

**DAVID LIVINGSTONE**

**MISSIONARY EXPLORER OF AFRICA**

by

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**CHAPTER FIVE**

**TRY AGAIN**

"I desire," said Chief Sechele one day, "to build a house for GOD, the defender of my town, and that you be at no expense for it whatever."

This house about which he was consulting Livingstone was the new school at the new station, Kolobeng. The want of rain at Chonuane had almost proved fatal to the mission there. It had been necessary therefore to move to a place where water was more plentiful. Thus a site on the banks of the Kolobeng River, forty miles to the north, had been selected. On the morning after Livingstone had suggested the move, Sechele and his whole tribe were ready for the exodus.

Again Livingstone had to build a house. But this time it was only a hut, as he had not the money to build a permanent house.

The natives had their huts to build, too. But Livingstone got them to dig a canal and build a dam whereby the river could be turned aside to irrigate their gardens. Besides that, there was the erection of the school, of which Sechele had spoken. And no less than two hundred natives were employed.

Livingstone wrote to a friend that his meetings were much better than they had been at Mabotsa. But the days were full - with worship and school, then sowing, plowing, and smithing, or other manual work.

In the afternoon Mrs. Livingstone had her children's school which sometimes as many as eighty

happy youngsters attended.

After working at manual labor till five in the evening, Livingstone then went to town to give lessons and to talk to the natives. After milking-time there was a meeting and then another prayer-meeting at Sechele's house. Still Livingstone lamented the fact that he was not doing more real missionary work.

The next year he built a permanent cottage again, and what a relief to live in it after the twelve months or more spent in the hut through which the wind nearly blew out their candles at night and through which the flies swarmed during the day! And now into that home had entered a little boy and girl - Robert, the first-born, and Agnes, the baby.

With all his labors, Livingstone's spiritual work seemed to go slowly among the natives.

Sechele himself seemed to be the only one who had any conception of Christian duty, and even he was hampered by his wives. Though he had at one time sent them away, he seemed unable to give them up entirely. And indeed they were the best scholars in the school and a very friendly group of women.

But the time finally came when Sechele stepped out and took a bold stand for Christianity, though it aroused great opposition.

The black rhinoceros is one of the fiercest beasts of Africa. A party of hunters in going through the woods one time were attacked by one of these fierce beasts. It charged for the wagon and drove its horn into the driver's abdomen, leaving a terrible wound.

A messenger was sent at once for Doctor Livingstone, who was eight or ten miles away. The messenger ran the whole distance and found Mr. Livingstone. But the Doctor's friends tried their best to dissuade him from going. It was night, and they thought there could be no hope for his return should he expose himself to the rhinoceros and other wild beasts that prowled in that forest. But Livingstone would not listen to their pleas.

He would save a life if possible, even at the risk of its costing him his own.

Mounting his horse, he rode as fast as he could till he came to the spot where the man lay. But when he got there the man was dead and the wagon had left. So the Doctor must brave the dangers of that black forest again in the return trip, without even the hope of saving a life.

One thing he was sure of - that GOD was with him.

As we have seen before, the Boers in the country to the east gave considerable trouble.

Livingstone had hoped to enlarge his work by sending native workers in that direction. But of course his plans were spoiled. So the only expansion he could make was northward. And in the beginning of 1849 he made the first of his journeys to the north.

"Will you go with me northward?" Livingstone asked Sechele, though on his eastward trip the chief had turned back. This time Sechele really wanted to go, for he wanted to see Sebituane, a

great chief living north of Lake 'Ngami who had saved his life in his infancy. "Sebituane is a great man," said Sechele, "one of the greatest chiefs in Africa. He rules over a vast territory with many tribes under him." When Livingstone heard this he was more eager than ever to go. And then the lake - for years he had cherished the ambition that he might be the first of the missionaries to discover it. Then at Kolobeng the rain had failed, food was scarce, and the men had had to go to hunt locusts; so there were few to attend church or school. Some move must be made.

