

## Letter to John Washington, 12 September 1860

*Livingstone, David, 1813-1873*

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

[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<sup>r</sup> Kirk and M<sup>r</sup> 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. Dr 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<sup>r</sup> 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<sup>r</sup> Moffats family. A town is to be sent up this year by way of experiment on Mosilikatzes cupidity. A son of M<sup>r</sup> Moffat is ~~here~~ [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