

His stern sense of independence led him to shrink from seeking aid in any shape; and, in point of fact, he never received a farthing from any one, excepting what he had earned by his own hands. Afterwards he was able to say—"Looking back now on that period of toil, I cannot but feel thankful that it formed such a material part of my early education; and were I to begin life over again, I should like to pass through the same hardy training."

Livingstone's main object, in entering on a course of medical study, was to fit himself to be a pioneer of christianity in China; but by the time his training was completed the opium war had broken out and China was completely closed against him. Acting on the advice of some friends, he then offered his services to the London Missionary Society, being influenced mainly by the unsectarian character of that organization. By this Society he was appointed to take charge of one of their missions in South Africa, and in 1840, he landed at Cape Town, being then twenty-seven years of age. "There's a divinity that shapes our ends rough-hew them how we will." China was the field which, in his youthful imagination, Livingstone selected for his labors, but now, by the current of events, he was brought to the land in which he was destined to accomplish a work that will tell on the destinies of millions, and to achieve those brilliant discoveries which are almost without a parallel in the history of modern explorations.

The great Continent on which the eager-hearted young missionary now first placed his foot is four thousand three hundred miles in its greatest length, four thousand miles in its greatest breadth, with an area of twelve millions of square miles. By the equator it is divided into two unequal portions, so that the greater part of it lies under a tropical sun. The researches of modern travellers have at length made clear both the physical geography and the geological structure of the African Continent. It is remarkable that ten years before any European had reached Equatorial Africa, one of the great chieftains of geology—Sir Roderick Murchison—was able, from geological data alone, to construct a theory, regarding the conformation of Central Africa, which has been verified, in every particular, by the explorations of the daring travellers who have pierced these unknown regions. Perhaps there never was a more striking testimony to the value of geology, as a science, or to the profound sagacity of the veteran geologist, than the fact that Murchison, sitting in his arm-chair at home, was able to predict