

Letter to Robert Moffat 1, 18 January 1849

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[The Boers]

Kolobeng 18th January 1849

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My Dear Father

We have of late been favoured with three parcels from your quarter, one by Hans Hae another By Rudolf & the third by Joseph Abrim As the last intends to make this his farthest point Northward & will turn round on Monday I begin to think of what I may have to say to our southern friends and first of all we must as the Directors say present our acknowledgements for sundries recievedviz. Herrings - they deserved to be sent whither most of them have now gone with at least a good character. We all liked them, this all including the two old people Robert Manee & the one who is still on the road home for Mary felt greatly the better of one for breakfast. The apples came in good order & were very welcome - sorry to see the tail end of them. mill locks &c &c all in good condition & everything else so far as I remember. The safety with which these articles came puts me in mind of an annoyance about which I forgot to write last time. though after all I question whether you can do anything to prevent it. Most of the boxes which come to us from England are opened & usually lightened of their contents. You will perhaps remember one in which Sechele's cloak was.. It contained on leaving Glasgow besides the articles which came here a parcel of surgical instruments which I ordered & of course paid for - one of these was a valuable cupping apparatus in which the air was exhausted by a small air pump previous to being applied to the part to be operated upon. At the price which medical men receive these instruments it was £2.12. - scalpels &c at the same terms amounted to about £2. They were purchased for me by a medical gentleman. Their real value was of course much more than the above sums. We think too there were some dresses for Mary in it and a magic lantern. The box which you kindly packed for us and dispatched for Glasgow has we hear been gutted by the Custom House thieves, & only a few very plain Karosses left in it. When we see a box which has been opened we have not half the pleasure we should otherwise have unpacking it. I ordered some things from Glasgow lately but could not tell to whom they ought to be consigned at Algoa Bay. Has our society any agent there now? & do you know whether an invoice sent to an agent would prevent the lids being wrenched off as we have had in two cases

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I requested my friends to apply to the secretary for information as to whom they

ought to send. Can you give me any information as to how the annoyance may be prevented. or must we submit as to one of the crooked things of this life which Solomon tells us cannot be made straight

[Here begin]

Paul & I went lately in order to erect a temporary building at Mokhatli's in which he might place his family. We found Potgeiter close by and somewhat opposed to our work from an idea that we had come to take possession of the land for the EnglishGov^t We could scarcely get an opportunity to reason with him on the absurdity of this supposition for an individual from Holland whom I take to be a Jesuit would scarcely allow us to speak three words without screaming out at the top of his voice that missionaries were like a cancer & ought to be shot & a thousand other things which perhaps happily for me I did not understand. Our friend Pretorius told me in private that the Hollander was a strange fellow - whom no one understood - or knew anything of. Among the boers I observed him always with the bible lecturing them & when I came near Potgeiter he always took it upon himself to answer me and with so much energy the foam gathered at the corners of his mouth. In the evening we had a conference with Potgeiter & Pretorius alone. the former told me that the land was his he had conquered it & intended to remove Mokhatla from his present situation to the Limpopo & all our labour would be in vain if we erected a school in the present locality. I felt very unwilling to defer our commencement for all their violent speeches seemed first to give me the go by. But threatenings to bring a commando against Mokhatla & not spare us in it seemed to say our labour would be in vain for they would probably burn what we erected. I put it to Potgeiter that if he hindered the gospel the guilt of the loss of many souls would rest on his head. this tickled the old gentleman dreadfully Ké ké ké ké he tried to speak but the words stuck fast at Adam's apple. After saying he did not expect such a word from me he called on Pretorius - (our friend) to answer me & he did so by recounting all Potgeiters good deeds. I repeated the sentiments as the truth but the present state of feeling amongst them of which by the bye we had no idea when we went made me conclude that proceeding at that time with our plans would entail misery on Mokhatla. We heard two days afterwards that two clergymen from the Colony had come to Gert Kruger's to hold a service as it was only two days off we went to see them & secure their influence on our side. there was a goodly company of boers & boeresses there M^r Robertson of Swellendam & M^r[...] Stellenbosch were the [0003]

operators on the occasion. Seeing a great burly boer dressed in black coming out of the place of meeting & receiving the homage of his neighbours, I presumed he was the predicant & introduced myself in English. He answered in dutch and after ascertaining that I lived beyond the sphere of ~~European~~[colonial] news told me he was the commandant Pretorius. the Kwade doer of the English - Our Jesuit friend was also there & striving to stir up the boers against me Having found M^r Robertson & made known as much as the bustle of

