

Letter to John Kirk 2, 14 February 1865

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

Newstead Abbey
14 Feby 1865
My Dear Kirk
D^r Peters might as
well come down gracefully
and to help him you might
say that on employing
a native whose language
I knew as well as any
Portuguese knows the
dialects of Tette, to enquire
the name of a mountain
he replied "They call it
Kaia or as D^r Peters
spells it caiia - and I
put that down as the
name of the mountain
referred to.

[0002]

It is no disgrace to a man
to make a mistake of the
kind. M^r Moffat has
been collecting words
in the Sechuana language
for the last 43 years -
and finds new ones
every week. In eight
years I had upwards
of seven thousand and
I rejected many hundreds
either as uncouth or
to me quite useless.

Who but a mad philologist
would collect at least
a score for the different
parts or modes of
walking as erect - stooping
leaning backwards

[0003]

- sideways - from side to

- side - wriggling- lifting
the feet high - or very
straight - slouching
swaggering. I think
there were eleven
names for a lion -
and no end of words
meaning different
shades of fools. D^r
Peters vocabularies
are wonderful on
account of their gross
inaccuracies and
the ability displayed
by D^r Bleek in making
so good a use of such
a jumble as they con-
tain. there is scarcely a
page but contains as gross

[0004]
[mistakes as this and one sees the mistakes are
made by the
Portuguese element
employed]
The D^r makes a bad
shot with pēnu, seeing
it is never pronounced
painoo - and does not
mean (except inferentially)
"I dont know." the e is
the same as in our word
hen - and the word is
used as we do the words
perhaps - it may be -
possibly - Is this the
way, or is this right,
panic - perhaps it is -
inferentially of course
it is, I dont know -
The majority of Tette
fouls live in the huts
of the people & not on perches

[0005]
I cannot recollect two
aá's in any native
word but penu, they [may] exist
You will see whether
it has been a misprint
by consulting Bleeks

book.

M^r Webb gave me yours
to answer about the
words - and you may
quote me if you like -

I remember the hill
very well - I say a
conical hill from which
a large piece had peeled
off granitic fashion
like a portion of the
flake of an onion - but
I dont know the proper

[0006]

word for flake

Mosambique wont
do but Bambatook
bay would I think -
and as soon as I hear
from Sir Roderick
will write to Lord
Russell and make
use of Col Playfairs
absence as an argument
I think you had better
write to Dalhousie too

Thanks for your
thoughts about Tom
I send D^r Loudons
letter and write a note
today to D^r Watson