While Livingstone was considering the matter, messengers came from Lechulatebe, a chief who lived near the lake, asking him to come to his country.

On June 1, 1849. Livingstone set out, not with Sechele. but with two English hunting friends, Mr. Oswell and Mr. Murray. Between them and the lake lay a portion of the great Kalahari Desert.

Long and weary was the journey over that hot stretch of sand. They had gone about half way when suddenly it appeared that their goal was near. Mr. Oswell, who had gone a little way ahead, threw his hat into the air and with a wild cry which made the guides think he was mad, shouted back to the rest of the party, "The lake! the lake!" But all too soon the "lake" vanished and proved to be only a large salt-pan gleaming in the light of the setting sun - a mirage. Lake 'Ngarni was yet three hundred miles beyond.

At last real water did appear - but a river this time, or a junction of two rivers, the Tamanak'le and the Zouga.

"Whence comes the Tamanak'le?" asked Livingstone of the natives.

"Oh, from a country full of rivers and full of large trees," they answered.

Was it really so, that instead of a great sandy plateau. as had been commonly thought, beyond them lay a fertile and populous country?

It was on Aug. 1, 1849, that they really reached the northeast end of the lake. Another of Livingstone's ambitions had been realized, for he and his friends were the first Europeans to look upon that great sheet of water. It was so wide that they could not see across it, and the natives told them that it took three days to walk around it.

Lechulatebe, the chief who had sent the invitation, did not give the white men as warm a reception as they might have expected, especially after he learned of their intention to go on to Sebituane's country. He refused them guides and sent men to prevent their crossing the Zouga River.

But Livingstone was determined and he spent many hours on the river trying to make a raft of some rotten wood, the only kind he could get. However, as Mr. Oswell promised to go down to the Cape and bring up a boat the following year, the expedition was postponed and they returned home by way of the Zouga River. This region abounded in elephants so that ten tusks could be purchased for about fifteen shillings (\$3.60).

Of the beauty of the river and its vicinity Livingstone wrote to a friend thus:

"It is a glorious river; you never saw anything so grand. The banks are extremely beautiful, lined with gigantic trees, many quite new. One bore a fruit a foot in length and three inches in diameter. Another measured seventy feet in circumference. Apart from the branches it looked like a mass of granite; and then the Bakoba in their canoes - did I not enjoy sailing in them? Remember how long I have been in a parched-up land, and answer. The Bakoba are a fine, frank race of men, and seem to understand the message better than any people to whom I have spoken on divine subjects for the first time. What think you of a navigable highway into a large section of the interior? Yet that the Tamanak'le is."

Livingstone's discovery of the lake and rivers was a source of much satisfaction to the Royal Geographic Society. Several better equipped parties than his who had tried to make the journey had failed. The Society awarded him the sum of \$125.

"Try again," was always Livingstone's motto. So the following season he started again for Sebituane's country, this time accompanied by Sechele, Mebalwe, twenty Bakwains, and Mrs. Livingstone and the three children. Hard enough the journey was in the rough wagons and through country abounding with dangers. It was reported that swarms of tsetse flies along the Tamanak'le River would kill their oxen. So they went another way to avoid them.

Arriving at the lake, they found a party of Englishmen who had been attacked by fever. One of them had died and the others Dr. and Mrs. Livingstone nursed back to health.

"To think of it - my own children paddling in my own lake!" Livingstone said one day as he watched his children at play like a flock of little ducklings in the water. It had been so long since they had seen much water that it was a great treat to them.

"Give me that rifle," said Lechulatebe, "and I will give you anything you want and will feed your wife and children while you go to Sebituane's country."

The rifle was not only a valuable one, but was the gift of a friend. Nevertheless, Livingstone could not afford to withhold that which would bring him such benefits. He handed over the gun. But before he had started again for Sebituane's country two of his children were attacked with fever. So he had to take them back to Kolobeng, and later to Kuruman.

"Try, try again," was still Livingstone's motto.

