

Letter to H. Bartle E. Frere, 27 November 1870

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

P.S. Nov^r 27. 1870 I have not a morsel of paper left so I take a leaf out of my cheque book to give you the latest information and materials to correct some points mentioned in the letter

West of the Sualaba the central line of drainage of the Great Nile Valley. These are two large each having the same native name Sualaba - These two unite and form a large Lake which I am fain to call Lake Lincoln. Looking back from this Lake to the sewers on the Watershed a remarkable mound gives out four fountains not more than ten miles apart. Two of these on the northern side form large rivers which again form Lake Lincoln, and then the united stream coming out thence flows I suppose into the Western arm of the Nile I have presumed to give your name to one of the fountains and a river by anticipation, for if I have any good fortune at all I shall reach them ere this reaches you Of the two fountains on the south side of the Mound one is so large a man cannot be seen on the other side. I call it after good Lord Palmerston. It is

[0002]

the course of the Seambai or Leeambye = the upper Zambesi - the last fountain gives rise to the [...] far down before it falls into the Zambesi is named Kafue - These fountains are probably the "unfathomable" fountains of the Nile" mentioned to Herodotus by the Secretary of Minerva in the City of Sais from which "half the water flowed northward to Egypt, the other "half Southward into inner Ethiopia". I heard of this remarkable spot, which if in Armenia would be the locality nearly of the Garden of Eden from the natives 200 miles on the South West - again on the South East & East 150 miles off - then on the North East 180 miles distant and here on the N.N.E. many intelligent Arabs who have visited it, and had their wonder excited as much as that of the natives give substantially the same account. The Watershed from which the fountains of the Nile do unquestionably arise and on which stand Ptolemy Mountains of the Moon, is in length 700 & 800 miles from West to East the Water collects into three lines of drainage. The Tanganyika whose majestic flow

[0003]

I marked by miles & miles of and other aquatic
vegetation for three months during my illness at

is with Lower Tanganyika discovered by Baker a River
Lake from 20 to 30 miles broad. This Sualaba is another
Lacustrine river from two to six miles or more broad
The Western Line & drainage is equally large. Ptolemy
has but two of these head waters but he probably got
information from his predecessors who enquired of men
who had visited this very region and mistakes were
natural in oral information Spekes great mistake
was the pursuit of a foregone conclusion. When he discovered
the Victoria Nyanza he at once leaped to the conclusion
that therein lay the sources, but subsequently as soon
as he and Grant looked to the Nyanza they turned
their backs on the Nile fountains Had they doubled the
correctness of their conclusion they would have come West
with the trough of the great Valley and found these mighty
Streams not 80 or 90 yards as their White Nile but from
4000 to 800 yards and always deep I felt a little thank
ful to Old Nile for so hiding his big head as to leave all
[0004]

theoretical discoverers out in the cold

Captain Singleton may have come to the Southern
end of Tanganyika - never by the north end of Msau &
there crossed the Lualaba & then gone West by &
come abreast of the Conge Salis yet undiscovered. The
Elephants tusks are eagerly collected from the interminable
forests on Manyema where they have lain till one half
rotten I saw the same thing at Lake Ngami. Defoe
may have got his story from the supercargo - he began
to understand the Gunners Charts very well & this could
not have been the Captain trying to magnify the
difficulties he speaks of deserts where exist.
He could scarcely have come through this region without
being plagued by the grass, and water is so abundant
none is ever carried by travellers - No tradition exists
of any white man coming through the are
known as "they the donkey" as they had one with them

I have now a sore longing to retire - no letters
since the date 1866 have reached me An impertinent
letter from the Supernumery Under Secretary Murray in the
[0005]

Foreign Office forbids me having any claim no matter
what services I may render He got Lord Russells signature but it contained internal evidence
that
His Lordship knew nothing about it He might
enjoin future Governments to give but never not to give

this worried me, and it is not without care that I
strive to make a complete work of the sources I
feel in a strait - duty draws me towards my family
and duty draws me to finish the work undertaken

David Livingstone