

Letter to Roderick I. Murchison, 23 May, 26 August 1856

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

Quillimane, East Africa.

23^d May 1856

Sir Roderick I. Murchison

A packet of letters to the care of M^r Maclear contained information addressed to you respecting noble Zambesi in the regions beyond. I remained six weeks with the excellent , Major T. A. J. A. Secard, generously advised me thus to avoid Delta at Quilimane, untill the com-of the healthy season in , I had an opportunity of gleaning knowledge of the ajacent country, recovering from the effects of my on foot. and I mean in this give the most trustworthy of my concerning the Eastern or portion of the same river. Strangers so liable to be unintentionally misled

[0002] the careless answers of uninterested , I would fain have subjected important point to the test of personal , but except in the cases gold, coal, iron, and a hot fountain did not involve any additional , I had to rely on the information others alone. The difference of climate account for the disproportionate experienced by myself and by marches of a dozen , compared with that produced our naval officers by those pro-strides we read of having performed in the Artic circle. Indeed was pretty well "knocked up" by not more than a month on foot. climate on the river felt hot and , water never cool, clothes damp from profuse perspiration. as the country is generally covered long grass, bushes and trees, the

[0003] of well rounded shingle everywhere it necessary to keep the eyes continually the ground. Pedestrianism under circumstances might be all very for those whose obesity for the process of Pressneitz; but for who had become as lean as a , the only discernible good was it enabled an honest sort of man to a vivid idea of the meaning of phrase "a month on the Treadmill."

Looking down the Zambesi from remarkable falls which I think to be named after our Queen

"the smoke sounding falls of Victoria" see the river fringed on both sides ranges of hills, of from eight hundred a thousand feet in height, on the or southern bank, they cease at Lupata but on the left they run along Senna, terminating in the fine

[0004] mountain Morumbala, with a sulphureous fountain on its summit. A very large number conical shaped hills ornament ranges and as all are covered to tops with fine leafy trees with of lighter green grass between, scenery is always pleasing. It particularly so in my voyage from Tette, for being the beginning winter the foliage had changed the most varied hues before off. Some were inky black, copper coloured, and others so bright an orange I have turned to them, in the belief that they masses of flowers. Then here stimulus of cold, acts like that heat on birds in our climate.

"the time of the singing of birds had come."

[0005]2^d Sheet

It is far from true that the birds of at this portion of the Tropics are un-; they have wanted

poets only bring them into notice as ours have since the times of Aristophanes . the river itself is a one until spoiled by out in this sickly delta. at the fort of Tette, it was to be five hundred fathoms a thousand yards broad, and is a narrow part. Below

Lupata, it spreads out among large, islands from one to two or miles broad. It has been in ever since we struck it in last, and it looks as if it remain high for more than month to come. These five months high water shew that the statement it is navigable for considerable

[0006] launches for half the year to substantially correct. Three and four freshets occur at Tete. The flood of waters, which inundates Barotse and Sesheké valleys, into the Makololo country February. The flood of the Chobé always a month later, on account the impediment which extreme of the river's bed, presents to flow. It is often heard of as spreading the lands thirty or forty miles Linyanti a fortnight before floods that place. In the case of river of Libébé - Teoughe , Zóortzó Tamunakle, the flood descends in April, at other times later; but it is not capable of making an inundation except the country near Libébé; as it

[0007] discharged into the Lake, till that is full - surplus finding its way down the Zouga Kumadou and a little way beyond. water in these floods is in all cases clear. This peculiarity enabled to distinguish the water of the inundations in a large rise the river which took place at Tette the beginning of March. To inhabitants it seemed the third of that year but the water comparatively limpid, enabled to connect it with the overflowing Sesheke in February. the two floods produced by rains East of the Eastern ridge, a deep reddish brown tinge the Zambesi, this was but a discoloration effected by numerous feeders of the Zambesi to pour in some muddy

[0008] untill the winter set in in April, as they are very numerous above Tette we percieve the reason why the floods of the clear water the great Interior valley have not noticed farther down.

I am aware of no obstruction to from the bottom of the ridge of the Delta except one Kebrabasa, about 20 miles Tette. there a number of jagged jut out of the stream across river forming in high water a rapid, and at low water flow is so zigzag the canoes must taken ashore and hauled along bank. It is near the district called

Chicovai; but being on foot when came near that point we were to leave the river to avoid the troublesome rivulets

[0009]

3^d Sheet which the Zambesi in its rise had filled, we did not know till we arrived at Tette, that we had thereby missed the of examining the only we are likely to meet with our returning upward course.

