

Letter to Benjamin T. Pyne, 25 June 1843

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org), 2017

[0001]

Kuruman 25 June 1843

My Dear Friend

In M^{rs} Pyne's letter I have neglected to give Mission[-]
-ary information. In this I shall endeavour to supply the
omission and as you may feel a little interest in what
relates more immediately to my own efforts in that cause I shall
give you some account of my recent tour into the Interior
I left on the 21st Feb. last & returned a few days ago, Part
of this journey was in my waggon & about 400 miles of
it on a pack ox. It was very warm in that country
I was exposed to some dangers but have much reason
to be grateful to Him who preserved my health &
rescued me from every danger. I had many opportun[-]
-ities of preaching the gospel, & frequently to those who had
never before heard the voice or seen the face of a
European. My first stage was 10 days from this
& at the village where Sebegoe with the remains of his
tribe have taken up his abode. I related to you the
sad doings of Mahura among that tribe. Some of our
people having been there (with S.) at the time of attack
& under ^ in circumstances which could not fail to
excite the minds of the Heathen against the gospel I therefore
felt most anxious to go & by my explanations &
presence endeavour to eradicate their prejudices. that
you may understand what the feelings of the heathen were
in reference to our people I may mention that they
having accidentally fired a gun the night previous to the
attack, it was considered by S's people as having been the
signal by which to apprise Mahura of the situation in which
the Wanketze stood. the singing at family worship their
incantations to insure success in the ^ the attack of next morning &
the collecting them together on sunday mornning for worship
as no other than a pretext to get them more easily slaughter[-]
-ed. On account of these circumstances we felt much
grieved, & earnestly longed for an opportunity to disabuse their
minds But S could get no one to go out with me, some who
thought I might ask them immediately absconded for the dread
of certain death was on every mind when they thought on the Interior
By the 21st of Feb however I prevailed on three to accompany
me. But a more craven hearted set never ate corn, one of
them was with the party of believers who visited Sebegoe previous
to the attack. We unyoked outside his village & fearing to leave their

[0002]

man by the waggon as mischief might have ensued had he been recog[-]
-nised by the Wanketze (apart from myself) I said come along Let us
go to the king. He seemed reluctant enough but followed. When we
came to the place where Sebegwe was seated on the ground I squatted
down beside him. His warriors immediately recognized my servant
& neither words nor looks betokened any complacency towards him. the
poor fellow looked 'unutterable things' and as soon as the uproarious
recognition was over Sebegwe turned to me & demanded Why I
had attacked him, destroyed all his people, & stolen his cattle. I in turn
demanded why he had refused to the advice I tendered him by the messen[-]
-gers by whom he sent me an ox & thus destroy himself not to leave the Bakalihari desert.
Did the messengers fail to deliver my message or did he discredit my
words . I told him I had said to his messenger that if Sebegwe left
that country Mahura would certainly attack him. He answered
the messengers told him all. But his heart sore longed again to eat
corn fevers had destroyed many of his people while his oxen had
increased so much he could not get them taken care of. He
did not discredit my words but was induced to leave that country
by the unportunities of his people. & not knowing the power of guns
he dispersed the Batlapi. Poor man he now knows it to his cost
May these afflictions be blessed to his soul. some of the messengers
who came to me last year still survive & recognized me. Sebegwe
& I soon became very good friends. The day following that
on which I arrived being Sabbath I was pleased to hear before day[-]
-light the kings herald proclaiming from an eminence "that no
work must be done on that day. We must do nothing but pray
to God & listen to the words of the foreigner, all must come to
hear, Sebegwe will not suffer anyone to remain behind["]]. This
was by way of honouring me I having explained to him the day before
the nature of our Sabbath. His people were all entirely ignorant
of God. He was seen by M^r Moffat once, But does not
remember anything that was then preached to him. It is probable
as M^r M. was then young & did not understand the language the
Wanketezi did not understand what was preached. The comet
which M^{rs} P. averted to in hers of december last, we saw in
the month of march. It was a glorious sight But inspired
all the inhabitants of the Interior with terror. The Batlapi thought
that Sebegwe had brought it in order to kill them for their
attack upon him, & Sebegwe asked me if Mahura was dead
as he thought the comet was the signal of that event
I visited the Bakhatla, the chief of that tribe fled into the desert
with Sebegwe & has just now returned to his own land. He was
particularly friendly to us, I asked him if he should like me
to come & live with him He held up his hands & exclaimed O I shall
dance if you say you will come, I asked if he would give
me a garden, they have no idea of selling land. Wherever
one chooses to plough that is his land. We however have

to make a bargain in order to have a permanent property near their villages over which the king has no power He said

