

Letter to Whitwell Elwin, 22 March 1858

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[0001]

Screw Steamer Pearl

22 March 1858

My Dear Sir

One or two things having come to my recollection as probably worthy of insertion in the abridgement I note them down in order to send them back from Sierra Leone which place we hope to reach in the course of four or five days, and I may just say to you that we have had very fine weather up to this time and all my companions seem to be men in of the right stamp. I look upon this as a smile on our enterprise from the Benignant Father in Heaven. May He graciously continue to prosper us.

When speaking of the quantities of honey in the country above Tete, it may be well to remark that. We have several varieties of bees in the country, and some of them are without stings. One called Motla makes its hive always in the ground but a still very small variety of the same selects trees for this purpose. The honey is decidedly aromatic and sensibly acidulated in taste. The latter species swarm around any person who comes near their hive and lights on the face and hands and apparently sucks the perspiration. It resembles

[0002]

and is not much larger than the small common black ant and if it exists in Palestine may be the "ant" of Solomon, for I am not aware that the habit of "providing her

meat in summer, and gathering
her food in harvest” can be ascribed
to any ant as well as it can be
to this species of bee. It would be
worth while for those who travel
in Palestine to examine this point.

At the point given of the pounding
of corn in mortars by the
ancient Egyptians - the following
illustration of a scriptural phrase
might be put in-

”though thou bray a fool in
a mortar among wheat with a
pestle yet will his foolishness not
depart from him.” When wheat
or other grain is pounded in the
mortars here represented a little
water is added and very soon
the bran is stripped off the seed
the idea present to the mind of
any one who has witnessed the
operation is this, if wheat is
brayed the outer scale is stripped off
[0003]
but though a fool were subjected
to the same treatment his folly
would still cleave to him.

When Professor Owen
spoke at the Farewell dinner
given by the Royal Geographical
Society he remarked that
though I had let their ideas
of the majesty of the South
African Lion down considerably, he could assure
his hearers that the British
Lion which once inhabited
these islands was a very
different animal from
that with which I was
acquainted and its size
indicated that it was
really a noble majestic
beast. The speech is
to be published in the transactions
of the Geographical Society
and if not too much trouble
might make a good
footnote

[0004]

I give these for your consideration
if you think them unworthy
of insertion just drop them
without ever taking the
trouble to tell me you have
done so. As I am writing
about the book I may just
mention that if you think
more illustrations desirable
there are several scenes
in possession of Mr Oswell
and they are at our disposal
at any time. M^r Murray
knows them - they are at
Burlington Hotel Cork St.

A week after we
left Liverpool we were in
fine warm weather and
now 12 days after our departure it is like midsummer
with you. We look back &
pity the poor natives of what
the Romans called "out of the
world" and hope that Great
Eastern may become so
plentiful yet that annual
migrations to warmer skies will be possible for
all the weak chested. I have nothing to write about
yet so say good bye

David Livingstone