

## Letter to Thomas S. Livingstone, 12 October 1861

*Livingstone, David, 1813-1873*

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Lake Nyassa 12 Oct<sup>r</sup> 1861

Private

My Dear Tom

I often think that one of the greatest blessings God bestowed on me was birth in a Christian land of Christian parents and among those who loved the Lord Jesus. I feel how great was the benefit bestowed when I see human bones bleaching on the shores of this Lake or have the sense of smell offended by coming near human bodies rotting on the beach. The children are except in colour, just like children at home - the same merry shouts at play - the same tones of voice in weeping, but here no church going bell is ever heard - no school has ever been erected to teach either young or old. Slaving goes on whenever a slave buyer comes - the people offer children to us - We seem in the kingdom of darkness where men are without natural affection. but this state is largely indebted to war tormented either by slave traders or by native conquerors. the majority of the people flee before invaders and as we saw down the Shire place a river between

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them and their enemies. Then comes starvation for the food is all left behind the parents have often to part with the children for food or the parents die and the children are left desolate - the headmen sell them - We came into a village surrounded by beautiful shady trees & stopped under them to breakfast a sadly emaciated child was sitting picking up grains of corn & eating them. but thinking that we were the slavehunters

from whom it had escaped across the river it made off crying though so weak it could only crawl on hands & knees. I took some of our breakfast to give it but it had secreted itself among the long grass & could not be found - Many hundreds will perish in consequence of the Ajawa invasion. which Ajawa are only a small body of 60 or so robbers and murderers urged on by Portuguese They kill all the able bodied men of a village and sell the women & children for about three yards of calico worth eighteen pence. If you knew how sad this fair portion of the world is by the wickedness of those who dwell in it you would pray heartily "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

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We hope to place a steamer on this Lake and this would do little without a Mission. The Free Church of Scotland proposes to send one, and I rejoice to hear of it - We have been looking at many places for a suitable locality and At Makuza with a chief called Marenga we think they might be comfortable. We have always to think of the healthiness of the place first and curiously enough the presence or absence of Mosquitoes assists us in forming our judgement A great many of these troublesome insects shews where much fever may be expected - The missionaries will require a steamer and it is well that they have many good friends in Glasgow who would gladly help them to one. We expect to have one capable of being unscrewed at the bottom of the cataracts and carried past in pieces. Were it on the Lake now we could save hundreds of lives by buying food at one part of the Lake where it is cheap and giving it to the perishing. they would not know our motives but in time they

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they would discover that the love of christ  
constraineth us. We have had the honour  
to lead the mission of the English  
Universities up to the Mang-anja high-  
lands. they settled on a nice spot by a  
stream about the size of the Calder at the  
Prior's bridge. It forms a bend thus  
[symbol of a stream]and on the promontory at [cross symbol] they  
live. the water was quite too cold to  
bathe in when I was there. they are  
about 3000 ft above the sea. and lofty  
mountains rise East of them with the  
tail of Lake Shirwa at their base. We  
went to speak with the Ajawa robbers  
from whom all the people were fleeing  
and nearly lost our lives by some  
people with us calling out "Here is our  
Chibisa" this Chibisa is believed to have  
all powerful war medicine & on the  
murderers rushed at us and would  
soon have made an end of us all  
We were by this foolish cry deprived of  
the shield of our good name and all  
we could say in explanation was  
looked on as an evidence of fear, but  
God protected us and the Ajawa have  
left that part of the country. I fear that  
you will find my writing difficult as I  
have to write with the paper on my knee  
God bless you and save you

David Livingstone