

Cairo, 27th Nov., 1855

Reverend & Dear Sir,

I promised in my last (of Nov. 18) to write to you more fully – which I now attempt to do.

My last letter written from Kisuludini in April began with the weighty sentence: "The East African Mission has suddenly been brought to a close." It must be born in mind that this sentence had not been hastily formed from the inroads the Masai had made into the Wanika-country – but was rather the simple inference from a proposition made, as I was informed by Dr. Krapf, by the Committee, viz.: that the continuation of the E.A. Mission was dependent on the formation of a new Station on the Kadiaro-mountain. It was very remarkable, that the receipt of the information from home exactly coincided with the first appearance of the Masai in the Duruma-country. The proposition had no sooner arrived than the impossibility of its being put into execution had been established, yea even that our stay in Kisuludini was rendered for a time very doubtful; for if those robbers had extended their inroads to the Rabbai territory, all the people around us & even our servants would most surely have fled from us. Rabbai Mpia, near, as it is, would have afforded no refuge to us, because on the one hand the miserable cottages had already begun tumbling down to the ground, while on the other its safety – from want of provisions, would have been useless. But notwithstanding all this – if no other reasons had existed for our leaving E.A. besides the robbing attacks of the Masai, our leaving it merely on their account might justly have been termed a running away from our post. As it was however – we would not leave the place then, but were obliged to wait at least till Oct. next, because – as it is well known to you Mombas is not visited by the ships of the civilised & christian world, but your Mission, & your Missionaries, till now depend on such ships only as belong to the false prophet. This is truly a curious fact in the history of the Church of Christ & certainly well worthy of consideration. It seems to me that no blessing can possibly attend the E.A. Mission, until their unnatural communion of light with darkness will have ceased to exist. We returned to Kisuludini from Mombas on the second of May last, & as I have already stated, the country remained quiet up to the time we left, though everybody believes that the cattle-robbers will one day unexpectedly make their appearance again. But having against all expectations been enabled to spend the whole of the time between April & Oct. at Kisuludini, instead of being obliged to spend it at wretched Mombas, I no longer considered myself justified, as I had done in April, to relinquish the Mission without the sanction of the Committee, but only resolved on going to Aden, which seemed necessary not only for the sake of a quicker correspondence, but also on account of the health of the only companion left me, who for some time previous had been rather suffering, & we thought that the see-air might do her good.

Excepting the time I spent with Abbe Gundsha (sic), every evening in reading & praying with him, I was exclusively engaged in studying the Kiniassa-language – the Vocabulary which I had originally intended to form growing under my pen to a Dictionary, finding – as I gradually did, to my great astonishment – that language to be nearly as rich in words as the Kisuaheli with all that the latter has borrowed from the Arabic - & almost richer in grammatical forms of a most curious kind. The importance of that language in relation to the great South African family of languages can rarely be overrated, when it is known that it

contains the fundamental meanings of a great number of words not only in Kiswaheli & Kinika, Kisamba etc. but even in the Caffre-language. It was with the profoundest interest that I traced the various forms & particles of speech which elucidated what had still remained dark & unaccountable to us in the other dialects. I fully believe that the language spoken to the West of the lake Niasa holds the same central position in the great S.A. family of languages as the people who occupy that part of the Continent do in a geographical point of view – for no sooner had I got an insight into it, than the dialect with which I had previously made myself more or less acquainted, appeared to me rather as so many rays of one & the same light.

My study of the Kiniassa (or Kinia'sa) was to me such a continued intellectual feast, that days & weeks fled so quickly as I never remembered they had done before, & it was with great reluctance that I tore myself from it when the time had arrived when we had to get ready for our voyage to Aden. The only trouble we had experienced in connection with the Masai at our Station was of a peculiar & very instructive nature: On the 25th of July Manikemba, one of the principal men of the other division of the Rabbai tribe came accompanied by our chief to ask me for a black cow – what for? For a "sadaka" (propitiatory sacrifice) to chase off the Masai, or at least –if they should come again – to render them an easy prey to the Wanika "so that", as Manikemba expressed himself, "they might seize them with their hands & kill them". In my reply I first expressed my grief & sorrow to our chief, that he, who of all Wanika had heard most of the Gospel could still support such a petition. What an appalling fact that after 9 years of labour the Missionary in E.A. is still asked by the heathens around him for the means of doing their own works of darkness & superstition!? You must not wonder then my dear Sir – that to me such a state of things goes to say: Missionaries have been sent to a country, in which this very position prevented the Natives from understanding, believing & appreciating their object. The affair with the "black cow" which, before it was slaughtered, was to be led along the western boundaries, was at length settled by declaring myself only willing to give them our usual present in consideration of our soon leaving them for a time. But though I warned them of the great sin they would make themselves guilty of if after all they would use our money for making their "sadaka", I of course could not actually prevent that. The hard hearts of the Wanika were by no means broken by the calamity brought on them by the Masai – nor can I believe that the Masai will ever be the cause of such a happy effort – instruments of a far cleverer kind will be necessary, as the Missionary history of the S. & W. of Africa will testify. Not long before we left I received a letter from Dr. Krapf in which he sent a salutation to our chief – but when he received it, he took not the slightest notice – neither asking after his health or if he should ever see him again - & he had been the principal man of the "meeting in Rabbai Mpia" & been given more presents than any other Wanika. ---

