

Letter to Margaret Sewell, 20 September 1847

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

Kolobeng, Bakwain Country 20 Sep^t

1847

My very Dear Friend

It is now a considerable time since I heard from you
But supposing a letter or a parcel to be on its way I begin to answer it by anticipation. Your last kind favour we recieved & duly acknowledged while at Kuruman in March or May last. We (you see I use the language of sovereigns & great folks now) were very much reduced in strength during our first years residence among the Bakwain, and took a tour Eastward by way of recruiting it, having at the same time some important missionary duties to perform among the tribes in that direction. the journey did me good but my better half became as thin as a lath. Having scarcely any provisions at home & a meeting of Committee being about to be held at Likatlong we were glad to pay a visit to Kuruman
Our visit proved very beneficial to M^{rs} L. We got a daughter there too and when we returned we were gratified by witnessing that love for us had not been diminished among the Bakwains by our absence the expressions made use of by them were so extravagant I should feel if I attempted to commit them to paper that I was writing what the Irish call "blarney". their deeds subsequently have been more pleasing than their words. Chonuane was a bad spot for a European to live in. Water very scanty & bad so we could not procure necessary food by irrigation. Both Chief & people saw this & had been searching for a better locality for us. they told me what they had done and asked what I wished them to do for they "were determined to cleave to us wherever we went". They had selected the Kolobeng a fine stream about 40 miles N.W. of Chonuane & after examining it we were glad to remove to the blessed sound of gurgling waters, you have your nightingales thrushes blackbirds & canaries. Of all the birds in the world commend me to the merry frogs whistling with might & main their midnight carols. We thank Him through whom alone we have obtained influence among the heathen and we pray it may be a pledge of their future conversion. We have of course to begin again at the beginning. We have built temporary houses already. the country being thickly wooded we did not need to go far for materials. the chief without any suggestion from us told us that the meeting house must be his work entirely
I wish you to be at no expense whatever said he. It shall be
[0002]
my work to build a house for God who is the defence of my town"

Subsequently he desired me to name the dimensions, form &c believing that I should only be a looker on, but we or our party said, it is for the God of all so we shall all work at it. Unfortunately we are obliged by the advanced state of the season to decide to decide on a temporary meeting house. We must attend as soon as possible to the wants of the body. If we do not sow we shall be starving again by the winter. We get up a temporary building now in order that our work of systematic instruction may go on in all weathers, and also during the period in which we must attend to our bodily wants.

I believe now the Bakwains believe that we are their real friends this is a great step in advance. We never got so far with the Bakhatla. After leaving the latter people poor M^r Edwards was obliged to pay a fine for harsh expressions made use of by him to the chief. Had he not done so Mabotsa would have had no place among our stations. I am sorry he lost his temper - loss of temper is loss of influence but keep in temper & you may say what you like to this people - the chief of Mabotsa became enraged in turn & he & his people expelled M^r Inglis. they proceeded to M^r Edwards house for the same purpose as they had to Inglis' but a fine appeased them for the time. My heart is sore for Mabotsa, I deeply regret taking M^r Edwards there however all may yet turn out well I suppose you know Inglis domiciled in my house there. If you wish me to tell how he goes on I must say easy enough He wanted to be a great man among us. The Bahurutse wished a missionary from M^r Moffat. they sent repeated messages to him to come to them & take them into their own country [^] [Mosega] and place a missionary among them. It was simply the result of unbounded confidence in him as a tried friend of Bechuanas We are Independents but we need not tell the natives so. M^r I. thought otherwise. the Bahurutse removed half way to their own country & Inglis the whole way. the former [^] [now] play falsely with him - they have not confidence in one who can declare unfriendly feelings to their old friend. After expulsion from Mabotsa he sat down at a fountain to which he expects the Bahurutse to come. He who so often declared his determination to go home if he did not get a sphere embracing a population of some thousand [0003]

lives with a mere handful of people expecting a tribe to come to him In the mean time the precious contributions of the poor Christians in England are being expended in doing what? - I have seen so much evil under the sun since I left your roof I begin to think that madness & folly & evil are necessary ingredients in our present sphere. O your question related to Inglis wife. She is at Mabotsa living with the Edwards. How she does I do not know. Not a single Mokhatla child comes to school. What services are conducted are attended by the dependants of the mission - the Bakhatla never come since [^] [the] period of the fine mentioned above. so how she gets on is to me a mystery - I suppose M^r Mather mentioned some troubles he has had in India from the follies of others. they are to be

found everywhere

How is my dear friend Maclehose? Be sure & tell me. I do not write him now. I would but can not. He does not even send my account Present my kind regards to him [&] his better half & assure him of my unabated esteem. A friend upbraided me for writing long letters to one who never answered & yet wrote short ones to him who always gave double or treble the quantity this paralysed my pen. I must hear from him now.

We were much gratified by a letter from the former Miss Leslie Let us know about her as much as you can. Never forget the immortal Howie if you hear ought of him - also Dickson & Holland. I hear from Watt. Where is Best & Ayrton & old M^r Wildman - I have heard of Charles &c from M^r Pyne whom I believe you now know better than formerly -

Of Mokoteri I hear no good. The poor fellow wishes much to get married but is unable to get a wife of any respectability - He lately went on oxback to court & the Father of the family applied a rod to his back forthwith. He is a Griqua & felt insulted by a degraded person presuming to ask one of his daughters - Poor fellow this is different treatment from writing names in Albums & giving locks of his curly poll to London exquisites - he was spoiled & now reaps the fruits of his pride & folly.

[0004]

you do not forget us in your prayers. May you enjoy every temporal & spiritual blessing & believe me yours ever

Very Affectionately

D Livingston

the Ashtons are very well at present. they lost a fine little boy whilst we were at Likatlong. We have a little boy running about & a little girl in her mothers arms. Poor little niggers I often look at them here in the heart of Africa & think, what do I not -? May He who feeds the Ravens Remember them

Care of Rev^d D^r Philip Cape Town
M^{rs} Sewell
57. Aldersgate St.
London