

Letter to Arthur Tidman, 14 January 1855

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[0001]

Cassange, Angola West

Africa, 14th January 1855

Rev^d D^r Tidman

Dear Sir

As soon as I was sufficiently recovered from the severe indisposition which kept me prostrate for a long time after my arrival at Loanda, I wrote you a full account of the journey concerning which you have probably recieved information from other sources. I regretted you had not recieved the earliest intelligence directly from my own hand and that regret was increased on learning a few days ago at Pungo Andongo that all my letters & maps had been lost in the wreck of the "Forerunner" off Madeira
[0002]

Having left the river Zambesi or Leeambye in Lat. 12° 11' South and Long. 23° 40' East we ascended the Leebauntill we had the country of Lobale on our left and Londa on our right. We then left the canoes and travelled N.N.W. on oxback till we reached the Latitude of this place viz. 9° 37' thence proceeding Westwards we at last reached Loanda

In passing through a part of Londa we found the people exceedingly kind and generally anxious that we should succeed in opening up a new road to the coast They belong to the negro race and are more superstitious than any of the Southern tribes. They would not eat with us, And near every village we observed an idol consisting either of a clay figure of a lion or alligator, or a block of wood on

which a human face was rudely carved
[0003]

In cases of sickness or of failure in any
pursuit offerings of food are presented
and drums beat before them during
whole nights. The Balonda invariably
go armed with short broad-swords,
large bows and arrows and guns,
and seem to possess but little sense
of security in their own country. Cases
of kidnapping of children occurred
while we were passing and these
with persons who flee from one
chieftain to another are generally sold
to half blood Portuguese who visit
the country as slave dealers. The country
appeared to contain a large population
and it abounds in the necessities of
life. The soil is fertile and the
climate admits of the crops appearing
in all the different stages all the year
round

The time of our visit was unfortunately
[0004]

the season of the heavy rains which
appear to follow the course of the Sun
in his progress North, our experience
can scarcely be considered a fair criterion
of what may occur during the rest
of the year. perpetual drenchings - a
hot sun, (the temperature never under
84° in the shade) quickly drying our
clothing, and frequently sleeping in
damp beds, prevented my forming
a reliable idea of the salubrity of
the climate. My companions all
native Zambesians had nearly as
much sickness as myself - intermittent
fever being the complaint from
which we all suffered most. The
country however is elevated. and
abounding in flowing streams is
moreover of great fertility and beauty.
The time spent in the way was also
[0005]

2 sheet

longer than may be required at other
seasons, because we had to halt early
in the afternoons in order to allow
the men to build little huts for shelter

during the night. The dense tangled
forests however presented an insurmount-
able obstacle to travelling in waggons
but the plains on our West may
not be similarly obstructed.

When we came into the vicinity of
the Portuguese settlements the [^][native] tribes treated
us rather ~~seurvily~~[badly]. Some levied heavy
fines on the most frivolous pretences
others demanded payment for leave
to pass at all. I parted with everything
I could dispense with and my men
gave all their armaments & most of
their clothes either for food. fines or
ferries. but when we explained that
[0006]

we had nothing we could part with besides
it did not in the least appease the violence
of the mobs which surrounded us. We
must pay either a man, an ox or a
gun and were looked upon as interlopers
wishing to cheat them out of their dues.
At last on reaching the river Quango
by the generous assistance of a young
Portuguese sergeant of militia we entered
the territory of Portugal and recieved
the kindest treatment from all classes
all the way to Loanda

In that city I arrived nearly knocked
up and suffering from fever & dysentery.
Edmund Gabriel Esqre Her Majesty's commissioner
for the suppression of the slave trade and
the only Englishman I know in the city
most generously recieved me and
my 27 companiions into his house.
I shall never forget the delicious
[0007]

pleasure of tumbling into his bed after sleeping
six months on the ground, nor the unwearied
attention and kindness through a long sickness
which M^rG. invariably shewed. May
God reward him. My companions
were struck with awe at the sight of
a city and more especially when taken
on board H.M. ships of war. The kindness
of the officers of the cruizers removed
the last vestige of fear from their minds
for finding them to be all my countrymen
they saw the fallacy of the declarations

of the negroes of every village we came to West of Cassange"[That the white man was taking them to the sea and would sell them all to be taken on board ship, fattened and eaten"]. They were afterwards engaged in discharging coals from a ship for wages, and will marvel to the end of their lives [0008] at the prodigious quantity of "stones that burn" one ship could contain. They previously [^][imagined] their own little canoes on the Zambesi the best vessels, and themselves the most expert sailors in the world.

