

Letter to Thomas L. Prentice, 8 April, 8 May 1842

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Bakwain Country 8th April 1842

Dear Sir

Before this letter can reach you, you may have concluded that I have forgotten my promise to write you concerning your son Manning. But many reasons have induced me to delay and when I reflect on the different feelings which agitated my mind as circumstances connected with missions in the country were made known to me. I am glad I have been prevented from writing you sooner. Had I written you before this very probably the communications would have had a tinge of what was at the time causing me either joy or grief. For I daresay you know that though in the Mission field there are many things which it would be well for the people in England to know, there are others which it is well they don't know. Here I am quite ^ as much separated from both the failings & excellences of the missionary community as you are, and have been so for some months. I think I shall on that account be able to give a calmer view of the state of matters so that you may form a correct judgement of how you ought to act with respect to Manning. I have written several times to Thomas & have mentioned to him some of the things which form the dark side of the picture. I feel very anxious on his account for I fear that after all I can say that when he comes & looks in matters with different eyes to than mine he may feel disappointed. I fear he will take a more pervasive view than I do, for you will ^ have seen if you have looked into my letters that I have far too much levity in my composition. This is not as it ought to be but I always felt, when writing, not in Africa but in Gower Ct.. You must therefore make allowances for this failing of mine. Adding to the difficulties your sons will encounter the sadness which arises from being a strangers in a strange land. I fear for them on this account. It will be a sacrifice for them to make. I believe it is to most. And I almost wish it were to me to sober me down a little

Neither Thomas nor Manning must for a moment think of settling in the Colony or even in Caffreland. If they come at all it must be to the Interior. If they halt before they reach the Tropic the spot where I now write they had much better remain in England. I shall endeavour to explain just what one would wish them to be. But it would seem these are not sufficient for the people or rather for the missionaries. You find missionaries in some places better supplied with his bread of life than many of of like size in England. There is Algoa Bay. This village is certainly not larger perhaps not so large as Ongar but it has a Roman Catholic, a Wesleyan, & one of our miss[-]ionaries with one of our schoolmasters who preaches to the blacks. His clergymen besides but as neither he nor the Roman Cath. nuns are evangelical. I shall say three evangelical missionaries to a place

the size of Ongar, a small town you will find the population in a Gazetteer. They are chiefly the descendants of Dutch missionaries of our society, one of whom takes all the blacks under his charge. A clergyman & government schoolmaster who preaches all evangelical: Graham's Town is quite an English place has also one of our missionaries but not having seen it I dont know how large it is or how supplied by other societies. Graaf Rennet

8th May By a letter to Thomas of this date I inform him of the reasons which prevented my going westward as mentioned in this but I hope my coming here will also be attended by good to souls. Yours DL.

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has a most excellent clergyman & our missionary is his curate. Colesberg I dont believe it has more than 500 of a population. A Wesleyan, of ours & a clergyman all evangelical. I dont say anything more of the real mission stations such as Monkey Bethelsdorp, Rat River &c There ought to be & are all supplied with missionaries. But I cant help thinking that the poor Christians in England are defended by the rich English people in these towns above mentioned who detain missionaries amongst them. Some of them indeed such as Graham's Town raise as much as pays the salary of their pastor. But then the expense of outfit &c. and in some instances education too (Robson) stands a black debt unliquidated. If missionaries are detained by English people I suppose justice requires that they should in addition to defraying all expenses of the missionary send another on to the destination appointed by the Directors If not they defend the real heathen for to them these missionaries were appointed. Mr Robson for instance was appointed to Lattabao— Perhaps however it is not the fault of the English population. I dont know I will not condemn my bretheren But all of them with whom I convened seemed anxious to impress my mind with the idea that they had very large spheres of usefulness (Perhaps they have I however could not see it in the same light they did). And if they have spoken so to the Directors of course the fault does not lie with them. It is not in the Colony as it is in India A missionary there can do more good by means of the liberality of the English for support of schools than by attending exclusively to the natives and the chieftains there are generally ^ not evangelical. But here, whoever heard of the liberality of the South African Colonist? Where is there either a school or anything else shewn as the fruits of their liberality? The clergymen of the Dutch church which is the established form are generally evangelical too It is not pleasant to write these things, but it is absolutely necessary for one to know them before he can judge of the spiritual wants of the country. Please us to count the number of missionaries of all denominations. The clergy & compare it with the amount of Colonial population. And I am sure you will not appoint Manning to the ~~that~~ part of the country.

