

Letter to William C. Oswell, 10 April 1848

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Kolobeng

10th April 1848

My Dear M^r Oswel

Your favour of July last containing a communication from our friend Vardon reached its destination a short time ago. It was extremely welcome and afforded us much pleasure. I only wish mine may yield a tithe of what yours imparted. It set my mind at ease on several points. I had concluded that my note had miscarried - that you had gone to England - & was on the eve of writing to Vardon for your address. In addition to the pleasure of perusal the prospect of another visit allows us to indulge the pleasures of hope. And our position in this out of the world region has taught us to make the most of this source of employment. On one point I feel a little sorry, and though engaged in building a new house I hasten to remove the impression from your mind which my letter seems unfortunately to have produced. I suspect the wording of my epistle has been read far wrong to induce you to conclude I doubted your accuracy in the nothing of the Limpopo. I do not recollect my words but I remember having a conversation with you on the point before my mind in perusing it, in which you remarked if the River really did come round as far south as the Aegoa Bay it would be one of the most remarkable rivers in the world. Having ascertained that it really does come very far south I felt anxious to set you right in your idea of the improbability of such a roundabout course. If I appeared to throw discredit on the Morthing it makes I must have alluded (in my own mind) to Arkthought mao & I am very sorry the blunder has caused you uneasiness. N^e A left me a sketch but I relied on yours and indeed that information furnished by you and Captⁿ M is the only knowledge I possess on that part of the course of the River. I never was East of the Balai in the same latitude My knowledge of the Lulipolo was gained in the Latitude of Choumane and Southwards (a little) I believe M^r Murray's rights to have been pretty correct and from your account that the Limpolo goes as far North as that tribe I see no reason to dissent - But whatever may be the Southing it makes It comes round again to very nearly the latitude of the Choumane. The latter however (the junction) I did not see. It was pointed out to me in the distance. In going from this to the Bamapela our course is not quite straight. We have to make some southing to avoid some ranges of hills. We crossed to Marikoe then its source, but course was then North East for 9 days and there lies the Limpolo again after having traversed the course you know

the first two crossings are by Lundungo the main direction of the whole must however be at those parts North West. I imagine its course may be some what of the following shape there exists a range of very high hills North East

of the Bamapela these may be the obstacle to its finding its way to the sea farther north but this is merely conjecture. Do not I entreat you imagine that [0002]

doubted the candour with which you made your observations. I supposed that your observations had been dictated by a mass of magnetic rocks eastward of Choumane. Arkwrights certainly were by some means or other but now I believe it is quite possible yours in respect to nothing may be correct by supposing that the river makes a great bend. It certainly come round very far south whatever it may have done in the north.

I have written Captain Steele very fully about about my projected journey lakewards Our removal to Kolobeng has deferred it but I had proposed to go next month and had your letter not come to hand I would in a probability have proceeded. I wait now for you if I hear of no one else having his face in that direction. Sechele whom you know if a mixture of good & evil has for a considerable time past exhibited most of the former quality on his character. He would accompany me himself and as he has a considerable amount of regard for you it is probable he will do the same when you come. I heard him lately saying that you & Olson exceeded all other travellers and when I told him that you intended another visit he seemed much pleased & requested me to return your salutations as that is possible on paper. His conduct to us & to others has been for a long time better than we hoped for in a native - is a great reader according to his means - has perused the Testament & all the other parts of the Bible printed three times and is found of general information the innate African greediness may not be diminished to others but it to us for he invariably offers to pay for what he gets from us. We are infinitely better here than where we were formerly, the hutonegs have been a sore drain on the salary but we are devoutly thankful that we are away from Mabotsa. We have had and still have much hard work but feel in good spirits. We can irrigate now. Have good water - A great blessing in Africa. People talk of nightingales & poets turn up their eyes to ?? I thank they call her because they have nothing else to do But if all the songsters in the world I like best to hear the merry frogs tantalus like up to their chins in water. Esop must have been an African for he speaks tenderly of these same musicians. We are about 40 miles West N. West of Choumane. the spot I mentioned as due west of our old place did not afford a good prospect for native produce so we went down the stream a little. If no mishap occurs we shall be able to supply you with comment year - so you must not purchase much in the colony. If we have it & shall write & let you know. You must allow us to furnish you with at least corn & potatoes. When we came hither Sechele of his own accord built the school & his people made the

watercourse & dam in exchange for some assistance in erecting a square house for their chief - these works saved some expenses which had we been in Mabotsa must have been incurred. Poor Mabotsa M^r E quarrelled with Mosielele soon after we left - the difference was never made up & scarcely a single Mokhatea either adult or child ever comes near him for instruction. We feel very sorry for this for we worked hard there in matters were looking favourable If you wished to come through Mabotsa again you know the route We go by a path West of the station leaving the old path at Maritsane

we enter the hills near Motsenekatze & come along by the high hills directly west of the reedy part of Mitoane where Baba was killed on your spoor. We come close by a large table hill which is visible

