

## Letter to William C. Oswell, 10 April 1848

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My Dear M<sup>r</sup> Oswel

Your favour of July last containing a communication from our friend Vardon reached its destination a short time ago - It was extremely welcome and afforded us much pleasure - I only wish mine may yield a tithe of what yours imparted - It set my mind at ease on several points - I had concluded that my note had miscarried - that you had gone to England - & was on the eve of writing to Vardon for your address - In addition to the pleasure of perusal the prospect of another visit allows us to indulge the pleasures of hope - and our position in this out of the world region has taught us to make the most of this source of employment - On one point I feel a little sorry - and though engaged in building a new house I hasten to remove the impression from your mind which my letter seems unfortunately to have produced - I suspect the wording of my epistle has been as far wrong to induce you to conclude I doubted your accuracy in the Northing of the Limpopo - I do not recollect my words but I remember having a conversation with you on the point before my mind in penning it, in which you remarked if the River really did come round as far South as Delagoa Bay it would be one of the most remarkable rivers in the world - Having ascertained that it really does come very far South I felt anxious to set you right in your idea of the improbability of such a roundabout course - If I appeared to throw discredit on the Northing it makes I must have alluded (in my own mind) to Arkwright's map & I am very sorry the blunder has caused you uneasiness. M<sup>r</sup> A left me a sketch but I relied on yours and indeed that information furnished by you and Capt<sup>n</sup> M is the only knowledge I possess on that part of the course of the River. I never was East of the Bakaa in the same latitude

My knowledge of the Limpopo was gained in the latitude of Chonuane and Southwards (a little) I believe M<sup>r</sup> Murray's rights to have been pretty correct and from your account that the Limpopo goes as far North as that tribe I see no reason to dissent - But whatever may be the Northing it makes It comes round again to very nearly the latitude of its source The source may be a degree South of Chonuane and when it takes in the Lepimole it is very near if not quite at the latitude of Chonuane. The latter however (the junction) I did not see. It was pointed out to me in the distance - In going from this to the Bamapela our course is not quite straight - We have to make some Southing to avoid some ranges of hills - We crossed to Marikoe then its source - our course was then North East for 9 days and there lies

the Limpopo again after having traversed the course you know  
the first two crossings are by windings the main direction of  
the whole must however be at those parts North West - I imagine  
its course may be some what of the following shape  
[outline of river route]  
there exists a range of very high hills North East  
of the Bamapela these may be the obstacle to its  
finding its way to the sea farther north but this  
is merely conjecture - Do not I entreat you imagine that  
What has become of M<sup>r</sup> Murray? I wrote him long ago but suppose my letter has miscarried -  
I shall let fly at  
him again soon - I write Vardon by this post - and will give you some farther information in  
the course of the winter

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I doubted the candour with which you made your observations. I supposed  
that your observations had been vitiated by a mass of magnetic rocks  
Eastward of Chonuane - Arkwright[']s certainly were by some means  
or other but now I believe it is quite possible yours in respect to  
Northing may be correct by supposing that the river makes a great  
bend. It certainly comes round very far south whatever it may  
have done in the North -

I have written Captain Steele very fully about my projected journey Lakewards  
Our removal to Kolobeng has deferred it - but I had proposed to go  
next month and had your letter not come to hand - I should in a probability  
have proceeded - I wait now for you if I hear of no one else having  
his face in that direction. Sechele whom you know as a mixture  
of good & evil has for a considerable time past exhibited most of the  
former quality on his character - He would accompany me himself  
and as he has a considerable amount of regard for you it is probable  
he will do the same when you come. I heard him lately saying that  
you & Vardon exceeded all other travellers and when I told him that you  
intended another visit he seemed much pleased & requested me to  
return your salutations as that as possible on paper. His conduct  
to us & to others has been for a long time better than we hoped for in  
a native - is a great reader according to his means - has perused  
the Testament & all the other parts of the Bible printed three times  
and is found of general information - the innate African greed-  
iness may not yet be diminished to others but it is to us for he  
invariably offers to pay for what he gets from us - We are infinitely  
better here than where we were formerly, the buildings have been  
a sore drain on the salary - but we are devoutly thankful that we are  
away from Mabotsa. We have had & still have much hard work  
but feel in good spirits - We can irrigate now - Have good water -  
A great blessing in Africa. People talk of nightingales & poets turn  
up their eyes to Philmel I think they call her because they have  
nothing else to do But of all the songsters in the world I like best to  
hear the merry frogs Tantalus like up to their chins in water - Esop  
must have been an African for he speaks tenderly of these same  
musicians - We are about 40 miles West N. West of Chonuane -

the spot I mentioned as due west of our old place did not afford a good prospect for native produce so we went down the stream a little - If no mishap occurs we shall be able to supply you with corn next year - So you must not purchase much in the Colony - If we have it & we shall write & let you know - you must allow us to furnish you with at least corn & potatoes. When we came hither Sechele of his own accord built the school & his people made the watercourse & dam in exchange for some assistance in erecting a square house for their chief - these works saved some expenses which had we been in Mabotsa must have been incurred - Poor Mabotsa M<sup>r</sup> E quarrelled with Mosielele soon after we left - the difference was never made up & scarcely a single Mokhatla either adult or child ever comes near him for instruction - We feel very sorry for this for we worked hard there & matters were looking favourable If you wished to come through Mabotsa again - you know the route We go by a path West of that station - Leaving the old path at Maritsane we enter the hills near Motsenekatze & come along by the high hills directly west of the reedy part of Motoane where Baba was killed on your spoor - We come close by a large table hill which is visible

