

Letter to Thomas S. Livingstone, 28 August 1866, 1 February 1867

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

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[0001]

Lake Nyassa - 28 August
1866

My Dear Tom

We have had a long & weary trudge from the coast up to this and have been almost shut up from letting our whereabouts be known. The Arab slave traders all skiddadle as soon as they hear of our approach and away they go scuttling through pathless forests. I entrusted one letter about the sepoys to a chief to be given to a slave trader for I had no hope of looking one in the face, and at the time I gave it I had small hopes of its ever reaching its destination for the fellows must conclude that they were bearing no good news about themselves - I write however in case I may light on one as I did on Seph Rubéa by accident he heard that I was famishing and came forward like a man and brother with an ox and big bag of flour - We had just accomplished a march of eight days across a depopulated tract of country and he with some 800 slaves was just entering on it - I had made forced marches on the 6th & 7th day to buy food and send it back to the weaker bretheren - all but four had given in, when this good Samaritan slave trader took the precaution of taking the bull by the horns. "The English coming" - "Why what can the christians want but our slaves", and off they all scamper - This dread of the English has the disadvantage that I cannot get a dhow though there are two on the Lake for fear that I should burn it -

The country is a gradual slope from the coast up to within fifty miles of this shore - When within the influence of the humidity of the Indian Ocean the forests are dense to a painful degree - one could no more take bearings of his position unless he were a baboon then if he tried to use his instrument out of the bunghole of a hogshead. Further up it is more often forest but still so thickly planted that one very seldom sees the horizon - at the confluence of the Rovuma & Loendi we came on a tract of country destitute of provisions and here the sepoys entirely failed me - they had done their best to kill the beasts of burden by way of forcing me to turn & they certainly succeeded in some instances - The Tsetse probably helped but the experiment was vitiated - The

sepoys were morally unfit for travel and then we had
hard lines all of us - food was not to be had for love or
money - our finest cloths only got miserable morsels
of the common grain - I trudged it the whole way
and having no animal food save what turtle doves
and guinea fowls we occasionally shot I became
like one of the Pharaoh's lean kine. the last tramp
that referred to above brought us to a land of plenty.

[0002]

It was over a very fine country but quite depopulated
I counted in one days march fifteen running burns
and this in the dry season - The country was then undulating
and mountainous - generally from 2000 to 3000 ^ then 4000 feet
above the sea - cool & pleasant - The people near the
coast are called Makonde - then Matambwe - then Makoa
then Waiau or Waiyau - the Ajawa further south
and lastly Manganja or Wanyassa here on the Lake
The principal chief named Mataka lives on the watershed
overlooking this but fifty miles or more distant -
his town contained a thousand houses many of
them square in imitation of the Arabs - Large patches
of English peas in full bearing grow in the moist
hollows or were irrigated - Cattle shewed that no
Tsetse existed - When we arrived Mataka was just
sending back a number of cattle & captives to their
own homes - they had been taken by his people without
his knowledge from Nyassa - I saw them by
accident there were 54 women and children -
about a dozen young men & boys and about 25 or
30 head of cattle - as the act was spontaneous it
was all the more gratifying to witness - From
Mataka's I sent the sepoys back - a more useless
lot I never saw - It was all against the grain that
they came, and they had such a sullen hangdog expression
of face the country people used to remark of them - "these
are the slaves of the party".
To come back to Nyassa was like visiting an old
home I never expected to see - The roar of the waves
and a dash in the breakers or rather rollers was quite
exhilarating - We get milk here and often fine
fresh fish very like herring in taste & appearance
These are putting flesh on our bones - Where
D^r Roscher came I cannot make out - Nobody
knew him as a European and no one knows
his name - I believe he travelled as an Arab.
I have to stand a deal of staring as the first English
man they ever saw but a poodle dog is as popular
as anyone - His appearance is so terrific to the

country curs that they flee from him as if he were
a lion and he chases them as if he believed the
same thing of himself - I think his fierce appearance
arises from it being difficult to decide at
which end his tail lies - the rest of my party
do pretty well

[0003]

