

Letter to George Grey, 25 March 1860

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Mazaro, Zambesi River

25th March 1860.

Private

My Dear Sir George

In consequence of the loss
of a mail bag on the bar off Kongone harbour
we are [not] aware whether in the hurry of parting
you bestowed a thought on us. But
feeling persuaded that you will be
disposed to aid us wherever you are. I beg
your attention to the question of free
navigation on this river which I have
brought before Lord John Russell, the
Portuguese make no use of the river Zambesi
below this point, nor have they ever
ascended the Shire more than a few miles
above the confluence, their line of
exploration ran across country from
Sofala to Senna, and then down to Quilimane.
The Governor of Tette acknowledges in a
letter to M^r Dupratt published in the Cape
Argus in August last, that we are the first
that ever came from the sea to that district
by the mouths of the Zambesi. Now I would
not object to own their lordship over
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parts known or traded to by them, but
we have opened a new region by going
up the Shire; and Burton & Speke have
explored that region still farther, and
confirmed what we advanced respecting
the form and fertility of the country, as
well as the disposition of the inhabitants:
and it seems feasible to suppose that
English settlers in that Highland region
would both develop the trade in cotton,
and soon stop the supply of slaves to
various ports on the East coast.
I am so fully persuaded of this, that

should the Government not grant the means of placing a small steamer on Nyassa to afford protection to settlers and develop the lawful trade which crosses the Lake at various points. ~~that~~ I now send home M^r Rae our engineer to superintend the construction of one at my own expense. If the Portuguese hear of our plan they will be up in arms against it, and put on restrictions that will prove real obstructions. I don't see why they should retain the

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2/ the power of doing this - we ought to have free passage in to our discoveries; and our success without diminishing their territory an inch, would promote the prosperity of their establishments. You will appreciate my earnestness in this matter when you remember that their settlements are not colonies, but small penal settlements entailing a loss of £5000 or £6000 annually on the mother country, and sending not a particle of trade home; and never a single African made fortune to be spent there. The Governors, no matter what professions they make all get as much into their pockets from slave traders as possible. The present Governor General of Mozambique - an educated & enlightened man, winked at a regular system of French slave emigration from near Quilimane for two years, and then when the affair of the Charles & Georges caused a stir in Europe, made a formal denuntiation in the "Boletin of Mozambique" of those who carried it on. It was carried on under the very eye of the Governor of Quilimane. It was well known to His Excellency of

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Mozambique for everything is reported, and each Governor knows even the private affairs of all the people of his district. When this denuntiation appeared the emigration agent (Senhor Cruz) retired to Bombay, and thence to Bourbon; and as every one expected, has now returned to Quillimane to carry on the same or a worse system. People here talk openly of the Governors being bribed to allow these things, and from all I have seen of the officials, I feel certain

that they would hamper a movement such as I propose by every means in their power. We want only free access by harbours and parts of the river of which the Portuguese make no use whatever - to parts quite beyond their trade and even geographical knowledge.

then their numbers are so small if we exclude the military there are not 20 real Portuguese on the river and only 150 or 200 half casts. Portugal does not intend to send colonists, those actually sent are a class of military called "Incorrigibles" and the chief trade which is only paltry peddling in ivory and gold dust is in the hands of
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3/ the few officers employed to look after these worthies. The exclusive - "dog in the manger" policy pursued, is almost entirely for the benefit of these men. No women are sent out, and frightful immorality is the consequence. I say little about them publicly, because I have recieved much kindness from individuals among them - but a more used up syphilitic race does not exist in the world. With a soil and climate superior to Natal we can get neither fresh meat nor vegetables between the sea & Tette for either love or money. On the coast we get abundance of game & live splendidly bushbuck, waterbuck & the oryx abound but inland the grass is too tall for hunting and we are put on salt provisions or starve. I have laid the whole matter before Lord John Russell, and if you can say a word in behalf of urging a more open system on the Portuguese, you will confer a great favour = I do not know whether a silent system might work out our ends. If we were allowed to hoist a pendant the officials could not
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interfere with us, yet I fear the opposition of the whole population when they see whither our efforts tend in eating out the slave trade. They are rather glad at having cleverly as they think, restricted my consulate to Quilimane, and I say nothing respecting my being accredited to the independent tribes beyond them.

the loss of the mail bag though I hear
of its having been picked up in a damaged
state and conveyed to Tette has entailed
ignorance of the intentions of Government
respecting the "Bann" which my naval
officer led me to reject, or another steamer.
If we get a powerful vessel we intend
to try and reach Lake Nyassa by the Rovuma
a river which is said to flow out of it,
and to be navigable 100 leagues in land -
It is beyond Portuguese territory, and from
its situation on the map appears to be about
what we conjecture to be the Northern end
of that Lake. It has a depth of three fathoms
at the entrance and no bar - but free
navigation here would answer our purpose
as well.

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I need scarcely say that I am as
sorry as any one on account of
your departure from the Cape.
But I hope it may be only to
afford you wider scope for
your energies. Should you favour
me with a line will you mention
where a famous despatch respecting
the treatment of native tribes is to
be found. I hear about it
but being long out of the world
never met with it.

I am &c

David Livingstone