

Letter to Roderick I. Murchison, 18 June, 17 July 1864

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)
[0001]

Malta 17th July. I come home to consult friends as to my future work. I did not sell the steamer - could

Poonah 18th June 1864

My Dear Sir Roderick

We arrived at Bombay on the 13th current after a passage of forty four days from Zanzibar, and very thankful I feel to be again on solid ground. From Zanzibar we went along the African coast for the sake of the help of a current of at least one hundred miles a day. If Solomon's ships went down to Sofalla, as some suppose, they could not have done it [against this current] in the South West Monsoon. We went along beautifully till we got past the Line then fell into a calm region which Captain Maury places south of the Equator. Altogether we had 24 1/2 days calm, the sea as smooth as glass, and as we had but one stoker with us we could
[0002]

find it in my heart to give up Africa & now run

not steam more than nine or ten hours at a time. By patience & perseverance we have at last got over our 2500 miles - but I now feel at as great a loss as ever. I came here to sell the steamer but with that comes the idea of giving up Africa before accomplishing something against the slave trade. The thought of it makes me actually feel as if I could not lie in my grave in peace with all the evils I know going on. That which makes it doubly galling is the fact that while Lord

Palmerston's policy has, to a very
gratifying extent, been successful on
the West Coast - The same measures
have been in operation here - the same
[expense and] same dangers incurred - the same
heroic services performed by H M
cruisers on this coast, and all has been
rendered ineffectual by dirty dribble
[0003]

home intending to be back again in four months
& will too if I can make up the means. D. L.

of the Portuguese convict population,
who by no means represent either
the best or half best of the statesmen
of Lisbon. the country is to be shut
up now more closely than ever.
and unless we have an [English] trading settle-
ment some where on the the mainland
beyond their power. ~~Without it~~ all
repressive measures will continue
fruitless.

I would willingly have
gone up some of the rivers instead
of coming here - but I had only three
white men - a stoker - a sailor
~~and~~ a carpenter; and seven Zambesians
The sailor & stoker had severe illnesses
in the way and it would have been
imprudent to go up a strange river
as the Juba - - -

so short handed. The two men
named had moreover volunteered
to accompany me to Bombay though
they had served some years with us .

[0004]

[already] so it would not have been right to have
drawn them elsewhere. Our engineer
left at Zanzibar for a situation on
a sugar plantation, and I had either to
run the risk of a pretty long voyage in
the little Lady of Nyassa or wait at
Zanzibar till the monsoon changes in
Autumn. She is a first rate little seaboat
and rose on the huge waves of the Bay
~~of Bengal~~ [Indian ocean] like a little duck - but she
was not intended for sailing. the sails
are very simple and the screws drag in
the water as if we had another boat in
tow.

I have some hesitation too because
the Baron Van der Decken intends to
explore the rivers. but my object is not
so much exploration as to set in train
operations by merchants & others which
shall eventually work out the slave trade.
I would not forestall him or do anything
dishonourable and I wish I had five
minutes conversation with you about
it. The Mission of the Universities was a
sore disappointment to me. they have all
bolted - too fine gentlemen I fear for the work
of civilising. Kind love to Lady M. from yours
Ever affectionately David Livingstone