LIFE AND WORK OF ROBERT MOFFAT WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE EXPANSION OF MISSIONS AND WHITE SETTLEMENT NORTH OF THE ORANGE RIVER 1817-1870

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ABSTRACT

LIFE AND WORK OF ROBERT MOFFAT WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE EXPANSION OF MISSIONS AND WHITE SETTLEMENT NORTH OF THE ORANGE RIVER 1817-1870

Robert Moffat's period of missionary service in southern Africa between 1817 and 1870 coincided with the rise of the Boer power in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal; the eruption of the Bantu tribes in the mfecane; the emergence of the Matabele into the Transvaal and (what is now) Southern Rhodesia; the "missionary struggle" to keep open the road to the north and to prevent it falling under Boer control; the first white settlement in Southern Rhodesia, and the beginnings of the Christian faith amongst the Bechuana and the Matabele. Moffat's establishment of his farthest north base at Kuruman (now in the Northern Cape) was the key to his influence, and the pattern of mission activity he created there was copied as the Christian frontier expanded northwards. Kuruman was the centre from which radiated the lines of Christian communication to the north, the base from which the expansion plans operated; and, in particular, was the focus point of the colleagueship of Moffat with his son-in-law, David Livingstone, which this study examines in detail.

As a pioneer traveller in southern Africa, Moffat undertook five long journeys between 1829 and 1859 into the then unexplored areas of the Transvaal, Bechuanaland, and Southern Rhodesia. His journals and letters are primary evidence of conditions amongst the tribes, and in particular of the close friendship between himself and the Matabele chief, Moselekatse. Moffat's mastery of Sechuana; his translation of the Bible, singl-handed; and his printing enterprise at Kuruman, all have the marks of pioneering originality which made Livingstone admire him more than any other man in southern Africa. The influence of the Moffat family to-day in Central African affairs is a continuation of the liberal tradition in race relationships which Robert and Mary Moffat began during their fifty years in southern Africa.

Life and Work of Robert Moffat with particular reference to the Expansion of Missions and White Settlement north of the Orange River 1817-1870

INTRODUCTION

My own interest in the contribution of Robert Moffat to southern African history was first seriously awakened in 1941, when, as the then home secretary and literary superintendent of the London Missionary Society, I was informed by his grandson, Dr. R.U. Moffat, of the discovery of his grandfather's missing papers in the saddle-room of Mr. Livingstone Moffat's farm at Quagga's Kerk in the Tarkastad district of Cape Province, and of the family decision to present them to the Southern Rhodesia Archives. On August 8, 1942, Mr. E.W. Hiller, then Chief Archivist in Salisbury, sent me a complete calendar of the papers, which quickly showed that, althought there were copies of many of the letters and transcripts of some of the documents in the L.M.S. Archives in London, the newly-discovered papers offered a basis for an entirely fresh judgment of Robert Moffat and his work in southern Africa. This was confirmed when, under Mr. Hiller's energetic direction, Professor J.P.R. Wallis edited two volumes of the papers in Matabele Journals of Robert Moffat (1945) and The Matabele Mission (1945), and in 1951 when Professor I. Schapera edited an earlier group of journals and letters in Apprenticeship at Kuruman 1820-1828. In 1958, the Leverhulme Foundation granted me a Research Award to investigate the Robert and Mary Moffat Papers in Salisbury and to visit the Moffat sites. These papers, together with the southern Africa Correspondence of the London Missionary Society (1817-1870) at Livingstone House, London S.W.1., are the chief archival sources from which this study has been built up. I have also had access to the Livingstone-Moffat correspondence in the possession of the Livingstone family, and to Livingstone's manuscript Bechuanaland Journal, both since edited by Professor I. Schapera as

Family Letters (1959) and Private Journals (1960). I have also drawn upon the relevant African correspondence in the archives of the Societe des Missions Evangeliques de Paris, at 102 Boulevard Arago, Paris, and of the Church Missionary Society, 6 Salisbury Square, London.

Moffat's period in southern Africa coincided with the rise of the Boer power in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal; the eruption of the tribes in the mfecane; the emergence of the Matabele under Moselekatse into the Transvaal, and then into what is now Southern Rhodesia; the "missionary struggle" to keep open the road to the north, and mission opposition to the Boers gaining control of the route; the first white settlement in Southern Rhodesia, and the beginnings of the Christian faith amongst the Bechuana in what is now the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Moffat's establishment of his farthest north base at Kuruman (now in the Northern Cape) was the key to his influence, and the pattern of mission activity he created there was copied as the Christian frontier expanded northwards. It was the centre from which radiated the lines of Christian communication to the north, the base of the expansion plans, and was in particular the focus point of the colleagueship of Moffat with his son-in-law David Livingstone.

The Robert and Mary Moffat papers in Salisbury (referred to as NA) are arranged in four main groups: Correspondence (M9/1/1-18) for the years 1808, 1810-28, 1830-72; Visits to Moselekatse (M9/2); Sundry Journals (M9/3) and Miscellaneous (M9/4). The 813 letters in the Correspondence group cover Moffat's life from his Scottish boyhood to the eve of his leaving Africa. They are a mixture of official communications to the L.M.S., of which Moffat usually made drafts to keep in his own files; letters to and from his family; and letters within the family which have not been used in any modern study of Moffat.

The Visits to Moselekatse as related by Moffat are in five main groups of foolscap and quarto letter-journals written to Mrs Moffat in 1829, 1835, 1854, 1857 and 1859 and total 190 sheets, written both sides in Moffat's small writing. They represent Moffat's chief attempt at formal journal keeping. The 1829 contribution is a resume of the original letter-journal which is missing. This source shows that Moffat realized that the eastward expansion of missions from Kuruman was bound to be baulked by the growing Boer power.

As reliable evidence for the state of Transvaal veld in 1829 and 1835, the Journals of those years appear to be trustworthy, but need the supplementation in detail available in the Diary of Dr Andrew Smith (2 vols. Van Riebeck Society, ed. P.R. Kirby 1939-40), as Moffat was a member of the Smith Expedition of 1835. The 1854, 1857 and 1859 Letter-Journals are of prime importance for the penetration of the Christian faith into Southern Rhodesia, and of the first white settlement there. They show that the expansion of Christianity northwards was almost entirely dependent on Moffat and his reputation amongst the chiefs of Bechuanaland, and with Moselekatse of the Matabele. Any policy-making in London, Paris or Boston, was dependent on his goodwill and commendation. They show too Moffat's technique of friendship with the chiefs; but, in the case of Moselekatse, a lack of understanding of the Matabele system which prevented acceptance of the faith. These Journals - especially those of 1854 and 1857 - offer the main evidence for the remarkable personal relationship between Moselekatse and Moffat, which is still a somewhat unsolved enigma. Despite Moffat's bias against a heathen chief, his Journals show an undercurrent of attraction to Moselekatse, and this was certainly so on Moselekatse's part of Moffat's reports are to be accepted as trustworthy.

These written records are the primary source for the facts of the Moffat-Moselekatse friendship which I have examined in Appendix 3 and there is every ground for accepting them as reliable. Moffat in his simple, rather guileless manner appears

somewhat baffled by Moselekatse's attentions, an attitude which supports the documents' authenticity. In any case, he knew that Moselekatse's confidence in him was the key to the heart of the Matabele, and that mattered most of all. This material is also evidence for Moffat's position as a pioneer in south-central Africa. His ventures northwards in 1854 and 1857 not only opened the door for the Christian faith beyond the Limpopo but placed him amongst the great travellers of the period.

Allied to this material in the Salisbury Archives are 113 letters associated with Moffat's son and daughter-in-law John Smith Moffat and Emily Moffat, including twenty-two from Livingstone who was the instigator of both the Matabele and the Makololo missions. But again it was the plodding Moffat on whom everything depended for the start, and the letters offer evidence of his mature patience, and endless capacity for improvisation in new surroundings. They are also evidence for the impasse between the mission and the Matabele, which not even Moffat's prestige and influence were able to break through. But, without him, so the letters show, Moselekatse would probably not have admitted the mission at all to a permanent settlement.

The Sundry Journals consist of eight groups of papers chiefly related to Moffat's early days at the Cape, in Namaqualand, and at Kuruman. He used much of this as the basis of his Missionary Labours (1842). Out of the Miscellaneous Collection of Moffat family papers it has been possible to authenticate details of the Moffat family in Scotland, and, above all, to construct a family pedigree of the Moffats in Africa which shows the remarkable contribution to southern and central Africa that Robert and Mary Moffat's descendants have made.

The other main source (L.M.S.) consists firstly of Correspondence from Cape Colony (1817-1823) which is evidence

for the Cape government's anti-mission attitude which prevented expansion beyond the Colony's limits until 1820. This material is also evidence for the chaotic state of the missions within the Colony owing to lack of a central direction. It is individualistic - each missionary writing from his own point of view, often sending information about other colleagues to London in a critical manner, and with many personal rivalries. But, in spite of this, the main facts which emerge show that the government was against mission expansion not on grounds of the supposed unreliability of the missionaries, but because they were anxious to protect the colonists' interest in relation to native labour, which was said to be spoiled when in contact with a mission institution.

Robert Moffat's own first letters from the Cape are naive, and merely reflect the prevailing attitude to missions and missionaries as "confused, deplorable and degraded". His letters to London, however, did assist in creating a renewed concern for the control of missions, which resulted in the second tour of John Campbell; the appointment of John Philip as resident agent in Capetown; and the resultant ability of the missions to move beyond the Colony. The evidence shows that Moffat himself was no policy-maker but followed the path of duty when laid down. Government attempts to set up their own missions in the form of colonial preachers was obviously a set policy, according to this correspondence. Moffat resisted the overtures and was scornful of those who did not.

The correspondence of George Thom (then unofficial L.M.S. agent at the Cape) shows that he has some claim, through his wife's influence, to be regarded as the one who loosened government opposition to extra-colonial mission work. While he is a gossipy, irascible, self-opinionated person, he evidently

knew the way into government house and was listened to. He had a poor opinion of the educational qualifications of his missionary colleagues, but evidently liked Moffat and took him under his wing.

The documents are peculiarly weak in recording formal arrangements and decisions such as those which sent Moffat off on his apprentice journey into Namaqualand in October 1817. Thom's correspondence shows that he was on good terms (at least in his opinion) with Charles Bird, Lord Charles Somerset's Colonial Secretary, and got permission for Moffat to go. The fear of the government lay primarily in their distrust of "the missionary institution" and the possibility of it spreading beyond the colony; hence their original opposition to Moffat's journey. They were not - according to this correspondence - against mission work in general but against the London Mission type, which was concerned with the physical and political as well as the spiritual welfare of the people.

A long letter describing his Namaqualand experiences, and particularly his encounter with Afrikaner, show Moffat's descriptive capacity. Much of this was later reproduced in his Missionary Labours (1842). He is observant, but in a formal style, and was no geographer. But as evidence of a Christian thrust in the western coastal area of southern Africa the document is valuable; and it also displays thus early one of the Moffat techniques in the Christian expansion of southern Africa - the concentration on the chief, a technique which he followed in both Bechuanaland and Matabeleland.

Secondly (LMS), the Bechuanaland Correspondence extends from 1820 to 1870. Again it is individualistic. Each missionary was required to produce an annual report for London, parts of which were frequently reproduced in the Society's printed reports and in the Evangelical Magazine. Moffat also wrote

personal letters to George Burder and to Arthur Tidman, secretaries in London; and to John Philip, the Capetown agent from 1819, in the early period when he was settling at Kuruman. They are evidence for the nervousness of the government in allowing him to dig himself in beyond the frontier of the Colony, and for the tribal movements of which Moffat got the powerful backwash in the Kuruman area.

Moffat's descriptiong of the "Mantatee" movement is, on the whole, trustworthy, except for his inability to say exactly who they were amongst the tribes, and his too ready acceptance of the veld rumour that the woman warrior, Mantatisi, herself was leading the host. This is excusable, for until Mrs Marion How corrected Ellenberger's History of the Basuto (1912) the view that the Batlakoa crossed the Vaal was generally held.

Moffat's letters and journals describe the veld of the early nineteenth century, with its animal life, extreme isolation and the attendant fears and rumours. Moffat was no ethnographer and bull-dozed his way along when it came to writing about the tribes. They were degraded heathen, and every custom was worthy of condemnation from his theological and religious standpoint. In this sense, the letters and journals have a curious "religious archaeological" value, as they illustrate as clearly as any amongst early nineteenth-century mission letters and journals the application of a rigid evangelical and Biblical theology to primitive tribal life. Even when he had mastered the Sechuana language, Moffat was still largely insensitive to the religious ideas of the Bechuana. The letters show that he did not credit the Bechuana with any marked religious sense. Even so, the correspondence up to 1828 is evidence for the ability of the Christian religion to transfer itself and to take root in another soil. Moffat, of course, was always ready to attribute this to an act of God, but the correspondence shows that he was not unaware of his own importance. In other words, the power and

prestige of the white man were powerful recommendations to those considering conversion. The main evidence for this is found in descriptions of his visit to the Bangwaketse Chief, Makaba; in the dealings which both Moffat and Livingstone had with Sechele; and also in the gratitude which Mothibi and his people felt for Moffat's share in delivering them from tribal attacks.

Allied with this block of material are the 53 letters that Livingstone wrote to Moffat between 1844 and 1856 when they were colleagues in the Bechuana Mission. These contain some of the main evidence for the northward policy of Moffat and his son-in-law, and also show the tension between the settled mission station of the Kuruman pattern and the traveller-missionary type as in Livingstone. Again the lack of a policy on the part of the L.M.S. is evident. The men on the spot made their own policy. These letters, combined with Moffat's Kuruman correspondence from 1844 onwards, are also of primary importance for any understanding of relationships between missions and the Boers. Both men are biased against the Boers, and plainly laid themselves open to charges of supplying the tribes with powder and guns, but the letters and correspondence show that what did come out of Kuruman and Kolobeng can hardly be called gun-running. Letters from Jean Fredoux, a French missionary at Motito and Moffat's son-in-law, in the archives of the Paris Missionary Society, show that the French group were as much under the suspicion of the Boers for interfering with the natives as the British groups - for which there is also evidence in the South Africa mission papers of the Church Missionary Society.

Evidence for two important factors in the northward expansion of the Christian faith also lies in this correspondence.

One is the mission concern at the British policy of abandonment of the Orange River Sovereignty and the Transvaal, which came to a head at Bloemfontein in 1853 with personal representations by Moffat. The correspondence (usually addressed to Arthur Tidman, Secretary in London) shows that the abandonment was regarded as an abandonment of the natives to the Boers which (to the natives) appeared to involve their abandonment by the missionaries too. The other concern was the freedom of the road to the north, of which the most formal evidence is in Livingstone's Private Journals - where he records a decision made by himself and Moffat about the Society's need to move away from its Colony responsibilities while there was yet time to move north, and to put more of its resources into the plan.

In the correspondence from 1838 to 1857 Moffat's involvement at Kuruman in his sedentary task of translator and printer is prominent; and out of this it has been possible to build up an inventory of Sechuana material printed at Kuruman, which has been checked with the Grey Library in Capetown, the Kimberley Public Library, and the Bible Society's Library in London.

In the L.M.S. archives there are also 53 letters written by Moffat between 1871 and 1882 to various friends and correspondents after his retirement in England. It also contain two manuscripts by Moffat of William Robey's Theological Lectures (460 quarto pages) and David Bogue's Missionary Lecture (127 quarto pages) which are important for an understanding of Moffat's theological and religious position, and MSS notes of 64 sermons.

Amongst printed material, Moffat's own Missionary Labours (1842), once his over-pious leanings are reckoned with, is trustworthy, especially for his first twenty-eight chapters, which deal principally with the settlement and expansion amongst the Bechuana. He unfortunately fore-shortens in print his Moselekatse-Matabele experiences. The book was partially

based on his 1824 Journal now lost. The impact of Moffat in Britain, which is evidence for the rising tide of interest in Africa, is described in Farewell Services (pub. John Snow,1843).

John Campbell's three volumes of Travels in South Africa (1815 and 1822) were partly written as "missionary propaganda" in Britain; but, when his enthusiasm in this direction is allowed for, his observations are accurate in relation to population, tribal life and the possibilities of a mission amongst the Bechuana. David Livingstone's Travels and Researches (1857) are important for his descriptiongs of the encounters with the Boers; and, in the same vein, the Memoirs of the Reverend Walter Inglis (ed. Cochrane) (1887). In the northern expansion, John Mackenzie's Ten Years North of the Orange River (1871) is the work of an able and accurate observer. Precisely the opposite is the case with T.M. Thomas's Eleven Years in Central Africa (1872), but as a member of the original mission party he does convey some of the difficulties of planting the Christian faith in the soil of Matabeleland.

Among secondary books, W.M. Macmillan's Bantu, Boer and Briton (1929) is based on the papers of John Philip, and deals with the clash of philanthropy and the Boers on the frontier of the Colony. Macmillan, on the whole, is pro-mission and critical of the Boers; but his view is balanced, and helps to correct the nationalist bias of Theal's History of South Africa (1908), for whom a mission of the London Mission type was a misguided venture in southern Africa.

C.W. de Kiewiet's British Colonial Policy and the South African Republics 1848-1872 (1929), based on the Cape records in the London Public Records Office, adopts the humanitarian-

mission view of the situation and regards the British abandonment of the territories as an abandonment of the natives. In his judgment, the colonists' views were bound to prevail; which was also the view of the missions, and confirmed them in their moves towards the north. But it is in J.A.I. Agar-Hamilton's Native Policy of the Voortrekkers (1928) that the issue between the emigrant Boers beyond the Vaal and the missions is fairly joined. This book is based chiefly on two manuscript sources, the Pretoria Archives and the L.M.S. London archives, both of which Agar-Hamilton handles with scrupulous fairness. He shows that the missions had a very real case in their charges against the Boer inboekin (apprenticeship) system; and that Moffat and Livingstone were at least unwise in their possession and distribution of fire-arms. He examines the evidence for the Boer clash with Sechele; and this, together with A. Sillery's Sechele (1954), offers the most balanced view of this contentious event. The attempt of American and Anglican missions to establish themselves amongst the Bechuana is described in letters of the period, but since printed in Letters of the American Missionaries (ed. D.J. Kotze,1950) and in The Diary of the Rev. Francis Owen (ed. G.E. Cory, 1926); and also in E.W. Smith's Life and Times of Daniel Lindley (1949).

Moffat's routes to the north have been examined in great detail by E.C. Tabler in his The Far Interior (1955), and is evidence for his importance as a traveller and master of ox-wagon travel. The Moffat ("Moshete") tradition amongst the Matabele is almost impossible to fasten down to historical recorded fact, but it has to be reckoned with in the on-going existence of Christianity in Matabeleland. It was undoubtedly an asset from the beginning of the mission, and there is evidence for this in D. Carnegie's Among the Matabele (1894); in Neville Jones' My Friend Kumalo (1945), which keeps close to

Matabele tradition; and in the contributions of F.W.T.Posselt and H.M.G. Jackson to "Nada" in the volumes of the Native Affairs Department Annual, Southern Rhodesia, from 1923 onwards; and in Proceedings of Rhodesian Scientific Association (1919).

Amongst mission histories, Kenneth Latourette's fifth volume in his A. History of the Expansion of Christianity (1947) is an industrious assemblage of the main facts of Christian expansion in southern Africa. No known fact appears to have been overlooked, but a critical view is lacking; and this also applies to Groves' Planting of Christianity in Africa, Vols.1 and 2 (1948,1954). Lovett's History of the London Missionary Society, Vol 1 (1899) is a volume linked with the centenary of the Society's foundation; and, while accurate as far as it goes, is only an outline history. J. du Plessis' Christian Missions in South Africa (1911), is a detailed survey of the nineteenth-century expansion, but needs supplementing with new material, particularly from the Moffat and Livingstone papers. G.G.Findlay and W.W. Hildsworth's History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, Vol. iv (1922), is a reliable factual guide; and Theophile Jousee's La Mission Francaise au sud de L/Afrique, 2 Vols. (1899), has the additional advantage of an author who served in the mission.

PERSONAL JUDGMENTS ON ROBERT MOFFAT

Among missionaries there was none greater, none holier than he.

- Field Marshal Smuts, inscribed on Moffat Monument, Ormiston, Scotland.

Think of Moffat running away from a difficulty - a lion from a turkey cock - no! no!

- David Livingstone to Henry Waller 13.8.63. Waller Papers. Rhodes House Oxford.

Of great mental and physical powers, simple hearted, sanguine, unselfish, fearless, forceful and attractive. Moffat made an ideal pioneer.

- Kenneth Latourette, Expansion of Christianity, Vol.v, p.345, 1947.

His commanding height, authoritative manner, piercing eyes and black-side whiskers, his insistence on truth and his sense of justice, his knowledge of their language and his refusal to countenance tyranny, cruelty and cunning.

- Intro. by Una Long to The Journals of Elizabeth Lees Price, p.7, 1956.

In the famous library at the Bible House in London there is a memorial window figuring great translators: William Tyndale, Jerome, Cyril and Methodius, Martin Luther, John Eliot, William Carey, Robert Morrison, Henry Martyn, and Robert Moffat who takes his place naturally in the far-shining company, most of whom were greater scholars than he, but none of whom surpassed him in single-hearte devotion.

- E.W. Smith Robert Moffat p. 245 1925

More than any other single factor it is to the mission at Kuruman that the attachment of the Tswana to the British Empire is due.

- A. Sillery, The Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1952.

The romance which was to shine like a bright thread across the gloom of savage Africa, lighting a pathway over the sub-continent for close on half a century.

- Nora S. Kane, The World's View: The Story of Southern Rhodesia, p.202, 1954.

A NOTE ON AFRICAN NAMES

(Modern Orthography in brackets)

As Moffat was Sechuana speaking I have kept to the Sechuana (Tswana) spelling of African names such as "Moselekatse" for "Mzilikazi". I have also kept the spelling of popularly used names such as Bechuana (BaTswana) and Bamangwato (BaNgwato), Barolong (BaRolong), Batlhaping (BTlhaping) Mantatisi and Mantatees (boo MmaNtatisi) Makwena (BaKWena), Bangwaketse (BaNgwaketse), Lattakoo (Dithakong), Bahurutshe (BaHurutshe), Matabele (MaTebele and Ndebele).

ABBREVIATIONS used in FOOTNOTES

A-H	Agar-Hamilton, J.A.I., The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers
Blaikie	Personal Life of David Livingstone
Bryant	Olden Times in Zululand
Campbell 1815	Travels in South Africa, 1815
Campbell 1822	Travels in South Africa, 1822
Clinton	The South African Melting Pot
Ellenberger	History of the Basuto
FL	Livingstone Family Letters
How	Alibi for Mantatisi [African Studies, Vol.13]
Journal	Robert Moffat's Journals
de Kiewiet	British Colonial Policy and the South African Republics
Labours	Missionary Labours [Moffat]
Latourette	History of the Expansion of Christianity
Lives	Lives of Robert and Mary Moffat
LMS	London Missionary Society Archives
Lovett	History of London Missionary Society
Mackenzie	Ten Years North of the Orange River
NA	National Archives, Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia
Nada	Native Affairs Department Annual, Southern Rhodesia
P.P.	Parliamentary Papers
du Plessis	Christian Missions in South Africa
Price E.L.	Journals of Elizabeth Lees Price [ed. Una Long]
PRSA	Proceedings of Rhodesian Scientific Association
Schapera, K.	Introduction, Apprenticeship at Kuruman
Sillery	Sechele
Smith EW	Robert Moffat
Smith GL	Great Lion of Bechuanaland [E.W. Smith]
Smith Lind	Life and Times of Daniel Lindley [E.W. Smith]
Stow	Races of South Africa
Tabler	The Far Interior
Travels	Livingstone's Missionary Travels
Walker	History of South Africa
Wallis MJI	Matabele Journals [Vol. 1]
Wallis MJII	Matabele Journals [Vol.2]
Wallis MM	Matabele Mission of J.S. and E. Moffat

[N.B. In date abbreviations, [18..] is omitted throughout.]

Chapter 1

A GARDENER FROM SCOTLAND

Oh! that I may die fighting in the armies of the living God

In the late eighteenth century, with Napoleon master of the seaboards of Europe, the scare of a French attack on and invasion of Britain had a free run even as far north as the eastern coasts of Scotland. In the spacious firths of Forth and Tay the shipping roads were open to the quick thrusts of the smart privateer, and in the isolated windy harbours of the north-east watchers and fishermen were alert to what French cruisers might do by sudden assault and landing. The fears of the French penetrated inland where the volunteer corps were marshalled and drilled in much the same way as in 1940. In the East Lothian village of Ormiston, twenty-six miles over the hills from Edinburgh, there was, according to Ann Gardiner Moffat, "consternation" at the thought of an invasion, which she characteristically under-stated as a "visit from the French". Her main worry was about her husband Robert, who had left their home at Ormiston to branch out in life as a petty official in the Salt Tax Office at Portsoy in Banffshire. As he levied his dues in that remote harbour, she imagined him fair game for the French cruisers which might carry him prisoner across the wintry seas. Her [undated] letter of March 1797, now in the National Archives at Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, is full of the tender concern of a young wife for a husband far away from home and children. They had three small boys, Alexander, William, and Robert; and there were yet to come Richard, Helen, Ann, and James.

The Moffats had been married eight years, he a ploughman of Pencaitkland, she the daughter of William Gardiner and Helen Johnstone, in the service of the Hopetoun family at Ormiston Hall. The

Gardiners' stone cottage stands today in the confines of the Ormiston gardens, square and sturdy, overlooking the Belsis Burn, but all that remains of the Moffats' cottage is three of its walls in a yard of the National Coal Board in the area called the Killogie.[1] Robert, their third son, was born there on December 21, 1795.

At 28, Robert Moffat, the ploughman, was looking to the future of himself and his family. He could contemplate illustrious ancestors, a Nicholas de Moffat, Bishop of Glasgow in 1268, and a Moffat who in the same year joined the train of Edward of England and Louis of France in the fourth Crusade, and another William Moffat who became Baillie of St. Andrews in 1594. But the truth was that, as the Moffats drifted eastwards across Scotland from their ancestral lands in Dumfriesshire, they descended in the scale of Scottish life; and while Robert and Thomas de Moffat of the County of Dumfries did homage to Edward I in 1296 the Moffats of the 1740s were ploughmen.[2] They had long ceased to boast a coat of arms in the Lyon Register of Edinburgh, but their family motto Spero Meliora was treasured, and, in the same hope of better things to come, Robert Moffat decided to shake himself free from Ormiston and the plough.

As one looks at it today, from the Moffat Monument down its broad main street, Ormiston shows the hand of that remarkable eighteenth-century planner and industrialist, John Cockburn. He re-built the village, brought it a distillery and a malting, revivified its agriculture, and started a flax industry.[3] But none of these attracted Robert Moffat. Through a connection of his wife's family, who was Commissioner of Excise in Edinburgh, he secured the Salt Officer's post at Portsoy in Banff, and there

[1] Whitehead, History of Ormiston 92; and personal observations 1958.

[2] Maxwell Moffat, Short History of the Family of Moffat.

[3] Whitehead 41.

at the risk of capture by the French he stayed until 1799, when Salt was finally merged with Excise.[1]

Robert, the ex-ploughman, was again fortunate in his friends. He moved to the post of coast-waiter in the miniature port of Barrowstoneness [Bo'ness], where the Forth-Clyde Canal reaches the Firth, and settled his family at Carronshore in the parish of Bothkinnar. He had to wait until 1811 for his promotion across the Firth to Inverkeithing, which he accomplished in an open boat with only "the loss of our fine goldfinch; it fell into the water but could not get up again".[2] At Inverkeithing, now in the shadow of the Forth Bridge, Robert, the ploughman, blossomed into Mr. Robert Moffat, Her Majesty's Deputy Collector and Principal Coast Officer, at £120 a year plus fees. He was superannuated on March 23, 1847, at £130 a year, and died eight weeks later leaving £2,351 and a house at Inverkeithing.[3]

It is a tale common enough in Scottish families, and in many ways had a counterpart, across the waist of Scotland, at Blantyre, where the Livingstones, to be later so intimately linked with the Moffats in Africa, were also showing what industry and thrift might do to improve the lot of the godly poor. For the Moffats were pious in the manner of the United Presbyterians, who combined their Calvinism with a lively evangelical interest in foreign parts which Ann Moffat imparted to her brood. "She united a sternness of religious belief bordering on gloomy vindictiveness", says her grandson, John Smith Moffat, "with one of the tenderest and most loving hearts that ever beat. Her handsome features and dark eyes usually wore an expression of melancholy, but when a smile came it lit

1-3 Alex.Moffat's Reminiscences, NA; R.M. to Rd.M. 23.7.11 NA

up her beautiful face in a way that could not be forgotten."[1] On winter evenings she gathered the young Moffats to knit and sew - even the boys - and "read aloud, in such missionary publications as were then to be had, the story of the dauntless pioneers of the gospel".[2] But there were other things for growing boys along the Firth of Forth such as boats on the canal and coasters going to sea carrying coal and timber. Robert Moffat says he "lived among shipping and ran off to sea ... in the coasting trade, but got disgusted with a sailor's life, to the no small joy of my parents".[3] He was then about ten, having escaped from the clutches of Wully Mitchell, the parish schoolmaster of Bothkinnar, who warmed his pupils' hands with the tawse as they plugged away at the Shorter Catechism. At eleven he went to Mr. Paton's school at Falkirk, where his elder brother Alexander ("among the sons of the better sort of folks") was paying to have lessons in astronomy and geography. Robert was allowed to look and listen, without payment, to explanations of the planetary system, which Alexander on the way home made even plainer. Six months of Mr. Paton ended all formal schooling for Robert Moffat. At fourteen he became an apprenticed gardener.[4]

The spacious lands round the Firth of Forth are still ringed today with the pleasaunces and policies of estates whose hey-day in gardens and gardeners lay in the apprentice years of Robert Moffat. In 1809, at Parkhill, Polmont, on the southern shore of the Firth, and in 1812 at the Earl of Moray's Donibristle estate at Aberdour, on the northern shore [now in the hands of the Royal Air Force], the gardener's boy learned in the hard way under tyrannical head gardeners. The boys lived in bothys in the gardens, feeding themselves with only just enough to eat to fend off the cold of Scottish winter mornings when their hands

1-3 Lives; 4 A.Moffat's Reminiscences NA

were often too frozen to hold their spades. But there were warm days too in the great walled gardens to practise the arts of pruning and deep planting, and enough time, at Donibristle, to swim in the Firth - where Robert once saved a companion from drowning. He grew up a tall, physically fit youth; and, like his father before him, began to look around. He had supplemented his meagre schooling with a little Latin and mensuration and some violin lessons, but, for a living, there appeared nothing for it but gardening. In 1813 he secured a post in the gardens of Mr Charles Legh, at High Legh in Cheshire. It was good-bye to Scotland, and, in after years, Moffat suitably embroidered his description of the sentimentally affectionate farewell with his dark, handsome mother, who "with big tears rolling down the cheeks" made him promise to read a chapter of the Bible morning and evening.[1]

To travel from Scotland to England on the cheap meant a tedious and risky ship passage, and for Robert the eight days from Greenock to Liverpool in Nov-ember 1813 began with a narrow escape from the "press-gang" in Rothesay Bay:

> It was about midnight when we got as far as the Cumbrae Isles, blowing a strong breeze right in our teeth. We were obliged to bear away under a heavy sea and dismal dark to Rothsay Bay, in the Island of Bute; but the wind favouring us, we put about and stood towards the Cumbrae Lighthouse but under a dreadful sea we were obliged to bear away a second time to Rothsay Bay, where we got in about one o'clock Saturday morning with several sloops and a man-of-war. The rain descended in torrents the whole night till about eight o'clock.[2]

From the man-of-war, the Cygnet, two "pressed" men tried to escape by swimming ashore; one was drowned and the other was seized in the water. This so enraged the naval captain that next morning he boarded Robert's ship and "pressed John Bow". Most discreetly, says Robert, "I happened to be in bed, and kept there as long as they were up on deck. ... Every man was sorry for Jock."

[1] Lives; [2] R.M. to parents 5.12.13 NA.

Robert did Jock's work on deck, and got through to Liverpool, baggage, food, fiddle and all, for twenty-five shillings. On the voyage, his fiddle "kept ourselves merry, but it was against my will". For Robert, it was no time for fiddling, and no time to dawdle in Liverpool to travel on the un-Sabbatarian Sunday coach to High Legh. He went on Saturday, spending only sixpence on the way for a pint of ale in addition to his coach fare of five shillings.

The High Legh gardens [the house is now in the possession of the Army], on the road between Warrington and Knutsford, were then in the full pride of the unstinted attention of a family who cared for their gardeners as well as their gardens. The bothy in which Moffat lived is still in use as a gardener's shed, but Mrs Legh thought it an unkempt place for the Scottish boy in his first English winter. He ate and slept for some weeks in the house, and there won her notice by his bookish and pious habits. She offered him the run of her books and presented him with a Book of Common Prayer, which set off an argument about the respective merits of the English and Scottish churches - which finally ended in Mrs Legh's admission that the "English ministers were not so able men". Moffat was nineteen. His wages were twelve shillings a week, and one of his chief responsibilities was the nineteen fires in the spreading greenhouses of the gardens. He banked at night and stoked in the morning in a luxury of winter warmth unknown by the Firth of Forth.[1]

But there were other fires to be stoked. In the long winter evenings of January and February 1814 he was faithful to his Bible-reading promise, and, with the spring, his meditations drew him to a like-minded group of Bible students in a tiny meeting of the Independent Methodists on the confines of High

[1] R.M. to parents 25.1.14 NA.

Legh. On the evening of March 4, 1814, "I left my fires", he says, and went to the Independent meeting about 1½ miles in a farm house."[1] This small Methodist Society - still in existence - was born in 1873 out of the itinerant zeal of John Wesley's preachers as a result of his own peregrinations through Cheshire.[2] Its earnest, "cottage-meeting", tempo and laymen's enthusiasm for "what Christ had done for them and what was required of them to be saved" appealed to Moffat. He was a lonely young man in his isolated bothy in the heart of the great gardens, and the fortnightly glow of Methodist preaching in Betty Okell's Northwood farm-dairy offered the kindling fellowship he needed.[3] What the Methodists supplied was the flame which fired the solid fuel of his own Biblical meditations. He wanted to know that he was converted but could not believe that he was. It would have been easier, he thought, to fit into the pattern of a conversion experience had he been a great sinner, and he at one time considered becoming one in order "to be so sensible of the change that all doubts would vanish".[4] But the gross sins were not for Robert Moffat so he fell back on the simpler resolution of "forsaking foolish and worldly company, vain thoughts and wicked imaginations" in order to free himself from his religious uncertainty. "I knew of no one", he writes, "to whom I could unbosom the agony that burned within. I tried to pray fervently, but thought there was a black cloud between me and the throne of God. I tried to hear Jesus saying to my soul, 'Only believe'; but the passages from which I sought comfort only seemed to deepen my wounds."[5] But gradually the Methodist warmth and the lonely

1, 3 R.M. to parents 4.3.14; 23.11.14; 4.5.15 NA.

2 Mounfield, A Short History of Independent Methodism, 24-26.

4,5 Lives 13

wrestling in the garden bothy combined to provide the evangelical experience. "One evening", he says, "while poring over the Epistle to the Romans, I could not help wondering over a number of passages which I had read many times before. They appeared altogether different. I exclaimed with a heart nearly broken: 'Can it be possible that I have never understood what I have been reading?' turning from one passage to another, each sending a renovation of light into my darkened soul. The Book of God, the precious undying Bible, seemed to be laid open and I saw what God had done for the sinner. ... I felt that, being justified by faith, I had peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ."[1]

From then on Moffat was caught in the elation of his religious experience.[2] The moody boy in the garden bothy became Methodist, in spirit if not in name, defending them and himself from parental Calvinistic blasts from over the border which warned him "to examine well and to follow them no further than they follow the word of God".[3] In the year of Waterloo he expounded to Inverkeithing the differences between Wesley and Whitefield in pious phraseology which drew forth from Mrs. Moffat a realistic retort of a box of six shirts, a dozen napkins, two quires of paper, twenty-five quills, and four catechisms in the bottom for ballast.[4] In the same year he walked, on a summer evening under a cloudless sky, to Warrington and noticed a placard by the town bridge advertising a missionary meeting at which the Rev. William Roby of Manchester was to take the chair. His mother's stories of Greenland and Labrador flooded back to his mind. He read the placard over and over again, so that "passers-by must have wondered at my fixedness" and there by Warrington Bridge he "resolved to go to sea again

[1] Lives 15. [2] "I heard the Methodists and pressed on with fervent prayer and supplications" R.M. to parents 23.11.14 NA

[3-4] R.M. to parents 4.5.15; R.M. senr to R.M. 30.6.15; R.M. senr to R.M. 13.11.15; 15.11.15 NA.

[5] [redacted]

and get landed on some island or foreign shore where I might teach poor heathen to know the Saviour".[1] The evangelical victory of Calvinism mixed with Methodism was complete. The road back to High Legh became a road to southern Africa.

At twenty, dreams of a foreign shore are easy enough, but Robert Moffat was no day-dreamer. He had an honest look at himself: no education, no powerful connections, and no special qualifications for the venture he proposed - except the fire in his belly and his remembrance of the name Roby on the placard. William Roby was then, at forty-nine, in the prime of his ministry at Grosvenor Chapel, Manchester; an able man, with an orderly theological mind, who moved through the Congregational chapels of Lancashire and the northwest urging them to unite into a working union, in order to evangelize the industrial masses of the thriving cotton towns. He had an eye for likely young men for the ministry, and, practically single-handed, for seven years ran an academy to train them. In his Manchester Sunday school there were 1,280 scholars, of whom 376 had got to the stage of the first spelling-book and 301 could write.[2] Roby allied his evangelistic enthusiasm with elementary education, and when Moffat presented himself at his door in the autumn of 1815 Roby sensed a young man ripe for development. He was a director of the London Missionary Society, then catching its second wind of enthusiasm as an organization to send "the glorious gospel of the blessed God to the heathen"; and his line of volunteers already reached to the South Pacific, South Africa, and India.

"My simple tale was soon told", says Moffat of his first interview with Roby, and the result was a letter from Roby to

[1] Lives 17. [2] Robinson, William Roby, 81.

London commending the raw youth; but the reply, in November, 1815, turned him down, on the grounds that the society "cannot receive all who offer their services for missionary work, and are therefore obliged to select those who possess the most promising acquirements".[1] Roby was not surprised, and not daunted. He began to work on Moffat. His first step was to get him a job nearer Manchester than High Legh. On New Year's Day, 1816, Moffat started to work in the nursery gardens of James Smith of Dukinfield, from where he paid regular tutoring visits to Roby, whose system of instruction seems to have been based on a plan of copying and memorizing.[2] His "System of Divinity" consisted of eighty lectures, some of them running to eighteen quarto pages each of close writing, which the industrious Moffat eventually copied in a full fair hand.[3]

The Roby lectures were the only formal theological training that Moffat received, and as he had practically no vocational preparation at all they provide a basis for an understanding of his religious position. The lectures begin with the formal assumption of the existence of God, "that self-existent Being who is the cause and the governor of all other beings; of whom and through whom and to whom all things. ..." They move on to a consideration of religion as a "natural consequence" of "the Being of God", with the pages weighted with lists of duties encumbent upon the religious man: such as "a habitual watchfulness against everything that would injure our bodies, or our souls; and especial attention to our spiritual and eternal interests; a constant guard against carnal indulgences, and the immoderate use of lawful enjoyments; and a due estimation of

1 Roby to R.M. 27.11.15 NA.

2 Robinson, William Roby, 118.

3 Lectures on Theology, by William Roby, transcribed by Robert Moffat, 1817, LMS.

ourselves as frail, dependent, mortal, accountable beings".[1]

Para./ Basic to the whole formal system was "the divine authority of scriptures", which meant that "reason must be exercised not as an haughty remonstrant but as a humble disciple" - an apt description of Moffat's adult attitude in Africa. For him, too, the "sovereignty of God", as it appeared in Roby's formal Calvinism, conditioned his approach to native peoples: for it was God's sovereignty which determined "whether any should be redeemed" and the "persons who should be redeemed"; and "the method of redemption" and "in the conversion of individuals to Christ, in the measure of gifts and graces which He bestows upon converts, in determining the trials or the comforts which individual believers experience in the course of their pilgrimage on earth. In fixing the season when they shall be dismissed from their warfare and received into Glory".[2]

One prime inference of all this, for Moffat, and formally stated in Roby's system, was "to learn to acknowledge the sovereignty and dominion of God in all the events which occur, and to consider the duty of being willingly subject to His government". This recognition and submission sustained him for fifty years in Africa, a theological substratum to a working faith which, however rigid it may appear in formulation, was always resilient to new demands; for, in Moffat's hands, the great themes of orthodox theology became an instrument of mission, providing both the authority and the impetus for his calling. To see them all set out in his neat copperplate handwriting, extending for 460 pages of manuscript complete with Biblical and contemporary references, is to realize not only how dutifully the young gardener regarded his tutoring but how deeply the majestic system became part of himself. He

[1,2] Roby Lectures 8, 89.

found there three guiding principles for practical affairs: acceptance, duty, and obedience; and he set himself to follow them with an undeviating pertinacity that continued throughout his long life. For Moffat, a system of theology was a necessary servant, and - however he may be criticized in his later use of it - he compelled it to work in Africa.

For him, 1816 was a year of swiftly moving events. At the beginning of it he was the new gardener at James Smith's nursery at Dukinfield; at the end of it he was within a fortnight of landing at Capetown as a new missionary with all his dreams of a foreign shore fulfilled. In a year of Britain's war-time aftermath, with bad harvests, widespread unemployment, bread at famine prices, and a rising tide of unrest, the links were forged which bound him to Africa. One of them was forged at Dukinfield itself, where the bright eyes of Mary Smith fell on the comely grace of her father's employee and he discovered in her a "warm missionary heart". The Smiths had changed their name from Gow on coming south from Scotland, and amongst Mary's romantic foreign links was her mutinous uncle, Alexander Gow, alias Smith, alias John Adams of the Bounty - then reigning over his fellow mutineers as a model religious monarch on Pitcairn Island in the southern Pacific.[1] But while Mr Smith of Dukinfield was also eminently pious, and approved of his young gardener's missionary plans, he was in no mood to part with Mary at once. It was up to Robert to prove himself, alone on the foreign shore.

On May 23, 1816, Robert solemnly informed his parents at Inverkeithing: "I believe I am intended to occupy the station of a foreign missionary."[2] William Roby's belief in his protégé and his influence in London had finally opened the closed door.

[1] A.Moffat's Reminiscences record this family tradition, NA.

[2] R.M. to parents 23.5.16 NA.

In July he went north to say farewell to his family. In August he was caught up in the enthusiasm of Manchester's missionary festival, with, according to Roby's report, "sermons uncommonly excellent, the meeting for business delightful, the missionary communion solemnly affecting, and the collections upwards of £500."[1] In mid-September he was in London to meet the directors of the missionary society, having resigned himself to leaving his Mary behind. His eyes boggled at the "truly awful" curiosities in the missionary museum in Old Jewry, trophies of the gospel warfare in China, Africa, the South Seas, and the West Indies. On September 23 he was measured for three dozen shirts, given £10 to purchase books, and another £5 to buy handkerchiefs, night-caps, stationery, and brushes; and was provided with "boots to cover our feet from the serpents which infect the grass".[2] Seven days later he stood, "a lad ower young" as one director described him, in Surrey Chapel on the South Bank of the Thames to be publicly ordained. On October 20 he embarked on the Alacrity at Gravesend, three months short of his twenty-first birthday.

Never did the wheels of evangelical dispatch turn more quickly. The fathers and founders of the London Missionary Society, still in the reflected glow of their initial enthusiasm of 1795, were practical men eager to find suitable recruits for the armies of the living God in foreign parts. "It is not necessary", they said, "that every missionary should be a learned man; but he must possess a competent measure of that kind of knowledge which the object of the mission requires. Godly men who understand mechanic arts may be of signal use to this

[1] Roby to Burder 31.8.16 LMS.
[2] R.M. to parents 23.9.16 NA.

undertaking."[1] Robert Moffat, the gardener from Scotland, fortified by the theology of William Roby and godly in his own life, amply filled the bill. He was on a par with their original party dispatched in 1796 to Tahiti: six carpenters, a shopkeeper, a harness maker, two tailors, a gentleman's servant, a gardener, a surgeon, a blacksmith, a cotton manufacturer, two weavers, a hatter, two bricklayers, two shoemakers, a linen draper, and a cabinet maker.[2] But, unlike them, he had had a few months of theological discipline; moreover, he was destined, not for the cultured cities of Asia, but for the primitive peoples of Southern Africa. It was worth taking a risk on him, in spite of his youth and lack of education.

His churchmanship, too, fitted the Society he was to serve. Cradled in Presbyterianism, warmed by his Methodist experience, he was now to live within the ecumenical orbit of a Society whose declared Principle was "not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy, or any other form of Church Order and Government but the glorious Gospel of the blessed God to the heathen".[3] It was a broad, tolerant, and catholic basis, and ideally suited many pioneer spirits of the early nineteenth century who viewed the call to evangelize as one which Christians of different denominations might unite to answer, leaving (as the Principle stated) those who were converted "to assume for themselves such form of Church Government as to them shall appear most agreeable to the Word of God".[4]

The promulgators of the Principle had hoped by their brave venture "to attend the funeral of bigotry"[5] and to herald the

[1] Rules for Examination of Missionaries LMS 1795.

[2,3,4,5] Lovett i 127, 49, 50, 35.

coming of unity in evangelism. They were disappointed in their ecumenical hopes amongst the denominations in Britain, who soon began to rally under their own individual banners, and to found separate missionary societies committed to the Episcopalian, Methodist, and Presbyterian, traditions of churchmanship. But they had their reward in the companies of remarkable men and women they dispatched to the remote places of the earth, often ill-equipped and unprepared to meet the miseries of their calling, though for the most part displaying a quiet heroism and devotion to their duty. Some of their choices displayed all the frailties of human nature, while others moved to join the select circle of those whose lives adorn the annals of the Christian faith. One of the latter was the young gardener from Scotland, who, as the leaves fell in 1816, was outward bound for the Cape of Good Hope.

He was in many ways to become the representative man of the movement of missions which developed out of the religious life and swelling industrial prosperity of nineteenth-century Britain. Without active assistance from governments, and with little patronage from the ruling classes, it was a movement of the rising middle class and the rank and file,[1] who saw new worlds of wonder in Asia and Africa through the reports of the men and women supported by the pounds and pence of their contributions. Religious romanticism and realism went together. The "organised, semi-educated, evangelically-minded, and entirely vocal British middle class"[2] gathered a good deal of authentic first-hand information about the "foreign parts" they desired with all speed to be brought under the sway of the Christian faith. This meant that official policies in colonial territories - as in southern Africa - towards "the natives" or "the aborigines" had to be carried out under the watchful eye of these independent emissaries. Like Robert

[1] Latourette iv 47ff. [2] Walker 151.

Moffat, many of them were dogged and fearless observers who, because they served a heavenly kingdom, were rarely subservient to the rulers of earthly ones. Conservative in theology, and always concerned about their main task of converting the heathen, they were in fact pioneers of nineteenth-century liberalism in colonial affairs; and the fruit of their planting is only now in many places being harvested.

Chapter 2

YOUNG MAN AT THE CAPE (1817)

I hope to fight the good fight to the end of my days

The Capetown that met Robert Moffat's gaze on January 13, 1817 - eighty days out from England - was still the eighteenth-century trading and victualling base, more Dutch than British, although the British were now finally back in power after the re-shuffle of colonial possessions following the Napoleonic wars. Through its cobble-paved streets, lit with oil lamps at night, came the ox-wagon trains loaded with butter, tallow, candles, sheeps' tail fat, and soap, from the interior and the frontier districts, to provision the passing ships and to feed the 4,500 British troops still quartered in the garrison. It won its name "tavern of the oceans" in the high prosperity of the 1750s, when the average stay of a vessel in Table Bay was four weeks and the boarding-houses of Capetown were thronged with passengers waiting to sail out to the Indies or home to Britain. Their demand on fresh food was prodigious, reaching, for the East India Company's ships alone, to 8,500 sheep annually; while a Swellendam butter producer could rely on selling 2,600 pounds of butter a year for a cash income of £66, and the melted fat from the aboriginal tails of the Cape sheep was lucrative at 2/8d a gallon. Added to these basic fundamentals of provisioning were trading side-lines, such as selling ostrich eggs and feathers to naval officers, bartering for ivory with the frontier tribes, and selling an elephant's tooth in Capetown for 3/9d a pound, and in the developing trade in hides and skins.[1]

By the time Robert Moffat walked its streets, Capetown was beginning to be aware that it was no longer the sole market of

[1] Neumark, The South African Frontier, 49-135.

wheat and wine and of animals and their products from the interior. Coastal shipping to Algoa Bay, where Port Elizabeth commanded a route to the interior through Graaff Reinet, was already by-passing the wagon roads to the eastern frontier. Lines of communication were lengthening through the colony, whose borders were being pressed steadily back by trade and farming towards the Orange River. Little was known about the lands beyond the Great Karoo and the Sneeuwberg Mountains, and still less about the country beyond the Orange River, where the frontier farmers were armed and alert against the hordes of native tribes coming down from the north, and equally ready to trade with them in cattle.[1] Trade and the rights and freedom of the Dutch farmers, and the due supply of cheap labour to the farms, were the dominating concerns of the colony and its government. Beyond the snug pattern of domestic farming around Capetown itself the farmers in many little treks were pressing out to occupy the farm lands towards the border of the Colony; which swayed irregularly from its eastern boundary on the Great Fish River, northwards to the mountains of the Zuurberg and Nieuweld ranges, and then by the rivers Riet and Buffles through the bleak wilderness of Namaqualand to the Atlantic shore.

To the central group of British officials in Capetown, under the aristocratic Lord Charles Somerset, these movements towards the Colony's frontier and beyond posed a problem of administrative control; while to the Boer farmers they offered not only new lands but possible freedom from British rule.[2] To Robert Moffat and his four young companions - John Taylor, James Kitchingman, Evan Evans, and John Brownlee - the Cape and its expanding frontier suggested fresh realms of service - an idea which met with a very cool reception from Lord Charles Somerset, who

[1] Neumark 122.

[2] Walker 203.

allied missions with the detested growth of Methodism in the army at the Cape and was determined in any case to give no encouragement to missionary establishments beyond the Colony's border.[1]

Governor Somerset had some well-founded reasons for his suspicions of missions and his opposition to their expansion. Almost everbody and everything to do with them were in bad odour at the Cape. Memories were still fresh of the "Black Circuit" of 1812, in which the missionary James Read's accusations against Boer farmers in the Graaff Reinet and Uitenhage areas for ill-treatment of their Hottentot servants were investigated. A thousand witnesses - farmers and Hottentots - were summoned to the four-months' assize, and, while twelve charges out of thirty-six for murder and violence were proven, the general indictment of the government and the local landdrosts was not upheld. The name of the London Mission and all its emissaries became an object of obloquy to the colonist farmers.[2]

Administratively, too, the missions of the London Society were lacking in a central authority. Their pioneer leader, the eccentric, saintly Dutchman Johannes van der Kemp, had died in 1811 leaving behind no colleague of comparable eminence or education to lead the missions. Every man spoke for himself and acted on the sole authority of his conscience, which in every case was quickened by and sensitive to the lot of the Hottentots, the dark-skinned people scattered at about three to the square mile from Table Bay to the Fish River, and who had gradually come to be economically dependent on the Dutch farmers. By Moffat's day there were estimated to be about 28,000 Hottentots,[3] who, by the vigorous advance of the Dutch farmer-settlers, had

[1] Taylor to Burder 26.1.17 LMS.

[2] du Plessis 132ff.

[3] Macmillan, Cape Colour Question, 141.

lost any legal rights to land they might have had, and were ignorant of settled agriculture. They were no doubt a feckless, ill-disciplined people, helplessly in the grip of the Dutch farmer, whose land was dependent upon their labour but who regularly cursed and punished them for laziness and thieving. The Hottentot was often a vagrant, leading a nomadic life, getting his food from roots and honey, and dragging his miserable family about, with no settled habitation.[1] /It was amongst these right-less people that the London missions had been at work for twenty years, gathering them into "institutions" or "settlements" to teach them the value of a settled pastoral life and the basic elements of a welfare education. James Read wrote a piteous description of the Hottentots to Governor Caledon in 1810:

> The poor Hottentot turns his eye to any person, to whom he dares to unbosom his wounded spirit, and to lay open his sore complaints; he has sought for redress, perhaps at the hazard of his life; at last he finds in a missionary a friend, whom he afterwards begins to experience is more or less concerned for his temporal and spiritual welfare; then, and not without some degree of fear, he tells his pitiable story and even a heart of stone must bleed to hear the father relate the loss of his child, the child that of the father, the tender husband his wife, the wife the husband, and the survivors forced into an almost endless bondage, and the orphans made worse than slaves.[2]

If the London missionaries had been content to concern themselves only with the private spiritual welfare of the Hottentots all would have been well in the eyes of government and colonist, but, once inside the mission settlement, the Hottentot often learned to read and write, became decently dressed, and practised a trade which sometimes gave him an economic independence.

[1] Macmillan 33.

[2] Read to Caledon 19.10.10 LMS Transactions III 398.

He might possess land, or start up in business as a soap-boiler, basket-maker, or stocking-knitter, a state of affairs which led gradually to the campaign for Hottentots' rights under the redoubtable John Philip in the 1830s. All thus championing of the Hottentots roused the ire of the farmer-colonists, who described the "institutions" as havens for rogues and vagabonds and refuges for the lazy; and the missionaries who supervised them as people who roused disaffection towards the farmer-settler, robbing him of docile and willing labour. Even the notorious Black Circuit of 1812, in which government and colonist won a partial victory over the missionary, meant that "the farmer could not continue to be his own policeman as well as his own judge; and the chastisement of a servant, hitherto an unchallenged right of the master, was now to come under the review and control of the state and of its law courts. At the time, writes W.M. Macmillan, "this was almost a revolutionary innovation; and so deep was the resentment caused that, even yet, colonial opinion is slow to recognize, either that legal intervention was inevitable, or that the attendant troubles were to be expected in the progress of civilized government in South Africa. This was actually the first round in the fight with the idea underlying slavery."[1] It was also the first round in the varied aspects of the "southern African question" which Robert Moffat was to meet beyond the frontier in the clash of Bantu and Boer, and of which he also saw the beginnings between Matabele and European in Southern Rhodesia.

To have the "rights of native people asserted on political and economic grounds was bad enough for the frontier farmer, but to have them also linked with the Christian religion was

[1] Macmillan 91.

doubly galling. This was the heart of the "colonist-farmer" and "foreign-missionary" antagonism with which Moffat was to live for fifty years in southern Africa.

For the Boer farmer, his religion was a social factor which he jealously guarded as a group privilege, and because of it he felt justified in his right to dominate the heathen by whom he was surrounded. His Christianity was part of his group consciousness, inseparable from his white skin and social mastership that formed "a caste into which the individual was born, or from which he was excluded as the result of the same accident".[1] The idea that the Christian religion, when it was imparted to a heathen Hottentot, could change his status in any way was foreign to the farmer's conception of religion - which must not be mixed up with the revolutionary doctrines of Liberty, equality, and fraternity. Those doctrines were admirable among the closed company of the farmers themselves, but once religious men were seen to be advocating them for all and sundry then the very foundation of society, as the Boer farmer conceived it, was threatened. It was his religion which gave the farmer the right to dominate those who had had the misfortune to be born without the pale of civilization, burdened with the stigma of colour: he was now face to face - even on the remote veld - with perverse prophets who, on the grounds of the same faith, preached the strange equality of all men.[2] So ran the stern rib of argument which was to make southern Africa and its spreading frontier a battle-ground of human rights throughout Moffat's lifetime, and far beyond it. Modern South Africa's doctrine of <u>apartheid</u> had its genesis, as well as its eventual exodus, amongst these Bible-reading Cape farmers.

1, 2 I.D. MacCrone, <u>Race Attitudes in South Africa</u>, 127, 130.

As for slavery itself, the Cape that Moffat knew still based its domestic and farm life on a slave economy, even though the Act of 1807 had abolished slave trading. It was a cosmopolitan slavery, with slaves drawn from many races, including Asiatics, who were prized for their excellence as butlers, cooks, and house servants. Families in Capetown and in the wine and wheat areas as far inland as seventy miles might have thirty slaves each, of varied types, who were nearly always well-treated, well-fed and well-housed. The mistress often took a great pride in her female slaves, and liked to see them handsome and courteous when they walked out in her company to carry her Bible to church or to hold an umbrella to shield her complexion from the hot sun. On the farms, the slaves were the expert craftsmen, doing most of the manual work amongst the vines and in the fields; so much so "that the farmer had become a gentleman overseer on his estate, disdaining all forms of manual labour as beneath the dignity of the white man".[1]

Five years before Moffat arrived, John Campbell (sent out by the Missionary Society in 1812 to inspect the missions) lodged in Capetown with a slave-owning family:

> In the house where I lodged they are treated as if they were their own children, and most of them would be sorry to leave the family. Their children are put to school, and play about the room where the family sit at their meals with much freedom. ... All the children of a female slave are the property of her master, whether the father be bond or free; of course it is the interest of the master to see that even the mother treats the child well, on the same principle on which the farmer takes care of his young foals, because by their death, or their disease, he becomes a loser.[2]

At the Cape, slavery might "wear a smile",[3] but it was still slavery: an institution against which the humanitarians and

1,3 Edwards, Towards Emancipation, 15ff., 16.

2 Campbell 15, 7.

emancipators in Britain were then beginning to prepare a final onslaught. To Lord Charles Somerset, high Tory and traditionally against reform movements, any independence of action on the part of slaves and Hottentots, within the Colony or on the frontiers, might prove fatal to the economic welfare of the farmer-colonists and the prosperity of the Cape as a trading centre and market. He had grave doubts about the worth of the missionary "institutions", and in a letter to the Colonial Secretary, Earl Bathurst, in 1817, he wondered whether any benefit at all had come to the Colony from the exertions of missionaries. He wrote:

> I am disposed to think no further encouragement should at present be given to missionary establishments beyond the boundary ... and with respect to those already formed, it should be clearly made known to them that they must be liable to the same laws and regulations as are binding upon other British settlers in this province.[1]

He had a sharp brush in 1814 with William Anderson of Griqua Town, who resisted an order that his Griquas should be liable for military service on the grounds that they lived beyond the Colony and were not British subjects, and in any case would misunderstand a compulsory order of that kind.[2] Somerset was offended that an order of the government should be questioned in this way, particularly by a missionary in charge of a settlement notorious for harbouring runaway servants and slaves belonging to farmers in the Colony.[3] These missionaries were stiff-necked, and smacked of "Dissent" in religion and of "Reform" in politics, and Lord Charles Somerset was in sympathy with neither. He

[1] Clinton 110.
[2] Anderson to Burder 29.10.17 LMS.
[3] Taylor to Burder 26.1.17 LMS.

remembered that two of them, Van der Kemp and Read, had even dared to marry Hottentot women, in order, as they said, to give the Hottentots a public example of "the inviolable ties of matrimony",[1] a crowning folly which was unforgivable in the eyes of Cape Colony. It was clearly time to call a halt to the expansion of missions.

Somerset was in this mood when the newly-arrived young men were introduced to him by the Reverend George Thom, the then unofficial agent of the London Mission in Capetown. Thom, originally destined for mission work in India, had "stopped off" at Capetown and after four years was still working there amongst the garrison and hoping that the mission would build him a church in the heart of Capetown. The correspondence between him and George Burder, the then secretary of the mission in London, shows an opinionated, critical, and self-important man, censorious about the state of the missions and anxious to be regarded as the local boss.[2] In the newcomers he obviously saw an opportunity to create a "Thom party" over against the older group of missionaries, of whom the faithful but luckless James Read was his chief target for venom. But Thom had the gift of perseverance, and was not the least abashed by previous frigid interviews, when the Governor mistook him for a Methodist instead of a Church of Scotland minister and acting Chaplain to the 93rd Regiment! He eventually became a predikant of the Dutch Reformed Church.

Moffat was the youngest of the group that appeared at Government House on January 22, 1817,[3] a slim youth, six feet tall, dark haired, dark eyed, with the characteristic long, thin nose which is so marked amongst his descendants in Northern Rhodesia to-day.

1 Lovett 503.
2 Thom to Burder 25.1.17; 18.10.17 LMS.
3 Taylor to Burder 24.1.17 LMS.

John Brownlee, a fellow Scot from Wishaw, was later founder of King William's Town; James Kitchingman became head of the Bethelsdorp Institution; John Taylor, the spokesman, entered government service as a minister; and Evan Evans returned to England in ill-health. They presented a formal memorial, and then had their interview with Somerset, who appeared obsessed with the problem or runaway slaves and the probable chaos of the border regions if more missionary institutions were there to give them refuge. In vain Taylor argued that their object was "not to teach the people to be rebellious but to submit to the powers that be" and that they "would exhort slaves to return to their masters".[1] Not even their youth and obvious readiness to co-operate with authority moved Somerset. He remembered the tough and awkward Anderson.

The setback at Government House was paralleled by the tale of domestic misery amongst the missionaries themselves, which the acrimonious Thom peddled to the newcomers. Allowances were as low as £35 to £45 per annum, and subject to the violent fluctuations of the Cape Exchange. There were all kinds of irregularities deriving from the independence of the missions in their extremely isolated positions and the lack of ecclesiastical supervision, which, by its very nature as an independent missionary organization, uncommitted to any one view of church order, the London Missionary Society could not provide. There were irregular marriages, as well as mixed marriages; baptisms by unordained men; and an alleged lapse into immorality by James Read himself. Factions too had arisen on policy, as was to be expected with fifteen missions scattered as far as Bethelsdorp, 500 miles east of Capetown, and Griqua Town 700 miles to the north-east. One group believed in concentration on the

[1] Taylor to Burder 26.1.17 LMS.

evangelization of the Hottentots, and the other in the conversion of the colonists.[1]

The gloomy and forbidding tale was enough to deter the new recruits, and Moffat moaned to the secretary in London in most pious and respectful tones:

> Surely never was there a period when a body of missionaries were in such a confused and deplorable (& awful to add) degraded condition. Ah! my esteemed Father were you to witness the deeds done by your missionaries in this country your very soul would melt with anguish.

But in the same letter he ordered:

> One pocket box sextant, one artificial horizon with two spare cap glasses ... also two pocket compasses, and two of Schmacalder's Patent Pocket Compass (82 Strand London) for taking angles and observations, with two three-legged stands which when put together are in the form of two walking staffs. Also two maps of Africa on a large scale.[2]

The order to London, written from the home of John Melvill, Government Surveyor at the Cape, showed that Moffat was characteristically managing his time of waiting. Melvill initiated him into the mysteries of instruments; while, out at Stellenbosch, a kindly wine-grower, J.M. Hamman, taught him enough Dutch to start him off in a language that he preached and prayed in regularly until he finally mastered Sechuana in 1827. During these days of waiting he copied out in his fairest copperplate the two sets of lectures which represent the only formal higher education he ever had, and which he kept by him all his life. One was the 460 pages of William Roby's Theological Lectures referred to in the first chapter, and the other David Bogue's "Missionary Lectures", borrowed from his colleague James

[1] Thom to Burder 11.7.17 LMS.

[2] Moffat to Burder 28.6.17 LMS.

Kitchingman, who had been a pupil in Bogue's seminary at Gosport, a vade mecum of perfectionism for the prospective missionary. His needs were a "good temper, sagacity, quickness and reading of mind, firmness and intrepidity, skill in ingratiating himself in the people's favour, a good constitution, ability to endure hardship - as to food, clothing and habitation". The twenty-six lectures were packed with solid common-sense, especially on the subject of preaching, which should be simple in ideas, words, phrases and sentences; while the admonition that "the person who cannot apply to learn the language of the heathen people has not the talents requisite for a missionary" was not lost on Robert Moffat.[1]

George Thom reported to London on Moffat as a "faithful and zealous brother",[2] and, to show his liking for the young man, took him on an evangelistic tour of the western areas of the Cape Province. Starting out from Stellenbosch on horseback, they covered seven hundred miles in six weeks over a desolate region, with isolated primitive homesteads where congregations from miles around gathered to listen to their preaching~~, which for both men must have been~~ in stumbling Dutch mixed with English. They camped in the open to serenades "more wild than sweet of jackals and hyenas" and in fear of fugitive slaves more dangerous than the animals. They fell into a muddy stream, with poor Moffat under his horse and the triumphant Thom secure on his, finishing up the adventure by spending the night together shivering in a corner of a shepherds' slaves' hut. It was Moffat's introduction to the grind of African travel, and the result was that his Dutch improved to the point of being able to pray extemporaneously in it,

[1] Bogue's Lectures MS LMS.

[2] Thom to Burder 10.4.17

and to talk easily with the "colonists and the heathen".[1]

If Thom's evangelistic jaunt was calculated to inspire Moffat with missionary zeal, the unofficial synod he called in August 1817 was well designed to kill it. Only an ardent, sanguine, and permanently hopeful young man of twenty-one could have withstood the onslaught of seaminess and gossip which the synod was called on to investigate. Thom had no authority for calling the synod to consider the state of the missions and the various charges brought against individual missionaries, although he claimed that ten men had demanded such a meeting. In the event, only six were present at the Orphan House and signed the minutes, including Thom himself and three of the new-comers - Moffat, Taylor and Evans - who could have little practical knowledge of the questions involved, and might be regarded as echoes of the Capetown view of affairs as opposed to those of the far-scattered rural areas. But the minutes reveal that on some of the points discussed Moffat already had decided views, which are reported in a kind of staccato verbatim :-[2]

On the question of "single missionary rule over one station":

> Moffat. I disapprove of this rule as being contrary to the spirit of the gospel.

[In view of Moffat's own later dislike of committees and control, and his tendency to autocracy, the reply is revealing]

On the question of"missionaries and slaves":

> Moffat. A law should be made by our society declaring them free.
>
> Siedenfaden (missionary at Caledon Institution). I would leave it to the conscience of my wife.

[1] Thom to Burder 10.4.17

[2] Synod Minutes 12.8.17 LMS

On the question of "children born to married slaves who may be in the household of a missionary. When should the children be free?:

Moffat. Free from birth.

Thom. Free at 25 years of age.

Thom's opinion was the conventional one at the Cape. He was echoing the official view, and no doubt had his eye on the minutes of the "synod" and his own standing with the government. In the end, the "synod" passed a curious compromise resolution to the effect that "it is not proper for missionaries to buy or sell slaves".

On the fifth day, the "synod" considered the case of Mr. Schmelen, who "on a journey to the mouth of the Orange River without the boundaries of the Colony did marry himself". This was one of the choicest scandals of the "synod", which involved the good name of a Dutch missionary, J.H. Schmelen, who was compelled in the course of his duties in Namaqualand to travel in his wagon with his maid-servant. To "avoid the appearance of evil", he reported, he determined to marry her, called a group of witnesses together, read a Dutch form of marriage, and took her for his wife. He afterwards acknowledged his hasty imprudence. Moffat's synodical comment was tolerant:

> I consider his conduct as very imprudent and bordering on sin, but considering the circumstances he was in at the time, being out of the Colony where no law exists, I cannot see that we are authorised by the Holy Scriptures to cut him off from missionary work.[1]

On the last day of this strange assembly [August 21, 1817] it appears to have worked itself into a mood of judgment over the sins of the brethren who were not present, and it issued formal declarations that unless certain people, including James Read, were removed as missionaries they would all resign. It

[1] Synod Minutes 12.8.17 LMS

was altogether a lamentable and unworthy ten days of manoeuvring on Thom's part, which brought the twenty years of mission work in Cape Colony to a low ebb of domestic uncharitableness and pious spleen. But the youthful glow of Moffat and his colleagues remained undimmed; and so did the zeal of the veteran James Read, who survived for another forty years of faithful service in South Africa. But Thom's correspondence and the minutes of his "synod" had their effect in London. A firm central control of mission affairs throughout South Africa was needed, and the man to give it was eventually found in John Philip, of Aberdeen, whose entry on the stage of South African affairs in January 1819 marked a turning-point not only in the direction of missions but in the general battle there for human rights.

It was now seven months since Moffat landed from the Alacrity, and he was still methodically kicking his heels between Capetown and Stellenbosch, copying his lectures, learning his instruments, and perfecting his Dutch. The way to the frontier was still barred. But between August 21 and October 22 George Thom, freed from the cares of his phoney "synod", got busy in representations at Government House, an exercise in persistence which ideally suited him. Influential doors were opened to him by his marriage with the fourth daughter of "J. L. Vos, who was President of the Burgher Senate and a man of much influence and fortune".[1]

No doubt, too, the likeable characters of the young men from Britain had won friends in Capetown, where the London Missions were not without their influential supporters. The youth and good looks of the young gardener from Scotland ~~must have been~~ were an asset in all the recommendations which led to the

[1] Thom to Burder 18.9.17 LMS

final permission, in October 1817, for Moffat and Kitchingman to make a journey into the bleak western flanks of the Colony known as Namaqualand, far away from the drift of the Boer farmers as they sought for openings in the east and north-east.

There was no harm in allowing these youths to wander through the arid region beyond the lower Orange River where the semi-desert sloped down to the sea. Those acres were not coveted by any of the restless Boer farmers, and, in any case, they were dominated by the wild ruffian, Jager Afrikaner, who could make life miserably uneasy for anyone who lingered too long. Up there, the young Moffat could do little damage to law and order on the frontier, and he might come back with a different view of his own future and even be ready to settle in a cosy pastorate within the Colony, which had already been suggested to him. But Governor Somerset was dealing with a young man behind whose guileless simplicity lay a tough resilience and an even tougher determination. Once he had opened a door to the north, he would never willingly close it behind him.

Chapter 3

APPRENTICE JOURNEY 1817-18

I being still a growing youth

When the wagons rolled out of Capetown on October 22, 1817, Robert had in the forechest his carpenter's and Gardener's tools, a copy of Young on Agriculture and Young on Botany, a thermometer, a microscope, a pocket compass, some kitchen utensils, a fowling-piece, and a Dutch grammar and dictionary. It was the standard missionary equipment, supplied to him in London, for the mixture of husbandry, culture, and religion which nineteenth-century missions aimed at. His clothes were "too dandy fashion", he said, for the rough-and-tumble of wagon life, but he liked to be neat and well washed, even in the desert, and the motherly Dutch vrouws on the way up through the Colony piped an eye over his youthful comeliness. One of them predicted that Afrikaner - the wild chieftain of the Namaqualand frontier - would "strip off my skin and make a drum of it to dance to", and another prophesied that he would"make a drinking-cup of my skull".[1] These ladies liked his white shirt and carefully tied neckerchief, which Robert wore all through the long journey, but he noted the absence of the lively laundry-maids of the Cape and the lack of ironing and mangling arrangements. One native woman washed his shirts without soap in a kind of "bag-wash", and the fastidious Robert, in order to have a "nice shirt for the sabbath", turned a shirt inside out "to feel the comfort of a clean shirt". He had seen his mother do it, and was thankful that she had taught him how to use a needle and thread, which were all to hand in the big box.

He also remembered another trick of his mother's, which did

[1] Labours 94

not turn out so happily in the wilds of the frontier. He had seen her smooth a shirt by hammering it with a piece of wood. He substituted a piece of fine granite, but on holding up the shirt he found it "riddled with holes, some as large as the point of my finger"! When he got back to the Cape again his shirts were mostly minus their sleeves.

In the South African travel tradition the party invariably outspanned at a farm-house for the night, and tasted the Biblical hospitality of the patriarchal Dutch, who laid out the Bible and psalm-books with the home-brewed beer and sometimes invited the visitors to read and pray. On one occasion Robert noticed the large number of Hottentot servants about the house, and when the family gathered for prayers he mildly asked whether the servants might join the group:

> Moffat: I mean the Hottentots of whom I see so many on your farm.
>
> Farmer: Hottentots! Do you mean that? Then, let me go to the mountain and call the baboons - if you want a congregation of that sort. Or, stop, I have it; my sons, call the dogs that lie in front of the door - they will do.

Moffat quietly dropped the argument, but, when it came to the reading of the Scriptures, he chose the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman in the seventh chapter of St. Mark with its pertinent reply: "Truth, Lord, but even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the master's table." He had barely begun his exposition when the farmer interrupted him:

> Will mynheer sit down and wait a little? He shall have the Hottentots.

In trooped a crowd of coloured men and women, astonished at the invitation to step over the sacred threshold of the master's house; and Moffat was even more astonished when the farmer turned to him and said: "My friend, you took a hard hammer and you have broken a hard head."[1]

[1] Lives 32

The stony, desolate road led on towards Namaqualand, ~~and~~ divided by the Orange River into Little Namaqualand to the South and Great Namaqualand to the North, equally barren and equally burnt, a land of no seasons, almost perpetual drought, and spontaneous thunder-storms. John Campbell, who had been there five years before Moffat, aptly called it the Southern Sahara:

> Wherever the eye turned there was nothing but the perfection of sterility; the hills appeared a brown burnt colour, and the plain was deep sand, strewed with tufts of withered grass. The consideration of being so far from any cooling stream or fountain of water, no doubt added to the gloominess of that desert, to which there was no visible termination.[1]

Moffat, with gardener's eye, noticed that the "soil is generally impregnated with saltpetre, as to crackle under the feet, like hoar frost, and it is with great difficulty that any kind of vegetable can be made to grow. Much of the country is hard and stony, interspersed with plains of deep sand. There is much granite; and quartz is so abundantly scattered, reflecting such a glare of light from the rays of the sun, that the traveller, if exposed at noonday, can scarcely allow his eyelids to be sufficiently open to enable him to keep the course he wishes to pursue".[2]

He also noticed the peculiar clicking language of the Namaquas, a nomadic collection of people, half Hottentot, half Bushmen, who roamed this no-man's land of harsh sunshine and brittle soil, caring for a few sheep and watching always for the track of a thunder-storm which meant a sudden and sparkling wave of fresh grass which would perish almost as quickly in the rising heat.

A dozen years before Moffat, Abraham Albrecht, the pioneer

[1] Campbell 1815, 445

[2] Labours, 67

Dutch missionary, had found them "obliged to live on the gum which they gather from the kameel doorn (a mimosa), upon the bulbs and roots growing spontaneously, and upon wild honey. The natives hunt the smaller species of bucks, and kill them with arrows or assagais; but the larger game they sometimes catch in holes, which they dig near the wells of fresh water. For clothing they make use of karosses, made of sheep-skin. Five or six skins are requisite to make a kaross, which is worn the woolly side next the skin and also serves as a cover during the night, but is thrown aside in summer[when] the men go quite naked, except a small piece of jackal's skin. The women are clothed with sheep-skin karosses, like the men; but, like them, throw them off in summer, and wear only a small apron of skin".[1]

"Nothing much had changed amongst the Namaquas since the patient Albrecht brothers set themselves to create a few gardens in a desert, and wrote in isolated misery to the missionary society in London that "we were never in our lives so perplexed, to think what we should eat or drink ... not only to our grief but that also of our people, in this dry, sandy desert, where we are deprived of human assistance, but must rejoice when able to get just a drink of water, which is mostly brack or saltish".[2]

These pioneer missionaries, and Moffat too, were expected to live off the country as much as possible, not to bother too much about the number of rix-dollars in their accounts in Cape-town, and to plod on through the sands with the lines of communication growing longer and thinner. Their pace might be that of the oxen they drove, but they needed their poor beasts' patience too, as their little companies set up homes in bee-hive huts near brackish fountains and ventured to call them "stations", even christening these outposts with names such as Stille Hoop (Silent Hope) and Blyde Uitkomst (Happy Deliverance).

1, 2 Transactions, LMS iii, 208ff, 1806

The mission to Namaqualand was one of those enterprises which adorn African history, because of the personal heroism and fortitude of its participants, but also provides evidence of how blithely unplanned missions could be. The Dutch government at the Cape, in 1804, unlike its British successors, was eager for missions beyond the Colony's borders; and the London Society sent three Dutchmen - Christian and Abraham Albrecht, and John Seidenfaden - northwards on May 22, 1805. It was a gruelling, even cruel, assignment in a waterless world where they were expected quickly to become self-supporting in little havens of piety. Not only did they endure the elements but also the terror of Afrikaner, whose musketeers roamed the area and finally destroyed their station at Warm Bath in 1811. By the time Moffat appeared, another intrepid group - J.H.Schmelen, John Ebner, and Henry Helm - had literally dug themselves into Namaqualand and had managed to tame Afrikaner. Under Ebner he had even joined the mission.

Afrikaner's story goes back to the early days of Dutch settlement at the Cape, when the tribe of free Hottentots linked with the Afrikaner family met the pressure of the farmers as they moved into the farming areas. The land greed of the newcomers, and the need for farm workers, eventually brought Afrikaner and his people under the control of a family named Penaar, who used them as shepherds and flockmasters in conditions of near-slavery. Cruelty and abuse led to rebellion, which Moffat describes:

> It was even-tide and the farmer, exasperated to find his commands disregarded, ordered them to appear at the door of his house. It had not yet entered their minds to do violence to the farmer. When they reached the front door of the house, and Jager, the chief, had gone up the few steps leading to the door, to state their complaints, the farmer rushed furiously on the chieftain, and with one blow precipitated him to the bottom of the steps. At this moment Titus (the chief's brother) drew

> from behind him his gun and fired on Penaar, who staggered backward and fell. They then entered the house; the wife, having witnessed the murder of her husband, shrieked, and implored mercy. They told her on no account to be alarmed, for they had nothing against her. ... Overcome with terror, two children escaped by the back door. These were slain by two Bushmen, who had long been looking out for an opportunity of revenging injuries they had suffered. [1]Mrs. Penaar escaped in safety to the nearest farm.

Afrikaner and his group vanished to the banks of the Orange River and set up a bandit kingdom in Namaqualand, raiding not only the Colony farms to the south but the northern tribes as well. He was a man of considerable intelligence, and, according to Moffat, was a strategist of sorts:

> The success which, in almost every instance, followed the arms of such a small and inconsiderable body of banditti as that of Afrikaner may be ascribed to his mode of warfare. He endeavoured always to attack his enemy on the plain; or, if entrenched or among bushes, he instantly drove them from their sheltering places. ... Afrikaner was a man of great prowess, and possessed a mind capable of studying the tactics of savage warfare. His brother Titus was, perhaps, still more fierce and fearless; and though a little man he was an extraordinary runner, and able to bear unparalleled fatigue. He had been known, single-handed, to overtake a party of twenty possessing fire-arms, and only [2]retired when his musket was shot to pieces in his hand.

One of the amusing episodes of Afrikaner's career of cattle raiding and stealing is his encounter with Mrs.Albrecht's pianoforte. To escape one of his raids, the missionaries of Warm Bath - across the Orange River - buried themselves and their belongings six feet deep in the sand, "and remained buried alive for the space of a week, having the tilt-sail of a wagon thrown over the mouth of the pit, to keep off the burning rays of an almost vertical sun".[3]

1, 2, 3 Labours 75; 79; 87-88

Mrs. Albrecht's new pianoforte, brought all the way from London, was also buried in a shallow grave. Some of Afrikaner's men, looking around for something to steal, trod on the grave and were astonished to hear music. Afrikaner himself came and jumped up and down, making more music. "He stood motionless", writes Moffat, "gazing over his shoulder, with mouth and eyes dilated, hesitating whether to stand still, and see the dead arise, which he had heard the missionaries preach about, or to take to his heels." They dug up the music and passed round bits of the piano, which were shown to Moffat five years later.

By the end of November, 1817, Moffat and the Kitchingman's had reached Bysondermeid (Steinkop), on the stony road to Pella and the Orange River. It was slow going, in the springless wagon, made even slower by Mrs. Kitchingman, who was approaching what Moffat calls "a period of maternal solicitude". They did most of their travelling in the cool of the night, the men taking it in turns to trudge behind the wagon to look after the spare oxen and the sheep - fair game for the prowling hyena, who "would approach with his unearthly howl and set the poor timid sheep to their heels, and the missionary, dreading his loss of mutton, gets his legs lacerated by one bush and his face scratched by another, tumbles over an ant-hill, and then headlong into the large hole of a wild boar".

The little flock of sheep they started out with from Cape-town was reduced to one, which "generally travelled with a leathern thong tied round its neck", as the pet of the caravan. On the night before it was to be killed for food, the sheep, frightened by hyena, leapt into the bushes and disappeared:

> Early next morning Mr. K. and I followed the track which showed us that the hyena had pursued it to the mountains. After a long and wearisome search we discovered our lost sheep near the top of the rugged elevation. It had still, as the natives express it, de schrik in de lyfe (the terror in the body) and fled at our approach, till it

> ascended cliffs beyond our reach. It was most mortifying to us to leave such a feast to the panthers, but, not having a gun with us and seeing some footmarks of these dangerous animals, we slowly returned to the wagons where all were anticipating mutton chop, and the only compliment paid to our exertions was that we had managed very badly. [1]

Just after the lost sheep adventure Robert did a gallant courtesy to Mrs. Kitchingman by carrying her over a swollen river which she hesitated to cross in the wagon. "Being rather more robust than Mr. K," he writes, "this duty devolved on me, and it was not an easy one, as the stones in the river were as slippery as butter, and the whole party standing on the bank all in a titter expecting every moment we should both have a plunge."

From Bysondermeid, Moffat went on alone with his guides to Pella:

> Having travelled nearly the whole of Friday night thro' sand, next morning at sun rise the oxen lay down in the yoke with fatigue which obliged us to unyoke short of the place where we trusted there was water. ... It grew dark before we reached the place, being deep sand and no road, the oxen could go no further. Daylight next morning discovered to us that we were involved in sandhills when thirst drove us immediately with the oxen to search for the watering place which lay in the hollow of a mountain at a considerable distance. After digging for two hours in sand, water made its appearance exactly like the bilgewater of a ship both in taste and colour, but thirst converted it into a cooling draught as if from a chrystal fountain. Having got a little to the oxen as well as ourselves we departed to the wagon. The extreme heat of the sun renders it impossible to walk on the sand even with shoes; the oxen stood together to hide their feet, or rather to render the ground cool by their shadows. [2]

[1] Labours 98

[2] R.M. to Burder 2.3.18 LMS

The oxen grew frantic in the heat, "those on the outside always trying to get in to the centre", and when night came, to inspan for the journey, the oxen had walked off back to Bysondermeid, and the guide, maddened by thirst and in terror of lions, gave up the chase:

> Three days I remained with my wagon-driver on this burning plain, with scarcely a breath of wind; and what there was felt as if coming from the mouth of an oven. We had only tufts of dry grass to make a small fire, or rather flame; and little was needful, for we had scarcely any food to prepare. We saw no human being, not a single antelope, but in the dead of night we sometimes heard the distant roar of the lion on the mountain.[1]

A messenger got through to Pella and the missionary Bartlett arrived on horseback with a supply of mutton tied to his saddle, which "required no keeping to make it tender", and with oxen used to deep sand Moffat and his wagon got to Pella with its "gardens and numerous fountains which lie scattered all over". The Bartletts had nursed this oasis into life and showed Moffat what could be done in stony, salty soil, provided plenty of water was available. They displayed their melons, and pampoons or gours, their rows of vegetables and patch of tobacco plant - a sight that warmed his gardener's heart and sent him off across the Orange River with ideas in his head about planting civilization in a sterile land, based on hard work and water, which flourished in later years at Kuruman.

The Orange River at Pella was five hundred yards wide, studded with rocks and with a rapid current, and the plan was to float the wagon and its contents over on a raft of dry willow logs fastened together with the inner bark of mimosa. It took some days to get everything over, for the raft was swept downstream with every load, and after hitting the

[1] Labours 100

~~2, 3 R.M. to Burdor 2.3.18 LMS~~

opposite shore and discharging its cargo it had to be got back again, usually log by log, and then re-assembled. The last raft was prepared for him, but Moffat refused to board it, and, stripping off his clothes, swam across the river, to the terrified consternation of watchers on both banks. This feat may have had a lot to do with the sharp rise in Moffat's prestige as he got his wagon party together for the trek to Afrikaner's.

A deputation from Warm Bath led by a native teacher pleaded with Moffat to go home with them; and "the women came like a regiment, and declared that if I left them I must take the wagon over their bodies, for they would lie down before the wheels". Only the arrival of a welcoming party from Afrikaner's quietened the women, who "withdrew with tears" as they saw Moffat carried off in the opposite direction. "We left the river", he wrote, "on Saturday evening, thermometer 110; had rather a rough journey there being no sort of road."[1]

Afrikaner's Kraal was a disappointment. Moffat had no doubt built up an ideal picture of a mission station, with the missionary Ebner in close friendship with the converted Afrikaner, with ample signs of settled civilization and orderly life, which to Moffat were always amongst the primary fruits of Christian missions. Instead of that he found dissension between Ebner and Titus, Afrikaner's forceful brother, and even the threat of violence between the two men. Ebner had evidently had enough of the Namaquas and their ways, and after six years beyond the Colony was beginning to think of the more solid comforts of pastoral work nearer the Cape. He hailed Moffat's arrival with relief, as no doubt did Afrikaner himself. The chief commented on Moffat's youth, and hoped he would live

[1] R.M. to Burder 2.3.18 LMS

[2] ~~R.M. to parents 8.4.18~~

long with him and his people, and then ordered the women to get busy in building Moffat a house. In little more than half an hour of his arrival the young man was installed in a "hemispheric hut" made of bent poles covered with mats:

> When the sun shone it was unbearably hot; when the rain fell I came in for a share of it; when the wind blew I had frequently to decamp to escape the dust; and in addition to these little inconveniences any hungry cur of a dog that wishes a night's lodging would force itself through the frail wall. ... I have started up from a sound sleep to defend myself and my dwelling from being crushed to pieces by the rage of two bulls which had met to fight a nocturnal duel.[1]

While Ebner and Titus quarrelled, Moffat and Afrikaner became friends in that slow gentle way which was Moffat's secret. "More than once", he wrote, "I took my violin and in the stillness of the evening played and sung a hymn." Afrikaner liked to sit and watch him, and would often spend the day in the shadow of a great rock "gazing on the blessed book". Moffat helped him with his Dutch Bible and would try to explain something of the mysteries of creation as they looked out over the barren Namaqualand landscape. Moffat doubted whether anything could ever be made to grow in the fountain-less spot Afrikaner had chosen for his village, but he persevered with Afrikaner himself:

> One day when seated together I happened in absence of mind to be gazing steadfastly on him. It arrested his attention, and he modestly enquired the cause. I replied: "I was trying to picture to myself your carrying fire and sword through the country, and I could not think how eyes like yours could smile at human woe. Afrikaner shed a flood of tears."[2]

1, 2 R.M. to parents 8.4.18 NA
and Labours 104, 111

Together the two men set about starting a school for a hundred and twenty children, in which the first lesson was mass washing at the fountain - a process which had to be repeated regularly because the filthy karosses kept the children permanently dirty. The tanned skins sewn together with the sinews of animals "harboured much company", and the washing campaign spread to a "cleaner kaross" campaign amongst the whole community:

> I used every plea to induce them to wash their dirty karosses, which I at last accomplished, and it is delightful to see them now to keep them clean. Many of the older people thro' shame imitate the example of the children. ... They are candid enough to acknowledge that a clean kaross is much warmer and comfortable than a foul one; neither, say they, are we troubled with so many lice. Formerly most of their attention in church was taken up in slaughtering these their fat companions, and I always get my share of those restless inhabitants while preaching.[1]

But Namaqua laziness shocked Moffat as much as Namaqua dirt:

> It grieves me to see so many stout fellows lying sleeping in their karosses nearly the whole day, but the question is what are they to do? When the cows and goats come every morning and evening they drink the milk, and when that is scarce they bind their bellies with a belt to prevent hunger. They eat serpents and reptiles of every description rather than work they are so inured to laziness. But where there is a proper place for a station and suitable plans adopted with perseverance I am convinced that great things might be done.[2]

He was also convinced that the "great things" could not be done in the spot where Afrikaner was then living. It was no place to establish "civilization", or even an outpost in the wilderness, for it appeared to Moffat to be the very wilderness itself ironically named "Jerusalem" by Ebner, but to the young man of twenty-three more like "the mountains of Gilboa on which neither rain nor dew fell".[3]

1, 2 R.M. to Burder 22.6.18 LMS

3 R.M. to parents 15.12.18 NA

He decided to prospect northwards as far as the Great Fish River in Great Namaqualand, and to take Afrikaner with him in the hope of finding a spot where the chief and his people might be more profitably trained in the crafts, if not the arts, of decent living.[1] Movement of this kind was not unfamiliar to Afrikaner and his brothers and their people: it was their life. For them, there was no going back into the Colony, where there was a heavy price on the head of Afrikaner himself and the prospect of sjambocking and gaol for the rest of them. They were wanderers for life, and the idea of an adventure northwards led by the young missionary had a lively appeal. Moffat, however, was surprised when thirty men turned up for the start, headed by Afrikaner; and when Moffat objected to so large a party he was met with the disarming reply that they were all going to protect him.

But to assemble, as Moffat had already learned, was not to leave. The only wagon available to carry food and equipment was crippled, and there was no blacksmith's shop that side of the Orange River to repair its broken iron ties. The party stood around to see what Moffat would do, and spent two days watching him. The first attempt at a fire hot enough to weld iron was made with a native bellows, "made of goat's skin, to the neck end of which was attached the horn of an elk and at the other end two parallel sticks", which were opened and closed by hand, "making a puffing like something broken-winded". The iron got red-hot, Moffat sweated, but the welding failed:

> I set my brains again to work to try to improve on the bellows; for it was wind I wanted. Two goats were killed, the largest on the station, and their skins prepared till they were as soft as cloth. These skins now resembled bags, the open ends of which I nailed to the edge of a circular piece of board in which was a valve; one end of the machine was connected with the fire, and had a weight on it to force out the wind when the other end was drawn out to supply more air.[2]

1 R.M. to Burder 22.6.18 LMS
2 Labours 117

The apparatus worked, and with "a blue granite stone" for anvil and a clumsy pair of tongs the iron was welded, Moffat modestly receiving the praises of his audience but "heartily wishing their departure". The party moved off towards the Karas Mountains and the Great Fish River, a land of sandy plains, granite escarpments and slaty formations, with plenty of wild life. Zebras, wild asses and giraffes, provided abundant meat; and "when one of the larger animals was shot we generally remained a day to cut the meat up into thin pieces, which, spread on the bushes, soon dried". This meat was stowed away in the wagon, and came out so tough and hard that it had to be put under the hot ashes of a fire and then beaten between two stones. Even then it needed "very hard chewing", which gave Moffat a sore jaw-bone. Water was scarce and was usually found in small stagnant pools covered with a green froth. They found honey in the fissures of the rocks, but as the bees had been busy amongst the poisonous euphorbia bushes the honey created a "terrible inward heat" which water made worse. Thirsty, poisoned and hungry, Moffat bound his stomach "with a thong to prevent the gnawing", and thought of all he should be doing to "break the bread of eternal life to the perishing heathen".

