

Letter to John Washington, 18 April 1861

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

Private

Johanna 18th April

1861

Dear Captain Washington

After ascending barely 30 miles

we found that the water of Rovuma was falling at the rate of about half a foot a day and we saw at once that had we proceeded we should be detained till next flood. Had the whole of the bishop's party been with us we should have had little hesitation about it - but as only he & Rowley were there we resolved not to be caught but return here and then go to Shire Had we taken them there first we see now that all would have perished - fever is unusually severe this year probably from the amount of rain being greater than ever known. While on the Fever I may say at once all have had it with one or two exceptions and all have recovered It was all we could do to make Mohilla - there we bought very indifferent wood - then we bought a ton [of coals] here to take us round the island to H M. Wasp. where we got 26 tons - we got also a rain awning of which we stood very greatly in need for our "sun awning" allowed any one under it to be drenched. Having a great many things in the cabin, as we have no hold, most sleep on deck - the rain awning will be a great protection & comfort. I treated all the men who had been sick with fresh meat & vegetables as often as we could get them. I engaged six Johanna men [some of] whom have been on board whalers at £1 8/8 a month or as they say seven dollars I advanced 2 months pay to each - they are easily rationed and should there be pleased

[0002]

After 12 months service we shall get as many as we please. I had just taken our Makololo crew home to their own land when Pioneer arrived, and sixteen who are now with us are perfectly raw & useless on the sea. For land they are invaluable - they

brought the half caste Arabs on the Rovuma to their senses in no time by only making a rush to their arms when they began the insolence of which Burton so much complains - but on the sea they are like children, and I have to treat them with the greatest gentleness. We discharged five men into the Wasp on receiving the Johannesburg. One Quarter master is quite useless from old Rheumatism - and a leading stoker a most willing man, from chronic dysentery of old standing - the others were quite well. We shall reduce the whites as soon as we can. the stokers for instance, but they are necessary for this sea voyage. M^r May goes home by way of the Cape. He has suffered somewhat from fever, and his remaining would have broken up the previous arrangements of the Foreign Office, and possibly caused disturbance, so I proposed to him to retire in an amicable way. As you had wisely forewarned him might be necessary, I giving him a letter thanking him for his services in bringing out the Pioneer. [...]—
[...], I have avoided saying a word about his retirement to any one - except to the Foreign Office, and hope no unfavourable inference may be drawn from his retiring

[0003]

Returning to the subject of expenses, I received £17 [from M^r May] the balance of money received by him at the Cape. The Bishop had advanced £10 to a [black] man intended to act as M's interpreter. this man was to receive £36 per annum & £2 per month was to be advanced to his wife out of it. As we could not well break through the arrangement though he is useless as an interpreter we have made him cook.

We found that he had been a slave and would have made mischief so send him off to the Cape. His wife and he will cost us not £17 but £22. the balance of £17 was therefore only nominal. Our expenses for fresh meat & vegetables, which for the sake of those I got ~~from~~ who had had fever I got as frequently as possible; for fowls - wood at Mohilla - boat hire one ton of coals to take us round from Pomony bay to the Wasp - provisions for the natives on board, and advance

of two months wages to each, amounted to nearly £50. So I gave a receipt for that amount on the 18th April to the Paymaster. [H.M S Wasp]. We got also stronger tackling that used to take the ship off a bank in Rovuma having broke several times. Also an addition to the white crew's provisions We shall not come down the river till 1st January 1862. We ought then to have a stock of fresh provisions ready at the mouth of Kongone. Preserved meats are the most important article for us, those on board Pioneer when she came were to last till September

[0004]

In consequence of having the bishop & Rowley Kirk, Livingstone & myself addition M^r May will tell you there is not much likelihood of the stock lasting so long. We shall use as much native produce as we can. We ask the bishop to contribute to the cabin table from this place onwards. The only thing we ask of you is Preserved fresh meats. We can get coffee tea & sugar from the Cape. Salt meats and biscuit from the men of war. We found 23 bottles of brandy in Pioneer, and put them into the medical stores. Of wines and spirits a good quantity was got at the Cape & that is the best place to send if we need any more. A present of 4 dozen best Export ale from M^r C. S. Hanbury turned out to be only four bottles. They had forgotten to wire their corks!! The idea that these were safe made us use those you kindly sent freely after our long tramp up to Sesheke Please do not send any more cotton gins till you hear from me - but honour a small bill for some medicines from the Apothecaries company which will be sent. The new medicines got at the Cape are rubbish and in some cases required a shovelful of salts atop to make them operate.

I could not square our last years account because I could not get a bill from Quilimane & another from Mosambique - but though the expenses arising from our goods being pretty well all expended the calicoes being very dear & our means of locomotion gone - the sum against Gov^t

is not large. I have recieved £130 by way
of the Cape Treasury

[0005]

If there are any means of getting
M^{rs} Livingstonea passage out I think
I shall be able to provide a house for
her by January 1862. I understand
that Government has contracts
with certain lines whereby they can
send whom they will at a lower
rate of fare than the common. If
you can procure that or any other
advantage you will oblige me much
the bishops sisters are now at the
Cape and come up by a Man of
War in January next. I suppose
we shall have entered into little
contracts with as many villages
on our route as we touch at
to buy cotton and also settled the
Nyassa & Rovuma questions
by that time and it will not do for
me to keep away from my wife after
the other ladies have come. So I give
her leave to come and she will
be sort of headquarters for us.
The steamer must remain up all
the time [till January] as our point of retreat.

A small gun boat's condenser
said not to be more than 18 inches

[0006]

in diameter and costing only £15 or
£20 - would enable ~~to~~ us to get rid
a great inconvenience - the want of a
hold. It is said that there are a number
of these little condensers always on
hand - they are made for the ~~lowe~~
smallest gunboats and distil enough
for all we shall ever need to put aboard.
We could get rid of the large Tanks
We are now obliged to put in three
tons of water - and though we may
not be in the sea often yet we
should condense in unhealthy water
such as Rovuma in flood which
gave us all diarrhoea. I mention
this to you only. I think all additional
we should require would be piping
and only a few feet of that.

We have ordered 2 mules and
2 Scotch carts from the Cape by
Sir George Grey to transport our
goods past the Cataracts. By the
way our goods should have been
got from James Aspinall Turner
M.P. for Manchester He supplied
us formerly and his goods gave
great satisfaction. M^r Clegg's people

[0007]

sent a lot of fragments in one bale, &
the articles generally good for the
West in doubt are too flimsy for our
people. Of the men discharged into
the Wasp two were suffering
from the effects of former
Tropical diseases - but all the
fever cases recovered well.
Proctor complains of a little fever today

I am &c

David Livingstone

I enclose requests made by Hardisty, &
George for you to draw and appropriate
part of their pay, as it seems you
kindly offered to do. I told them that
a quarterly life certificate was not
necessary.

I enclose also a plan and
measurements for the condenser
M^r H. says that the second size
used in the gun boats and not
the very smallest would suit us
We could take out the tanks
and make a sort of hold and
thereby stop any talk that may
arise about forgetting one.