[xii] although these treaties may not turn out to be of great immediate utility, it is always worth while that future explorers should know, that on the borders of Lake Tchad there is a power which professes to be united with England in formal ties of friendship, and that the Sultan of Bornou has never shown any disposition to break his promises or secede from his engagements. As to the question, whether legitimate commerce can advantageously be carried on across the Sahara, and substituted for the frightful traffic in human beings, I do not consider that it is as yet decided; but Mr. Richardson's researches will throw great light on this interesting subject.

I do not intend here to attempt an account of the services rendered by Mr. Richardson to the sciences of geography and ethnography during his useful career. At some future period, no doubt, this task will be performed; and it will not fail to be added, that he was always impelled by a higher motive than the mere satisfaction of curiosity or ambition. A profound conviction that something might be done towards ameliorating the condition of the African nations, if we were only better acquainted with[xiii] them, seems to have early possessed him. This it was that sustained and guided his footsteps; and all who knew him unite in testifying that he concealed beneath a pleasant, cheerful exterior, the character of a Christian gentleman, and an ardent crusader against the worst form of oppression which has ever been put in practice. The hope that the public will unite in this opinion must certainly assist in consoling his widow for the loss which she has sustained. Mrs. Richardson is alluded to in the narrative throughout. It is necessary, therefore, to say, that that lady remained in Tripoli until the news of her bereavement reached her, and that she then returned to England to promote the erection of this best monument to her husband's memory.

I have now only to add an account written by Dr. Barth (dated April 3, 1851) of the death of Mr. Richardson, in a letter addressed to Mr. Crowe, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul-General at Tripoli. The German traveller, as will be seen in the second volume of this work, had separated from his English companions on the plains of Damerghou, and proceeded to prosecute other researches, the results of which will be looked for with great interest: — [xiv]

"It was on the 25th of March," he says, "that I heard accidentally from a Shereef, whom I met on the road, the sad news that my companion had died, about twenty days before, in a place called Ungurutua, six days' journey before reaching Kuka, when I hurried on as fast as my horse would allow in order to secure his papers and effects from being lost or destroyed.

"I now shall send you a short account of Mr. Richardson's death, as far as I was able to make out the circumstances from his servant. Mr. Richardson is said to have left Zinder in the best health, though it is probable that he felt already very weak while he was there: for, according to the man whom he hired in Zinder as his dragoman, he had, while there, a dream that a bird came down from the sky, and when sitting on the branch of a tree, the branch broke off and the bird fell down to the earth. Mr. Richardson being very much affected by this dream, went to a man who from a huge book explains to the people their dreams. On the man's telling him that his dream meant death, he seems really to have anticipated that he would not reach the principal object of his journey. But, nevertheless, he seemed to be quite well, mounting even the horse which the Governor of Zinder had made him a present of, as far as Minyo, when he begged the Governor to give him a camel, which he mounted thenceforward. He felt notoriously ill in Kadalebria, eleven or twelve days' journey from here (Kuka); and he is said by his servant to have taken different kinds of

medicines, one after the other: from which you may conclude that he[xv] did not know himself what was his illness. Mr. Richardson never could bear the sun, and the sun being very powerful at this time of the year, it must have affected him very much. I think this to be the chief reason of his death; at least, he seems not to have had a regular fever. He was happy to reach the large town of Rangarvia after a journey of three short days, and had the intention of returning from here directly to Tripoli, without touching at Kuka and the low, hot plain of Bornou, which he was affrightened of very much. He offered two hundred mahboubes for a guide to conduct him directly to the road to Bilma; but there being no road from here, and no guide having been found, it was necessary first to go to Kuka.

