

Letter to Adam Sedgwick, 5 November, 24 December 1863

David Livingstone

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[0001]

1 MS 10/2
Murchison's Cataracts
5 Nov^r 1863

Dear Professor Sedgwick

Your letter about the boat service reached me on the 1st currt - when I fear you may have construed my silence as neglect of duty, and anything I could have suggested will be of no avail - It will be small comfort to mention that four or five of Admiral Washington's own letters bore yours company in a long detention some-[-]where - but in the event of the University's boat club being still willing to assist the mission by

[0002]

2 a boat service - I would suggest a pinnace drawing when loaded not more than 2½ feet - she would carry five tons and a yearly voyage to the coast might bring up all the stores required by the mission Her cost should be about £70- We had one and found her exceedingly useful With a good wind, which could always be secured by

selecting the time when the
wind blows regularly up the
river for the voyage, she
went as fast as our
little steamer - any other
information would I
am sure be willingly
afforded by Captain Wilson
of H.M.S Gorgon whose

[0003]

address may be found at 3
the Admiralty

A hint I ventured to
give Bishop Tozer may
possibly obviate the
necessity for sending to the
Cape for flour. Wheat
sown in May and
irrigated by any small
stream yields a crop
in three or four months
the Portuguese raise it
even at the level of the
sea - sown at any other
time as Bishop Mackenzie
found it runs all to
stalk - In my own
experience when over
a thousand miles from
the cape a single crop on
a small spot of land
supplied my family for
two years. English potatoes

[0004]

4 of the sort called "kidney potatoes"
yielded the finest tubers I ever
saw - the round ones grew
too big and were hollow in
the centre, while the oblong
"kidney" sort expanded in
length - I mention these trifles
that you may gather hope
that as our friends in the
mission gain practical
knowledge of the country

they will be less dependent
on you -

We are coming home as
soon as the river rises -
By we, I mean the Expedition
I must go with the steamer
Lady Nyassa probably to
India for a market - the
mission is now the
only hopeful point in
the country - the Portuguese
after all their profuse

[0005]

2 professions of desire 10/2 to
open up the country to 5
the influences of civilization
are determined to shut
it as more closely than
ever - the heavy dues -
4 pence per pound weight
levied on bishop Tozer's
calico - though they know
it to be the currency of the
country, clearly shows
their intentions - The
late king Don Pedro V.
was the only true hearted
man among them and
he was as completely
thwarted by his own
officials in Lisbon
as we have been in
Africa - the king wished
to send out an agricultural

[0006]

6 colony to Tette - procured
ploughs & other implements
for them and when the
colonists arrived at Tette
The Governor informed me
that the king had been
grossly deceived as not
one of them knew aught
but cleaning his musket
as a soldier - As elsewhere

there are two parties in
Portugal - you will readily
guess with what disfavour
the priest party looks on
us - The liberal party
makes laws in favour
of freedom but I suspect
only to please their best
customer England as
the enactments are never
put into execution

[0007]

I bitterly regret ever 7
believing a word of their
professions of desire
for the cessation of the
slave trade - because
anywhere else - on the
Rovuma even which
is navigable for
only eight or nine months
yearly - with half the
labour & expense we
should have left an
indelible mark of
improvement in a
large section of the
continent - I see now
that the time spent in
gaining influence
among the natives
who have all been
swept off would have
been better employed

[0008]

8 in the lower occupations
of mere exploration -
However nothing a man
does to serve the Supreme
Ruler of all can be
lost -

I have just returned
from Lake Nyassa - our
object in going was to
improve the time between

our recal and the next
flood by examining whether
a large river comes into the
Lake to account for the
perennial flow of the
Shire and also whether
the 19,000 slaves that pass
annually through the
custom house of
Zanzibar do really come
from the Lake district -
Lost the boat we were
carrying past the cataracts

[0009]

3 then tramped it & went 10/2 N.W.
to come to the Latitude of
the North end of the Lake
without intruding on the
Mazite or Zulus
who have depopulated its shores
there - but we were hindered
by a range of mountains
about 6000 feet high - then
by Mazite whom to avoid
we turned N.E. and
walked along the western
shore of the Lake till we
came to two Arabs
busily transporting slaves
and building a dhow
to replace one that had
been wrecked - We now
turned West on the great
slave route and my
enquiries led me to
the conclusion that

[0010]

from that quarter nearly
all the slaves for Zanzibar
Quilloa - (Kilwa), Iboe
Mosambique are drawn
It is only a fathom of calico
or one shilling they have to
pay for a boy & two for
a girl but it is curious

that without ivory they
would be unprofitable
their food costs so much.
but they carry the ivory -
In going West we ascend
what from below seems
a range of high hills but
is the edge of a plateau
3440 feet above the sea
the watershed hence is to
the Westward and so it
is as far ^ North as our in-
[-]formants could tell us

[0011]

Apart from this I had
crossed so many streams
whose mouths from
being hidden among
reeds we had not
previously observed
I was forced to conclude
that a large river was
not necessary to account
for the Shire - the plateau
over which we went
about 100 miles or so
is flat - is well
peopled and cool -
several Lakes are reported
but our time was up
and we had to come
back sorely against
the grain - I might
have speculated on a
late rise of the river
but Earl Russells

[0012]

orders were explicit &
and I returned ^ after travelling
and going & coming 660
geographical miles on
"Shanks Nag" I have seen
more of slaving of late
than formerly and am
of opinion that its horrors

baffle exaggeration - I
trust that you will
continue to uphold your
mission and trust also
that the disappointments
hitherto experienced may
only be the prelude to
ultimate success
Believe me my Dear
friends yours
affectionately
David Livingstone

[0013]

4 P.S. 24th Dec^r

I regret exceedingly
to learn from Bishop
Tozer that he has resolved
to abandon the mission
as early in the coming
year as possible - It is
the more sad inasmuch
as it is the first mission
in modern times which
without compulsion
has beat a retreat. The
first party in consequence
of a conscientious
example of the late bishop
did not teach the
natives - the second
by selecting the top of
an almost uninhabited

[0014]

mountain for a residence
did not come near the
people to be taught and
now run away - The
bishop does not mention
his reasons for retiring
so I am led to conjecture
that it may be a fear
of death owing to the sad
mortality that has taken
place - But not a single

European was lost from
disease contracted at the
spot where I placed them
M^r Burrup was borne
thither from the swamps
against which I have
always protested - there
Bishop Mackenzie died
and Burrup contracted

[0015]

his fatal illness - the Makololo
hurrying him home to
Magomero lest he should
die in their hands and
there too though a little
higher up the river
perished the first rate
men Surdamore and
Dickenson - Not even
after these severe losses
would the survivors
up to the highlands again
move ^though we all
knew that a sedentary
life is most dangerous
and now with the
retiring mission the
last ray of hope for
this unhappy land
departs - the Interior
will now be more
closely shut up than ever

[0016]

Some may think that it is
too much to expect gentlemen
to begin at the beginning -
I began where none had
ever appeared except Couran
and Donovan two travellers
who were never again
heard of - and were I to
begin again I would scorn
to sit down where others
had laboured and try
to reap their fruit as

might be the case in
Madagascar and is now
in Hunolulu - We can
now only look to Heaven
for help - slaving goes
on faster than ever - the
low effete slavers seem to do
it now as if in bravado
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