

## Letter to Lord Kinnaird, 25 November 1861

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[0001]

H.M.S. Pioneer. River Shire

25 Nov<sup>r</sup> 1861

Dear Lord Kinnaird

Your most welcome letter of April last came to hand by two of the Oxford and Cambridge missionaries who without knowing a word of the language or a bit of the way came up this river in common country canoes. This has never yet been accomplished by a single Portuguese.

From a small section of this river - say six miles, to which we were limited by our vessel being too deep to run up and down. we bought at a very cheap rate about 300 lbs of excellent clean cotton. It was not the period of the cotton crop and had we not been employed elsewhere double the quantity could easily have been obtained. the people had not been stimulated by the prospect of a regular

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market to plant more than they meant for their own use, and having ourselves been cheated in our supply of calico we had to offer them the most worthless hash you can conceive in payment. But calico is here in very great demand. You must not imagine that we are here among the "Gonakeds." Every one is clothed with the inner bark of a certain tree and calico is so highly valued that the very best slaves cost only five yards valued out here at 2/6. Women and children go for two yards or one shilling. You can get any work done for calico. But a great difficulty meets us here. 1 We

shew the way. 2 We open the markets  
3 We so gain the confidence of the natives  
that to any man of common sense  
life and property are perfectly secure.  
Are Government servants to become  
besides public cotton collectors? I  
think that after we have accomplished  
these three important results in any one  
part of the country there are work is

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done. This lower Shire valley[& hills adjacent] produces  
an immense quantity of cotton superior  
to common American. Who is to collect  
it, and after it is collected are the Portuguese  
to be allowed to put a tax on it while  
all Portuguese productions go out  
free. We go onwards. We are now  
going down to the sea expecting to meet  
a steamer built at Glasgow in  
compartments, and every man of us  
will be employed during the best  
part of a twelve month in trans-  
porting it past Murchison's cataracts  
I look back therefore to see if any  
advantage is to be taken of our  
labours among a people now all  
friendly - witness the passage of these  
missionaries - and I see only the  
Portuguese erecting a fort at the  
mouth of the Shire.

With respect to the finer kinds  
of cotton the sea island, it really  
flourishes in this country with very

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little care. the soil of both the lower  
and upper Shire contains a considerable  
quantity of salt. the people even extract  
salt for their food out of it. this may  
be the reason why it takes so kindly  
to the soil. But we have besides an  
indignous cotton which shews an  
inch and a half staple. We found it  
below Victoria falls on the Zambesi  
and again at the upper end of Lake  
Nyassa With the idea of a colony  
I throughly agree and I expect [soon] to  
meet a D<sup>r</sup> Stewart, a minister I  
believe of the free church of Scotland

who has come out to consult me  
on this very point. The object is partly  
religious. ~~and~~ with a view to influence  
the slave trade. and I suppose to benefit  
our honest poor. Besides cotton we could  
grow wool on all our highlands and  
instead of being considered intruders  
would be looked on by the natives as  
benefactors.

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When we went up to the highlands East  
of Murchison's cataract's to introduce the  
bishop to the Mangangja - (pronounced  
Mañ-anja. g not heard) we met Portuguese  
slave hunters returning with large numbers  
of captives - An extensive system of slave  
hunting had been set agoing by instigating  
a tribe called Ajawa to attack village  
after village of Manganja - kill the  
men and sell the women & children to  
the Portuguese. All the captives met fell  
with my hands and I presented them to  
the bishop to begin school with. the  
piecemeal destruction going on along  
their borders produced no effort at  
union for mutual defence among the  
Manganja - All were fleeing. So in order  
to prevent the country around the mission  
from becoming depopulated and to stop  
the effusion of blood we went to try what  
a conference would do. On approaching  
the Ajawa all our declarations of peace

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were nullified by some Manganja followers  
trying to frighten the enemy by calling out  
that one of their great sorcerers had come  
Unfortunately it did not strike me that we  
were thereby deprived of the protection of  
our English name till afterwards - they  
rushed at us like furies and shot at  
us with muskets and poisoned arrows  
at about 50 yards distance. We were obliged  
to drive them off with our firearms - the  
Manganja alone suffered from the weapons  
of the Ajawa. The bishop has since  
gone to drive away other companies  
of Ajawa who were destroying his  
people though I thought he ought to have

acted only on the defensive as we did.  
This slave hunting has depopulated large  
tracts of as fine land as any in the world  
And as the Portuguese encourage it -  
the authorities keeping discreetly in the  
background much more territory will  
be laid waste. A colony would be a  
defensive nucleus for fugitives from  
the slave hunters. the bishop has 200

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freed people on his station and a large  
population is collecting around him.

