

Letter to Robert Moffat 1, 11 February 1846

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org), 2017

[0001]

Chonuane 11 Feb^y 1846

My Dear Father

We were very sorry to hear of the loss
your system received from the mill. The pain must
have been intense for an extensive laceration
is of all others the most irritating. M^r Ashton
seems to have done his duty in the surgical line
the only difference I should have suggested in
the treatment might not have pleased you as
it would have been a simplification and
might have appeared as doing less than duty
You ought to have had a strong opiate as
soon as possible in order to allay or
prevent the effects of the shock on the
system. Morphia perhaps repeated for a day
or two and afterwards if pain prevented
sleep, the wound dressed with lint dipped
in water after the bleeding ceased or suppurati -on
fairly begun. Till then nothing but dry
lint is necessary. If there is too much
inflammation set up in the wound and
it looks red & angry (Like M^{rs} R) warm
water frequently poured over the lint and
evaporation prevented by the whole being covered

[0002]

covered over with oil silk or oil cloth and a
little cooling medicine will soon relieve it and
is far better than poultices. The wound
should never be washed. Pus is the best
salve. In dressing the skin around alone
needs cleaning - the sponge ought not to
touch the red flesh. If the new parts
springing up use above the surrounding
skin or are too large & flabby a little of
what salves are usually composed, Zinc
Alum.lunar caustic &c may be dissolved
in the water and applied Nature does all

the water dressing is now used more than any other where people are willing to pay without a farrago of doctoring and is asserted by those who have the best means of judging as better than any other Hope you will never need to apply it on your own person. Shall not be surprised if you feel numbness &c in your little & next finger for some time to come. It was a mercy the arm was not lost you will be obliged to spend your time in better work than roofing & other manual

[0003]

labours. That which although all very necessary are not to be compared to the effects of translations for these will be known when our stations swept away & we all dead & rotten. I am glad to think as it is the left arm you may be just as useful as ever. I have got up the roof and Mebola is now at the third row in thatching I felt very nervous in roofing this time in consequence of a piece of lath breaking & setting me aswinging in the air like a pendulum. All my operations aloft were conducted after that in the crawling order and in perpetual fear of coming down by the run. The walls in consequence of long detention at Mabotsa were sadly dilapidated on my return and had we enjoyed the usual supply of rain we should have found them prostrate. Is it the prince of the power of the air who avenges drought at Chonuane this year As was last season at Mabotsa? If he has the power I suppose we may say He has the will & no mistake. The corn is short burned & shooting into ear at about 2 feet from the ground and I suppose many think we are the cause

[0004]

We have so many clouds around us I believe we are to be favoured with success soon And I feel the more inclined to stick to and persevere in the great work: I would not go back to live at Mabotsa with M^r E for the good word of seven or even seventeen ladies, for though I liked & do still love

the Bakhatla the prospects are so much more encouraging, here there is no comparison. This although in addition contentions between the tribes. Edwards dirt &c I have got the Boers about my ears. I send a note we got last week, almost if I understand it right prohibiting farther operations without their sanction. As they seem to know perfectly of this station and are only five days distant We thought it would be imprudent to take no notice of their mandate so I answered shortly in English by informing them of my object. An object which they as professing Christians approve (?) and which they I hoped would endeavour to promote To this I added I was a Scotchman & MC. and

[0005]

and without promising any obedience to their order I hoped to visit them at some future time and might be of some service to the afflicted. We thought civility the best mode of dealing in the affair. A chief named Mokhatla lives in their direction and although he would be glad of Paul to come and live with him he says the Boers would not allow it. As it seems a favourable opening. He being a sensible agreeable man perhaps some friendly intercourse with the boers may smooth the path for Paul. They will be sure to visit us as they come to the Marikoe to hunt every winter for sealcows. They may come sooner But we feel at perfect ease whether they come or not - I should not like them to come in my absence. If here I have no apprehensions of any unpleasantness, But dont know what they might do if they found the house standing unoccupied

Mamary mentions M^{rs} Lemue's fears about Saul coming here. He will not be so well as he is at Motito and those who invited him must have told him so. Mebala has far fewer cattle now than he had on leaving Kuruman

[0006]

every one of his goats and sheep died. The ground he could irrigate is about 100 yds in length and in my garden which is situated in every respect

as his is, if drought continues a week although
I turn the whole of the water in a piece of ground
four yards in breadth & one hundred paces in
length will not be irrigated in half a day - Saul
knows all both losses in cattle at Mabotsa
and that Chonuane is worse than Mabotsa so
if he comes it must be for other reasons
than those M^{rs} L might ascribe And indeed ascribe
what she likes her words are wind to me.
When Saul came to nurse Mebala after the bite
of the lion he said to me "Marry & I shall come &
live with you" To this I only replied by the joke
of offering to employ him to go & seek a wife for
me as I had then no time myself. I should
be sorry to write him as a member of another
society and equally so to say a word against him
coming I put M^{rs} L in nearly the same
category with M^{rs} Ross. She must side with
M^{rs} E or woe betide her It is not now
convenient to indulge in the style of invective
against your egotism & ingratitude for the immense
assistance M^r Lemue afforded you in criticism
(of which criticism by the bye they confessed
you had not availed yourself in actual printing)
And which was the burden of their song on
every occasion your speeches or letters came

[0007]

