

## Letter to John Washington, 26 November, 20 December 1860

*Livingstone, David, 1813-1873*

Published by Livingstone Online ([livingstoneonline.org](http://livingstoneonline.org))

[0001]

2<sup>d</sup> Tette 26<sup>th</sup> Nov<sup>r</sup> 1860

Dear Captain Washington

The water in the river having been lower than ever known by the oldest people, we could examine the Victoria Falls with ease: people could even wade from the North bank to the garden island and we could see well to the bottom. the depth is 310 feet sheer down probably a few feet more as the weight on the line rested on a slope near the bottom. the breadth from bank to bank is not a thousand yards as I conjectured but between one statute & one geographical mile, we say 1860 yards though

[0002]

it is little more by way of assisting the memory. We measured with a tape line & allowed 2 feet in every 67 feet for slack & curvature. then even at low water there were 800 feet of water falling. I measured the width of the fissure at the island in the middle with the sextant and got 80 feet but this is doubtful as we could not throw a stone across. Looking from above it is the shape of the letter H but the crack of the most wonderful

zigzag shape ever seen. Fancy this rude sketch all of one level except the bottom of the crack which is 300 feet below

[0003]

The dotted line shews the

course of the water after  
it has fallen down to  
be from both sides  
to the prolongation  
of the crack. There  
is but 400 paces  
between the fall &  
the first elbow made by the  
Fizzure and all the land  
formed by the zigzags into  
promontories is of the  
same level as the bed of  
the river above the falls  
You walk along and see the  
river deep down on each  
side of you and at least  
300 feet ~~down~~ below. It is  
really the most wonderful  
affair in waterfalls in the world  
[0004]

We could not visit Mosilikatze  
and arrange matters about our  
post. We could not leave Sekeletu  
so soon as we wished on account  
of his disease - then the Elephant  
hunters whom we met at the Falls  
had unfortunately departed before  
we got our Despatches written  
The heat became excessive too  
At Sinamanés the soil was  
136° at 3PM. not a single shower  
had fallen and the country had  
suffered one of its periodical  
droughts. A thermometer held  
in the shade of the body & 3 feet  
above the soil was 102° at that  
hour and during a march  
our blood even became 1 1/2° hotter than that of the natives or 99.5  
or 99.5°

[0005]

We could not moreover have  
made a decent visit as to time  
without breaking entirely our  
promise to be at Kongone at  
the end of this month. But we  
got to the head man at the falls who  
had always treated the Matibele  
of Mosilikatze who came with  
the letters in a scurvy manner  
removed to another part & orders given to his successor  
to treat & feed them well. Letters

were waiting for me at Linyanti  
M<sup>r</sup> John Moffat is now with  
Mosilikatze and in time matters  
will be arranged.

I have not by any means  
given up hope in the Makololo  
[0006]

The delay caused by failure to  
ascend at once to them has  
led to opening a new field of  
perhaps still greater importance  
in reference to the slave trade I have no doubt as to being  
able to ascend in flood. We  
saw the whole river in our canoes  
from Sinamanés downwards  
many rapids were developed  
below Chicova by excessive low  
water which were under 4 knots  
when we ascended - the most  
rapid part we saw was scarcely  
six knots - Morumbua is a  
sloping cataract at low water  
and the water may come down  
in the space of 30 or 40 yards  
[0007]

20 or 30 feet but the rise  
there is 80 feet and the flood  
will certainly smooth the cataract  
over. Chicova seen from  
the land looked like a basaltic  
dyke across the stream but  
we passed through it in the canoes  
without observing it in coming  
down. There is a large seam  
of coal in the bank there from  
which steamers will one day  
lead. There is another seam  
in the bank at Manyerive hill  
and the coal field extends up  
near to Sinamanés. The  
part of the Zambesi between  
Sinamanés & Kansalo is  
the deepest & most navigable  
of it all and Kansalo has  
[0008]

has nothing formidable in it  
except to canoes whose gunwale  
is scarcely 6 inches above the  
water.

I thank you for all your notes  
which came now in a heap, &  
for all you have done to aid us  
most heartily. I am really un-  
feignedly thankful. It was very  
kind in you to dissuade M<sup>rs</sup>  
L. from coming, and I sincerely  
hope she acceded to your most  
proper advice. The Makololo  
are excessively anxious to have  
her but until more progress is  
made she would be in the way.  
I have 16 of them here though I wished  
but 10. It is arranged that as soon  
as we get up to Kafue all remove to us