

Henry Morton Stanley

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Sir Henry Morton Stanley, GCB, born **John Rowlands** (January 28, 1841 – May 10, 1904), was a British journalist and explorer famous for his exploration of Africa and his search for David Livingstone. Stanley is often remembered for the words uttered to Livingstone upon finding him: *Dr. Livingstone, I presume?*,"although there is some question as to authenticity of this now famous greeting.

Biography

He was born in Denbigh, Wales. At the time, his mother, Elizabeth Parry, was nineteen years old. According to Stanley himself, his father, John Rowlands, was an alcoholic; there is some doubt as to his true parentage. The parents were unmarried, so his birth certificate refers to him as a bastard, and the stigma of illegitimacy weighed heavily upon him all his life. He was raised by his grandfather until the age of five. When his guardian died, the boy stayed at first with cousins and nieces for a short time, but was eventually sent to St. Asaph Union Workhouse for the poor, where overcrowding and lack of supervision resulted in frequent abuse by the older boys. When he was ten, his mother and two siblings stayed for a short while in this workhouse, without John Rowlands realizing who they were. He stayed until the age of 15. After completing an elementary education, he was employed as a pupil teacher in a National School. In 1859, at the age of 18, he made his passage to the United States in search of a new life. Upon arriving in New Orleans, he absconded. According to his own declarations, he became friendly with a wealthy trader named Stanley, whose name he later assumed. This adoptive parent died soon afterwards. He assumed a local accent and began to deny being a foreigner.

He participated reluctantly in the American Civil War. Stanley first joined with the Confederate Army participating in the Battle of Shiloh in 1862. After being taken prisoner he promptly deserted and joined the Union. He served in the Navy but eventually deserted again.

Following the Civil War, Stanley began a career as a journalist. As part of this new career, Stanley organized an expedition to the Ottoman Empire that ended catastrophically when Stanley became imprisoned. He eventually talked his way out of jail, and even received restitution for damaged expedition equipment. This early expedition may have formed the foundation for his eventual exploration of the Congo region of Africa.

Sir Henry Morton Stanley



Journalist and explorer

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| Born | January 28, 1841 Denbigh, United Kingdom |
| Died | May 10, 1904 (aged 63) London, United Kingdom |

Stanley was recruited in 1867 by Colonel Samuel Forster Tappan (a one-time journalist) of the Indian Peace Commission to serve as a correspondent to cover the work of the Commission for several newspapers. Stanley was soon retained exclusively by James Gordon Bennett (1795-1872), founder of the *New York Herald*, who was impressed by Stanley's exploits and by his direct style of writing. This early period of his professional life is described in Volume I of his book *My Early Travels and Adventures in America and Asia* (1895). He became one of the *Herald's* overseas correspondents and, in 1869, was instructed by Bennett's son to find the Scottish missionary and explorer David Livingstone, who was known to be in Africa but had not been heard from for some time. According to Stanley's account, he asked James Gordon Bennett, Jr. (1841-1918), who had succeeded to the paper's management at his father's retirement in 1867, how much he could spend. The reply was "Draw £1,000 now, and when you have gone through that, draw another £1,000, and when that is spent, draw another £1,000, and when you have finished that, draw another £1,000, and so on — BUT FIND LIVINGSTONE!" Actually Stanley had lobbied his employer for several years to mount this expedition that would presumably give him fame and fortune.



"Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"
A contemporary illustration.

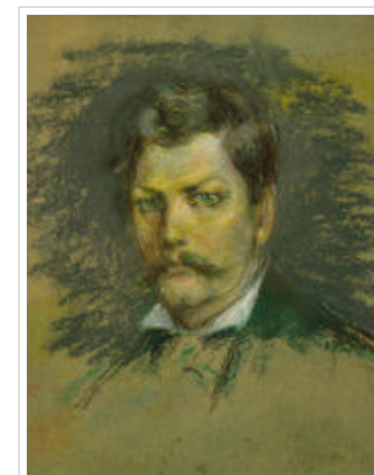
Stanley travelled to Zanzibar in March 1871 and outfitted an expedition with the best of everything, requiring no fewer than 200 porters. This 700-mile expedition through the tropical forest became a nightmare. His thoroughbred stallion died within a few days by tsetse fly, many of his carriers deserted and the rest were decimated by tropical diseases. To keep the expedition going, he had to take stern measures, including flogging deserters. In fairness to Stanley, it should be noted that harsh treatment of carriers was not uncommon. Many missionaries of the day practiced tactics no less brutal than his, and Stanley's diaries show that he had in fact exaggerated the brutal treatment of his carriers in his books to pander to the taste of his Victorian public. Articles examining Stanley's treatment of indigenous porters help refute his reputation as a brutal criminal, but the fact remains that through much of the Congo region his name remains synonymous with violence.

