

# ROBERT MOFFAT AND THE BEGINNINGS OF THE GOVERNMENT MEDICAL SERVICE IN UGANDA

*by*

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ROBERT UNWIN MOFFAT was born at the London Missionary Society's station at Kuruman, South Africa, in 1866. His father was a missionary and the son of Robert Moffat (1795–1883), the pioneer missionary of that area, who had gone out to South Africa in 1816 and had founded the station at Kuruman in 1825. It was Robert Moffat who was responsible for bringing David Livingstone to Africa, and Livingstone married Moffat's daughter, Mary. Thus the subject of this article was the nephew, by marriage, of the great explorer.

Robert Unwin Moffat was brought up and educated in South Africa until the age of twenty when, with the aid of a loan from some family friends, he went to Edinburgh to study medicine. Immediately after qualification he obtained an appointment as medical officer to the company projecting to build a railway from the coast at Mombasa to Uganda, 800 miles inland, and, on 29 March 1891, landed at Mombasa. From that time until he finally quit East Africa, over fifteen years later, Moffat wrote regular letters to his family in South Africa and these letters are preserved in the library of Makerere University College.<sup>1</sup> They are of great interest and provide much material for the history of European medicine in East Africa from its earliest days. This account is largely based upon this collection of letters. Moffat's personality and career are themselves of interest, apart from a strictly medical point of view, and his letters build up a fascinating picture of European life in the very earliest days of the British Protectorate.

Moffat's first post was that of medical officer at a place called Railway Point, close to Mombasa. This he found an uncongenial station. The place itself was an untidy conglomeration of huts and railway equipment and all the trees in the vicinity had been cut down. Moffat himself was housed in an 'iron shanty' with a palm leaf roof which harboured a variety of animal life, including a large snake. The hospital at Railway Point, like most of the other buildings, was an 'iron-shed'. Moffat's day began with a visit to the hospital at 6 a.m. At 7.30 a.m. he returned home for breakfast and thereafter might find other work in the hospital until 10 a.m. Throughout the heat of the day the hospital was closed, until 5 p.m., except for emergency work. The day's work finished with a further short visit to the hospital and he was home for dinner at 6 p.m. As he only saw about forty new patients a week he had not nearly enough to do and described his existence as 'a very strange quiet life'. Not unnaturally, he was soon bored so that he recorded his first attack of fever as 'an acceptable change'. There were few diversions; he did not get on with such young men as there were in the district who led a wild, drunken life. Nor did he admire the company doctor, Dr. MacDonald, in Mombasa, although admitting that he was 'hearty and kind'. The only other society that he might have cultivated was that of the missionaries who ran establishments in which they cared for liberated slaves in the area.

Despite his upbringing, he found the missionaries 'a curious set' and rapidly revised his favourable opinions regarding them. The lady missionaries were 'stand-offish', their doctors discourteous and they generally behaved towards the local inhabitants in a way that left them open 'to be spoken ill of'. Moffat quoted in a letter to his mother 'a zealous fool is no less a fool' and often found himself blushing for the good name of missionaries. He was very sceptical about much real good work being done. 'It is too theoretical . . .'.

Life as a railway company medical officer was clearly unsatisfactory, although he was able to live economically and hoped to save a regular £15 a month and be able to repay debts incurred for his education in a year or so. But another opportunity was soon to present itself. About the end of May a party of missionaries from the East African Scottish Missionary Society, including a Dr. Stewart, arrived in Mombasa, and Moffat gathered that they intended to set out for Uganda. He lost no time in transferring himself to their expedition at a salary of £250 per annum. The missionary expedition, in fact, had no intention of going as far as Uganda but intended to head in that direction and set up a station, some 200 miles inland, at Kibwezi. The caravan was to consist of Dr. Stewart, the leader, and five other Europeans, and their evangelical efforts were to be assisted by teaching the natives useful trades. Two of the missionaries were master-carpenters. Moffat's letters are full of youthful criticism of the expedition but much of it seems to have been justified. The leader, Dr. Stewart, Moffat liked except for the fact that he was too old and his survival was a perpetual source of anxiety to him. The caravan he did not consider well planned. Money was wasted; they bought two collapsible boats for a journey through what was well known to be a waterless, semi-desert area and Dr. Stewart insisted on taking two horses. Moffat commented that he was 'afraid the tsetse will do for them'—which indeed they did. They supplied themselves liberally with rifles and ammunition for self-defence, but this Moffat thought hardly necessary since their route was 'a well-known caravan road with friendly people'. On the other hand no adequate medical supplies or instruments were provided. Each member of the caravan was allowed six head-loads of about 50 lb. each, for his personal effects and £50 to supply himself with provisions for the journey.

