

Letter to Margaret Sewell, 22 November 1852

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)
[0001]

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]

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 containing 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"* * statement of a leading colonial Newspaper 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 [...] [advance] 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 believeing 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 [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 interpreter. 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

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

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

Care of Rev^d W. Thompson

~~Cape Town~~

Prepaid

M^{rs} Sewell

57 Aldersgate St.

London