“Mr. Richardson, therefore, seems to have taken strong medicines; in consequence of which, in the evening of the third day of their halt at Rangarvia, after having taken a walk through the town, he felt well enough to fix his outset for the next morning. But this day being rather a long one, and the sun being very powerful, he became very tired and unwell; and the more so as, notwithstanding his illness, he had not left off drinking milk, even on his camel, mixing some brandy with it. Having recovered a little during the night, he moved on the next morning, but ordered a halt about noon, on account of his weakness. Having started again at sunset, they encamped at midnight. The next day, after a short journey, they reached the Wady Mettaka. Mr. Richardson seemed to feel much better, and drank milk and a little jura, besides rice. From this place, on the last[xvi] day of Kebia-el-awel, the caravan, after but a two-hours’ march, reached the village called Ungurutua, when Mr. Richardson soon felt so weak that he anticipated his death; and leaving the hut (where he was established) for his tent, told his dragoman, Mahommed Bu Saad, that he would die. Being consoled by him that his illness was of no consequence, he assured him several times that he had no strength at all; and indeed his pulse ceased almost to beat. He began, then, to rub his feet with vinegar, and applied the same several times to his head and shoulders. After which, in the absence of his servants, he poured water also over himself; so that, when they returned after a few moments, they found him quite wet. To counteract the bad effect of this proceeding, they began to rub him with a little oil. In the evening he took a little food, and tried to sleep; but notwithstanding that he seems to have taken something to bring on sleep, he threw himself restless from one side to the other, calling his wife several times by her name. After having walked out of his tent with the assistance of his servant, he ordered tea, and remained restless on his bed. When it was past midnight, his old dragoman, Yusuf Moknee, who watched in his tent, made some coffee, in order to keep himself awake; upon which Mr. Richardson demanded a cup of coffee for himself; but his hand being so weak that he could scarcely raise the cup, he said to Moknee: *‘Tergamento Ufa,’*— ‘Your office as dragoman is finished;’ and repeated several times, with a broken voice, *‘Forza mafishe, forza mafishe le-koul,’*— ‘I have no strength, I[xvii] have no strength, I tell you,’ at the same time laying Mahommed’s hand on his shoulder. Feeling death approaching, he got up in a sitting posture, being supported by Mahommed, and soon expired, after three times deep breathing. He was entirely worn out, and died quietly, about two after midnight, Tuesday, 4th March (Jumed-el-awel), without the least struggle. His servant then called into the tent the other people and the Kashalla, or officer of the Sheikh, who had come along with them from Zinder, in order to be witness, and while wrapping the body of the deceased in three shirts which they had cut up, ordered the people of the village to dig a grave for him. They then shut up whatever of the luggage of Mr. Richardson was not locked up, and prepared everything for their journey to Kuka. Early in the morning they lifted the body,

wrapped up as it was, upon Mr. Richardson's carpet, and carried him to his grave, which had been dug in the shade of a large gaw, close to the village, to the depth of four feet. Having then covered his head and breast with a very large tabah, so as to protect it from every side, they covered the body with earth, and had the grave well secured. I have spoken several times with Haj Beshir that it might be well taken care of, and I am sure the grave of the traveller, who sacrificed his life for his great object, will be respected. I send you with this first kafila all Mr. Richardson's papers and his journal, which is kept till the 21st February, consisting of six reams, and his vocabularies, not finished, four reams, with Yusuf's journal, as well as[xviii] all his other papers or letters. I have taken out only the letters of recommendation of the Mission and the papers concerning the treaty to be made, as well as a letter from Lousou, one of the Tuaricks, and another from Ibrahim, the Governor of Zinder, to the Queen, which I shall enclose in my report to Government. I send you, besides, an authentic list of all the objects found in Mr. Richardson's possession, as it has been made up on the things being deposited with Haj Beshir.

"I beg you to assure Mrs. Richardson of my most sincere sympathy, and that I hope she will find a good deal of consolation in the rich journal of the deceased."

