

Luabo, W. C. Africa
Congo Free State
April, 17, 1895

Dear Sister:—

We have had much to disturb us, much to annoy us and much to make us happy since last I wrote you: How shall I tell it all to you in the short time allotted to us in our busy sphere? Shortly after writing you Mrs. Sheppard's baby died: it was sick only a few days and at no time did we consider it dangerously sick; but one night, about nine o'clock it simply stopped breathing, much to the surprise and grief of all. The little time it was with us it had endeared itself to each one.

We felt lonesome after that, a baby dies at home and is missed, but not so much as this baby who had come to us out here so far away from home.

Then came the report of an Elephant which had entered the banana plantation of our neighbor over the river and had done much damage. This brought to the surface the fact that not many years ago plenty of Elephants roamed around here, perhaps they mean to return, think of what damage they would do us; in one night they would destroy all of our fences beside giving us a scare.

Then the driver ants; what pests they are! One night, not long ago they drove Mr. Sheppard and family out of their house. Just think of it: Ants from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch long each one having a pair of pinchers fastened on to its head capable of taking a small piece of flesh out of ones leg or arm or any other part of the body upon which it happens to ~~fall~~; then think of millions upon millions of them pouring into your house in one or two streams from an inch to four inches wide; And this in the night time; One does not stay to fight them, one "gets up and gets" to use a slang phrase - They go all through the house carrying off every bit of grease that can be found and every insect leaving the house the next morning much cleaner than they found it. They attack and kill, snakes, and large animals - Even the elephant is so annoyed by their getting into his trunk that he lashes his trunk against a tree in his agony until the blood streams from his nostrils. Then snakes. When first we came here we thought we were free from snakes, but this last year has dispelled all that, snakes from two to six feet long have entered our houses and almost taken possession. We have almost picked them up for skins, and almost put our feet on them at other times.

One day I saw one in our pigeon cot and quickly getting my gun I shot him with one shot, cut him in two, about two feet from the end of his tail and strange as it may seem the rest of him, over four feet, went crawling off towards the woods, I put another charge of shot into him and finally killed him with a stick, he measured over six feet.

Another time we tore up part of our out house so as to dislodge one of these "six footers". One night, a while before retiring, I went into the pantry for a glass to get a drink of water and there hanging down from a shelf was about 3 feet of snake, the rest of him hidden among the dishes, I hastily procured a stick and gave him a whack but he got away.

Then the Leopards; they scare us once in a while, they enter the village of the Baskiti and carry off a goat every once in a while. Our little Polly tells of one which came to her village one evening as the sun was setting and carried off a woman and her child that she was nursing. I saw a man at our station the other day with a scar over his forehead and top of his head at least six inches long. Once his hand showed marks of a terrible nature - when questioned he said, "Long ago when

As was a child, he was asleep in his house with
 his father when a leopard came in and
 grabbed him out of his bed and made for the
 woods, his father hearing the cry of his child
 started in pursuit and rescued him, but
 he was sorely wounded, and thought he
 would die. You can imagine how we
 felt when we knew the leopards were around
 and how much more put out we were
 when one Saturday night a leopard came
 to our station, climbed up on top of Mr.
 Sheppard's house and started hissing by
 its heavy walk on the roof. The next morn-
 -ing we all saw its tracks all over the
 yard, and the points of its claws on the
 soft earth. You can imagine that
 we fastened the doors more closely than
 ever, and my wife made me nail ^{the}
 slats on our glassless window - Our gun
 was loaded every night in readiness
 for the return of the monster cat. Every
 noise at night was construed into a
 leopard's walk or cry. And altogether
 it was an unpleasant feeling, but
 out here one grows accustomed to
 danger and it was not many days
 after its visit when it was almost forgotten.

Yes, we grew so unconcerned as to neglect
 putting the gun at the head of the bed, ^{and}
 one night even forgot to fasten the door, left
 it on a crack. The other night as we were
 peacefully sleeping, I was suddenly awar-
 -ened by an unusual noise. I heard a
 noise like that made by a large dog lap-
 -ping water. Our water pail full of water stood
 by the wash stand, alongside of the door lead-
 -ing out into the dining-room and the
 sound came from there. Could a leopard
^{have} come in and was he now grenching his
[^] thirst before proceeding to devour us? Our
 night light of palm oil, had grown very
 dim, and a table stood between me and
 the water pail so I could not see. My gun was
 out in the dining-room and to get it I would
 have to pass right by the leopard, well here
 was a fix, I could still hear the lap, lap,
 lap. So quietly raising up I reached for
 the box of matches and softly lit one ^{and}
 waited until it should flame up, was
 ever a match so long in making a flame?
 And just as it began to grow light, the
 match went out; I could still hear the
 leopard drinking away and so I proceed-
 ed to light another match, this one went all

and as the light diffused itself throughout the room I cautiously arose and looked over the table — the leopard was not there. — Was he behind, or under the bed, was he preparing to spring from some dark corner, think of his claws clanking one's neck! but no, I could still hear the lap, lap-lap — and yet no animal was to be seen. Some snake has got into the pail I thought. So I arose and went carefully across the room, and cautiously looked into the pail and what do you suppose was there? — A large Congo rat, and his frantic efforts to get out of the pail as he swam, around and around, made the noise so much resembling the drinking of a dog. Well we learned a lesson. And now every night we look to the doors and windows and our gun stands loaded, at the head of the bed. Monkeys disport themselves in the woods bounding our station, but they are comparatively harmless —

I had a present the other day of a fine skin of the Ant-eater, (*Manis tetradactyla*) with its scaly armor so impenetrable that a bullet from a revolver will not injure it

As to our work here, God has graciously granted us to see the fruits of our labors and during the past two months thirty five have united with the Church on profession of their faith. Our first Communion was an eventful day and one to be remembered.

We spoke to them, also, of the service of giving. And the first Sunday they gave ten percent of their wages, voluntarily.

We have every reason for thinking that they are sincere, although there are slips once in a while; they repent of wrong grieves and hasten to God for pardon.

The Baskets are still holding off: three, so far have joined the Church: the others being Babuts.

We have heard one tradition that strongly resembles a Bible story, and only one, and that is to this effect. Years & years ago, a Lusenga - (Lusenga means King, but in the sense that Pharaoh meant King of Egypt) after having searched out the land, was desirous of knowing what was above, in the sky. And so he ordered long and strong sticks to be put in the ground and to these other long ones to be spliced - and when a great height was reached he sent three men up to investigate but the stick broke and many were killed, and so he gave up the undertaking.

May 8th 1895

Dear Fannie:-

You see almost a month has passed since this was begun, but we have had no opportunity to mail a letter for more than two months. However, we are looking for a boat this week and with it will send off over forty letters.

We have received two mails lately, but by boats that went up another river miles from here, our mail was sent over land. I am sending by this mail a long letter to Nellie, you can exchange and thus each get two letters as it were.

Your letter of Nov. 18th is at hand we were glad to learn that Maggie was so favorably situated.

We hope she will learn more and more and with it all gain that knowledge of Christ, whom to know aright is life everlasting.

Yes Fannie, you are well trained in the chore nursing, practical knowledge outweighs theoretical knowledge in more than one instance and it would be a happy day if you could put your knowledge to use in helping the heathen of Africa, when shall we look for you?

When you see Maggie Blayshaw remember us to her, why has she not answered our letters?

We are all well at present
 Yours with love
 De Witt & Malie