

Mrs. Mary Moffat

Wife of Dr. Moffat, Missionary to South Africa...

by Emma Raymond Pitman

"Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee!
Take my feet, and let them be
Swift, and beautiful for Thee!
Take my voice, and let me sing,
Always, only for my King.
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages for Thee.
Take my intellect, and use
Every power as Thou shalt choose.
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee."

F. R. Havergal



Miss Mary Smith was born of respectable and educated parentage, on May 24th, 1795, at New Windsor, near Manchester, [England]. Mr. Smith was a Scotchman who came south and settled in Yorkshire. Her own education was completed at the Moravian School at Fairfield, near Manchester; and it was here that Miss Smith's mind was first powerfully attracted towards the mission cause. It was the custom in that institution, to read among the young ladies the short monthly reports of what God was doing in the dark places of the earth, principally by means of Moravian missionary workers; and Miss Smith not only listened with interest to these accounts, but gave in her adhesion to the missionary principle, there and then, in her girlhood's days.

After really entering upon mission work, Mrs. Moffat never ceased to feel lively gratitude to the gracious providence which had caused her to be placed at Fairfield; because, in tracing all the way which that providence had led her, she could distinctly discern the guiding hand which even then was fitting her, although in this retired position, and unconsciously, to become a "vessel meet for the Master's use" among the far-distant Africans.

Miss Smith was the eldest child, and only daughter of a family of four. Mr. Moffat was a few months younger than herself, having been born on December 21, 1795; and circumstances having thrown the young couple together, a kindred spirit was soon developed.

Young Moffat had prospects of advancement and honour, had he followed secular pursuits; but his mind was providentially turned to the mission cause, and as he determined to yield up himself a living sacrifice for the work, Miss Smith cheered and upheld him in the resolve. Finally, after some acquaintance and friendly interchange of sentiment, the two young people were betrothed, resolving together to devote themselves to the work of the Lord, in whatever position should offer in the great missionary field.

So great an impression did Miss Smith's noble self-renunciation make upon her brother John, that he was led carefully to examine the motives and the spirit which caused such a sacrifice. He knew that his sister was giving up a happy home, a life of comfort, plenty, and intellectual luxury, as well as the prospect of ease and riches in England, to go out to Africa; and the thought of all this at first staggered him. His reflections ended in conversion. Although he was just preparing to enter into a lucrative business, he renounced everything, and giving himself up to mission work also, he entered Blackburn Academy, under Dr. Joseph Fletcher, to prepare. Finally, in 1828, he went to Madras, South India, where he laboured among the heathen with great success. Returning by ship, in 1843, from Vizagapatam to Madras, after an ordination service, he perished in a storm, the vessel being lost at sea.

After his dedication to the missionary work, Mrs. Moffat very earnestly desired that her brother might join herself and husband in South Africa, but this was not to be. He was not only to labour on another continent, but to perish at last, far away at sea, in the howling storm. We cannot wonder that his death proved a great trial to his bereaved sister.

Mr. Moffat sailed for South Africa in October, 1816, and after some delay, joined Mr. Ebner, a missionary who had been settled there a little time, at Africaner's Kraal.

Doubtless there were seasons when the mission work to which Miss Smith had dedicated herself appeared full of difficulty and trial, for the young man was settled in the midst of a savage and barbarous people, upon a salary of £25 per annum. The prospect was anything but inviting: the people were so uncivilised that they laughed to scorn the idea of the sacredness of human life; so greedy that they stole his food at all opportunities; and so dark and imbruted in mind, that it was with the greatest difficulty they could be made to understand the meaning or purpose of the letters of the alphabet. In habits, practices, bloodthirstiness, and lack of feeling, they were more like the beasts that perish, than aught else. Indeed, travellers who had mingled with

them doubted whether they possessed souls at all; while the conditions of life in that sterile and drought-stricken country, were sufficient to frighten away all who valued existence at all, from the bare contemplation of the self-immolation necessary to dwell among those so needing the Gospel.

But none of these things moved Miss Smith from her purpose. In 1819 she went out to Cape Town, whither Mr. Moffat had travelled to meet her. They were married there, and in January, 1820, started for the interior. They arrived at New Lattakoo, afterwards called Kuruman, in March, but returned to Griqua Town, where they laboured for a few months.

