

DAILY NEWS 7 SEPTEMBER 1872.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE DAILY NEWS.

SIR,—The number and character of the misconceptions I find in the newspapers of subjects on which I can speak with the authority of certain knowledge are simply amazing; but I will confine nearly all of what I am about to say to the letter signed "P." in your impression of yesterday, Sept. 5. It will not, I trust, be thought by my colleagues on the Council of the Royal Geographical Society to be a breach of confidence if I state (1.) that the letter of instructions to Lieut. Dawson was draughted by myself, well-considered by a large council and accepted with trifling modifications. (2.) That I acted as chairman of a small sub-committee to arrange about the *materiel* of the expedition; my colleagues being the late political resident

in Zanzibar, General Rigby; that most accomplished African geographer, Mr. Findlay (not one of the "critics" about whom I shall have to speak), and Colonel Grant (Speke and Grant) whenever he was able to attend. (3.) The private letter of geographical instructions, a roughly-written reminder of what I thought might prove useful hints on surveying matters, which somehow found its way into your columns, was my writing. (4.) I, myself, wrote and proposed the letter of thanks to Mr. Stanley at the Livingstone Search Committee, which, with slight modifications, was sent to him. (5.) I have served on the Council of the Society for many years, and, for some time, held the post of its secretary.

I thus claim some right to interpret the views of the members of the Council in its recent action, which has ended so abortively, and I unhesitatingly deny the existence of any feeling less than one of admiration and pride in Dr. Livingstone as being the most eminent explorer of the day.

The "Insane Geographer" paragraph curiously enough refers, I believe, to one or other of four gentlemen, three of whom have not served on the Council for very many years, if at all—I mean the late Mr. M^oQueen, who was, I grant, a provoking critic; Mr. Cooley, who will not be offended, I hope, if I call him a caustic as well as a most learned critic in historical geography; and Dr. Beke, the well-known Abyssinian traveller, and the frequent correspondent of the *Athenæum* and the *Times* on such points of African geography as may from time to time come under public notice. Beside these, is Livingstone's old friend Mr. Arrowsmith, to whose conscientious and thorough map-work all travellers who have had occasion to apply to him eagerly testify, and who brought Livingstone's first map into a shape far more satisfactory to the traveller himself than was the original drawing. This is alluded to in the remarks that precede the passage in question. It is notorious that the alteration of Lake Nyassa at a place then unseen by Livingstone was violently objected to by him; but it was afterwards, I believe, fully approved of; and his attachment to Mr. Arrowsmith before leaving England for the last time was such, that he insisted on spending his concluding days as a guest at Arrowsmith's house. I believe, but do not know the particulars, that the alteration of a position fixed by astronomical observations (alluded to in the paragraph) was made in ignorance of all the particulars by Dr. Beke. If I am wrong it really matters little, but I hope I shall be corrected. Now all these matters refer to a transaction, as I

I am informed, 17 years old. The passage shows to my mind a disposition to have brooded in solitude over trifles until they became of exaggerated moment, and I ascribed its being written to a temporary irritability, likely to pass away and to be regretted. For what more can it matter if a particular geographer interprets numerical data in a wrong way, than if any other person misinterprets anything else? Publicity and discussion are the very things wanted in geography before a map is finally drawn up. I do not believe that the map of any traveller in wild countries extending over a large area bordering on lands visited by other travellers and mapped by them, has ever stood intact after recalculation of positions at home, and analysis of the evidence on which it was constructed. Travellers are usually as sensitive about their conclusions being criticised as experts of all kinds are, when giving evidence on disputed points. Nay, they are more so, from the habits of their solitary life, which prevent their being accustomed to hear contrary opinions without offence, and their learning by frequent experience how much good arises out of discussion. My belief is, that Livingstone is as sensitive as other travellers in these respects, criticising, as they all do, one another unsparingly, and not sufficiently recognising how much they themselves are justly amenable to it. Let us seek for an example in Livingstone's last despatches. It appears he was a resident for a long time on the shores of Lake Tanganika, and yet firmly believed its waters to run out to the North, to the Albert Nyanza, through the Rusizi. Yet Mr. Stanley goes to the end of the Lake with him, and finds that the Rusizi runs into the Lake, not out of it, and that the Tanganika must find an exit somewhere to the southwards of Ujiji. Here is a conclusion of Dr. Livingstone's obviously at fault, showing that geographical conclusions, as distinguished from positive evidence, are open questions. On the other hand, Livingstone criticises other great travellers on their own ground, without compunction, and I do not blame him for it, only I insist that justice should be even-handed. Then in this last despatch he strongly combats Speke and Grant's drawing of the Victoria Nyanza, and cuts it up into three or four small lakes. But I have little doubt that he would make strong objection if Colonel Grant happened, on the grounds of some native evidence, to make alterations of the same amount in his own theoretical geography. In short, I look upon Livingstone, like most men, to be very ready to criticise the theories of others, and not much to relish criticisms on his own theories; and I looked on the "insane geographer" paragraph as a morbid and exaggerated outburst of this feeling, having a touch of the effects of African fever in it, likely to be regretted hereafter, and not to be seriously regarded by us in the mean-

time. I also think that if Dr. Livingstone had really intended, before leaving England, to send nothing to the Geographical Society, he should and would have said so before he took their 500*l*. Again, there was much in the prolonged silence of Dr. Livingstone which could not, and cannot yet, so far as I know, be satisfactorily accounted for. My own view was chiefly this—that Livingstone, as I fully believe, is a true hero and a great man; but heroes and great men are never perfect, and he has the peculiarity of entertaining dislikes as violent as they appear to me capricious and wrong-headed. What I have said about Mr. Arrowsmith will serve as one example; and his recent denunciation of his old friend, Dr. Kirk, which, to the best of my present knowledge, derived from much independent testimony, is cruelly unjust, will serve as another. I therefore thought it quite possible that Dr. Livingstone might have taken great offence at something. Anyhow, I felt sure it would be proper that he should be approached with tact, but that it ought to be unmistakably pointed out that, from some cause or other, whether miscarriage of letters or what else, his letters had contained less geography than has hitherto been invariably furnished by travellers circumstanced like himself.