writing down names for Hoopei or whatever else they call it would allow. He seemed very friendly, knew you, shook hands with Paul at which the Boer stood astonished. He spoke to Chevi & Potgeiter on our affair. both declared as they have always done their desire to further the gospel by all means in their power but the state of feeling among their people was such that they could not guarantee our safety if we builded now - requested us to go on itinerating as usual untill they had brought forward the subject before their people and, as their minds were decidedly favourable & should be expressed so. we should have a greater probability of permanence they mentioned the violent opposition of some of their people to missionaries as a reason for caution. Chevi however called Mogale away next morning when he must have know I wished to a meeting with the people & I could not hold one. I may however in this be wrong - the people are completely in the power of the boers. Great numbers have come from the southward & taken possession of the whole country & every one must be served by the natives. A larger share of the drudgery falls on Mokhatla than on anyone else. Many of them said to us we wish you would come & live here. perhaps the boers would let us alone a little You will be able to gather from the above our prospects in the Eastward - I think it will be our duty after Mary's confinement to take Paul & family over & make another effort. If they drive us away then the guilt will rest on their heads. I do not feel satisfied that all has been done we can do untill they do more than mere threatening. If repelled then we can turn our attention somewhere else. But that is certainly a fine missionary field. You will remember it in your prayers that the kingdom of Christ may be advanced

Since we have come home we have been building Mebaloe's house But before leaving the East I may mention that the French missionaries sometime ago sent five native teachers to the Bamapela tribes. they were directed to go to Mokhopane or Secoamari. Had a letter for Chevi or perhaps for the boers in general but Chevi tore it up & threw it into the fire & took their guns from them

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they entreated him to give back their guns & he gave them two & kept one - & sent them back. Mokhatla told me of it & added the missionaries sent me an old file I wondered they should send an old thing to one they did not know - the Bishop of Capeton said in a public meeting in England he intended to go beyond other men's line of things [with his mission]. Why does he not send his missionarties to the tribes still

farther Eastward or rather Northward than the Caffres. Kamenyana - Pelanies son is an agreeable youth - very friendly & has a large tribe. We had good meetings there for the first time also at Mabe's & Khotlamashne's I have a very great desire that the gospel be tried at Mokhatla's the proposition that Paul should come & teach him was entirely his own and a station there although boers have taken possession of the country might be a blessing to very many for he is situated among thousands. He began to collect his people into one town but the boers foiled him. He had a stool & boers objected to him using it. "You'll be thinking you are a man"

We have no hope for success but in the almighty power of God.
 We did not intend to go near the boers when we went but Potgeiter being
 near & sending for me to take the latitude for him (which not having
 my sextant I could not do) seemed like being led to them. If any
 one feels disposed to blame me for doing too little or too much or doing
 what I did wrong I can only say I wish they may do better - the French
 might have succeeded better if they had come with the teachers they sent
 I should not like to see Mokhatla taken from us but should not grumble
 if the gospel were introduced no matter by whom We earnestly hope these
 people may be given to the Bechuana Mission.[/]Fell glad you succeed so
 well in the different departments of missionary labour in your sphere
 I entertained the same views respecting Helmore's labours as Mrs M. expresses long
 ago but felt disappointed in him when he turned off from Bongeling in the way
 he did. His houses will bear comparison with any in the country where no trades
 -man[^][as builder or carpenter] has been employed & even some of the taught as Father Ross
 might take a
 [1849]a leaf out of his book with advantage. the reference to them brings another
 subject to my mind & which might with profit be resolved in Mr M's mind
 When I visited them about 4 years ago the people were all either professing Christians
 or wishing to be so - He states that religion was quite fashionable - I suppose
 it is so still but many no doubt have been guided to true faith in Christ
 Would more good not have been done had he taken to a heathen tribe [Jan 1849]
 rather than to an outstation of an established mission. this point is
 interesting in reference to the permanance of the churches raised up in this
 country. I am not now to be understood as speaking of Helmore in
 particular but should like to know whether the nursing the people
 of Likatlong have got has tended to strengthen or weaken Sometimes I
 believe the former sometimes the latter. What do you think? the
 squall raised by Mr Elliot may elicit something worth knowing