In May, 1821, at the desire of Mothibi, the chief, they settled at Kuruman station, and took up regular work among the people. Here Mr. Moffat had to be his own gardener, blacksmith, carpenter, and tailor, while Mrs. Moffat was compelled to do all her own domestic work, as well as to instil, by degrees, ideas of modesty and honesty, into the females who flocked around her, and viewed her as a curiosity, to be teased, robbed, or let alone, as it pleased them. She had to be her own cook, and to be thankful when she got anything to cook, for the natives would watch the hut, and in the absence of the young couple would break in and steal all the food, so that many times Mr. and Mrs. Moffat returned home to an empty cupboard, after being out for hours, trying to instruct the natives...

Missionary life in South Africa was no bed of roses at that time. To begin with, the houses were as unlike English ideas of comfort as they were possible to be. These huts were invariably built by the women — who did all the drudgery — and were composed of a number of poles placed in a circular form, and covered with mats. When the sun shone it was unbearably hot; when it rained the water poured in; while it was not unusual for dogs and serpents to force their way into some quiet corner. The cleanliness practised by the missionaries in regard to their food or clothing was a constant source of amusement to the Bechuanas, who would say, if pleased to speak favourably, "Ra-Mary, your customs may be good enough for you, but I never see that they fill the stomach." They had no single idea of God, or of a Creator; there was literally no remnant even of a false faith, or of a dark superstition, on which to lay hold of in order to commence preaching or teaching. They knew nothing of idol-worship; they lived the lives of oxen, enjoying only ravenous meals of flesh, and sensuality of life. What could a missionary and his wife do with such a people? Nothing can better describe their situation than Mr. Moffat's own graphic words:

"The site of the station was a light sandy soil, where no kind of vegetables would grow without irrigation. Our water ditch, which was some miles in length, had been led out of the Kuruman river, and passed in its course through the gardens of the natives. As irrigation was to them entirely unknown, fountains and streams had been suffered to run to waste. The native women, seeing the fertilising effect of the water in our gardens, thought very naturally that they had an equal right, to it in their own, and took the liberty of opening our water-ditch, and allowing it, on some occasions, to flood their own gardens. This mode of proceeding left us at times without a drop of water, even for culinary purposes. It was in vain that, we pleaded and remonstrated with the chiefs, the women were the masters in this matter. Mr. Hamilton and I were daily compelled to go alternately three miles, with a spade, about three p.m., the hottest time in the day, and turn in the many outlets into native gardens, that we might have a little moisture to refresh our burnt-up vegetables during the night. Many night-watches were spent in this way, and after we had raised with great labour, vegetables, so necessary to our constitutions, the natives would steal them by night, as well as day; and after a year's toil and care we scarcely reaped anything to reward us for our labour. Our situation might be better conceived than described; not one believed our report among the thousands by whom we were surrounded.

Native aid, especially to the wife of a missionary, though not to be dispensed with, was a source of anxiety, and an addition to our cares, for any individual may not only threaten but carry a rash purpose into effect. For instance, Mrs. Moffat, with a babe in her arms, begged, and that very humbly, of a woman, just to be kind enough to move out of a temporary kitchen, that she might shut it as usual before going to the place of worship. The woman seized a piece of wood to hurl it at Mrs. Moffat, who, of course, immediately escaped to the house of God, leaving the woman the undisturbed occupant of the kitchen, any of the contents of which she would not hesitate to appropriate to her own use. It required no little fortitude and forbearance in the wife of a missionary who had to keep at home and attend to the cares and duties of a family, to have the house crowded with those who would seize a stone and dare interference on her part. As many men and women as pleased might come into our hut, leaving us not room enough even to turn ourselves, and making everything they touched the colour of their own greasy red attire; while some were talking, others would be sleeping, and some pilfering whatever they could lay their hands upon. This would

keep the housewife a perfect prisoner, in a suffocating atmosphere, almost intolerable. As it was not pleasant to take our meals among such filth, our dinner was often delayed for hours, hoping for their departure.

