

AFRICAN AFFAIRS.

LETTERS FROM A NELSONIAN.

(Continued from Yesterday).

In view of the state of social and political affairs in Africa, the appended extracts from letters written by Mr W. W. Anderson to his father, Mr W. B. Anderson, of Riwaka, on his way from the Transvaal to England, should be read with much interest:—

“Hotel de la Grande Bretagne, Cairo, 26th Nov., 1898. . . . After leaving Dar-es-Salaam we came in sight of the island of Zanzibar. It is a coral island and covered luxuriantly with tropical vegetation—plenty of trees and shrubs of kinds that I have not seen before except at Dar-es-Salaam, cocoanut palms, mangoes, orange, lemon, cloves, pine-apple, dates, bananas, etc., etc. The town of Zanzibar lies very open to the sea. We anchored about half a mile from the beach in company with seven or eight war-ships—English, German, Italian, and the masts of the sunken warship “Glasgow” of the Sultan of Zanzibar sticking up out of the water close at hand. At the bombardment this boat is said to have fired one shot only before being disposed of. Also, the Sultan's warship “Nyanza,” which he receiv-

ed in place of the one destroyed by the British.

“The damage done to the town of Zanzibar by the bombardment was not very extensive, it having been chiefly concentrated on the Sultan's palace which was demolished and is now being re-built, but buildings here would be very easily destroyed from the nature of the material of which they are built, chiefly timber and soft sandy coral stone. Of course the bulk of the passengers went ashore as soon as possible. I went along with several other fellows and spent the afternoon wandering through the curious, narrow, irregular, streets visiting curiosity shops kept by Indians and Arabs, the market-place, refreshment places of course, and watching the street life. Where everything is so strange I find it difficult to describe, but I will just mention a few features that strike one. There are very few horses here, I only saw three or four—a white one with part of its tail dyed red. I am told that the horses belong only to the Sultan and rich people,—Arabs and others. All that I saw were very good ones (I had not seen the beautiful Arab and Syrian horses at Cairo then). All the cattle that I saw were of that peculiar Eastern description that one only sees in Zoological gardens and menageries in England, with humps on the shoulders—they use them in the streets.

“In the busy streets—some not more than 12 or 14ft wide (perhaps less)—one picks one's way past a stream of various

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descriptions of coloured people, but seldom a European. The Indians are always very keen tradespeople, but the Arabs (Moslems) are often sulky, evidently hating Europeans. One needs to know the price of things here or you are cheated right and left. One has to beat down the price for everything. In our case an Indian came down from £2 10s to £2 7s 6d, and then at one drop to 30s, at which price I bought the article—dear no doubt at the money.

“Passing near the English mission church I was fortunate in making acquaintance with a clergyman, a Mr Key, who showed me through the mission church, hospital, printing establishment, etc. and then through the town, and gave me information about Zanzibar. He said that there were about 20,000 slaves here, but a law has been passed by the British Government that they may become free by applying to the British authorities, and the owners are compensated to a certain extent, but not nearly to the value of the slave, the funds coming entirely from the Zanzibar revenue, which he (Mr Key) did not consider was fair, and it certainly does not seem so. We saw many of the slaves, of which a very large proportion are girls, carrying small quantities of coral stone for the building of the new palace—they would be hired from their owners for the purpose. They looked contented enough, and he said that they were probably as well off as if they were free. The Arabs, according to this gentleman, who from his position one would not expect to find biassed in their favour, are not so bad as they are painted, and, on my observing that no doubt they had their good points he said “Yes,” he thought “they had more good points than bad ones.” This polite clergyman conducted me back to the beach, where in passing we saw a cage of a newly-caught lioness, and then, amidst an onslaught of crowds of mad, screaming, Swahali boatmen, we took a boat and returned to the ship. I did not go ashore again that night, and I regretted that I had not done so next morning when I heard that the previous evening the Sultan had arrived with his body-guard, a company of Soudanese, and 35 of his veiled ladies. I was much disappointed at having missed the opportunity of seeing them. We passed the Sultan’s brother when we were with Mr Key in the afternoon and he saluted very civilly. I was agreeably impressed by the civil and respectful manner in which the Mohammedans greeted the English clergyman. My inaccurate information had led me to expect a curse or an ejaculation of “Christian dog!” than any civility. This surface politeness probably means nothing. I cannot observe anything, but under the surface there does not appear to be much in common; any community of feeling between the Mohammedans and Christians.”

(To be Concluded in our Next.)