

## Letter to William Thompson, 8, 12 August 1856

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[0001]

At Sea. H. M. Brig Frolic

8<sup>th</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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

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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

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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]

12<sup>th</sup> August.

We came into Port <sup>s</sup> 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<sup>r</sup> 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.<sup>d</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Thompson  
Cape Town  
Cape of Good Hope

To be returned after  
perusal to Rev Thompson-  
18<sup>th</sup> Sept 1856