

Letter to John Washington, 25 March 1860

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Latest

Mazaro, Zambesi 25th March

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My Dear Captain Washington

After waiting 23 days at Kongone Harbour we left on the 14th currt for Mazaro in order to get M^r Rae conveyed by this route to Quilimane. The river being full now we might have gone near Quilimane by one of the canals off the Luabo - but our vessel has 35 patches held on by over 60 bolts in her bottom and without wind we cannot make more than 1/4 knot an hour. She is without cargo too and certainly have not a ton with crew and everything else. Everything is in the Pinnacle yet you cant see the waterline. It is very doubtful indeed if she ever reaches Tette as she has scores of minute holes all over which entail constant watching & labour. We abandon her at Tette if she does not abandon us before that. Never was Expedition crippled and belaboured as we have been by trusting the Niger Philanthropist.

No ship having called I am hopelessly in the dark as a new ship. One we shall have either by public or private means. Our prospects seem to me brighter than ever though I try to divert the whole of any sanguine tinge.
[0002]

I long to hear what you think of them from a cool business point of view. One thing, should the Bann or another vessel be given, we ought to have a pennon and a couple of respectable guns, not for fighting but for respect. the Portuguese look on us with great jealousy this is much increased of late by some English forcing commerce up the river at Delagoa Bay and they think we mean to do the same here.

I have requested Lord John Russell to try and get freedom of trade on this river or at least on those parts never used by the Portuguese as the Luabo below Mazaro & the Shire. If not this then let us work it out quietly without troubling the Portuguese, but for this we would require to be able to say that we are a man of war. They make much of my being consul for Quilimane only. I say nothing of course of my being accredited to other tribes beyond their dominion. Nothing is said to me, but as much as possible to my companions by way of sounding them or drawing me into a discussion. With a soil and climate far superior to Natal they do nothing but peddle in ivory I think we ought to try the Rovuma if we cannot get free trade here. 1000 feet must be accounted for along that river to the sea but the fall may be in a shorter space than the 35 miles of the Shire and it is happily beyond [0003] Portuguese claims.

The river is now magnificent just as Captain Gordon described it "more like an inland sea than a river". By the way the chart of Baines above Senna is what is never seen. the great expanse of water is what always strikes the eye and he acknowledged that his sketch was not its actual appearance but what ought to be in instead of the sand banks in mere lines as compared with the water. I did not suggest alteration as I considered it would be near the truth to give it as bad as it ever can become for its low water. For two years past it has been fordable in two places. this never occurred according to the Portuguese before. All my companions are well & well tired of the slow movement up David Livingstone