

Letter to David G. Watt, 18 June 1843

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Kuruman 18th June 1843

My dear Watt

Your long and excellent letter I found awaiting my return from the Interior a few days ago. I wrote you twice previous to leaving the 21st of Feby & now I shall give you some account of my sayings & doings since that period. I passed northward in nearly the same path I trode last year but I had now different objects in view. I have told you of the massacre of the people of the unfortunate but brave Sebegoe. No one would go with me to him for several months as every one feared for his life. And they had some cause to fear for several of the people of Kuruman were there at the period of attack on a trading visit & the night previous to the attack by Mahura they had accidentally fired a gun & as usual engaged in family worship. The former deed is considered by the people of S. as the signal by which they apprised Mahura where they were & the latter as incantations to ensure success in their undertaking. I longed to go to him & disabuse his mind of the unfavourable impression against the gospel it had received but it was the above date before I could prevail on any one to drive my waggon. Well I went straight to the town where he with the remains of his tribe have taken taken up their abode & entering squatted down beside him as if I had been an old acquaintance. He & his people recognized a young man who was with me as having been of the trading party & after the prove identification had passed S. turned to me and said Why have you attacked & destroyed all my people. I gave him a Scotch answer & said Why did you refuse to listen to the advise I gave your messengers last year not to leave the Bakalihari desert as Mahura would certainly attack you if you did. Did your messengers not deliver my message or did you discredit it & thus destroy yourself? I was

If you could procure the seeds of the "asclepias gigantea" or any other medicinal plants & seal them carefully up in a bottle or tin you would oblige me much. Of Cardamoms, all must be sealed from sea air

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He was evidently surprised to get such an answer as he imagined he had acted quite properly in all he had done. He said he did not disbelieve my message but had been compelled by the sickness & deaths of his people, want of water & corn to come out of the desert & was on his way when he sent messengers with the ox to me. The messengers who have escaped the slaughter recognized me again & our subsequent intercourse was of a most friendly description. By the bye Sebegoe lives about 10 days from this & near the place where M^r Campbell faced about to go home. The oven foundries, he mentions as not having been permitted to see I gave you an account of the reason he was not permitted to see them as no one who has had female intercourse with the other sex since the period of the year when they commence to work the iron is permitted to approach as they believe firmly the presence of such a one would certainly bewitch alias burn the metal. This which of course always occurs when they blow too hard is invariably attributed to witchcraft. I who am a batchelor am permitted to examine freely. And this spot is that at which M^r Moffat saw the notorious Moselekatze, I walked over the site of his town & the place where he suffered his last sad defeat by the boors & a few human bones are the only remains I could observe of the former greatness of the tyrant I am thus circumstantial because I shall probably be for some time located in that very neighbourhood I passed on to the Bakwains but the commotions lately convulsed the country have produced great changes in all I saw. Bubi has fled to another part of the country, Sechele was fulminating against me when I had passed him last year but [...] he did not know what to do with me for kindness. He told many he would lay hold on me if I came back to this country again But to think of laying hold of me when I am absent & to look me in the face & do it are two very different things

Please refrain from apologies it fills up so much valuable space & they are not worth the ink you write them with

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I had a set of most dastardly fellows with me who refused to go with me beyond the Bakwains. Woe betide them for they alone prevented me seeing the lake and now Moffat is on his way hither & is going to do wonders in the way of going

