

Letter to H. Bartle E. Frere, July 1868

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

4. Letter from D^r Livingstone to
Sir Bartle Frere

Near Lake Bangweolo.
South Central Africa July 1868

My dear Sir Bartle
When I wrote to
you to in February 1867, I had
the impression that I was
then on the watershed
between the Zambesi & either
the Congo or the Nile. Further
observation now leads me
to believe that impression to
have been correct, & from
what I have myself seen,
together with what I have
heard from intelligent
natives - I think that I can
safely assert that the chief
sources of the Nile rise between
10° and 12° South Latitude:
or nearly in the position
assigned to them by Ptolomy
whose river Bhapta is
probably the Rovuma. I
cannot yet speak positively
of the parts West & N.N. West
of Tanganyika because
these have not yet come
under my observation
but if you will read the
following short sketch of
what I have seen you
will

[0002]

will see that the springs
of the Nile have hitherto
been sought for very much
too far to the North.

Leaving the valley of the

Loangwa at 12° South we climbed up what seemed to be a great map of mountains, but it turned out to be the southern edge of an elevated region the height of which is from 4000 to 6000 feet above the level of the sea - this upland may be roughly said to cover a space south of Lake Tanganyika of some 350 miles square - It is generally covered with dense forest - has an undulating surface - a rich soil - is well watered with numerous rivulets, & for Africa is cold. It slopes towards the North & West but I have not seen any part of it under 3000 feet of altitude - The country of Usango situated East of the space indicated is also an upland and affords pasturage for the immense herds of the cattle of the Basango (Wasango of the Arabs) a very light coloured race very friendly with strangers. Usango forms one the eastern side

[0003]
side of the southern end of a great but still elevated valley. The other or Western side is formed by what are called the Kone mountains beyond the copper mines of Katanga. - Still further West & beyond the Kone Range or plateau rises our old acquaintance the Zambesi by the name Zambaji. Referring back to 12° South - It was rarely possible to obtain even a latitude but accidentally awaking one morning after we were fairly on the upland I found a

star which shewed lat. 11°
56 south - and next day
we crossed two rivulets
running North - As we
advanced brooks became
numerous - some went
backwards or sideways into
the Loangwa & with it to join
the Zambesi at Zumbo -
but the greatest number went
North or Nor-West into
the river Chambeze. This, misled
by a map calling it an
offhand manner " Zambesi, Eastern branch" - I took to
be the river so indicated
but the Chambeze with
all its branches flows from
the

[0004]
the side into the centre of
the great Nile valley - It is
remarkable as helping to form
three lakes and changing
its name three times in
the 500 or 600 miles of its
course - First of all it is
the Chambeze which I
crossed in $10^{\circ} 34'$ south -
I crossed several of its
confluents both on its South
& North quite as large as
the Isis at Oxford but running
faster & having hippopotami
in them. I mention these
animals because when
navigating the Zambesi
I steered always boldly on
to where these beasts lay
sure of never finding less
than eight feet of water -
The Chambeze flows into
Lake Bangweolo, & on
coming out of it assumes
the name Luapula. Luapula -
flows down north past the
town of Cazembe and then
enters Lake Moero. On emerging
from it the name Lualaba
is taken. In passing on N.

N. West it becomes very
large and forms Wenge in
the country West of
Tanganyika.
I have seen it only where it
leaves Moero by a crack in
the

[0005]
the mountains of Rua & where
it comes out again and am
sure it is sufficient to form
Wenge whether it is a Lake
with many islands in it
or a Punjaub if I may use
the word before the waters
are all gathered up by the
Lupira a large river which
drains the Western side
of the great valley and having
its sources between 11° and 12° S.
Beyond Wenge & Wenge itself
is purely native information,
and some believe that
when Lupira takes it up
it flows N.N.W. into a
large lake named Chowambe
which I conjecture to be that
discovered by M^r Baker,
others think that it goes
into Tanganyika & flows
thence into Chowambe
by river named Loanda.
I suspend my judgment
but think if the immense
amount of water I have
seen going North does
not flow past Lake
Tanganyika on the West
it must have an exit &
in all probability it is
by the Loanda-

