

## Letter to [Joseph B. Braithwaite], 24 October 1859

*Livingstone, David, 1813-1873*

Published by Livingstone Online ([livingstoneonline.org](http://livingstoneonline.org))

[0001]

River Shire 24<sup>th</sup> Oct<sup>r</sup>

1859

~~Private~~

~~My Dear Friend~~[[ J. B. Braithwaite]]

We have traced this river up to its point of emergence from the hitherto ~~undiscovered~~[unexplored] Lake Nyassa and have thus made an opening into a cotton producing country superior to the American. for here there are no frosts to endanger or cut off the crops and instead of the never ending toil necessary to raise a foreign plant on that soil one sowing here serves for three years crops even though the plants are burned off. I have alway said that the fine country for the production of raw material for our manufactures and which I thought and still ~~do~~ think destined to free us from the stain of dependence on slave labour, is situated North of 14° or 15° of south Latitude and here we have entered it in a quarter of which we never dreamed. ~~Aand in consequences of hindrances but little creditable to ship builders & others. We havethis~~[The] river Shire[is] better adapted for steam navigation than even the Zambesi. One hundred miles without any obstacle. then 33 miles of cataracts past which a common road could easily be made. Above this the Shire is placed again right into the Lake Nyassa in 14° 25 S. Lat. the land above the cataracts ~~has~~ is arranged in three terraces. the lowest, ~~or valley~~[or valley] of the Shire is 1200 feet high and exactly like ~~the~~[that of the] Nile at Cairo. a second terrace

East of it is over 2000 ft and a third 3000 ft. All are well supplied with running rills of deliciously cool water You will percieve that we have here changes of climate within a few miles of each other. On the third terrace rises the Mount Zomba with a base some 20 miles in diameter and from 7000 to 8000 feet in altitude. On the other terraces it was delightfully cool in the hottest period of the yearon Zomba we found it cold. One of the greatest benefits our expedition will confer is the cure of fever even in the lowlands without [0003]

without[(in general)] loss of strength in the patient. We use quinine in the cure but as a preventative it is a farce ~~to use quinine wine, only good to fill the pockets of the selfinterested.~~ On all the terraces cotton is now grown very extensively. the people are great cultivators and have no cattle. the Portuguese say that they are of quick apprehension even in a state of slavery We found that their suspicions that we might after all turn out to be a marauding party were most effectually allayed by frankly telling them that we came to mark the paths for our countrymen to come and buy their cotton.

Lake Shirwa or as its proper name is, Tamandua is ninety miles long. but no one could tell us where the head of Nyassa or Nyinyesi lay It had a heavy swell on it though there was no wind and it never varies so far as we could see in height [though it gives off constantly the Shire which may be called 80 to 150 yards wide with a two fathom channel.]

[0004] and a two & a half knot current. Even [^][the] Shire never varies more than from 2 to 3 feet from the wet to the dry season The two Lakes lie parallel with the East coast and all the trade from the Interior must cross the Shire where it comes out of Nyassa then go

along the partition between the Lakes  
without embarking on either. We met  
an East coast slaving party there  
A more blackguard looking lot I never  
saw. they had an immense number  
of slaves and Elephants tusks with  
them. We bought some fine pieces  
of malachite from them. On learning  
that we were English they made off  
probably with the same opinion of us  
as we had of them

Confidential We have submitted a plan  
of an English station to H M. Government It would cut off the slave & other trade from  
Mosambique and several other ports. I have  
written M<sup>r</sup> Venn recommending the church  
missionary society to occupy this most  
desirable field. but we must be still  
lest the Portuguese smell out our intentions[...] [I want a small steamer on the Nyassa. Lawful  
commerce would cut out that in slaves & develop the Cotton Trade.  
D. Livingstone.]

I enclose a letter for the Times again. It may be sent if the other  
was noticed. My love to all the friends at Kendal

[we] could not explore Nyasa. It seemed about 8 or ten miles broad  
[at this] end. Lairds vessel was in a sinking state. Funnel Furnace  
[0005]  
Deck & Bottom went done simultaneously - £1200 for 12 months wear  
was fairish without any whine of "doing it for the good of the cause"