The third time he started for Sebituane's country, this time taking with him his family and Mr. Oswell.

"Following the old route along the Zouga, we came at last to the driest stretch of the desert we had ever seen with not even a bird or an insect to break the stillness. On the third day a little bird chirped in a bush. Then Shobo, our Bushman guide, lost his way, and for four days we wandered about without water. Before that Mr. Oswell had saved the day for us by finding water. It seemed that the less water there was the more thirsty the children became."

On the fifth day toward evening some of the men returned with a little of the precious liquid.

And how they thanked GOD for the wonderful gift!

In this case the third time proved a charm, and the long perilous journey ended in their finding the great chief Sebituane. "He has a heart! he is wise!" were expressions Livingstone had heard of him along the way. And on finding him he was made to exclaim, "He is unquestionably the greatest man in all that country."

He was very much like Livingstone himself in that he knew how to gain the affections of both his own people and strangers. He usually welcomed strangers with a feast and sent them away with gifts in their hands and with praises on their lips for the great chief.

Especially kind was Sebituane's treatment of Livingstone and his party. It had been the dream of his life to talk with a white man. On Sunday, as usual, Livingstone held services, which the chief attended. And how glad was the missionary for the opportunity of lifting up CHRIST before this great heathen chief! This proved to be the only time the chief ever heard the Gospel story. Shortly afterward he was seized with inflammation of the lungs and died.

During his illness Livingstone was not allowed to talk to him concerning his soul. So he could only commit him to the great Judge of all, knowing that his ways are just. Sebituane's last words were about Livingstone's son. "Take him," he said, "to Maunku [one of his wives] and tell her to give him some milk."

Livingstone was deeply touched by Sebituane's death, and looking, as it were, into eternity, he wondered if he might not have spoken more pointedly to him about his soul. In another sense, too, the chief's death was a blow to the missionary. He had promised to show Livingstone his great country and to select a suitable place for him to live. But now, for all he knew, his plans were foiled. Ma-mochisane, the chief's daughter, was to be his successor.

However, she gave Livingstone consent to visit any part of the country he desired.

About this time Livingstone had a narrow escape from attack by an elephant. The elephant seemed to start in his direction but then stopped. Livingstone accredited this, along with other miraculous escapes, to the care of our heavenly Father who would not suffer him to be taken before his work was done.

Livingstone and Mr. Oswell then took a journey to the northeast, passing through the town of Linyanti and on to the beautiful River Sesheke. This river was later found to be a part of the Zambezi, though before it was not supposed that the Zambezi existed in this region. This discovery was one of the great geographical feats for which Livingstone afterward became famous. This trip was short, and after a two-month's stay they returned to the family.

"If you will only stay we will make you a garden and will keep Sebituane's promise to give you oxen in return for those killed by the tsetse flies," the people said.

But Livingstone saw no signs of finding a suitable place to settle with them. So with great reluctance they began the weary journey back to Kolobeng. On the way his son Thomas was seized three times with fever.

Many were the letters of criticism from well-meaning friends, two indeed from his mother-in-

law, blaming him for exposing his wife and children to the dangers and hardships of such a journey.

That Livingstone loved his family we can have no doubt. But there was a stronger power prompting him to take the course that he did. That was his responsibility toward GOD and toward duty.

If GOD was leading him into these dangerous paths - and he believed that He was - He would surely take care of him.

Many times he had found that he could come into closer touch with the natives by having his family with him. And then the comfort and spiritual benefit it proved to both him and his family it seemed almost justified the risk.

Many times, too, GOD had shown special favors to them.

He had wonderfully helped in supplying guides, even though a plot had been made to deprive him of any. The river Chobe had somehow been prevented from rising at its usual time; then there was the protection of his oxen from the tsetse. There was the commencement of rains just when they needed them. Then Mr. Oswell had kindly offered to furnish as much money as they needed.

All these and many more incidents Livingstone took as signs that the heavenly Father had been ordering his path and would continue to do so.

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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