

Letter to Robert Moffat 1, 31 January 1849

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

Kolobeng 31st January 1849

My Dear Father

By the arrival of Mary we are enabled to add to our string of palavers and Joseph having left only a week ago we have not much to add except that our political horizon is considerably brighter. This is of some importance for when the public attention is engaged by rumours of wars it is more difficult to turn it to matters of higher importance. By our spies we have ascertained that the talk of the Boers about Sechele is over and the individual near Mosega who made a sort of fortification of his house may sleep undisturbed in his castle. Mary brings us notice that Sekhome wishes a missionary this if true is surprising for he was very much opposed to the word we believe through the influence of Apie & France God. It is frequently expressed dislike made me feel desirous to visit him. I like to hear of one who thinks on the subject. After Sechele's baptism a party of a distant tribe wished to come here to sell leglets. Sekhome would not let them, but taking a roundabout course they arrived & told us that he had stated as his reason for refusal that Sechele had become mad.

We move on as usual - great hunger prevails and a burning sun seems to say we shall have another failure of the native corn crop. This is the fourth year of stunted crops and the Bakwanis formerly were remarkable for the abundance of their corn. The scarcity is usually ascribed to the word of God: the hunger makes some look to us without much good will but all are civil in their deportment. The school suffered much after the reception of Sechele but attendance is gradually becoming better. We have finished the roof of Mebaloe's house today, and there is an appearance of rain. All the fountains in the country are dried up. So we cannot grumble & wish we had been elsewhere in this region. I have never seen anything like this drought. The very trees seem to feel it. The leaves crumple together and we hear that there are some tracts of the Bakalahari country in which the trees are killed. Our rain makers have thrown their nostrums to the moles & bats and some of them come to the meeting Tell M^r Hamilton I have looked at the clouds more this year than I did during all the previous years of my life put together and it is all gammon. We have had every sort & degree of cloud at all times of the day & night & in all quarters. Clouds with calm & clouds with
[0002]
wind. fleecy, electric violent thunder clouds thick & thin and not a

drop of rain with them. The old grey headed weather-wise jockies were as completely nonplussed [as I]. They whistled and whiddled, cheeped & muttered and did everything they could (for we do not interfere except in the way of occasional discussion) but no rain. We have had only three good showers this season if you ask anyone now when it threatens do you think it will rain. "It will if it likes" I intend to take this as my motto & not trouble the clouds by looking at them. M^{rs} M. mentioned a wish to have a Karross from this side. The drought in the Kalahari side has been so great very few have been able to go thither in search of skins so they are scarcer this year than we ever knew. Only those who have Bakalahari near have been able to procure any. - The majority of the people have none. We have bought none for a long time past on account of the scarcity having raised their value. I think I mentioned a brace & bits But have since been supplied with both. I had not seen the gun traps at the time I wrote last. I was very much pleased with your giblet pie. Can you send two locks for natives viz. one for Sechele & another for Mebaloe & the specify the price to them the roofs of the school temporary & dwelling house with Mebaloe's too have furnished our supply of nails. You have a box full under the bunch of old one if you wish to see them in use you can send a lot here.

We enclose a bill for £60. and should like you to square off at the point at which you summed up when you sent the last account and at which there was a balance due by us. of £58..7 and £15..4..1 = £73..11..1. To liquidate this, the Bill & perhaps something else we do not yet know of the Bill in favour of Draper &c co of £28.12. and the enclosed £60. will if I understand properly be available . Let us know if we are right.

I am not aware of anything which we need at present except soap and rice. And if you can without trouble hiefers. We find it much cheaper to pay a hiefer per annum than beads by the month or week. The Blue neck beads were very useful and those sold produced about 27 sheep a supply which will enable us to hold on for some time to come. I thank you heartily for the pans & cocks. The former were our only source of mutton chops untill the beads came. I am not desirous to obtain any more at present. If you can procure ewes at the same rate as formerly please [0003]

remember us But no goats on account of the disease in the feet here. We men were very glad of the powder. We gave three strings of beads for a sheep. Mume's large white [neck] beads are saleable to the Zastwarid but not at his prices. If he gave them at about 9 a string we could take them but dont care about dealing with him at all.

Mary is much as usual. frequently tired & troubled with pains of different sorts. these are troublesome when she sits up long in one position. She can stir about pretty well Cannot write her Mamma at present & is quite excusable Wish much I had some Chloroform.

From the accounts I see of its operation I expect the old ladies will be wishing they could begin again. It is uniformly safe for both mother & child and the recovery is much accelerated. It is much more speedy in its operation than ether & has not any of the disagreeable effects of that drug. half a teaspoonful sprinkled on a handkerchief & held to the nose is all that is required. there is no livosity coughing, but a calm & gentle sleep & the mothers will scarcely believe when they awaken that they have a child. I should have attempted to make some by a make shift retort but fear the heat is too great here & it is very volatile. Could we not procure some chloral from England and a retort. Professor Sunpassum of Edinburgh has used it in 50 cases with entire success.

The second bill viz. of £20 we shall feel obliged if you can cash for us & send it here. We need that article too.

Have you a tin can such as those used for holding milk, one below the value of three dollars. A Mokwain wishes it

Heard from a bookseller in Glasgow that missionary books are a drug in the market. Had they been furnished with William & Moffat only they would have done well But such a flood of small fry followed these. Booksellers wont have even Buyers a pretty good one in their shops unless they receive an order for them previously. With love to Ann M^{rs}. M.& M^r Hamilton

We remain yours Affectionately,

DLivingston
[0004]

Sechele desires me to mention that if you have any very strongtrousers stuff he would be glad to buy it with oxen. I mentioned glass in a former letter. 60 ¼ by 8 ¼ I have

Rev^d.R. Moffat
Kuruman