

Letter to Hamilton M. Dyke, 1 December 1851

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

Kolobeng 1st December 1851

My Dear Friend

I was pleased a few days ago to receive an epistle from you containing some statistics with which I have troubled you. they seem to have driven your own domestic affairs out of your head for you do not mention your better half - so I conclude she is dead and I am now addressing my widowed brother Dyke. Have you no children either? You must try and remember that every body is not so transcendental as yourself. I for one like to hear how the families of my friends get on. I don't want scandal but I give you an example by telling you that I have four children - three boys and a girl and the fifth a little girl is in Heaven. I must soon part with them for the region to which we go to settle in is a feverish one and though one may dispose of his own life in the way he thinks best for His Redeemer's glory - he can scarcely be said to have the lives of his children at his disposal. How do you employ your time? Do you think the young are likely to become a set of model Christians? Are they better upon the whole than those who have believed after they have grown up? We have a theory that though the old have not become great things yet your hopes ought to be sustained by the expectation of great things to be effected among the young. We seem to think we shall make a set of model Christians from among the young. And I begin to doubt whether the notion is sound? Are we models ourselves? Providence took Tahiti out of our hands and we are deprived of the Hottentots. Are we not taught that our ideas of doing wonders with the young are erroneous. Our duty seems to be to preach the gospel to every creature and those who believe will be saved those who believe not be condemned. A great number of both become manifest

[0002]

of both young & old. though I have plagued you for statistics, excuse me while I beg a few more. If convenient will you let me know - How many years the Basuto Mission has been established. What the average missionary force in each seven years of the time. [with] What [expense or a rough guess at it] the average number of

converts in each seven years. Can you furnish any statistics of the Wesleyans. Don't turn up your nose at the work I would fair extract out of you. You seem of rather a desponding turn of mind. Some such work in your leisure moments will do you good. this is a medical opinion so you must bear with me.

I sympathize with you sincerely in your afflictions I know it must be extremely trying to you to see defections in the church. the world may deride & scorn but you have the sympathy of your bretheren in Christ and far better of Our great High Priest in the Heavens. Here we have nothing to encourage. the people have had no corn for four successive years, and have now removed about 8 miles up the Kolobeng. I would remove with them but they are so badgered by Boersthey have in addition to the hunger no heart to learn. God has by his good guidance opened up for us a large field on the North and we may either enter in there & work for Him or begin & build again in order carry forward his work among the Bakwains. the former seems to me to be the best for the Divine glory and I am now going Southwards in order to deposit my family some where and then return for the Interior work. the existence of African fever renders this step necessary. the whole country of Sebitoane so far as we saw it is an immense marsh It is intersected in every direction by numerous rivers and these overflow annually & cover many miles of [...] face. the higher parts are only a few feet above the surrounding lowlands. Tsetse abounds, we lost about 40 oxen - a wonderful insect. It only affects domesticated animals. We lived two months in the midst of it our children were bitten and recieved no harm. and you may see Pallahs waterbucks, buffalo Zebras &c &c [0003] living undisturbed in the very midst of the venemous insect Calves are not killed by it so long as they suck their dams but dogs fed on milk die. Its poison is fatal to domestic animas only but is a henpecked husband not as much as domestic animal as a calf. Let such beware.

the Sesheke we believe to be the main branch of the Zambesi It is from 300 to 500 yards wide - and when it overflows it extends fifteen miles out. Date trees abound and so do Palmyra and other trees which were new to us. Sugar cane and sweet potatoes are planted by the Barotse And slave dealing has begun among them. A party of Nambari another tribe from the Nor West came last year and carried off about 800 slaves. they brought lots of English manufactures to purchase slaves with. Blue [...] & striped cottons. Blue red & green baize. they would

not take ivory or cattle in exchange. The people
of Sebitoane are a mixture of Bakwains, Bamangwato
&
Masuto. the River tribes a black race speaking another
language are subject to them. I tried M^r[...] translation but they seem to have adopted more
Bakwain words than Suto. And could understand me
better when I read M^r Moffats testament. He [(Sebitoane)]has done
good service to us in introducing the Sitchuana in that
region We found people every where who understood us
though the river languages differ as much from Sitchuana
as Latin does from English. there is an immense
population on the rivers - very black & strong but not
warlike. they excell all in basket making & as smiths
potters & workers in wood. Iron & honey abound in
their country and they seem to have abundance of food
It was to our inexpressible sorrow that Sebitoane fell
sick & died while we were there. We hope God will establish
his kingdom in that dark region.

Present our kind regards to M^r & M^{rs}Cassilis and to
M^{rs} Dyke. And believe me affectionately yours

D Livingston
[0004]

Rev^d T. H. Dyke

Missionary

Basuto Country

Via Colesberg