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from Chonuane - containing plenty of Black buck. We sent out a waggon lately by the Western path which the Griquas always take on account of the game - Either of these I should prefer if a sportsman Cumming took your spoor last year with 15 horses 18 dogs & a Hottentot Venus - a species of solace I suppose. He spent some considerable time in hunting a new buck which he resolved to call A. Ronalyni in honour of himself. I thought it entirely new too - untill I described it to two boers I heard them declare it was the Bushbuck of the Colony! I have no doubt it is the same you shot & lost among the reed - viz the same as you mention. fine white stripes like the Khoodoo & about 20 small white spots on the hip - horns of male like those of the goat here - & a darkish belly - hoops prettily curved upwards thus -  
[small drawing of hoof] - I felt sorry you had not secured it but do not regret now - If no one undeceives Cumming before he gets to the Colony - I shall send you a portion of newspaper with the puff he is sure to put in. He passed the Basilaka I could not ascertain from him how far but believe it must have been 7 or 9 days beyond at most. He gave the Limpopo a little more bend South than you - a very little however - says he killed 33 elephants a great number of hippopotomi - Went to some hills West of the River to hunt putokuane - was successful - and so were the Tsetse for he wrote to us from beyond the junction of the Hotoaue for the loan of oxen - One solitary mare & two oxen with a dog or two attested what the fly can do. One of his Hottentots was snatched away from the fire one evening by a lion & devoured a few paces from the waggon - Cumming killed it next day - He will never think of the Lake - Not he - unless somebody tells him that he may get ivory lying on the ground there - He is by far the keenest trader we have

seen in Africa - When he sees an elephant he does not become excited with the idea of sport - He says in his heart "there goes £25" I could not help pitying him when he made the confession - feels anxious to obtain a farm - Is uncertain too whether he will come up again. I think his necessities will drive him in again but it will be to the Limpopo again - I mention this much concerning him that you feel at ease on his future course -

I feel confident that M<sup>r</sup> Ashton has received the sum you mention. If he had not I should have heard it from him when at Kuruman - I distinctly remember that he stated the manner in which you settled about the rifle he thought a money transaction would be the most [...] it if you & therefore said he I proposed it to M<sup>r</sup> O. I shall ask him however - M<sup>r</sup> Hume has been in Graham's town for some time past. I shall deliver your message by first opportunity & it will probably reach Kuruman as soon as he - your kind gift to me was brought to us in August last, the rogues however had taken as much benefit out of it during the two years they kept it from me as to render him useless for some time after I got him - the sickness began early this season and he fell a victim to my great sorrow - We got by him several elands & Kameels - I had always doubts about his identity, he had a bay mane & tail now you mentioned that these points were black they deny the saddle - It may however yet turn out when no longer usable. We felt the more sorry to part with the poor animal as it was in our minds closely associated with yourself - As I am on a four footed subject I may mention that Robert's cow has calved a hieffer calf & both cow & calf are now very beautiful animals - We thank you for the milk you have given us. Robert runs about now & speaks a little in both languages, his sister helps him occasionally in the

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matrimonial music we enjoy - If you heard them both at it you would conclude that Selkirk talked nonsense when he said something about science is shocking to me. I am building a new house at present. I burned the old house & school lest a boer might take up his residence in them - This brings to my mind the Boer expedition to Mosilikatze. It was a mere foray for cattle & they succeeded in carrying off a number but the Matibele recaptured them & killed a great number of their native auxiliaries - the expedition ended by their attacking one of their assistant tribes - the Bamapela - and carrying off a great number of children & sheep - I saw in my late journey many Bamapela children in their houses kept in a kind of slavery. The Boers generally are indignant until the party which acted treacherously with a friendly tribe - they have had some meetings on the subject But I need not trouble you with Boer politics - The above is the report given by the boers themselves & the native report agrees with it - The Boers generally intend an expedition against Mosilikatze in May next, they crossed the Limpopo somewhere about x Cumming did not see their spoor so I conclude he did not go very much further than yourselves. Mosilikatze lives not very far from the Limpopo. It would be dangerous to go very far down the River on the northern bank - One might fall in with

Matibele & be mistaken for a boer-

Care of the Rev. D<sup>r</sup> Philip Cape Town

~~Care of [...] Cape Town~~

W. Oswel Esq<sup>re</sup>

~~Mr Crawford Calcutta~~

~~Madras C. S.~~

~~[...]~~

~~India~~

As I have but little space now I must say a word on the course to the Lake one route is N. W. from this for a considerable part of the way & waggons can go on till within 8 days of the water - the other has more Northing & passes by Sekhomi, this is the preferable route as waggons can perform the whole distance. Sekhomi is unwilling that any one go past him for all his ivory comes from the tribes situated there but we should not ask his leave - We should go through north from Mashue or Koribelo - Please bring a nautical Almanack with you. Five shillings in London - But 15 at the Cape. I have requested Captain Steele to bring any periodicals he can lay his hands on - Any old Reviews Scientific Journals - not new - Maybe left here rather than be consigned to lumber homes at home - If you can take in the Edinburgh or Blackwood while at home. Please do not leave them behind you You wonder at my impudence But I am a Caffre - the seeds have not arrived yet but will in due time I have no doubt - I thank you infrequently for them - the Moana seeds did not vegetate here

Saw two genuine Banyan's. Roots coming down thus  
a lot of fibrils at the end of each descending branch all  
ready to do duty in the ground. M<sup>rs</sup> L joins  
with me in very affectionate salutations.  
Ever yours D Livingston Dr. Livingstone