northward. I left the waggon at Bubi's & proceeded on my pack ox more than 200 miles north of that, a distance greater than I should have been obliged to go had I according to my plan got the waggon on to the Bamang[-]wato & thence proceeded to the lake. As it is if Moffat goes beyond every other white man I can tell you he will go a good way, for I have been as far beyond his furthest point north as he has been beyond Kuruman. A weary way it was & that too beneath a burning sun. But I can bear thirst better than the natives & am as tough as a "wuddy" I had the privilege of making known the glad tidings of mercy to many who never before heard them or saw the face of a European. I had three wild Bakwains as my only attendants & poor fellows they served me faithfully. Every night gave me the best place at the fire & the first dive at the meat. We were entirely dependant on my gun for food and many a weary man with an empty stomach I had after the game. I killed 2 rhinoceros 8 large antelopes, we ate or rather took a "blow out" over the carcass, each one then took a piece & away we trudged. You go with a tent. My tents were growing every where. A bush at my head & a fire at my feet with some grass spread under were my necessary abodes for 3 weeks & 10 days. The lions were very numerous & sometimes came so close, roaring tremendously, we were or rather I was obliged to get up & fire at them. I became acquainted with many of that poor oppressed tribe called Bakalahari who are usually used by all the other Bechuanas. They usually have fled from us but now I got into friendship with many as they came when they saw me in the wilderness & invited me to their villages which are usually so situated it is very difficult to

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find them out. They are obliged to hunt almost constant[ly] for their masters & are not allowed to keep anything to themselves of what they take. Once they supplied my want when I should have been put to shifts without their aid I had the misfortune to break my finger bone when descending the lofty rocks of the Bakaa & was unable to procure food for my party with the gun. They had had the fortune to kill a horse a little before & generously gave me a supply which lasted till we arrived at the waggon. Meat was my staple article of diet but I eat every[-] thing eaten by the natives. Bread is quite out of the question. locusts a kind of large caterpillar &c &c

every thing goes down with them & so they had to do with me. I lost my way one day & became entirely separated from my companions. I wandered on & on & on the country was a flat forest, I slept on a tree while the lions & hyenas howled around my airy couch. The following night late I arrived at a village of Bakalahari & right thankful I was to see the human face divine or rather dirty for hungry & faint & weary I had often thrown myself down under a bush & thought that here I should surely die. But the Lord was merciful to me & next day I got food & two men to go in search of my surviving companions.

Professor Owen has got one box but I am waiting for further instructions before I shall send the other, a third box I gave in charge to M^r Williams of Hankey an excellent man who is now compelled to leave for England in consequence of a disease in the throat. He was fully bent on accompanying me to the Interior But was prevented by the opinions of medical men in the colony. As soon as he gets well he intends to come out & strike fair across the country to where I am. He is no shilly shallier but a right good[-] hearted Welshman. I hope he will succeed in one object he has in view by the Establishment of a Welsh missionary magazine & if so I shall give in the Rev^d D. G Watt Benares as a contributor to its pages

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Tell me if you object. He has been most successful among the Hottentots of Hankey & I pray be may be still more success[-] ful amongst the inhabitants of the Interior What do you think. I am appointed member of the district committee about to be established here and this without asking me whether I liked the affair or not. A strange world we live in this Africa. But we shall see. I mean to vote against its coming into the world at all & after that give myself not trouble at all about it, for to meet only once a year would in this slow travelling country cost me at least of my time. How is your committee organized? Inglis & Ashton are on their way to this place & are designed by the directors to go to the Interior, they are both intent on obeying the command to increase & multiply & replenish the earth. Last night I was called up to assist but in another way the same laudable undertaking, the night before to another & in a day or two I expect to be at a third so you see we are all tending one way Please present my very kind regards to Budden

& Kennedy. If they become ill they must not
run away to England at once. It will do them good to
take a look at this outlandish quarter before
they go. Poor Giles is gone & so is M^r Wright
of Phillipolis. May we be enabled to improve
by these warning voices. M^r Moore is gone to
South Seas. He expected till within a month of
sailing to come to me. Alas my brother, he wrote
me a note which betokened a man in a predicam[-]
-ent Had been married yesterday. All my linen down
in the hold & compelled to purchase other today and will
sail tomorrow. Yours Most affectionately DL.

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Care of Rev^d D^r Phillip Cape Town

The Rev^d D. G. Watt.

Benares

[...]

India

[Two lines of Arabic text]