The caravan set out on 12 September 1891, and on the first day camped outside the mission station at Rabai at the head of the inlet in which lies Mombasa island. The main party moved on a few miles the following day but Moffat was left behind to recruit more porters, for they needed at least twenty, over and above the main party, to carry water. The first ninety miles of their route lay across quite waterless bush of thorny acacias and euphorbia trees. This part of their journey, as far as the Teita Hills, was uninhabited and so no food could be purchased although some game might be shot. On 18 September Moffat joined the main caravan and on the 23rd the safari began in earnest. Moffat soon found himself 'enjoying caravan life'. The first night they camped in a dried-up river-bed which did, however, contain some muddy pools. He was able to have a good wash and shoot a guinea-fowl for dinner. The exact date on which the caravan reached Kibwezi, which was to be Moffat's home for over a year, is not recorded but his first letter home from that place is dated 29 November 1891. Kibwezi lies in a dry, savanna country dominated by the grotesquely-

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shaped baobab trees and, except as a staging point on the route to Uganda, can have had little to recommend it. They immediately set about building a mission station consisting of a church on one side of which was built a double row of houses, about seventy-five yards apart, and on the other a similar double row of huts for the porters. Initially he pitched his tent on the site and, as his house grew, gradually moved into it, the tent at first serving as his bedroom.

The party soon began to have its troubles. Everyone was at loggerheads with Dr. Stewart, who would 'have his finger in every pie' and could not manage natives. Moffat still regarded him as 'a decent old card' but a month later even he was quarrelling with him. Moffat himself was in rude health and had put on a stone in weight since leaving the coast, but one of the missionaries, Grieg, was ill with 'dysentery'. On 15 December Moffat thought him 'at death's door' and on the 20th he died despite Moffat's conscientious care. Moffat was kept relatively busy with medical work among the natives which consisted almost entirely of dressing large, crippling, tropical ulcers and pulling teeth. Otherwise, he led a very quiet life assisting with the general running of the mission and planting a garden which rapidly produced crops of potatoes, peas and beans. He fished in the nearby river and on one occasion shot a crocodile. Meanwhile, Moffat had plenty of time to consider his future and the sort of work he wanted to do in life.

This is perhaps a convenient point to attempt to give an account of Moffat's personality as a whole, as it reveals itself in this long series of letters spread over a period of fifteen years. His missionary upbringing might be expected to produce a religious character with a strong sense of duty and a desire to do worthwhile work in the world but, in Moffat, these characteristics were combined with a refreshing absence of bigotry and a tolerance for others. He was never slow to criticize and, in particular, had scant respect for Church Missionary Society missionaries and British army officers. But, on the other hand, in many ways he showed a kindly tolerance to those with other beliefs and to human weaknesses. For example, he got on well with the French Catholic missionaries in Kampala and although a Christian and the son of a clergyman, he wrote to his father that his experience in East Africa had taught him the value of Islam, 'a religion, which is much maligned', and to look leniently on any religion which makes men better than a heathen savage.

He disapproved strongly of drunkenness and himself had never so much as tasted 'tembu'—fermented coconut juice. Nonetheless when living alone, except for Africans, in the fort at Hoima, and his men were all drunk, he remarked that 'they are so happy over it that I think the strictest T.T. could scarcely find it in his heart to blame them. Poor beggars they have a rough life and it is really pleasant to see them happy'. His kindly feeling towards the rough savages who were often his sole companions is often evident. Whilst taking a long journey by canoe which was loaded with the decomposing meat of an elephant which Moffat had shot, so that the stink was awful, he wrote that 'knowing what a treat meat is to them even when rotten I had not the heart to make them chuck it away'. Moffat was always modest and often disclaimed credit that had been given to him. He must have been of a rather solitary disposition, a characteristic indeed to some extent essential in Europeans living in East Africa at that time. He was glad to return to East Africa after a spell of leave in England,

