

Letter to William Thompson, [20?] July 1852

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[0001]

Scheit Fontein.

My Dear Sir

Herein you will recieve the fulmination of the Commandant Potgeiter who I believe has gone to a tribunal at which nothing but truth will be told It is a copy sent from the committee by the then secretary M^r Ashton. The answer which they sent me at the same time is I find not by me - but it must be at Kolobeng and as soon as I can lay hands upon it I shall forward it A re - perusal of the document brought some circumstances to my mind which had nearly vanished from my memory. One was that when the Bakwains heard of the intentions of the Boers to molest me they instantly called a Peecho and resolved unanimously to defend their missionary with their blood. On my objecting to their exposing their lives on my account they replied it was on their own account for whatever was done to me was done to them. They intended to mislead the Boers into a strong ambushade if they found out by any means that they were approaching and a simultaneous attack was to follow by both guns & assegais. If they should come upon us at unawares the whole tribe was to rush

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to our house and defend us with their lives. Had Potgeiter come he would have met a very different reception from any he ever had before. The tribes he has attacked never could do him or his party on horseback any harm. His fighting has been a series of cold blooded murders. In his bloodthirstiness he has poured out drunk offerings to the Devil. What a terrible surprise such men must look upon their prowess in the still shades of Hades. No false pretences there of "making peace among the natives" and no Predikants to baptize them into the belief that

they are christians and no mistake and then
land them in the "Land African". I am
however preaching to you instead of writing
a letter. Well when I saw the Bakwains
were determined to doctor the Boers I thought
it right to send my family out of the way
M^{rs} L. was in child-bed but much preferred
going westward with the Bakwain women
to going to Kuruman. The Kurumanites
pressed upon us the propriety of sending the
family out there - and I did so about four
months after the threats of the Boers had
vanished into thin air. a short time after
they left for Kuruman I departed for the
Lake - the first time - I remember too that

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the imputation of having run away nettled me more
than all the rest. I wrote on the paper in pencil the
words you see & left the letter in a conspicuous
situation at Kolobeng in case they should come
when I was absent at the Lake. I destroyed abou[...]t
350 letters before going - and many of these I regret
but felt unwilling anything should fall into their
hands of which they could make any bad use

I am here in the house of M^r Alheit of
Skeit Fontein and may inform you how
we have succeeded hitherto. We have come
but slowly. My oxen were lean but quite
fresh. I used them only and by buying some
and exchanging others as they became tired
for fresh ones giving about 10/ on each for
the extra flesh of the new ones I succeeded
pretty well. I shall soon be at the River and
thence will get on well. The oxen I have now
are in good condition & will carry me thither
quickly.. The waggon however is enormously
heavy - This ^ loading is one of those things I shall do
but once in my life. We had to pass through
a bad defile - and hired a span from a
Boer to take us through. He took us into
it but his large fat oxen could not move
it farther. I inspanned our meagre beasts and

[0004]

they walked out with it at once. The Boer then left
us in disgust and when we had got fairly through

wanted payment but this I declined.. I shall feel
glad when I deliver the articles to their owners
The wood work of the wheels cracks from the
enormous strain There now take a lesson
by my folly. Of George I have seen nothing
though I have travelled so slowly. I gave him two
men so as they do not make their appearance
he must be on his way after us either by
the road we hence come or by some other
we shall be sure to meet at Kuruman
I have been quite busy all the way with the
Dictionary I did not know I had so
many words in my head as I have put
down but every time I sit down there is
no end to them. They are hooked together
by strange associations. I have not begun any
thing else. The waggon is most inconvenient
for writing. I can write only on my side
and must doff & trek on my "inexpressibles"
only when lying flat on my back. I must
be getting old & illnatured now for the constrained
positions of my waggon life rather makes me
crusty than gentle. The longer one lives the
more one learns, is however true
Dictionary

[0005]

2 sheet

I have been reading the tour of the Bishop. He is quite
an angel compared to me. Dont you see the
effects of the Puseyite partial belief in salvation
by works. He is quite in earnest, no doubt of it
he and the Archdeacon tramping it on foot
Well done my hearties. If I had £800 or even
£400 a year travelling expenses as you my Lord
and your venerableness the Archdeacon have I
would not be so self denying. No not I. I would
sport good oxen in my waggon and good horses
in my cart and should now be somewhere
beyond your Lorship's diocese. Perhaps sitting
at supper with the bishop of Kuruman aye
with the Apostle of the Bechuanas.

You will have observed a great deal of ignorance
apparent in his Lorship's notes and a great
deal understood or rather presumed in the
readers for whom it is intended- see the
Preface. You are expected to believe that
he passed through unknown regions and
even where he seems to have been without
a path you find him looking for M^r Harding's

spoor. And mention is made of Captain
Gardner but none of a body of troops which
went through the same parts with a large number of waggons

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The earnestness with which he works is however
very pleasant and almost excuses the ignorance
The sour looks at the Independants, the grinning
with watering teeth at the Dutch Predikant's salaries
the Political partizanship and innocent gloating
over two poor simpletons daughters of a London
missionary.. He feels not all the while that he
makes the least part of his book by imitating
the Independants way of doing things. And as for
the missionary's daughter's, bless his heart we
could give him a couple of missionaries themselves
yes a couple three times told and be no losers either.

I have nothing to tell about the Boers
or any one else. Have heard nothing about
the Caffre war since I left nor of Botha
The Boers are certainly the remnants of
the Lost Tribes of Israel they speak
of nothing but Pounds, shillings, dollars
guilders sheep & oxen. Their whole
souls seem absorbed by this world's
goods - Their talk is just exactly
what you overhear in the Jews
of London. I shall be glad when
I hear something else.

[0007]

M^r Alheit is a fine friendly man. He does not
believe in baptismal regeneration as do some
of his bretheren. At least I believe so for
when I said that the bishop liked him
because of holding similiar views on
baptism he laughed and said But
we dont all believe in that doctrine
He seems a great admirer of Luther. He
has been successful here. Has 80 commu[-]
-nicants but is plagued by the surrounding
Boers badgering his people. Intends to
remove to the Orange River with his peo[...][ple]
but the present war prevents his gett[...][ing]
the necessary permission from Govern[...][ment]

Please present kind regards to your
sister. Ralph, Jessie and my worthy friend

Willie. May God bless you all and help
you who are in the forefront of the
strife to be valient for the truth. &
righteousness.

I lost my horse about a week ago
a great affliction - he ran away. A
Trader called Bredencamp going back

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may find him and if he writes please know
how to do with the beast. He was an excellent
traveller but like many other travellers became
disgusted with the way & went back. Malatsi
my man spent a week in search of him
Believe me ever yours

David Livingston

/v/v/8^d

Prepaid

Rev^d W^m Thompson

Church Square

Cape Town

1 - Dictionary

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