

Letter to Andrew Murray, 10 June 1847

David Livingstone

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org), 2020

[0001]

Kuruman 10 June 1847
Rev^d A. Murray 35D/2/15
My Dear Sir

Your very welcome letter safely reached its destination about two months ago, I need not state how acceptable it was - for communications from our friends always come like cold water to a thirsty soul - We have been enjoying the pleasure of a visit to our friends out here for sometime back - The chief object I had in view in coming was to attend a meeting of committee - The chief object of my wife seems to have been to add another unit to the population of this planet - The newspapers say that a new one has been discovered in our solar system - So if you are a disciple of M^r Matthews you will not be disheartened by the above little bit of information there is yet plenty of Room in the wide creation -

It is with much pleasure I acknowledge your kind epistle previous to returning to our sphere of labour. We are glad to hear that your elder sons are so honourably engaged May God grant that they may ever feel it both a privilege & an honour to be permitted to enter into the service of our Great Redeemer. We were delighted to hear from M^r Melmore that your son John had some desire to be a missionary - I hope he will dedicate his whole being to ^ the service of Christ - He has plenty of work for all his people and will if he commits his way unto him, so direct his paths as that he will be loved & useful through life and in death he will not be unlamented I confess I feel in respect to him a little of what the French call "esprit de Corps" We all belong to one army - all fight one side you however belong to Regements of the Line and we are like the Rifle brigade scattered in over the ground still occupied by the enemy - It will therefore

[0002]

be no great harm though I should love my fellow sharp shoote[...][r] with peculiar affection - I hope he will not be a missionar[...][y] in the colony - For if I had my will I would have all the missio[...][n] out of it & in the real mission fields which are now lying totally uncultivated - But Directors must be wiser peopl[...][e]

than I am.

I beg leave to thank Charles for his kind intentions - Ho[...] the seeds will come before spring - What does he intend to be? I remember seeing him one morning reading the Bible - Set th[...] be the man of his counsel & he wont stick in the world no[...] yet cause any of his relatives to feel shame in saying that is "ou[...] Charles - A young brother of mine who bears the same nam[...] has attained the degree of A.B. in a College in Ohio & is now study[...] theology - He would like to be a missionary, but health impaired hardship seems to forbid the accomplishment of his desire, I remembe[...] Martha very well - Her namesake of old seems to have been a right good housewife. What a terrible pucker she was in to have every exquisite in her "set out" Hope our Martha will be as good in d[...] -estic affairs and a great deal better in attention to the words of Him into whose lips grace was poured & who spake as never man spa[...] May He dwell in all your hearts -

Previous to coming out to this quarter M^{rs} L & I took a lon[...] trip to the Eastward of the Bakwain Country - our route lay North of what is called Magale's berg - a very fine country indeed - no[...] both above & below - for both copper iron & Tin ores abound It is well ventured by the tributaries of the Ourie or Limpopo - The state of the people however does not present features so pleasing - We visited several tribes which were once under the power of Mosilikatse - & were kindly received - one chief told us that he was an attendant on that dignitary when he visited M^r Moffat's waggon - But both these and other tribes situated farther to the North East live

[0003]

in a state of hopeless ignorance - about 6 days Eastward from the Ourie we came to the Bagalaka - quite a cluster of tribes - and all very populous - they seem to be as numerous as all the rest of the Bechuanas put together - Rich in cattle and able to manufacture the different ores with which their country abounds - they know how to mix copper & tin in order to form an amalgam which resembles gold or fine brass We procured a few spindles & distaffs with which they sp[...] cotton and that seems indiginous for we saw some cotton trees growing in the hills - all live in entire ignora[...] of what our Great Redeemer did for us 1800 years ago some think of missionary life as one of great sacrifice the most trying thing to me in it is to see such fields & feel that I do & can do so little for their cultivation while so much remains to be done - Pray ye the Lord of this to avert &c in all probability these crowds of poor sinful beings will pass away into the region of the dead without fully com-prehending whither they are going - you will understand that we can do but little for these distant tribes when I mention that we were 19 days travelling before we

reached the most distant -

There are a great number of Dutch emigrants in that quarter and to these I beg leave to draw a little of your sympathy I shall beg something else besides sympathy and when I do so I have no expectation that though you see the word Give Give you will turn to M^{rs} M. & say "Why here is anothe[...][er] horse leech at me" - the state of these people - our own flesh & blood - is anything but encouraging - they are beyond the range of Colonial laws and the bad among them will not obey the wishes of the better disposed - The children whom I saw are growing up in comparative ignoran[...][ce] of Divine things & the parents in many instances did

[0004]

not seem much to regret the want of a knowledge of letters [...] grieved me for I had the impression that their fore- [...][fa]thers like our own always desired their children to be taught [...] Gert Kruiger the commandment of the Mogale's berg district [...][in]formed me that several chests of elementary books had [...][be]en sent to Delagoa Bay by the good people in Holland - [...][b]ut no one was public spirited enough to go down for them [...] however professed to be anxious that his children be furn- [...][-ish]ed with books - He was once an attendant on your ministry [...]spoke of you with great affection - and I confess I spoke [...][ab]out you in the same terms in the way of trying to make [...] friendship a kind of passport to his own - they have [...] general a great aversion to missionaries - the cause [...][o]f their dislike seems to be an idea that we wish to furnish [...] natives with fire arms and whether right or wrong [...][a]lways take the side of the latter - the Road of the Com- [...][-m]mandant Potgeiter determined to disarm the chief with [...]hoth we like - As I believed an attack would disperse [...] tribe and scatter all by labours to the winds - I represent [...] the case to them & appealed to their better feelings [...][on] behalf of the station - they very kindly acceded to my [...][r]equest to let him alone - Still they look upon me [...][w]ith distrust and are divided in their opinions as [...][to] whether the concession made ought not to be rescinded [...] case causes me uneasiness - my heart's desire is [...][t]o do good to all as I have opportunity & have as little to [...][do] with Politics as possible - To owe you any ^ Dutch tracts [...][a]t your disposal? I should much like to have it in [...][a]ny power to give a tract where I can do nothing else Will you help me in this respect? - If you can [...][a]ssist the emigrants by ~~my~~ means of tracts perhaps a [...]ter to some of them by whom you are known