On some occasions an opportunity would be watched to rob when the missionary was engaged in public service. The thief would put his head just within the door, discover who was in the pulpit, and, knowing he could not leave the rostrum before a certain time had expired, would go to his house and take whatever he could lay his hands upon. Knives were always eagerly coveted; our metal spoons they melted, and when we were supplied with plated iron ones, which they found not so pliable, they supposed them bewitched. Very often when employed in working at a distance from the house, if there was no one in whom he could confide, the missionary would be compelled to carry all the kitchen utensils with him, well knowing that if they were left they would take wings before his return."

Among the perils to which missionaries situated among those savage tribes are exposed is that of invasion by other tribes. On one occasion the Mantatees made an incursion into Mothibi's country, and produced great terror. Many of the natives were killed, while the mission party experienced great anxiety. Mr. Moffat was compelled to be absent on a visit to Makaba, and his wife was left alone at the station with two infants, and a young Hottentot woman. In the night she was aroused by a loud knocking at the door of the hut; and on inquiring, Mrs. Moffat found that it was the chief Mothibi come to tell her that the Mantatees were indeed coming quickly. He and his warriors crowded into the hut, and after stating the position of affairs to Mrs. Moffat, took counsel with her as to what should be done. She immediately wrote to Mr. Hamilton, their fellow-missionary, to come to the rescue. This gentleman came by eight o'clock, in obedience to the summons, and packed up and secreted as many articles of property as he could, preparatory to flight; but by noon the intelligence arrived that the dreaded invaders had directed their course from the station, instead of to it. This intelligence was the unwitting source of much sorrow to Mrs. Moffat; because, although she herself was safe, her husband's journey lay right in the track of the Mantatees; and, knowing that they would rejoice to kill such a distinguished victim, the poor wife endured, for three weeks, agonies of suspense and trial. During that time her sorrow was increased by the garrulous reports of the natives, who, to gain some measure of popularity and consequence for themselves, reported all sorts of unlikely things. One had seen portions

of Mr. Moffat's clothes stained with blood; another had tracked pieces of the wagon; while a third had found the saddle, hacked to pieces. But, after three weeks of terrible alarms and long-drawn agony, the husband and wife were once more re-united. We may fancy the joyful thanksgivings which ascended from their little hut that day!

It is impossible to imagine the difficulty of bringing up children amid such surroundings. Mr. and Mrs. Moffat did all in their power to neutralise the gross influences of heathenism by the careful training of their little ones, and, finally, by sending away their girls to different schools in Cape Colony. Fancy pictures how tenderly and prayerfully Mrs. Moffat would draw her little ones around her, like many an English mother in far more favourable circumstances, and tell them the elevating story of the Cross. Amid all the dense darkness of heathenism, and the demoralising influences of savage life, she would do her best to instil into their little minds both by deed and word, some echoes of English civilisation; but chief among all the instrumentalities relied upon by her to bring them up as Christian children should be, is the religion of Christ. Was the mother's heart never despondent? Was her soul never sick with fear? Was her spirit never heavy within her, as she contemplated her children's life — as she remembered the manifold advantages of the poorest English peasant child? O yes! This trial is one of the keenest which missionaries have to endure, and allied to it is the separation between parents and children. The missionary received more salary than of old, and with his increased means, though far from rich, they resolved to send away their daughters to school. So Mary (afterwards Mrs. Livingstone) and her sister were sent away to Cape Town.

To show the dangers of travelling, we will transcribe a lion story which concerns these two sisters, though not at the time of their education. Mary had been married to Dr. Livingstone, and Ann had gone to visit her during a time of illness. As the station at which Mrs. Livingstone was settled was 230 miles away, it was not often that the sisters could visit. Accordingly, Miss Moffat spent a few weeks with her married sister, and nursed her back again into strength and health. The journey to Mabotsa took a fortnight, but nothing was seen of any lions, only occasionally a loud roar, though distant, was heard; and the young lady set out on the return journey in good spirits, accompanied by an old woman and three native drivers. On the afternoon of the second day this old woman discovered that her kaross had fallen out of the wagon, though nobody knew when or where. She insisted on two of the men going back to look for it, which they did, taking the only gun among the party for defence, leaving the solitary wagon in the midst of a howling wilderness infested with lions, with only two trembling

women, one man, and no gun. It would have been wiser to have lost the kaross, than to have dared other and worse dangers, as the event proved. Mrs. Moffat, writing a letter to a friend, gives an account of these dangers in the following words: [? these are her words?]

