

Letter to Thomas S. Livingstone, 12 October 1861

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

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[0001]

Lake Nyassa 12 Oct^r 1861

Private

My Dear Tom

I often think that one of the greatest blessings God bestowed on me was birth in a Christian land of Christian parents and among those who loved the Lord Jesus. I feel how great was the benefit bestowed when I see human bones bleaching on the shores of this Lake or have the sense of smell offended by coming near human bodies rotting on the beach. The children are except in colour, just like children at home - the same merry shouts at play - the same tones of voice in weeping, but here no church going bell is ever heard - no school has ever been erected to teach either young or old. Slaving goes on whenever a slave buyer comes - the people offer children to us - We seem in the kingdom of darkness where men are without natural affection. but this state is largely indebted to war tormented either by slave traders or by native conquerors. the majority of the people flee before invaders and as we saw down the Shire place a river between [0002]

them and their enemies. Then comes starvation for the food is all left behind the parents have often to part with the children for food or the parents die and the children are left desolate - the headmen sell them - We came into a village surrounded by beautiful shady trees & stopped under them to breakfast a sadly emaciated child was sitting picking up grains of corn & eating them. but

thinking that we were the slavehunters
from whom it had escaped across the
river it made off crying though so weak it
could only crawl on hands & knees.
I took some of our breakfast to give
it but it had secreted itself among the
long grass & could not be found - Many
hundreds will perish in consequence
of the Ajawa invasion. which Ajawa
are only a small body of 60 or so robbers
and murderers urged on by Portuguese
They kill all the able bodied men of a
village and sell the women & children
for about three yards of calico worth
eighteen pence. If you knew how
sad this fair portion of the world is by
the wickedness of those who dwell in
in it you would pray heartily
"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be
done in earth as it is in heaven.

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We hope to place a steamer on this
Lake and this would do little without
a Mission. The Free Church of
Scotland proposes to send one, and I
rejoice to hear of it - We have been looking
at many places for a suitable locality
and At Makuza with a chief called
Marenga we think they might be
comfortable. We have always to
think of the healthiness of the place
first and curiously enough the
presence or absence of Mosquitoes
assists us in forming our judgement
A great many of these troublesome
insects shews where much fever
may be expected - The missionaries
will require a steamer and it is well
that they have many good friends
in Glasgow who would gladly
help them to one. We expect to have
one capable of being unscrewed at the
bottom of the cataracts and carried past
in pieces. Were it on the Lake now
we could save hundreds of lives
by buying food at one part of the
Lake where it is cheap and giving
it to the perishing. they would not
know our motives but in time they

[0004]

they would discover that the love of christ

constraineth us. We have had the honour
to lead the mission of the English
Universities up to the Mang-anja high-
lands. they settled on a nice spot by a
stream about the size of the Calder at the
Prior's bridge. It forms a bend thus
[symbol of a stream]and on the promontory at [cross symbol] they
live. the water was quite too cold to
bathe in when I was there. they are
about 3000 ft above the sea. and lofty
mountains rise East of them with the
tail of Lake Shirwa at their base. We
went to speak with the Ajawa robbers
from whom all the people were fleeing
and nearly lost our lives by some
people with us calling out "Here is our
Chibisa" this Chibisa is believed to have
all powerful war medicine & on the
murderers rushed at us and would
soon have made an end of us all
We were by this foolish cry deprived of
the shield of our good name and all
we could say in explanation was
looked on as an evidence of fear, but
God protected us and the Ajawa have
left that part of the country. I fear that
you will find my writing difficult as I
have to write with the paper on my knee
God bless you and save you

David Livingstone