Your Correspondent objects that the Royal Geographical Society thought much of geography, and not of the mere relief of Dr. Livingstone. Of course they did. The society is not a humane society, established to succour persons in distress, but for the promotion of geographical science. The 500*l*. voted for the expedition by the Council of the Royal Geographical Society would have been a malappropriation of the society's funds if there was no intention to utilise the expedition, as could perfectly be done, to obtain geographical facts. The public may be considered to have sent their subscriptions mainly, but not entirely, for the relief of a man personally dear to the nation, and the two objects of relief and geography admitted of being simultaneously fulfilled. It is a strange ground of blame of the council of a geographical society that it should show itself zealous to accomplish geographical work.

Now, let there be no misunderstanding as to the chief geographical facts which I, for my part, looked to Lieutenant Dawson to obtain. Those to be derived from Dr. Livingstone would be the observations of latitude, longitude, and altitude above sea level of those few cardinal points which he had already fixed and written about, or was about to describe; also the quantity of water discharged by his rivers. These, if sent, would, according to the custom of the Society, be sent to Greenwich Observatory, to be carefully re-calculated. The originals would be preserved in the Society's rooms, and the public would ever after have virtual access to them. I did not expect that Livingstone would care or like to send back any detail which he hoped shortly to be able to re-touch, but I thought he might well be persuaded to send sealed copies of the original but imperfect observations home, in case of accident. This Livingstone may have done, but there is nothing to show that the "Letts' Diary" contains other than mere narrative. Again, I hoped that Lieutenant Dawson, as a skilful, I might say, professional nautical surveyor, would be able to afford great assistance in overhauling and finding the errors of Livingstone's necessarily battered or otherwise untrustworthy instruments. I also expected he would "pick up the ends" of Livingstone's route at the point where he met him, by rigorously determining its position and elevation; also that he would map wherever he went. I cannot for the moment imagine any reasonable traveller being otherwise than gratified by such appropriate assistance. No doubt, as I have already said, Livingstone ought to be approached with tact; but when the matter had been distinctly explained there would be, to the best of my judgment, absolutely no cause for distrust. It is abundantly certain that these dry details would have no interest to the public; while the graphic letters he has already sent do in some degree forestall his book. And why do we want these dry details? Clearly because Livingstone's researches have a bearing on the routes of adjacent travellers. Exploration is always going on, and it is for us at home to help, by diffusing information useful to explorers. The geographical position of Cazembe's town, supposed to have been fixed by Lacerda, but unfixed 30 miles—we know not in what direction—by Livingstone, is itself one of those cardinal points by which the routes of numerous traders, who took notes but no observations, can be laid down. Those who argue that Livingstone would be justified in withholding this information after the case was distinctly explained to him, seem to me to say, that he ought to be actuated by the pettiest of personal motives. That which has made Livingstone dear to the nation in his heroic abnegation of self in persistently and laboriously pursuing geographical

and anti-slave-trade ends; but by the former more than by the latter. Does it not strike "P." as incongruous that such a man should withhold the very thing for the achievement of which he is so highly honoured? Let me add, that to the best of my knowledge, there has ever been a complete unanimity of feeling among the members of the Council of the Geographical Society, in respect to what was due to Dr. Livingstone.

I have now only to refer to what your correspondent seems to look upon as a want of cordiality on the part of the Council of the Geographical Society in hailing Mr. Stanley as the reliever of Dr. Livingstone. It is unnecessary to recall the circumstances under which the news first arrived, and continued flowing in telegraphic dribbles, and the many conflicting opinions afloat. For my part, I thought that until Livingstone's own handwriting and acknowledgment of Mr. Stanley's services reached the country, it would be judicious to take no action. These letters were delivered to various persons on a Thursday and a Friday. Monday is the usual day on which the Geographical committees meet, but the next Monday was the Bank holiday, and it happened that a Livingstone Search Committee had been summoned for the Tuesday. It was on that day and on that occasion that the letter of thanks to Mr. Stanley was decided on and sent, to which I referred in the beginning of this letter, and it was the very earliest opportunity at which it was feasible to send it. The period of the year was one when the Society was in recess, and an adequate meeting of Council could not be obtained without great inconvenience; but I maintain that the recognition then sent was quite early enough and cordial enough. Livingstone is a consul; but Lord Granville delayed his acknowledgments for finding and relieving his own missing public servant to a much later date. I am confident that the more the public know of all these matters on which the Council of the Society, or its committees, has taken action, the more will they have reason to acknowledge that they have throughout acted with the fairest and most generous motives, that they have taken a vast amount of labour, and that each step was the most promising one at the time when it was taken.—I am, &c.,

Sept. 6.

FRANCIS GALTON.
