

Letter to Lord John Russell, 28 November 1865

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

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

Copy
n^o1

Bombay- 28 Nov^r 1865

My Lord,
I have had the honour to inform Y. L. that having arrived here on the 11th Sept^r I spent some time in organizing my expedition for the interior of Africa, & was ready to start 6 weeks ago.

On again visiting my little steamer, I came to the conclusion that she was much too small to recross the 2700 miles between this and the river Rovuma, & that it w^d be unwise again to incur the risk of that - navigation for the sake of using her on the 150 miles of that river wh^h is navigable.

I therefore waited, in the hope of hearing of a passage in a man-of-war, in accordance with a request made by the Forⁿ office to the Admiralty, but received no information till the arrival of Comm^{re} Montresora week ago, when it appeared that the first ship proceeding to the E. Coast w^d not be here for another month. H. E. Sir Bartle Frere, however, having given me the option of a passage in a small steamer, named "Thule", wh^h is to be sent in a few days as a
[0002]

a present
from this Gov^t to the Sultan of Zanzibar, I shall gladly avail myself of this conveyance.

By the favour of H. E. the Gov^r I have 12 sepoy volunteers & a native officer from the Marine Battalion, who having served as marines in the old East Indian Navy in the Persian Gulph & on the Coast of Africa are prepared to undergo hardship, & it has been

kindly arranged that this work will count as service.

In addition to these, 8 liberated Africans, who have received some education at a gov^t school at Nassick, and been taught carpenter & smith's work, have also volunteered to serve.

The most serious drawback to travelling in Africa is the want of carriage & beasts of burden. The insect called "tsetse", by destroying domestic animals, confines cattle to very limited areas of country. As wild buffaloes are not injured by the bite of this pest, it occurred to me to try whether the tame buffalo of India might not enjoy the same immunity, & by the very friendly assistance of H. H. the Sultan of Zanzibar, who wrote an order to the Captain of

[0003]

of one of His Ships with his own hand to convey what I might send on board. I despatched 14 of these animals to be used as beasts of burden, & as an experiment to see if they can withstand the insect poison. The tame buffalo of India resembles the wild one of Africa so closely that they must be more than half brothers, & should we succeed in introducing a beast of burden it will be a boon to the country, & by rendering strangers almost independent of native carriers a blessing to travellers. The experiment at any rate is worth the expense.

H. E. Sir B. Frere has done everything in his power to aid my progress & shewn more kindness than I can express. Through his influence The Sultan of Zanzibar furnished a frinan to all his people whom we may meet in Africa. This will at least prevent hostility, & may do much more. It is a gratifying proof of H.H's friendship.

Some of the gentlemen of Bombay of their own accord entered into a subscription in aid of my expedition, & handed £645 to me. I have deposited this sum with a mercantile firm to be used as soon as I can point out a comparatively healthy locality, in an effort to

establish lawful commerce, & begin that system
wh^h has been so eminently successful on the West
Coast

[0004]

Coast. It is probable that a mercantile
house will manage a matter of this kind to
greater advantage, & spend the money to
better purpose than I could, because I am
deficient in the trading instinct.

The explanations pointed out in Y. L's
instructions, and in those of the Royal
Geographical Soc^y will claim my earliest
& earnest attention.

I am &c
/signed/ David Livingstone