

Letter to George Grey, 18 December 1858

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[0001]

Tette 18th Dec^r 1858

Private

Dear Sir George

We have been up
to examine the rapids of
Kebra or more correctly Kaora-
basa when the water in the
Zambesi was at its lowest
and we found that all we
knew of the it previously from
Portuguese description was
just nothing at all. We
steamed about four miles
beyond where any description
we could get even here
terminated and found that
instead of a number of detached
rocks jutting out of the water
across the stream the affair arises from the Zambesi
[0002]

being confined by mountains
to a bed 1/4 mile wide at parts
and at one point to 50 or 60 yards
In the wider parts there is a deep
groove cut out of the solid rock
if such it can be called where
rocks are twisted, broken, cleaved
& huddled together in every direction
besides being water worn and
drilled with potholes everywhere
When sailing up the groove with
the walls far above our masts
the man at the lead kept calling
out "no bottom at ten fathoms"
yet the groove fills at flood
and flows over the adjacent
bed though to do so it must
rise perpendicularly 80 or 100 feet
There are rapids in the groove
which this feeble vessel cannot

stem but we have no doubt
that a steamer of good power
would go up easily at flood
one rapid which had five feet
[0003]
of fall became level at three
feet general rise of the river - the
Ma Robert was just 1/16 of an inch
thick when new - it is now thinner
so we fear to try towing
her up lest she should go craunch
like an old tin kettle in the operation
There is also a place with per-
pendicular walls past which
no towing line could be carried
The mountains are at least
2000 or 2300 feet high, covered
with trees and very healthy
As far as the can reach
Northwest we see ranges of the
same even into the blue
distance. We slept without cover
or quinine & but for the toil
which was excessive we
should all have returned improved
in health. It made us so
lean that had I come down
this way in 1856 I should have
perished before reaching Tette.
It is an impediment to
[0004]

navigation i.e. canoe or bum -
boat navigation - they cannot paddle
against a four knot current and
then here they cannot punt at 60 feet
deep nor tow from a height of
80 ft so they go over land. We have
abundance of work in the mean
time down here, the geologist reports
having found 3 seams of coal
1st 7 feet thick 2^d 13 ft 6in. 3^d twenty
five feet thick in a five cliff section
It was fired by lightning a few years
ago and burned a long time. We
are all in good health. Have had
colds only, no fever except among
the Kroomen. The Portuguese command -
and Major Secard gave us the
Residencia of Government house
to live in at Tette I am going up
the Shire next week.

Thanks for the pamphlet containing
the account of your library. I made
a collection of Bechuana orations
Maina or names they are called and
each boy must produce his own at
the circumcision. They contained a great
number of to me entirely new words. I
intended to have examined & translated
them but the boers in plundering Kolobeng destroyed them all. (that took place at the very
time when my friend
D^r Robertson was recieving them (the boers) into the bosom of the
Dutch church in the presence of the Cape dignitaries, if the others knew of
they existence of these orations they might recollect them)
David Livingstone