

## Letter to Robert M. Livingstone, 26 September 1861

*Livingstone, David, 1813-1873*

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[0001]

Lake Nyassa 26 Sep<sup>t</sup>

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

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[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  
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

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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

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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