

Letter to Robert Moffat 1, 13 August 1845

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)
[0001]

Mabotsa 13 Aug 1845

My Dear Father

The bearer of this to Moiloe is a Mokwain sent by Khake to announce the death of Bube, which took place a few days ago. As you may not hear a correct version of the circumstances which preceded that even, I may mention that it was occasioned by an explosion of gunpowder. The people had been out hunting elephants, and having killed none thought the reason must have been in their ammunition not being charned. The principal men were therefore requested to try the same medicines they employ in charming their spears. All the powder in the town was collected on a kaross & the three principal men with medicine burning (roots, I suppose) came close, and pointing the stuff to the combustible material uttered a sort of whistling incantation. The explosion burned Bube nearly all over. His body was nama hela. The others suffered chiefly in the limbs & face. From their description of the quantity of powder, it seems to have been about 10 or 12 lbs. in amount. They sent immediately to Mabotsa for medicine, but I was gone to Sechele's. Having followed me thither I gave them a note to Mary, and the [0002]

poor fellows trudged all the way back again. But Bube was no more before the medicine arrived. The people don't wish it to be known in what way the fire was communicated to the powder. They say there was no fire near, and as some of the powder was procured from Sechele they may believe it to have been bewitched. But the above account I received from some Bamaleti who were there at the time the accident happened, and who can have no motive for falsifying it.

In my last by Paulo I informed you of our determination to leave Mabotsa as soon as possible. I took our trees & planted them as the first step

bought sufficient ground for three large gardens for a gun, some ammunition & beads. Sechele said he never expected that we should buy it but the whole of the plot being cultivated I could not request him to remove his people from their gardens without remuneration. He was highly pleased with the price. In the event of removal it is stipulated that the missionaries are to receive an equal amount of garden ground for nothing. I intend to build a good large house, whether the station be permanent or not, we shall have the pleasure of it while there. Mary says this is not an inch too large for us. I got next week to begin & [0003]

if I am no longer with it that I was with this, it will be fit for residence in December or January I should have left this week, but did not like to leave my dear rib to encounter M^r E alone. I left a note for M^r E when I went last time. Mary had just delivered it when I arrived & he had not troubled her. The note was to the effect "that he M^rE was to set his mind completely at rest respecting my leaving Mabotsa; he might consider the whole establishment as entirely in his hands" – And in order to prevent him conceiving I did this now in order to impede his Colonial journey, I stated that I did it simply to relieve his mind from the great anxiety he seemed to feel for my departure. I shall not alter my plan of preaching or keeping school while here, though I have renounced connection with the station. I likewise requested him to furnish his letter to the Directors in its original form only. I intend making use of my notes of it in that form & no other.

I greatly long to hear what you have thought of our correspondence. I did not wish to keep up the quarrel, but did not see the smallest probability of any amicable arrangement being come to by our meeting alone. I do not expect it by our meeting at all, but the gross perversions he has penned of what I said made me afraid again to come into [0004]

interview with him the very first "charge" is false I never charged him with putting out a member from revenge. And all the others are culled out of the "interview" Now when I saw by the written charges that he had shifted the ground of his attack entirely I believe unless I had a witness to attest what might

pass he might get something more against me
 M^r Edwards has not put a single point against
 me exactly as it happened. Now I had no witness
 here. I should have been very glad of an interview
 had I only had one witness. In what I wrote
 I tried to be frank & plain. I believe as I told
 you before when he got the assurance that I should
 leave he gained the point he wished from
 the first. Had Ashton not been as he has been
 the second conjecture I made would I have no
 doubt before this been verified. My going to
 Sechele is however against the realisation
 of their hopes. You will have seen by his note
 which I sent by Boe that had he known
 of my intention to have another station
 he would have waived all this "row" he would
 not have cried & groaned before you not he
 had he only known that the "nonentity"
 would probably withdraw himself from
 the immediate vicinity of his supreme importance
 Pilanie seems to think him as much a nonentity
 as I am for in his recent visit

[0005]

