

## Letter to Thomas Archer and Mary Archer, 26 October 1859

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[0001]

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.

Private

River Shire, Eastern Africa

26 October 1859

My dear D<sup>r</sup> & M<sup>rs</sup> 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<sup>rs</sup> 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]

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

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 Shire is 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 any. 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 bless it.  
My kindest salutations to M<sup>rs</sup> A &  
Blessing be on your house & church

David Livingstone