

## Letter to Edmund Gabriel, 4 June 1859

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[0001]

[...] [[Hand pointing to the added text.]Look to the end for the beginning.]found the people all friendly, we left the vessel in charge of the Quater master and stoker with a chief named Chibisa (Lat. 16°2' S. Long. 35° E.) and with D<sup>r</sup> Kirk and thirteen- Makololo proceeded on foot  
[0002]

[...] chiefly North and along the banks of the Shire; We were in a mountainous country and the observations[ *[Note: Enclosure N<sup>o</sup> 1.]* ] of the Aneroid Barometer registered by D<sup>r</sup> Kirk show that we  
[0003]

daily [9] gained some hundreds of feet of elevation - The river besides rushing over several cateracts has generally a current as rapid as a millrace. About Lat. 15°30' South it is only about thirty yards wide and the channel being but little below the level of the banks, it gave the idea of water power without dams sufficient to drive all the mills in England. Our route was much more tortuous than the river because we were obliged to go from one headman's village to another, and much delay is occasioned by the formalities necessary to convince every little great man that we are not a company of marauders. Chibisa is the only man who did not feel it incumbent on him to collect all his people together before

We got on well enough with the Portuguese but when any of them get drunk we hear that they dont like the

expedition - We are hoping to get a vessel to take us up the rapids if not then we go on our own pious & independent [0004]

giving us an audience, but he possesses a firm belief in his own inherent dignity and he told us that his father communicated an influence to him where by "all who heard him speak feared his words". He spoke of it as one would a fact in Natural History. and we formed that he possesses great influence in the country Northwards from which he is traditionally descended - the influence of his name through a man he sent was of essential benefit. Our progress was however slow for after a fortnight's journey from the ship we were not much more than forty miles distant.

We had come in sight of a lofty mountain named Dzomba or Zomba and on crossing the southern talus [0005]  
[2/]of this mountain we first got a distant view of [^] [a part of] Lake Shirwa at the foot of a range of lofty mountains in the East. We had traced the Shire up to the Northern end of Zomba, and were prevented by a marsh from following it further on that side. On coming round its southern flank we were informed that the river we had left so near, had no connections with Lake Shirwa - We then proceeded Eastwards and on the 18th April reached its shores - a goodly sight it is to see, for it is - surrounded by lofty mountains, and its broad blue waters look like an arm of the sea. There is no outlet known; a great

many streams run into it  
[0006]  
for the adjacent country is  
well watered - The Palombe  
and Sombane flow in  
from the South - The water  
has a bitter taste but is  
drinkable - Fish abound,  
and so do alligators and  
hippopotami. We saw the  
waves breaking on the rocks  
on the shore as in the sea  
and when the southern wind  
blows strongly the water  
retires sufficiently from  
the southern shore as to  
enable the people to catch  
fish in weirs planted there

The Lake is of a pear  
shape only the narrow end  
is prolonged some thirty miles  
from the body - There is an  
inhabited mountain near  
the beginning of the narrow  
part. The broad part  
is about (25) twenty five

If you could send me a bag of Palm tree nuts - you  
would confer a benefit - Here there are none - I am about  
to send Buanye trees and seeds to Mora - also another tree  
[0007]

the seed of which yields both an oil & hard fat. The Buanye yields  
a crop annually by being pollarded - yet the Portuguese wont  
collect it - they attend to ivory alone - and are born donkies  
and worse. They think a "compania" will make them all rich  
while they lie on their backs smoking

or (30) thirty miles, and when  
we ascended some way up a  
hill ( Pirimiti) and looked away  
to the S.S.E. we had 26° of  
watery horizon with two mountain  
tops rising in the blue distance  
like little islands fifty or  
sixty miles away - The  
natives use large canoes,  
and count four days journey  
as the length but when  
the wind blows strongly  
they can accomplish it

in two. It is therefore not  
an over estimate to say it is  
sixty (60) or seventy (70) miles  
long, exclusive of the southern  
narrow portion of thirty miles

The height of the Lake  
above Chibisa's land  
where we left the ship was  
1800 feet or in round  
numbers 2000 feet above  
the level of the sea. Zomba  
mountain is quite 6000 feet  
[0008]  
high and inhabited. We could  
see cultivated patches from  
below. Milanje range is inhabited  
too, but another range on  
the Eastern side of the Lake  
seems over six thousand feet  
and so bold and rugged it  
looks inaccessible - The whole  
region is an elevated one.

