

Letter to Robert Gray, 8th April 1860

David Livingstone

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[5-6-9] Private
My Dear Sir

On receiving your letter of 31nd March 1859 I wrote at once from Mazaro in reply but being hurried by the departure of the mail, I omitted some things which considering that I shall be away from the region of letter writing for some months, it may be well for me now to supply.

I had no reason whatever for not wishing your mission to go into the Makololo country, except that the way having lately been opened by the river Shire to a much more inviting field, and one specially adapted for such a mission as the Universities propose to send, I concluded that as soon as you became aware of its features it would at once secure your preference - I entertained a strong I believe that Don Pedro the king would favour the mission and our own Prince Consort would use his influence with him, I am &c] []
David Livingstone
[0002]

conviction too, that the Church of England ought there to step into the van. There is a difficulty in the way to each sphere of labour. The Shire has 33 miles of cataracts and there the passage must always be by land - The rapids of Kebra-basa are about the same length and at present we believe that a powerful steamer may go up during the period of flood, but that is during only three or four months in the year, and it has not been tried yet. I will not say but that the difficulties you will have to encounter

with an unreduced language, and among
a people who are entirely ignorant of what
missionaries intend, are a little more
formidable than those of the Makololo country
but then the field is your own, and
if your University men have not the pluck
and desire to go beyond other men's
line of things made ready to their hands,
they are not the stuff I thought them made of.

A steamer may take them at once past
the unfriendly coast tribes. The Borderers-
and into the land of a comparatively mild
race. They have no desire to hear the
gospel for they know nothing about
it - but they have no prejudices nor
bigotry. And this is the character of the
population of the vast region lately explored
[0003]

by Burton and Speke. It is not this
people alone that will be benefitted. The
country we saw is admirably adapted
for European enterprise & residence:
and I believe that no one who comes
after us will ever call the scenery tame
or uninteresting - I have no doubt
but these highlands will prove a blessing
to our own over crowded population
at home, nor have the least mis-
giving as to the ability of the English
church to become a double blessing -
by engaging in the work with a will -
To me it seems as if she never had
such an opportunity of entering on a
work which will eventually eat out
not only slavery[trade] but slavery -
everywhere -

In venturing to advise the mission
not to leave the Cape till November when
we return from the Makololo country,
or until they have a steamer as a temporary
home, I do not assume that we are
indispensable in any respect. We can
cure the fever, and it will be an advantage
for the missionaries to have a knowledge
of that. To us it will be a privilege to
render any assistance in our power.
If we get a steamer, it will be at their
service. It seems of the utmost importance
[0004]

to have no fatality in the outset on account of the bad effect it may have at home so any one likely to give way might be detained for a time at the Cape. Good living is absolutely necessary - plenty of animal food twice a day & plenty of exercise. Wine as a beverage is not necessary but on recovering from fever it is beneficial. Quinine is invaluable in the cure of the complaint, but [it] never wards off an attack. Preserved meats are indispensibly necessary, and these with coffee Tea & sugar - and abundance of biscuits (or carefully preserved flour) are all the essentials -

Mosquito curtains or materials to make them with, are invaluable for the Delta and lower Shire - The invention deserves a statue in Westminster Abbey. On the Highlands there are few or none[^] [mosquitos] - On the banks of Shirwa many, but few on those of Lake Nyasa-

[()]I have written to Sir George Gray about the entrance of the French. I am in doubts as to whether we ought to ask liberty from the Portuguese to go up the Shire. Possibly it may be the better plan to go and simply notify to their Government of the fact. They already prefer anxiety to civilize the natives. The Lakes are not in their dominion.