It was lion country too. The first roar of "his majesty" was heard one night when the party was bivouacked bya small pool near the Great Fish River:

> We had just closed our united evening worship, the book was still in my hand, and the closing notes of the song of praise had scarcely fallen from our lips when the terrific roar of the lion was heard; our oxen, which were before quietly chewing the cud, rushed upon us, and over our fires, leaving us prostrated in a cloud of dust and sand. Hats and hymn-books, our Bible and our guns, were all scattered in wild confusion ... the oxen were pursued, brought back and secured to the

> wagon, for we could ill afford to lose any. Afrikaner grasped a firebrand and exclaimed "Follow me", and but for this promptness and intrepidity we must have lost some of our number, for nothing can exceed the terror of oxen at even the smell of a lion ... they start like racehorses, with their tails erect, and sometimes days will elapse before they are found.[1]

But it was people, not animals, that Moffat was looking for, and he found few. "The whole appearance of the country impresses the mind with the idea that it is only fit for beasts of prey. The people seem to drag out a miserable existence, wandering from place to place in quest of grass, game, or wild roots." He discovered one old woman abandoned by a stagnant pool who had been left to die by her family. She was no longer able to carry children on her back, and had become a handicap to the family group as it wandered about in search of food and water. "She took hold of the skin of her left arm with her fingers, and raising it up as one would do loose linen she said: 'I hear the lions; but there is nothing on me they would eat; I have no flesh on me for them to scent.'" Moffat offered to take her to people in the next village, but she objected because "they would only do the same thing again. It is our custom; I am nearly dead; I do not want to die again." He left a supply of dried meat, and tobacco and a knife, with the woman and promised to return - only to find that she had disappeared. Probably her family, finding her still alive and supplied with food, were alarmed at what the "hat-wearers" - as the party was called - might do in revenge. In any case, the news that the dreaded Afrikaner was on the move through the countryside seems to have depopulated the empty spaces completely during this tour, and Moffat got back to Afrikaner's Kraal disillusioned about the prospects in Great Namaqualand.[2]

[1] Labours 131

[2] R.M. to Burder 20.8.18 LMS

~~[3] R.M. to parents 15.12.18 NA~~

He and Afrikaner now formed a plan for Moffat to go due east into Griqualand to prospect for a new settlement.[1] This was a horse-back venture with ten horses, carrying strips of meat tied to the saddles, some tobacco, a tinder-box, and guns to supply fresh food. It taught Moffat the rough simplicities of an African safari, to sleep in the open, and not to worry about tearing his jacket and trousers in the thorn bushes. The course was roughly along the northern bank of the Orange River:

> The windings of the river somethimes flowed through immense chasms, overhung with tremendous precipices, and then like a translucent lake with the beautiful towering mimosas and willows reflected from its bosom; and a rich variety of fine plumage, though without a song; wild geese, ducks, snipe, flamingoes, in perfect security, feeding on the banks ... the swallows also mounting aloft, or skimming the surface of the stream, while the ravens with their hoarse note might be seen seeking their food among the watery tribe or cawing on the tops of the willows.[2]

Moffat's travel observations were never as direct and exact as his future son-in-law, David Livingstone's, but the wild life of these lower reaches of the Orange River appealed to his countryman's eye. He notes the flocks of guinea-fowl, the kites and hawks, the fox and the cobra, the hyena and the antelope. He saw a crow carry a tortoise into the air and let it drop on to a rock, to smash the shell before beginning to eat it. He learned the trick of digging in for the night by scooping out a sleeping-hole in the sandy soil; and when he asked about the danger from lions he was comforted by the grim remark of one of the party: "The lion will not eat heads when he can get whole bodies." He drank poisoned water but threw off

[1] R.M. to parents 15.12.18 NA

[2] Labours 153

the effects after a day's perspiration, surrounded by a morbid group of Bushmen expecting to see him die. He could eat a steak of tough zebra meat, "black looking flesh mingled with yellow fat", in order to please his hosts, although he knew the zebra had been drinking the same poisoned water.

From the Orange River the route lay through the waterless Lange Berg, where for two days they rode and walked without drinking.[1] It was baboon country. "I was surrounded by almost a hundred baboons some of gigantic size. They grunted, grinned and sprang from stone to stone, protruding their mouths and drawing back the skin of their foreheads, threatening an instant attack. I kept parrying them with my gun, which was loaded. ... If I had wounded one of them I should have been skinned in five minutes."[2] The hot, silent defiles of the Lange Berg conjured up mirage of "lakes and pools studded with lovely islets", and when the heat grew unbearable he thrust his head into an old ant-hill to get relief from the direct rays of the sun. The famished group staggered through the barren hills to the settlement at Griqua Town, where the missionary Anderson protected Moffat from taking water by the bucket-full but "left me with a full tumbler of unusual size. ... No sooner was he gone than I drank the whole."[3]

Moffat was now in Bechuana country, where he was to live for fifty years. It was only a brief look, but enough to display the advantages of the Griqua Town area for mission work situated on the road to the north. He went up to Lattakoo with the Andersons, a hundred mile wagon-trek, back again and then home to report to Afrikaner by the same road but this time often

[1] R.M. to parents 15.12.18 NA

[2, 3] Labours 162, 166

saturated with rain, and with soggy biscuit and tobacco in his pockets. In crossing the Orange River a hippopotamus snorted at them "so loud as to be echoed back from the dark overhanging precipices", and it came lunging for the horses as they crossed from island to island. Afrikaner's son heaved stones at the beast, while the party struggled to the bank; and they comforted themselves at night with hippo stories and what it must be like to be caught in "the monstrous jaws of the sea-cow".

Back in the company of Afrikaner, Moffat outlined the advantages of a move eastwards to a country more amply watered and less exposed to the pitiless glare of the sun on a naked land. In his mind he quietly wrote off Namaqualand as a mission country, and turned his thoughts southward to the Cape once more. But the relations between himself and Afrikaner had ripened in their twelve months' acquaintance, and the outlawed chieftain had come to rely on Moffat's judgment. Had they now reached the final parting of the ways? How could they go on together? Should they go eastwards, or should it be to the Cape?

At Afrikaner's Kraal (Vredeberg) he first sampled the infinite variety of the settled missionary's life, a bachelor's existence in the parched wilderness, which made him all the more eager to be "united to Miss S." News from Dukinfield was depressing. "She has most reluctantly renounced the idea of ever getting abroad, her father determining never to allow her."[1] He gloomily surveyed his lot:

> I am carpenter, smith, cooper, tailor, shoemaker, miller, baker and housekeeper - the last is the most burdensome of any. Indeed none is burdensome but it.
> I drink plenty of milk, and often eat a piece of dry flesh. Lately I reaped nearly two bolls of wheat from two hatfuls which I sowed. I shall soon have plenty of Indian corn, cabbage, melons, and potatoes. Water is scarce. I have sown wheat a second time on trial. I live chiefly now on

[1] R.M. to parents 15.12.18: NA

> bread and milk. To-day I churned about three Scotch pints of milk, from which there were two pounds of butter, so you may conceive the milk is rich.
> I wish many times my mother saw me. My house is always pretty clean, but oh what a confusion there is always among my linen. An old Namaqua woman milks my cows, makes a fire and washes.[1]

In the same letter to his parents he announced his intention of going to the Cape in the company of Afrikaner - "a wonderful event to hear of, Afrikaner accompanying a missionary to Capetown. It will also be very acceptable to the Governor, as he has often requested him to come that some sort of peace might be established."

Moffat says that the wild idea of taking Afrikaner with him back to the Cape just "darted into my mind" - an impulsive, youthful suggestion which the older and more wily man at once rejected. There was a price of 1,000 rix-dollars on his head which the first farmer over the Colony border would be glad to earn. He was an outlaw, and in the eyes of many a murderer; and the fact that he had been baptized and belonged to the mission would only arouse suspicions against him. For three days Afrikaner and his people discussed the suggestion and at last agreed to go, relying entirely on Moffat's good faith and protection - in itself a testimony to the general esteem Moffat had created for himself. There also seems to have been an understanding between the two men that Moffat would go back with him to Namaqualand, in spite of the poor prospects.

The party left in mid-February 1819 and arrived in Capetown in mid-April. Moffat dressed Afrikaner for the part, giving him one of his last two shirts, a pair of leather

[1] R.M. to parents 15.12.18 NA

trousers, a duffel jacket and an old hat. There was an agreement that Afrikaner should travel as Moffat's servant, a clever ruse to get the outlaw through the Dutch farms without mishap.

Moffat had passed along the same route just over twelve months before and some of the farmers were surprised to see him alive. The rumour had spread that Afrikaner had murdered him and that his bones had been seen bleaching in the sun. One farmer declared that Moffat was a ghost and that he had risen from the dead, and when introduced to Afrikaner refused to believe he was the same man who had terrorized the frontier.

Moffat. He is now a truly good man.

Farmer. I can believe almost anything you say, but that I cannot credit: there are seven wonders of the world, that would be the eighth. He killed my uncle.

Farmer. Are you Afrikaner?

Afrikaner (making a polite bow and doffing his hat): I am.[1]

Conversations of that sort were repeated down the road to Capetown until Moffat was basking in, what seemed to many, the glory of a rich prize: a trophy which he finally laid at the feet of Lord Charles Somerset at Government House. His Lordship was affable and kind as he looked on what his official papers had so often described as "the scourge of the country". But, instead of ordering his instant execution for his crimes, he presented Afrikaner with a magnificent wagon worth eighty pounds sterling, which touched off a spate of hero-worshipping in Capetown and district. There were public meetings and receptions, with Moffat leading Afrikaner round to be viewed by incredulous congregations who looked at his New Testament, "thumbed and worn by use", listened to his broken Dutch, and ~~wondered~~ marvelled at the "unexpected mildness and gentleness of his demeanour". It was all a most potent testimony to the

[1] Labours 177-178

efficacy of missions and missionaries, which softened even the official hardness of the Governor and gave a much-needed boost to the dwindled fortunes of the London Missionary Society.

The young apprentice missionary had shown his mettle, and had also displayed something of the simple technique of friendship with the chiefs of the frontier which was to be a prime instrument in the years ahead. The official deputation, John Philip and John Campbell, who had arrived from London in February 1819 to survey the missions scene, noted their man. As for Moffat, the news which topped the Afrikaner miracle was that "Miss Smith of Dukinfield" had changed her mind, her parents had relented, and the Ship British Colony, with Mary aboard, would arrive in Table Bay before Christmas 1819.

The first stage of the apprenticeship to Africa was almost over.

Chapter 4

HONEYMOON BY WAGON 1820-21

The people received us as curiosities, especially Mary

Six months however elapsed before "Miss Smith of Dukinfield" arrived to marry Moffat, and in those six months his long future in Africa was mainly decided. The "deputation" from London — John Philip and John Campbell — had been in Capetown for six weeks when Moffat came into the town, on April 12, 1819, with Afrikaner in his train and under at least a half promise to see his chieftain friend safely home again to Namaqualand. But the "deputation" persuaded him to go with them round the mission stations in the Colony first of all. His Dutch was good, and the reputation of his Afrikaner connection gave Moffat a local fame which was no bad asset for the leaders from London.[1]

They set off on May 4, 1819, by Paarl, Tulbagh, Pacaltsdorp, Bethelsdorp, and Theopolis. For Campbell and Moffat, much of it was old ground; but, for Philip, the journey was the first extended sight of the South Africa he lived in and fought over for the next thirty years. Then in the prime of life at forty-four, this able, strong-minded Scot had been sent out as a "resident director", or "superintendent", to provide some central authority to the missions, and his parish covered practically every area of the Colony. His regular journeys, which eventually stretched beyond the Colony boundaries, gave him an intimate knowledge of the Colony's affairs which no one during his time could rival. He was twenty years Moffat's senior and

[1] Afrikaner himself was given a safe-conduct back to Namaqualand, and with the £100 prize on his head as parting gift from the Government. In July 1820 he safely delivered Moffat's belongings to him at Lattakoo, but died before he could remove his people to be near Moffat's new home on the Kuruman River.

an extremely observant and judicious person, with more insight than his younger colleague into the issues which were at stake in the relationships between the races in Capr Colony. He was under no illusion that the mere exchange of British for Dutch government at the Cape would give the Hottentots an economic and political standing, a view which inevitably earned him the taunt of being more a politician than a missionary and with which Moffat himself was inclined to agree.[1]

Both these men had been brought up in the pietistic strain of Scottish religion, but Moffat saw the missionary calling in the narrow sense of "saving souls". So did Philip, but he also realized that the Hottentots had bodies to save as well, and that the missions could not escape their duty of speaking up for them. He also ~~no doubt~~ saw in the young Moffat a man capable of development who had already shown what he could do in Namaqualand. Such men were required on the frontiers of the Colony, and in the most strategic places too. In a joint-report to the missionary society made with Campbell towards the end of 1819, Philip outlined the task of such men:

> to settle a wandering people in villages ... to be Magistrate, Father, Master and Minister ... at the same time; in Africa, the missionary is a person of social importance, on an easy footing with officers of the army and navy, and men in the first official stations under Government.[2]

Along these lines Philip and Campbell talked to Moffat during their tour. Both men had already seen the importance of the Bechuanaland gateway to the northern interior, and the need for a well-organized mission there under competent leadership. It was infinitely more strategic for Africa than the innocuous backwater of Namaqualand. Philip, like Cecil Rhodes

[1] R.M. to J.Smith 10.6.25 NA

[2] Philip & Campbell to LMS Dec.1819 [n.d.] LMS

later, was able to think of a southern Africa beyond Cape Colony, and, within his limitations, set about placing his men on the map. He had, says Macmillan,"no illusions about missionaries":

> He knew only too well that both character and intellect were needed to fit men to bear even the loneliness of the missionary's life. In South Africa, above all, especially on the frontier, where there was no magistrate or other government representative, the difficulties arising from the contact of his coloured parishioners with the white colonists threw on any missionary an inevitable load of responsibility for the secular interests as for the spiritual welfare of his people.[1]

Moffat, however, had qualms about his proposed destination, and made it a condition of his going that his old friend Afrikaner should be supplied with a missionary; and he was anxious that the Society in London should regard his conduct in leaving Afrikaner as justifiable. It is an instance of Moffat's disinterested attachment to an African chief, a quality which won him the regard of more important ones in later years.

He was also under pressure from the government "to become their missionary and proceed to Kafirland, and had I consented to this they would have jumped at me".[2] Moffat's simple loyalty to the calling which brought him to Africa was unshaken, but he flared up in a letter to George Burder, the secretary in London, in defence of the men who did leave the Society's service at the time of the "Synod" of 1817:

> The brethren who held it acted conscientiously and faithfully, and however much the Directors may be prejudiced against it, time will decide who are in the right. I am the willing servant of the Directors and I am ready to sacrifice my life itself in the cause which they are engaged to promulgate; but to submit to any Ruling Resident Director or Superintendent in the world is what I will never do.
>
> I am happy that Mr. Campbell came to Africa, that I might

[1] Macmillan CCQ 106

[2] R.M. to parents 21.2.20 NA

> have an opportunity of knowing and loving so good a man. Dr Philip is worthy of high esteem. But as long as they retain their present sentiments, we cannot mingle our ideas together respecting the future government of the missions.[1]

It was a signal to London and Capetown that the guileless and rather innocent-looking young man about to go northwards was as independent as any of the group of missionaries then in Africa.

For the next thirty years Philip and Moffat eyed one another across the long tracks of southern Africa with a kind of critical esteem, which developed, on Moffat's part, into some sharp questioning about Philip's political activity, which he distrusted.

Moffat most admirably sums up their relations in a letter to his brother, Alexander:

> Dr Philip and I differ widely as it regards the government, but we agree to differ, and on that account keep the best of friends. The affairs of the Mission, except church discipline, are under his direction. The Missions on this side of the Colony, as may be conceived from this distance, have very little to do with his superintendence.[2]

1 R.M. to Burder 17.1.20 LMS

2 R.M. to A.M. Jan. 1823 [n.d.]

I

In the early days of December 1819 "Miss Smith of Dukinfield", on board the ship British Colony, was drawing near the Cape and her future husband. After "two years and a half of the most painful anxiety", she wrote to Robert's parents, "I have, through the tender mercy of God, obtained permission of my dear parents to proceed ... to join your dear son in his arduous work. ... My father had persisted in saying that I should never have his consent; my dear mother has uniformly asserted that it would break her heart ... notwithstanding all this they both yesterday calmly resigned me into the hands of the Lord, declaring they durst no longer withhold me."[1]

Her voyage to the Cape on the British Colony was a high excitement for Mary, delivered at last from the parental confines of Dukinfield, and the entries in her Journal[2] have a schoolgirl sparkle:

> Sept. 8 I feel squeamish and am obliged to keep up on deck, have only been sick once and eat a hearty dinner afterwards of goose and apple pudding. I have not rested well the two nights I have been here the bugs have frightened me so much. ... My sides are sore with my hard bed but I feel a sort of satisfaction in it thinking it will prepare me for tumbling about in the wagon.
>
> Sept.24 A little fruit would now be very grateful to our stomachs being very weak and fanciful, tho' we have had everything here that we could possibly expect. We never sit down to dinner without goose, or ducks, roast or boiled fowls, ham or tongue or salt-beef and generally a pudding. An apple after dinner, wine and brandy as much as is necessary. I often think my friends in England would smile to see me sitting on deck with my tumbler of brandy and water before dinner with as much boldness as if it were a glass of milk, but sometimes it is quite necessary. One week nothing would have kept on my stomach had it not been for that, everything else failed. One of

[1] M. Smith to Moffats 16.12.18 NA

[2] M. Smith's Journal, 8-9-19/6-12-19 LMS

our sheep died to-day for want of water, or perhaps air; this is the second that has dies, the poultry die very fast.

She enjoyed the domestic tittle-tattle of ship-board life:

Sept.28 We have a virago of a woman on board who loves the bottle too well & we none of us feel partial to her. ... I had said or done nothing really to offend her but thro' the Capt. mentioning my name with those of the other ladies respecting something that was up among them she jumped up from tea table walked upon deck and attacked me like one crazy before I knew any cause. ... She terrified me so that I trembled before her and burst into tears. ... I had all the ship's company on my side as well as the common sailors and the officers.

Sept.29 Mrs. B - my last night's antagonist - came to me this morning & begged of me to overlook last night's business, she was sorry that she had misconstrued the matter and been so rude to me. I heartily forgave her and shook hands, rejoicing at the prospect of peace, where I expected nothing but bickering all the way to the Cape.

Days of dead calm, the stench of a shark's carcase on deck, the rush of water through her port-hole, the sailors stretching a sail to catch the rain, and the daily hunt for bugs, which "are very polite for they never venture to touch me anywhere but my hands and feet", are all noted in Mary's three months at sea.

October 17 Yesterday a most beautiful dolphin was caught with the lampoon. It is curious to see these creatures die, they change colour as quickly as you can think, green, purple and yellow are the prevailing colours at first but afterwards it becomes blue and white. We had a piece of it to dinner to-day, it is white and very dry, but with a good sauce makes a change agreeable to voyagers.

It is a miserable Sabbath. It is hardly possible to read, or think, here we are some lounging on our beds, which are quite dark, others swinging in their cots & I as lazy as any one, stretched on a sofa with a book in my hand but so stupid that I do not know what I read. It resembles one of your very worst November days with an oppressive heat in addition, so many of us together, and

so many bad smells we can scarcely breathe & what is worse than all the wind is foul and we are making no advances & the motion of the ship is most unpleasant.

October 20th We have this afternoon crossed the Line and are getting on well having gone all day at the rate of 4 or 5 miles an hour. The usual ceremony was not performed except a large tub being thrown out with Tar & Okeham burning which the sailors dignified with the name of Neptune's Car. It was after dark and we could see it an amazing distance. I was astonished to see how long the fire kept alive on the Ocean, a lively image indeed of the principle of grace being kept alive in the Soul. The Sailors certainly intended having a little diversion by way of getting a little grog from us who had never crossed the line before. ... We got the Capt to promise them they should have an additional bottle. But he stopped their fun.

November 12 During the squabble the other night my name was mentioned by some person when Mrs Johnson replied that I thought for myself and in most cases kept my thoughts to myself - I was glad to hear this; they call me Lancashire when they allude to this propensity of thinking for myself - they teaze me a good deal about my provincial pronunciation - particularly my u's. ... I can bear a joke pretty well when devoid of acrimony. ... I have begun to drink salt water and purpose taking a Glass every Morning till I go ashore.

The voyage was by the Cape Verde Islands and St Helena, but at neither place did the irascible captain allow his passengers to go ashore to stretch their legs, and when he refused a request from the ladies to dance "for the sake of exercise" Mary records "another stir with the Capt.". But in this "stir" she and her missionary travelling companions, Mr and Mrs Beck, "were neuter, but could not but be sensible of his bad behaviour". She adds: "when he gets into these humours he is rude in the extreme to the whole set of us, though I must acknowledge he behaves as well to & pays me as much attention in general as I could desire." With sails torn, a big leak, unwashed passengers and an almost mutinous crew, the British Colony limped into Table Bay on December 6, 1819:

> Land! Land! was sounded through the Ship about 4 in the morning when every breast was filled with joy & some with agitation for instance mine. ... About 1 o'clock I went ashore & clasped my Robert in my Arms. I was tolerably composed! ... It was a day never to be forgotten by me.

Three weeks later they were married in St George's Church, with John Philip giving away the bride. "My cup of happiness seems almost full; here I have found him all that my heart could desire", wrote Mary to Dukinfield, "except his being almost worn out with anxiety, and his very look makes my heart ache!"[1] This was a state of mind that Mary often relapsed into when she contemplated "Moffat", as she invariably referred to him during their fifty-three years partnership, and both of them were inordinately pious on paper. But there was a tender simplicity about their married life with Mary dutiful and Robert acceptably domineering in the Victorian domestic manner. It was all solid and sensible even though lived "amongst the blacks" beyond the range of organized civilities, for the Moffats' home on the frontier was Mary's creation. If she was a little too clinging, and rather over-fearful about Moffat, it was all in the pattern of their married bliss and Moffat liked it. "Mary, my own dear Mary, is now far distant from a land endeared to her", he wrote to the Smiths at Dukinfield, "and from you, but let this comfort you ... she is united to one who speaks as he feels when he promises to be fether, mother and husband to Mary, and will never forget the sacrifice you have made in committing to his future care your only daughter."[2]

The honeymoon was by wagon to the north. But before the wagons moved there was the problem of the Reverend John Campbell to settle. Was he to go with them or could he be persuaded to

[1] M.S. to parents 8.12.19 NA

[2] Lives, 69

slip quietly away home to London? "The last step was what everybody wished", says Moffat, who was in no mood for a chaperoned honeymoon. But the little minister from Kingsland in north-east London, who shaded himself from the sun with a very English-looking umbrella, and always had a note-book and pencil ha-ndy, was "all on fire about going".[1] John Campbell has a niche to himself in the southern African story through his three volumes of travels, which are now marked up to high prices in the Africana catalogues. He was a precise if pedestrian observer, and some of his coloured sketches, with their naive elevations and figure-work, have a workmanlike air and even charm. He was a leader amongst the London evangelicals, a director of the Missionary Society, an ardent tract writer for the Religious Tract Society, and the African scene fascinated him. He had already been as far north as Griqua Town and Lattakoo, and the chance to go again was not to be missed; so it was the Moffats plus John Campbell who took the road by Stellenbosch, Paarl and Tulbagh out of Capetown on January 18, 1820.

The sight of Campbell accompanying Moffat on what was declared to be a visit to the missions probably reassured the government, who were once more against Moffat going beyond the Colony. "We undertake this long and tedious journey", he wrote, "with no other view but of returning."[2] It was four years before the return, and by that time Moffat was well settled to his frontier post.

The wagon route as far as the Hex River Kloof was familiar to Moffat from his previous stay in the Stellenbosch area, but after that the road to Beaufort West through the Little and Great Karoo was new to the whole party. Campbell describes

[1] Lives, 69

[2] R.M. to Burder 17.1.20 LMS

the majestic Kloof so well known to road and rail travellers in modern South Africa:

> At six in the evening we proceeded up the Kloof, which is a long serpentine defile, or narrow pass, between high and steep mountains. The scenery was extremely grand and interesting, being marked by stupendous cliffs, rugged rocks, and spiral-topt mountains of great elevation. Their bases were covered with mimosa trees, the flowers of which appeared like innumerable golden balls suspended from the branches. The Hex River, with rumbling noise, was heard forcing its way along the jungle, and what rendered the wild and singular scenery still more interesting at that time was, that the heavens were beautifully illuminated by the setting sun at one end of the pass, and the full moon in serene and cloudless majesty was seen rising at the other. In three hours and a half we halted near the extremity of the defile.[1]

It was a slow and meditative pace made more comfortable for Mary by a change of oxen soon after starting. Some wine-wagoners passing them on the road noticed that some of Moffat's oxen were young and only partially broken in but of the colour they wanted. An exchange was made for older, more tractable vineyard beasts, which pulled well up through the Kloof to the Hex River valley where "chestnuts, walnuts, peaches, nectarines, apricots, mulberries, oranges, apples, pears, quinces and lemons were hanging on the trees in such profusion as to weigh down the branches to the ground".[2]

For Mary, the tented box on wheels was her first home, and the earliest of many wagons the Moffats owned. It was all wooden, even down to the axles, which Moffat learned to mend from trees growing in the wilderness. Not until 1859 did he own a wagon with iron axles. Under the kap tent Mary looked out over the backs of twelve oxen whose humps pushed against the yokes

1, 2
Campbell 1822, I.7

fastened to their necks by yoke stays and throat straps. Each pair needed eight feet of working space to pull on the tow-rope of hide lashed to the boom, so there was a length of nearly fifty feet from the rear oxen to the front pair. The two great chests - fore and aft - were the built-in furniture of the wagon, and the space in between was carefully packed with goods, the weightier boxes in the belly of the wagon to make a solid foundation for sleeping on.

Mary wrote to her parents:

> It is true I feel a little feeble and languid in the very heat of the day, but am not sickly as I always was at home in warm weather. I never was more vigorous than I am now in the cool of the day; and when I consider the manner in which we live, just eating and sleeping when it is convenient, I am truly astonished. I like wagon travelling better than I expected. It is not so fatiguing. I have had none of those hardships which I looked for.[1]

The favourite time to inspan was in the early evening when, between five o'clock and midnight, the cooler air was kind to the oxen, and the lumbering wagons were less stifling for those sitting inside. There was no exact time-table for wagon travel, and a hospitable farm such as Mr de Vos's at the head of the Hex River called for a day's complete rest amongst the apricots and mulberries before making the long descent into the Great Karroo, which Mary called a "perfect desert". They crossed most of it in bright starlight, the oxen crunching through the gravel and slate of the rough road towards the Dwyka River, and those awake on the forechest at dawn rewarded with rosy view of distant mountains, which Campbell noted as "a truly grand appearance".

Mary notes that for ten days she never saw a house, but as

[1] M.M. to parents 17.2.20 NA

they moved along the banks of the Gamka River she writes home to her nurseryman father about the "long thorned mimosa which is certainly very beautiful" and an "old tree fallen with age and from the root a young flourishing large tree, and both attached to each other. There are few other things except succulent plants, and everything in the desert, except the mimosas, has a blue and yellow sockly hue with the saltpetre. We have scarcely seen any grass for a fortnight."[1] When the wagon stood still at noon the timbers were so hot to touch, and the thermometer ran to a hundred.

Perched on the forechest, Robert kerchiefed and Mary bonnetted, the young husband and wife watched the busy wagon traffic of this main road to the north, which Mary thought "in many parts as fine as any turnpike road in England" with all its excitement of meeting and travellers' gossip about the state of the road and the streams the wagons had to ford. Mary saw ostriches running at a distance, and was suitably beguiled by one farmer with tales of "sixty lions killed in six years" and the sight of one tame ostrich whose stomach was capable of "devouring pebble stones like bread". Underneath the forechest Robert kept his supply of tracts for distribution to passing wagon parties, and Mary reports: "they seem well pleased for they seldom see a book except their old, massy, finely-gilt family Bibles, kept more as pieces of furniture than for use".[2] One of the passing travellers they talked with was Mr. Pienaar, the son of the man Afrikaner murdered, who was surprised to know of the outlaw's favourable reception in Capetown. "He said very little", Mary comments.

Along the banks of the Gamka, where the railway now runs, the wagons rolled on, chiefly at night under a rising moon. By day, Campbell rambled about, charmed with the mimosa that glittered in

1 & 2 M.M. to parents 17.2.20 NA

the sun, "like so many newly-coined guineas", and at the coveys of pheasants, the butterflies of vivid beauty, and, under one wide-spreading mimosa, "lizards of various hues enjoying its shade". As the Gamka diminished in size so the track ceased to be turn-pike and got entangled "among trees, rocks, deep sand, small cliffs, and numerous branches of the river. The wagon made hairbreadth escapes of being nearly overturned at least six or eight times." In the noontide heat Campbell was driven out of his wagon by flies only to step into an ants' nest whose "alarmed inhabitants sallied forth and in less than two minutes completely covered my leg".

In the Moffat wagon there was much amused observation on the doings of "good Johnny Campbell", as Moffat called his travelling companion. "He will surely imitate Moses when he told Jithro, his father-in-law, all that has befallen us since our departure from the Cape; so that it would be superfluous for me to give you a journal like that of a late journalist, containing a spun-out history of a hunter and the depredations of his dog."[1]

The little man, short, ugly, and shrewd, often sat with the young couple under their kaptent, taking his pinch of snuff and re-telling his parson's anecdotes as the wagon lurched and shunted over the Karroo. Campbell had a weakness, so Moffat reported to Philip in Capetown, for "Mr. Wine, or Mijn Heer Brandy, he is very quarrelsome at such seasons. My dear partner and I have often mourned and lamented, the more that we were not the only spectators of such human frailty."[2] Fifty years later, when presented with John Campbell's snuff-box, Moffat warmed to happy remembrances of "good old Johnny" and of the long hours in the wagon on his honeymoon journey. "I have often seen him take a pinch, and sometimes two if the subject was weighty, and in the tent, or outside the tent, or on the other side of a thin partition, he might be heard to say, 'Oh I never was in such a world as this.'"[3]

1, 2, R.M. to Philip 19.9.20 LMS

3 Lives, 88

II

Twenty-nine days out from Capetown the travellers arrived at Beaufort West, three hundred and forty miles on their way, lying in the shadow of the Nieuveld Mountains, with only a farm-house or two to show of the town to come. Mr. Baird, the Landdrost, produced his plan for the future Beaufort of two parallel streets on "an excellent meadow" with irrigation canal and good gardens for the houses. He had already matched the civil administration centred in his farm-house with a religious parish under John Taylor, Moffat's shipmate and co-missionary from London, who had "gone over" to the government. As a predikant of the Dutch Church, Taylor was already helping to shape the future of things to come on the frontier and has a parish "as large as Yorkshire"; but, to Moffat's surprise, he preached only one sermon on Sunday, which had to be "two and three hours long". The church was a room in a farm-house, with two beds in it. For four days the wagons outspanned at Beaufort and the party had regular meals with Mr. Baird, being waited on at table by a little bush boy of ten who had been rescued half-starved from the wilderness. "We go to every meal", Mary gleefully wrote to Dukinfield, "and he supplies us plentifully with delicious fruit from his garden, though we eat it three times a day at his house".[1]

Up through the Nieuveld range each of the wagons needed twenty-two of the strongest oxen, with the men trudging behind. Campbell walked with his umbrella up, and Moffat, half amused and censorious, wondered what the little man might report to Philip about him. They were now moving on beyond the limits of the Colony towards the Orange River into bushmen's country. It took nineteen days of slow crawling under the ever-present sun. "So great was the effect of the heat", wrote Campbell, "that our

[1] M.M. to parents 17.2.20 NA

sugar was as hard as a brick; the ink was dried up in the ink-stand; the board I used in the wagon for a writing-table was split; the water in all our vessels was as hot as tea is generally drunk in Britain, and I could not touch without pain any part of the wagon that had been exposed to the sun."[1]

The veld between the Nieuveld range and the Orange River was still the open kingdom of the Bushmen, who leaped to be friendly to passing travellers, guiding the wagons to water and lighting fires on the hill-tops to announce a grassy spot for the outspan. Springboks and ostriches stopped to watch the caravan as it moved in the early evening over the immense plain that spread to the horizon in unbroken swathes dotted with conical hills. "The splendour of the heavens at sunset", wrote Campbell, "seemed to exceed anything of the kind I remember"; while, in the clear light of the African moon, he could see the marks of previous wagon-wheels turning towards water - the dominant desire of man and beast. The "Great River" at last gave them plenty of it, the Hottentots from Bethelsdorp plunging in to cool themselves and the oxen sucking it in in vast mouthfuls.

Fortunately, the river was low and the three wagons were over in half an hour at Read's Drift, where the river was a quarter of a mile wide, and so to Griqua Town and the road north to Lattakoo the high street of the veld for the Moffats in the years to come; the line of retreat against the threat of tribal warfare; and the road of advance into Bechuanaland.

The four days between Griqua Town and Lattakoo were tiring for Mary as she sat on the forechest looking for the first signs of Lattakoo, which, six years before, she had heard Campbell describe so vividly to a Manchester audience that she sighed: "Oh that I might spend my days at Lattakoo" - and here she was.

[1] Campbell 1822, I.40

And apparently there were no disappointments, for she wrote:

> I am happy, remarkably happy, though the present place of my habitation is a single vestry room, with a mud wall and a mud floor. ... Poor Mrs. Helm has not had a letter for five years. I long to hear from you. [1]

On the last stages to Lattakoo they outspanned near the source of the Kuruman River:

> It is a vast rock which appears to have been terribly convulsed some time or other, forming curious caves, and on every side the most beautiful water that I ever saw (except at Greenfield) gushing out. I went into the principal cave that is accessible, and went nearly knee-deep in water as clear as crystal. The top of the cave was lined with bats, and in some directions we heard waters rushing like a torrent. The sound came along subterraneous passages; I should have imagined that a mighty river would have flowed from such a spring, but it is very small. [2]

That was Mary's introduction to the Kuruman waters alongside which she made her home and reared her family. She was happy to see the beauty of the stream, the waving grass of the veld that suggested an English cornfield, and, while disappointed at the general leanness of the country she had passed through, there was no pining for the scenes of home. If she had to choose for comfort or livelihood it would be "old England still", and preferably the wood above the nursery at Dukinfield, but her heart was already ~~at Lattakoo~~ in Africa and there it remained for fifty years.

According to family tradition, Mary trimmed her maiden curls in Capetown, and in the sober married state of dame's cape and flannel petticoat was ready to be partner as well as wife to her Robert. She was no peevish, fretful damsel, full of complaints to her young husband or anxious for the ease of

[1] M.M. to parents 8.8.20 NA

[2] M.M. to parents 8.4.20 NA

Capetown. The school might be miserable, the church benches empty, and, as for the hope of a girls' school, it seemed impossible in a world where "the women do all the men's work and the men the women's".[1] Her mental eye carried in it the lush picture of rural England, but Africa was now home, and for Mary Moffat there was no return. The people of Lattakoo turned out to stare at her dress, and to peep into the wagon where she laid out the table with cloth, dishes, and knives and forks. She was a curiosity, and such a youthful one.

One old chief, after looking at Robert and Mary, was asked whether he would like a missionary to come and live with him and his people. He looked again at the young couple on the forechest of the wagon, and replied that he would be willing "if the missionaries could tell him how he could become a young man again".[1] It was a shrewd comment on the ultimate aim of the honeymoon by wagon.

[1] R.M. to parents 18.9.20 NA

Chapter 5

AMONGST THE BECHUANA 1820-23

At present meat and tobacco are their gods

The 'eighteen-twenties were formative years in southern Africa, and Moffat's arrival amongst the Bechuana in the far north-west beyond the Colony coincided with many changes within it. In the same months of March to July 1820 that he and Mary were sampling the prospects of the northern veld, the 1820 settlers were moving into their farms in the Albany district of the Cape as part of Lord Charles Somerset's plan to build up a white population on the eastern frontiers.[1]

John Philip, settled in Capetown, was planning his pastoral and political activities, which, by his tours of 1821 and 1825, made him a master of information about southern Africa, and the guide to a developing Africa conscience in Britain.[2] These were also the years of the mounting campaign which led to the abolition of slavery in the British Colonies in 1834, and of the gathering momentum which formed the Boers' Great Trek of 1835.

As he moved about the Colony and on its frontiers Philip noted the restlessness of the farmers in seizing new lands, with their fountains, and their native populations for cheap labour, a habit that alarmed him when he saw Boers as far north as the Griqua country within striking distance of the new mission on the Kuruman river.[3] He concluded that "the country was to be given out to the Colonists and it must be cleared of Bushmen and other Wild Beasts, and this could not be done under the eye of the Missionary Station."[4] This made Philip all the more determined to show that the Hottentots of the Colony were capable of

[1] Walker, 161
[2, 3, 4] Clinton 119, 121

improvement, and that beyond the settled frontiers the new missions could be a potential power for peace amongst the tribes and a bulwark for civilization, a claim which the young Moffat was to justify.

Philip was as eager as John Campbell to probe beyond the frontiers into the interior of Africa, believing that "missionary stations are surrounded by moral atmospheres, or have a moral and civilizing influence to a considerable distance around, beyond which it is extremely hazardous for white men to go". These were John Campbell's words as he surveyed the Lattakoo scene in 1813,[1] when he lost only two buttons by theft and was convinced that the Bechuana were only waiting to be taught to "sit on chairs instead of on the ground, to sleep on beds instead of skins, and to eat with knives and forks at a table instead of their fingers".[2]

John Campbell, always optimistic, had been impressed by the Bechuana[3] Chief, Mothibi, at Lattakoo, and his readiness to receive instructors, and although Moffat quickly dubbed his people "thoroughly sensual beings", more interested in what he had got in his wagon forechest than the sermons he preached, he, with Scottish dourness, began to identify himself with the Bechuana and their fortunes.

Mothibi ruled the Batlhaping, the southernmost group of the Bechuana, whose descendants to-day are settled in the Taungs area of the Northern Cape. Their ancestors had come southwards into southern Africa in the second wave of Bantu migration, probably from the region of the Great Lakes, with the Basuto people to whom the Bechuana belong,[4] and had then

1, 2 Campbell 1815, 208

3 Moffat spells the word in several ways. The modern way is Tswana. I have retained the territorial form, as in Bechuanaland.

4 Stow, 404ff.

undergone the process of division and secession by which discontented families set up as rulers over subdivided clusters. The Barolong broke up into the Batlhaping, Maidi, Kaa, and settled along the Molopo River, spreading south and westwards across the open veld.

The third great wave of migrating peoples from the north brought more Bechuana into the south-western portions of the Transvaal and eventually accounted for the presence of the Bahurutshe, the Bakwena and Bakgatla, all of whom live to-day in their own recognizable areas of the Transvaal or within the Protectorate. By A.D. 1600 it may be assumed that a pattern of Bechuana settlement roughly corresponding in its eastern form to the present day was beginning to emerge.[1]

By 1807, the position of the tribes from west to east and north-east was probably: (1) the Batlhaping; (2) the Barolong; (3) the Bangwaketse; (4) the Bakwena,[2] all living sufficiently near one another in the narrow Bechuana corridor, roughly three hundred miles long by eighty miles wide, to indulge in the endless cattle-thieving and petty warfare which raised a chief into passing eminence and awe and as quickly dashed him down again. In the early part of 1817, for instance, the Batlhaping were pitted against the warriors of Makaba, the warlike chief of the Bangwaketse, their neighbours across the Molopo River. Mothibi was irritated at the loss of cattle, but he knew that Makaba was too much for him so he resolved as an alternative to go for the Bakwena to the north of Makaba. It was a two-hundred miles trek to the Bakwena, and Mothibi suffered a heavy repulse, barely escaping with his own life and coming home to his chief town of Lattakoo in mourning and misery.

[1] Schapera, The Tswana, 1953

[2] Stow, 446

This was one of the reasons, Moffat says, which influenced the chief to move away from Lattakoo to the new settlement on the Kuruman River at Maruping [New Lattakoo] where the missionaries James Read and Robert Hamilton established themselves in June 1817.[1] It was the fourth move of the Batlhaping chief town between 1801 and 1817,[2] an indication of the feckless, roaming character of the Bechuana, which, however, did not destroy their form of government and administration. In 1813, Campbell thought there were as many as fifty organized wards of the town of Lattakoo for seven thousand five hundred people; and at New Lattakoo in 1820 there were twenty-nine.[3] Each ward was a collection of households, under the leadership of a headman, most of whom were related to him, and he had executive and judicial authority over the group and stood between them and the chief. Each household had its living-enclosure, surrounded by a wooden fence or an earthen wall, and expanded according to the number of married women in the household, for polygamy was practised by the Bechuana, with the first wife as the "great" of chief wife.[4]

Campbell admired the way the women worked; "even the queen digs the ground along with the other females",[5] and in a "city" of fifteen hundred houses there was no filth of any kind lying about.[6] "I do not know", he wrote, "how the men treat the women at home, but it is rare to see a man take any notice of a woman out of doors. Yet the women do not appear under any restraint in the presence of the men, but are free and cheerful. I observed one of them scold five or six men, because they did

1 Labours 238
2 Schapera K, xix
3 Campbell 1822 Vol. II 255, 276 and 152-4
4 Schapera K, xx
5, 6 Campbell 1815, 274ff.

not remove from a fire around which they were sitting when the dancing girls were passing. I understood that to be a piece of etiquette customary on such an occasion. The men made no reply, but continued to look steadfastly to the fire, like persons conscious of having done wrong in remaining where they were, but so lazy that they did not like to rise."[1] He describes the dancing girls:

> Some of them had one side of the face painted black, and the other white; others, the upper part of the face white, and the under, black. They had pieces of reeds about six inches long, strung like beads, and made into the form of a petticoat, hung round them from the middle almost to the ground, which made a strange noise when they danced. They had likewise a great quantity of straw rope wound round them projecting twelve or fifteen inches from the middle of their backs, and also in front, which gave them a very odd appearance. The queen and several others, who acted as musicians, by bawling aloud and clapping hands, wore cloaks composed of about a dozen fur tippets, hanging from their shoulders to the ground, under which they had a skin cloak, without the hair. A few wore leather caps, but the greater part had no covering on their heads."[2]

It appeared to Campbell to be an easy-going life, with "a number of fine clever young people playing about, having nothing to learn or to do. Their parents appear to teach them nothing; for though various articles are manufactured among them, yet they are made, not as a trade, but for amusement in the public place; as if a London engraver were to carry a plate of copper to the Royal Exchange, to engrave upon, while conversing with his friends."[3] But he admired the ingenuity of the Batlhaping in making articles from copper and iron such as "adzes, axes, knives, spears and bodkins from iron; rings for the legs, arms, fingers and ears from copper; and likewise

1, 2, 3 Campbell 1815, 274ff.

from the construction of their houses, which are far superior to those of the nations nearer the Colony. Their cloaks are made and sewed as well as could be done by Europeans."[1]

It was a farming subsistence life for each household, with the women working in the gardens cultivating the crops of millet, pumpkins, sweet cane and beans, while the men and boys looked after the cattle at the distant grazing posts. All these routine activities "were accompanied by various forms of magic, whose object was to ensure success and protection from misfortune. Fields and seed corn, for instance, were 'doctored' for fertility and protection against pests and wizards; the agricultural season was inaugurated by special rain-making ceremonies, performed by the chief or under his supervision, and repeated in more elaborate form if the rain failed to come ... certain people, known as dingaka, were specialists in the art of magic. They treated the sick, divined the riddles of the present and the future, and, through inoculation or other use of 'medicines', endowed people, livestock, fields and dwellings, with good fortune, or protected them from sorcery. Any misfortune, and especially sickness or death, was generally attributed to the malevolent use of magic, and the culprit, if found, was severely punished, and might even be killed by order of the chief."[2]

But, as for religion, was there any? Moffat, with preconceived ideas of the evidence to look for, concluded that there was none; and, in the Christian meaning of religion, he was probably right, but at the same time profoundly wrong. He could see no altar, temple, or emblem of heathen worship, and no

[1] Campbell 1822, 255

[2] Schapera K, xxi. The death of the chief's son, Peclu (Labours 436), of kwatsi in 1825, attributed to magic, has been identified with a syphilitic ulcer (Murray and Merriweather, Endemic Syphilis in the Bakwena Reserve 1956).

mementoes to remind the present generation that their ancestors had "ever loved, served or reverenced a being greater than man. A profound silence reigns on this awful subject. ... Satan has employed his agency with fatal success in erasing every vestige of religious impression from the minds of the Bechuanas, Hottentots and Bushmen; leaving them without a single ray to guide them from the dark and dread futurity, or a single link to unite them to the skies."[1]

It was a gloomy outlook for the young Moffat as he tried to find religious links, even wordless ones, that might faintly coincide with his own theology:

> Thus the missionary could make no appeals to legends, or to altars, or to an unknown God, or to ideas kindred to those he wished to impart. ... To tell them, the gravest of them, that there was a Creator, the governor of the heavens and earth, or the fall of man, or the redemption of the world, the resurrection of the dead, and immortality beyond the grave, was to tell them what appeared to be more fabulous, extravagant and ludicrous than their own stories about lions, hyenas and jackals. ..."[2]

He recognized the word Modimo or Morimo as suggesting a name for God, the Supreme Being; but, to him, "this Morimo served the purpose of a bugbear, by which the rain-maker might constrain the chiefs to yield to his suggestions, when he wished for a slaughter-ox without which he pretended he could not make rain." Moffat, with his Christian institutions, could not discover anything of the character of Morimo, except that he was cunning or malicious, and failed to discover in him a personality capable of doing good, or endowed with the possibility of doing so. He was forced to the conclusion that the hearts of the Bechuana "are darkened", and that they are

1, 2 Labours 243ff., 257.

"spiritually buried, and without knowledge, life or light."[1]

Moffat's judgment on Bechuana religion was written after twenty years' experience, in 1842, when he had acquired a fluency in the language; but those who have followed him in the same field have challenged his views. Livingstone wrote to Adolphe Mabille in Basutoland in 1843, after two years in Bechuanaland, wondering whether the people "are really so very far sunk as has been represented. I heard Mr. Moffat say in England that the Bechuanas had really no conscience until it was formed by the missionaries ... besides other fragments of knowledge which I have found among them, they seem to have had the idea of the future existence clearly."[2]

W. C. Willoughby, after twenty-five years amongst the Bechuana, was convinced that there was a universal belief in survival after death amongst them, but no evidence "that the Bantu have considered the idea of immortality",[3] and that the word modimo was used of any ancestral spirit, and "if you ask one of these people what modimo he is speaking to in his prayer, he will tell you the name of someone long dead. If you ask him who made the world, he will reply, modimo; and if you ask him the name of this modimo who made the world, he will tell you that it is just the Great Modimo ... but the people never thought of praying to the Great Spirit direct ... they pray to the spirits of their ancestors who have gone forward into the town of the Great Chief of the spirit world."[4]

J. T. Brown believed that the word Modimo might refer to one ancestral spirit, but that he is something more than one amongst many, and may even have had a personal name to signify

1 Journal 20.8.22 NA
2 Quoted Smith EW 107
3, 4 Race Problems in New Africa 64; 78

the greatest spirit, the Supreme Being.[1] While E. W. Smith argues that if the word modimo had been as bad in content as Moffat suggests it would never have been taken over as the Sechuana word to signify the Christian God.[2]

All this suggests that Moffat was hasty and insensitive in his judgment about Bechuana religion, and that Modimo had about him the atmosphere of "a high god who was regarded as the creator of all things and the moulder of destiny. He was vaguely associated with the phenomena of the weather, and punished innovations or departure from established usage by sending wind, hail, or heat, and withholding the rain; and death, if not attributable to sorcery, was spoken of as an 'act of God'. He was, however, considered too remote from the world of man to be directly approached in prayer, although at times the ancestral spirits might be implored to intercede with him."[3]

Such was the theology of Moffat's Bechuanaland parishioners. If they had religion, then its moral content was exceedingly meagre, and its teaching about right and wrong almost non-existent. He further regarded their initiation ceremonies of boguera for boys and boyale for girls as "prodigious barriers to the gospel";[4] and, as for polygamy, it led to concubinage and drudgery to which the "single state, or widowhood" was infinitely to be preferred.[5] It was a parish ripe for Moffat's ministrations, which viewed the Bechuana as a stronghold of

1 Brown, Amongst Bantu Nomads, 95ff.
2 Smith, EW, 113; Journal 26.4.22; 25.5.23 NA
3 Schapera, The Tswana, 59
4, 5 Labours 251

idolatry, to be dealt with by frontal assault and condemnation. It is doubtful whether, after fifty years amongst the Bechuana, Moffat was any more sensitive to the structure of this African society than he was in the first years of his association. He was no ethnographer, or social observer, zealous to relate what he saw and heard. His business was to move about with disapproval of nakedness, theft, feasting, and witchcraft, to convince the people of their state as sinners, and "to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ among the heathen". His formula was a simple one. The people were living in a world of superstition and ignorance, which, in Biblical phraseology, meant that their "hearts were hardened" and needed the softening process of sharp rebuke and denunciation, which he pursued with immeasurable patience even when derided:

> Let us introduce the subject whatever way we will, no sooner do they become sensible of our object than they stand up and go away, or should they listen they consider their presence meritorious; nor do they think we do our duty in such cases till we give them a piece of tobacco, and to that end they will title us with considerable dignity such as "king, chief, honourable, good, rich, etc." Should they not attain the object of their soul's desire (tobacco) they immediately change their tune and give us the appelations of "misers, wolves, tigers, etc., etc." From the very same cause we have often to put up with very angry faces. If they do us the least service, it is not without assurance of being well rewarded; nay if they only sit a few minutes within sight of you they expect to be well rewarded. Should anything be borrowed, fourfold must be returned.[1]

They snored at public worship, scattered insects amongst the congregation, ransacked the preacher's house while he was preaching, stole his precious tools, knives and spoons, and if twenty sheep were purchased Moffat and his colleagues were lucky to get home with ten.[2] It was more than enough to daunt a

[1] Journal 18.1.22 NA

[2] Journal 25.2.22; Labours 287ff.

beginner, but Moffat's patience and subdued sense of the ludicrous carried him through his apprenticeship. He records the adventure of the iron pot, stolen from the fireplace and so hot to handle that the thieves dropped it in making their escape. The cracked pot refused to behave like a pot. The more the primitive smith fired it, the more "it flew into pieces at the first stroke of his little hammer", while the thief and the smith "gazing with eyes and mouth dilated on the fragments of iron scattered round the stone anvil, declared their belief that the pot was bewitched, and concluded pot-stealing to be a bad speculation".[1]

His encounter with the rain-maker in October 1821 is an illustration of his forthright, stubborn approach:

> I found him with his companion making rain, as was his habit. I enquired if it was by means of the boola (four small pieces of horn, sometimes of ivory, of different sizes, resembling dice, but their prognostications are drawn more from their position than the small holes when thrown down). He replied "Yes".

Moffat then began to question him about his business of rain-making:

> I told him that I believed he could not make rain, or he would have made it long ago. He flatly contradicted this, and assured that when he had hitherto exercised his power, abundance of rains had fallen.

Moffat countered with the fact that rain fell amongst the Griquas to the south and also in the "unpeopled desert":

> He said that I had asked enough of questions. I remarked that I wished to prove from his knowledge whether he was indeed a rain-maker, for I had seen no marks of it as yet. He said that my God dwelt in the south, that their God dwelt in the north. ... He looked rather stupid when I informed him that my native country was in the north, that my God ruled over all the earth. I asked him from whence the rain came, and where God dwelt.

When the rain-maker confessed his ignorance of the last

[1] Labours 289

question, Moffat bore down on him:

> I asked how he could pretend to make what he knew nothing about. I quoted and explained several passages of scripture bearing on that point. I pointed out to him the different periods in which he had been guilty of telling lies, that he took the honour on him which belongs to God alone. The old man seemed to wish to close the controversy, and remarked that I had surely been long in the world. I replied that age did not always increase wisdom, and referred him to the Book of inspiration. [1]

It was heavy going, but it was Moffat's method. He was there armed with divine authority denied to the people round him. As he strode about amongst the Bechuana, his height adorned with a magnificent eight inches of black beard, and his sharp brown eyes missing little, he was undoubtedly an authentic apostle to the heathen, an incarnation of what Victorian Britain expected a missionary to be. His famous book, Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa, written twenty-two years after his first appearance amongst the Bechuana, and compiled during the glow of his own triumphal visit to Britain, is a mixture of description, propaganda, and argument for the missionary enterprise; and, while it lacks the vigorous movement in descriptive prose of Livingstone's Missionary Travels, is a valuable record of the impact of Victorian religion on an African people. "When we attempted to convince them of their state as sinners,", wrote Moffat, "they would boldly affirm, with full belief in their innate rectitude, that there was not a sinner in the tribe, referring us to other nations whom they dreaded, or with whom they were at war; and especially the poor despised Bushmen. That they are less ferocious than some tribes; but this is saying little in com-

[1] Journal 15.10.21 N.A.

mendation of those who could with impunity rob, murder, lie, and exchange wives. No matter how disgraceful the action might be, or what deceit, prevarication, duplicity, and oaths, were required to support it, success made them perfectly happy in a practice in which most were adepts."[1]

Behind Moffat amongst the Bechuana rose the massive edifice of evangelical Britain, with its concern about the state of the individual soul, the recognition of sin, and the need for repentance and conversion. He transposed the familiar techniques of one religious climate into another, and expected the same kind of response; and, while frequently depressed at the barrenness of the soil, and the absence of any harvest worth calling a harvest, those very metaphors helped to sustain him. Seedtime and harvest were within the divine ordering and were not to be presumed or anticipated. Moffat would have been frustrated by lightning success. He was made for the long haul. "Often have we met together to read the word of God, that never-failing source of comfort, and, contented with being only the pioneers, have poured out our souls in prayer for the perishing heathen around. There were seasons when, by faith in the sure word of promise, we could look beyond the 'gloomy hills of darkness' and rejoice in the full assurance of hope in the approaching latter-day glory."[2] Tucked away in the forechest of his wagon were those 587 quarto pages in his own copper-plate script of the evangelical theology of Messrs Bogue and Roby - his mentors in the faith of which the Bechuana got full benefit, and Moffat the satisfaction of fulfilling his calling.

I

His first period on the Kuruman River at New Lattakoo was very short. It lasted only from March to July 1820, for the

1, 2 Labours 254; 291

authorities in Capetown were still nervous about his presence beyond the colonial frontier and the desirability of reinforcing the missions with new recruits.[1] Philip, in Capetown, failed to persuade the government on Moffat's behalf, and the young couple were forced to go back to Griqua Town,[2] but not before a gleam of unexpected thanksgiving shone from out of the west. His old friend Afrikaner came riding across the wastes of scrubby veld and hills from Namaqualand to Latakoo, in July, to deliver Moffat's books and furniture, as well as his cattle and sheep.[3] It was an eight weeks' trek,[4] and one that called out Moffat's gratitude "to the once plundering Afrikaner"[5] for delivering his property in such good order through the western wilderness. The link between the two men was still strong enough for Afrikaner to plan to remove himself and his people nearer where Moffat might settle; but he died two months later, to Moffat's grief. "I feel as one deprived of a near relation especially when I call to mind the many happy hours I spent in his company."[6]

With the happiness of Afrikaner's devotion and friendship to lighten their gloom in returning to Griqua Town, Robert and Mary made the best of their ten months' enforced sojourn in this frontier settlement with its half-breed population of European, Hottentot, Bushman, and Bechuana blood.

Seventy-five miles due south of Kuruman, Griqua Town, by the time Moffat knew it, had become the centre of the widespread Griqua people who were scattered along the banks of the Orange

1, 2, 3 R.M. to R.M. Senr 18.9.20 N.A.

4 R.M. to Burder 5.8.22 LMS

5 R.M. to R.M. Senr 18.9.20 N.A.

6 LMS Report 1823, 105

River for some six hundred miles, and probably numbered five thousand people.[1] Their ancestors had come north from the western parts of Cape Colony, where they had their origin through an intermixture of Hottentots with Europeans, and in the early nineteenth century came under the regular ministrations of L.M.S. missionaries - particularly William Anderson, who reported on them in 1800 as a horde of "wandering naked savages, subsisting by plunder and the chase. Their bodies were daubed with red paint, their heads loaded with grease and shining powder, with no covering but the filthy kaross over their shoulders."[2] But, by the time John Campbell visited him in 1813, there was, thanks chiefly to Anderson, a stationary community at Klaarwater [re-named Griqua Town], and the people previously known as Bastard Hottentots were dubbed "Griquas".

Campbell drew up fourteen rules for the government of the community, which them numbered nearly thirteen hundred.[3] He noted the people's gardens, their considerable number of cattle, sheep, and goats, and the "outward comforts since they became a stationary people" under their two captains, Barend Barends and Adam Kok.[4]

Able to speak Dutch, use firearms, and dress in a jumbled selection of European clothes, the Griqua were a cut above the surrounding Bechuana, and frequently gave themselves airs, which made Moffat critical of them and their settlement. By 1820, when Campbell came again to visit his protégés, he found them in disruption over an order to supply twenty recruits for the Cape Regiment - a demand from a remote colonial control which they resented, and for which they appeared to blame their missionary protector.[5]

1,2 ~~R.M.=to=R.M.=Senr~~ Stow, 337; 317

3,4 Campbell 1822, 351ff

5 Anderson to Burder 29.10.17 LMS

Barends and Kok went off to settle at Campbell and Danielskuil, and Andries Waterboer - a mission teacher - was elected as captain of the Griquas, at Griqua Town, and proved himself a reliable ally to Moffat in the threats to Kuruman or marauding tribesmen and in the formidable affray of the Mantatees in 1823 [see Chapter 6].

For Moffat, Griqua Town, with its thirteen hundred people, its established mission, with Henry Helm already dabbling in printing,[1] its traders and outcrops of civilized life, was a useful base and a port in many storms to come. There, he could happily grumble about the cost of everything: 70 rix dollars for a greatcoat; 10 to 14 for a hat; 3 for a handkerchief; 2 for a bush-knife; and 10 for a piece of calico.[2] He had been asked by Campbell to assist Helm in reorganizing the mission,[3] and he enjoyed rooting out "fruitless stumps" from the church and amputating "dead members of the body".[4] And Mary, anticipating her first-born child [Mary, who became Livingstone's wife], wrote a crisp, homely narrative on the domesticities of frontier life:

> In this part of the country it is the custom to have the kitchen separate from the house ... the kitchen of the missionary is the place of common resort, and if one turns one's back, perhaps half the food is gone, and spoons, knife, fork, or whatever lies about, is away. Those who have tolerably good houses have generally what is called a fore-house. It is the place of entrance. The outer door renders it cool and comfortable, which door is in the middle, as in a hall; and this place is generally the largest in the house. It is the house-place of the family, where they eat, fold and iron their clothes, prepare victuals for the fire, &c. At each end

[1] See Appendix.

[2] R.M. to Melvill; Jan. (n.d.) 1821 LMS
[The rix dollar was then about two shillings.]

[3,4] R.M. to J.Smith 23.4.21 NA

of this place is a small room, one of them the bedroom, the other the private sitting room, study, or whatever you may call it. Behind are detached pack-houses, where everything is kept. This is the plan of a good missionary house here, and I approve it; only I would have both kitchen and pack-houses attached to the dwelling-house. If I want a little coffee, sugar or butter, I like to have it at least a little nearer the house than they have it.

The washing is done at the river in cold water, and instead of rubbing they beat things upon the stones, which wears them fast. When we get settled I wish very much to wash in the English way. We cannot at present for want of tubs, but Moffat has promised to make me some, and I know he will.

During these months at Griqua Town the young couple planned their future home economy, adapting themselves to the way of the veld:

With regard to animal food, all missionaries, however small the family, kill a sheep (but the sheep are small in this land) every week in the moderate weather. They must do it on account of the people they have about them - people in the garden, &c., who all eat more than their work is worth, for it will take two or three generations to get indolence out of their nature. The chief part of the sheep's fat is in the tail, which is an enormous size, a burthen for it to carry. The fat of this is of quite an oily nature and very rich; this we melt, and it assists in cookery. In the heat of the summer it will not stiffen, unless mixed with hard fat and set in a cool place. With the hard fat we make candles, and some people soap; but that is an immense and troublesome business, being three weeks every day on the fire, and requiring the most constant attention.

Most missionaries have a brick oven for their bread. We leaven our bread, always keeping a lump of leaven, and the bread is as sweet as any yeast could make it if we do not let it work too long. We have the wheat all ground down together and I like it better than sifted for household bread.

Mary began to love the thick Bechuana milk so often presented to visitors as a welcoming dish:

They get a goat-skin and scrape the hair clean off, so that you could not tell that it had been hairy. Then they turn the outer side in, sew it up into a bag with a narrow neck like a bottle. At the bottom they have a

very small peg stuck in, a thick peg at the top which closes the mouth of the sack. Into this sack of goat's skin they pour their milk as it comes from the cow. Perhaps in three or four days it is full. It is hung in a pretty warm place. They pull out the small peg at the bottom and let the whey off.

The milk is poured out at the top end of the sack, and comes to the table wet, but not swashy. This when served up looks like a dish of light curds. The milk here being very rich it has quite a yellow appearance. It is rather sour, and with a little sugar and new milk it is quite delightful. I did not fancy it at first, but probably it was on account of its being brought in their dirty vessels. I have now got over that and eat it with relish.

She even conquered her antipathy to cow-dung on the floors:

We smear all our rooms with cow dung once a week at least. At first when I saw Sister Helm do it I thought to myself, "But I'll do without that dirty trick, or I will try hard." However I had not been here long but was glad to have it done, and I have hardly patience to wait till Saturday. It lays the dust better than anything, kills the fleas which would otherwise breed abundantly, and is a fine clear green. It is mixed with water, and laid on as thinly as possible. I now look upon my floor smeared with cow dung with as much complacency as I used to do upon our best rooms when well scoured.

And when she saw Chief Mothibi wash his hands in cow-dung, before he ate, Mary Moffat saluted the act as that of a gentleman.[1]

II

They were back in the broad, reedy valley of the Kuruman at New Lattakoo on May 17, 1821, free at last to settle, and to build the first permanent homes of the white race in the far northern interior. Mary, the babe, had a rapturous welcome from Mahutu, who "pressed it to her breast, kissing it with all the affection of a mother".[2] The faithful Robert Hamilton had

[1] M.M. 11.8.20 NA

[2] Journal 17.5.21 NA

remained in charge of the tiny settlement, and he and Moffat now turned irrigation specialists in order to use the Kuruman water for their gardens. The river, as it is to-day in some places, at Maruping (New Lattakoo), was a shapeless marsh, with the water bubbling up in spring fashion beneath the soil and wandering away unseen south-westwards towards the edges of the Kalahari Desert.

From the surrounding Kuruman hills which enclose the immense vlei of the Kuruman valley, the eye still takes in a vast flat landscape devoid of trees except on the immediate confines of the Kuruman water which irrigates and freshens the scene. Moffat's gardener's eye saw the possibilities of the valley for his permanent establishment, for all else was a barren land of stony hills and sandy plains covered with long, tough grass, a light straw colour for most of the year, and in a glitter of brilliant green only after the rains. There was, however, always the wide bottom of the Kuruman oozing moisture, even in the driest season, fed from the perpetual Eye of Kuruman ten miles up the valley. Above the Eye to-day - which forms a delightful water-park for modern Kuruman - stands a monument to the Voortrekkers, but no mention of the men who first prospected the valley and brought their white wagons into this northern oasis.

A furrow of water through the patches of arable land was the first necessity of life. Moffat's predecessors had dug a water ditch some miles long, but, as Moffat says, "the native women, seeing the fertilizing effect of the water in our gardens thought very naturally that they had an equal right to their own, and took the liberty of cutting open our water ditch, and allowing it on occasions to flood theirs. This mode of proceeding left us at times without a drop of water, even for culinary

purposes."[1] Mary was forced to send her washing seventy-five miles across the veld to Griqua Town. The men chased away the women when they hacked down the ditch, and when Moffat upbraided them they replied by destroying the high dam at the river-head:

> The women would watch our return from turning the streams into the watercourse, and would immediately go and open the outlets again, thus leaving us on a thirsty plain, many days without a drop of water, excepting that which was carried from a distant fountain, under a cloudless sky, when the thermometer at noon would frequently rise to 120 in the shade.[2]

The first accommodation Moffat built was what he laconically calls a "library and a bedstead", with a roof supported by "pillars formed of rough trunks of a hardy sort of tree. The wall, composed of reed and clay, is formed in the inside of the pillars, which makes the room quite square, withal giving the outside a Grecian appearance. The massive pillars, sunk a suitable length into the ground, enable the house to remain immovable amidst the devastating thunderstorms which we often experience in this part of Africa."[3]

Church attendance varied from one to forty, with its gigglers, snorers, potential thieves, backsliders, and simple believers, all under Moffat's disciplinary sway:

> Sabbath September 30 1821 The attendance at church seems rather on the increase, though comparatively little attention is paid to what is preached. It is, however, very pleasing to see them within reach of the gospel net. They give by so doing a partial approbation to our remaining among them, though they care little about our going and staying. Many would regret were we to go, merely from their love to tobacco, which they get now and then from some of us.[4]

> Sabbath February 17 1822 Early this morning I visited a neighbouring kraal. The chief is an old regardless

1, 2 Labours 285ff

3 R.M. to A.Moffat 25.2.22 NA

4 Journal 30.9.21 NA

> character. Having brought with me some medicine for his foot, which has been sore for upwards of a year, and having preached and conversed with them on spiritual things, to which the greatest inattention was paid, I applied the medicine. Feeling its effects rather sharp, he requested me to give tobacco to comfort his heart.[1]
>
> Sabbath February 24 1822 The attendance at church seems again on the decline. On the Sabbaths few come, but during the week almost none.[2]

Moffat was slow to follow the chief clue to the Bechuana heart - the language. His stumbling Dutch, at the mercy of inefficient translators, was an inadequate instrument of preaching, even though he might muddle along in everyday affairs with a mixture of Dutch and Sechuana phrases:

> For the first six months I had no means of acquiring words or sentences, and of course only picked up by the ear any word that I could catch. Latterly I had an interpreter, though a very poor one, and, could I have been enabled to have attended to it two days out of seven, I should have made some proficiency, but considering the peculiar structure of the language, and the means of acquiring it, I have not laboured in vain.[3]

There were no grammars to grind on, and no language pundits to guide him amongst the strange noises of the Sechuana tongue. He stumbled on with words and phrases, and by 1822 had translated Dr Brown's Catechism,[4] and the Lord's Prayer; but it took another five years before he isolated himself on the remoter veld to perfect his conquest of Sechuana. His understandable excuses were the physical labour of establishing a liveable life on this frontier when every sundown found him tired and in no fit state for language drill. With no special gifts as a linguist, and no training in the elementary rules of language study, the marvel is that Moffat's patience never cracked. He set himself to learn as an ox drawing on the yoke, and got there in the end.

1, 2 Journal 17.2.22 NA; 24.2.22 NA

3 R.M. to J.Smith 20.8.22 NA

4 R.M. to Burder 5.8.22 LMS

Water and words were Moffat's guides on this northern frontier. Without unrestricted water his settlement would perish; and without an ease in words he had no key to the life of the people. He soon realized that a move nearer the gushing waters of the Kuruman spring would be an advantage, and on February 20, 1822, he first broached the subject to Chief Mothibi, who "seemed very much pleased with the proposal".[1] The tribe began to look to him for guidance, and they soon had further evidence of Moffat's reliability as a defender of their physical freedom as well as an adviser in their spiritual affairs. He had come to stay.

[1] Journal 20.2.22 NA

Chapter 6

THE GREAT TREK OF THE TRIBES

All looked up to me in the present distress

1823-24

The face of southern Africa is lined and webbed with pathways which, from a low-flying aeroplane, appear to straggle without plan or purpose across the open bush-veld, with no firm beginning and no certain end. They have been flattened free by the slow usage of the years, so that from the air the paths are astonishingly clear and neat; but when the traveller begins to walk them he soons discovers that the persistent growth of African grass and trees threatens their clarity. Give the main paths a few years neglect, and, like the minor ones, they will be enveloped once more in the endless terrain.

It is like that with the movement of the Bantu African peoples. They came from the north in the unrecorded historical past, and they erupted again in the early nineteenth century from the south-east in a series of explosive rushes that scarred the land with a maze of pathways which have long since disappeared. But, though the pathways have gone, the historical signposts are known as well as the areas where the great Bantu treks originated; while the shape and character of modern South Africa and Southern Rhodesia are evidence of the permanent effect of this immense movement of the Bantu peoples which swept up from the south-east in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.[1]

When Robert Moffat met some of the vast waves of this movement on the veld to the north-east of his new home in 1823 and 1824 it was the result of years of ebb and flow of the peoples. Like the great trek of the Boer farmers out of Cape Colony, this great trek of the Bantu peoples was a process which accumulated a momentum over the years, and Moffat's waves were really the

[1] Bryant 147ff

back-wash of a flood spilling itself out. It had rolled across what is now the Orange Free State from Zululand, and was lapping the outer confines of the Transvaal and Bechualand, with some of its early vigour spent but still powerful enough to threaten the life of Moffat's Bechuana.[1]

For a long and dateless period the Nguni family of the Bantu race had lived in their upland seclusion between the Indian Ocean and the Drakensberg, where they roamed and hunted, cultivated the Nguni system of clan-life with its rigid range of education and youth discipline, leading to the supreme experience of valour and sacrifice on the field of battle.[2]

By 1816, Bryant estimates that there were 78,000 people in Zululand organized into some fifty independent clans, and the process of clan-forming and re-forming was still going on, with the rise and fall of "kings", "queens", and "kingdoms", indicative of change rather than of strength. "A Zulu king was no whit more majestic than any other Native man of standing; a queen no more elegant or less odoriferous than an ordinary Native housewife; their palace no more significant than any large kraal; their kingdom no more extensive than many a Dominion farm. And yet, to his people, a Native king was as great by birth and comparative wealth as is ours to us, and he was endowed with power over property and person such as never an English king or Roman emperor possessed."[3]

To such an eminence came the young Zulu, Shaka, about 1816, as chief of the Zulu clan itself: one of the middling sized groups of probably no more than 2,000 people,[4] but destined, under his military skill and energy, to dominate his own land and to expel across the face of southern Africa columns of tribesmen who fashioned African life for the next half century.

1 Labours 354
2 Bryant, 79
3 Bryant, 73
4 Bryant, 82

Shaka created a fighting force with genuine regimental discipline, and invented a new technique of hand-to-hand fighting with assegai and shield, and a policy of crushing his foe out of existence once and for all.[1] His advent hastened the coalescence of the clans, and provided the Zulus not only with a generally recognizable name but with a fighting form which made them irresistible among the Sotho tribes beyond the Drakensberg and the Bechuana of Moffat's country; and, later, gave Shaka's apt pupil Moselekatse the cue for his own conquests beyond the Limpopo.

Shaka's growing omnipotence in Zululand created rivals who either eventually succumbed to his power or fled northwards and eastwards, a process which had been in operation long before his time, but which reached a crisis under him.[2] Two of these outward thrusts arose from the activities of Zwide, Shaka's greatest rival, and his allies Soshangane and Zwangendaba, who led their people northwards in 1821-22;[3] the first, into the Portuguese territory of Gasaland, and the other, two thousand miles into the Central Africa of the Great Lakes, to become the Angoni people.

But, in a third thrust westwards across the High Drakensberg, the maelstrom within Zululand deposited a mixed horde of tribesmen, most likely led by the Hlubi,[4] amongst the Sotho - setting in motion the snowball movement which landed thousands of them on Moffat's doorstep.

The fourth westward movement brought Moselekatse and his Kumalo host into the Transvaal in the area of modern Pretoria, where, en route for their final home in Southern Rhodesia, Moffat encountered them in 1829.[5]

1-4 Bryant 132; 147; 459; 150

5 See Map

I

Fear and greed, motives not unconnected with the Great Trek of the Boers, were the propulsive powers of these Zulu tribal treks: fear of what lay behind them in the shape of Shaka's power and greed for the cattle and possessions of the tribes ~~not~~ beyond the mountains. Once the roving and ravaging set in, it continued under its own power; what the warriors demanded were targets to attack, and what the conglomeration of wives and families needed was food; for these tribal movements were movements of people, as well as fighting forces; the dispersal of a race, and not simply the dispatch of invading armies.[1]

About 1818, the Hlubi people, living along the Blood River and the sources of the Mzinyati, in Zululand, were on the move, harried by Matiwane of the Mgwane, who in turn was harassed both by Shaka and his rival Zwide. In numbers, the Hlubi could muster over 8,000 people, to the Ngwane 4,000 and the Shaka Zulu 2,000 - but numbers were unavailing in face of the skilled battering the Hlubi received from Matiwane, which sent them off across the Drakensberg where some of them froze to death in the passes.[2] After crossing the mountain barrier, this fugitive Hlubi horde found itself in the land of the Batlokoa, probably in the upper Wilge Valley region of the modern Harrismith, with old scores to pay off against the Batlokoa, then ruled by their formidable woman ruler, Mantatisi.

This warrior widow of the Batlokoa was evidently a terrifying person with a record of battle and subterfuge which has given the name of "Mantatees" to a section of this movement of the Sotho peoples as they clashed and coalesced in this Mfecane, or crushing of the peoples. Beaten in the north of the Free State by the invading Hlubi (later known to the Boer Trekkers as

1, 2 Bryant, 140; 150

the Fingo), Mantatisi retreated southwards, where she met the Bafokeng (later known as the Makololo) and drove them northwards. In the south of the Free State, round the mountain of Kurutlele, between the Vet and the Sand Rivers, she defeated more Bafokeng and scattered them across the Vaal to join the other fugitives as they roamed north-westwards.[1]

Mantatisi's martial genius is illustrated in the story that Bryant relates of her ruse when faced with a sudden appearance of the Hlubi in the Caledon River area. With her warriors off foraging, she was left with only the women and the children in the camp. Collecting them together in a mass on a hilltop, in full view of the still distant enemy, she paraded them in lengthy file along the skyline - a simple ruse which signalled her alertness, warned the enemy of her lively power, and gave time for the warriors to get home from their foray.[2]

No wonder that rumours of her valour and campaigning skill spread across the veld. She was supposed to nourish her warriors at her own breast, and to be at the head of an invincible host laying all the world waste in its march.[3] The truth was that Mantatisi was fighting for the patrimony of her "arrogant and bellicose" son, Sigonyela, who when he came of age outdid even his mother in the fighting business until Moshesh, the great Basuto Chief, brought him to his knees.[4] Although the name "Mantatees" smote terror over the veld, as Moffat records, Mantatisi and her people never crossed the Vaal and were certainly not present at the battle of Lattakoo, where the tribal hordes broke against Moffat's generalship and the rifles of the Griquas.

[1] Bryant 151ff
[2] Labours 340
[3,4] Bryant 152
[5] How 70 and Smith GL n.371

The name "Mantatees" was used indiscriminately for all sorts of marauding groups coming from the east during this period of mfecane, even being used by some to include the Matabele - then emerging on their own independent trek out of Zululand.[1]

II

By expelling the Bafokeng [Makololo] across the Vaal by 1822, Mantatisi had also prompted another of the great treks of the Bantu peoples; for the long northward march of the Makololo towards the Zambesi started soon after the tribal whirlwind which smote Moffat in 1823. Under their young and able chief, Sebituane, for whom later Livingatone had such admiration, the Bafokeng were stirred by his eloquence: "Let us march! Let us take our wives and children and cattle and go forth to seek some land where we may dwell in tranquillity!"[2]

From the Vaal there may have been 10,000 Makololo in marching order, with families and cattle and oxen, making for the Bechuana country at the beginning of 1823. This number may have increased by many hundreds more as deserters from the Batlokoa and other wandering marauders joined the Makololo host, which appeared to have a purpose and to know where it was going.[3]

Sebituane, a young man of twenty,[4] brave and intelligent beyond his years, led his host on its conquering path northwards, defeated the Bangwaketse and killed their chief,Makaba, in 1824,[5] scattered the Bamangwato, and, by way of the Botlele River, reached a temporary resting place at Linyanti [See Chapter 17]. His trek was second only to that of his great rival, Moselekatse, and his Matabele, who far to the east were already moving from

[1] Smith GL n.371 [E.W.Smith amends and expands Sclenberger's account]

[2] Quoted Smith GL 367

[3] Smith GL 369

[4, 5] How 71; 72

one mountain range, the Drakensberg, to another, the Magliesberg, also in search of an abiding country.

Alongside Sebituane and his Makololo in the winter days of June 1823 in Bechuanaland were the Maphuthing, a vigorous pillaging and fighting people also expelled from south of the Vaal by the attacks of the Batlokoa [Mantatee]. Their route, under Chuane, appears to have been through the Barolong country towards Mafeking and the Marico areas, even reaching as far as Kanye, where Makaba fought them off and sent them reeling southwards directly in the pathway of Robert Moffat as he set out to visit Makaba.[1]

They swept through the towns and countryside, collecting cattle and burning houses. Their wealth of livestock was hoarded within an immense circle under the care of the women and children, with the warriors forming a human stockade around the booty.[2] They clashed inevitably with Sebituane and his Bafokeng [Makololo] and fought an indecisive battle in the region of Old Lattakoo,[3] with losses in warriors and cattle on both sides. A compensation for Sebituane was the attractive young prisoner-widow, Setlutlu, of the Makollo, who became his wife, gave him his heir, Sekeletu, and also gave the name Makololo to his people.

Associated with the Maphuthing were their neighbours and allies, the Bahlakoana, also on the rampage in the north round about the present Clocolan and Prynnsberg, in the Orange Free State.[4] Their leadership was weak, and in Moffat's battle of Lattakoo they suffered most of all; but they appeared to have trailed along in the wake of the Maphuthing, picking up what they could of cattle and kind - an occupation that was foremost in all these wanderings of the Bantu.[5]

1 Journal 16.5.23 NA
2 Schapera, Short History, 6
3 How 71f
4 Ellenberger 306
5 How 71f

Another more independent group were the Bataung, under Moletsane, who struck out on a free-lance career of battening on the Bechuana - particularly the Barolong people - ransacking the little house of the Wesleyan Missionary Samuel Broadbent, and being most puzzled at the reverend gentleman's trousers, which appeared to be useless bags without bottoms, and at his pistol, which was thought to be a whistle until the barrel was warmed in a fire and killed the man watching over it.[1]

III

The movements of these tribes, and the others which shared in the eruption of the mfecane period, are inevitably indecipherable in any final fashion. Like the African pathways in the bush to-day, they come and go without plan and order; but 1823 is a usefully fixed date in the peregrinations, for in that year Robert Moffat, the young apprentice on the veld, saw with his own eyes something of the entangled manoeuvres of this shifting mass of African life between the Orange and the Molopo Rivers, and his observations provide the most detailed record of this period.[2]

The Battle of Lattakoo, where Moffat and the Griquas made their stand against the marauders, staved off disaster not only against the rising mission station on the Kuruman River, but also saved the Bechuana tribes from even worse fates than the pillaging and fire they endured, and the Colony from a flood of terror. Famine, death, and even cannibalism, stalked the land,[3] and the fear which smote the hearts of the Bechuana was added to by the rumours of the mighty woman Mantatisi, with her single eye and terrible reputation, who was supposed to waste the land with revolting miseries.[4] That she was "affable, stout and

[1] Journal 16.8.24 NA and Ellenberger 167

[2] Schapera K, xxv

[3] Ellenberger 217

[4] How 67ff

handsome",[1] according to Basuto traditions, only adds to the irony of the rumours which then, as now, in Africa had the power of a third force in the clash of two parties. That she never appeared in person north of the Vaal[2] also adds to the wonder of her reputation, which the Basuto lauded from the mountain-tops[3] and the Bechuana whispered ~~about~~ in the secret of the kraals.[4] The "Mantatee" were invisibly represented on the veld by a powerful name, but the truth is that the chief warring tribes which threatened Moffat and his friends were a mixed group of Maphuthing and their allies, with the Bafokeng [Makololo] on the side-lines - a fact which Moffat himself records[5] but which historians have confused.[6]

No doubt there were refugees and prisoners from other tribes amongst them, for these treks of the Bantu were movements that swept together exceedingly mixed companies, as much for mutual protection[7] as for attack. Murder and robbery were the common and expected practice, while the swift march and surprise onslaught were almost essential to existence; and, if the facts of cannibalism on the veld between 1822 and 1828, as given by Ellenberger,[8] are accepted then the grim fears of Moffat's Bechuana were indeed well founded.

Behind all this whirl of warring tribes, in what is now the Northern Cape, Transvaal and Orange Free State, still lay the restless power of the Zulus across the Drakensberg, which up to 1828, when Shaka was murdered,[9] propelled further intermittent trouble across the mountains[10] to lash the already

1, 2, 3, 6 How 67ff

4 R.M. to M. Smith ~~M.~~ 12.4.23 NA

5 Journal 21.7.23 NA

7, 8 Ellenberger 217; 225 [He estimates a total of 300,000 people eaten by their fellows during these years.]

9 Bryant 662

10 Ellenberger 130ff; 176ff

tormented tribes. This infliction did not even cease with Shaka's death, for by then the fighting Moselekatse and his Kumalo invaders were established in the Transvaal - on the eve of starting their thirty years' association with Robert Moffat [see Chapter 10] as their stern admonisher and adviser.

IV

Such was the state of affairs on the bleak veld when Robert Moffat, snug in his home-made jacket of leopard skin, rode out in his wagon in the piercing cold of Wednesday, May14, 1823.

Mary was left behind with the children, Mary and Ann (then two months old), and he departed with doleful prophecies of death at the hands of Makaba, the Bangwaketse chief, whose stronghold at Kanye he had determined to visit. For him, the veld was "no adorned landscape, no winding stream nor Gothic castle"[1] but a rough wilderness of unbeaten tracks, sandy tufts of grass, and muddy puddles in which rhinoceros "rolled their bulky sides":

> [May] 24. Saturday. The morning excessively cold. ... The wagon is perpetually jolting. ... I cannot read but with the greatest pain. I am obliged to sit and think, and sometimes get out of my wagon and walk, and sometimes run to keep myself warm.[2]

This was Moffat's first major journey alone, and he moved cautiously from pool to pool along the route northwards, accepting little gifts of berries and milk from the people and watching the hundreds of animals which roamed freely across his tracks, or were gathered at the pools for water. He admired

1, 2 Journal 15.5.23; 24.5.23 NA

the stately roll of the rhinoceros:

> I sat a few minutes and gazed with astonishment at their ponderous bodies. Their skins, above one and a half inches think, and warlike horns, seemed to pronounce them invulnerable. I fired at one, and gave him a deadly wound, when he raged and ploughed the ground with his horn. While I was re-loading, one of the men fired and wounded another. At first they were inclined to attack us, but afterwards made off towards the thickets and fell. The sun being set, we returned to the wagons, and pointed out to the poor Bechuanas where they could find flesh enough for them and families for a month.[1]

Two days out, on the way to Nokaneng - thirty miles from modern Vryburg - he heard the first rumours of the "Mantatees", a fierce, black, long haired people,[2] but dismissed them as imagination and lies; and was more occupied with the gnus, quaggas, rhinos, antelopes and partridges. Moffat was no shot, but a brace of partridges a hundred yards from his wagon tempted him, and "I was successful."[3] There were the "poor Bechuanas", the serf-like Bakgalagadi, wandering without "house, hall, garden or fold", dependent on their poisoned arrow and spear for their living and all their possessions carried on the shoulder in a small sack, and always at the mercy of a local chief. There was the ever-present wilderness, dry and barren except for a series of muddy pools, fouled by hundreds of animals, a country of sky and horizon which had its own effect on the young traveller. He early learned to be cautious and patient where haste and irritability were useless pieces of equipment, and where a wild dog pursuing a hartebeest was the main excitement of a long day.[4]

Could there possibly be any long-haired marauders about? He thought not; but he also early learned that, in Africa, news

1-4
Journal 26.5.23; 16.5.23; 21.5.23; 27.5.23 NA

was news even when there were no visible signs of it, and when the wide wilderness and the wider sky were emptier than anything he had ever known. He turned back in his tracks when messages from the neighbouring Barolong people convinced him that the "Mantatees" (or was it the "Matabele"?) were ahead of him on the veld in ferocious style and capable of slaughtering his Batlhaping:

> Sabbath June 1. Feel extremely anxious to get home, but cannot see it to be a duty to travel on a Sabbath, without it be a case of urgent necessity.[1]

It was typical of Moffat to subdue necessity by regulated discipline. The "Mantatees" could wait, and in Africa, he learned, time always won its own victories. But the news prompted speedy attention. Four days later he was back to warn Mothibi and his people of their danger, and in another four he was at Griqua Town to raise a commando of riflemen; and was home again in four days more with a promise of men, horses and ammunition. It was a feat of hard driving by wagon and hard riding by horse. He returned with a useful ally in George Thompson, the South African traveller, then making his way northwards, and most anxious not to miss a showdown on the frontier. Together they rode into the Kuruman valley by moonlight on June 11; and at the pitso on June 13 watched Mothibi rouse his people into action:

> One side (wrote Thompson) was allotted to the warriors who seated themselves, as they arrived, in close rows on the ground; holding their shields in front of them; and their assegais, seven or eight of which were stuck behind each shield, bristling up like a wood of spears. On the opposite side the old men, women and children took their station. In the middle was an open space reserved for the privileged, or those who have slain an enemy in battle, to dance and sing in celebration of their prowess; which they did for half an hour, previously to the opening of the debate, with all the violent fantastic gestures imagination can conceive accompanied by the clarorous plaudits of the spectators.[2]

[1] Journal 1.6.23 NA

[2] Thompson, Travels in Southern Africa, 100

The thousand armed men answered their chief's greeting with a deep groan, and when from behind his shield he drew a spear and thrust it towards the north-east as a declaration of war the host whistled and hissed. Mothibi capered into the arena in a white chemise, fastened in a huge frill round his neck and barely covering him to his middle. The garment billowed as he danced, and Moffat recognized it as one of Mary's creations which she had vainly persuaded the young women to wear. After his ballet Mothibi spoke:

> The Mantatees are a strong and conquering people. They have destroyed many nations; they are now on their march to destroy us. Moffat has gained information for us respecting their exploits, their weapons, their mode of fighting, their bad designs. Through the care of Moffat we now fully see our danger. ... But the Griquas have been called by Moffat to our help. He has held a council with their chiefs ... the cause is a great one - it involves our very existence as a people.[1]

The next ten days were a test of Moffat's patience and diplomacy. He knew that the stout speeches and bold gesticulations at the pitso were laid on extremely feeble foundations. A few more rumours that the "Mantatees" were on the march might start a panic which no outward calm on his part could prevent. His plan was to stiffen the Bechuana warriors with Griqua riflemen, whose well-placed shots might well settle the day of battle. Powder was short. All told, it amounted to about twelve shots a man for the Griquas - if they got there in time.[2] He cast his eye anxiously over the southern sweep of the Kuruman veld for the sign of horsemen, and on June 21 sent out a messenger to stir the laggards on the road. He reconnoitred, with Thompson, to sniff the air in what the latter described as an "inoffensive

[1] Thompson, Travels in Southern Africa, 101

[2] Journal 23.6.23 NA

disinterested and prudent demeanour":

> Our journey (he wrote) lay across a country thinly sprinkled with mimosa trees, and abounding with game. As we proceeded, immense plains opened interminably to our view, waving with a sea of grass. About two o'clock we reached the Maquareen River ... here, to our surprise, we found a wagon already outspanned, and a party of men along with it. Mr Moffat immediately conjectured that this must be the party of one Arend, a runaway slave ... and so it proved, for on approaching we discovered Arend seated in his wagon, with his gun in his hand, prepared to defend himself to the last extremity, for he had taken us for colonists coming to apprehend him.[1]

The Arend story is typical of many Moffat was to hear ~~in later years~~ on the northern frontier of the Colony. The man had been in the employ of a Boer farmer in the Sneeuberg region of the Colony whose cruelty compelled him to flee beyond the borders to trade amongst the tribes. He had managed to accumulate ninety head of cattle, a wagon, a musket, a heap of ivory, and an assorted group of Hottentots and Bechuana, all now fearful of the advancing black horde of the "Mantatees".

Arend invited his visitors to a feast of newly-killed broiled springbok, and in the chill night "under a refulgent moon" the runaway slave, the missionary and the traveller, swapped yarns round a blazing fire. Thompson produced a jew's harp, which Arend strummed to the astonishment of his "wild retinue", while the pastoral innocence of the firelit serenade in "the deep silence of the wilderness" contrasted sharply with the dangers they were in. Moffat took Africa as it came, and managed to sleep soundly in his wagon "amidst the melancholy howlings of the hyenas and jackals".[2]

Acting on Arend's advice, Moffat and Thompson turned back again to the Kuruman valley, to find the place in the turmoils

1, 2 Thompson, Travels 111; 112

of evacuation. The tribal cattle were brought in from the cattle posts, valuables were buried, and household corn secreted in large earthen pots. People rushed about, shouting "Mantatees", "Mantatees", while Moffat and Hamilton had their wagons loaded and ready for flight.

On June 18 the Mantatees were eighty miles off, and there was still no news of the Griqua commando.[1] On June 19, Thompson, eager to get at least one glimpse of the dreaded enemy, before he departed south to civilization, rode out to Old Lattakoo, to find the town abandoned. He and Arend, the ex-slave, climbed to a height above the Lattakoo River, and there saw the wonder of "an immense black mass in the valley below us, pushing on towards the river". From behind a screen of camel thorn they saw the "Mantatees"[2] move in orderly precision along the valley, "trampling into blackness the grassy meadows over which they passed", a mixture of army and popular multitude with their shields and spears covering the moving horde of women, children and cattle. It was enough to send Thompson riding back to Kuruman, under a cloudless moon, with the awful news. He clinched it by holding Mothibi's fingers to his eyes, to testify that he had actually seen what they all so dreaded.[3]

All night long on the 20th the flight from the Kuruman valley proceeded, with the pack-oxen moving westwards loaded with wooden and earthen vessels, red paint-stone, corn, and karosses. Next morning at eight a general evacuation of the women and children was ordered; and at Moffat's house it was decided that unless the Griqua commando appeared by noon the missionaries would go too.

1 [redacted] Journal 21.6.23 NA

2 Undoubtedly the Maphuthing [see pp. 97-99]

3 Thompson, 123

An hour later a shout of exultation went up as two Griqua horsemen galloped in to herald the coming of the commando, still forty miles off; and the next day ninety-nine horsemen rode in, under Andries Waterboer, the Griqua captain, a sight that moved Moffat to preach from Psalm twenty: "Some boast of chariots, and some of horses; but we boast of the name of the Lord our God."[1]

V

From now on until the end of the Battle of the Lattakoo Moffat was unofficial civilian generalissimo of a mixed army of Bechuana and Griquas, anxious on the one hand to defend his Kuruman valley, but, on the other, determined if possible to prevent a fight.

His vivid descriptions of scenes in the scattered battle have often been quoted,[2] but his Journal of June 24-25[3] makes it quite clear that for two days he rode about the outskirts of Old Lattakoo as an emissary of peace. It was at sunrise on June 25 that Moffat first caught sight of the enemy, looking "like an immense black surface" on the landscape, as if during the night the bushes had been fired, leaving behind a vast, dead black area.

But the glint of the morning sun on the war axes and brass ornaments of the people revealed a formidable host, who were soon aware of the two men walking about unarmed on the hillside. A few men rushed towards them, but Moffat's nonchalent attitude was rewarded for the men slipped back to the crowd, which encouraged Moffat and the Griqua captain, Waterboer, to ride towards the "Mantatees" intending to walk the last hundred

1, 3 Journal 26.6.23 NA; 25/26.6.23 NA

2 Labours 354ff

yards and ask for "two or three of their men to come and speak with us". The reply to this move was a hideous yell and a rush of spears towards Moffat and Waterboer, who fell back "astonished at this savage barbarity".[1] Not put off by the rush, they prepared to picnic in full view of the armed warriors - shooting a wild turkey and roasting it in hot ashes, and even sending their horses to be watered in the distant stream, thus taking an obvious risk of their capture.

