

Letter to George Grey, 25 March 1860

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org), 2020

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Mazaro, Zambesi River

25th March 1860.

Private N° 10

My Dear Sir George

In consequence of the loss
of a mail bag on the bar off Kongone harbour
we are ^ not aware whether in the hurry of parting
you bestowed a thought on us - But
feeling persuaded that you will be
disposed to aid us wherever you are, I beg
your attention to the question of free
navigation on this river which I have
brought before Lord John Russell - The
Portuguese make no use of the river Zambesi
below this point, nor have they ever
ascended the Shire more than a few miles
above the confluence - their line of
exploration ran across country from
Sofala to Senna, and then down to Quilimane.
The Governor of Tette acknowledges in a
letter to M^r Dupratt published in the Cape
Argus in August last, that we are the first
that ever came from the sea to that district
by the mouths of the Zambesi - Now I would
not object to own their lordship over

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parts known or traded to by them, but
we have opened a new region by going
up the Shire; and Burton & Speke have
explored that region still farther, and
confirmed what we advanced respecting
the form and fertility of the country, as
well as the disposition of the inhabitants:
And it seems feasible to suppose that
English settlers in that Highland region
would both develop the trade in cotton,
and soon stop the supply of slaves to
various ports on the East coast -
I am so fully persuaded of this, that

should the Government not grant
the means of placing a small steamer
on Nyassa to afford protection to settlers
and develop the lawful trade which
crosses the Lake at various points -
~~that~~ I now send home M^r Rae our
engineer to superintend the construction
of one at my own expense - If the
Portuguese hear of our plan they will
be up in arms against it, and put on
restrictions that will prove real obstructions.
I don't see why they should retain the

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the power of doing this - we ought to have
free passage in to our discoveries; and
our success without diminishing their
territory an inch, would promote the
prosperity of their establishments - You
will appreciate my earnestness in this
matter when you remember that their
settlements are not colonies, but small
penal settlements entailing a loss of £5000
or £6000 annually on the mother country,
and sending not a particle of trade home;
and never a single African made fortune
to be spent there. The Governors, no matter
what professions they make all get as
much into their pockets from slave traders
as possible. The present Governor General
of Mosambique - an educated & enlightened
man - winked at a regular system of
French slave emigration from near Quilimane
for two years - and then when the affair
of the Charles & Georges caused a stir in
Europe, made a formal denuntiation in
the "Boletin of Mozambique" of those who
carried it on. It was carried on under
the very eye of the Governor of Quilimane.
It was well known to His Excellency of

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Mosambique for everything is reported,
and each Governor knows even the

private affairs of all the people of his district -
When this denuntiation appeared the emigration
agent (Senhor Cruz) retired to Bombay,
and thence to Bourbon; and as every
one expected, has now returned to Quilimane
to carry on the same or a worse system -
People here talk openly of the Governors
being bribed to allow these things - and from
all I have seen of the officials, I feel certain
that they would hamper a movement
such as I propose by every means in
their power - We want only free access
by harbours and parts of the river of
which the Portuguese make no use
whatever - to parts quite beyond their
trade and even geographical knowledge -
then their numbers are so small
if we exclude the military there are not
20 real Portuguese on the river and
only 150 or 200 half casts. Portugal does
not intend to send colonists - those
actually sent are a class of military
called "Incorrigibles" and the chief trade
which is only paltry peddling in ivory
and gold dust is in the hands of

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the few officers employed to look after
these worthies - The exclusive - "dog in the
manger" policy pursued, is almost entirely
for the benefit of these men - No women
are sent out, and frightful immorality is
the consequence - I say little about them
publicly, because I have recieved much
kindness from individuals among them -
but a more used up syphilitic race does
not exist in the world - With a soil and
climate superior to Natal we can get neither
fresh meat nor vegetables between the sea &
Tette for either love or money - On the coast
we get abundance of game & live splendidly
bushbuck - waterbuck & the oryx abound
but inland the grass is too tall for hunting,
and we are put on salt provisions or
starve - I have laid the whole matter before
Lord John Russell, and if you can say a
word in behalf of urging a more open
system on the Portuguese, you will confer

a great favour = I do not know
whether a silent system might work
out our ends - If we were allowed to
hoist a pendant the officials could not

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interfere with us, yet I fear the opposition
of the whole population when they see
whither our efforts tend in eating out
the slave trade - They are rather glad at
having cleverly as they think, restricted my
consulate to Quilimane, and I say
nothing respecting my being accredited
to the independent tribes beyond them.

the loss of the mail bag, (though I hear
of its having been picked up in a damaged
state and conveyed to Tette) has entailed
ignorance of the intentions of Government
respecting the "Bann" which my Naval
officer led me to reject, or another steamer.
If we get a powerful vessel we intend
to try to reach Lake Nyassa by the Rovuma
a river which is said to flow out of it,
and to be navigable 100 leagues inland -
It is beyond Portuguese territory, and from
its situation on the map appears to be about
what we conjecture to be the Northern end
of that Lake. It has a depth of three fathoms
at the entrance and no bar - but free
navigation here would answer our purpose
as well.

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I need scarcely say that I am as
sorry as any one on account of
your departure from the Cape -
But I hope it may be only to
afford you wider scope for
your energies - Should you favour
me with a line will you mention
where a famous despatch respecting
the treatment of native tribes is to
be found - I hear about it
but being long out of the world
never met with it.

I am &c

David Livingstone