Pilanie went out of his way But let it be known
 that he thinks him "a child of Mosielele" Pilanie said
 in his last visit to Mosielele, Edwards O'mpehile from
 beha; ñuana oa Mosielele hela eo. M^r E gave him
 a present when here. I gave him nothing – If he of
 importance is so much esteemed, what must I be?
 I think I did not tell you of the grand conference
 of Kings once projected to take place at Motito.
 Sebegoe Moiloe Mokhatla Mahura Andries &c &c &c
 were all to be there. Sebegoe was sent for [^] [here] and
 urged to go. He thought Edwards wanted to betray him
 I was sent for & found the poor man did not
 know what to make of M^r E's earnest entreaties
 M^r E thought I would assist him, I unfortunately
 expressed a doubt about the safety of Sebegoe
 putting himself into some of their hands and the
 famous congress was knocked on the head
 Sebegoe said he would go if I would take
 him but I did not feel inclined to interfere
 in kingly affairs. I don't remember that you
 were to [^] [be] one of the party but Ross, Helmore &c
 certainly were. I think of it now as if it
 would have been very fine – I now hear
 the car passing the window, but we don't
 send letters by him.

[0006]

I have taken out two door frames, & two of the

window frames I intend to take ^{also}. If this house is
 made a meeting house of it will not need the
 door frames and if he makes it a dwelling house
 he M^r E can make others more easily than I
 I dont think spite will allow him to do anything
 with it. If the inside walls were removed it would
 make a much better church than that at Motito
 Mebaloe goes with us. I said not a word to him
 but when digging up the trees he came & asked if
 I should help him by taking his. I replied that
 though I contemplated removal I had not thought
 of requesting him to move, I had wished to get
 another to go forward with me. To this he requested
 if I had any fault to find with him not to hide it
 and on my saying I had no fault but supposed
 as he had at great expense cleared out all the
 roots out of a fine garden, built a good house, &c
 I thought he would prefer to remain and another could go
 with me as assistant, he then entreated me to
 allow him to go forward & let the other of whom
 I spoke remain here & take his place. To even
 this I would have objected had M^r E not
 in his letter to the Directors quite discarded him

The chief made many objections and it was with
 great difficulty I could remove the impression
 [0007]

that I had some cause of dissatisfaction either in him or
 people. Had any one stolen anything? He would give
 orders immediately that no one should from that day
 forward beg. If any one had vexed us Tell who it is &
 I shall punish him. Were we tired because the hearts
 of the Bakhatla were hard he explained that the
 hearts of all Bechuanas were so & he could observe
 they were just about to begin [^] [to] give way to the preaching
 of the word. If any one wished to believe he was
 at liberty to change his customs &c. I tried to persuade
 him that I was not in the least dissatisfied with
 either him or his people. I promised to mend his
 gun for him where I was in future as if I were living
 with him, &c. but they all say "Loa re latla"
 I did not expect they would have shewn
 anything like the concern for our leaving
 which they do. It made me sorry for there
 are many of the younger men who seem to
 have affection for us and I suppose that
 affection might have been the means of
 leading them to the Saviour. I hope they
 may be converted although not by our instrumen-
 -tality

We have sown a great many garden seeds
presented to us by M^rMethuen. The endive
spinch, turnip, marigold wurzel & Knights early
cabbage have come through the ground

[0008]

also so lettuces & carrots, so we shall have vegetables
I have got three large Swedish turnips - intend them
for seed. None of our onions have come up, the
seed seems bad. I am very sorry the olive is
dead but there is hope in the roots. There are
wild olives at the bottom of our garden at
Chonuane. The soil is black deposit
with at some parts small portions of limestone
intermixed. The banks of the stream are clayey
the water is small but it will serve. The
prospect of success in the great object of
our mission is greater there than here. The
Bakwains are not so degraded as we found
the Bakhatla. The people there all profess
to be highly pleased with the prospect of
our residence among them. Sechele is
building a wall round his town, it contains
loopholes for shooting. The shape of the
whole is a sort of triangle and the base line
is longer than the wall in front of both
gardens at Kuruman

From what I have said of our plans
you will understand that we cannot come
to a committee till February. I suppose the
bretheren will make some allowances for
our convenience as well as for Mrs E's