writing to his father that he was 'quite unfitted for civilized life' and, in 1897, when work had begun on the Uganda Railway, jokingly noted that 'I shall wait until the first train arrives on the shore of the lake and then I shall shake the dust off my boots and go off in search of the North Pole'. He was an individualist who preferred to be left alone to do his own work and, in 1903, resigned his post as Principal Medical Officer, reverting to the rank of an ordinary medical officer and dropping £200 per annum in salary, partly because he thought he would do better work both for the government and himself. He was weary of bossing a department consisting of either fools or knaves; ' . . . all I ask is to be allowed to sit quiet and work. It is a much more satisfactory position than striving vainly to make other men work'. Nonetheless there is ample evidence of his almost universal popularity with his colleagues and acquaintances except towards the end of his period as Principal Medical Officer. His affection for his family, of whom he was to see so little, shines through the letters, particularly in one to his mother written when both he and she knew that she was suffering from a fatal disease and that they would never see each other again. Moffat was always sensitive to the natural beauty of the countryside, such as his first sight of the Ripon Falls or the beautiful lake shore at Entebbe; 'I cannot tell you what a lovely spot this is by moonlight . . . it beats all the sights I have set eyes on . . .'; and ' . . . only wants a lovely young lady to accompany one on a moonlight walk along the lake shore . . .'. Or again, whilst canoeing along the western shore of Lake Albert, mountains towering 5,000 ft. above the lake with the vegetation covered cliffs, riven by waterfalls and full of monkeys and colourful tropical birds, dropping almost vertically into the water, he wrote 'the whole scene was fairy-like', that he had 'never seen such idyllic scenery' and that, in short, 'it fairly takes the cake'. It seems likely that Moffat originally took up medicine with the purpose of being a medical missionary. Such would certainly have been in the family tradition. His interest in his profession was undoubtedly serious and part of his dissatisfaction with his life at Kibwezi was the limited scope for medical work. He wanted medicine to occupy him wholly, rather than as a subsidiary activity to general mission work. But this Moffat was never to achieve in East Africa for, at that time, a European was perforce a Jack-of-all-trades, and soldiering, administration, building, gardening and countless other tasks were always to occupy a considerable part of his time. Whilst stationed at Masinde, in 1896, Moffat took particular interest in the local fevers and planned to undertake research, surely the very first medical research project ever undertaken in Uganda, with a view to taking the M.D. degree. Although he had abundant clinical material he lamented that he had 'so few of the proper requirements for scientific research' and that it was 'very difficult to work out the microscopic part with regard to the parasites without some assistance'.

In 1892 the future of European influence in Uganda hung in the balance. The Imperial British East Africa Company, even with the powerful support of the missionary societies, clearly had not the resources to manage the territories nominally under its control. Sir Gerald Portal, the young British Consul-General in Zanzibar, was, therefore, asked to head a commission to Uganda to advise the British Cabinet as to what should be the future of that country. The Company had a medical officer, Dr. Macpherson, in Uganda, but he was due for leave and Moffat hearing this, and

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feeling that the British Government would not abandon Uganda—‘there would be too much feeling at home’—resigned from the mission and prepared to accompany Portal as the Company’s medical officer to Uganda. He had, by this time decided that he did not want to undertake any form of private practice and, that in the Company’s or Government’s service, he could do as good work as a missionary. Moffat joined Portal near Kikuyu about the end of January 1893 and percipiently remarked that ‘there is a wonderful future in store for this place’ which is, today, perhaps the fairest part of Kenya in which lies the beautiful, modern, capital city of Nairobi. Of the part of the journey from Kikuyu to the Kingdom of Buganda, the magnificent Rift Valley, the Mau escarpment, the cool of the equator at 9,000 ft. altitude, the savanna-covered Nandi plain and the elephant grass and bananas of Busoga, Moffat makes no mention in his letters. But 12 March found the party on the banks of the Nile at its very source in Lake Victoria. Moffat wrote ‘today has been rather an epoch for we have at last entered Uganda and are now only about 56 miles from Campalla’ [*sic*]. To him the occasion was of particular interest for he had never seen the Nile before, whereas most others in the party of seven had seen it in Egypt. The Ripon Falls he described as ‘not big but very pretty’ and wished he had ‘one of those Kodaks’. Percipient again, he supposed that if a railway was built there would soon be an hotel and Cook’s conducted tours which would ‘rob the place of all its freshness and sentiment’. The railway has been built and the hotel; the Ripon Falls are now submerged behind the giant hydro-electric dam, a mile or so downstream but, if Moffat’s ghost ever visits his old haunts these days, it would surely agree that the place, though not what it was, has not entirely lost ‘its freshness and sentiment’. On 21 March he wrote his first letter home from Kampala. He was housed in Lugard’s overcrowded fort on the hill which has now given its name to the capital of Uganda. Although Moffat preferred the countryside around Kikuyu to Kampala he was, like all the early travellers, impressed by the relatively civilized Baganda in comparison with other African tribes.

Moffat set about his professional duties enthusiastically and work was by no means lacking. He also had, at least temporarily, a medical colleague, for the Church Missionary Society doctor, Dr. Baxter, had come up with the new Anglican bishop but was to return to the coast with him. Although again, he ‘did not think much of the missionaries’ and ‘Bishop Tucker I don’t exactly take to either’ he found Dr. Baxter ‘not a bad old chap though excessively religious’ and enjoyed medical talk with him. Baxter got plenty of work among the local inhabitants, whereas Moffat was kept busy with the Sudanese troops and Company employees. Seeing the opportunities for interesting work he thought it a pity that the Church Missionary Society did not keep a doctor in Kampala but did not feel inclined to offer his own services. In the fort there was ‘just a bit of a hut for a dispensary’ which he considered inadequate and set about trying to get something better. Moffat gives few details of his medical practice. The most crippling condition he encountered was ‘a regular plague of what is called the “jiggers”’. Tunga penetrans, although probably but recently introduced into Uganda, was ubiquitous wherever there were Sudanese. In another fort he noted that the jiggers were so bad that if one but ‘puts one foot to the ground for a minute one would see a dozen jiggers running on ones foot’. Although Moffat managed to

avoid infestation with jiggers himself his feet were soon so sore from other insect bites that he could not walk. His most important medical case was that of Captain Portal, brother of the Commission's leader. He returned from a safari into Toro on 23 May, already very ill. Moffat was glad to have Baxter to consult. On 29 May Portal died, a firm diagnosis unmade, but Moffat surmised that he might have had sunstroke.

