

Letter to Unknown, 12 February 1871

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

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[0001]

12: February 1871.

Bambarre: Manyuema:

(Useful to Finlay - for the geographical data) a few passages marked in the margin may be had.)

P:S: I cut this off the end of a packet of quinine from Kirk, the first I have had for years, to say that I am sorry to be in a manner compelled to speak rather disparagingly of the opinions of my - Predecessors in exploration but the discovery of the sources of the Nile was asserted so positively and withal so honestly that in making a similar claim some explanation is

[0002]

is necessary. Poor Speke's grand mistake was, the eager pursuit of a foregone conclusion. When he discovered the Victoria Nyanza or Okara he at once leaped to the conclusion that therein lay the sources of the river of Egypt. "20,000 square miles of water" confused by sheer immensity. He did not know that according to intelligent suaheli, who have lived many years

East of Okara that Lake
Barings, Lake Kavirondo,
and Lake Naibash and Lake
Okara have been run into
one huge Victoria Lake.

He

[0003]

He seems never to have
allowed a doubt to
arise in his mind as
to the correctness of his
first conclusion No
sooner however did he
and Grant turn their faces
to their Nyanza to prove
it true than they turned
their backs on the sources
of the Nile which are 500
miles further up the Great
Nile Valley than the most
southern point of the
Victoria Lake. When they
saw that the little river
that issues out of it though
termed the White Nile:
would not account for
that great River stream
instead

[0004]

instead of conjecturing
"a back water" to eke it
out but for devotion to
the foregone conclusion
they would have come
westward into the trough
of the Great Valley to find
out what did account
for the river of Egypt
and there not to mention
Albert Nyanza or lower
Tanganyika the upper
part of which, Speke
had already partici-
pated in discovering
he would have found
Webb's Lualaba not
80 or 90 yards broad.

(I speak from memory:)

but never less than from

2000

[0005]

2000 to 4000 yards -
sometimes 8000 yards
wide and always deep.
And again still further
West and still in the -
Great Valley Bartle Frere's
and Young's Lualabas
of similar large proportions
The true head waters of
the Nile telling of a copious
supply of water for the
inundations and for
the enormous evaporation
of a river in Latitude
and Longitude from the
sources to the sea of about
three thousand miles I
sympathize with all real
explorers & admire the
splendid achievements
of Speke, Grant and Baker
the

[0006]

the last named came
further up the Great
valley than any other in
modern times, but turned
when about seven hundred
miles short of the sources
the second Egyptian ex-
pedition under D^r Arnauld
and Sabatier turned when
a round thousand miles
short of the same point
no one awakens my
admiration more than
the Dutch Lady explorer.
She had provided with
such wise foresight a
steamer with means of
both land and water
exploration and proceeded
so far in spite of the
severest domestic - affliction

[0007]

affliction, the loss of
her two Aunts by fever
persevering so nobly
until she was assured
that Speke and Grant
had already found

in the Victoria Nyanza
the sources she sought
that but for being foiled
by an honest enough state-
ment she must inevitably
by boat or on land have
discovered the caput Nile I cannot concieve of a
lady of her indomitable
courage turning short of
Banguelo. We great
he donkeys say exploration
was not becoming her sex
Considering [that] some 1600 years
have elapsed since former
or
[0008]
or ancient travellers
came here and Kings, Emperors
philosophers. All the great
minds of antiquity longed
in vain to know the fountains
whence flow'd the famous
river. Exploration does
not seem to have been
very becoming the other
sex either. I know -
nothing about her save
what has appeared in
the papers:

(signed:) David Livingstone: