

Letter to Edward Marjoribanks, 6 August 1859

David Livingstone

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[0001]

River Zambesi 6th August,
1859
My Dear Sir

I ought to have written
long ago to let you know that the hard
work unmercifully imposed on me
by our contracting engineer has not
killed me. We have been doing the work
which a decent engine would have done -
and it was only a dogged determination
not to "give in" that has enabled me
to hold on so long. Leaving the labour
of navigating the Zambesi for a
season ^we ascended a branch of it
named Shire (Sheerey) about a
hundred miles. This had never
been examined by any European
before. We then left the people
there for awhile, and returning
went about 20 days on foot
beyond one hundred miles, and
discovered a magnificent
inland Lake called Shirwa
(Sheerwah). This work was play
compared to the monotony of
an everlasting cutting of wood
E. Marjoribanks Esquire
I am sailing master though as far as taste is concerned
I would as soon drive a cab in London in winter

[0002]

and waiting for the slow movement
of an engine really destined I believe
to grind coffee in a shop window, but
palmed off on us at an enormous
price, by a philanthropist! I never
appreciated the value of you business
men so highly as I do now; but

not to weary you with the story of
our toils; I may state that I had the
great pleasure of introducing one
of my companions D^r Kirk to a
portion of the fine country which
when travelling across Africa I discovered
one is so accustomed to think
of this country and "Afric burning
sands" as identical, that in describing
the rich fertile valleys & uplands
with running streams, I often
felt that it was hardly fair for
me to expect persons entirely to
believe me. When however we
went on foot beyond the furthest
point our vessel could go up the Shire,
we ascended in ten days \1500 feet
in altitude, and then we were among
mountains at least 6000 feet high

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and all green and covered with trees
to the top. One, Zomba, has a flat
top and is inhabited - We could see
the gardens from below - Its top is
quite fifteen miles broad - and then
all the country below is so fertile
that one is quite buried in the tall
grass 7 or 8 feet high - Every few
miles you cross a running stream
or burn, and large fields of cotton,
grain, and kassava (from which
tapioca is made) are met with. Sugar
cane grows everywhere, and but
little care is needed. This above
all countries is calculated to yield
the new materials of our commerce
and if it should please Providence
to permit us to introduce the
trade in these we shall do something
towards the extinction of slavery. We
are now on our way back to the
Lake region, and this time I have
D^r Kirk - M^r C. Livingstone (my
brother) and Mr Rae, all Scotchmen
in company, and hope to look
at a much larger lake beyond Shirwa -
By the discoveries in the no idea?

[0004]

Africa will soon appear to be a very different region from the sandy deserts of the Map makers, and I earnestly hope that I may see a beginning of a new state of things than a nightly slave market. We think that we have rendered the African fever less formidable - and should the rich fertile country, most of which now lies untilled, become the means of assisting our own home honest poor by colonization, I think I should die contented. We have had but little news from home but that little contained the information that Miss Coutts had most munificently provided religious instruction for the new Colony and this greatly gladdened my heart.

I have little to say on business. I was obliged to have my wife at the Cape and she went with her parents up to Kuruman - 500 miles inland. She has been drawing on the £500 you kindly placed for me at Mr. Dickson's I don't know how much, for we no penny postage nuisance here - The Government has been aware of my life being yet spared, and I suppose you have been drawing my consular salary in consequence. With kind salutations I am most Truly Yours David Livingstone