

## Letter to [Joseph B. Braithwaite], 28 September 1858

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[0001]

Kongone Harbour

28<sup>th</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup> 1858

My Dear Friend

I send you the first sheet of a letter I began for you but could not finish by the time the Pearl left us just to shew you I was not so unmindful of you as might be inferred. the other unfilled sheet told of the damage of Krootown by the present Governor Hill who was extremely kind to us and the effect on the general health. Now I go without farther preface into the middle of things and say that I have been up at Tete with the first cargo - the first steamer ever seen there and was visited with as much interest as the Leviathan. It would be a vain attempt ~~to meet~~ were I to endeavour to tell you of my meeting my Makololo companions Poor fellows they grasped my hands and arms with all fervour

[0002]

and lullilood as a way of shewing joy The Portuguese could not get near me for they clustered so closely. I never shed tears but this time as I told them that I had no Sekwebu with me the tears ran down in spite of me. Thirty have died of small pox and six were killed by a half caste chief who holds a stockade at the confluence of the Luenyathe excuse is that it was done in a fit of drunkenness. For them our hearts are very sore. they have accumulated a stock of property in beads fowls & pigs by woodcutting & other work and many of them have taken wives and possibly a few may remain altogether But they say the Tette people taunted us often

by saying your Englishmen will never  
return but we trusted you and now  
our hearts will sleep.

We got the Tette gentlemen to dig coals  
for us, the very first ever taken out  
of the seam in this country. We got a  
ton and a half and the engineer reports  
them to be good for steaming purposes  
though what we have is from the  
surface and exposed for ages in the

[0003]

bank of a river to the action of floods  
and our if M<sup>r</sup> Thornton our geologist  
reports favourably of them too. He will  
yet make a full report of the whole thing  
quantity, quality &c. With, as I believe  
from my own former observations, no  
end of coal and the best iron ore  
Surely the Great Architect designed  
something grand for the future of this  
poor trodden down Africa. As for  
me I will work with might and  
main at this one thing that it be  
opened to the gospel of the grace of  
the Almighty. From all I hear  
of Kebra basa it is not a waterfall  
but a number of rocks jutting out  
across the stream which render the  
passage through deep tortuous and  
dangerous. If half a years work  
and a good deal of expense in gun  
powder and sweat will remove  
this obstacle then dont be sur  
prised at my turning quarryman  
as well as consul & "Skipper" but  
I say nought about it till I see  
and I am going up to see directly  
while the river is low

[0004]

The Naval officer who came with me  
turned out badly, quarreled with everyone  
and at last from the confident belief  
that we could not move a mile without  
him took on all manner of airs against  
myself. I had to interfere for the protection  
of my companions and especially  
for the Captain of the Pearl and Bedingfeld  
at once resigned. I would have sent  
him home at once but thinking it

would not be doing as I would be done  
by if I did not give him a chance I allowed  
him to withdraw the letter. I could not allow  
him to make the cabin of the Launch his  
own private apartment and on seeing  
him turn out the things of my companions  
unceremoniously I requested him to ask  
them first. Then came resignation second  
I bore with slander, carping, complaining  
raising objections and endeavouring  
to excite the Kroomen to mutiny to the  
utmost limits of endurance but he  
went on from bad to worse - ran  
the boat aground and said to one of the  
officers "do you think they could do  
without me" So I accepted his resignation  
and mounted the paddle box myself  
made quicker passages - carrying heavier  
loads than was ever done before

[0005]

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First trip I never once touched the  
ground and he never made a trip without  
doing so several times and delayed us by  
clumsiness in getting her off. D<sup>r</sup> Kirk  
tried it too and was equally successful  
so we got two skippers instead of one.  
When we returned from our first trip  
never did lower jaw descend like his  
when we came in "Ease her, stop her, let  
go the anchor " All right. He then tried in  
various ways to secure his pay but  
failed though he accused me of cruelty  
harshness &c &c because I ordered him  
off to Kilimane and thence home.  
I never met a person who had so  
little regard to truth as he. He seemed  
to trust to unlimited assertion and  
even wrote a log after his dismissal  
in which he changes sides making  
me the person who hindered our progress  
and himself the person anxious to get on

[0006]

It was awfully painful to witness all this  
in connection with extra ostentatious  
piety. His secret prayers must be done  
in sight of the whole ship. but if you  
will not be offended I enclose some of the

rough copy I have sent home to Foreign  
Office All the rest of my companions  
are agreeable. Not a single jar and  
with B. I had no quarrel. What he  
may make a noise about is the following

I consider this Expedition as experimental  
in various respects one of these is  
the health. Now the great Niger Expedition  
if I am rightly informed had prayers  
read three times a day and stopped all  
Sunday. Warned by its fate I resolved  
to lose not a moment in getting my  
party out of the Mangrove swamps  
and worked on that day at what I  
believe to be service to Christ Our Lord  
after asking the leave of the men  
I sent the Pearl off without a case

[0007]

Two Dutch clergymen whom I met in the house of a rebel have fastened on a footnote in  
my book and make a great row because £400 or £500 is mentioned instead of £200 or 300  
28 Sept. 1858 (continued)

People may talk against this they talked  
more against the Niger Expedition's loss  
of life. then when we got out of the  
swamps of Mangrove & mud we found  
the country in a state of war and  
I could not rest all day on Sunday  
while my companions were exposed  
to be plundered. So I never stopped  
except to have a public religious  
service unless we were all together  
on the island. We have had no  
fever yet some colds which resemble  
fever a little but nothing serious. This  
is a sand river in contrast to the  
muddy ones of the West. The river is  
now near its lowest point, and  
as it is spread over between from one  
mile to three in width we found con-  
siderable difficulty in getting a deep  
channel. but when we got to Lupata  
all difficulties of that kind ended  
Two naval officers gave a very  
favourable report when it was five  
or six feet higher than now. I see it  
in its worst state and a vessel

[0008]

[0009]

but say nothing of my mention of them. They wish by this slight mistake to throw discredit on the whole

drawing three feet would navigate it with ease  
I was led to trust in the report of the naval  
officer respecting this Launch the Ma Robert  
and was deceived for instead of as he said  
very little wood being required we spend  
half our time wood cutting and she has  
a badly constructed engine - so weak too  
the canoes pass us in ascending & look  
back at the "Asthmatic" as she ought to  
be called. It is a great shame to M<sup>r</sup>  
Laird to send such a job from his shop  
the vessel herself is good & a well made  
one - broader & shorter would save our  
sailors an immense amount of labour but the  
engine is a wretched thing but here we  
are & will make the best of it. Bedingfeld's  
untruthfulness began in England. He led me  
to reject the Ban a fine vessel drawing 3  
feet but I find now it was because he  
would have been required to navigate her out  
and he could not from sea sickness

the war is finished. It was nothing to us for we  
went from one side to the other perpetually as friends  
of both. We sometimes raised an alarm in the  
rebel camp by coming near their sentinels by night  
but when we called out "English" (Maingleze)  
all was right. Several influential Portuguese wished  
to accept my mediation but the Governor refused  
Kindest love to Robert and you all in Kendal  
M<sup>rs</sup> L is away to Kuruman David Livingstone