

Letter to Robert Moffat 1, 11 February 1846

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[0001]

Chonuane 11 Feb^y 1846

My Dear Father

We were very sorry to hear of the toss
your system recieved 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'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 com-
-parison. 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 per-
haps 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
don't 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 & 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 grandmothers cat. Yet I felt distressed [0008]

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 & 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 mghs amongst the
number most abominable mule headed
wickedness and I shall repeat it as long
as I live if Ross does not acknowledge it

[Not suitable]

[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 & 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
detractation 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 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^rE 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 & Oswals 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 they 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]