

Letter to Robert M. Livingstone, 26 September 1861

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

Lake Nyassa 26 Sep^t

1861

My Dear Robert

You asked me once

if this Lake were beautiful. I am now 120 miles up from its southern end, and yet I cannot very well answer your question for this is the time of year in which a great deal of grass is burned and the air is so hazy that one cannot see any distance. We can however make out that it is, as far as we have yet gone, encircled with mountains - and highland scenery is always beautiful. We suppose it to be 30 or 40 miles broad at its wider parts but should we have fair weather we hope to measure it by means of the stars, a chronometer and sextant. It is very deep in some parts, we could feel no bottom at 35 fathoms or 210 feet. At present it is frequently stormy and its waves rise very high in a very short space of time - Its

[0002]

[shores] are crowded with inhabitants and as they never saw white men before they swarm around us as boys do a black man at home. An Arab vessel called a dhow ran away to the Eastern side when we came near. It had a cargo of slaves. The object we have in view in coming is to put a stop to this traffic and we hope to do so by introducing lawful commerce & the gospel of Christ. We went up with bishop Mackenzie to the highlands to shew him a healthy place and introduce him to the people and met four parties of slave hunters. We took about 140 captives from them

and I gave them to the bishop to
commence his mission with.
Most of them were women and children
all naked and tied to each other by
thongs passed round their necks. the
men had a horrid stick on their necks
fastened with iron. these slave
hunters had induced a number of

[0003]
of another tribe to capture people for
them we came to this tribe while burning
three villages. and though we told them
that we came peaceably and to talk
with them they saw that we were a
small party and might easily be
overcome. rushed at us and shot
their posioned arrows. One fell between
the bishop and me another whizzed
between another man & me. We had to
drive them off, and they left that
part of the country. Before going
near them the bishop engaged in prayer
and during the prayer we could hear
the wail for the dead by some manganja
probably thought not worth killing,
and the shouts of welcome home to these
bloody murderers. It turned out that
these were only some sixty or seventy
robbers and not the Ajawa tribe
so we had a narrow escape from
being murdered

How are you doing? I fear
from what I have observed of your

[0004]
temperament that you will have
to strive against fickleness. Everyone
has his besetting fault. That is no
disgrace to him but it is a disgrace
if he does not find it out and by God
grace overcome it. Your Uncle Robert
is very fickle, never overcame it, has
had many opportunities of succeeding
in life but wanted steadfastness of
purpose and is now settled down as
a poor trader. I am not near to advise
you what to do but whatever line of
life you choose resolve to stick to it
and serve God therein to the last. Whatever
failings you are conscious of tell

them to your Heavenly Father, strive daily to master them and confess all to him when conscious of having gone astray. And May the Good Lord of all impart all the strength you need commit your way unto the Lord Trust also in him, and acknowledge him in all your ways and He will bless you. I am writing now because we cannot put out in the boat through the surf. It hinders our progress greatly.

I hope to write to each of you before we reach the sea in January next. Ever affectionately
David Livingstone