

Letter to General Edward Sabine, 6 February 1860

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

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

[Ans^d. Oct. 3
by Arch. Mackenzie.]

Tette 6th Feby 1860

My Dear General Sabine

In spite of the interest
employed in our behalf by the Royal Society
and the intentions of Government
M^r Laird furnished us with a most
wretched vessel, and I am sorry to
inform you that our magnetic
instruments have lately suffered
severely in consequence. the
vessel was built of a sort of
Patent steel plate of only 1/16 of an
inch in thickness. It is excessively
hard - friction has no effect
upon it, but moisture & heat
[0002]

produce a chemical decomposition
from which paint is no protection.
Scales apparently of the black oxide
of iron are formed inside & out
and when these are peeled off there
is a black smooth shining surface
with numerous small holes. the
scales are strongly magnetic, and
I think that they have damaged the
magnetism of the instruments. The
moisture consequent on the scaling
off, and wet from springing
of leaks in plates now not
1/32 of an inch in thickness
have destroyed the glue in
the wooden parts, so much
that a new set would be
[0003]

the only really satisfactory
remedy. You may be
sure that my brother
will do the best that

he can in the circumstances
by regluing &c. but I
think it my duty to let
you know exactly how
matters stand. We hope
for a new vessel with
room for instruments &
collections. In this we have
neither [& much private & public property has been spoiled]. and she has been
so put together as to pump
water into herself by her own
proper motions. M^r Macgregor
[0004]

Laird promised before we got her
that she would carry ten or twelve
tons. His brother cooly says
after we got her, that she
was intended to carry only a
very few persons. As far
as discovery is concerned we
have done pretty well, but
all our operations have
been cramped by this wretched
vessel, and it is a wonder
we have escaped with our
lives.

I am Dear Sir

Yours Most Truly

David Livingstone