Meanwhile, the Portal Commission, having viewed the scene and decided to recommend the retention of Uganda as a British Protectorate, Sir Gerald proposed to set up an administrative capital some twenty miles south of Kampala, on the lake shore, near a landing area used by fishermen and some Arab traders, known as 'Intebe'. They chose a fine, flat-topped hill with magnificent views southward over Lake Victoria whose blue waters dotted with green islands stretched away to the horizon. Moffat was consulted in the choice of site, camped there and supervised the making of bricks for its first houses. In his last letter to his father, in 1906, he claimed that he was one of the two men who actually chose the site for the town of Entebbe, the other being Colonel Rhodes, brother of Cecil Rhodes. The Portal Commission left for the coast the day after Captain Portal's death and Sir Gerald presented Moffat with a rifle to replace one which had been stolen. Apart from the missionaries there were now only four Europeans left in Kampala; Captain MacDonald, Wilson the storekeeper, Gedge a correspondent for *The Times*, who was leaving within the next three weeks, and Moffat himself.

Within a month of Portal's departure trouble flared up. A group of Muslims refused to perform work due to the Kabaka. Normally the Kabaka would have been sufficiently powerful to deal with the matter himself but, in this instance, the rebellious subjects had the support of some of the Sudanese soldiers under a Sudanese officer, Selim Bey. However, with commendable speed, Captain MacDonald controlled the situation and arrested Selim Bey, but not without some bloodshed. This gave Moffat his first opportunity for practical study of bullet wounds on which he commented 'It is most exciting work extracting bullets. Just like a rabbit hunt'. Selim Bey was tried by court martial and, in Moffat's opinion, would have been shot had not some witnesses perjured themselves. Instead he was first banished to a nearby island on Lake Victoria and, in July, Moffat was given the job of escorting him as far as Mumias, near the north east corner of Lake Victoria, on his way to the coast and repatriation to Egypt. Moffat was probably given this task as there was news from Mumias that Colonel Rhodes lay there seriously ill. Moffat set off from Entebbe, now named by Portal, Port Alice, on 10 July. He collected Selim Bey, who was too ill to walk, and set off by canoe along the north shore of the lake. He was excited for that part of the lake had not before 'been traversed by any European so we shall be regular exploration bugs'. On 17 July they put ashore at Lubira's village, close to modern Jinja. The chief, Lubira, was notorious for the fact that he had murdered Bishop Hannington but Moffat remarked that 'old Lubira is friendly enough now . . .' and had hospitably presented Moffat's party with goats and cows. During his journey Moffat had various exciting adventures 'but made no great discoveries'. At Mumias he found Colonel Rhodes much better, handed over Selim Bey (who was to die on his way to Mombasa) and was back in Port Alice just six weeks after he had set out. For the next few weeks he was stationed at Port Alice where he was alone and enjoyed being 'boss of the whole

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show'. He found the climate very pleasant, the temperature just right, so that he needed one blanket on his bed at nights. His medical work was limited. Moffat thought the Uganda climate very healthy and was only afraid that Captain Portal's death would set people at home against the occupation of Uganda. The most serious medical problem seems to have been the jiggers—about twenty of his porters were quite disabled by them and Moffat's own feet 'were getting into a horrid state'. His main job was to supervise the manufacture of bricks, which was complicated by the heavy rains at night, so that sometimes a whole days batch would 'go to pot'. He started some building, having to lay the bricks himself as the natives had no idea of a straight line.

