

Letter to John Murray III, 1 November 1859

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

River Shire - 1st November
1859

My Dear M^r Murray
Never a blessed word
have we got from any of our
friends since we left England
but we hear that there is a mail
for us at Senna and a surfeit
of newspapers. I am therefore
preparing to yield myself utterly
to the feast by writing to my
friends. and having forgotten
the address of M^r Elwes of the
Quarterly I beg to entrust my
letter to him to you.

We have just traced this river
up to its source in Lake Nyassa

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and we had a long tramp of 250
miles on foot through a very fine
well watered mountainous country
and it being the hot season of the
year when we travelled we had just
as much foot work as is good
for Europeans at a dose. We
could not explore Nyassa as we
had left M^r Macgregor Laird's
sham vessel in a sinking state.
Funnel - Furnace - Deck and Bottom
all went honeycombed after only
twelve months wear - £1200 for 12 months
was fairish with the whine of "doing it
all for the good of the cause." Lake
Nyassa is large if one may judge
from the swell when there is no wind
and the Shire is given off constantly
without causing any alteration in
the height of the Lake. The Shire is from

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80 to 150 yards wide - ten or 12 feet deep

has a two & a half knot current, yet never varies more than 2 or 3 feet from wet to dry season. there are only 33 miles of cataracts in it and a common road could without difficulty be made past them. The country beyond is elevated and lies in three terraces - of 1200 feet - 2000ft and 3000 feet high respectively. On the last rises the lofty mountain Zomba which we ascended and found to be between 7000 & 8000 feet high. Yet cultivated on the top. the country is well adapted for cotton and it is now grown pretty extensively tthe terraces have great numbers of running rills of deliciously cool water and they present changes of climate within a few miles of each other

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It was delightfully cool on the third terrace even in the hottest period of the year and on Zomba it was cold.

A remarkably white lichen may have decieved those who saw some white rocks in the North. I think we have here in the lands watered by the Lakes a cotton country of unlimited extent. We have no frosts to cut off the crops and one sowing of foreign seed serves for three years - the natives have introduced it themselves. The Lakes lie parallel with some of the notorious slaving ports on the East coast and traders must cross the partition between them in coming from the Interior. Lawful commerce & missions would do an immense good here in the course of time. I send a photograph on bad paper which will shew you the similarity between the Ancient Egyptian and modern African pestles & mortars. Kind regards to M^{rs} Murray M^r & M^{rs} Cook. David Livingstone