

Letter to William Thompson, 6, 20 September 1852

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org), 2017

[0001]

Kuruman 6th September
1852

Rev^d W. Thompson
My dear Sir

Having by means of a sound constitution survived tedious drawl through the Colony I crossed the Orange River at Priestcar - a spot which has been selected for a mission station by M^r Alheit of Scheit fontein. The enormous weight on my waggon soon after that told on one of the wheels and down came the elegant Dutch vehicle. The African coach and ten, on to its marrow bones. M^r Hughs kindly lent a wheel and by the assistance of himself and some of my old patients I managed to crawl to this place about 10 days ago. I was sometimes vexed with myself for having loaded up so much but when I reach the places where I could offload it gave me sincere pleasure to hand the goods to the owners. I was disposed to blame myself most when we had to offload at the bottom of acclivities and carry the boxes up ourselves. I am now detained here getting my wheel mended.

I had written another letter to you and mentioned a number of conjectures respecting George but his arrival at Kuruman today renders my surmisings as valuable as conjectures usually are. I could not understand what should have prevented him coming up to me on the way and after waiting here a week I began to suspect he had got into mischief by going to Beaufort. He has been at more expense than I have - and I had to spend upwards of £50 in the way. We shall now help him on. I waited for him as soon as I got a spot which possessed forage, but when he did not turn out I concluded he must have taken another road. I came here ten days before him.

Now that I can calmly look back on my sojourn among the natives who live in a hollow under Table mountain and who dailly and nightly inhale effluvia known only to the initiated in the mysteries of Sanatory reform, I do remember them

I had a fine medical library - and many good works on general subjects - the former

was my pride & a
great comfort. I have got lightened - and will move so much more easily now. You will hear of
my
Bakwains yet - they are not broken spirited Hottentots that attack sealed many a
boer's doom.

[0002]

with feelings of compassion. Poor creatures, living in a state
of utter respectability - exchanging their how dye do's - their noddings
curstyings and ministerial breakfasts and all the while to carnivori
The cannibals I may say of the Law & state & Puseyite church ready
to spring upon them and devour them. They are obliged to live &
walk as circumspectly as Elephants among well covered pitfalls
I do pity you from my heart. I could not breathe freely
till I got over the Orange River

Well, that is a fine letter from his Riverence Calderwood
I look upon it with mingled feelings of scorn and shame. With
scorn when I think of an English Professor of Christianity so
unutterably mean as to join in the hue and cry against a
poor Hottentot, and so dead to the shame of infamy as to
confess at the same time that it has been his practice
to act the part of a common informer. A salaried
Government spy.- I blush up to the ears when I
read his confession (after spending years in the service
of our society) that he does not know the language
sufficiently well to know exactly the statement of a
native without an interpreter. Is it not disgraceful
to find the gospel of Christ proclaimed in a patois
called "school Caffre"? We must not lose sight of this
confession. It is good that he makes it though that
and other statements ought to cover him with lasting
infamy. A man who could write as he has done
will do more. This is not his last letter nor
his last stab at the cause of truth & righteousness

You see how the Government officials feel towards
the defence of Botha. In Scotland counsel is provided
for the most depraved criminals at the expense of the
state. This Reverend Commissioner would have us
believe that such defence "tends to break down important
moral distinctions" - that its tendency is to cause the
whole of Scottish society to be suspected for we have
criminals there out of every class. From Commissioners
who can play the fool for £600 per annum with the
bible in one hand & the sambok in the other. Good Lord delivers us

[0003]

The copies of M^r Read's letters have not reached any of the miss-
ionaries up here.. The Reports all did - I have made arrangements

for the delivery of your letters. Have recieved two notes from you. M^r Moffat's head is still affected. Nothing he has tried has the least effect on it. The Translation goes on briskly notwithstanding. Edwards has left his station and the people of Mabotsa have come over to Sechele. The Boers are reported by an individual who came here two days ago to be encamped at Mabotsa. They contemplate rooting out Sechele and wait only till two or three of their party return from the Lakes They fear if an attack is made now that Sechele's people fleeing Northwards would meet their friends and of course - treat them as they ^ now hope to do the Bakwains. they may find it more difficult to subdue Sechele than they dream of. But their plan is to secure the whole country to themselves and prevent traders and travellers from going beyond them. One of D^r Robertson's converts called Chief commandant Pretorius was feasted the other day not far from Boomplaats where the battle was fought. They drunk the memory of Major Hogg in solemn silence but forgot the memory of the brave men who [...] butchered at Boomplaats by this same Pretorius. Is it right or is it not for the Bakwains to make the country too hot for this man's party - after he strikes the first blow? I shall be there soon and must give an opinion on the point. What would you advise? If it is right for Hottentot Levies to fight against the Caffres it is right for Caffres & Bakwains to fight against the enemies of their country. I doubt if it is right to fight at all

M^r Ross has gone to see his people again at Tauns. He came along with me from Griqua Town as far as Daniel's Kuil. He will return by way of Kuruman. The Directors have not written any of the bretheren for a long time. Major Hogg will have some idea now as to whether the reports he circulated anent a certain person were true or false. We shall all soon be hushed in the still & peaceful Hades. All this bother & bluster & blarney will recieve a quietus before many years in as far as the present actors are concerned. What a hush takes place as the shades of death close around one. God grant that when we have finished our work we may be hushed to eternal rest on Abraham's bosom

[0004]

Kind love to your sister Ralph & Jessie, I wont mention Willie because he did not come to help me. I tried your plan on one ox and he became a beauty & so tame. All the boers wanted to exchange him & poor fellow he was drowned in the Orange River Three fell into a muddy place on a Saturday evening. We all worked the whole night trying to get them out of the sloughy bank and as the morning dawned the finest of the whole lot expired. You may guess how eagerly we toiled when I mention that when daylight appeared I thought [it] was only about 12 o'clock. I have not yet begun to write but have not lost sight of the project. I have not been idle. A correct and lucid analysis of the language engages my attention and has taken up all

my spare time - I have devoted a whole evening to you - your notes were good but very short you will someday write a longer I hope. Poor Botha. The sentence is terrible. It is worse than death. Poor fellow. - the wicked shall not always triumph By same post I send a letter for my brother containing Sandillahs speech to Renton. to be printed in America. All we learn of the Caffre war is one sided. We must hear both sides It is well Sendillah speaks out so nobly. Bringing out converts to assist the English is infamous - We must either preach passive resistance or fighting for our own countrymen D. Livingston

20th You will see by M^r Moffat's to you the doings of D^r Robertson's dearly beloved bretheren. I mourn over my books & medicines [&] instruments. Please say nothing about my losses or some good Samaritan will forthwith send me odd numbers of the Evangelical Mag. the pictures extracted - "Alleine's Alarm". without the title page. An odd volume Charnocks sermons &c

Two parties of Boers are gone Sebitoané wards. they will be cut off by Sechele's people. One of these parties would plunder me if they met me - so I think it well to wait here till they are out of my way or killed. It is trying to wait but God's good Providence has detained me so long just to prevent me falling into the very worst of the strife & losing everything

Many thanks for the Poalter & O'Niel books doubly precious now. I send Sandillah's speech to be printed in America. Please notice if it comes to you also two letters for M^{rs}L.

Prepaid
Rev^d W^m Thompson
Church Square
Cape Town