ALEXANDER, BOYD (1873-1910),

African traveller and ornithologist, born

at Cranbrook, Kent, on 16 Jan. 1873,

was a twin son (with Robert Alexander) of

Colonel Boyd Francis Alexander, of an

Ayrshire family, by his wife Mary Wilson.

Boyd, after education at Radley College

(1887-91), passed into the army in 1893,

joining the 7th battalion rifle brigade.

Devoting himself to travel and ornithology,

he visited the Cape Verde Islands twice in

1897 to study their ornithology, and he

went, in 1898, for the same purpose to the

Zambesi river and its tributary the Kafue.

In 1899 he joined the Gold Coast con-

stabulary, and in 1900 he was present at

the relief of Kumasi. For this service he

received the medal and clasp, and on his

return to England he was offered and

accepted a commission in the rifle brigade.

Keeping up his studies of bird life in West

Africa, he visited Fernando Po hi 1902, and

made there not only ornithological but also

ethnological investigations and a map, and

gathered material for a review of Spanish

missionary work. In 1904 he started on

an expedition which was designed to

survey northern Nigeria and to show that

Africa could be crossed from west to east

by means of its waterways. Accompanied

by his younger brother, Captain Claud

Alexander, Captain G. B. Gosling, Mr. P. A.

Talbot, and his assistant and taxidermist

Jose Lopes, Alexander left Lokoja on the

Niger on 31 March, and travelled to Ibi

on the Benue. There the party separated

for a time. Gosling, a zoologist, went off

to shoot big game. Claud Alexander and

Talbot carried out a valuable survey of the

Murchison mountains in spite of sickness,

scarcity of food, and difficulties with

carriers and hostile natives ; they finally

reached Maifoni, where Claud Alexander

died of fever, after six weeks' illness,

on 13 Nov. 1904, at the age of 26. Boyd

Alexander meanwhile travelled alone by

Loko on the Benue, Keffi, the Kachia and

Panda Hills and Bauchi to Yo (26 Oct.),

some thirty miles from Lake Chad. He

succeeded in visiting his dying brother at

Maifoni, and thence he (now with Talbot.

Gosling and Lopes as companions) reached

Lake Chad by way of Kukawa and Kaddai.

Some months were spent in the difficult

exploration of the lake. Their valuable

surveys of the lake, when compared with

other surveys, enabled geographers to form

an idea of the remarkable periodic variations

of level and other physical conditions to

which the lake is liable in sympathy with

periods of drought or heavy rainfall. On

26 May 1905 Alexander, Gosling and Lopes

(Talbot having returned to the west) started

up the Shari, making a detailed survey

of the Bamingi tributary in September.

They then traversed the watershed to the

Ubangi, and proceeded across the centre

of the continent, following that river and

the Welle. At Niangara on the Welle

Gosling died of blackwater fever. Alex-

ander now travelled to N'Soro, turned

north to the Lado country, and followed

the Yei river and Bahr-el-Jebel down-

ward through the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

He surveyed the Kibali tributary of the

Welle in July and the Yei in October 1906,

besides carrying out important zoological

studies. He reached the Nile in December

1906.

For his journey across the continent

Alexander received the gold medal of the

Geographical Society of Antwerp in 1907,

and the founder's medal of the Royal

Geographical Society of London in 1908,

as well as the thanks of his colonel, the

duke of Connaught, on behalf of his

regiment. At the close of 1908 Alexander,

with Lopes, left England again for West

Africa. He visited the islands of Sao

Thome, Principe, and Annobom, and, in

March 1909, the Kamerun mountain, whence

he proceeded to Lake Chad by way of the

upper Benue, intending thereafter to make

for Egypt through Wadai and Darfur. The

country was known to be in a disturbed

condition, and Alexander, on reaching

Nyeri, seventy miles north of Abeshr, the

capital of Wadai, was murdered by the

natives on 2 April 1910. He was buried

at Maifoni, by the grave of his brother Claud.

Lopes, who had accompanied Mm since his

earliest journey to the Cape Verde Islands,

escaped. There is a memorial to Boyd and

his brother Claud at the parish church of

Cranbrook, Kent, and his portrait as a boy,

by Godbold, is preserved by his family.

Alexander published, an account of his

journey of 1904-7 in ' From the Niger to

the Nile ' (2 vols. 1907). He contributed

a detailed account of Fernando Po to the

'Ibis' (1903), and a paper 'From the

Niger, by Lake Chad, to the Nile,' to the

'Geographical Journal,' xxx. 119.

[Obit, notice, Geographical Journal, xxxvi.

08 ; private information.] 0. J. R. H.