The next day the same peaceful technique was continued by Moffat and the Griqua leader to within one hundred and fifty yards of the invaders, who then "commenced their howl and threw out their right and left wings for an immediate attack, and discharged from their hands some of their savage weapons. Their black dismal appearance and savage fury was calculated to daunt, and the commando, on their attacking, wisely retreated a few yards and again drew up."[2]

Waterboer, judging the attack about to begin, levelled one warrior with a shot, and his men were soon firing into the "Mantatee" ranks irregularly in order to break them up. But where individual warriors fell the ranks closed with admirable courage "boldly treading over the bodies of their slain companions" and forcing the Griqua riflemen to retreat. Ammunition was scarce, so the Griquas changed their tactics by drawing the warriors away from the main host, and then suddenly wheeling in amongst them with considerable slaughter.[3] This broke the battle into a mêlée over stony ground:

> The undulating country around was covered with warriors, all in motion, so that it was difficult to say who were enemies or who were friends. Clouds of dust were rising from the immense masses, who appeared flying with terror, or pursuing with fear. To the alarming confusion was

1-3 Journal 25.6.23; 26.6.23; 26.6.23 NA

> added the bellowing of oxen, the vociferations of the yet unvanquished warriors, mingled with the groans of the dying, and the widows' piercing wail, and the cries from infant voices. The enemy then directed their course towards the town, which was in possession of a tribe of the same people, still more numerous. Here another desperate struggle ensued, when the foe appeared determined to inclose the horsemen within the smoke and flames of the houses, through which they were slowly passing, giving the enemy time to escape. At last seized with dxspair they fled precipitately.[1]

Then came the hour of Mothibi and the Batlhaping, which Moffat describes with obvious scorn:

> The Bechuanas, like voracious wolves, with their spears and war axes began dispatching the wounded men and butchering the women and children. As fighting was not my province, I of course avoided discharging a single shot. The only place of safety was to mingle with the commando; but seeing the savage ferocity of the Bechuanas, killing the inoffensive women and children, and severing the head from the body, for the sake of a few paltry rings, I turned my attention to those objects of pity, who were flying in consternation in all directions.[2]

Cornelius Kok, one of the Griqua leaders, lent Moffat a fine horse, on which he galloped amongst the fighters to prevent "their barbarous purposes":

> It was truly affecting to see the mother and infant rolled in blood and I more than once saw the living infant in the arms of a dead mother. All ages and sexes were lying prostrate on the ground. Shortly after the enemy began their retreat, many of the women, seeing that mercy was shown them, instead of flying generally sat down, baring their bosoms [and] exclaiming "I am a woman". It seemed impossible for the men to yield. There were several instances of a wounded man being surrounded by fifty Bechuanas, but it was not till life was almost extinct that a single one would allow himself to be conquered. I saw more than one fighting boldly with ten and twelve spears, and a number of arrows, fixed in his body ... instead of laying down their arms some actually fought upon their knees, their legs being broken.[3]

[1] Labours 360

[2, 3] Journal 26.6.23 NA

As he rode about during the seven hours of scattered battle, Moffat noted the handsome and robust appearance of the invaders, their European cast of countenance, blacker than the Bechuana, and smeared with charcoal and grease. The men fought naked, except for a small loin skin, and were loaded with copper rings round the neck, legs and arms. They had ear-plates, cockades of black ostrich feathers, knob sticks, ox-hides, clubs and spears, and to him were more barbarous and rude than his milder Bechuana.[1]

With two chiefs killed - Chuane of the Maphuthing and Nkgaraganye of their allies, the Bahlakwana - the host which Moffat called the "Mantatees" was at the mercy of the Griquas and the Batlhaping. While Moffat and his colleagues collected the women and the children, and provided food for the hungry, their fighting allies went after the fleeing defeated groups, dealing most hardly with the Bahlakwana, as far as the Vaal, where many of them were drowned in the flood waters;[2] while the Maphuthing, under Ratsebe, turned off towards the Mafeking district to recoup their losses in cattle.[3] Five hundred of the enemy dead was Moffat's estimate, but only one Bechuana.[4] As he rode home across the veld to Kuruman he meditated on the misery that such a host (he estimated 40-50,000) had caused in their career, and hoped that the Batlhaping would be suitably grateful for their deliverance - although he was quite sure "they are heathens still".[5]

1, 4, 5 Journal 26.6.23 NA

2 Ellenberger 139

3 Moffat to Burder 20.1.24 NA and How 72

At any rate, Moffat's own position was now secure amongst the Batlhaping, for, if the Griquas and their rifles won the battle, it was his energy in organizing the strategy which gave the tribe the protection they needed. No longer were there doubts about him and his purposes in the Kuruman valley, for the prestige of battle had lifted Moffat's name into a renown that made the loyal Mary write home to her parents that "a new era is dawning in the history of this unhappy wretched country, and that the late awful events will be overruled for the spread of the glorious Gospel."[1]

Mothibi was now prepared to talk about the removal of the settlement higher up the river towards the watery "Eye of Kuruman", where Moffat could build his "magazine for provision for infant stations in the interior".[2] He was even ready to allow his son, Peclu, to go with Moffat to Capetown as an exhibition trophy of the world beyond the Colony's frontier. This was a characteristic Moffat flourish. He had done it with Afrikaner; and now another "young prince" gazed wide-eyed at the wonders of Capetown. He was a comely, well-grown youth, whose picture in Thompson's Travels[3] shows refinement of features, and his death in March, 1825,[4] was a blow to Moffat's plans for the consolidation of his mission.

However, Peclu at Capetown, marvelling at the ships and the buildings, watching a boy mount a rigging, and wondering whether the vast hull did not reach to the bottom of the ocean, were all part of the prestige campaigh for the white man and for Moffat's.[5] The young chief saw the variety and importance of Moffat's friends

1, 2 M.M. to J.Smith 1.9.23 NA

3 Thompson, Travels 340-342

4 Chap. 5

5 Labours 376

from the governor downwards, so that by "ocular demonstration" he was aware that "we are neither refugees nor runaways as they have sometimes hinted".[1]

As Moffat saw this young chief sampling the delights of "Macooa-land" [white-man's land], he wondered whether the young man might be the means of making those changes in the Bechuana way of life which would increase knowledge, relieve the "weaker sex" from "comparative slavery" and help his people to be convinced that "we are not come to live on them, but to suffer for their sakes".[2] Moffat brought him hopefully home, in May 1824, in a resplendent second-hand uniform and shouldering a musket. He had grown taller in his absence, and the "heathenish joy" of his homecoming filled Moffat with expectations that what the young man had seen in the white-man's world might help to transform his own domestic economy.[3]

Within two months of returning (filled with preparations for moving his home up the river[4]), Moffat was off again across the northern veld to beat the bounds of his wide parish as far as Kanye, where Makaba and the Bangwaketse had long expected him.

Makaba was then at the height of his power as a Bechuana chief, and had so built up the fame and prowess of his people that in Southern Bechuanaland they were supreme.[5] An offshoot of the Bakwena people, on their northern flank, the Bangwaketse shared with them the crocodile [kwena] totem, but had become fierce rivals in the traditional habit of cattle raids, in which Makaba was acknowledged expert.[6] By the time Moffat knew him, he was over sixty and had been chief since 1780, and was basking in the glory of his recent victory over the "Mantatees" [Maphuthing], unaware that his own downfall and death were near at hand as the victorious Sebituane and his Makololo [Bafokeng] swept through his dominions on their momentous northward trek,[7] late in 1824.

1-3 R.M. to Burder 8.5.24 LMS
4 Chap.8
5-7 Schapera, Short History 4ff (-113-)

In July 1824, however, Makaba was still free and securely enthroned on his hill of Kwaaiwe, opposite the present Kanye, and anxious to meet Moffat, whose fame had grown in the twelve months since they last planned to meet. This time, Mothibi and the Batlhaping offered no opposition to Moffat's going; and his own confidence as a master of veld travel was evident as he set out, accompanied by a troop of Griqua elephant hunters, in a north-north-east direction towards the dry river-bed of the Molopo. He travelled in the day by compass, and by the stars in the cooler night across the hard limestone plain, where only the hook-thorn acacia seemed to grow and where the rhinerocos frequently made tracks broad enough for the oxen to follow.

In a Biblical manner, Moffat records "intense heat by day, while the night is piercing cold", and the relentless refrain is concerned with water - "second day without water", "great scarcity of water", "the plain without water", "not much water in the well", "a solitary pool will soon dry up", "all repaired to rest faint and thirsty". But, however hard and dry the going, he finished each day with prayers for his mixed company round the open fire, and there was no travelling on Sundays:

> 11 July (Sabbath). Spent a rather sleepless night, from the noise of the dogs, which were perpetually barking at the game which came in great numbers to drink. At sunrise we held our prayer meeting, and at 10 a.m. preached, and again in the evening. My congregation, about forty in number, are indeed a mixed multitude; ... one Berend (a Griqua chief) was once a preacher of righteousness, but now a secret enemy of the cause he once espoused. I cannot complain from want of attention, but alas! how many see their face as in a glass and straightway forget. [1]

There were the "poor Bechuanas" again, the down-and-outs of the veld who stirred Moffat's sympathy even though he was laughed at by the Bechuana for such concern about "dogs".[2] He saw them with their "few old tattered skins, and a couple of

[1] Journal 11.7.24 NA

[2] Moffat uses the word "Sawneys", which is difficult to determine (Schapera K 125n and School of African Studies,No.13,1945,2-6).

assegais and a knife"living in huts of a few branches covered with grass, using blown ostrich eggs corked with grass for water-bottles, and making their domestic vessels out of the entrails and paunches of animals.[1] He noticed their subservience to the Bechuana, especially the women, who could be compelled to carry meat for thirty miles and were rounded up in a fold of hook-thorn bushes to prevent their elopement.[2] He watched the women stampede to a water-hole, and wedge themselves into it so tightly that no-one could stoop to drink until Moffat sorted them out into an orderly queue.[3] These were the most hapless of all the hapless Bechuana. When he spoke of a great Being in the heavens they looked at him with a vacant stare as if they expected to see something appear, and wondered whether the hymn-singing was the white man's war song.[4]

The harsh, veld wind blew from the north as the caravan lurched on through deep sand towards the Molopo River, with the oxen desperately thirsty rushing from one shady bush to another to escape the edge of the sun and wind which reduced man and beast to a sickly, enervated weakness.[5] Wherever there was a pool, Moffat gathered his company and the local people for a feast of meat and soup, well laced with mud, and was amused at the way everybody dived their hands into the hot liquid in search of a lump of meat, tossed it between their hands to cool it off, and then ate it, licking their hands to lose no morsel of meat or mud.[6]

The Molopo was as dry as the plain. Moffat's caravan of eleven wagons, one hundred and fifty oxen and nearly a hundred men, moved over its shrivelled bed, dazed with heat and dust.

1, 4, 6 Labours 384-385

2, 3 Journal 16.7.24 NA

5 Journal 19.7.24 NA

A buffalo in a thicket of reeds was dislodged by fire and smoke to give the company "raw flesh instead of water", but the maddened animal preferred death in the flames to a shooting dogfight in the open. But about noon on July 23 there was a cry of "Water" not far from the modern Phitshane on the north bank of the Molopo about 38 miles west of Mafeking, and Moffat lets himself go in describing the scene, as men, oxen and horses, pelted into the stream:

> One man is pushed down by an ox, pleased with the refreshing coolness of the water; another, in his haste, tumbles head foremost into the bank, followed by a sheep or goat. One crawls between the legs of oxen; another tries to force himself in between their bodies. One shouts that a horse is trampling upon him, and another that he is fast in the mud. But while all this was going on, there was no disposition for merriment, till every one was satisfied and withdrew from the water; when, wet, muddy-looking spectacles presented themselves, which would have caused even gravity itself to laugh. While the meat was preparing over the fire, a quaff of tobacco pipe unloosed every tongue, and made all eloquent on the hardships of the past.[1]

Phitshane was the Barolong citadel, a people closely allied to the Batlhaping, and then in a fever of bitterness and apprehension at the ravages of the "Mantatees", who had swarmed through their tribal lands, the Maphuthing group, on the way to give battle to Makaba before their defeat at Lattakoo, and now the Bataung of Moletsane, who in April 1824 overthrew the Barolong of Sehunelo, looted the house of their missionary, Samuel Broadbent, and were still actively on the war-path.[2]

Moffat appeared, crowned with the fame of a deliverer and protector, and the Barolong were loathe to let him pass them by on his way north to Makaba while the veld was such a whirl of rumours. They were caught between two penetrating fears: that

[1] Labours 387

[2] See pp. 98f
and Ellenberger 165ff

of the "Mantatees" and of Makaba, the Bangwaketse monarch to whom Moffat was bound.[1] Their timidity, however, had not prevented some of them from sharing in the loot of Broadbent's house and in coming to Moffat's wagons with the stolen goods for sale. But Sehunelo himself had done the honourable thing and had collected some of the missionary Broadbent's property, of which a "light great coat and the twenty-fourth volume of the Encyclopaedia Perthensis" were handed over to Moffat.[2]

VI

Adding a few frightened Barolong to his train, Moffat moved north-north-east in the early days of August 1824 through wooded, level country to the hilly borders of the present Bechuanaland Protectorate and Makaba's Bangwaketse country. He was now beyond the Molopo, on the confines of the Bechuana dominion he was to know so intimately during the following fifty years, and where his name - even then, at twenty-nine - was already surrounded with respectful awe. Makaba was impatient; he sent out scouts to greet his guest as the long caravan rumbled towards Kwakwe Hill, on whose "northern horn", at Kanye, Makaba was installed.

There, the chief, with "inexpressible delight", reviewed the long trail of Moffat's eleven wagons, appointed a guard to be responsible for his safety, and set the seal of hospitality by sending his "most beloved wife" to deliver a sack full of thick milk and the promise of oxen for meat. Thousands of people seethed around the visitors, making deafening noises, which only ceased when Makaba appeared to testify that his heart was "whiter than milk", and that he was now "a great man" in the eyes of the world because Moffat had visited him.

1, 2 Journal 25.7.24; 30.7.24 NA

From Kwakwe Hill to-day the visitor looks over the spreading but orderly spaciousness of the principal town of the Bangwaketse, with the chief's kgotla two miles away on Kanye Hill. The disciplined array of the Bechuana architecture of round huts, burnt brick walls, and the domain of thatched yards and cattle-folds lying in almost careless design on the high plateau impress the modern traveller as they did Moffat:

> Their premises and houses are rather on a different plan to the other tribes which I have seen. The houses are no larger, but built both with more taste and comfort. The accuracy with which circles are formed and perpendiculars raised, entirely by the eye, is quite astonishing. Their outer yards and house floors are very clean and smooth as paper. No dairy maid in England can keep the wooden bowls cleaner and whiter than they. In this respect they form a perfect contrast to the Batlhapies.[1]

From the hill-top he counted fourteen "villages", or "wards", of the town, which covered at least eight times more ground than any town he had yet seen among the Bechuana; while the concentration of population in the town during the month of August, with the people at home from their farms, showed Moffat the possible fruitfulness of Makaba's dominions for a settled missionary.[2]

He was never quite sure about Makaba himself, who had the cunning countenance of a Hottentot, was frequently intoxicated, and boasted his power over the surrounding tribes. He wanted Moffat, who, as a white man, provided an open door into the white mans' world; but did he want his religion? Makaba was astute enough to parry Moffat's leading question, as to whether his people had any knowledge of God, with another one: "How can we know? No man ever taught us." It was an opening which provided a lengthy rein for Moffat's exposition of Christian

1, 2 Journal 5.8.24 NA

doctrine, leading up to a most realistic presentation of the Resurrection - in which Moffat, in his evangelical zeal, declared that even "the bones on the plains" of bodies consumed by wild beasts would live again, a sufficiently startling prospect for Makaba to make him exclaim: "My ears hear today."[1]

Just before his departure, after eight days' stay, Moffat yielded to Makaba's wishes for a display of "muskets on horseback", which Moffat - no horseman, and certainly no musketeer - performed with a brace of pistols, loaded with powder, passing the chief at full gallop and shooting his pistols into the air - a "wild west" display that established Moffat's prestige even more than his prophecies about the resurrection of the dead. It was Moffat's finest hour with Makaba, who laid his hand on Moffat's shoulder and complimented him on his fearlessness - and on the fact that he did not always carry those "little rogues" [pistols] in his pocket.[2]

Moffat departed from the Kanye hills with the memory of a rich and rolling land, "beautifully adorned with a great variety of stately trees and shrubs" and filled with people waiting for a man of "faith, zeal and self-denial" - a memory which was no doubt with him when twenty-five years later he stirred the imagination of the youthful David Livingstone with his grandiloquent phrase about "the smoke of a thousand villages, where no missionary had ever been".[3]

A few hours out on his homeward way he was met by messengers from the Barolong with the news that the "Mantatees" were advancing on their town of Phitshane. They were anxious to secure the protection of Moffat and the Griquas who were with him. The Phitshane affray was the Battle of Lattakoo over again

1, 2 Journal 8.8.24; 10.8.24 NA

3 Blaikie 27

on a confined scale, with the Bataung under Moletsane, as the "Mantatees", and with Moffat and the Griquas as defenders. Moletsane was in his most marauding mood, having roamed as far north as the Bahurutse[1] and as far south as the Barolong, in the area of modern Potchefstroom,[2] collecting fat cattle; but, according to Moffat,[2a] much reduced in numbers, and, above all, "much afraid of guns" as a result of what he had heard of the Battle of Lattakoo. Numbers were evidently on the side of the Barolong, who could produce as many as 11,000 people,[3] but numbers quailed before the fearful whisper of the word "Mantatees" until the loose, blank shots from the Griqua rifles stemmed the Bataung tide.

Once more Moffat performed the role of peripatetic peacemaker, riding out towards the invaders, amongst the low bushes, with spears flying, and all the risks of ambush in such a scattered mêlée of antique and modern warfare. He overtook one of the Bataung with his "body lubricated with grease and charcoal; a large round cockade of black ostrich feathers on his head; his eyes glaring with rage; while his open mouth, displaying his white teeth, poured forth the most opprobrious epithets and obscene curses, threatening to give our flesh to the hyenas, and our eyes to the crows, when he made a run first at one of us and then at another".[4]

For a week the tribesmen manoeuvred on foot, while the Griqua horsemen rode amongst the groups, firing into the air or into the sand, and marshalled the Barolong into some sort of battle order before the "mighty black wave" of the Bataung. Far more interested in cattle thieving than fighting, the

1, 2 Ellenberger 165; 166
2a,3 Journal 17.8.24; 19.8.24 NA
4 Labours 417

Barolong made a poor show, except for Sehunelo and his men, who had old scores to pay back and who lost three of his brothers in the fight.[1] The Griquas were not only masters of the struggle, but also fair dealers in handling the booty - for which Moffat gave them high praise. They gave back to the Bataung over two hundred head of cattle seized by the Barolong, and presented their own share of the captured cattle to the Barolong: which, Moffat says, "astonished the multitude of spectators; many held their hands on their mouths, to signify their utter amazement".[2]

VII

With the Phitshane affray as another feather in his cap, of defender of the Bechuana, Moffat came home to the Kuruman valley on August 28, 1824, to find that the flying rumours of the "Mantatees" had once more scared Mothibi and the Batlhaping, and on one occasion had roused Mary at midnight to begin packing her bags for flight.[3] On the south-western flank of the valley, too, there were independent gangs of Griquas-Korannas in the Long Mountains, all musket-proud and capable of alarming the timid Batlhaping, and sacking Moffat's house as effectively as the Bataung had sacked that of the missionary, Broadbent.

Moffat began to realize that to be allied closely to a tribe beyond the frontier was no guarantee of safety. "Our present prospect", he wrote, "holds very little hope of future peace. ... War, tumult and discord, are the common topics of the day."[4] But there is no suggestion of retreat. "Our own situation is rather precarious; for we know not but we shall be obliged to fly before the day closes, or become a prey to the

1 Journal 20.8.24 NA and Ellenberger 168

2, 3 Labours 422; 425

4 R.M. to Burder 27.9.24 LMS

lawless banditti, who, if reports be true, threaten our destruction. All around is one sea of trouble."[1]

Moffat could write in this style to his home correspondents and convey an air of general gloom and depression, with an amplitude of "melancholy prospects" amidst the threats of civil war and reports of his own murder, but the idea of abandoning their purpose never occurred to him and Mary. "We go where our hearts are, to the Kuruman", wrote Mary a few months later, after a sudden rush of trouble sent her and the two children to the safety of Griqua Town.[2]

The eruption of the Bantu tribes had shown Moffat something of the fickleness of the people with whom he was proposing to live; their elementary greed, immense appetite for fighting, and abysmal standards of conduct. By his Victorian judgments of character, and his elevation of a morality which could not be shared by the Bantu, he was a hearty despiser of all he saw. But behind Moffat's stern judgments lay the even tougher belief that human nature could be changed, and that he was an agent of change no matter how long the process took. If there was a moment when he might have honourably withdrawn from his turbulent parish between the Orange and the Molopo, it was now, when the veld held little promise of permanent peace and the idea of the white man's penetration into the north was still suspect within the Colony.

But if there were suspicion and doubt elsewhere, there were none with Robert and Mary Moffat, who reported home: "our hearts are so devoted to the Bechuan mission".[3]

[1] R.M. to A.Moffat 22.9.24 NA

[2, 3] M.M. to J.Smith 14.2.25 NA

Chapter 7
BRIDGE-HEAD AT KURUMAN
1825-28

A strong stomach is an essential article for one in my situation

In the autumn of 1824, Moffat and his colleagues established themselves in their new home eight miles up the Kuruman River in the spacious valley which Mothibi leased to them for forty pounds of beads - marked up in the mission books as worth £50. The miracle of everlasting water in a dry land drove Moffat to the new site. It was close to the "Eye of Kuruman", the fountain which still gushes out its five million gallons a day from a dolomite cave. Mary had paddled in the clear, cool water soon after her arrival; and the gardener's eye of Robert planned a series of conduits and canals to irrigate the sandy soil. This, "one of the finest fountains in South Africa", was too good to be missed as a bridge-head, a conviction that Moffat pursued all during these troubled years on the veld. Here he felt he could practise his working philosophy of "Bible and plough" and dig himself into the soil of Africa as well as save the souls of the Bechuana. Here he could offer some evidence of the "superior civilization" he was fond of talking about, and go a long way to convince the feckless Batlhaping that the way of the moochan [the white man] was worth following. But it was all dependent on water; and there, from the vast "calcareous grotto", with its bats, owls, serpents, and stalactites, it gushed in gallons and could be had for the taking.[1]

Moffat's settlement "farthest north" was founded on a mixture of domestic thrift, a concern to have a secure base for his mission, and a shrewd judgment that Kuruman would be on the road to the interior not only for missionaries but for

[1] Moffat gives two dates for the official move - November 10 and September 10. R.M. to A.M. 9.12.24 NA; R.M. to Miles 5.12.27 LMS.

that variegated company of traders, hunters, and concessionaires, already nosing northwards across the veld. He and Mary carried into their wilderness all the homely virtues the British settler has exhibited everywhere he has set up his front porch and made a garden. Mary wanted a little house where she could wash and sew and train a few girls in the domestic arts she had learned in Dukinfield; while Robert coveted a piece of land not only for his own delight but to produce food. Supplies from the south were expensive to haul by ox-wagon, and the idea of being dependent on "foreign supplies" was contrary to Moffat's notion of independence in all things, economic and spiritual.

For nearly ten years he struggled to make Kuruman secure against marauding tribesmen, and to provide it with the symbols of civilization from a white cloth on the table to grapes ripening in the garden. He succeeded triumphantly, as the train of visitors for the next forty years acknowledged; but he was not able to foresee that the tide of southern African life would sweep past his beloved Kuruman, veering to the east rather than to the west. The Batlhaping failed to rally in strength to the new station, leaving Moffat to build a following from variegated groups of Bechuana - but desertion and doubt never daunted him. He and Mary gave Kuruman a fair and famous name as an outpost of Christian civilization which has endured in the African story for over a century.

So the three miles ditch from the spring to the gardens was dug six feet wide and two feet deep, an accomplishment, says Moffat, "attended with much hard labour, as the canal was carried nearly level as far as our premises, in order immediately to cultivate the ground beyond the limits of the valley ... the ground on the descent was generally hard, with lime cement and conglomerated or pudding stones, which required all the strength and perseverance that could be mustered. ... It is our intention to put a large sluice in a situation which will inundate the

whole valley when deemed proper, to supersede the necessity of irrigation in dry seasons. ... For the last twelve months it has rained only once, excepting a light shower."[1]

Moffat's team of workers was led by Robert Hamilton, as clerk of works, with ten Hottentots for the digging, at 150 rix-dollars[2] a year each, with the use of oxen and wagons for ploughing and hunting - a group of men to whom "the tea and brandy of the Colony seem to possess irresistible charms compared to the plain and often uncertain diet of this country".[3] There was Isaac Hughes, a blacksmith-missionary, whose health broke after twelve months, and Hugh Millen, a "laborious and steady" professional mason from the Colony, engaged for two years at 1,200 rix-dollars a year to build the mission houses. Millen refused to build in home-made clay brick, and happily used the local stone to give character and endurance to the Kuruman houses.

While the builders raised the stone walls Moffat was either out in the river "up to the middle in water cutting thatch for the house", laying out the gardens, or stocking the larder. "It became necessary", he wrote, "to keep two men exclusively on the hunt to supply the wants of the others".[4] He was anxious about the corn supply, knowing that a replenishment from the south meant five men and two wagons for six months; so he pressed on with his gardening and farming, while Mary surveyed with expectant delight "our new house, which is a very comfortable one, and will be a treasure to the Society in this barbarous

1,3,4 Journal (Summary) June 1825 LMS

2 In 1825 the rix-dollar was stabilized at 1/6d to the £

land ... they will be permanent and not require re-building every few years like our reed houses, as well as more conducive to the health of Europeans."[1] Those digging the ditches had to have their guns handy in case of attack from marauders, while the builders put up barricades of chests and sacks. Kuruman was created in an atmosphere of siege and sortie.

Early in September 1825, Dr John Philip, on the first of his northern tours from Capetown, visited the scene, no doubt a little apprehensive at the plans, as were the directors in London - who counselled Moffat against "considerable unauthorised expense" and on the wisdom of consulting Dr Philip.

Moffat, on his part, was exasperated at the quick look which Philip gave to Kuruman, and was in no mood for consultation or advice. He claimed his right of direct access to London with his correspondence and journals, and was elated to think "that the Dr will be more cautious in future". Moffat had his little victory, and crowned it by introducing Philip to a noisy reception by Mothibi and his people:

> He got unbounded applause for his profusion in presents and words, or promises without knowledge. Being the only interpreter, I had an excellent opportunity of hearing what passed. The noisy din of the savage rabble, who would scarcely let the Dr turn himself without getting a share of ointment and filth, in addition to the perpetual begging, in which he was ready to think I assisted, put him out of all patience, and obliged him to exclaim, turning to me, "I pity you." The morning he left he was determined to get the start of them, but to his sad mortification his wagon was surrounded by daylight with beggars, among whom the royal family, as is usual, held a conspicuous part.[2]

Philip had seen more than Moffat thought, and wrote[3] an observant - and magnanimous - description of Kuruman:

> The place chosen for the site of the institution was selected because of the breadth of the valley at that

[1] M.M. to J.Smith 23.9.26 NA

[2] R.M. to J.Smith 15.11.25 NA

[3] Researches in South Africa Vol.II 113-115

> spot affords the greatest quantity of land capable of irrigation and it is not more than three miles below the spring. ... They have now finished a ditch two miles in length, two feet in depth and from three to five feet in breadth. This has been very arduous, and certainly a great work for their strength. ... With very great labour, the missionaries have succeeded in erecting a neat x row of houses in the bottom of the valley; to each house is attached a large garden, enclosed with a neat fence. The gardens have been laid out, by Mr Moffat, with much taste; and from his knowledge of horticulture, they have been stocked with a variety of seeds and edible roots. In front of the houses, and at a distance of, perhaps, forty feet, is the canal by which the water has been led out from the river. Across this water-channel is a wooden bridge, leading to each house. Within ten feet of the house is the garden, from which it is entered by a gate; and along the whole line of the fence, the space between it and the watercourse is planted with willows and poplars.

The early blossoming of Kuruman was accompanied by threats of raids, cattle forays, free-lance commandos from the Long Mountains and the Orange River borders, which petrified the Hottentot workers and still further scared away his congregation of Batlhaping.

Early in 1826, after a long drought, swarms of locusts swept through the valley, eating every bit of vegetation and passing over like an immense cloud, "extending from the earth to a considerable height, producing with their wings, a great noise. ... When a swarm alights on gardens, or even fields, the crop for one season is destroyed. I have observed a field of young maize devoured in the space of two hours. They eat not only tobacco, and every thing vegetable, but also flannel and linen."[1]

But even the locusts had their uses, for Moffat saw the people getting fat on them, boiling them up like luscious shrimps, spreading them on mats to dry in the sun, and then

[1] Journal 8.5.26 NA and Labours 447ff

"pound them in a wooden mortar, and when they have reduced them to something like a meal, they mix them with a little water, and make a kind of cold stir-about".[1]

With the locusts came news of even more formidable invaders, a flying squad of the Matabele, roaming the veld to the north - "tall, robust, very black, with knob sticks and assegai", a description enough to terrify Moffat's chicken-hearted parishioners.

One afternoon in May 1826 "while we were about to put the beams on the new house" came a strong rumour from the south that the Griquas were moving northwards to Kuruman "to destroy this station and murder the missionaries", which could only be disproved by Moffat and Hamilton travelling through the night by wagon to get the facts. It cost them five working days, but Moffat only records that he is "thankful for the agreeable disappointments"[2] and went back to his roof-laying.

On the evening of February 4, 1826, "Mrs Hughes was safely delivered of a fine boy", Isaac; and a year later, in January, 1827, Mary gave birth to a "large, strong child" and called him Robert. The arrival of two babies at Kuruman sealed the permanence of the settlement, as did the beginnings of a little graveyard where the Moffat's had already, in 1825, buried a previous five-days-old Robert.

Kuruman was beginning to look and feel like a civilized place, equipped with the provisions for life and death, and it stirred Mary to a thanksgiving:

> We are now reaping wheat and barley on the place ... we are also eating fine potatoes, the produce of our own garden; a great blessing to me, as I was beginning seriously to feel the want of vegetables, and the warm weather, having a large strong child to nurse, and not being able to wean him for want of milk. We have also a prospect of plenty of grapes and figs and some peaches, everything of the kind growing very luxuriantly here.[3]

[1] Journal 8.5.26 NA and Labours 447ff

[2] Journal 13.5.26 NA

[3] M.M. to J.Smith 6.12.27 NA

There was the house too, stone-built and thatched, four small rooms, a hall, kitchen and pantry, which Mary began to turn into a home and haven on the frontier. By the time the second baby Robert was born, an adopted infant, baptized "Sarah Roby", was established in the Moffat household, rescued from a death which Mary describes in one of her most effective letters:

> One Sabbath morning while preparing for church, some of our children brought in a report that a child was heard crying among the stones on the side of the hill about a quarter of a mile from the house. We immediately set off to the spot. ... The inhuman mother had pulled out stones to make a hole sufficient for its little body, and then put it in and laid upon it one huge stone, the corner of which rested on its little nose and made a severe wound. Its limbs were sadly bruised with kicking about, and its eyes all bleared with the cold. I took it up and brought it home, fed and washed it and dressed its wounds to the great astonishment of the natives. They viewed it with indifference; said the mother was a rascal, but wondered much that we should love so poor an object. It was only about five weeks old, but very small, like one new born. It appeared that the monstrous mother, assisted by her own mother, had committed it to its cold tomb about four o'clock the day before, where it remained the whole night till nine o'clock in the morning when we found it. It was amazing that it still lived, as it had rained hard and there was not an inch of covering about it.[1]

Robert gained himself a new poise, for the security of Kuruman offered not only a defence for the mission families but growing evidence that he was succeeding in his task. He could even look with amused ease at a rainmaker who arrived with his fantastic magic and brought drought instead of rain. "His professions are becoming an old song and his dupes blush when his name is mentioned."[2] And even when an unusually strong and threatening commando of mixed marauders approached Kuruman in August 1828 he calmly threw up some entrenchments, and,

[1] M.M. to J.Smith 1.4.26 NA

[2] R.M. to R.M. Senr. 6.2.27 NA

giving each man on the station a rifle, waited for the attack:

> I waited at one of the entrenchments to watch their motions but chiefly with a view to prevent the people belonging to the station from firing. ... They sent one of their number with a rag (or mock flag) suspended at the end of a rod. In order to prevent his discovering the weakness of the place, I went and met him at a distance without the entrenchments.

There were 90 men, 40 guns, and 9 horses in this commando, but Moffat calmly continued to talk it out with the leaders of the troop:

> Though they were four times the strength of the shooters on the station, they were so alarmed that they begged me to prevent any attack being made on them during the night. Surely this was the Lord's doing. He sent a fear into their hearts, nor did he suffer them to do us harm ... all the cattle were returned. ... The Coranna chief before leaving begged me to give him a few pounds of tobacco as a token that I still viewed him as a friend and not an enemy.[1]

Moffat was moving into a position of authority on the frontier. He could even afford to ignore the unfounded tales of his ivory-collecting expeditions and his lucrative trade in elephants' teeth. Hunters and traders enjoyed his hospitality at Kuruman, but none of them drew Moffat into their affairs or secured his blessing as a trading passport. He remained a man of integrity, where simple, stubborn characteristics were allied to a serene faith which nothing that the veld had to offer financially could shake or cause him to deflect from his course:

> May 1, 1826. Sabbath. Met as usual at the sacred ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Our number does not increase, but it rejoices us that the Lord our Redeemer has promised his presence to two or three who meet in his name, which I trust was in a measure realized. We have reason to be grateful that, though our number be small it is not diminishing.[2]

[1] R.M. to L.M.S. 26.8.28

[2] Journal 1.5.26 NA

I

There was one major weakness in the bridge-head that Moffat now set about correcting. He was still too dependent on Dutch, and unsatisfactory interpreters, in speaking to the Bechuana. Only slowly did he realize the central importance of becoming an easy master of Sechuana - the mother-tongue of the surrounding tribes - and of being able to communicate directly the faith he preached and to judge the value of the response he was receiving. He had no instruction of the simplest kind in how to learn any language, let alone one whose structure and vocabulary were entirely different from Dutch and English. There was no grammar or dictionary available, and no evidence that Moffat tried to make them. He was a rule of thumb man and floundered along, making what he called "egregious mistakes and shameful blunders":

> It was something like groping in the dark and many were the ludicrous blunders I made. The more waggish of those from whom I occasionally obtained sentences and forms of speech would richly enjoy the fun, if they succeeded in leading me into egregious mistakes and shameful blunders, but though I had to pay dear for my credulity, I learned something.
>
> After being compelled to attend to every species of manual, and frequently menial, labour, for the whole day, working under a burning sun, standing on the saw pit, labouring at the anvil, treading clay, or employed in cleaning a water ditch, it may be imagined that I was in no very fit condition for study, even when a quiet hour could be obtained in the evening for that purpose. And this was not all; an efficient interpreter could not be found in the country; and when everything was ready for inquiry, the native mind, unaccustomed to analyse abstract terms, would, after a few questions, be completely bewildered.[1]

Out of this floundering had come a few simple school primers, and a little thirty-five page "Bechuana Catechism" in the form of one hundred and thirty-six questions and answers, short extracts from the Bible, and the Lord's Prayer, printed in

[1] Journal 28.3.27 NA; Labours 292

London in 1826. It was the beginning of a printed literature in Sechuana[1] - but a meagre enough start to Moffat's ambition to translate the whole Bible.

To fulfil his ambition of Bible translator he knew there was nothing for it but to immerse himself for a long period in Sechuana, away from the distractions of Kuruman; so on March 28, 1827, he left Mary and their eight weeks' old babe and set off in his wagon to the Barolong country, wearing his home-made veld-going clothes of leather trousers and jacket, taking a driver, a little boy to lead the oxen, and a couple of Barolong men.

Moving on a now familiar trail to the north-north-east, he fell again under the spell of the dry and lonely country; the sparse drinking holes, with the footmarks of animals; the crisp, sunny mornings and the cool nights. He notes in his Journal a lion adventure on the third night out, which, in his Labours evokes an unwonted sparkle, for Moffat took African travel prosaically, seeing himself under the stern direction of duty rather than in any sense a romantic traveller:

> We listened on the lonely plain for the sound of an inhabitant, but all was silent. We could discover no lights, and amid the darkness, were unable to trace footmarks to the pool. ... We took a firebrand, and examined the edges of the pool, to see, from the imprints, what animals were in the habit of drinking there, and with terror discovered many spoors of lions. We immediately collected the oxen, and brought them to the wagon, to which we fastened them with the strongest thongs we had. ... The two Barolongs had brought a young cow with them, and though I recommended their making her fast also, they very humourously replied that she was too wise to leave the wagon even though a lion should be scented. ...
> I had retired only a few minutes to my wagon to prepare for the night, when the whole of the oxen started to their feet. A lion had seized the cow only a few steps from their tails, and dragged it to the distance of thirty or fifty feet where we distinctly heard it tearing the animal, and breaking the bones, while its bellowings were most pitiful.[2]

[1] See Appendix

[2] Labours 455

[And from the Journal :-]

> I fired at the spot, which the lion answered with a most dreadful roar. The Barolongs to whom the heifer belonged took fire brands, and with shouting attempted to frighten him, but it was vain, for he only growled the more horribly. At length they threw them at him, but instead of driving him, he came toward the wagon with a fury ... when I fired a heavy shot direct towards him, when he returned to his prey ... the two men followed up with shouting which made him furious. He again rushed towards the wagon, with the most dreadful roar I ever heard ... we concluded that the safest plan was not to disturb, much less to enrage him, lest our oxen fall a prey and ourselves too ... the lion after gorging himself a little, took up his prey and carried it to a distance.[1]

Moffat was moody and irritable on this journey, worried about his food, "sick at the stomach", missing his sleep, and, above all, missing Mary. "My mind", he writes, "naturally turns homeward"; and, when he finally came to a resting place amongst Chief Bogachu's Barolong people, he says "I am quite exhausted with doing nothing."

He halted his wagon on the open veld at Tswaing [the modern Morokweng], some ninety miles north-west of ~~K~~ Vryburg, and there started his eight weeks of listening, talking, and writing; while the flies pestered him, drank the very ink from his pen, and the "genteel beggars" swarmed around, demanding tobacco and beads. From the wagon he made "crooked speeches" and got riotously laughed at, and grew disheartened at the few words he really knew in Sechuana and the many hundreds that circulated amongst the chattering people and eluded him.

The differing accent of the Barolong Sechuana made him think he had lost what he already knew. "I sometimes despair", he writes, "of ever becoming perfect in the language. Every new subject pours with new terms, which completely baffles me. However, by little and little I shall improve."[2]

[1] Journal 1.1.27 NA
[2] Journal 18.4.27 NA

Nevertheless, he wandered about in the shadow of the wagon on hot days, noting down words and phrases and listening to the chatter of the people. His limited vocabulary, built up on Biblical phrases, began to widen into conversation "of a worldly nature"; although he preferred to start off casual chats with shattering questions such as: "What will become of you after death?" or "What about the burning of the world?" One woman was distressed at his fiat that there could be no oxen in heaven, an idea which did little to recommend his teaching; but another was interested in the idea of prayer and liked to see him take a piece of paper from his pocket and read a prayer in Sechuana.[1]

As April drew on into May, the bitter wind of the veld rattled through the solitary wagon, making the patient learner cold and depressed; while the people sitting round wrapped in their karosses wondered at the meaning of all this preoccupation with words and paper. "They frequently turn it to ridicule and laughter."[2]

His method was to sit down in the middle of a group on the wagon stool or chair and note as many words as were new to him, and in the evening, by the spluttering candle-light, write out his lists. It was not only words he collected, but lice and flies by the thousand - which meant half an hour's lice hunt every night. Always meticulous in his person, he managed to get a daily wash, although the water had to be brought from four miles away; and he informs Mary, by runner, that he is changing his shirts and drawers because of the lice and would like "a supply of clean under-waistcoats". The runner - a Hottentot working at Kuruman - was Moffat's postman over the hundred-mile route: coming with news of Mary and the family, and taking back letters from the wagon written in Moffat's

1, 2 Journal 20.4.27; 21.5.27 NA
and R.M. to M.M. 22.4.27 NA

formal copper-plate while the wagon often swayed "in perpetual motion with a very strong wind".[1]

Well stocked with tea, coffee and flour, he made his own bread; and the local milk, both "sweet" and "thick" was supplied to him daily by order of the Chief Bogachu. For meat, he hunted the rhinoceros, and upset his bowels by eating the tough stuff. Cooped up in the wagon, he missed the open-air exercise he was used to at Kuruman; and there are many references to his low spirits, and "an excessive languor in me" produced by the high wind from the north which swirled the dust about him.

"Cold disagreeable day ... no shelter but a wagon." But there was always the possibility of a visit from Bogachu, who played host to Moffat, organizing his water and milk supplies, exchanging presents ("a neat mousehond - polecat - kaross for little Mary, also a curious spoon for ditto"), and asking him to send for "Vraghum, our dog", a solicitude which touched Moffat's heart. In return, Moffat offered a hat, a cooking-pot, and the inevitable beads and tobacco. It was the traffic of affection which Moffat always inspired amongst the chiefs, but he had the wisdom never to spoil it by over-familiarity.

Bogachu took him hunting in the cold half-moonlight to a water-hole, where they wounded a buffalo, a couple of giraffes and a rhinoceros, and watched a troop of quaggas sniffing the air. They all got stiff with the cold, and Moffat vowed never to hunt by night again at a water-hole. If it was meat you wanted, enough could be got by fair shooting by day. He was no lover of a shooting-party for the sake of the party.[2]

Moffat's method with a chief was dramatically illustrated on this journey by the arrival of Sebegwe, who had succeeded his father, Makaba,[3] as chief of the Bangwaketse. He drove in on a

[1] R.M. to M.M. 22.4.27 NA
[2] R.M. to M.M. 11.5.27 NA
[3] R.M. to M.M. 25.5.27 NA

solitary wagon at the head of a troop of two hundred men, breaking all the laws of his chieftainship by crossing the boundary of his dominions to see Moffat, whose friendship he was anxious to have, and to get his help in securing a missionary to live amongst his people.

Sebegwe is described by Moffat as "imposing" and "well shaped"; but, however handsome he was, Moffat went straight to the point and charged him with horse-stealing - a moral delinquency which must be put right before they could be real friends; and within two days Moffat got the horse back. Sebegwe also got a pair of Moffat's leather trousers, as a pattern for future trouser-making; his tailor was competent to deal with the bottoms but "ignorant how to get the upper parts cut".

No one but Moffat at that time dared be so flat-footed with a chief and two hundred armed men. He spoke plainly to Sebegwe about friendship amongst the tribes, and the uselessness of hoping for guns or ammunition from missionaries. Moffat's diplomacy had little finesse and no sentiment. He was on the veld for "God and their immortal souls", whether the tribe was on Sebegwe's side of the Molopo River or on Bogachu's. He watched the chief depart in his trousers, and was soon back in the shaky wagon mouthing his Sechuana words and listing his growing vocabulary.

> Tuesday [May] 29 - Pursued my studies, though with difficulty, from the strong cold wind which blew all day.[1]

By June 12 he was back at Kuruman, and astonished Mothibi and his people by the transformation in his Sechuana speech. He had added a corner-stone to the bridge-head at Kuruman.

[1] Journal 29.5.27 NA

Chapter 8

TRANSLATOR AND PRINTER
1828-38

Children around the printing-office door, waiting for a new sheet

Back from his solitary, self-imposed language discipline in the wilderness, Moffat surveyed the situation of the infant settlement by the Kuruman stream. It was a doleful retrospect of three years' siege and sortie on the veld; of commando cattle raids, burned villages, scattered Batlhaping, and great cruelties to prisoners at the hands of mixed companies of musketeers who surged up from the Colony borders, armed, if not led, by the Colony farmers. "The number of cattle taken by the different commandos must have amounted to many thousands, and some hundreds of lives lost, independent of the great numbers who have since perished from want, being driven from place to place, without a house, a field, or garden."[1]

In a long letter to Richard Miles, then deputizing for John Philip in Capetown, he described on December 5, 1827, the commotion amongst the tribes; the dejected and forlorn Mothibi, helpless against rifle fire to defend his people; and the miseries of the veld life, subject to the free-lance raids of Griquas, Corannas, and Bushmen, who dealt out death from a distance and then swept off the cattle-wealth of the hapless Bechuana. Moffat was concerned about two effects of these raids on the tribes:

> The comparative peace and union which formerly existed between these minor tribes have been turned into enmity and revenge, for the enemy sometimes compelled one tribe to assist them against another; and one party, being robbed of all they possessed, had no alternative, to supply the imperious pangs of hunger, but to fall on their neighbour's cattle.[2]

1, 2
R.M. to Miles 5.12.27 LMS

But even worse than civil commotion amongst the tribes themselves was the gun-running from the Colony to the free-lance commandos, who were the cause of all the trouble:

> The Bechuanas are also well aware that all that ammunition came by some means from the Colony; and how such quantities could be obtained without the connivance of Government is to them inconceivable; and how the Mountaineers on the Black River [the upper Orange River] near the limits of the Colony, could be allowed so long to desolate the interior with firearms is to them an equal mystery. These impressions became the more deeply engraven on their minds by being informed by prisoners, who have from time to time made their escape, that the marauders send numbers of oxen to the Colony to purchase powder etc., and they do procure it.[1]

On August 11, 1828, Kuruman had its most intimate alarm from a commando which approached within half a mile and watched Moffat deploy his twelve armed men in the entrenchments which made the defence seem really more formidable than it really was:

> I waited at one of the entrenchments to watch their motions, but chiefly with a view to prevent the people belonging to the station from firing, and I wished them not to fire at all, and leave the commando to batter away at the entrenchments till their ammunition was exhausted. When they came within gunshot they sheered off towards the river, where they intercepted a flock of goats belonging to the Batlarus on the station, also Br Hamilton's sheep and a few oxen. Three horsemen rode to the tops of the different hills to see if there was no more booty. It now appeared to us a much more powerful commando than was expected, there being a number of Bastards, well dressed, near 40 guns, above 90 men and nine horses.[2]

Under a flag of truce they walked towards Moffat on the open veld, who then addressed their leader in a majestically Biblical style, that "if he had any fear of God, any respect for one who pitied his immortal soul, if he had any sympathy for the natives who were already reduced to comparative

[1] R.M. to Miles 5.12.27 LMS

[2] R.M. to L.M.S. 26.8.28 NA

poverty, he would not only relinquish his wicked intentions, but return all that had been taken that morning; and, should he refuse, I should not resist with firearms, but like one of old lay the matter before the Lord, and implore his interference."[1] That powerful threat brought home the sheep and the cattle, and the armed men were soon begging at Moffat's door for a little tobacco.

Moffat made no claims to be a defender of the tribes, but the fact that he was there in the valley building houses, digging gardens, and becoming a master of the language, provided an air of security and civilization to the veld. To crown it all, he started a day school in January 1828, with forty in the class, and hymn-singing in Sechuana in the curriculum; and he also began the long trials of a translator.

I

The additional ease in Sechuana which his "language journey" gave him was blunted at first by a fit of gloom about his procedure. He wonders in a letter to the directors in London[2] whether it is his business to do anything more than acquire the language and do the primary organizing work of a linguist and philologist. He looks at himself and the poverty of his equipment - no Greek and Hebrew, and no training in language work - and fails to find any specific instructions that he should set about translating the Scriptures. He wonders whether the directors realize that Sechuana is not the dialect of a paltry few; and do they intend the mission to die a natural death. Eliot spent thirty years translating the Scriptures for the North American Indians in a dialect now extinct and useless. Where are the men of ability for the Sechuana dialect?

[1] R.M. to L.M.S. 26.8.28 NA

[2] 12.9.28 LMS

Moffat never over-estimated his own abilities, although he might have a good opinion of them; and, in the loneliness of the frontier, with no other white man to consult whose opinion mattered, his apprehensive gloom is understandable. Hewas about to begin the translation of the whole Bible into Sechuana, a self-imposed task which lasted for twenty-nine years. It was the continuous backcloth to the whole of Moffat's future life, whether in the seclusion of Kuruman or during his long expeditions into the Transvaal and Southern Rhodesia.

He was never free from words and paper, or from the grinding process of transferring familiar Biblical phrases into a new tongue. His own deep reverence for the Bible was the basis of his activity, but the spur which drove him on over the tedious years was the thought of transferring this reverence to his adopted people. It was for their sakes that he endured the relentless discipline needed to give them a Bible in their own language and mainly produced in their own country.

Towards the end of his task (in August 1856) he described for his own children the interruptions he also endured:

> Many and many are the times I have sat down and got my thoughts somewhat in order, with pen in hand to write a verse, the correct rendering of which I had just arrived at, after wading through other translations and lexicons, when one enters my study with some complaint he has to make, or counsel to ask, or medical advice, and medicine to boot, a tooth to be extracted, a subscription to the auxiliary to be measured or counted; or one calls to say he is going towards the Colony, and wishes something like a passport; anon strangers from other towns, and visitors from the interior arrive, who all seem to claim a right to my attentions. Here we cannot so easily ring the bell and bow visitors to the front door. ... Repairs want doing or superintending. ... I have to correspond with native teachers ... all these and twenty other things of a similar kind, leave very little time indeed at my command.

Fortunately, Moffat learned how to move easily from hand work to head work:

> The moment I have finished any little job I throw down my tools and am back to my work, so that my little workshop would beat any Irishman's garret you ever saw; but it does not incommode me any more than confusion in my study. Your mother has some difficulty at times to get permission to brush out my study, for it is visited by all sorts of people, some of whom are neither brushed nor buttoned, independently of the dusty character of the country.[1]

He began his long task with translating St. Luke's Gospel, trying out the chapters at public worship as he completed them. The range of personal and dramatic stories in the Gospel made a strong appeal, as Moffat discovered in a journey round some of the villages:

> I have frequently listened with surprise to hear how minutely some, who were unable to read, could repeat the story of the Woman who was a sinner; the parable of the Great Supper, the Prodigal Son, and the Rich Man and Lazarus; and date their change of views to these simple but all important truths, delivered by the great Master Teacher.[2]

He was surprised at the felicity and ease with which the Gospel stories almost translated themselves into Sechuana, in spite of the language's deficiency in theological terms - which he made up for by employing circumlocutions and by introducing a few foreign words which were locally familiar.

He says he found the Gospels"comparatively easy", as well as the minor Epistles, the Acts, and even St. Paul's Epistles, but his borrowings from English were not always successful. He introduced the term epistle in the form of episetole - which native preachers began to confuse with pistols. One of them, preaching on St. Paul's conversion, described how the party was

1/ Lives 314 (2) R.M. to Bible Society 20.11.36; ~~5.3.31~~

about to leave Jerusalem when Paul ordered a halt while he ran back to get the epistles "for we can't go without them". The preacher commented: "You know what these epistles are - they are those little guns the white people carry in their jacket pockets."

Moffat also failed to find a vernacular word for "lilies" in the text "Consider the lilies", and put in a manufactured one - lilelea. That made the word almost identical with the Sechuana word dilelea - tarantulas, the long, hairy-legged spiders with a poisonous bite. So, for a time, the Bechuana were exhorted to "Consider the tarantulas, which toil not, neither do they spin"![1]

To the British and Foreign Bible Society, which consistently supported him all during the years of his translation work, he wrote:

> I have used two different terms, to distinguish between Hades and Gehenna. I have also endeavoured to distinguish the two verbs, metanoein (to change one's mind, to repent) and metamelesthai; for Christos, I have used Messiah. It was once recommended to me to adopt the original word baptizo; but finding a word in the language exhibiting nearly all the meanings of the original, I preferred it. As it means not only to sprinkle, but also to saturate, to make wet, either by pouring or immersion, I feel sure that a Baptist brother would have adopted the same ... the deep sense of the awful responsibility which I have taken upon me, increased in the course of the work; and I have often wished I could push it on to the shoulders of some one else more competent ... were it even never to be printed, I should feel that I had received a rich, yea, an abundant reward for all my labour.[2]

By the end of 1829, St. Luke was in manuscript, the first complete Gospel in Sechuana; and the proud Robert decided to make the journey into the Colony to get it printed, and at the same time to go with Mary to put the two elder children, Mary, nine, and Ann, seven, to school at Salem in Grahamstown.

1, 2 R.M. to Bible Society 5.3.61; 3.7.38

Although he was only just back from his first visit to Moselekatse [see Chaper 9], Robert and Mary and four children set off in June 1830 to go by way of Algoa Bay on a coastal ship to Capetown. It was the first of the Moffat family's wagon journeys in which Mary practised the art of home-making on wheels while the slow panorama of African life passed by:

> I shall never forget (writes one of her children in later years) the delight with which I explored the old wagon - the large commodious bed with Side-sacks all round & curtains in front and behind; the leather cushioned seat at the end of the bed where we sat in the day; the fore-chest in front on wh. the driver used to sit (& containing all our daily provisions - Coffee, tea, sugar, rusks &c &c) - the lower part of the wagon being for boxes & a little space portioned off at the back for the handmaid to sit or sleep - her name The one of the Desert. There seemed a halo of happiness encircling my mother & the old wagon, for all my brightest associations in life were with her & that wagon ... even the strong aroma of ginger in her early morning cup of coffee (an old fashioned remedy for indigestion) which has to this day its own peculiar fasanation tho' I know it to be quite untasteable.[1]

Up on the leather seat the children recited the names of the oxen and enjoyed the dusty hurly-burly as the driver and the leader urged the slow animals along the monotous miles to the next outspan where the camp fire was lit under a tree or bush and the coffee and rusks came out, with milk from a neighbouring farm and sometimes fresh bread and meat. The wagon was Mary's nursery. She sat in her tight, matronly mob-cap and shawl, telling the tales of her childhood to her cluster of children, with an amplitude of moral admonitions, and, already, to them, seeming elderly. She was 45 on this journey. Fourteen years later, to Elizabeth, she was "the dear old lady".[2]

II

At Grahamstown and Algoa Bay Moffat met with two sharp

1, 2 E.L. Price 53; 55

disappointments. There was no printer and no ship. It was the kind of set-back which always roused him to action. The manuscript of St. Luke's Gospel was burning in his pocket, and the only hope to get it printed lay in Capetown, four hundred miles off, and the only transport was a horse. After visiting some of the eastern mission stations of the L.M.S., he set off on the nine days' ride to Capetown by way of Uitenhage and George, riding for stretches of seven hours at night and thirteen by day.

The "horse-stages" were well organized on this important route through the Colony, and if Moffat had been able to write ahead to the local Field Cornets he could have had fresh horses every four or five hours. Even the local farmers - all anti-missionary -[1] stirred themselves to help him on his way. One of them, Stephanus Ferreira, "a notorious enemy to missionaries", whom Moffat says he "dreaded most", was the kindest of the lot. The experience was typical of the friendly hospitality offered to the Moffats on their various journeys through the Colony. It may have been because they came from beyond the borders and were aloof from the colonial controversies of missionary and settler, but more likely the reason was just plain human kindness which persisted in spite of politics.

On arriving in Capetown, on October 30, he scoured the place for a press and a printer able to tackle the precious pages of his Sechuana St. Luke, and was baulked at every turn by what he mildly called "the infant state of typography in that place", and was forced at last into pleading with the Governor for help. Even the official government press was ill-equipped, with only one competent printer - Mr Van der

[1] Philip's Researches, with its sharp exposure of the farmer-colonists' methods, was just published [1828]. Any zendeling along this route, from which much of the evidence came, might well have been shown the door!

X ~~Originally intended for work~~

Zandt - who was ready to take Moffat on as pupil and teach him printing in six months. He was joined by Rogers Edwards,[1] and together the two men did the job of composing the twenty-four chapters of St. Luke by hand; then printed an edition, throwing in a little hymn-book for good weight. The paper and £50 for expenses came from the Bible Society in London. It was a feat of concentrated work, of the mechanical, dogged kind in which Moffat excelled; for his Scottish tenacity carried him through the roughest weather, provided he could keep to a course and do the steering himself.

An added reason for mastering the intricacies of type and printing was John Philip's promise to give Moffat and Edwards "a valuable iron press so suitable for this climate" to take back to Kuruman. This incentive stirred the two men as probably no other offer of help would have done, for it was in line with Moffat's dream of independency for his mission in all things. To have the Gospel of St. Luke in print was one achievement, but to have a press at Kuruman capable of keeping up the supply of Scriptures would be the crown of all his planning. He exerted himself so much in the summer heat of Capetown that when the time came to go northwards to Kuruman he had to be carried on a mattress on board the ship for the passage to Algoa Bay. But a "fourteen days' rough passage" revived him for the wagon journey with its precious cargo of St. Luke, the hymn-book, press, type and paper, plus the new baby Elizabeth for Mrs Moffat[2] to nurse on the wagon, and 1,904 rix-dollars (£142-7-0) in his pocket for the new church at Kuruman.

Moffat begged the dollars for this project by means of a subscription list sent round the town, headed with 200 rix-

[1] Originally intended for work at Kuruman, he had been at Bethelsdorp since 1823 and now linked up with Moffat. R.M. to L.M.S. 22.3.32 LMS

[2] R.M. to L.M.S. 4.1.32 LMS

dollars from Philip and 100 from the Governor. His printed statement[1] set out the case for a dignified building for Christian worship in the outer regions, where every plank of wood and every nail had to be imported from the Colony, as well as the glass, doors and hinges, for a building 100 feet long and 30 feet wide. Moffat got his money in the same way that he got his printing-press - by showing that he could do the practical job of building and printing. He got back to Kuruman in June 1831 with a rich harvest which was of lasting benefit to his mission.

To be the pioneer printer north of the Orange River[2] was to be beset with problems of supply; these Moffat grappled with, but grumbled about loudly enough for the echoes to reach London. He wanted type-faces, and more of them, especially a liberal supply of capital M's - which was the conjunction in Sechuana; and in more than one letter he gives the alphabet and estimates the weight of type under each letter. Much could be done, he says, with plenty of y's; and there is a lack of pica, and great primers - "see what we could do if we had good type". It was a cry which moved the practical Philip to buy up £15 worth of old type from Grieg, a Capetown printer, and send it up to Moffat, in June 1832, to keep him going. The bill for the consignment lists the items: 31 pounds double pica, 22 English, 4 open faces, 41 great primer, 16 leads, 12 lengths of rule, a supply of justifiers (broken leads for filling up blank pages), and some brass rules - much of it worn, but useful enough in Moffat's primitive printing shop until better type came out from England.[3]

When the press was started up, the local astonishment was

1 LMS 1.1.31
2 See Appendix
3 Grieg to Philip 31.5.32

profound:

> Although many of the natives had been informed how books were printed, nothing could exceed their surprise when they saw a white sheet, after disappearing for a moment, emerge spangled with letters. After a few noisy exclamations, one obtained a sheet with which he bounded into the village, showing it to everyone he met, and asserting that Mr Edwards and I had made it in a moment, with a round black hammer (a printer's ball) and a shake of the arm. The description of such a juggling process soon brought a crowd to see the segatisho (press) which has since proved an auxiliary of vast importance to our cause.[1]

It was even more profound when Moffat and his colleagues - Hamilton, Edwards, and Millen - began to build the great church, which stands at Kuruman as a monument to their zeal, with its spacious span of timbered beams, and sturdy stone walls,[2] and opened it in November 1838:

> Between eight and nine hundred entered those walls, now sacred to the service of Jehovah. ... In the afternoon of the following Sabbath, one hundred and fifty members united in commemorating the dying love of Him who had redeemed them by his blood, and brought them, by his providence and grace, from tribes - some very distant - to participate in the heavenly banquet. Many, with eyes suffused with tears, compared their present happy condition with the ignorance and degradation from which they had been graciously delivered. The church has since increased to two hundred and thirty.[3]

III

Moffat had stumbled on the formidable combination of the church and the printing-press at the moment when his early unfruitful years amongst the Batlhaping were moving towards brighter prospects. Long before the great church was built, however, a religious movement amongst the people, aided by a simple school and Moffat's growing ease in Sechuana, led to an emotional

[1] Labours 564

[2] Hugh Millen (1798-1835?) did a mixture of building and trading round Kuruman. He finished off the church walls without payment, and died tragically on the veld "seeking ivory". An 1820 Settler, and a favourite with Mary Moffat - "every heart was melancholy at his death".

[3] Labours 606

religious awakening:

> Notwithstanding our earnest desires and fervent prayers we were taken by surprise. We had so long been accustomed to indifference, that we felt unprepared to look on a scene which perfectly overwhelmed our minds. Our temporary little chapel became a Bochin - a place of weeping; and the sympathy of feeling spread from heart to heart, so that even infants wept. Some, after gazing with extreme intensity of feeling on the preacher, would fall down in hysterics, and others were carried out in a state of great exhaustion.[1]

Mary, in a letter to her father,[2] thinks "the converts are going on well" and with the "general commotion" subsided there are signs of an "abiding conviction" - to which she adds a womanly, domestic touch with the news of how the Smith family portraits were received. The portraits of her mother and father were displayed and hung in a full meeting of the church, with "Brother Hamilton on one side of the fire in an arm-chair, and Robert on the other, and the portraits hanging above to form part of the company. I fancied my mother might be spiritually present. Five Bechuana converts were received on that occasion... I could not but breathe when looking at your own, 'Oh that those lips had language and that those ears could hear.'"

For Robert and Mary, Kuruman began to glow with a warmth of spiritual domesticity after the pattern they knew at home, and the Smith family portraits were not only an adornment to the church but a seal to their hopes. They spoke from the walls for the church universal and eternal. So did Moffat's printing-press and the stream of printed pages that came from it during these ten years, including the tracts of pious edification and admonition which he and Edwards loved to translate and print, straight from the heart of early Victorian Britain with titles

[1] Labours 496

[2] 19.10.29 Lives 156

such as: "Poor Joseph"; "The Sinner's Help"; "Do you want a Friend?"; and "Peace in Death".

It is a forgivable trait in the Moffats and their colleagues that they transferred to this wilderness north of the Orange River so much of their own religious cultural pattern, and, through unhurried patience, gave it roots in unpromising soil. The geographical map and the spiritual map were presumed blank. They proceeded with unswerving zeal to fill in both, and, if later generations are wiser in knowledge and methods, none of them outmatches the dedication of these pioneers, who themselves learned as they preached and taught what they knew.

To clothe the natives, for their "great comfort and improvement" was always Mary's aim. Nakedness, particularly in the native women, was a spectacle to be covered up with suitable lengths of Manchester cloth, of which the first box was brought up from Capetown in 1831. Boxes came regularly after that, to supply the sewing school at Kuruman led by the busy needles of the missionaries' wives. To be a mistress of the arts of cutting out and sewing up was a mark of gracious living, at Kuruman as well as Manchester. While Moffat translated and printed, Mary fashioned those ill-designed garments of night-gown length which sat so awkwardly on the forms of the Bechuana women and were the signal of civilized respectability. For the Moffats, the primitive savage called for clothes and not for anthropological study. Later generations may regard them as wrong, both in their understanding of primitive peoples, and their methods; but, for their own times, they were adamantly right. In any case, nothing would have moved the Moffats from what they conceived to be their duty.

Mary was also carrier-in-chief. Twice - in 1833 and 1835-36, she made the long journey alone from the Cape to see the children in school and to bring up supplies of paper and

type. In the care of Bechuana men, with a Hottentot driver, and a girl to nurse the latest baby, Mary ventured southwards to Grahamstown. Robert came as far as the Vaal River, "over which we walked dry shod", in late November 1835; but at the Orange River Mary spent Christmas and the New Year watching "the mighty stream" in flood.

For a "round month" Mary lived in the wagon on the northern bank, waiting for a chance to cross, "till all hope was gone". During the month's wait she was cooped in the wagon by day, for want of shade, and at sun-down walked by the "water's edge" pathetically hoping that to-morrow they might be able to cross. A group of Boer wagoners in the same predicament finally rescued Mary by the laborious process of dismantling the eighteen wagons in order to float them over on rafts:

> The raft was a much better conveyance than I had supposed (writes Mary). It was made of four or five willow trees tied together with bark of the river thorn, and again two or three trees tied across underneath. To this they fastened a strong rope of bullock's hide on either side, and then able-bodied men drew it at their pleasure back and forwards from one bank to the other. They chose a narrow place between rocks which were convenient for landing. It was eighty yards across; but where we had lain so long, hoping to ride through, it was five hundred yards across. Each wagon was brought over piecemeal in two trips, and the contents afterwards. It was a time of great anxiety to me, the river being tremendously deep, but the Lord my God graciously heard and answered my prayers, and exceeded all my expectations! 1

On his way home from the Vaal River, Robert did a round of horseback visitations through the districts of what is now Barkly West and Griqualand West, chiefly to see his old friends Mothibi and his wife Mahuto, now living with their people away from the Kuruman area. He preached to them for an hour "in the pale moonlight", being interrupted by a robust young man who burst into recitations of passages from St. Luke's Gospel - clear evidence to Moffat that the little book from Kuruman was

1 M.M. to J.Smith 14.4.36 NA

doing its work. "You would weep tears of joy to see what I had seen", he wrote to Mary; and that night lay down to sleep on a floor mat "as if it were a mattress".

The next day, accompanied by the echoes of St. Luke and of Kuruman hymns, he rode on to Campbell and Danielskuil, near which he was caught in a veld storm:

> On a plain without a single bush, the lightning struck close to me, and the rain and hail instantly fell in torrents. The knocked-up horse turned his tail to the storm, and I had no alternative but to imitate him, and I sat down in the middle of the road with my head on my knees. In five minutes I was drenched to the skin, and from a state of perspiration and excessive thirst I was, as it were, instantly launched into an ice-cold bath; but my thirst continued. I at length proceeded, it still raining till I reached Mosheu's house - a wretched temporary place, as you know, but to me it was a palace. Having no other clothes, and there being many other persons in the house, I had no alternative but to throw off my jacket and waistcoat, and try and dry myself with the rest on by the fire. A cup of tea did me good, and I lay down with my under-clothes like a dish-clout. I awoke fresh in the morning.[1]

Back at Kuruman, the round of printing and translating began again. Moffat was in his little office by five every morning to correct the sheets of the Selections from the Scriptures, the largest book he and Edwards attempted. In its paper covers, and with four hundred and thirty-one pages, it was a remarkable effort and filled the gap before the complete Bible was ready. Mary brought more paper,[2] to keep the press going in the hope that eventually the two men might be able to print the New Testament, of which the first draft was finished by July 3, 1838 - a hope that proved too ambitious for the small

[1] R.M. to ~~Bible Society 3.7.38~~ M.M. 2.12.35 NA

[2] There were generous grants of paper from the Religious Tract Society between 1828 and 1838.

press:

> I have laboured hard at the work but much still remains to be done, for it was not until the translation was made that I finally settled in my mind the appropriate use of numerous words of importance which I had left undecided until I should thoroughly discover their meaning and their parallels in the Scriptures. Of course this obliges me to re-examine the whole very closely, in order to obtain something like uniformity.[1]

He writes about "hard tugging" to get a proof sheet, and his early morning composing "before I could see a from b". His little sons, Jim and John, would stand by their father popping questions while he worked about the profundities of the Resurrection, and "would naughty children who have died come back and not be naughty again?"

Looking back on his childhood at Kuruman and the picture he had of his father at this time, John Moffat wrote:

> Most of his time was spent in his study, wrestling with the difficulties attendant on the translation of the Scriptures and other books into a language which was in its literary infancy. ... When out of his study he had to be doctoring the sick, and then the garden or the workshop claimed his energies. In those days everyone had to be his own farmer, blacksmith, carpenter and builder. ... Many is the time I had to blow the blacksmith's bellows, while my father made the sparks fly from the red or the white hot iron.[2]

But the final flourish to these pioneer years of print and paper north of the Orange River came in the conversion of two chiefs - Mosheu and Mothibi. Mosheu (a Coranna) rode ox-back to Kuruman from his village a hundred and fifty miles off, to see the wonders of Kuruman - including Moffat's beard, then in full black luxuriance. He often came with his people, "over the plain","all mounted on oxen, bringing with them a number of milch cows".

[1] R.M. to Bible Society 3.7.38

[2] J.S.Moffat Papers NA

Moffat also rode out to their village to teach the alphabet, "dragged and pushed" about until he pitched the A.B.C. to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne", which "infuse pleasurable emotions into the sons of the North, were no less potent among these children of the South". This pious"music hall" went on for hours, until Moffat was worn out and lay down in the wagon "Cap, shoes and all" to sleep. But there were calmer occasions when he stood in the wagon with a crowd round it "under a "bright, silvery moon, holding her way through a cloudless starry sky, and shining on many a sable face", while the people repeated "over and over again" what they had heard.[1]

News of Mothibi's baptism reached Moffat from Edwards while he was in England. The old chief, "feeble from age", writes Edwards, "stood forth with others to make a public profession of his faith by being baptized. He has for some time been reckoned among the dead; his people viewing him as one of the past generation ... though the rightful chief of 20,000 Bechuanas, Mothibi stood with as much humility as others of his people beside him, whom he formerly considered as his 'servants' or 'dogs' to receive the ordinance of baptism ... he may not be a bright star among the believers ... a monument of what grace can do even in the eleventh hour."[2]

To Moffat, the news was a benediction on twenty years of toil.

1, 2 Labours 598; 606

Chapter 9

FRONTIERSMEN IN THE TRANSVAAL

November 1829-January 1830

Moselekatse walked along leaning on my arm with the most perfect familiarity

The chance events which change the course of human affairs were never better exemplified than in the happenings which launched Robert Moffat into the broad stream of African life through his pioneer journeys into the Transvaal and Southern Rhodesia. Moffat had the settler's instincts and habits rather than the explorer's, and although the immense spaces of Africa around him were largely unvisited, and unknown, he had no desire to penetrate their emptiness for the sake of discovery alone. Duty had to be linked with discovery. There had to be some high purpose to justify the time and energy needed, and to compensate for his absence from Kuruman and Mary. Once caught up in the line of duty, however, Moffat was a sticker; and his five long journeys to visit the great Matebele Chief, Moselekatse,[1] between 1829 and 1859 provide a good example of this.

These journeys place Moffat amongst the great travellers of Southern Africa in the unsettled years of the early nineteenth century when the tribes were harassed by internal strife and the ever-increasing threat of the white man's advent. He moved across the veld with an acknowledged supremacy, not only because he was master of the mysteries of Kuruman, but because of his friendship with the powerful Moselekatse. The links between the two men[2]- Scottish missionary and Matabele chief - provide a rare person chapter in the story of southern Africa which illuminates the shrewd simplicity of Moffat's character and the unalloyed devotion to him on the part of Moselaketse.

[1] This is the Sechuana spelling of the name. The other familiar and Matabele one is Mzilikazi. Mary Moffat playfully referred to her husband's friend as "Catsey". There are sixteen different renderings of the name. It probably means "well-defined trail or track" (Nada 1933).

[2] See ~~discoussion at end of Chapter 15.~~ Appendix

It all began in a chance encounter. In the latter part of 1829, five men, all naked, which according to Moffat shocked the delicate feelings of his now well-clothed Bechuanas, appeared at Kuruman from over the horizon. Moffat was now accustomed to the curious and the inquisitive, but these five, two of them obviously head-men, had an important bearing. They also came with testimonials from two traders, Robert Schoon and William McLuckie, who had been in their country, beyond the Baharutse tribe - the land of Moselekatse, the Matabele warrior-chief. These traders regaled Moselekakse with news of the glories which were comparatively near at hand in the Bechuana country, and so impressed the chief that he dispatched an embassy to Moffat.

The risk of the journey these men had made through hostile tribal country, and the obvious admiration for what they saw at Kuruman, pleased Moffat's simple vanity. He liked admiration, and got an ample supply of it in his dealings with the Matabele in the next thirty years. He did the honours to his visitors, for he shrewdly judged that those who risked the journey were worth a little fuss:

> Everything calculated to interest was exhibited to them. Our houses, the walls of our folds and gardens, the water ditch conveying a large stream out of the bed of the tiver, and the smith's forge, filled them with admiration and astonishment, which they expressed not in the wild gestures generally made by the mere plebeian, but by the utmost gravity and profound veneration, as well as the most respectful demeanour.
> "You are men, we are but children", said one; while the other observed: "Moselekatse must be taught all these things."

Mary flashed her large mirror in their faces, and Robert paraded the visitors in chapel:

> The order and fervour which pervaded all parts of the service bewildered their minds, which, from their infancy, had been accustomed to observe every public meeting introduced by the hoarse war songs and displays of chivalry. They were inquisitive about everything, and were surprised to find that the hymns we sung were not war songs, expressive of the wild reveries which the associations of music brought to their minds.[1]

[1] Labours 511

The embassy was led by Moselekatse's chief factotum, Nombate, who in all the years that followed was an efficient and friendly adviser to Moffat in Matabele affairs. It was he who now posed the question about getting home again through the lands of the Bechuana tribes, who might easily wreak vengeance on the five travellers in return for the destruction and thieving caused by the Matabele. To risk the lives of these five men - including Moselekatse's right-hand man - on the road home from Kuruman was a serious responsibility, as Moffat realized. He "could not help fearing the dire consequences of their being butchered on the road".[1]

Moffat therefore could not do other than conduct the embassy back along the road they had come, at least as far as the boundary of the Matabele lands at Mosega - near the modern Zeerust. In a couple of hastily-prepared wagons, and accompanied by a scratch group of volunteers, Moffat set off on November 9 with the five Matabele on the 190-mile trek. His guests had walked barefooted the same road a few weeks before, and their return in this triumphant manner was not lost on them. Moffat was plainly a wonder-worker, too, not only at Kuruman but all along the road through the tall grass from which the people popped to beg a little tobacco. Even the lions roared in a mannerly fashion, and when one of them slew a Moffat ox he withdrew most politely, leaving the carcase behind him.

The Barolong people, and then the Bahurutse, received the party peaceably; and what pleased Moffat most of all was three

[1] -1829 Journal NA [A Letter-Summary to LMS 20.11.36. The original "voluminous journal" mentioned in Labours is missing.]

days' rain at Mosega, which gave him a chance to preach until the torrents subsided. Having come so far, his Matabele guests pleaded, it was a pity not to go on to see their great chief, Moselekatse. "They begged with great earnestness that as I had come so far on their account and shown them kindness, I might go forward and experience the kindness of their king, who, they repeatedly declared, would be ready to kill them for allowing me to return."[1] It was another call of duty of the kind to which Moffat always responded. His safe conduct of the embassy would not be complete until he had delivered the men back to Moselekatse, and himself into the bargain.

Moffat therefore agreed to move on to Moselekatse's kraal, another one hundred and twenty miles distant, attended by a retinue of the Bahurutse, led by their chief, Mokatla, "an adept at intrigue", who was set on seeing the Matabele chief himself under Moffat's safe escort. What Moffat had intended to be a quick journey to the frontier of his parish now became almost a major expedition across unknown territory, where the streams flowed towards the Indian Ocean rather than to the Atlantic, and the rolling hill country of the Zwaartberg and the Magliesberg reminded Moffat of Scotland.

Across this watershed of the central Transvaal there were no roads, only probable passages through the deep ravines, where the party had to hack a way through for the wagons with spades and hatchets. The rainy season clothed the countryside with rich, green vegetation, immediately delightful to the eye, but covering up scenes of devastation caused, Moffat presumed, by the forays of the Matabele:

> The plains and valleys, of the richest soil to a great depth, had once waved with native millet and been covered with pumpkins, water melons, kidney beans, and sweet reed, all of which are cultivated through the interior. The

[1] 1829 Journal NA

> ruined towns exhibited signs of immense labour and perseverance, every fence being composed of stones, averaging five or six feet high, raised apparently without either mortar, lime or hammer. Everything is circular from the inner fences which surround each house to the walls which sometimes encompass the town. The remains of some of the houses which escaped the flames of the marauders were large and showed a far superior style and taste to anything I had before witnessed ... the walls of clay with a small mixture of cow-dung and so well polished that they had the appearance of being varnished. The walls and doorways were neatly ornamented with architraves and cornices. The pillars supporting the roof in the form of pilasters, projecting from the wall and fluted, showed much taste.[1]

He was astonished too at a "beautiful and gigantic" tree in which seventeen Bakwena families had built little houses:

> After halting I soon mounted the aerial abode and, to my astonishment, counted no fewer than seventeen houses and part of three others unfinished. On reaching the topmost, about thirty feet from the ground I entered and sat down. The only furniture was a hay carpet, a spear, spoon, and a bowl full of locusts. Not having eaten anything since morning, I asked a woman, who sat at the door with an infant at her breast, permission to eat, which she cheerfully acceded and brought me more powdered ... I then visited the different habitations, which were all distinct on separate branches. A scaffold is formed of straight sticks, an oblong about seven feet wide. On that the conical house is formed of straight sticks and neatly covered with grass. A person can nearly stand upright in the centre and the diameter of the floor is about six feet. ... They adopt that plan in order to escape the lions, which must often stroll under the tree alive with inhabitants, terribly chagrined.[2]

He also notes houses built on poles seven or eight feet from the ground in circular formation, and below each group a gruesome heap of bones. The spacious beauty of the Transvaal, its rich soil and chains of mountains, was overladen by the

1 & 2 1829 Journal NA

misery of the "aborigines", who had been "scattered and peeled" by Moselekatse and driven to a miserable existence on locusts, roots and the meat of wild animals. He meditated gloomily on the overbearing cunning of the Matabele, and the tales of "robbery, rapine and blood" which met him in every village. Nombate was hard driven to egg him on towards "the blue mountains" where "dwells the great Moselekatse". Moffat argued that he had done his duty. His guests were practically in their own home and were safe. Why should he go on?

> "Father", replied Nombate, "you have been our guardian. We are yours. You love us, and will you leave us?"

With his right hand on Moffat's sho ulder, Nombate pleaded with him:

> If you love us still, save us, for when we shall have told our news, he will ask why our conduct gave you pain to cause your return; and before the sun descend on the day we see his face, we shall be ordered out to execution, because you are not.[1]

Like Livingstone with his Makololo friends thirty years later, Moffat established a reputation for personal loyalty to Africans, and forced his way on across the rain-saturated plains where the wagon wheels because masses of think black soil, and he was forced to take off his boots and walk barefoot through the clay.[2]

The route to Moselekatse's kraal lay towards the gap in the Magaliesberg near Commando Nek, where the Oori, or Crocodile River, breaks through on its way to join the Limpopo. There, in the vicinity of modern Pretoria, "nearly due east of the source of the Yellow (Vaal) River, we came within sight of the monarch's abode. The town lay under a high hill."[3] The Crocodile River

2,3 1829 Journal NA

1 Labours 522

lived up to its name:

> Halted for the night at a respectable distance from the water in order to avoid a visit from the crocodiles. It is no uncommon thing for these amphibious brutes to find their way during the night to an encampment and sweep away dogs, skins, shoes and indeed anything they can conveniently and quietly get within their horrid jaws. It is seldom however that he will attack man in that situation. In all his actions he displays much cunning and seems to avoid, if possible, giving alarm. Throw a dog into a pool where they are swarming, there is little or no danger of his being seized, and I have known instances of a dog being confined to the centre of a pool with a line crossing to both sides, when no crocodile would appear. But should a dog wander to a pool to quench his thirst he is sure to be seized. [1]

Moffat now moved ahead on horseback, crossing the rivers Oori, Peban, Bakane, Kabeng, and Entsabotluku, with one of the home-going chiefs two days in front to give new of their coming. It was an impressive arrival, and Moselekatse knew how to make the most of it by deploying eight hundred of his warriors two deep in full dress [or lack of it, in Moffat's eyes!], and arranged in a huge semi-circle in the public cattle-fold. After the two men had dismounted, "the warriors at the gate instantly rushed in with hideous yells, and leaping from the earth with a kind of kilt around their bodies, hanging like loose tails, and their large shields, frightened our horses". Then the huge circle was enlarged by another 300, so that "we stood surrounded by warriors whose kilts were of ape skins, and their legs and arms adorned with the hair and tails of oxen, their shields reaching to their chins, and their heads adorned with feathers". [2]

When the circle was complete, the eleven hundred men "motionless as statues" kept a "profound silence", for ten

[1] 1829 Journal LMS Wallis MJI 12n suggests that Moffat's reference to the Limpopo is probably the earliest written reference to the river, the boundary between the Transvaal and Southern Rhodesia.

[2] Labours 531

minutes, broken only by the "breathing of our horses". The whites of the men's eyes were seen to move and there was "a rich display of fine white teeth". Then a sound like "hollow thunder" broke the silence, moving into a strange harmony as a thousand pairs of feet stamped the ground and the glistening bodies swung to the rhythm. All eyes were fixed on the visitors, and Moffat likened the thunderous chant as "befitting the nether regions", especially when the great assembly imitated the groans of the dying on the battle-field and the yells of the conquerors. No one approached the two men until in a sudden silence a gap in the lines opened up and Moselekatse appeared, with attendants carrying a supply of food and beer. He walked across the circle, gave each man "a clumsy but hearty shake of the hand" and then had the food placed at their feet. It was Moffat's first sight of the man who for the next thirty years he was to know intimately and to influence in a manner unique in relationships between white men and African chiefs.

Who was he? Moselekatse's origin lies behind the Drakensberg in Zululand, and his presence under the Magliesberg in such autocratic strength and military power was due to his eruption into the Transvaal as part of the great trek of the tribes, presumably about 1822.[1] One of Shaka's commanders, coming from the royal house of Kumelo, Moselekatse rose to be trusted and favoured in the great Zulu chieftain's empire, and then broke with his master and moved with his warriors over the mountains into the open veld. His Matabele[2] were ruthless marauders, slaughtering human beings but careful to collect cattle. He organized them into regiments whose skill in strategy and swift orderly movements made them a formidable people, as Bechuana Griquas and

[1] See Chapter 6

[2] The name Amandebele, meaning "the vanishing or hidden people", referred to their large battle-shields and was first used by the Basuto. To the white man they are either "Matabele Zulus" or simply Zulus.

Boers discovered to their cost.

Moselekatse had brought his host to a permanent headquarters in the Pretoria area where they were able to perfect the Matabele discipline of cattle raising and cattle raiding, combined with an inner obedience to military tribal custom and the completely autocratic rule of Moselekatse. Until the coming of the trek-Boers in the 1830's the Matabele were able to defend their veld against all comers; but the firearms of the white man warned Moseletakse that another move of his people was imminent into the northern spaces. He then led them into the southern areas of Southern Rhodesia, where he, and his son Lobengula, placed Matabeleland for ever on the map of southern Africa.

Moffat at once realized that he was dealing with a man and a people far different from his Bechuana and their chiefs, and yet his approach was not modified in any way. He was no sycophant, and his public relations techniques were simple and straightforward:

> I told him that I was a teacher from God, who was the creator of all things and the governor among the nations, and in visiting him I had also in view the time when his people also might receive messengers from God, to tell them of another and better world beyond the grave. On these subjects I had long conversations with him. On one occasion he seemed to have come on purpose for conversation for he said, "I am come to sit at your feet. I am a king, it is true, but you must now talk to me as if I was a child, for neither I nor my father knew anything about these wondrous things you told me yesterday.[1]

Both men were impressive physically, with an air of command which commended them to each other. In spite of his nudity, his crafty reputation and bloodthirsty deeds, Moselekatse was an intelligent and able man capable of gratitude and generosity. Laying his hand on Moffat's shoulder, he said: "My heart is as white as milk. I am still wondering at the love of a stranger who never saw me. You have loved me, you have fed me, you have

[1] 1829 Journal NA

protected me, you have carried me in your arms. I live to-day by a stranger of another nation."[1] It was his way of thanking Moffat for bringing home his chieftains in safety, the act which laid the initial foundation for their friendship. He also admired Moffat's skill with the wagons. It was the first time he had allowed the "moving houses" to come within his kraal:

> He continued to stare at their motion, particularly the wheels. ... When they halted and the oxen unyoked, he approached with caution, holding a firm grasp of me by one hand while he held the other on his mouth. ... When told of how many parts each wheel was composed his surprise seemed to reach its climax.[2]

Nombate added to the wonder by describing how he saw Moffat cut bars of iron and join them together again, using a hammer, a chisel, and fire:[3]

When it came to his turn to admire Moselekatse's "public ball" in honour of the visit, Moffat was studiously cool in his comments:

> Some thousand had collected on a smooth plain outside the town. The warriors were formed into a kind of circle, about three or four men deep. A number of war songs and national airs were sung, and one of these was composed for the occasion. Sometimes Moselekatse took his stand in the centre, with a shield of lion skin and a well polished common butcher's knife, which he had from me, in one hand and which seemed to please him much, as its bright surface reflected the rays of the sun. He appeared to be the chief musician. ... The appearance of his men in full dress was much like the dress of a regiment of Highlanders, colour excepted. A great number of strings or strips of skin, with the fur twisted, hung like a kilt round the middle, reaching to the knees. Similar tails adorn the arms and neck, while the head is decorated with a profusion of feathers.[4]

Was it not fine? asked Moselekatse. Were there such things "in my country"? Moffat was deliberately unimpressed and refused to "gratify his vanity", even turning up his nose at the "adoring

1-4
1829 Journal NA and LMS

applause" of the "satraps" as they bellowed the Matabele greeting of Bayede ["Hail! your Majesty"], and shouted a selection of Moselekatse's titles - "Great King", "King of Heaven", and "Bull Elephant".

Whatever Moselekatse thought of Moffat's coolness, this off-hand attitude paid; for Moselaketse was all grace and hospitality, heaping up liberal supplies of meat, milk and beer, and, when the meat was not to Moffat's taste, he offered a whole breast of well stewed fat ox. He fussed round his visitor, and even allowed his presence to interfere with the course of justice in an episode which impressed Moffat deeply. The culprit had been caught with one of Moselekatse's wives, and the judgment and punishment of death by drowning amongst the crocodiles was a foregone conclusion. "You are a dead man", said Moselaketse, "but I shall do to-day what I never did before; I spare your life for the sake of my friend and father. I know his heart weeps at the shedding of blood; for his sake I spare your life ... he tells me that to take away life is an awful thing, and never can be undone again."

The man was sentenced to be degraded and to live the rest of his life amongst the "inhabitants of the desert", a prospect which no Matabele of spirit could relish; and the prisoner pleaded for death in preference, which Moselekatse granted:

> He was led forth, a man walking on each side. My eye followed him till he reached the top of a precipice over which he was precipitated into the deep pool of the river beneath, where the crocodiles, accustomed to such meals, were yawning to devour him ere he could reach the bottom.[1]

A Sabbath morning scene "such as heathenism exhibits" is Moffat's comment.

[1] Labours 541. There are two accounts of this incident, both written some years afterwards by Moffat: in his Journal-Letter, 1829, written in 1836 NA; and in Labours 1842. The latter was a bit embroidered for public consumption!

He was eight days with Moselekatse and the Matabele on this first visit, the longest period of intimate contact with the Matabele that any white man had had up to then. He notes the horned cattle; the immense kraals for three or four thousand cattle; the dome-shaped houses, high enough for him to stand upright in [six feet], but with an entrance so low that he had to crawl on his belly.

Food is carried in baskets, in the form of bowls "so tight with dirt and grease that they seldom leak", and the assortment of wooden bowls are neatly carved and burnt black on the outside. The men sleep with their heads raised from the ground on a little carved stool, to protect their elegant "hair-do" or a ring-stick of hair on the carefully shaven head. The fat ladies "are not beauties", and he bemoans the general nakedness, and even warns Moselekatse that no great king would allow his people to go about unclothed, at which "he laughed most heartily ... the idea of shame never was in all his thoughts".

He explains his mission as "a servant of God", and points to his two empty wagons and supply of beads as a sign that he is no trader and is not there to go home with a load of ivory. He turned aside Moselekatse's request for a musket by saying that the law of his nation forbade this, in the same way as a Matabele spear and shield belonged to the king and not even Moffat had been able to get them as souvenirs. Moselekatse was content with a gridiron.

These eight days were a curious blend of artifice and cunning simplicity, for Moselekatse wanted to keep Moffat, put off the day of departure, and got him to promise to come again and stay at least a year. Moffat took every opportunity of driving home information about the Christian faith, and publicly lamenting the heathenism around him. He admitted to the charm of Moselaketse: "his voice is soft and feminine, and

cheerfulness prediminates in him. He does not appear to be passionate ... were he so, many would be destroyed in the ebullitions of his anger. Indeed he might be taken for anything but a tyrant from his appearance."[1]

Although he deplored his heathenism, Moffat undoubtedly respected Moselekatse, for their intimacies moved far beyond the formal politeness of guest and host into the realms of friendship, where Moselekatse's "Moshete" (as Moffat was called) was elevated into a dignity which counted for much in the future political and religious history of the Matabele. Many white men appeared before Moselekatse during the next thirty years, but there was only one "Moshete". The links between the two men were firmly forged on this first visit, and basicly were fixed in a mutual attraction combined with necessities on each side. Moselekatse wanted a reliable connection with white men, and in Moffat he saw the finest specimen available; and Moffat - entirely disinterested, except in his calling - recognized in the Matabele a people worth knowing, and in Moselekatse a chief worth converting.

On the morning of Moffat's departure the two men sat side by side on the forechest as the wagons moved back along the route across the Oori River. Moselekatse was excited because Moffat had promised him the spectacle of a miniature elk-hunt, which sent Moselekatse dancing for joy and made him to hot that he lay down to sleep on Moffat's bed. He liked the wagon so much that Moffat agreed to buy one for him provided he could get the repairs done.

They moved on in royal progress, accompanied by shouting warriors and droves of cattle:

I assured him that I should not cease to remember him, and

1 1829 Journal LMS - the earliest-known description of Moselekatse.

> pray for him and his people that God would send him teachers to instruct him to be wise and happy. As the time drew near that I must depart, his attachment seemed to increase, so much that some of his people supposed that I must have given him some kind of medicine which made him love me. He ordered every kind of prepared victuals to the wagon ... he took my hand and, addressing me by all my names - Moffat, Ra Mary (or Father of Mary) and Machobane - said, "Your visit to me appears a dream. My heart will follow you. You must arrive safe at Kuruman, and next time you come you must bring Ma-Mary with you. Tell the white king I wish to live in friendship. ... Let the road to Kuruman remain open.[1]

While the wagons moved away, Moselekatse and his men struck up a dirge of farewell; and Moffat meditated on the strange days he had spent with the Matabele chief, whom he saluted in the words of St. Luke: "The barbarians showed us no little kindness."[2]

For Moselekatse, the road to Kuruman and the white man's world was now open. Although he and Moffat did not meet again for five years, their unwritten alliance was a regulative factor on the frontier between the Colony and the Matabele, for all parties seeking to enter Moselekatse's domains were required to go by way of Kuruman, and disregard of the order caused much bloodshed.[3]

The chief's curiosity about white men and their ways had been partially satisfied by intimacy with Moffat, and as a tribute to his friend he named his son "Kuluman". He had met various white men as traders and hunters, but, in Moffat, the shrewd Moselekatse perceived a difference in the species which appealed to his own more noble and humanitarian instincts. Obviously there was much to be learned on both sides. The road to Kuruman was at least a two-lane highway.