Then as to Caffretown. There are many missionaries in it & there of almost every society in existence. The habits of the Caffres are unsocial They do not congregate round one chief like the Bechwanas, but each lives with his few cattle & dependants to retire by himself. the population is therefore much scattered and one of the greatest difficulties is to get

a few families collected & afterwards to keep them together. I do not however speak of them from personal knowledge but from the testimony of those who have had opportunities of examining the country They cannot either remain near Kuruman. While the missionaries in the Colony may be heard in the towns expatiating on their large spheres of usefulness More on this side the river especially the Kuruman & Griqua Town missionaries are exchanging sour looks on account of what they deem encroachments on each others spheres. Griqua Town by means of native teachers is expanding delightfully. I wish Kuruman would do the same. I heard a brother about 2 months ago tell another then on a visit to K. from about 100 miles East of it. That M^r Moffat wants bring out a reinforcement of missionaries to live at Kuruman. What will they do here. O we shall itinerate occasionally to Towns! and this the only heathen place in the neighbourhood of our visitor to which

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he can itinerate. On mentioning this to the French bretheren at Motecto. 15 miles North East of K. "A reinforcement to K." said they "will put us out altogether we must leave all we have done & seek a new people"— & it will be so. Unless the new missionaries go forward they will not have work equal to what they might find in thousands of villages in England The population is by no means dense. The Bechuanas consist of tribes each of from 1 to 2000 in number. The Battapee. The Kuruman Tribe is however an exception, as it has from 10 to 12000, & of which at least are bitterly opposed to the gospel. You cannot have a large sphere of usefulness here unless you come far into the Interior & then although residing at one spot you must extend your energies over a large space by means of native teachers. I know about a dozen of [...] tribes beyond this all quite ignorant. I dont much [...] expect to understand it is like an Indian population. Say each is 2000 in number & you can form a pretty correct idea of what you might meet after trav- a degree of latitude between each. I earnestly recommend my Dear Friend Thomas if he is permitted in the providence of God to come here at all to determine resolutely to preach the gospel in the regions beyond. Dont let him enter on another line of things By bold determination I see nothing to hinder him along with Manning from earning an interest which may ^ be more useful to the Interior than any mission Southward. I shall write Manning along with this explaining in what manner he could be by the blessing of God as useful as any of us. It would also be better for Miss R. than any where near Kuruman, for I think from her appearance the bleak sterile prospects which that country affords would have a depressing influence on her spirits & ultimately induce disease. The country gener[...] around Kuruman for a great portion of the year a wretched wi[...] appearance. The fields have a great profusion of low soggy bushes (scarcely any trees) most of them arrived with thorns which [...] [a]re either bent back like fish hooks or forwards in every direction but all villainously sharp & strong. The grass grows in little round clumps and there is more stones & sand between than bushes shrubs plants & grass together. During one portion of the year at a distance it looks beautifully green But even then one cant walk in the fields with any pleasure and

this is an exercise which she must take. Mr Campbell visited it during the favourable season & he speaks of some parts as equal to Mahomet's paradise. I spent a few days in that paradise at a different season of the year & I was most happy when I got out of it. But as we approach the Tropic the country loses its browned parched appearance. [...] dwells here are covered all over with trees the red sandstone rocks looking pleasantly out here & there from between them. But towards the South they are quite bare. There the vegetation is quite tropical the nettle is no longer a mere plant but grows up to a tree a foot or more in diameter & from 20 to 30 in height. The wild figtree abounds on the mountains & though it yields little fruit, its presence indicated that fruits would thrive better here than at Kuruman. I think all the Tropical fruits might be reared here without much trouble. An immense amount of manual labour has been expended on Kuruman to make it what it is. All the trees had to be planted. Here you might select a dozen sprouts for building each of them superior in picturesque beauty to any mission I have seen & the trees ready to your hand

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I came here for the purpose of planting a native teacher with this portion of the Bakwain tribe & am thankful to say I have met with a reception which has exceeded my expectations. It is all through the Loving kindness of our gracious God. Blessed be his glorious name and may the whole earth soon see his glory After three days I set off on a long journey directly West in order if possible to prevent bloodshed. The whole of the Southern tribes having leagued together to attack one lying in that direction. They are now on their way but if I can be at it before them so as to apprise the chief of his danger their object will be defeated. He & the chief with whom I now am are the only men of good sense I have seen of blood royal amongst Bechwanas, He alone of all the Bechwanas had the courage to defend himself against Moselekatse a desperate marauder who plundered nearly the whole of them of their cattle a few years ago. And now because he has cattle they league together to attack & [...] It is a long journey and across a desert. for three days we shall have nothing for the oxen to drink but we hope to find a species of better water melon on the sand & if I can apprise him of his danger I have little doubt his superior generalship will secure both him his people & cattle and gratitude I should think will induce him to receive another native teacher gladly. I hope this will be the result of my doing as I should wish to be done by. I do not fear the wrath of the Southern tribes. They are all opposed to the gospel and those who do not love fear me. The general opinion among the more ignorant being that I am a great wizzard The people of one village made enquiries a short time ago of Mr Lemue a French miss.^y concerning the doctor who has lately come to the country "who could raise the dead" We dont want your gospel said they "send us this doctor"– I have written several times to Thomas but have not yet [...] [received] a single line from him If you kindly favour me with a letter Please address me to the care of D^r Phillip. Church Square. Cape Town & Believe me Yours Affectionately

D. Livingston

~~Care of Rev^d D^r Phillip, Cape Town~~

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