

## 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 are skidaddle 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 hope of it 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 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> 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 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 with 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 hogshhead. 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 & Loanda we came on a tract of open 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 [...] . 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 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 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 Waiyan - the Ajawa further south  
and lastly the Manganja or Wanyassa here on the Lake  
The principal chief names 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 grew 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 - Frao  
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  
Dr Rosder 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 - th Rev Harvey  
Goodwinsaid 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  
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 write to D<sup>r</sup> Buchanan or M<sup>r</sup> Young  
you will have madde up your mind what to  
answer. They require very thorough scholarship,  
and I have no doubt but you are working for  
that will 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 Lond: 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<sup>r</sup> Young you will find a  
good counsellor and a warm friend - you can scarcely go  
wrong with his advice. It would be wise to visit them as  
often as convenient. Captain Sherard Obborne 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.

1<sup>st</sup> Feb<sup>y</sup> 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 there 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 - though 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 very easily &  
we got a cow yesterday & I am to get milk tomorrow & will want  
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 one 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 & 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 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