

Letter to Robert M. Livingstone, 26 September 1861

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

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

Lake Nyassa 26 Sep^t

1861

My Dear Robert

You asked me once
if this Lake were beautiful. I am
now 120 miles up from its southern
end, and yet I cannot very well answer
your question for this is the time of
year in which a great deal of grass is
burned and the air is so hazy that
one cannot see any distance. We can
however make out that it is, as
far as we have yet gone, encircled
with mountains - and highland scenery
is always beautiful. We suppose it
to be 30 or 40 miles broad at its wider
parts but should we have fair weather
we hope to measure it by means of the
stars, a chronometer and sextant. It is
very deep in some parts, we could
feel no bottom at 35 fathoms or 210
feet. At present it is frequently
stormy and its waves rise very high
in a very short space of time - Its
[0002]
[shores] are crowded with inhabitants and
as they never saw white men before
they swarm around us as boys do a
black man at home. An Arab vessel
called a dhow ran away to the Eastern
side when we came near. It had a
cargo of slaves. The object we have in
view in coming is to put a stop to
this traffic and we hope to do so by
introducing lawful commerce &
the gospel of Christ. We went up with
bishop Mackenzie to the highlands to
to shew him a healthy place and
introduce him to the people and
met four parties of slave hunters.

We took about 140 captives from them and I gave them to the bishop to commence his mission with.

Most of them were women and children all naked and tied to each other by thongs passed round their necks. the men had a horrid stick on their necks fastened with iron. these slave hunters had induced a number of

[0003]

of another tribe to capture people for them we came to this tribe while burning three villages. and though we told them that we came peaceably and to talk with them they saw that we were a small party and might easily be overcome. rushed at us and shot their posioned arrows. One fell between the bishop and me another whizzed between another man & me. We had to drive them off, and they left that part of the country. Before going near them the bishop engaged in prayer and during the prayer we could hear the wail for the dead by some manganja probably thought not worth killing, and the shouts of welcome home to these bloody murderers. It turned out that these were only some sixty or seventy robbers and not the Ajawa tribe so we had a narrow escape from being murdered

How are you doing? I fear from what I have observed of your

[0004]

temperament that you will have to strive against fickleness. Everyone has his besetting fault. That is no disgrace to him but it is a disgrace if he does not find it out and by God grace overcome it. Your Uncle Robert is very fickle, never overcame it, has had many opportunities of succeeding in life but wanted steadfastness of purpose and is now settled down as a poor trader. I am not near to advise you what to do but whatever line of life you choose resolve to stick to it and serve God therein to the last. Whatever failings you are conscious of tell

them to your Heavenly Father, strive
daily to master them and confess all
to him when conscious of having gone
astray. And May the Good Lord of
all impart all the strength you need
commit your way unto the Lord
Trust also in him, and acknowledge
him in all your ways and He will
bless you. I am writing now
because we cannot put out
in the boat through the surf. It
hinders our progress greatly.

I hope to write to each of you
before we reach the sea in
January next. Ever affectionately

David Livingstone