

Sir,—A letter from Dr. Livingstone, the intrepid explorer of the Ngami Lake, has lately been going the round of the press. As it mentions my name apparently under a misconception of the objects of my late exploration, perhaps you will allow me to explain away the confusion in a few words.

Dr. Livingstone has ascended the Shire (Ohire) River, a northern tributary of the great Zambesi, till he has reached what appears to be a vast widening of the stream, and to this he has given the name of Shirwa. He reports that he expects to find it separated by five or six stages from the Nyassa Lake, which I had been charged to explore.

Many of your readers will perhaps still imagine that Central Equatorial Africa contains but a single grand reservoir, which in our best maps is called Zembre, Maravi, Nyassa, or Nyassi. To trace how the error arose is not my object. Briefly, in 1857 the East African expedition, under my command, ascertained that the lake in question consists of at least four distinct bodies of water. In May, 1857, Captain Speke and I navigated the northern third of the Tanganyika Lake, also called the Sea of Ujiji. In July of the same year Captain Speke laid down the southern extremity of the Nyanza Lake. Already, in 1799, Dr. Lacerda, a well-known Portuguese traveller, had fixed the position of the little Chama Lake, also called Moiro Achinto; and now it is to be hoped the honour of completing the actual exploration of the fourth and last of the series has fallen to Dr. Livingstone.

These four waters are disposed in an irregular crescent or semi-circle, the arc of which fronts westward, while its chord faces the Indian Ocean. The most southerly is the "Nyassa," the subject of the late communication from Africa. Though it has been run into the other seas by European geographers, no Arab at Zanzibar has authorized the confusion. The native caravans trafficking to the Nyassa assemble at Kilwa (Quilwa), and they reckon one month from the coast to the Rufuma (Livuma) River, 14 marches from the Rufuma to Luchelingo (Lukelingo), and chief district in the province of Uhiao (Tao), seven days from Luchelingo to the summit of the Njesa Mountain, and seven stages from the Njesa to the southern extremity of the Nyassa Lake, which is there called "Nyassa Ndogo," or "the Little Nyassa." These 58 marches are by some reduced to 45; the mean of the extremes may be safely taken. This would place the terminus in the lake, at 400 rectilinear geographical miles from Kiiwa, on the coast, about 11 deg. south latitude, and 33 deg. east longitude. Mr. Cooley has computed it to lie in 12 deg. 30 sec. south latitude, and 34 deg. 50 sec. east longitude. In the map published by the Mombas Mission the distances have been unwarrantably reduced. M. Erhardt gives but 26 short stages, which would scarcely represent 200 rectilinear geographical miles.

The Arab and other merchants concur in representing the Nyassa to be the long widening of a river which passes out of its southern extremity. It is, probably, swollen by the western watershed of the chain which may be called the Eastern Ghauts of Africa, of which Njesa is the culminating summit. Its length is still a mystery. M. Erhardt records the travels of a party of Wabisa (Moviza), who, after following the lake for 22 days, crossed the Ruapura (Luapula) River. Messrs. Gamito and Monteiro, Portuguese explorers, in 1831, estimate it at 9 leagues=30 miles. Dr. Livingstone (chap. 31) records that a certain Senhor Candido "had visited a lake 45 days to the N.N.W. of Tete, which is probably the lake Maravi of geographers, as in going thither they pass through the people of that name." The enterprising traveller little thought when he wrote down the hearsay information that he would so soon have an opportunity of verifying it.

Excuse this trespass upon your valuable space, and believe me,

Your obedient servant,

RICHARD F. BURTON,

14, St. James's-square, Oct. 7.