

Letter to Margaret Sewell, 22 November 1852

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

I have got your parcels up to - Reviews for Jan Feb. & March 1851 - inclusive
and your very welcome letters, last one being N^o 25

Kuruman 22 November

1852

My Very Dear Friend

I have not written you for some time
because I believed you would have a living epistle by you
who would answer the purpose better than pen and paper
I expected that my better half would have found her way
straight to 57. but I suppose she must have forgot your
address. I am sure I would not forget it. Well you have
seen my little niggers, noisy enough I fear they made your
quiet domicile. I was sometimes bothered by their roaring
and ranting and noise but now I wish I could hear
it again. It is much easier to live a batchelor's life than
one of widowhood. The "stillness is shocking to me." Of the
poor batchelor it may be said as Cowper said of his
bird "that delight he never knew." I am getting quite
poetical I declare. I must stop or instead of a letter you
will recieve a sonnet to the Moon or some other bit of wise
nonsense.

I have met with many obstacles to my progress
Northwards since I left the Cape. but I found when
I arrived here that the delay had been wisely ordered
for had I got on as well as I wished I should have
been at Kolobeng exactly at the time the commando
of Boers came. they vow vengeance against me
and the reason of their hatred is the following. they
have attacked and plundered eight tribes since I have
come into the country and on each occasion, have
carried off large numbers of captive children and
killed great numbers of the parents. they have

[0002]

Thank Charles for his kind promises of welcome Fain would I see you all again
But I have such a world of work before me I shall never have time to visit England

no compunction for they believe the blacks have no souls
In these massacres they never lost a single man for having
guns and horses the natives cannot approach them with

their spears. The Bakwains however fought bravely, and
 killed about 30 of them. A son of Pretorius the rebel
 chief was among the number. Sechele had two bullets
 through his hat and one through the sleeve of his coat
 Now the difference in this attack is all ascribed to me
 "Its all owing to thst horrid doctor" they say - and we shall
 have his head yet for it. they believe that I must have
 taught them to fight. Only fancy your reverend friend
 "teaching the young idea how to shoot" boers. they
 gutted our house - tore [^] [the] books & smashed all the bottles contain-
 ing medicines. I have not got the length of taking joyfully
 the spoiling of my goods. We had just bought an iron
 sofa. I may have sat twice on it but not oftener. It was
 intended to be a spare bed for any stranger as well as a resting
 affair for ourselves. Now only think of a big fat Boeress
 enjoying it and drinking coffee out of my wife's kettle &c.
 They are worse savages than the natives. Yet the ministers of
 the Dutch Reformed church go among them administering
 the sacrament - baptism without the least discrimination
 The people have been severely punished and viewing
 their punishment apart from the iniquities of the
 Boers. It seems a judgement on them for rejecting the
 gospel. They have rejected it. And I hope they may be
 led to repent of their unbelief. their kindness to us
 personally was very great and I feel much for them
 but it is not to be forgotten that they have by unbelief
 done despite to the spirit of grace. All the fault the
 Boers could charge on Sechele was his refusal

[0003]

to throw obstacles in the way of Englishmen going to the
 countries beyond. Our Government can do nothing for
 the natives [in the Interior]. It has foolishly been led into a war with the
 Caffres and though wishing to exterminate them cannot effect
 it. Sir George Cathcart brutally hangs or shoots all prisoners
 even women are not spared. the Hottentot leader wrote
 to him lately requesting him to fight with men and not
 with women. And now that he finds his brutality avails
 nothing - the "Caffres being just as they were and where
 they were 20 months ago" * He tells the friendly chiefs
 to recieve the enemy among them - which means "for
 any sake take them away from fighting with me. they
 may beat me out after all". this after about
 two millions of English gold have been squandered
 in the war. The Hottentots have fought bravely
 they [...] and retire in strict military order by
 the sound of the bugle and though our troops are
 furnished with all sorts of guns & rifles they never
 come out of an engagement unscathed. If no
 other good comes out of this struggle than this we
 feel sure that nobody will henceforth laugh at

missionaries for believing that Hottentots have souls
and no future Caffre war will be undertaken
with as little cause as the former wars have had.
Calderwood has £600 per annum as a magistrate
he preaches on Sunday and beats the Caffre seats of
honour on Monday. The Caffres say he holds the
bible in one hand and the Sambok [(whip)] in the other. They [(converts)]
have been forced in some cases to fight against their
own chiefs & have asked to be shewn in the bible
the text which authorized such conduct. My opinion

* statement of a leading colonial Newspaper

[0004]

from all I have heard of your friend is that though he
should do good for fifty years to come he will not counteract
the evil of his missionary magisterial course. He was the
main instrument in the condemnation of Botha a Hottentot
officer of forty years service and it came out that he (Cald)
had been in the habit of acting as a Government informer
Calderwood himself admitted it in the Newspapers. At the same
time confessing he had not an interpreter when he took the
accusation & sent it to the Government

I was quite taken aback with this for I have always understood
him to be a man who would not rest with the stilt of an interpret-
er. In our part of the country the missionaries are decidedly the best
scholars in the native language. there is not a man of us except
perhaps M^r Ross who needs an interpreter. From all I can learn
the less you hear of Calderwood the better. I am sorry he has
turned out so. I had a high opinion of him formerly. Please
present my love to Charles. M^{rs} L. was highly pleased with
you all. I leave this in a few days. Ever Affectionately

D Livingston

Care of Rev^d W. Thompson

~~Cape Town~~

Prepaid

M^{rs} Sewell

57 Aldersgate St.

London