In crossing the Southern talus  
of Zomba we were 3400 feet  
above the ship at Chibisa's  
and the great mass of the  
mountain itself rose on  
our left higher (apparently)  
than Morambala which  
by ascending we ascertained  
to be 4000 feet high - our  
estimate is therefore moderate  
To a spectator in the far North  
it will appear as standing in  
the Lake - It is not actually  
on its shores but it separates  
the Shirwa and the Shire vallies  
[0009]

[3/]and as the natives report  
Lake Shirwa to be separated  
from a much larger Lake,  
Nyinyesi, by a strip of  
comparatively level land  
we see the general correctness  
so far, of information  
collected by the Rev<sup>d</sup>- Erkhardt  
of the church missionary  
Society. Nyinyesi is also  
called the Nyanja,  
but this word is applied

to any collection of water, and  
even to rivers; Nyinyesi=  
"stars" seems preferable.

The whole region seemed  
well, though not densely peopled  
with Mang-anja who inhabit  
both banks of the Shire from  
Morambala up to Ihibisa;  
but the Eastern bank and  
adjacent mountains beyond

The Highland region in which the Lake is situated is so  
appropriate as a mission field that I have written to the  
Church Missionary Society recommending it - they have long  
been trying to find a field in Eastern Africa  
[0010]

him; The western bank above  
the same chief is inhabited  
by the Maravi- There are  
none of this tribe anywhere  
near Shirwa, so it would  
appear improper to identify  
it with the " Lake Maravi"  
of the maps; nor can we  
set it down as that mentioned by  
Sehor Candido of Tette as forty five  
days S.S.W. of that point.  
No Portuguese even pretends to  
know anything about it. I think  
it necessary to state this, because  
after the first European had  
crossed the continent the honour  
was claimed by a Portuguese  
Minister [ *[Note: Blue Book*  
*for 1856 or 7]* ] for two blackmen  
("feirantes pretos" according to the  
History of Angola & Portuguese Archives)  
who in the memory of a lady  
now living at Tette came thither  
but proceeded no further - They  
failed by 300 miles of what was  
claimed for them, and had they  
[0011]  
gone over land to Mosambique must  
have mentioned surely either Nyinyesi  
or Shirwa, if not the passage  
between them. We made frequent  
enquires among the people if they  
had ever been visited by white

men before and the invariable  
answer was in the negative - A  
black slave trader with wooly  
hair had once visited the part  
but the discovery is claimed  
for D<sup>r</sup> Kirk and myself as  
Europeans, and we do not  
enter into competition with black  
people, nor with secret discoveries  
locked up in Archives.  
[This part is made rather  
milder in the real despatch]  
I take the liberty of giving  
the foregoing explanation because  
the Portuguese are in the habit  
of depreciating our explorations  
by declaring that they have full  
information about the whole  
country in the Archives, and  
the Portuguese minister adopted  
the same tone to Lord Clarendon  
[0012]  
and referred to Bowdich's examination  
thereof though he found out the  
very fact I have stated. The  
Portuguese dare not enter the Shire  
The only expedition they ever sent  
up was beaten back by the natives  
before they had ascended 25 miles  
We have gone one hundred and fifty  
miles, and never came into  
collision with any one.

The Manganja cultivate the  
soil very extensively, and the land  
is exceedingly rich; The grass  
is generally from six to eight feet  
high and overhanging the paths  
which are only about a foot wide  
There is a perpetual patter on the  
face in walking - A few yards  
distance from a companion  
hides him completely, and guides  
are ~~absolutely~~ necessary, it being  
absolutely impossible to see, on  
entering a path, where it will  
lead, Even the hills though  
very stoney are very fertile and  
gardens are common high up their  
sides and on their tops-

You have a piece of plate at M<sup>r</sup> Horsfall's ready for M<sup>rs</sup>  
Gabriel whenever that lady takes you under her wing - My  
wife is at Kuruman with her parents to be confined  
[0013]

Cotton is cultivated largely and the  
farther we went it appeared to be  
of the greater importance as an  
object of culture, though only the  
women were well clothed - Every  
one seemed to spin and weave it  
even chiefs may be seen with  
the spindle and bag which serves  
as a distaff, and the process of  
manufacture is the most tedious  
and crude that can be conceived - the  
cotton undergoes five processes  
before it comes to the loom - time  
is of no value - They have two  
varieties of the plant= one indigenous-  
yields cotton more like wool than  
that of other countries - It is very  
strong and rough in the hand - The  
other is from Foreign seed and yields  
a cotton which renders it unnecessary  
to furnish the people with American  
seed. A point in its culture worth  
noticing is the time for planting  
has been selected so that the plants  
remain in the ground during the  
winter, and five months from  
sowing it comes to maturity

The London Missionary Society did not behave itself to me  
and now abuses me for turning consul - What they will say  
when they know I have turned "skipper" I don't know - Would  
they turn black in the face  
[0014]

before the rains commence or  
insects come forth to damage  
the crop.

