

## Letter to John Washington, 5 May 1862

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[0001]

Shupanga 5<sup>th</sup> 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 27<sup>th</sup> 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 know  
ledge 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]

M<sup>r</sup> 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<sup>r</sup> 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<sup>r</sup> 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<sup>r</sup> 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<sup>d</sup> 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<sup>r</sup> Conyngham  
of the Foreign Office & Remember me most kindly  
to M<sup>rs</sup> Washington