[1] 1829 Journal NA

[2] Acts 28:2

[3] PRSA (Posselt) 16ff July 1919

Chapter 10
BIBLE, PLOUGH, AND MOSELEKATSE
1830-37

I am bound to look to fields of labour beyond the one I occupy

Moffat's initial expedition to Moselekatse established him as a master on the north-western frontier of Cape Colony. He held at least one of the keys to what was then called "Central Africa", the friendship and trust of the Matabele monarch; and for seven years, until the Matabele host retreated beyond the Limpopo in 1837, the door into the Transvaal and beyond opened most successfully when Moffat unlocked it. The trader-explorers knew this: men such as A.G.Bain, Robert Schoon, William McLuckie, David Hume, and Hugh Millen, all of whom respected the dependable Moffat. So did the sportsmen-travellers: Captains Sutton and Moultrie; and Cornwallis Harris and William Richardson. The missions of the Paris Society, the American Board in Boston, and the Anglican C.M.S. in London, were all aware that Moffat in Kuruman held a key to the interior, and used him in their plans; and when in 1835 the Cape Association for the Exploration of Central South Africa sent Andrew Smith northwards, Kuruman became his adva nced base.

By 1835 Moffat had been ten years in his valley carving out a community in which the useful arts associated with spade and plough were intermixed with school and church. He believed in the doctrine of "Bible and plough" in Africa in much the same fashion as Livingstone later sounded the call of "commerce and Christianity". His aim was simple enough - to see an "improvement" in the Bechuana both in manners, industry and religion, and Moffat's capacity for patience was ideally suited for the task. "We discover a general desire for improvement. The females are desirous of learning to sew ... the men are becoming industrious and will eventually prove good farmers. Formerly we could not get an individual of the Bechuanas to

take a spade or mattock in his hand for any reward but now we are overstocked."[1]

Beyond the gardens of the missionaries in the valley lay the farm lands they supervised, which gradually expanded to over five hundred acres irrigated by the water of the Kuruman River, and producing, in 1834: 14 bushels of potatoes; 4 of peas and beans; 45 of native corn; 14 of barley; 160 of maize; and 131 of wheat. There were 3 ploughs; 11 wagons; 466 goats; 230 sheep; 764 cows and calves; 752 oxen; 13 horses; and the population was 727.[2] Moffat's census even included the number of fruit trees: 828; and those in the "forest" 700. There were 236 houses, whose inhabitants "know that they are living on the grounds of the missionary society and are required only to live honest and peaceable lives and attend to the means of instruction; dancing and other heathenish amusements are not allowed".[3]

Moffat and his colleagues, Hamilton and Edwards, had drained the valley sufficiently to allow for this amount of farming; but, even so, he said, the natives "live a starving life and scarcely ever can say that they have had a full meal of wholesome food".[4] But he praised their industry and regarded them as superior to the natives in the Colony. His vision was of a "new and superior race ... among those in the vicinity of missionary stations".[5]

Even in times of drought, when "the wind sometimes felt like flame and the earth seemed ignivomous", Moffat's valley was a "comparative Goshen to the surrounding country"[6]; and even though the inhabitants persisted in shaving their heads and

[1] R.M. to [illegible] LMS 12.8.29

[2] R.M. to ELLIS 3.9.34 LMS

[3-6] R.M. to ELLIS 3.2.34 LMS

~~[6] R.M. to ELLIS 16.9.35 LMS~~

exposing them to the sun their daily existence was a step above the rest of the Bechuana. To live in the Kuruman valley was a mark of an elevated life, for in most homes there was someone who could read, and the little spelling-books from the press and the copies of St. Luke's Gospel were circulated and sold as fast as they could be produced. In 1835 Moffat reports a sale of 600 books, 260 religious ones and 85 Luke's Gospel.[1]

The useful arts of the plough and the hoe were promoted to serve a far more important end than efficient farming. Moffat saw them as the basis of the good life for the Bechuana, which however could only be sparked off by conversion from heathenish ways and by regular disciplined living within the church-community. It was not until July 1829 that the first six candidates for church membership were chosen, after much prayer and deliberation and repeated examination of the individuals selected during a three-months' probation. They were admitted to Holy Communion, using the service vessels sent from Sheffield for the first time.[2]

The Moffats, overjoyed at the "steady and growing piety of these sable children of Adam",[3] watched over their spiritual health and habits meticulously, and rigorously controlled entry to membership. By 1834 the number of communicants was only 29, although the congregation on Sunday morning was 340, 130 on weekdays, and candidates under instruction numbered 80.[4]

Moffat was in no hurry to expand the borders of the infant church. He was more ready to defend its portals from the impious and impure, who if they did secure a place were speedily detected in their heathen habits and barred from contact with holy things. He was not building an agricultural-utopia where ease and opinions in conduct might be condoned, but a community where "the

[1] R.M. to Ellis 16.9.35 LMS
[2] R.M. to L.M.S.12.8.29
[3] M.M. to Smith 19.10.29, Lives 156
[4] R.M. to Ellis 3.9.34 LMS

Spirit of God has commenced His operations and surely He will go on".[1]

The condition of souls was more important than the condition of crops, and the health of the church more to be desired than a large membership. Apart from the public worship on Sundays, the chief instrument of instruction was the catechetical meeting in the week, when either Dr Brown's or the Assembly's catechism was drummed home to the thirty or forty attenders who must be able to read and were preferred young.

By 1834 there were 113 scholars in the day school, with the simple Sechuana spelling-books and ~~xxx~~ St. Luke's Gospel the main text-books, and the patient Moffat struggling to perfect his mastery both of language and printing in order to produce the superior race he longed for. He had faith in the combined efficacy of an inner disciplined group, the power of Scripture and the redemptive capacity of hard work to produce the desired reformation in morals and conduct, a hope he never abandoned - as his comments show:

> The son of an old backslider (a Hottentot) who for a time stood aloof came to acknowledge his sins. 28.3.30
>
> An old woman and her eldest daughter came a whole day's journey to attend the sabbath services. 28.3.30
>
> Congregations considerably diminished by small-pox. 26.12.31
>
> A number can read in the school, and some can write. We would naturally wish that it were in our power to tell you of hundreds. 26.12.31
>
> The prosperity of a mission depends on a school which is generally attended by adults as well as children. The aspect of a mission like this will change in proportion as a school is conducted. 22.2.32

[1] M.M. to J.Smith, Lives 157

> Motseitese after struggling some time with a guilty conscience separated from his young wife. He frequently remarks that he had been wilfully wandering, and that the prospect of eternal separation from God now embittered all his enjoyment. 30.9.33
>
> Down the valley to our old station, five or sometimes six preachings on a sabbath but as yet no fruit to our labours. 30.9.33
>
> Some of the hearers are often much affected and to make an exit (as instructed to do) makes frequently no little confusion in a congregation literally wedged together. 16.9.35
>
> Women "separated" for given way to their passions, men for lies and prevaricating. 16.9.35 [1]

One of Moffat's sporting visitors, Cornwallis Harris, wrote of Kuruman as "a lovely spot in the waste by which it is completely environed ... a little speck of civilization ... dropped into the very heart of the wilderness".[2] Moffat would have agreed that one of his aims was civilization on the veld, but, without a Christian community that was "growing in grace", he saw no hope of achieving it, and it mattered little how long it took. Patience was always his supreme virtue.

I

While Moffat and his colleagues preached, prayed, and ploughed, at Kuruman, the first of the non-British organized groups of missionaries arrived at Kuruman seeking to establish a station amongst the northward tribes. They were the Frenchmen, Samuel Rolland and Prosper Lemue, of the Paris Society, introduced by John Philip; and, on Moffat's advice, they planned to

[1] R.M. to L.M.S.

[2] Harris, Wild Sports of Southern Africa (1839) 45

establish themselves at Mosega amongst the Bahurutshe people, under their Chief, Mokatla.[1]

Mosega [near the modern Zeerust] was then on the western boundary of Moselekatse's dominions, but he regarded the Bahurutshe as subject to him. The French missionaries, under Moffat's patronage, were to be hostages to the sincerity of Moselekatse's "milk white" heart and to his desire to keep open the road to Kuruman. For ten months they lived with the Moffats, learning the language and admiring the pertinacious industry of Moffat and his colleagues as they built their oasis in the wilderness. What could be finer than to duplicate the pattern at Mosega?

Rolland went up to Mosega in May 1831 to mark out the site for the new station, to build a temporary hut, and to announce the advent of the missionaries. But other people had their eye on that fruitful corner of the veld, where the waters of the Marico make green the valley. One of them was Barend Barends, the chief of the Griquas, who in a cattle-thieving foray moved northwards in June and July 1831 with a force of 600 horse and 1,000 men on foot.[2] He stole 4,000 Matabele cattle, and looked like getting away with his booty when Moselekatse, in one of his swift marching movements, swept down on the Griquas, killed 400 of them, and recovered his cattle.

"He is a desperate tyrant", wrote Mary to her father,[3] "and subjugates all the tribes about him. He is consequently very rich, and his cattle have proved a bait to those who ought to have known better." And, in another letter,[4] she refers to him as "the enraged Moselekatse who had been so villainously treated by old Barend." So Moffat felt, and by messages to Moselekatse

[1] Jousse, La Mission Française Evangelique au Sud de l'Afrique, Vol. I, 59-98.
[2] Tabler, 190
[3,4] M.M. to J.S. 15.9.31; 23.2.32 NA

got him in a frame of mind to allow the missionaries to occupy Mosega regardless of the threats which surrounded him. There were many of them: Griquas and Boer farmers from the south; Zulus from the east; and Moselekatse was in no mood to distinguish between the half-caste Griquas and the Boer farmers. They had all got guns and gunpowder, and how could he be sure that the feckless Bechuana would not betray him to these all-powerful armaments?

Moselekatse was in a precarious position. He had got to feed his warriors, find them fighting jobs to do, and at the same time defend the flanks of his dominions - which he realized were being subtly but surely turned by the emigrant farmers' pressure. Were not the missionaries part of that pressure? The only certain fact was his trust in Moffat, who, while despising the "heathen state" of his Matabele friend, respected him, never bullied him, and never took advantage of him. Even on the day of battle with the Griquas, when Moselekatse's own blood was at boiling-point, Hugh Millen and his companions trading near the scene were unharmed. "Though completely in their power", writes Mary, "they received no harm, on it being found that they were from Kuruman."[1]

The Frenchmen, now joined by Jean Pellissier, made another move to occupy Mosega in February 1832. "They have met with many discouragements, but we hope and trust they will now succeed", writes Mary, ... "having had enough to damp their zeal, they require Christian sympathy and kindness. I feel attached to them as my own brothers, and have greatly enjoyed their company."[2]

On the Kuruman pattern, they built and irrigated, dug their

1, 2 M.M. to J.S. 15.9.31; 23.3.32 NA

gardens, made bricks and felled timber. Their mission house was to be sixty-six feet by seventeen. Moffat's messengers to Moselekatse calmed the monarch, who, in their view, was now anxious to see a line of stations to link him with Kuruman as a line of retreat in the event of being too hard pressed by his enemies. He invited them to come to see him, and Pellissier was received with many marks of friendship - even though he was asked to clean the guns Moselekatse had captured from the Griquas.

It seemed to Pellissier that Moselekatse was nervous and uneasy about the future, and anxious to have the missionaries near him as an extra protection. He believed they were wanted in order to teach the Matabele warriors to shoot. Soon after he returned to Mosega there came a demand from Moselekatse for all the Frenchmen to visit him, which convulsed the Bahurutshe with such a deep fear that no oxen leader and no wagon driver would make the journey; and the Chief, Mokatla, begged the missionaries to leave his town in case the Matabele should punish him for harbouring them. He convinced them that it was death to go to Moselekatse and death to remain. More experienced men might have stood their ground, but the Frenchmen chose discretion and moved back towards Kuruman to consult Moffat. They met him on the road, and he characteristically there and then offered to turn and go with them to see Moselekatse, but the wagon drivers struck against any northward trek and the group came back to Kuruman to await events.[1]

That summer, rumours were all of wars and impending attacks. One thing was certain. The Matabele were on the move westward from their settlement in the Magliesberg-Rustenberg area where Moffat first met them. Moselekatse was harassed from the east by

[1] Jousse, La Mission Française, Vol.I, 59-98

his ex-Zulu compatriots under Dingaan, and in turn he harassed the Bechuanas on his western flanks. Caught within this tempest of veld warfare, the French missionaries saw their hopes of a settlement at Mosega finally blasted when Mokatla's people murdered six of Moselekatse's emissaries. His regiments moved in amongst the Bahrutshe without mercy, and no plea from Moffat could secure a return of the Frenchmen. As Moselekatse later hinted to Moffat, the unhappy episode might have been different if Moffat had been there to "tell me the truth".[1]

II

The second move northwards was an American one; and to prepare for the coming of a group of American missionaries who wished to settle amongst the Matabele in the Transvaal, Moffat joined up with the Andrew Smith "Expedition for Exploring Central Africa" (1834-36). He was thus able to serve the exploratory expedition by opening a door into Moselekatse's domains, and at the same time recommend to him the advent of the young men of the new world. The story of the venture and its intricate involvement with the Matabele and the Boer farmers is one of the most extraordinary in southern Africa history.

On March 16, 1832, a young American student, J.B. Purney, at Princeton Theological Seminary, New Jersey, wrote a letter to Dr Philip, the L.M.S. Superintendent in Capetown, on behalf of the "Society of Inquiry on Missions",[2] a student group interested in assembling facts "relative to the conditions, habits and manners of unchristianized nations", putting to him a number of questions about South Africa, and politely asking him to "send us a long letter, such as you would address to your own

[1] R.M. to M.M. 10.6.35 NA [The French Mission was established at Motito, 36 miles from Kuruman, in 1832. It was absorbed within the Kuruman Mission in 1869.]

[2] Founded at the Andover Theological Seminary in 1811

son to prepare him for that field of labour", and asking for his answers quickly "as one of our number will in a few months be prepared to go where Providence shall open the way".[1]

Philip was on tour when this letter arrived in Capetown, and his reply was not despatched until May (n.d.), 1833. It is an eight thousand word letter, fresh, factual, and as comprehensive as only Philip in southern Africa could make it. He laid himself out in a masterly manner to inform the young men of Princeton that "as far as my observation extends, it appears to me that the natural capacity of the African is nothing inferior to that of the European" - a bold statement, but one which Philip goes on to justify in a letter packed with the sort of information to stimulate an intelligent group of young men.

His description of Moselekatse shows his ability to sum up what he had learned from Moffat and others:

> To an address the most mild and winning he united great capacity for war, great ambition, and, like many other ambitious conquerors, he shows none of that weakness which allows any feelings of compassion to come between him and the attainment of his object. ... His ambition is to be a great king ... when he subdues a nation or tribe, he takes full possession of the country, and divides it among his warriors. The old people he generally destroys; the young he preserves for future service. ... Last year the soldiers of this tyrant invaded the Bechuana country; and the unwarlike Bechuanas fell before them like sheep under the knife of a butcher. The whole of the Bechuana has been desolated as far as Lattakoo, which is yet untouched;[2] and the people of Moselekatse possess the country.

As a result of the correspondence, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions of Boston decided to send

[1] Letters of the American Missionaries, 1835-38, ed. D.J.Kotze (Van Riebeck Society 1950), p.21;

[2] Letters ... 1835-38 ..., p.28, Philip to Purney, n.d., May 1833.

three missionaries and their wives to Moselekatse, relying on Philip and Moffat to help them settle. They left Boston, under the leadership of Daniel Lindley,[1] on December 3, 1834, and got to Griqua Town on May 16, 1835, armed with lengthy instructions and reiterated admonitions:

> Have you and your wives thought sufficiently of the nature of these missions and have you counted the cost? Have you thought how much of your time and strength for a season will be consumed by merely secular cares and labors?... the cattle must be protected from wolves and lions, and from the thievery of the natives ... the sites must be selected for the missions where soil, water, climate, prospect ... are all as they should be.[2]

"Grief","perilous exposure", and "violent death", are all suggested as possibilities to the young missionaries; a gloomy prospect which was amply fulfilled. Moffat moved northwards to prepare Moselekatse for their coming on May 10, 1835, in the train of Dr Andrew Smith and his "Central Africa Expedition".

Moffat's association with the army medical officer, Andrew Smith, is on the face of it one of the most unlikely combinations, but, as it turned out, their months of travel together was a period that both of them eventually looked back upon with pleasure. They were both Scots, roughly of an age, and had been in southern Africa about the same length of time. Smith, in addition to his medical duties within the regiments stationed at the Cape, played a leading part in the embryonic scientific and learned life at the Cape, and has some claim to be regarded as the founder of the South African Museum.[3] Successive Governors sent him on expeditions into Kaffirland, and in 1830 he penetra-

[1] Alexander Wilson and Henry Venable were his colleagues. Newton Adams, George Champion, and Aldin Grout, went to Natal at the same time.

[2] Letters ... 1835-38, 51

[3] Andrew Smith Diary [1839], ed. Kirby, 14n.

ted into the Zululand dominion of Dingaan, and even into the principal kraal of the famous monarch.

Three years later, the northern frontier of the Colony and Moselekatse were suggested to Smith as objects worthy of his explorer's "zeal, courage, activity and experience"; and when the newly-formed "Association for the Exploration of Central South Africa" began to fit out its expedition Smith was the man appointed to lead it.[1]

Smith organized his expedition with all the precision of a military engagement, taking with him a second in command, Captain Edie of the 98th Regiment, a surveyor, two draughtsmen, a general assistant, a personal servant, three European soldiers, and thirty-six Hottentots. Two German missionaries of the Berlin Society also went with the expedition as far as Philippolis, in the hope of getting Moffat's advice about their future, but rumours about Moselekatse's mood turned them back. They concluded that Smith would be compelled to fight, and had no wish to be mixed up in veld warfare.

Kuruman and Moffat's "good offices" (already bespoken by Dr Philip) were Smith's point of departure into the unknown Matabele territory, and his arrival at Kuruman in January 1835 was, for the Moffats, "a dispensation of mercy". Moffat was ill, after a winter's hard labour at translating and printing, and Mary was expecting a baby,[2] whose birth brought her "to the very gates of death".

Smith used Kuruman as a base of local exploration, before setting off on the main journey; and, while in the Kuruman neighbourhood, his "tender sympathy" towards Mary and his night watches over "what appeared to be the dying pillow of my beloved partner"

[1] Smith, in July 1832, managed to merge two learned societies at the Cape into the "South African Literary and Scientific Institution", and promoted his expedition under its auspices. He eventually became Director-General of the Army Medical Department (1853) and as such roused the ire of Florence Nightingale for Crimea mismanagement. Moffat was amused at his military stiffness, but admired his thoroughness. Veld travel was perhaps his metier rather than War Office administration. The Moffats were always grateful to "kind Dr Smith".

[2] John Smith, b.10.3.35

won the Moffats' loyalty and gratitude. Even though Mary was still an invalid when the two men set out together in May 1835, Robert travelled with a light heart, and, for him, a ready pen.

His Journal-Letters to Mary, delivered by runners, show him at his best as a correspondent, on this journey. He had then little responsibility for the caravan, as the efficient Dr Smith and his men moved in almost battle order towards Moselekatse:

> I continue to admire Dr Smith more than ever. He sets an excellent example to his men, and is not only willing but anxious for their instruction in the things of God. All the English, if I except Dr Smith and one or two more, swear, and some do it in no ordinary degree, but they are all cunning enough to take care that I never hear them ... they have just written out an agreement that for every oath the swearer pays a fine of half a stick of tobacco. ... I pray that the plan may succeed and it is very likely, as all have put their names to it, and tobacco is precious ... The sentry walks for two hours and six are appointed for each night ... every ten minutes or quarter of an hour the sentry shouts that all is well. I hope it will be the same song till we return. [1]

With swearing under control,[2] the monotonous chant of the sentries at night, and the Doctor sitting in his wagon for regular conversation, Moffat enjoyed the order and discipline of Smith's little army. Almost every night, under the bright glow of one of her own tallow lights, he jotted down for Mary the doings of the day:

> I always breakfast alone: I like coffee. Mr Hume and Scoon [3] will have me join them at tea immediately on outspanning: and for the sake of social intercourse I generally sup with the Doctor in the tent. It is their dinner. ... They live rather roughly. The tea is dished up out of a large black pot into beakers (full) twice the size of the ones you sent. Their cookies are rough and

[1] R.M. to M.M. 17.5.35 NA

[2] Fines for swearing gradually decreased. One day however produced 17½ sticks for 35 oaths (R.M. to M.M. 21.5.35 NA).

[3] The two "Kuruman traders" who attached themselves to the expedition.

> tough; generally some meat roasted or boiled, and sometimes sausages. The tea, not of the best quality, is sugarless, well mixed with leaves. ... To-night we had one of your common loaves which was as good as when it left. It threw the cookies into the background. ... The tent is generally lighted with a farthing candle stuck on the top of a tent mallet, with thumb snuffers to brighten its beams. To-night I sent for one of mine ... which appeared like gaslight and did our eyes a great service.[1]

The Doctor also kept a diary,[2] filled with minute observations on the quaggas, the hartebeests, springbok, cameleopards, hyenas, jackals, elephants, and lions - the kind of recording which Moffat admired but had no inclination to copy. He and the traders laughed and protested about Smith's precautions against lions whereby a wagon fortification was made, with the oxen enclosed, which only appeared to attract lions. Smith let off rockets, blue lights, and sent out parties with guns, and kept the camp bell ringing all night as a defence against the enemy. He had to defend his men, declared Smith in sound military fashion, a point which Moffat submitted to, but "not cheerfully", as he knew the men were safe enough but not the oxen. In any case, "tau" [the lion] "knew how to take care of himself, and of course eluded the short-lived moonshine".[3]

The Doctor was endlessly observant on the way to Mosega, where it was hoped to meet Moselekatse; if by night, he was excessively cautious in his camp arrangements; by day, he was ready to ride off to look around for himself. One fruitless expedition to try to find the sources of the Molopo River yielded

[1] R.M. to M.M. 19.5.35 NA

[2] Andrew Smith Diary, ed. Kirby, 2 Vols., 1839 : (Van Riebeck Society No.20)

[3] R.M. to M.M. 29.5.35 NA

a neat diary entry in the doctor's precise style about the habits of the rhinoceros simus:

> ... generally repairs to the same place to deposit his excrement, and after doing that generally ploughs up the ground with his horn. Nearly a wagon load is to be seen in some places. The black rhinoceros generally tosses his dung about, after voiding it, with his horn, and ploughs the ground up about the place. Several of the neophron carunculatus were seen to-day and one was shot. Caruncules larger and fewer in number than those I have seen elsewhere. On each side of neck a fold of white skin which disappears when the oesophagus is much distended. It reaches up as high as the angles of the lower mandible; ... head rose colour; legs and feet bluish green; eyes brown.[1]

In camp that night Moffat's letter entry, by contrast, almost glows with the warmth of the fires and the savour of elk steaks:

> All colours from jet black to comparatively white, all degrees of dress from nakedness to double duff. Rich and poor, bond and free, are all enjoying the comforts of a warm fireside with a confusion of tongues as if they had but just emigrated from Babel tower.[2]

But the noisy bell rang all night - formerly "but an occasional tinkle, but now it goes on as if a house was on fire". Hume, the trader, maddened by the doctor's rigidity in the camping arrangements, and the everlasting bell, threatened a revolt - to prevent which needed Moffat's tactful intervention between the two men. Moffat also warned the doctor, as they got nearer the Matabele country, that wagons outspanned in military formation might indicate lack of confidence in the Matabele on Moffat's part.

"Timid and to be pitied" is his comment on Smith as the

[1] Andrew Smith Diary, Vol.2, 49

[2] R.M. to M.M. 31.5.35 NA

caravan moved into Mosega, but he admitted the doctor's "greater responsibility" and his "indefatigable research".

The two men walked together over the undulating, stony tracks towards Mosega, exciting a riot of interest with their long beards and their upright bearing. Smith was said to be Moffat's younger brother. Messages from Moselekatse showed that Moshete's approach was welcome, and one tuna [headman] arrived to hold Moffat's fist again and to look in his eyes. It looked as if the old magic of friendship was still working, and that this formidable caravan of twelve wagons, horsemen and soldiers, would have a peaceful entry into the Matabele domains.

There was plenty of melancholy evidence of Matabele destruction at Mosega itself, where the house of the French missionaries was dilapidated and forlorn, with the walls sagging and some of the woodwork burned, although Moselekatse had been true to his promise to Moffat about the garden. The enclosure round the house still had its walnut and almond trees, and the irrigation ditch was in good order. Fields of corn crept raggedly to the edge of the garden, but as Moffat walked round the patch of civilization he meditated gloomily on "the mysterious providence which permitted the cheering expectations of our brethren to be blasted when just beginning to bud".[1] He must have wondered how the Americans would fare in the wake of the Frenchmen.

The news coming in of Moselekatse's whereabouts reported him beyond the Marico River, and the tricle of presents coming to Moffat's wagon - beer, kidney beans and pumpkin - showed how the honours were likely to pile up as he drew nearer to the

[1] R.M. to M.M. 3.6.35 NA

meeting place. The ravines and glens they passed made Moffat "dance for joy" at their stately timber, which he coveted for the church roof at Kuruman; and one afternoon he and the doctor rode off to see the Matabele thrashing corn with "massy knob-stick" singing as they thrashed.

He was glad to see the women standing round as spectators while the men worked. One village they visited was entirely composed of women - a punishment inflicted by Moselekatse for failure to resist an attack of Dingaan's Zulus by the husbands, who had been transported seven miles away. When Dingaan attacked again the husbands would have another chance of displaying their manhood and getting their wives back, an ingenious idea, which seems to have impressed Moffat but is not mentioned in Smith's diary which on the same day (June 4, 1835) records Smith's encounter with a group of Matabele women:

> After they had surveyed me from head to foot they began to finger my shoes and looked with great surprise at the under part of the soles, and particularly were astonished with the small iron nails that were in the heels and toes. Asked what the sole was made of, and upon being told that it was ox hide they seemed more surprised than before as they could not comprehend how and what sort of ox hides had iron in them. They then were particularly anxious to know if I had toes, and made signs for me to permit them to ascertain that. I pulled off my shoe and counted them through the stockings.[1]

On June 8 news came from Moselekatse that he wished Moffat to ride ahead of the wagons to see him at Tolane River, which frightened the timid Smith, who suspected danger"like a childish mania".[2] However, Moffat was up before sunrise next day, and in three hours' riding came upon Moselekatse washing in the river, with an attendant bodyguard. In the kraal the chief

[1] Smith Diary Vol.2, 55

[2] R.M. to M.M. 8.6.35 NA

"instantly stretched out his hand and hastened up to me, and seized my hand which he shook heartily. He did not speak, but gazed on me for a time, as if I had dropped from the clouds. At length he repeated my name two or three times, adding: 'Now my eyes see you again, and my heart is as white as milk.' This he repeated again and again, laying hold of my hand and stroking my head. Had a perfect stranger witnessed what passed, he might have supposed that we were near relations meeting after a very long absence."

The warriors sang a song of welcome, while Moselekatse stroked Moffat's beard, admired his cap of Mary's making, patted him on the shoulders, and laid out beer and beef for the party's entertainment. When the wagons came up, the chief bounced on Moffat's bed, and was fascinated by "my canisters of mental food" - specimens of Sechuana books printed at Kuruman. "Kuluman, Kuluman", he chanted, "I would like to see it."

Moffat brought out Mary's present of "five blue basins" with figures printed on them, which the chief fingered with the same affectionate care as he pronounced her name, "Ma-Mary", and said he was sure she would recover from her sickness. The two Griquas [Andries and Younker] who were with Moffat gazed in wonderment at the sight of the Matabele chief seated humbly on a four-legged stool holding hands with Moffat - "Pathetic to see the man", said Younker; "I was terribly astonished", said Andries.

How would "the Doctor" hit it with Moselekatse? Moffat was undoubtedly anxious, but he need have had no qualms. Smith had a way with him too, in spite of his military stiffness; and his presents of green baize greatcoats, two fine looking glasses and a load of beads, were happily received - and even more happily were his eight doses of salts.

He presented the official medal and chain from the Cape Government, and, while Moffat discreetly turned a deaf ear,[1]

[1] R.M. to M.M. 9.6.35 NA

he delivered his message about the tribes living at peace and the intention of the government to punish those who stole cattle. It was a prickly topic and Smith was wise not to persist in trying to secure a quick decision, leaving it to Moffat during the following seven weeks to play gently on the chief's mind without mentioning a far away government.

III

After seven days at Moselekatse's kraal on the Torane, Andrew Smith prepared to move eastwards into the Rustenberg region and the country where the Vaal River rises. He let off rockets to celebrate the event, astutely turning aside Moselekatse's request to barter a rocket for an ox by saying that the rockets were "the property of our king" and could not be sold.

Moselekatse then dismissed the expedition in his most handsome and gracious manner, calling his assembled chiefs "to take care that no injury happens to the white men; if there does you are a dead man as sure as Nombati[1] lives". As the Doctor's wagons moved eastwards, Moffat realized that the first object of his visit was accomplished. Smith's expedition was safe in the Matabele country at least as far as the write of Moselekatse ran.

But there were three other aims he wished to secure while "the Doctor" prospected eastward. The first was to collect timber for the church at Kuruman. This permission was speedily granted, and so zealously that the wagons got overloaded:

> On entering a little way into the glen I pointed out a tree suitable. Two of the Matabele took the large saw, being persuaded that they were perfectly able to saw it down, from the instructions about sawing which I had given them yesterday. The tree stood on an eminence, so as to make standing difficult. ... I was afraid of receiving injury from the fall of the tree. ... The Matabele begged me to stand at a distance and leave

[1] The principal Matabele adviser, friend of Moffat's, who went ~~went~~ with Smith to Capetown -186- [3.3.36] to sign with Sir Benjamin D'Urban a treaty of friendship as a result of the Smith expedition. (Smith Diary Vol.2,13)

> them to take their chance. "If you are hurt, we are dead men." It was to me, much as I have seen of a tyrannical government, surprising to see so much real anxiety to preserve my life. "If we are killed", said they, "that is nothing." ... I got the wagon loaded up, but left the two wild-olive axletrees, being too hard for my axes.[1]

The second aim was not nearly so simple, and was eventually protracted into 1854 on Moffat's third visit. It concerned the relationships of Moselekatse with the Griquas, a field of reconciliation where Moffat considered himself expert. These half-caste settlers had their eye on the rich herds of the Matabele beyond the Vaal River, and whenever an opportunity occurred they nipped in to secure a prize. Two cattle raids happened as the Smith Expedition crossed the Colony borders. One was a Griqua raid pure and simple which Moselekatse quashed with the capture of four wagons, eighteen horses, and the eldest daughter of Peter David - the acting chief of the Griquas. It was the capture of "Gertrude" that worried both Smith and Moffat, and Moffat used all his arts to secure the girl's release:

> I then applied for the Griqua captives, and especially for P. David's daughter. This he at once refused, stating that he had taken good care of them, and that the Griquas had taken people from him, and never returned them. I asked if I could not redeem them, but especially the daughter; he said no, he must first wait and see how things went.[2]

The "Trudy" story echoes as a permanent refrain between the two men as they moved back towards Mosega and Kurechuene, where Moselekatse then had his principal kraal. Moffat tried humour, but "he only laughed too". Then, sitting close to him on the front of the wagon, he whispered about their close friendship. "I told him his friendship was but a name, and exhibited some

1, 2 R.M. to M.M. 18.7.35; 10.7.35 NA

symptom of displeasure, which he noticed, and remarked that I was his greatest friend, and he would yet show me that he loved me as his father:"

> I tried hard to get him to give up Peter David's daughter, but without hope of success. He assured me that she was well taken care of. No evil should come over her and that none should marry her; it being contrary to their established laws. He told me again and again to ask anything from him, or even go into the kraals and take what I pleased of his property, and he would be glad; but as regarded my applications for either the wagons[1] or the prisoners, he had determined not to return them until he had received some satisfactory reply from the White King.[2]

Moffat felt that this was a reasonable position, and his confidence that no harm would come to the girl amongst the Matabele proved correct. He confessed to "the Doctor" that in the matter of prisoners and property he could not expect "a pagan king to do what few Christian kings will perform"! Far from being rebuffed, Moffat felt his esteem for Moselekatse considerably heightened because of the negotiations, and was ready to enjoy a bowl of fine boiled beef in the evening, choosing the lean pieces - while Moselekatse and his men went for the "exuberant fat", laughing at Moffat for not knowing what was good for him.

The third aim was to prepare Moselekatse for the coming of the American missionaries to Mosega:

> He asked me from what nation they were. I replied America, but found difficulty in telling him where that country lay. I explained to him again, as I had done before, by whom missionaries were sent, and under what circumstances. The brethren's letter being at hand, I took

[1] The wagons of A.G. Bain, a trader, which had also been captured by the Matabele. Bain had allowed Griqua cattle thieves to travel with him and deserved his loss.

[2] R.M. to M.M. 29.7.35 NA

> it up and told him I would read it again to him. He gave a look of utter astonishment, and asked me if I knew them. I said I knew them not; a great sea separated their nation from mine, but we had one feeling and served one master who was in heaven. I then read the letter, which seemed to please him much. I could not have wished a word more or less. ... I told him if he was indeed my friend he would be their friend also, for they would do all, and much more than I could do, to make him happy in this world. ... He must be very kind to them and their wives, for they had come far for his sake.[1]

That was on July 15, 1835, three weeks before Moffat turned homewards on August 5, and seven months before the Americans, Daniel Lindley and Henry Venable, arrived at Mosega to begin their attempt to found a mission amongst the Matabele. They found that Moffat's word provided them with a welcome and introductions to the local Matabele official, Mkalipi, whom Venable described as a "fine-formed man with the air of a gentleman".[2]

It was not until April 1836, however, that Moselaketse met his friends from America, on whom he pinned so many hopes as possible creators of a new Kuruman, and by July he called them "his children" and said "that he would do anything for us".[3]

It looked as if Moffat's prediction of a permanent mission to Moselekatse and his people had prospects of success at last, now that three missionaries, their wives, and two children, were settling in at Mosega. All that Moffat did was to prepare their reception, and make certain of Moselaketse's favour, without which even the hopeful beginnings were impossible, but even he could not foresee the catestrophes ahead. One of them might have been avoided by a practical builder, but the other engulfed the mission in the sweep of the Boer farmers through the

[1] R.M. to M.M. 18.7.35 NA

[2] Missionary Herald (Boston) 1837 Vol.33

[3] To Wilson, quoted Smith Lind, 90

Transvaal, the flank of the Great Trek which eventually ejected the Matabele themselves from the Mosega area.

The Americans added on to the Frenchmen's house at Mosega so as to give each of the three families a two-roomed apartment, and did their building with wet clay hardened and packed in but always needing to dry. It failed to dry out, and even when they were forced to move in during July 1836, after existing for weeks in the wagons, the floors were still damp. The clammy atmosphere of the house, the cold west wind all day, and hot work in the sun on the house and in the gardens tired out the little group until successively they collapsed into fevers and rheumatic affections. Dr Wilson alone escaped.

There were no proper beds - only the katels taken from the wagons, supported on boxes above the damp floors - and when Mrs. Lindley was ill her husband, wrapped in a blanket, slept on the floor itself. Half a dozen chairs made at Kuruman, stools, camp tables and packing cases, completed the equipment of the house - with the ineffective help of Mary Moffat's little black maid Sarah.

Tragedy smote the group on September 18, when Jane Wilson died[1] and was carried by her husband to lie under a stone slab scratched with her name "till ye resurrection when it will rise to testify ye benevolent desires of her husband and those connected with him to impart ye blessing of ye gospel to ye natives of Africa".[2]

The personal miseries of the American missionaries were soon eclipsed by swift disaster for the mission itself as the

[1] On the railway between Johannesburg and Mafeking, at Zendelingspost near Zeerust, the Martha Washington Club (1914) of Johannesburg has erected a monument to Jane Wilson, the first white woman to die in the Transvaal.

[2] Smith Lind, 96ff

result of warfare between the Matabele and the Boers pressing across the Vaal. It is no doubt correct to set this disaster within the movement of the Great Boer Trek - that compound of land-hunger, hatred of a central government, and a determination to maintain a white-controlled order of society - but, as it happened, the attack on Mosega was a direct revenge by the organized Boer emigrants for a Matabele cattle raid which culminated in the "Hill of the Fight" at Vegkop between the Wilge and Rhenoster rivers in the north of the present Orange Free State.

In that celebrated fight of October 19, 1836, Moselekatse carried off fifty thousand sheep and goats, and about five thousand head of cattle, and lost a thousand of his best men in the action. Daniel Lindley in his account of the fight says: "We had no opportunity to dissuade him from his bloody enterprise. Indeed we think discussion would have had little effect on his mind."[1] No doubt he was right. Moselekatse's position was worsening, and while there were no strong personal links between him and his American missionaries, his continued protection was assured if they had stayed at Mosega.

The time for decision came in January 1837, as Lindley describes it:

> On the morning of the 17th of January, some time before sunrise, we were roused by the startling cry, "A commando! A commando!" Almost immediately after this alarming cry a brisk fire commenced on a kraal of people a few hundred yards distant from our house. The fire of one followed that of another in quick succession and on the thrilling report of every gun the thought would rush on our minds: There falls one, and another and another, and another of the poor heathen of whose salvation we once had some hope. Our hearts became sick, for in a few minutes we were in the midst of the slaughter.[2]

1, 2 Smith Lind, 96ff

The Boer expedition was a well-organized one, officially dispatched by the new "People's Council", of which Gerrit Maritz was President and A.H. Potgieter Commandant, consisting of one hundred and seven Boers, forty Griquas and Korannas, all mounted and fully armed, and with sixty Barolong to drive the captured cattle. In the Mosega area they evidently did not meet any strong force of Matabele, but came upon villages occupied by old men, women and children. It was an easy victory, and the crowds of wounded that swarmed towards the mission house were chiefly helpless women and children, some of them, according to Lindley's story, being shot down in his wife's bedroom.[1]

In a lull in the fighting, the missionaries made their decision to go back with the Boers. They were evidently impressed by the bold speeches of the commando leaders to give Moselekatse "no peace till they had ruined him, saying they could never again confide in him as they had done, and that in the country to which they were removing they were resolved to live ... they would drive everything out of the land before them ... to remain would be useless as we could do nothing to stay the torrent of vengeance Moselekatse had brought upon himself".[2]

Unlike Moffat, the American group had no faith in Moselekatse. It was not to be expected that, after a few weeks in his domain, in which they had little personal contact with him, they could conjure up a similar regard to Moffat's. Dispirited by disease, as Moffat recognized, and perhaps overwhelmed by the tragic experiences of their few months at Mosega, the group decided to go with the Boers; and "at one o'clock p.m. of this

[1] Quoted Smith Lind, 105

[2] American Missionaries Letters, ed. Kotze, 170

trying day, we set out in company with white men and black men, footmen and horsemen; some armed with guns, and others with assegais, shields, bows and arrows; and driving before them 6,000 head of cattle." [1]

According to Moffat, "it was altogether a melancholy affair, like many others, which have resulted from the unrestrained power of the farmers who emigrated from the Colony."[2]

As for Moselekatse, he was not destroyed by the Boer farmers but beat an ordered movement northwards towards the end of 1837 to the lands beyond the Limpopo, to which he gave the name of his people. Moffat believed that he deeply regretted the departure of the American missionaries, and that their decision to go with the Boers rankled in his mind even as long as 1859, when Moffat and his son settled the first missionaries in Southern Rhodesia.

It made him hesitate about further groups of missionaries. Were they the heralds of disaster, as at Mosega? If Moselekatse reasoned in this way, it is also permissible to surmise as to what twist history might have taken if the Americans had settled north of the Vaal.

Moffat, however, was in no doubt that Moselekatse deserved what was coming to him. "I have more than once told him", he writes,[3] "that if he did not change his government and prohibit deliberate destruction of human life, the innocent blood which deluged his country would soon call down vengeance from heaven. It is to us blind creatures, in the awful mysteries of Providence, painful to see professing Christians becoming the sword of

[1] American Missionaries Letters 171

[2] Labours 587

[3] R.M. to J.Smith [1838 n.d.], Lives 218f

Jehovah."

From the sheltered enclave of Kuruman, Moffat viewed both Boers and Matabele with a detached and somewhat sanctimonious eye, but the failure of the American effort was both a personal blow to his plans for a permanent settlement amongst the Matabele and to his hopes for the Matabele themselves. "The means by which this painful event has been brought about must have a baneful influence on the minds of the interior natives, and will lead them, and especially the Matabele, to think anything but well of the government of the white people."[1]

Moffat, at home again in Kuruman, was equally condemnatory of the Boer farmers, then mounting in power in the Transvaal:

> We wonder and wonder again to witness the apathy of the government in allowing so many hundreds of its subjects to pass the boundaries of the Colony, and by force of superior arms to mark their course among the native tribes with blood. If they are not interrupted the success of our interior missions will soon be at an end. These Boers are from various parts of the Colony, are discontented with the British Government, and have been for the last two years emigrating to what they think a better country. We are glad that none come in this direction.[2]

On June 6, 1837, at Winburg on the Vet River, the emigrant farmers under Pieter Retief showed their attitude to missions in the "Nine Resolutions" drawn up for the future conduct of the emigrants, the first of which resolutions called on every farmer to take an oath disowning all English missionaries.[3] Whether or not it was aimed particularly at the agents of the London Society, whom they regarded as the cause of so much mischief within the Colony, it revealed a deadly enmity to all that missions represented.[4]

1, 2 R.M. to J.Smith [1838 n.d.], Lives 218f

3, 4 A-H, 19

Moffat, in his valley, might be far away from the main thrust of the Boers, but, as with the great trek of the tribes, the backwash of their presence was powerfully felt. Trek leaders like A.H. Potgieter were no mere assenters to committee resolutions but active practitioners of their policy of racial pride, which saw the native peoples of Trans-Orange and Trans-Vaal as their servants and themselves as masters. They advocated their policy on horseback across the veld; and, while they never stormed into Kuruman itself, they were suspicious of "Moffat & Co." and the ungodly doctrine of human equality preached there, and were troubled at the commanding position Moffat held on the road to the north. They were even more troubled when Moffat's new recruit, his future son-in-law, David Livingstone, joined the Kuruman company in 1841.

Note.

To complete the ill-starred story of Mosega as a centre of missions beyond the Kuruman corridor, the venture of the Church Missionary Society in 1839-40 may be briefly noted. Moffat was then in England, and the introduction of the three missionaries, the Reverend Francis Owen and his two lay colleagues, Wallace Hewetson and Robert Philip, fell to Rogers Edwards - then in charge at Kuruman. All three men had come out to South Africa to start a mission in Zululand amongst Dingaan's people, and Owen was an eye-witness of the murder of Retief and his companions by Dingaan in February 1838. [1]

Wallace]

The sudden end to the Zululand venture turned their attention to Moselekatse's country, and Owen with his wife and sister arrived at Mosega via Kuruman in December, 1839; to be followed by Hewetson and Philip in 1840. These two men kept up a running feud of personal bickering, which Owen tried to straighten out by assembling pages of facts and sending them off to London, while he pitched his tents, did a little irrigation work, and surveyed the unsmiling prospect of Mosega.

The Matabele were no more, and the scattered Bahurutshe appeared to have deserted the area. Hewetson reports: "They had commenced eating wild roots. Mrs. Owen telling me how nice they were being like seakail. I thought they tasted like

[1] Owen's Diary, ed. Cory (Van Riebeck Society No.7), 106ff

soap."[1] He spent seven hours a day digging in the summer heat, and had the misery of seeing his home-made harrow last for only one day - "its wooden pins could not be expected to pull out grass that was higher in some places than my mouth ... the stones broke it in three places".[2] Insects ate Hewetson's untanned leather shoes, and for three months he and his family were without soap for washing - which he mildly comments "is not pleasant".

On May 2, 1840, Owen and his family moved into a new wattle and daub hut with a thatched roof, but by September they had abandoned their home and the mission on orders from the Society in London.

One observation Owen made in his short stay deserves note: "There is no disposition of the Boers really to take possession of Mosega. The country is not at all suited to them - not good for sheep or horses."[3]

That was Moffat's view also, but it needed continuous draughts of his eternal patience to occupy the land, and to see a token harvest for years of hard labour.

1-3 C.M.S. Archives (South Africa Mission Box)

Chapter 11

ENTER DAVID LIVINGSTONE

He asked me whether I thought he would do for Africa

On July 3, 1838, Moffat completed the first draft of the New Testament in Sechuana, a feat of the first order for a man who had to acquire his linguistic and translation equipment as he went along. He explained something of his method in a letter to the Bible Society:

> In introducing new words into the language, I have made it a rule to borrow from the language most contiguous, namely English; which though not exactly contiguous, soon will be, and is already spreading in our infant schools. The original words in Greek for weights, measures and coins I have retained. I have also written all the proper names of persons and places as they stand in the original, only in accordance with the orthography of the Sechuana. When I commenced translation, I felt inclined to make what would be termed a free translation; but I had not proceeded far, before it appeared destitute of that simple and original beauty of more literal translation, which is found even in those portions which had already been printed in the language. I am aware that a middle path is recommended which I have attempted to imitate - perhaps more literal than free.[1]

It was a bold and lonely venture in Bible-making, a tapestry of translation and assiduity into which Moffat put his whole heart and soul. He had hoped to print the New Testament at Kuruman but it proved too big a task for the little machine what he and Edwards worked. There was nothing for it but another visit to Capetown and a hunt for a printer, so at the end of 1838 the Moffat wagon, with the precious manuscript in the forechest, moved out on the two months' journey to Capetown complete with Mary and the family. Again Capetown proved inadequate in print and machines, although the Bible Society had delivered two hundred and fifty reams of paper, enough for four thousand copies.

[1] R.M. to Bible Society 3.7.38, [Moffat lists his translations aids as Commentaries by Scott, Poole, and Clarke; Platt's Self-Interpreting Testament; Calmet's Dictionary; Horne's Introduction; Harmer's Observations; Campbell, on the

[To 198]

The shrewd John Philip calculated that it would be more expensive to keep Moffat and his family in Capetown while he saw the New Testament through the press than to send them all to England. They sailed from Capetown on March 17, 1839, a few hours after a baby girl[1] was born to Mary; who, within another three days, lost her six-year-old son, James, in a ship's outbreak of measles. It was a tedious and miserable voyage which ended in Cowes Roads on June 6, almost twenty-three years since Moffat had departed as an untried apprentice.

Moffat now stepped into the glow of Britain's evangelical life as a master-man, an authentic pioneer from beyond the bounds of civilization, and therefore a symbol for the whole enterprise of missions, then moving into the jubilee period of its beginnings. He looked the part, although he had shaved off his beard on the way home: six feet, upright, and, at 44, in the prime of a vigorous manhood.

From the leafy suburb of Walworth in South London he set out on a round of speech-making, devised for him by the missionary society, chiefly through the chapels of the industrial north, where the story of his twenty years in Africa opened a world of wonder, risk, and romance. He had the rolling phrase tinctured with the pious sentimentality which the big audiences loved, and through which they projected themselves into the African scenes which Moffat sketched in his word-pictures - "I admit I have suffered in Africa; I have hungered in Africa; I have experienced extreme thirst in Africa; I have been in perils in the desert among savage beasts; in peril among men more savage than

[From 197 :-
Gospels; Hebrew Bible; Septuagint; Parkhurst's Greek and Hebrew Lexicon; English and Dutch Bibles.]

[1] Elizabeth Lees (afterwards Mrs Roger Price).

beasts."[1]

There was nothing false in the style or timing of it. Moffat's four years of speaking and writing in Britain [1839-43] helped to lay some of the foundations of "missionary propaganda", that subtle art of factual reporting and legitimate romanticizing. By the summer of 1841 the pace of this itinerant propaganda had become so intensified that he was forced to issue a circular letter explaining that for a period he must give up touring in order to concentrate on the work of seeing the New Testament through the press, which had primarily brought him to Britain.

But Moffat enjoyed the pious adulation and remote hero-worship which accompanied him through the cities and towns where a prosperous nonconformity was being persuaded to dip deeper into its pockets for the cause of "foreign missions"; and it all moved to a crescendo in his farewell services, of which exact accounts have been preserved in John Campbell's Moffat's Farewell Services.[2]

In Manchester, a vast tea party of nine hundred people in the new Corn Exchange saluted him with a bag of one hundred and thirty-five sovereigns; while Edinburgh did the honours with a copy of the latest edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica, and Newcastle with "an electrical machine which I may use in letting the natives feel what unseen powers can do".[3]

Moffat was worldly-wise enough to remind his mercantile audiences that in the Africa he ~~xxxx~~ knew "there was not a knife used there, not a pin or a needle to be seen, not a handkerchief or a yard of cloth worn ... now there are thousands of

1, 3 Farewell Services 21 : 68; 120

2 L.M.S. [Published in 1843 by John Snow, an alert evangelical publisher who saw a market in the rising missionary interest. The editor, John Campbell (1794-1867), was minister of Moorfields Tabernacle - not to be confused with "Johnny" Campbell, the traveller in South Africa. He got verbatim reports and persuaded Moffat to work over his reported speeches while the Fortitude idled in the Downs in February 1843.]

pounds' worth of Manchester, Sheffield and Birmingham goods disposed of there, just because they have received the Gospel, and civilization has followed in its train."[1] It was the first announcement of the doctrine of Christianity, civilization and commerce, which Livingstone was later to echo all through Central Africa as a justification for his movements.

Moffat improved on his civilizing theme in a sermon at the Barbican Chapel, London:

> Previous to the introduction of the Gospel among the people, war of every description was carried on. Reckless revenge brooded in their bosoms; tempests rested there, ready whenever opportunity offered, to burst forth upon the heads of the undefended and the innocent. Go there now, and you can with impunity travel for hundreds of miles among that people where no one formerly dared to go, but at the peril of his life.[2]

He rose in sentimental rhetoric and prophecy about his immediate future in Africa:

> I will go again to mines deeper than I have ever gone. Promise to pray for me, and gems will be brought up again. I will promise to go to scenes still darker; I will go to individuals in circumstances perhaps still more forbidding and disgusting; only promise to pray for me, and convince me that it is the path of duty, and I shall feel happy whatever be the sacrifice. Oh what are sacrifices? I often think that in this country there are many that make a mistake in talking about sacrifices. ... Men of rank, men of property, men of talent, and men with sweet endearing, strong connections, will leave their home, their wives, and their dear children, and cross the ocean, and land on pestiferous shores, and pass through pestilential climes ... to gather sordid dust; to gather a laurel that must wither away. In our objects, and in our labours, and in your labours, all that occupies our minds is stamped with immortality.[3]

1, 2, 3 Farewell Services 120; 68 [See frontispiece]

Those were the bold, spacious statements beloved of evangelical Britain, a refrain repeated on scores of platforms in the mid-nineteenth century as missions gathered momentum and built their home propaganda round a group of personalities, amongst whom Moffat, and later Livingstone, were acknowledged monarchs. In origin, far deeper than any concern about civilization, or even the improvement of the lot of peoples in Africa or anywhere else, Moffat put the case for missions very simply and sincerely in his address in the York Street Chapel, Walworth:

> I have tried to look upon those hands and those feet streaming with blood. I have tried to look on that thorny crown that encircled the sacred head of the Son of God. I have tried to hear his voice; I have read in the words of eternal truth what he said, and I believed that he was the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. I believed that what he said was true when, as he left the sacred mount of Olives to ascend this mediatorial throne, he said "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. [1]

Against that background his farewell services moved to a tearful finale in the Thames, where he leaped on the paddle-box of the Royal Sovereign to wave his hat to the multitude of well-wishers, a flourish that struck the imagination of the indefatigable Mr Snow so vividly that he published a"splendid full-length portrait of Mr. Moffat, 17 inches by 13, representing him in this attitude".[2]

But the years in Britain were not all tea-parties and speeches. Moffat expounded the theory of "native agency" to the directors of the Society so effectively that he even opened up the idea of a training institution for them at Kuruman, which waited another thirty years, after his retirement, for its fulfilment. He announced his intention "to proceed into

1, 2 Farewell Services 69; 158 [See frontispiece]

the interior" where there "is a country far beyond us - that contains an ocean, an island sea ... with a dense population. ... I have seen individuals who sailed in canoes on that large fresh water lake ... if I am spared to reach that point, and see the Gospel banner floating in the breeze."[1]

Wherever he went Moffat represented exciting prospects of new adventures, the mystery of the unknown, and an association with danger and personal bravery. He stood in the pulpits and on the platforms of mid-nineteenth century Britain as the symbol of the unattainable for many thousands of hearers whose restricted lives were lifted into realms of wonder by his presence and speeches.

For the humble working people of the industrial north who crowded to hear him in their chapels, he was a prince of Christian adventurers, a field-marshal in the army of the Lord, doing battle on their behalf against the forces of darkness in Africa, and deserving not only of their prayers and pence but of their material gifts for this baggage train. "Mr Moffat carries with him", noted Campbell, "a gun with seven barrels which are all fired simultaneously by one trigger. This terrible apparatus may be of material service. From the wide range of the seven shots thus poured forth, it is literally impossible for a lion to escape."[2]

Livingstone was sarcastic about the 50 tons of baggage Robert and Mary collected for Kuruman, "not 20 worth the freight ... only think of lots of old dirty ball dresses which the Bechuans won't look at as they can be seen through. Hundreds of old oblong silk buttons ... the old worn-out coverings of parasols, old starched shirt collars to people who have no shirts ... some of our good people in England seem to have consciences of india rubber."[3]

1, 2 Farewell Services 85; 167 ~~[See frontispiece]~~

3 D.L. to Benjamin Pyne [22.6.43], Rhodes House, Oxford.

The assembled Victoriana was designed not only to startle and shock the natives with an electrical machine and a galvanic apparatus (complete with sulphuric acid) but to impress them with the superiority of the white man. A "phaeton for the ladies" was a new wonder for the veld. So were the yards of white calico stretched across the ceiling of Moffat's study.[1]

I

Mary, in England, longed to be back at Kuruman "my own home"[2] but acquiesced in Robert's determination to finish the Psalms, and his Labours, which appeared in 1842 - "I long to get home. I fear I shall forget what I knew of the language. I long to see the spot again where we have so long toiled and suffered .. to behold our swarthy brethren and sisters again." Mary mentions for the first time the two young men destined for the Kuruman mission - William Ross and David Livingstone. Ross, she says "we have seen the most of", while "I have done what I could to persuade Livingstone to marry, but he seems to decline it."[3]

It was Mary Moffat's first bout of argument with her future son-in-law, who comes into the Moffat story in a gale of dedicated restlessness.

Moffat first met Livingstone at Mrs. Sewell's boarding-house in Aldersgate Street, where, with other young missionaries, Livingstone lived during visits to London:

> I observed soon (writes Moffat) that this young man was interested in my story, that he would sometimes come quietly and ask me a question or two and that he was always desirous to know where I was to speak in public, and attended on these occasions. By and by he asked me whether I thought he would do for Africa. I said I believed he would, if he would not go to an old station, but would advance to unoccupied

[1] R.M. to J.C. Bruce 10.10.44 LMS (copy)

[2,3] M.M. to Hamilton 25.11.40 NA

> ground specifying the vast plain to the north, where I had sometimes seen, in the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages, where no missionary had ever been. At last Livingstone said: "What is the use of my waiting for the end of this abominable opium war? I will go at once to Africa." The Directors concurred, and Africa became his sphere.[1]

Moffat at 44 and Livingstone at 26 both came from the same Scottish background of the "godly poor" and although Livingstone's education had been more systematic and thorough there was the same assured self-reliance and competence in both men. The Aldersgate Street meeting was a turning-point. In Livingstone's case it settled his future field of activity, Africa and not China; and also began an association with the Moffat family, which, by marriage and work, became of first importance in his early African life. For Moffat, it meant the colleagueship of an adventurous spirit in the Bechuana Mission at the moment when it needed it, for in spite of Moffat's concentration on Kuruman his vision of Africa was big enough to inspire someone of Livingstone's quality. He saw a continent waiting to be occupied, and the Aldersgate Street meeting all unknowingly was a long step forward in the occupation.

On December 8, 1840, Livingstone set sail for Africa, carrying with him the first five hundred copies of Moffat's Sechuana New Testament; while the translator himself set out for the north on a renewed round of visitation and preaching, making friends with some of the merchant princes of the rising nonconformist power — Crosfield of Liverpool, Baxter of Dundee, Woodward of Manchester and Backhouse of York — a campaign for Africa which helped to foster an Africa conscience in the life of Britain which Livingstone in later years appealed to and sacrificially crowned in his own life. It was the first unwinding of the Moffat-Livingstone thread in the story of Africa and Britain.

[1] Blaikie, 28

Not until April 10,1843, were the Moffats back at Cape Town equipped with a further two thousand Sechuana Testaments, and ten thousand hymn-books provided by the Religious Tract Society. Livingstone himself, on horseback, met them at the Vaal River in December 1843 to conduct them home to Kuruman in triumph. "Such a visitant as Mr Livingstone in the wide wilderness was to us a most refreshing circumstance. Few can conceive", wrote Robert Moffat, "of the hallowed feeling his presence produced, direct from the station and people to whom all our fondest affections were bending."[1]

It was a gallant flourish of welcome on the part of the younger man, but also an assertion of his independence; for, by the time he met Moffat, he had done two thousand miles roaming on foot, by wagon and on ox-back through Moffat's parish, and had made himself as informed as the older man on the state and prospects of the mission. He wanted to see for himself, to check critically some of the more enthusiastic statements of Moffat at home and in his Missionary Labours,[2] and above all to show that he "did not come to Africa to be suspended on the tail of anyone".[3] He was disappointed at the sparsely populated areas where he had been led to believe there was a dense population, and disputed Moffat's estimate of 30,000 Bechuana.[4] He was even more disappointed at the prospect of new missionaries in "a country better supplied with missionaries" than any country in the world.[5] He had already written importunate letters on the subject to London, and in January 1843 was assured that expansion was now the policy and that the new men arriving with Moffat were to assist in carrying it into effect.[6]

1 R.M. to Tidman 24.2.44 LMS

2 D.L. to Drummond 20.6.43 Blantyre Memorial Library

3 D.L. to D.G.Watt 14.4.42 LMS (copy)

4,5 Blaikie 47; 48

6 Tidman to D.L. 29.1.43 LMS [William Ashton and William Inglis. Inglis was expelled from the Transvaal in 1852 by the Boers. (See Ch.12)]

Even Paris felt the hand of Dr Livingstone in a doctor's certificate for the French missionary's wife, Madame Lemue, at Motito of September 26,1843:

> I do hereby certify that Mrs P. Lemue suffered severely during the month of April last from a protracted attack of intermittent fever. That both before and since that period she has been subject to frequent attacks of distressing dyspepsia - that after careful investigation I am decidedly of the opinion that the excessive dampness of the spot on which her residence stands is the cause of her illness - And that an immediate removal from that situation is required in order to the re-establishment of her health.
> David Livingston M.R.C.S.[1]

Such was the argumentative, somewhat cocky young man, who conducted Robert Moffat back to his own bailiwick, "to the church-going bell in the Kuruman vale ... the substantial chapel and the mission houses, and the tall Babylonian willows waving in the breeze, the swallows skimming aloft ... the buzz of a hundred school-children .... sights and sounds pleasant and melodious to eye and ear."[2] Moffat's fond description of Kuruman showed where his heart lay. "Neither Moffat nor Livingstone", wrote Walter Inglis, "could bear a yoke-fellow. They were created to work alone. Livingstone scandalized Mr Ross by the prophetic declaration that if he lived he would far excel Mr Moffat as a traveller."[3] They were now members of a team, all of whom were strong individualists, scattered over the veld amongst the Bechuana.

After five years' absence the older Batlhaping never expected to see Moffat again. One section of the tribe had moved to Taung, a hundred miles due east of Kuruman, and there William Ross (1802 - 63) and his wife settled, with Livingstone and Edwards to the north of them at Mabotsa, and Walter Inglis (1815-84) away at Likhatlong, where he was first associated with Holloway Helmore (1815-60) and later with Edwards amongst the

[1] P.Lemue to Paris 1.11.1843 PMS

[2] R.M. to Tidman 24.2.44 LMS

[3] Inglis Memoirs 213

Bahurutse until the expulsion of missionaries from the Transvaal. At Kuruman itself Moffat had the veteran Robert Hamilton and his new colleague William Ashton (1817-97).

It was a team of unequal quality and staying powers, and although the mission tried to impose the machinery of a "District Committee" on it the machine never worked. One meeting was held at Kuruman in January 1844 which settled the immediate staffing problems, but there is no trace of any formal meetings after 1849 and up to 1866. None of the men was committee-minded and there was no acknowledged chairman beyond the natural pre-eminence of Moffat, who was never sufficiently interested in administration to assert a leadership of that kind. He too distrusted management in missions, and the suggestion that the men at Griqua Town, Peter Wright (1798-1843) and Isaac Hughes (1789 - 1870), should be part of the committee of direction won no favour from him. Missions, for him, were free-lance affairs dependent on the personality of the missionary, and the idea of extended meetings and conferences to frame a policy was abhorrent, as it was to Livingstone.[1]

What Moffat did was to provide leadership of another sort. There was Kuruman itself, a base for all the immense area which stretched northwards to the Zambesi, westwards into the Kalahari and eastwards into the Transvaal. Even though no important tribe made the valley its permanent home, Moffat's Kuruman was a symbol of the life and influence of the white man and the Christian faith, and all the new mission stations modelled themselves on its pattern. From Kuruman came the printed New Testament, and a steady flow of other books in Sechuana, all of which provided the tools of missionary activity. Each man as he dug himself into his lonely veld parish knew that Kuruman could be relied on in emergencies to act as bank, general provider and counsellor, with occasional and welcome contributions from Mrs Moffat's kitchen and the gardens, in the form of cookies, giblet pie, and the unfailing fresh fruit.

[1] D.L. to Tidman 24.6.43 LMS

II

During the eight years between 1844 and 1852 Livingstone kept up a regular correspondence with Moffat, from his three stations of Mabotsa and Chonuane in the Transvaal and Kolobeng just inside the border of Bechuanaland, writing him 54 letters and addressing him, first, as "My dear Sir", and, after his marriage to Mary Moffat in January 1845, as "My dear Father". One of his early letters gives the news of his lion adventure:

> Mabotsa Feby 15 1844. My dear Sir, I am in very different circumstances now from those in which I expected to have addressed from our new station. The lions here are very numerous & very troublesome and besides having attacked us here & destroyed some of the cattle of our people one of them destroyed 19 sheep and goats in broad daylight on a little eminence opposite our hut last Wendensday. The natives came screaming to us as we were engaged on the water course and as all operations were immediately suspended I imprudently ventured across the valley in order to encourage them to destroy him. This very nearly cost me my life for after he was wounded he rushed down bit Mabalwe badly on the thigh, another native on the shoulder & myself on the arm. The humerus is splintered & his teeth have produced deep wounds which may trouble me for a long time. ... [1]

But, characteristically, the lion did not put Livingstone completely out of action, for in this letter he asks Moffat for an adze, a large handsaw, an axe or two "with any other tools either smithy or carpenters you can spare ... it is fortunately the left arm that is injured so I shall be able to work with the right while that is still weak".[2] Within two months he was convalescent at Kuruman, but as late as May 12, 1845, he reported his arm still in a splint but much stronger.

The sad and wearisome disagreements between himself and Edwards, which eventually led to their separation, are rehearsed in this letter for his father-in-law's benefit. Moffat, who was

1, 2
D.L. to R.M. 15.2.44 FL

patient enough to listen to "mission station gossip" and make large allowances for the gossipers, scrawls comments on this letter - "The third sheet to be amended as it contains a libel ... Mr. L. wants light." [1] He was shrewd enough to see in his brash son-in-law a person of character with whom the slower and more plodding Edwards and Ross could never work; and the two men, corresponding across two hundred miles of veld, struck up an understanding which increased to mutual respect:

> I cannot perceive [Livingstone to his mother] that the attentions paid to my father-in-law at home have spoiled him. He is, of course, not the same man he formerly must have been, for he now knows the standing he has among the friends of Christ at home. But the plaudits he received have had a bad effect, and though not on his mind, yet on that of his fellow labourers. You, perhaps cannot understand this, but so it is. If one man is praised, others think this is more than is deserved, and that they too ("others", they say, while they mean themselves) ought to have a share. [2]

Unfortunately, Moffat's letters to Livingstone during this period have not been preserved; [3] but, reading between the lines of Livingstone's letters, it is clear that while the older man was critical of the younger, Livingstone would take rebukes from Moffat and from no one else - "I have often spoken in bitter anger but now feel sorry I had not more philosophy or rather Christian meekness & forbearance." [4]

After detailing in a letter of July 18, 1845, the differences between himself and Edwards, he says: "You must never take any expression in my letters as implying disrespect or disanything bad unless I tell you it is such in addition to the expression. Take this to prevent any misapprehension ka bosina bokhutlo yotle Amen." [5]

1, 4, 5 D.L. to R.M. 6.6.45; 6.6.45; 18.7.45 ["for ever and ever" FL

2 D.L. to Mrs L. 14.5.45 FL

3 Probably destroyed in the 1852 sack of Kolobeng

He invited Moffat to "scold me as you like. We could both speak plainly enough if together, & let the righteous smite me &c I should not grumble at any amount of faithful smiting".[1] He wonders whether it was the Boers who drove away Moselekatse from the Transvaal - "the Zoolahs were the cause of his flight, & not the paltry attack of Mosega. Ask the people of Sechele how they like the Boers, & they will tell you that rather than come near them again they will desert their chief."[2]

There are playful touches too:

> 18th June 1845. Please send a bit of old copper for soldering; see how attentive I am to rid you of your rubbish.
>
> 22 Sept 1845. Thank you for the barren cow consolation. It equals what one might have given the gravedigger's wife who complained of the hardness of the times, "Nothing doing at all noo. Jamie has na had a job for three weeks. I dinna ken hoe we can fen awa."
>
> Thank you for the music book. I am precentor now and such a prexentor! I am in agonies before I can screw out anything like a tune.

In an incomplete letter of July 1, 1846, from Chonuane - forty miles north of Mabotsa, to which the Livingstones moved in 1846 - Livingstone addresses Moffat as the

> Revd. Robert Moffat D.D. & LL.D etc.,
> Maddison University
> Alleghenner Mountains
> via Kuruman

a thrust of boyish impudence which Moffat would take in good part from his son-in-law.

In the same letter he gleefully retails a tooth-extraction episode for the entertainment of his parents-in-law:

> A Family Scene in Private
>
> We had a practical exposition of your Phantasmagoria scene lately. Mary had taken up the profession of surgeon dentist. I was the subject operated on - the twin of that

1, 2 D.L. to R.M. 5.10.46; 12.5.45 FL

you extracted became very bad one night so up we got to it. I scarified and fixed on the tooth key & then the new surgeon dentist gave a wrench & I pulled her hand away in agony - it had come out a little way. I pulled and pulled with a pair of shoemaker's nippers but every pull was like a haul at my entrails. On went the key again - another wrench & I roared out "murder". It came a little farther but was still sticking doggedly, another trial of the nippers, forceps etc, and then another effort with the key completed the first attempt at dentistry. We were a pretty sight in our ghostly dresses - I on the floor & Mary over me. It was dreadful. "Teeth drawn at Chonuane 1/- each" [1] Mouth rinsed out afterwards with dirty water gratis.[1]

One of Livingstone's chief regrets on leaving Mabotsa was the abandonment of the garden, which, in genuine Moffat style, he and his wife Mary had cultivated, almost as an outlier of the Kuruman garden, on the cuttings, seeds and plants sent up by Moffat. "We have had some dishes of Scotch kale", he writes on September 22, 1845, "spinach, leaves of mangold wurzil, carrots an inch in diameter. Lettuces we shall have in abundance & broccoli & cabbage & turnips ad nauseam, endive in abundance. But we don't know how to eat all our good things. Perhaps I shall turn out a half gardener, ... I like it very much. Many thanks for the vine cuttings. When you come you must give me some instructions."[2]

Livingstone "played up" most astutely to Moffat's little vanities, because he respected his integrity and genuine accomplishments, particularly in his mastery of Sechuana, and he defends him against all comers as a Bible translator. They swop lists of Sechuana words, argue about bills and debts, discuss the repairs to wagons in the deferential manner of pupil to master, a most un-Livingstone attitude, but one which established him in

1, 2 D.L. to R.M. 1.7.46;
22.9.45 FL [The word half is scored through in the original.]

the good graces of Kuruman.

Over Moffat's shoulder in this to and fro relationship peeped Mrs Moffat - the "Ma-Mary" of many references in the letters - who with womanly intuition probably glimpsed something of unusual quality in her restless son-in-law, but was not afraid of giving him a "touching up", as Livingstone called her admonitions. In a letter of November 29, 1851, he even suggests that she might give him a "warming" from the "taws" on his next visit to Kuruman.[1]

Livingstone's removal to Chonuane was partly dictated by his eagerness to be free from his entanglements with Edwards, and partly by his growing association with Sechele, the Bakwena chief in whom both he and Moffat recognized a leader of x capacity. But the removal was hasty and precipitate, and illustrates the haphazard character of mission planning in a country where water was scarce and every fresh move meant building a new house, and, in the Moffat tradition, planting a new garden.

From the comforts of Mabotsa, and the memories of his early married bliss with Mary, Livingstone carried his goods and chattels forty miles north to Chonuane, where he had greater hopes of success than amongst the Baklhata at Mabotsa:

> The house is 64 feet by 20, the kitchen 8 feet, a lean-to at one end. As the wall will be much lower than that of the house, it will be little more trouble than the verandah would. Nasty water, but I shall make a well. There is one already made by some animal, but it needs deepening. The water in it is excellent. I have remedies for everything in my head, but alas, they all need time. Hope however is a blessed thing. We enjoy the future in the present. But I need not preach about it. ... Don't be displeased with the apparent slovenliness of this.[2]

When the news came of an alarming accident at Kuruman in which Moffat's arm was lacerated in the wheels of a corn-mill,

1, 2 D.L. to R.M. 29.11.51; 1.11.45 FL

Livingstone as medical man is instant with professional advice:

> You ought to have had a strong opiate as soon as possible ... 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 ... shall not be surprised if you feel numbness &c in your little & next finger for some time to come. ... You will be obliged to spend your time in better work than roofing & other manual labours, the which although all very necessary are not to be compared with the effects of translations, for these will be known when our stations [are] swept away & we are all dead & rotten. I am glad to think as it is the left arm you may be just as useful as ever.[1]

In setting up his own mill, Livingstone had Sechele as assistant. "He and I bothered with it the whole day and failed after all. But I got a thorough knowledge of it by the labour, & as soon as I came out of the room next morning succeeded."[2]

His hopes were centred in Sechele, who learned the alphabet on the first day of Livingstone's residence in Chonuane and "set himself with such close application that, from being comparatively thin, the effect of having been fond of the chase, he became quite corpulent from want of exercise. ... Seeing me anxious that his people should believe the words of Christ, he once said: "Do you imagine these people will ever believe by your merely talking to them? I can make them do nothing except by thrashing them; and if you like, I shall call my headmen and with our litupa (whips of rhinoceros hide) we will soon make them all believe together."[3]

Conversion of that kind was not within the plan of Livingstone or any other of the Bechuana missionaries, but the idea of mass conversion was not beyond the conception of Livingstone, who saw more deeply into the relationship of community life than did Moffat. It may have been one of Livingstone's reasons for follow-

1, 2 D.L. to R.M. 11.2.46; 1.7.46 Fl

3 Missionary Travels 14-15

ing the larger tribes, which he believed were living to the north in a more primitive, impressionable state than the Bechuana tribes now being conditioned and changed by their "contact with Europeans".[1] That view tuned in with Moffat's view, and livingstone admits that "the natives who have been in subjection to Moselekatse place unbounded confidence in missionaries".[2]

To make up his mind about the expansion of missions in the new Boer Republic of the Transvaal, Livingstone in July 1846 made two journeys eastward of Chonuane in the region of the Magaliesberg, where the Boer emigrants from the south were now in full command over the tribes:

> They have taken possession of nearly all the fountains and the natives live in the country only by sufferance. Each chief when called upon is obliged to furnish the emigrants with as many men as any piece of work may require and except in the case of shepherds no wages are paid for labour. Labour is exacted as an equivalent for being allowed to live in the land of their forefathers. In this system of unrequited labour all the emigrants from the Commandant downwards unanimously agree. In other ways of maltreatment they are not so unanimous. The better disposed emigrants lament the evils they witness. But the absence or laxity of law leaves the natives open to the infliction of inexpressible wrongs.[3]

These forays eastward helped to convince Livingstone that missions in the lands now controlled by the Boer farmers had a far less bright prospect than they had under Moselekatse, who "while cruel to his enemies" was "kind to those he conquered, but the Boers destroyed their enemies and made slaves of their friends."[4]

He found considerable populations in the Marico River area and along the head-waters of the Limpopo River, where he spent a

1,2, Blaikie 66; 67

3 D.L. to Tidman 17.3.47 LMS

4 Missionary Travels 26

Sabbath with a "large tribe of Bakwains, the chief a most friendly man shewed me the scars on his back, of stripes which had been inflicted by those who consider themselves masters of his country".[1] Everywhere he was received with kindness and confidence, especially amongst the chiefs who had "formed part of the train of Moselekatse in his frequent visits to the wagon of Mr Moffat. They seem then to have acquired an idea of what teachers are".[2]

On the second eastward excursion - after establishing the Chonuane mission - he was accompanied by Mrs Livingstone, their infant son, named Robert Moffat, and the native teachers Paul and Mebalwe. Eastwards he found there were large groups of villages of the Bamosetla, and beyond the Limpopo the Bagalaka, who as well as being rich in cattle had cultivated skills in cotton-spinning and in smelting iron, and had produced an alloy of copper and tin. They had never known Moselekatse or the influence of Moffat, and on the appearance of the Livingstone party the men rushed to arms, no doubt taking them for a commando of Boers come to demand forced labour or to take off their children for domestic servants. "I saw and conversed", says Livingstone, "with children in the houses of Boers who had by their own and their masters' account been captured, and in several instances I traced the parents of these unfortunates, though the plan approved by the long-headed among the burghers is to take children so young that they soon forget their parents and their native language also."[3]

"I hope to be able to demonstrate before another year that native teachers may be placed even among very distant tribes" [4]

1, 2, 4 D.L. to Tidman 17.3.47 LMS

3 Missionary Travels 27

is Livingstone's general conclusion after these visits to the Transvaal tribes; a policy that the brethren at the Kuruman Committee of March 1847 were divided on, but which Moffat, Livingstone and Ashton, realized was the key to permanent advance.

But the Transvaal visits also showed how precarious was the hold of any mission in an area dominated by the trek farmers from the south, who brought with them the traditional Boer attitude to native peoples. "The Boors hate missionaries", he writes to Dr Tidman in London, "but by a kind & prudent course of conduct one can easily manage them; medicines are eagerly received and I intend to procure a supply of Dutch tracts for distribution amongst them."[1]

He was ready to be tolerant and generous, though he could not but be disturbed by the signs of what he called "this new species of slavery"[2] developing amongst the tribes on the high veld to whom his service was pledged:

> I have spent every farthing I have in the world - worked hard and fared hard - and am not ashamed to say that I am in Debt £29 for building expenses £3.8 of this sum were expended at Mabotsa, £15 or £20 more will be expended in commencing the new station ... but for the assistance of the native teachers I could not have succeeded with so little expense to the society ... may I be favoured with £5 or £10 for medicines ... I have spent more than £30 of salary in this way. [3]

By August 1847 the short spell at Chonuane was at an end, and Livingstone had persuaded Sechele to move with him to the watered valley of the Kolobeng, forty miles north-west out of the area of the Transvaal Boers and on the main route to the north. In one sense, the move to Kolobeng might be construed as an organized retreat from the Boer influences; but, in

1, 3 D.L. to Tidman 17.3.47 LMS

2 Travels 26

another sense, it was a constructive advance, for it provided the mission with a more secure base amongst the vigorous Bakwena under Sechele, and, for Livingstone, a door into the open country of the north where his plan of native teachers plus his own adventurous spirit could have unimpeded sway.

Chapter 12
THE NORTH FROM KURUMAN
1847-53

There is a country far beyond us

The modern traveller looking for Kolobeng from the direction of Kuruman will find it - if he has a good guide - off the rocky track between Kanye and Molepolele in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Its utter loneliness in a cup of the hills near the Transvaal border, its rushing stream, and the oblong eminence on which Livingstone built his brave twenty-five pound house are all there to witness to a gallant venture. Moffat must have seen it as a prospective Kuruman, probably the finest chance of a permanent mission settlement since he drove his stakes down in the Kuruman valley. There was seclusion, the shelter of hills, and an air of promised domesticity about the place. As you stand to-day amidst the silence of the Kolobeng hills, the area looks liveable, and the few gardens of the people show that in the clearings the soil is fruitful. Sechele and his people were there to provide a population for the missionary's authority and leadership.

Moffat saw his son-in-law's new home in December, 1849, in the company of J.J. Freeman, secretary of the L.M.S. from London, "who found trees and graceful shrubs are abundant ... the mimosa in full flower, with its bright-yellow heads, actually perfuming the air with its delicious fragrance".[1] Over a hundred years later, in the bright December sunshine of 1958, the mimosa was flowering round the scanty foundations of the little house, and had covered the grave in the bush where the six-weeks-old Elizabeth Livingstone was buried ("how fast a little stranger can twine round the affections").[2]

[1] Freeman, A Tour of South Africa, 278

[2] D.L. to R.M. 18.9.50 FL

Looking back at Kuruman from Kolobeng, Moffat saw his own settlement in the perspective of the north. For twenty-five years he had been in his green and watered valley practising the gospel of "Bible and plough", which meant calico clothes for the naked, learning to read the Bible for the eager ones, and more methodical gardening for the hard workers. He had no illusions about any of the people. His letters to London were still condemnatory of heathen wickedness to be diligently purged from the little inner group of the church. Amongst them (never more than a hundred) the "separations" for lying, thieving, and sexual lapses, were part of the disciplinary routine. By 1847 he and his colleagues concluded that "our only hope of seeing an intelligent Christian community among the people arises from the young"; so a schoolroom fifty feet by seventeen was built, and classes of 62 children registered, with an average attendance of 38.

This drive on literacy revolutionized the habits of the Bechuana herd boys, who rather than miss school amalgamated their flocks , taking turns in the field and in the class-room. The honours class could recite the whole of the Assembly's Catechism, and the second-raters at least a third of it, while the illiterate listeners sat in mute wonder at the miracle.

All told, there were 150 children under the care of the mission families at Kuruman, in addition to Mrs Moffat's treasured group of thirty sewing girls, whose Lancashire calico productions were the hall-mark of Kuruman's civilization. "I assure you", wrote Moffat to his manufacturing friend, Thomas Barnes of Bolton, "they make them look quite spruce on the Sabbath days. All these things help, and help wonderfully too, till by degrees a wonderful transformation has been accomplished. Tho our great work is to evangelize yet we can never feel satisfied without seeing corresponding progress in civilization."[1]

[1] R.M. to Thos Barnes 25.6.49 LMS

Kuruman's culture was based on Moffat's translations of the Bible, Pilgrim's Progress, Ashton's Line Upon Line", and the steady toil at the printing-press. Ashton could properly boast, in October 1850, that "there is no other station on this side of the Orange River in which this work could possibly be carried on."[1] And where else would a cattle-minded father bring his son of ten to have him taught and trained in English, carpentering and smith's work?[2]

Even the women - slowest of all to change their habits - would bring a little corn as their church collection in a month of famine, and the men give twelve head of cattle, sheep and goats. Charity was beginning at home, but did not stop there, for gifts to the missionary society in these years ranged from £40 to £62.

Looking round on their achievement amongst the Bechuana, the Kuruman men could say in 1847 that "the time has gone by when the great proportion of members in the Bechuana churches should be unable to search the Scriptures."[3] Some of this progress was due to the work of the "native teachers", whose names appear in the correspondence as haphazard forerunners of an indigenous ministry. There was Molehe, whose chief raged at him because he threatened "the customs of the fathers"; Lilochotle, "whose love for learning increased the more he was taught"; and Sebubi, who valiantly stuck it out amongst the Bangwaketse at Kanye. Only two out of seven could make themselves understood in writing, but all of them could preach after their own fashion and drum home a bit of the catechism while they inveighed against nakedness and heathendom. They moved about amongst the little companies of the faithful on the veld, lacking any formal

1, 2 Ashton to Tidman 15.10.50; 24.9.49 LMS

3 Report 25.10.47 LMS

training as preachers or teachers, existing on a pittance, but loyal to their fathers in God at Kuruman. It was not until after Moffat's retirement in 1870 that any attempt was made to give them consistent education.[1]

From Kolobeng, Moffat saw two dangers to the future of his own parish at Kuruman. One was its lack of a resident chief or a chief's son, to keep the people together, and the other was the fear of the insurgent Boers. Both dangers were intertwined. The tribes already had experience of the heavy hand of the Boer farmers, which they declared was worse than "the iron sceptre of Moselekatse", who at least was "a man", but "the mabura [Boers] are no men".[2] Their fountains were in danger, and what guarantee was there that the most celebrated fountain of all, "the eye of Kuruman", might not fall to the white man? Was there much difference between the Boers and the English? So reasoned the people. Only Moffat's presence in the valley and on the road to the north gave them a modicum of confidence.[3]

I

By the time Moffat came to see him, Livingstone had already taken his flying first leap to Lake Ngami and sampled the wonder of the wide spaces, whose excitements he was anxious to share with his father-in-law. He wrote pleadingly to Moffat from Kolobeng:

> Do come on here and let us have a tour among the Eastern tribes; and if, after you have seen their numbers, friendliness & need and contrast them with your present sphere you can say you ought to remain where you are I shall be content to bear any epithet you choose to put upon me. I am quite aware of the extent of the field you now occupy and that the Kuruman has always, since I knew it, given a poor idea of its greatness, but the people leaving so may render it needful for you to go through the building operations of a new station somewhere else in your district. Now would it not be well to look at

[1] R.M. and Ashton to Tidman 20.4.48, 1.6.48 LMS

[3] R.M. and Ashton Report 22.10.49 LMS

[2] R.M. to Tidman 24.1.49 LMS

> other spheres before you look at anything else. You may think all this premature, prejudged or something else as bad as either but I think you will not refuse me credit for a sincere desire for your honour and usefulness. A tour will do your health good.[1]

But, beyond his short visit with Freeman, Moffat did not budge. Livingstone had to be content with a visit in October, 1850, from Mary Moffat, with a supply of meal and soap, just two months after the Livingstone's with their three children had struggled back from the second visit to Lake Ngami "sick and out of supplies".[2]

Within two days of arriving home he was writing to Moffat about new plans to go northwards, fired by news which messengers from Sebituane, the Makololo chief, brought about the north. The news was evidently sufficiently appealing to Livingstone to transport him away from his domestic cares and his sick wife, and to stress to Moffat his concern to get in first lest "others forestall us".[3] Kolobeng had already become a springboard for the north.

Questions of a move northwards were presumably discussed between Moffat and Livingstone at Kuruman in December, 1850, where the Livingstone family was escorted by "Ma-Mary" to recuperate. The two men shared - although not equally - the feeling of frustration which surrounded the whole mission; and Livingstone played on Moffat's stern sense of duty, both to his present commitments in tutoring the infant church and in translation, and also to the regions beyond. He was anxious too that Moffat should have the personal honour of further pioneering, even to the extent of finding the real lake, which he believed lay beyond Lake Ngami - "the honour" (he wrote on

1, 3 D.L. to R.M. 2.9.48; 17.10.50 FL

2 D.L. to B. Pyne 4.12.50 LMS

his way back from Lake Ngami in July 1850) "of discovery would naturally fall to you. Shall I say to Oswell that you are going next year ... your health would suffer less from translating and itinerating than it will by constant sitting and study. A merciful man spareth spareth his (animal parts?) least. Please let me know if you will really go. If spared I shall make a longer stay than I have done, and may be find a passage to the sea for supplies. A great and difficult undertaking but my ambition mounts thus far, though I tell it to but few. The East is shut up but the North will be opened. ..."[1]

Livingstone's far-ranging vision of his missionary duties could not now be contained within the confines of Kolobeng, and the Moffats no doubt realized that the sedentary, patient methods of Kuruman would never be practised by their restless son-in-law. Neither did he feel an alliance with the Bakwena, as Moffat had done with the Batlhaping, in spite of his understanding with Sechele, their chief. Kolobeng was but a temporary habitation, and now that the river itself was drying up and Sechele was seeking fresh pastures the time had come to be on the wing again. "We think we are not called upon to build again for their sakes", he wrote to Moffat in October 1850, "the seed we have sown will not be lost wherever we may go".[2]

It was hardly the gospel for Kuruman, where the grace of digging in and holding on was preached and practised, and might well have been expected of Livingstone. His missionary graces were of a different order, only slowly appreciated by the Moffats and by the Society he served. "We have an immense region before us", he wrote to Tidman, the secretary in London, "thousands live and die without God & without hope though the command

1, 2 D.L. to R.M. 8.7.50; 17.10.50 FL

went forth of old Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. It is a venture to take wife & children into a country where fever - African fever - prevails. But who that believes in Jesus would refuse to make a venture for such a Captain? A parent's heart alone can feel as I do when I look at my little ones & ask shall I return with this or that one alive."[1]

Livingstone was not the only parent asking the same question. From Kuruman, probably in April 1851, Mrs Moffat wrote him a letter of protest which not only sums up the Moffats' personal concern for their daughter and grandchildren, but suggests that the risks would be worth it if the aim was to find a settled mission station, but preposterous for a mere exploration party.

Livingstone copied this letter into his own private Journal[2] with the comment "this shows in what light our efforts are regarded by those who as much as [we] do, desire that the gospel may be preached to all nations":

> My dear Livingstone
> Before you left the Kuruman I did all I dared to do to breach the subject of your intended journey, and thus bring on a candid discussion, more especially with regard to Mary's accompanying you with those dear children. But seeing how averse both you and Father were to speak about it and the hope that you would never be guilty of such temerity (after the dangers they escaped last year) I too timidly shrunk from what I ought to have had courage to do. Mary had told me all along that should she be pregnant you would not take her, but let her come out here after you were fairly off: though I suspected at the end that she began to falter in this resolution - still I hoped it would never take place i.e. her going with you and looked and longed for things transpiring to prevent it. But to my dismay I now get a letter - in which she writes "I must again wend my weary way to the far Interior, perhaps to be confined in the field." O Livingstone what do you mean - Was it not enough that you lost one

[1] D.L. to Tidman 30.4.51 LMS

[2] Private Journals c. 24.10.51 [cf D.L. to Tidman 17.10.51 LMS]

> lovely babe, and scarcely saved the others, while the mother came home threatened with Paralysis? And will you again expose her & them on an exploring expedition? All the world will condemn the cruelty of the thing, to say nothing of the indecorousness of it. A pregnant woman with three little children trailing about with a company of the other sex - through the wilds of Africa among savage men and beasts! Had you found a place to which you wished to go and commence missionary operations the case would be altered. Not one word would I say were it to the mountains of the moon - but to go with an exploring party, the thing is preposterous.
>
> I remain yours in great perturbation, M. Moffat.

Prayers were offered at Kuruman, even after the journey had started in April, 1851, that "some dispensation of Providence"[1] might prevent the headstrong husband and father from the wild undertaking, which, as it happened, raised and settled many questions for Livingstone and the missions.

In the first place, he made the hard decision that his family was a handicap to his dedicated task, and within twelve months they were on their way to England; and, secondly, both Moffat and Livingstone committed themselves finally to the view that the future of missions, as they perceived them, lay beyond the Colony "in really heathen lands". In a joint letter, copied by Livingstone into his Journal of November 22, 1852, from Kuruman - after Livingstone had seen his family off from the Cape and before his great Trans-Africa journey - they write, in response to an enquiry from the Society:

> We beg leave to submit our decided conviction in so far as support by our Society is concerned that the whole of the Colonial and Griqua missions ought immediately to be abandoned. We believe that the Colony has ceased to present the temporal and spiritual destitution which are understood to entitle a country to be treated as a missionary field by our society, and the prompt establishment of the pastoral relationship in all its bearings is the only measure which either here or at home is likely to secure a continuance of public confidence and support. Viewing such a procedure as one of justice to the constituents of the society and also to the real heathen

[1] M.M. to D.L. 12.5.51 Private Journals

> nations beyond we can attest from our own personal observation that the members of the Colonial and Griqua churches are in point of temporal comfort and education at advantages decidedly better provided for than the majority of the members of Independent churches at home, and consequently no shyness need be experienced by them in accepting the honour of the entire support of their pastors. To those of our brethren who prefer the work of evangelists in connection with the society, to the settled pastorate there is sufficient work in really heathen lands.
>
> Signed D. Livingstone. Robert Moffat.[1]

In a further letter to Dr Tidman of March 17, 1852, Livingstone sarcastically reminds the secretary in London that a mission "in the paltry village of Colesberg, already supplied with a Wesleyan & a Gospel Propagation Society's missionary and a Dutch Reformed minister, is allowed to draw on an average more than twice as much as a mission 500 miles beyond the same market ... Colesberg £211 ... while the "Apostle of the Bechuana" draws on an average not much over £100."[2] He warms to the defence of Moffat in face of the "knowing ones" who "believe him to be rich because he once received some money from the sale of his book but that is all long since spent, and my private opinion which I express to you in confidence is that there is some probability of a valuable life being lost through the injustice of the London Missionary Society",[3]

Livingstone is also concerned about Moffat's health and mentions "Mr Moffat is suffering from an affection of the head which I fear will eventually lay him aside. My opinion expressed to him with sufficient earnestness was that he ought to lay aside his translation and seek the re-establishment of his health in total relaxation on the sea coast but I fear his finances being in the same state as my own prevented compliance with my suggestions."[4]

[1] M.M. to D.L. 22.11.52 Private Journals

[2-4] D.L. to Tidman 17.3.52 LMS

All this was strong meat for London, particularly coming from a junior missionary who had yet to prove his worth as a working missionary, and who was about to take two years' leave (practically without permission); to overdraw his allowances; and to dump his wife and family in England. But where Moffat was concerned Livingstone's affection and respect were both engaged, and the correspondence between the two men shows a liaison of spirit as well as of policy.

They both knew that fresh resources in people and money were needed if missions were to move away from their "colonial" setting, and were not to find themselves thwarted, and perhaps suffocated, between the advancing Boers and the ever-present sands of the Kalahari. Moffat's hope of a mission linked with the Matabele had so far failed, and his friend Moselekatse was now beyond the Limpopo, far out of easy reach. Livingstone, having partially failed at Kolobeng with Sechele, was now looking to Sebituane and the Makololo as the brighter prospect for the establishment of an inner Christian fortress in south central Africa.

II

But both plans depended upon the route to the north - which Moffat and Livingstone blazed & being kept open along the border of the Transvaal and Bechuanaland. If the Boers once commanded that route they would become masters of the north. This was the thread of Livingstone's argument and the impetus behind much of his life and activities at Kolobeng. The two men had no personal hatred of the Boers, and Livingstone was convinced that but for one factor the Boers "would let us alone if we let them alone";[1] and that factor was their determination "to reduce Sechele to the level of the eastern tribes".[2] This he was equally determined to resist.

