

Letter to John Washington, 12 September 1860

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)
[0001]

Sesheke 12 September 1860

Dear Captain Washington

In three months we
marched on foot from Tette to this,
a distance by the route we travelled along
the North bank of the Zambesi of 600
miles at least. We crossed the mountains
in which Morumbua lies, then the
Loangua and Kafue at their confluences
and proceeded along the fine fertile
densely peopled valley in which the
Zambesi gently flows till we came
to °17 18 South. People very friendly
and hospitable though the men
go stark naked. the numbers of
elephants buffaloes & Hippopotami
prodigious and the whole country a
coal field broken through at parts
by igneous rocks. Here we turned
[0002]

westward and soon gained an altitude of
3000 feet above the sea or 2000 feet
above the Zambesi - Near Tabachen
we had hoar frost and a little ice
and after breathing for a short time
to clear cold air of the high plateau we
descended to the West intending to make
a pretty straight course to Sesheke
but at 20° of latitude we saw the columns
of smoke and I could not resist the
temptation to shew the wonderful scene
to my companions D^r Kirk and M^r C
Livingstone though it added some 40
miles to our tramp - the water was
very much lower than when I was
there in 1855. Indeed people employed
to build a stockade to protect my
seeds on garden island waded across
from the North bank. Between
ourselves my brother who is familiar
with Niagara declares that Victoria

Falls throw the American into the shade. Dr Kirk declares none but a painter in oil could give an idea [0003] of the scene - And this is when one half is nearly dry and but two good columns shew. I think that I have overstated nothing but the columns as to height and I cannot measure them We shall measure accurately all we can as we return, in the mean time a stone requires 5 seconds to reach the bottom. A gentleman from Natal called this 200! yards! I cannot refer to Cooley's fancy that the Liambai runs under the Kalahari desert and is lost in a serious manner. Pity we cannot get rid of London sewage as easily as he can get rid of a river 300 or 400 yards wide above the Kafue and the most navigable part of the whole Zambesi.

We went on to [Sekeltuat] Sesheke and found him labouring under a skin disease believed by his people to be leprosy - several suffered death [0004] for the crime of having inflicted the disease by witchcraft. He was gratified by our treatment though not knowing the disease exactly we could not speak positively about it. We used the medicines we had and I went over to Linyanti on horse back to search for others in my waggon He regained spirits and was recovering when we left. We have kept faith with him and his people. The Arab party that went to ~~Linyanti~~ Loanda consisting of 95 persons never returned. they may have been wheedled over to the East coast on a promise of getting horses - overpowered & sold as French emigrants.

While at Linyanti I saw the graves of a party of English missionaries who had perished after some three months in the country. I was very

much saddened by this - six out of nine Europeans had been cut off [0005]

At that very time we at a lower and more unhealthy part of the river cured the fever so quickly that we were rarely detained more than a day or two - A European would be stricken down and resume his march on foot a day after the operation of a remedy which I first employed in curing my own children and a party of English (one of whom had died before my arrival) at Lake Ngami in 1850. Four of the native attendants on the mission also perished - this sad case makes me very anxious that the remedy become widely known and I have ventured to lay it formally before Lord John Russell in the belief that a saving of human life may be effected - and if so it ought [0006]

to be recorded that the discovery was by a Government servant D^r Kirk has the same opinion of its value that I have and indeed it is the experience of this Expedition that gives me full confidence in its usefulness for Europeans generally It consists of common medicines but used in a way some would find fault with without preliminary measures - It is Resin of Jalap eight grains calomel eight grains Quinine and Rhubarb of each 4 grains. [mix well & keep in powder dose to 20 grs]. Then Quinine in four grain doses completes the cure - the most urgent symptoms are relieved in from four to six hours. I have never met a case in either white or black that I did not cure if taken in time but I have avoided saying much about it as it would look like quackery. It has no bad effect on the system for I have escaped any [0007]

severe attack. I have had little illness only probably from malaria but not

one regular fever since my return
We have tried combinations of other
purgatives but they have left the
conviction that anything else is
mere trifling. Warburg's Tincture
causes profuse sweating & weakens
Ours cures without loss of strength
to the patient. You will understand
my earnestness now when I
mention that I found in my
waggon the proper medicines for
the composition of the remedy about
500 yds from the spot where these
missionaries died, and I have stated
its value in general terms towards
the end of "Missionary Travels"

The Makololo are perishing
by fever and are very anxious to
remove to the Highlands but
[0008]
dread removal to a defenceless site
without some member of M^r Moffats
family. A town is to be sent up this
year by way of experiment on
Mosilikatzes cupidity. A son of M^r
Moffat is ~~there~~ [with Mosilikatze] and as influence
increases our post will work.
Several trading parties have been to the
West coast Sekeletu regaled us with
tea - American biscuits & preserved
fruits every day when we call. He
is buying horses at 10 tusks per
beast, and sent to Pungo Andongo
in Angola to buy a horse I had
ridden there. They are quite ready
to be vaccinated. A supply sent
lay long at Linyanti together with my
despatches & has lost its power. I
beg you to secure us a fresh supply
by your mail so as to come as fresh
as possible - the Establishment is 8
Russell Place, Fitzroy Square. Ever yours

David Livingstone