BC151 C14·35

Worthing,
3 October 1863

My dear Friend.

I fear you will think me dead, or very forgetful of my old friends, as I have so long neglected writing to you, but I entreat you not to attribute my silence to any thing else than increasing infirmity, such as must accompany old age. I am now closely approaching the regular "three score and ten" when King David tells us that a man gets to the end of his strength, and becomes good for nothing. – I have been here by the sea-side some weeks, but I do not find that sea air does me much good, though I enjoy it very much. I shall go back in a few days to the labours of the desk, but as the Mail leaves town on Monday, I have thought it better to write a short letter at once, but only of Gossip, for all your letters to me are left behind at the Foreign Office. – Accept my thanks for the books you have sent me; the fables from the Hottentot language are very curious, and some years ago I should had much interest in comparing them with the original language, but I am sorry to say that

I find my memory rapidly failing. I do not forget what I learned in early life, but any thing acquired since I attained fifty years, fades away, unless continually followed up, which the Hottentot has not been. In matters of ordinary life, I find it very inconvenient, for I never remember where I put my books and papers, and I lose much time in seeking for what I want. But enough of that. — What think you of the political condition of Europe? quiet enough at the moment, but menacing on every side. Prussians and Danes, Poles and Russians, French and Italians, (or at least the papal power of France against liberty in Italy) americans North and South, &c &c. all seem ready to embroil us with their dissensions. You must feel quite delighted at the Cape to be out of the way of all this hubbub. It is true that we are perfectly quiet here, but it seems to me that we are like ships in the centre of a cyclone, where learned meteorologists tell us, they are quite quiet and calm, but every moment expecting the hurricane to reach them, with no chance of escaping it; at sometime or other it must reach us. —

How do you get on at the Cape. I should like to hear your opinion about it, how the people live there, if the Dutch and English amalgamate, which language is generally spoken, if there are many Hottentots, Caffres, Malays, &c. there and if they have any influence on the European community. An observer such as you are must be able to enlighten us on these matters, which travellers do not tell us much about. I should also like to have your opinion about the progress of the town, and colony generally.

I shall tire you with my gossip I fear, but I will now stop. I forget how I ought to address you, but I suppose Cape Town is not so big as London, and your name must be known at the Post Office

Believe me
My dear Friend
Yours faithfully
Edwin Norris

F. W. Bleek,