

Letter to Thomas Milne, 28 October 1859

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[0001]

Please present my kindest salutations to M^{rs} M. I remember her kindness with gratitude. Remember me also to other friends. My wife is at Kuruman

River Shire, Eastern Africa

28 October 1859

Private

My Dear M^r Milne

As we have not yet received any letters from home since our departure in 1858 I take advantage of this and skip over apologies to those of my friends whom I have neglected. But I may say to you and M^{rs} M. that I have not been idle, nor have I felt at ease when I remembered my duty to you. I have been employed in work which I did contemplate on leaving you. The naval officer with whom I was furnished was possessed with the idea that instead of coming to seek the elevation of the African and development of the country. he was about to discover the ten lost tribes, as if of all things in the world we had not plenty of Jews already. I was soon forced to send this visionary away and do the work myself. though I assure you I would as soon drive a cab as a

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steamer. We have but lately begun our proper work. and I am happy to tell you that our prospects brighten where I never contemplated exploring. We ~~went~~ [steamed] up this river over one hundred miles though only three were previously known to the Portuguese. We have also traced it on foot another hundred and found that it emerges from the hitherto undiscovered Lake Nyassa or Nyinyesi. This lake must be

large for it gives off a large river
(Shire) without diminution of more
than two feet during the whole year. there
are too only 33 miles of cataracts in
it and a common road could easily
be made past them. Here you find
the finest cotton field in the world
for it is of unknown extent watered
by the Lakes - Nyassa & Tamàndua
and there are no frosts to endanger
or cut off the crops as in America
Instead too of the unmerciful toil
required to raise the crops in that
country - one sowing of foreign
probably of American seed already
introduced by the natives themselves

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My Address if you favour me with a letter, I don't say
"line" only is D^r L care of Admiral Sir F. Grey K.C.B. Cape of Good Hope

serves for crops for three years though
the plants be annually burned down.
We have besides changes of climate
produced by the land lying in terraces
of different heights. The third terrace
is 3000 feet high - and on it
rises the Mount Zomba between
7000 & 8000 feet in altitude one
days march took us from the
hot sultry valley of the Shire into a
cool climate, and all the terraces
are abundantly supplied with
running rills of deliciously
cold water. Fancy our tramping
in the sun when the thermometer
on the ground reached 126° and
climbing up two thousand feet
into air delightfully refreshing. Then
on to Zomba into the cold. I am
hoping that the Church Missionary
Society long anxious to enter Eastern
Africa will take advantage of this
opening. they can be away from
the unfriendly coast tribes at once -
and check the slave trade in the
middle of the slave market. We met
a large party of East coast slave

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traders with an immense number of slaves and elephants tusks. A more black-gaurd looking lot I never saw. When they found out that we were English they slipped off by night, probably thinking the same of us as we did of them.

The policy of Lord Palmerston in repressing the slave trade has given the English a prestige of great value. the

Lake Tamàdua is about ninety miles long. but no one could tell us how long Nyassa was. We could not explore it for we had left our sham vessel called a steamer in a sinking state.

Funnel, Furnace, Deck & Bottom went down simulaneously after only 12 months wear. £1200 for 12 months (extras all paid for besides), was pretty fair without any whine from the contractor of "doing it all for the good of the cause." It has been a great hindrance to us from first to last involving enormous toil, and as in the Great Niger expedition, always wet. Indeed we have lain for many months on damp rotten cushions - but thanks to God we have not lost a man yet.

We have had a first rate opportunity of trying the remedies for fever I had opted when alone & have been sucessfulDavid Livingstone