

Letter to Lord Kinnaird, 25 April, 8 May 1862

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Shupanga 25th April 1862

Dear Lord Kinnaird

You may have been surprised to hear of the death of Bishop MacKenzie by the same mail with my last letter containing no forebodings of such a loss. The time between our receiving the news, and the departure of the mail was so short that I could not let you know that our anticipations of a healthy and successful mission had been disappointed. I prevented the bishop's party from landing for three months. then took them up to the healthy highlands, but after exposing themselves for days together to rain in going to punish a chief who had maltreated two of the party, the bishop and another returned to the lowlands, was upset in his canoe in a marsh losing bedding medicine &c. & perished - the place selected for their settlement has turned out unhealthy. It was shaded by magnificent trees and surrounded on three sides by a fine stream about 10 yards wide. the poor bishop admired the trees exceedingly and would allow none to be cut down.

A kind salutation to Lady Kinnaird. My wife told me lately of her kindness to her.

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but having about 140 freed captives the absence of sanitary regulations and airmade the place become like a huge cesspool. the missionaries speak of it as a "pest hole". Scarcity of provisions followed a period in which there was an absolute glut from the whole population sending their surplus stores to the mission - dysentery ensued &

some 30 of the freed people died - To people living in such an unhealthy atmosphere the smallest scratch became a frightful ulcer. The missionaries did all they could for the people except removing to a spot having free circulation of air, and suffered in their own health. It is no wonder that some of them feel discouraged and

8th May I had written thus much by the sick bed of my wife when the saddest event of my life put it out of my head. On 27th I had to part with my good and faithful companion of eighteen years whom I married for love and the longer I had her I loved her the more. It is the first heart-stroke I have experienced and seems to take the spirit out of me, and to blacken all my horizon. Everything else that happened

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to me only made my mind rise with a determination to overcome. All our longings for one day having a quiet home are now gone. She is, I trust through Divine mercy, in the home of the Blest, for she was a good though often dejected christian You will excuse my saying so much of a personal nature.

Our steamer for Nyassa came out in pieces instead of sailing out as I had arranged that she should do. It was feared that in sailing out she might be lost and my plan which involved exposure in the delta of three or four days was, no doubt with the best intentions, departed from for one which has kept us in the Delta four months. But I do not feel much regret for the change of plan compared to the loss we have sustained by the engines of the Pioneer being out of order - For Commander Wilson of H.M.S. Gorgon who is well known to Admiral Hope volunteered to help us up the cataracts and all seemed to promise a speedy departure from the lowlands but

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the engineer of the Pioneer had neglected his duty. The engines were full of sand & we were three weeks in getting up to Shupanga which we have done before & since with as heavy a load in two & a half days. We were then obliged to unload and put the steamer together at the most unhealthy part of the river. While trying to vow to the Almighty Disposer of events it is impossible not to feel regret that we have not been able to take advantage of the knowledge which we imparted to the Portuguese - their last detachment of soldiers was sent up at once to Tette and they have lost but two in two years. While formerly when they kept them down at Quillimane and Sennathey were invariably nearly all cut off.

M^rRae put the shell of the steamer together in a fortnight. I am carrying the rest of her from Kongone to Shupanga and we hope to go up Shire in June. the Portuguese say nothing to us about the captives we freed and we of course dont introduce the subject. We hope to do something towards a permanent stoppage of the trade from Nyassa of 19000 slaves to Zanzibar as soon as we get on the Lake David Livingstone