[1], [2] D.L. to R.M. 23.3.49 FL

On their side, the Boer leaders of the young Republic of the Transvaal, Potgieter and Pretorius, saw their western flank dominated by the able chief of the Bakwena; the route to the north out of their control; and carrying a busy, miscellaneous traffic of traders, hunters and missionaries. News travelled speedily along this route, as the various travellers' letters and messages pierced its isolation. Police control, either by the British colonial government or the Boer republic, was non-existent; and the race of independent hunters and traders snapped their fingers at edicts from the "solemn lugubrious Raad"[1] of the Transvaal.

But this "free for all" status was changed in 1852 at the Sand River in the Orange River Sovereignty. There, on January 17, Livingstone's "lugubrious Raad" became the recognized authority beyond the Vaal River. From being an outlaw with a price of £2,000 on his head, Andries Pretorius was received by Her Majesty's Commissioners Hogge and Owen, and from them accepted a guarantee of freedom for "the emigrant farmers beyond the Vaal" to manage their own affairs.

Pretorius led the Boer farmers of Potchefstroom, Magaliesberg and Lydenberg, in signing the Sand River Convention, which, in fact, gave them undisputed possession of all the country to the north of the Vaal River. They were not to be slavers, and they were not to encroach south of the Vaal; and, on their part, H.M. Government assured them of an open gunpowder market and promised not to enter into alliances with "coloured nations to the north of the Vaal River".[2]

The Transvaalers won their recognition, and it was over a territory far larger than the immediate lands vacated by Moselekatse. Eleven months after the signing of the Convention, Moffat wrote to London:

They (the Boers) conceive that they have a special right to

[1] D.L. to R.M. 23.3.49 FL

[2] c.o. 48/326 20.4.52 (Text of Convention)

> engage in ward and dispossess chiefs of lands of their forefathers, by the late treaty between the British Government and them in which their independence north of the Vaal River is acknowledged and proclaimed. This in the judgment of these people includes the country north of the Vaal River from its source till where it enters the Western Ocean. Formerly the Boer thought he had a right only over that portion of the country from which Moselekatse had been expelled.[1]

And eighteen months later, in May 1854, Moffat's colleague Ashton registered the dismay with which the native tribesmen viewed the new masters of the veld:

> The natives are thus delivered over, so far as our Government can do it, bound hand and foot to the tender mercies of their oppressors ... they have lost all their respect for the English ... and we missionaries partake largely of the general odium.[2]

The Convention was ratified at Rustenberg on March 16,1852, with mighty psalm-singing as the details were announced to the assembled host by word of mouth in lieu of printed papers. There were five thousand families of Europeans[3] in the Transvaal lands scattered in remote loneliness on their farms, ill-equipped to manage the affairs of the infant republic, leave alone the control of large masses of Bantu.[4] But they knew that the hand of Britain in the form of edicts from the Cape was now removed from their affairs, and that if they chose to fight with the tribes no outside government would interfere.[5] Pretorius instructed his Commandants to deal with the natives "as justice quietness and peace may require",[6] but none of them was a trained administrator and the justice they dispensed was often violent and always feudal in its methods.[7]

1 R.M. to Tidman 22.11.52 LMS
2 Ashton to Tidman 7.5.54 LMS
3 Theal, History iv 369
4 Brookes, Hist. of Native Policy 121
5 de Kiewiet 62
6 A-H 74
7 Helmore to L.M.S. 12.7.35 LMS

From now on the military-farmer-commandant, and his subordinate, the field-cornet, ruled the veld; and the pendulum swung away with a vengeance from the former humanitarian policy of primary concern for the native peoples to one of concern for the Boer farmer and his rights. "It was in this moment of responsibility on their behalf that the independent Transvaal was born."[1]

The first to feel the heavy hand of the ruling farmers was Chief Sechele, who refused to recognize their authority,[2] gave shelter to the Mabotsa Chief, Mosielele, when he stole their cattle, and irritated the Raad so thoroughly that Pretorius ordered out a commando of 400 farmers (including the 27-year-old Paul Kruger) to deal with him. They regarded Sechele as "insolent and ambitious, a dangerous man to have loose on their western border, with an unhealthy love of firearms".[3]

As a protégè of Livingstone and Moffat, he basked in the reflected glory of his British connections, and the position of his tribe athwart the road to the north gave him control of a strategic communication line, a sort of side door to the north which no Transvaaler could see ajar with equanimity. It was no doubt the cattle-stealing affray of Chief Mosielele and Sechele's willingness to give him sanctuary which alerted the commando in August 1852 - only seven months after the Sand River Convention was signed - but it was the fear of an "outflanking movement along the 'missionaries' road'"[4] which drove the farmers to fight.

3, 4 Sillery 109; 112

1 de Kiewiet 62

2 Travels 32; Sillery 112; Chapman, Travels Vol.I, 114

Although by the Sand River Convention they gave away their rights in the Transvaal proper, the wily British still had a way open to the north through Bechuaaland, with missionaries, traders and hunters, free to travel along it, and an able well-armed chieftain to defend it.[1] The fight at Sechele's Dimawe on August 30, 1852, was no simple commando reprisal but a deliberate act of policy on the part of the young Republic[2] to settle a problem of frontiers which the Union of South Africa still regards as unsolved.

The two sides agreed to observe the Sabbath, and on the Saturday even exchanged polite notes, persuasive on Commandant Scholtz's part and truculent on Sechele's:

> Friend Sechele (wrote Scholtz) - As an upright friend, I would advise you not to allow yourself to be misled by Mosielele who has fled to you because he has done wrong. Rather give him back to me, that he may answer for his offence. I am also prepared to enter into the best arrangements with you. Come over to me, and we shall arrange everything for the best even were it this evening.
>
> Your friend, P.E.Scholtz. Act.Com.Gen.

To which the over-confident Sechele replied:

> Wait till Monday. I shall not deliver up Moselele: he is my child. If I am to deliver him up, I shall have to rip up my belly; but I challenge you on Monday to show which is the strongest man. I am, like yourself, provided with arms and ammunition and have more fighting people than you. ... I am myself provided with cannon. Keep yourself quiet to-morrow and do not quarrel for water till Monday; then we shall see who is the strongest man. You are already in my pot; I shall only have to put the lid on it on Monday. Secheli.[3]

The farmers attacked on Monday, and by Tuesday morning had driven Secheli from his town, burned part of it, killed many of

[1] Sillery 112

[2] A-H 144

[3] Appendix, Holden's History of Natal, 380-384

his people, rounded up three thousand cattle, eleven horses, forty-eight guns, two wagons, and carried off two hundred women and children for distribution amongst the farmers.[1]

A patrol sent down to Livingstone's house at Kolobeng, seven miles off, found it already broken into by Sechele's warriors in their search for ammunition and rifles, and, no doubt, they completed its destruction. To blame the ransacking of his house entirely on the Boer farmers was a natural reaction of Livingstone, who reached Kuruman on August 29. As soon as he heard the news he wrote hasty letters to Mary in England[2] and to Governor Darling at the Cape.[3]

Early in October 1852 Moffat received Sechele's own account addressed to him as "My Friend of my heart's love and all the confidence of my heart. I am Sechele. I am undone by the Boers."[4] /They are all "hot under the collar" statements, and need to be examined alongside the Boer account of the raid compiled by Commandant Pieter Scholtz at Maries on August 20,1852.[5] One thing is clear. Both Sechele's people and the Boers had a hand in the destruction of Livingstone's home, with the sad loss of his books, medicines, and furniture; but the exact apportionment of the blame is now an impossibility.

In his biography of Sechele, Sillery says: "the most likely conclusion is that Sechele entered the house before the raid and removed some guns; that a Boer patrol visited it after the battle and took away the contents of the workshop; and that a good deal of damage was done by "some person or persons unknown". Some furniture and household goods may well have been taken by the Boers.[6]

1 Co 48/337 11.2.53; Co 48/387 2.4.57
2 D.L. to M.L. 20.9.52
3 D.L. to Darling 29.9.52 LMS (Copy)
4 R.M. to Tidman 22.11.52 LMS
5 Holden's History 380-384
6 Sillery 116

III

The Dimawe-Kolobeng raid was a turning-point in the history of the northern route, and of missions to the east of it; for it signalized both the failure of the Boers to prevent the passage to the north through Bechuanaland and their success in shutting off the expansion of missions in the Transvaal except those of their own sponsoring. Sechele himself was put in his place, and was frustrated in his proposed appeal to London.

Far more effective than anything Sechele could have done was Livingstone's own anti-Boer campaign in his letters and in his Missionary Travels. Much of it was deserved. In any case, Livingstone was never one to see an affair of this sort in balanced half-light. His triumphant thrust in the Travels: "The Boers resolved to shut up the interior, and I determined to open the country; and we shall see who have been most successful in resolution - they or I"[1] shines with the gleam of controversy between Britain and Boer which a century and more has not dimmed.

As Livingstone's fame rose, so his indictment of the Boer farmers was broadcast, and justifiably in many ways provided a yard-stick for British judgments on the Boers and their characteristics. But what has not received the same amount of attention and investigation is the charge that both Moffat and Livingstone had a hand in selling powder and guns to the tribes, and particularly Sechele. That they were gun-runners in any organized sense, as some of the Boer charges would suggest, is absurd.

All during his career Moffat steered clear of trading ventures, and evidently kept an eye on the possibility of Livingstone straying into that path. In a letter from Kolobeng, March 23, 1849, to Moffat, Livingstone rebuts the charge levelled by "Mrs M" that he is associated with trading: "we had no shop, nor have one yet." To both men, existing on small salaries, the

[1] Travels 34

temptation to do a little trading "on the side" must have been considerable. Hunters and traders made use of their mission stations as bases; ivory was still plentiful; and the tribes of the far interior were eager for all the white man could provide in exchange for it - guns in particular.

Did Moffat and Livingstone act as powder and gun salesmen? There are many references to guns in letters to Moffat from 1846 to 1852:

> Chonuane 11 March 1846. Sechele is greatly in love with your rifles and wishes to know if he could buy one with either money or karosses.
>
> Kolobeng 29 Septr 1847. Sechele is anxious for some one to make gunstocks for him. Many of the guns of his people being much damaged and split.

In the latter letter, Livingstone tells the exciting story of the dangers of powder supplies in the hands of inexperienced store-keepers:

> When we came here Sechele had all his powder (about 100 lbs) in his tent. The tent was smeared with fat to make it impervious, the floor was covered with dried grass, and as he always uses candles in the evenings the candle-stick usually stood at the head of his bed. After drinking beer one evening he & all his attendants got up & went into the kotla leaving the candle burning. The wind blew it over into the grass, & when the flame ran up the tent it was observed. One of my guns being in the tent, S ran in & snatched it up. As he pushed back the flaming tent with one hand it was severely burned. The tent was completely consumed but the powder remained untouched, it being covered over by some paties. All agreed it was a great deliverance. We do not know when we shall obtain a supply of that article.[1]

A letter from Kolobeng of 1848 from Livingstone thanks Moffat for the gift of a gun to Sechele, but "two months elapsed before he could bring himself to fire with it. He told me he did not know what to do with it". He then goes on:

> Many thanks for the gun apparatus ... the two loading rods have been bought by Sechele. I have got the wherewithal

[1] D.L. to R.M. 29.9.47 FL

> to pay for them. He is anxious to pay for the double barrelled gun and will do so soon, for he has sent to the Bamangwato in expectation of ivory. It has been promised. If successful, the little rife will be bought about the same time. Sechele does not know what to say about his gun, he is so pleased with it.[1]

In 1849 he reported: "The arrangement with the small rifle cannot be made." Later in the same letter he said that Sechele was sending "a really splendid tiger kaross" to the Birmingham manufacturers "for doing his gun so well, and to ask friendship, so that if he can obtain the price he may buy three double barrelled guns, 10 to the lb, not now, but when he gets the price".[2]

In August 1850 he wrote again that Sechele "is very anxious to get the seven barrelled gun";[3] and in September he asked "Have you forgotten the seven barrelled gun?"[4]

In July 1850, on his way back from his second visit to Lake Ngami, Livingstone thanks Moffat for fifty pounds of powder delivered to Kolobeng, "very seasonable", and later another fifty pounds to sell to Sechele for ivory. He sold both lots to Sechele for four tusks; and with £40 in cash bought himself a wagon from a trader.[5]

These extracts suggest that in most of the transactions Livingstone was merely Moffat's agent, and that Kuruman was a powder magazine! James Chapman, in his Travels in Southern Africa, provides a close-up picture of Livingstone dabbling in the trade amongst the Makololo - he "would give them two barrels of powder, a large heap of lead and sundry other articles for a small tusk of ivory, or mend a dozen guns for a paltry remuneration."[6]

But is all this sufficient evidence for the charge that the Kuruman-Kolobeng men were gun-runners and were arming the natives against the encroaching Boers? Even Agar-Hamilton, who builds up a

1-5 D.L. to R.M. Nov.1848 n.d.; 4.5.49; 1.8.50; 18.9.50; 31.7.50; 1.8.50 FL

6 Chapman I, 289

case against them in his The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers, admits that there are various uses for guns and that on a frontier where wild animals abounded, powder, the bullet-mould, the gun and a smithy for repairing it, were necessary:

> Moffat and Livingstone put forward the plea that the natives used their guns for quite legitimate purposes, and that they were not necessarily accumulated for use against the whites. There is some justification for this claim. On the western border in particular game was an important item in the natives' food, and the competition of the European hunter was rendering their methods out of date. On the other hand the guns that they used in hunting were equally useful when they ambushed Boers, and there is little doubt that the stores of arms and ammunition collected by ambitious chiefs like Sechele were never intended for hunting expeditions.[1]

This is a fair comment, and there is some truth in Agar-Hamilton's further observation that Livingstone "should have been on his guard against the appearance of countenancing war. It was unfortunate that no one in South Africa, whether among his superiors or his friends, could warn Livingstone of the risks that he ran".[2] But in finding Chapman's evidence "convincing proof" that Livingstone was a gun-runner, it is odd that Agar-Hamilton does not quote Chapman's own considered statement about the charges: "I believe these assertions to be a slander on his character and reputation, invented merely to aid Sekeletu and his people in their attempts to make a good bargain."[3]

The charge of missionary gun-running to arm the tribes against the Boers[4] remains an unproven one - but still of sufficient hardiness in the Transvaal frontier tradition to give missions and missionaries a bad name amongst the Voortrekkers and their descendants, and to add an odour of hatred and sus-

[1], [2] A-H 83; 209 [3] Chapman I 289 [5] R.M. to Tidman 22.11.52 LMS
[4] William Ashton, Moffat's printer colleague at Kuruman, wrote: the time has come for the Bechuana to look to others than their missionaries to mend their guns and wagons. At any rate those missionaries who have to provide them with books. These are guns that I like to mend." [Ashton to Tidman 2.2.50 LMS]

picion which clings more pungently to the men of the London Society than to any other group.

The heavy hand of the Boers was against any one who had contact with the natives, as Moffat's son-in-law, Jean Fredoux, French missionary at Motito, found during a journey in the Transvaal from April 9 to June 3, 1850.[1] He visited the home of Commandant-General Pretorius ("une petite maison blanche gracieusement situee au fond d'une immense vallee") and then set out to preach to the local natives. But the Boers arrived with muskets and powder, proceeded to search his wagon ("fixe sur moi leurs yeux etincelants de colère"), and warned him off the ground.

A letter from Pretorius ordered him to return immediately to his own area, in order to prevent further discontent amongst "the caffers". This "scurvy treatment" of his brother-in-law drew one of Livingstone's bitterest attacks on the Boers, from Kolobeng on August 29, 1850:

> They really don't know what they do. Although Christians in name they are becoming very much like the heathen among whom they dwell. And there is very little prospect of a reformation taking place among them for those to whom they look up as their spiritual guides cause them to err by treating them as children of God. What would your French friends think of the Revd. Dr Robertson and the younger Faure baptizing the children of the very people who forbade you to preach unto the Gentiles that they might be saved by scores and hundreds. I saw these two Protestant priests pocketing the money in fine style for baptism. They even baptized the children of Potgieter and Pretorius, their hands reeking with blood.[2]

What the farmer-trekkers really feared was the northward extension of Dr Philip's pro-native policy. They had escaped

1, 2 Fredoux to P.M.S. 3.8.50; D.L. to Fredoux 29.8.50 PMS [Robertson and Faure were Dutch predikants from the Cape.]

into the freedom of the Transvaal veld with no desire to face once again the old charges of brutality and slavery, but almost inevitably these charges were levelled against the Transvaalers. Moffat, from his prophet's tower at Kuruman, deep in his translation of the Old Testament, thundered agsinst them in November, 1852, in a Hebrew prophet's style:

> If the British government does not speedily undo what they have done [the Sand River Convention had just been signed] and adopt immediate measures to put a stop to the progress of the Boers in the work of human destruction we unhesitatingly affirm that ere long the colonials may prepare themselves to receive tens of thousands expected from their country, with nothing before them but a pining death in the desert, and who will rush down from the north like ravening wolves, as Bears robbed of their whelps to seek graves in the land of the white man. [1]

Ashton prophesied war as the hand of Britain relinquished even its tenuous control of the far distant veld where the chiefs and the farmers skirmished amongst the kopjes and the kraals.[2] The Sechele fight was only an enlarged example of the thieving and the shooting, which nobody denied went on but which no British Government - whether at the Cape or in London - dared to intervene in, as Livingstone discovered when Governor Cathcart loftily referred to his losses at Kolobeng as "inconveniences ... incidental to a state of war ... to which those who live in remote regions beyond Her Majesty's dominions must frequently be liable".[3]

Livingstone did not make relationships with the Boer farmers any happier by referring to them in a letter from Kuruman to Sir John Pakington at the Colonial Office as "a small company of men who may be described as the analogues of the bush rangers of New South Wales".[4]

[1] R.M. to Tidman 22.11.52 LMS
[2] Ashton to Tidman 7.5.54 LMS
[3] P.P. LXVI 2085 14.11.52
[4] P.P. LXVI 2085 12.12.52

IV

The heart of the missionaries' charges against the Boers lay in the apprenticeship or "in-booking" ["inboeken"] system whereby boys were indentured to a master until the age of twenty-five and girls until they reached twenty-one. There were other charges such as irreligious conduct, aggressions on unprotected tribes, and acts of violence against native servants;[1] but apprenticeship smacked of slavery, and once that word was used the flame of old controversies was re-kindled and the Boer farmers became exasperated by the complaints against them - which reached the Cape and trickled through to London. They undoubtedly inherited the problem of destitute natives and their children left wandering on the veld in the wake of the tribal defeats; and no doubt the apprenticeship system inaugurated by the Volksraad at Pietermaritzburg in September 1843 was an honourable attempt to regulate a human traffic by which the incoming farmers secured the labour they needed and settled homes were provided for "orphan" children.

But the Volksraad writ was weak, the farmers were independent, and the abuses of inboeken so numerous that the Slave Trade Commissioner at Capetown reported to Lord Palmerston in August 1848 that reports reach him "to the effect that the Boers ... not only make slaves of the natives with whom they are at war, but also deal in slaves with the inhabitants of the Portuguese Settlement at Delogoa Bay".[2]

Chapman, in his Travels in Southern Africa, speaks of the Boers purchasing "many children, who with those captured in their wars with the tribes, remain in a condition of slavery until released by death. I have had many of these unfortunate beings offered to me, either in exchange for a horse, a quantity of merchandise or in liquidation of a debt".[3] Children taken

1, 2 A-H 115ff; 178

3 I, 16

in kraal raids, or received as presents from local chiefs, were registered with the landdrost on the payment of a fee (about 1/6d), and a child could be transferred to another master on the payment of a transfer fee of £2-5-0. Parents might sell their children. The long years of inboeken, the utter dependence on the whim of the Boer master, and the apprentice's lack of status in the eyes of the law, brought the system, as Agar-Hamilton admits, "perilously near slavery".[1] Even President Pretorius, as late as 1865, managed to purchase "three little Kaffirs" for two white blankets, and took Lea, Sara, and Jaantje, into his possession under commitment to feed them and treat them without cruelty. For his two white blankets he got the possibility of eleven years' work out of each of the girls, and seventeen out of the boy. As Agar-Hamilton remarks, "he seems to have made a good bargain".[2]

For the Boer farmer and his family, more often than not kindly and hospitable people, a group of little kaffirs about the house set the adults free for the more important jobs of farming and cattle-raising. It ensured the farmer, too, a labour supply in the future, as the children grw up and married. To add to his stock of "apprentices" he must often have been tempted, in the open freedom of veld life, to do a little "blackbirding" amongst the kraals and to traffic with the chiefs for small pieces of "black ivory". An episode of "blackbirding" is recorded by J.J. Freeman while staying with Moffat at Kuruman in 1849. He met there an elderly native who had travelled two hundred miles to tell his story to Moffat:

> He related that some time since, a party of Boers came and demanded of the chief the "orphans" who might be there. .. After much altercation and the steady refusal of the chief to give up the orphans the Boers demanded the children of the people. The mothers ran to hide their children; the Boers began to seize them and to put them

1, 2 A-H 181; 219

> into their wagons; the men interfered; the Boers fired, and in the result most of the men were killed defending their families, and the wagons were loaded with children and driven off as booty. Against such outrages there seems to be no relief.[1]

Freeman adds a bit of hearsay that children are sold amongst the farmers at "about £1 per head",[2] to be used "as slaves in fact, though not so called". Whether this episode happened in exactly the manner related to Moffat and Freeman may be doubted,[3] and no place is identifiable - except that Agar-Hamilton suggests it might be in the Marico district of the Transvaal in the area where the missionary Walter Inglis was working.

Missionary evidence of this kind was unfortunately rarely pinned to dates, places and people, and many of the "blackbirding" stories are no doubt exaggerated; but they are sufficiently numerous to justify missionary protests, which came to a head in 1852 when Walter Inglis and Rogers Edwards wrote to Commandant P.E. Scholtz from Matebe on August 11, 1852, a letter which eventually led to their expulsion from the Transvaal:

> Regarding the present war and the depriving the Kaffirs of guns and cattle, we do not presume to offer an opinion; and indeed we desire to abstain from touching on political matters. But there is one subject which causes us much pain, and regarding which we feel constrained by duty not to conceal our opinion; and this is, the capture of so many Kaffir children in war.
> Of this we have nowhere else an example, except on the Western Coast of Africa, where children are caught for slaves. ... In our opinion the treaty between emigrants and the British Government has been violated by the capture of children in war, which will be regarded through Cape Colony, England and Europe as nothing else than slavery. Many of the captive children will probably be taken away, and sold to other parties in distant places, where their parents may never see them more.
> We are well aware that the Kaffirs have as much affection for their children as the whites, and will much sooner part with their land, guns, cattle, or corn, than with their children.[4]

1, 2 Tour in South Africa 260; 174

3 A-H 176

4 Inglis, Memoirs 77

Scholtz replied within a month to this "libellous" letter, and on November 20, 1852, the two men were summoned before General Pretorius at Rustenburg "to defend themselves for having written certain documents detrimental to the Free Republic". Inglis, a fiery, abrupt Scot, who talked and wrote in a dogmatic manner and, like Livingstone, was no compromiser with the Boers, appears to have taken the brunt of the examination in the Landdrost's office at Rustenburg. His manner was boldly argumentative and did nothing to appease the equally dogmatic Pretorius, who was irritated by such missionary phrases as "children driven to the water like a flock of goats" and had no doubt made up his mind to rid the Transvaal frontier of the meddling missionaries with their British connections.

Their conversation, as recorded in the Bloemfontein Gazette[1], is an instructive example in race relationships and of the prejudices that befoul them:

> Inglis: I thought that the free republic of the Boers, wherein there is such wonderful freedom of speech towards each other, I might present a memorial.
>
> Pretorius: Yes. Freedom for a reasonable memorial (billik memorie), yours is unreasonable (onbillyk). The Boers know nothing of slavery. The children were all inboeked.
>
> Inglis: I mentioned that the English in all their wars with the Kaffirs had not acted as the Boers were doing with women and children; that such was not a custom, so far as I knew, honourable among the nations.
>
> Pretorius: They were not going to look at the example of other nations. It was time the Boers looked to their own safety. All the troubles that have befallen the Boers have come from the missionaries (zendelings). Inglis' letter was shameful (schandelyk). He had spoken impudently (brutaal). He must have punishment (straf).

The punishment was expulsion from the Transvaal within fourteen days "along the great high road by way of Moui River" and the payment of ninety-five Rix-dollars as expenses of the

[1] P.P. LXVI 2085 [Extract] 20.1.53

case. It was the end of Inglis's missionary life in Africa, although Edwards continued in the service of the mission until 1874. It was also the end of the eastward expansion of missions based on Kuruman. The Boers were triumphant within their own borders, and Government took no notice of the humanitarian and mission protest lodged in London asking Her Majesty's Government "for their interference and protection on behalf of the injured missionaries".[1]

- V -

Whatever sort of treaty might govern their future relations with Britain, the Boers were determined to be free from the aggravating humanitarian-missionary pressures they had endured for thirty years in the Colony, and to guard their undefined borders against their encroachment.

The expulsion of the two missionaries meant the end of the London Society's influence in the Transvaal proper, where the rise of the Nederduits Hervormde Kerk in the 1850's ensured for the Boers an established church after their own hearts. They resisted incorporation into the Cape Synod,[2] and under the predikant Dirk van der Hoff drew up their own ecclesiastical constitution, which was accepted in the Grondwet of the South African Republic of 1858.[3]

The Grondwet gave the Dutch Reformed Church in the Transvaal a specially safeguarded position, with every member of the governing Volksraad a member of the church; and"no equality between coloured people and the white inhabitants either in Church or State".[4]

[1] P.P. XLIII 2170 11.7.53

[2] Walker 274

[3, 4] Eybers, Select Documents, 362ff

But they agreed to evangelize the heathen, and had already set up, in 1853, a mission committee to evangelize the native races - which led to devoted work amongst the tribes in the north-east Transvaal and on the Bechuanaland border.[1] President Pretorius was reputed to be partial to missions "under suitable direction",[2] and hoped to attract the Moravian Brethren;[3] then turned to the Hermannsburg missionaries, sending three of them up to Sechele's people, where Moffat found them in 1857.[4]

By 1860, the Berlin Society entered the Transvaal, and became its leading foreign missionary enterprise,[5] to be followed by the Swiss. None of these men asked the awkward questions of the English missionaries; and their attitude to the tribes was adjustable to the Boer policy; while even Moffat admitted that "their nationality and their concessions to the Boers on some points give them a footing where English missionaries would be shut out".[6]

Keep out the English, whether traders or missionaries, appears to have been the Boer policy, and one positive way of doing it was "to encourage missionaries of any other nationality".[7] This both assuaged the Boer religious conscience and placated their politicians.

But away on the western border lay Kuruman, with its authority amongst the tribes shaken but not destroyed, still

[1] Groves, Planting of Christianity in Africa, 274-275

[2], [3] A-H 131

[4], [5] Groves, 162

[6] Lives 323

[7] A-H 131

an effective base for the northward thrust.

In a fit of gloom, Moffat summed up the position in his mission-parish to Tidman in London in November 1852:

> The mission among the Bakwena, commenced by Livingstone, and latterly under the care of a native-teacher, is a scene of solitude, brooding over ashes and dead men's bones; while Sechele and his followers who escaped the balls of the Boers, are in the fastnesses of a neighbouring mountain, suffering from want, their supplies having been taken or destroyed by the enemy. The Bakhatla of Mabotsa have been attacked, many slain, and the survivors scattered in the desert wilds. The Bahurutse of Mathebe, the third missionary station, are prostrate, because on the side of their appressors there is power. Our two native teachers among the Bangwaketsi, as well as the one with the Bakwena, have had to retire with much loss of property. The Barolong on the Lotlakane, among whom Mr Ludorf, a Wesleyan missionary, was living, have fled to the westward, and Mr L. is on his way southward seeing no possibility of continuing his labours.[1]

He blamed it all on the Boers and their belief "that all the aborigines must become their vassals", and attitude which, in Moffat's view, was encouraged by the British Government in the Sand River Convention. "Every act of rapine and bloodshed is carried on with the excuse that the country is theirs by authority of the Queen of England.[xx] This strange note jars horribly on the ears of the natives."[2] It was to jar even more horribly by what happened in the following year at Bloemfontein.

1, 2
R.M. to Tidman 22.11.52 LMS

Chapter 13
OPENING UP THE ROAD
[July 1853 - Dec.1854]

The kindness of a savage tyrant of great power to a plain Christian missionary

On August 8, 1853, Sir George Clerk, lately Governor of Bombay, in his fifty-third year, an elegant servant of the British power in India, drew into the little one-street dorp of Bloemfontein in the midst of the vast flat-lands of the Orange River Sovereignty. On the way up from the Cape his eyes fell on the endless miles of level distance which opened to the horizon across the Orange River. Almost as big as England, this curiously named tract of country between the Orange and the Vaal Rivers counted its space in acres. The British Crown had eight millions, the "black aborigines" thirteen millions, and the farmers - chiefly speculative absentees - possessed eleven millions.[1]

To Clerk, it seemed an empty land, and the little town of Bloemfontein with its street of one-storied houses hardly a capital city where any kind of efficient government could be carried on. Sir George was not surprised that the British Government in London had decided to put an end to the British suzerainty of these vacant acres, for that was the operation he had been chosen by the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary for War and the Colonies, to perform.

Only five years before, on March 8, 1848, another product of Britain's Indian empire, Sir Harry Smith, Governor of the Cape, in a fit of impetuous administration, annexed the territory as an attempt to control the emigrant Boer farmers who had moved over the Orange River in search of land and cheap labour. He had also hoped by this act to settle the most crucial question of all - the government of the natives - and

[1] Walker, 268

to secure the vulnerable eastern frontier against the powerful Basuto under their able chief, Moshesh. With only one British Resident in the vast area, aided by a dozen clerks and constables,[1] the government was a failure and deserved the lash of the cynical Sir George, who described to the Duke of Newcastle its characteristics as "insufficient revenue, no credit, land jobbing character," with "a detachment of 150 British infantry, 50 Hottentot cavalry, in a starved country whose nearest support is 400 miles off across a country where severe droughts and ox carriage, with a wretched post, render communications so difficult".[2]

Sir George's orders were to get the British out of the Sovereignty, and to place the government - and all its problems - on to the shoulders of the Boer and English farmers, who, if they were opposed to independence, were to be persuaded into it.[3] British policy on the frontiers and beyond was again swinging from remote control to freedom for the emigrant; from legislative interference to the offer of self-government. Sir George Clerk, "hard of temperament, with an icy and unapproachable manner, little disposed to be moved by appeals or entreaties",[4] was the man for the job - for he interpreted his orders narrowly, with no abiding interest in the problems involved. He had his instructions to get the British out of a land which was obviously no credit to them. He was not in Bloemfontein to settle disputes between the inhabitants of the Sovereignty but to conduct, with dignity, a British scuttle.[5]

It took him six months to do this. Between August 1853 and February 1854, Bloemfontein was a busy rendezvous for the Boer

[1,2] C.O.48/307 12.9.50; 348/3.12.53
[3] P.P. XLIII 25.8.53; 8.10.53
[4,5] de Kiewiet 70; 83

and English farmers, who, in the proportion of 76 Boer delegates to 19 English, met Clerk in the little village church and astonished him at first by their unanimous opposition to the suggested independent status, but, under his cool handling, gradually fell for the idea. Bloemfontein goggled at the strange spectacle of a high British official instructing the unresponsive farmers in the advantages of republicanism, the delights of managing their own affairs, and the bliss of saying farewell to the British government.[1]

This almost indecent haste to be rid of responsibilities north of the Orange River alarmed humanitarian and missionary interests in Britain and South Africa. All the anxieties for the rights of the natives and the future of missions were again aroused. Twelve months before, the Sand River Convention [See Chapter 1] turned the Transvaal over to the Boer domination. Now it was the turn of the Orange River Sovereignty, which also meant the areas of the Griquas on the southern boundaries of the Sovereignty, where the Griqua chief Adam Kok held his lands, since 1848, by special treaty with the British Government and looked to the L.M.S. representative, Edward Solomon, for political as well as spiritual advice.

Prompted by William Thompson, the L.M.S. agent in Capetown, the missionaries of the north met at Likhatlong, the station of Holloway Helmore at the junction of the Vaal and the Hartz Rivers, on July 12, 1853, to consider the situation and to prepare a memorial to Sir George Clerk. The L.M.S. men present were Moffat [who was elected to the chair], Hughes, Ross, Solomon, Inglis and Helmore; with Jousse from the Paris and Mayforth from the Berlin Society, and their memorial was brief and to the

[1] de Kiewiet 76

point. It conveyed the general impression "made upon the native mind that the white man is combining for the destruction of the black", and that the "emigrant farmers have always entertained very low views of the rights and privileges of the aborigines" and had destroyed six mission stations. "The British Government is beginning to be regarded by the natives", continues the memorial, "with distrust and suspicion, since they look upon it as combined with the Boers", and the result is "that a general combination is now being formed among the natives in order to resist encroachment of the Boers." The memorial looks to a "dark, gloomy prospect and bloody war", chiefly because of "the lure of plunder and lust of power and the desire of obtaining constrained and not paid labour on the part of the Boers". It earnestly hopes that the British will not abandon the Sovereignty, and ends with a noble plea for missions to be allowed to continue their work of "enlightening, civilizing, elevating and evangelizing the aborigines of South Africa".[1]

Armed with this memorial, Moffat rode out across the veld from Kuruman in mid-August 1853 to Bloemfontein, where he joined Inglis and Solomon in presenting it to Sir George Clerk. Although the memorialists lived beyond the Sovereignty and drew their anti-Boer experiences from the Transvaal and its borders, it was Clerk's duty to listen to all comers. The memorial was translated into Dutch, and the old Boer apologist, Commandant Scholtz, replied to it with a general denial of the missionaries' charges and a shrewd thrust at their "most upright intentions", for what they were really advocating was the "destruction of all authority. The emigrant government could not exist if the tribes living on its soil were independent of its control".[2]

[1] R.M. to Tidman 12.11.53 LMS

[2] Theal, History of South Africa, 1847-1862, 350

That was the kind of phrase that Clerk's administrative mind understood. He was there to establish an authority which would control and permit the British to depart. If there were advocates of native rights they could be politely fobbed off, and, if necessary (as with the Griquas), the natives themselves could be left to the mercies of the incoming republic.[1] Sir George was not there to settle hoary problems of race relationships. He was there to conduct an act of "scuttle", and "scuttle" it was.

He turned away from the worthy memorialists to his own missionary task of persuading the farmers to set up their own government, and the Griquas to give up their lands to the new Free State. He succeeded in the first, but was baulked in the second by Edward Solomon, the Griqualand missionary, who advised Adam Kok against it, largely because it would mean the end of missions in Griqualand. Clerk then left them to their lot, to make what terms they could with the Free State, and bemoaned the fact that his tidy plan for a complete British withdrawal across the Orange River should be muddled by such a "medley of vagrants dignified with the designation of Griqua nation".[2]

I

As he rode home across the 250 miles of veld in September 1853 from Bloemfontein to Kuruman, Moffat was a disappointed man. "From a man of Sir George Clerk's disposition", he wrote to Tidman in London, "we ought to expect something more than fair promises. If the Transvaal Boers are not arrested in their career of extermination either by British power, or by the vengeance of the combined tribes the tens of thousands of the

[1,2] C.O. 48/364: 28.3.54; 26.1.55

Bechuanas will be doomed."[1]

He knew that he had not saved the "tribes and our missions" from destruction,[2] and that across the broad spaces of the Orange River Sovereignty and the Transvaal the Boer writ was not only now given ample scope for its anti-native policies, but had the backing of the British in doing so. It was a strange and bewildering switch of policy, which, according to Moffat's letter to the British Banner,[3] soured the natives against the English as well against the Boers", who now went "hand in hand in the work of plunder, slavery and extermination".

The Bloemfontein Convention, signed on February 17, 1854, registered the triumph of the view that "the colonist must ultimately prevail against the native",[4] and that the British Government had "finally abandoned the attempt to secure the natives in the possession of their lands, and to protect them against aggression".[5] It was all the more galling to Moffat and his colleagues because they must have realized that the British decision was not pne of heart but of immediate policy in relation to southern Africa.

The Boers had no more convinced the British of their view of the place and rights of the coloured population than the British had conceded to the Boers every vestige of authority north of the Orange River.[6] British recognition of the Boers only hardened them in their isolation and way of thinking; while Britain, for the moment, turned a blind eye to the "fundamental cause of the disputes which had rent the country for two generations".[7]

1,2 R.M. to Tidman 12.11.53 LMS
3 Feb. 1853
4,5 de Kiewiet 79
6,7 Macmillan BBB 289

To the man riding homewards across the veld it looked as if both parties were now cpmbined against the natives, and that a British community of interests with the independent Boers was springing up which declared the Boers as allies and the natives as enemies. "Britain appears to have left the coloured races to their fate in this country", Moffat wrote to his brother, "the acknowledging of the Boers was an act of folly."[1]

The truth was that for the time being Britain had had enough of the troublesome southern African frontiers, and of the restless semi-independent colonists beyond them, who were an economic drag and appeared to be using the protection of Britain only to grab huge allotments of empty acres.[2] There were more vital frontiers for Britain in Europe and Asia. Let the incipient republics of the Transvaal and the Orange River Sovereignty deal with the frontiers and the tribes was the attractive argument behind the Conventions of 1852 and 1854, and in yielding to it the British Government abandoned, for the moment, its humanitarian policy for one of immediate self-interest.

"In 1854 the native question", says de Kiewiet, "had been degraded from one of civilization into one merely of defence." Britain had grown "weary and stale" of her South African investments, which were "flat and unprofitable", with, as yet, no golden fortunes from the open veld but only a harvest of internecine warfare amongst the tribes of the interior, whose growing skill in fire-arms was the main result - so the cynics said - of twenty years of missionary activity. In the House of Commons Sir William Molesworth sneered at those who imagined that "the fierce savages of South Africa, who delight in exterminating wars, who revel in human slaughter, and whose only notion of a deity is a bloodstained demon, were true Arcadian shepherds". In his judgment, the missionary enterprise had produced natives

[1] R.M. to R.M. 17.1.54 NA

[2] Walker, 265

more adept at countering white attack, "better fighters but worse savages".[1]

If the humanitarians were under a temporary cloud in Britain there was no flagging at Kuruman, where Moffat plunged again into his translation work. The Bloemfontein visit had been a duty to be performed, and he comforted himself in a letter to Tidman that, whatever the result, "we did what we could".[2] He was no visionary about either the tribes or the Boers. They both fell far short of his stern, moral standards, and both deserved the castigation which he administered in a letter to his brother: "these Boers were never very civilized and during the lawless life they have been leading for years they have no manners, become more savage than their swarthy neighbours ... the natives were thought to be bad enough but compared to the Dutch Boers beyond the Vaal they are saints".[3]

It was this unromantic, objective view of his immediate neighbours which saved Moffat from the miseries of disappointments and frustrated hopes, and also from the expectation of miracles. He lived and worked in a world of hard facts, and, while he could lament the weakness and frailty of human nature, he never strayed into cynicism.

Britain's attitude to the Boers might seem to be a big betrayal of her national character, and of the mission which Moffat conceived for his fellow-countrymen in southern Africa, but the turn of events only confirmed him in his own mission. There was always the road to the north, which he and his colleagues had so far secured against the encroaching Boers. It led to Moselekatse and his Matabele.

[1] de Kiewiet 79

[2, 3] R.M. to Tidman 12.11.53 LMS

[3] R.M. to R.M. 18.10.52 NA

II

Nineteen years had passed since Moffat met Moselekatse in the Transvaal [See Chapter 10]. From being a defeated fugitive, running before the Boers from Mosega in the Marico Valley in 1837, Moselekatse was now an established monarch in the high veld country of Matabeleland, where his organizing and military genius had ample scope for their operations. He was anxious, according to news brought by a Griqua hunter in 1853,[1] to see Moffat again, no doubt feeling secure enough to receive visitors, especially his favourite Moshete. His policy was isolation, and, so far, he had been able to prevent foreigners from entering the country he had appropriated from the helpless Mashona and Makalanga, and to control his southern frontier against the restless, land prospecting Boer. To the west, the Bamangwato had a healthy fear of the Matabele; and to the north the Makalolo were far distant, defended by the dread tsetse fly and the great Zambesi. Moselekatse was now ready to play host to the white man, so long as he controlled the exits and entrances, and gave permission to come and go on a well guarded route.[2]

Whether Moffat himself gave specific advice to Moselekatse to go northwards and eastwards into the new promised land is extremely doubtful,[3] but the tradition is strong amongst the Matabele ~~of Moselekatse's day~~ that he did so. "Moshete's name was a great name among the Matabele of Moselekatse's day. Our fathers said that, if he had not directed them, they would have been lost and our nation would have perished in the desert",[4] says Mtompe Kumalo, a member of the royal house. Another reliable Matabele, Siatsha, whose father came as a youth with Moselekatse into Matabeleland is even more explicit:

1,2 Tabler 213

3 Hughes, Ndebele 48

4 Jones, My Friend Kumalo 7

> Mzilikazi and his people moved on and eventually met Mr Moffat ... advised Mzilikazi to go east until he came to a large open space with a long hill in the centre ... a suitable home for the Matabele. Acting on his advice Mzilikazi moved east until he came to the junction of the Gwaai and the Bembezi rivers ... he then turned south-east up the Bembezi River and eventually found the two hills described by Mr Moffat and now known as "Ntaba ye Zinduna" and Maxim Hill. ... [1]

This tradition is hard to reconcile with the fact that Moffat's last personal contact with the Matabele was in the Transvaal in 1835, and that he himself knew nothing further of them until the journey of 1854. But it may have been that amongst his moral admonitions to Moselekatse in 1835 Moffat pointed to the north as a way of escape from the pressure of the Zulus and the Boers, and that a possible route lay through the Bechuana country; for it was this route which Moselekatse took after his defeat, following roughly in the footsteps of the Makololo who had gone this way in 1823,[2] after the battle of the Mantatees [See Chapter 6].

Moselekatse marched in two columns: one, a small, compact group under his own command,[3] and the other under the induna, Gundwane. The two sections lost contact, the king going to the west and striking northwards to the Zambesi in the wake of the Makololo,[4] while Gundwane's section moved eastwards through the Matopos - following the route of the present railway line from West Nicholson to Bulawayo and reaching the shapely hill of the Intabas Induna near Bulawayo in 1838, which is normally considered to be the foundation date of the Matabele nation.[5]

[1] Nada (Pitout) 1953 57ff; also (Jackson) 1927 21 and Nada (E.H.B.) 1935 14ff; (Carbutt) 1948 38ff; (Sigola) 1959 87ff; PRSA (Posselt) 1919 18ff; R.M. to D.L. 29.10.57; D.L.Bruce Coll.

[2] Smith GL 367

[3,5] Hughes, Ndebele 49

[4] Tabler 195-197

For two years Moselekatse was separated from the main body of his people, who, hearing nothing of him, elected his son Kuluman [Kuruman] as king, an act which brought swift retribution from Moselekatse when he discovered their whereabouts.[1] Five indunas were executed, probably on Maxim Kopje, and not on Intabas Induna,[2] and Kuluman was most likely exiled,[3] rather than secretly strangled in the manner described by T.M.Thomas.[4]

The despotic rule of Moselekatse, at the age of 38,[5] was now established at the heart of Matabeleland, but it was never wholly free from apprehension of the outside world. Within the central core of his power Moselekatse might relax in strength, but, over the hills from the south, the old deadly power of the white man might yet appear in a new guise.

III

Moselekatse in his isolation had not forgotten that it was pierced in 1847 by the brilliant commando of his old Boer enemy, Andries Hendrik Potgieter, who had been the prime instrument in ousting him from the Transvaal. This determined, "obstinate, conservative, old patriarch"(he was only 53!),[6] in his blue blouse, short coat, moleskin trousers and wide-brimmed straw hat, was persistently trek-minded, seeing in it a ready answer to the Boers' immediate domestic problems as well as the fulfilment of a land dream which might give the northern farmers access to the sea.[7]

1,4,5 Thomas, Eleven Years 227; 227; 165

2 Hughes, Ndebele 49

3 PRSA (Posselt) 1919 16ff; Nada (Posselt) 1923 29ff; Posselt, Upengula the Scatterer

6 Bulpin, Lost Trails in Transvaal 91

7 Tredgold, Matopos 62

Nor had Potgieter forgotten Moselekatse, for in June 1847 he rode out from Ohrigstad at the head of a large commando of 233 men, with seventy native allies, probably Bapedi, across the Limpopo to the Shashani, and so to the southern fringe of the Matopos and the entry to Southern Rhodesia.

What made the Boer leader undertake this foray has been examined in some considerable detail,[1] and, like most ventures of this character, the motives are mixed. Potgieter himself had the gallant notion of trying once again to rescue the Boer Liebenberg children believed to be held captive by the Matabele, although it is very nearly certain that at the time of this commando the Matabele had no such prisoners, though they still held two light-skinned Griqua children, one of whom, Truey, was freed by Moffat on his 1854 journey.

The lure of captured cattle was another reason, but hardly strong enough to draw a commando over three hundred miles in each direction over unknown and trackless country dominated by such warriors of distinction as the Matabele. The idea of having another brush with their old enemies, the Matabele, and teaching them another lesson in the power of the white man's guns was also in their minds, to ride again behind Potgieter to victory amongst the unknown hills.

Whatever the reasons, this Boer adventure into Southern Rhodesia was skilfully organized with gallant precision and courage, and brought the burghers within striking distance of Moselekatse's capital at Matlokotloko, in the environs of modern Bulawayo, before the redoubtable Matabele Zwankendaba Regiment fell upon them and forced a fighting retreat.

[1] Moffat himself is the principal first-hand source of information: Journal 19.7.54, 25.8.54 NA; R.M. to Tidman 15.7.54LMS; Posselt, Fact and Fiction 180-182; Nada (Jackson) 1924 58ff; Tredgold, Matopos 62-65.

The commando, stream-lined to a hundred, entered Matabele territory by Mount Francis (Fumikwe), massacred a weak outpost of the Karanga people, came through what is now known as Hendrik's Pass (Ekalweni lu ka Ndeleka), followed the Tendele River in the Matopos, and boldly emerged without opposition to the open country north of the hills. On the headwaters of the Gwai River they attacked the Isizinda Regiment, captured cattle, and then fell back on the shapely hill of Ntabemyama, on what is now La Concorde farm, to camp for the night - burghers and their horses on the top of the hill, native allies and cattle below. It was an ideal target for Moselekatse's Zwankendaba warriors, who swept down during the night, destroyed the burghers' allies and carried off the cattle, while Potgieter and his commando were marooned on the top of the hill. When Robert Moffat passed the hill seven years later, the bleached bones of the massacred cattle-men were still lying in the valley.[1]

What later appeared to Moffat to be an "expedition of rapine and murder"[2] now became, for Potgieter and his men, a skilful retreat through the western flanks of the Matopos area, to reach, by a long detour, their laager in the south. Harried by the impis, without a guide through the intricate country, and in fear of sudden attacks from the hills, the Boers, exposed on horseback, and minus a laager for defence, were fortunate to escape without loss of life.

This deep probe into Moselekatse's territory taught the Boers that the attacking zeal of the Matabele was still powerful, and that new lands could not be won north of the Limpopo without fighting their old enemy; while, to Moselekatse, the commando was a sign that his isolation was not so complete and invulnerable as he believed it to be, and that as long as the Voortrekkers on his

[1] R.M. to Tidman 15.7.54 LMS
[2] Journal 19.7.54 NA

southern frontier had horses and courage there would be no peace between them.

Six years later, the two sides, at Zoutpansberg on January 8, 1853, signed a treaty in the presence of the ailing Potgieter: which announced peace between the South African Republic and Moselekatse; undertook to regulate trade; and even bound Moselekatse, if called on, to appear with his warriors before the Republic's Commandant General!

The Boers were most concerned to prohibit trade in arms, a condition that a local official such as Viljoen was always ready to break for the sake of valuable ivory,[1] and which Moselekatse, if he understood the clause, would have laughed out of court. In practice, the treaty was probably never taken seriously by either side,[2] but at least it served a useful purpose in setting down for both parties some of the conditions of co-existence on the Limpopo-Shashi frontier.

Potgieter's commando resulted in a peace, on paper, which appeared to satisfy Boer aspirations, and confirmed Moselekatse in his policy of isolation. The last fight between the two had been fought to a draw. Never again did the Boers organize an armed assault across the Limpopo, and when Moselekatse eventually opened a door of his frontier it was to admit, not a Boer, but a Scot - Robert Moffat.

IV

For Robert Moffat, his journey to the north in 1854 was a domestic adventure, almost a family outing, to discover what had become of Livingstone, and to give himself a health trip away from his books. Livingstone had been gone seventeen months on his stupendous fling across Africa to the west coast. It was a

[1] Journal 19.11.57 NA

[2] A-H 79

journey on which he had hoped for Moffat's company, and there were many guesses at Kuruman as to where he was and how he was faring. Mary had often remonstrated with him about the risks of his journeys, even on one occasion "informing him that much prayer had been offered that, if the arrangements were not in accordance with Christian propriety, he might in great mercy be prevented by some dispensation of Providence from carrying them out".[1] But now that he was no longer dragging her daughter and grand-children through the fever and fly country Mary's maternal solicitude warmed towards her lonely son-in-law.

She wrote to her son, John, in England about him:

> Our poor dear Livingstone all solitary and alone, worn down by repeated attacks of fever and hard fare ... none but the veriest barbarians to attend to his wants, and his supplies of little comforts exhausted ... should Papa and his companions only succeed and go all together to Moselekatse his dominion seems to extend to the Zambesi and there is communication between him and the people of Sebituane ... surely when Moselekatse hears that the son-in-law of Ma-Mary, the very husband of Mary is there in a suffering condition, he cannot refrain to give him guides to take him there. Tell Mary I have sent everything for her dear husband which I thought could add to his comfort. ...[2]

As Mary packed her boxes of Kuruman goodies, Livingstone was staggering on towards the west coast, still a month away from Loanda. She hoped they would reach him somehow on the Zambesi on the return journey and remind him of the green valley they came from and of her own warm heart. Inside the box, amongst the quince jam, lemon juice, tea and coffee, the dandy blue waistcoat, the white shirts and woollen socks, she tucked an affectionate letter:

> My dear son Livingston - Your present position is almost too much for my weak nerves to suffer me to contemplate. Hitherto I have kept my spirits and been enabled to believe that our great Master may yet bring you out in

[1] Blaikie, 95

[2] M.M. to J.S.M. 21.5.54 NA

> safety. ... Dear Livingston, I have always endeavoured to keep this in mind in regard to you. ... Your having got so thoroughly feverised chills my expectations; still prayer, unceasing prayer, is made for you. When I think of you my heart will go upwards. [1]

Moffat's own attitude to Livingstone was a compound of affection and critical admiration. The two agreed on policy and plans better than any other two in southern Africa; and, while Livingstone was swifter in execution, he nevertheless held Moffat's thoroughness and patience in the highest regard. Moffat counted his son-in-law as a member of the "Kuruman team", the flying outrider of the north, out-distancing Moffat's own ox-wagon pace but loyal to the same basic view of their mutual calling in Africa. It was his duty to know where he was.[2]

Mary was secretly glad of the excuse. She was able to prise Robert away from the slog of fitting words to words; from turning Hebrew and English into Sechuana; from the candle-lit arguments with Ashton about meanings; and from the toil of proof-correcting. His head buzzed, and spots floated before his eyes. Mary put into the wagon a copy of Uncle Tom's Cabin for him to cry over ("there was no stopping, bleered een and all"[3]) and a litter of playful kittens to play with. She packed a supply of his favourite raisin-loaf, a home-cured ox-tongue, rusks which had to be hammered into softness for he was practically toothless, and "ginger-bread things, prime companions on the road".[4] Even then he managed to smuggle into the wagon a few quires of the, almost complete, Sechuana Bible to mull over as he jolted along.

It was a light-hearted expedition, and Moffat's Journal gains in style as well as freshness of observation. Besides, he

[1] Blaikie, 147
[2,4] Journal 10.6.54 NA
[3] R.M. to M.M. 31.5.54 NA

had the companionship of two younger professionals in African travel, James Chapman, aged 23, and Sam Edwards, aged 27. Edwards, son of one of Moffat's missionary colleagues, known to later generations in South Africa as "Far Interior Sam" [he died in 1922, aged 95], was already an experienced bush-traveller with three journeys to Lake Ngami to his credit, and a great favourite on the frontiers because of his trustworthy knowledge and his fluency in Afrikaans and Sechuana. Chapman had been on the Zambesi a year before, where, with a little more luck with his boatmen, he might have discovered the Victoria Falls in 1853, two years before Livingstone. A good field-naturalist and hunter, he also collected vocabularies of native languages for his friend and patron, Sir George Grey, and was one of the first to try photography in the interior.[1] Both young men, favourites with Mary Moffat, regarded Robert as a master of veld travel, and as the key to the northern road where his name and fame would open the doors for their hunting and trading. Their eagerness to get into the territory of Moselekatse under Moffat's protection was the final impetus in his preparations.

With a fraction of Livingstone's flair for descriptive exploration, Moffat might have turned his memorable journey into one as celebrated as any his son-in-law accomplished. It has all the ingredients of a first-rate travel story, and only lacks the final flash of Livingstone's lightning to transmute it into greatness. Nevertheless, it made history for central south Africa as surely as Livingstone's trans-continental journey did, and in some ways its effects are even more permanently rooted in African history. It was the first organized white penetration into Southern Rhodesia, and prepared the way for the permanent settlement. Moffat not only kept open the road

[1] Chapman, Travels, frontispiece Vol. II.

to the north, but stamped out a surface for its traffic from Kuruman to within striking distance of the Zambesi. It provided the first preaching of the Christian faith in Matabeleland, and so lifted the sights of the Christian expansion in southern Africa as far as the great river, while running through the tale is the thread of the ripening companionship of two men - Moffat and Moselekatse - who developed as close a personal tie as any two men of differing races have achieved in the story of southern Africa.

For Robert, with Mary by his side as far as Motito, the rumble of the wagon-wheels across the veld signalled a renewal, at sixty, of his young manhood. Much of the early section of the route to Kanye was familiar, and, under Edwards and Chapman guidance, the travellers moved more directly northwards than did Moffat in 1857 and 1859 towards the Molopo River and up the long waterless pull to Kanye which Edwards called a "beast of a road".[1] There they arrived on June 4, after twelve days of heavy going for the oxen, and almost as hard for Moffat - who failed to soften his rusks in his coffee, and was reduced to water and the hammer. The nights were so cold that a bush fire was lit every night, but the days, which began "when the morning star rises", had the agreeable light tang of the South African winter.

The picturesque groupings of the Kanye hills were a welcome relief after the barrenness of the veld. But part of Kanye itself was a desolate sight as the result of the Boers burning it down in 1852 after their defeat of Sechele at Dimawe [See Chap. 11]; and the place where Moffat stood to preach in 1849 on his visit with J.J.Freeman, the L.M.S. official from London, was "overgrown with weeds ... burnt points of poles ... nor the shadow of anything left to tell that thousands once lived here".[2]

[1,2] Journal 2.6.54; 4.6.54 NA

Two or three skulls of the Bangwaketse lay about the place, and Moffat listened sadly to a tale of flames and destruction while the faithful teacher, Sebobi, collected a congregation and then led them on the winding march up to the top of Kanye hill. Chapman stayed with the wagons, but Edwards climbed the hill with Moffat through the conglomerations of rocks, the thornless bushes and the evergreen shrubs, to the broad plateau which is still the chief town of the Bangwaketse.

Under the leadership of Senthufe and Gaseitsiwe, the two sections of Bangwaketse were then living in uneasy friendship; but they listened unitedly to Moffat's preaching on the subject of "wisdom", reinforced by grandiloquent references to the rocks of Kanye "like immense plum-puddings made for the giants of olden times" which had once "been rolled by the ocean waves a thousand years before Adam".[1] Moffat loved an audience, and his decorative eloquence was much approved by the gathering, who listened with great attention, and the chief, Gaseitsiwe, rewarded him with thick milk to drink, which helped him to sleep - being something of a substitute for the tough meat he found so hard to chew.

After Kanye, the next stop was Sechele's stronghold at Lithubaruba, where for the first time he saw the chief at home; and his eye was alert and critical to report to Mary the condition of the chief's family since their time at Kuruman.

Sechele himself was cheerful, and eager to chat about guns and ammunition; his children were "pretty well dressed, with dirty duds under"; and the yards of the mountain village were stocked with corn, pumpkins, and dried strips of vegetable marrow. Moffat, Chapman, and Edwards, were regaled with a huge bowl of porridge, each supplied "with a spoon as clean as new",

[1] Journal 4.6.54 NA

to scoop the bottom clean. Masebele, the chief's wife, appeared tidy and clean, while she mended her lord's braces and Moffat poked fun at the number of leglets of beads on the women's legs, which could only prevent them running away from the Boers. The children played games round his knees, the boys with trousers and the girls with karosses being specially favoured, while the frightened ones "scamper off with fear as if I were going to eat them". In Sechele's home there were two good chairs, a table of yellow wood, a gun or two, ball-pouches and powder-horns, and, during the five days Moffat was with him, ample supplies of porridge, boiled corn, and well-cooked ox meat.[1]

The two men had long private palavers, one lasting for five hours. What did they talk about? First, a political question. Sechele's distant relation, Macheng, the legitimate heir to the chieftainship of the Bamangwato, had been in Moselekatse's hands since a youth. Would Moffat intercede with the Matabele monarch for his return home? Moffat delicately dodged the question, and did not broach it with Moselekatse until three years later.[2] Politics were not then for him, and he had a shrewd suspicion that Bamangwato politics were the most dangerous of all.

Then came a review of the moral condition of the Bakwena, their impenitence and foolish loyalty to the tribal initiation ceremonies of boguera and boyale, which, with Bible in hand, Moffat condemned "with plain dealing", pointing to Sechele's duty to his own handsome daughters still not thoroughly weaned from heathenish habits. Under Moffat's eye, Sechele talked "faithfully to his children" about the iniquities of the circumsion ceremonies, with Moffat weighing in heavily on the commandment "children, obey your parents". Whether they did

[1] Journal 6.6.54 to 11.6.54 NA

[2] See Chapter 15

obey is not recorded, although Moffat was satisfied about Sechele's own sincerity, even though that same night he heard the boyale note sounding in one of the villages as he lay in the wagon playing with the kittens.

Christianity had not got very far with the Bakwena. Beyond Sechele's own household it had little root, but within the chief's family the Bible was read, and Sechele was eager to be a preacher as well as a prince amongst his people - a position which Moffat contested, because of "the strange and unholy mixture in a chief sanctioning wicked heathenish customs among his people with impunity and then standing up with the Holy word in his hand and preaching repentance, faith and holiness."[1]

Sechele's wife and daughters had been taught to "read, sew, and cut out" by Mary at Kuruman, as part of Moffat's plan to give Sechele and his family the elements of civilization; and two teachers - Sebobi and Jan Khatlane - were seconded to aid Sechele in the conversion of the Bakwena. Between them all they produced a splendid congregation of four hundred for Moffat on June 11, 1854:

> The house did not hold t he half, but the others sat close round the walls outside, and as these are very pervious to the voice, heard about as well as those within. The mass, including the children outside, were perfectly silent. I read and preached - or rather expounded - from verses 24 to 27 of the 16th chapter of Matthew. The chief men were there from nearly all the different villages, and listened with marked attention. ... I was glad to find afterwards that I was well understood, or at least much better than I anticipated.[2]

But the truth is that Moffat expected too much of Sechele and the reformation in the manners of the Bakwena, and was irritably disappointed when the Old Testament analogies did not propel the Bakwena out of their traditional habits. He projected his strict evangelical standards of conduct on to a people whose world of morals was far removed from his, and in his unbending

1,2 Journal 11.6.54 NA

manner made few allowances for "the heathen". He pitied them, sighed over them, warned and lectured them, in a style which seems misguided and tactless, but his rigidity was not unsuccessful. His methods have been justly criticized in the light of later understanding of tribal religion and customs, which Moffat considered to be wholly evil;[1] but, as he saw it, there could be no compromise between "heathen darkness" and "the light of Christianity". By upholding this view he gave the Christian faith a status and standard in Bechuanaland and beyond which were necessary for its survival. Unfortunately, a little less nakedness and a little more clothing were too often Moffat's desired acknowledgments of the Christian faith, outward symbols of an inner revolution which, alas, only too rarely happened; while his stern evangelicalism appears to have been a handicap in his relationships with the people and in his general commendation of the faith. But a policy less fixed and more easy-going would have produced a bastard Christianity, a belief without his hearers' commandments - and Moffat and his hearers believed in commandments. He was authoritarian in a day of authoritarian Christianity, and in an Africa which understood authority. Without a shadow of doubt, that was the religion for the Bechuana.

V

After five days with Sechele, Moffat's party moved northwards on June 12, 1854, leaving as late as ten on Monday morning because the wagons could not be prepared on the Sabbath. Through open, small-wooded country, with a touch of damp and cold in the air that helped the oxen, the hunters of the party went off, to Moffat's displeasure, to shoot game. Unless he wanted a steak for the pot, Moffat saw no point in shooting "the lovely animals that inhabit and adorn the wilderness", and from this expedition Sam Edwards and his men came back with a bag of three giraffes - of which only a fat female was cut up for eating. Moffat lamented

[1] Journal 11.6.54 NA

over the abandoned beasts: "I went to look at the nearest giraffe; there it lay, its splendid tall and unique figure prostrate, its fine large black eyes, only a half an hour ago so bright, now glazed. There it lay, till the eagles of heaven should descend on it, or the wild beasts of the desert, attracted by its smell, come roaring or howling to tear it and devour." [1] But full stomachs that night made for a contented party at evening worship, and the next day the oxen had "abundant grass of the finest description" as they pulled towards the Bamangwato town of Shoshong, which they entered at sunset on Monday, June 19, after spending a Sabbath "up to the ankles in fine white sand".[2]

Sekhomi, the one-eyed chief, had been entrusted with letters and supplies for Livingstone, which he was to do his best to forward to Linyanti; but whether through laziness, or deceit, the supplies were still at Shoshong. Moffat's heart "was very sore" to see the parcels, but at least Sekhomi (in spite of his thievish reputation) had not rifled them, and was full of unfounded rumours about Livingstone. One was that Livingstone had already passed down the Zambesi on his return journey, making for the east coast,[3] a rumour that Moffat discounted as coming from "a scamp".

Two days was enough with Sekhomi ("that poor splinter of a man"), whom Moffat believed wished him and his party to perish in the desert on the way to the feared Moselekatse . So, having parted with Chapman, who headed across the thirsty Kalahari to Lake Ngami, Moffat (with Edwards) turned eastward through the granite hills of the Bamangwato, where the gigantic clusters of

[1,2] Journal 14.6.54; 17.6.54 NA

[3] In fact, Livingstone was still resting at Loanda, on the west coast.

rocks and trees compelled him to walk ahead of the wagons to pick a path. It was tough going over knots of hard grass, "which produce an everlasting jolting", towards the Mahalapye River, sixty-seven yards broad, with a coarse dry sandy bottom, and water only a few inches below the surface. Here, one of the kittens died through eating raw giraffe flesh, leaving only little Netty to comfort Moffat in the wagon.

From now on the country was new to Moffat,[1] and as Sekhomi's promised guides did not appear the route was problematical as the wagons moved north-eastwards towards the Matabele domains, striking across the dry watercourses of rivers which, in the rainy season, flowed into the Limpopo. It was a brooding, silent country, dominated by the range of the Chopong Hills. Moffat climbed to the top of a conical hill but "saw no smoke rising from any quarter to indicate the abode of human beings" - only a few wildebeest stirring where the grass was short. A thorn-kraal had to be made each night in the long grass areas to protect the oxen from lions, and by day fire often swept the dry acres:

> We met an extensive wall of fire meeting us right in the teeth, but, driving on our oxen at an unusual speed, we were just able to pass to the right of it. Sometimes, when there was sufficient time, the grass was set on fire to the leeward of the wagons, one side extinguished by beating out the flame with bushes and the other allowed to go on. When sufficient room for the wagon or wagons has been cleared, they are drawn on to it, there to wait till the grass to the windward has been swept off by the flames.[2]

The nights were so cold that a tumbler of water inside the wagon froze into ice, and in their deep silence "not a dog moved its tongue. On the same day of the fire alarm (June 28) they

[1] See also Chapter 15 for route

[2] Journal 28.6.54 NA

came to the Seruli River, whose brackish water attracted lions and rhinoceros; and thereabouts Sam Edwards shot a fine reedbuck for the larder, and, later, a supply of giraffe and quagga for a hungry-looking group of Bamangwato.

Sekhomi sent word ahead of the travellers warning his people not to give them help, as they were going to Moselekatse's, but fresh meat and a few beads worked such wonders that some of the men even offered to go as far as the Shashi River - the Matabele frontier. A gigantic baobob tree loomed over the track on June 30, like an immense cabbage stalk, and the next day in the wide Lobala valley the oxen had their first real drink for two days of rain-water, with enough to fill the wagons' water vessels.

There was water too and a Sabbath rest at the Motlaotse River, which brought them near the Shashi River, where the axes were used continuously on the thickets and fallen trees. Moffat speaks of "worming our way fourteen miles", cutting down bushes, rolling away old tree trunks, making a path for the wagons amongst the stony outcrops and boulders. It was July 4 when the party crossed "the Rubicon into Moselekatse's dominions" by descending into the stony gully of the Shashi and pulling through eighty yards of deep sand on the bottom, but the passage next day of the bed of the Ramaquabane River was even more exhausting:

> It was alarming to look down on the bed of a river, three hundred yards of pure sand, through which the wagons must be dragged. Our oxen being tired with the hot day, we allowed them a couple of hours rest and water, and then undertook the task. It was a terrible hard pull, with the fore-wheels sinking nearly to the naves in soft sand. Sam's wagon, coming through the large mimosas which line the banks, came against a tree and broke the axle ... the only wonder is that our axles and tents have not been broken over and over again. Thousands of bushes and young trees have been just rode over and borne down with the weight of the wagons. ... This river, when full, must have a noble appearance and be a perfect barrier to travellers.[1]

[1] Journal 5.7.54 NA

With a present of knives, tinder-boxes, snuff-boxes, and a quantity of beads, the Bamangwato guides were persuaded to stay with the wagons for another day; but on July 9 the fear of the Matabele got the better of them, and Moffat and Edwards were left to do the best they could in a wilderness of rocks, wooded hills, and empty river courses, going due north.

Moffat warmed to the feel of a new country, noting the excellent soil, the hills and dales covered with trees, the abundant grass, and no want of water from the deep sand-rivers. Sam Edwards spread the news of his approach in a village of the Bamangwato ruled by a Matabele induna, who immediately sprang to the alert on hearing the magic names Moshete and Kuruman - and came to see whether it was the genuine article with the long black beard. He prophesied the delight of Moselekatse on hearing the news, and when finally convinced that the beard had been shaved off, and the remains gone grey, he surveyed Moffat "from top to toe" and gave a verbal passport, "I see and I know you are Moshete."

It was four days for a runner to take the welcome news to Moselekatse's headquarters at Matlokotloko, beyond modern Bulawayo, and bring back the urgent summons that Moshete should hasten his journey, and that the traders (except Sam Edwards), tagging to the rear of the Moffat party[1] in the hope of an easy entry, should stop at the Shashi River. Moffat's old exclusive place in the monarch's affection was evidently secure. He was still "Machobane" - Moselekatse's father.

The wagons moved through the outlying flanks of the Matopos with a renewed prestige and confidence, which is reflected in the genuine eloquence of Moffat's description of the scene as he approached the Mangwe Pass: [2]

[1] Journal 21.6.54 NA

[2] For details of the route from Mangwe to Matlokotloko, see Note at end of Chapter.

> Wherever the eye is directed, nothing but hills rise in endless succession, most of them covered with enormous blocks of granite and trees, though to the eye there appears in most instances no soil. We have also passed hills, some not less than five or six miles in circumference, like the third part of a sphere above ground, of solid granite, as smooth to the eye as an orange, with scarcely a tuft of grass to be seen on the entire surface ... some of the hills are topped with an enormous block, standing endways like a square castle of enormous dimensions. We met with blocks of granite lying along, or rather cropping out of, the ground, which have at a distance the appearance of long trunks of branchless trees. I examined a single block standing near to where we passed, nearly perpendicular, slightly hollowed [and] exhibiting a face, fifty by forty feet, as smooth as if it had been chiselled and intended for the base of some stupendous monument. ... The granite is of every grain and colour. Thousands of blocks, some of the most antique forms, are perched on the pinnacles of others, which the slightest shake would send thundering down to the base. [1]

Nowhere does Moffat say he used the Mangwe Pass into Matabeleland, but the lie of his route almost certainly takes him through this break in the hills, which was a familiar passage to his guides. It led direct to Matlokotloko and Moselekatse, and that above everything was what mattered in July 1854. He was now a sight to be seen. His progress brought out the tribesmen as surely as any royal visit. They came to inspect "my contour, my nose, my eyes, and beard till they came to the conclusion that I was Moshete and no other".[2]

They did the inspection respectfully, in the dignified Matabele manner - which contrasted so favourably with the Bechuana inquisitiveness. There were presents along the route, too; a goat from the people, and an ox from the monarch. "I am sure if I heard the name Moshete once, I heard it a thousand times." It was all very royal and very gratifying, only spoilt by two

1,2 Journal 14.7.54; 15.7.54 NA

blots on the record - the extreme nakedness of the women, and the tragic death of little Netty, the kitten, killed under the noses of his men by a strange dog. This was a grief hard to be borne, for the little animal had become part of the expedition - "she knew my wagon well, and, if dogs quarrelled, she would bolt into the wagon, and if I were near, run up my clothes and perch on my shoulder and sometimes look over the top of my cap at what was going on below. She seemed always so pleased when I went into the wagon to write, when she would lie down beside me and purr away and make other signs of satisfaction and pleasure." [1] Destined as a present to Moselekatse, little Netty had survived six hundred miles, and her needless death both angered Moffat (on a Sabbath morning, too!) and brought him near to tears.

VI

All the messengers from Moselekatse suggested haste ("beat the oxen and hasten"), but Moffat refused to hurry across the high bracing plateau towards Matlokotloko, where the dried river gullies led to the Gwai River and the Zambesi. The watershed, tilted away now from the south-east to the north-west, was wide, flat and well wooded, with the rocky river bottoms glistening with blue and green stone. At sunset the air was hazy with smoke from burning grass, the clouds hanging in dense formations on the western horizon. On Saturday July 22 Moffat quickened his pace, no doubt with the idea of spending Sunday with Moselekatse; and, in the forenoon, he came into the immense fold which the Matabele had built as their monarch's residence, where there were fifty or sixty men sitting round before the inner sanctum. The gate had to be widened to bring in the wagons, and in the scurry of the arrival Moffat and Edwards courteously waited at the inner doorway while Moselekatse - unable to walk because of dropsy - was moved by his wives to

[1] Journal 17.7.54 NA

a position at an opening in the fence.

Moffat was shocked to see the vigorous, active man of twenty years before, now lame and not even able to stand. In an affectionate greeting, the two men held hands, while Moselekatse, after one glance at Moffat, threw a mantle over his head to hide his emotion. "It would have been an awful sight to see the hero of a hundred battles wipe from his eye a falling tear."[1] Still holding Moshete's hand, he peeped from under the coverlet, and murmured "Moshete, Moshete", and then withdrew again as the tears welled into his eyes.

Moffat was presented to the assembled court, while the monarch "cast a look at me, as if I were his only son, lost but found", and for the rest of the day the two men gazed at one another as they discussed remedies for Moselekatse's dropsy:

> After dark he with great difficulty came out to my wagon, supported by one of his wives who half carried him. I gave him the great armed chair, which he appeared to enjoy. ... I had given him a pair of old woollen socks and promised to prepare an ointment to rub his feet. It would at least please him till I had prepared suitable medicine for dropsy.[2]

They compared notes about their appearance:

> His hair, though becoming, is not gray, and his eye still possesses its former liveliness, and but for his indisposition, might still look fresh. To-day I pointed out my short white beard, instead of the long black one I had when he last saw me, to show him how old I had become. "You are young", said he, "you march and jump about as you always did."[3]

Moffat was suffering from an inflamed knee-cap, which he treated by poulticing and wet towels; while his regimen for Moselekatse was foot-rubbing with ointment, but, above all, abstinence from beer - which in three days had the magical effect of putting the monarch on his feet, and keeping him there as long as he took Moffat's advice to drink water only.

1-3 Journal 22.7.54 NA

Propped up in the wagon, with a hot cow-dung poultice on his knee, Moffat had a spacious view of his royal friend's system of government, as the indunas came in with their daily concerns:

> If a party all sit down, while the principal one draws near to within thirty yards, always with a small stick or rod in his hand when he delivers his message or mentions his business, all with clear and generally animated enunciation. Except when [he] had [an] object of enquiry he instantly retires with pronouncing some of his (Moselekatse's) great names, and Aete (Thank you), I suppose for having been allowed to speak to his sacred majesty. ... To-day two men drew with two lion-skins and, by placing them against the stump of a tree, told where and when and by whom the lions were killed. This done, they retire, very often stooping, at least for some distance.[1]

Many of the indunas came to congratulate the king on Moshete's arrival, which provided a double halo of reflected glory: for Moselekatse, in his pride of possession; and for Moffat, in tribal esteem - "There sits Moshete. Who knows the heart of Moshete, like the great king, the great mountain, the son of Machobane! Where are they who said Moshete will not come again? There he is ... must give him plenty of cattle to kill."

The refrain of the warriors, the sight of the king carried shoulder high in the arm-chair which Moffat brought from Kuruman, plus Moselekatse's "overflowing liberality and his kindness and attachment to me", were all signs to Moffat of his supremacy in royal favour. It was a strange supremacy, half repelled by Moffat in his stern evangelical zeal, but pathetically bolstered up by the heathen monarch, dogged in his personal devotion but unyielding to his friend's religious pleadings:

> There is, I believe, not a mortal in Moselekatse's dominions who can talk to him with that freedom and assume the

[1] Journal 27.9.54 NA

> independence I can in his presence, yet I endeavour by every means and on every occasion to keep in mind the apostolic exhortation, "Be courteous." I feel most reluctant to offend. To gain the entire confidence he has in me would be probably no easy matter, and even this may some day be turned to account in the reception of future visitors and ultimately in the spread of the Gospel; but it is exceedingly distressing to me to be living here and not to be able to talk to the Matabele about the soul's salvation or to be permitted to proceed in quest of Livingstone.[1]

All during the early days of August the two men bantered and manoeuvred, the one to be off towards the Zambesi to hear news of Livingstone, and the other to hold him back:

> 18th August, Friday. Told him he might see my men were putting my wagon in travelling order, and that I should start to-morrow and make the best of my way in the direction I wished to go in quest of Livingstone. He said he had not yet had time to see me and to show me kindness ... you are my father and mother ... he laid hold of my beard and he really looked as if he intended kissing me. He held up his three fingers and said, "Three days!" and walked off, telling me, with a shake of the hand, that he was joyful.
>
> 22nd August, Tuesday. Patience, patience, patience. ... To-day I had got all ready to start to-morrow when he sent word to ask if I could put some corn into my wagon as he was going with me. ... Is he afraid of getting sick during my absence ... or is he afraid that I go too far and decamp, and not return, even for his gift of twelve hundred pounds of ivory, which, of course, I leave. ... Patience is a plaster for all woes.[2]

VII

By August 24 even Moffat's patience was wearing thin. He was eager to be off westward towards the Chobe, while Moselekatse loaded him with presents of ivory and corn as part of his delaying movement.

Then, to Moffat's astonishment, he proposed going with him, and installed himself in Moffat's wagon, sitting up in front or lounging on the bed, while a crowd of followers chattered alongside the wagon, dogs yelped, at at every village people flocked

1,2 Journal 13.8.54 NA

to see the strange sight of "Matabelean monarch and humble missionary in the wilderness".[1]

For the first day they were without William, the Griqua, as interpreter;[2] so the two men sat silent, smiling to one another, Moselekatse playing with his "beads and baubles" on Moffat's bed, while Moffat wondered at himself "riding with him like a state prisoner". On the second night, Moselekatse took a bold step. He spread his karosses in Moffat's bivouac, forsaking his wives and retinue to sleep amongst Moffat's Bechuana servants, "determined to be enrolled amongst my domestics", holding a royal barbecue round Moffat's gridiron ("strips of meat right and left"), finishing up with family prayers.

William's explanation was that Moselekatse was afraid of sickness as they moved into unhealthy country, and that the closer hewas to Moffat the safer he would be. Moffat hoped that "as he gets nearer to me in body, I hope to get nearer his soul". It was all very mystifying, but also gratifying "that he should accompany me to the most unhealthy part of his dominions to assist me in obtaining information about Livingstone".[3]

The direction was north and west from Matlokotloko, through the spacious river valley between the two great hills of Sipongwene (4,395 feet) and Umfasimete (4,421 feet) to the Umgaza River, and then westwards on to the Khami, the Gwai, and the Nata. From "inyoking to unyoking" the two men sat together as the wagon jolted over cracks and holes in the open plains where the cattle stood in their hundreds for the king to inspect. It

[1,3] Journal 24.8.54; 27.8.54 NA

[2] See page for the story of the Griqua captives (Willem and Truey) whose release Moffat secured.

was a rich land, with ample water; and a continuous supply of stewed pumpkin, boiled maize, and calabashes of beer, brought to the wagons, turned the trek into a luxury safari. Messengers and runners were out on all sides to report; warriors cleared the route, even moving stones a dozen yards away from the wagons. At the Khami River the hippos were out in force; and Moffat, to the huge delight of the travelling court, shot three to provide a "full and free gorge on fat sea-cow flesh" for everybody, and for the vultures, too - which swooped on the immense head of a sea-cow "2½ feet high, 20 inches across the upper lip, 6½ feet circumference".

By night, Moselekatse slept hard on the open ground, with a couple of karosses for bedding, but by day preferred the ease of Moffat's bed. He amused Moffat by handling his books ("trying his hand to pick up a little"), particularly a copy of the Eclectic Review, with a pictorial advertisement for umbrellas - which he recognized. That unlocked the mystery of print - "he seemed quite proud that he had found something that he knew".

On September 6, towards the Nata River, the wagons rumbled across a light soil-covered limestone country which Moselekatse knew in his wanderings after his expulsion from the Transvaal, a country of elephants, giraffe, and rhinoceros, with stream-beds brimful of "coarse sand winding like a yellow serpent through a level valley of black soil".[1]

At Matabele outposts the women capered with rods, the men with evergreen branches, and the youths - looking blacker than black on a moonlit night - serenaded the party with songs. Through the tall grass the warriors marched with their shields and spears, their heads peeping above the grass like men on horseback, and where the trees were thin this tapestry of tramping men moved in precision with the wagons. When the

[1] Journal 7.9.54 NA

wagons got stuck, as they did in the deep sand of the Nata River, Moselekatse shouted for his men to replace the tired oxen, and up rose the heavy vehicles to the opposite bank in a mighty heave.

By September 9 Moffat noticed that the country was getting drier, and the scouts brought in little news of water ahead, but much prophecy about the tsetse fly belt. He realized that his oxen were thin and tired, and the westward route would only bring them into waterless Bechuanaland. If they were to find Livingstone they must go northwards. Various plans were discussed, and the one Moffat most favoured - of walking on foot for twenty days to Linyati and back - was effectively baulked by Moselekatse: "I will go too,"he said, "I will not leave you. I shall take my wagon as far as I can, and after that I shall be carried." Moffat's predicament was lack of reliable information about the route, and the fact of his friendly captivity by Moselekatse. The only way out was to organize a Matabele expedition to find out about Livingstone and take the goods to the Zambesi. Moselekatse agreed with enthusiasm. Moffat was happy, and Moselekatse's grip on his Moshete was as sure as ever.

On a day of cloudless heat, Moffat transferred the contents of three wooden cases into seventeen packages for the Matabele men to carry on their heads. Out came the Kuruman goodies - coffee and apples, a bundle of vine cuttings ("as fresh as when cut"), a sack of potatoes, two bottles of wine and two of lemon juice, a bag of raisins, a box of prunes ("1853, good; 1854, going bad"), two bags of flour, and a box of books. They were packed up in cotton bags and pillow slips; and, after Moffat had written a long letter to his son-in-law, the twenty men lined up before him and Moselekatse. Their instructions were to go to Sekeletu, chief of the Makololo, and deliver the goods into his

keeping for Livingstone. At the command from Moselekatse the men went off on their 150 miles trek northwards to the Zambesi, on a route which is now impossible to define but which must have gone through the Wankie area of Southern Rhodesia.[1] In any case, it was beyond the normal Matabele boundaries, in tsetse fly country, and had its termination amongst the Makololo enemy.[2]

As Moffat watched them depart he felt that "a big stone that had lain on my heart had rolled off", and when one carrier ran back twenty miles to report the breakage of a pot of syrup all he got for his pains was a stern "Hamba" [march] from Moselekatse. The two men were happily united in planning this audacious trek to carry the homely condiments of Mary Moffat's kitchen to the distant "child Livingstone", whom Moselekatse and his men had never seen but accepted because of the name and the importunities of his father-in-law.

Across the practically unknown and mostly waterless miles of the Wankie area the men tramped for ten days with their packages, meeting eventually with one of Sekeletu's men who had served Livingstone. He led them towards the south bank of the Zambesi, above the Victoria Falls, and there they stopped opposite Kalai Island (now Queen Elizabeth's Island) and began to call the suspicious Makololo across the river to receive the goods. Livingstone himself describes the scene in his Missionary Travels:[3]

> Makololo: Go along with you, we know better than that; How could he [Livingstone] tell Moffat to send his things here, he having gone away to the north?
>
> Matabele: Here are the goods; we place them now before you, and if you leave them to perish, the guilt will be yours.

[1] See Note at end of Chapter

[2] Journal 30.9.54 NA

[3] Page 247

Suspicious by experience of the Matabele, the Makololo pointed to the warrior's ring on the head of Mondane, the leader, and wondered why "Moshete" should choose such people to do his work. "Why does not Moffat bring the goods himself?", they asked.[1]

> When they had departed [writes Livingstone] the Makololo thought better of it, and after much divination, went over with fear and trembling, and carried the packages carefully to an island in the middle of the stream; then, building a hut over them to protect them from the weather, they left them; and there I found they had remained from September 1854 till September 1855 in perfect safety.[2]

VIII

By September 30, Mondane, the expedition's leader, was back to report on the success of his venture to the two men who had planned the happy partnership. He found them on the way home from the Nata River, picking out their previous path, with the oxen tired, and Moselekatse always ready to dilly-dally; but Moffat triumphant, for on Sunday, September 24, he preached for the first time to the Matabele.

About noon on September 22 the wagons unyoked at Babampeng, four miles from Matlokotloko, Moffat drawing his wagon outside the cattle kraal and away from the dirt and dust. Moselekatse followed him, anxious not to lose a moment of his friend's company, and came out with the alluring suggestion that Moshete must preach to the people. "He says he feels ashamed, and will feel so until I tell his people about God's word. I should almost think that he knows that this will detain me perhaps a little longer, if anything will." Whatever the reasons for Moselekatse's action, the congregation next day in front of Moffat's wagon assembled under orders for the preaching, which

[1] Journal 30.9.54 NA

[2] Travels 427

followed Moffat's customary oration of "creation, providence, and redemption," and concluded with "death and immortality". The congregation listened in profound silence, and "looked as if they were looking to the wonder of wonders and the most extraordinary statements - and so they were".[1] For Moffat, it was the first sowing of the seed in Matabeleland; while Moselekatse had hit upon a fresh and most powerful reason for keeping Moffat with him. After the sermon they both shook hands. Moffat was happier than at any time since leaving Kuruman.[2]

Next day at nine o'clock, with the sun mounting into the nineties, Moffat was up again by the wagon, with Moselekatse at his elbow listening to an exposition of the atonement. On Tuesday there was a larger congregation than ever, and on Wednesday evening :

> Between two and three hundred men sitting before me on their posteriors on the ground, with their arms leaning on their knees, without an article of dress save the few tails about their middles, listening with the stillness of death and when I prayed, turning down on their knees till I was done, and after, till told to get up.[3]

Through Thursday, Friday, Saturday, to Sunday October 1, in intense heat, the Matabele sat round the preacher as he pointed out their personal and public sins. Moffat spared no one. He pounded away at evils such as taking children from conquered tribes to rear as soldiers, and of death as a punishment. The doctrine of the resurrection sent a shiver down Moselekatse's spine as he contemplated the number of individuals he had "causelessly ordered to be killed".

On Sunday, October 8, there was singing, followed by

1,2,3 Journal 24.9.54; 24.9.54; 27.9.54 NA

Moffat confirming and enlarging what he had already preached. Time was running short. Moselekatse knew that freedom to preach was the only inducement that could possibly keep Moffat a few more days, so he sat late with him in the wagon, flattered him with more tusks of ivory, and yielded at last to Moffat's entreaties to free the captive Griqua maid, Troey.

The deliverance of Troey was the crowning act. She had been in Matabele hands for over twenty years, since she was carried off with her cousin, William, in a Matabele raid on the Griquas. Peter David, her father, was a leader amongst the Griquas, and Moffat felt an honourable obligation to restore her to her home. He astutely left his final assault on Moselekatse's good nature until almost their last day together:

> I told him I pitied her father who was still mourning for his daughter; that as a father I knew what I should feel like if I had a child in such circumstances, and then appealed to himself kissing his children, and asked him if he had a daughter, a captive in a distant nation, would he long to see her again.[1]

It was enough. Troey went home with Moffat, although she had to walk all the way.

One by one Moselekatse's ruses to detain Moffat failed. He needed pills for his dropsy; and did not Moffat's cold need careful attention? In the dawning light of October 9 he resorted to the last desperate ruse of all by attempting to drive away Moffat's oxen. Sam Edwards saw him scuttling about in the early daylight - "the Lion of Lions among our oxen to drive them away". Moselekatse loved being caught, for he enjoyed his own jokes.

When the hour of parting came, he took Moffat's hand and looked him straight in the face. "Tell Ma-Mary", he said, "how glad I am that I have seen you. Tell her I love her much." It was a salute to the heart of Moffat in the best

[1] Journal 8.10.54 NA

style of the first Matabele gentleman, who "seemed at a loss to know what to do next to show me he loved me".[1] Never in African history had a royal farewell had so much depth of genuine personal feeling:

> Nothing surprised me more [wrote Moffat] than the unwavering kindness of Moselekatse up to the last moment I left his dominions, and his munificence is no less surprising. I went expecting nothing, and he has sent me away full. It may be easily supposed that I must have been extremely liberal in gifts. This however has not been the case, and of gunpowder I did not give him one grain, nor a single ounce of lead, and the most valuable beads I took with me are still in my possession. On nothing however do I look with so much pleasure as having been permitted to preach to him and his people the words of eternal life.[2]

A guard of honour escorted him to the Matabele frontier, while news of his health was regularly relayed back to the royal kraal. "I leave", wrote Moffat, "with astonishment at the kindness of a savage tyrant of great power to a plain Christian missionary, which perhaps has never been surpassed."[3] It was a true word.

1-3
Journal 9.10.54; 28.10.54; 8.10.54 NA

MOFFAT'S ROUTE THROUGH MATABELELAND FROM MANGWE PASS TO MATLOKOTLOKO [1] in 1854

Although Moffat nowhere mentions going through the Mangwe Pass on July 18, 1854, on his entry as the first European into Matabeleland proper, there can be no doubt that the wagons of Sam Edwards and himself passed along that route where the memorial now stands.

His description of the country in his journal[1] has the unmistakable flavour of the Matapos along whose western flanks he moved, wandering in and out amongst the kopjies, the granite formations, and over the stretches of open savannah.

On December 3-4, 1958, I investigated a portion of this section of Moffat's route, in the company of Mr Roger Summers, of the National Museum's Department of Antiquities, Bulawayo; and afterwards consulted Dr George Jamieson, who has made a close study of early routes into Matabeleland.

On descending the Mangwe Pass, Moffat diverged to the north-east, from the present road to Marula, towards the headwaters of the Shashani River.

Some five hundred yards before a small tributary of the Shashani is the rock formation known as Eagle Rock [so christened by Thomas Baines], on "Taylors", a farm belonging to Mr "Boote" Rosenfels, who was the prime mover in establishing the memorial on the top of the Mangwe Pass.

Below Eagle Rock the track followed by the coaches from the south to Bulawayo (1894-98) is very clearly visible. This was most probably Moffat's route also as he moved north-eastwards, always looking for easy passages for the wagons and oxen, and heading for the double crowned hill of Ntabemyana on what is now La Concorde Farm.

It was here that in 1847 Potgieter camped with his burghers in their retreat before the Matabele; lost their cattle and cattle-guards; and beat it round the western outflanks of the Matopos.[2]

Here Moffat was some two and a half miles south of the present Figtree-Westacre Junction Road, to which the road runs parallel until it begins to get entangled in the developments of the Bellevue district of modern Bulawayo. Here it deploys through the south-eastern districts to the ridge of Lemon Grove, between Bellevue and Newton West, and then on to the 4,600-foot contour: roughly following Ullswater Drive - Greystoke Way - Cecil Avenue - and through the grounds of Hillside School down to the

[1] Journal 19.7.54; 20.7.54 NA

[2] Tredgold, Matopos 64; Nada 1924, 58; Africana (Tabler) June 1954,70

difficult crossing of the Matsheumhlope River, and across Raylton Golf Course, and the Little Umguza River to Glengarry on the Bulawayo-Salisbury Road, to the main Umguza River.

Here, within sight of the flat-topped Taba Induna [4,647 feet], Moselekatse had his kraal at Matlokotloko, somewhere between Glengarry and Cement. In 1857 the king had moved farther north-eastwards in the country behind Kombo, and then by 1859 some fifteen miles north of Inyati.

FROM MATLOKOTLOKO (1854) TO THE NATA RIVER, AND BACK [August 18 - October 9]

This north-north-west trek of Moselekatse and Moffat followed the waters of the Umguza River (flowing northwards) and swung due westwards across the Umguza, near where it is crossed by the Great North Road; and then west towards the Highfields Station on the railway, to the Khami, the Gwai and the Nata.

MATABELE ROUTE TO THE MAKOLOLO FROM THE NATA RIVER

It is impossible to say exactly what this route was. Mr Roger Summers is inclined to put the route much nearer the present Bechuanaland border - on account of the water problem - than is Dr George Jamieson, who would put the route through part of the present Wankie Game Reserve.