Although the Kingdom of Buganda was, by now, in a tolerably settled state, lasting peace in Uganda would not be possible until the Kingdom of Bunyoro, to the north, ruled by the able warrior Kabarega who harboured dissident Muslims from Buganda, was under control. In December 1893, therefore, a military expedition into Bunyoro was planned. The army consisted of a few British officers under a Colonel Colville, the Sudanese soldiers and some thousands of Buganda Christians. The Church Missionary Society missionary, Pilkington, insisted on accompanying the army as its chaplain and Moffat was their medical officer. The expedition left Kampala on 13 December and headed northward. The journey was unpleasant; papyrus swamps, elephant-grass so tall that one could see nothing, heavy rain, increasing heat as they descended in altitude, awful water and the agony of riding a donkey made Moffat miserable. Christmas Day found the army near the Kafu river which formed the southern border of Bunyoro. Moffat whiled away the time reading a book on telepathy and made experiments on himself. He 'even tried my girl but even she refused all communication'. An alternative amusement was theological argument with Pilkington. Moffat had a considerable amount of medical work to do. He had one patient with pneumonia and on 3 January 1894, there were ninety-two persons on sick parade, six of whom were quite unable to walk. Three-quarters of his patients had ulcerated feet and the occasional skirmish provided him with a few bullets to extract and scalps to suture. Kabarega's village was purposely not occupied because it was infested with jiggers and there were said to be cases of smallpox there. The army camped about four miles beyond. It is not necessary to follow the details of the campaign which, as Moffat wrote, was rapidly 'resolving itself into a wild goose chase'. Eventually, since they were unable to bring Kabarega to battle, it was decided to march around his country building small wooden forts at strategic points which were left garrisoned with about fifty Sudanese. This work also involved Moffat who played as much the part of a combatant officer as medical officer and was often left in charge of forts. On 17 January the army marched to Kibero on the top of the escarpment which drops precipitously about 1,500 ft. to the eastern shore of Lake Albert. The object was to capture Kabarega's salt fields, one of his most fruitful sources of revenue. Moffat thought Kibero 'rather a desolate-looking spot' as he wandered along the shore picking up some shells to send to his girl. He was able consistently to enlarge his medical experience; a porter died of dysentery and another of tetanus 'the first case I have seen'. Smallpox had broken out among the Baganda and Moffat heard that it was spreading a good deal among them but there was nothing he could

do. His medical unit became the refuge of all and sundry, and he was saddled with a baby, whose mother had run away, and a blind Banyoro boy. Another patient was a little girl, whose leg was in such a state that all Moffat could do was to amputate it. He could persuade neither Villiers nor Thruston to help him—'soldiers have got very tender nerves'—and had to administer the chloroform as well as perform the operation himself. The girl made a good recovery but Moffat worried about her future 'for a woman who can do no work is not a *persona grata* in a country like this'. Eventually he decided that he would have to take her himself to a coast mission, although, he thought, 'probably they won't exactly jump at her'.

In April Moffat was sent to make contact with what was hoped would be a friendly chief, named Kavalli, who lived on the south-western side of Lake Albert. He started from Kibero in the steel boat with twelve rowers, two soldiers, two servants and two interpreters just about nightfall. Almost immediately they ran into a storm—'by Jove it was something unspeakable'—although it only lasted twenty minutes. Half his crew were sea-sick and although Moffat himself was usually a good sailor the nauseating stench in the boat made him vomit also. They reached the other side of the lake, a journey of about thirty miles, by 8 a.m. the following morning but had difficulty in finding a landing place since the mountains ended in sheer cliffs dropping straight into the water. Eventually they found a shingle bank about four yards wide where they were able to land, stretch their legs and dry their clothes. They sailed again at 3 p.m. turning southward and keeping close to the shore. They continued to row all night and, at daylight, found that the hills were now set a mile or two back from the shore. They landed at a village but the inhabitants ran away as they arrived. Resting during the heat of the day, they rowed on southward at 4 p.m. and about 10 p.m. their guide and interpreter said that they had reached the point on the shore nearest to Kavalli's village, which was situated in the hills about eighteen miles away. They anchored off shore and fell asleep. Moffat was awoken by a native from the shore calling out 'Mzungu, Mzungu', and who told him that he had come from Kavalli to welcome him. They, therefore, landed and set up camp and Moffat shot a waterbuck for meat. Two days later Kavalli came to see him, was very friendly and Moffat 'had a long confab. with him'. He amused himself by going shooting and bagged his first elephant 'with a ripping pair of tusks'—one was 9 feet and the other 8½ feet long. The natives, delighted to get such a supply of meat, fell on the carcass 'just like so many hyaenas' and, until all the meat had been hacked off, Moffat could not get anyone to extract the tusks for him. After an agreeable stay of five days they sailed to return to Kibero, rowing south intending to circumnavigate the southern end of the lake. Returning to Hoima fort he found Thruston about to set out to the north in the hope of collecting some Sudanese. Moffat was quite glad to 'have a nice quite time all to myself for the next couple of weeks'.

He remained at Hoima fort until the beginning of September when, having heard that another government doctor had arrived in Kampala, he was able to make his way, on his long overdue leave, to the coast. He left Kampala on 11 October, after a four-day march crossed the Nile near the Ripon Falls, reached Mumias by the end of the month, where he spent some time gathering food, and reached Mombasa on 1 January 1895.

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Moffat's leave lasted just over a year. He visited his family in South Africa, went thence to England, probably for some postgraduate study, and returned to Kampala again on 27 April 1896. He was posted to Masinde, a station between Lake Albert and the Nile, in the heart of Bunyoro. At Masinde there was a small, but strong, fort manned by two European officers with 500 Sudanese. Their armaments included two Hotchkiss guns and four Maxims. Moffat's duties were again those of an army medical-cum-general-duty officer but he liked the life and would not transfer to the relative sophistication of Kampala when he had the opportunity. He had a reasonable amount of medical work, preferred to treat blacks rather than whites remarking 'it is always a pleasure to be treating these people for wounds as they have such remarkable healing powers' and was attempting to work on the aetiology of the local fevers with a view to an M.D. thesis. He hoped to be able to get short study leave the following July to go to Rome to learn something about malaria parasites. Besides his medical work he enjoyed going on tours of inspection to the forts at Kibero and Hoima.

