

Letter to John Washington, 10 November 1859

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

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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 of four times a day, and I thought

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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 out-
side 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

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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

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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 countenance 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

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".

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

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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.