

## Letter to George Back, 30 November 1860

*Livingstone, David, 1813-1873*

Published by Livingstone Online ([livingstoneonline.org](http://livingstoneonline.org))

[0001]

Tette 30<sup>th</sup> Nov<sup>r</sup> 1860

Dear Sir George

I have been very far from forgetful of your kindness, though you have recieved no evidence of my remembrance since I came back to Africa - but you know the sort of life an Explorer leads and will be disposed to make allowances.

We have just come off a trip of about 1400 miles. We went up this river to the country of the Makololo travelling along the North bank on foot and returning partly in canoes and partly on foot by nearly the same track. We had thus a good opportunity of examining the whole river at ~~the~~ low water and saw about a hundred miles of it which the tsetse prevented me from seeing in 1855. We crossed the Kafue at its confluence and went along the fine fertile valley in which the river gently flows among a people who may all be called Bat[o]ka though each small tribe has its own name besides. they were remarkably hospitable and being in the habit of cultivating the ground extensively they had plenty of food to bestow. They cultivate great quantities of very fine cotton too though the men go stark naked. the women have more sense and go decently covered. their country is well furnished with coal - many rivulets contain fragments of the precious mineral but none knew that it would burn. We saw two fine large seams in the bank

[0002]

of the Zambesi from which steamers will one day be loaded - for the river above Chicova is finer i.e. more navigable than below Tette and Lupata

On a second visit to the falls of Victoria about which you shewed a kind interest. I am inclined to say that they are the most wonderful in the world. the breadth is not 1000 yards as I conjectured but between one statute

and one geographical mile we say 1860 yards  
though it is a little more, by way of assisting  
the memory. the depth is not 1000 [feet] as I stated  
but 310 feet and even now at extreme  
low water there were 800 feet of water falling  
After leaping sheer down 310 feet it is collected  
from both ends of the fissure to the escape  
which being nearer the North than South  
bank is like the letter but come to the

other or Eastern side of the crack and you  
find it prolonged in the most wonderful  
zigzag manner. If you will excuse the  
following it may convey my meaning  
the promontories formed by the zigzag  
are of the same height as the bed of the river

above the Falls - they [are] flat & covered with trees  
but the sides are perpendicular and you  
in walking along their tops can see  
the river some 300 feet  
below jammed in a  
space of 20 or 30 yards  
the base of one promontory is only 560 paces

[0003]

and of another 400. The river being very low  
we could see clearly the bottom of one half of  
the full fissure. The columns of vapour  
were smaller than when I was there in  
/55 - but still very high as we saw them  
distinctly at a distance of 20 . And this  
wonderful water fall exists in what we  
were all thought to believe were interminable  
plains of burning barren sand where  
the most enterprising rivers ran only  
to be lost.

We found it hot enough on our return  
though in going we climbed up to the Highlands  
of the Batoka and saw hoar frost and  
a little ice. The soil becomes disagreeably  
hot even for [a person with] shoes.  $136^{\circ}$  at 3 P.M.  
and a thermometer in the shade of the body  
when marching is often over  $100^{\circ}$ . the  
blood even becomes hotter than that of  
the natives  $99^{\circ} \frac{1}{2}$  while the natives shew  $98^{\circ}$   
but the most remarkable feature in the  
climate was the rate of evaporation  
there was often a difference of  $33^{\circ}$ -  $36^{\circ}$   
and even  $40^{\circ}$  between the wet and dry bulbs

In meeting with our old friends the  
Makololo we were grieved to find that  
many of them had died of fever and  
indeed if they are not permitted to  
remove from their unhealthy swamps  
soon they will break up as a tribe.  
A party of missionaries had

[0004]

suffered severely from the same com-  
plaint.their loss makes me value  
a remedy rather highly which I have found  
quite effectual in curing the disease ever  
since 1850 - but I do not like to  
make a fuss about it as I would  
look as we medical people say  
Quackish. We have however enjoyed  
good opportunities for testing it during  
this Expedition.

Your knife is my constant companion  
and it has often brought you vividly  
to my recollection. Please present  
my kindest remembrances to  
Lady Back and believe me

Faithfully Yours

David Livingstone