On the 18th of Sept. we left Kisuludini for Mombas in order to prepare ourselves for our little voyage. Here also, while engaged in hiring a vessel I again experienced what a poor & helpless stranger the European still is in E.A. whenever he is removed from the eye of the British Consul. There was a large Arab Bugalow lying in the harbour belonging to a Native of Bushir in the Persian Gulf who at the same time was the captain. About it I was first told, as it seemed, impartially, that most of the sailors had run away from the captain, he being a bad man, & that he also had lost an anchor & sold his sails. I at first listened to these stories chiefly on the ground that the captain was said to belong

to the Arab tribe, called Sur, to whom I did not like to trust myself & my wife & therefore agreed for a passage in a vessel which belonged to the Governor of Mombas, though the cabin was rather narrow & so low that I could not stand upright in it, the choice being only between it & the Sur's vessel. In the mean time I had got more acquainted with the person & the circumstances of the Captain, whose name was Abdallah, & began to suspect that the representations made about him by the Mombasians were all owing partly to national jealousy & partly to selfishness. At the same time I learnt that his vessel was to sail sooner than that of the Governor who, moreover, had given me permission to go in which vessel I liked best. Being satisfied as to the person of Abdallah, his sailors, sails & anchors, & the cabin of his vessel being far superior to that of the Governor's, I changed my agreement with the latter in favour of the former. – Soon were my suspicions now corroborated by the rage this caused in Tangai the Governor. He was not ashamed – nor was the Custom master, being a Banian who, being naturally a British Subject, ought to have known better – of going so far in their endeavours to intimidate me, as to say – Abdallah would kill us for the sake of a "robo" (a quarter-dollar). When I at last also got angry & threatened him with reporting his conduct to the English Consul, you should have heard with what contempt he pronounced the name of his title – "Balos-" "Balos-" as if he had said ,what do I care about him? He also in his fury called me a liar, but I answered him no more a single word. When he had convinced himself that I could not be terrified from going in the Bushire-Bugalow he still tried by the most contemptible means to prevent that vessel from sailing – but to this I remained perfectly quiet.- How glad we were, when on the morning of the 3rd October (not the first, as I erroneously stated in my last) we at last moved out on the free Ocean & breathed its free air, where the Governor of Mombas could no more vex us, I will not describe. But already on the next morning, the 4th of Oct., our goodly Arab Bungalow was helplessly laid on one side on a rock about 6 or 7 miles from the coast & in the neighbourhood of the Oza river. The particulars of this disaster you will find in a letter written by Mrs. Rebmann to her sister which I enclose in mine, & request you, after reading, to post it. It almost looked as if our shipwreck had been compassed by bribery – but the risk of life in connection with it is too great to entertain the thought for a moment. Suspicion could possibly rest only on the oarsman, & not on the Captain, who with his Bugalow lost about 1000 dollars & did all he could to save our lives & of our property, at least our money.

In the harbour of Maralla too, we had a narrow escape of our lives – when one day we were about going on shore, & I just was in the act of lifting down Mrs. Rebmann from the vessel into the boat – it was tossed away under my feet, so that for about a minute I hung, with one arm on the edge of the ship, while in the other I held my wife – if the boat had not returned immediately, we might have sunk together into the deep below.

But notwithstanding all these perils, vexations & privations – we are perfectly willing to go back to E.A. to do what we can for the present – leaving the rest to Him who maketh all things work together for good to them that love Him –

Commending ourselves to your sympathy

& prayer, I remain, dear Sir,
Yours respectfully
J. Rebmann

P.S: Cairo, Dec. 1, 1855

To the Financial Secretary

Dear Sir –

I beg to inform you that at Aden I drew two bills of money on you – the one dated Nov. 7 to the order of W.f.W. Graham Esq. with the sum of L40 (fourty pounds), & the other dated Nov. 9 to the order of J. Seater Esq. with the sum of L50 (fifty pounds).

I had some difficulty at Aden in getting the money necessary for our passage to Suez, because Brigadier Coghlan has never been authorized, as Captain Haynes since the Aden Mission had been, to supply us with money. The Brigadier however was very friendly with me, & would have gladly given me the money in his private character if he had had it at hand, but officially, he said, he could not do so without my having a document. –

I also have to inform you of another sum L50 (fifty Pounds), which I drew in Cairo, dated Nov. 23 – to the order of Messrs Tod, Rathbone + Co. The Account of the half year ending 30th Sept. I sent home in my last.

I am Sir yours respectfully

J. Rebmann