In April 1897, Moffat did transfer from Masinde for Kampala. He did so regretfully but, having heard that Lieutenant Thruston, whom he described as a 'brute', was being posted to Masinde he declined to serve with him. He was not happy about the change, feeling that his wardrobe was not up to Kampala fashions and the society of ladies! Moreover, as we have seen, he had little liking for the Church Missionary Society missionaries who dominated Kampala society but who 'keep aloof from government officials' and 'treat us all as outcasts'. Moreover, Moffat had considerable doubts about the intentions of the missionary ladies and appears to have had a narrow escape from a Miss Taylor 'in the dark at Pilkington's house'. Two other, more successful, missionary ladies had 'made a capture', but Moffat deciding that matrimony would not suit him, had acquired a dog.

In the September of 1898 Moffat made his first contribution to the published medical literature in the form of a letter to the *British Medical Journal* strongly criticizing the great Robert Koch for publishing his opinion that blackwater fever was but 'another name for quinine poisoning'. Moffat thought that such a pronouncement would do much harm since it was already difficult to get people to take quinine prophylactically and now the unfortunate doctor would also have Koch's views 'thrown in his teeth'. Moffat remarked, 'speaking with all due humility and respect, I must confess that I think Professor Koch should have kept his theory to himself until he had absolutely proved its truth beyond a doubt'. Writing of his own experience he said that he had never seen a case of malaria die when quinine was 'given properly and early in the case', and, on the other hand, even when giving very large doses of quinine he had never induced haemoglobinuria. He ended by pointing out 'I can only say that my humble opinion is that there is only one treatment for malaria—quinine, more quinine and yet more quinine', whatever Koch might say!<sup>2</sup>

Some time, probably in 1898, Moffat again went on leave and there is a gap in his letters until 22 October 1899. He was by now thirty-three years old and, with nearly nine years' service in East Africa, the government Principal Medical Officer. Whilst on leave, despite his acquisition of a dog, he had married his cousin Hilda—probably the girl with whom he had tried to communicate by telepathy and for whom he

collected shells on the desolate shore of Lake Albert. His wife accompanied him back to Uganda, where only one other government official's wife lived, and that some 200 miles from Kampala. Hilda was, moreover, already a partial invalid suffering from some form of rheumatism which led to her death at an early age.

Their march to Uganda was much facilitated by the railway which was in the course of construction. The actual railway ended at Nairobi, a newly-founded town of shanties and railway stores and equipment. But the route of the projected railway was planned to its terminus on the Kavirondo gulf of Lake Victoria and a chain of stations and depots along the Rift Valley, up the Mau escarpment and over the Nandi Hills, down to the lake shore had been established. From Nairobi, they marched on foot, although Hilda sometimes rode a donkey and was sometimes carried in a hammock. She suffered from several bouts of fever, but at least these seemed to relieve her rheumatism, and although 'bitterly cold coming over Mau' (on the equator but 9,000 ft. above sea level) they enjoyed the spectacular scenery of the 'Ravine' (Rift Valley) with its volcanoes and flamingo-skirted lakes and the green Nandi Hills. They spent some days at the railway depot at Ugowe Bay near the site of modern Kisumu, which was in charge of a European named Galt, and even had a newly-appointed doctor by the name of Pownall. Moffat and his wife could have sailed across the lake from Ugowe Bay to Entebbe but he preferred to march round by land. They stopped a while at Mumias, which now also had a European, named Hobley, in charge. His was the only other official's wife in Uganda but she was in an advanced stage of pulmonary tuberculosis. Moffat noted, as they left, that she would be the last European lady that Hilda would see 'bar mission ones'. At the Nile crossing Moffat went crocodile shooting and had 'great fun' but recovered only one out of six that he shot as 'unfortunately they sink immediately they are killed'. They arrived in Kampala on 23 November 1899, to find a great accumulation of paper work and 'red tape' and their house, in which a Dr. Hodges had been living, very dirty. Moffat decided to keep Hodges in Kampala to do the hospital work whilst he attended to the administration.

Hilda seems to have settled rapidly into her new way of life—she had been brought up in India so perhaps the colonialist ways were not strange to her. Except for the fleas and trouble with her cook she enjoyed herself, and Moffat, full of praise, wrote to his mother 'I verily believe she will turn out the prettiest house in Uganda out of the "Old Barn" '. Their nearest neighbour was the paymaster of the Uganda Rifles who liked Hilda and sent her flowers and vegetables from his garden. Moffat was so busy with work in the office that he 'dragged in Hilda' to assist him and found that 'she really makes a very good amanuensis'. He was at home very little and could hardly spare the time one Sunday to rig up a bookshelf for Hilda. Perhaps it is not surprising that by the beginning of the new year Hilda was already looking forward to leave.

