

## Letter to Edward Marjoribanks, 6 August 1859

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[0001]

River Zambesi 6<sup>th</sup> August,  
1859  
My Dear Sir

I ought to have written long ago to let you know that the hard work unmercifully imposed on me by our contracting engineer has not killed me. We have been doing the work which a decent engine would have done - and it was only a dogged determination not to "give in" that has enabled me to hold on so long. Leaving the labour of navigating the Zambesi for a season ^we ascended a branch of it named Shire (Sheerey) about a hundred miles. This had never been examined by any European before. We then left the people there for awhile, and returning went about 20 days on foot beyond one hundred miles, and discovered a magnificent inland Lake called Shirwa (Sheerwah). This work was play compared to the monotony of an everlasting cutting of wood  
E. Marjoribanks Esquire  
I am sailing master though as far as taste is concerned I would as soon drive a cab in London in winter

[0002]

and waiting for the slow movement of an engine really destined I believe to grind coffee in a shop window, but palmed off on us at an enormous price, by a philanthropist! I never appreciated the value of you business men so highly as I do now; but

not to weary you with the story of our toils; I may state that I had the great pleasure of introducing one of my companions D<sup>r</sup> Kirk to a portion of the fine country which when travelling across Africa I discovered one is so accustomed to think of this country and "Afric burning sands" as identical, that in describing the rich fertile valleys & uplands with running streams, I often felt that it was hardly fair for me to expect persons entirely to believe me. When however we went on foot beyond the furthest point our vessel could go up the Shire, we ascended in ten days \1500 feet in altitude, and then we were among mountains at least 6000 feet high

[0003]

and all green and covered with trees to the top. One, Zomba, has a flat top and is inhabited - We could see the gardens from below - Its top is quite fifteen miles broad - and then all the country below is so fertile that one is quite buried in the tall grass 7 or 8 feet high - Every few miles you cross a running stream or burn, and large fields of cotton, grain, and kassava (from which tapioca is made) are met with. Sugar cane grows everywhere, and but little care is needed. This above all countries is calculated to yield the new materials of our commerce and if it should please Providence to permit us to introduce the trade in these we shall do something towards the extinction of slavery. We are now on our way back to the Lake region, and this time I have D<sup>r</sup> Kirk - M<sup>r</sup> C. Livingstone (my brother) and Mr Rae, all Scotchmen in company, and hope to look at a much larger lake beyond Shirwa - By the discoveries in the no idea?

[0004]

Africa will soon appear to be a very different region from the sandy deserts of the Map makers, and I earnestly hope that I may see a beginning of a new state of things than a nightly slave market. We think that we have rendered the African fever less formidable - and should the rich fertile country, most of which now lies untilled, become the means of assisting our own home honest poor by colonization, I think I should die contented. We have had but little news from home but that little contained the information that Miss Coutts had most munificently provided religious instruction for the new Colony and this greatly gladdened my heart.

I have little to say on business. I was obliged to have my wife at the Cape and she went with her parents up to Kuruman - 500 miles inland. She has been drawing on the £500 you kindly placed for me at Mr. Dickson's I don't know how much, for we no penny postage nuisance here - The Government has been aware of my life being yet spared, and I suppose you have been drawing my consular salary in consequence. With kind salutations  
I am most Truly Yours David Livingstone