

Letter to George Grey, 4, [8 or 9] April 1861

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org), 2017

[0001]

Mohilla Island - near Comoro

4 April 1861.

My Dear Sir George

You will probably have

heard ere this reaches you that we went

to the Rovuma in February and made

an attempt to ascend that river in March.

Our progress was arrested when only some

thirty miles from the mouth by observing

that the water was falling at the rate of seven

inches a day; we had come over some

parts not more than five or six feet deep

and our vessel was drawing four & a half

feet so we had to make up our minds

whether to proceed further and remain among

a people whom we do not know till next

flood, or come back and work on our

old "spoor" up the Shire - The detention

would have been such a waste of time

for those who remained at Johanna, &

would not have advanced the objects

of those who had come to Rovuma more

effectually than by spending the same

period up the Shire = For the general

good therefore we returned and were

favoured by a rise in the river of

three or four feet - this last is said

to be the last flood of the year, And

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made us fully alive to the fact that

from one cause or another we were

quite two months too late for successful

exploration.

From the little that we saw we are

disposed to think favourably of the river

as an entrance into Eastern Africa - It

has a sandy bottom ^ three quarters of a mile broad and partakes much

of the character of the Zambesi - Unlike

that river with its abominable bars,

it flows into a magnificent bay - and the only danger in its mile wide mouth is a sort of "bore" formed by the water of the river of a few fathoms meeting the ocean tide of nineteen fathoms. At full tide it is all smooth - By keeping near the shore it is quite safe at all periods of the tide - We have a very short delta and the land rises up from the banks in a gentle slope to 300 or 400 feet - It is well wooded the ebony attaining a much larger size than it does anywhere on the Zambesi - The country is very beautiful but there is something wrong among the people - Food seemed scarce in a soil where everything could grow - Half caste Arabs appear to lord it over the general population and they were inclined to do the same with us. When my brother took the Makololo on shore to cut wood some of them came and assumed the airs we read of in

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in countries further North. They demanded payment for the wood and he offered to give it provided that they should cut it. But no, they would seize that already cut, the Makololo were unarmed but made a rush to their arms - "They would not let their white men be imposed on" the bastards made a rush the other way, and could scarcely be prevailed on to come back and take up the vegetables they had left behind - But for this little shew of pluck we should have had the company of these half castes at every village - fines levied on every possible pretext - and the word passed on beyond their beat, that we were a herd of she asses to be milked for the public benefit - It is of the utmost importance here, as in Europe for the people to feel that you are not dependant on them - If they see that you can get on without them they are much more obliging You could not have done a wiser deed than give my friend Captain Speke the Hottentot gaurd - If they ^ continue stead fast and escape fever, which is rather doubtful as people of colour

are as liable to it as whites, his opinion of the general population will be raised about 300 per cent - I have always found that the presence of a trusty band of Makololo - though useless for ship work, was invaluable on land - It was not without considerable regret

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that we gave up the project of a land journey with them up the Rovuma. It was the worst season for travelling - rain, and heavy dews would have cut us up. In fact the same reasons that prevailed for the postponement of the landing of the Mission still continued in force - By the time we reach the Shire we shall be in the healthier season, and a beginning will be made of the general labours from the other end of Nyassa to that which we looked on by the Rovuma - It is curious that all the people declare that Ny Rovuma comes out of Nyassa - This, according to a curious idea that has come over the geographical mind in England, must mean that Nyassa comes out ^ of Rovuma I wish our good friends would only tell us all about it beforehand - It would save us a great deal of trouble - and deliver us from the perplexity of guessing and - grumbling - We see for instance Shire never discolours in flood - but is always of a dark mossy hue = carries a great deal of mica, has a muddy bottom and never rises or falls more than a few feet - Rovuma rises some five or six feet - is very brown & muddy, but has a sandy bottom - water carries little or no mica - and tastes of rain rather than moss. Now anything positive if given beforehand will be thankfully recieved though it comes from the Archives of Prester John

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P.S. Johanna, at W^m Sunley's
H. M. Consul, Comoro Islands -

We require two well trained strong
mules fit for and used to either

harness or the saddle - and two
good strong Scotch carts with
harness &c complete to transport
goods past Murchison's Cataracts.
And I have to beg you to place
the matter in proper hands
paying what may ^ reasonably be necessary
on account of the Expedition.
M^r Frederick Rutherford
might be a proper person
but I dont know whether
he undertakes these sort of
matters - there is plenty of time
as we expect them to meet
us by a man of war which
we beg may be sent to meet
us at Kongone on the 1st
January 1862 - We shall not,
indeed cannot return to the
sea till then -

If a small steamer we
expect comes before that

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and the bishops sisters should
wish to come by that opportunity
I shall be glad if you instruct
the person in charge to afford
every facility to any one con-
nected with the mission in his
power - either by coming up
to the Pioneer at Chibisa's
or Dakanamoio island and
offloading, then returning for
all their luggage or acting in
anyway that may seem most
serviceable to the general interests -
I should like now to see my own
wife appear on the scene but
we have a tough bit of work
in getting up a boat and examining
Nyassa - and Rovuma as the
Anatomical lecturers say "from above
downwards and from before
backwards" - What do you say 3 to 1 for Rovuma out of Tanganyika against &c &c

About the mules I sometimes
think a horse & mare for breeding

purposes might be preferable but
we might stumble into tsetse and then
everybody will say "why we knew that"
"I told you so."

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I propose to submit a spot near
the village marked "Chizunze's" not
far from the bottom of Zomba
for the bishop's inspection - the
headman called Chibaba is a
fat frank jolly fellow - the
elevation some 3000 or 4000
feet above the sea, cool in the
hottest part of the season, and
well watered. This will be a
sanatarium - and there stands
Zomba's top a day's journey up -
inhabited - and a fine rivulet -
If they become sick there they had
better make their wills at once
and not bother the doctors - some
work will be required to find a
good sloping kloof up to the
first Plateau. All have had
fever except one. Indeed but two
of the entire Expedition have escaped yet nothing serious
occurred -

You remember when every Cape
Paper contained the great Word
"Mazzepa" - From flaring in print
she has come down to carrying

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slaves. We found her here with sixty
on board bought at Kilwa (Quilwa) on
the East Coast at 22 dollars per head
then - the owner gave 250 dollars to
a chief on Comoro island to furnish
him with certificate that the slaves
were his own people lent as free
emigrants - It is here scarcely thought
necessary to conceal the nature of these
transactions - there is constant intercourse
between the islands & the chief is rather
admired for the amount he extracted,
but the French Government Official

is on board and it is illegal to touch her - What did the Emperor mean when he said that he would not have the slave trade at any price?

I am &c

David Livingstone