

Letter to Editor of the Medical Times and Gazette, 26, 27 January [1863]

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1 GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE.

2 ENGLISH LOSSES IN CENTRAL AFRICA.

LETTER FROM DR. LIVINGSTONE.

[To the Editor of the Medical Times and Gazette.]

SIR - In a leading article in the *Medical Times and Gazette* July 5, 1862, headed "English Sacrifices in Central," after remarking on the general sickness that pre-at the mission station Magomero, you very naturally "How, then, can we reconcile these sad facts with the that 'the mission under the direction of Dr. Living-settled down in an admirable station high up the river, the country is an elevated plateau, where the climate tolerably salubrious, and where a dense population is available for missionary work.'" The quota-is from the Bishop, ([aThe late Bishop Mackenzie.-ED/) and expresses the opinion which formed, and still hold, as to the general healthiness of the referred to. The spot, taken as a temporary residence extensive acquaintance with the whole region should the head of the mission to select a suitable locality for permanent abode, was forty or fifty miles distant from the

"Elephant Marsh," and at an altitude of between 3000 and 4000 feet above it. We shall therefore try to think of the and mission station as distinct as Oxford and London. plateau is ten or twelve miles broad, and probably 100 length. We happened to travel along it at the hottest of the year, and even then found the climate deliciously . When previously in the Upper Shirè valley, at an alti-of 1200 feet above the sea, we were drinking water at 84°, in one day mounting up to an altitude of between 3000 4000 feet, we had every few miles a gushing stream, with water at 65°. The air had that bracing effect which the breezes have at home, and we all struck by far more very old people than we had seen anywhere . Our stay was too short for our own experience to be anything; and the experience of the missionaries only to this, that without ordinary sanitary pre-the health is endangered here as it is everywhere else.

The missionaries were placed in very peculiar circumstances, such as probably they never anticipated. As we climbed the plateau together, and felt its refreshing breezes,we parties of Portuguese, with long lines of bound captives their possession. These were soon made free, and the , trusting to the support of those who had sent him, took charge of them. These re-captives soon amounted 200; but in what follows I have only the testimony of the themselves, for I then left, and pursued the of Lake Nyassa for some 225 miles. Magomero situated on the bend of a small river of exactly the same as that into which General MacClellan, for "strategic ," ran. It was shaded by lofty trees, which the poor admired exceedingly, and resolved to preserve. The of the missionaries failed to prevent these 200 people from their droppings all over a space of less than 100 by 50, and it then was fitly described as a "pest hole." some months the people adjacent and around them brought of provisions for sale, and no one imagined that were all their surplus stores; but after the expenditure the surplus came famine. The missionaries nobly shared

[0002] own provisions with the poor wretches whom they had , and were reduced to the same hard and scanty fare. fifty of the natives perished by ulcers and dysentery, to me the wonder is, not that in that foul den the whites the sorry figure you have drawn, but that they were all cut off together. Now, don't blame them; they felt necessity of removing out of the

pest hole, but the grass all been burned off, and new huts could not be built; -hunting, at the instigation of the Portuguese of Tette, going on all around them; they were in new and untried ; had to retire to the lowlands; but still all that the plateau is the healthiest abode, and will return soon as possible.

The Bishop, whose untimely fate every one who knew him deeply deplore, never spared himself, and was foremost depriving himself of the comforts, which you rightly are indispensable to Europeans, in order to save his children. ([b*The orphans of the liberated slaves*.-ED]) He and Burrup were the strongest of the , and were proportionately disregardful of their health. for more than a week previously to hard, fast , worse fare, and drenching showers, he set out from , ill with diarrhoea, on his last and fatal trip, and by walking through the stream, remarking that he soon be wet at any rate. After two days' walking in a which you may imagine, he reached the Shirè, embarked a miserable small canoe, and after dropping down the stream day was upset, lost clothes and medicines, and went on, course, still wet - coffee, tea, and sugar all gone; it is possible to conceive a more doleful plight: but let one go through the same amount of exposure in England, he will as certainly be cut off by consumption as the and Mr. Burrup were by fever and dysentery. I began to travel I walked through streams, and braved in the same way the Bishop did; but I found that I had perpetually, and gave up the habit, though it was pleasant to have the extremities cooled. You will per-a good service if you warn all Europeans going to the to take as good care of their health there as they do at . In addition to the loss of invaluable services, these deaths are a great misfortune to the cause of African , because people immediately ascribe them to the effects of the climate, and with it you say "it is of use to send missionaries where they cannot live." In our , though we have undergone exposure to which no need subject himself, we have had but two deaths a large number of Europeans in four years, and these caused by detention sorely against out will in most localities.

No great work can be accomplished without pain and , and even death. Those who, with you, "would say a word to damp the energy of missionaries and of that send them," must expect to hear cases like that of noble-minded Indian officer who lately fell a victim to labours during the Indian famine, or that of Lord , and try to place a slight drag on the imagination. seems to lay hold on you at the bare mention of

"Elephant Swamp." I am actually to pass through it to-morrow, and am only sorry that the enormous herds of - we have seen eight hundred in it at once - have so knowing we have no chance of getting a steak or foot. But see the effects of bad example: my imagination, as I will to prevent it, obstinately pictures you sitting on that of eight hundred cesspools, which the commis-only the other day swept away, and drinking water , according to Dr. Acland, with all the abominations unutterable filthinesses which are poured out of Oxford, , etc., into your cup. Oh! you filter your water a few inches of sand, do you? I would not trust it (unless I were in London) though filtered through the Great . The delicious unconsciousness with which you "Elephant Marsh; good heavens! what a vista of swamp, rotting vegetation, flies, vermin, stinks, agues, dysentery do the words call up!" only excite a merry , which I beg you to believe has not one particle of ill-in it, and the quotation,

"Oh, wad some power the giftie gie us, see oursels as others see us."

You have actually a larger area of cesspool and marsh around above London than exists in the Elephant Swamp, and to direful effects let typhus, typhoid, diphtheria, cholera, , scrofula, etc., testify. Here they are absolutely . But our fever, if ill-treated, as by bleedings, or treated, as it was in the case of the missionaries at Lynyanti, took only a little Dover's powder, is as fatal as any two your catalogue. And while it would be "penny wise and foolish" to make missionaries of inferior men, good men invariably to be accompanied by a thoroughly educated well-paid Medical officer. I am, &c.

DAVID LIVINGSTONE. River Shirè, January 26.

We have just heard the sad tidings that the Rev. H. C. has been cut off by fever about forty miles above , but not on the plateau. In this case there seems to been no undue exposure.

He was skillfully treated by . Dickenson. I am bowed down in grief for our beloved . This case is different from those on which I remarked. - D. S.

Elephant Marsh, January 27.