

## Letter to Arthur Tidman, 14 January 1855

*Livingstone, David, 1813-1873*

Published by Livingstone Online ([livingstoneonline.org](http://livingstoneonline.org)), 2017

[0001]

Cassange, Angola, West  
Africa, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1855  
Rev<sup>d</sup> D<sup>r</sup> 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 Leeba untill 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 necessaries 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 insurmountable 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 <sup>^</sup> 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 companions 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<sup>r</sup> G. 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 <sup>2</sup> (That the white man was taking them to the sea and would sell them all to be taken on board ship, fattened and eaten<sup>2</sup> ). 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 <sup>2</sup> (stones that burn<sup>2</sup> ) one ship could contain. They previously <sup>^</sup> 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<sup>d</sup> 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 recieving 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<sup>r</sup> Gabriel dated 19<sup>th</sup> June 1854  
It was sent to his agents M<sup>rs</sup> Woodhead  
and Co. N<sup>o</sup> 1 James St London. Finding  
subsequently ^ the balance 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>r</sup> 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<sup>r</sup> Thompson any notice

[0013]

4<sup>th</sup> sheet  
of it in 1852. But believing you had  
paid the amount to M<sup>r</sup> 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<sup>rs</sup> L. informed  
me that M<sup>r</sup> Maclehose had told her

he had not received the bill of which I speak. Now, as I am quite certain the bill for £20 was sent to M<sup>r</sup> Maclehose' It has not been deducted 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<sup>r</sup> 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 received 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<sup>r</sup> Thompson it would come before I returned from my present journey. I have learned from M<sup>rs</sup> 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<sup>rs</sup> 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<sup>r</sup> 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]

5<sup>th</sup> 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 ize their memorials  
in the great numbers who can both  
read and write. There are very few  
of the people of Ambaca 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 Congoese 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 ends 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 ꝑ Plantations of it which were are dailly 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