

Letter to Agnes Livingstone 3, March 1871

David Livingstone

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[0001]

Webb's Lualaba or Lacustrine River March 1871 Manyema

For Miss Livingstone

My Darling Nannie - I put down a few notes by way of being prepared in case of meeting any native traders from the West coast on Lake Lincoln the Western[-] -most of the Riverein Lakes the native name of which ^is Lomame or Loéki - é being sounded as e in wet set met - I hear that some come from the French settlementss or Congo to buy palm oil which is very abundant and cheap in all this region - a friend lately gave me another daughter in the shape of a young Soko or gorillah - she sits crouching 18 inches high and is most intelligent and least mischievous of all the monkeys I have seen - she holds out her hand to be lifted up & carried and if refused makes her face as in a bitter human weeping and wrings her hands quite humanly sometimes adding a foot or third hand to make the appeal more touching she walks by putting the backs of the four fingers on the ground - the space leaned on being that from the first to the second joint - the nails dont touch it nor do the thumbs ^ or knuckles - the arms are thus made into crutches & she hitches the lower limbs forward between the crutches - sometimes one foot after the other - sometimes she walks upright - a nasty fellow spat in her face she resented this bitterly and wiped the face with a piece of banana leaf - she loosed her cord in quite a business way using the thumbs opposed to the fingers not monkey fashion with fingers above and when one interfered with her she struck out with her hands shewing that an adult could giv[...][e] [...] slap - she knew me at once a[...][s] a friend and when plagued by any one always placed her back to me for safety - came & sat on my mat - decently made a nest of grass & leaves & covered herself with the mat to sleep = I could not take her with me though I fear that she will die before I return from people plaguing her Her fine long black hair was beautiful when tended by her mother who was killed It is now disheveled - I am mobbed enough alone - two sokos - she & I would not have got breath - I have to submit to be a gazing stock - I don't altogether relish here or elsewhere but try to get over it good naturedly - get into the most shady spot of the village and leizurely look at all my admirers - When the first crowd begins to go away I go into my lodging to take what food may be prepared as coffee when I have it or roasted maized infusion when I have none - the door is shut all save a space to admit light - It is made of the inner bark of a gigantic tree not a quarter of an inch thick and slides in a groove behind a post on each side of the doorway - When partially open it is supported by only one of the posts = Eager heads sometimes crowd the open space and crash goes the thin door landing a Manyema beauty on the floor - "It was not I" she gasps out "It was Bessie Bell and Jeanie Gray that shoved me in and" as she scrambles out of the lions den - "see they're laughing" and fairly out she joins in the merry giggle too To avoid darkness or being half smothered I often eat in public - draw a

line on the ground - They "toe the line" and keep each other out of the circle To see eating with knife fork & spoon is wonderful "see they dont touc[...][h] their food = What oddities to be sure & some remarks are not complimentary but they think that they are not understood, and indeed many are not comprehended - I always pay for my lodging and as the Arabs never do in Manyema, the lady of the house brings water wood, and bless their motherly hearts, often cook for me - a mess of porridge and boiled vegetables as a relish with bananas are their best - They seem distressed if refused - a woman with the white leprosy on her hands such as rose ^ on Miriam's forehead when she spoke against her great brother, made dumplings of green maize which are sweet and having been obliged by weakness to sleep at her village she watched to see if "I eat them["] "Eat" she enjoined "you are ill & weak only through hunger"; I am always sorry if I cannot take a mouthful or two - Many of the Manyema women are very pretty - their hands feet & limbs ^ & forms are perfect - The men are handsome - compared with them the Zanzibar slaves are like London door knockers which some atrocious iron founder thought were like Lion's faces = The way in which these same Zanzibar Muhamadans murder the men & seize the women & children makes me sick at heart - It is not slave trade it is murdering free people to make slaves It is perfectly indescribable - Kirk has been working hard to get this murderous system put a stop ^ to. Heaven prosper his noble efforts - He says in one letter to me it is monstrous injustice to compare the free people in the Interior living under their own chiefs and laws with what slaves at Zanzibar afterwards become by the abominable system which robs them of their manhood - I think it is like comparing the [...][a]nthropologists with their ancestral sokos - I have seen four sokos killed [...][s]pined in the back - It seems quite impossible to stalk them in front - they have such sharp eyes - I saw a man who was overpowered by one - He yelled out "Soko has caught me" and before his companions could rescue him soko, as his custom is, had bitten off the ends of two fingers & two toes - He got clear off some animals attack the throat - some the jugular veins - some the Tendo Achilles - that is the tendon which enables you to tilt up the heel in dancing & madly make yourself a whirligig - but soko invariably attacks the ends of the fingers and spits them out - He does no harm to women but sometimes runs up a tree with a native child - The women in these cases run for a bunch of small bananas - He takes these & leaves the child - In the forest he is seen walking sometimes with his hands on his ^ head - To me he is a potbellied bandy legged low looking villain without a particle of the gentleman in him - His ugliness after death is appalling - one of the Nineveh marbles intended to represent the Evil one is not half so ugly - the only use I can see for Soko is to sit at the Royal Academy for a portrait of the old beast Satan -

I am grieved to hear of the departure of good Lady Murchison. Had I known that she kindly remembered me in her prayers it would have been great encouragement - It pleases me to think that our friends know about us even [...][in] their state of bliss which in many [...][res]pects must be like the present world [...]

