

## Letter to Whitwell Elwin, 22 March 1858

*Livingstone, David, 1813-1873*

Published by Livingstone Online ([livingstoneonline.org](http://livingstoneonline.org))

[0001]

Screw Steamer Pearl

22 March 1858

My Dear Sir

One or two things having come to my recollection as probably worthy of insertion in the abridgement I note them down in order to send them back from Sierra Leone which place we hope to reach in the course of four or five days, and I may just say to you that we have had very fine weather up to this time and all my companions seem to be men in of the right stamp. I look upon this as a smile on our enterprise from the Benignant Father in Heaven. May He graciously continue to prosper us.

When speaking of the quantities of honey in the country above Tete, it may be well to remark that. We have several varieties of bees in the country, and some of them are without stings. One called Motla makes its hive always in the ground but a ~~still~~ very small variety of the same selects trees for this purpose. The honey is decidedly aromatic and sensibly acidulated in taste. The latter species swarm around any person who comes near their hive and lights on the face and hands and apparently sucks the perspiration. It resembles

[0002]

and is not much larger than the small common black ant and if it exists in Palestine may be the "ant" of Solomon, for I am not aware that the habit of "providing her meat in summer, and gathering her food in harvest" can be ascribed

to any ant as well as it can be  
to this species of bee. It would be  
worth while for those who travel  
in Palestine to examine this point.

At the point given of the pounding  
of corn in mortars by the  
ancient Egyptians - the following  
illustration of a scriptural phrase  
might be put in-

"though thou bray a fool in  
a mortar among wheat with a  
pestle yet will his foolishness not  
depart from him." When wheat  
or other grain is pounded in the  
mortars here represented a little  
water is added and very soon  
the bran is stripped off the seed  
the idea present to the mind of  
any one who has witnessed the  
operation is this, if wheat is  
brayed the outer scale is stripped off

[0003]

but though a fool were subjected  
to the same treatment his folly  
would still cleave to him.

When Professor Owen  
spoke at the Farewell dinner  
given by the Royal Geographical  
Society he remarked that  
though I had let their ideas  
of the majesty of the South  
African Lion down consid-  
-erably, he could assure  
his hearers that the British  
Lion which once inhabited  
these islands was a very  
different animal from  
that with which I was  
acquainted and its size  
indicated that it was  
really a noble majestic  
beast. The speech is  
to be published in the transactions  
of the Geographical Society  
and if not too much trouble  
might make a good  
footnote

[0004]

I give these for your consideration

if you think them unworthy  
of insertion just drop them  
without ever taking the  
trouble to tell me you have  
done so. As I am writing  
about the book I may just  
mention that if you think  
more illustrations desirable  
there are several scenes  
in possession of Mr Oswell  
and they are at our disposal  
at any time. M<sup>r</sup> Murray  
knows them - they are at  
Burlington Hotel Cork St.

A week after we  
left Liverpool we were in  
fine warm weather and  
now 12 days after our depart-  
-ure it is like midsummer  
with you. We look back &  
pity the poor natives of what  
the Romans called "out of the  
world" and hope that Great  
Eastern may become so  
plentiful yet that annual  
migrations to warmer skies will be possible for  
all the weak chested. I have nothing to write about  
yet so say good bye

David Livingstone