The mutiny of the Sudanese troops, in 1898, had brought home to the British government that they now had, almost unwittingly, acquired responsibilities in East Africa that demanded serious attention and, in 1899, Sir Harry Johnstone was sent to Uganda to make recommendations for the administration of the Protectorate. Sir Harry was not popular with Moffat—he tended to 'turn things upside down' and

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was 'such a big pot in his own estimation'. Although he had been but three months in Uganda, Johnstone was full of plans and issuing new regulations of all sorts. The government had, in Moffat's view, 'forgotten the little lessons of the mutiny' and economy was 'the order of the day'. Economics, however, did not prevent Johnstone from going on a tour of the Rwenzori region, a 'very pleasant four month holiday at government expense and no practical utility whatever' except that Johnstone 'probably got some copy for his next book'.

Beginning in June 1900 Moffat obtained four months' leave, probably the study leave that he had wanted to work on malaria in Rome, for he was evidently in Rome in the July. It is possible also that Hilda's health had deteriorated for, when he returned to Uganda in September, she did not accompany him. Arriving at Kampala, after a four-day passage by canoe from Ugowe Bay to Port Alice, he found that, although his medical duties had been attended to by a Dr. Walker, all his administrative work had been left on one side. In August 1901 Hilda came back to Uganda and Dr. Hodges, returning from leave, was able to escort her. Moffat reported that 'there is very little work here now medically. The glory of Kampala has departed and the staff is so small that I do not think it necessary to keep a doctor here. All the headquarters offices are now at Port Alice and Johnstone wants me to go there also'. This was one of Johnstone's innovations, to transfer the seat of government and, incidentally, he insisted that the name 'Port Alice', given to the town by Portal, should be changed back to its Ugandan name of 'Entebbe'. Moffat's opinion of Johnstone had not improved for he refers to him as 'a small-minded little beast' and a 'terrible little cad'. Moffat moved to Entebbe early in 1901 and this was to be his home until he left the colonial service in 1906. Soon after Hilda's arrival he was able to boast that because she had 'such wonderful good taste', even though most of the furniture was homemade, their house 'although one of the smallest is one of the most nicely furnished houses in Entebbe'. He acquired another doctor to assist him, since administrative work took up so much of his own time, but did not approve when the newcomer brought his wife with him, since he felt it limited the Principal Medical Officer's ability to post him to certain parts of the Protectorate. To have one's wife with one was 'all very well for the P.M.O. who is a fixture' but not for general duty medical officers. However, Moffat considerably posted the new man to Ugowe so that he would not be out of touch with civilization as 'it is only seven days travelling now from rail head to Ugowe'.

During the period between May 1902 and May 1903 two events were to considerably affect Moffat's work in Uganda. The first was the outbreak of the great sleeping sickness epidemic. This disease had been first diagnosed in Uganda by the Cook brothers, at Mengo, early in 1901, but, in 1902, had reached such proportions as to be 'worse than plague'. This major event in the medical history of Uganda cannot be considered here. The second event was the offer, in May 1903, of the job of Principal Medical Officer of both the Uganda and Kenya Protectorates. On 1 April 1903, the Government decided to amalgamate the medical services of the East African (Kenya) and Uganda Protectorates. This was not an arrangement that met with Moffat's approval from either an administrative or personal point of view. Writing to his father he said 'This new scheme is too unwieldy and it is an anomalous position serving two

commissioners, both of whom wish me to stay in their own Protectorate'. Neither did Moffat, who had accepted the appointment as Principal Medical Officer at a salary of £900 per annum, like the prospect of having to live in Nairobi which was 'gradually becoming the centre of gravity of this Protectorate'. He considered Nairobi 'a rotten sort of place' and was sure the relatively cold climate would be bad for Hilda's rheumatism and they would miss their 'dear old lake'. The job also involved him in much travel but this, with the railway completed from Mombasa to Kisumu and an adequate steamer service on Lake Victoria, was no longer difficult. In the event, after a few months spent 'running from Dan to Beersheba', making several visits to Mombasa, over 800 miles away, and being shipwrecked when the steamer struck a rock—'the most unpleasant night I ever had', he resigned his post in September and reverted to the position of an ordinary medical officer. Writing to his father he said 'I regret it in some ways but the game is not worth the candle. I feel that I should sacrifice my profession if I remain on writing despatches all my time and I cannot afford to do that as I may any day have to earn my bread by it'.

