

Letter to John Washington, 12 September 1860

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

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[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. D^r 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
Mosilikatze's 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