

Letter to Baldwin W. Walker, 17 February 1862

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[0001]

Enclosure 1 in No 96

List of things req^d

of 1862 River Zambesi 17th Feby

by D^r Livingstone 1862.

req^d

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Admiral A.E. 314.

Sir Baldwin Walker

√ Sir

I take the liberty

of placing before you a short account

of our proceedings since I last

addressed your predecessor Admiral

Sir Henry Keppel, and of thanking

you for most important services

rendered to us by your direction

by Captain Wilson of H.M.S.

Gorgon.

On reaching the Elephant
marsh about 30 miles below the
cataracts of the Shire in June last

[0002]

year we found that the river shoaled

to about four feet in consequence

of a number of branches passing off

from the main stream - Anxious

to place the ship in a healthy locality

we warped her up to within seven

miles of the cataracts, and feeling

that we could ^ not well leave the bishop's

mission without introducing him

to the people, we accompanied him

by a few days march up to the

Manganja highlands East of the

Shire cataracts - When we had just

passed over the brow of the first

plateau we met a party of Tette

slaves driving 84 captives before them - They had followed the footsteps of our discoveries and set up a system of slave hunting in the very country to which

[0003]

the mission had come, and of which they had no previous knowledge, by employing one tribe called Ajawa to attack another named Manganja - kill the men and sell the women and children to them - I was doubtful how to act at first, but while making enquiries among the captives, the Portuguese slaves decamped into the forest - We handed the captives of this and three other parties over to the bishop - For one of these we went several miles out of our way - and hearing of a fifth party with over one hundred captives, D^e Kirk was sent back to intercept them in crossing the

[0004]

river - This movement failed but a body of men with about ninety muskets, and headed by a white Portuguese from Tette, was deterred from joining the Ajawa by hearing of D^e Kirk's return to the ship -

We found the Manganja all fleeing from the Ajawa, and believing that we could induce them to desist from murdering the Manganja we went to hold a conference - We reached them about 12 miles from the mission station, and found them in the act of burning three villages - Unfortunately our professions of having come peaceably were neutralized by some Manganja followers calling out "our chibisa is come" - This

chibisa is believed to have medicines

[0005]

2/ capable of ensuring victory - I heard the words distinctly but it never struck my mind till afterwards that they were neutralizing our professions and depriving us of the protection of our English name - The Ajawa attacked us with four muskets and many poisoned arrows and forced us to drive them off with our firearms - a matter for which I am very sorry, as I never had a hostile encounter with the natives before -

We then left - returned to the ship - and carried a boat past the cataracts of the Shire - there are five cataracts in 35' of Latitude of 100 or 150 feet each - the whole descent amounts to 1200 feet, and when we

[0006]

launched the boat above the upper[-] -most cataract we were virtually on the Lake Nyassa or Nyinyesi, because the upper Shire is all smooth and deep - There are sixty miles of fine gently flowing river above the cataracts, and a lakelet 10 or 12 miles long and 5 or 6 broad. We sailed into the Lake on the 2^d September and followed the Western Shore - It is a very deep body of water - our sounding line of 35 fathoms often shewed no bottom at a mile from the shore, and in the North no bottom was found at 116 fathoms - The Lake is from 18 or 20 to 50 or 60 miles broad but we could not cross to measure accurately; It was very stormy when we were there, and being encircled

[0007]

by mountains and highlands,
tremendous seas for an open
boat get up in 15 or 20 minutes,
The length is over 200 miles.
The shape is an approach to the
Boot shape of Italy. We were
forced to return by want of
food without going round the
Northern end - War had raged
there and the country was
depopulated by a tribe of Zulus
originally from the South -
so we were obliged to come
back without finding out
about the Rovuma - The
chief object of our exploration
on the western shore one man
would tell us that we might
sail out of the Lake into the
river - Another that we must

[0008]

^ carry the boat a few yards - another
would declare that she must be
carried fifty miles or a hundred.
on one point alone did all agree,
namely, that Rovuma is a very
large river - We must confess
however that we returned just
about as wise as we went - after
a three months absence from the
ship -