Above Lupata which is about miles below Tete the river is rather narrow by the hills and on its banks. It may be to be from one thousand to twelve yards broad. the current $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles per hour: the gorge Lupata is about 200 or 300 yards , twelve miles in length and winding, but so deep close to rocky, perpendicular banks a steam ship could pass through full speed. Below Lupata river becomes very broad and of large reedy islands which

[0010] one from seeing the banks. I the breadth from occasional of dark low lying woodland the South and the ranges of Manganja on the North. A sailing vessel have more room to tack in , than in the Clyde below Greenock. however saw it only when the river full. In the dry season it presents very different appearance, but it is without a very large volume water flowing in a somewhat channel. But though both and islands change their from time to time according the swing and force of the full , free passage is always afforded launches and large canoes and river is never fordable. Minute leads me to believe a steamer of light draught ply on the Zambesi during

[0011] greatest part of the year. but the of a seaman might be very different.

Our surveyors however and visitors to Quilimane have had but little opportunity knowing the capabilities of the river that which is called the river of Quilimane no more deserves the name Zambesi, than does the Serpentine of the Thames. It's proper name " Mutu" and the point of departure the main stream " Mazaro" "mouth of Mutu". Mazaro may thus considered the beginning of the Quilimane[delta], as the Mutu, though small, the first branch which leaves the Zambesi for the sea. Its claims may understood when I mention that now, when the water is at its height the upper part of the Mutu is only three or four yards broad. is also very winding and so full reeds and water plants, together over hanging branches of trees

[0012]

[that] a small canoe even can with difficulty along. And during a great part the year it is dry, rendering it necessary employ land carriage for twelve or miles in the case of all commerce and from Quilimane and the interior. the part which annually dry, the Muturecieves two rivers the North called Pingazi and Lua (Pingazi, Lua) which it navigable. Another farther named Likwareé and the contribute to form the River of Quilimane. The Bar at its entrance very dangerous, as it admits small as schooners only twice month and it is a common that but few of these can go in and out unscathed. this bar embittered all the joy might otherwise have felt on

[0013]

4th Sheetgaining the Eastern coast for on approach-Quilimane the sad news was that eight of my in coming from H. . Brigantine Dart to offer me passage homewards had unfortunately their lives. It caused me the poignant sorrow and made feel as if it would have been for me to have died for than to bear the thought of many being cut off from all the joys life in generously endeavouring render me a service.

The Portuguese in extenuation the apparent stupidity of building "Capital of the rivers of Senna" -

(Quilimane) where it possesses such connection with the Zambesi that the Mutu in former

[0014] was large but is now filled with a fluvial deposit. the bar too safer then than it is now. To a it looks remarkable that the of the Zambesi sometimes Cuama and Luaba which at least three quarters of a mile at the mouth of the Mutu be left to roll on to the ocean . It divides it is true below into six or seven branches two of these named near the Melambe and Catrina present safe harbours at mouths, and free passage for launches during the entire into the interior. these harbours not more insalubrious than Quilimane and Senna. Indeed with to the former one could scarcely search get a better man-killing than it. The village is placed

[0015] a large mudbank so moist water found by digging two feet down and is surrounded by Mango bushes and . the walls of the houses too gradually so as to jam the doors. the subject of securing a better for the commerce of the country, drained by the Zambesi merits the attention of the Government as interested its prosperity, a glance at the articles might be exploited to a great will sufficiently shew.

If we again fancy ourselves looking the Zambesi, from its confluence the river Loangua, we find that soft grey sandstone rock with many silicified trees & palms for the surface forms, use an ungeological expression, the flooring of the country all the way Lupata. This space [a trapezoid in form] 3° of Long^e. 2° or more of Latitude & is if I am mistaken a field of coal; for

[0016] rock is in many places cut through dislocated by dykes of greenstone basalt. There are also broad bands gneiss & Porphyry, with hills of baked and ~~other~~ igneous rocks containing silica and mica. The disturbances by the eruptive rocks in the sandstone have brought many of coal to the surface. There no fewer than nine of these in country adjacent to Tette and I upon two before reaching that . One seam in the rivulet Muatize is fifty-eight inches in . Another is exposed in the Morongoze which as well as the Muatize falls into the Revubue and forms the Zambesi from the about two miles below Tette. Revubue is navigable for canoes the whole year and but for small cataract in it near the points

[0017]

5th Sheet of junction with the rivulets canoes be loaded at the seams themselves. of the rocks have been ejected the deposition of the coal for it is converted [in some spots] converted into coke, and about miles above Teté there is a hot emitting abundance of acrid , the water at the point of is 158° Fah^t and when the is held in it half a minute shews steadily 160°. When frogs fish leap into it from the in which it is situated they cooked and the surrounding stones were [much] too hot for the bare feet my companions.

the remarks about the absence of tradition of earthquakes in my letter must be understood in to the country between the alone, for I find that shocks

[0018] frequently been felt in the country the Maravi and also at Mosam^{que} all have been of short durations appeared to pass from East .