I sometimes remember you with some anxiety
as not knowing what opening may be made
for you in life. The Dear of Ely - the Red Harvey
Goodwin said to me that he might be able to do some
thing to help forward the education of my children.
The church of England people have much in their
power - It is a rich Establishment, and they have
many educational priveleges of which we have
scarcely a vestige in Scotland - they have presentations
to schools and colleges which provide for young
men of ability, and open up higher situations - though
I do not know how your tendencies be I wrote to
Professor Sedgwick to put the Dean in mind of
his kind intentions - the letter will go with this
and I should he write to D^r Buchanan or M^r Young
you will have made up your mind what to
answer - They require very thorough scholarship,
and I have no doubt but you are working for
that with a will - If you incline to the mercantile line
you will require to be a year or two in a merchants
office in London, but whatever you feel yourself best
fitted for "Commit thy way unto the Lord" Trust also in him
and he will bring it to pass" - One ought to endeavour to devote
the peculiarities of his nature to his Redeemer's service whatever
these may be - Many make mistakes, as for instance a person
of a solid practical turn of mind & body, looking to a minister of a
fervid impulsive nature as his model - and aspiring to that
for which he was never intended - M^r Young you will find a
good counsellor and a warm friend - you can scarcely go
wrong with his advice - It would be well to visit them as
often as convenient - Captain Sherard Osborne said to me
that he could assist you in his line that is get you a situation
in an Indian Railway - they are well paid but you could
look to that only if you enetered on it - I said that I would tell you
Let nothing come between your work of mental preparation
for the present -
1st Feb^y 1867 at Bemba about 10° 10' Lat S. & 31° 50' East -
for we came but yesterday - We crossed Loangwa R. &
then had a long wet hungry march through to Babisa
country to cross Chambeze as Zambesi is here called in
10° 34' South. The Babisa are great slave traders and have
reaped its fruits in a miserable destitute depopulated

country - It is one great forest with mountain & flood
very fine to look at but toilsome - dripping with
showers every day - small patches of millet at wide
intervals & scanty population who have nothing to sell

[0004]

Mushrooms in plenty in the dark forests but a little millet
porridge & Mushrooms - woe is me - good enough to produce
fine dreams of the Roast beef of Old England but nothing else
I have become very thin - thought I was so but now
if you weighed me you might calculate very easily how much
you might get for the bones only but I take on flesh easily &
we got a cow yesterday & I am to get milk tomorrow & will wait
a little with the chief Chitapangowa a good fellow so far as we
have seen him - I am on the Watershed I think at last about 4500 ft
above the sea - We crossed one range 6600 feet & then a spot where
I grieve to write it poor Poodle "Chitane" was drowned - We had
to cross a marsh a mile wide & waist deep - bottom soft peaty
stuff in which one did well enough but deep holes made by buffaloes
feet caused us flounder - I went over first & forgot to give orders about
the dog - all were too much engaged in keeping his balance to notice
that he swam among them till he died - He had more spunk than a
hundred country dogs, took charge of the whole line of march - ran to
see the first in the line then back to the last & barked to haul him up
then when he knew what hut I occupied would not let a
country cur come in sight of it & never stole himself - He was
becoming yellowish red like the country dogs - and he shared
the starving with me - We have not had any difficulties
with the people - made many friends - imparted a little
knowledge sometimes and raised a protest against slaving
very widely - some will remember what was said & at all
events a beginning was made - Some black slaves from
the Coast were found here - their first visit - but they go off
tomorrow & I try the experiment of sending letters - a few half
ready in ones & hope they may reach you. The rains hold us
back but we hope to be at our second supply of goods
at Tanganyika by May - not a line has come to me
from the coast so I am as ill off for news of you as you
may be of me. I have but nine African boys with me
the Johanna men ran back in sheer terror of the Mazitu or
Zulus. In fact [they] did that at the South end of the Lake which I
feared would occur at the North end, but we have fewer
mouths to fill & when we are in a game country I generally
secure a beast. My love to Agnes Oswald & the Anties with
Anna Mary - the Lord bless & keep you all - I expect letters
at Tanganyika - You must send love to John & family
in America & also to Charles for I cannot write them
at present Affectionately Yours -
David Livingstone