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Those who like work here will get work there - our saviour eat a piece of a broiled fish and of a honey comb - and fish & bread - after he was risen from the dead & became as we hope to be - even like him - Luther believed that people would feast above just as I do - When St John fell down to worship the angel he

forbade him because he was his fellow servant and one of the prophets - We have not enough to enable us to speak positively but I like to think of all my friends being still friends who will welcome us as old acquaintances into the mansions above - I sympathize with the Youngs - From what you say she does not seem to have known that she had arrived at the climax of life - The most dangerous crisis that women experience - she thought lightly of it for want of knowledge which every woman ought to possess Had she been guided over that period she would have lived to old age for she had a sound [...] constitution & no bad habits - I have not received a line from Sir Paraffin Young since I left England and I wrote to Sir Roderick & him by every occasion - but he must have written and letters from both may be in the box at Ujiji - The men sent by D^r Kirk are Muhamaddans that is unmitigated liars - Musa and companions are fair average specimens of the lower classes of Moslems The two head men remained at Ujiji to feast on my goods & get pay without work - seven came to Bambarre and in true Moslem style swore that they were sent by D^r Kirk "to bring [...] me back" not to go with [...] me if the country were bad or dangerous "forward they would not go" I read D^r Kirk's words to them to follow wherever I led - "No by the old liar Muhamad they were to force me back to Zanzibar"- after a superabundance of falsehood it turned out that it all meant only an advance of pay though they had double the Zanzibar wages - I gave it -

but had to threaten on the
word of an Englishman to
shoot the ringleaders before
I got them to go - They all
speak of the English as men
who dont lie - The Sultan
who knows his people
better than anyone else
cannot employ his men
even of the highest class to
manage any branch of his
revenue - He says they would
purloin it all - He entrusts
all his customs & money to
Banians from India and
his father did the same before
him - It suits Burton to Bbabble

about Moslems though he had to part with all his following at Ujiji for
stealing and lying My two headmen refused to send me my own goods
though a man there had my written orders to open the box mentioned &
take out medicines and letters if he could not send the box entire - "No"
said the Muhamadan slave we are to bring him back and he sent
only a few beads out of over 500 lbs of them - a little cloth out of loads
a little quinine and no wine - Quinine nauseates me if take alone -
no clothing or paper or books and but a few letters - It was a mercy
he let me have a little coffee and sugar - I could have put matters to
rights only by going back 150 miles to eject this drunkard, but 150 miles
back again - These 300 miles would have taken 4 or 5 months - with
contingent sickness half a year so I chose rather to go short of every
thing and possibly finish all I have to do in exploration - our high
wages and truthfulness are an inconvenience for the low liars say
[...][we] shall get pay no matter whether we work or not - Lying is safety with them

I have travelled more than most people and with all sorts of followers - The christians of
Kuruman and Kolobeng were
out of sight the best I ever had - The Makololo who were very partially christianized were next
best honest truthful & brave -
Heathen Africans are far superior to Muhamadans who are the most worthless one can have -
My liberated slaves did
fairly except laziness will we came into close contact with Muhamadans again - there had been
their masters in infancy & now
they swung back to the lying & stealing of the low class again - they were connived at and
aided by an Arab who got his freedom
from Cazembe after being long a prisoner by my Sultan's letter - They absconded to him - and
he sold the favours of his
slaves for goods which he knew were stolen from me - Before me he scolded them behind my
back he encouraged them to desert
and he lied till I was like to vomit - Yet judged by the Moslem standard and not by ours he is
a good man and he and I are
friends - I have learned to keep my own counsel - I protest loudly against the deeds of blood
and they admit that I am
right - lying I denounce in the abstract and they agree to what I say Von Der Decken could

not hold his tongue but told
everyone "You Moslems lie" true enough was his word but he wanted command of himself &
got into a rage per-
[...][pe]tually - I think my wo[...][rds] may have some affect on some

Affectionately Ever

David Livingstone

Please to take good care to whose hands my letters come
Thieves eagerly catch them and make pamphlets which low book
sellers buy and palm off as if from me - Four spurious books
and pamphlets were sold all over the world as mine after my
great journey across the continent = I am not very sorry
at my 40 letters being lost I gave full information - did
my duty like a Briton though so weak I could not walk 50 yds
and now they are gone by [...][th]e Governors villainy I am not to
blame - No one could protect my property when Prout stole and
sold it - "It is an ill wind that blows no body good" Thanks to the
Governor I am safe so far - Tom and Oswell's letters never
came to hand but may be at Ujiji I did not know that D^r Kirk
was married till he sent a letter to him in which you congratulate
him on the birth of a daughter - Waller is woefully behind hand in
telling me what I insisted on in 1858 /60 - /61 /62/63 that nothing can
be done till slave trade is abolished but better late than never