His Excellency the Bishop of Angola then the acting Governor of the Province recieved my companions with great kindness and assured them of his protection and friendship. as well as desire to promote commercial intercourse with the country of Sekeletu. He also sent a present of a horse and handsome dress for. that chief. and shewed very great attention to myself in my sickness- The merchants too of Loanda took the opportunity of our return to send presents to Sekeletu and as they give much more for the produce of his country than can [0009]

3^d sheet

be, or is done by merchants from the Cape Colony it is to be hoped that intercourse with either Cassange or Loanda will promote the civilization of the Interior.

I return, because I feel that the work to which I set myself is only half accomplished. The way out to the Eastern coast may be less difficult than I have found that to the West. If I succeed we shall at least have a choice. I intend, God helping me, to go down the Zambesi or Leeambye to Quilimane. May in order to avoid the Falls of Mosisatunya and the rapid & rocky river above that part, go accross from Sesheke' to the Manimelie-Loenge or river

of the Bashukulompo and then
descend it to the Zambesi. If I
[0010]
I cannot succeed I shall return to
Loanda and thence embark for England
I expected letters at Loanda and feel
much disappointed at receiving none
I asked my friends to write to that
place, and now suppose they believed
I should never reach it. I shall
feel obliged if you send a letter to
Quilimane. I know not whether
I shall reach it. I mean to try.

~~Enclosed in this is a letter for my~~
~~family.~~[End]

~~[Business] My companions, decidedly the~~
~~best I ever travelled with, were given~~
~~by Sekeletu for my assistance without~~
~~any idea of remuneration. As wages~~
~~are a most effectual means of breaking~~
~~up the feudal system and that~~
~~form of domestic slavery which~~
[0011]

prevails throughout Africa I resolved
to give each of them a small payment
in goods. For this purpose I drew
on you for £50 by a bill in favour
[Accepted 7 Sept 1854] of M^e Gabriel dated 19th June 1854
It was sent to his agents M^r Woodhead
and Co. N^o 1 James St London. Finding
subsequently [^][the balance of] of that sum insufficient
for the supply of goods necessary for
the return journey viz. to purchase
food, reward our friends who shewed
kindness and conciliate our enemies
who verily were "no better than they
should be". I afterwards drew £25
in the same way. the Bill was dated
[£20 Accepted 3 Apl. 1855] 16th August 1854. This second bill may
have gone down in the Forerunner
I hope the above may meet your
approbation
[0012]

Another matter. for troubling you
with which I beg to apologize. As it
may appear very unbusiness like to
refer to transactions without positive
dates, I can only plead the destruction

of my papers by the Boers at Kolobeng
having recieved according to order periodicals
from James Maclehose bookseller in
Buchanan St. Glasgow. I requested
him to send his account in, to the
best of my recollection, 1851. And when
I recieved it immediately transmitted
a bill in the usual form to M^r Maclehose
and at the same time advised you
that the sum (£20) might be deducted
from my salary. I heard nothing
more of the above referred to bill
nor had M^r Thompson any notice

[0013]

4th sheet

of it in 1852. But believing you had
paid the amount to M^r Maclehose
I caused it and two other bills, to be
deducted from my last account
current with the society when in
Cape Town (1852). When on my
way to the Zambesi in the end of the
same year a letter from a M^{rs}L. informed
me that M^r Maclehose had told her
he had not recieved the bill of which
I speak. Now, as I am quite certain
the bill for £20 was sent to M^r Maclehose'
[It has not been fryovtu] address I wish to ascertain whether
it was paid to him. If as I suspect
the bill and letters were lost I shall
feel obliged if you pay M^r Maclehose
£20, as that sum was deducted by
me from my salary when the account
was last made up in Cape Town

[0014]

Another sum of £20 was deducted at the
same time, under the same impression
viz. that a bill in part payment
for clothing had been recieved by a
merchant and presented to you for
payment, and that though your
advice of the same had not yet
(in 1852) come to M^r Thompson
it would come before I returned
from my present journey. I have
learned from M^{rs}L. that I owe
something to the same party. I do not
know the present address of this
merchant but it is probably known
to M^{rs}L. and you will favour
me by allowing her the above sum

or any part of it to liquidate the debt
as it is positively deducted from the salary
[0015]

A sum of 10 was deducted also in
[Paid 24 Sept 1852] favour of M^r Snow, but in his case
the date was 1852. I hope he has applied
for his money.

