

Letter to John Washington, 10 November 1859

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)
[0001]

The wine for the passage out was abundant but only three cases of 2 dozen each were the supply for the Expedition afterwards. We had all the Pearls people on our stock & some of the "Hermes".

Private (II)

Kongone Harbour 10 Nov^r

1859

My Dear Captain Washington

We recieved our first mail since leaving England eight days ago, and in it your kind favours of 5th July, 5 Dec^r 5th Nov^r 6 Dec^r /58 4 & 5 Jan^y /59 and I return my sincere and hearty thanks for these tokens of your kind remembrance. I have replied to M^r Lairds assertions in a letter accompanying this; and will add in this that the letter copied was addressed to you but I have not made use of your name in the matter. [The island at his village is called Dakanamoio Lat 16° 2' S. Long 35° 1' E.]

When we returned from Nyassa to Chibisa's M^r C. Livingstone had to make Magnetical Observations there. As the launch was unfit to go up to Tette, M^r Rae made her a new funnel from copper plates supplied by H. M. S. Persian, then with D^r Kirk marched overland to Tette for the materials to patch up the bottom on this beach. I waited till the observations were made, then descended Shire to its confluence with the Zambesi. Rowe the stoker and Hutchins our seaman went in the whaler thence up to Senna & brought down our long longed for mail. During this time we kept her dry by pumping three or four times a day, and I thought

[0002]

Then when the Kroomen got fever we put them on it - and even used

that we could with ease wait at Shupanga till Kirk & Rae returned from Tette, but the water being very low we touched the bottom twice and the sand seemed to have rubbed off the rust formed as she lay in the Shire for she became honey combed all over. Our pumps - (a common small hand pump exactly such as are used for drawing spirits!) could not keep her afloat as all the compartments leaked. I had therefore to ground her every night and the water rose up to the level outside before morning. this rubbed still more of the rust off so I had to run down from Shupanga to this, and beach her without waiting for Kirk & Rae. So here we are and we intend to make the best of our bad bargain with planks (part of the iron house) white lead & canvas.

The conduct of the steel plates we observe is this - a species of rust forms - not ordinary brown rust but on the inner side quite black & brittle, and this scales off leaving the plate quite smooth and exactly as if it had come out of the fire on rollers an hour before. These scales form both outside and inside. I tried to get a bit of the inside to enclose for you, but it crumbles into powder. [(Piece enclosed)] the scaling goes on till the plates are absolutely as thin as wafers and you can bend them backwards & forwards as you do the very thinnest of tin plates - our plates at first $1/16$ of an inch thick are honey combed through all over & when we beached her the weight on the sand burst many fresh holes
[0003]

a mixture of brandy & water instead. We got a quantity of Cape brandy & wine for the purpose but at last gave it all up. I ordered a glass of wine to each at midday on returning lately knocked up from Nyassa.

The plates were well painted both inside & out side with Peacock's patent on our voyage out. When I first saw the scaling with this clean black smooth surface left I thought the steel plates were answering well but greater experience says unless they are made thick they are not the thing for African rivers. The iron [or steel] bolts in them dont rust.

I turn now to a more pleasant subject and one in which I know you will sympathize. I am becoming every day more and more convinced that the highlands from which we have come are admirably adapted for European colonization, and that a small English colony with its religious and mercantile establishments will do more to forward the cause of African elevation than anything else. We have a high cool healthy region. C. Livingstone, Kirk & Rae never saw such a well watered tract in all their travels, and they have all seen a good deal of the world. There is no tsetse, and it is only a corner of the rich lands which I saw far to the West. the people unlike the Caffres, have no cattle except a few goats & sheep, and are great agriculturalists, cotton is now cultivated very extensively. In many parts the soil contains a good deal of salt & raises cotton of long staple almost spontaneously this trade could easily be developed by resident Europeans - and as all the slave [0004]

and other trade must cross Shire to get along the partition between the Lakes Tamándua & Nyassa, and thence diverge to Mosambique, Angoxia River & other parts, a quiet & effectual blow could be struck at a most important section of the slave market. I have no doubt but a great deal could be done by the natives themselves, but long time is required to gain their confidence and this will be done [soonest and] most effectually by a missionary & mercantile establishment. I believe we could open the way for this by a small steamer made to be unscrewed at the foot of the cataracts into pieces of 200 or 300 cwt each, & carried past in 2 scotch carts [with mules]. A few sappers & miners [assisted by natives] would make a road of 33 miles in three months. Rae who is an excellent Engineer says a steamer of this kind could be arranged without difficulty. Tod & Macgregor of Glasgow have made vessels for Australian rivers drawing 30 inches only, and they have sailed out. I would have got a vessel from M^r Tod for nothing had he not supposed that M^r Laird was making something very superior.

I must take the Makololo home in the
beginning of 1860 though I do it on foot. I wish
I knew whether the Government would coun-
tenance my plan of a road past the cataracts which
I now submit to them. I could then arrange
with the natives for the sale of a station & visit
all the chiefs on returning from Sekeletu's
I do seriously believe that an English colony
in a cotton field is the remedy for Africa
and her slave trade. D Livingstone