

Letter to Benjamin T. Pyne, 6 June 1844

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

Mabotsa 6 June 1844

My Dear Friends

I sent off three letters for you about three months ago and when I was in a sadly distressed state on account of having suffered hurt in the jaws of a lion. About the time we came here we were surrounded by an unusual number of lions. Many were killed but attacks continued to be made daily and the natives were beginning to lose heart, and no sooner was it made known that cattle had been killed during the night than all our work at the water course was immediately suspended; Feeling vexed with these misfortunes on one occasion when a lion killed 9 sheep on a hill opposite our house I contrary to my usual custom went with them in order to encourage them to put him to death and I paid dearly for it for the lion on being wounded rushed down upon and bit three of us badly, mine was worst for he broke the left arm bone in several places & twelve large gashes were made some of them reaching down to the fractures. Mebaloe our native assistant ran forward to rescue me but his gun missed fire and he got severely wounded in the thigh. The lion then attacked a makhatla & bit his shoulder but this was his last deed of mischief for in doing so another makhatla pitched a spear into the monster's heart. Mebaloe's wounds healed in about a month after their infliction but mine were three before I could use the arm in the least. I had a long trial of patience. Our hut being quite unfinished the natives built me a hut and in that hut I had many a wearisome day & night - the wounds discharged so excessively I was reduced to a mere skeleton and had not strength to make the least movement on any couch and not being able to secure the bones myself every motion of the body caused them to grate on each other so as to prevent union & retard the healing of the wounds But through great mercy I have recovered well beyond my utmost expectation & my arm is both straight & firm. It was a great affliction

[0002]

But the Lord mingled much kindness with its severity and now I can only praise him for his goodness & sparing mercy. May the spared life be devoted to the glory of my great Deliverer the Bakhatla are at present erecting new villages on the site of the mission and we shall commence the erection of a school immediately in order to have the power of collecting both children & adults in all weathers. We have

nothing of interest to relate respecting them. It is only midnight gloom in their minds their affections are all on the earth & a thought never glances heavenward. But notwithstanding their selfishness which is supreme I begin to love them more than ever. I soon forgot to think of them as of a different complexion and feel towards them as fellow immortals who if they dont soon accept mercy must be lost eternally & O that they would but listen to the glad tidings. It would satisfy them more thoroughly than all the world of goods. We hear that the Lord is blessing his word at Lattakoo twentythree were lately added to the church. I wish we could say we saw even three beginning to think about their souls & eternity. they are degraded beyond conception they seem to have sunk as far as human nature can - there seem to exist some evidences of animal worship at some former periods, as they are all called by some animal thus for instance ~~the~~ Batlapi literally translated is they (of the) Fish, Bakwain they (of the) Crocodile, Bakhatla they of the monkey, Bachuéne, they of the Baboon. While the Barolongs if asked by what they swear invariably answer "we dance to iron". And in hunting if they happen to kill a khoodoo a magnificent animal of the antelope species always make loud lamentations before they begin to ~~skin~~ flay it as "yo yo yo we have killed our Father yo yo yo &c &c, believing if they neglect this some of their number will die in consequence. All the other tribes swear

[0003]

by the animal after which they are called, never kill or eat it & sometimes wont even look at it, saying that animal is the friend of their race But if I am not wrong in my conjecture even this form of worship has degenerated so that now only the vestiges remain & all their affections are given to the gratification of earthly propensities O that the Holy spirit may work mightily on these dark minds & turn them from the service of their lusts to the pure service of the Great God of Heaven & of earth

Of all the seeds you gave me none vegetated except the sun-flower and now it is planted at Mabotsa, the reason of the deficiency of vegetative power I dont know perhaps it was sea air that destroyed it. I long much for an opportunity to send you a box, but all my endeavours have as yet been in vain. We have chinese oats without [^] [any] husk and Egyptian corn (a few grains of it were once shewn me by M^r Pyne grows well. It being better adapted for boiling than the Bengal corn we have it ~~planted~~ sown yearly. there are other things which might be of use if I could only get them sent. I shall however still be on the look out & hope I shall yet succeed.

Hoping soon to hear from you I shall conclude this short letter with very affectionate regards to all your

family & yourselves Yours ever
David Livingston
I have written M^{rs} Wright of Ongar

[0004]

Care of Rev^d ~~D^r Phillip~~ Cape Town

Benjamin Pyne Esq^{re}
Ongar Essex
single England