

Letter to Editor of The Times, [11 April 1861]

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

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~~The Editor of the Times~~

D^r Livingstones expedition arrived in Pomony Bay, the residence of M^r consul Sunley on the island of Johanna, on the 9th of April last from the river Rovuma on the coast of Africa, and came round to the chief town to coal the "Pioneer" from H.M.S. Wasp on the 11th. They had ascended the river only thirty miles, when halting to wood their ship, a mark was made on a tree shewed that the water was falling at the rate of six or seven inches a day. they had found some parts carrying no more than five or six feet

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of water, and as they drew nearly five feet, they had to look out and not be left, by spending more time in going up, fixtures till the flood of next year. the cause of this unsuccessful termination is attributed to various delays suffered by the Pioneer [in the voyage out] making her at least quite two months behind the time for a successful trip up the river. After coaling they left for the Zambesi intending to go up the Shire, and then make a road past Murchison's cataracts on that river to Lake Nyassa. The distance is only thirty five miles, and it is hoped that they will carry a boat up above the cataracts and

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by that means explore the Lake.

It is also in contemplation

to settle the point whether Rovuma comes out of Nyassa as asserted by all the people they met before going in the Pioneer again to that river. The Oxford and Cambridge mission accompany the expedition up the Shire, and it is proposed to place these gentlemen on the plateau of 2000 feet [above the sea] on which stands Mount Zomba - there they are likely to enjoy good health, while pursuing their enterprise they have had a good deal of fever, but no mortality. The healthy season begins in May.

The Rovuma will probably turn out to be the entrance into Eastern Africa - it must

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however be navigated with a vessel of light draught, and with the same skill as is required in the above bridge London passenger boats. On the question whether it actually derives its waters from Nyassa the D^r thinks that it cannot come out of the Nyassa he discovered - but [from] some other lake. The reasons he adduces are - Nyassa is already known to give off one large river, the Shire - this river never rises nor falls more than three feet nor is its water ever discoloured. The Rovuma rises and falls six or more feet, becomes very muddy and no instance is known of one Lake giving off two large rivers

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the probability is therefore that if the Rovuma does not come out of a Nyassa or Nyanza (lake or piece of water) it is some other than that discovered by the Expedition. It is well known that lakes having no outlets become brackish in the course

of ages. This is the case with Shirwa - but Nyassa and Tanganyika are sweet. the former owes its sweetness to the Shire flowing out of it. Does Tanganyika owe its sweetness to the Rovuma?

While the Pioneer was at Johanna a French vessel having sixty slaves on board lay anchored

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close to H.M.S. Wasp. She came from Quiloa on the coast of Africa where the cost of the slaves was twenty two dollars. The slave trader then went to Comoro Island, and paid 250 dollars to one of the chiefs there for a certificate that the slaves had been engaged there. This last transaction could not be hid from all the other chiefs, but the slaver cannot be captured. He had even the assurance to ask a supply of provisions and rum from the Man-of War. The Emperor of France

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is said to have declared that if the so called "free emigration" were the slave trade he would not have it at any price - here unfortunately his people have it at the prices above stated.

Private the object of attempting the Rovuma is to get an entrance into Eastern Africa exterior to the Portuguese claims We hope to carry a boat up to Nyassa and ascertain the nature of the connection if any exists, between the Lake and the River.

David Livingstone

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1861

D^r Livingstone
Rec: July 16