

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
Mosilikatzes 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