The Manganya have no  
domestic animals except sheep  
goats and fowls. We get abundance  
of provisions at a cheap rate -  
They have no ivory - but few  
wild animals; And say that they  
abound among the Maravi  
West of the Shire. Their weapons

are large bows and poisoned arrows  
with iron heads. Every one carries  
a knife - and almost every village  
has a durnace for smelting iron  
spears were rarely seen but very  
well made and of excellent iron  
Both sexes are tattooed in straight  
raised lines radiating from various  
points, and all file their teeth  
with stones so as to leave them  
of a semilunar shape [Livingstone draws a tooth with a semi -circular indentation.] - The  
women perforate the upper lip  
close to the nose and enlarge the  
opening till they can insert a  
ring of ivory of two inches diameter  
Some ladies of fashion have the  
lip drawn out so the ring comes  
down below the chin and the mouth

We caught a young elephant coming down the river  
but one of the Makololo in excitement cut its proboscis so as at  
last to cause its death - It lived two days and to use the language  
of the Newspapers when tearfully pathetic. "In spite of the unwearied  
[0015]  
caution of the medical gentlemen in attendance the vital spark  
cut its stick" - It would have been a great curiosity at home  
as no African elephant has in modern times been seen in  
England.

appears through the upper lip - All  
were timid - Men whom we met  
suddenly among the long grass threw  
down their burdens and ran away  
It is probable that our dress is  
as uncouth to them as their  
nakedness and lip rings are to us,  
for when we entered a village  
the fowls would take to wing  
and leave their chickens. & The  
women rushed into their huts &  
shut the doors in terror -

When at Lake Shirwa the  
people pointed out a pass in the  
end of the mountain range Milange  
through which a tribe called Anguru,  
came to attack them with guns.  
The Manganja have no fire-arms  
except a rude kind of pistol made  
by themselves for the purpose of  
making a noise at funerals-



gunpowder was enquired for in  
order to this alone - We came close  
to a large party of Bajaua  
slave traders who are in the habit  
of taking slaves down to Quilimane  
but they persuaded the people to  
mislead us so that we did not  
see them. Some of the women  
[0016]

told the Makololo that Bajana  
said that English would stop their  
trade and no more foreign cloth  
be brought into the country The  
chiefs tried to justify their  
cooperation in the traffic by  
saying "only criminals were  
sold." No one attempted to treat  
imprudently except some of these  
Bajana slavetraders and they  
changed their conduct instantly  
only learning that we were  
English and not the Portuguese  
with whom they had been accustomed to do business.

My Dear Friend Gabriel River Shire [4 June 1859]

The foregoing is the rough copy  
of a despatch giving an account of the discovery  
of a magnificent Lake called Shirwa - I have  
written on all my paper - so if you are not  
please with a mutilation you must send [...]  
it back and I shall write it over again. Shirwa  
has no known outlet and it has only five  
or six miles of partition between it and Nyanj [...]  
or Nyinyesi= The stars which reaches pretty  
well up to the equator - The Southern portion  
of Shirwa is only about 30 miles distant  
from the navigable Shire= The Portuguese  
know nothing about it - We have had some [...]  
fever but very mild

David Livingstone

[0017]

[ 10  
after 1859] I did not see the Blue Book till lately  
in which the Portuguese claimed the honour  
of first traversing the continent for two  
black men - Shirwa lies some forty or  
fifty miles on each side of the Latitude

of Mosambique - How is it that these  
feirantes pretos as the History of Angola  
calls them did not cross or come near  
it - An old lady at Tette remembers  
Baptista & Jose coming to Tette - black  
men with the wool dressed Londa fashi[...]  
and Lond swords on their shoulders I[...]  
must know farther cosequently failed  
by some 400 miles of going across  
Africa-But they want all to appear  
theirs so we dont tell them how near  
Shirwa is to them nor how it may be  
approached by the Shirwa - We go back  
next month towards Nyinyesi - We have  
had no European news for a twelve month  
so dont know if Burton has reached  
Nyanja= I am of the decided opinion now  
that a colony of our own people must  
be planted in the Interior for any good to  
be done - French emigration in chains goes  
on from Quilimane regularly - Secard is  
superseded by Governors under French influence

If is only by remembering that there is a P[G]reat Power above overruling all  
that one can possess one's soul in patience - Love to Schut & Demony  
and to your Marabou in the yard.  
[0018]

[  
Per HMS  
Buffalo  
] Edmund Gabriel, Esquire.  
At St. Paul de Loanda  
[ D<sup>r</sup> Livingstone] West Coast of Africa

Will Admiral Grey kindly forward this  
at his convenience