

Letter to H. Bartle E. Frere, 27 November 1870

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

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[0001]

P.S. Nov^r 27. 1870 I have not a morsel of paper left so I take a leaf out of my cheque book to give you the latest information and materials to correct some points mentioned in the letter

West of the Sualaba the central line of drainage of the Great Nile Valley. These are two large each having the same native name Sualaba - These two unite and form a large Lake which I am fain to call Lake Lincoln. Looking back from this Lake to the sewers on the Watershed a remarkable mound gives out four fountains not more than ten miles apart. Two of these on the northern side form large rivers which again form Lake Lincoln, and then the united stream coming out thence flows I suppose into the Western arm of the Nile I have presumed to give your name to one of the fountains and a river by anticipation, for if I have any good fortune at all I shall reach them ere this reaches you Of the two fountains on the south side of the Mound one is so large a man cannot be seen on the other side. I call it after good Lord Palmerston. It is

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the course of the Seambai or Leeambye = the upper Zambesi - the last fountain gives rise to the [...] far down before it falls into the Zambesi is named Kafue - These fountains are probably the "unfathomable "fountains of the Nile" mentioned to Herodotus by the Secretary of Minerva in the City of Sais from which "half the water flowed northward to Egypt, the other "half Southward into inner Ethiopia". I heard of this remarkable spot, which if in Armenia would be the locality nearly of the Garden of Eden from the natives 200 miles on the South West - again on the South East & East 150 miles off - then on the North East 180 miles distant and here on the N.N.E. many intelligent Arabs who have visited it, and had their wonder excited as much as that of the natives give substantially the same account. The Watershed from which the fountains of the Nile do unquestionably arise and on which stand Ptolemy Mountains of the Moon, is in length 700 & 800 miles from West to East the Water collects into three lines of drainage. The Tanganyika whose majestic flow

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I marked by miles & miles of and other aquatic vegetation for three months during my illness at

is with Lower Tanganyika discovered by Baker a River Lake from 20 to 30 miles broad. This Sualaba is another Lacustrine river from two to six miles or more broad The Western Line & drainage is equally large. Ptolemy has but two of these head waters but he probably got information from his predecessors who enquired of men who had visited this very region and mistakes were natural in oral information Spekes great mistake was the pursuit of a foregone conclusion. When he discovered the Victoria Nyanza he at once leaped to the conclusion that therein lay the sources, but subsequently as soon as he and Grant looked to the Nyanza they turned their backs on the Nile fountains Had they doubled the correctness of their conclusion they would have come West with the trough of the great Valley and found these mighty Streams not 80 or 90 yards as their White Nile but from 4000 to 800 yards and always deep I felt a little thankful to Old Nile for so hiding his big head as to leave all

[0004]

theoretical discoverers out in the cold

Captain Singleton may have come to the Southern end of Tanganyika - never by the north end of Msau & there crossed the Lualaba & then gone West by & come abreast of the Conge Salis yet undiscovered. The Elephants tusks are eagerly collected from the interminable forests on Manyema where they have lain till one half rotten I saw the same thing at Lake Ngami. Defoe may have got his story from the supercargo - he began to understand the Gunners Charts very well & this could not have been the Captain trying to magnify the difficulties he speaks of deserts where exist. He could scarcely have come through this region without being plagued by the grass, and water is so abundant none is ever carried by travellers - No tradition exists of any white man coming through the are known as "they the donkey" as they had one with them

I have now a sore longing to retire - no letters since the date 1866 have reached me An impertinent letter from the Supernumery Under Secretary Murray in the

[0005]

Foreign Office forbids me having any claim no matter what services I may render He got Lord Russells signature but it contained internal evidence that His Lordship knew nothing about it He might

enjoin future Governments to give but never not to give
this worried me, and it is not without care that I
strive to make a complete work of the sources I
feel in a strait - duty draws me towards my family
and duty draws me to finish the work undertaken
David Livingstone