

Letter to John Washington, 6 January 1862

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

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[0001]

River Shire

6th January

1862

Private

My Dear Captain Washington

We have lost at least three months by the Pioneer being too deep and too long for these East African rivers. I am not disposed to find fault with her as a ship for she is an excellent, strong, and well furnished vessel. She is besides a comfortable home for us when we are on board, but lighten her as we may, she touches at five feet. I saw enough of her in the Rovuma to make me believe that she will not do there except in running up in flood and remaining till next season. In the Shire we have abundance of water for her the whole year, up to the Elephant marsh. Above that it is 4 1/2 feet. We warped her through this for the sake of the Missionaries, and to secure a healthy spot for those who should remain in her while we were away, but we could not come down again till the water rose, for a bank forms at once on our lee as soon as she touches. If it were possible for you to sell her to those Australians to whom you wrote respecting a steamer for surveying, and give us another [an iron one] with [0002]

the price drawing when loaded not more than three feet we should be able to navigate all the rivers on this coast Speed is not of much consequence but light draught most certainly is. I mention this not by way of grumbling but in the

belief if you can do anything to make
us more efficient, you will continue
your goodness to us. She leaks not a
drop. Engines perfect except a little damage
to the paddle wheels, and you could recommend
her for strength, in hulk & machinery.

We shall warp her up again to the cataracts,
and keep there till we launch the other on
Nyassa. A letter from Col^l Rigby to Sir
George Grey says that "if it should ever be
found possible to put a steamer on LakeNyassa it will cut off the chief supply of
slaves to the East Coast." To effect this I
earnestly pray that the Almighty may spare
my life. In view of having succeeded
and wishing for an outlet for the cotton
away from the Portuguese a steamer of
light draught would be an immense
advantage. I lay the matter before you
and I know that you will not put
it as if I did not know what I would
be at next. If it cannot be done we
shall do the best we can with the Pioneer.

I see that M. Chaillu has brought
home some sixty new birds and that they
will be bought by the British Museum
[0003]

M^r C Livingstone & D^r Kirk have made
collections of birds, insects, and plants -
which are sent home to be kept at the
Kew Museum till they arrive themselves.
they know that the British Museum
has the choice of all, for not taking
charge of the collections [myself] I always said
that these were Government property -
and to first offer must be made
to the Museum. It occurs to me that
many of our birds may be new &
might be substituted for those to be
bought if the Museum authorities
would only examine, and take what
they wished - the plants are registered
by D^r Hooker and I suppose that
all may be left with him till the
arrival of the collector whose knowledge
of the plants will be most advantageous
in classification.

the Portuguese have got a small steamer

similar to the Ma Robert for the Zambesi
this is to secure "all merchandise for the
river to be under the national flag", as she
will look after the big canoes the necessity
for securing our own outlet by Rovuma
becomes every day more decided. If you
hear of any disaster befalling us please
suspend your judgment till you hear
from us. I shall give you the earliest
information possible. I say this because
[0004]

the Portuguese continually get up unfavour-
able reports - such as that one or two of us
has been killed by the natives or we are floundered
on a rock - lately a report was rife at
Mozambique that we were aground in the
Zambesi - and again that we were sticking
between two rocks in the Shire - the only thing
untoward is that delay I have mentioned in
page 1st of this. We have lost time by
waiting till the river rose in a part to which
it may be said we ought not to have gone.

Thanks for M^r Petherick's speech = our
work will be more of a stationary nature
for some time to come. Will you send us
Maury's work? and anything African
the Viscount de Sáda Bandeira has
published all that the Portuguese minister
could muster of geography "ancient & modern"
of this region. It is all from our maps
except the Loangua (of Zumbo - Zambesi
called Arroangoa by the Portuguese) which
is made to come out of the North end of
Nyassa! While Shire arises N.W. of the
cateracts! I have only seen a tracing from
his map.

M^r Hardisty valued the carpenter's tools
at £4-10. and we keep them for use.

the river is up and we go down
as fast as we can cut wood - never saw
Shire bringing down so much rubbish &
so discoloured before David Livingstone