CHAPTER 14
"COUNTRY TO LET"
July 1857 - January 1858

Faith, faith, faith is now our only motto

Matabeleland was now Moffat's land. From the Limpopo to the Zambesi, and from the Shashi in the west to the Sabia in the east, Moselekatse's writ[1] provided a freedom for Moffat to come and go in a manner that no white man had then achieved in the territories of a great African chief. "My land is yours"[2], said Moselekatse. In what Moffat called "a country to let"[3], the lonely apprehensive monarch reached out for protective sympathy, for in spite of Moffat's rebukes and admonitions he found comfort in "Moshete". "How I love you", he said. "How can you say you would not come again? You have never tired working for me ... my wives say 'Let us have Moshete.'"[4] Moffat's ascendancy was established not by any subtle skill but by a plain disinterested devotion to his cause; a stubborn "duty to supply him and his people with the knowledge of Divine things"[5], which never slackened in spite of Matabele unresponsiveness.[6]

Moselekatse and his Matabele had been nearly twenty years in the "country to let" and were firmly established in their central stronghold of power, with a supremacy over a raiding area amongst the Mashona and the Makalanga extending as far as 150 miles north and east from the present Bulawayo.[7] Their military techniques perfected, under Moselekatse's genius, during the

1 Thomas, Eleven Years 80

2,3 Journal 17.11.57; 6.7.57 NA

4-6 Journal 5.12.57 NA

7 Schapera, Tswana Tribes (LSE Monograph 1952.7)
Whether it was "Moshete's" advice which led them to this high and healthy plateau may be strongly doubted, but the fact that this tradition persists amongst the Matabele to-day is evidence of the influence that Moffat had [See Chap. 13].

seventeen years of their power in the Transvaal[1], were the tactics of storming the weak enemy, and retreating before the strong one.[2] This made them invincible amongst the Sotho and Bechuana tribes, and might have firmly established a Matabele empire south of the Limpopo save for the Voortrekkers, who showed that they too could attack and win.

In his new home, Moselekatse found ideal ground for his methods, and the victories he achieved could well justify his ignoring the gloomy warnings of Moffat[3] that war was "hateful to Jehovah". For thirty years his profession of aggressive warfare had brought him signal success amongst the weaker tribes of southern Africa, in spite of Moffat's trenchant off-stage alarms about the ultimate doom of his bloodthirsty policy.[4] But Moffat's influence and presence did produce modifications in despotic practice,[5] and made him a welcome visitor amongst the Matabele in general who knew that he and he alone could compel their master to be "more lenient and forgiving".[6] In particular, Moffat saw that the Matabele practice of impounding young men in barracks, and prohibiting them from marriage, was "a stern law under which many groaned".[7] Such young bloods could only "clamour to be led forth to pillage, outrage and bloodshed",[8] and he modestly records his success in persuading Moselekatse to raise large numbers of his people "to the nobility", from being machaha (soldiers) to mantoto (men), to wear a ring of hair on their shaven heads and to possess wives.[9] But he was under no illusion that Moselekatse in "the country to let" was any less ferocious than he was in the Transvaal. The Mashona and Makalanga tribes - even in their mountain homes - fell easy prey to the devastating charges of the Matabele,[10] whose favourite target

1,2,4,10 Nada (Summers) 7ff 1955

3 Journal 8.10.54 NA 5 Journals 1829 (n.d.); 13.9.57 NA

6,7,9 Journal 13.9.57 NA

8 Mackenzie, 311

was a sleeping village in the early dawn when "they rush it with break of day, butchering the adults, seizing the young and stock and burning the huts to the ground. Old women were frequently paraded, then stabbed to death, or covered with straw and set alight." [1]

Into this country of miliary conquest and planned raiding Moffat once again prepared to move in July 1857, on instructions to open the way for a permanent missionary settlement amongst the Matabele - the first venture of white men to live north of the Limpopo. Like Moselekatse himself, Moffat was an invader, for his orders were to prepare the way in the "country to let" for the revolutionary ideas of the Christian faith whose acceptance would be bound to hasten the disintegration of anything that was left of the old Bantu civilization that the "mild, industrious and disunited"[2] Mashona and Makalanga had inherited from their past glories. He was an agent of change, just as the Angoni and the Matabele had been before him, amongst the older Bantu groups inhabiting these uplands of Southern Rhodesia.[3] The Matabele system of raids, conscription and military discipline had wrought a revolution in the "country to let", but Moffat's coming heralded revolution for everyone - conquerors as well as conquered - in a land which no-one fully commanded or occupied.[4]

Even so, it would be inaccurate to say that the land was devoid of life apart from the dominant Matabele. Tribal life proceeded according to its ancient pattern, although threatened by the intermittent miseries of raiding and captivity, and many tribes remained "relatively autonomous":[5] a man knew his

[1] PRSA (Posselt) 18ff 1919
[2] Tabler 112
[3] Summers MSS Notes 1958
[4,5] Hughes, Ndebele Intro. 17, 19

social and personal position with its attendant obligations and duties,[1] and had the solace of his ancestors, the comfort of his descendants and, if need be, the resource to magic and witchcraft. More than their conquerors, the Mashona were industrious craftsmen, workers in iron and metal, weavers in cotton fibre, as well as farmers and builders; and their women accomplished in the domestic arts of cooking, plastering, pottery and gardening.[2] Where they failed was in an ability to defend what they had first in the face of the Matabele military power, and then in the face of the omnicompetent European penetration - religious, economic and political - which subdued both conquered and conquerors in Southern Rhodesia and whose herald was Robert Moffat.[3]

He was amply armed for the penetration - he was the great Moshete, a European, able to command at least the essentials of the white man's equipage, and he was a Teacher. Although Moffat regarded himself as a simple ambassador of the Christian faith, ready to do his duty and leave it at that, he could not divorce himself entirely from his other roles, and Moselekatse certainly would not allow him to do so. He could mend axle-trees, bleed the monarch's wives to their own and their husband's pleasure, administer potent pills of resin of jalap, clean gun locks, repair a powder horn and shoot a rhino in the river.[4] He was a reliable link too with the white world beyond the Matabele borders where the traders and hunters were manoeuvring for position and the Boers always alert. When he stood up to preach, Moselekatse listened - if he could not avoid being present - because it was his friend Moshete preaching; but when in 1859

[1] Hughes, Ndebele Intro. 19

[2] Posselt, Fact and Fiction 100ff

[3] Hughes [to author 13.3.1959] : "It is conceivable that the Ndbele did not regard the whites as any more alien than their Sotho and Shona neighbours. As fellow immigrants they may even have felt a certain affinity for them. They also promised to be potential allies; it should be borne in mind that the Ndbele and the British Crown entered into formal treaty relations as early as 1836."

[4] Journal 2.9.57 NA

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other practisers of the art appeared at Inyati, "the chief proceeded amid merriment to draw a ludicrous picture of the state of Matabele society were the Christian views adopted."[1] He realized what a head-on collision between Christianity and the Matabele society-structure would mean, and Moffat too - a shrewd and practised observer of African ways - foresaw the frustrated impotency that lay in store for Christianity:

> Whoever is destined to labour as missionaries among the Matabele will require strong faith, great prudence and unwearied perseverance. They are verily the greatest savages in S.Africa and until an entire change takes place in their government, the case seems hopeless. The mind of Moselekatse, though doubtless once strong and, I should think, elastic, is in dotage, blunted with beer ... he professes to yield to my judgment in everything; but, except in cases where I can, without exciting suspicions, make him stick to his own words, his professions are piecrusts ... lies with him are as lawful as eating food.[2]

Moffat, saw that the "country to let" was not entirely devoid of religious practices. True there were no idols to focus an obvious cult[3] and no officials and priests (except the popular witch-doctors), sadhus or saints, to adorn a hierarchy. Matabele religion, like that of the Bantu in general, was a theophany of spirits and magic linked with the round of the seasons, and especially the coming of the rains, in which the ritual of signing and dancing by men in full war dress played

[1] Mackenzie 337
[2] Journal 8.11.57 NA
[3] Tabler, 110

a central part.[1] Free beef and free beer, the spectacle of barbaric dancing, and the butchering of oxen,[2] could only merit trenchant condemnation from the standard-bearer of a lofty Christian morality whose test of inward faith was outward conduct.

Moffat preached a personal salvation to a society where for a man to think of himself as "the object of divine favour individually and apart from his tribe would seem absurd and impossible",[3] and where religion had no connection with the moral laws.[4] He and his colleagues expected to see personal conversions after the western Christian manner amongst people whose whole existence was embedded in a tribal pattern, and whose life depended on the nod of the chief. It was asking the impossible; and almost because of it Moffat pursued his quest with unwearied patience, pressing the frontal attack, a method which in the field of military tactics Moselekatse well understood and secretly admired. His friend Moshete "spoke the truth",[5] but to follow him in it would demand a revolution in the Matabele way of life, which Moselekatse probably realized would mean the end of his lordship and the death of the Matabele system. That view no doubt lay behind his laconic reply to Mackenzie in 1863, who asked the ageing monarch why he would not permit his people to be taught to read. "We have many wives", he replied.[6]

Unlike the weaker Mashona, when faced with invasion, the Matabele under Moselekatse were out to defend their empire. If it had not been for Moselekatse's resolute leadership it is not unlikely that the Boers would sooner or later have broken through

1 Tabler 111
2 Hughes, Ndbele 103
3,4 PRSA (Neilsen) 1912, 166
5 Journal 16.11.57 NA
6 Mackenzie 337

the feeble defences of the Makalanga and Mashona and swept on to the Zambesi and so changed the face of Central Africa.[1] He was a formidable barrier in the pathway of Boer expansion, and appeared to distinguish between them and the Englishmen who came into his dominions with Moffat's recommendation.[2] But, while successfully withstanding the outward physical assault from the south, he succombed inevitably to the internal spiritual assault which Moffat began, although maintaining his own "heathen" integrity to the end. Caught in the toils of his own personal affection for Moshete, and an inward antagonism to his teachings, Moselekatse was nevertheless a bulwark against change amongst the Matabele, and many who were sympathetic to "the teaching" turned away rather than be accused of disloyalty to the nation.[3]

I

Behind the journey which started from Kuruman in July 1857 was another power making for change in the "country to let", and which must be reckoned with in assessing the undertaking.

It was the year of Livingstone's triumphal welcome home to Britain, a year which lifted Africa into popular concern in Britain, and formed in the mid-Victorian conscience a sensitive area where political responsibility and humanitarian devotion struggled for reconciliation. By the time Moffat set out, Livingstone had finished the manuscript of his Travels, which sold in seven quick editions and in its "taut, sometimes exciting and humorous astringent Scots manner"[4] conveyed the Victorian reader to savage Africa and helped him to share in what the Chamberlain of the City of London grandiloquently called "the moral elevation of mankind ... by preparing the way for that intercommunication and commerce between alienated races ... to unite all the tribes of the earth in a bond of universal brotherhood".[5]

1 PRSA (Posselt) 19, 1919
2 Journal 13.9.57 and Tablet 235
3 Carnegie, Among the Matabele 166
4 Simmons, Livingstone in Africa 73
5 Presenting Freedom of City 21.5.57

Charles Dickens praised Livingstone as "the man with the soft heart and the smile in it";[1] while the British Association, the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, the Corporation of Glasgow, the City of Edinburgh, and the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, all rose to do him honour - which Livingstone modestly turned away from himself to Africa.

The continent became the centrepiece of all the receptions and speeches, ending with that magnificent crescendo in the Cambridge Senate House on December 4 when he suddenly shouted to the audience: " Do you carry on the work which I have begun. I leave it with you."[2]

The mid-Victorians, under the spell of Livingstone's first great journey, recognized his astonishing contributions to geography, zoology, geology - as well as the moral grandeur of the man - in a manner which the modern world is re-discovering. Mary Moffat was not far out when she wrote about her son-in-law to Mary, his wife:

> He is certainly the wonder of his age, and with a little prudence as regards his health, the stores of information he now possesses might be turned to a mighty account for poor wretched Africa.[3]

For Moffat and Livingstone, Africa was a down-to-earth continent, and they both faced its bleak, harsh conditions unbemused by the build-up of Victorian romantic religious sentiments, of which Moffat had been the centre-piece in 1843 and now Livingstone in 1857. Moffat wrote to Livingstone:

1 Household Words 23.1.58

2 Livingstone and Cambridge UMCA 15. On that same day, Robert Moffat was closeted with Moselekatse on the thundery high-veld of Southern Rhodesia, preparing for the monarch "pills of a pithy description for his sickly but favourite wife. Livingstone would have approved his father-in-law's observation that "a dose at a former time, on the top of enough to physic half-a-dozen, had done her good." [Journal 4.12.57 NA] Africa, after all, was not only meant for high sentiments in London and Cambridge.

3 Blaikie 167

> Your explorations have created immense interest in England, and that man must be made of bend-leather who can remain unmoved at the rehearsal even of a tithe of your daring enterprises. The honours awaiting you at home would be enoughtto make a score of heads dizzy, but I have no fear of their affecting your upper storey .. I daresay many have called you a very naughty man for having exposed your life a thousand times.[1]

Out of the glow and glory of the Livingstone epic in Britain came the thrust that sent Moffat northwards again in July 1857, for the instructions which reached him that month[2] revealed that both he and Livingstone by their personalities and propaganda had helped to convince the Directors of the L.M.S. to start two new missions in the north - one to the Makololo and the other to the Matabele. The idea began to shape of a Matabele-Makololo mission which might bring peace between the two tribes, and give the Christian faith a firm foothold in south-central Africa,[3] a grandiose plan which perished in the disaster to the Makololo missionaries (see Chapter 16) and which probably Moffat never believed in.[4]

Livingstone was all on fire to plant a mission amongst his devoted Makololo, to get them out of the swamps of the Chobe-Zambesi basin and onto the drier plateau north of the river,[5] while Moffat - more cautious but always loyal to the vision of the north he shared with his son-in-law - saw that his immediate duty was to see Moselekatse again, for without his goodwill the hope of settling missionaries in his domains was a forlorn one.[6] At sixty-two the projected journey of fourteen hundred miles there and back was no light undertaking, but Moffat knew that

[1] Blaikie 168
[2,3] Tidman to R.M. 4.4.57 NA
[4] Smith GL 30
[5] D.L. to J.S.M. 14.1.58 NA
[6] R.M. to Tidman 15.7.57 NA

only he was capable of opening the door permanently into Matabeleland; the 1854 journey had secured him the freedom to travel in the "country to let"; his task now was to occupy it. Within twenty-one days of receiving his instructions, he was on the road to the north.

II

This speedy departure was eased by the fulfilment of another duty which since 1827 had dominated his life - the translation of the Bible into Sechuana. In January 1857, Ezekiel, last of the books was finished:

> I do not feel willing to forget the emotion I felt when the last galley was read, nor the just indignation I felt at being locked out of my study, towards which I felt a kind of sacred awe.[1]

By July the finished sheets of the complete Old Testament[2] were coming from the Kuruman Press, a triumph of translating and printing which then had no equal in southern Africa, and which in Livingstone's opinion surpassed any attempt to transfer the "minutiae and idiom of an African language ... to paper with anything like the accuracy which obtains in Mr. Moffat's Sechuana Bible. ... all who succeed him in the same field are under the deepest obligations to his indomitable energy." [3]

Section by section, the Old Testament[4] had passed through the printing shop, beginning with the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Isaiah in 1847; Genesis and Exodus, 1851; Genesis to 2 Kings as one volume in 1853; and then in 1857, 1 Chronicles to Malachi. The thirty years of translating and printing resulted in two volumes, of which Moffat and Ashton (who had printed every sheet except the Psalms

1 Journal 28.8.57 NA

2 See Appendix II

3 Livingstone, Sechuana Grammar 1858 (an opinion confirmed by a modern authority on the language, the Rev. Alex. Sandilands)

4 The New Testament was printed in London (1840) and the Psalms was bound up with it

and one sheet of Proverbs) had every justification to be proud. Ashton rightly claimed that the work of the small hand-press at Kuruman[1] was as good as any done at the time at the Cape. He could never be sure of efficient assistance:

> Sometimes on the very morning when I must print off a sheet (Ashton wrote) having the paper wet and everything ready the lad that should roll for me, has not made his appearance ... I have all my own rollers to make, and in winter, with frost every night, and having no stove, I have had great difficulty in keeping them and the ink sufficiently soft for working. I have burnt loads of charcoal in open fire-grates, which were placed sometimes under the ink-table, and at other times under the press to warm the type, to prevent the ink sticking and tearing the paper.[2]

In the adjoining room, his head buzzing "with a constant roaring noise like the falling of a cataract",[3] Moffat ground out the translation with Ashton at call, and Mary to read out the English:

> Having finished one or more integral portions, I called to my assistance a native, generally two, taking care to have at least one of them a stereotype in his own language, and not easily moved by foreign idiom. To these I read and re-read the translation, during which words wanting were supplied, dialects investigated by calling in the assistance of others who were not difficult to obtain from the mixed community residing on the station.[4]

After Mary had read out the English "slowly and distinctly to see that no word or rather sense was left out" the translation was passed to Ashton, who again read the English aloud to Moffat as he followed the Sechuana. The sheets of the translation were then passed to the compositor, while Moffat held his breath as the proofs came:

> In proportion as each sheet of eight pages octavo drew near completion the deeper was the anxiety I felt even when correcting the galleys, proofs

[1] See Appendix II

[2] Ashton to Tidman 18.7.53 LMS

[3] Dr George Jamieson of Bulawayo identifies Moffat's complaint as Menieres Disease - a haemorrhage of the inner ear which cleared up in old age.

[4] R.M. to Bible Society 5.3.61 [Bible Society]

> and especially the revises. I very frequently got a native to read the revise audibly while I looked on another to see if anything still required altering. I naturally enough felt a kind of horror at the prospect of finding, after the sheets were printed off, errors ... hundreds of times have I felt that I would give almost anything to be able to consult some (persons) of Biblical lore and critical acumen, whose learning and judgment would have enabled me to decide on points of translation on which my mind still stands in doubt.[1]

It proved, however, to be an achievement of remarkably even quality, and stood the test of regular use for the next fifty years. Moffat had no knowledge of phonetics, let along any disciplined knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, but his blunders in Sechuana as well as in interpretation are astonishingly few when it is remembered that he had to make his own standards in orthography,[2] was unable to refer his translations to any outside referee, and had no grammar or dictionary on which to build his vocabulary.[3] The Kuruman Bible was a home-made production even to the Kuruman dialect, that crept into the Sechuana, although Moffat claimed that his Bible could be read with ease as far north as the Makololo country on the Zambesi. When A.J. Wookey came to revise it between 1895 and 1907 he pronounced it a "wonderful work" and eighteen years after the publication of the revision Moffat's Bible was still outselling its rival.[4]

III

With three years of close concentration on Bible translating and printing behind him, Moffat was glad to feel the wind and sun

[1] R.M. to Bible Society 5.3.61 [Bible Society]
[2] Smith EW 224ff
[3] Bleek, Catalogue Grey Collection
[4] Smith EW 224ff

of the open veld once again as the wagon moved northwards to Motito on July 27, 1857. He was alone except for four Bechuana servants, and took only one wagon and a small stock of food, with the intention of buying sheep, goats and cattle on the way with a little personal hunting if necessary. For a man of sixty-two it was a courageous and lonely expedition, but its spontaneity in planning and execution displayed Moffat's mastery of veld travel and his confidence in the welcome he would receive in the "country to let". Mary and Bessie (his daughter, then eighteen) loaded him up with the domestic delicacies he loved - rusks, chopped beef, ginger, new bread, walnuts, preserved apples, and oranges to be planted, if possible in Matabeleland.[1]

As a man will when he leaves home in a hurry, he had not gone far on the track to Motito when he remembered all the instructions he should have given, particularly about the garden. "Tell Pule", he writes,[2] to sow another two rows of peas ... there is abundance of radish seed ... parsley may be sown ... a single row of red and white kidneys may be acceptable ... pumpkin ... beet ... carrots ... cut down the suckers growing on the trees, apple, pear in orchard and vineyard ... uncover the naartje tree in the orange tree row ... clip the pomegranate hedge." Without telling Mary, he smuggled into the wagon his version of the New Testament to revise, and a supply of paper to compose some hymns in Sechuana.[3]

The veld seemed bleaker than usual. "Not the smallest vestige of anything of any colour to be seen - perfect blackness - perfect gloom; though the sun shone, its light made blackness

1,2 Journal 11.8.57; 30.7.57 NA

3 He translated or composed 90 hymns

blacker".[1] Not far from Motito, where he left his Fredoux grand-children tucking into Kuruman oranges, Moffat found the skeleton of a man:

> All the bones were in their natural position, lying on one side with the knees drawn up like a person sleeping on his side with his right arm under his head. The flesh had been clean picked off every part, apparently only within two or three days ... nothing but eagles and crows had picked the bones as there was no spoor of either lion or wolf ... he had either died or been killed in the waggon-road and from thence he had been dragged by someone and placed behind a bush some fifteen yards from the road.[2]

Moffat diagnosed natural causes "increased by the cold and hunger", a potent example of what could happen to the lone traveller in this brutish wilderness.

Across the Molopo River, by modren Mafeking, Moffat walked alongside the wagon on August 7 to keep warm and with the salt meat finished and the last sheep diseased and useless he turned to Mary's chopped beef for a "capital dinner", and sent back home warnings to "water the walnut corner" and "cut the suckers from the olive plants".[3] His system of postmen to and from Kuruman depended mainly on passing traders, except when he used his own runner; but letters and messages were in time always delivered, and Moffat never records any fear for his own safety, although he war far removed from any efficient assistance in case of sudden illness.

He was now moving into the hilly country of the present Bechuanaland Protectorate in the winter-days of mid-August, with

1-3 Journal 6.8.57; 5.8.57; 7.8.57 NA

bitter winds rattling the wagon, and the nights so cold that he could not hold his pen.[1] On Quaque Hill, at Kanye, where thirty years before he first met Chief Makaba,[2] a congregation of seven hundred turned out to hear him preach from Psalm 33. "I spoke long, loud and earnest too", for there were so few who could read, and only a handful trying to learn. Even Moffat's unalloyed patience could get rattled.

It is difficulty to establish the exact route that Moffat took from the Quaque Hills at Kanye to the Ditenyane Hills near Molepolole in the Bakwena Reserve, where Sechele, in 1857, was established in his hill fortree of Lithubaruba. The present track through the farming lands of the Bangwaketse and the Bakwena runs via Moshupa and Tamakha, but Moffat's route[3] probably ran nearer Kolobeng - Livingstone's old station. Sechele had retreated to Lithubaruba after the disaster at Dimawe, seeing in its rocky defiles and precipitous slopes a natural defence for his people, wedged as they were between the open Kalahari and a frontier dominated by the restless Boers. How deadly the fear of the Boers was Moffat knew from his previous visit to Sechele's citadel, when he sat "completely floored" at the bitter speech of Sechele's brother, Khosilintse, on November 22, 1854. With the memory of the Kolobeng-Dimawe disaster still singingly sharp, the speaker poured out his sarcasm on Moffat's head:

> Are the Boers to be permitted to kill us, that our children may become their slaves? Is it because we have not white skins that we are to be destroyed like dibatana (beasts of prey)? You have spoken about what the word of God says. Have not the English the word of God, and have not the Boers the word of God? Are we only to obey the word of God because we are black? We are told

[1] Journal 7.8.57 NA

[2] Schapera, Short History of the Bangwaketse, says that the two sections of the tribe were living side by side on the Kanye Hills in 1853; but in 1857 (after Moffat's visit) an internal cattle war broke out which rent the tribe until a reunion in 1859. To-day the tribe lives at Kanye and draws royalties from the asbestos mines on Quaque!

[3] Local information

> that the English love all men. They give or sell ammunition, horses and guns to the Boers, who have teeth red with blood, to destroy us, and if we ask to buy powder, we can get none. No, no,no! Is this their love? The English are not friends to the black man.[1]

Moffat must have remembered this speech as he outspanned on the afternoon of August 13, 1857, beneath the entrance to the narrow kloof which led to the broad plateau of Sechele's town, for the speech was partly an explanation of the presence of the German Hermannsburg-Lutheran missionaries, who had arrived just a month before Moffat, at Sechele's invitation - or at least with his permission. Was it done to spite the English? Was it in collusion with the Boers? Was it Sechele's idea to have a full-blown mission instead of a native teacher, which was all Moffat could supply from Kuruman? Sechele being what he was,[2] there is some truth in each allegation. The presence of the Germans on the road to the north, which lasted until 1864, is an illuminating by-product of frontier politics and religion, and was an immediate problem for Moffat beneath the rugged heights of Lithubaruba.

The Hermannsburg Mission grew out of a revival of religion in Hanover in 1848 under the preaching of a Lutheran pastor, Ludwig Harms. It was a development of peasant religion, and Harms dreamed of sending out bands of farmer-missionaries who in simple communities would win non-Christians both to Christianity and democratic ideals.[3] They settled in Natal and were invited into the Transvaal by the Boer Republic,

[1] R.M. to Tidman 22.11.54 LMS

[2] Smith GL 162

[3] Latourette V 369

which if it had got to have foreign missionaries working within its borders preferred the American or German variety to the English - especially the ones labelled "London".[1]

Although the expulsion of the "London" men from the Transvaal (see Chapter 12) cleared their own territory of this type of missionary influence, the Boers knew that their Bechuana frontier was still vulnerable to this penetration. What could be better than a German group amongst the Bakwena to counteract the London group? It appears, according to the official history of the Hermannsburg Mission,[2] that in 1864 the Boer President Rensburg assured the Hermannsburg men that Sechele was subject to the Republic and that missionaries sent to him must be approved by the Republic. It was a far-fetched claim to make and there is no other evidence to support it, but there is no doubt that, even in 1857, the official policy of the Republic under Pretorius was to exclude all Englishmen, traders as well as missionaries, from lands where the Boer writ ran or might run,[3] and that the authorities at Potchefstroom suspected the Moffat-Kuruman prestige and its influence upon the border chiefs.[4] If Sechele wanted missionaries all to himself - as he most sincerely did - then here were the Germans ready to hand and willing, and at Marico the official Veld Cornet, Jan W. Viljoen, was bursting to introduce them.[5]

Moffat was convinced that it was all a deep-laid plot on the part of the Boers to oust the London men, and to bring Sechele and his subjects "into the thraldom of the Boers".[6] His dilemma was a genuine one. He could not grumble at Sechele's eagerness to have teachers, but the invasion of Bechuana territory by another mission, apparently under Boer auspices, was a bitter pill to swallow. "It makes one nervous",

1,3,4 A-H 118; 131; 131

2 Quoted Smith GL 163n

5 Wallis MJII Intro. 4

6 Journal 2.8.57 NA

he wrote, "the very idea of either directly or indirectly laying a straw in the way of the Gospel chariot." [1] Fortunately, Moffat had got the name "Moravians" [2] and not "Lutherans" into his head; and when he met Messrs. Schroeder, Muller and Herbst beneath the hard sandstone precipices of Sechele's redoubt he was, in spite of all his prejudices, predisposed towards them. "They appear to be estimable men", he reported to Mary,[3] and his chief fear was that Sechele and his people would not value them as they ought - a concern which he vented on the chief in a typically Moffat admonition:

> I begged of him not to talk of these men, nor allow them to be talked of, as if they were Boers; that as I had now ample opportunity of knowing them, he must believe when I say that they are valuable men. I also explained to him how cautiously they had acted, and how gladly they would have avoided the Boers if they could have done so, and that they had written to the Directors of our Society respecting their coming here.[4]

His policy was to detach the German mission from Boer connections; to persuade Sechele that he had got a company of Gospel-minded men for whom he should be thankful, and that "the eternal condition of himself and his people" depended on how he treated them. This magnanimity towards the newcomers glowed on the Sabbath on the spacious plateau where the people crowded into Sechele's Chapel "like herring in a barrel" to hear a long sermon in Germanic-Dutch from Schroeder. When Moffat himself preached in the afternoon the house was only half full! The Germans were in the ascendant, and Moffat was astute enough to see that their presence might prove "a faithful and unflinching monitor to keep Sechele right", for the battle was for the soul of Sechele. If the Germans could

1,3,4 Journal 2.8.57;13.8.57;17.8.57 NA

2 Pretorius had unsuccessfully asked the Moravians to help Sechele (du Plessis, 375)

help in that long engagement then Moffat was happy.

He bullied Sechele to give them decent houses to live in, rather than the native ones where the wind blew out the candles, and the shivering Germans had to put up their umbrellas when it rained. He rated him for his lack of gratitude in sending back their gift of a silver watch and asking for money in its place, and grieved over his impudence in writing his own name in large letters on the walls of the chapel, an idea which the Germans with their Lutheran doctrine of religion according to the way of the state (cuius regio eius religio) might well have encouraged him in.[1] Poor Sechele was beset with religious advisers, and for the next seven years sat uneasily between the Kuruman and the German influences. In 1864 Roger Price, Moffat's son-in-law, then missionary at Molepolole, was convinced that the newcomers amongst the Germans, at Lithubaruba, at any rate, were Boer emissaries,[2] a view which Sechele himself adopted and by a tribal pitso announced their dismissal. He did it in a sound Biblical manner, by reading to the Germans from the 29th chapter of the first book of Samuel in which Achish, king of Gath, suggests to David that although he was an angel of the Lord the princes of the Philistines had decided there was no place for him in the battle, and that he had better be off early in the morning.[3] The Germans took the hint, and moved back into the Transvaal, leaving the graves of Schroeder, Herbst, Frau Backeberg and two children, behind them in the wilderness of bush below Lithubaruba as a monument to their courage and forbearance. The graves were marked with a granite cross in 1957.[4]

[1] Journal 22.8.57 NA

[2,3] Smith GL 168

[4] The most lasting effect of the German incursion into the Bechuanaland Protectorate was the baptism, at Shoshong, 6.5.62, of the chief, Khama, founder of the present Bamangwato Khama family [Grove Planting Vol.2, 163]

IV

It was a hundred miles to Chief Sekhomi's capital of the Bamangwato at Shoshong. Moffat did it in eight days through the scrub country with its groups of hills, a fair supply of water and an abundance of hack thorns to make anti-lion kraals. After tea on August 24 he worked for two hours making a defence for his oxen, which were few and in poor condition. His tea - "I drain the pot every evening" - was a quality brew compared with the Germans' sorry production of "bilge-water" coffee with no sugar and little milk. He ate with relish off a roasted sheep's leg, and porridge of crushed maize which produced stomach ache, for which the Moffat family remedy was ginger lozenges. This time the ginger failed to work and he lay in the wagon wet with perspiration until the stomach quietened down. He resolved to be "more temperate with pap the next time I eat it".[1]

He had hoped that Sechele would have agreed to be his companion on this visit to Moselekatse[2] for Moffat had decided to use his influence to secure the return from Matabele captivity of Macheng - the lawful chief of the Bamangwato, a venture he shirked in 1854 but now felt able and strong enough in Moselekatse's affections to attempt. Sechele was implicated in the matter because it was from the Bakwena country some sixteen years before that Macheng, then a child refugee from his own homeland, was captured by the Matabele and turned into a warrior. Moffat never seems to have got quite clear in his mind the exact antecedents of the captured young chief: whether he was the son of his father, Chief Kgari and his mother Mma-Kgama, or the son of his mother by her nephew Sedimo, or

1,2 Journal 25.8.57; 17.8.57 NA

whether his widowed mother legally re-married.[1]

Whoever his father was, there was no doubt that Macheng - through his mother - was the rightful chief of the Bamangwato, and that Sekhomi, then reigning chief, was only regent. Tribal memories were long, and the loyalty of the Tswana to the legal status of their chiefs was an impregnable strain in their character, as modern events within the House of Khama have shown. Besides, Sechele had his own reasons for wishing to see Macheng in power as his neighbour. It would give him a finger in the Ngwato pie, a possible opening to the rich hunting grounds towards the Zambesi, and if the restoration could be arranged through the powerful Moffat it might all redound to the honour of Sechele.[2]

No wonder Moffat's welcome by Sekhomi at Shoshong was brief and frigid.[3] "Sitting on the forechest with our backs to the wind I begged him just to keep from looking at every trifle in the wagon and listen to what I had to say."[4] Although he had been twenty years a reigning chief, Moffat dealt with him as a naughty school-boy, particularly for his failure to forward the letters and parcels to Livingstone three years before. After his dressing down the chief pleaded to be forgiven, and laying hold of Moffat's hand he kissed it, and said, "Moshete, fare thee well!"

The next fifteen days, August 26 to September 10, were lonely, arduous scofts, totalling 196 miles from Shoshong to Makobi's village, the frontier post inside Matabeleland. In later years it was familiar ground for traders, hunters and miners, and was often referred to as the "Hunter's Road".[5] Over this route, striking north-east into the Matabele domains, came Potgieter and his Boer commando in 1847;[6] the Joubert brothers

[1] Wallis MJII Intro.3; Sillery 119; Mackenzie 358ff

[2] Sillery 134

[3,4] Journal 26.8.57 NA

[5] Tabler, Africana, June 1954, 69ff

[6] See Chapter 13

in 1853; and Moffat, with Edwards, in 1854. But this time Moffat was alone in his wagon with only the faithful Koboeapori, his Bechuana driver; and the long slow miles were "one jolt from beginning till ending, very trying on the wagon axle-trees."

Moffat was a frontiersman without knowing it. He was no accurate observer of latitudes, or recorder of times and distances, and, unlike Livingstone, let loose no flood of little field notebooks to capture the tempo of the passing miles. There was always the wagon to inspect and repair at the outspan, the oxen to water and protect from lions, and the sunset foray with a gun to get some meat for the pot. He forgets to wind up his watch at night, decides to do it every morning, and forgets and cures himself by doing it night and morning.

Within the wagon he makes a place for his brush and comb, and pockets for his spectacles and watch at night.[1] He was a careful traveller looking for the spoor of other wagons, noting level runs for the oxen, dodging the wheel-wrecking boulders, and always with an eye on the sand-bed river where water might be had for the digging. It is unexciting country to look at from Shoshong to the Tati River, and Moffat kept too much to the eastward always to be on the "Hunter's Road".[2] H His hump of locality was strong if not always geographically accurate, and his long years of ox-wagon travel had given him the feel of a terrain so monotonous and uniform that a grassy knoll with a wagon-wheel track was a monument to be remembered.[3] He could even tackle the unbelievable, crippling disaster of the breaking of the iron long wagon, which connected the wagon's fore and back axles, with undisturbed equanimity. He used a

1,3 Journal 2.9.57; 28.8.57 NA

2 Tabler, Africana 71ff - for a reconstruction of the hunters' route. Moffat says he took a course from the Seruli "between the one I went before and the one by which I returned" [Journal 1.9.57 NA].

chain in place of the iron, and calmly recorded - "thunder this evening, but no rain".[1]

The river system which he crossed going north-eastwards flowed south-east to the Limpopo - the Mhalapshwe, Mita, Towani, Lotsani, Dikabla, Seruli, Khokwi, Sedibi, Maklautsi, Shashi, the Tati, the Ramaquabane and the Ingwesi (at Makobi's frontier village), all of them dry, with deep sand, some permanent pools, and all awkward for a wagon to negotiate down and up the steep wooded banks. E.C. Tabler, who has meticulously analysed every scoft of the hunters' road, describes the Lotsani River:

> Dry at the drift in winter. The channel formed of a slaty rock, the drift the most difficult for wagons from there to Tati. Fly to the east. The haunt of many aggressive lions for several years before 1876. There were deep, permanent pools in the Lotsani five miles off the road but early travellers were not told of them by the Bushmen. Near the present railway station of Palapye Road, at the western end of the Chwapong Hills.[2]

When he got to the Shashi River, then the Matabele boundary, on September 4, Moffat was tired with hewing a pathway for the wagon through an entangled mixture of timber, long grass and fallen trees. The oxen were panting with thirst, and he himself perspiring hard through running backward and forward, rolling away stones and chopping down trees. That night, as he stepped down from the wagon at the outspan, half the oxen rushed headlong towards him, throwing him down with great force on the back of his head on the hard ground, and so stunned him that his driver had to lead him staggering to the wagon. The oxen had caught the scent of a lion and stampeded on Moffat, who shook off the effects of the accident by washing his head in cold water, and was grateful that it was he and not the wagon that had crashed.

1 Journal 27.8.57 NA

2 Tabler, Africana 74

From the Shashi to the Ramaquabane (the present boundary of Southern Rhodesia) it was eight hours with axe and ox over stony hills, and rugged valleys. On the broad ninety yards' sand bottom of the Ramaquabane the tapestry of the feet of rhinoceros, red buck, lion, wildebeest and quagga warned him to make a hackthorn kraal, and the "pring of a small human foot" on the sand suggested that there were travellers ahead of them. At Makobi's village the advance notes of the Matabele welcome were sounded by Monyama, the frontier officer, while Moffat rested for four days, dealt with his dirty linen, had milk in his tead, packed a tiger kaross and a bird's nest for Bessie, found the artificial horizon for a latitude-finding "of no use", and wished there was more vinegar in the bottle to make the cold mutton palatable.[1] The advance travellers at Makobi's were a mixed group of half-caste elephant hunters from Kuruman led by Hans Sederas, and a party of Bechuanas from Likatlong. They had waited for "three sabbaths" to get Moselekatse's permission to move into his country, had had no luck with the elephants, and lost six horses to the thickhead sickness. Moffat decided to throw the mantle of his protection over them, and take them with him at least half-way to Moselekatse's, sharing the free beer and beef which began to shower on him as the news of his advent reached the delighted monarch.

Into the granite country of the far western flanks of the Matopos he struggled with eight worn-out oxen, following roughly the track of his 1854 journey and heading for the site of old Matlokotloko. A gift of fourteen royal oxen arrived on September 24, stubborn brutes which needed re-nreaking to the yoke by beating, biting their tails and much shouting. There was an abundance of guides and advisers, too, along the route

[1] Journal 12.9.57 NA

headed by Monyebe, Moselekatse's second induna, who appeared in jacket and trousers and superintended the royal intelligence system that produced goats, grain, honey and milk, as well as instructions to the accompanying Kurumanites to come on with Moshete.

As the column drew into the heart of Matabele domain, skirting the old site of Matlokotloko,[1] and moving north-east towards the new town, the rocks and little hills were crowded with inquisitive people eager to see Moshete who still snorted at the nakedness of the women and wondered whether the word "shame" had yet got into their language.[2] At the Inkwekwesi (?) River[3] the wagon stuck in the deep sand was rescued by Matabele soldiers, to the vast diversion of the crowds who enjoyed the sight of Moshete and his wagon being man-handled into Moelekatse's presence. On Saturday, September 26, the oxen finished the journey, and Moselekatse, crippled with gout, welcomed his old friend but had to wait until Monday for the presents from Kuruman - travelling blanket, red flowered table cloth, prints, waistcoats, handkerchiefs and roll of tobacco. From then until December 9 there was ten weeks of fraternization, less intense than three years previously, for Moselekatse was no longer the nimble and frisky personal host out to please Moshete his friend. Besides, Moshete was now an official ambassador armed with authority from the white world to secure a footing within the king's dominions, and had come also to release the captive Macheng who for seventeen years had been a symbol of the Matabele power to lord it over the Bechuana.

[1] See Chapter 14

[2] Journal 25.9.57 NA

V

The situation was delicately different from the warm intimacy of the previous visit when the two men coddled together on the forechest of Moffat's wagon in a glow of friendship and of mutual concern about Livingstone. Moselekatse was obviously more cautious in his attitude but not less attentive to Moffat's advice. In particular, he had paid attention to Moffat's suggestion that he should move his main kraal to a more healthy position in the north-east where the river system falls away towards the Zambesi. ""Skin for skin' he has attended to my instructions to the letter", Moffat wrote to Livingstone.[1] But he was suspicious of Moffat's increased interest in the great river, and his enquiries about the streams that ran into it. "How is it that Moshete is always enquiring about the Zambeze? I fear he will leave me and pass beyond."[2]

There were three reasons for Moffat's concern. One was his desire to be in touch with Livingstone, whom he presumed to be on the river; the second, his fear that the Boers in Bechuanaland would block the northern route to the Zambesi; and thirdly, the Portuguese. What were they up to on the Zambesi? Were they supplying Moselekatse with muskets and ammunition? He even suggested to Moselekatse that he should establish a market town immediately below the Victoria Falls, to encourage trade in the north and so free Matabeleland from its dependence on the south for supplies.[3] All this he wrote about to Livingstone in a letter which reveals his understanding of some of the problems of the land-locked Matabele empire which are still those of modern Southern Rhodesia.[4]

1-4 R.M. to D.L. 29.10.57. "From ~~Matlokotloko~~ Matlolotloko, on the Engkuikuize River, about 60 miles N.E. of the former Matlokotloko." He presumes that Livingstone, with Mary, is already at Linyanti, on the Chobe! Livingstone was still in London and did not leave until March 1858. [D.L. Bruce Collection]

The letter was carried by Matabele runners through the fly belt to Linyanti, with the two volumes of the translated Old Testament and a supply of beads and seeds,[1] while Moffat himself continued to idle methodically round the royal kraal watching for moments to continue conversation on the two main objects of his visit, a mission settlement and the release of the captive Macheng. In any case, Moselekatse was in no fit state for quick decisions, with his left leg, knee, and stomach swollen and his hands shaking like an aspen leaf.[2] Moffat's remedy for all ailments in the royal household was "opening medicine", which maintained a procession of patients "to the field" - and the monarch was no exception!

VI

Moffat first met Macheng on this visit when he came with a group of young soldiers bringing a supply of coal for Moffat's home-made forge. He liked him as an extremely quiet young man who might patiently be manipulated, not only towards his own freedom but also to add some glory to Moffat, who was not without his own ego. "He knows that he is in my power, and, I should think, in some measure aware of the difficulties of my position as his deliverer. Think only of the thousands of Bamangwato who are longing with all their souls to see their king. He is a captive and if I can deliver him from captivity is there any harm in doing so?"[3] Moffat had brought Afrikaner in triumph to Capetown,[4] delivered Troey the Griqua maid, and here was Macheng, Chief of the Bamangwato, ready to be loosed from the hands of the Matabele. Only he could win the prize from Moselekatse, manage the slippery Sechele, and place the young chief on his throne. In the two months by the banks of the Inkwekwesi he artlessly schemed his king-making plan, while the young Macheng conducted

1-3 Journal 2.11.57; 29.9.57; 8.10.57 NA
2 See Chapter 3

himself with proper humility and respect for Moshete who, in his turn, persuaded Moselekatse that only he could compass this deliverance:

> He promptly replied, I thank you, but you must tell him to go when you please. He is yours. He had no sooner said this than he ordered one to go for a fine piece of beef, which was brought before the king and which he instantly ordered to be given to Macheng.[1]

Less than a month later (December 7) Moffat proceeded to clinch the matter in the presence of Moselekatse and Macheng, in a pantomime of diplomacy with Moselekatse as master of ceremonies. Sitting and "half laughing" in his great arm-chair, Moselekatse addressed Macheng:

> Macheng, man of Mosehte, you go with your father. Moshete will take you back to Sechele. It was from him you were taken in war ... when captured you were a child. I have reared you to be a man.[2]

"Never before", said Moffat, "did tones so sweet fall on Macheng's ears"; and to complete the pantomime Macheng was arrayed in bright garments. First, a pair of trousers whose buttons needed Moffat's fingers; a hat; but no shirt - which the king proceeded to supply from the five gowns recently presented to him for his wives by a Boer trader:

> They were made from coarse stuff (writes Moffat) with large vulgar red flowers interspersed with black horses, big enough to be sure. One of these was given as a shirt for Macheng, and, being a large size reached nearly to his ankles ... I laughed outright and the king laughed too .. they got his head into the wrong end .. on it went .. wrong side foremost.[3]

1-3
Journal 13.11.57; 7.12.57; 7.12.57 NA

"I protested against his wearing it, pointing out the impossibility of stuffing all that material into his trousers, not too large; and besides it was not a shirt, it was a woman's dress".[1] In the fun and the shouting Moffat produced a blue striped shirt straight from the Walworth Road, stuffed it into Macheng's trousers, and led him through the town to the acclaims of the people - "there goes Macheng. Moshete is going to take him away".[2] A month later, on the way home, Moffat re-introduced the young chief to his own people on the hills of Shoshong in a scene of tears and suspicions, with Sekhomi, the displaced ruler, "Eyeing Macheng very closely with his well known forbidding countenance."[3] This dubious welcome home was joyfully surpassed on Sechele's mountain at Lithubaruba, where a pitso of seven thousand Bakwena turned out to greet the boy who seventeen years before had been stolen from them. Like an "archbishop in the House of Lords", Moffat sat in the amphitheatre of hills with Macheng, magnificent in a second-hand uniform and brass helmet, by his side, while the rocks rang with shouts of welcome for Moshete and Macheng. Out of the jaws of the Matabele he had brought the young man, who was as obedient as his own Bessie,[4] and had all the promise of an unassuming disposition and gratitude to his deliverer.

Whatever the future might hold for Macheng, Moffat was sure he had acted rightly in bringing him home to his chieftainship. He could not foresee the eighteen years of intrigue, war and exile which lay ahead of his protégé, who was shuttle-cocked between the arch-intriguers Sechele and Sekhomi and ended his days in exile in the Transvaal. Out of the morass of double-

1-4 Journal 7.12.57; 7.12.57; 18.1.58; 18.1.58

dealing and treachery, which Macheng's arrival only deepened, one man of genuine leadership and character eventually emerged in Khama, the great Chief of the Bamangwato.[1] It could be argued that it would have been kinder to the Bechuana peoples to have left Macheng with Moselekatse, but at least the miseries of his advent heightened the need in Bechuanaland for a strong hand, such as Khama's. It was Moffat's misfortune, and Livingstone's too, that they were never associated with chiefs of Khama's stature.

VII

On November 11, 1857, an excessively hot morning, with Moselekatse reasonably free from beer, Moffat again opened the subject of a "fountain on a suitable spot on which missionaries could reside". The reply which lodged "like an icicle in my bosom",[2] was that he knew of no such fountain. Five days later Moselekatse was equally stubborn - "this is a land without fountains. If there were I should tell you of them",[3] and the next day he again prevaricated: "You go to look for a place for teachers ... my land is yours. You must settle that point, but we must talk more on the subject when you return from visiting the fountain".[4] That visit never took place: there was always a gun to be cleaned, a wife to be bled, an axle-tree to be mended, and even the chief's pipe to be made to draw. In any case what did it matter? He already had Moselekatse's bright and snappy decision - "bring your teachers. You know what is good for us and the country better than I do. The land is yours."[5]

[1] Sillery 136

[2-5] Journal 11.11.57; 16.11.57; 17.11.57; 4.10.57 NA

Moffat knew how to play his hand within the elastic pattern of relationships; when to stretch and when to slacken. To know the exact spot where the mission might settle was not nearly so vital as the growth of the idea in Moselekatse's mind, and this is what Moffat accomplished. A lesser man might have secured his acres, but lost the king's goodwill; captured his immediate concession, but missed the authority to occupy it. Moffat's patience was pliant to every twist of Moselekatse's mind; or, as it might seem to others, to every idle whim. Moselekatse was neither so idle nor so whimsical as inexperienced Europeans might imagine.[1]

There were other problems for Moselekatse at that moment as well as finding fountains for missionaries; and other visitors to the "country to let" as well as the beloved Moshete. Down at the southern frontier village of Makobi's a motley collection of hunters, game poachers and ivory seekers was waiting to enter his domains, led by the veteran Boer elephant hunter Marinus Swartz, whom Moffat had met on his previous journey. With Swartz was Jan Joubert, another Boer hunter, who had been up to Moselekatse in 1853, and with him was the English professional hunter, William Charles Baldwin, anxious "to get among the mighty bulls."[2] Moffat was their chief hope of getting a friendly right of way, and with their letter to him on November 10 came a consignment of beads, cotton counterpanes, women's dresses and a scarlet blanket for Moselekatse, who scoffed at their femininity. Weak stuff from tough hunters; what he wanted was guns and ammunition. Swartz had already overstepped his poaching for ivory, and now had the impudence to send "these childish things",[3] Moffat did his best to heal the injured pride, and to smooth a pathway for the hunters. His task was not made easier

1,3 Journal 5.11.57; 10.11.57 NA

2 Tabler 236

by the sudden arrival of the egregious Englishman, Colling, who jumped the hunters' queue and appeared on horseback at Moselekatse's, where, fed on beef and beer, he was kept kicking his heels for three days while he bored Moffat with his hunting stories.[1] He eventually got a mock permission to hunt, a tongue-in-the-cheek passport from Moselekatse, which Moffat thought was phoney[2] and would lead the valiant gentleman into a promised land without elephants. According to Baldwin, Collins did shoot one bull, after breaking its hind leg by a fluke, in ten shots, and so verified Moselekatse's prophecy "that he would show him a veld that he would guarantee he would be quite as anxious to get out of as he was now to go in".[3]

But this coming and going led to dark questioning in Moselekatse's mind. "Why do Englishmen", he asked Moffat, "unite with Boers in visiting the country?"[4] It was a profound question for his own future, to which he got no effective answer. His association with Moffat had taught him to distinguish between Englishman and Boer; and, while he respected the former and knew what to expect from the latter, the combination suggested mysteries beyond his range of comprehension. "I could only see", says Moffat, "from the countenance of the king, as well as what I heard, that he was displeased."[5]

When the two men said good-bye in mid-December, the question of a fountain for the mission settlement was still undecided, and some of the sharp answers Moffat received arose, no doubt, from the uncertainties Moselekatse felt about his frontier, which was proving more vulnerable than he liked. His isolation on the Southern Rhodesia high-veld was not as iron-bound as he would

1,2 Journal 6.11.57 NA

3 Baldwin, African Hunting 189

4,5 Journal 10.11.57

wish, or permanently impenetrable to travellers and possible settlers. Moffat had already pierced it with his invasion of ideas; and ideas, like the oranges he presented, would grow if planted. Now there was this strange alliance of Englishmen and Boers, which might mean much more than a zest for elephants and ivory. Moshete he was prepared to trust, and take the consequences, but the others still raised the unanswered question.[1]

From his political bewilderment, Moselekatse turned, in his most benevolent vein, to give Moffat a grocery order, as he made for home: for a box of sugar-candy, liquorice, dates, walnuts, coffee, sugar, Epsom salts - murmuring to Moshete, out of his pathetic loneliness, "You I trust above all men."[2]

1, 2
Journal 10.11.57 NA

CHAPTER 15
PIONEER OF SOUTHERN RHODESIA
April 1858 to June 18, 1860

"O that I were young again"

On April 21, 1858, the screw-steamer Pearl, with David Livingstone, his wife, and members of the Zambesi Expedition on board, sailed into Cape Town harbour. Three weeks before their arrival Robert Moffat and Mary came into the town by horse-drawn cart from Kuruman, the first time they had ventured in such an expeditious vehicle. A month after the Livingstones, on May 18, the young John Smith Moffat - ordained and newly married to Emily Unwin - arrived by the ship Norman; on July 14 four young missionaries, Roger Price, John Mackenzie, William Sykes and Thomas Thomas and their wives joined the group; and, later, came Holloway Helmore with his wife and four children. Cape Town was modestly startled to see such an assembly of people all commissioned for the far interior of Africa, the Livingstone group to go by sea and the Zambesi and the Moffats overland. Not since Moffat's own arrival in January 1817, had the farthest north received such attention and reinforcement. Kuruman was then on the northern rim of civilization; now the rim was stretched beyond the Limpopo to Matabeleland and Makolololand, which only the veterans Moffat and Livingstone had so far visited.

There were many shocks for Moffat in Cape Town. First he learned that Livingstone had dissolved his connections with the L.M.S., a step which for Moffat "required the exercise of some resignation",[1] and secondly that his own son John, under the

[1] R.M. to Tidman 19.4.58 LMS

stimulus of Livingstone's example, had also become an "independent missionary". But worse still a mission to the fly- and fever-ridden swamps of Linyanti and the Chobe amongst the Makololo had been decided on.[1] In all this he saw the impetuous, impatient hand of his son-in-law, and during their ten days together in Cape Town the two men ~~[illegible]~~ debated the issues which Moffat admitted to Tidman in London he found "confounding and very painful".[2] But within the family all was happiness at the reunion, and with Mrs. Livingstone expecting a child[3] it was decided she should return with her parents to Kuruman. For her husband there was the grand dinner at the Exchange, a crowded receiption by Sir George Grey, the Governor, and eight hundred guineas in a silver box. London glory was reflected in Cape Town enthusiasm, and anyone less fame-proof than Livingstone might have recollected with a puffed pride that all the cheers were for a prophet in his own country of Africa.

Then came the last parting with the Moffats, and the farewell with Mary, who "waved her handkerchief as long as she could see me waving my cap",[4] which Livingstone described to his friend James Young as "tearing the heart out of one".

Moffat and Livingstone never met again. Their inner understanding of spirit was born of a respect for each other's gifts and characters, although neither of them records much of this. After Livingstone's burial in Westminster Abbey in 1874, Moffat wrote: "he was characteristically humble. When I came down to Cape Town in 1858 to meet him, laden with honours and

1,2 R.M. to Tidman 20.7.58 LMS
3 Anna Mary (1858-1939)
4 D.L. to Agnes 7.5.58 Bruce Collection NA

honorary degrees, he seemed more humble than ever ... he sacrificed everything for one grand object, to carry the Gospel of the Son of God to the heart of Africa."[1] And when frustrated and defeated on the Zambesi in 1863 it was to Moffat's example that Livingstone turned for comfort and courage - "a mission without difficulties would be to me like a man without a shadow. Think of Moffat running away from a difficulty - a lion from a turkey cock - no! no!"[2] The older man was always ready to move along behind the flying ventures of his son-in-law, stamping out the routes and maintaining an efficient base for the interior at Kuruman, and although he now distrusted the Makololo plan - and was perhaps over-confident about the Matabele one - he faithfully prepared for them both.

When his son John, with his bright-eyed bride Emily, arrived on May 18, he learned that the two missions had been decided on in London on February 10, 1857, in consultation with Livingstone, in the hope that both he and Mrs. Livingstone would be able to live amongst the Makololo [3] although no promises were made and there was no arrangement that Livingstone should lead the mission. The move into Matabeleland depended on the elder Moffat. But the long process of recruiting suitable men, and raising money to finance them was all too slow for Livingstone, who wrote to brother-in-law John:

> Are you youngsters dillydallying so that they cannot move you to go or what is it? Is there an oligarchy impeding the wishes of the great body of the Directors? I certainly expected that men would have been on there way ere now.[4]

1 Sunday at Home 1874

2 D.L. to Waller 13.8.63 (Rhodes House, Oxford)

3 L.M.S. Board Minutes 10.2.57

4 D.L. to J.S.M. 14.1.58 NA

He resorted to direct action with John by offering him £150 a year, a lump sum of £500, his wagon at Cape Town and £300 "if you wish to retire". His advice to John was "take your passage at once and send a note of it to the Mission House. You may be delayed enough before you get to Kuruman, but in Africa delays will be justifiable. Here they are not." The elder Moffat recognized the impatient hand of his son-in-law and was rightly apprehensive as to how his "independent" son would mix with the rest of the men gathering in Cape Town. They were a competent group - Roger Price (1834 - 1900), the sturdy Welshman who served forty-two years in Africa and became Moffat's son-in-law; John Mackenzie (1835-99), a massive fair-haired Scot later prominent in the British administration of Bechuanaland; William Sykes (1829-87); who has more claims than most to be the establisher of the Matabele mission; Thomas Morgan Thomas (1830-84), an observant, volatile Welshman credited with being "a Welsh imitator of Livingstone";[1] and Holloway Helmore (1815-60), who had already done 19 years in the Bechuana mission. Add to them John Smith Moffat (1835-1918), who had Africa in his blood, and it must be admitted that the human resources for this invasion of the far interior were of good quality and outweigh much of Livingstone's sharp criticism of dilatoriness in choice and execution. That one section of it [see Chapter 16] ended in disaster due to a measure of misjudgment, chiefly on Helmore's part, might well be paralleled by Livingstone's own catastrophes on the Zambesi. In both instances a dedicated determination was pitted against the physical rigours of Africa; and, as the elder Moffat knew from experience, Africa could only be conquered by an endless supply of patience.

In Cape Town, the eye of Governor Grey fell kindly on the group as it prepared for the road, for he too had a mind - and a

[1] Wallis MMII xxi

policy - for southern Africa beyond the settled frontiers. He saw the new missions as another link in the tenuous chain connecting the Colony at the Cape with the Zambesi area, where he fondly hoped Livingstone would soon be establishing a series of stations. "The road from hence to that river", he wrote to the Colonial Office, "will run through British territory, or through that of independent chiefs who are anxious to afford us every facility for carrying out this line of road."[1]

Grey was then in his twenty-first year in the British colonial service, and his policies had already helped to shape the future of New Zealand where the process he started of racial co-operation between the Maoris and the incoming white settlers largely solved New Zealand's native problem.[2] South Africa was a far more intractable problem with its powerful, war-like native races and frontier farmers who believed in racial domination rather than co-operation and had moved northwards under the impetus of that belief. All the same, Grey held to his basic argument that native administration could not be left only to colonists[3] which was precisely what the Sand River and Bloemfontein Conventions had done and against which Moffat protested.[4]

But in the republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State Grey was powerless. He might hear of ominous reports about the Boer methods of native treatment but the Conventions prevented him from investigation, and most galling of all was the growing impression amongst the natives that while arms came to the Boers through British channels they themselves were

[1] C.O. 48/394 26.2.59

[2,3] de Kiewiet 86

[4] See Chapter 14

prohibited from owning them.[1] Grey wanted a common policy for South Africa in the treatment of native peoples so that what happened in the Republics should be at one with his policies in the Cape colonial areas, where on his New Zealand model he regarded Europeans and natives alike as inhabitants of one country.[2] By 1856 he had become convinced that the Conventions stood in the way of peace on the frontiers, an idea which the British Government utterly refused to contemplate if it meant turning back from its policy of scuttle. To interfere in disputes between Boers and natives could only open up a hornet's nest of trouble,[3] and to enter again into the life of the Republics - whose governments were admittedly feeble - was a retrograde movement.

By 1858, however, humanitarian concerns in Britain about native rights in Africa - which were at a low ebb in 1852-53[4] when the Conventions were signed - rose once more with the powerful tide of interest created by Livingstone, and the anti-Boer influence of his Missionary Travels. Sir George Grey saw evidence of it in the presence of the new missionary reinforcements in Cape Town, and even the Colonial Office appeared to have been penetrated by a renewed interest in the trans-frontier Boers and their relations with the natives, for it informed Grey that if he spotted violations of the Convention treaties by the Republics this might constitute grounds "for insisting on their modification or refusing to be bound by them".[5]

To Grey's mind - and here it was in harmony with the missions - the policy of British abandonment was no cure for South African problems, for there was now no power within the

[1] C.O. 48/377 (Grey to Labouchere) ~~5.3.57~~ 1.11.56
[2] Walker 297
[3,4] de Kiewiet 100; 65, 101
[5] C.O. 48/377 (Labouchere to Grey) 5.3.57

Republics to draw the separate races of colonists together, and lead them to assume responsibilities for themselves and for the native peoples. The chance of constructing well-governed and prosperous states, with the right attitude towards dependent peoples, had been missed by the withdrawal, but Britain must realize that what occurred across her South African borders did concern her. In his view the communities of South Africa both in the colonial areas and the Republics, white as well as black, were inter-dependent, and, in spite of their isolation, tenuous communications, and fierce antagonisms, were mutually necessary to each other. Grey forcibly stated his case for the federation of the South African territories, to the surprise and eventual exasperation of the Colonial Office, who were unable to share the vision of their far-seeing servant at the Cape.[1]

For Governor Grey, the white spaces on southern Africa's map were rapidly filling in. Every ship calling at the Cape brought its quota of immigrants, who helped to make up for the losses of the trekkers going north; a railway was feeling its way from Cape Town to Wynberg; a penny post was about to start for the whole Colony, and wool - the basis of colonial prosperity - was booming.[2] Even in the distant Transvaal, where each farmer was a law to himself, and officials and police almost non-existent, Grey saw the shape of things to come. Ministers of the Reformed Church were moving north; by 1860 the missionaries of the Berlin Society had also established themselves and one Reformed Church missionary had even settled in the remote and turbulent Zoutpansberg region.[3] In Grey's

[1] C.O. 48/377 20.12.56

[2] Walker 303

[3] Latourette V 368

view it was no time for the British to retreat from the frontiers in Africa, however distant and ill-defined they might be, for only by their co-operation with colonists and natives could order and settled life be secured. He looked favourably, therefore, on Moffat's stalwart company in Cape Town as they assembled their oxen and wagons in July and August, 1858, for the march which would take them along the western flanks of the Transvaal, and some of them down the long Bechuanaland corridor to the Zambesi itself. Already Livingstone, to whom he had said farewell from Capetown on May 1, was battling his way up the river to the hoped-for rendez-vous with the overland party at Linyanti. The vast pincer movement to prise open Zambesia was taking shape.

Sir George's immediate contribution to the movement was twelve donkeys, which he handed over to Moffat to establish a postal system between the Matabele and the Makololo. The idea was that native postmen, with the goodwill of the chiefs, might pack the poor beasts with mail, or the donkeys might even be taught to draw a light cart in order to speed letters from the interior. The donkeys were presumed to be proof against the tsetse fly and would become faithful auxiliaries to the new mission groups, and incidentally furnish Sir George with news of what was going on beyond the settled frontiers. Moffat agreed to act as unpaid postmaster-general, north of Kuruman, where donkeys were deposited with Moselekatse, who was amused at the creatures but never used them as post-boys. The ones for the Makololo were still with Moffat at Kuruman in October 1860 when he reported to Sir George on his "three jennies and one jack" who, because of the disaster to the mission,

never got to their destination. Moffat believed in "these donkeys as an invaluable boon to the inhabitants of the tsetse regions",[1] although they were a nuisance on trek, refusing to pull a light wagon and always missing when they were wanted.[2] But it was not the poor inefficient donkeys which wrecked Grey's postal hopes but mainly a petty squabble between the rival chiefs Sekhomi and Macheng at Shoshong, the cross-roads to the Zambesi, who fought over a mail-bag bound for the new mission at Inyati in February, 1860. Shoshong was the key point in Moffat's postal system and there the undependable chiefs, rather than the intractable donkeys, destroyed his hopes of regular mail between the Cape and the Zambesi. Meanwhile, news still depended on the chance traveller and the native runner, which meant that letters to Livingstone on the Zambesi took 21 months to reach him and to get a reply back to his friends in Matabeleland, although he was only three hundred miles away across country.[3] "We must be content" said Moffat "with a tortoise speed in Africa".[4]

At last, on August 20, after an infinitude of delays with wagons and oxen, "the tortoise" turned northwards out of Loop Street, Capetown, with the Moffats leading the way on the six hundred miles trek to Kuruman, and the rest followed a week later. Each man had £150 for personal expenses, and £100 was allotted for medical supplies. Moffat's new daughter-in-law, Emily, saw the journey through the fresh eyes of an observant traveller, quick to comment on the slow, passing scene, who fortunately recorded her observations, chiefly in letters to her father James Unwin, a tea merchant of Brighton. Her "bonnie strong waggon" as befitted a Brightonian, became "The Pavilion", and from its forechest she described the daily events of the

1 R.M. to Tidman 2.10.60 NA

2 E. Moffat to J.S. Unwin 27.8.58 NA

3 D.L. to J.S.M. 20.4.60 [J.S.M's note] NA ; Tabler 142, 143

4 Smith GL 44

cavalcade. "How I wish you could have seen the picture before us as we sat in the entry of our wagon. At a short distance in front was the fire, and round it sat all our men. ... There they sat, drinking their tea and making merry, their faces lit up with the bright flame which rose high, and the sparks all flying hither and thither. Presently one of the pipes wanted lighting, so a great piece of wood, all on fire, was taken up and applied to the tobacco and though on paper this may sound very tame, I assure you the sight was picturesque, and a most beautiful moon shines kindly upon us."[1] Away in Brighton, James Unwin followed his daughter and her husband over the Cape Flats, through Paarl and Wellington and up the steep drag of Bain's Pass in the Drakenstein Mountains:

> High and rocky mountains on our right above us, and on our left the deepening valley, and beyond that valley other ranges of heights. The road we traverse is one perpetual zig-zag, such grand chines and chasms constantly opening up, with long grasses interspersed with arums rising conspicuous from their size. After an eleven or twelve miles journey we reach the saddle of the pass, where we are introduced to fresh mountains vieing in grandeur with those just hidden from our view ... we are soon descending. On our right, hundreds of feet below the pass, this mountain stream winding along with grand heights on the other side, and on our left another tremendous eminence, huge rocks under which we came, overlying the road ... this is really an awfully grand sight ... I longed to linger here and pitch our tent for a week.[2]

It was slow going even for Emily. At the end of a fortnight, with poor oxen and inefficient drivers, they were only seventy

1, 2 E.M. to J.S.U. 27.8.58; 11.9.58 NA

miles from Capetown - "we do literally cr-e-e-p. If Africa is destined to be christianized and civilized at bullock-wagon pace, the end of the world cannot be so near as some believe."[1]

Then came the Great Karoo, a wilderness "covered with a shrubby plant, the leaves pulpy and thick":

> A vast plain, an ever-winding road and no sign of water nor of food. The poor hungry, thirsty oxen look deplorable, and soon one of Mrs. Livingstone's fails and her number is so reduced that there are only eight to draw her waggon. A little farther on the same disaster comes to us. Another stop and Mr. Moffat is obliged to leave one behind and he goes on with eight. Pitiable indeed, the three waggons with but eight miserable oxen! We feared every moment that others would be down. Not until three did we reach a valley where was water. We saw many wild ostriches but there was no enjoying enything. All our thoughts were centred in our oxen.[2]

They struggled on to Beaufort West, with heavy rains, terrific winds, the donkeys always missing and the oxen sick and dying, and by the time they got into Beaufort the Moffats counted nineteen oxen lost out of forty-two; their companions sixty-three out of eighty, and of these only seven fit to travel further; and the cost of replacements ran to over £230. But Emily's heart was cheered by the passing post-cart with a packet of letters to refresh her, "in this dreary wilderness. I shall ever remember that spot where I ran to meet the cart and seized the packet. For John and me there were twenty letters."[3]

But, for Moffat, the news coming along the road was ominous. The Boers were out against the Batlhaping, his old tribal friends

1-3
E.M. to J.S.U. 27.8.58; 11.9.58; 11.9.58 NA

now centred seventy miles away from Kuruman in the Taungs area, and the story, as he gradually pieced it together only confirmed his own views of the disastrous consequences of the British withdrawal from the Transvaal territories. In this case, however, as Moffat later learned, a group of marauding Bushmen started the trouble by crossing into the Free State - while the burghers were off on the eastern frontier dealing with the Basuto Chief Moshesh - looting farmsteads, killing women and children and driving off cattle. They then moved across the Vaal into Bechuanaland where Basibonwe, the Batlhapi chief, gave them harbourage. Gasibonwe's sons, in their turn, emulated the freebooters, and brought home some fine horses and a supply of live stock from the Dutch farms. It was too much to expect that the farmers would not retaliate in force. Gasibonwe was shot and beheaded, the Bushmen scattered or killed, and the farmers moved towards Mahura, the chief of the main section of the Batlhapi then at Taungs, who was innocent of blame and had discountenanced the raid. The unfortunate Mahura - after defeat in battle - was compelled to allow his sons to put their mark on a treaty which bound him to the terrific indemnity of 8,000 cattle, 300 horses, 500 guns and 10 men who had committed murder. The alternative was the concession of territory which would push the undefined western Transvaal frontier much nearer Kuruman, thus possibly straddling the road to the north which up to now Moffat and his colleagues had kept open by regular use.[1]

By dint of hiring fresh oxen at intervals Moffat and his family were back at Kuruman on November 10, leaving their travelling colleagues to follow the road more leisurely. Moffat took the Boer threat to Kuruman and the border seriously, and

[1] Mackenzie 86ff; Wallis MJII 159

remembering the attacks on Kolobeng and other stations prepared to defend his home by sending away papers, correspondence and goods, while determined to stay himself. "I never for a moment harboured the idea of fleeing" he wrote to Tidman afterwards. "I felt determined to be here to answer for myself, for I have yet to learn wherein I have swerved from my duties of a Christian missionary, or given cause for the indignation against me."[1]

The heart of the Boer contetion against "Moffat and Co" was the old one of supplying arms and ammunition to the natives, which, on this occasion, they declared were secreted in the wagons from the Cape. The truth was that Moffat got back with but one pound of ammunition, and that his ration of six hundred pounds of shot for the basic needs of the missions was on its leisurely way by sea to Port Elizabeth. Accused in the Boer official Staats Courant of supplying Moselekatse with five hundred pounds of powder, Moffat told Grey "I did not supply Moselekatse, either directly or indirectly, with a single shot of powder. I brought back all the ammunition that was not required for shooting on the road." He neatly threw the accusation of powder-peddling on to the Boers themselves - "let the members of the Republic look at home, and they will find that it is the Republic which possesses the monopoly, and who send their agents right and left, far and near to barter with powder."[2]

But by far the more serious issue for Moffat and the expansion of missions was the question of Boer suzerainty over the border and the road to the north, raised in a letter from three Transvaal officials he received in November 1858:

[1] R.M. to Tidman 28.6.59 LMS
[2] R.M. to Grey 20.6.59 NA

Dear Mr. Moffat,

> Sir, we have ascertained through private communication, that you are again making preparations for another journey to Moselekatse with other missionaries. Sir, if it be so, we would warn you to procure an order from His Honour the President, Mr W. Pretorius, otherwise we shall not allow you to pass. We have the honour to be your friends. (Signed) J.L.Pretorius, Commandant. J.W.Viljoen, Field Cornet. D.L. Botha, Prov. Field Cornet.[1]

This was the most forthright and formal notice Moffat had ever received of Boer intentions on the border and seemed to him to presage the rumoured attack on Kuruman which he forecast for the dry month of May.[2] He wrote at once to Grey on November 30, 1858:

> I cannot with a shadow of resignation look at the prospect of six or seven missionaries brought to a stillstand, robbed and detained till the proper season for proceeding to the Makololo especially is past ... whoever fell into Transvaalian - and I might add Free State - hands, sacred or profane, and escaped unscathed?[3]

He wrote again on January 4, 1859:

> They have in view the interception not of any contraband articles, which they supply in immense quantities to such tribes as succumb to them, but of missionaries belonging to the same society as Dr Livingstone and myself who have done our best to expose the enormities of their policy towards the native tribes.[4]

Five months later, on the eve of setting out for Matabeleland, he had a last fling against the Boers in a letter to Grey:

> Were these Boers to be allowed to block up all intercourse with the interior, except through their own district, it would be a disgrace to the English name for ages to come.[5]

Grey was swift to see in the letters a two-fold opportunity. First he could read the Republic a lesson on his own, and secondly use the correspondence as part of his campaign to persuade the

[1,3,5] R.M. to Grey 30.11.58; 30.11.58; 20.6.59 NA

[2] Mackenzie 31

[4] C.O. 48/394 26.2.59; 19.3.59 and
C.O. 48/395 2.4.59; 21.4.59

Colonial Office that the policy of the Conventions had broken down. He was supported in this by William Thompson, the L.M.S. agent at the Cape, who viewed the Boer attitude as "the very essence of slavery" and warned Moffat that an attack on Kuruman was in preparation.[1] Grey's messenger, Robert Margitson "an intelligent young man of French extraction", in the employ of Magistrate Dely at Hope Town, was soon on his way to President Pretorius at Potchefstroom with Grey's note dated January 27, 1859, from Cape Town, which reminded the "honourable President Pretorius" that several British subjects had long established "an extensive and prosperous missionary station" at Kuruman for which "Her Majesty's subjects have contributed large sums of money and in the welfare of which they are deeply interested. Reports have now reached me that some persons resident in the Transvaal territory have determined to destroy the mission station and to injure the missionaries residing at Kuruman." Sir George says that he cannot believe this to be true, but at the same time recommends the President to protect "the person and properties of Her Majesty's subjects" and if he is not able to do so to let Sir George know "in order to enable me without delay to take such steps as it will then be my duty to take."[2]

Sir George's messenger was kept kicking his heels in Potchefstroom for twenty-four days, and then went home with only a curt acknowledgment; but, wide-awake to what was brewing, he noticed the preparations in the little town for a commando timed for May 1. Even the Republic's ancient cannon were furbished up, and land-greedy burghers openly boasted about the hoped-for fertile acres of the Kuruman valley,[3] Pretorius replied

[1] Thompson to R.M. 25.12.58 NA; Thompson to Grey 8.8.59 NA and pamphlet Boers of the Transvaal Republic and Kuruman [? by Thompson] 22.7.59 NA

[2] C.O. 48/394 26.2.59

[3] C.O. 48/395 2.4.59

officially on May 6, 1859, in what J.P.R. Wallis calls "a tissue of perverted gossip and insincere protestations"[1] which ended with an assurance "that the missionary station at Kuruman will be warmly supported and protected, in the same manner as all other missionaries in the State, when we have the conviction that the seeds of discord are not sown there, nor the heathens are instigated to wage war with Christians, but that the true Gospel of Christ is preached."[2]

Evidently Grey's letter had prevented the attack which public opinion at the Cape was prepared for, according to the local papers. "The high road of the interior" said the Port Elizabeth Telegraph, December 9, 1858, "must not be given up to the white savages of the Transvaal! They are a class far more dangerous to civilization than even the irreclaimable savages of Moffat and Co." The Cape Argus declared that "the mouths of the Boers have long been watering for Kuruman and the other pleasant mission stations of the firm of Moffat and Company. These will, of course, having no owners or occupiers, fall to the Boers." The Cape Monitor (January 26,1859) made the political point that the first shot fired on Kuruman would release the English Government "from the bondage of the infamous Convention by which its hands have for the last seven years been so disgracefully bound."[3]

But the first shot was not fired, and in London the effect of Grey's correspondence was only to produce a ponderous opinion from the Queen's Advocate that while the Boers were not justified in stopping or interfering with travellers, the British Government could not go back on the Convention of 1852.[4]

The immediate victory was to Moffat who peacefully staved off an attack on his green valley, and sustained the freedom of the open road to the north. He wrote to his brother Richard

[1] Wallis MJII 161

[2,4] C.O. 48/395 6.5.59; 48/399 6.6.59

[3] Papers quoted A-H 31ff

"as the Boers are the out-and-out opposers of missionary operations, and especially those of our Society, they are now threatening to take in the whole (Batlhapin) country and expel us altogether. If something is not done to check their diabolical purposes they will one day or other carry them into effect".[1] Moffat had administered a check, and also erected a lively signal both to the governor at the Cape and to the Colonial Office that all the old abuses within the Transvaal of kidnapping, cattle-raiding and encroachment on native lands were in full swing amongst the uncontrolled farmers on the veld,[2] and that to the natives - as he learned to his cost later in Matabeleland - Briton and Boer appeared to be combined against them.

II

"Grandpa is all on fire" reported Emily Moffat on June 22, 1859, just three months after her arrival in the green valley of Kuruman, and her husband noticed that his father's heart "is in Moselekatse's country".[3]

With the Boer menace subsiding, Moffat was able to marshal his two companies of pioneers for the long northward journeys, to the Makololo and the Matabele in what Emily called "this lovely spot ... this comfort and English life." Robert Moffat's Kuruman was then in its cultivated prime with its long lines of willow and syringas, its irrigated gardens, the green flush of the broad valley which even to-day against the bleak scrub of the open veld is so welcoming to the traveller coming up from Kinderley or Vryburg. John Moffat had boyhood memories of the honeysuckle, the walnut, the vines and the oak, almost

[1] R.M. to R.M. 3.1.59 NA
[2] A-H 34ff
[3] J.S.M. to J.S.U. 21.3.59 NA

too English for Africa, but how refershing for Emily away from the soft lines of the South Downs, and how memorable for them both as their "Pavilion" started for Southern Rhodesia on July 14, 1859, six days after the Makololo party [see Chapter 17] and two weeks before the elder Moffat accompanied by Williams Sykes followed their tracks.

Emily's "Pavilion", re-painted and pretty, splashed through the Eye of Kuruman, where the water lilies grow today, following the Thomas's wagon, on to the sandy "vast, vast plains of long dry grass":

> At midnight when the moon is brilliant, I am awaked from my first sleep with the bustle of inspanning: the getting a start is a dreadful struggle: there is a sandy slope. Once up this ascent we jog on a short half hour, and then we are firmly rooted in a deep bed of sand. One hour is spent, many and livid are the lashes the poor oxen receive. They are stubborn: some pull one time, some another, and, after vain attempts to teach them to do better,[1] the men untie the brutes, and we remain where we are.

Out on the sandy plain, Emily's eye noticed the cummunal birds' nests built by the Sociable Gross-beaks "as large as a wheelbarrow" hanging down from the branch of a tree; the ant-hills "as large as graves"; the spring-boks "springing about"; and the "footprints of lions"; and when the sun set the twinkling stars appeared as guides to the lonely company on the veld. Emily was bewitched by the silver hue of the fire crackling underneath the trees, and when safely within "my Castle" listened with trembling to the serenade of the hyenas and jackals accompanied by the distant roar of "His Majesty". She slept with the wind gently rocking the wagon and dreamed of "a lion following me through Brighton streets as I was on my way to the Brighton Kuruman."[2]

1, 2
E.M. to J.S.U. 15.7.59; 28.7.59 NA

Through the dry, waterless land Emily and her John struggled on in the "handsomest waggon" ever seen on the northern road,[1] staying three days at Kanye where Chief Gasiitsiwe honoured them in his "black satin waistcoat, fine coat and trousers", and his ladies came out in their print dresses with necks and arms glistening with plumbago and red paint. In the silvery moonlight Emily saw the "glens and rocky heights" of Sechele's stronghold at Lithubaruba, where the deep shadows cast by the heights are still memorable for the traveller. Then on to Shoshong, travelling doggedly - "rode, rode, rode, on, on and on" - in the latter part of the day and the early morning hours for the sake of the weary oxen. By this time Grandpa Moffat had, with William Sykes, caught them up, but the hope that they might all meet the party bound for the Makololo was not fulfilled. They had already departed from Shoshong on their ill-fated trek to the north-west with John and Emily half-regretting they were not with them.[2]

By September 24 there was lung-sickness amongst the oxen, which, in spite of inoculation from the lung of a dead animal, threatened double disaster to the expedition. A message was sent to Moselekatse warning him of the peril of introducing the epidemic to his cattle, and asking for fresh wagon oxen, but the thought of a delay in Moffat's arrival, plus his eagerness to receive the new wagon Moffat was bringing for him banished the fear of risk until Moffat bade Moselekatse think again. Then Moselekatse acted with high drama, and dispatched 160 men to the frontier near Makobi's to pull the wagons home. For the eighteen days from October 10 to 28 the posse of warriors hauled

1, 2 E.M. to J.S.U. 6.8.59; 1.9.59 NA

the wagons towards their impatient master, and when their speed was too slow he sent forty ill-disciplined draft oxen to aid them.

Through the western ouflanks of the Matopos country, now familiar from his two previous journeys, Moffat guided the strange caravan of warriors and wagons, his own wagon stocked with their shields and spears. "Away we went", he reported to Mary, the men occupying the place of the oxen, taking hold of the yokes in their own way, over hill and dale, over bushes and stones, winding through trees, along a track scarcely visible occasionally, breaking forth with the harsh tones of the war song. When the wagon came to a dead halt by the wheel getting into a hole or against a stump or stone, they instantly joined in something like a 'strong pull and a long pull and a pull altogether' and out it came."[1]

For Emily, "the poor naked fellows with eager wondering eyes staring at us" and then pulling until their shoulders ached reminded her of omnibus drivers racing one another in a London street. At first she refused to ride on a wagon "with men for oxen" but the lively vigour of the men and the roughness of the track compelled her to mount once more to the forechest to watch the "white sails of the wagons" going past, or more meditatively at night to catch the first flares of the camp fires over the hill-tops. The human oxen made only eleven miles a day, good enough for Moffat, but too slow for Moselekatse, whose runners informed him of the pace. His forty oxen, which appeared from "the dead" ("a fib of the first water")[2] now aided the men, pulling Moffat's own heavily loaded wagon, while eight men cantered along with Moselekatse's lighter one, drove it into a deep gully and smashed the wagon-pole which

1, 2 R.M. to M.M. 17.10.59 NA

Moffat mended like "the broken bone of an Emperor".[1] Moffat did most of the running repairs, for his colleagues were poor mechanics. He was glad of the iron axles on his own wagon which made it run more lightly and gave him ease of mind, for a cracked wooden axle meant, even with Moffat's swift skill, a day's delay as well as the uncertainty of the repair work.

As October 1859, drew to a close in thunder, clouds and rain, the cavalcade lurched out of the thicket country into the broader, open uplands, beyond the modern Bulawayo, making for the upper waters of the Bembesi River where north of its tributary, the Inkwekwesi, Moselekatse still had his royal kraal at Matlokotloko, probably only half a mile from where Moffat met him in 1857.[2] It was again a triumphal progress for "Moshete", with the added attraction of the ladies and Mrs. Thomas's little boy who laughed back at the cheerful black faces "like all that".[3] Beer and beef descended on the wagons with words of welcome relayed along the route, and on the first night near the kraal Emily mentions the large dish of "well cooked and excellent boiled beef" sent down from the king.[4]

The welcome was obviously for Moffat. Arrayed in the Moffat presents of 1857, duffel coat, railway rug and highland bonnet, Moselekatse received his old friend, with professed signs of pleasure at the prospects of missionaries coming to live permanently in his land, but after complimentary introductions he turned away from the subject to discuss the supplies of rice, coffee, sugar and dates Moffat had brought. All through the damp, hot days of November, 1859, the chief's mind was centred on presents and barter in whose techniques his quick mind found a new pleasure, cornering a roll of printed cloth from Thomas for four pails of corn, and demanding a

1,3 R.M. to M.M. 27.10.59 NA

2 Personal investigation; Tabler 31

4 E.M. to J.S.U. 24.10.59 NA

musket for a cow from Sykes.[1] Moffat grumbled at the close bargaining of his friend, and drove a shrewd deal for his son in a coffee pot and a tin jug for two cows and a calf.

Every day Moffat ("straight as a poker in his presence, or on the forechest when he is in his waggon") gently suggested that the newcomers must have gardens to cultivate or they would perish from hunger, producing seed potatoes and cuttings from the Kuruman vine to show what he meant.

The ease of conversation in previous visits, through William the Griqua as interpreter, was shattered by William's death[2] and the weakness of Monyebe whose translations were suited to what his master liked to hear. Moffat persevered with his Sintabelized-Sechuana and even more with his medical attentions:

> I went in to be phlebotomist to his majesty. He looked quite bright at the prospect of losing blood. I opened a vein in his fat arm, which flowed freely, and took from him three times the quantity I should have done in any common, or even extreme case. I insisted in vain to stop the bleeding. I told him what would be the consequences; and at last had to take my own way by threatening that I should not bleed him again. He submitted reluctantly, while looking at a mass of blood one would think enough to frighten him ... he is quite delighted with the good bleeding has done him.[3]

But the month on the bank of the Inkwekesi was a sore trial to the commissariat and the tempers of the newcomers. In their tents of double thickness, and in the heat of the wagons, patience wore thin and dissolved into bickerings and criticism of the elder Moffat and his ways with Moselekatse. Obviously the king, under various internal pressures, was hesitating about the mission, and on November 17 he told Moffat there were

1,2,3 R.M. to M.M. 5.11.59;30.10.59; 8.11.59 NA

objections to Missionaries because they were "spies and precursors of the Boers" like the American missionaries at Mosega, and that "wherever missionaries had gone the Boers followed".[1] Moffat's method was to listen and not argue. "One must see what he does, and not rely on what he says".[2] He set up Moselekatse's corn-mill, and sat with him for the distribution of "very coarse blue bastas" to his wives who handled the stuff "as much gold cloth".

The King's mind was torn between his loyalty to Moffat and the news from the south which his own messenger Sam had brought. Sam was one of the four Matabele men sent with a present of cattle to Kuruman in 1857, a drunkard and a sot according to Moffat, and a peddler of gossip about missionaries and their ways. He was with Chief Mahura [see page 330] in the hour of his bitter defeat by the Boers, and no doubt his descriptions of the terror of the Batlhaping and the revenge of the Boers stirred old, unhappy memories for Moselekatse. Was he to see history repeated if he allowed the mission to settle with his people? Moffat, preoccupied with his own troubles, was perhaps not sensitive enough to the predicament of his old friend and the debates going on within the royal circle. Both monarch and missionary failed to re-establish the personal intimacies of their 1854 association, which accounted for much of the accumulated suspicion on both sides. On November 21, Moselekatse sat in Moffat's wagon, drank his coffee and promised oxen to pull the mission wagons across the river to his town of Inyati.

Instead of the oxen came a stream of complaints against the missionaries. They had not paid for the use of Moselekatse's

[1,2] R.M. to M.M. 19.11.59 NA

oxen; there were no guns and ammunition in their baggage, no skull caps for the king, and what was secretly hidden in those wagons? They were ordered not to cross the river or go hunting or buy food. Moffat grew apprehensive.[1] Food was so short that the Bechuana servants had to be fed from the reserve rice store,[2] and the men caught fish and turtles to eke out the supplies. Tents taken down had to be put up again; large mice ran over the face of sleeping baby Thomas; Moffat had toothache; Sykes lost his only spectacles; and no one could sleep for the plague of rats.[3] They were all bored with waiting and wondering.[4] But Moffat's patience never cracked, and Emily even enthused to her father on the loveliness of the Inkwekwesi:

> The foliage is now rich and luxuriant, the grasses are beautiful and the banks of the Impimbezi are so lovely ... we stroll there every evening, and the sunset scenes in these tropical skies are of rare loveliness - and then their reflection in the clear murmuring waters! Oh, it is a sweet spot! Our moonlight nights too have been bright, bright. I long for one and another to join with us at such times and drink in our pleasures.[5]

From his distant kraal, Moselekatse did not forget to tantalize the company awaiting his pleasure. He sent them beans, beer, cooked beef, two goats and two oxen, a reminder to Moffat that patience might yet win an entry to his kingdom:

> I confess (he wrote on December 14, 1859) I was not prepared for the disappointment I have felt in the attempt to plant a mission among the Matabele, though I always stated, both in public and private, that the undertaking was an arduous one and would call for strong faith and unflinching perseverance. Perhaps I have been trusting too much to my personal influence which has proved to be a broken reed.[6]

1,3,4,6 R.M. to M.M. 24.11.59; 10.12.59; 28.11.59; 14.12.59 NA

2 E.M. to J.S.U. 24.11.59 NA

5 E.M. to J.S.U. 16.12.59 NA

The next ten days were decisive for Southern Rhodesia. Between his gusts of displeasure and suspicion, Moselekatse's mind was finally made up to invite the visitors across the Inkwekwesi and give them land to live on. The news came on Friday, December 16,[1] but not until next day were the five wagons, using two span of oxen, all across the river, with their route set east-southeast, past the site of the 1857 Matlokotlo, to the royal town of Inyati. There on December 22 Moffat was received with a trough of forty pounds of beef, eighteen obese wives and much bellowing of cattle.

Before he left, Moselekatse pointed towards the near-distant hill of Ndumba beneath which lay the watered valley, and when next day, Friday, December 23, the men, according to Emily, returned from their reconnaissance "their beaming faces as they approach us tell of good news".[2] In the cool of the same afternoon the ladies walked the mile down under the range of wooded hills on their left from Moselekatse's Inyati to their new home in the valley and found it so beautiful and "oh, the delight of being at our journey's end is refreshing". The day after Christmas Day, 1859, they moved in under the king's permission that "if the valley pleases you, it is, with the fountain, at your service. Choose where you wish to build and occupy as much land as you please. If you are satisfied the king will be glad."[3]

> A very fine valley (wrote Moffat) lying east and west ... we came to a source or fountain in the centre of a wide open valley, which increased as we proceeded towards the bottom where it became a considerable stream which, running about three-quarters of a mile further, falls into the Engkuekuise River. The valley itself is entirely free of trees and containing arable ground of different kinds, from the black mould to the red

1&3 R.M. to M.M. 16.12.59; 23.12.59 NA

2 E.M. to J.S.U. 23.12.59 NA

> alluvial to almost any extent ... The situation was everything that we could desire, and far exceeded our most sanguine expectations. The ground and purity of the water was everything to be wished for ... the region lying high and more open than in most parts, has been found to be healthy.[1]

Such was the first concession of black to white in Southern Rhodesia, the forerunner of a series of grants that gradually opened a sealed land to hunters, traders, explorers, prospectors and eventually to the new rulers associated with the Rudd-Rhodes Concession. It was essentially a personal concession, from one man to another, almost an arrangement between friends, for without Robert Moffat's links with Moselekatse it would probably not have happened in the way it did. As a personal achievement it put the crown on all Moffat's dealings with him, and as a social and economic factor it introduced revolutionary changes into Matabele life, but as a religious venture it had little immediate success, with only two baptisms by 1887.[2]

Moffat was over-sanguine about the future. Behind him lay forty years' experience amongst the Bechuana, where the leadership of the chiefs had commended the Christian faith in many of its outward observances if not in morals and conduct. There was no such asset amongst the Matabele. "I cannot help thinking", wrote Emily Moffat to her father, "that he (Moselekatse) does not wish any of his people to come under our influence and training. Grandpa laughs at this idea, but with all we daily see and hear, it is the most natural conclusion, and I fear it is the truth, which ultimately even Grandpa will be compelled to admit."[3]

[1] R.M. to M.M. 23.12.59 NA

[2] J.S. Moffat 103

[3] E.M. to J.S.U. 28.3.60 NA

She and John believed there was "no entrance for the Gospel" and that Moselekatse had an "erroneous opinion of our objects in coming here",[1] looking on the mission as another trading outlet, an idea encouraged by Moffat's own presents. This harsh judgment on the elder Moffat by the younger ones was not borne out in Robert Moffat's dealings with Moselekatse, where he was often rigid to the point of rudeness in refusing ivory, and his final advice to his friend in June 1860 was that now "the servants of God had come to live with him and teach his people the road was now open, and merchants and traders would gladly supply his wants for his ivory".[2]

Teaching was more ominous for Moselekatse than trading: "If all my people go to school" he told Moffat "they will forget how to fight, and will become cowards, and the enemy will lay waste my country".[3] It was a penetrating summing up of the peril he faced once the mission was conceded, and while he lived he saw to it that schools were blocked and anyone who showed too much interest in "the teaching" was secretly removed.[4] For Matabele, the newcomers' Gospel "goes dead against everything which distinguishes ... the Matabele tribe" in despotic power, military standing and polygamy ... monuments of this nation in which they glory. These are not matters of faith, but of sight and touch, and dearer to them than their life's blood."[5]

How Gilbertian the situation was between monarch and mission is illustrated by John Moffat's preaching to a thousand Matabele in the king's kraal at Inyati on the subject of prayer. "I was trying", he says, "to impress upon the people the

[1] E.M. to J.S.U. 28.3.60 NA
[2] R.M. to Tidman 4.9.60 NA
[3] Jones, My Friend Kumalo 11
[4,5] J.S.Moffat 102; 100

willingness of God to listen to the prayers of us all. I pointed to the compact crowd of men in front of me and said 'You men can every one of you speak to God for himself and God is willing to listen to you.' I pointed to the row of women and girls and repeated the assurance ... I told the boys and girls that, even when they were alone in the gardens or herding the cattle in the veld they could speak to God and he would hear them. By this time I noticed that there were signs of uneasiness. The men were looking at each other with disturbed faces. I looked round at the chief, whose seat was a couple of yards from me. He had risen up and stood trembling with rage. He shouted in a stentorian voice, 'You are a liar!' This was followed by a roar of applause from the audience. Again he said it, and again there was a thunderous cheer. I waited for the dead silence that fell upon all and said, 'Chief, I am not speaking my own words. I am speaking the words of God'. The chief slowly subsided into his chair, and I closed the service with a short prayer. As soon as I had finished the chief rose and marched off to the 'isigodlo' (Inner enclosure) without a word to me. I thought to myself, 'This will not do; we cannot part like this', and I followed him and sat down in my usual place near him. A profound silence reigned for fifteen or twenty minutes, which was broken at last by the chief abruptly calling out to one of his wives: 'Bring the teacher some refreshment.' This was at least a sign of peace, and in due time, but with no further conversation, I took my leave."

