

Letter to Frank Vardon, 30 January 1861

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Kongone mouth of Zambesi

30 January 1861.

For Major Vardon

to be forwarded

My Dear Vardon

I have written to you twice since I came out but having recieved no answer I fear the letters may have mis-carried. I shall therefore try to reach you by way of your brother in London.

We are down here waiting the arrival of our new steamer which we understand is to be a real one and made not merely to draw grist to the mill of some greedy contractor. We have about a hundred miles of swamp in our rear, and eight of these the deadly mangrove marsh. Our neighbours are six black "rogers" sent by the Portuguese to assert their sovereignty over a flag staff, and a port which we discovered - and plenty of waterbucks, oryxes & bush bucks. So you may be sure we often send a wistful

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[glance] across the watery waste in front.

We lately went up to Linyanti on foot. the only points of importance we ascertained, were the presence of very fine cotton in the central parts of the country, and the extension of the coal field up to near Victoria Falls. These same falls too after a second visit we feel inclined to pronounce the most wonderful in the world. We could see clearly to the bottom of one half of the Falls - the water being lower at the time than we ever saw it. And the depth is not 100 feet as I conjectured, but 310 feet, or nearly twice the depth of Niagara. Then the breadth is not 1000 yards as formerly stated, but nearly 2000 yards we say 1860 by way of assisting the ~~memory~~ memory. Though this is a little more. then [diagram of a river]

to allow one to see them with the utmost advantage the crack into which the river rolls is prolonged in a zigzag manner and the promontories made by the wavy line allow one to walk

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along in N^o 1. facing the falls, or in N^o 2 with the river on each side, and some 300 or 400 feet below jammed in the bottom of the crack in 20 or 30 yards - the promontories are lower & have perpendicular sides, and are of the same height as the bed of the river above the falls. the base of No 1 is only 400 paces of N^o 2 - 150 D^o so you can by a few steps see the river running in opposite ways.

We returned by buying canoes below the falls, and sailing down to Chicova -Thence we marched again on foot to Tette. From Kafue to the falls there are more large animals than in any part of Africa we have seen. the numbers of elephants, buffaloes & hippopotomi were really prodigious. they were obliged to come to the water for it was the dry season. We saw a pure white hippopotomus & several piebald ones. Two half caste Portuguese traders with about 400 slaves had got 40,000 lbs of ivory by shooting and trading in a few months this market we have opened yet our own

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countrymen are prevented from reaping any of the benefits by that stupid treaty of Sir George Cathcart with the Boers.

I am very much delighted with the prospect of a mission from the English Universities. It is going on briskly, and I expect that it will soon make a beginning in some part of this coast. the work before it is nothing less than the final extermination of the slave trade by the introduction of commerce and the gospel into the slave market. And I trust that soon, that great body the church of England may feel itself committed to this great & noble enterprise. I have great faith in that church if it only sets to work.

You may hear of a very untoward commencement made by the London missionaries at Linyanti. by some

inadvertence, it is supposed, we were not made aware of their movements till we reached Victoria falls, and then we heard that they had arrived, and six out

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of nine Europeans, and four native attendants, had perished of fever - this happened at the very time we were on our way up and curing the disease so quickly that a severe case, in a European even, rarely detained us more than a day or two though our march was on foot. the remedy was found to be effectual first in my own children and in a party of English at Lake Ngami in 1850, and I have never failed in a single case since. It is referred to in the "Missionary Travels" but I deeply regret that I had not an opportunity of pressing it on the attention of these good people in time. One of them M^r Helmore you probably saw - he was a personal friend and an excellent missionary. This threw a damp on our visit to the Makalolo.

You will be pleased to hear that Sechele is doing well. He has nine tribes under him. And has a Hanoverian Missionary

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a M^r Schroeder, who succeeds well. Old Mosilikatze has John Moffat as his missionary - (and another)- He is still the same old rogue yet is unable to walk from something the matter with his knees, and I fear will be Mosilikatze to the end of the chapter. We met some of his people down at ~~Mosilik~~ Senna lately. they fled on seeing my Makololo. they had come to buy guns. Laws here dreadfully stringent against selling guns to natives, but neither Governors nor governed mind the laws on that subject.

Please present my very kind greetings to M^{rs} V. My wife is in England & not very sweet because I stay so long away. We shall get to work at last when our vessel comes. We believe it will be a good one, as everything we have got from the Admiralty has been of first rate quality. Let me

hear from you David Livingstone

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M^r Frank Vardon
15 Waterloo Crescent
Looz