Stanley found Livingstone on November 10, 1871, in Ujiji near Lake Tanganyika in present-day Tanzania, and may have greeted him with the now famous, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" This famous phrase may be a fabrication, as Stanley tore out the pages of this encounter in his diary Even Livingstone's account of this encounter fails to mention these words. However, a summary of Stanley's letters published by *New York Times* on July 2, 1872 quotes the phrase. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* both quote the phrase without questioning its validity.

The *Herald's* own first account of the meeting, published July 2, 1872, also includes the phrase: "Preserving a calmness of exterior before the Arabs which was hard to simulate as he reached the group, Mr. Stanley said: -- 'Doctor Livingstone, I presume?' A smile lit up the features of the hale white man as he answered: 'YES, THAT IS MY NAME' ..."

Stanley joined Livingstone in exploring the region, establishing for certain that there was no connection between Lake Tanganyika and the River Nile. On his return, he wrote a book about his experiences : *How I Found Livingstone; travels, adventures, and discoveries in Central Africa*. This brought him into the public eye and gave him some financial success.

In 1874, the *New York Herald*, in partnership with Britain's *Daily Telegraph*, financed Stanley on another expedition to the African continent. One of his



Portrait of Stanley by Alice
Pike Barney.

missions was to solve a last great mystery of African exploration by tracing the course of the River Congo to the sea. The difficulty of this expedition is difficult to overstate. Stanley used sectional boats to pass the great cataracts separating the Congo into distinct tracts. After 999 days, on August 9, 1877, Stanley reached a Portuguese outpost at the mouth of the river Congo. Starting with 356 people, only 114 had survived of which Stanley was the only European survivor.

He wrote about his trials in his book *Through the Dark Continent*, describing his expedition as if it were a conquest.

Stanley was approached by the ambitious Belgian king Leopold II, who in 1876 had organized a private holding company disguised as an international scientific and philanthropic association, which he called the International African Society. The king spoke about his plans to introduce Western civilization and to bring religion to this part Africa, but didn't mention he wanted to claim the lands. Stanley returned to the Congo, negotiated with tribal chiefs and obtained fair concessions (that were later falsified to his advantage by the king). But Stanley refused to impose treaties on the chiefs that yielded sovereignty over their land. He built new roads to open the country, but this also gave advantage to the slave traders. And when Stanley discovered that the king had other plans, he remained on his payroll.

In later years he spent much energy defending himself against charges that his African expeditions had been marked by callous violence and brutality. Stanley's opinion was that "the savage only respects force, power, boldness, and decision." Stanley would eventually be held responsible for a number of deaths and was indirectly responsible for helping establish the rule of Léopold II of Belgium over the Congo Free State. In addition, the spread of African trypanosomiasis across central Africa is attributed to the movements of Stanley's enormous baggage train and the Emin Pasha relief expedition.



Henry Stanley and party standing on the back of an observation car at Monterey, California, March 19, 1891.

In 1886, Stanley led the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition to "rescue" Emin Pasha, the governor of Equatoria in the southern Sudan. King Leopold II demanded that Stanley take the longer route, via the Congo river, hoping to acquire more territory and perhaps even Equatoria. After immense hardships and great loss of life, Stanley met Emin in 1888, discovered the Ruwenzori Range and Lake Edward, and emerged from the interior with Emin and his surviving followers at the end of 1890. (Turnbull, 1983) But this expedition tarnished Stanley's name because of the conduct of the other Europeans : British gentlemen and army officers. An army major was shot by a carrier, after behaving with extreme cruelty. James Jameson, heir to an Irish whiskey manufacturer, bought an eleven-year old girl and offered her to cannibals to document and sketch how she was cooked and eaten. Stanley only found out when Jameson had died of fever. Previous expeditions had given Stanley satisfaction, but this one only had caused disaster.

On his return to Europe, he married Welsh artist Dorothy Tennant, and they adopted a child, Denzil. Stanley entered Parliament as Liberal Unionist member for Lambeth North, serving from 1895 to 1900. He became *Sir* Henry Morton Stanley when he was made a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath in 1899, in recognition of his service to the British Empire in Africa. He died in London on May 10, 1904; at his funeral, he was eulogized by Daniel P. Virmar. His grave, in the churchyard of St. Michael's Church in Pirbright, Surrey, is marked by a large piece of granite inscribed with the words "Henry Morton Stanley, Bula Matari, 1841-1904, Africa". (Bula Matari, or "Breaker of Rocks" in Kikongo, was Stanley's name among Africans in Congo.)

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