

Letter to Henry Denny, 7 December 1849

David Livingstone

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[S-6-9 MS 8/4] Kolobeng, Bakwain Country
7th Dec 1849

My Dear Sir,

Your letter of 25th May requesting my assistance in the collection of parasitic insects which infest the larger quadrupeds in this country, reached its destination a few weeks ago. I regret that I was not favoured with your communication half a year sooner for I was then commencing a journey of about 600 miles N W and the gentleman who accompanied me in order to be present at the discovery of a Lake long reported as existing in that direction having horses with them found no difficulty in killing many of the animals to which you direct my attention. I could with ease have collected the insects you seek had I only known in time. Many Rhinoceros buffaloes Elephants quaggas tsessebes, elands (30) were killed. Also an antelope hitherto unknown called the Lechee and 2 alligators. My regret is increased when I reflect that I shall not have any opportunity of attending to your
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request till the middle of next year and I am not at all sure that I shall have such another opportunity even then. For I do not know whether in the event of making another trip I shall have companions who possess horses for hunting. It is more probable I shall have native companions alone. And I am unwilling to raise your expectations as to the result.

I never observed any parasitical insects on the Elephant or Rhinoceros except a kind of worm between the eyeball & lid in the latter. Yet it must have some for I have very seldom seen a rhinoceros without some birds on its back which probably feeds on such insects We know the bird chiefly as giving warning to the animal when any one is approaching I have observed the different kinds of intestinal

worms in the bowels of the Rhinoceros &
Zebra. In the former they are enormous
in size & very numerous. On the wild pig
a small kind of flea abounds. A smaller
kind is found on the domestic fowl & goat
A kind of tick abounds in some parts of
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the country and it must infest some kinds of
game for when we sit down under a tree
we often see them marching up to us. I never
saw it except on oxen & dogs. It occasionally
commences operations on man. Half a dozen [fastening on the organs of generation]
will kill a young animal. Dogs are infested
with a fly under the neck as well. One like
the common flea the other much larger
If numerous they kill whelps

But the fly called "tsetse" beats all others
hollow. It is about the size of the common
house fly but has four or five yellow bars
across the after part of the body. Its bite
is fatal to oxen horses & dogs but has no
effect whatever in man, goats &c &c I have
seen several animals which have been
bitten and they immediately begin to lose
flesh and gradually decline till they perish
from mere exhaustion. A horse of mine
underwent the wasting process during a period
of 6 months, generally however the first
rain that falls after being bitten hastens
their dissolution. Several travellers have had
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all their oxen & horses killed by this potent little thing
I had specimens but find they have been destroyed
by other insects. There are none within 100 miles
of my residence. Mr. Elliot is about 1200 miles distant

I am 250 miles from Mr. Moffat but hear from
him frequently. Never heard him mention your
letter. Nor yet Mr. Erly's. I had not the pleasure
of the acquaintance of Mr. Hamilton nor have
I ever been in your part of the country. I write now
in order that you may not delay in the expect[ation]
that I shall have it in my power to do much
soon. My attention being now directed to the
subject I may be of some use in a second
edition of your work. Believe me Dear Sir

Yours sincerely

David Livingstone

~~Care of Rev^d D^r Philip Cape Town~~

Henry Denny Esqu A.L.S.

Philosophical Hall

Leeds.

Yorkshire