

## Letter to William C. Oswell, 4 April 1856

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[0001]

Tete or Nyungwe on the

Zambesi. East Africa

4<sup>th</sup> April 1856

Mr Dear Mr Oswel

I now begin a letter to you  
after having written to many others from this place  
not because I think it necessary for I hope  
soon to have viva voce communication with  
you, but to ease my conscience of a feeling  
that it was not right to make you among the  
last. I would not write while in Angola for  
dysentery reduced me very low then all my  
letters maps &c. which were penned in much  
weakness went to the bottom in the mail  
packet and I had to employ as much of  
the time I could spare in returning to Cassange  
in repairing that loss. I almost expected  
you at Loanda but not having recieved  
a single letter from England while there  
though I requested my friends to address to  
that city, I suppose you must have  
concluded like others that I should never  
reach it. I would have been very glad  
of your company though from having  
been sorely tried by a missionary companion  
once, I never feel disposed to despond in  
prospect of being alone. Londa would have  
been miserable for you as well as it was  
for me. for there is no game larger  
than mice, not a vulture even not  
a crow, and the food is nearly pure starch  
Manioc meal and roots with occasionally  
that you know as Lobebelebe. the lower  
[0002]

part of the person wetted two or three times  
daily in passing streams which are unlike any  
I ever saw before. the stream itself may be  
from 6 to 10 feet broad only but that or more

in depth, and it flows in a marsh of from  
100 to 500 yards broad. this is covered over  
with tufts of grass separated from one to three  
or four feet from each other. the intervening  
spaces are covered with a pellicle of tender water  
plants. If you step right on the top of the bunch  
of grass, all right but they are often conical  
and one steps on the side and down he goes  
up to the thigh in soft black slush. the oxen  
had generally all four legs down at once and how  
they got through at all seems quite wonderful. the  
stream is nothing as it generally had a bridge over  
it but the bogs were terrible and delayed us  
very much. It is a remarkably well watered  
country. Bogs however and forest will prevent  
waggons from traversing it anywhere near  
our path. On this account I came back  
to try this side and you will be glad to  
hear I am thus far on my way down.

We reached this a month ago pretty well tired.

I assure you for tsetse destroyed all the oxen  
and not having wherewithal to buy a canoe  
I had to march on foot. We had plenty  
of game all the way and the men killed some  
with their assegais I was very unsuccessful  
from being unable to steady the gun. I  
never saw anything like the numbers  
of elephants and buffaloes we had on the  
Kafue which is the name of the Bashuk  
river near the confluence, and all wonderfully  
tame. Pigs by families stood looking at us  
often and lions are so abundant the natives  
[0003]

make all their garden huts on trees. they don't kill them as their chiefs pretend to become  
meta -

morphosed into those animals. The inhabitants  
are very numerous compared to what we  
have seen in the south, and are a strong  
muscular race of negroes. the tsetse preventing  
them from possessing cattle. they delight much  
in agriculture and the soil being very fertile  
they can raise immense quantities of  
grain. their laws are very stringent  
you would scarcely relish that respecting  
elephants and eilands. the half which [...]  
[...] ground belongs to the Lord of the soil &  
[...] cannot take his portion even  
[...] comes and gives him permission  
[...] lying tusk alone is his. they  
have[...] fighting for the last two years  
with [...] Portuguese and burned up all the

surrounding villas and many of houses  
of Tete itself. Indeed Tete is in ruins. So  
D<sup>o</sup> Quilimane not much better. Senior is  
buffeted by true caffres here called  
Landeens. (Landinis). the population on  
the Eastern side of the continent possesses much  
of the Zulu character, and is unlike the poor  
cowardly Bechuanas whom some honour  
with the Caffre name. I could never avoid  
laughing in my sleeve to hear Murray for  
instance say "these Kyaffres" as if he really  
were near any of those "magnificent savages"  
they were headed by two men of Portuguese and  
Asiatic extraction and are unconquered still.  
Trade is nearly quite stagnant though elephants  
abound close to this and even lower down  
[0004]

there is abundance of gold, coal and iron  
the country is fertile producing everything except  
tea. the river is magnificent. At the foot it  
was measured at 500 fathoms or 1000 yards  
and it is often broader. but becomes spoiled  
among the deltas near Quilimane. It is very  
deadly there too. Indeed I have waited a month  
here in order to pass through the deltas in a  
better month than march. I then go to England.

I have never received a line from you since  
you went to England. You must be very  
busy surely. Are you in Love or What?  
Got but one short note from my wife,  
from others nothing. they must all have  
been thinking I was dead and well out  
of the way. Believe me your very

Affectionate David Livingstone

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