In addition to coal we have iron of quality in many parts of the . It seems to have been well in the operations of nature it occurs in tears and[or] rounded admitting of easy excavation pointed sticks, and it shews of the pure metal in its substance. smelted it closely resembles the Swedish iron in colour and . I have seen assegais of , strike the crania of hippopotami curl up instead of ; the owner afterwards it for farther use by straighten-it cold with two stones.

[0019]

~~there~~Gold.- If we consider Tette as occupying somewhat central position in the coal and extend the leg of the compasses 2°1/2, the semi circle which may be described from N.E. round by to S.E. touches or includes the district as yet known to yield precious metal. We have five well gold washings from N.E. to N.W. Menisetbutna not now known, but must have been in the West or South - probably on the flank of the ridge. then the country of the Bazizula or Mashona on the South Manica on the South East. the Mazoe, Luia and Luenya in South and several rivulets in the bring gold into the coal field their sands but from much it is generally in such minute as would render amalgamation mercury necessary to give it

[0020] in the sand and render the washing . the metal in some parts in is found in [red] clay slate which is enough to allow the women to pound in wooden mortars previous to washing. Mashinga it occurs in white quartz of the specimens of gold which have seen from Manica and the country Bazizula (Mosusurus!) was as as grains of wheat and those from nearer Tette were extremely minute only. I was thus led to conclude the latter was affected by transport the former shewed the true gold field indicated by the semicircle. Was Eastern ridge the source of the gold it now found not far from Eastern Flank?. ~~However this may have been~~ We have at present coal field surrounded by a gold one abundance of wood, water and - a combination of advantage

[0021]

6th Sheetmet with neither in Australia nor California. former times the Portuguese traders

to the washings accompanied great numbers of slaves and con-there untill their goods were in purchasing food for washers. the chief in whose lands laboured, expected a small present, Pounds worth of cloth perhaps for privilege. But the goods spent in food from the tribe was considered so advantageous for general good all were eager for these . It is so now in some quarters the witchery of slavetrading led to the of industry from both washing and every other source wealth; and from 130 or 140 pounds annually the produce has down to 8 or 10 lbs only. comes from independent natives wash for their own convenience

[0022] for their own profit. A curious tends to diminish the which might be realized. No will dig deeper than his chin a dread of the earth falling in killing him. And on finding a of gold it is buried again from idea that without this "seed" the would afterwards prove . I could not for sometime this in people who know right the value of the metal, but it is asserted by the Portuguese are intimately acquainted with language and modes of thought. may have been the sly invention some rogue among them who wished baulk the chiefs of their perquisites in more remote times these pieces all claimed by them.

the soil formed by the disintegration igneous rocks is amazingly fertile

[0023] the people are all fond of agriculture. have seen ~~wheat~~[maize] of nearly the same size of as that sold by the Americans for in Cape Town. Wheat for which entertains such a friendly feeling admirably near Tete in parts have been flooded by the Zambesi it doubles the size of the grain at Zumbo. When the water retires the sowing . A hole is made with a hoe, a few grains dropped in the earth pushed back with the foot, simple process represents all our , lining, subsoil plowing, &c &c with one weeding a fine crop is for the sickle in four months . Wheat, sugar, rice, oil and were once exported in considerable from Tette. Cotton is still but only for native manufacture of a very large ~~growth~~ grows wild all the country. there are forests the Cinchona tree near Senna

[0024] this not shew the Divine care over , where fever prevails the remedy abounds. We have also salsaparilla root and senna leaves abundance; the last I believe the same as is exported from Egypt.

It may not be out of place here to attention to native medicines as worthy investigation of travellers. I have had to regret the want of time examine which were efficaceous and not and whether there are any to our own. It is worthy of that the bark which yields the , has been known as a potent by the natives from time . Our knowledge of its is comparatively recent. Some think we have more medicines the Pharmacopoea than we know how to use but the fact of well persons resorting to Homoeopathy,

[0025]

7th SheetHolloways's ointment, Morrison's pills and nostrums may indicate an actual to be supplied by something more than either raillery or argument. such I imagine would in cool prefer Parr's life pills to Quinine intermittent fever; and if we had remedy for cholera only half as as Quinine in Quilimane it would be esteemed a universal . Many native remedies are , perhaps the majority are so; they can cure wounds inflicted poisoned arrows. In Inhambane Delagoa Bay a kind of croup . It is probably the Laringismus which cut off General Washington it attacked and proved very fatal to singularly enough it was unknown the first visit of Potgeiter's Boers Delagoa Bay. They brought it from to the South West were it prevails

[0026] left it there though none of them were from it at the time. It is still here. This case is analogous ships leaving diseases at the South Sea . After many had perished native doctor pointed out a root which used in time effects a speedy cure. Portuguese now know the remedy value it highly. I am not disposed believe everything marvellous but excoriations