I beg leave to call your attention
to the opinion of Colonel Rigby that
of 19,000 slaves which pass annually
through the custom house of
Zanzibar, the chief portion comes
from Lake Nyassa, and the
valley of the Shire; and that should
it ever be possible to place a
steamer on the Lake the trade
would be repressed - Without
knowing this opinion we have
been working with a view

[0009]

3/ to carrying into effect his proposition with respect to the placing a steamer on the Lake - Our hopes can scarcely be realized unless in addition to a steamer on the Lake we have an outlet to the three hundred miles of cotton field which in the upper Shire, and Lake Nyassa we have opened up - It must be beyond Portuguese claims, and Rovuma seems to be best adapted for the object - The Portuguese watch every step we take, and the Government by lately building a port at the mouth of the Shire intends to enrich itself by dues from the cotton trade, while the Tette merchants headed by the Governor depopulates the country from which the trade is to come by slave hunting -

[0010]

The movement of the Governor General of Mosambique to induce the Sultan of Zanzibar to cede the Rovuma to him is just of a piece with all their policy - They are intensely anxious to be enriched by English enterprise, & without an outlet away from them we cannot invite English merchants into the country.

We shall be unable to do anything about Rovuma during twelve months in which we shall be carrying the steamer past the cataracts - It is extremely desirable that the new cotton field should be opened during the present complications of affairs in America. I feel diffident in venturing to suggest anything to you but

[0011]

remembering the important influence

that free access of Englishmen
into the country will have on
the Nyassa slave trade, I hope
you will bear with me in
proposing the exploration of the
Rovuma in boats from the sea
upwards - avoiding the months
when the river is low, probably
June July August September & October
The work might be quickly per-
-formed especially if committed
to a man so well acquainted
with the coast and so energetic
as Captain Wilson - The service
would be of immense value
to this Expedition and to the
objects which we have in
common in relation to the slave
trade - To my mind all that is

[0012]

wanting to complete the success of
our undertaking is a steamer on the
Lake and a road out to the sea
coast free to Englishmen - Being
very anxious that the latter object
should be secured while we are
busy with the former I hope you
will excuse me in saying so much

I have now to thank you
for your kind consideration in
instructing Captain Wilson to render
us assistance, and I can soberly
assure you that I feel more
grateful for his services than I
can express - He brought the Brig
having the steamer "Lady of the Lake"
on board from Mosambique to Kongone -
and put the principal pieces into the
Pioneer in a week - a work that
would have cost us a month if
we could have accomplished it
at all - I feel very thankful for

[0013]

4/ he has done everything he could
in the most frank & obliging

manner possible -

On another point I feel inclined to say very little but am sure that you would not fully understand matters up here if I kept silence - The bishop informed us that during our absence at Lake Nyassa he had gone about 15 miles and attacked another tribe of Ajawa's - burned their town and drove them away He took 2 men of war's men and our Engineer whom I had sent up for the sake of change of air after being

[0014]

much reduced by fever - They remembered after they had gone that I had given no orders to them to fight and I excuse them on account of the position of the gentleman who asked them to go - I never contemplated the missionaries doing anything in the offensive and indeed told the natives before leaving that the white men would never engage in their quarrels or fight unless attacked as we were. I disapprove of the missionaries fighting at all except in self defence - but am not very sure what I ought to do to prevent it - I apply by this mail to the Government for advice on the point. I

[0015]

regret very much that by going to try and secure a peaceful settlement for them I became in a measure mixed up with it.

We left our small boat hoisted up to a shady tree above the uppermost cataract. We have one gig only and very

much shattered by the work it
has done in laying out anchors &c
May I beg a strong cutter gig
from the dock yard?

Captain Wilson will inform
you that he could give us but
very few provisions - We shall
therefore trust to you for a
supply of all sorts of common
provisions at your earliest
convenience -

[0016]

We shall come down to the Kongone
sometime in March and again
in April next -
I am Sir
Your most obed^t servant
David Livingstone