M^{rs} L knows M^{rs} E would make disclosures if she did
not keep friendly. Having heard so much of your
egotism before I ever saw you in this country
I remember having considerable dislike to you
and as your faults were always mentioned in the
deploring crocodile strain I thought the men
really mourning & praying over your frailties. As however
I am now favoured with the same lugubrious
prayers and dolorous wailings I know their
value & wonder at my own utter ignorance
of mankind

As for M^r [Ross] & M^{rs} Ross I feel strongly inclined
to expose their conduct towards me. I believed
he treated me most ungentlemanly in the way
and when I looked back after our arrival at
Kuruman I felt humbled that I had not
been more patient of insult &c than I had been
I thought I should have borne more and
have uniformly taken the blame in part
upon myself. After accusing me of an
intention "to impose on his wife", calling me

"a liar" when I denied it & repeating the insult in several ways. I could not esteem him. My heart burned with indignation for I was conscious of just as little inclination towards his wife as I now have towards my grandmother[']s cat. Yet I felt distressed

[0008]

[not usable]

that being a missionary I had these feelings. Many a sleepless night I spent & wished I were not a missionary. Well when I came to Kuruman I tried to subdue my feelings & never mentioned any thing to any one. M^{rs} Edwards has repeatedly told that M^{rs} Ross did not allow three days to pass over before she began and made statements respecting me which to use M^{rs} E's own words "made us afraid of you" And - that I never said one word about the Rosses for more than three months. Why did I then begin? Because M^r[Edwards] & M^{rs} E then began to tell me all that they had heard from the Rosses about me their statements being gross misrepresentations I was compelled to tell my way of viewing the subject. The Rosses went on month after month retailing scandal against me & that was just as regularly reretailed to me at table untill I was sick of it. I would have spoken to the Rosses about it But was so disgusted with them I could not. This continuous scandalizing which I bore as a nail in my shoe for two years determined on no account to quarrel again I called to my friends and to Inglis amongst the number most abominable mule headed wickedness and I shall repeat it as long as I live if Ross does not acknowledge it

[0009]

As a specimen of the details with which I was furnished her first child was on the point of strangulation in birth as Rachel did not know how to deliver the head, I assisted the child immediately by doing what you know. But as it is very simple I never thought of mentioning it untill told by M^{rs} E that M^{rs} R told both M^{rs} Helmore & [M^{rs}] Lemue that I had "done nothing at all but pretend that the child was

in danger in order to take credit to myself. I was also told that M^r Ross said that when previously consulted by M^{rs} R (Having explained the nature of the pains) I had tried to make her afraid and other things of a like nature. Now in reference to this I have felt if they did not choose to feel gratitude & Ross never once thanked me They need not have told a lie in order to detract from my character. I never boasted of what I had done. Why shew hatred towards me. Why pursue me with such inveterate enmity when during my whole intercourse with them after coming to Kuruman I never said an uncivil word or did one uncivil thing. Why begin detraction and lie to Mary Moffat about me as soon as she came to Kuruman If I did not feel that I should degrade myself by giving her an opportunity of familiar

[0010]

intercourse I should speak to her frankly But after being told by Mr R that he looked to me "with infinite contempt" "never mind" said he to M^{rs} R "We are far above him" I never come near them but feel I have no more esteem for them than I have for Punch the London Charivari. I give these few particulars that you may know whether I have had reason to speak against them. I have spoken against them and can repeat every word again. I should like to bring a few things like the above to their remembrance and if I met him should probably do so

We thank you heartily for the bellows & beads. I was getting quite low spirited & gloomy but these arrival[s] put fresh steam into our boilers. I was foolishly beginning to feel as if we were forgotten. Pictured to come as not come. You as no longer wishing to be bothered perpetually sending. My walls lying like droppings from a cow's tail Perhaps you see it in my late letters for I cannot write cheerfully if dull within I hasten now with inside walls. Perhaps we may finish one room in order to remove

[0011]

speedily. Glad to hear of coffee seed & will be thankful for a little also Rhubarb. I see D^r Wallich mentions my answer to his Did you write by the box. I have not written again and the lot sent was but a poor assortment I expected you to tell this but suppose you were busy. Ought we not in sending off another to beg some Indian fruits?

I expect the Committee will decide that M^r E furnish me with something like what most of them know to have been his charges against me. I have no doubt but he has written to the Directors long ago "Minds of iron" are so "honest" breaches of honour make scratches no deeper than cobwebs on long noses. The letters sent by the Bakwains to the Bahurutse were delivered into M^r Inglis hand. We spoke in them of M^r Murray & Oswal^[']s opinion of Edwards, given unsolicited by us "the coarsest most uncouth man they ever saw" "He will never make conversions". &c. I send a note by these open, requesting M^r Inglis on the back of it the name of the person to whom he sent

[0012]

the present messengers will take on the note to you if he refuses to write we shall have a guess Sechele was very much pleased with your message but complains that he is plagued by Khake's people robbing his Bakalihari as the[y] come to him with skins. If another people he would bear all but they hire his own subjects and he thinks he ought to remove them from that part of the country. He says he will do so but will tell me before he does it. He sends a Karros to Mamary partly as an acknowledgement for the little red cap sent and partly to buy clothing. Shirts & handkerchiefs would be very acceptable to him. She will know the value to be sent. He dresses in haartebeest skin on week days and in a red coat on Sundays Can spell all through the spelling book fluently and reads with a little help. He lost his spelling book when out hunting during our absence. (the second) which rather retarded him for he had to revert to the first. He is

greatly in love with your rifles and wishes
to know if he could buy one with either ivory
or Karroses. And requests me to ask if you
[no correspondence]