

Letter to William Thompson, 8, 12 August 1856

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org), 2017

[0001]

At Sea. H. M. Brig Frolic
8th August 1856

My dear Friend

I could not have been more surprised by your own personal appearance at Quilimane than I was by that of George Fleming on the 10th Ult. and when I witnessed all the kind preparations you had made for my comfort in travel it appeared like a scene we see in dreaming. ~~and~~ I had begun to fancy my letters contained an order forthwith to return whence I had come. On perusal however I found that I am somewhat to blame in not stating explicitly my intention to go from Tette to Quilimane soon after the dispatch of my letters and thence proceed to England. I had

[0002]

mentioned my plans so often I unfortunately took it for granted that all my friends knew them perfectly. And when the Tett packet left I intended to proceed down the river in a few days afterwards. Indeed I fully expected to overtake it at Quilimane but my good friend Major T. A. d'A Sicard the commandant of Tette generously advised me to remain untill the beginning of the healthy season in the Delta viz. April. I was not without need of rest for our cattle having all been killed by Tsetse I had a severe spell of trudging on foot and had become tired and thin enough. My men got food from the worthy Major

and employment in carrying
wood & in canoe work also

[0003]

about 16 came down with me to Senna
eight returned thence to Tette and eight
came to Quilimane but were glad
to go back too for there was a famine
in the land which cut off thousands
My head man named Sekwebu
I have taken with me - a sensible
worthy heathen, but for whose tact
and knowledge of the Zambesi language
I might not have been here today
The rest about 110 are to remain
at Tette till I return to take them
to their own land again. Such was
my plan but a short time before
the arrival of the Frolic I got a letter
from the Directors by way of Mosam-
bique in which I am told that "they
are restricted in their power of aiding
plans connected only remotely with
the spread of the gospel." and they
add that even though certain

[0004]

obstacles (fever, tsetse &c.) should prove
surmountable "the financial circumstances
of the society are not as such as to afford
any ground of [...] hope that it would
be in a position within any definite
period to undertake untried, remote
and difficult fields of labour." I had
imagined in my simplicity that both
my preaching conversation and
travel were as nearly connected with
the spread of the gospel as the Boers
would allow them to be. The plan
of opening up a path from either
the East or West coast for the
teeming population of the Interior
was submitted to their judgement
and secured their formal approbation
I have been seven times in peril
of my life from savage men
while laboriously and without

[0005]

swerving pursuing that plan, and never doubted but that I was in the path of duty. Indeed so clearly did I perceive that I was performing good service to the cause of Christ I wrote to my brother that I would perish rather than fail in my enterprise. I shall not boast of what I have done but the wonderful mercies I have received will constrain me to follow out the work in spite of the veto of the Board. If it is according to the will of God means will be provided from other quarters

I received all the articles sent in charge of Captain Peyton and George Fleming as noted in the lists which accompanied them Some, as the clothing for myself

[0006]

bedding stockings &c. were most welcome and did not come certainly before they were needed. Some woolen articles and others which would spoil by keeping I directed to be sold and others as the desk and work box I left at Quilimane for future use. The money viz. fifty sovereigns and 500 Spanish dollars I took with me. I have some debts against me up the river for clothing &c. of which though my kind friends there refused to give a formal account I consider myself bound to repay by bringing articles which I know they require As I could not settle my affairs at once I leave it for a future time. About 18 tusks belonging

[0007]

to Sekeletu are left also in charge of

Colonel Galdino José Nunes in
whose house I lived at Quilimane
with orders to sell them in case
of my death and remit the proceeds
to Sekeletu. The money from
you I reserve for oceanic use. The
dollars are said to be worth 4/2 or 4/1
only, at the Mauritius though you
gave I hear 4/6 for them. Rather
than part with them at such a loss
I shall if not needed as passage money ^keep them for the Zambesi
again. I suppose all goes down
to my account with the society.
I prefer the overland passage to
that by the Cape because I have
a chance of a free passage from
one of the companies. P. O. O. I believe
and none from the common
vessels which pass your way

[0008]

I wish to come back without any
delay in England.

I was happy to see Ralph's name
among those who recieved prizes
at the college. Hope he will profit
largely by the mental discipline he
now enjoys and become fit to serve
our great Creator in his day and
generation. How are the other two
little Hottentots Jessie & Willie? If they
lag behind Ralph and I am obliged to
write about them in a book I shall give
them Boer names as having no
Wardlaw blood in them. "My Dear
Wife" you say, and I knew not you
had one. Of course I fell into a quandary
as to who had taken charge of you,
if she had a long nose or red hair,
or squinted, but I was obliged at last
to recieve the compliments with thanks
though only from as yet an abstract idea

[0009]

12th August.

We came into Port ^s Luis, Mauritius
this afternoon, a lovely island it seems
but not nearly so fertile looking, as

the banks of the Zambesi (inland)
I cannot of course give any notice
of my future but may tomorrow
I intend to live on board ^ Frolic till I sail
homewards. for I had a little touch
of my African fever yesterday & the
purer the air the better. I shall
visit Mr Lebrun when I can & see
his Malagassi. At St Augustine's
Bay we saw many of them. They
resemble closely the better classes of
Makololo and many words in
their tongue shew them to be true negroes
The French are causing them to
emigrate to Bourbon by promise
of wages & facilities for returning
It seems all fair and above board

[0010]

work for they had an official of
the French Govt_ aboard to see that none
but free men were taken

Respecting George Fleming I suppose
it will be best to settle with him in
Cape Town for besides not having
more money than I may need supposing
I get not a free passage the agreement
does not specify what was to be given
supposing he was required to do no
more than has happened. Here he has
able seaman's pay as Captains servant
He serves me too He came to Quilimane with another
man of colour who left us at
St Augustine's Bay. He would have
found no difficulty in going to Tete as
it is all fair sailing though against
the stream. Whatever you think
proper to give please put it to my
account I have full confidence
in your discretion. I only feel

[0011]

sorry that my not noticing my plans
in the Tette packet should have caused
so much anxiety and perplexity

I send letters for the Kuruman
along with this. Sekwebu's mind seems

affected by the marvels he sees. The steamer which took us into the Port was a terrible apparition to him, All are very kind to him. One who went to Loanda became insane also but recovered in a few days as I hope Sekwebu will, Remember me kindly to Captain Holmes and thank him for a letter of recommendation he kindly sent for M^r Azevedo - that gentleman was not at Quilimane but I met him three days beyond near his estate and with his well known benevolence he lent me a covered boat

[0012]

which was extremely acceptable to me suffering from a raging fever. Is your sister married too
Ever Affectionately yours
David Livingstone

Rev.^d W^m Thompson
Cape Town
Cape of Good Hope

To be returned after
perusal to Rev Thompson-
18th Sept 1856