

# My Heart is in Africa

Dear Fellow TMS, honoured guests!

The time is 1840. Great Britain is under the reign of Queen Victoria. The British Empire is growing. Just six years earlier, Britain abolished slavery.

Many parts of the world are uncharted territory. It's the time of adventurers and intrepid explorers.

The "Scramble for Africa" is about to start and everybody wants a piece of the pie. **MAP**

Arabs, Portuguese (both are slave traders) and Dutch. The centre lies unclaimed. Most of the interior is impenetrable. Nobody knows what it is like. Probably a barren desert.

David Livingstone, a Scotsman, missionary and physician arrived on the dark continent. He is 27 years old and he abhors slavery.

Soon after his arrival at the mission, he had a dramatic encounter with a lion. The ferocious beast bit him in the shoulder and he was saved in the very last minute by other men. Livingstone was extremely ill for weeks...It is hard to imagine the agony he must have suffered without anaesthetic and without the help of another doctor. He had to supervise the setting of the badly splintered arm himself.

As a missionary, he was not very successful. Actually, he only converted one man: Chief Sechele... and Sechele found it very difficult to give up his 5 wives and he also didn't like the fact that he couldn't ask the new God to send him rain. So he lapsed.

Livingstone came to the conviction that the best long-term chance of evangelising was to open up Africa by mapping and navigating its rivers. This would bring trade and trade would also do away with slavery, a mission close to his heart.

In the expedition that made him famous, he crossed Africa from one side to the other. He mapped the entire path of the Zambezi River. And with this expedition came the surprise: Africa's centre was not the barren desert everybody had imagined.

As an explorer Livingstone possessed several qualities. Other expeditions had dozens of armed soldiers and scores of hired porters carrying supplies. Some explorers brought enamelled bathtubs and Turkish carpets with them into the jungle. Livingstone usually travelled light. On most of his journeys, he brought just a few servants and porters. He treated them well – as equals actually – that was rare for the time. He bartered for supplies along the way and only had a couple of guns for protection. He understood the ways of local chiefs, spoke their languages and was often invited and helped.

It was the natives who also told him about "Mosi oa tunya" - "The smoke that thunders". So he went with them canoeing on the Zambezi River. They could hear the thunder booming from far away. Suddenly there were columns of vapour rising up, white below and dark above, nearly like smoke. As they got closer the spray grew so big it almost darkened the sun above them. Livingstone managed to get on an island in the middle of the river. Looking down a crevice he saw the biggest curtain of falling water in the world. 1.7 kms wide, 100 metres deep. No European had ever set eyes on it. Two bright rainbows stood above, colourful vegetation spread below. The smoke that thunders – he named it "Victoria Falls". In his journal Livingstone wrote: "No one can imagine the beauty of the view ... A scene so lovely must have been gazed upon by angels in their flight."

The Royal Geographical Society gave him a medal for his achievements. He was now a national hero, He wrote several books which made him one of the leading explorers of the age.

The doctor resigned from the Missionary Society. The abolition of the African slave trade became his primary goal.

At 51 years of age Livingstone went on his last expedition to find the source of the Nile. Months stretched into years. Little was heard of the explorer. Rumours spread that Livingstone was being held captive or was lost or dead. Newspaper headlines read: "Where is Livingstone?". Henry Stanley – newspaper reporter and Welshman – was sent out to find him.

Stanley was quite another type of explorer. He was cruel and racist. It was a huge expedition of 200 men. After nearly eight months he found Livingstone in a small village on the shore of Lake Tanganyika. When they met, Livingstone was the only white man around for hundreds of miles. But this was the Victorian age of repressed emotions. Stanley was so overwhelmed by finally meeting the great man, that he uttered the famous words: "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"

Livingstone was now 60 and weakened by disease. Stanley gave him medicine and tried to convince him to return to Europe. However, as soon as Livingstone was restored, he continued searching for the source of the Nile – with no result. Two years later in 1873 he died of dysentery and malaria.

Livingstone was happiest in Africa. He was familiar with the local dialects, an admirer of the women and satisfied with the food. He possessed many gifts: perseverance, faith and fearlessness. The most remarkable one, though, was his ability to immerse himself in African cultures.

Once he said "My heart is in Africa". So, after his death, his African friends, former slaves he had freed, buried his heart under a tree. They then enclosed his embalmed body in a cylinder of bark. This they wrapped in sailcloth and then carried it to the coast. 2400 kms. It was a 10-month journey through equatorial jungle.

In England it was necessary to identify the remains. Easy. There was the badly set broken arm which had been mauled by the lion.

However the best proof of identification was: Only Dr Livingstone could have inspired the Africans to overcome their natural superstition of carrying a dead body for so many months and face all the dangers that journey entailed.

Livingstone's body was buried in Westminster Abbey. His heart remains in Africa.