

## Letter to Lord Palmerston, 13 May 1859

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[0001]

Senna 13<sup>th</sup> May 1859

Private

My Lord

We have just returned from the discovery of a magnificent inland Lake, and as you took a kind interest in our Expedition I feel anxious to tell you about our success so far. We ascended a branch of the Zambesi called the Shire about a hundred miles from its confluence in January last. the people were very much alarmed never having been visited by whites before for the Portuguese have always been afraid of them as a very warlike race. the steamer caused a panic and we were constantly gaurded by large parties armed with bows and poisoned arrows. Returning lately we found the alarm subsided and left the vessel with

[0002]

a chief named Chibisa. We then proceeded Northwards on foot and after 18 days march reached a large Lake called Shirwa. It is from twenty to thirty miles broad and 50 or sixty long – We could not see the end though we ascended a height for the purpose but two mountain tops rose in the blue distance like little islands, and the waves dashed on the rocks as if it were an arm of the sea. there is no outlet known. the water is slightly bitter and contains plenty of fish alligators & hippopotami the most interesting point about it is the fact as asserted by the natives that there is a partition of only five or six miles between Lake Shirwa and Lake Nyinyesi = "stars" - the

Nyanja, Nyassa &c of the maps  
which is very much larger - then  
as we found out afterwards Shirwa  
a part of Shirwa is only about 30  
miles from the navigable Shire.

[0003]

Shirwa is surrounded by moun-  
tains of great height. many are  
6000 feet high. the Lake is 2000  
feet above the level of the sea -  
the whole region is high and  
well watered with flowing streams  
A very great quantity of land  
is under cultivation with cotton  
and everyone spins and weaves it  
even chiefs may be seen  
with the spindle and a bag instead  
of the distaff in hand. They treated  
us well. Only one party seemed  
inclined to treat us scurvily &  
they did so only untill they  
were told we were English - they  
had taken us for Portuguese and  
are in the habit of going down  
to Quilimane with slaves for  
sale. It is really no flattery  
to say that to you we owe  
the influence of the English name.  
The French emigration slave trade

[0004]

goes on regularly now from Quilimane  
and the Portuguese say Ah we can  
sell our slaves now the English  
dare not interfere with French vessels  
It is indisputable that the repression  
of the slave trade was mainly owing  
to the cruizers. The other part of the  
plan - developing lawful commerce  
will I fear be checked by this new  
slave trade. A mercantile agency in  
the Shire would soon collect large  
quantities of cotton, but the Portuguese  
jealously watch us lest we introduce  
our own merchants. Were your  
Lordship in power - (We have had no  
news from England for fourteen months)  
I would strongly urge free trade to be  
secured on the Zambesi. We slept  
22 days on the ground in this high

region and got wet with the dew off  
the grass which overhangs the paths &  
our heads every morning but returned  
to the vessel in good health. We have  
had cases of fever among us but it is  
easily cured, and I think that colonization  
by our own countrymen would complete  
what your Lordship began in suppressing  
the slave trade David Livingstone [D<sup>r</sup>. Livingstone  
13 may 1859]