

Letter to Thomas Archer and Mary Archer, 26 October 1859

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[0001]

This is written in a marsh with millions of mosquitoes about. Before dark I counted ten herds of elephants feeding in the distance. My brother is here & well saving the mosquitoes.

Private

River Shire, Eastern Africa

26 October 1859

My dear D^r & M^{rs} Archer
I suppose there is no
use in beginning apologies & explanations
to you my dear friends for my long
silence. It has troubled me more than it
can have done you for again & again
have I remembered your disinterested
kindness to me & mine and felt
ashamed that I had never once given
you the poor acknowledgement of
a letter. I do not think that a hundred
would wipe out the sense of obligation
I feel, nor do I desire to feel it less
but there is a pleasure in letting one
know that his goodness was appreciated
and freeing oneself as far as may
be from the the knotless thread character.
Blessing be to you and M^{rs} A
for your manifold kindnesses.

We have not been idle since
we came here, and with a thankful
heart to our Father above we have
to say that his kind Providence
has watched over and prospered
[0002]
us at every turn of our path. Even
circumstances which at first seemed
very untoward have turned out signally
for the best. It would have been a long story
to tell you all so I begin at our latest
feat namely, tracing this river up to

its point of emergence from the hitherto
undiscovered Lake Nyassa or Nyinyesi
this is a direction in which we had no
previous intention of travelling and the
result is the discovery of a cotton
producing region in every respect
superior to the American. There are no
frosts to endanger or cut off the crops
and instead of the enormous toil required
to raise the plant in America - one
sowing serves for three years crops
even though the plants may be burned
down. The land above the cataracts is
high and disposed in three terraces
of 1200 feet 2000 feet & 3000 feet
respectively. We have as we experienced
changes of climate within a few miles
distance of each of them. The terraces are
well supplied with running rills of
deliciously cool water - & cotton is grown
over them all. On the last terrace
rises Mount Zomba between 7000 &
8000 feet high & cultivated on the top
[0003]

This is a splendid sanatorium, and one of the great benefits the
Expedition will have to shew is the cure of fever even the lowlands millions
loss of strength in general to the patient

Fancy Benledi on the top of Benlomond
and a fine river running in a valley
on its great top some 15 or 20 miles
broad. I want the church missionary
society to occupy this field. they have
long been trying to get into Eastern
Africa. The Shire is easily navigable
for 100 miles from the Zambesi. Then
33 miles of cataracts & then an immense
field watered by the lakes. Tamandua
we measured at 90 miles long but
no one could say how far away
the head of Nyassa lay. they can come
into this field any. that is if they
have the pluck & be at once away
from the unfriendly coast tribes. The
good land by all will assuredly
occupy it by some agency or other
for it has advantages for which I have
not paper to tell. Some of our friends
on hearing of this discovery will think
that I am now seeking the glory alone

of discovering Lakes Mountains - Jenny-
nettles and guddock stools - others will
see at a glance whether my efforts
tend and perhaps it may be permitted
to me to do some little to relieve our
countrymen from the stain of upholding
slavery by manufacturing the produce
[0004]
of slave labour alone. At any rate I shall
work while life lasts for noble &
christlike ends.

Singularly enough we have been
without news from home since we
left. Except a few newspapers
[...] our
Government despatches which have
come with great regularity we have
no private information as to how
the world goes. A day or two ago
however we heard by a man kindly
sent by a Portuguese gentleman of
Senna that a bag awaits us there
My wife was some time ago at
Kuruman. We expect to ascend to
the Makololo Country in the beginning
of next year. Hope the London Missionary
Society has sent men to that interesting
field and that the men have had the
sense to occupy it. When does the
Free Kirk and your Kirk write?
Must death still clear the way? What
a powerful body for good you will
make. May the Master bless it.
My kindest salutations to M^{rs} A &
Blessing be on your house & church

David Livingstone