



# The Victorians

## Dr Livingstone - The Smoke that Thunders

Written by Jeff Capel

Livingstone: I was twenty seven years old when I first arrived in Africa in 1840. I came as a missionary - a man spreading the word of God - and as a doctor. But now, fifteen years later, I had become an explorer too.

It is November 1855 and I have been exploring one of Africa's biggest rivers - the Zambezi - for three years. No European has ever ventured this far before and the going has been very, very hard. My team has pitched camp for the night. Tomorrow they tell me I will see something extraordinary -

Mothusi: You look tired, Dr Livingstone. You should get some sleep.

Livingstone: I am, Mothusi. But you have been a great support.

Mothusi: I am living up to my name. Mothusi means 'helper' in my language.

Livingstone: Indeed it does.

Mothusi: Our friend, Tau, Lion, is calling.

Livingstone: I'm not sure he thinks of us as friend. I have scars on my shoulder here to prove that.





- Mothusi: What happened, doctor? The men talk of your hurt arm but why did you fight a Lion?
- Livingstone: Mothusi's eyes widen as I describe what happened to me one day twelve years before...
- I was working at a mission, teaching the ways of God, when a lion charged out of the bush and tried to bring down one of the village cows...
- I had my gun close at hand and I shot it... Thinking it was dead, I walked up to the beast, only for it to spring up again and grab me in its jaws...
- The lion shook me like a terrier dog shakes a rat. I was frozen with fear and didn't struggle at all...and the lion, perhaps thinking I was already dead, suddenly let go of me. And then the bullet I had fired finally overcame the poor creature...
- Mothusi: You are lucky to be alive.
- Livingstone: See here how the bones on my elbow have not set properly...and how this arm is shorter than the other.
- Mothusi: That is bad. You will need great strength tomorrow to canoe. The river is at its fiercest as we get close to Mosi - oa Tunya.
- Livingstone: Mosi - oa Tunya! 'The smoke that Thunders'. How the thought of seeing this waterfall for the first time has spurred me on these last weeks.
- Mothusi: Tomorrow, doctor. Tomorrow we shall see the falls.





Livingstone:

Good night, Mothusi.

The next morning, we make an early start. Our party of canoes take to the swift flowing waters of the Zambezi, paddling towards the top of the falls. Mothusi and I lead the way.

I doubt I have ever seen a more beautiful sight. those columns of mist, remarkable, rising into the air...and bending in the the wind.

Mothusi:

You see now why my people liken it to smoke?

Livingstone:

Yes. It reminds me of the blazing grass lands in other parts of Africa, but this is water. Look ahead there!

Mothusi:

We should keep as close to the bank. The hippos they won't like us paddling through their group.

Livingstone:

The trees and plants here are quite astonishing.

Mothusi:

Is your country like this?

Livingstone:

No such colours, no such forms. And certainly no hippos in the rivers of Scotland. How far are the falls, Mothusi?

Mothusi:

Less than a mile, doctor. But soon too many rocks and the current is too strong for us to go further. This is as far as it is safe to come.

Livingstone:

Nevermind safe! I want to see for myself where all this water disappears to.

Mothusi:

We will be swept downstream, doctor. It is impossible to...





Livingstone:

I will not put you or any of the others at risk, Mothusi. I don't expect you to come with me. But I do expect you to understand that I am the first European man to see these sights and owe it to my Queen and country to describe everything I have seen.

Mothusi:

Very well. Half a mile from here - an island. We can get out of our canoe. You cannot go further. It is impossible.

Livingstone:

We shall see. Tell the others to pull ashore. I shall take the smallest canoe and paddle to your island.

And that is what I did. But despite Mothusi's words of warning I knew I knew had to get closer.

Mothusi:

Please, Dr Livingstone! Stop there. The rocks are too slippery. You will fall to your death. To the centre of the earth!

Livingstone:

Wait for me there. Do as I ask!

Slowly I stepped forward towards the edge of the falls. I entered a dense white cloud of spray. There was a rainbow - Mothusi said there would be - a permanent rainbow. I edged to the very lip of the falls. I was on my hands and knees now. The water surged straight down over one hundred feet below me. I stretched out a little further. Scenes so lovely must be gazed upon by angels in their flight!

Mosi -oa-Tunya, the smoke that thunders. In the name of my Queen, I shall tell the world of Victoria's falls.

