

Kisuludini, April 28, 1856

Reverend & Dear Sir,

Trusting as I do that by this time the Committee have come to some decision or other about the East African Mission, but being entirely ignorant of what the decision may be & having nothing of importance to communicate to you, my only purpose in writing by this opportunity is simply to inform you of our safe arrival at our station on the 18th ult.

As Dr. Krapf used to write to me from Mombas on his visits there from Rabbai Empia, that he found all in the old state, so I have to tell you about East Africa in general that I found all in the old dead & meaningless state of things. My convictions therefore of its being no Missionary field yet, have only become deeper and stronger. It is all a dreary hopeless nothing – that is the true inscription to be put over the East coast of Africa in its present state. Where the power of a christian nation ceases to be felt, there – my dear Sir – is also the boundary, set by Providence, for Missionary labour. Scripture & history proclaim the fact, though it is not yet fully known & recognized by Missionary friends. There are laws & conditions on the progress of the Kingdom of God as sure & marked as those of growth & development in nature. This is a topic well worthy of an essay, & I do wish that such an essay might be written for the instruction of Missionaries & Missionary Committees as well as for Miss. friends at large.

As I have already told you in a note written from Aden, we were favoured with almost a gratuitous passage to Zanzibar in an American vessel. After writing to you Mr. Alley the agent resolved on waiting for the next steamer, which was due on the 26th or 27th of Jan., but though we waited till the 4th of Feb. we were at last to sail without receiving the longed for mail, as Mr. Alley could detain his ship no longer. This detention brought us near the close of the North Monsoon, & instead of a fortnight's passage we had one of nearly a whole month, as we arrived there only on the 2nd of March. I tell you this only that you may see how incompatible my visit to England would have been with my return with that Monsoon. – Colonel Hamerton received & greeted us with greatest kindness. It was nine years since I had seen him last, & very much altered he was both in body & mind. He now not only reads his bible but is more christian in his conversation & general behaviour, so that we spent a very happy & comfortable week with him. He believes that on the death of the Imam our lives will be endangered & advises us in that case immediately to leave the country: The Arabs, he said, considered Dr. Krapf a French spy & would always look upon us with the greatest distrust while the Imam himself was more ready to forbear. On taking leave from him I expressed my thankfulness for all the kindness I had received from him from the beginning – by the wish, that the Lord might reward him with spiritual & heavenly things for what he so liberally bestowed on us in things temporal at which he replied, that he was very glad that I said this to him (This he repeated twice). The Colonel spoke to us of his going away next autumn with certainty. It was on the 11th of March that we were once more turned into one of the meanest, to flesh & blood most humbling & disagreeable native boats, & sailing only during day time we did not reach Mombas until the 15th. The 18th of March, as already mentioned, was at last the day which brought again the desired rest for the weary travellers – for weary indeed had we become of

travelling. It was however a rest only from travelling, not from hard work – for such has been the damage already done to our house by the heavy rains during our absence, that all my time hitherto had to be spent in cleaning & repairing it & I acted at one time as carpenter at another as a mason etc. . As to the cottages or rather hovels (as others might more properly call them) of Rabbai Mpia, they are all tumbled down to the ground so that I had to bring over to Kisuludini all the boxes which Dr. Krapf had left behind him. The place is now almost wholly forsaken, as people generally, when no enemy is at hand, prefer living on their plantations. It was only the "Msungu" who had brought a little life into it, but – as it seems – only to make the desolation appear more striking. No other attack has been made by the Masai.

As to Abbe Gunja he continued to read his gospel of St. Luke on Sundays in Mr. Erhardt's room which I left him open but so little is he able to maintain his position as a christian among his heathen relations that just tomorrow a cow of his will be killed by them on the grave of his father, in order to appease "the Koma" (the departed spirit), which according to their superstition having lost a son's service, vented its displeasure on the grandson in causing ulceration of the wound made by circumcision (During our absence Abbe Gunja's little son together with all others of his age of the Rabbai tribe down to little children had been circumcised. Many are injured for life and some died in consequence). Such cases, A.G. says, were formerly very rare. Circumcision had always taken place in the "Viaja", but this time it was performed on their plantations, as it seems, with low care. Abbe Gunja certainly does no more participate nor believe in the efficacy of such practices, & he even confesses his belief to his relations, but he dare not refuse them the means of what they believe necessary to be done for the wellbeing of his son - & such is the manner of the Wanika that you may reprove them again & again for their errors & lies - & they will patiently listen to & laugh at you if they can only get something for their stomachs. April 29 very significant: while his relatives are gone to feast at his expense, being licensed by the old superstition of the country – A.G. is reading his gospel in front of his cottage with his usual loud & slow voice. So it is whenever his wife is unwell, that he must supply her with the means of going to the "Mganga" to have the drum beaten & the evil spirit pacified. – This also shews the necessity for Missionary labour to be preceded by some Christian power for then the convert is at once enabled to leave entirely his heathen community & join himself to the visible church – be it ever so feebly represented. But why you may ask, does Abbe Gunja not join you? Simply, because I am politically & socially a nothing in the country – I hang as it were in the air. I have no ground to stand upon & nothing to lean against – And so little is even my character as a Missionary understood & cared for, that if I was forbidden the country this very day, it would not be because I had brought a new strange doctrine, but only because I was considered dangerous to the revenue of the Muhamedan ruler of the country.

Mr. Koelle's books have never reached me, but I surmise that they have been kept for me at Bombay until I should have returned to my station.

Commending ourselves to your Christian prayers & sympathy

I remain – Sir - yours respectfully
J. Rebmann