

"At present Moffat is applying himself with all diligence to the language, as the particular object of his destination here. He finds immense difficulties from the barrenness of the language and imperfect interpreters, but he is naturally too persevering soon to lose courage. This is his sole motive for undertaking a journey at present, in order to become familiar with it by being for a time out of the habit of speaking Dutch with our own people here. I think it will also be of advantage to me in that respect; having so much to employ my time with at home I have little chance of learning much of it. You beg of us to pay particular attention to the instruction of the rising generation, but alas, we have no opportunities of doing this: the people instead of desiring that their children should be instructed, are afraid of their becoming 'Dutchmen,' so tenacious are they of their old customs and habits, and if a boy and a girl venture to come they are soon laughed out of it. Perhaps if we gave them a meal of meat every day or a few beads, we might have the place crowded—but on no other condition. Oh! how we were affected on reading an account of Madagascar, when we thought of the difference between that people and this; they so desirous and these such despisers of instruction. As to some of these people having correct notions of God and of heaven, death and hell, as has been asserted, you must not believe it; for daily conversations convince us that the wisest of them have most corrupt notions on these subjects. We are astonished at their dreadful stupidity about these things. My beloved parents, we have much need of your sympathy and prayers, and those of all other Christians. Could we but see the smallest fruit we could rejoice amidst the privations and toil which we bear; but as it is, our hands do often hang down."

Their faith was put to a very severe test. They toiled for years without any visible fruit. But though disappointed, neither were disheartened.

"Mary," he said one day to his wife, 'this is hard work.' 'It is hard work, my love,' she replied; 'but take courage, our lives shall be given us for a prey!' 'But think, my dear,' he replied, 'how long we have been preaching to this people, and no fruits yet appear.' Mrs. Moffat rejoined in this manner: 'The gospel has not yet been preached to them in their own tongue wherein they were born. They have heard it only through interpreters, and interpreters who have themselves no just understanding, no real love of the truth. We must not expect the blessing till you be able from your own lips and in their own language to bring it through their ears into their hearts.' 'From that hour,' said Mr. Moffat, in relating the conversation, 'I gave myself with untiring diligence to the acquisition of the language.'

At the close of the year 1822 Moffat wrote his brother:

"I shall now give some particulars of our present situation. The most important is the cause of Christ. Alas! we still hang our harp on the willows, and mourn over the destiny of thousands hastening with heedless but impetuous strides to the regions of woe. They turn a deaf ear to the voice of love, and treat with scorn the glorious doctrines of redemption. This often causes our hearts to languish, while our eyes fail with looking upward.

"It is, however, pleasing to reflect that affairs in general wear a more hopeful aspect than when we came here. Several instances have proved the people determined to relinquish the barbarous system of commandoes for stealing cattle. They have also dispensed with a rainmaker this season. We rejoice in this, because his services and presence must ever form a strong barrier to the spread of the gospel.