[0003]

I shall call all your people to ~~plow~~ hoe for you , & you shall have more corn & sweet seed than I have . We shall do every thing to assist you. It is probable M^r Edwards & myself will go & settle with him soon. But I must go on to the rest of my journey. I visited the Bakwain again but the recent commotions have quite [...] changed all the former state of things. No one now lives where he formerly resided. Bubi has fled from the spot where we led out the water last year, Sechele has come southwards, The Bamangwato have fled into the holes of the rocks & live like the Bakua & Bamakalaka, many of Sebegwe's women were taken prisoners by the Matibule of Mosilikatze (who I may mention now lives 12 days E N E of the Bamangwato & still acts as formerly) these escaping from them met us at the Bakwains they had subsisted on roots by day & fled up some high rock for safety by night during the whole of this weary journey. Poor creatures it was affecting to hear their tale of woe. Their sufferings made them the mere skeletons of what they formerly were But as they were to use the native phrase, "only women" nobody cared about them. the sight of these people frightened mine. It was in vain I urged I had engaged them to carry me to the Bamangwato No, they lay down on their faces & if these had not been black I am sure they would have [...] pale with fear . I had to leave the waggon with them & proceed on oxback with three of Bubi's men as guides, most faithful fellows I found them. They were as kind as men could be. they always gave me the best place at the fire, the best bed under the bush at which we slept & the first cut of the meat However hungry they were themselves they always waited untill I had eaten. We were entirely dependant on my gun for provisions. When I killed anything we took a meal off the carcase, a piece to hang over our shoulders & away we went sometimes we had plenty to eat at other times we had to feast on the delectable things we saw in our dreams It was a tiresome journey of more than 400 miles But I saw many whom I should otherwise never spoken to I in particular remember my interviews with the Bakalihari through part of whose country we travelled. The pleasure of visiting them & making known the way of life to their poor degraded & enslaved people far surpassed the fatigue of travelling. they were more attentive than any Bechuana I have seen. When at the Bakaa in descending the huge basaltic rocks to our sleeping place below with the testament in my hand I felt as if falling & making an effort to save myself struck my hand so violently against a sharpe fragment

[0004]

as to fracture a finger bone which rested on the testament & nearly sever[ed]
it from my hand. I got a very good splint made of a bit of
reed, & it promised to heal soon. But one night we were aroused
by a lion as near as from your parlour to the opposite side of
the yard. He roared terribly, my ox leaped out among us . My poor
Bakwain shrieked for fear & I half awake siezed a pistol with
the disabled hand fired at the monster but the rebound rebroke my
finger. A few more shots sent him off & When Bakwains saw
the blood again running they said, "You have hurt yourself but
you have redeemed us by your hand. Hence forth we shall
swear by you". O that they knew the value of the blood whi[-]
-ch was shed for their souls . this was worse than the first
fracture after which I had to fast nearly two days a circumstance

Care of Rev^d D^r Phillips
Cape Town
Benjamin T. Pyne, Esq^{re}
Wildingtree Ongar
Essex

which I believe saved me from irritative fever But as I can
bear a little pain pretty well neither was so bad as you may
imagine . It did not make me rest a single day. I saw some
of the Mabalaka who live close to Mosilikatze. I sent salutations
& a message to that notorious villain . One took off an armlet
& gave it to me as a pledge that he would deliver the message &
asked me to give him a pair of earrings to shew Mosilikatze as
a token that he had seen me. I gave him two of my metal
buttons which pleased him much . I shall send this armlet to M^{rs} P.
also some cloth of the Makalaka which I brought out for her
I do not tell you the pains I felt to excite your pity . I did feel pain
But I felt more pleasure & therefore I do not grudge it in the
least. We have a kind master to serve, there never can be
one more gracious Let us bless him for ever & ever
Seeds of medicinal plants sealed in tin would
be of great value to me. Those I got from you
were spoiled by the sea air & did not germinate