"At length they were benighted. They unyoked the oxen, but neglected to fasten them properly. They prepared a meal, and drank a little tea; when, all on a sudden, came down the shaggy monster — an enormous lion — and levelled an ox in a moment, not ten yards away from the wagon. They were soon all huddled together in their vehicle, and sat, with horrified feelings, watching the movements of the lion. Having sufficiently regaled himself, he came close up to the wagon, and roared. The man in the wagon had a stick, which he lighted by the candle, and which he stretched out to scare the animal. He turned on his heels, and marched off somewhere; but he returned before sunrise, and made another meal off the ox. The man then took his long whip, and tried to frighten the lion by cracking it as close to his ears as he could reach. At length, much to the satisfaction of the party, the unwelcome visitor turned to the right-about, and skulked away among the bushes. But yet there they were, far from water during the hottest season of the year; the oxen had all scampered back from whence they came; they had no weapon of defence; and the two men had not yet returned with the kaross. So they resolved on setting off on foot, back again to Mabotsa, and to leave the wagon — a poor little cat being the only live thing in it — to the mercy of the lion. They started before sunrise, and soon met the men. This was some comfort, for their number was now augmented, and they had got the gun. On they went, through the burning desert, and beneath the scorching sun — imagining that every bush they saw had a lion behind it — sitting down now and then to taste a drop of the last bottle of water they had with them. At last they reached a native village, and a house was provided for Miss Moffat; and there, with a single ox-hide for a bed, she and the woman stretched their weary limbs, but were far too excited, and too fatigued, and too hungry, to obtain sleep. Next morning the march was resumed, and in the afternoon they reached Mabotsa. The family had, however, left the day before, and a man was left in charge of the premises. Very soon some coffee was roasted, and some bread baked; the chief of the village also sent a fowl, and so a meal was obtained. Five days were spent in this solitude. The wagon was then brought back, and another commencement of the homeward journey made. This occupied eight days, travelling almost incessantly, day and night. They neither saw nor heard any lion this time, and they

reached home about one o'clock in the morning."

The Miss Ann Moffat who was the heroine of the foregoing adventure was accustomed to teach in the infant and Sunday schools at the Kuruman. But, before the children could be instructed or Christianised, the mothers had to be dealt with, and this work fell largely, if not entirely, to Mrs. Moffat's share. But this was a work of faith, and most assuredly a labour of love — a labour, too, in which success seemed almost hopeless.

Many long weary years were passed ill labouring to keep the mission in the country, surrounded by many thousands who, instead of feeling any interest in the mission, displayed the most vehement opposition to it. There was no interest in the object of the mission; no aid in any department of missionary work; and no appeal in case of injury, except to a barbarian. The women were the most conservative, and the most difficult to manage. In no domestic emergency would they lift a hand to help, for many years; and a poor old refugee slave woman, who lived about fifty miles away, was the only one to whom Mrs. Moffat could apply for domestic help at this period. Fancy what it must have been to have brought up a family of nine children amid these savage wilds and yet more savage people! The world has been told of both "the madness" and "the romance" of the missionary enterprise; but the two phases are pathetically mingled in Mrs. Moffat's life-story. Nothing but a God-like charity, which endured all things, suffered all things, and hoped all things, united to the faith which removeth mountains, could ever have sustained the heroic woman through these long, terrible years.

Although the Bechuana women were so unpromising, Mrs. Moffat unceasingly endeavoured to benefit them. She commenced with those who appeared willing to learn, and endeavoured to impress on them the necessity for abandoning their heathen dress. But this was a difficult task; for the women were neither the manufacturers of the raw materials, nor the dressmakers. The materials were the skins of goats, sheep, and gazelles; while the men formed the skins into garments, no woman being ever known to attempt such a feat. However, in time, the prejudice of the women against European clothing began to wear away, and the first converts, who were chiefly women, adopted some articles of light attire more in consonance with womanly modesty and their Christian views. These first converts became the special objects of Mrs. Moffat's care as well as instruction; and the barriers to trade in European produce being broken down, a demand was made for dressmaking and dress materials. This naturally led to a sewing school being set up for all the women who were willing to learn. This school, as well as classes for spiritual instruction for the women, became

particularly Mrs. Moffat's charge, so that she entered into "labours more abundant."

