

Letter to Thomas Milne, 28 October 1859

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

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River Shire, Eastern Africa
28 October 1859

Private

My Dear ^r Milne
As we have not yet
recieved any letters from home since
our departure in 1858 I take advantage
of this and skip over apologies to those
of my friends whom I have neglected
But I may say to you and M^{rs} M. that
I have not been idle, nor have I felt
at ease when I remembered my duty to
you. I have been employed in
work which I did contemplate on
leaving you. The naval officer
with whom I was furnished was
possessed with the idea that instead
of coming to seek the elevation of the
African and developement of the
country. he was about to discover
the ten lost tribes, as if of all things
in the world we had not plenty
of Jews already. I was soon forced
to send this visionary away and do
the work myself. though I assure you
I would as soon drive a cab as a

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steamer. We have but lately begun
our proper work. and I am happy to
tell you that our prospects brighten
where I never contemplated exploring.
We ~~went~~[steamed] up this river over one hundred
miles though only three were previously
known to the Portuguese. We have
also traced it on foot another hundred
and found that it emerges from
the hitherto undiscovered Lake Nyassa
or Nyinyesi. This lake must be
large for it gives off a large river

(Shire) without diminution of more than two feet during the whole year. there are too only 33 miles of cataracts in it and a common road could easily be made past them. Here you find the finest cotton field in the world for it is of unknown extent watered by the Lakes - Nyassa & Tamàndua and there are no frosts to endanger or cut off the crops as in America Instead too of the unmerciful toil required to raise the crops in that country - one sowing of foreign probably of American seed already introduced by the natives themselves

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serves for crops for three years though the plants be annually burned down. We have besides changes of climate produced by the land lying in terraces of different heights. The third terrace is 3000 feet high - and on it rises the Mount Zomba between 7000 & 8000 feet in altitude one day's march took us from the hot sultry valley of the Shire into a cool climate, and all the terraces are abundantly supplied with running rills of deliciously cold water. Fancy our tramping in the sun when the thermometer on the ground reached 126° and climbing up two thousand feet into air delightfully refreshing. Then on to Zomba into the cold. I am hoping that the Church Missionary Society long anxious to enter Eastern Africa will take advantage of this opening. they can be away from the unfriendly coast tribes at once - and check the slave trade in the middle of the slave market. We met a large party of East coast slave

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traders with an immense number of slaves and elephants tusks. A more black-guard looking lot I never saw. When they found out that we were English they slipped off by night, probably thinking the same of us as we did of them.

The policy of Lord Palmerston in repressing the slave trade has given the English a prestige of great value. the Lake Tamàdua is about ninety miles long. but no one could tell us how long Nyassa was. We could not explore it for we had left our sham vessel called a steamer in a sinking state. Funnel, Furnace, Deck & Bottom went down simulaneously after only 12 months wear. £1200 for 12 months (extras all paid for besides), was pretty fair without any whine from the contractor of "doing it all for the good of the cause." It has been a great hindrance to us from first to last involving enormous toil, and as in the Great Niger expedition, always wet. Indeed we have lain for many months on damp rotten cushions - but thanks to God we have not lost a man yet. We have had a first rate opportunity of trying the remedies for fever I had opted when alone & have been sucessful David Livingstone

Please present my kindest salutations to M^{rs} M. I remember her kindness with gratitude. Remember me also to other friends. My wife is at Kuruman

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My Address if you favour me with a letter, I don't say "line" only is D^r L care of Admiral Sir F. Grey K.C.B. Cape of Good Hope