

A MISSION TO GELELE: VOLUME 1

And as night first glooms in the East, the view borrows fresh beauties from indistinctness. The varied tints make way for the different shades of the same colour that mark the several distances, and hardly can the eye distinguish in the offing land from sea. Broken lines of mist-rack rise amongst the trees of the basal plain, following the course of some streamlet, like a string of giant birds flushed from their roosts. The moon sleeps sweetly upon the rolling banks of foliage, and from under the shadowing trees issue weird fantastic figures, set off by the emerald light above. In the growing silence the tinkle of the two rivulets becomes an audible bass, the treble being the merry cricket and the frog praying lustily for rain, whilst the palms whisper mysterious things in their hoarse baritone. The stars shine bright, twinkling as if frost were in the air; we have eliminated the thick stratum of atmosphere that overhangs the lowlands, and behind us, in shadowy grandeur, neither blue nor brown nor pink, but with a blending of the three, and sometimes enwrapped in snowy woolpack so dense as to appear solid against the deep azure, the Pico Santa Isabel, the highest crater in the island, rises softly detached from the cirrus-flecked nocturnal sky.

Life, as an American missionary remarked, is somewhat primitive at Buena Vista, but it is not the less pleasant. An hour of work in my garden at sunrise and sunset, when the scenery is equally beautiful, hard reading during the day, and after dark a pipe and a new book of travels, this is the "*fallentis semita vitae*" [spoor of a life unseen] which makes one shudder before plunging once more into the cold and swirling waters of society—of civilization.

— **Burton1864:Mission.** Buena Vista was the elevated retreat on Fernando Po where Burton's well-being was restored.

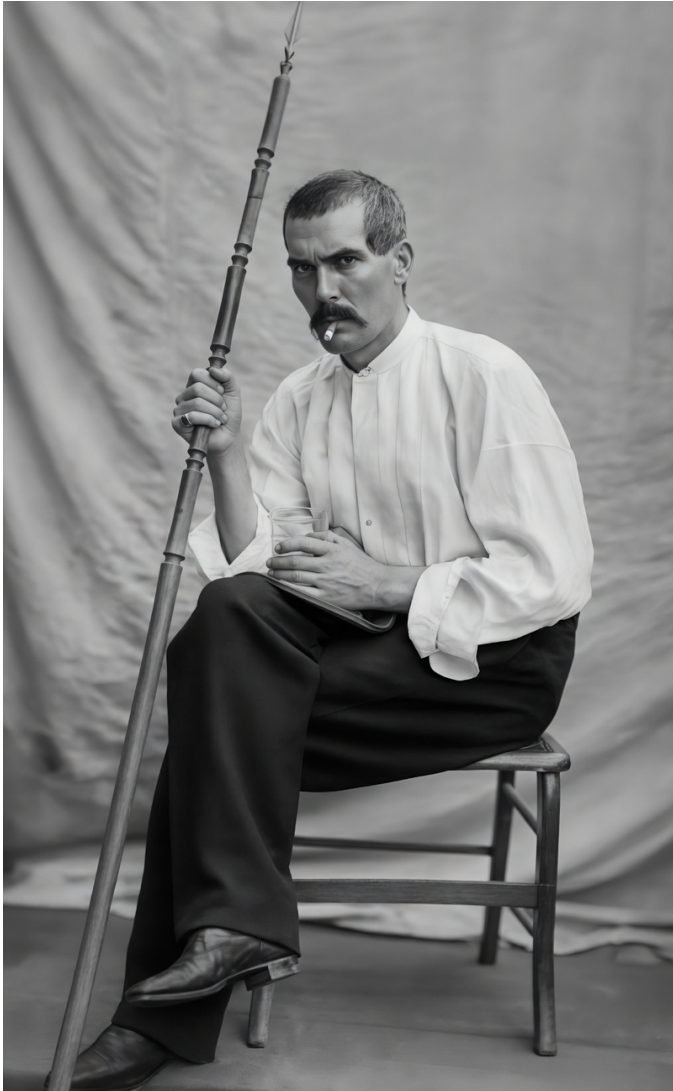


Figure 1: Richard Burton in West Africa, circa 1862. Restored.

A MISSION TO GELELE, KING OF DAHOME.

Richard Francis Burton

A Facsimile of the First Edition of 1864

Volume 1



Edited by Gavan Tredoux



burtoniana

Editorial matter, preface and composition
© Gavan Tredoux, Wednesday 29th April, 2026: 13:50.

ISBN: 978-1-963225-35-8

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