In addition to these classes, public schools for general instruction were opened, as opportunities grew, until, in time, the whole Bechuana people were prepared to receive the translation of the Bible which Dr. Moffat had made. One fact may be mentioned, which will afford some idea of the progress of the people. In the earlier years of the mission a few traders possessing courage penetrated so far beyond the boundaries of civilisation as to reach the Kuruman. They exhibited all that they thought attractive in the way of fine dress, etc., but could not obtain a single purchaser. The clothing was looked at with laughter and scorn, and the traders had to return sorely mortified. But since the conversion and civilisation of the Bechuana females, who numbered some thousands, as well as those of the neighbouring tribes, the demand for European produce is so great, that Dr. Moffat states that the latest accounts show an amount of something like three hundred thousand pounds' worth of goods annually passing through the missionary stations into the interior. So thoroughly did a reformation take place, and especially in female attire, after the influence of Divine grace was spread abroad, and after the art of reading became common, that the community around the Kuruman presented an entirely different appearance from what it had in bygone years. The contrast was remarkable and complete.

Referring to the commencement of this part of their civilisation, Mr. Moffat writes:

"Those who were baptised had previously procured decent raiment and prepared it for the occasion, with Mrs. Moffat's assistance, who had to supply two of the women with gowns from her own wardrobe. Hitherto a sewing-school had been uncalled for, the women's work being that of building houses and raising fences; and it was a novel sight to observe women and young girls handling the little bright instrument, which was scarcely perceptible to the touch of fingers accustomed to grasp the handle of a pickaxe, or to use them to supply the absence of trowels. But they were willing, and Mrs. Moffat, in order to encourage them, engaged to meet them as often as her strength would permit. She had soon a motley group of pupils, very few of the whole party possessing either a frock or a gown. The scarcity of materials was a serious impediment to progress, and living as we did, far beyond the reach of traders, and six hundred miles from a market town, it was next to impossible to obtain them just when wanted. The same Gospel which had taught them that they were spiritually miserable, and blind, and naked,

discovered to them also that they needed reform externally, and thus prepared their minds to adopt those modes of comfort and cleanliness which they had been accustomed to view only as the peculiarities of a strange people."

The first converts were baptised in June, 1829. The following interesting extract from a letter written by Mrs. Moffat in Oct., 1829, to a friend in England will show her joy over the "first fruits" of their labours:

"You will doubtless have anticipated our feelings in the events of the past year and a half, in observing the progress of the natives in divine knowledge, their regular attendance on the means of grace, the solemn and devout attention in the house of God, and at length the general commotion in the minds of almost all on the place inquiring with the greatest possible earnestness what they must do to be saved; and after that had subsided, the decided profession of a number who have been judged fit subjects for the Christian ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We must have been truly insensible not to have felt — tears of joy and gratitude often flowed to give vent to those feelings which could not be expressed; we were frequently overpowered with a sense of the goodness of God, that He had not suffered any of us to descend to the grave without the sight — a sight which we sometimes thought was reserved for those who should follow after us. The day on which they were baptised was a solemn season, and that part of it especially on which we surrounded the table of the Lord, where we could not but weep together at the recollection of the days and years that were past as contrasted with the present scene. It was not a little singular that the Communion vessels should arrive only the Friday night before, just when they were needed, and we could not but regard even that incident as a condescending mark of the Divine approbation of the measure of faith exercised both by the donors and the applicant; for sure to some they would have appeared very superfluous at the time they were sent from Sheffield. I am happy to be able to inform you that the converts are going on well, walking consistently with their profession, and we hope soon to have some addition to their numbers, as there are several on the station who appear to have abiding impressions. The standard of morality is considerably raised, so that those who are no way particularly serious abstain from those sins which were formerly committed with impunity. They are becoming generally more civilised. The station affording great facilities for agriculture, it is carried on to a considerable extent. The

missionaries have now fine gardens, vineyards, orchards, and corn-fields, so that they have our example, which they follow very well; they are chiefly poor people of different tribes. The head of each family has a garden on the mission-ground, and all who have that privilege are bound to work (for wages) whenever their services are required for building, agriculture, or any public work.

