

Letter to General Edward Sabine, 6 February 1860

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

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[0001]

[Ans^d. Oct. 3

by Arch. Mackenzie.]

Tette 6th Feby 1860

My Dear General Sabine

In spite of the interest employed in our behalf by the Royal Society and the intentions of Government M^r Laird furnished us with a most wretched vessel, and I am sorry to inform you that our magnetic instruments have lately suffered severely in consequence. the vessel was built of a sort of Patent steel plate of only 1/16 of an inch in thickness. It is excessively hard - friction has no effect upon it, but moisture & heat

[0002]

produce a chemical decomposition from which paint is no protection. Scales apparently of the black oxide of iron are formed inside & out and when these are peeled off there is a black smooth shining surface with numerous small holes. the scales are strongly magnetic, and I think that they have damaged the magnetism of the instruments. The moisture consequent on the scaling off, and wet from springing of leaks in plates now not 1/32 of an inch in thickness have destroyed the glue in the wooden parts, so much that a new set would be

[0003]

the only really satisfactory remedy. You may be sure that my brother

will do the best that
he can in the circumstances
by regluing &c. but I
think it my duty to let
you know exactly how
matters stand. We hope
for a new vessel with
room for instruments &
collections. In this we have
neither [& much private & public property has been spoiled]. and she has been
so put together as to pump
water into herself by her own
proper motions. M^r Macgregor

[0004]

Laird promised before we got her
that she would carry ten or twelve
tons. His brother cooly says
after we got her, that she
was intended to carry only a
very few persons. As far
as discovery is concerned we
have done pretty well, but
all our operations have
been cramped by this wretched
vessel, and it is a wonder
we have escaped with our
lives.

I am Dear Sir
Yours Most Truly
David Livingstone