

Letter to Robert Moffat 1, 6 June 1845

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org), 2017

[0001]

1 sheet

Mabotsa 6 June 1845

My dear Father

We recieved your several communications by M^r

Cumming on Saturday last, a bitter cold day having ice standing on all the pools in the morning and as M^r Greig was preparing to leave on the same day as he, (Tuesday) we had not a moments time to answer yours untill Monday night. I sat up nearly the whole night in order to give you some particulars anent M^r Edwards' charges, &c. But another opportunity being about to present itself in the person of M^r Milligan I sit down to talk a little more leisurely than I could do on the former occasion. We are heartily glad at the departure of M^r Greig but as he is only three days gone we cannot yet rejoice with very great confidence as the fellow may come stalking accross our path again. We liked M^r Cumming very much. He is now fairly on his way to the Bamangwato. He seems just the right sort of person for exploring so far as courage goes & I hope he will come safely back. Matters go on in much their usual way here, the meetings are not full a certain number seem always to come & others only when greater efforts for their attendance are made, they sit with much more sedateness than formerly, but as yet I see not the least evidence of any change in their habits. Last Sunday, afternoon we had the smallest meeting we have had since our return in March last. The reason was the feast of harvest fell on that day or rather the preparations for it were made for its celebration next morning. A Divine power is certainly requisite for their conversion. I fear that influence will not be granted so long as the present state of feeling exists between M^r E. & myself. This consideration makes me more than willing to leave the station to himself, for from what I know of his quarrel with Hume. ours will not soon terminate. If this were my only motive I should be deeply grieved for then I could not expect the Divine blessing anywhere But I know that I had a desire to be the means of carrying the gospel to another tribe before I knew anything of the state of feeling which had existed. And when I asked myself the question whether I were not in anyway influenced by a desire to get quit of a peculiar[-] tempered colleague it seemed to me then that his peculiarities only rendered it less desirable to remain than it otherwise might have been. There are other feelings in my mind now but I hope & pray that if parted I may be able to forgive as I hope to be forgiven. I however shall feel no respect for M^r E. aged though he is, and feeling none, none will be expressed. It is probable I shall adopt the same course I adopted (not soon enough) with respect to M^r Ross. I shall not speak about him: When we came to Kuruman I began it & continued it for three months but

foolishly departed from it when informed that an opposite course had been adopted towards me. I have forgiven him & M^{rs} R. from my heart and I fear to hear any of their statements now lest all the bitter feelings I once had should return against the injurious speeches uttered again & again by M^r [Ross] & M^{rs} Ross. I have often spoken in bitter anger but now feel sorry I had not more philosophy or rather Christian meekness & forbearance. For an investigation of the charges brought against me by M^r [Edwards] & M^{rs} Edwards I feel very desirous for an impartial

[0002]

investigation in the presence of the bretheren. If I could come I certainly would now write to you officially by this opportunity to demand a committee meeting But the probable circumstances in which my dear partner will then be placed convince me that I need no revelation from heaven in order to pronounce that it is clearly not my duty to go out. I should be loath besides to leave the station without any one on it but Mebaloe My leaving the station is I am convinced that which M^r E. desires, but that very desire and the version he will afterwards give of my leaving present the greatest obstacles to the following out of my own desire, reg to go to another tribe. I will not leave, unless in the decision of the committee there is something to shew that my leaving involves no acknowledgement of guilt. In my heart & before Him who knows my heart I am not conscious of having up to the time of our interview given him any just cause of offence Now I will not whatever others may think do that which would imply that such consciousness did exist. Ought the meeting of committee not to be here? Certain statements could be better investigated here than anywhere else. For instance Mebaloe's garden. It is not a hundred paces yet. And then the assertion that I went to natives. Who are these? One native deacon was the only individual to whom I mentioned it previous to speaking to M^r E. & to his Mapoleane wife afterwards and to no other. If M^r E asserts I did anything else than what I have related to you, it is either by mistake of malice utterly untrue It is entirely untrue that I accused him of feelings of revenge in excluding the woman His own way of relating this story shews that it is so. When asked about the exclusion he denied it. I believed him but urged that something should be done in it as the woman had a wrong impression of what had been done, she evidently understood exclusion. Now as the object of discipline was the good of the offender as well as the purity of the church. Let us remove this wrong impression Let her be subject to discipline so that she may not go on in sin He replied that he would do right & not care what impression was produced, I replied that we ought to be careful not to produce a wrong impression lest our good be evil spoken of that in discipline especially we ought to be careful not to produce the impression that we acted out of private revenge and that we ought even to have a good report from those who were without He replied but she is within and then as he had repeatedly done before, that he did not feel at liberty because the affair had happened in his own house &c. It is utterly untrue that I

ascribed feelings of revenge to him. He denied that he had excluded at all. I believed him & every act of mine afterwards shewed that I did so, this case as ~~in~~ the case of the garden was handed over to me, and I solemnly declare I thought that in both cases I had done the very things he wished me to do. I thought I had obliged him in the case of Mapoleane up to the time of our interview by taking a disagreeable subject off his hands. And my thoughts were the very same about the garden up to the receipt of your

