

Letter to [Margaret Sewell?], 17 June 1843

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

(Nº 9)

Kuruman 17th June 1843

My very Dear Friend

I shall not advert to the topics contained in the other letter which I enclose to M^r Macle hose But will endeavour to give you some account of my recent tour to the tribes of the Interior. You who are accustomed to Railways & steamboats can form no idea of the slowness of our movements in this country, We are five or six centuries behind you in regard to locomotion, and this makes our itineraries as tedious as voyages to India, I had 10 days of this tedious drawling before I reached the valley of the Bakhatla which you may associate in your mind with the turning point of M^r Campbell when he visited the Kurrichane Mountains for the Bakhatla tribe live within half a day of the spot where his waggon stood in its farthest progress north. It is also the spot where he was informed of the existence of iron founderies. they are still in existence but they do not refuse me permission to examine them as they did to him, and it is also near to the place where the notorious Mosilikatze had his residence when seen by M^r Moffat. I walked over the site of his town & the spot where his people suffered a dreadful defeat by from the boers, the rock where he executed those who had fallen under his displeasure by casting them down was unknown to the natives who now reside in that vicinity. But though I examined with care the whole locality and anything which might have remained could be easily discovered as the grass had been but recently burned off, I could only see a [^][very] few human bones & these the last vestiges of the tyrant will soon all be devoured by the hungry Hyaena. I mention these things because there is a probability I shall located for some time at least near [^][in] that neighbourhood

the chief Sebegoe of the Wanketye who suffered a cruel massacre by the Batlapi last year also lives in
[0002]
lives in that neighbourhood and as some of the believers

of Kuruman were on a visit to him at the time of attack & in circumstances which could not fail to produce an impression on the minds of the Heathen that they had been the means of betraying the Wanketye, one of the objects of my journey was to endeavour by my presence & explanations to disabuse his & their minds of that impression. It was not without danger that one put himself into his hands, for Sebegoe has been an almost total stranger to missionaries But the Lord was with me & gave me favour in his eyes I went directly to him as soon I arrived, the people crowded around & as they recognized a young man who was with the others at the period of attack it was anything but pleasant to see their looks & gestures. the first uproar having ceased Sebegoe demanded of me why I had attacked & destroyed all his people. I replied why did you not listen to the advice I sent you last year from the Bakwain country & thus destroy yourself. I told you if you came out of the Bakalihari desert Mahura would certainly attack you. Did your messengers fail to deliver my message or did you discredit it? the messengers were there to recognise me and by a few Scotch answers of that sort his prejudice seemed to evaporate & he became quite friendly. In one of the letters I wrote you I gave an account of Sebegoe He is the bravest of all the Bechuana chiefs & passing into the Bakalihari desert bade defiance to all the forces of Mosilikatze. He was on the march out of it last year when he heard of my presence in the Bakwain country & sent a number of messengers to me with the present of an ox. I warned him not to come out of the desert as the Batlapi (people of Kuruman) would certainly attack & plunder him of his cattle. He did not know the power of guns &c. which the unbelieving portion of the Batlapi now possess & and ventured to [0003]

act contrary to my advice. Of the subsequent massacre of his people I also informed you in another letter. I left him now evincing towards me a most friendly disposition But perhaps the reason why I did not fare worse might be what one of his people told me, "O, nobody thinks of killing a teacher" As poor Sebegoe now is, his power is gone, only the remains of his tribe are left him yet what he gave me in the way of presents he gave like a king. When he sent milk or porridge to me they were always in a dish as large as that basket sort of thing you put your plates in at dinner. When I returned from the countries beyond that he took me to the house of one of his wives & said, as we squatted down beside a huge pot of beer, "now you must remain many days with me & we shall drink much together", "my wives (he has

five of them) are all busy making beer for you" I am still a teetotaler notwithstanding M^r Moore's

"defection" But I always take a little of their stuff when it is offered in kindness. It is not intoxicating whatever the quantity drunk may be, and is as thick as the nice gruel you used to make but sour bitter & of a pink colour. I think it is nutritious for it contains a large quantity of the native corn from which it is made by a very simple process. Another kind of beer is now being introduced into this country made from honey & a native root which is not only intoxicating but produces a kind of frenzy most horrible to behold. With respect to this I am a teetotaler as I never tasted it. the other or ancient beer I taste to shew good will but fear in any way to encourage by example the other pernicious drug. I never objected to beer or porter as a medicinal agent but only never felt I needed it as such. I went a long way beyond Sebegoe not less I think than 350 miles, North. Formerly traders went far beyond missionaries. Now I am determined [0004]

if spared to be outdone by no one in carrying the blessed gospel to the regions beyond. I see it stated M^r Moffat intends to go where no white man has yet been I can tell you he must go a precious long way for that purpose for I have been as far on the other side of his farthest point North as that is on the other side of Kuruman. I should have visited a lake in the Interior which has been long known by report But I had a most dastardly set of servants with me this time who refused to go with me farther than the Bakwain country. I had therefore to leave them & the wagon there & proceed Northward on an ox. A curious enough mode of conveyance for add to the great looseness of his skin which renders it difficult to stick on, the annoyance of him putting back his long horns (frequently 4 or 5 feet long) to give one a punch in the belly when he likes

The sun was sometimes excessively hot but we jogged on the whole weary day My powers of doing without water excited the astonishment of the natives & I think I suffered as little from thirst as any of them

Please present kind regards to M^r & M^{rs} John Sewell, Charles, Miss Brodie & M^r Wildman When he comes over on Monday, would the good old man write me? Affectionately yours David Livingston

M^{rs} Sewell

57 Aldersgate St

London

For^d by M^{rs} Pyne