

Letter to Editor of The Times, [11 April 1861]

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

~~The Editor of the Times~~

D^r Livingstones expedition arrived in Pomony Bay, the residence of M^r consul Sunley on the island of Johanna, on the 9th of April last from the river Rovuma on the coast of Africa, and came round to the chief town to coal the "Pioneer" from H.M.S. Wasp on the 11th. They had ascended the river only thirty miles, when halting to wood their ship, a mark was made on a tree shewed that the water was falling at the rate of six or seven inches a day. they had found some parts carrying no more than five or six feet

[0002]

of water, and as they drew nearly five feet, they had to look out and not be left, by spending more time in going up, fixtures till the flood of next year. the cause of this unsuccessful termination is attributed to various delays suffered by the Pioneer[in the voyage out] making her at least quite two months behind the time for a successful trip up the river. After coaling they left for the Zambesi intending to go up the Shire, and then make a road past Murchison's cataracts on that river to Lake Nyassa. The distance is only thirty five miles, and it is hoped that they will carry a boat up above the cataracts and

[0003]

by that means explore the Lake.

It is also in contemplation

to settle the point whether Rovuma
comes out of Nyassa as asserted
by all the people they met before
going in the Pioneer again to
that river. The Oxford and
Cambridge mission accompany
the expedition up the Shire, and
it is proposed to place these
gentlemen on the plateau of
2000 feet [above the sea] on which stands
Mount Zomba - there they are
likely to enjoy good health,
while pursuing their enterprise
they have had a good deal of fever, but no
mortality. The healthy season begins in May.

The Rovuma will probably
turn out to be the entrance into
Eastern Africa - it must
[0004]
however be navigated with a
vessel of light draught, and with
the same skill as is required
in the above bridge London
passenger boats. On the question
whether it actually derives its
waters from Nyassa the D^r thinks
that it cannot come out of
the Nyassa he discovered - but
[from] some other lake. The reasons
he adduces are - Nyassa is already
known to give off one large
river, the Shire - this river
never rises nor falls more
than three feet nor is its water
ever discoloured. The Rovuma
rises and falls six or more
feet, becomes very muddy and
no instance is known of one
Lake giving off two large rivers
[0005]
the probability is therefore that if
the Rovuma does not come out of
a Nyassa or Nyanza (lake
or piece of water)
it is some
other than that discovered by
the Expedition. It is well known
that lakes having no outlets
become brackish in the course
of ages. This is the case with

Shirwa - but Nyassa and
Tanganyika are sweet. the
former owes its sweetness
to the Shire flowing out of it.
Does Tanganyika owe its
sweetness to the Rovuma?

While the Pioneer was at
Johanna a French vessel having
sixty slaves on board lay anchored
[0006]
close to H.M.S. Wasp. She came
from Quiloa on the coast of
Africa where the cost of the
slaves was twenty two dollars.
The slave trader then went
to Comoro Island, and paid
250 dollars to one of the chiefs
there for a certificate that
the slaves had been engaged
there. This last transaction
could not be hid from
all the other chiefs, but the
slaver cannot be captured.
He had even the assurance
to ask a supply of provisions
and rum from the Man-
of War. The Emperor of France
[0007]
is said to have declared that
if the so called "free emigration"
were the slave trade he would
not have it at any price -
here unfortunately his people
have it at the prices above
stated.

Private the object of attempting
the Rovuma is to get an
entrance into Eastern Africa
exterior to the Portuguese claims
We hope to carry a boat up
to Nyassa and ascertain the
nature of the connection
if any exists, between the
Lake and the River.

David Livingstone
[0008]

1861

D^r Livingstone

Rec: July 16