

Letter to John Washington, 4, 22 December 1863

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

Murchison's Cataracts 4 Dec^r

1863

Dear Admiral Washington

The despatch containing our recal dated 2 February reached me on the 2nd July when it was quite impossible to take the Pioneer down to the sea. So after sending off all the principal members of the Expedition I proceeded to improve the intervening time between that & next flood in Dec^r by trying to settle the question whether a large river flows into the Lake in the North and also verify the opinion that nearly all the slaves that go to Zanzibar Quillsa - Iboe - & Mozambique come from the Lake district. Very unfortunately we lost a boat otherwise of no great value when nearly past the falls so our plan of sailing round the Eastern shore and North end had to be given up. and we made away for the N.W. on foot intending to go to the Latitude of the Lake but west of the Mazite or zulus who have depopulated the Northern shores. but a range of mountains about 6000 feet above the sea - proved a barrier by the people declaring that no population existed on the other side - (It is the Masari country - a high table land called Déza.) - Travelling along a beautiful valley at its Eastern base we came out at the heel of Lake Nyassa - West N. W again till we came to a stockade, attacked by other zulus or pretended zulus than those we formerly met in the North, only the day before. We saw the dead bodies of the conileatants and to avoid collision went now away N.E. till we came to the Lake and went along its shores to Lat. 12° 55' S. where we found a couple of arabs busily transporting slaves across, and building a new dhow to replace one which had been wrecked. These men said that they had 1500 souls in their village and we saw tens of thousands in the vicinity who had fled thither for protection We saw the same man on our last visit but then

[0002]

They had very few people. Every disturbance benefits the slave trader. a boy costs one fathom of calico or say one shilling - a girl two - at this point all the slaves from Mozambique, Iboe, Quillsa Arid and Zanzibar cross the Lake. a few traders only go down, and for cheapness cross at the outlet of The Shire. some strike west from that point but here at Kutakula bay (12° 55 ') which is formed by a sandy spit running out & protecting from the East wind, is the great slave route to each of the places named. Curiously enough the slave trade is greatly dependant on that in ivory - the slaves cost little but their food costs a great deal. But they carry the ivory, and that makes the joint trade profitable. I knew this of old but Captain Wilson of the Gorgon has lately discovered it, and mentions it in his last "slave trade report" It was the knowledge that I was working towards and ruining the slave trade of Mozambique and Iboe by buying up the ivory that made the Portuguese gain all their destructive power. I trust that operations in the interior under a more able leader will not be lost sight of. These will do more to stop the slave trade than all the cruisers, and without them I see no hope of the Portuguese giving up slaving. the sight of the new dhow gave me a hint which I may mention. She was 50 feet by 12 and five deep. I would never think of carrying more than the engine & boilers past cataracts like ours. One could build a hull more easily. At the port of the lake there are many trees 60 feet without a branch. & 3 feet in diameter -

We now went due West on the great slave route to the Babisa. Ka[ta]nga and Cazembe -po- say 90 or 100 miles. Then turned up to the N. N. W. but before we had gone far, our time was expired We had ascertained that the watershed was clearly to the West. after crossing the branches of the Loangwa on the Lake - we had the Loangwa of the Maraui which enters Zambese at Zumbo in front [0003]

We were on a level plateau 3440 feet above the sea in Lat. 12° 46' S. a rivulet called Motala or Motawa flows N.N.W into Lake Bemba which is said to be the source of the Loapula. This flows Westwards and forms two lakes Moero or Mofue Mofue then passes the town of Cazemba and is lost in Tanganyika. these were the reports

we heard and though Bemba was said to be about ten days distant, I was afraid to speculate on a late rise of the river which I now find I should have been safe to do. In view of Earl Russells explicit order not to undertake any long journey Our European food was sepended. Hindrances were thrown in our way as we were going to the part whence a great deal of ivory is drawn, and dysentery came back on us in force. But all reports agreed that no large river flows into Lake Nyassa.[in the North] Two small ones do - this agrees with the general watershed; and the numbers of running streams whose mouths must be covered with reeds as we did not see them from the boat in our first visit - but had to cross now in our march, had convinced me that a large river was not needed to account for the perennial flow of the Shire. Nearly all the travelled natives and the Arabs maintained that Loapula or Luapula flows into Tanganyika. Is there an opening in the West of that Lake to discharge its waters by Kasai into the Congo East of where I crossed the latter river? We returned and reaching the ship on the 31st Oct^r found to our great joy all well and all had enjoyed excellent health without either medicine or doctors! They had generally been employed and work is the best preventative for fever. I took the steward with me because Meller thought he ought to be invalided, and as usual had told him so - the little fellow walked like a Briton - had only a touch of fever for one [0004] and came back pretty well knocked up but in excellent health. We were on our metal to be back in time for the very earliest rise and went 660 geographical miles in 55 travelling days – on an average 12 miles a day.

22^d Dec^r the flood is very late this year. I hear from Bishop Tozer that he has determined to leave the country as early in the coming year as possible. He selected the top of an uninhabited mountain - Moremibala at the mouth of the Shire for his residence. It is a detached mass. The land all around except on the North being flat. all the clouds collect there and the missionaries have to rush into their huts to fires or get wet to the skin in a few minutes. They knuckle down to the Portuguese in everything and are about as useless a set as can be concieved. the first

party never attempted to instruct the natives in consequence of a conscientious scruple of the late bishop.the second party never went near any population and now run away.