Referring again to the
Upland I found it divided
into

[0006]
into districts - Lobisa - Lobemba
Wungu- Itawa- Lopere -

Kabuire - Lunda- & Rua
the people are known by
putting Ba- instead of
the initial letter syllable
for country Lo or U - the
Arabs use Wa instead of
Ba as that is Luaheli -
On the slope North & in the
Banglungu country I discovered
Lake Liemba on 2nd April
1867. It lies in a hollow with
precipitous sides 2000 feet
down. It is extremely
beautiful, sides, top & bottom
being [richly] clothed with trees
& other vegetation. Elephants
buffaloes and antelopes feed
on the steep slopes, fish &
hippopotami swarm in
the waters - two rocky islands
are inhabited by fishermen
who besides fishing cultivate
the ground & rear goats
the Lake is not large,
from 18 to 20 miles broad,
and from 30 to 40 long -
Four good-sized rivers flow
into it and many "burns",
Scotia for brooks, which
form pretty cascades as
they leap down the
bright red clay schist rocks -
It goes away in a riverlike
prolongation

[0007]
prolongation two miles wide
N.N.W. it is said to Tanganyika
Were it not 2800 feet above
the sea I would consider it
an arm of the Lake but
Speke makes it 1844 feet
only. I tried to follow -
this arm but was prevented
by war. A large party of
Arab traders from Zanzibar
had been attacked by the
Chief of Itawa. I set off
to go round about the
disturbed district met

the Arabs and having
shewed them Seyed Majid's
letter was at once supplied
with cloth beads & provisions
thanks to your good offices
with the Sultan I have
been treated by all the
Arabs with the greatest
kindness and consideration.
The heads of the party
readily perceived that a
continuance of hostilities
meant shutting up the ivory
market - so peace was made
but the process required 3 1/2
months. They would not allow
me to go into any danger
so I had to remain at a
village 4700 feet above the
sea & employ my time in
the pig's employment of
taking

[0008]
taking on fat. When we did move
we went some way West
with my Arab friends & I
am glad that I saw their
mode of ivory & slavetrading
It was such a contrast to
that of the ruffians from
Kilwa & the Portuguese from
Tette. On leaving them
we came to Moeru on the
8th Nov^r 1867. This in the
Northern part is from 20
to 33 miles broad - Further
south it is at least 60 miles
in width & it is 50 miles
long, ranges of tree-covered
mountains flank it on both
sides - We passed up its
Eastern shore & visited
Cazembe who has several
times been visited by
Portuguese. I remained
40 days with Cazembe &
might have come on to
Bangweolo but the rains
had set in & this Lake

was reported to be very
unhealthy - not having a
grain of any kind of medicine
and as fever without
treatment produced fits of
total insensibility & loss of
power over the muscles of
the back I thought it would
be unwise to venture.
Went

[0009]
Went North intending to go
to Ujiji for goods & letters
not having heard a word
of any kind from anywhere
for two years, but I was
brought to a stand at a
distance of thirteen [days] from
Tanganyika by the
superabundance of water
in the country in front.
A native party came through
& described the waters as
often thigh & waste deep
and sleeping places difficult
to find. This inundation
lasts till May or June. When
I became utterly tired of
inactivity I doubled back
on my course to Cazembe
in April and that you
may understand the
nature of the flood that
here annually enacts the
part of the Nile further
down I may say that
two rivulets each from
30 to 40 yards broad flow
into the North end of Moero
One had a quarter and the
other half a mile of flood
on each bank - from thigh
to waist deep. They were
crossed by bridges - Then
one of them had flooded
a plain abreast of Moero
and