Their industry enables them to barter very profitably. The place is much frequented by strangers from different parts of the interior; for this purpose they bring their karosses, ivory, &c., which they exchange chiefly for tobacco grown on the place, so that it forms a kind of mart, and keeps up a friendly intercourse with the natives in general. The females are beginning to be ashamed of their heathenish dress, of which they are naturally very tenacious; and all who feel the importance of a change of life and manners, cast it off as soon as they are able to procure skins for a petticoat. They are now, many of them, learning to sew, and make tolerable progress. Many of the young people can both read and write; but, as may easily be conceived, those who are older are but dull. Mr. Moffat has now nothing to do with the school; Mr. Hamilton has it to himself, Mr. Moffat's engagements in the way of translation are so numerous, and school-books being so much wanted. He has the Gospel of Luke and a work of Dr. Brown's, entitled "Scripture Extracts," almost ready for the press. The latter contains a great mass of Scripture, and will doubtless be very useful to the natives till such time as the whole Bible can be translated. He has also commenced translating historical lessons out of the Old Testament, commencing with the three first chapters of Genesis. He has also fourteen hymns in the language, which they learn very quickly, and sing very well to some of our finest English tunes."

The following is the beautiful hymn, "I think, when I read the sweet story of old," translated into the Sechuana:—

"Eare ke gopola ga Yesu Morèn,
Ka o la tla go aga bathuñ,
Kaha o la bitsa banyana go èn;
Ke rata ke le ke le gon.

"Nko ke eletsä diatla, le con'
Tsa gagwè ke di beilwe tlhogoñ,
Le go mo utlwa ka a bua le bon
'Tlañ go nna banyana ke Ion'

"E, rure, nka ea go èna yanuñ
Go mmatla mo merapeloñ;
Ha ke tlhoahala go mmatla hatshiñ,
Ke, la nna naè kwa godimoñ.

"O ile go banya kwa bontlè bo gon'
Helo go bona ba' ichwarecweñ,
Kwa banyana bantsi ba phuthilweñ gon'
Ba bogosi yoa legodimo.

"Ba thausanta bantsi ba mo timeloñ
Ba ba sa itseñ legodim':
Kea rata ba itse ha bonno bo gon'
Kwa Yesu o gona bontleñ.

"Ke tlhologèlèlwa lobaka lo' tlañ
Lo lontlè lo lo ratègañ,
Mogañ o banyana ba' mo merahiñ
Ba ea go eo o ba bitsañ."

During Mr. Moffat's frequent absence Mrs. Moffat was left in charge of the station, and attended to the affairs of the mission. It is gratifying to be able to record that she was not once molested during these enforced seasons of loneliness, but looked up to and consulted by the natives as if she carried Mr. Moffat's head on her shoulders. At all times she regularly visited and ministered to the sick and aged among the people. At these visits she would read the Scriptures, and explain them, in many little addresses and exhortations, which found their way to the hearts of the people. Years afterwards these addresses were remembered, and referred to, by many a grateful hearer to whom they had been blessed. Even in the last conflict these words of the lady-teacher would rise up with instruction and comfort, so that resting upon Divine truth, the once benighted heathen hearer would confidingly cross the Jordan of death.

Mamonyatsi was one of these. She was a Matabele slave, and had followed Mr. Moffat on one of his journeys from the interior. Mr. Moffat had taken her into his service, and had taught her about Christ — teaching which, the poor girl received lovingly and gratefully. She made a public profession of her faith, and lived up to it most sincerely, but she was full of trouble for those of her kindred who knew not Jesus. One day Mr. Moffat found her weeping, and on inquiring the cause of her tears she sobbed out, holding up the Gospel of Luke, "My mother will never see this Word; she will never hear this good news!"

Then she wept again, and wailed out, "Oh, my mother and my friends! they live in heathen darkness, and will die without seeing the light which has shone on me, and without tasting the love which I have tasted! Oh my mother, my mother!" Mamonyatsi breathed forth many a prayer for her heathen mother, and after witnessing a good confession of faith, died triumphantly. Doubtless she welcomed her much-loved teacher to the "better land."

