

Letter to John Washington, 5 May 1862

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)
[0001]

Shupanga 5th May 1862

Private

My Dear Captain Washington

With a sore heart I have
to tell of the loss of my bosom friend
of eighteen years. She died on the
27th the complaint having the
worst complication continued
vomiting by which all the remedies
were rejected. We have been
three months down in the Delta
instead of as I anticipated three
or four days. I bitterly regret now
having consented to her coming
this time, but matters have
taken a turn so utterly beyond my
control that I bow to the will
of the Almighty Disposer of events.
I thought that Lady Nyassa could
sail out & on reaching Kongone
[0002]

cut wood & steam up to the cataracts
but she might have been lost. When
Captain Wilson volunteered to help us
up to the cataracts I thought all would
then turn out right we should only be
a week or two down here. But Pioneer
as I thought failed to carry 35 tons.
We landed the sections at Shupanga
there was some tinkering at the engines
and we came back to the sea in one
day. We took 3 weeks to go up. I still
[at that time] put the blame on her having been
overloaded. She was down to five feet.
But Gorgon had been driven away
and during seventeen days we were
detained at the Kongone nothing was
done to the Engines. After the Gorgon
had left the air pump was opened,
and happening to go down I saw

at least a quarter of an inch of sand round the plunger & it had worn a great way into the cylinder on the working parts. the trunions [0003]

which had not been packed for 20 months were repacked then, and we were detained a day & a half while that was done. We went up to Shupanga with a load which brought her down again to 5 feet in 2 1/2 days steaming - We grounded a day. Now it is not the Engineer's fault that we go aground - but the feed pump ought to be disconnected at once and the boiler supplied by the donkey engine. She ought not to be allowed to pump in sand. When the other valves come the Engine will be quite safe. I tell you all this without one ill feeling towards the Engineer, he has become respectful again & probably he was irritated by some of the officers of the Gorgon as it is evident he does not feel kindly towards the service. But I think it only fair to explain [0004]

what without any engineering knowledge appears to have been the cause of the wretched failure of the Pioneer in carrying 35 tons. the list is nothing as in a seaway she would always list

Gwilliam the quarter master & Hardisty have always been at variance & having come to words lately Gwilliam assaulted Hardisty and I have to give Gwilliam over to a man of war for trial. I am very sorry for Gwilliam for he behaved well during our period up the river and is a good hard working man. When in drink however he is bad. While among Portuguese the men do get drink and we had much dysentery & illness. We could not get fresh meat except at enormous prices & having no flour the beans caused irritation of the bowels. We part with a number

of the men - when we meet a man
[0005]
of war about the end of this month
John Hutchins quartermaster
invalided from being subject to
dysentery. Wheatcroft quarter master
master for Lady Nyassa an
inveterate drunkard disrated &
reduced to single pay. Nolan
a stoker never did a day's work
since he came nor is it said
any where else - single pay
from beginning - Waldman
a cooper intended to be carpenter
but quite useless. He was on
his passage to the Cape and I
shall send him off He is not
a man of war's man. Reid
turns out a first rate man
as carpenter & everything. Macleod
a smith - a very good & well
behaved man. A civilian
[0006]

Mr Rae put the hull together in
a fortnight with but a very few
hands - but for the sad event which
casts a gloom over all my horizon
I should have felt delighted. I cannot
spare my brother though I thought
of reducing our expenditure by sending
him home. We shall need every
hand at Roadmaking & carriage
We have about 4 months
provisions - we recieved the
preserved meats you sent but
the ale by 10 dozens remains
somewhere. I feel sorry that
your kindness is stopped in its
flow - where I cannot divine
we recieved it but twice - eight
was the number in one - the other
much less. It surely could be
traced. It would have saved us
[0007]
a great deal of money. I had to
buy mess rum for our crew
at 10/ per gallon. I would have
let them want rather but
thought at the time we should
get the sections up to the cataracts

and wished to give them
their grog while working ashore.

I shall enclose my accounts
in a letter which will go to
the Cape in July. M^r Young
is going to give quarterly
accounts of expenditure as
we ought to have done all
along. We have no forms
for it. I am a good deal out
of pocket at present and
have not enough private
money to pay our six

[0008]

Johanna men who have now
served 13 months - If we get
12 more when these leave we
shall do with but few Europeans
Captain Oldfield has promised to send them. They have never
once been sick until lately.

My poor wife had made
ample provision for making
Lady Nyassa a comfortable home
for us all. We find evidence
of this in her boxes. As a great
deal was new I have selected the
best and any keepsakes for her
daughters and send them in three
boxes, to the care of M^r Frederick
Fitch. I have taken the liberty
of addressing them to you. We
took plenty of table linen & towels
for the Lady Nyassa

I am &c David Livingstone
[0009]

P.S.

I would just add that the water is still
high but falling fast. I think we shall
get up the Shire in June. We have a
fair prospect of being able to do our
work comfortably. D^r Kirk & C Livingstone
went off this morning to Tette to remove our
things by canoes. the Portuguese have said
nothing to us about our freeing the captives
& we say nothing to them. We are good friends
still. I gave Major Secard his watch. the
other would never work I suppose it had

been knocked - if repaired I shall buy it if
you please. Waller was down here &
[0010]
left on 3^d with all the mission goods in
canoes. A report says that the missionaries
contemplate retiring down to Chibisa's
a bad movement to come down to the
lowlands but some are faint hearted
We carry no more for them as it is out
of the question

Please give the sad intelligence to my friend M^r Conyngham
of the Foreign Office & Remember me most kindly
to M^{rs} Washington