[0005]

in commendation of the doctrines taught ^ [...] will ensure their favoura[...][ble]
reception - or perhaps some of your influential members
might write their friends in the Mogale's berg quarter - I should
be happy to forward any communication sent - I make
these remarks not in the way of dictation - but as hints -
a hint has often put me into plan of usefulness so I think
you will - whether you think them proper or not take
mine in good part -

I have a great desire to place a native teacher in one of
the tribes over there - But the distrust with which we are
regarded seems unfavourable to the project - the emigrants
lately attacked a large tribe of Bagalaka which was situated
a little beyond those we visited - To me the affair appears
to have been entirely wrong - the most that can be said in defence
of the massacre is that information was obtained from other
chiefs that the chief of that tribe intended to attack the Emigran[...][ts]
a chief scarcely ever speaks well of his neighbour - But independe[...][nt]
of this we know that revenge never dies in the savage boso[...][m]
and though they have no fire arms now they may yet
procure them & prove as troublesome as the Caffres - I say
this much about it that you may understand what
I shall now state - We went to the Bagalaka simply to
preach the gospel - We did not go near the tribe which
was lately attacked, yet a general impression was made
among the Boers that our object was to obtain information for the
Colonial Government!! It is trying to have one's motives
looked upon in that light, I have not yet attained to
a resignation which will admit my good to be evil
spoken of without a pang.

[0006]

We have not been long with ^ the Bakwains, but have reason
for thankfulness in the symptoms of progress made amo[...][ng]
them - they were entire heathens when we came - and in
a state totally unlike that of the tribes in the vicinity of
the Kuruman - Here the leaven has spread & been spreading
during the last 25 years - through all the Southern tribes
of Bechuanas - they have been brought into a state
favourable for missionary operations and as soon
as a missionary settles with them the favourably inclined
draw around him and soon obtain confidence enough
to make a profession But in the interior tribes it is
quite different - the whole subject is new to them
They have no objection to meet once or twice but
when they percieve that we repeat our message again
and again - they think, "this will never do - there is no
end to this preaching and praying" - One said to me "I tel[...][l]
you what it is, we should like you much better if you
came and traded with us & then went away about you[...][r]

business" "We dont like this "word God" at all"
yet we percieve amongst many a desire to learn - all
are kind & respectful to us - several adults are trying
to acquire the knowledge of reading - In this the chief
has succeeded best - Having read through the
selection before I left - and reached Mark in the New
Testament - He is very desirous of obtaining inform[...][-]
-ation on what he reads. But whether it will end
in his conversion we can only hope & pray that
it may - That he is desirous of civilization

[0007]

I think we may conclude once he sent out goods with us to
purchase a mattress - 4 lanterns - 6 candle boxes - a baking po[...][t -]
a smoothing iron - a table &c and soap in an article which bot[...][h]
he & others eagerly buy - It is the day of small things wi[...][th]
us - so we count almost everything a favourable sympto[...][m]
you will remember us in your prayers that our
labour may not be in vain

All the missionaries here are well, Mr Hamilton ha[...][s]
first returned from visiting an outpost or two & though
frail is moving about - His usefullness is not over
yet for he taught me to make windows lately - If you
say this letter is badly written Remember it is panned
just after forging a set of harrow teeth out of an old
waggon wheel band - Fine doctoring this yet my
fingers must be nimble enough to cut out a tumour
tomorrow out of a woman's back - if your son
becomes a missionary in this country he must lay
his account with being a jack of all trades - It is not
at all unpleasant to be so - The thought "can do" sooth[...][es]
ones pride & we feel it agreeable to be somewhat independent

Please present very kind regards to Mrs M. from Mr & Mrs Moffat
the latter intends a visit to the Cape soon - If Mr Ashton knew
I was writing they would salute you too. They lost a fine
little boy a short time ago. M^{rs} L. & self desire to be kindly
remembered to M^{rs} M. & all the children we know. May
you each be favoured with grace according to your
need is the wish of yours affectionately

D Livingston

[0008]

P.S. I do not wonder that the Boors should now be loathe to go down to
Delagoa Bay for books, or a minister, as I saw a trader who wen[...][t]
down from Brigstadt with four others and he alone returned t[...][o]
tell the tale - the others were cut off by fever - they had declin[...][ed]
going previous to the danger of fever being known -

Their disinclination however need not influence our efforts for their good - DL.

6

147

77

[...]

P P 4

The Rev^d A. Murray

Graaf Reinett

Paid

[...]

grains of Rye too - ?

I hope you will not refrain using your influence with the emigrants I have mentioned from an an idea that you have none - they spoke of you with great affection & respect and I am sure whatever & whoever you might recommend would be favourably recieved