Instant in season and out of season, "Mrs. Moffat continued for about fifty years to labour for Christ and souls among the Bechuanas. During the latter years of this term of service her strength oftentimes failed, and again and again her husband had to remonstrate with her on the impropriety of exceeding the limits of her strength. But the aged matron could not forbear; she held, regularly, Sabbath services among the women, walking punctually amid the weaknesses of advancing life to the place of meeting. And when, in the course of years, it became desirable to return home — to relinquish active service — the separation between the teacher and the taught was most touching. For many long miles a large number of converts followed the wagons, with tears, sobs, sighs, and every expression of sorrowing affection. By-and-by the numbers began to diminish, and as the last disappeared, out of a full heart Mrs. Moffat exclaimed, "What a relief that I cannot any more look upon the faces of those I have so loved and prayed for! I now feel some relief, for the separation from so many beloved ones is most painful." She had looked her last -upon the much-loved pupils, but the work remains. This little church at the Kuruman now numbers 230 members.

This loving spirit was most brave withal. Sometimes she accompanied her husband on his journeys into the interior; but at other times, to spare Dr. Moffat's services to the mission and to the work of translation, she travelled alone. On one occasion she went, with native attendants only, over three hundred miles to visit Mrs. Livingstone; and on more than one occasion she travelled to Algoa Bay, and to Cape Town, to arrange matters in relation to the education of her children. These journeys required bravery beyond description, but amidst it all the heroine exhibited an unconscious abnegation of self which added nobility to her character. Shortly after her return to England a friend said to her, "God has honoured you to be a great helper to your husband." "Yes," she replied; "I always studied my husband's comfort, never hindered him in his work, but always did what I could to keep him up to it." This reply gives the key to her character as a missionary's wife. Self-denial, self-forgetfulness, and self-sacrifice, seem to have been prominent traits. Speaking of Mrs. Moffat's letters, Dr. Moffat says, "Into whatever letter I glance there is

the transcript of a soul sympathising with, and yearning to serve, the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom.

In all the relationships of life, Mrs. Moffat was the wise, tender counsellor, and the unfailing friend. We give an interesting extract from a letter written by her to her eldest grandson, Robert Livingstone. This young man was the eldest son of Dr. and Mrs. Livingstone, and after being trained at the University of Glasgow, went first to Africa, to accompany his father, and thence to America, where he entered the Federal army, and engaging in the Civil War, was wounded, and ultimately died at Richmond. The letter speaks for itself, and proves what a wealth of affection welled up in that motherly heart towards the young man.

"Kuruman, October 4th, 1863.

"My Dear Grandson, Robert Livingstone,—How vastly were we relieved the other day by getting letters, both from Cape Town and Natal, with the information that you were at the former place awaiting your father's direction. It is now many months since we heard from your aunt Moffat that you had arrived at Natal on your way to the Zambese. The mournful tidings of the death of your dear mother only came to our ears just when our hearts were yet bleeding over that of her brother, our own dear Robert. For some time after these mournful bereavements I did not feel able to use my pen, and when strength of mind was again restored, it was only to address those dear ones who were partakers of our sorrow.

For your dear father, too, we feel much, and dread any increase of his trials. And you are my oldest grandchild—the first-born of my dearest Mary—the first of her family who lisped "papa" and "mamma" to ourselves, and I cannot but feel the deepest interest in you now, when you have no mother to look to. I now feel myself very frail, as it were tottering on the brink of the grave; but while I do live, let me know your tastes, your aspirations for this world, and for that which is to come; for I trust, my dear boy, you do not forget that after all your plans and purposes for this life, whether they may prosper or fail, there is a life to come infinitely more important, when it will be found that verily 'the chief end of man is to glorify God, and enjoy Him for ever.' Open your heart to me, as you would to the dear departed mother, were she here. I am hoping, ere long, to join her in that world of spirits, to which, in her last letter to us, she expressed a kind of anticipation of welcoming us, her aged parents. And is it not possible that she will there be allowed to inquire of the

condition of those she left behind?

It is now long since we heard from your dear father; we look longingly for intelligence of him, poor man, but have seen nothing for some time. Old Kuruman is much as you left it. We were long worried with fears of the Boers, but for two or three years they have been too busy contending among themselves to meddle with us; but they have sadly encroached on the lands to the east of us, and the tribes are much scattered. The beautiful valley of Mabotsa, the place of your birth, is now deserted, from its contiguity to their dwellings. Mebalwe, whom I think you will remember, is at his old business, defending the helpless from the lion, as he did your dear father many years ago. He has a lasting affection for your father, and would do and suffer much to see him once again. Your grandfather is still the hale old man, and steps about more quickly than some who are only half his age; yet he feels some of the infirmities of advanced life. He is always in danger of being overworked, and labours much at what for some time he has felt to be his chief work, the revision of the entire sacred Scriptures preparatory to a new edition, which he hopes to see before he dies.