[0003]

letter on Saturday last, I nevertheless could in justice have ascribed feelings of revenge to him about the meat, or what feelings the expressed resolution that Mapoleane should get no more of his meat indicate But I never did to my recollection ascribe anything improper to him on any occasion previous to our interview, nor did I ever say or do anything which I thought could offend him. In the case of the garden he came to me and said something like what he gave in version N^o 2. and that some[-] -thing to me implied that he had not given satisfaction to all parties and he wished me to interfere and give a larger piece of ground, so as to effect a good understanding. To do this I remember distinct[-] -ly I was decidedly averse, & said that I thought the amount he then stated was quite enough, I was then walking about But a consider[-] -able time elapsed before I did anything. A considerable time I say for an interval elapsed sufficient to convince M^r E. that a great number of Kurumanites would not come to live with him as he expected. I think it was the return of Merupe with the waggon that made him first doubt the affections of the Kurumanites We had conversations on the subject and we both agreed that those who had come first ought to have the largest share & that ground ought not to be kept for those whom he expected. At least two months had elapsed after what he related to you. And he had spoiled the lower part of the water ditch before I did anything in it. I had previously thought of having my garden below his but when I saw that the ditch was useless in a portion or nearly all of his and quite impracticable all below it I prop[-] -osed that he should shift up a little. I did not tell him the principal reason, but shewed him that the ground was better as you ascend. He said he had fixed and I might do or go where I liked. Mebaloe & Kobopure were next to him above so I proposed to ~~him~~ them to remove to oblige me. Both readily consented, so when I took Mebaloe's garden I must of necessity measure off a garden for both him & Kobopure Mine was & is equal to all Mebaloe's & part of Kobopure's I remember distinctly saying. It seems none of our Kuruman friends are coming untill they see whether we die or not. We need not keep land for them till then. I measured off 80 paces, and asked if he were satisfied. Kobopure complained

of more trees in the new than his former. I said then take farther than the 80 paces if you can pick it But you will never pick it all. He then went forward about 20 paces more and I asked if he were satisfied, & he replied in the affirmative Now it occurs to me if Mr E is such a bold out spoken man why did he never say one word to me implying dissatisfaction

[0004]

there are several questions I should like to put to M^r E. one of them is. On what occasions did he interfere between the natives & me. If he says he ever did except in the one case of appeal which I related and to which I put a stop at once he tells what is decidedly untrue When I was ill, he is quite right in saying that the men were sent to him What had they to do with me then? They were more of men than trouble me with any thing but sweet reed, beer, and their own kind sympathizing company more than I liked too sometimes - there were only one batch of seven men employed while I was able to work. These were asked for by M^r E. and I now recollect he asked for them in my heinous way "I want". By the by there was a fine row with these same men's wages in which had I been so disposed I could have interfered to advantage But I defended him when they asserted he cheated them Now these same men finished the ditch & the house. I had no more to do with these works after I was bitten. When I went out the first time to see Mary, the walls of the school were built in my absence. So we never worked conjointly except for a very short time & with that same one batch of seven men whom he asked for with the "ego" Now what he means by saying the men we asked were always sent to him, Always what does the always mean? We never did on one occasion ask for men conjointly. If the men whom I employed on my own works were sent to him first he may thank me for calling him "co mogolu" for that but I don't believe they ever were. But now I am blamed for calling him an old man. About the letters I think too he mistakes, they may have gone occasionally first to him But this I know I have sometimes sent them when I saw his name & not mine which I believe happened at least once. After my return from my first visit to Kuruman I am certain they always came to me first But it would have been all quite right had the paltry circumstance not puffed up the poor old man's self importance. Don't mistake the tone of my voice when I say if grey hairs may catch at every straw to bolster up its own importance surely I-I-I-I may do the same. Indeed if M^r E really believed he was of 1/20 part of the importance he wishes you to understand he is he would not be in such a dreadful fright lest it should be annihilated. I know however that if it is destroyed it will not be by anything that I have said or will say to his

disadvantage

[0005]

