

Letter to The Earl of Clarendon, 24 February 1863

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Livingstone River Shire 24th February MS 819
The Earl of Clarendon 1863
My Lord

Believing that you still have a lively interest in the suppression of the slave trade I take the liberty of stating the new phase in which the whole subject as relates to this coast now appears. The slave hunting system to which the Portuguese have long been addicted, has at last crossed our path - in fact followed our footsteps - and we are witnesses of its devastations - The valley of the lower Shire is nearly quite depopulated. The Tette people backed by the Governor, came across to the Shire - instigated one tribe to attack another, and recieved good payment for the arms & ammunition supplied in captives - A panic seized the whole country North East of the cataracts, and thousands fled to this river in hopes of its proving a defence - all their grain was left behind - droughts & famine followed, and a very grievous mortality was the result - Further down the river a sort of "ticket of leave" gentleman called Marianno ravaged the whole country around Mount Clarendon - a panic - flight and famine followed his slavehunting too - and where last year we could buy any amount of provisions at the cheapest rate, not a village is to be seen, only a few starving wretches were met -

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cowering among the reeds and striving to maintain life by fishing and collecting

the seeds of certain grasses. Thirty two dead bodies were counted as we ascended the river, and this is a mere fragment of those devoured by alligators or left unburied. This Marianno was sentenced to three years imprisonment for rebellion and murder, but on returning became a guest of the Governor of Quillimane till he "ran away" and His Excellency ran after him but of course could not catch him. Supplies of arms & ammunition are sent from Quillimane regularly, and the Governor complained to his Excellency of Mosambique that so many arms and so much ammunition were introduced by the Kongone Zambesi that the commerce of the country was damaged. The Kongone is never used by any but ourselves, and the Mission of the Universities The Governor of Tette connives at and derives profits from the slave hunting on the Shire. When the captives reach that village the men are retained while the women and children are sent up the Zambesi to buy ivory. When an opportunity occurs either at Quillimane, Sofala, or Mhambare, these men are speedily sent to the coast. We saw very little of the system which has made the country between Cape Delgado and Delagoa Bay simply a slave "Preserve" because all the " French Free Emigrants " were supplied by forays in the North & North West of Quillimane - very few went from the lower Zambesi - It had already been depopulated - but now we see that in one year the lower Shire.

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from which and the adjacent highlands Captain Wilson of H.M.S. Gorgon, conjectured that one hundred tons of cotton might be collected, is converted into a desert - This is the more grievous inasmuch as the statesmen of Portugal seem really anxious to have another state of things, and we find that all the sacrifices which our Government has made are rendered fruitless. In the West coast according to an intelligent American missionary named Wilson, Lord Palmerston's policy produced a sense of security which

led to the establishment of over twenty missions - great numbers are educated and good influences are spreading inland. Lawful commerce has increased from £20 000, annually in ivory & gold dust to between £2 000-000 - £3,000 000 - and a larger tonnage is employed in carrying it than ever was engaged in the slave trade. Though an American, he says that but for the efforts of England "Africa had as yet been inaccessible to the gospel," and he earnestly calls upon his countrymen to take advantage of these efforts while the squadron is continued on the coast. On this coast the same expensive work has been in operation during the same time but there are no more results than would have been on the West had only a few convict Portuguese obtained ingress. The exports & imports duties for the whole Zambesi amount only to £600 per annum - and by this slave hunting they do all that men can do to turn the natives from industrial pursuits. I gave the statesmen of Portugal credit for the best intentions, and hoped that we should at

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least not be interfered with in trying to turn the remarkable prosperity of the natives to barter to good account, but if they are to be allowed to follow in our footsteps the scamps will spoil everything. My only hope now lies in the Lake districts and there I ~~trust~~ trust these slave hunters will not follow us. Firearms are so much superior to the native Bows & Arrows that any one may become slave hunter who chooses. There are no fewer than five of these private marauders and no notice whatever is taken of their deeds till the culprit has collected property enough to stand a good mulcting.

If I am not mistaken this country was acknowledged to be Portuguese on the understanding that slaving should be put down. As no effort to that has ever seriously been made, and indeed none of them I have seen feels like us that the slave trade is morally wrong it might

be well if the countries therein over which they have no control should be declared free to all nations. The mouths of the Zambesi are still never used by any Portuguese and they have to pay tribute to the natives for nearly all the right bank.

It looks like flattery to say it, but till I read Wilson's book, I had no idea how much good has been done by this gentleman quietly working in that dingy Foreign Office in which I had the honor to meet you. I am &c David Livingstone