

Letter to Arthur Tidman, 25 February 1862

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org), 2017

[0001]

H.M. Exploring Ship Pioneer,
Zambesi 25th Feby 1862

Private
Rev^d Dr Tidman
My Dear Sir

While thankfully acknow[-]
ledging your letter of 5th July last, I confess that
the statements respecting the treatment endured
by the Makololo missionaries are perfectly
astounding, yet, though far from supposing
myself to be proof against misrepresentation
I cannot concieve how I could have been
so grievously misled as you imagine - If
you allow me to state a few particulars
connected with our visit I may possibly
appear not altogether unreasonable in
withholding my assent to the statements so
generally recieved, even should the opinion
that the mission ought to be abandoned not
be modified -

Sekeletu was labouring under a skin
disease when we arrived which we did not
then know but now believe to be leprosy -
He was shut up apart from his people and
with the exception of his mother and a near
relative, no one was admitted to his presence
save D^r Kirk and myself. He was low[-]

M^{rs} Livingstone joined me in good health on Thu 1st currt. I thank you

[0002]

spirited enough in the belief that the disease had
been inflicted by witch craft for which some
influential headmen had been executed, but
he treated us with exactly the same cordialty
as he did in former years when I was alone
He was by no means popular, and was believed
by many to be more deformed by the disease
than we found him to be - Some had talked

openly of deposing him - which was equivalent to killing him - but from both well and ill-affected we recieved the unvarying testimony that M^r [Helmore] and M^{rs} Helmore had been highly valued by ~~both~~ chief and people. The subject tribes are by no means so tongue-tied there as they are under Mosilikatze, yet not at Sesheke and Linyanti alone did they speak well of our departed friend but on the East coast utterance was given occasionally to expressions respecting Helmore which were particularly gratifying - D^r Kirk who alone of our company understands Sichuana recieved the very same impressions that I did - Moboka the son of a man who escaped execution in the witchcraft affair by flight to Lechulathebe had certainly no great love for Sekeletu - Yet he spoke of M^r Helmore recieving supplies of meat whenever he asked - and when nearly insensible the chief asked him if he wished meat and M^r H shook his head & smiled. The difference of social position to which you refer was not viewed by the Makololo as the missionaries may have looked upon it -

very heartily for your kind wishes and letter and also for the Report

[0003]

for in speaking kindly of Helmore, they often remarked "he was just like you a man with a heart" i-e. a kind man.

It was also very painfully apparent that no feelings of respect were entertained towards M^r Price. I have refrained from saying a word to anyone on this point but yourself - Thus, while Helmore was represented as recieving supplies of meat "Price might ask long enough before he got any." And Helmore was said to have declared after the death of his wife "that Price being a child might return, but he (H.) never would go back, but proceed onward as soon as I came whether his elders had sent him." The question was put repeatedly Why was Helmore not taken to the Highlands - and the answer was just what I gave you - It is notorious that only two influential men ~~in the tribe~~ object to the whole tribe removing thither and the general belief was that had he lived a little longer M^r H. would have led them to the South East. We never heard a syllable

to his disadvantage but we overheard one man
tell another ^ who had come from Tette that having gone to M^r P.'s waggon
while the latter was at a meal he was kicked
away, and he added "Had Sekeletu not been
there by - I would have fought with him -"
Some remarks made at a public meeting
at Cape Town ^ about binding a man to his waggon wheel &c and fortunately unreported
in the papers - and a statement about using
his revolver with the Makololo made at the
Royal Observatory before going into the country
at all lead me to make some abatement

[I] beg you not to think that I in the least consider [...] ^ Price unfit for his office -
greater
experience will no doubt enable him to get on better - Ever affectionately Yours
David Livingstone

[0004]
as to the colouring without questioning M^r P.'s
veracity. It was abundantly evident that he
had failed to secure the respect of either chief
or people. This is no justification of any
wrong the Makololo may have committed,
but it is remarkable, if they recieved no
provocation, that they should shew so
much rapacity towards M^r Price, and leave
my goods safely in my waggon & in their
huts though the boxes are unlocked.
As to the further prosecution of this mission
I am very glad to see in your Report since
I began this letter that you still look hopefully
forward. I grieve over the loss this
country has sustained in the departure of
our brother to his rest. Nine Englishmen
have died in that country since the discovery
of Lake Ngami - One perished by trying to save
a duck in the Zouga - Another, with his servant,
was lost under suspicion of foul play - Another
ran madly under the feet of an elephant -
and others blew themselves up with gunpowder
the tenth, with his wife, lies at Linyanti &
of the whole he alone had an object worth
risking his life for. There, without a tree
within a hundred yards to mark the spot, he
rests from his labours, as good and as
devoted a missionary as ever left England.
I collected a few bones & placed him over his
head - there is not a stone in the country - but
these will soon vanish and his memory
will remain only in men's hearts - I still

feel convinced that a flourishing mission might
be established there by a judicious missionary

I was only one day there & went over from Sesheke only for my medicine box

[0005]

P.S. It has occurred to me to add that the
treatment we recieved was not the effect
of presents as each of the men from
Tette had a load of his own and they
would not carry much for us or their
chief. We abstained from complaining
of this as it would have caused
the confiscation of all their hard[-]
earned property. We gave Sekeletu
comparatively little & may have appeared
stingy.

The want of horses was severly
felt by M^r Helmore - It is not
likely that I should have recommended
them to one who knew the country
so well but he was seen at one
of the watering places in the Desert

[0006]

by M^r Baldwin whom I met at
the falls and had been vainly trying
to get meat several nights by
waiting at the water - M^r B. rode
out & killed a couple of giraffes
for them - I always had horses
either my own or M^r Oswells

D. Livingstone