As John Moffat walked back to the mission valley a runner overtook him with a message from some of his congregation: "Tell Mnali Jone (Mr. John) that we cheered the chief when he called you a liar because we had to. We dare not be silent, but nevertheless your words about God were very sweet to our hearts."[1]

[1] J.S. Moffat 101

Two of Moselekatse's sons - Mangwane and Lobengula - were especially attracted to the teachers. "On one occasion, quite early after our arrival at Inyati", says John Moffat "these two sons of the chief came to see me. We were having an interesting conversation, when suddenly one of their attendants rushed up to the door and gave the alarm. An induna of high rank, at that time in constant attendance on the chief, could be seen coming down the valley from the kraal at Inyati. Not another word was needed. With a hurried salutation the two young men rose to their feet and disappeared with their followers in the forest behind our dwelling, and it was many weeks before we so much as caught sight of them again."[1]

Suspicious, jealous, and rigorously opposed to any adoption of the "teaching" by his people, Moselekatse nevertheless threw his protective mantle over the undertaking. His promise to the elder Moffat to "take great care of the teachers"[2] was "royally kept"[3] and never once in their peaceful valley were they in personal danger.

In the midst of a people who lived by fighting, and were skilled in the ruses of the surprise massacre, the little company in the valley planned their homesteads in the wilderness in unshaken security. Gardens were dug, seed sown, and Emily Moffat's two-roomed "Brighton Cottage" looked so pretty with its windows, venetian blinds, and tea-table laid in earthenware tea-things instead of the wagon enamel ware. "There is an untellable pleasure in living in a house built by my husband, every stroke of which I have watched ... the very opening a door is a treat, and the sight of a window almost as great a novelty to us as to the wondering Matabele ... they just shout again at the sight of their own faces."[4]

1,3 J.S. Moffat 100-102

2 R.M. to Tidman 4.9.60 NA

4 E.M. to J.S.U. 29.7.60 NA

In the valley, where today only a few rough outlines of the pioneer settlement appear in the grass, Emily Moffat and Ellen Thomas did the chores of frontier wives "grinding flour, sifting chalk for putty, carrying wood, washing fetching water",[1] and bearing babies too. When little Livingstone Moffat, four months old, was carried up to Moselekatse's kraal in August, 1860, he put out his tongue at the king, and, to his mother's amazement rested happily in the arms of "that old half-naked porpoise of a human being" who kissed the darling and presented him with a skinned sheep.[2] At Ellen Thomas's death in 1863, Moselekatse exclaimed to Thomas "take the poor motherless ones to the wagon, for I cannot bear the sight ... I am sorry for you. She who is no more was lovely, and beloved, we all loved her and are sad."[3]

It was an Inyati protectorate rather than a concession, a white addendum to Moselekatse's kraal whose honour he scrupulously respected and whose tribulations and happiness he, in his own way, shared. John Moffat found him tough. "I have often gone up to the town determined to sit half the day if I could only say something to him which might pierce to the heart within, and as often have come away foiled by the strange indifference of the man to anything but what happens just then into the current of his whims.[4] Thomas Thomas - less rigid, more relaxed - found him "combining much simplicity and genius";[5] and William Sykes more welcoming than he expected, only <u>begging</u> for a new blanket where in former times he <u>demanded</u>.[6]

[1] E.M. to J.S.U. 29.7.60 NA
[2] E.M. to H. Unwin 24.8.60 NA
[3,5] Thomas, <u>Eleven Years</u> 329; 65
[4] J.S.M. to J.S.U. 6.11.60 NA
[6] Sykes to Tidman 3.8.63 LMS

Down in the valley Emily Moffat cooked the first potato dinner in Southern Rhodesia on January 22, 1861, capped it with a baked plum-pudding, and at supper time in good Brighton style ate bread and milk while John read aloud.[1]

On the day Grandpa Moffat said farewell to Moselekatse, May 24, 1860, Emily wrote to Brighton for six wideawake hats for husband John, one foot eleven inches and a quarter in circumference, and for the baby "one of the little chairs that screw to a stool". In the same letter, that Grandpa carried southwards to civilization, was an order for elastic-sided boots, a nest of canisters, strawberry jam and ("entre nous, quite private") a bottle of port wine. Emily transported her Victorian pleasures to the African wilderness, laughing at her foolish womanly fears when loiterers peeped through the parlour windows, and welcoming the bright moonlight as an antidote for loneliness. Alone with her baby she once "put on Baby's cappie" to flee down the valley to be with Mrs. Thomas and then bravely took it off again, determined to fight her fears alone. Isolation frightened Emily Moffat, but never destroyed her spirit. She called herself a "stupid creature" and then courageously remembered she was a woman and no coward.[2]

For Robert Moffat, the settlement at Inyati was the triumphant finish to his thirty years siege of the Matabele and their great chief, an accomplishment of patience and fortitude which, at Inyati, also triumphed over the petty criticisms and gossip of his younger colleagues. For him, it was Kuruman all over again with water in the valley and gardens in the making. The southern African frontier had moved once more to its northern-most limits, and he had shown that the true frontier was no arbitrary boundary on an undrawn map but "the outer edge of the wave - the meeting-point between savagery and civilization".[3] It was his veteran mechanical skill which guided the first house-

[1,2] E.M. to J.S.U. 22.1.61; 26.6.60 NA

[3] F.J. Turner, The Frontier in American History 4

building, planned the gardens and "smoothed the way" of the pioneer party, and when malaria smote the valley staved off universal panic. His presence and unhurried wisdom were the guarantee of personal peace on the frontier for the newcomers, an assurance which flowed almost naturally out of the friendship between himself and Moselekatse. There was no bargaining, or treaty-signing, for this first concession in Southern Rhodesia. It was a protectorate based on the simplicities of personal encounter between two men who in themselves personified "the frontier". In them "savage" and "civilization" met and continued to respect one another for thirty years until the frontier moved forward again in 1888, when their two sons, Mnali Jone and Lobengula formally fixed it by treaty.

His mission accomplished, Moffat turned southwards on June 18, 1860. "I am all in haste", wrote Emily, "to get some new butter ready for him and a loaf baked" - symbols of the civilization already founded on the frontier. When he said a last farewell to Moselekatse the two men held hands for a long time, Moselekatse looking him intently in the face. "Hamba guhle" (go in peace), he said, "why should I continue to look on you. I shall take great care of the teachers. I love them." It was the word of a gentleman that was never broken.

That night Moffat at the first outspan was knocked down by an unruly ox, but before dawn the swift and devoted king had sent him a fat ox as a token of sympathy, and the next day another one to express his joy that all was well again with Moshete on the road home to Kuruman.

"Fickle and fastidious", Moffat called him. Moselekatse also knew how to act as a gentleman.[1]

[1] R.M. to Tidman 4.9.60 NA

CHAPTER 16
DISASTER IN ZAMBESIA

November 1860 - February 1861

The wreck of an undertaking big with promises of success

Within three months of getting back to Kuruman, in August 1860, from his successful thrust into Matabeleland Moffat received news that the companion-expedition to the Makololo at Linyanti had met with overwhelming disaster.

On November 11, 1860, Joseph Arend, a Griqua hunter who had hunted elephant as far as the Victoria Falls, brought tidings to Kuruman that the leader of the party, Holloway Helmore, his wife and two of their four children, together with Mrs. Roger Price and her baby, were dead with fever. Roger Price and two little Helmore children, Willie and Lizzie, alone survived. Next day Moffat sent the news to London with the comment that the Makololo chief Sekeletu had "murmured because Livingstone had not sent men to conduct the missionaries and tell the Makololo when he should come himself."[1] Moffat decided to go himself on the northward trail once more and find out what had happened to the eager and expectant pioneers he had fathered and farewelled from Kuruman on July 8, 1859.

I

The story of the Makololo mission is a lamentable one of mismanagement, inefficient preparation, stubborn allegiance to a set plan, coupled with heroic resistance to African conditions by a group of simple, dedicated people. Although Moffat was against the plan of the mission from the start - unless Livingstone or himself could lead it[2] - he must carry some blame for not insisting, when the expedition assembled at Kuruman, on the posponement of the start to a more favourable

[1,2] R.M. to Tidman 12.11.60; 20.7.58 LMS

Kalahari trekking season.[1] His wisdom and experience were also not exercised in inspecting the equipment of the Makololo party, which had no separate water-cart, no horses and - all against the Moffat tradition of travel into unknown country - was handicapped with wives and children, and without a doctor or even an amateur one. Moffat's pre-occupation at the time was with the Matabele party. He knew, too, that in Holloway Helmore the Makololo group had a leader with nineteen years of southern Africa experience. He had his doubts, and expressed them to London and his immediate colleagues, but never allowed them to disrupt his loyalty to the total plan.[2]

Helmore was a stubborn believer in the confidence created amongst Africans by the presence of the missionary with his family, and nothing could shake his determination - supported by his wife - to take his family with him, a decision which also won the assent of Roger Price and his wife, then an expectant mother. John Mackenzie, who was also destined for the Makololo, wisely chose to stay at Kuruman for another ten months because of his wife's health, and made the shrewdest suggestion of any in connection with the enterprise - that the men should go alone as a reconnaissance party, a "proposition not received with favour by those whose age and experience entitled their judgment to great respect, and very unpopular with the ladies".[3] It was finally vetoed by Helmore and his wife.[4]

What of Livingstone's responsibility? This is a complex and unresolvable problem. Undoubtedly he was the inspirational drive behind the venture,[5] and all the members of it had been in Britain during the memorable year of his fame in 1857 and must have caught some of Livingstone's obvious affection for the faithful Makololo and their great chief Sebituane.[6] One of his

[1] Smith GL 56 [2] Isabella Price to her parents 1.2.59 LMS
[3,4] Mackenzie 33 [5] See Chapter 15 [6] Travels 59ff; 72ff.

reasons for going up the Zambesi to Tete was to take home his Makololo carriers he had left there in 1856,[1] an obligation he nobly discharged even though of the ninety survivors of the four years' wait at Tete one-third declined to go home, and eventually only twenty-five got there.

More than his men, their chief Sekeletu (Sebituane's successor) wanted Livingstone himself.[2] Moreover, he ardently desired someone associated with Moffat[3] as an insurance against his most powerful enemies, the Matabele. The Makololo "undoubtedly liked and respected Livingstone for himself, but it was as Moffat's son-in-law that they wanted him permanently among them. They were not interested at all in the other missionaries who came to settle among them."[4] It may well have been Sekeletu's sharp disappointment that no one with a Moffat-Livingstone connection came with the new missionaries that led to Sekeletu's abominable behaviour towards them, which contrasted so sharply with his polite manners to Livingstone, who, according to Gluckman's view, broke faith with the Makololo by not going himself to lead them, as they had hoped,[5] into the drier uplands across the Zambesi.

Did Livingstone also break faith with the mission itself in not meeting the party at Linyanti? Was there any undertaking to do so? On this the Livingstone historians are divided. Lovett, the L.M.S. historian, says there was an arrangement,[6] but offers no evidence; while Blaikie says "No",[7] and Campbell quotes Livingstone's own sentence in a letter to Tidman after visiting the scene of the disaster in August 1860: "I was too late to render the aid which I had fondly hoped to afford."[8] Seaver is of the opinion that no definite promise was made but that it was Livingstone's purpose to arrive at Linyanti about the same time as the mission party,[9] and undoubtedly Helmore, as

[1] D.L. to J.S.M. 20.4.60 NA [2] Zambesi Journal A3 20.2.59 NA
[3] Zambesi Narrative 300; and Gluckman, Listener, 22.9.55
[4] Gluckman, Listener, 22.9.55 [5] Travels 431 [6] Lovett i 619
[7] Blaikie 231 [8] Campbell, Livingstone 270 [9] Seaver 315

leader, was anxious to be there in time to meet the doctor and be introduced by him to the Makololo.[1] In the pathetic scrap of a journal which Isabella Price kept of the ill-fated venture, she records that "nothing has been heard here of Livingstone" and suggests that consequently "our course is rather obscure".[2]

II

With a scratch team of oxen, Moffat left Kuruman on January 5 (,), 1861, on his single-handed venture. The disaster must have lain heavily on his mind, but there are no recriminations and no distribution of blame. What puzzled him most was the silence of Livingstone, who had had ample time to send letters southward from the Victoria Falls area which he reached on August 8, 1860, and from where on August 10 (as Moffat later knew) he wrote to his father-in-law a cold, detached letter of sympathy on hearing of the death of "our much esteemed friends". His medical mind immediately diagnosed "fever untreated", to him an unforgivable omission when his own efficacious purge might have been used.[3]

Moffat pushed on up the familiar northern track, using his supplementary oxen to make speed. By January 26,1861, he was at Sechele's old stronghold of Lithubaruba; and a day's journey from there, to his great surprise, met John Mackenzie and his wife, who had set out from Kuruman on May 25, 1860, to join the Makololo Mission. To his even greater surprise the Mackenzies had with them Roger Price and the two Helmore children, whom they had met on September 8, 1860, emaciated and staggering southwards from Linyanti as sole survivors of the disaster.

[1] Mackenzie 39

[2] Journal, Isabella Price 21.2.60 LMS; R.M. to J.S.M. 8.1.61 NA

[3] Blaikie 232

As the whole party moved homewards to Kuruman, Moffat heard from Price the tale of an expedition which had its miseries and unlucky accidents from the start. Price had with him the previous scraps of his wife's diary, which record the privations of the waterless country of what is now the Crown Chobe Lands long before the travellers were smitten by fever at Linyanti and show the relentless conditions the women and children faced:

> Monday September 5 1859. We took one solitary cup of tea, sparing just a little water untouched for fear of anyone being taken ill. Then we thought over all the liquid resources of the waggon. We got out some oranges and lemons, most of them bad, but they were delicious to us. I felt obliged to exercise great self-control not to drink every drop of liquid we had, whether vinegar, brandy or wine, but we tasted neither.
>
> Friday January 13 1860. Oh, I shall never forget going one afternoon to Mrs Helmore's waggon. The dear children were crying piteously - they had no water. Poor Mrs Helmore was so weak from privation, she could scarcely be kept from fainting, and Mr Helmore had determined to walk a distance of forty miles that night to obtain water. We spared them a little of ours, though we knew not when we should get more. Mr Helmore performed his journey, and to see the joy of the children when they got plenty of water! It was truly overwhelming ... The day the Helmores suffered so much the thermometer stood at 107 degrees in the shade.[1]

Price also described the 250 miles across the Chobe Lands and the Mababe Depression where Livingstone and his family nearly perished[2] for lack of water in 1851:

> About two days journey to S.E. of Kamakama we found the last fountain of water before reaching the Chobe; a distance of about two hundred and fifty miles. Hence we had to be entirely dependent on rain water and hence our great difficulties and privations between Kamakam and the Makololo country ... Shortly after that, for nearly a fortnight, every drop of water that we used had to be carried on men's backs for about twenty miles. Add to that the fact that

[1] Journal, I.P., LMS

~~[2] Price to Tidman 20.2.61 LMS~~

[2] Travels 79

during that time the thermometer generally stood at 107 to 110 degrees in the shade, and you will be able to form some idea of our position.

In the forested areas it was not much better:

> In the forest for four days we had to be entirely dependent upon water that the Bushmen could suck out of hollow trees, where it had been standing I do not know how long. It was more like water from a dunghill than anything else; still we were glad to get it and only wished there were more of it.[1]

When the party arrived at Linyanti, seven months and a week after leaving Kuruman, Chief Sekeletu's reception was cool and critical. He refused to consider moving to the trans-Zambesi highlands, or even as far as Shesheke on the river, which Helmore considered more healthy and more in the direct line of communication with Livingstone.[2] The experienced H elmore might preach, as he did, in the chief's kgotla, but Sekeletu had lost the accent of friendship which commended him to Livingstone and was no doubt in the early stages of the leprosy complaint for which Livingstone gave him treatment five months later, a fact which needs to be remembered in judging his behaviour.

By the beginning of March, 1860, the morale of the group was further shattered by "this nasty, slow fever"[3] which moved through the company with such deadly zeal that by the end of April 1860, Helmore and his wife, their two small children, Henry and Selina, and the eight-months old Eliza Price were all dead, as well as four Bechuana servants. The stricken camp offered a spectacle of hopeless desolation:

> Four sick children, guarded by a sick and enfeebled mother, lay in one place, their sick father at a little distance. The Bechuana men were lying about like logs of wood - one here and another there, rolled in their blanket or kaross, utterly prostrated by fever, unable to

[1] Price to Tidman 20.2.61 LMS

[2] Mackenzie 187

[3] Journal, I.P., 3.3.60 LMS

> help themselves, and some of them in a deep stupor. The only ray of hope in the picture was that Mr and Mrs Price, although suffering severely, were never both ill at once ... Mr Price for some time cooked food for the whole party, servants included ... the first death was not a European, not even one of the tender children, but Malatsi the tallest and perhaps the strongest of the Bechuana servants who had been the driver of Mr Price's waggon.[1]

Helmore died on April 22, 1860, a tragic date in the whole affair because by then he had received Robert Moffat's letter dispatched from Inyati in Matabeleland on February 22, 1860, with the news of Moselekatse's peaceful intentions towards the Makololo. "He has assured me again and again", wrote Moffat, "that he has not the most distant idea of attacking the Makololo ... indeed he seems averse to war entirely, perhaps aware that should it recoil he could not so easily escape in his wagon, and run he cannot."[2] If Helmore had been a fit man, this wise letter might have saved the situation and might have encouraged him in his desperate situation to hold on until there was definite news of Livingstone's appearance. It may have been that he made the effort to discuss the position with Sekeletu, because it was after visiting the chief that his strength finally gave out,[3] and Price and his wife and the surviving Helmore children, Lizzy and Willie, were left as the sole wreck of the mission.

As apprentices in African affairs the Prices had little choice but to re-trace their steps along the same grim road they had come; and their departure was the signal to Sekeletu to begin his thievish demands on their goods. Egged on by a

[1] Mackenzie 188

[2] R.M. to Helmore 22.2.60 LMS; and M.M. 127

[3] Journal, I.P., 26.5.60 LMS

renegade Bechuana, Mahuse, the chief asserted his rights to Helmore's property, including his wagon and four oxen; and the helpless Price was robbed of his own personal belongings, down to one set of bed-clothes, a couple of shirts, a vest or two, two or three pairs of trousers, an old coat and an old pair of shoes.[1] And when on June 19, 1860, the Prices managed to organize their departure, Sekeletu had the effrontery to ride with him in the stolen wagon to the edge of the town, and pester him with demands for more goods.

At the Chobe, Price was compelled to deliver up his last blanket and the grain supply of his men, and even to pay for the grass his cattle had eaten. "These were my prospects", he wrote, "for a journey of upwards a thousand miles to Kuruman". The route he chose ran westwards of the previous road towards the Thamalakane River to Lake Ngami, but before they struck it one of the two wagons broke down so hopelessly that it had to be abandoned, which meant that every night Price slept in the open leaving the wagon to his wife and the two Helmore children. Soon after this, on July 4, 1860, came to the crowning disaster for Price - his wife died, and that same evening "I buried her under a tree, the only tree on the whole of the immense plain of the Mababe".[2] Alone with the two orphans and with Bushmen guides, Price trekked along to the junction of the Rivers Thamalakane and Botletle, and then to the town of Lechulatebe, the chief of the Batawana, where a friendly reception gave new life to Price and the children. There he heard of Mackenzie's approach on the banks of the River Botletle on his way to join the Makololo mission, and on September 8, paddling down the river in the chief's canoe, he met him.[3] On September 26, Mackenzie, after listening to Price's story, decided to abandon his own journey to the Makololo; and, with Price and

[1,3] Mackenzie 196; 181

[2] Price to Tidman 20.2.61 LMS

the children, moved by the Botletle towards Shoshong which they reached on December 1, 1860, and on January 27, 1861, met Moffat on the road.

III

As they pieced together the evidence of the Linyanti disaster, Moffat and Mackenzie were soon aware of Price's conviction that the evil designs of Chief Sekeletu were the prime cause of the deaths, and that his friends had been poisoned. In his Great Lion of Bechuanaland, E.W. Smith has minutely investigated the reasons for the deaths and quotes Price's speech in Capetown of August 17, 1861, in which he said: "I attended Mr Helmore during his last illness and I can safely say that I could not discover any fever in him. In African fever I have not seen much pain suffered, but some of my friends suffered pain of the most excruciating character.[1]

Moffat notes that the "whole country was perfectly dry and no appearance of fever among the natives".[2] Mackenzie, however, says that symptoms of poisoning are also characteristic of African fever; and that "it needed no poison in the ox to cause liberal rations of beef, without much exercise, to bring about that bilious state which, in the summer months, and in such a region, would be sure to beget fever. It needed no poison in the beer as drunk by Mr Helmore and Mr Price, after preaching on the Sunday, to produce the pains in the head and loins and neck which they complained of on their return to the camp. The fatigue of preaching in the open air, the unhealthy atmosphere of the town, with rank vegetation all around, and a

[1] Smith GL 415

[2] R.M. to J.S.M. 26.1.61 NA

hot sun overhead, were absolutely sufficient to produce African fever."[1]

Livingstone was convinced "that there is no occasion for suspecting other poison than malaria, that being more than enough. We have witnessed all the symptoms of this poison scores of times, and, from the survivors' description believe the deaths to have been caused by severe African fever and nothing else".[2] In any case, he said, the Makololo use the spear and not poison. What no doubt made Livingstone critical and surprised was the thought that within a hundred yards of the stricken camp at Linyanti stood his old wagon, still in the safe keeping of the Makololo since 1853, and stocked with a medicine chest which might have saved their lives if his never-failing rouser of jalap, calomel, rhubarb and quinine had been thoroughly administered.[3] Why the Linyanti party never used this supply, or were ignorant of it, has never been explained, but that the supplies were there intact Livingstone proved by using them in August 1860, only two months after Price had moved away southwards.[4] It may be argued that, if it had been African fever, the party - particularly Helmore - would have known how to deal with it, even without the aid of Livingstone's supplies; but, if it was poison, why were the whole party not killed - an argument which the Makololo themselves later used.[5] On balance, the fever theory is probably the right one but the mysterious ways of African witchcraft and poisoning cannot be finally ruled out.[6]

[1] R.M. to J.S.M. 26.1.61 NA

[2-4] Zambesi Narrative 280; 297; 297; and D.L. to J.S.M.28.1.60NA

[5,6] Smith GL 129; 421ff

Moffat also discovered, as the company moved southwards to Kuruman, that Price was violently anti-Sekeletu. His shameful treatment at the hands of the Makololo chief, when in his distress he might have expected sympathy and help, provides an unedifying chapter in African-European relationships. It was made worse for Price by the news which reached him soon after he had buried his wife in her lonely grave that the Makololo had taken out the body, cut off the head and carried it to Sekeletu.[1] He was 26 when the Makololo tragedy happened and had been in Africa only two short years, most of which was spent in ox-wagon travel. He was Welsh, and his biographer, E.W. Smith, admits that he was "constitutionally capable of ebullitions of temper",[2] and that there may have been acts of provocation on his part.

Livingstone listed three charges against Price which he discovered were current amongst the Makololo.[3] One was that he kicked a man away from his wagon, that he bound a man to the wheel, and used a revolver. The first two charges were never fully substantiated, but were not unlikely, and the third Price admitted himself in a letter to the L.M.S. of November 4, 1861:

> I had to defend myself at Linyanti after having first given public notice to Sekeletu that I should do so. My notice was of no avail and I had to resort to my pistol. Afterwards it was taken from under my pillow when I was too ill and weak to think of anything but the grave ... Some may find fault with my having resort to such means; let such try and put themselves in my position, alone among thousands of barbarians. I did it merely to frighten them, which of course it did.[4]

1 R.M. to J.S.M. 26.1.61 NA

2 Smith GL 109

3 D.L. to Tirman 25.2.62 LMS

4 Quoted Smith GL 107

How far Livingstone had been able to investigate these charges and to sift them from tribal gossip is impossible to say, but they fell hardly on the stricken Price; particularly when, later, Livingstone was critical of his public speeches in Capetown in a letter to J.S. Moffat on February 23, 1862 (after Price had married Bessie Moffat in October 1861):

> You may take 90 per cent off your new brother-in-law's statements. We were made painfully aware that he got on well with neither Chief nor people. All spoke well of Helmore, but of Price the less said the better.[2]

Livingstone fully accepted the Makololo version of the disaster in letters to Tidman on November 10, 1860, and on February 25, 1862, defending his favourite tribe; and later in the Zambesi Narrative describing them as "generally truthful, unless they have some self-interest at stake; and they cannot be made to combine to propagate any downright falsehood."[3] There is a certain heartless efficiency about Livingstone's comments on the ill-fated affair which suggests that he was justifying his own position of not having arrived in time to give help to the mission. His defence of himself describes how successful he was lower down the Zambesi with the same fever that was so deadly at Linyanti - "in very severe cases the patient was able to resume his march on foot a day or so after the operation of the remedy".[4] Anyone who muddled along to failure always incurred Livingstone's wrath, and at Linyanti he sensed inefficiency which would have been transformed into success had he been there! "I think they wanted to do it all themselves and have it to say they did not require any aid from me" he wrote to J.S. Moffat. "A precious mull they made of it."[5]

1,5 D.L. to J.S.M. 23.2.62 NA

2 Narrative 280

3 D.L. to Tidman 10.11.60 LMS

Those were hard and ungracious words from one who had not troubled to investigate all the facts.

Moffat also discovered from Price one other important fact which illuminated if it did not justify Sekeletu's conduct. Price was convinced that much of his cruel treatment of the newcomer missionaries was due to the influence of the half-breed Portuguese who moved through the Zambesi valley engaged in the slave traffic. Sekeletu's predecessor, Sebituane, had traded with them, exchanging boys for guns in 1850; and in 1853 they were at Linyanti again, a year when the wholesome fear of Livingstone and the British drove them off. By the time Helmore and Price arrived they were once more in influential positions for their trade in slaves and ivory in exchange for cloth, guns and ammunition, and had fully installed themselves in the chief's favour.[1] According to E.W. Smith, they poisoned Sekeletu's mind[2] and found an ardent ally in the Bechuana, Mahuse, who against Robert Moffat's advice had attached himself to the mission.

Livingstone's arrival in August 1860 dethroned the half-breeds, but their influence had done its work with the weak and leprous chief, who must bear a major responsibility for the miseries of an expedition which was riddled with errors of judgment from the start, and had the ill-starred misfortune of trying to establish itself in a territory where native authority was rapidly decaying and could only be temporarily restored by the one man who failed to appear in time. Livingstone had sufficient alibis in his own crushing defeats and delays in the lower Zambesi, but that he failed the Makololo both in the mission and in plans for their removal from the swamps of the Chobe can hardly be disputed - and what

1,2 Smith GL 109

is more he probably knew it.[1] How different had been the results of Moffat's patient preparation of Moselekatse for the entry of missions to Matabeleland!

In listening to Price's story, all Moffat's previous hesitations about the Makololo venture were confirmed. As a tribe, their career roughly corresponded with the length of Moffat's own career in southern Africa. They came into the Transvaal in 1822 from the vast Basuto reservoir of tribes which under the propulsion of Shaka's Zulus streamed into the northern veld through the Orange Free State and began their march through the Bechuana tribes to the Zambesi under their great chief, Sebituane.[2] Whether they were present at Moffat's Battle of Lattakoo in 1823 (See Chapter 7) is very doubtful, but out of that maelstrom Sebituane collected his forces to seek a new country in the north, fighting their way through the Bechuana tribes and making themselves masters of Ngamiland by 1834.[3] From there they eventually moved into the swamps of the Chobe, which appeared to have a fatal fascination for the Makololo; and then by 1840 they crossed the Zambesi, and for the next eleven years Sebituane fought for the mastery of Zambesia over territory that stretched away into Barotseland.

It was during this period that Sebituane learned to respect and fear the Matabele, against whom the great river itself was a sure frontier. But the lure of the south and the Chobe again set in, and by 1850 Sebituane was back where he began, and where Livingstone found him in 1851. A fighter of great personal courage, "the greatest ever heard of beyond

[1] Gluckman, Listener 22.9.55

[2,3] Smith GL 371;394

the Colony", says Livingstone.[1] It was his humanity that appealed to Livingstone, "for he had the art of gaining the affections both of his own people and of strangers".[2] When he died suddenly on July 6, 1851, Livingstone "never felt so grieved at the death of a black man before"[3] for with Sebituane perished not only the greatness of the Makololo but also Livingstone's own visionary schemes of a Zambesian Empire on the healthy uplands between the great river and the Kafue where his beloved Makololo might grow into a people of peace and prosperous industry, secure against the Matabele through Moffat's influence, and where he and Mary might settle with their family.[4]

After Sekeletu's death in 1864 the Makololo decline set in, with the customary disputes about the succession to the chieftainship and the surrounding tribes joining in the fight as opportunity offered. Lechulatebe, the Ngamiland chief, capped the civil war with a wholesale massacre which wiped out "every Makololo man of birth or distinction"[5] But before the death of Sekeletu, Mackenzie, with the backing of Price and J.S. Moffat, made two attempts to suggest the establishment of another Makololo mission. Nothing came of these, however, as the sick chief fell a victim to his leprosy, and his people were either killed or subjugated and their name vanished from the African scene.

One melancholy asset endured from it all, according to Mackenzie. Whenever there were disputes in his own missionary career, "some Gamaliel was sure to stand up and advise: 'Let the missionary alone: the Makololo injured the missionaries, and where are the Makololo'?"

1,2 Travels 72; 77

3 Quoted Seaver 138

4 D.L. to Tidman 10.11.60 LMS; Wallis, Intro. Zambesi Expedition xiv; Zambesi Narrative 299

5 Mackenzie 247

Chapter 17

THE FLOWERING OF KURUMAN
[1860-70]

The Kuruman Fountain sends forth its noble stream

The eye of the modern traveller along the ninety-two miles of yellow, gritty track from Vryburg to Kuruman wanders over a harsh expanse of veld which, except for the absence of wild beasts, has probably changed little since Robert Moffat's day. There is a timeless fixation about a terrain of this kind, clothed with a low brown-black scrub in the dry season, and presenting such a sombre face, even in the sunshine, as to merit the name of semi-desert, or Siberia, which the people of the lush regions of South Africa call this remote corner of the Northern Cape.[1] From the high plateau, nearing Kuruman, the eye begins to take in the vast valley of the Kuruman River, really a huge, sodden vlei, which bends about under the Kuruman Hills on its way to link with the even drier Molopo valley and eventually the more visible waters of the lower Orange River.

It is the Kuruman Hills which hold the eye, as they break the monotonous miles of the scrub-veld, capped by the purple Knob [Gamahaan] whose friendly shape was often a welcome sight to Moffat on the last scoft home. Below the hills, but well out into the bare, open valley of the Kuruman, is a cluster of trees: the poplars and willows that Moffat planted to give shade to his water-furrow and a cool light to his home. They are the only sign of human landscaping until you pierce the thicket to the gardens opposite the mission buildings, where the syringa and the almond trees still shoot luxuriantly. Three miles up the ever flowing water-furrow (encased now in a cement trough), from this site called Seodin, is the modern dorp of Kuruman, where the

[1] The Times 9.11.59

gushing "Eye of Kuruman" is set in a miniature park, with a monument to honour the Voortrekkers, and no one else, as the pioneers of civilization in the Northern Cape.

From The Nek in the Kuruman Hills, over which the road runs on into the western wilderness, the eye catches a glimpse of the immense bleakness of the Lang Berg, pointing on to the distant borders of South-West Africa and northwards to the confines of the Kalahari. To the south-east lies the hard road - 138 miles to Kimberley - where in Moffat's later years the diamonds sparkled and eventually the railway came. Somehow Kuruman missed them both, and remained a name on the map that modern surveyors passed by. Moffat chose his green valley well enough, but it was a wagon man's choice, strategically placed for the long oxen-haul, providing a base for the northward expansion of the Christian faith, and offering an example of organized domesticity and the practice of the useful arts. Its prosperity was always subject to the capricious perils of the wide wilderness, as they affected the total Kuruman community; but within the mission pleasaunce itself all was cosy and confident. "The principal advantage of this place", wrote Moffat, "is that it must continue permanent so long as the Kuruman fountain sends forth its noble stream."[1] That was after forty years of the slow flowering of Kuruman. He prophesied as much at the beginning.

There was a created beauty about the place which travellers coming off the bleak veld quickly noticed. James Chapman, in 1853, is a good sample:

> All we see is the result of well-directed labour. A street of about a quarter of a mile in length is lined on one side by the missionary gardens, enclosed with substantial walls, and teeming with fruit and vegetables of every description. A row of spreading willows are nourished by a fine watercourse, pouring a copious stream at their

[1] R.M. to Mullens 1.1.67 LMS

> roots for nearly a mile, and beyond the gardens flows to the eastward the river Kuruman, between tall reeds, with flights of waterfowl splashing on its surface ... on the opposite side of the street ... is a spacious chapel calculated to hold more than 500 people. It is built of stone, with a missionary dwelling-house on either side of it, and a trader's dwelling-house and store at the western end. All these, as well as the smaller but neat dwellings of the Bechuanas, built in European style, and in good taste, have shady seringa trees planted in the front ... behind the chapel is a printing office, in which native counsellers were setting type for the new editions of Mr Moffat's Bible. The natives here are the most enlightened and civilized I have seen, the greater portion wearing clothes, and being able to read and write. [1]

It was a hospitable place of call, as the sick Chapman discovered in February 1853[? 4], when Mrs Moffat turned him loose in the garden to feed on grapes, pears, apples, figs, almonds and walnuts: "the best medicine I have ever taken".[2] Moffat found that too many callers turned the place into "something like a caravansary". He longed for quietude, to get on with his Bible revision.[3] But callers were the lines of communication, and Kuruman a pivot in the tenuous and unofficial thread which carried postal sacks from the Cape to the Zambesi.

Kuruman had its weekly postal runner to Hope Town, thirty miles away on the Orange River, but the northward dispatch from Kuruman was mainly Moffat's responsibility. Southwards from Matabeleland it was anybody's wagon for the post, and the sack might be dumped on the Moffat doorstep in the very early hours, when Mrs Moffat would "spring out of bed, all stiff as I am; no more sleep; I got some wrappings about me and there I sat till I

[1] Chapman, Travels in the Interior, Vol.1, 132ff, 1868

[2] Chapman, Travels, Vol.1, 213

[3] R.M. to Tidman 1.12.62 LMS

got through the whole budget".[1]

When the post from Hope Town was expected, Mrs Moffat waited for it in her arm-chair, or on the sofa her husband made for her,[2] asking as she read her letters how the dinner was getting on, and having a nap both before and after the meal. The Moffat home was a small, compact stone house opening on to a large yard at the back, where the five servants Mrs Moffat had trained did their chores - including baking 28 large loaves of bread a week in a big brick oven. A patent mill ground and sifted the meal in one go; cooking was done in three-legged pots on tripods; and coffee was roasted on open coals after the bread baking. There was always white and brown bread on the table, and on Sunday mornings Lancashire furmety boiled from Kuruman corn.

In summer, peaches, apricots, pears and apples were dried in the sun and packed away in linen bags; and in the same way grapes were reduced to raisins, and vinegar produced from the refuse. Mrs Moffat was an ardent packer of boxes, for "the brethren in the interior", of nuts, oatmeal, pickles, rusks, raisins, millet, pumpkins, melon, leather for shoes, all securely wedged in with a bucksack of dried apples to prevent rattling in the wagon. Her Shrewsbury cakes, lemon juice, and freshly ground coffee, added luxury to restricted diets.[3]

A warm autumnal beneficence oozed from Kuruman. It was the sort of place you came away from with a pomegranate, a pumpkin, quinces, or a cabbage;[4] and if you were trekking north it was the last place where you might recruit your oxen, bull-

[1] M.M. to J. & E. M. 23.4.62 NA
[2] Now Mrs R.L. Moffat's, Ormiston, Shangani, S.R.
[3] M.M. to Mrs Helmore 22.5.60 LMS
[4] Lizzie to Annie Helmore 31.5.59 LMS

ocks, cows, sheep and goats.[1]

For forty years the Moffats lived along their grassy street, making it a kindly corridor to the north, and a rendezvous of replenishment for travellers. Livingstone remembered it with affection on the Zambesi,[2] and J.S. Moffat saluted it with a filial nostalgia:

> We bade farewell to the good old mother and rode away from Kuruman - the patriarch accompanying us as far as the drift ... they have been very kind ... we ride along the sandy plains now covered with beautiful grass, looking back upon the long lines of trees and gardens diminishing to mere dark streaks, but do not lose sight of them till we go over a little hill six miles distant; a tear will dim the eye as we wonder whether we shall ever see them again, or those who live among them.[3]

A new young missionary saw it with fresh eyes in February, 1866, after the long journey from the coast:

> Perhaps it seemed more beautiful than it really is to eyes which had long been weary with the sun's glare upon dusty roads and stunted bushes ... the long avenue which separates the mission houses and chapel from the gardens is now carpeted with the greenest of turf; the trees in front of the buildings are thick with a beautiful foliage, and over the garden wall hang clusters of rich red pomegranates ... house and gardens alike are the best monuments that could be raised in honour of the patient and indefatigable labours of those who have borne the heat and burden of the day here.[4]

Little children on distant mission stations were excited when their father came home from visiting Kuruman. There was bound to be a box of eats in the wagon from Mrs Moffat, and a bag of fruit from the gardens.[5]

While it was a gardener's paradise, the lands round the mission settlement were not adapted for extensive cattle-breeding, or for the keeping of sheep and goats, a fact which sent up

1 J.S. Moffat's Diary 3.5.63 NA
2 ZE 236
3 J.S. Moffat's Diary 3.5.63 NA
5 Lizzie to Annie Helmore 31.5.59 LMS
4 J.Brown to Tidman 5.2.66 LMS

Moffat's bills for meat, milk, soap and tallow, and made him envious of the sixty lambs he saw gambolling at the neighbouring station of Likhatlong.[1] The lands spread two miles long and a quarter of a mile wide down the valley, apportioned out in plots to the approved elect of the community - whose basic criterion was "one man, one wife". Here, under the zealous eyes of Moffat and William Ashton, his colleague from 1843 to 1864, the inner group of the Kuruman community - probably never more than a hundred all told - lived a subsistence existence, always confident that the Kuruman stream would produce something to eat, even though meat got scarcer as the spring-buck and the duiker steadily retreated across the veld.

This was Mary Moffat's parish, too, as she drove out in her ox-drawn phaeton to see the old women at home, and to encourage the younger ones to neat sewing by a plentiful supply of patches and pieces sent to her by the box-load from Manchester. Patch-work dresses were the fashion in the valley, but before a brand-new cotton dress could be worn the wearer had to produce a petticoat made from an animal skin, killed, cured and dried, by husband or father. Mary Moffat's sewing bags were the basis of dress discipline, for patches had to be as neat as the gardens, and fashions as regulated as water from the Kuruman stream.

I

The full glory of the Kuruman commonwealth was seen on Sundays, when the elect from the gardens and the more loosely attached company from the surrounding terrain flocked round and into the handsome stone church. Its massive walls and even more massive thatched roof (restored in 1959) had the solid meeting-house air of eighteenth-century England, or it would have looked noble on a New England green. Its Quaker white-washed simplicity, its backless rough forms, the reading-desk pulpit, the tallow-lit chandelier, and the packed rows of the dark-skinned Bechuana

[1] R.M. to Tidman 20.8.63 LMS

singing their gospel hymns, were all in the pattern of Moffat's inheritance of worship. It was plain and simple, with an hour-glass beside the candle-snuffers in the pulpit, and an officer-known as a "snuffer" - going round to light and douse the candles. The church could seat 800, but congregations appear to have been about 300 in the morning and 200 for the afternoon and evening services, when the cattle-herds, bird-frighteners, and their colleagues were expected to attend worship.[1]

The great day began with a prayer-meeting at sunrise, and continued with a flow of schools under the trees, or in the church; spelling groups with their lesson-boards; and adults proudly swinging their Bible-bags containing the three volumes of the Sechuana Bible, and the Kuruman hymn-book. Most of the women wore handkerchiefs, black and coloured, tied tightly round their heads, with flowing skirts amply decorated with Mrs Moffat's patches - as were the men's coats and trousers, except those who sported the home-made tanned skinned variety. Shoes were made out of local leather, in the style of Scottish brogues; but gloves and stockings were thought to be superfluous.

The worship followed the pattern of singing, Scripture-reading, prayer, and preaching, and was usually presided over by Moffat or Ashton. The minister wore a black cloth coat, but no other signs of clericalism such as white ties or preaching bands crept in - and he was known to come to church in slippers and smoking cap. The singing, disciplined by Bessie and Jane Moffat into tuneful orderliness with the aid of an imported harmonium, was no longer a monotonous one-tone recitative of the psalms and hymns, but equal, in John Mackenzie's opinion, to that in a village church in Britain.[2] Preaching consisted of the re-telling of incidents from the Bible narra-

[1] R.M's MSS reports 1857, 1861, 1868, 1869, to Tidman and Mullens LMS

[2] Mackenzie, 74

tive, with the Old Testament characters and the Parables in the ascendant, and the moral of every story well driven home. The preacher knew that the sermon would be argued about and discussed all during the week, for this type of Bible preaching became the yardstick of morals and conduct in the Kuruman valley; and the form of family worship encouraged amongst the people brought Bible manners into everyday life. The Book became the rule of living, its phrases and stories were woven into the common speech, and the name of Yesu regarded with veneration.

Moffat never enthused over this Biblical commonwealth in the Kuruman valley. He never made spectacular claims for his forty-years' achievement amongst the Bechuana; and in his last report he could write of them as "cradled in serfdom ... afraid of each other and consequently slow to approve and to find fault ... not a thinking people ... their garrulity defies description". But, while lamenting the general laxity of the people, he could commend the church members for "their laudable zeal to maintain the character of the followers of the Lord Jesus ... family worship increases and the reading of Scripture". [1]

This inner group of the church was the heart of the Kuruman community. In the style of the Independent churches, which flowered both in Old and New England, no one was admitted to it unless he had been through a catechumen or enquirers' class - which at Kuruman met once a week. Between 1860 and 1869 one-hundred-and-fifty new members were admitted,[2] under the supervision of Moffat and his colleague; but the total membership appears never to have exceeded seventy.[3] Discipline and obedience were more to be desired than large numbers, for this company of the elect had the same rigidity in personal conduct and in church government as any Bible-ordered, covenanting

1,2 R.M's Report 8.1.69 LMS

3 Reports 1857(65); 1867(59) LMS

community in eighteenth-century Massachusetts. Kuruman was a reign of the saints, with Robert and Mary Moffat as watchful overlords, jealously guarding the ordinances of the church from contamination with the impure world and punishing the backslider with excommunication:

> Dina, the wife of Lipone cut off for generally bad conduct - more especially for absenting herself from the chapel on the Sabbath, and for lying when questioned respecting it. 30.4.52.
>
> Mokiblamene separated for lying, deceit, etc. 5.8.53.
>
> Tsebouyane separated for allowing Ramphate to visit her house frequently at night (as she says) to see a woman who lives with her. 1.9.54
>
> Dina seems to be very haughty. She will not acknowledge she has any fault and as a proof of her haughty spirit she had kept from church on the afternoon of the two ordinance sabbaths. 2.10.54.
>
> Lekuene again separated, fighting with her children, beating her daughter-in-law. 5.11.58.
>
> Pule separated for stealing from Mr Moffat during his absence. 4.2.59.
>
> Mereeotle separated for allowing his boy to the Boguera. 7.10.60.
>
> Senatla separated for refusing to give up bad company, neglecting the ordinances. 3.4.63.[1]

To be separated from the church meeting and the ordinance of the Lord's Supper - with its massive vessels of shining Sheffield plate - was severe punishment, for church membership was a mark of standing in the community, and restoration could only be secured by an act of penitence in church. Moffat was alternately elated and depressed about it all. In 1864 he reported: "There is no reason to complain of retrogression or stagnation in the condition of the church here ... the increasing attendance on the means of grace is most satisfying."[2]

[1] Kuruman Church Minutes MSS

[2] R.M. to Tidman 11.1.64 NA

Four years later, looking back over his years with the Bechuana, he was depressed:

> Notwithstanding the many lingering relics of heathenism in the Bechuana country a great change has been effected, but when we think of the time the Gospel has been proclaimed among them much more was to be expected especially when we know how the Gospel has conquered in other countries. I am humbled when I see how little fruit has been brought forth by the Gospel after so many years of labor.[1]

Whenever Moffat floundered into this depressed mood, especially following long bouts of revising the Sechuana Bible text, which was his constant occupation in his last decade at Kuruman, he got out the ox-wagon and went off to the Lang Berg across the Kuruman Hills. Here was a group of villages within the orbit of the Kuruman hegemony, one village having sixty households with 300 people in the congregation and forty members at the ordinance, most of whom had been at Kuruman in their youth.[2] A cow-horn was blown to announce his arrival, or a flat-iron did duty for a bell, and the people flocked to a prayer-meeting in the piercing wind, after which he baptized the babies and admonished the evil-doers. He would trek all night across the veld, doing thirty-seven miles in sixteen hours, to preside over a meeting to examine candidates for church membership at which eight would be chosen out of fifteen. He would listen to the complaints of drought, lung-sickness in cattle, the late frost which destroyed crops; preach in a dry, hot wind; and accept a piece of cooked mutton to eat as he walked back to the wagon.

All the old exhilaration of wagon-life on the open veld returned as he "examined the state of the church", and contem-

[1] R.M. to Mullens 13.1.68 NA

[2] R.M. to Tidman 16.6.67 LMS

plated the poverty of the people, their miserable resources and their comparatively few complaints. He had known most of them in "their naked, wild heathen state" and now beheld them "clothed and in their right mind". At Puruhuchwe, the school and schoolmaster joyously surprised him:

> I found him and his charge fully engaged, the children scarcely taking off their eyes to look at me. I found five boys and five girls most correct readers ... though I stood long watching I did not hear a single mistake notwithstanding the rapidity with which his pointer went from letter to letter, from large to small. What I saw was really worth one's while coming from the Kuruman on foot to witness.[1]

In the same village the chief's brother had a concubine, and was therefore "cut off"; while the native preacher he had stationed there preached "queer sermons", seldom sticking to his text but seldom wandering "far from the Cross".[2] Somehow the central facts of the faith and its redemptive purpose had got home to a few people, even though the reformation in morals and conduct was not thorough enough for Moffat's liking. By now he knew all their excuses for laziness, indifference, and the grosser sins, and his admonitory zeal never waned.

He could, however, also report to London that "it is most gratifying to witness the spread of Xtianity, followed as it must be with unmistakable marks of civilization even in sequestered villages"; and in the same letter announce contributions from the faithful of £47 for the year from the Kuruman area, almost enough to pay for the five native preachers at £10 a year each. The total area membership was 260.[3]

1 R.M. to Tidman 16.6.67 LMS

2 R.M. to Tidman 5.2.62 NA and 16.6.67 LMS

3 R.M. to Tidman 17.1.66 LMS

II

With the completion in 1857 of the Old Testament in Sechuana, Moffat's place amongst the great Bible translators was established. He had provided the first translation of the whole Bible in an illiterate African tongue,[1] From then on he concentrated on the revision of the New Testament, with the same relentless devotion, and eventually a small trial edition of fifty copies was printed at Kuruman in 1867 under the supervision of his son, John Smith Moffat, which Moffat believed to be an improvement "in simplicity of style, easier to read and in some places less difficult to understand".[2] The larger revised edition was completed under his supervision after he returned to Britain in 1872.

With the printing of the two parts of the Old Testament at Kuruman in 1853 and 1857, and the trial edition of the New Testament in 1867, the Kuruman Press had reached the zenith of its usefulness and fame as a printing-house.[3] It continued to produce Spelling Books and Hymn-Books but its chief glory was the Bible, home-made from the start, created out of a language which had no grammar or dictionary, and printed and published on the veld. Moffat was characteristically grandiloquent about the impact of the book as a visitor to the Bible commonwealth at Kuruman might see it:

> He would perchance see a boy or a girl reading in the sacred volume to his aged parents ... he would find some interest, and perhaps instruction, in listening to parties discussing doctrines and duties bearing on their present and eternal welfare. He would see among them those whom I have seen in all their comparative nudity, filth and ignorance, raving in a heathen dance, conversing on themes which fill angels' minds. ... Let any one who doubts come here, and I shall take him round our station, and from village to village and say, "Look at that man, look at that woman, and ask them what they were before they were taught to read the Bible. 4

[1] Bleek, Grey Collection Catalogue, 155

[2,4] R.M. to Bible Society 16.1.65

[3] See Appendix 1

But the flowering of Kuruman in later years was accompanied by a series of massive assaults on his patience and fortitude, which the Africa of those years was capable of delivering on even her finest servants. In February, 1861, the Moffats received back to Kuruman the remnant of the disastrous Makololo Expedition they had farewelled so hopefully in July 1859 - the two small Helmore children, and Roger Price, who became their son-in-law in October 1861. On August 6, 1862, Robert, their eldest son, who was establishing himself as a trader at Kuruman, died suddenly on the veld within a few miles of home. A month later the news came that their eldest daughter, Mrs Livingstone, had died at Shupanga on the Zambesi on April 27; and in March, 1866, their son-in-law, Jean Fredoux, the French missionary at Motito, was killed at the hands of a drunken trader in a gunpowder explosion - leaving seven children and a somewhat incompetent mother to be cared for by the Moffats.

With their two eldest children dead within a few months of each other, Christmas 1862 was a melancholy one at Kuruman. Their eldest son, by his fluency in Sechuana and his interest in the welfare of the people, seemed to Moffat to offer fair hopes of decent and honourable trading connections. His sudden death, so near home at Mangeeri and yet so far from help, struck them with a pathetic grief they kept to themselves in unexpressed resignation. Within a month, on September 2, 1862, Moffat was heroically off across the veld to the Lang Berg, spending two days in each village, examining the children, admitting members to the church, and selling five pounds' worth of Bibles.[1]

It was the distant death of Mary Livingstone on the Zambesi which affected them most of all, for it re-opened many of the old questions about their son-in-law and his way with their daughter and their children. "Poor dear Livingston", Mrs Moffat

[1] R.M. to Tidman 2.9.62

wrote of him to her daughter-in-law, Ellen Moffat, "we hold him with a loose hand, thinking it quite likely we shall hear of his death as of his coming out alive."[1] Mrs Moffat's affection for him was clouded with maternal irritation when his letter came to Kuruman long after the news of Mary's death had reached them by traders and newspapers.[2] Away at Johanna, off the east coast of Africa, Livingstone too was saddened in October, 1862, at the thought of no letters from the Moffats.[3] Distance and delay added misery to their mutual bereavement. Mrs Moffat wrote to her daughter, Ann Fredoux, on September 18, 1862:

> The post brought a letter from Livingston - you know his way, he makes no parade of his feelings ... I do like some expression of feeling. When writing about poor dear Mary he says[4] she was only one week ill - she never swallowed the calomel.

At that moment Livingstone had just come down the Rovuma River, ready for one more assault on the Zambesi but with a sore heart at "the departure of my beloved one ... the prospect of a home is all dispelled".[5] He had already written in his Journal (May 31, 1862): "The loss of my ever dear Mary lies like a heavy weight on my heart"; and, to Mrs Moffat, "a good wife and mother was she. God have pity on the children".[6]

On Christmas Day, 1862, in the midst of her own heartbreak, Mrs Moffat wrote to the lonely, defeated Livingstone:

> My dear son L - I do thank you for the detail you have given us of the circumstances of the last days and hours of our lamented beloved Mary. ... While not eminently pious I have always continued to hope that the root of the matter was in her. ... As for the vile scandal which

[1] M.M. to Ellen Moffat 10.4.54 NA
[2,6] Blaikie 254; 254ff
[3] Livingstone to Moffats 25.10.62 NA
[4] NA
[5] Livingstone to Maclear 27.10.62 NA

> seems to have hurt you both so much, those who said it did not know you as a couple. In all our intercourse with you we never had a suspicion of your not being comfortable. I know some kind ladies do insinuate when a man leaves his family frequently no matter for what important object he is not comfortable at home.[1]

It was typical of the Moffats and their religious tradition to be concerned as much for the eternal welfare of their daughter as for the immediate solace of their son-in-law, an attitude which Livingstone himself shared. "I have been thinking a great deal since the departure of my beloved one", he wrote to Thomas Maclear, "about the region whither she has gone and imagine, from the manner the bible describes it, we have got too much monkery in our ideas. There will be work there as well as here, and possibly not such a vast difference in our being as is expected."[2] Death was the great divide, but, for the Moffats at Kuruman and Livingstone on the Zambesi, it was also a living link which thirteen years later was to be further emotionally deepened by the death of Livingstone himself.

By 1868, Moffat knew that his days in the Kuruman valley were drawing to a close. He was 73, but "still in possession of a large measure of strength so that I can run, ride and work hard too if required. My lungs suffer from three services, or even two in one day, addressing large congregations such as we have on the sabbath with a toothless mouth is a severe tax on the lungs".[3] Still upright, with his beard beginning to flourish in the massive style of his later years, Moffat looked the Patriarch; and when on horseback going down the valley to examine a church, or deal with a backslider amongst the faithful, he had the air of a Prophet which the Bechuana revered. The "great Moshete" became part of their tradition as he did that of the Matabele.

[1] NA [Incomplete]

[2] D.L. to Maclear 27.10.62 NA

[3] R.M. to Mullens 19.5.68 LMS

From London, the fresh and vigorous direction of the new secretary of the London Missionary Society, Dr Joseph Mullens, was felt in southern Africa; and on January 8, 1869, the brethren from Bechuanaland and Matabeleland assembled at Kuruman, under Moffat's presidency, to discuss Mullens' questions, and they stayed until February 17. The fact that they came naturally to Kuruman from such an immense area of south-central Africa was a recognition of the pre-eminence of its pioneer position and a salute to Moffat in his last days. There were William Ashton of Likhatlong, away on the Hart River; John Brown, the new missionary at Taungs, then the chief centre of the Batlhapi; James Good, from Griqua Town; and the more distant northern men, Roger Price amongst the Bakwena at Lokakeng, John Mackenzie at Shoshong with the Bamangwato, and William Sykes with the Matabele at Inyati, in addition to John Smith Moffat, then colleague to his father at Kuruman.

The central knub of Mullens' questions was the creation of a native ministry, in order to speed the pace of a church independent of mission direction. It was a question after Moffat's own heart which he and Livingstone had foreseen in their policy of northward expansion, but after forty years of work there was little to report. At Kuruman there were five native pastors, "£10 a year, not good but zealous"; at Likhatlong, "four inefficient £6 each"; at Griqua Town, "four all uneducated, reading the only qualification". What was wanted was a school for the training of native pastors.

The conference[1] also had a radical look at the type of public worship that had developed in the mission, and recommended that one of the services should be a "public examination or catechization" in which the morning sermon might be recapitulated

[1] Kuruman Conference Minutes 17.2.69 LMS

"in order to stimulate the piety, zeal and liberality of their people". At Mullens' request they suggested a basic allowance for each missionary of £175 a year, a sensitive point for Moffat - who had always resisted increases in allowances.[1] The argued long and wordily about the revision of the Sechuana New Testament, passed a resolution asking for a medical missionary to succeed Dr Livingstone, and noted with pride that early marriage of females was no longer so prevalent amongst the people. Six days before they broke up Moffat indicated his intention to retire, and after they had all gone home he wrote to Mullens: "it is time for me and the partner of so many years, labor, aye and tail of no ordinary description to retire and give place to youth and energy - I wish I were young again."[2]

It was one thing to tell your colleagues, but quite another really to say "good-bye" to Africa. It took Moffat twelve months to do it. Africa was in his blood, part of his constitution, and, like Livingstone, he never threw it off. "I am an African" he wrote to a correspondent.[3] As he walked about the Kuruman valley in the last few months of his time, smoking his pipe and wearing his old brown-skin veld coat, he realized how hard was the parting. One reason for the delay was the future of the Fredoux family, who could not be left with their widowed mother in the loneliness of Motito. There was nothing else to be done but to take them to England and care for them there. Another reason on his mind was the revision of the New Testament, but the biggest of all was the inability to think of himself anywhere else but at Kuruman and in southern Africa. This was his bailiwick. From the Orange River to the Zambesi he had planted the Christian faith, and had left the stamp of his personality and character on the Bechuana and the Matabele. From Kuruman the lines of communication reached out northwards through Bechuanaland along a road

[1] R.M. to Tidman 15.2.65 LMS

[2] R.M. to Mullens 22.4.69

[3] R.M. to Mrs Pitman 2.10.79 LMS

which, in face of Boer encroachment, had been kept free for the expansion of the faith. He had maintained Kuruman as a citadel of liberty for the tribes, who, in spite of Boer-British political collaboration, knew that Moffat and his colleagues were their friends.

The anti-slave, pro-native tradition he had imbibed as a young man from a theology which saw all men as God's children flowered at Kuruman into a life-service unsurpassed in the story of the Christian occupation of Africa. He had won the intimate regard and respect of Moselekatse, one of the greatest chiefs in African history, and had given the Bechuana the Bible translated and printed in their own tongue. True, the church he had helped to plant and nourish was a feeble and feckless growth, and when he contemplated the sight it became the reason of all reasons for staying at his post:

> I am much better than I have been - last Sabbath I took my horse and rode to our nearest Batlarin village about 8 miles distant. After the service I was obliged to return instead of going to the next village ... my lungs were too weak. My preaching days are nearly over.[1]

He was 74. Seven months later on March 20, 1870, he stood for the last time in the Kuruman pulpit and looked over the packed congregation. Very few of them were of his generation. Most of them were the children of the people who had known him in the prime of his manhood at Kuruman. He pleaded with the unbelievers and blessed the elect. On the following Friday, March 25, he and Mary stood in the doorway of their home watching the wagon being packed for the last journey to the Cape. The wagon had been there for many weeks as Moffat hesitated and paused. But now the crowds gathered on the grassy street of Kuruman and the oxen were yoked. He, Mary, and Jane their daughter, climbed in and the wheels turned southwards for the

[1] R.M. to Mullens 11.8.69 LMS

last time. Far down on the road as they neared Algoa Bay they were offered a more speedy cart and horse, but, for the Moffats, it was the ox-wagon to the finish. On July 25, 1870, they landed at Southampton, exactly four months after leaving Kuruman, and fifty-four years since Moffat left England.

Away in the Manyema country of Central Africa, baffled by the trickery of Arab slavers and with his feet torn by ulcers, David Livingstone was spending a miserable day of lonely pain and enforced idleness. Neither for him nor for Robert Moffat was there any end to Africa.

CHAPTER 18
MOFFAT AFRICANUS

I am an African

On Wednesday April 15, 1874, at six in the morning, Robert Moffat, described by The Times as "Livingstone's venerable and eminent father-in-law", went aboard a steam-tender at Southampton to meet the ship Malwa in Southampton Water carrying his son-in-law's body home from Africa. With a salute of guns the coffin was borne to the waiting train, and that evening in the rooms of the Royal Geographical Society in London it was opened for Moffat to see the sun-dried remains. He saw once again "the un-united fracture" of the left arm where the lion's crunch at Mabotsa thirty-two years before had left its indelible mark. "It was so clear", reported The Times next day, "that the identification of the body was placed beyond doubt."

Shortly before one o'clock on Saturday April 18, the bell of St. Margaret's, Westminster, began to toll for the burial in the Abbey. It was a buoyant spring day with Londoners out all along the route as the hearse and its twelve mourning coaches went by in the full panoply of Victorian black drapery and mourning plumes. In the first coach rode Moffat, now described as "the patriarch of South African missions, whose thin benignant face is bronzed and his flowing beard whitened by 54 years of African labour."[1] Alongside him were his two grandsons, Thomas and Oswell Livingstone, and his son-in-law James Vavasseur. In the Abbey he walked first behind the eight pall-bearers, and when the moment came for the lowering of the coffin the congregation noticed that his hand was resting on the shoulder of Livingstone's faithful African, Jacob Wainwright. Moffat had seen the beginning of Livingstone

[1] The Times 20.4.74

in Africa, and Wainwright the end, and their presence together by his grave in the Abbey sealed the compact of the western world with the now opened continent.

Livingstone's Abbey funeral with its fervent singing of the hymn:

O God of Bethel by whose hand
Thy people still are fed
Who through this weary pilgrimage
Hast all our fathers led

was an emotional landmark both for Africa and Britain. It quickened Britain's Africa conscience, and intensified the campaign for Africa of which Robert Moffat was the personal symbol during the years from 1870 to his death in 1883. He became a publicist for Africa, using his copious rhetorical style to draw attention to Africa through himself - "tall, strong, symmetrical in body, a noble face, eye keen, penetrating yet softening into great tenderness, a voice rich and flexible with tone of sweetest pathos".[1] Joshua Harrison's tribute at the end of Moffat's life matched the early propagandist efforts of John Snow, the publisher, who launched Moffat on his campaign in 1870 with an album portrait that sold in thousands as he travelled about, "the long white beard no doubt doing more to give him age than any other mark that time has left upon him".[2] Victorian Britain received him and Mrs. Moffat at a welcome home public breakfast at the Cannon Street Hotel on August 3, 1870, and on his 75th birthday that year their friends gave them a thousand pounds. Three years later the Moffat Trust Fund of five thousand guineas was established for the benefit of Moffat and his family, under the sponsorship of Titus Salt of Bingley, Yorkshire, Edward Crossley of Halifax, Samuel Hope Morley, William Henry Williams and Stanley Kemp-

[1,2] Christian World 16.8.83; 26.8.70

Welch of London, men high in the nonconformist hierarchy of the day and grown rich through textile manufacturing and merchanting.[1]

Mary Moffat died in their Brixton home on January 10, 1871, her heart still in the green valley at Kuruman amongst the honeysuckle and the vines, the printing of the Scriptures and the Bechuana; and, while her death freed Moffat for long bouts of itinerating through the towns of Britain, he moved as a lonely pilgrim. The thriving midland and northern cities were his regular beat, delivering speeches that were but variations of the more flamboyant addresses of his young manhood and the theme was still "heathen Africa" whose only hope was a transforming mixture of Christianity, civilization and hard work. The canvas was now and again stretched to include denunciations of the Boers and all their works and to a more general philosophizing about missions policy:

> We ourselves are convinced that evangelization must precede civilization. It is very easy in a country of high refinement to speculate on what might be done among rude and savage men, but the Christian missionary, the only experimentalist, has invariably found that to make the fruit good the tree must first be made good. Nothing less than the power of Divine grace can reform the hearts of savages, after which the mind is susceptible of those instructions which teach them to adore the gospel they profess.[2]

The overflowing chapels of Nottingham, Warrington, Liverpool, Manchester, Bradford, Leeds and Newcastle, shaped their views on the "dark continent" through the amalgam of piety and practical up-lift which Moffat personified as he stood in their pulpits adorned with the magnificent white beard

[1] Moffat Papers NA

[2] The Leisure Hour 1883

that warmed his chest in the chill English winters. He longed for the African sun and the clear skies of the veld. But he was rarely nostalgic about Africa. The continent simply needed the blessings which the lace-makers of Nottingham and the soap-boilers of Warrington possessed, and though the "noble-savage" theme might be an attractive one Moffat was no believer in it. The Africa he publicized was in dire need of what the chapel-goers of Britain could offer in men and money, and as they contemplated him and his copious eloquence this image of a needy Africa grew in Size. Moffat's nine years of itineration on behalf of Africa, from 1871 to 1880, helped to mould the British mind in its attitudes towards Africa and Africans which the following eighty years have not fundamentally changed. It is still the needy continent.

Piety also had its major moments, such as Dean Stanley's invitation to address a congregation in Westminster Abbey in 1873, and the Lord Mayor of London's public dinner at the Mansion House on May 7, 1881, when the religious world led by Archbishop Tait greeted him as "the venerable father of the missionary world". St. Andrew's University gave him a doctorate in 1872; the Paris Missionary Society invited him to France in 1877; the City of London gave him its Freedom in the same year; and whenever the broadening power of English nonconformity wished to grace one of its great public occasions Robert Moffat was always available. He was the centre figure at the Foundation Day of Mill Hill School in 1879; and when in 1883 the brilliant younger Fellow of New College Oxford, Robert Forman Horton, began his notable ministry in his new church at Lyndhurst Road, Hampstead, it was Robert Moffat who unlocked the door.

Whenever he appeared on the platform in Exeter Hall,London, or in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, audiences rose in

reverential homage, and when on his eightieth birthday he was waited on formally by the ministers of London he told them that "had he a thousand lives he would live them all over again in the same good and holy cause".[1] That was the kind of heroic answer that reverberated through the land and made elderly ladies eager to kiss "dear Dr. Moffat" and little children happy to sit on his knee to stroke the silky beard. Twice he breakfasted with Mr. Gladstone, once dined with the Archbishop of Canterbury; and, to complete the round of Victorian hero-worship, he was twice introduced to Queen Victoria. Moffat enjoyed it all, except the ball at Guildhall in May, 1876, in honour of the Prince of Wales's return from India, at which he was "not sufficiently charmed to desire a second such opportunity".

As at Kuruman, so in London, the endless language tapestry of Sechuana hung across the background of Moffat's life. He saw the complete Sechuana Bible through the press; revised the "Pilgrim's Progress"; corrected a new edition of the Kuruman hymn-book; built a Sechuana vocabulary, and so secured for himself a place amongst the great translators - being enshrined with Tyndale, Luther, Eliot, Carey and Morrison in the windows of the Bible Society's library. In 1872, the first three thousand revised Bibles in Sechuana were sent off to Kuruman, an instalment of the 63,859 copies of the complete Bible that the Bible Society has issued of Moffat's single-handed classic, in addition to many thousans of Scripture portions.

By 1878, he was weary of the bricks and mortar expanse of south-east London and eagerly accepted Mr. Samuel Hope Morley's offer of a cottage for himself and his daughter Jane on his Park Hall estate at Leigh, near Tonbridge in Kent. Here was

[1] The Times 23.12.75

the greenery of Kuruman again, if not the oranges and the grapes ripening under an African sun. His own "green fingers" were active once more in a garden, and the slow tempo of village life round the green and the squire's house matched his latter years. Women saluted him with curtseys, men doffed their caps, and the inhabitants of Mr. Morley's cottage-rows spoke of "the great Dr. Moffat" and liked to see him drive out in Mrs. Morley's carriage across the pleasant Weald of Kent. But his heart was still in Africa, and when the morning newspaper had no news he would sadly comment "Oh, there is nothing about Africa; they are just letting it drop."[1]

He died at Leigh on August 9, 1883, and was buried in the South Norwood Cemetery on August 16, with an immense assembly of mourners and much eloquence; but, according to The Times report "no weepers, no mutes, no velvet hangings, no plumes on the heads of the four black horses which drew the open funeral car and flowers the only pall for the coffin."[2] The gardener from Scotland was hailed by the Pall Mall Gazette as fit for "the honour of canonisation", by the Daily News as "that great Apostle of South Africa", but The Times less grandiloquently but more accurately saw him as the man under whom the "Bechuanas became new men" and a "proof that the ground was not barren and that even in South Africa the good seed might be trusted to spring up and to bring forth abundant fruit ... the progress of South Africa has been mainly due to men of Moffat's stamp."[3]

With him passed the simpler patriarchal period of African missions, when the fount of knowledge and the flow of beneficence were expected equally to proceed from the same source

[1] Lives 422

[2,3] The Times 17.8.83

to be distributed according to a pattern of unchallengeable paternal wisdom. In spite of his long years in southern Africa and his insight into tribal ways, Moffat was always Africa's white man convinced of his own God-given mission to improve the black man, and to lift him up from his morass of heathendom into a clean, clothed and industrious existence. It was not the misguided mission that its critics sometimes imagine, and in Moffat's case it paid rich dividends for Africa, not only in his own lifetime but in his own descendants who claimed the continent as their own birthright. His contemporaries saw him as the Apostle of the Bechuana and translator of the Bible, and then proceeded to preserve him within a hagiographical framework from which - like his son-in-law Livingstone - he is only now emerging as an African traveller of the first rank; the pioneer of white settlement and of Christianity in Southern Rhodesia; keeper of the freedom of the northern road against the Boers; the founder of a northern base at Kuruman; and the father of a lively enough dynasty in African life today to entitle its members to the classic patronymic of Moffat Africanus.

I

To trace the Moffat lineage in Africa is more than an exercise in pious pedigree-making. It is an illustration of how the white man naturalizes himself in Africa, and - in the Moffats' case - helps to build a tradition of liberal racial doctrine which amply fulfils the hopes and ambitions of the original forerunner. It is also an example of the often unrecognized contribution to African life that flowed from the expansion of missions and from the men and women who directed it. Not only is their monument the lonely grave in the African bush, but also the multitude of families and homes in mid-twentieth century Africa who rightly, and proudly, look to redoubtable ancestors who came to the continent for the sake of

doing some good in the name of the Christian faith, and then endowed the continent with such fruitful legacies in their descendants.

When Robert Moffat died, there were five survivors of his tne children: Ann Fredoux (1823-93); Helen Vavasseur (1829-1902); Jane Moffat (unmarried, 1840-1927); Elizabeth Price (1839 - 1919); John Smith Moffat (1835-1918). Amongst the seven Fredoux orphans, one, Agnes Martha, married in 1896 Dr. George Peake; and two of their five children live in Africa, Mr. Howard Livingstone Peake, a surgeon at Eldoret in Kenya, and Mr. Gardiner Peake, a schoolmaster at Thomson's Falls, Kenya. The eight children of Helen Vavasseur had no personal links with Africa, except Robert Vavasseur, who gave up his legal career in London to farm in Matabeleland and was killed in the Mashona Rebellion of 1896.

The children of Elizabeth Price and her husband Roger numbered fourteen, of whom ten were living at the time of their grandfather's death. Six of them lived in Africa, and have eight descendants living in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia. One of them, Christian Wallace Price, helped to edit her mother's papers, the Journals of Elizabeth Lees Price 1956.

Robert Moffat's eldest son, Robert (1827-62) left five orphan children living in Natal with their mother Ellen. One of them, another Robert Moffat, showed all the promise of an adventurous life and went off at 21 to join the R.G.S. expedition to find his uncle Livingstone and died of fever in Tanganyika in 1872.

The last male survivor of the Natal Moffats was Richard, who became a miner on the Rand and died in 1953. His only son Robert died in 1960 with no issue. While the three sons of David Livingstone and Mary Moffat all died as young men, their two sisters Agnes, Mrs. Alexander Bruce (1847-1912) and Anna

Mary, Mrs. Frank Wilson (1858 - 1939), all made significant contributions to Africa's life. Mrs. Bruce zealously collected her father's papers, which her grand-daughter, Miss Diana Livingstone Bruce, has presented to the National Archives in Salisbury. Mrs. Wilson and her husband worked in Sierra Leone; and their son, Dr. Hubert Wilson, and grandson Dr. David Wilson, have served in the medical mission at Chitambo in Northern Rhodesia.

The male descent of Robert and Mary Moffat was thus tragically shortened by early death until with the children of John Smith Moffat, the fourth son, the base of a continuing House of Moffat in Africa began to broaden.

John Smith Moffat had Africa in his blood from the day of his birth at Kuruman in 1835 until the end of his long life at Mowbray in South Africa on Christmas Day, 1918. He pioneered with his father into Matabeleland in 1859, and through him and his descendants the name of Moffat is written into almost every one of the decisive acts which has helped to shape the social and political face of Central Africa. It was he who saw more clearly than anyone else that by 1870, when his father left Africa, Kuruman was ceasing to be either a strategic base for the north or a centre of southern African tribal life. Roads, railways and industry were passing it by.

It was no place for the proposed Moffat Institute for the training of a native ministry that eager subscribers in Britain decided to raise to his father's memory, and it was partly disagreement with this plan that led John Smith Moffat into public service as Native Commissioner in 1880. The other reason was the Bechuana and their uncertain future in the Transvaal under the pressure of the increasing Boer power. He might be of service to them. "I shall not regret having made an effort to help the Bechuana", he wrote to his father. "The attempt may

seem to have been thrown away, but I cannot believe that anything done in good faith and in God's name can be entirely thrown away."[1] Like his father, he longed for contined British suzerainty over the Transvaal; he was bewildered by the many shifts of policy and did not hesitate to say so to his superiors, a habit of speaking his mind according to his conscience that displayed his unbending rectitude. The policy-makers found him awkward, but his name and reputation made him a valuable servant.

After two years in the Transvaal, he was appointed in 1882 Resident Magistrate at Maseru in Basutoland, but within three years was back again in Bechuanaland as Magistrate at Taung, then the centre of British controlled territory that included Kuruman. In 1887 it was Matabeleland again as Assistant Commissioner, and the negotiations with Lobengula, the son of his father's old friend Moselekatse, which led to the Moffat Treaty of February 11, 1888, and the beginning of permanent links between Southern Rhodesia and Britain. For the second time a Moffat held the key to south-central Africa. In 1892 he was moved to Northern Bechuanaland, and by 1896 ended his official career. For the next twenty years J.S. Moffat moved independently about southern Africa, creating, by his massive presence adorned with a Moffat beard, and his outspoken concern for native rights, a liberal racial tradition in southern African affairs.

The eight surviving children of the eleven born to John Smith and Emily Moffat all added notably to the strengthening of the Moffat tradition. Livingstone (1860-1942) farmed at Tarkastad in Cape Province; Mary Meta (1862-1954) married James Loosley, a trader in Bechuanaland; and John Bruce (1863-1919) followed his father into public service, becoming Chief Magistrate of the Transkei Native Territories in 1916, and was under appointment in 1919 as Secretary for Native Affairs in the Union Government when

[1] J.S.M. to R.M. 25.5.81; Life 183

he died suddenly, leaving two daughters - Dr. Elspeth Moffat of Fouriesberg and Mrs. Alec Ferguson of Capetown. Two sons, Robert Unwin (1866-1947) and Henry Alford (1871-1953) gave devoted medical service to Africa, one in Uganda as Principal Medical Officer, and the other in Capetown as a surgeon beloved particularly amongst the coloured population, but had no male issue.

II

The northward expansion of the Moffats began with J.S.Moffat's fifth son, Howard Unwin (1869-1951), who came into Matabeleland with the Goold-Adams Column of 1893, farmed at Ormiston, Shangani, and was Premier and Minister for Native Affairs for Southern Rhodesia 1927-33. With him the Moffats became Rhodesians and leaders of the colony's independence of South Africa, a stubborn group which made General Smuts once exclaim, "If I could have Moffat I should have Rhodesia."[1] At Ormiston today, his only son, Mr. Robert Livingstone Moffat, has four children including two boys, Howard John and Robert Bruce, to farm their Rhodesian acres and add their contribution to the family fame. His daughter, Mrs. Williams Lindsay, has two sons, Ewan Graham and Robert Moffat, and a daughter, Jean Hamilton, and his second daughter, Mrs. Maurice Rosen, no children.

The second Moffat venture beyond the Limpopo was in the female line, when Emily Ruth (1864-1941) and her husband, Clarkson Henry Tredgold, a Capetown lawyer, established themselves in Bulawayo. He became Attorney General, a judge, and a knight. Three of their five children have in different ways broadened the Moffat tradition in Rhodesia; Sir Robert Tredgold as Cabinet Minister, first Chief Justice of the Federal Supreme Court and acting-Governor General; Mr. Alan

[1] Bulawayo Chronicle 20.1.51 [395]

Tredgold as farmer and rancher, with three sons, Robin, David and Lindsay, to follow him; and Miss Barbara Tredgold, whose services at St. Michael's Mission in Harari, Salisbury, has sustained in this generation the direct missionary contribution of the Moffats to the African peoples.

In the political creation of modern Southern Rhodesia and the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, a Moffat has been present at every strategic step, and while Sir Robert Tredgold's share has necessarily been judicial and advisory, it has also been formative. This was most sharply illustrated in the report of the Franchise Commission of 1957, over which he presided, whose scholarly prose shows the restrained hand of its chairman in quietly sparking a revolution. "We are satisfied", says the report, "that an African who is earning £15 per month has proved himself as a citizen. Before he attains to this income group an African must have acquired a certain standing such as that of agricultural supervisor, building overseer, clerk, interpreter, minister of religion, chief, editor or journalist, medical order, building contractor, artisan or farmer .... if they are literate and know English and so can follow intelligently the course of an election, we feel they should vote."[1] The prospect of some six thousand African voters being added immediately to the roll on the Tredgold formula was too much for the predominantly white electorate, and was one of the causes that led to the downfall of Mr. Garfield Todd's government. But the Tredgold Franchise Report stands amongst the documents of Central Africa's future: too cautious for many but too undeniably liberal for the majority. The Moffats are accustomed to being in their own minority.

The planting of the Moffats in Northern Rhodesia came from the marriage of Malcolm (1870-1939), the sixth son of John Smith Moffat, with Maria Jackson when they were both serving in the Church of Scotland's Chitambo Mission in Northern Rhodesia, the area where the heart of their kinsman

1 Franchise Commission Report, S.R., 1957, p.12

David Livingstone lies buried at Old Chitambo. Their three sons, Unwin Jackson, John Smith and Robert Laws, entered government service as agricultural officer, district commissioner and legal adviser respectively to native courts; and to-day they farm in co-operation a great tract of unsubdued country at Nkolonga on the northern road between Broken Hill and Abercord. Between them they have eight children, three boys - William Malcolm Unwin, David Ian, Robert Unwin Hamilton - and five daughters.

But, for Sir John Moffat and his brother Mr. Robert Laws Moffat, farming is the background to a political life, the settled base from which to make forays to Lusaka and to Salisbury, one as the Leader of the Central Africa Party in Northern Rhodesia and the other as a member of the Federal Assembly to represent African interests. Sir John's interventions into Rhodesian political thinking in carefully phrased speeches, show courage, a certain philosophical detachment and an unswerving conviction that Central Africa (whatever political shape the white man may try to give it) is going ultimately to be ruled by a black majority. He wants to be sure, while there is time, that the majority is responsibly tuned to the job.

His "Moffat Resolutions" of July 29, 1954, enshrine his political thinking for a land where 72,000 Europeans and 2,160,000 natives must live together:

> The objective of policy in Northern Rhodesia must be to remove from each race the fear that the other might dominate for its own racial benefit and to move forward from the present system of racial representation in the territorial legislature towards a franchise with no separate representation for the races.
>
> Every lawful inhabitant of Northern Rhodesia has the right to progress according to his character, qualifications, training, ability and industry, without distinction of race, colour or creed.[1]

1 Northern Rhodesia Hansard 82 p.616 29.7.54

He preached this philosophy with high consistency all through the early days of the Federation experiment, exposting every attempt to rig the Franchise in favour of the European minority, and declaring that "the African peoples can obtain a majority in this Federation on the voters' roll far sooner than they could be trusted with the power that goes with that majority."[1] As a fourth generation Moffat in Africa, he is sensitive to the "wind of change" sweeping through the continent, and was bold enough on January 27, 1960, in the Northern Rhodesian Legislature to prophesy that "we deceive ourselves if we believe it is now possible to establish by agreement any strong Federal Government .. the best that anyone can hope for will be a loose association of the three States that is demonstrably powerless to impose its will on the territories that constitute the Federation."[2]

This Moffat realism has seen beyond the much fine talk about "partnership" to a Central Africa where the white minority must eventually accommodate itself to living in a land politically controlled by Black Africans whose move towards responsible government the white minority can promote for the benefit of all, or retard and so seal its own doom. For many Africans, this Moffat liberalism is old-fashioned and smacks still of the white-man's paternalism, a hang-over of Sir John's great-grandfather and the patriarchal pattern of the nineteenth century. It even looks like that when you see Sir John and his brothers on their broad acres of tobacco in happy feudal association with their African workers, who, as Sir John never wearies of telling his Rhodesian conservatives, will one day vote, and vote them out of power.

But it is, in fact, an honest realism that looks Africans frankly in the face in much the same way as the original

[1] Federal House Debate 1.7.58 Parl.Rep. 156ff

[2] Quoted Guardian 9 2. 60 or P.P. Debates

Robert Moffat did in his time, knowing that the white man is Africa's needed servant and tutor. Like their great ancestor, the Moffats are neither sentimental nor romantic about their Africa, but see it as a place to live in where patience brings its rewards, and disappointments can become milestones on the road of progress.

It is a far cry from Kuruman on the South African veld to Nkolonga in the Northern Rhodesian bush, but the Moffats themselves are still true to form. They dig their furrows of water, till their gardens, build their houses and lay out pathways of civilization through the virgin scrub. What great-grandfather did at Kuruman is done at Nkolonga with the added flourish of electric-light and a swimming pool. They care for the honourable tradition they inherit and adorn in the life of Africa, which they see being renewed rather than preserved in Africa's mid-twentieth century where a fifth generation of Moffats is making its home.

APPENDIX 1

MOFFAT PEDIGREE

If the old Roman fashion of surnames still prevailed there is no household of which all the members would have been better entitled to put Africanus after their name. The interests of the great continent were dear to them all. Blaikie, Life of Livingstone, 28.

Authorities:

Moffat Family papers, National Archives, Salisbury;
L.M.S. Archives; Lives (J. S. Moffat);
John Smith Moffat (R. U. Moffat);

Personal searches at Somerset House; the Register House, Edinburgh; Customs and Excise Archives, King's Beam House, London; at Ormiston, Pencaithland and Inverkeithing; and in Africa at Kuruman (Seodin), Kolobeng, Molepolole, Kanye and Inyati.

I am also greatly indebted to members of the Moffat family in South Africa and the Rhodesias for information and help.

I

THE FAMILY NAME

The family name is probably derived from the locality of the Dumfriesshire Moffat. In Ragman's Roll (A.D. 1296) it is written Movat or Moffet. In the twelfth century in Dumfriesshire Annandale "there was a family of sufficient importance to be designated in deeds and history as 'de Moffet', a description which showed that the family then held the position of principal lairds or landowners".[1] As early as 1268 Nicholas de Moffat was Bishop of Glasgow, and the Cross of St Andrew in various armorial bearings of the Moffats seems to indicate some connection with the church.[2] The association of the "Cross of Lorraine" and the motto Spero Meliora with the family crest may have arisen from the likelihood that a Moffat from Dumfriesshire went in the train of Robert de Brus, seventh Lord of Annandale, to the fourth Crusade, joining Edward I of England and Louis IX of France in 1268.[3] By 1560, the Moffats were greatly weakened as a clan, and were finally overthrown by the Johnstones, which led to the break-up of the clan and the dispersal of the Moffats from Dumfriesshire.[4] In 1594 a William Moffat was one of the Bailies of St Andrews[5] on the east coast of Scotland. In a letter to Richard Moffat (1862-1953) of Pretoria, dated March 17, 1904, the Lyon King of Arms, Edinburgh, says: "Robert and Thomas de Moffet, both of the county of Dumfries did homage to Edward I in 1296 ... No arms are recorded for any family of the name of Moffat in the Lyon Register, but they are frequently met with in the older armorial MSS. As to the crest I observe that a cross crosslet fitchee is given in one of the modern 'crest books' but I am not aware of any authority for it."[6]

[1] Maxwell Moffat, Short History of the Family of Moffat (Jersey 1908)

[2] Nisbet's Heraldry 1722

[3-5] Short History

[6] Letter in possession of Mr. R.L. Moffat, Southern Rhodesia.

II

TRACEABLE ANCESTRY

The traceable ancestry of the Moffats in Africa begins in the East Lothians of Scotland in the late seventeenth century, probably in the parish of Pencaithland, with a Richard Moffat who had two sons - Robert (later an "opulent cooper of South Leith")[1] and Alexander (1746-1821 d. at Upper Keith and buried at Humbie) who m. Grizel Nicol (d.1816). They had four children: Robert, Alexander, Barbara (m. David Forrest of Ormiston), and Margaret.

Alexander was a ploughman who brought up his son Robert (1768-1847) to the same occupation.[2] This Robert was born in the parish of Pencaithland, and was baptized in the parish church when a week old on March 6, 1768.[3] According to a church certificate issued in Ormiston on December 19, 1787,[4] Robert lived in Ormiston since infancy, so there was evidently a family move from Pencaithland.

Robert Moffat, the ploughman of Ormiston, m. 1789 (?) Ann Gardiner (1767-1854) daughter of William Gardiner (1719-1803), a gardener in the service of the Earl of Hopetoun at Ormiston Hall by his wife Helen Johnstone (1731-1802). At 28, Robert forsook the plough, and, through a family connection of the Gardiners, E.R. Phillips (Commissioner of Customs in Edinburgh) secured the post of Salt Officer at Portsoy in Banffshire. In 1799 the Salt collection became part of Customs and Excise, and Robert - again through the Phillips influence - was appointed Coastwaiter at Barrowstoneness (Bo'ness) on the Forth at the Forth-Clyde Canal, and lived at Carronshore in the parish of Bothkinnar, near Falkirk. In 1811 he was established in the Customs and Excise Office at Inverkeithing, on the north shore of the Forth, becoming in 1834 Deputy Collector and Principal Coast Officer at £120 a year plus fees. He was superannuated on 23 March, 1847, at £130 a year; and died on May 23, 1847. He left £2,351 and a house at Inverkeithing.

1-4 Moffat Papers and Alexander Moffat's Reminiscences NA.

Robert Moffat, the Customs official, and his wife Ann Gardiner had seven children: Alexander (1790-1825), William (1792 -), Robert (1795 - 1883), Richard (1799-1863), Helen (1803-27), Ann (1805-26), and James (1808-). Alexander was for years the family correspondent with Robert in Africa. For six years (1811-17) he was an artilleryman in the East India Company's service but gradually drifted into the life of a cripple, with a diseased leg. His letters and reminiscences amongst the family papers show both a gracious and observant spirit.[1] William was gardener at Woburn Abbey (Duke of Bedford) and later in Canterbury; and Richard assisted his father in the Customs House at Inverkeithing.

III

ROBERT AND MARY MOFFAT'S DESCENDANTS

ROBERT MOFFAT, the missionary (1795-1883) m. Mary Smith (1795-1871), daughter of James Smith (or Gow) nurseryman, of Dukinfield, near Manchester, at Capetown on December 27, 1819. Her uncle Alexander Gow, according to family tradition, was John Adams of the Bounty and Pitcairn Island. There were four sons and six daughters of the marriage. Two babies, Robert (d. 1825) and Elizabeth (d.1832) are buried at Kuruman. James (aged 6) died of dysentery on the voyage to England in 1839, soon after the birth in Capetown harbour of the fifth daughter, Elizabeth.

Moffat's children are designated in the Pedigree as follows: A, Mary; B, Ann; C, Robert; D, Helen, E, John Smith; F, Elizabeth; G, Jean.

[1] Alexander Moffat's Reminiscences NA

CHILDREN AND DESCENDANTS OF ROBERT AND MARY MOFFAT

A. MARY (1821-62) b. Kuruman. m.1845 David Livingstone (1813-73) and had three sons and three daughters. Mrs. Livingstone d. 27.4.62 at Shaponga, Mozambique.

Robert Moffat (1846-64) fought in the American Civil War in the Federal Army, wounded at Laurel Hill Va. d. Salisbury N.C. and is buried at Gettysburg; Thomas Steele (1849-76); William Oswell M.B.C.M.(Glasgow) (1851-1892) took part in the abortive R.G.S. Dawson Expedition (1872) to find his father; Agnes (1847-1912) m. 1875 Alexander Low Bruce. Collected her father's papers which formed the basis of Blaikie's Personal Life of Livingstone, 1884. Her grand-daughter, Miss Diana Livingstone Bruce, presented the bulk of the papers to the National Archives Salisbury S.R., and in 1958 presented to St Michael's Mission, Harari, Salisbury (associated with the work of her cousin, Miss Barbara Tredgold) £15000 for a new church. A Livingstone letter and a piece of the tree-bark where he died are embedded in the altar. Anna Mary (1858-1939) m. Frank Wilson of Kendal and served in Sierra Leone. Their son Dr Robert Wilson (1884-) served in the Chitambo Mission N.R., and also his son David Livingstone (1925-). Elizabeth d. in infancy 1850 and is buried at Kolobeng (B.P.)

All Livingstone's children were granted (17.3.74) Civil List Pensions of £50 a year. Their father's Civil List pension of £300 a year came after his death June 19,1873!

B. ANN (1823-93) b. Kuruman. m 1850 Jean Fredoux (1823-66) of the Société des Missions Évangéliques de Paris stationed at Motito, twenty six miles north of Kuruman. In March 1866 Fredoux was accidentally killed while on an evangelistic tour in a gunpowder explosion caused by a drunken trader at Morokweng. Robert Moffat assumed responsibility for the seven children of the Marriage:

Theophile John (1851-); Samuel Robert (1853 -); Marie Anne (1854-1930); Elizabeth Jane (1856-1938); Benjamin Adolphe (1858-95); Ernest Andrew (1860-84); Agnes Martha (1861-1950) m. 1896 George Peake M.B.,Ch.B., F.R.C.S. (Edin.) (L.M.S. missionary Madagascar) and had five children, Bruce Moffat (1897-) vicar of Theddingworth, Leics.; Ethelwyn May (Mrs T. Crowley 1899-); Muriel Agnes (Mrs J. Mackay, 1900-); Howard Livingstone, F.R.C.S., practising in Kenya (1901-); Frank Gardiner, Headmaster, Thomson's Falls Schools, Kenya (1903-).

C. ROBERT (1827-62) b. Kuruman. Employed by Cape Government Survey 1847, and in 1850 was Surveyor to the Orange River Sovereighty. Travelled in Little Namaqualand for a copper mining company 1854-55. Surveyed northern boundary of Cape Colony along Orange River 1856. Attracted the attention of Sir George Grey. His maps L. 17-27, and L.17-28, are in the R.G.S. archives and his journeys are described in R.G.S. Journal Vol.28, 1858. Elected F.R.G.S 1858 on proposal of his brother-in-law, David Livingstone. Author of The Standard Alphabet Problem (Trubner & Co.,1864, 173 pp.) published posthumously, an able philological survey based on his Sechuana language observations. A charming water-colour sketch of oxen crossing a river in the possession of Mr Robert Livingstone Moffat, of Ormiston,

Shangani, Southern Rhodesia, shows his gifts as an artist. Began trading from Kuruman, 1858, and died suddenly on a journey to Durban 1862 at Mangeeri, a few miles from Kuruman. On his gravestone at the Seodin burial ground is the phrase, "honored and loved by the aborigines. Esteemed by his fellow countrymen and mourned for by all." His stock was sold to another trader for £2,000.[1] "One of those hot, loving, impetuous, generous beings who are strangely missed when gone."[2] m. 1851 Ellen Platt (1823-91) b. Saddleworth, Yorkshire, of the sugar planting family of Isipingo, Natal. Miniatures of Robert and Ellen Moffat (in the possession of Mr R.L. Moffat) show an extremely handsome couple. They had five children:

Robert (1852-73) wrote many boyish, enthusiastic letters to his grandfather, who was his hero. "I should like to be a traveller, and God help me I will be" (Feb.12 1869).[3] Had 100 acres of his own in sugar-cane, which he sold in 1873 to join the R.G.S. East African Expedition to find his uncle Livingstone. Died of fever at Simbo, Tanganyika, May 22, 1873.

Hamilton (1854-1919) Surveyor ? Durban

Ellen Eisdell (1858-1946) m. Mr von Puttkamer, a law official in the Transvaal Government. d. Warmbath.

Isabella Roberton (1860-86) unmarried.

