

Letter to Edmund Gabriel, 12 September 1855

David Livingstone

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[0001]

4 Town of Sekeletu, on
Ed^m Gabriel Esqui^{re} the River Chobe
12th Sep^r 1855 My Dear Friend
A Moor of Zanzibar called Rya
Syde ben Habib and a Portuguese subject of
Bihé leave this tomorrow for Loanda, and
I am glad of the opportunity to send a few
lines to inform you of our progress and
welfare. We reached the Barotse country about
the end of July and came down the river
quite leizurely to Lesheke. Some parcels of
Newspapers meal biscuits &c &c had been
brought to the falls, in the river called Mosioatunya
by the tribe called Matibele - the mortal
enemies of Sekeletu's people and as the
latter refused to go near them, they were
left on a rock in the Leeamby. After due
deliberation and divination my goods were
taken to an island and a hut built over
them. I waited at Lesheke for them and
was gratified to find letters from my
family and many others. My first set of
observations had been recieved by M^r Maclear
the Astronomer Royal, and you will be
pleased to hear that he is hightly satisfied
with them. He says after noticing some
errors into which in some of the observations
I had fallen "But upon the whole, I do not["]

M^r Moffat sent them while on a visit to their chief who
lives south of Mosioatunya (your last packet did not come)

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"hesitate to assert that no explorer on record
has determined his path with the precision
you have accomplished." He pronounces
the pocket chronometer to be an excellent one
I do not mention these things by way
of boasting but in the belief that your
friendship for me will induce you to
"rejoice with them that rejoice." He is very

well pleased with my occultations as affording the means of proving the correctness of the Lunars. I could get none in Angola - The clouds prevented.

In contrast to the above a doctor of divinity of the Dutch church (a scotchman!) collected some tales of scandal among the Boers who live beyond the Colony - and retailed them to my brother in law who listened to all & to his dumbfounderment told him of our relationship - He apologized but did not forgo the pleasure of giving information to the Government. (I had it from the Attorney General at the Cape) the secretary of the Missionary Society &c. &c. &c. I prepared a statement of the affair in case he should venture to publish it after my departure - the Boers plundered my house and carried off upwards of 200 children after killing many of the adults of Lechele & Tocoio, and at the very time they were perpetrating this

I go down the riverZambesi at the beginning of next month - October - I am your most affectionate friend David Livingstone

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outrage the aforementioned clergyman was engaged in receiving them ^ in synod assembled into the bosom at the Cape of the Dutch church as Christian bretheren.

The marauding expedition by which I lost about £300 of value was the first act of their Independence and Christian membership - I felt it to ^ be my duty to expose the slave making deeds of the Boers in a letter to Government and when it appeared in the Blue book the tale carried to the Cape was published although it was well known I could not possibly answer it or even know of it till months or years had elapsed, but my statement was published and the worthy doctor returned no answer - I enclose a piece of newspaper which will give you an idea of the affair - I have it appears become quite obnoxious to the Boers - though when living at Kolobeng, they came to me for advice in all severe cases of disease & I prescribed frankly without in any instance asking the price of the medicines

I thought Government ought to have given me compensation for the loss I sustained for it was incurred in the course of a direct violation of the articles of the treaty by which Independance was given to the Boers. But I have got

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nothing but the notoriety of publication in the blue book. The Gov^r of the Cape is bamboozled by the public servants of Dutch extraction. Sir Harry Smith was attacked by the rebel Boers at Boomplaats and about a dozen of our soldiers slain - the Hon. Capⁿ Murray was shot dead - & two other officers disabled. While performing my duty among the blacks so soon after the engagement I had not heard of it. I met the worthy doctor above mentioned in the house of a boer who returned with two bullet holes in his clothing from the murder of our soldiers. This man had a significant hint given him by Sir H. Smith in a proclamation but what could he think of it - the underlings of Gov^r had actually lent the clergyman the Gov^t waggon in which the Judges go on their circuit and here his reverence was baptizing the children at so much per head - administering the sacrament and living on most amicable terms in the house of a man whose hands may be said to have been still reeking with the blood of our soldiers

