

Letter to John Laird, 21 June 1858

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Ma Robert, Zambesi

21st June 1858

John Laird Esq^{re}

My dear Sir,

As you will no doubt feel

anxious to hear how we get on with the Launch I am happy to be able to inform you that we entered what has been called the West Luabo (properly Luave) on the 13th of May and finding a fine, safe harbour we proceeded at once to take out the three compartments of the Ma Robert from the Pearl. The first day was sufficient for getting her into the water and putting her together by the admirable and simple contrivance your son invented. We had only to stand on a compartment in sufficient numbers to sink it down and drawing it to the middle section, the bolts slipped in with the greatest ease - on the evening of the third day, she was ready to

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to act as Pilot to the larger vessel and has been doing admirable service ever since - She goes puffing away on this great Zambesi now, to the infinite disgust of the Hippopotami whole herds of which rush off pell mell as soon as we approach them, and the crustiest old Bachelor among them, dares not to do her battle.

It would be an immense boon if the Government would send out such Vessels to run up Creeks and rivers and chase Slavers instead of taking it out on the poor Sailors muscles at the oars - but you would require to make them broader than this, and not quite as long - the length might be borne with if they were four or feet broader and no objection could be taken to this as the Men of War could carry them with ease between

masts. Allow me also to suggest as an improvement two plates near the bottom of each compartment with plugs which when the compartments were once put together might be taken out and both inserted, I mention this because our after

compartment shews some symptoms of the bottom bolts or dowels becoming loose

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loose I venture also to suggest the greater width as we cant carry luggage at present, and four feet additional with perhaps a little more power would make her perfect. She has done exceedingly well and tows a large launch far better than we expected. Now as I am done with criticism which you may think sufficiently presumptuous I beg to be most kindly remembered to M^{rs} L and all your family.

M^{rs} L was obliged to leave me at the Cape and go with her Parents to [...] We hope to meet again after her confinement. We are all in good health Pearl leaves us with this

David Livingstone

Our bolts shew signs of decay - altho' ashamed to say more I must add make the plates 1/8 they bend so underfoot.

A sketch of our getting the Launch out is sent at this time to the Foreign Office.