Richard (1862-1953) Connected with the Rand Mining. Director, Burgher Camps, Pretoria. Captain 10th South African Infantry in France 1914-18. Mentioned in Dispatches by General Smuts (1916) with the citation signed by Winston S. Churchill (1919). m. 1892 Alice McLeod (1857-1948) One son Robert (1894-1960) connected with Rand Gold Mines. m. Alice Wienand, of Niger, Transvaal.

[1,3] Moffat Papers NA

[2] E.L. Price 108

D. HELEN (1829-1902) b. Kuruman. Brought by her parents to England in 1839 and remained there. m. James Vavasseur (1822-1906), a member of a London Huguenot family of silk merchants still established in the City of London, much to her parents' disquiet. Livingstone refers to "Helen's affair" in a letter to Moffat, June 1, 1845, and counsels caution as she was then only 16. A wealthy London merchant, James Vavasseur, adapted Knockholt House, Kent, as an eccentric "folly". One member of the Moffat family remembers the house as having only one chimney, which meant that all the fireplaces smoked. The Vavasseurs, who made their Knockholt home a hospitable centre for all the Moffat family in England, had eight children:

Helen Mary (18 -1922) m. 1878 a German schoolmaster, H. Mannhardt;

Ernest (18 -) became a sheep farmer in New Zealand;

Edith ( );

Gertrude (1855-1928);

Robert (1865-96) compelled to retire from law owing to deafness, went out to Matabeleland and acted occasionally as a clerk to his uncle John Smith Moffat in official negotiations with Lobengula and the Matabele. He later farmed at Knockholt near Enkeldoorn in Mashonaland. "He brought with him Matabele servants. When the Rebellion broke out he refused to come into laager because he believed he would be forewarned by these Matabele. His confidence was justified but when the Mashona found that they remained staunch, they murdered them together with their master".[1]

Hilda (18 -1912) m. her cousin Dr Robert Unwin Moffat (see below) and had one daughter, Joyce (1904-).

A son James Moffat d. in infancy.

[1] Information supplied by Sir Robert Tredgold.

E. JOHN SMITH (1835-1918) b. Kuruman. Educated at Cape Town, Percy Street Academy, Newcastle-on-Tyne (the Rev. J. Collingwood Bruce), and for the ministry at Cheshunt College, Herts, and New College London. Sponsored by his brother-in-law, David Livingstone, as an independent missionary, and guaranteed an allowance of £150 a year with a capital sum of £500. m. February 15, 1858, Emily Unwin of Brighton (1831 - 1902) only child of Jonah Stephen Unwin (1804-88), a tea merchant. Ordained North Street Chapel (Countess of Huntingdon), Brighton, March 31, 1858, and with his wife joined the first missionary column into Matabeleland (Southern Rhodesia) led by his father, 1859, and was at Inyati until 1865. Assisted at Kuruman, particularly in the revision of the Sechuana New Testament, and later at Molepololoe. Entered government service 1878 as Native Commissioner for N-W Transvaal at Zeerust. Resident Magistrate, Maseru, Basutoland, 1882; Taungs 1885. Closely connected until 1896 with affairs in Bechuanaland Protectorate as Assistant Commissioner, and in Matabeleland as British Resident. Associated with the negotiations of the Lobengula Concession, in which his famous name, complete integrity and uncompromising speech gave him the confidence of all sides. With the Moffat Treaty (Feb. 1888) "the constitutional history of Southern Rhodesia might be said to have begun".[1] Awarded C.M.G. 1890, and retired on pension of £185 a year 1896. Served as Minister, Congregational Church, Vryburg, 1905-06. Died at Mowbray, South Africa, Christmas Day, 1918. Wrote The Lives of Robert and Mary Moffat (1885), a pious and selective work. The biography John Smith Moffat (1921) by his son, R.U. Moffat, uses his own reminiscences extensively, but many of his own papers have not been preserved. The sparkle and interest of The Matabele Mission of J.S. and E. Moffat

[1] Public Records, S.R., 1956

(ed. J.P.R. Wallis, 1945) is largely due to the observant eye and lively pen of Emily Moffat, his wife. Their children and descendants form the core of the House of Moffat in the Federation to-day. There were seven sons and four daughters of the marriage, of whom Unwin (1859), twin daughters Katharine Elizabeth (1867) and Margaret Jane (1867-69) died in infancy.

1. Livingstone (1860-1942) b. Inyati. First white child to be born in Southern Rhodesia. Became a farmer at Quagga's Kerk, Tarkastad, Cape Province. It was in the saddle-room of his farm that in 1941 his brother, Dr R.U. Moffat, discovered the long lost iron-bound pine-chest of their grandfather with its brass plate inscribed "Revd. Robert Moffat, Missionary, South Africa." In it were the Moffat papers now in the National Archives, Salisbury. m. 1. Minnie Pringle. 2. Janet Forbes. Two adopted daughters, Doris (Mrs Theron), and Winifred (Mrs Buss). There is a good description of life at Quagga's Kerk in Two Young Men See the World, by the Moffat kinsmen Stanley Unwin and Severn Storr (1934).

2. Mary Meta (1862-1954) m. James Loosley (1862-1951), a trader in Bechuanaland, and Rhodesian representative for Cooper, McDougall and Robertson, of Berkhamsted, England. Born at Inyati, the first white girl to be born in South Rhodesia; endowed, at birth, with a cow by Lobengula. Died at Hermanus. One child, Edwin Livingstone, died in infancy.

3. John Bruce (1863-1919) b. Bloemfontein. Cape Civil Service 1880. Director of Census, Union Government, 1910. Auditor General, Union of South Africa, 1915. Chief Magistrate, Transkei Native Territories, 1916. Died suddenly on January 16, 1919, when under appointment as

Secretary for Native Affairs in the Union Government. His three years in the Transkei marked him out as a skilled and sympathetic leader, and one who won the confidence of the people. His accession to the responsible post of Secretary for Native Affairs was looked forward to by all sections of African life, and his sudden death (as the result of a heat stroke) was universally regretted. The Cape Times spoke of it "as one of the severest blows the public service and the country have sustained since Union". The [London] Times (January 22, 1919) said: his "uniform efficiency, his obvious strength of character and his entire reliability marked him out for the highest distinction in the service to which he belonged".

m. 1891 Agnes Pringle (1859-1923), of an 1820 settler family. They had four daughters; one died at birth.

a. Janet Bruce (1893-1906).

b. Elspeth Bruce (1894-), M.R.C.S.,L.R.C.P.(London). m. 1931 Pieter Oberholster d. 1941. As Dr Elspeth Moffat, practises in Fouriesberg, Orange Free State. Two daughters, Lesley Janet (1932-)
Anna Valerie (1933-)

c. Lesley Bruce (1903-) m. 1932 Alec Ferguson, Camps Bay, Cape Town. Three children, Helen (1934-), Bruce (1935-), David (1919-)

4. Emily Ruth (1864-1941) b. Inyati m. 1894 Clarkson Henry Tredgold (1865-1938), son of Clarkson Sturge Tredgold, of Cape Town, whose father John Harfield Tredgold, one time secretary of the London Anti-Slavery Society, was associated with Wilberforce and Clarkson in the anti-slavery movement. C.H. Tredgold (Middle Temple 1889) was a member of the Cape Bar, and in

1897 established himself in law practice in Bulawayo. Attorney General, Southern Rhodesia, 1903, and Senior Judge of the High Court, 1919. Knighted 1922.
Five children.

a. John Clarkson (1895-1917). Rhodes Scholar. killed in 1917, after being awarded M.C. for bravery at Arras, aged 21.

b. Helen (1896-) m. A. B. Shaw, farmer (now retired) in Eastern Province, Cape.
One son, an engineer in the United States.

c. Robert Clarkson (1899-) b. Bulawayo. Rhodes Scholar, Oxford, 1919. Inner Temple 1923. Southern Rhodesia Bar, 1925. Entered Southern Rhodesia Cabinet, 1936; and was Minister of Justice, Air, Defence, Mines and Works, and Native Affairs. Judge of the High Court, 1944, and Chief Justice, 1951 - the first Rhodesian-born to achieve this distinction. Chief Justice, Federal Supreme Court, 1955. Acting Governor-General of the Federation at various periods. Knighted 1951. m. 1925 Lorna Doris Kielor. No issue.

d. Alan (1902-) Farmer and Rancher at Redleaf, near Bulawayo. m.1932 Zenith Richardson (1907-). Three sons: Robin (1933-), David (1934-), Lindsay (1945-).

e. Barbara (1905-). Associated with St. Michael's Mission in Harari, Salisbury; formerly missionary-social worker in Sophiatown, Johannesburg.

5. ROBERT UNWIN (1866-1947) b. Kuruman.
M.B., M.S.(Edinburgh University), 1890; M.D. 1907.
Entered British East Africa Company's service.
Became first Principal Medical Officer of Uganda,
1898. C.M.G. Retired 1906.
Collected the family papers and researched into the pedigree. Wrote Life John Smith Moffat (1921).
Was instrumental in discovering the Moffat Papers at Tarkastad in 1941, and in presenting them to the National Archives in Salisbury. m. 1. his cousin, Hilda Vavasseur (d. 1912). One daughter, Joyce (1903-). 2. Alice Loeffler, 1925.

6. HOWARD UNWIN (1869-1951) b. Kuruman. Entered service of Bechuanaland Exploration Company as interpreter to Chief Khama of the Bamangwato, and was in the Goold-Adams column which entered Matabeleland in 1893. Settled in Southern Rhodesia. In the South African War was in the Rhodesia Field Force and marched to the relief of Mafeking. Farmed at Ormiston, Shangani. Elected to the Legislative Council, 1920, and was member of the first Southern Rhodesia Cabinet (1923) as Minister of Mines and Works under Sir Charles Coghlan. Strong advocate of the independence of Southern Rhodesia and against incorporation into the Union of South Africa. In the Referendum Campaign 1923 General Smuts said: "If I could have Moffat I should have Rhodesia.[1] In 1927 became Premier and

[1] Quoted Bulawayo Chronicle 20.1.51

Minister for Native Affairs. Under his Premiership, Southern Rhodesia bought from B.S.A. Company mineral rights for £2m. A critic remarked that Moffat did not wear a dress jacket with distinction. "No," replied an old Rhodesian, "but he knows how to take his jacket off."[1] Keen believer in the possibilities of Rhodesian tobacco. In 1929 established department of Native Development, and in 1930 passed the Land Apportionment Act which created new framework of land settlement. Advocate of the merging of the two Rhodesias. Attended the Imperial Conference, Ottawa, 1932. Resigned from politics July, 1933. Developed his farming and ranching estate at Ormiston. Accepted C.M.G. but declined knighthood. In 1939 attempted to form Rhodesian Party but was defeated at the polls.

Buried with his wife in the family burial ground at Ormiston. m. 1903 Marion Meikle (1881-1940), a member of the well-known Rhodesian merchant family, and had four children; one child, Maurice, died in childhood, aged six.

a. Robert Livingstone (1904-) Farmer and rancher at Ormiston; associated in politics with the Central Africa Party. m. 1944 Ethel Lyne (1915-) and has four children: Howard John (1945-), Marion Ethel (1946-), Robert Bruce (1948-), Nerine Janet (1951-).

b. Unity Marion (1911-) m. 1940 William Lindsay (1908-), farmer, Shangani, and has three children: Ewan Graham (1941-), Robert Moffat (1946-), Jean Hamilton (1947-).

[1] Quoted Bulawayo Chronicle 20.1.51

c. Mary Unwin (1913-) m. 1946 Maurice Rosen (1909-), Post Office official, Bulawayo. No children.

[At Ormiston, Shangani, Mr R.L. Moffat possesses many family heirlooms, including his great grand-father's wagon forechest, a gold watch presented to him by friends at Inverkeithing, 1843, and a beautifully made wood and strip-leather seated settee.]

7. MALCOLM (1870-1939) b. Kuruman. Appointed Agriculturist at Livingstonia Mission (United Free Church of Scotland, 1894) and was associated with the mission until 1930. Ordained in 1907, and was in charge of the Chitambo Mission, Northern Rhodesia. A minute of the Foreign Mission Committee, Edinburgh (1930), on his retirement records: "his deep devotion and sacrifice, and his knowledge of native life, together with his unusual skill in many practical arts. In a land where there were no schools or Christians, he left a network of schools, manned by native teachers, and a fully organised church." Given a freehold grant of land (1930) by Northern Rhodesia Government at Kalwa, Serenje.
m. 1900 Maria Martha Jackson (1868-1953), a member of the nursing staff of the mission, and had three sons:
a. Unwin Jackson (1901-), Farmer, Nkolonga, Broken Hill. Formerly Agricultural Officer, Northern Rhodesia Government. O.B.E. m. 1930 Sheila Campbell Townsend and has four children: William Malcolm Unwin (1932-), M.B. Ch.B.(Edinburgh), Mary Frances (1935-), M.B. Ch.B.(Edinburgh), David Ian (1938-), Farmer; Flora Diana (1942-).

b. John Smith (1905-), Leader Central Africa Party in Northern Rhodesia. Nominated member for African interests in the House of Assembly of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland; and Chairman of the African Affairs Board 1953-58. Member of the London Conference, 1953, to inaugurate the Federation. Former Civil Servant, Northern Rhodesia. District Commissioner. Administrator, Colonial Welfare and Development Fund, Northern Rhodesia. O.B.E. Farms at Nkolonga, Northern Rhodesia Knighted 1955.
m. 1930 Margaret Christina Marshall Prentice.
Three children: Nancy Prentice (1931-) m. Geoffrey Bollen; Marie (1932-35); Janet Margaret Scott (1936-).

c. Robert Laws (1908-), Federal M.P. for African interests, Colonial Service, Northern Rhodesia, 1931. Resident Magistrate and Labour Officer. M.A., LL.B. Member Inner Temple. First Native Courts Adviser, Northern Rhodesia. Farmer, Mkusin.
m. 1939 Margaret Hunter Hamilton. Two children: Marion Ruth (1945-); Robert Unwin Hamilton (1949-).

8. HENRY ALFORD (1871-1953) b. Kuruman. Trained at Guy's Hospital, London. F.R.C.S.(Eng.) Served with Plumer's Forces in the South African War. Settled in Capetown as Surgeon. Lieut.-Colonel, R.A.M.C., and was awarded DSO. One of the original clinical lecturers, Somerset Hospital, Capetown. Member South African Medical Council. In 1940 commanded Wynberg Military Hospital. O.B.E. 1945. Hon. LL.D. Capetown University. Hon. D.C.L. Witwatersrand University. The Moffat Memorial Prize established by his friends and admirers in the Medical School of Capetown University has this citation: "As a surgeon he

was characterised by his sound judgment, great diagnostic acumen and good operative skill ... he was the friend and confidant of many of the great figures of contemporary South African history." As one of South Africa's leading surgeons and consultants for forty years, Henry Alford Moffat was greatly loved and respected not least by the Coloured people of the Cape whose interests he always had at heart.
m. Ada Heath. (d. 1945) No issue

F. ELIZABETH LEES (Bessie) (1839-1919), fifth daughter of Robert and Mary Moffat. b. on board ship, Table Bay, March 16, 1839, as her parents were waiting to sail for England. m. October 16, 1861, Roger Price (1834-1900), missionary, as his second wife. Lived in Bechuanaland, chiefly at Molepolole. Her letters and journals, edited by Una Long [The Journals of Elizabeth Lees Price, 1956] form a most lively collection of personal reminiscences of life in Bechuanaland 1854-1900, and also in the Northern Cape and the Colony. An old helper in the Price household spoken to at Kolobeng, December 1958, remembered "Pricey". Bessie Price "was small and slight, always timid, always apprehensive, always inclined to introspection, always afraid of failure. Yet her stamina, her power of work ... her ability to go on to the end ... perhaps her children had much to do with it; perhaps Africa had" (Una Long, Journals, page 3).
Roger and Bessie Price had fourteen children.
Four died in childhood: Moffat (1862-63); Mary (1870-77); and Slater (1877-88).

Roger (1864-1936) b. Shoshong. m. Ethel Johnston. d. Johannesburg. 1 child, Hilda (1899-)
m. J.A. Kidger (d. 1937); two children, Lorna Mary (Mrs Felgate), Robert Joseph.

Isabella Mary (1866-1945) b. Kuruman m. Frank Henson (d. 1907) d. Ashford, Kent. 2 children, Jane (1900-), of Swanage, Dorset; Frank (1902-), who has three daughters - Ruth, Beryl, Betsy.

Jean (1867-1937) b. Molepolole m. John Ashburnham d. Johannesburg. 3 children; a son died in infancy. Phyllis (Mrs Clarke-Kennedy); Madge (Mrs Pratt-Johnson), of Johannesburg.

Elizabeth (1868-1947) b. Kuruman m. Dr George Beare, District Surveyor of Kuruman. d. Simonstown. Two children: Mrs Helen Johnson, of Meshaba, Southern Rhodesia; Mrs Elizabeth Stubbs, of Simonstown.

Daisy (1872-1948) b. Molepolele. d. London Colney. Sister Fidelia of All Saints Anglican Convent.

Helen (1874-1951) b. Kuruman d. London Colney. Sister Helen Mary of All Saints Anglican Convent.

Thomas Livingstone (1876-99) b. Brixton d. Caracas, Venezuela.

Christian Wallace (1879-1949) b. Molepolole. d. Johannesburg. First editor of her mother's papers - Journals of Elizabeth Lees Price, 1956.

James Baldwin Brown (1881-1907) b. Molepolole. d. Johannesburg.

Robert Moffat (1883-1953) b. Molepolole. Manager of Barclays Bank. m. Dai Porter. d. Bulawayo. Two children: Roger (d. 1934); Evan Moffat, killed in second world war - leaving a posthumous son, Evan.

G. JANE GARDINER (1840-1927). Tenth and last child of Robert and Mary Moffat. b. Flixton near Manchester during her parents' visit to England. Her mother was then 46. Taught in the Kuruman School in the last years of Moffat's reign, and cared for her parents in England. The "Janie" or "Jeannie" in family letters and references.

APPENDIX 2

ROBERT MOFFAT AND SECHUANA PRINTED LITERATURE (1826-70) with a Note on Ndebele Printed Literature (1863-66)

Pre-eminent as a translator in Sechuana, Robert Moffat never composed a formal grammar or dictionary of the language, which he used fluently for nearly fifty years in Southern Africa. In 1827, during his concentration on learning the language [See Chapter 7], he made lists of words - "perforce a highly utilitarian sort of knowledge; yet, at the same time, it was fast becoming more theoretical and more literary".[1] Moffat forced himself to be a master in the language, for without it he could not attain to a mastery of his calling as a missionary. In 1841 Livingstone reports that "Mr Moffat intends publishing a Grammar and dictionary",[2] but, unlike Livingstone and his own son, Moffat does not appear to have had an interest in words for their own sake, and he was no collector of the finer points of Sechuana.

On his voyage to the Cape in 1841, Livingstone was busy making a dictionary, getting his words from Moffat's translation of the New Testament,[3] and he and Robert Moffat Junior corresponded about a phonetic table of Sechuana.[4] Both men were in debt to their father, for his pioneering language work, and Livingstone has full of admiration for Moffat's achievement in the translation of the Bible. "The thorough manner in which he applies himself to the translation involves a large amount of mental toil. Incessant attempts to make the Sechuana harmonize with the Hebrew render the undertaking nearly the same as learning the latter language and translating too. The various uses of each Hebrew word are ascertained and uniformity in the use of Sechuana attempted. Assistance in this is drawn from the

1 Sandilands, African Studies, April 1958, 192-196
2 D.L. to H. Drummond 4.8.41 LMS
3 D.L. to T.L. Prentice RL 1
4 D.L. to R.M. Jun. 13.8.47 LMS

Dutch, German, French, and English translations, and also from a number of Commentaries.[1]

By 1860 Moffat's translation of the Bible had attained the status of a standard work in Sechuana, and the leader of the Universities' Mission, Bishop Mackenzie, refers to his studying Sechuana with "Moffat's Bible our mainstay".[2]

But if Moffat himself did not compose a basic grammar of the language it may fairly be claimed that Isaac Hughes (1789-1870), the author of the earliest known Sechuana grammar,[3] was a disciple of Moffat's, or at least lived within "the Kuruman orbit, with the currents of thought and work of that centre flowing round him".[4] Hughes came out in 1823 to join the Bechuana mission as an artisan, being a blacksmith by trade, and was at Kuruman until 1828, when he was sent to Griqua Town until 1839, and then as an ordained missionary worked at Back-house until his death in 1870.

Hughes early developed an interest in Sechuana, inspired no doubt by Moffat, and reported in 1826 that "my sketch of Grammar for private use is almost completed to the end of the conjugation of verbs." Daniel Lindley and the American mission-aries used it in 1835, but why it was never printed, and why succeeding Sechuana scholars made no reference to it, remain a mystery.[5] It had 242 manuscript pages, with between 2,000 and 3,000 words.

James Archbell (1797-1866), Wesleyan missionary, whom Moffat met on his first visit to Moselekatse (See Chapter 9) in 1829, compiled and published in Grahamstown in 1837 the first printed Sechuana grammar,[6] a "slight and second-hand sketch" of 82 pages compared with "Hughes's infinitely more important and

[1] D.L. to Tidman 2.11.52 LMS
[2,4,5] Sandilands, African Studies, April 1958, 192-196
[3] Grey, 280d
[6] Grey, 266 and M.M.S. London

prior work".[1] Archbell severed his missionary connection in 1847 and became a farmer in Natal.

Eugene Casalis, of the Paris Missionary Society, also published in 1841 Etudes sur Langue Sechuana, which was more linked with Sotho than with the Sechuana of Bechuanaland.

David Livingstone was next in the field with his Analysis of the Language of the Bechuanas, a small forty-page booklet which he prepared and of which he had 25 copies printed privately in London in 1858 for the information of the members of his Zambesi Expedition, "with a view of imparting a general idea of the structure of South African languages. It was written in 1852, and no opportunity has since been enjoyed for amplification".[2] Robert Moffat worked over the manuscript,[3] in which Livingstone paid tribute to Moffat's skill in transferring to paper "the minutiae and idiom of an African language ... all who succeed him in the same field are under the deepest obligation to his indomitable energy". In a comment on Livingstone's work, Dr A.N. Tucker, of the London University School of Oriental and African Studies, wrote: "There is no doubt that Livingstone has grasped the fundamental nature of Sechuana, and sketchy as this book, of necessity, is there is no important aspect omitted, while there are one or two grammatical points which subsequent grammarians have treated even less fully."[4]

Robert Moffat, Junior (1827-62), Moffat's eldest son, was fluent in the language and interested in its study. After his death, John Smith Moffat edited and published his elder brother's book, The Standard Alphabet Problem (London: Trubner & Co. 1864), which "shows the writer as a serious and original student of the language".[5]

1 Sandilands 194
2 Intro. 20.2.58 [Copy at Livingstone Memorial,Blantyre,Scotland]
3 Journal 12.11.59 NA
4 To L.M.S. [n.d.]
5 Sandilands 194 and D.L. to R.M.Jr. 13.8.47 FL

Jean Fredoux (1823-66), of the French mission at Motito, and Moffat's son-in-law, was also a student of Sechuana, inspired no doubt by his father-in-law's example. He did translation work for the Kuruman Press, and in 1864 published A Sketch of the Sechuana Grammar [Capetown: J.C. Juta, Wale Street; and J.L. Philip, Adderley Street], a twelve-page brochure (11 x 18 cm), No. 5596, in the Library of the Societé des Missions Evangeliques de Paris.

I

THE FIRST PRINTED LITERATURE IN SECHUANA

Robert Moffat and his colleague Roger Edwards [See Chap.8] were the first to begin regular printing and publishing in Sechuana, which under Moffat's guidance developed into a considerable output at Kuruman from 1832 onwards. But as early as March 7, 1818, Henry Helm (1780-1884), writing to the L.M.S. from Griqua Town, mentions a printing press "we got in the course of the past year. As all the letters were mixed by the shaking of the wagon I had the tedious work to bring them in order. I am sorry to say that the ink which came out with the press has not arrived, perhaps it has been lost on its voyage from Cape Town to Bethelsdorp. I miss also one or two of the largest iron frames, and my printer's grammar. ... Brother Read is composing a small spelling book in the Bootchuana dialect which I was to print, but it must now be delayed."

On July 5, 1819, William Anderson (1769-1852), then at Griqua Town, wrote to the L.M.S.: "Brother Helm thinks upon attending as much as possible to the printing, he has lately printed a few copies of a Spelling Book in the Bechuana language, sent to him by the brethren from Latakoo, then to put this further in execution he needs inks and paper, also a type more suited than is here already, those he wants are called Great Primer and Pica."

The brethren at Lattakoo at that time were Robert Hamilton

and James Read. This first printed book in the Sechuana tongue is listed [153] by P.W. Laidler in his bibliography, The Pre-Victorian Products of the Cape Press 1796-1837 as: Sechuana Spelling Book printed 1821 at the Mission Press operating at Griqua Town [no known copies]. Probably this refers to the 1819 print.

The little press of Henry Helm at Griqua Town, therefore, it would seem has the honour of producing the first printed book in Sechuana. As Robert Hamilton never mastered Sechuana, James Read was undoubtedly the compiler of this spelling book. Isaac Hughes mentioned finding printed fragments of the Lord's Prayer at Griqua Town in 1824.

Always a little critical and jealous of what happened at Griqua Town, Robert Moffat says in a letter to the L.M.S. of February 22, 1832, that the Griqua Town press was originally intended for the Kuruman [? Lattakoo] mission!

In 1826, six years before he himself started printing at Kuruman, Robert Moffat had printed, through the L.M.S. in London (J. Dennett, Leather Lane, Holborn), two small books in editions of 1,000 copies each:

Sechuana Spelling Book (Buka ea Likaelo tsa entitla), pp. 24, 13cm. [Grey 282]

Bechuana Catechism (Buka ea Pocho ea Tuto le Poluko tsa Yesu Kereste) [Grey 283 and Kimberley N. 4183]. This was a translation of Dr Brown's Catechism. The Kimberley Library copy also has the third chapter of St John's Gospel, with other passages of Scripture and the Lord's Prayer.

Then, in 1830 [See Chapter 9], in Capetown, with the assistance of Rogers Edwards and under the guidance of B.J. Van der Sandt, the Government Printer, Moffat produced the first published Scripture translation in a Bantu language:[1]

The Gospel of St Luke (Evangelia lotsa mahuka a molemo a kauriloeng ki Luka) - pp. 102, 17cm. [Grey 295 and BFBS 3059]

The Bible Society copy has a hand-written note attached by John Campbell describing the extent to which Sechuana was spoken. The copy was presented by John Arundel, Home Secretary of the L.M.S., August 22, 1831.

[1] C.M.Doke, Bantu Studies, Vol.14 (1940), 245.

The Spelling Book, the Catechism, and the Gospel of St Luke, were reprinted in various forms at Kuruman itself, and have usually been regarded as marking the beginnings of printed literature in Sechuana,[1] a position which must now, it would appear, be accorded to the Griqua Town press productions, in point of time, although not in general recognition and circulation.

II

THE KURUMAN PRESS (1832-70)

The hand-printing press[2] which Robert Moffat and his colleague Rogers Edwards brought to Kuruman from Capetown in 1832 was the beginning of sixty-three years[3] printing and publishing, which up to his retirement in 1870 Robert Moffat superintended. Moffat and Edwards picked up their printing knowledge at Capetown in 1830 at the Government Press [See Chapter 8], and Ashton appears to have learned the rudiments of printing and book-binding in his home town of Ashton-under-Lyne before he arrived in Africa in 1843. In view of their own amateur status and the inability to secure efficient and reliable help, the Kuruman men produced an astonishing flow of print, with the Old Testament volumes of 1853 and 1857 as the apex of their production.

Moffat describes the coming of the press [See Chapter 8] as "an auxiliary of vast importance to our cause",[4] and under that impetus he and his colleagues struggled with their hand composing and printing in a small, dark, stuffy room attached to the Moffat homestead. "Even had we a steam press here we could not proceed quicker than we are doing now", wrote Moffat in July, 1852,[5] as

1 W.H.I. Bleek, Grey Collection Catalogue
2 Now in the Kimberley Public Library
3 Printing and publishing at Kuruman ceased in 1895-56
4 Labours 564
5 July 1852 [n.d.] LMS

the various books of the Old Testament were translated, composed, printed and published in separate editions - which have all become collectors' rarities. "Each book", wrote Moffat, "seems to call for another to make it better understood."[1]

The ten years from 1847 to 1857, when Moffat "finished the first translation of the whole Bible in an illiterate African tongue",[2] were peak years for the Kuruman Press. The little separate books of the Old Testament were eagerly welcomed by the Bechuana people. Their circulation was often limited by lack of supplies, which had to come from the Bible Society and the Religious Tract Society in London. "But for the sanction and countenance so cheerfully afforded by your Society" (Moffat wrote to the Bible Society) "I could never have succeeded as I have done in a work which demands talents far more than I ever possessed."

The Kuruman printers and publishers were dependent on the long haul from London via the Cape, Algoa Bay, and then by wagon for their supplies of type, paper, ink, boards, tape, thread, and gauze, as well as for some of their rollers. The printing office, so far removed from a supply base, was also at the mercy of the fortuitous happenings of a frontier-life. William Ashton, who in 1850 took full charge of the printing office in order to release Moffat for his translation work, writes on July 18,1853, of his experiences as manager of the press:

> It has so happened that I have no sooner taught a youth to compose and paid him his first wages than he has gone for months on a hunting expedition into the interior; and sometimes on the very morning when I must print off a sheet, having the paper wet and everything ready, the lad that should roll for me has not made his appearance, and, when sought for, has sent me word, "He can't come." On one occasion I had to take a lad out of my garden to roll the ink, who had never before in his life had a roller in his hand; you will not, therefore, be surprised that my printing is not perfect. Of course I have all my own rollers to make, and in winter, with frost every night, and having no stove, I have great difficulty in keeping them and the ink suffic-

[1] July 1852 [n.d.] LMS

[2] Bleek, Grey Catalogue

> ficiently soft for working. I have burnt loads of charcoal in open fire-grates, which were placed sometimes under the ink-table, and at other times under the press to warm the type, to prevent the ink sticking and tearing the paper.[1]

Ashton describes the fifty degrees difference in summer and winter temperature in the printing office, which affected the flow of printer's ink, and the unpleasant charcoal fumes from an inefficient Dutch komivoor [stove] they struggled with. In a letter to the L.M.S. on October 26, 1848, Ashton depicts his colleague Robert Hamilton (who had then been 32 years in the mission) as folding the finished sheets of the Pilgrim's Progress - "this suits him, as he can sit to it. ... I prepare them for stitching, which is done by a native whom I have taught, and then I bind them".[2] He also gives a pleasant picture of Moffat and himself at work under pressure (July 18, 1853):

> Mr Moffat's the translator - we work together in his study for days, yet we have no clashing. Mr Moffat having the work of course has the verdict ... my remarks are mostly written by candlelight, and Mr Moffat also makes very long days ... we feel there is no time to lose with the Boers threatening us.[3]

And the close liasison between translating and printing is described by Moffat (October 11, 1847):

> Mr Ashton and Molane keep up so close at my heels in the work of composing that with a variety of hindrances I find it hard work to keep ahead of them in translating, revising manuscript and proof sheets, and lately in order to expedite the work when a sheet is ready I take the Press and Molane the Roller while Mr A. goes on with the composing stick.[4]

A supply of type came with the first press from Capetown, and was supplemented at various times by purchases from London [See Chapter 8[. On August 10, 1847, Moffat wrote to his wife, then in Capetown: "Should you come in contact with a printer

1-4 LMS

enquire if he puts carytes, or rather carbonate of carytes, or what is called in common Paris white, with the composition of a roller, and if so procure half a dozen pounds."[1] And when, on February 15, 1865, he acknowledged the arrival of four boxes of type from London, Moffat says that in view of printing in Sindebele the office will need plenty of accented letters.[2] Four months later, June 7, 1865, he says: "The assistance in the printing office is as poor as it can be. The only compositor we have is a domestic of my own ... not strong enough for the press."[3] He asks for two pounds of Pica and Bourgeois type.

III

PRINTING PRESSES

The iron printing press, a heavy and cumbersome hand-manipulated press, by which most of the Kuruman printing was done, was given to Moffat by Philip in 1831 at the Cape. It arrived in Capetown on October 5, 1825, in the care of William Foster, a missionary bound for Bethelsdorp (1826-29), and was hauled to Kuruman by Moffat and Edwards in June, 1831; and by September of that year was in use, and continued in use, at Kuruman until about 1882. It was discovered abandoned in a fowl-house at Kuruman by Mr. John Ross of the Kimberley Public Library in 1916 and is now on exhibition there. There are no distinguishing marks whatsoever on the press.

A second Kuruman press was installed, probably in 1883, by A.J. Gould. Printing declined at Kuruman until 1896, when Gould found little to do except printing Mahoko, a Sechuana monthly. Government and local printing orders did not mature, in face of a new printing office in Vryburg.

1 LMS
2,3 NA

A.J. Wookey used the second Kuruman press in connection with his revision of the Bible in 1902, moving it to Vryburg - but eventually gave it up in favour of a typewriter.

A proposal in 1913 that the printing press should be set up at the Tiger Kloof Institution near Vryburg appears not to have matured. About this time it was evidently sold to the Northern Newspaper Company, Market Street, Vryburg, and was seen in use as a proofing press in December, 1958. This Albion Press bears the makers' mark: "Patent 1443. Improved Albion Press, V. and J. Figgins, Farringdon Road, 1880."

KURUMAN SECHUANA PUBLICATIONS
1832-1870
[with "known copies" listed]

SOURCES

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Catalogue of Wm.H.I. Bleek. Philology. Vol.1, Part 1, 1858 [Referred to as Grey].

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Cape Town School of Librarianship.
[Referred to as Grey R]

The Pre-Victorian Products of the Cape Press 1796-1837, a bibliography compiled by P.W. Laidler - mimeographed - Johannesburg, 1935.

A Digest of L.M.S. Printing, Southern Africa, compiled by Irene Fletcher, 1953, [L.M.S. Library]

A Digest of Sechuana Scriptures, compiled by Irene Fletcher, 1957, [L.M.S. Library]

British and Foreign Bible Society's Catalogue, compiled by Darlow and Moule, 1903-1911

Kimberley Public Library

Information collected by the Rev. Alex. Sandilands, missionary in the Bechuanaland Protectorate (1926-60)

I - SPELLING BOOKS

1832 Known copies

Sechuana Spelling Book (Buka ea Likaelo tsa enitla) - second edition of the 1826 spelling book published originally in London: see above.
Published by R. Moffat and R. Edwards at Bechuana Mission Press, Kuruman, pp.24, in two parts. Part 1, 12pp., 17.2cm. Part 2, pp. 13-24, 13cm.
["This second edition is quite a new book" - Bleek, p.144] Grey 282a

1842 Edition of 1832 "differs considerably in language and orthography" [Bleek] Grey 282b

1843 Further edition of 1832 Grey 282c

1850	First lesson book in Sechuana (Buka el Likao tsa eintla, tse ri rutan go buisa Pueo ea) Alphabet and spelling lessons; 16mo.,16pp.	Grey 282d
1857	Further edition of 1850 book	Grey 282e
1865	Sechuana Spelling Book, 16pp., 14.5cm.	Grey R355
1869	Sechuana Spelling Book - another edition	Grey R354
1870	A similar edition to above	Grey R358 Kimberley N3367

II - CATECHISMS

1831	Dr Brown's Catechism (Buka ea Pocho ea Tuto le Poluko tsa Yesu Kereste) - A second edition of the 1826 edition printed in London [see above]; 36pp., 13.3cm.	Grey 283a
1835	Assembly Catechism (Buka ea Lipocho tse ri rutang tsa tihelo ea Morimo), translated by R. Moffat.	Grey (Bound with 283b)
	Grey Collection is in blue paper covers, on which has been written "Assembly Catechism".	Grey (Laidler 665)
	Not listed in Bleek's catalogue, but would appear to be an earlier edition of the 1841 edition.	
1841	Assembly Catechism - 28pp., 16cm. 107 Questions and Answers. [Later edition of 1835 Catechism]	Grey 284
1842	Dr Brown's Catechism; 3rd edition (2nd at Kuruman) of this Catechism	Grey 283b
1846	Assembly Catechism - 2nd edition of 1841 book	Grey 284a
1860	Katekisma, A Sechuana Catechism prepared by J.F. Jean Fredoux 13cm.	Kimberley 3300

III - THE SCRIPTURES

Note. — After the printing of St Luke's Gospel in Capetown in 1830 [see above], Moffat concentrated on the translation of the New Testament, and to see this through the press was one of the main objects of his visit to Britain 1839-1843. Under the auspices of the Bible Society, the New Testament was printed in London by W. McDowall, 1840. [BFBS 3062 : Kimberley N3355] Psalms also printed in London [BFBS 3063: LMS]

1833	Scripture Extracts for the use of Schools (Lilaelo tse ri Tlauchoeng mo Bibelieng) R. Moffat and R. Edwards. 443pp. 18x11cm. paper covers; single page type face.	Grey 293 BFBS 3060
1836	Epistle of St James (fragment without title page) 12mo.	Grey 295a
n.d.	Evangelia. The Gospel of St Matthew. No title page; a Gospel fragment - possibly specimen printing.	Kimberley N3854
1847	Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Isaiah 109pp., 22cm., double-column printing. BFBS copy inscribed by Moffat.	BFBS 3064 Grey 299 Kimberley N3812
1849	Further edition of above Three further editions before 1853 No known copies	Kimberley N3812
1851	Genesis and Exodus 128pp.; 22cm., double columns.	BFBS 3065
1853	Old Testament, Part 1 (Biblia Kabo 1), Biblia ea Boitsepho, Genesis to Chronicles. Kuruman: Printed at the Mission Press for the British and Foreign Bible Society. 512pp., 22cm. Spine stamped in gold. Cloth-bound and cover stamped with decorations. BFBS copy carries label: "Printed and bound by W. Ashton of the L.M.Society." [Ashton presented a copy to Sir George Grey at Capetown, May 11, 1855.]	BFBS 3066 LMS Grey 300 Kimberley N3855

1853 Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Isaiah — BFBS 3067
Revised edition, 109pp., 22cm.; cloth bound; double columns. Inscribed by Moffat at Kuruman, May 13, 1854.

1857 Old Testament, Part II (Kabo ea Botu), Biblia de Boitsepho [1] — BFBS 3070; LMS; GREY 301; Kimberley N3855
Cloth bound in two sections - Chronicles to Malachi, omitting Psalms. 39pp.
Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Isaiah, 109pp., 22cm.
The Kimberley copy has the sections of 1853 and 1857 bound together as N3855.

1867 New Testament - Revised edition. — BFBS 3070; GREY R363; LMS; Kimberley N3854
About 50 copies printed; 317pp.,22cm., cloth bound; double columns.
BFBS copy inscribed: "Printed at the Kuruman Press under the eye of Rev.R. Moffat and intended to be referred to missionaries for approval before a larger be printed. Presented London May 1869.

[Commenting on this revision, Moffat wrote to the Bible Society, January 16, 1865, that it had fewer words and was more simple to read. His complete Bible was seen through the press by himself in London, 1872.]

1 "Mr Moffat has hereby finished the first translation of the whole Bible in an illiterate African tongue"
[Bleek, Grey Collection Catalogue,155]

IV - HYMN-BOOKS

The first hymn-book in Sechuana was of 23 hymns, printed by Moffat and Edwards at the Government Press, Cape Town, 1831.
In his Catalogue of the Grey Collection, W.H.I. Bleek lists it as 46pp. and 1 page errata.
The Grey Collection copy [285] is 21pp., as printed at Capetown.
Moffat himself translated 190 hymns into Sechuana, which are in regular use [1958]½
This hymn-book was enlarged and printed at Kuruman - with the exception of the 1843 edition.

1835	An extra 24 pages added, giving an added 50 hymns	Grey 285
1838	2nd edition of the above; 80 pages, 100 hymns.	Grey 286
1843	The 3rd edition appears to have been printed in London, during Moffat's visit, at the press of J. Unwin, Bucklersbury, and published by the Religious Tract Society. 105pp.; 124 hymns.	Grey 287 LMS
1843	Hymns which Praise Jehovah, by Some Teachers (Lihela tse li bakang Yehovah-Ki Baruti bangue) Printed at Kuruman for the Paris Missionary Society. The authors were the Reverends P. Lemue, of Motito; D.Livingston; and J.P. Belissier, of Bethulie. 16mo.; pp.32, and 31 hymns.	Grey 288
1855	35 hymns added to the above, with Ten Commandments as a hymn of ten verses	Grey 287a
1866	132 hymns	LMS
1870	266 hymns; 216pp. (Dihela tsa Tiheto ea Modimo tsa Seewana ka Robert Moffat,Kuduman)	Kimberley N3294 Grey R371

V - T R A C T S

Tract publishing, based on translations of R.T.S. tracts, was an early activity at Kuruman, with Roger Edwards and P. Lemue (of Motito) in the lead.

Edwards wrote (May 1, 1835): "We shall endeavour to turn off some tracts in which though there be found some mistakes in grammar the evil would not be of a serious nature so as to counteract the truths of the Gospel."

The First Series of Tracts, 1835-56, are as follows -
[Grey Collection, 305]

1835 No. 1 [Wanting]

1835 No. 2 [Wanting]

1835 No. 3 Polelo. Yakoba oa mochohe, by R.E(dwards), 4pp.
[A tale. James the old man.]

1835 No. 4 Tusho ea Molechi, by P.L(emue), 4pp.
[The help of the sinner]

1835 No. 5 A loa tloka Tsala? by R. Edwards, 4pp.
[Do you want a friend?[(Woodcut)

1835 No. 6 Buang amarure, by R. E(wards), 4pp.
[Speak the truth]

1835 No. 7 Bonatla yoa Batlabani, by R.E(dwards), 4pp.
[The three hundred warriors] (Woodcut)

1835 No. 8 Pulelo ea Lidia Surevanta, by R.E(dwards), 8pp.
[Tale of Lidia Sturtevant]

1836 No. 9 Morisa oa Molemo, by P.L(emue), 8pp.
[The Good Shepherd] (Woodcut)
Contains a dialogue between Maria and Ma Maria (Mary's mother) and a hymn of four verses.

1836 No.10 Kagisho mo loshung, by P.L(emue), 8pp.
[[Woodcut]

The Second Series of Tracts, 1840-41, appear to have been mainly re-issues of the First Series, with changes in grammar and spelling. The pagination of the thirteen tracts runs consecutively, making 132pp. [Grey Collection 306]

1840	No. 1	Yosefa mohumanegi. Pulelo ea amarure. [Joseph the Poor. A tale of truth.] R. Moffat, pp. 1-8. (Woodcut)	Kimberley N3248
1840	No. 2	Pulelo. Yakoba mocohi. [A tale. James the old man] R. Edwards, pp. 9-16. (Woodcut)	Kimberley N3248 Albany Mus. Grahamstown.
1840	No. 3	Bua boamarure. [Speak the truth] R. Edwards, pp. 17-22	
1840	No. 4	Thusho ea Moleohi. [The help of the sinner] P. Lemue, pp. 23-28. (Woodcut)	
1840	No. 5	A loa tloka Tsala? [Do you want a friend?] R. Edwards, pp. 29-34. (Woodcut)	Kimberley N3248
1840	No. 6	Batlabani, ba thri hundereda [The three hundred warriors] R. Edwards, pp. 35-40	
1841	No. 7	Pulelo ea Lidia Surevanta. [Tale of Lidia Sturtevant, or Purpose that perisheth] R. Edwards, pp. 41-52 (Woodcut)	Kimberley N3248
1841	No. 8	[Wanting]	
1841	No. 9	Kagisho mo loshung. pp. 65-76 (Woodcut)	
1841	No.10	Go bisa boitumelelo. R. Edwards, pp.77-88	
1841	No.11	Tsimo e e lapisan [The garden which wearies, or Work for all] R. Edwards, pp. 89-104. (2 Woodcuts)	
1841	No.12	Culuhelo ea pelaelo. R. Edwards) pp. 105-112 (Woodcut)	
n.d.	No.13	Motheletsi. [The Redeemer] R.E(dwards, pp. 113-132 (Woodcut) (Grey Collection copy breaks off in middle of word on p.12)	
1863	No.14	Tla go Yesu [Come to Jesus], by John Mackenzie, 108pp., 13cm. - two hymns at back.	Grey R372 Kimberley N3295 LMS

[1]None of the tracts has an English title. Those given come from Bleek's Catalogue and are his translation-

VI - PERIODICALS

In October, 1857, William Ashton began the publication of a regular monthly paper at Kuruman, under the title of Mokaeri oa Becuana, le Muleri oa mahuku [The Instructor of the Bechuana, and the Announcer of News], in quarto size - four pages, i.e., folded sheet - with double columns. It was priced at two shillings per annum. [Grey Collection 307]

1857 No. 1 Phalane [October]
No. 2 Nuanatsele [November]
No. 3 Serimothule [December]
1858 No. 4 Herikhon [January]
No. 5 Tlakole [February]
No. 6 Mophitloe [March]
No. 7 Saturdag [- Aperil 3, 1858
No. 8 Saturdag - Mei 1, 1858
No. 9 Dingsdag - Juny 1, 1858
No.10 Donderdag - July 1, 1858
No.11 Maandag - Augustus 2, 1858
No.12 Maandag - September 13,1858

Volume 2

No.13 Vrydag - October 1, 1858
No.14 Maandag - November 1,1858
No.15 Uoensdag - December 1,1858
1859 No.16 Saturdag - January 1,1859
No.17 Uoensdag - February 2,1859
No.18 Donderdag - Maart 3, 1859
No.19 [Wanting]
No.20 Maandag - M e i 2, 1859

[Photostats in L.M.S. Library, London]

The periodicals were bound in a volume, Kico ki nonoco [Knowledge is Power]. Vol.1, 4to., double columns. [Grey 307]

VII - MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS

1848 Pilgrim's Progress, Part 1, by John Bunyan [Loeto loa moreresti lo lo coan hatsin]... (Journey of a Christian which proceeds from world this it goes to world which is to come) Translated by R. Moffat and printed at Kuruman for the Religious Tract Society; 16mo., pp.viii and 206 (with several Woodcuts), preceded by a little narrative of Bunyan's life.
The LMS copy is inscribed: "To J.S.Moffat from his Father", Kuruman, Aug. 30, 1849.
Translating, printing and publishing the main part of Pilgrim's Progress took three years, and copies were not on sale until 1849.
The Kimberley copy is inscribed by Moffat.
Ashton writes on October 24, 1861, that "The copies of the 'Pilgrim's Progress' which have been lying for years unbound on our shelves are not sought after." [LMS Archives]
Grey 302
LMS
Kimberley N3302

1850 Line upon Line, Part I, [Scripture History with Questions for "the infant mind"], by Mrs. F.L. Mortimer.
1,000 copies printed on 25 reams of paper given by the Religious Tract Society; 16mo., pp. vi and 186 (with 12 Woodcuts); translated by William Ashton.
Grey 291
Kimberley N1827
LMS

1850 Line upon Line, Part II; 16mo., pp. iv and 180 (with 12 Woodcuts).
Grey 292
Kimberley N1827
LMS

1854 Line upon Line, second edition.
Ashton in a note says that the previous edition was for children, and that this is for grown-ups.
16mo., 284 pages and 24 Woodcuts.
80 chapters on the history of the Old Testament.
Grey 292a

1854 Molao oa Yaloa yoa Makhoa [Law of the intoxicating drink of the civilized], a proclamation on the evils of drinking, printed at Kuruman in Sesuto for Basutoland. Published by Mosheshe at Thava Bosigo, November 8, 1854. Also printed in Sechuana and Dutch. Eng.trs. in Vol.1,No.III,1856, of Aborigines Friend and Colonial Intelligencer, pp. 127-128, 8vo., p.1.
Grey 304

1861? Little Charley [A book for children], prepared by Jean Fredoux, of Motito.
No known copies

1862	Geografe [Palestine, Britain, and South Africa], pp. 36, 13cm. 500 copies Translated by John Mackenzie.	Grey R360 Kimberley N3368 LMS
1867	Aritmetik ke, Roger Price. 39 pp.,13cm.	Kimberley N3301

VIII - KURUMAN PRESS and NDEBELE PRINTED LITERATURE

Robert Moffat led the first pioneer missionary column into Southern Rhodesia (Matabeleland) in 1859. T.M. Thomas, a member of the party, who settled at Inyati, prepared a first elementary book in Ndebele, and sent it to Kuruman to be printed; but, in 1861, it was evidently thought to be premature and nothing was done.[1]

On March 3, 1862, William Sykes reports discussion at Inyati about the need for Matabele missionaries to print a language "differing from that of the established works of the American missionaries at Natal, seeing that Mzilikazi and many of his people are Zulus".[2]

But an alphabet was agreed on, based on that of Doke's Zulu Dictionary, with the addition of "Jj" to represent the articulation "ch". This change, advocated by Thomas, was not approved by Sykes and J.S. Moffat, but Thomas had his way.[3]

Thomas went to Kuruman in 1863 to help in the printing of his Spelling Book and Hymn-Book, but Robert Moffat reports on January 7, 1865, that Thomas was not much good at it.[4]

When the books reached Inyati in August, 1864, J.S.Moffat reports that Thomas had not paid attention to the agreements made about the language, but that in any case "without something like a revolution in this country, we may whistle for readers of Setebele for some time to come.[5]

The following entries of Kuruman Ndebele Printed Literature are from D.E. Roussouw's Catalogue of African Languages (1858-1900) in the Grey Collection [referred to as Grey R].

n.d. Spelling Book, pp.1 and 2 missing; 14pp.;13.5cm. Grey R238
p.13 has numbers up to 1,000.
[Tsuana Primer erased and Ndebele substituted.]

1863 Hymns for the Service of God R242
[Izinhlabelo zo msebenzelo wo morimo ze sentebele]
Thomas Morgan Thomas; 24pp.; 13.5cm.

1864 A First Reader in Ndbele [Inbuka ya magama o guoala R237
a funtisayo ga kulumisa inkulumo ya matabele]
16pp.; 14.5cm. (W.Ashton,Kuruman,Mission Press)

1866 ~~A First Reader in Ndbele~~ Second Reader for Children R239
Amantabele Mission. 16pp.; 14.5cm.

1866 Inhlamvu zogu bona umlimo. Amantabele Mission. R241
32pp.; 13cm. 33 hymns. Grey copy stitched in
cloth covers and then into brown paper wrappers.

1866 Ukwalo logu buza. Amantabele Mission. R243
16pp; 13.5cm. Catechism. Almanacks as end-paper.

There is also in the Grey Colletion, Epistle to the Romans [R240] [Gwabe rome] with English almanacks for 1860 on inside of covers. 7v.; 15cm. These are manuscript passages from Romans in Ndebele written in seven small notebooks.

1 Thomas, Eleven Years in Central Africa 313
2-4 LMS Archives
5 MM 233

APPENDIX 3

MONARCH AND MISSIONARY

An examination of the relationships between Robert Moffat and the Matabele chief Moselekatse

The close relationships between Moffat and Moselekatse have been noted by historians of the period, but they have not been examined in detail. J.P.R. Wallis says it is "a story of singular psychological interest. Moffat himself could not understand, was distrustful, almost afraid of the spell he cast over the chief. But there was no doubting its power. From their first meeting in 1829 it manifested itself."[1] On Moselekatse's part, "the chief's feeling towards the missionary came nearer to infatuation than could normally be conceived";[2] while Moffat "could never quite understand it, and always shows a disposition to hold himself a little aloof from meeting it on its own terms. This instinctive withholding was natural and characteristic, begotten parly of racial differences, partly of masculine incredulity and suspicion in the face of such unusual manifestation of strong feeling ... but every now and again he has to admit the sincerity of the chief's strange affection."[3]

H.M. Hole says: "The king appears to have been captivated by the missionary's personality, and to have conceived a strong affection for him ... one cannot exclude the idea that his crafty mind had some ulterior purpose in these outward demonstrations. In any case, it is an exaggeration to speak as many writers have, of the existence of a 'strong friendship' between natures so diametrically opposed as those of Moffat and the barbarous and ensanguined chief."[4]

1,2,3 Wallis MJI xi: 142

4 Hole, Passing of Black Kings 41

Commenting on Moffat's influence E.W. Smith says: "The people were astounded beyond measure that for one moment Mzilikazi should show mercy, and that for the sake of a stranger. There was something in this white man they had never encountered before. As he had won the heart of the savage Africaner, so now he had stolen his way into the affection of the blood-bolstered Mzilikazi."[1]

Commenting on the "personal magnetism" which Moffat and Livingstone had for Moselekatse and Sebituane (the Makololo chief) Frank Debenham writes: "Both these potentates opened their hearts to the two missionaries in a way they could not possibly do to their own people and had no fear in doing so. The feat was greater on the part of Moffat perhaps for his rigid unbending attitude to what in his view was wrong had less of the element of Christian love in it, and the affection - it was nothing less - of the cruel Matabele leader for this stern man of God seems almost miraculous."[2] A. Sillery records a somewhat harsh judgment - "it was an entirely one-sided affection ... every meeting was an occasion for Moffat to launch into harsh remonstrance and exhortation to reform ... Moffat quite failed to appreciate the friendship of Moselekatse, who never missed a chance to do him kindnesses and favours."[3]

Moffat himself says: "On reviewing the past, nothing surprises me more than the unwavering kindness of Moselekatse ... and his munificence is no less surprising. I went expecting nothing, and he has sent me away full."[4] Mary, his wife, writes to her Kendal friend Miss Braithwaite - "there is something very remarkable in the uncommonly strong attachment of the poor savage Moselekatse to my husband - an attachment which has lasted for twenty-three years - and we cannot help thinking that this circumstance is to be overruled for some great object."[5]

1 Smith E W 155

2 Debenham, Way to Ilala 75

3 Sillery 74

4 Journal 29.10.54 NA

5 M.M. to Braithwaite 8.6.55 Lives

Even as late as August 1864 William Sykes, one of the pioneer group at Inyati wrote: "The long established friendship between the aged chief of the Matabele and the venerable missionary of Kuruman is no more a phantom than is the closest friendship between man and man, I could say more on this strain but forbear"[1]; and when on June 1, 1868, Sykes visited Moselekatse for the last time (he died on September 6, 1868) he says, "the moment I spoke of Moffat his countenance beamed with interest ... I mentioned that the sons of Moffat had been appointed to remain at Kuruman to comfort his father in his old age, and with mien indicating inward disappointment and yet approving he signified his assent with a gentle nod." As Sykes left the camp a voice was raised above the rest: "Remember me to the sons of Moffat; and, as if by an echo, the whole camp repeated the request and cried 'All of us! All of us!"[2]

I

Between 1829 and 1857 the two men spent 196 days together in close daily contact, and in 1854 lived together in Moffat's wagon for 54 days. In addition there was the period from October 24, 1859, to June 18, 1860, when Moffat was helping the Inyati Mission to get on its feet, and his contacts with Moselekatse were more official and less intimate. The two men were roughly of the same age - Moffat born in 1795, and Moselekatse being about 27[3] when he fled into the Transvaal in 1822.[4] They were both handsome, well set-up men, Moffat strikingly so, six feet tall, and up to 1838 with an eight inch black beard. Moselekatse was "below middle size, lusty, has rather a pleasing and soft countenance and is exceedingly affable in his manners. His voice is soft and feminine."[5] Cornwallis Harris described him as "rather tall, beardless and inclined to corpulence."[6]

1,2 Sykes to LMS 24.8.64: 25.12.68
3 Thomas, Eleven Years 159
4 Hughes, Ndebele 47
5 1829 Journal LMS
6 Wild Sports 123

On Moselekatse's part, Wallis suggests that it was Moffat's manhood that first impressed the chief.[1] He had known traders such as David Hume, and later hunter-traders such as Hartley and McCabe; on Moffat's first visit, the missionary James Archbell was present too, and on the second visit the distinguished army medical man, Dr Andrew Smith, was received by Moselekatse. All of them were men of character, but none of them impressed the chief in the same manner as Moffat. Out of this initial admiration Moselekatse's affection developed. Another "first impression", which the chief never forgot, was Moffat's readiness to bring home the two principal men he had sent to Kuruman to report - "I am still wondering at the love of a stranger who never saw me ... I live to-day by a stranger of another nation ... these are my principal men whom I greatly love. They are my eyes and ears, and what you did to them, you did to me."[2] Through Moffat he learned the facts about the white man's world,[3] and also Moffat's attitude to fire-arms. Here was a disinterested, plain-speaking person who had come to see him for his own sake, and not for ivory and trading like other white men. The lonely chief, who lived in a world of flattering speeches and had no confidants, found an honest man in Robert Moffat and was eager to keep "the road to Kuruman open".[4]

Moselekatse's manoeuvres to keep close to Moffat on his visits took some puzzling turns, such as lying on Moffat's bed,[5] riding in the wagon with him,[6] sleeping in the open near the wagon,[7] handling Moffat's possessions,[8] loading him with presents,[9] enjoying Moffat rubbing his feet,[10] and stroking Moffat's beard and almost kissing him.[11]

1 Wallis MJI xi [Instances of affection are found in many places in the 1829-54 Journals NA]
2,3 1829
4 1829/1835
5 1829/1854
6-10 1854
11 1854/1855

All these innocent expressions of his happiness in Moffat's presence; his obvious delight in his guest, and his ruses to keep him as long as he could, puzzled the dour Scot, whose own brand of exhibitionism was much more restrained. Although to him Moselekatse was primarily a heathen tyrant, it is mainly due to Moffat's faithful recording of their contacts that an entirely new view of the Matabele chief emerges. Moffat records his compassion, his pity, his humanity and his pastoral concern about Moffat and his family, and constantly expresses his amazement at his kindnesses.[1]

On Moffat's side, the secular and the religious aspects of his relationships with the chief were interwoven. The religious aim of preaching the gospel was always paramount, and most conversations with Moselekatse eventually came round to the main point. He revolted at the heathen customs, rebuked Moselekatse for not observing the Sabbath, was cautious in dealing with a man who took on himself the honours due to Jehovah, thought Moselekatse afraid of religion "as a condemned criminal of the gallows", and yet records his religious response in the 1854 journey. But whenever he meditated on the condition of the people he fell into melancholy, and concluded they were "wilful sinners" and that Moselekatse was the chief of sinners.[2]

In secular affairs, Moffat was cautious about receiving presents from Moselekatse, but gave presents freely, much to the consternation of his colleagues in 1859.[3] He warned the chief about his war-like policy,[4] and under Moffat's influence there were mitigations of punishments and release of prisoners.[5]

[1,2] Journal 1829-54 NA

[3] E.M. to J.S.U. 9.8.59; 22.1.60; 8.6.60 NA

[4] Journal 1854 NA

[5] Journal 1835 NA

Although Moffat despised and pitied him he got a lot of secret enjoyment out of Moselekatse's intimate attentions, especially during the processions, the feasts and the safaris,[1] and it pleased him to think that "my name and Kuruman are among the Matabele like household words".[2] In fact it is not too much to claim - making all allowances for their sharply different characteristics and backgrounds - that the two men enjoyed one another. Moselekatse showed it by his unaffected displays of pleasure at the presence of his friend; and Moffat by his naturally reserved responses in present giving, medical attentions, patience in dealing with Moselekatse's variable temperament and the secret glow of personal triumph which the public receptions provided. On the eve of leaving Moselekatse in 1854 he wrote: "I shall leave with astonishment at the kindness.of a savage tyrant of great power to a plain Christian missionary which perhaps has never been surpassed".[3]

II

Did Moselekatse value Moffat politically? Professor Gluckman has advanced the theory that Livingstone was the key to the foreign policy of the Makololo, who in their dread of the Matabele wished to have Livingstone amongst them because he was Moffat's son-in-law and therefore might be influential on their behalf.[4] Sekelety, the Makololo chief, in a message to the Earl of Clarendon (through Livingstone), said that he would have been happy to settle in the Kafue highlands provided that Moffat's daughter, Mrs. Livingstone, had been able to come - because Moselekatse "would let her alone, and use, she being a

1-3 1835-54

4 R-L Journal 20, p.70 [cf. B.B.C. Listener 22.9.55]

child of his friend Moffat."[1]

It is arguable that the powerful Moselekatse had no need himself of a "hostage" of this kind, but was he entirely blind to the political worth of Moffat?[2] In the westward tour of the two men in 1854 (see Chapter 14) Moffat suggests that he is afraid of a collision between the two peoples, to which Moselekatse replies, "No fear of that. Nobody will fight where you are. Do you think the Makololo do not know Moffat."[3] Was it a comforting thought to Moselekatse that the Zambesi area dominated by the still active Makololo was safe while he had Moffat, who himself felt during this 1854 period that he was carried along as a "state prisoner"[4]? Powerful and established though he was, Moselekatse could not afford to neglect his defences, and Moffat's name might have been a useful bulwark on the Zambesi frontier. The awareness of the Makololo on the part of the Matabele had by no means faded, as the apprehension of the men carrying the goods to Livingstone revealed.[5]

III

In his illuminating book Psychologie de la Civilisation (English translation Prospero and Caliban, 1956) O. Mannoni offers some psychological explanations of "colonial" relationships which may throw some light on the relationships of Moselekatse and Moffat as well as that between Moffat and the Bechuana chief Matibi and Livingstone and Sechele and Sebituane. In Mannoni's opinion, Shakespeare's Tempest, with its Prespero and Caliban theme, is a "colonial" drama in which the "independent personality of the European and the "dependent" one

[1] Sekelutu to Lord Clarendon 9.9.60 NA

[2] A.J.B. Hughes (Corres. 13.3.59) thinks it is possible that Moselekatse used Moffat in his foreign policy in view of his contacts with the Sechuana tribes.

[3] R.M. to Tidman 10.5.55 LMS

[4,5] 1854 Journal NA

of the native struggle together with a gap between them. This gap "invites the projection of unconscious images and encourages behaviour which is not warranted by the objective situation, but is ultimately explainable in terms of the most infantile subjectivity."[1] In his Foreword to the book Mr. Philip Mason says: "Prospero at his best stands for many a man conscious of powers which he cannot exert to the full among his peers, a magnificent leader among people who give him unquestioning homage and do not compete with his greatness. Livingstone springs to the mind - but colonial history is full of them and none of us is quite free from the Prospero complex."[2] Moffat certainly could be included.

As for Caliban, it is not impossible to see some aspects of Moselekatse's character in him. Moffat's dictatorial method is the Prospero one - "obey and be attentive", with a touchiness that follows disobedience, Moselekatse is "Dependent" on Moffat, and when in 1859 he grew suspicious of white men and cagey about the mission and all that went with it, the psychologist would see a breakdown in this dependence attitude which Caliban in the Tempest describes:

> ... When thou camest first,
> Thou strok'dst me, and mad'st much of me; wouldst give me
> Water with berries in't; and teach me how
> To name the bigger light, and how the less,
> That burn by day and night: then I lov'd thee,
> but now
> ... you sty me
> In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
> The rest of the island.

This, of course, is a description of a colonial situation that only developed in Matabeleland much later than Moffat's time; but his advent could be reckoned as a forerunner of it, and

1,2
Mannoni 105; 12

his relationships with Moselekatse a pattern for those which followed. In much the same way, the relationships of Livingstone and Sechele and Sebituane might be explained.

The Rev.Kenneth Smith, who has lived for some years in Matabeleland at Inyati comments:

> I am not sure that one could simplify Moffat's relationship with Mzilikazi to the extent of fitting it into what Caliban says of Prospero. After all, it was not that Moffat had changed (though he must certainly have been a different man in 1859 to what he was in 1854) so much as that conditions in Matabeleland had changed. The fear of white invasion was real. It did not matter if the king made vague promises to Mtshede, but when Mtshede turned up with three people whom he proposed to settle in the country, that was something which affected the whole tribe, and so those who opposed it would be vociferous in a way they would not before the event (on the African grounds that it might not happen anyway). 14.3.60

Moffat's colleague at Kuruman, John Mackenzie, provides in his North of the Orange River (44-45) a striking illustration of the "dependent" native attitude which Mannoni[1] quotes as from Levy-Bruhl's Primitive Mentality (Chapter 13). Mackenzie describes how at Kuruman he doctored a man whose face had been clawed by a tiger-cat, and when the man came to see him Mackenzie naturally expected some expressions of gratitude:

> He said: My mouth is not exactly where it used to be ... but the wound is quite whole. Everybody said I should die, but your herbs cured me. You are now my white man. Please to give me a knife.
>
> I could not believe my own ears, and asked "What do you say?"
>
> I haven't got a knife; please to give me a knife. You are now my own white man, and I shall always come and beg of you.

Mackenzie's comment is: "The man's position which was so mysterious to me at the time was this. Here is a person who has cured me. I am come to do him honour. How shall I do so? By begging from him! To be begged from is one of the marks of chieftainship among the Bechuana. A stranger will say that his chief is a great man; people come from all quarters to beg from him."[2]

[1] Mannoni 45 ff
[2] Mackenzie 45

The explanation Levy-Bruhl offers is: "that the native thinks he has a right to compensation because he has suffered some loss in the mystical sphere. He argues 'henceforward you (white man) are my refuge and my support, and I have the right to reckon on you to compensate me for what your intervention has cost me with the mystic powers upon whom my social group depends, and upon whom I myself have depended till now.'"[1]

Mannoni argues that travellers who report such incidents project on to the native their own desire for reward "and it is this projection which prevents them understanding the psychology of dependent behaviour, and makes them see it as a reversal of the proper order of things." He says that "true gratitude seems to be an attempt to preserve a balance between two feelings which at first sight seem contradictory: on the one hand the feeling that one is very much indebted and on the other the feeling that one is not indebted at all ... that is why gratitude cannot be demanded ... and why, in spite of appearances, it can exist only where persons are equal."[2] It may have been just here that Moffat misjudged the character of the man he was dealing with, for Moselekatse never failed to be grateful for Moffat's attentions and his gifts.[3] He was able to give as well as to receive, and to do both graciously.

Writing of the modern colonial situation, Mannoni says:

> What the colonial in common with Prospero lacks, is awareness of the world of Others, a world in which Others have to be respected. This is the world from which the colonial has fled because he cannot accept men as they are. Rejection of that world is combined with an urge to dominate, an urge which is infantile in origin and which social adaptation has failed to discipline. (p.108)

[1] L-B Primitive Mentality, Ch.13

[2] Mannoni 46

[3] "a torrent of thanks", R.M. to M.M. 28.9.57 NA

"Few men" he writes "are capable, when at length they are obliged to acknowledge the existence of other people, of recognizing in themselves what they never suspected was there, without an outburst of the fear, hatred or harshness they had directed against an aspect of themselves which they had wanted to ignore" (14). Moffat had in his character certain harsh, opinionated, domineering and vain streaks, and the psychologist would say he saw them also in action in Moselekatse and under the impulse of his religious vocation tried to reform, civilize and evangelize his friend.

Moffat, according to Mannoni's analysis, played out the Prospero drama, and also the one which Defoe depicts in Robinson Crusoe, for in the end, like the "colonial", in general his personality "is wholly unaffected by that of the native of the colony to which he goes; it does not adapt itself, but develops solely in accordance with its own inner structure (108).

With Moffat (and also Livingstone) in mind, the commentary of Gaston Bouthoul in Traite de Sociologie (p.394) quoted by Mannoni (p.109) is an apt one:

> A man may be uprooted from his surroundings and taken to the antipodes or shut up in a cell, but the society to which he belongs will continue to live in him, in his beliefs and in the entire content of his mental life and the knowledge he takes with him. If such a man has the strength, or if he meets some of his fellows, he may build in some distant spot a society almost identical with the one he left behind. This was the case with many of the colonies.

On their "desert island" Moffat and Moselekatse acted over thirty years in a "colonial situation" which according to Mannoni happens

> the very instant a white man, even if he is alone, appears in the midst of a tribe, even if it is independent, so long as he is thought to be rich or powerful or merely immune to the local forces of magic, and so long as he derives from his position, even though only in his most secret self, a feeling of his own superiority ... however consciously watchful we are, we can never entirely eradicate this assumption of superiority from our unconscious, and it must be included among the data of the problem if we are to avoid all risk of error (p.18).

While this may be an interesting psychological hypothesis, it hardly does justice to the character of such men as Moffat and Livingstone, and the effect that Africa and Africans had on them. Moffat, in particular, was not "colonial" in the sense of living a separate and isolated life with few contacts with African life. His influence and reputation rested on more than just the fact of being a "white man". He learned from Africa and African ways, and because of this he was trusted. It is true that he remained to the end "a superior person", but he grew to regard himself as an "African", as one who was identified with the continent and its life.

I am indebted to Mr Roger Summers, of the National Museums, Bulawayo, for this comment on the relations between Moffat and Moselekatse:

> I feel that it shows that Mzilikazi was conscious of his "weakness" but that, great man that he was,he knew how to turn his weakness to good use (as Queen Elizabeth I did!). I doubt if there was any Prospero!Caliban relationship involved. If there was then why do we not find the same thing between R.M. and the Tswana Chiefs? It seems to me a straightforward David-Jonathan relationship which flourishes best in conditions of extreme loneliness (Moffat's response was most obvious in 1854 when he had nobody but Sam Edwards with him), and least in 1859 when he had the whole Inyati party. It may be that Moffat's unresponsiveness in 1859 was partly the reason for Mzilikazi's difficult behaviour. (10.8.1959)

Sir Robert Tredgold comments:

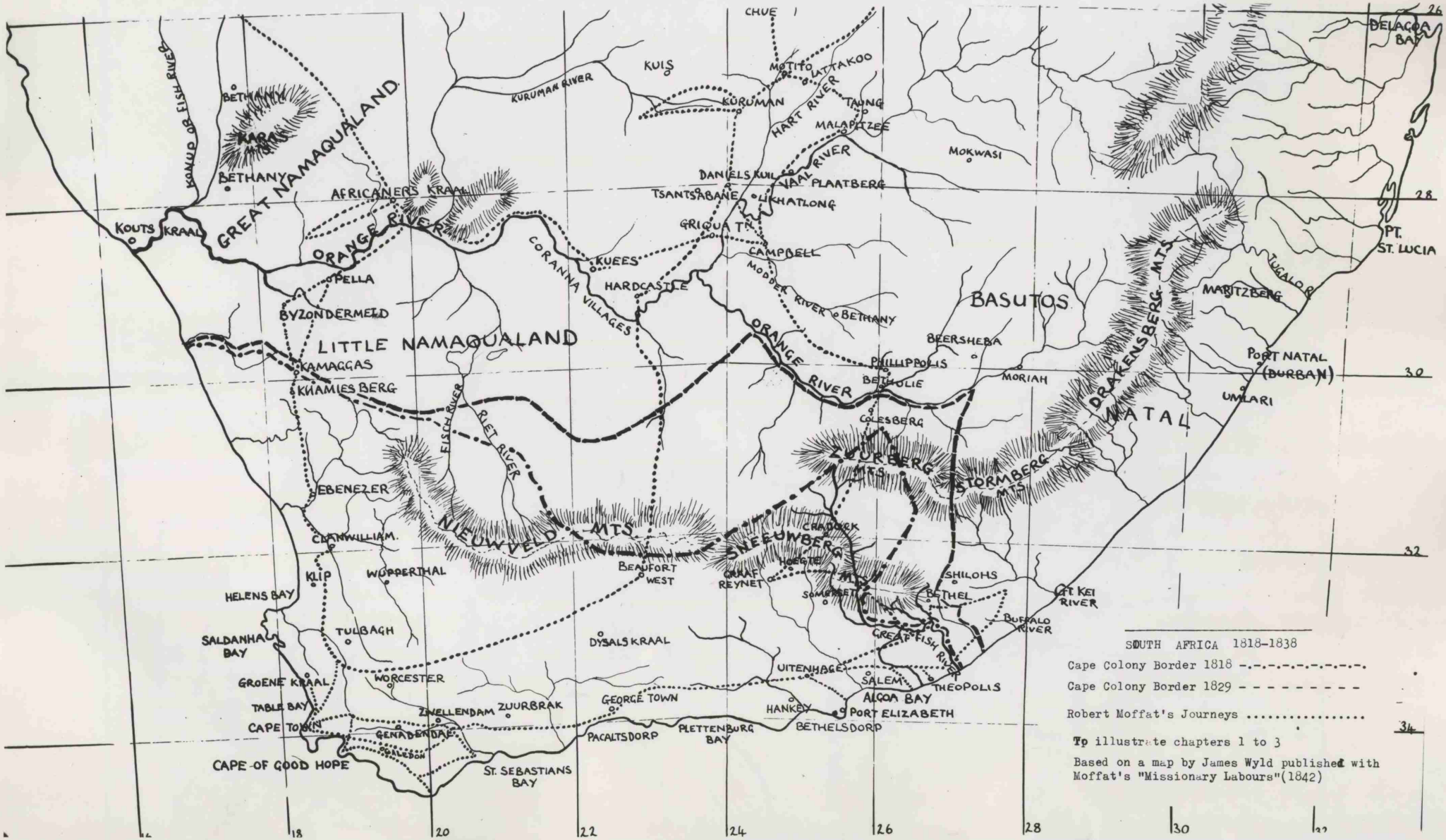
> The psychological aspect is only one of a number of possible explanations. In the first place it is an over simplification, but apart from that it seems to me by implication to reject a nobler explanation. The best modern psychology is moving in the direction of recognition that personality and the relationships it involves cannot be accounted for in terms of the purely material as we now understand it. I agree that Mannoni's theory is full of interest but whether it can, in this context, be more than one relevant factor amongst many is another matter. (15.4.1959)

Robert Moffat

On board the Royal Mercian at London Bridge acknowledging the farewell salute of his friends on the Morning of his departure for Africa 30th January 1873

Bird's-eye View of Kuruman.

472


CHUE
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HART RIVER
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DELAGOA BAY
BETHANY
KARAS MTS
KONUP OR FISH RIVER
GREAT NAMAQUALAND
AFRICANERS KRAAL
DANIELS KUIL
VAAL RIVER
PLAATBERG
TSANTSABANE
LITAKATLONG
KOUTS KRAAL
ORANGE RIVER
GRIQUA TN
CAMPBELL
PT. ST. LUCIA
CORANNA VILLAGES
KUEES
MODDER RIVER
BETHANY
HARDCASTLE
TUGALO R
MARITZBERG
BASUTOS
PELLA
BYZONDERMELD
LITTLE NAMAQUALAND
BEERSHEBA
PHILLIPPOLIS
PORT NATAL (DURBAN)
KAMAGGAS
KHAMIESBERG
BETHULIE
MORIAH
ORANGE RIVER
DRAKENSBERG MTS
UMLARI
NATAL
COLESBERG
ELSEH RIVER
RIET RIVER
EBENEZER
ZUURBERG MTS
STORMBERG MTS
CHADOCK
NIEUWVELD MTS
SNEEUWBERG
CLANWILLIAM
BEAUFORT WEST
GRAAF REYNET
HOEGTE
SHILOHS
KLIP
WUPPERTHAL
SOMERSET
BETHEL
HELENS BAY
GT KEI RIVER
BUFFALO RIVER
SALDANHA BAY
TULBAGH
DYSALS KRAAL
GREAT FISH RIVER
UITENHAGE
GROENE KRAAL
WORCESTER
SALEM
THEOPOLIS
TABLE BAY
ZWELLENDAM
ZUURBRAK
GEORGE TOWN
ALGOA BAY
HANKEY
CAPE TOWN
GENADENDAL
PORT ELIZABETH
PACALTSDORP
PLETTENBURG BAY
BETHELSDORP
CAPE OF GOOD HOPE
GNADENTHAL
ST. SEBASTIANS BAY
SOUTH AFRICA 1818-1838
Cape Colony Border 1818 -.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.
Cape Colony Border 1829 - - - - - - - - -
Robert Moffat's Journeys .....
To illustrate chapters 1 to 3
Based on a map by James Wyld published with Moffat's "Missionary Labours"(1842)
18
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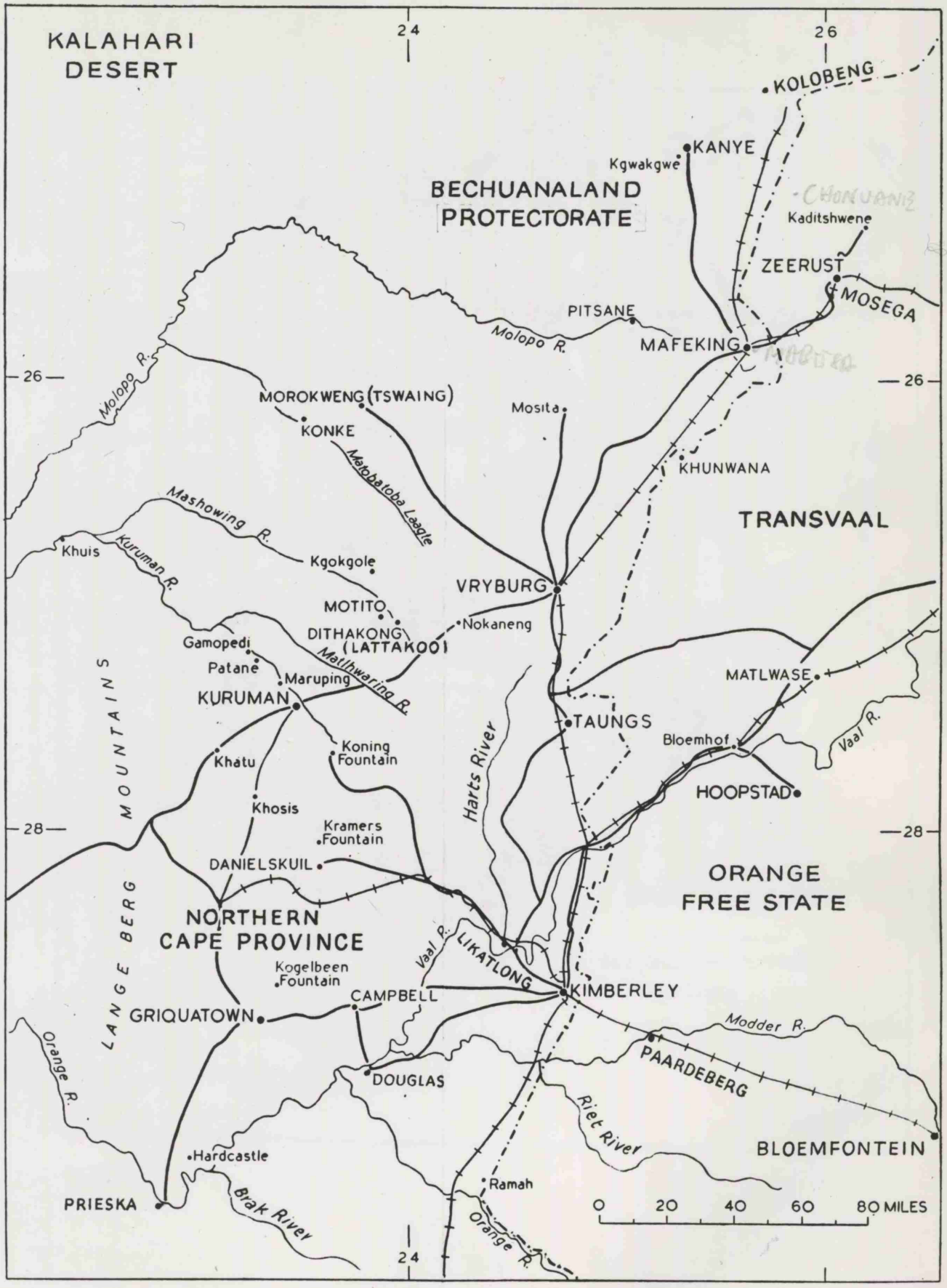
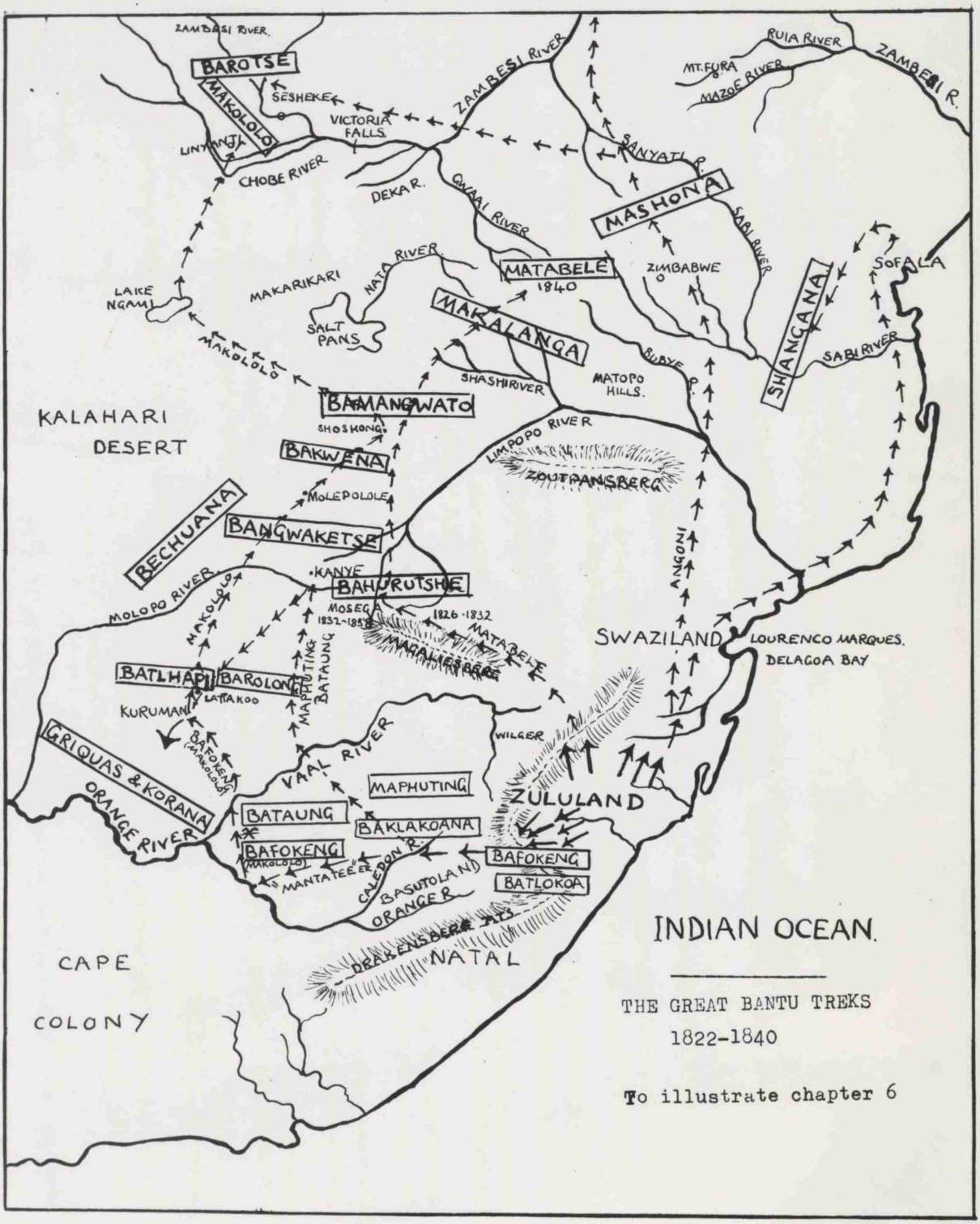
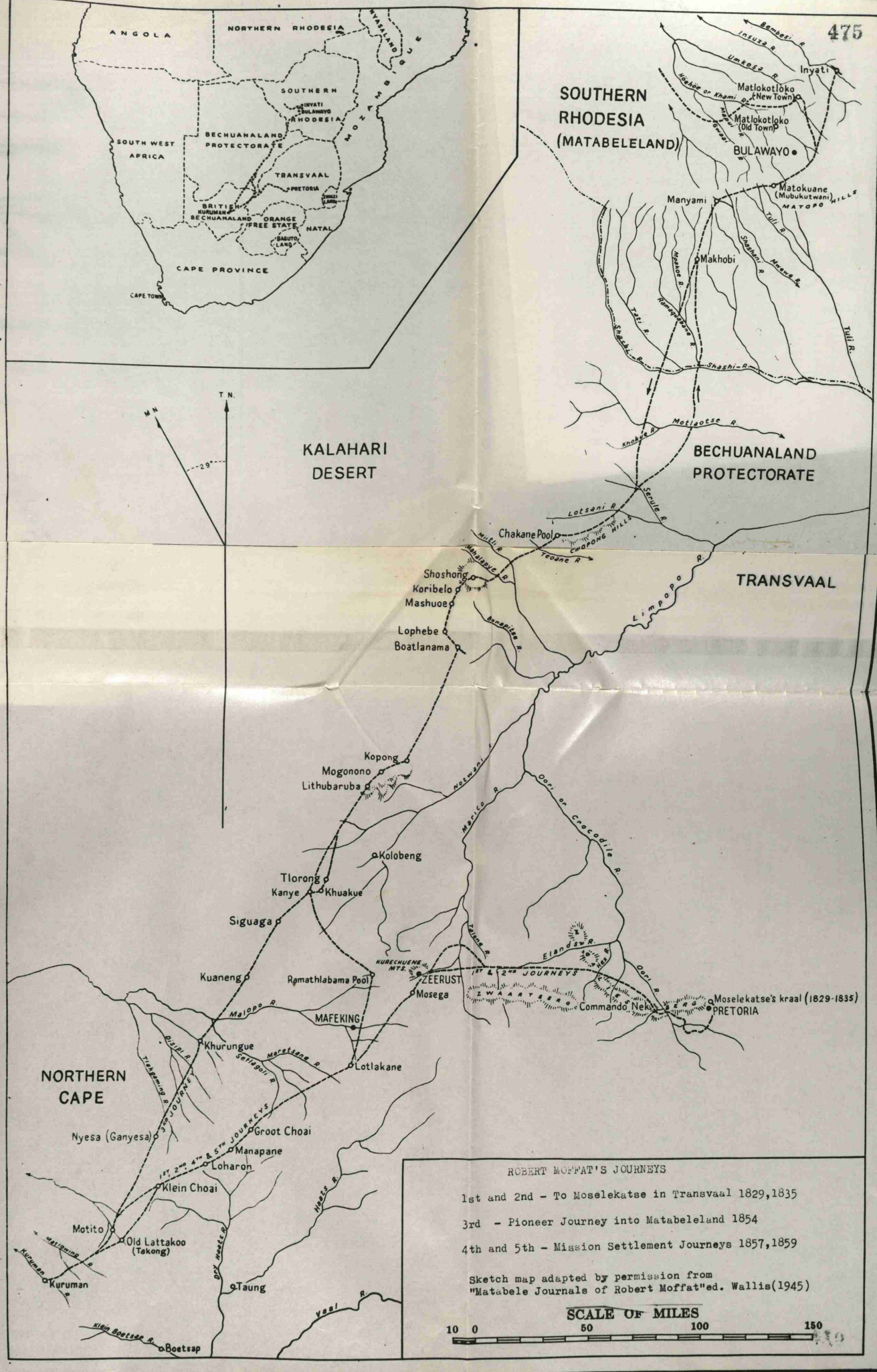


KURUMAN AND THE SURROUNDING AREAS



THE GREAT BANTU TREKS
1822-1840

To illustrate chapter 6



ROBERT MOFFAT'S JOURNEYS

1st and 2nd - To Moselekatse in Transvaal 1829,1835

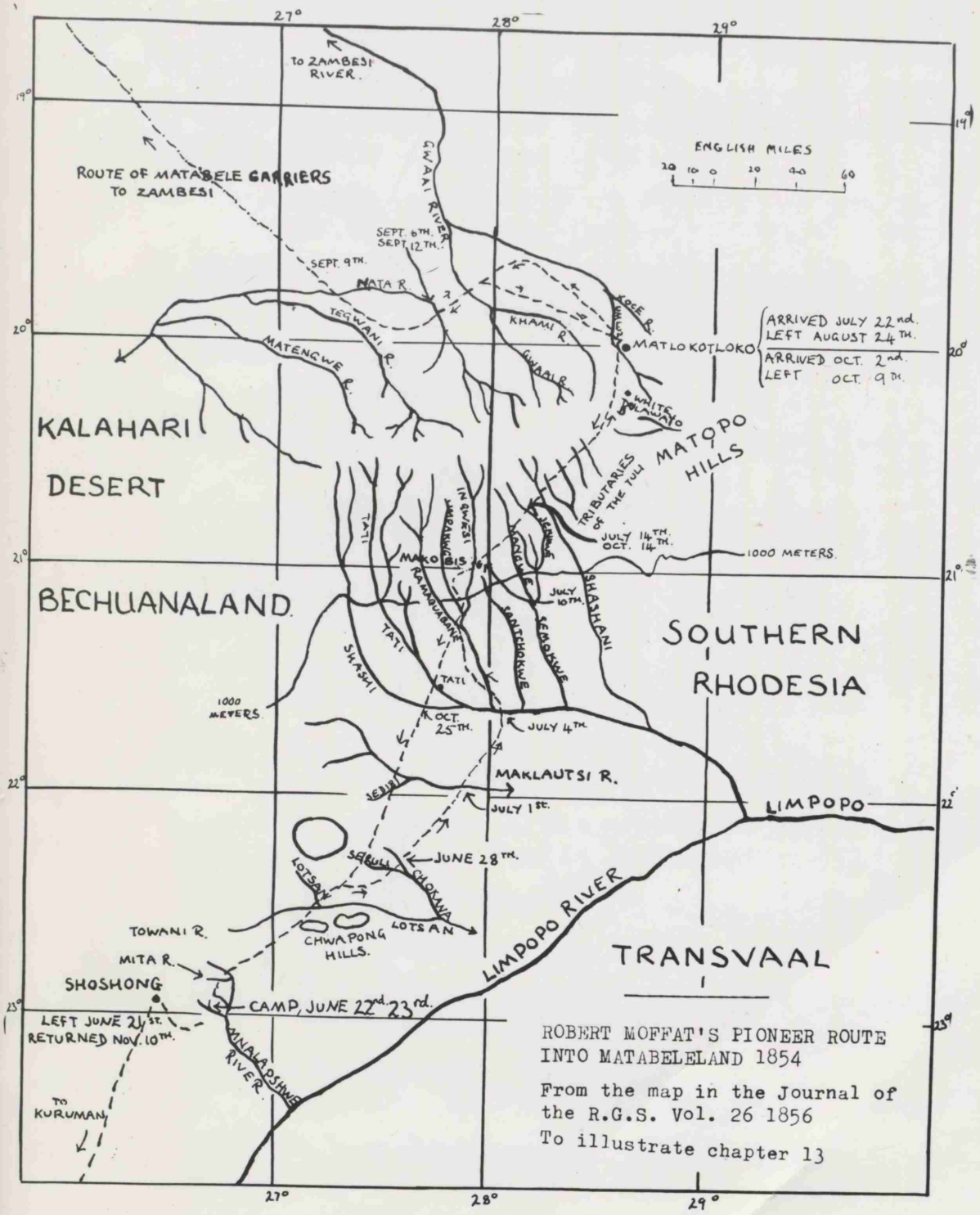
3rd - Pioneer Journey into Matabeleland 1854

4th and 5th - Mission Settlement Journeys 1857,1859

Sketch map adapted by permission from "Matabele Journals of Robert Moffat"ed. Wallis(1945)

SCALE OF MILES

10 0 50 100 150



ROBERT MOFFAT'S PIONEER ROUTE INTO MATABELELAND 1854

From the map in the Journal of the R.G.S. Vol. 26 1856

To illustrate chapter 13

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