I have given the above narrative in the words of Dr. Barth; but must direct the reader's attention to vol. ii. p. 261, where he will find that the whole account of the prophetic dream is distorted by the very unauthentic medium of Oriental report. There is no reason to suppose that Mr. Richardson was unusually affected by this circumstance, although any dismal suggestion is likely to disturb a person of sensibility placed in a dangerous position. The remaining facts, as they seem confirmed by concurrent testimony, may be taken as a sufficiently accurate account of the death of this lamented traveller.[xix]

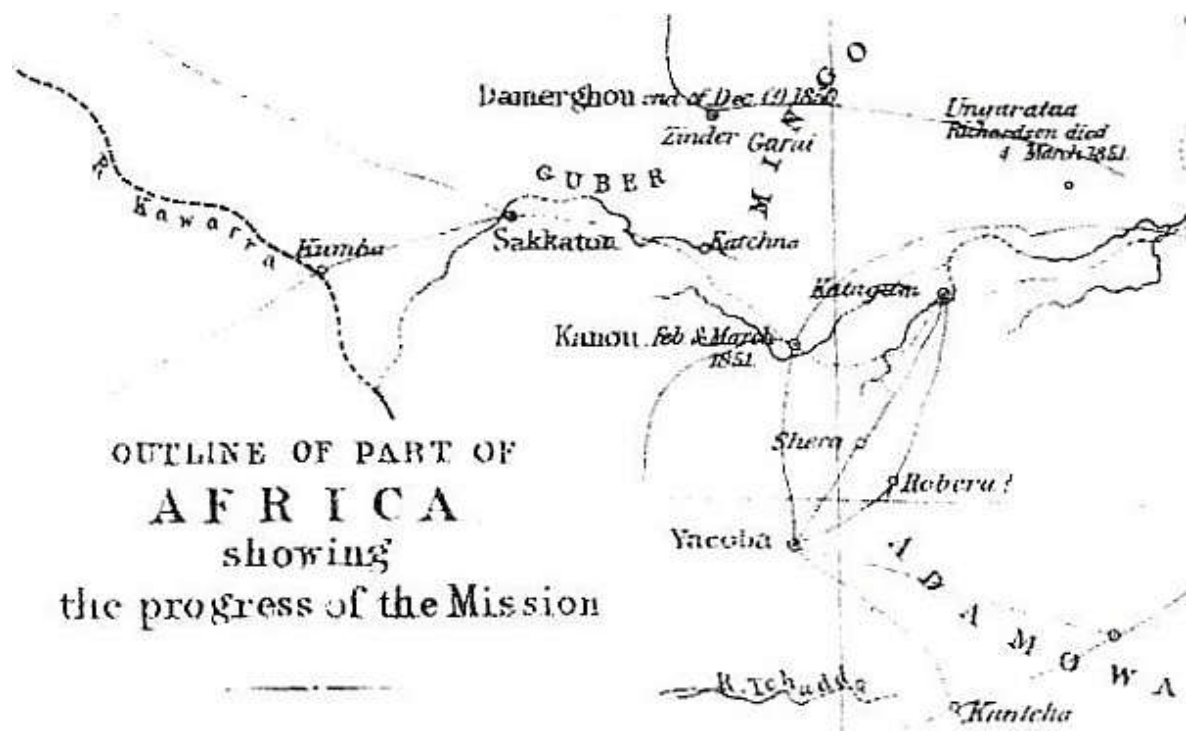
From the statements which have from time to time appeared in the press, the public are already aware, that the presents and the treaty intended for the Sheikh of Bornou were duly presented and accepted, and that the boat which caused Mr. Richardson so much anxiety on the road was ultimately launched, as he desired, on lake Tchad, and employed in the survey of that celebrated piece of water. It is unnecessary here to notice the results of this survey, or of the explorations subsequently undertaken by Messrs. Barth and Overweg. These gentlemen, it is to be hoped, will be more fortunate than their colleague, and return to give in person an account of their exertions and discoveries.

I shall conclude by expressing my hope that Mr. Richardson's reputation will not suffer from the way in which I have superintended the publication of his remains, and my regret that I am not able to do justice to the great services which he has rendered to philology by his copious collections of vocabularies of the languages, both of the Sahara and of the various kingdoms of Central Africa.

Bayle St. John.

*London, January 1853.*[xx]

P.S. It may be as well to mention that the extensive collections of vocabularies made by Mr. Richardson are now preserved at the Foreign Office, together with specimens of translations from the Scriptures. All these collections are extremely valuable, but especially those of the Bornou language, which were much wanted.



OUTLINE OF PART OF  
**A F R I C A**  
 showing  
 the progress of the Mission

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*End of Sample*