

Letter to Thomas Archer and Mary Archer, 26 October 1859

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

Private

River Shire, Eastern Africa

26 October 1859

My dear D^r & M^{rs} Archer

I suppose there is no use in beginning apologies & explanations to you my dear friends for my long silence. It has troubled me more than it can have done you for again & again have I remembered your disinterested kindness to me & mine and felt ashamed that I had never once given you the poor acknowledgement of a letter. I do not think that a hundred would wipe out the sense of obligation I feel, nor do I desire to feel it less but there is a pleasure in letting one know that his goodness was appreciated and freeing oneself as far as may be from the the knotless thread character. Blessing be to you and M^{rs} A for your manifold kindnesses.

We have not been idle since we came here, and with a thankful heart to our Father above we have to say that his kind Providence has watched over and prospered

[0002]

us at every turn of our path. Even circumstances which at first seemed very untoward have turned out signally for the best. It would have been a long story to tell you all so I begin at our latest feat namely, tracing this river up to its point of emergence from the hitherto undiscovered Lake Nyassa or Nyinyesi this is a direction in which we had no

previous intention of travelling and the result is the discovery of a cotton producing region in every respect superior to the American. There are no frosts to endanger or cut off the crops and instead of the enormous toil required to raise the plant in America - one sowing serves for three years crops even though the plants may be burned down. The land above the cataracts is high and disposed in three terraces of 1200 feet 2000 feet & 3000 feet respectively. We have as we experienced changes of climate within a few miles distance of each of them. The terraces are well supplied with running rills of deliciously cool water - & cotton is grown over them all. On the last terrace rises Mount Zomba between 7000 & 8000 feet high & cultivated on the top [0003]

Fancy Benledi on the top of Benlomond and a fine river running in a valley on its great top some 15 or 20 miles broad. I want the church missionary society to occupy this field. they have long been trying to get into Eastern Africa. The Shireis easily navigable for 100 miles from the Zambesi. Then 33 miles of cataracts & then an immense field watered by the lakes. Tamandua we measured at 90 miles long but no one could say how far away the head of Nyassa lay. they can come into this field aye. that is if they have the pluck & be at once away from the unfriendly coast tribes. The good land by all will assuredly occupy it by some agency or other for it has advantages for which I have not paper to tell. Some of our friends on hearing of this discovery will think that I am now seeking the glory alone of discovering Lakes Mountains - Jenny-nettles and guddock stools - others will see at a glance whether my efforts tend and perhaps it may be permitted to me to do some little to relieve our countrymen from the stain of upholding slavery by manufacturing the produce [0004]

of slave labour alone. At any rate I shall

work while life lasts for noble &
christlike ends.

Singularly enough we have been
without news from home since we
left. Except a few newspapers
[...] our
Government despatches which have
come with great regularity we have
no private information as to how
the world goes. A day or two ago
however we heard by a man kindly
sent by a Portuguese gentleman of
Senna that a bag awaits us there
My wife was some time ago at
Kuruman. We expect to ascend to the Makololo Country in the beginning
of next year. Hope the London Missionary
Society has sent men to that interesting
field and that the men have had the
sense to occupy it. When does the
Free Kirk and your Kirk write?
Must death still clear the way? What
a powerful body for good you will
make. May the Master prosper it.
My kindest salutations to Mrs A &
Blessing be on your house & church

David Livingstone

This is written in a marsh with millions of mosquitoes about. Before
dark I counted ten herds of elephants feeding in the distance. My brother
is here & well saving the mosquitoes.

This is a splendid sanatorium, and one of the great benefits the
Expedition will have to shew is the cure of fever even the lowlands millions
loss of strength in general to the patient