Look at the enclosures I have not time to write more the man Rya Syde goes off tomorrow morning

[0005]

I enclose too a slip containing information about the vegetable wax at the Cape - It has been investigated by the Cape Town agricultural society and you will see after giving good wages they can sell or expect it at a lower figure than the Portuguese give for it on the banks of the Luango. I saw 300 Reis per lb given for it there and at the Cape it is produced at 200

It grows where nothing else will and
 would flourish in all the sandy soil
 near the city - all the way down from
 Boa Vista and the adjacent valley might
 be covered with it - It is found flourishing
 on those banks of white sand which you
 may remember on you right in going
 from Simon's bay to Cape Town - Nothing
 else will grow there and when they sow
 the berries they mix them with rye or grass
 seeds which prevent the winds from
 covering ip the tender shoots of the wax tree
 The Gov^r has taken pains to plant different
 practical plants & grass with Australian
 gum trees on that dreary sea of white sand
 which constituted the scenery in your
 time - The lands adjacent to Loanda
 are greatly superior to that weary waste
 & the berry would prove a boon to
 the black population of your city. If

The slip about berry wax might be published
 in the Boletin

[0006]
 any Portuguese ship of war coming round
 to Loanda from Mosambique would
 touch at the cape M^r Duprat would
 I believe gladly send a bushel or two
 of the seed. It would afterwards propagate
 itself. I know M^r Duprat to be a
 public spirited gentleman and it would
 delight him to promote the prosperity of
 the colony of Angola - I shall write him
 on the subject by the present opportunity
 and surely the gentlemen of Loanda would
 not consider it beneath their notice
 to secure an article of export by
 requesting their home government
 to order a ship to call at Table bay for
 the seed - There are not port charges there -
 the people go on the principle of the more
 ships that call the better - and the profit
 to the general community derived from
 the money ^ with which each ship purchases refresh[-]
 -ments, enriches more than your stupid
 100 milres per mast.

I wonder if you recieved my last
 letters and map with observations from
 Cassange and Cabango. I wrote a

note by a Mombari whom I met at
the Barotse town Naliele and instructed
him to deliver it to Guillierme Jose
Gontalueo at Bihe who would send to

[0007]

M^r. Bires at Bungo Andongo - I dont send
any observations by this person as I
am not sure that they will reach you
I remain here one month and will
then go down the Zambesi to Quilimane
in canoes. I could go to Lake Nyassa
but as the object I have in view is to
secure a passage to the coast by which
merchandise may be profitably conveyed
the discovery of Lake Nyassa would be
accomplished at the expence of abandoning
that which I clearly see to be my duty -
the path would be opened opposite to
Zanzibar but it would only be a
repetition of that to Loanda - a land journey
and such is not desirable as all the
goods we brought were expended before
we reached the Barotse. My men brought
almost nothing of all they purchased
and no one feasted - our chief food
was manioc roots & meal - birdseed meal
and occasionally a fowl for my use.
Hence my desire to get water carriage
and however much I should like to
discover Nyassa I cannot go at present
except with the conviction of leaving
a more important duty. I should
but for this find no difficulty in
going there

[0008]

The Makololo (Sekeletu's people) are
really delighted with the prospect of returning
they want words to express their thanks
for the prospective benefit of trade to the
coast - The men who went with me are
great oracles now and the liberality
with which their friends treat me
makes me wonder - It is God who
influences their hearts. Sekeletu has
made two forays since left. One was
in revenge for repeated insults by

a chief at Lake Ngami, who went
so far as to take large quantities of ivory
from Sekeletu's poor people close to this
town - The poor people referred to are
the chief elephant hunters and make
no stand against an enemy - I expecte[d]
such a course long ago but prevented
it by representing the guilt of shedding
human blood. but when I left, the
warriors were let loose and punished
the arrogance of the Lake chief severely
Now however they have other means
of enriching themselves if they choose
Preparations for another trip are begun

You will find Rya Syde Ben Habib intelligent
He is in connection with Carvalho Bastos -