The Prices are just now at the Bamangwato, half way between Kolobeng and the Matabele; they are in a trying position, being quite alone, and the enemy likely enough to make a fresh attack. Thus, we have to exercise strong faith on account of all of them, and not less for your own dear father, who has passed through so many dangers unhurt. We know he is immortal till his work is done; but always stand prepared for a shock. O this poor Africa! how great are its miseries. But how much has he done and suffered to alleviate its sorrows!

"Now, for the present, I must conclude, and remain, my dear Robert,

"Your affectionate grandmother,

"Mary Moffat."

Mrs. Moffat was the mother of nine children, two of whom died in infancy. Mary, the eldest, became the wife of Dr. Livingstone; Ann, the next, married Mr. Fredoux, a French missionary; Robert, a promising young man, died from over-exertion in mental and physical labours; John is still a missionary in Bechuana-land; Elizabeth married the Rev. Roger Price, a missionary of the London Missionary Society. Besides these, there are two other daughters, who are still living.

But the time was come to retire from active work. Dr. Moffat had completed the translation of the whole Bible into the Sechuana language, and was now anxious to see it carried through the press, so, in 1870, yielding to the solicitations of the directors of the London Missionary Society, Dr. and Mrs. Moffat turned their faces homeward. They arrived in England in July of that year, and were received with enthusiastic welcomes from all hearts. And the aged saint, who had borne the burden and heat of the day for fifty-one years, still looked forward to the accomplishment of her husband's life-work with yearning solicitude.

Especially during the last few weeks of her life, did she dwell upon the fact, and painted bright pictures of all the joy and all the gladness which this Book would carry to the tribes for whom she had worn herself out. But she was not permitted to see this realisation of their united hopes and prospects. Barely six months passed by from the time of her landing on English soil, ere she passed away to the eternal shore. Her long African life had enfeebled her constitution, and the cold of our winter proved too much for her. On January 10th, 1871, after a few days' suffering from bronchitis, Mrs. Moffat went "up higher." She went from her work to her reward!

In contemplation of such a devoted life, the mind shrinks back in self-condemning humility, and the pen seems too feeble an instrument to do it justice. What, compared with the toils, the sufferings, the privations, the anxieties, the persecutions, and the labours of fifty years, is our poor little, whether of sacrifice or gifts? What English lady can stand side by side with Mrs. Moffat in the matter of missionary service? We give our few poor mites, or shillings, or pounds to the missionary cause, and then complacently think that we have done our duty. Mrs. Moffat and her co-workers stand on a far more elevated plane of duty; they come nearest to the Master in serving, and doubtless they will be nearest Him in glory. O the littleness of earth's riches and grandeur! how it all shrinks into insignificance when compared with a life like this!

Some may imagine, and perhaps hint, that this foreign mission work is almost vain; that it involves a great waste of life and an almost useless waste of money; that indeed the waste far exceeds the gain. Do not such objections recall the objector Judas? And does it not, too, recall the rebuke which Jesus gave him — a rebuke which was made up of commendation to the person blamed. How the words of that commendation ring through Christendom this day! How they wither the objector's words, and exalt the noble self-sacrifice! So it is now. The noble missionary worker works not alone, or unheeded, but is constantly under the approbation of the Lord of the vineyard, and He

himself will deliver His own cause from blame, and honour His servant. So also He honours those who *give* for His cause. And when we gave ourselves to Jesus did we not give our money also? If this be the case, does Christ expect us to give merely the trifle which we can give without missing, or does He not look for a measure of sacrifice? We must not offer to our God that which costs us nothing; or, while we gaze admiringly at such a life as Mrs. Moffat's, we shall be all too sadly, and too surely, heaping up condemnation for ourselves.

Copied and coded by Stephen Ross for WholesomeWords.org from *Heroines of the Mission Field: Biographical sketches...* by Emma Raymond Pitman. London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., [1880?]

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