On the Upper shire we found thousands  
of fugitives. We carried a boat past the  
cataracts and sailed up into Lake Nyassa  
We found it to be a very deep lake.  
A ship could find anchorage only near  
the shore. Our leadline gave no bottom at  
210 feet in the south and in the north  
we felt bottom with a fishing line at 600  
feet in a bay. A mile outside we could  
find no bottom at 696 feet. It is  
from 20 to 50 miles broad - Over 200  
miles long and surrounded by  
mountains and high uplands. the  
population is prodigiously large  
but slavery is the only trade. An  
Arab vessel called a dhow fled from  
us full of slaves to the East shore  
twice. We were on the West and it was  
so stormy during the Equinoctial gales  
(September) we could not cross in an  
open boat. The dhow had lately been built

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and Colonel Rigby our consul at Zanzibar  
says in a letter published in the "Times" that  
nearly all the slaves come from Nyassa &  
the valley of the Shire and a small steamer  
on the lake would break the neck of  
the trade. We shall now set ourselves to  
this work. then look for an outlet for  
ourselves by the Rovuma. We could  
obtain no accurate information about  
it except that it was a very large river  
In this all agreed but its distance from  
the Lake varied from a few yards to 50  
miles

I suppose that the Government will pay for the steamer after we have put it on the Lake - but do not know. It was built by my friends in Glasgow and the builders "Tod & Macgregor" take nothing [from me] until they see whether any thing will be granted. The expenses of this steamer [(Pioneer) &] all her crew are great £ 11,000 but next year they will be less. The Pioneer is unfortunately too deep A splendid strong good vessel with this

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one fault. Were she on the Lake she would be admirable. I do not grumble about her I am most thankful to have her, but with half her draught as was intended in the plan she would have gone up any of the East African rivers.

The kind of people that would suit this country would be families of the agricultural class - men that could turn their hands to anything - build their own huts - make their own doors - tables - chairs, everything They ought to form their first establishment on the highlands and as they became acclimatized descend to lower levels. This is what I have recommended for the Mission, and they will in all probability enjoy good health - If the obstacle presented by Portuguese

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were removed, either by free access being given - (It is not withheld now but the placing of posts or stations everywhere on our line of entrance, shews what is intended) or by our finding an entrance by Rovuma I would say send at once. some preparation might be made but a year must elapse ere we are on the Lake with our steamer. and then there is difficulty of the Pioneer's draught. She could take cargo or people up either Shire or Rovuma during but a part of

the year. the benefits to be derived  
from a small colony of industrious  
people in stimulating the people  
of the country to cultivate largely  
cannot well be over-rated. I am  
supporting that besides cultivating

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cotton themselves they would purchase  
the produce of the natives with calico.  
Beyond all doubt slave trading would  
soon die a natural death. When  
we entered the Lake on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September  
among the crowds that pressed around  
us I said to an intelligent man  
who had been down at the coast  
" We come today only to see the Lake  
but next year we shall come in a  
ship to buy cotton and ivory. but  
no slaves." After thinking some  
time he addressed the crowd, going  
over what I had said, and added  
" I see plainly that these people will  
enrich us. " they can see at once the  
benefits we propose to confer but  
the work must be done by many  
hands, and it is encouraging to  
remember that while benefitting  
Africans we are bestowing a boon

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upon our own poor. the bishop thought  
that introduction of whites would drive  
the blacks into a corner, but when I  
went up with him to the highlands  
he spontaneously remarked, I see you  
are quite right there is abundance of  
room for all - He is high church  
but there being no one to laugh at or oppose  
the pretensions of that party it cannot  
flourish out here - To be anything  
is better than heathenism and if the  
mission only works for the benefit  
of the people I don't care though they  
should pretend to be able to stand on  
their heads as well as forgive sins.

Returning the kind saluation of  
Lady Kinnnaird. I am yours

Most sincerely

David Livingstone

I expect to be joined by M<sup>rs</sup> L soon after a  
long & unexpected separation but without  
I am sorry to say a single child