In the case of first two bills of [£]20
each I have had fears that they may
have been lost, and therefore trouble you
before I leave the world of mails and
correspondence

[Private] I have been remarkably well treated
by the Portuguese. The Government
did everything in its power to facilitate
my progress through the Province, and
this I have reason to believe was according
to the wishes of the Government of
Portugal. I carry a letter from the
Bishop of Angola - the head of the
Provisional government to all
[0016]

the commandants and governors of
districts and forts to furnish me
with everything requisite and that I
should incur no expense whatever in
their territory. These gentlemen however
had already treated me on the "voluntary
system" with so much politeness and
hospitality I had not the face to present
the letter of authority, concerning this
courtesy for which I feel abundantly
thankful I may remark that the
Portuguese in Africa have a good
character for polite hospitality, but I came
amongst them in a peculiar manner.
I came out from behind them. It
would I suspect be a different story
if a missionary [^][had] come to Loanda and
wished to go in from thence.

I visited several of the "extinct
convents" or as we should say, deserted
[0017]

5th sheet

deserted missionary stations. The churches
are standing in some instances, and would
require [^][but] little to put them into good repair
South American fruit trees ~~stand~~[grow] in

the neat gardens which the missionaries
laid out. The bedsteads stand in the
dormitories as they left them, and the
big chests in which the bretheren
stored their grub[[^]][provisions], but there were no
books nor any inscriptions on the
graves which would enable one
to learn something of the dust which
sleeps beneath, but turning to the
people we soon recogn[i]ze their memorials
in the great numbers who can both
read and write. There are very few
of the people of Amabaca who cannot
use the pen, and the sight is not
[0018]

uncommon in that district of a black
man sitting in the evenings with a fire
stick in one hand and a pen in the
other writing in a beautiful hand a
petition to a commandant. I looked
upon these relicts of former times
with peculiar interest because if the
labours of the Jesuit missionaries
who were expelled by the Marquis of Pombal have so much permanence,
surely those of Protestants who have the
living word behind them, will be no
less abiding. I was informed by
a canon of the church whom I lately
met in Pungo Andongo, and who
had lately[recently] returned from a visit to
Portugal as conductor of the prince of
Congo that in the Congoeze territory there
are no fewer than twelve churches
[0019]

and not a single priest. This gentleman
was a woolly headed black, yet a dignitary
of the church, universally respected for his
virtues and has had an order conferred
on him by the King of Portugal. We English
feel very complacent with ourselves
when we compare our way of treating
people of colour with that of the Americans
but the Portuguese would stare as much
I did to see (as in the case of Botha)
a judge treating with levity a case of
life and death and a brandy bottle on
the bench beside him and in full
view of the court. The insalubrity
of the country is the cause why
there are so few priests in Angola.
Intermittent fever is excessively

prevalent and it usually produces
enlargement of the spleen which
[0020]

~~sooner or later end fatally.~~

Among the benefits conferred on the
country by the missionaries may be
mentioned coffee. A few Mocha seeds
were planted and it has now extended
itself over the whole country. ~~The Portuguese~~
~~are now in a state of transition from~~
~~illicit to licit commerce, the former~~
~~being effectually repressed by our cruizers~~
~~They turn enthusiastically to coffee p[P]lant-~~
~~-ations of [it] which were[are]daily discovered~~
~~in the forests, and only require to be cleaned~~
~~to yield as good quality of fruit as can~~
~~be found in the world. A few months ago~~
~~it was discovered near Cassange, 300 miles~~
~~inland. I cannot send you a map,~~
~~and this is not so full an account~~
~~as I wished to send. I am~~

Affectionately Yours

David Livingston