

Letter to [Joseph B. Braithwaite], 28 September 1858

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[0001]

Kongone Harbour

28th Sept^r 1858

My Dear Friend

I send you the first sheet of a letter I began for you but could not finish by the time the Pearl left us just to shew you I was not so unmindful of you as might be inferred. the other unfilled sheet told of the damage of Krootown by the present Governor Hill who was extremely kind to us and the effect on the general health. Now I go without farther preface into the middle of things and say that I have been up at Tete with the first cargo - the first steamer ever seen there and was visited with as much interest as the Leviathan. It would be a vain attempt ~~to meet~~ were I to endeavour to tell you of my meeting my Makololo companions Poor fellows they grasped my hands and arms with all fervour

[0002]

and lullilood as a way of shewing joy The Portuguese could not get near me for they clustered so closely. I never shed tears but this time as I told them that I had no Sekwebu with me the tears ran down in spite of me. Thirty have died of small pox and six were killed by a half caste chief who holds a stockade at the confluence of the Luenyathe excuse is that it was done in a fit of drunkenness. For them our hearts are very sore. they have accumulated a stock of property in beads fowls & pigs by woodcutting & other work and many of them have taken wives and possibly a

few may remain altogether But they
say the Tette people taunted us often
by saying your Englishmen will never
return but we trusted you and now
our hearts will sleep.

We got the Tette gentlemen to dig coals
for us, the very first ever taken out
of the seam in this country. We got a
ton and a half and the engineer reports
them to be good for steaming purposes
though what we have is from the
surface and exposed for ages in the

[0003]

bank of a river to the action of floods
and our ifM^r Thornton our geologist
reports favourably of them too. He will
yet make a full report of the whole thing
quantity, quality &c. With, as I believe
from my own former observations, no
end of coal and the best iron ore
Surely the Great Architect designed
something grand for the future of this
poor trodden down Africa. As for
me I will work with might and
main at this one thing that it be
opened to the gospel of the grace of
the Almighty. From all I hear
of Kebra basa it is not a waterfall
but a number of rocks jutting out
across the stream which render the
passage through deep tortuous and
dangerous. If half a years work
and a good deal of expense in gun
powder and sweat will remove
this obstacle then dont be sur
prised at my turning quarryman
as well as consul & "Skipper" but
I say nought about it till I see
and I am going up to see directly
while the river is low

[0004]

The Naval officer who came with me
turned out badly, quarreled with everyone
and at last from the confident belief
that we could not move a mile without
him took on all manner of airs against
myself. I had to interfere for the protection
of my companions and especially
for the Captain of the Pearl and Bedingfeld

at once resigned. I would have sent him home at once but thinking it would not be doing as I would be done by if I did not give him a chance I allowed him to withdraw the letter. I could not allow him to make the cabin of the Launch his own private apartment and on seeing him turn out the things of my companions unceremoniously I requested him to ask them first. Then came resignation second I bore with slander, carping, complaining raising objections and endeavouring to excite the Kroomen to mutiny to the utmost limits of endurance but he went on from bad to worse - ran the boat aground and said to one of the officers "do you think they could do without me" So I accepted his resignation and mounted the paddle box myself made quicker passages - carrying heavier loads than was ever done before

[0005]

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First trip I never once touched the ground and he never made a trip without doing so several times and delayed us by clumsiness in getting her off. D^r Kirk tried it too and was equally successful so we got two skippers instead of one. When we returned from our first trip never did lower jaw descend like his when we came in "Ease her, stop her, let go the anchor " All right. He then tried in various ways to secure his pay but failed though he accused me of cruelty harshness &c &c because I ordered him off to Kilimane and thence home. I never met a person who had so little regard to truth as he. He seemed to trust to unlimited assertion and even wrote a log after his dismissal in which he changes sides making me the person who hindered our progress and himself the person anxious to get on

[0006]

It was awfully painful to witness all this in connection with extra ostentatious piety. His secret prayers must be done

in sight of the whole ship. but if you
will not be offended I enclose some of the
rough copy I have sent home to Foreign
Office All the rest of my companions
are agreeable. Not a single jar and
with B. I had no quarrel. What he
may make a noise about is the following

I consider this Expedition as experimental
in various respects one of these is
the health. Now the great Niger Expedition
if I am rightly informed had prayers
read three times a day and stopped all
Sunday. Warned by its fate I resolved
to lose not a moment in getting my
party out of the Mangrove swamps
and worked on that day at what I
believe to be service to Christ Our Lord
after asking the leave of the men
I sent the Pearl off without a case

[0007]

Two Dutch clergymen whom I met in the house of a rebel have fastened on a footnote in
my book and make a great row because £400 or £500 is mentioned instead of £200 or 300

28 Sept. 1858 (continued)

People may talk against this they talked
more against the Niger Expedition's loss
of life. then when we got out of the
swamps of Mangrove & mud we found
the country in a state of war and
I could not rest all day on Sunday
while my companions were exposed
to be plundered. So I never stopped
except to have a public religious
service unless we were all together
on the island. We have had no
fever yet some colds which resemble
fever a little but nothing serious. This
is a sand river in contrast to the
muddy ones of the West. The river is
now near its lowest point, and
as it is spread over between from one
mile to three in width we found con-
siderable difficulty in getting a deep
channel. but when we got to Lupata
all difficulties of that kind ended
Two naval officers gave a very
favourable report when it was five
or six feet higher than now. I see it
in its worst state and a vessel

[0008]

but say nothing of my mention of them. They wish by this slight mistake to throw discredit on the whole

drawing three feet would navigate it with ease
I was led to trust in the report of the naval
officer respecting this Launch the Ma Robert
and was deceived for instead of as he said
very little wood being required we spend
half our time wood cutting and she has
a badly constructed engine - so weak too
the canoes pass us in ascending & look
back at the "Asthmatic" as she ought to
be called. It is a great shame to M^r
Laird to send such a job from his shop
the vessel herself is good & a well made
one - broader & shorter would save our
sailors an immense amount of labour but the
engine is a wretched thing but here we
are & will make the best of it. Bedingfeld's
untruthfulness began in England. He led me
to reject the Ban a fine vessel drawing 3
feet but I find now it was because he
would have been required to navigate her out
and he could not from sea sickness

the war is finished. It was nothing to us for we
went from one side to the other perpetually as friends
of both. We sometimes raised an alarm in the
rebel camp by coming near their sentinels by night
but when we called out "English" (Maingleze)
all was right. Several influential Portuguese wished
to accept my mediation but the Governor refused
Kindest love to Robert and you all in Kendal
M^{rs} L is away to KurumanDavid Livingstone