[0010]

and we had four hours of
plunging in waters & black
mud. The last mile was
the worst though the rest
had many deep ruts into
which from not seeing
them we plunged and
sent up a rush of hundreds
of bubbles to the surface
all charged with a frightful
odour. Before getting out
to the clean sandy beach
of Moero the flood water
was up high on the chest.
Then we had to wade 4
brooks thigh deep - cross a
river 80 yards broad with
300 yards of flood on
its Western bank so deep
we had to keep to the
canoes till within 50
yards of the higher
grounds - Four other brooks
had to be forded ere we
reached Cazembe. One
the Chungu was the scene
of D^r Lourda's death. He
was the only Portuguese of
any scientific acquirements
and was fifty miles wrong
in Latitude alone. Probably
fever clouded his mind
when he observed and
anyone who knows what
that implies will readily
excuse

[0011]

excuse any mistake he may
have made. The Chunga
went high up on the chest
and one had to walk on
tiptoe to avoid swimming.
Only four of my attendants
would come. The others
absconded on various pretexts
the fact is they are all tired
of this everlasting tramping
and so am I. Nothing could

be bought but the veriest
necessities - no paper only
a couple of note-books &
the Bible. I have borrowed
this and another sheet from
an Arab trader. The other
is for Lord Clarendon & they
will go by a party proceeding
to the coast through Usango.
I would go myself if it were
not for an inveterate dislike
to give up what I have
undertaken without
finishing it. I am often
distressed in thinking of a
son whom I left at the
University of Glasgow. He was
to be 2 years there then spend
a year or more in Germany
for French & German before
trying the civil service exam-
ination for India. He will
now be in especial need of
my counsel & assistance and
here

[0012]
here I am at Bangweolo.
His elder brother after being
well educated wandered
into the American war & we
know no more of him after
an engagement before Richmond.
Possibly Sir Charles Wood in
consideration of my services
might do something to fix
this one. I never asked
anything for myself Lord
Palmerston sent M^r Hayward
a Queen's Counsel to me before
I left home this time to ask
"what he could do for me as
"he was most anxious to serve
me" I don't know how it
was, but it never once occurred
to me till I was in here
that he meant anything
for myself. I replied that
if he could open the
Portuguese ports in East Africa

to free trade this was the
greatest boon he could
confer. I thought only of
my work & not of myself
or children. I feel more at
liberty in telling you of
my domestic anxiety and
my fears lest Tom should
go to the examination
unprepared because you
have a family yourself
and will sympathize with me.
I shall

[0013]
shall give Lord Clarendon
the same geographical information
as I have given you, & as
I have not the conscience
to ask more paper from
my Arab friend I shall
ask Miss Frere to favour me
by writing to my daughter
a little of the above & sending
it to M^{rs} Murray who will
know where she is. Agnes
is to tell Tom not to go in
for examination till he
is well prepared and he
may take a year more of
education where he may
have found the most
benefit. I had written you
a long letter which now
lies at Kabuire - the
foregoing contains the
substance of it - Miss Frere
must take this into consideration if annoyed
at my asking her to write
to a stranger in such a climate
as that of India. I regret
that the Nile has prevented
me from following out
my aspirations for the benefit
of the people. I sometimes
comfort myself by the hope
that by making this country
& its inhabitants better known
& occasionally imparting a little
knowledge

[0014]

knowledge I may be working
in accordance with the plans
of the all embracing Providence
for the good time coming
yet. At other times I feel as if
serving a few insane geographers
who will count me a man
& a brother. There is a large
tribe of Troglodites in Rua with
excavations thirty miles in length
& a running rill passing along
the entire street. They ascribe these
rock dwellings to the hand of the
Deity - the "writings" in them are
drawings of animals if it had
been letters I must have gone to
see them. People very black strong
& outer angle of eyes upwards.

The summary of sources I give Lord
C. as flowing into Chambeze, Luapula
Lualaba & the Lakes are thirteen in
all & are larger than the Isis at Oxford
& Avon at Hamilton. Five in another
line of drainage & five in a third
receptacle make thirty three in all.
These do not include "burns". Lofie has
eleven of them from five to fifteen
yards wide & perrennial -

I did get a bit paper & wrote to Agnes
so Miss Frere is absolved from the
penance. Love to Lady Frere & her family
(signed)
David Livingstone-