

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

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

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]

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 cruizers on this coast, and all has been rendered ineffectual by dirty dribble

[0003]

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 settlement 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 seaboard 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

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

[0005]
find it in my heart to give up Africa & now run

[0006]
home intending to be back again in four months
& will too if I can make up the means. D. L.