Twenty five boys whom we liberated & gave to Bishop Mackenzie were very unwillingly recieved by Bishop Tozer from the remaining men of the first party. Without them not a native would have been near the mission He lately sent six of them up to Chibisa's with written instructions to the man in charge "On no account to take them to the Pioneer" to which he himself was coming, and it is reported that the bishop told a Portuguese official that if the Portuguese demanded the remainder he would deliver them up. and this though he knows that I have volunteered to be at the expense of forwarding them to the care M^r Waller would not at the Bishop's bidding abandon certain poor women and [0005]

children who were attached to the mission by Bishop Mackenzie - and recieved his dismissal from the mission. I had offered to arrange with an honorable Portuguese to feed them till they should raise a crop, but the bishop who is a mere nobody in the hands of Rev D^r Steere (once a lawyer) was much offended with Waller for feeding them at my expense during my absence. In this most incompetent mission there are two, Mess^{rs} Allington & Drayton, who disapprove of the Bishops deeds, but Steere's word is law. It is the first protestant mission which in modern times has been abandoned that from sheer cowardice. Not one European died where I put them from disease contracted there. Burrup was borne thither in a dying state from the swamps and others stuck to the swamps in spite of every remonstrance. Now slaving goes on more briskly than ever. Marianno a rebel almost half way down the Shire is dead and his people are carrying away hundreds weekly of those he enslaved. It is done now apparantly in bravado. Thenew bishop'scringing policy & our recall seem to give new life to the slavers.

In reference to a promise to send out fresh instructions to the Portuguese officials to render us every assistance, which was

made in answer to Lord Russellsremon-
strance to the authorities at Lisbon, we have
only a fresh imposition in the shape of a
tax for residence at Quillimane by D^r
Kirk's party. It amounted to between £7 &
£8 which of course I must pay. The duty
of 4 pence per pound weight on calico paid
by Bishop Mackenzie Tozer seems to say
[0006]

We Portuguese mean to seal up the country
more closely than ever.

I never intended to make use of this river
after getting the steamer on the Lake. I only
thought as we had discovered this opening
we ought to make use of it to get up there,
and then send out ivory by the Rovuma
among the eight months when it is navigable.
I regret not being allowed to finish what
I had begun, but dont wonder at being recalled
after losing so much time by Hardisty's negligence.
By the way, Rae took the Pioneer's[air] pump all
down and found the lower valve all burned.
A large rent in it explained why she would not
as they say "take her water." and a stone the
size of a marble had been in the bottom ever
since we were up here before[or in Rovuma] after M^r
put on Roses at the Kongone neither stones
nor sand could enter. the foot valve was
also put right, and she now works beautifully
the wearing of the inside of the air pump was
a mistake in Hardisty's way of measuring
it. Rae had begun to make an apparatus
to bore it out afresh, when he could detect no
wearing. but the valves were out of repair as
I mentioned above. Rae suspects that the
boilers are a little burned, but Hardisty never
reported anything to me about it. If not
burned the engines are as good as ever they
were, and I trust she will yet do good service.

The expenses incurred in getting D^r Kirks
party away have been very considerable.
For sustanance at Quillimane alone we
have to pay £30- Meller's expenses too
will be heavy. Cattle from QuillimaneSuppua
Senna, and sheep & goats from Tette,
with rice and grain from the Zambesi,
make this the most expensive year
[0007]

we have passed. I shall send all the particulars as soon as I receive all the bills. In addition we have a Johanna crew at the same rate as Kroomen. I sent to the Cape for £150 and hear from Col^d Nunes' nephew that this sum was lost on Quillimane bar by a boat being upset [(no lives lost)] but no official notice has yet reached me. This supply failing us, and all my private money being expended, I thought it well to avoid the 25 per cent interest which the Portuguese charge on debts, and sent by D^r Meller a bill to colonel Nunes for £150 with the request that he would pay off the expenses incurred by D^r Kirk. Meller &c and the costs of sheep goats cattle & rice. He is one of the only two honorable men in the country and I knew of some of the bills being [already] liquidated. "The Bill was dated 14 July 1863. Amount £150 for - current Expenses - at Par. I sent a letter of advise on 14 July last. the name is " Colonel Galdino José Nunes of Quillimane." This is an additional notice in case the other with certain letters sent by Meller may have been lost in the upsetting of a canoe. I have to report myself not murdered according to a Portuguese report lately industriously circulated. I did see some zulus and they gave chase but on my [0008] turning back a few paces and asking what they wanted they instantly vanished in the wood in which we were. The interior tribes who have not been in the slave trade are all mild and cowardly. And I hope you will never lose sight of working out the slave trade by operations inland. They are absolutely necessary to render effective the labours of the cruisers.

The Lady Nyassa is as ready to go as the Pioneer if the water should rise. The flood cannot be far off now. Rae proposed to take her down in September last but changed his mind again & remained here. I thank you for the charts of the Rovuma. and I shall endeavour to take soundings, not on the bar, for there is none, but opposite the mouth. the

only thing like a bar is at half ebb & up to the
time the tide turns. When the water rushing
out of the river falls from three or four
fathoms into nineteen fathoms. Thus

you are supposed to be
looking sideways at
this. the water tumbling
into the deep just at
the mouth forms a
jobble which might swamp
a boat but no sooner does the flow begin
then all is smooth. I believe that the
Rovuma may be navigable for a vessel
of light draft eight of nine months a
year.

I am sorry to have to report the death
of Abraham Pearce Q.M.^r at Quillimane
on 4th June last. He had an epileptic fit &
became insane on going down the Quillimane
river. Then became calm & another attack at the
village on the second night ended in coma & death
He was of little use but we could not get rid of him
before I am most sincerely yours

David Livingstone