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from Choumane containing plenty of Black buck. We sent out waggon lately by the Western path which the Gruguas always take on account of the game. Either of these I should prefer if a sportsman Cumming took your spoor last year with 15 horses 18 dogs & a hottentot Venus - a species of solace I suppose. He spent some considerable time in hunting a new buck which he resolved to call A. Ronalyni in honour of himself. I thought it entirely new untill I described it to two boers I heard them declare it was the Bushbuck of the colony. I have no doubt it is the same you shot & lost among the reed - viz the same as you mention. fine white stripes like the Khoodoo & about 20 small [white] spots on the hip - horns of male like those of the goat here. & a darkish belly, hoops prettily curved [towards] this. I felt sorry you had not secured it but do no regret now. If no one [un] moreover Cumming before he gets to the colony. I shall send you a portion of newspaper with the puff he is sure to put in. He passed the Barilaka I could not ascertain from him how far but believe it must have been 7 or 9 days beyond at most. He gave the Lumpopo a little more herd south than you - a very little however, says he killed 33 elephants a great number of hippopotomi. Went to some hills West of the river to hunt putokuane - was successful - and so were the tsetse for he wrote to us from beyond the junction of the votsave for the loan of oxen. One solitary mare & two oxen with a dog or two attested what the fly can do. One of his hottentots was snatched away from the fire one evening by a lion & devoured a few paces from the waggon. Cumming killed it next day. We will never think the Lake. Not he, unless somebody tells him that he may get wary lying on the ground there. He is by far the keenest trader we have seen in Africa. When he sees an elephant he does not become excited with the idea of sport. He says in his heart "there goes £25" I could not help pitying him when he made the confession - feels anxious to obtain a fastu & uncertain too whether he will come up again. I think his necessaries will drive in again but it will be to the Lumpopo again. I mention this much concerning him that you feel at ease on his future course.

I feel confident that M^r Ashton has recieved the sum you mention, if he had not I should have heard it from him when at Kuruman I distinctly remember that he stated the manner in which you settled about the rifle

he thought a money transaction would be the most [...]
& therefore said he I proposed it to M^r O. I shall ask him however M^r
Hume has been in Graham's town for some time past. I shall
deliver your message by first opportunity & it will probably reach
Kuruman as soon as he - your kind gift to me was brought
to us in August last, the rogues however had taken as much
benefit out of it during the two years they kept it from me as to render
him useless for some time after I got him - the sickness began
early this season and he fell a victim to my great sorrow. We got by
him several eilads & Kaveels. I had always doubts about his identity, he
had a bay mane & tail now you mentioned that these points were black
they deny the saddle. It may however yet turn out when no longer
usable. We felt the more sorry to part with the poor animal as it was
in our minds closely associated with yourself. As I am on a four footed
subject I may mention that Roberts cow has calved [a heffer calf] & both cow &
you have given us. Robert runs about now & speaks a little in both
languages, his sister helps him occasionally in the
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matrimonial music we enjoy. If you heard them both at it you would con-
sider that Selkirk talked nonsense when he said something about science
is shocking to me. I am building a new house at present. I burned the
old house & school lest a boer might take up his residence in them. This
brings to my mind the Boor expedition to Mosilikatze. It was a mere foray
for cattle & they succeeded in carrying off a number but the Matibele recaptured
them & killed a great number of their native auxiliaries, the expedition
ended by their attacking one of their assistant tribes - the Bamapela - and
carrying off a great number of children & sheep. I saw in my late journey
many Bamapele children in their houses kept in a kind of slavery. The
Boers generally are indignant until the party which acted treacherously
with a friendly tribe - they have had some meetings on the subject. But
I need not trouble you with Boor politics. The above is the report given
by the boors themselves & the native report agrees with it, the Boors generally
intend an expedition against Mosilikatze in May next, they crossed the
Limpopo somewhere about x Cumming did not see their spoor
so I conclude he did not go very much further than yourselves. Mosilikatze
lives not very far from the Limpopo. It would be dangerous to go very
far down the River on the northern bank. One might fall in with
Matibele & be mistaken for a boer.

As I have but little space now I must say a word on the course to the
Lake one route is N. W. from this for a considerable part of the way &
waggons can go on till within 8 days of the water - the other has more
northing & passes by Sekhomi, this is the preferable route as waggons can perform the whole
distance. Sekhomi is unwilling that any one
go past him for his ivory comes from the tribes situated there
but we should not ask his leave. We should go through north from
Masihue or Koribelo. Please bring a nautical Almanack with you.
Five shillings in London. But 15 at the Cape. I have requested Captain
Steele to bring any periodicals he can lay his hands on. Any old
Reviews Scientific journals - not new. Maybe left here rather than
be consigned to luniber homes at home. If you can take in the Edinburgh or

Blackwood while at home. Please do not leave them behind you
If you wonder at my impudence But I am a caffre - the seeds have
not arrived yet but will in due time I have no doubt . I thank
you infrequently for them - the ?? seeds did not vegetate here

Care of the Rev. D^r Philip Cape Town
W, Oswell Esq^{re}
India

Saw two genuine Banyanis. Roots coming down
a lot of fibrils at the end of each descending branch all
ready to do duty in the ground. M^{rs}L joins
with me in very affectionate salutations.

Ever yours D Livingston