2 sheet

I cannot accuse myself of having behaved in the way he mentioned to you. Previous to our interview he had no just cause of offence and yet his first sentence which I took down in his presence was "your conduct has been dishonest dishonourable & mischievous" there never has occurred an instance of conduct so base between one missionary & another. I don't believe there is another instance on record" &c. Now I should like to hear these words poured out with the lamb like meekness tears & groans he assumed before you. To all this and a great deal more in the same strain I returned only a fair explanation of the whole of my conduct with my motives for acting as I did. He then went on talking of his honesty &c. and accused me of the opposite To this I only replied O don't talk so much of your honesty. It puts one so much in mind of Inglis. "I must have an apology said he for certain words you made use of", "It is true you made a sort of apology but I have no right to be satisfied with that" He then mentioned the words, I then & then only made use of words which you may find fault with, for all his hidden anger of which I had in the note been informed by Mrs E. came back to my mind & ranged side by side with his boasts of honesty. And I told him of it but I used no epithet such as "you are an old man." I said you informed me that you thought I wished to drive things all my own way At that very time I was endeavouring to uphold your character in the eyes of the natives, for when you were weak enough to endeavour to make yourself ~~an~~ a source of appeal I was refusing to be one against you. These same seven men (one of whom refused to obey me & went to you), declared to me that they had been cheated, and asked why I had brought a man like you with me, I said no you are not cheated, you don't yet understand wages. One said but all the people who come from the southward tells us that man is Satan Now I was defending your character and telling them never to come again to me to say a word against Mr Edwards at the very time you thought I was wishing to driving[e] things all my own way. You insolently told me I added to let the watercourse alone, & you would carry it on for I was always cont[-] -radicting you. Well you got it all your own way & from the point at which I was bitten by the lion, it had all to be digged over again I said all this but no more on that subject & I shall repeat it

[0006]

I was then accused of having engaged Mebaloe privately. To this

I replied (but not before he had accused me of holding the sentiment that no one should have authority over him but myself) that he knew of my requesting you to give Mebaloe a public charge to make no difference between him & me. And that my sentiments were that no one should have authority over a native who had none over his own temper. You M^r E. are an example of what I mean and the proof is you never speak out notwithstanding all your boasts of honesty unless your temper boils over & compels you I then asked why he had not spoken to me as an honest outspoken man would have done before going to another to introduce for him a subject into the committee. I can't prove ~~don't know~~ that you did but it has always looked so to me. He denied it point blank. I then gave him another instance of his honesty. But I never said one word about his temper or his honesty untill the subject was introduced by himself He charged me first with bad temper by saying "my temper was my ruin," which from him tickled me not a little Every statement I made was introduced by himself But why does he shift the ground of controversy from the case of Mapoleane & this nonentity sentence to what took place entirely at the interview. I assure you I did not say one word calculated to exasperate untill after I had been informed that he had written to all the bretheren on the subjects before speaking to me. And had I not been quite confounded by the unexpected explosion it is probable I should have given him a great deal more When coming away from the interview he asked me if I objected to any statement in his epistle to the Directors. I said it had got a twist through the whole of it & that my proceedings with respect to the Interior had had no reference to him for as he might remember he did not know untill long after my resolution with respect to this station whether or not to use his own phrase he should still be Moffat's lackey. Had he not delivered M^{rs} E's message concerning her writing to M^{rs} M. I should have been able to bear most of what he said But that with impeachment of my veracity in what he knows to be the truth was rather beyond me In conclusion on this subject I may state that whatever charges refer to a period antecedent to our interview I protest that except in the one case (of nonentity) about which I was informed by M^{rs} E. I was not conscious of ever having offended

[0007]

either in word or deed. And that I should be informed immediately if I ever did offend in either word or deed, was my pointed request on that occasion. It is scarcely fair on M^r E. to jumble all together viz.. what passed at the interview & everything else he can think of.

I feel most anxious to have an unravelling before bretheren but I must be guided by what you think best as to going or staying

I feel very unwilling to go out to a meeting and yet I feel very anxious to be present at it. It cannot however be at that time if called for my accommodation. December or January either would prevent my going quite. I may say again that I am even more willing than I was at last com. meeting to go to another tribe. I should prefer Sechele to the Bahurutse but should be content to go to the place where there is most hope of doing good. Bube has always professed great friendship & when here last week asked me if I would not come & live with him; Sechele, we met on the path leading up to his town, & after saluting Mary he said, Have you come to teach us? I shall come to Mabotsa & take you away from Moseelele & make you my teacher. When we talked to him afterwards on many other subjects we found that he always said just what a sensible man in his circumstances would be expected to say. He never said like Bube & others. O I like the word of God, &c. But when he told us that he intended removing to a fountain called Kolobēñ as soon as he heard that the Matibele intended to come that way no more, or were defeated, in order to get a missionary. His reasons were a missionary could help him in sickness mend his gun, teach him to read, & 'inthuta botlale. He seems very fond of improvements and altogether a more likely subject than any I have seen. He & Moiloe resemble each other in many respects. I did not like to propose anything lest it should seem like anxiety on my part to go to him. If you come as you mention~~intend~~ before august the proposal would come much better from you. I long to be away from all khañ. If I get in there M^r E will be clever if he can hook me into another scrape. the worst I fear here in leaving without giving to them any sort of what they will consider a plausible explanation, is anger on account of appearing to leave in discontent or if my residence were as near as Bube I fear blame might be attached to me (if they removed nearer to that locality) as having used improper influences to induce them to that step. They will not come near Sechele. But it might be different with Bube or Moiloe. I think it would be right to make provision against the

