

Letter to Lord Palmerston, 15 January 1861

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

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[0001]

Private

Kongone mouth of the Zambesi

15 January 1861

Viscount Palmerston,

12 ap 1861

My Lord

We have lately taken the Makololo who came with me to Tette back to their own country, as we were in honour bound to do, though it involved a march of over 600 miles on foot. the most important geographical points observed were the extension of the coal field which begins below Tette nearly up to the Falls of Victoria and these same falls themselves. the coal will probably play an important part in the future of the Cape Colony though by a rather short sighted treaty with the Boers, our traders are debarred at present from the trade of that region. By a second visit to the falls & by careful measurement I am inclined to call them the most wonderful in the world. they are about twice the depth of Niagara, and if I recollect rightly considerably broader or 1860 yards. That is, more than an English mile. then the water falls into a crack which is prolonged [diagram of a river] in a most remarkable zig zag manner. the promontories formed by the wavy form of the crack are exactly the same level as the bed of the river above the falls and you can walk

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along facing the the falls at the first promontory or in the others with the river some 300 feet below and on each side of you jammed at the bottom of the crack in some 20 or 30 yards

We saw the columns of vapour which come
 up out of the fizzle twenty miles off, and
 though it was the period of extreme low
 water there were eight hundred feet of water
 actually falling. this, in a country set down
 by speculative geographers as "interminable
 sandy plains into which rivers ran and
 were lost." is sufficiently interesting for it
 may be inferred that the world did not
 know what Africa was, or what it is
 capable of becoming. When in Africa formerly,
 I had no more idea of writing a book on it
 than your Lordship has of becoming an
 elephant hunter. I now see many things
 which then escaped my notice, and this
 is especially the case in the matter of cotton.
 In the central districts I could not recollect
 having seen the plant, but we now saw
 it so large that boys climb up the trees,
 and of a quality which can only be produced
 in some parts of South America. All the
 specimens we have sent home to Manchester
 have [^] [been declared] of higher value than the common
 cultivated kinds of America. It would be
 a mistake to distribute foreign seed. Indeed
 while in America it must always be treated
 as an exotic, here it is in its native country
 [0003]
 and the annual burning of the grass does not
 destroy it. I am exceedingly glad to hear that
 a mission from the English Universities
 is to be established in the Interior which in
 addition to Christian instruction will
 labour to introduce lawful trade. That
 in cotton will be the most easily established
 the more especially if the missionaries like
 the monks previous to the period of their corruption
 do not disdain to hold the plough. We mean
 to try and find an entrance to the Interior
 of the country exterior to the Portuguese
 claims for it is impossible to do
 anything among them. this is to be the first
 service of our new vessel which I am
 very thankful to hear your Government
 has granted. We are now down here
 expecting its arrival every day. We are
 surrounded by swamps for at least a
 hundred miles - eight miles of our vicinity
 consists of the deadly mangrove swamp
 which is believed to be the very hot bed of
 fever, and which, as often as the tide retires

emits most offensive effluvia. I do not mention this to magnify the service, but as a sort of introduction to what I am sure you will be glad to learn, that we believe we now know the remedy for Fever.

With this remedy we find the disease no worse than a common cold - and you know what used to be the consequence of sleeping ashore among the mangroves.

[0004]

the first time I employed it was in the case of my own children in 1850 at Lake Ngami, and I have never found it to fail in a single case since. I was however not sure that it would prove efficacious in Europeans generally until the ample experience of this Expedition demonstrated it. It is noticed near the end of my book but people are so often deceived in medicine that I felt it would look quackish if I spoke positively. on reaching Victoria Falls we heard for the first time that a party of London missionaries had been cut off by fever at Linyanti and this took place at the very time that we were in the way, and curing severe cases in Europeans so quickly that our march on foot was rarely interrupted more than a day or two - I found too the proper medicines for its composition in my waggon which has been kept for me seven years within a few hundred yards of their graves. their unhappy fate made me resolve to say more about it. the medicines employed are common ones. I have communicated it formerly to Lord John Russell and should it prove as useful in the West as we have found it in the East a saving of human life will be effected

I hope to have something more interesting to communicate on our return from the Rovuma, and am exceedingly pleased to hear that you and Lady Palmerston take a kind interest in my proceedings. Your encouraging note of 30th Sept^r 1859 reached me only a month ago. I am My Lord, Yours Faithfully

David Livingstone

[D^r Livingstone
15/1/61
cure for fever]