[0008]

possibility of blame. Certain remarks made by natives but to which I never return an answer induce me to believe that some talk has taken place other than what a wellwisher to the cause should like to hear. For instance repeated allusions to the gardens as mine. As having known me first &c, without any connection; and one said "Do you know what we said in the peecho. (I did not know there had been a pico) "Mosielele said you were his father and if you left this place so would he." I made no reply, but it has made me think since. What can induce them to speak of the gardens as mine when I have invariably declared that they are not mine but those of the teachers for the time being for ever

But I leave this subject You will perceive that
Sechele would perhaps be the most eligible situation
It would be 2 / days distant and as there is enmity
between the chiefs & between Mr E & one of them we should
not probably trouble each other

The plough met with an accident, in getting the mould
board broken off across by the hinder bolt. An unseen
root was the cause. another of it has since been broken
off by another hidden root But it continued to plough
very well until this evening when the foot board was broken
across by the first bolt. I have put a strong band
from the iron which receives the share round a portion
of the wood, & it is now on its legs again. We employed
men to root out the trees & they don't seem to have acted
conscientiously for we have found stumps which held 8 oxen
covered over with mould. Your band is a fail me
never, the iron does for everything. Will you favour
me with the measurement horizontally of the distance between
the end of the foot board & the tail end of the mould board
I think I must have given the mould board too great
a lateral set for though well supported it broke off.
Can I fall heir to the other mould board belonging to this
plough. Mr E. made a "Tutlua" plough last year & he has it yet
I think I shall be able to make a good one next time for
Mr Milligan gave me an idea of the shape. We have got 5 /
buckets of wheat sown. manured the land by making a
Kraal & shifting it, highland fashion. Have you any pease
or beans to spare for seed. I never saw the "Cobbet's corn"
you gave me. We have Mangold Wurzel & carrots growing
well but the potatoes were nipped off by frost. I thought
of putting up a smithy Do you think it would be proper in
present circumstances

[0009]

I have bought of Mr Milligan sheep & goats &c. to the
amount of Five Pounds and as Mr Cumming has proposed
selling some things to us on his return, such as coffee &c
I prefer keeping the money I have here for that purpose
So I send an order on you which I hope you will be kind
enough to ~~defray~~ honour discount or whatever ought
to be done. If you ever send for tools will you order a
large saw for me? that strong hand-saw you kindly
gave is completely bent in sawing up trees for planks
I see nothing will do but the large pit saws for
that purpose. I hope you did not forget the smiths
bellows. If I leave this they will be indispensable for a
new station

I intended to have written the Directors by this
opportunity on the subject of Mokoteri, the ly[...]

of that affair you will find by what I say will [...]
with the committee, I shall let you have it and with
it M^r Ashton[']s & your advice , me "Get out of it the best
way you can." I shall state my belief as an individual
that it would be improper to employ Mokoteri in any way
whatever in the mission, that belief being founded on
the testimony of M^{rs} _____ which I recieved as
true in the first committee. And also on the consideration
that ~~it would be~~ it is in general improper for one missionary to
give countenance to a native when that countenance might
be construed into opposition or condemnation of his
bretheren. Witness the same case in the hands of Inglis at
Bethelsdorp And then as being a man of yesterday I
shall politely hand it over to the "collective wisdom"
of which we all entertain a high opinion
I should have written now. M^r M. has come before I
anticipated. I dont understand what you mean by, being
"in it." the Directors, M^r Ashton, Inglis & you are in
it & ought to get out of it But I have not been in it yet
except as part of a committee. Perhaps I ought to be called
a nothing or neer do well or thing of yesterday because[...]
Directors in your & my own views are to [...] recieving our unit [...]my. We shall
see what the committee will say of me whose testimony [...] set at nought just as well [...] yours, unless you
mean to address yourselves to me I dont understand the advice "get out of it". If I were a
director it would do

[0010]

18th June Please observe the bill I have given
is Eleven Pounds Sixteen shillings Not Five Pounds
as stated within. The increase was for cows

Rev^d R. Moffat
Kuruman

Please send a bit of old copper for soldering
See how attentive I am to rid you of your rubbish