In October 1903 Hilda was suffering from some form of eczema and she was also pregnant. But her rheumatism was better and Moffat suggested that 'possibly the old theory is correct and her rheumatism is expending itself on her skin.' On 18 December Hilda gave birth to a daughter, Jemina. Moffat's mother had died towards the end of 1902 and, during the following year, arrangements were made for his father to visit him in Uganda. He seems to have arrived early in 1904 thus causing a gap in the series of Moffat's letters which extends to July 1905. In that month Moffat sent his wife and daughter home to England, travelling down to Mombasa to see them off. Hilda was very ill by this time and the advice of specialists was required. The possibility of sending her to Germany had been raised but not followed, Moffat remarking 'for choice give me an honest English doctor before all the German professors in the Fatherland'.

Although Moffat had resigned as Principal Medical Officer in September 1903 his successor did not arrive until January 1906 and he was, perforce, much occupied with the administrative tasks which he found so uncongenial. Moffat's annual report for the year ending 31 March 1904, is a very brief document reflecting his overbusy life, general disapproval of the new administrative arrangements and perhaps waning interest. The number of medical officers remained unchanged. Although one resigned and another died of blackwater fever, in the lonely Nile station at Nimule, two more medical officers were recruited. Scant information is given about the diseases seen during the year but a twenty-four bed native hospital had been built at Entebbe. Moffat ended his report with the comment 'Unfortunately my duties in East Africa have prevented me visiting the stations in Uganda this year'. During 1905 he again complained to his father that he was 'rushed off his feet'. One of his medical officers on a Nile station was killed by an elephant and another had to be invalided home. However, the doctor who had resigned found England not to his liking and returned—'the attraction for Africa seems to have been too great'. Moffat was pleased as he was 'a decent sort of Irishman and very amusing'. At the beginning of 1906 the new Principal Medical Officer, Major Will, arrived in Entebbe to inaugurate an extended scheme for the investigation of sleeping sickness. This was work in which Moffat

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could have been interested and offered to take part. But, the scheme proposed he regarded as a waste of money and said so and his offer was rejected. He, therefore, wrote to his father that he had decided to leave Uganda that year. 'What my life is to be at present I know not—there is an old Arab proverb which comes to my mind these days, 'Thy lot in life is seeking after thee; therefore, be thou at rest from seeking after it''.

Hilda was still in England and far from well. Moffat was convinced that the climate there would not suit her and made enquiries about a job in Egypt but was told that 'they prefer to take a young man . . . now I am forty and counted as getting old!' He also thought about Rhodesia and private practice but wrote, 'I imagine there are too many doctors there already'. His fifteen years' work in East Africa had earned him a pension of £200 per annum. In February 1906 he had been 'feeling seedy' and the new Principal Medical Officer had invited him to come and stay with him in Nairobi where he was 'simply astonished at the progress, the place is growing rapidly'. There was every sign of prosperity, 'any number of settlers' and land speculators were making fortunes. The visit did him good. On 26 April 1906, Moffat said goodbye to the Entebbe he loved so well—'my Entebbe life is over' he wrote to his father, 'It will be a great wrench tearing myself away from old Uganda. After 14 years ones roots have struck deep and in spite of all its drawbacks I am interested in and fond of the country. Then too I am well known and it will be difficult to settle down and cultivate new interests and surroundings.' He planned to return to England travelling down the Nile and Major Will kindly sent him to inspect the furthestmost Uganda station on the Nile, at Gondokoro, so that he remained officially on duty as long as possible. He marched overland to Hoima where he arrived on 5 May, nostalgic memories flooding back the whole way. 'I am back among the scenes and haunts of twelve years ago. It was at Hoima that I spent ten weary months cooped up in a little bit of a fort. All that now is changed—the old station is a couple of miles from here and a large, flourishing place has sprung up. The Pax Britannica has covered the land and the warfare and troubles of twelve years ago are things of the past.' From Hoima, Moffat marched to Lake Albert and took the steam launch (no longer the old steel rowing boat in which he had visited Kavalli) as far as Nimule, on the Albert Nile. Thence, because for 100 miles the Nile consisted of rapids, he marched overland to Gondokoro and caught the monthly Egyptian gunboat to Khartoum and relative civilization.

On his return to England Moffat set up in Harley Street intending to earn his living as a specialist in tropical diseases. He immediately set to work to compose a thesis for his M.D. degree with the title 'Haemoglobinuric malarial fever or blackwater fever' and for this received his degree in 1907. The same year saw the publication of two interesting communications from his pen. His new consultant work enabled him to show quite definitely that malaria could be congenital. This is a very rare condition and its existence was generally denied. However, he was called to see a seven-week-old baby suffering from anaemia. Its mother had returned from Africa and settled on the south coast four months before the birth of the baby, in whose blood Moffat found numerous malignant tertian malaria parasites. No other explanation than trans-placental infection could possibly explain this case.<sup>3</sup>

His other paper was a report on the relapsing fever of Uganda, a disease Moffat preferred to call 'Spirillum fever'. The material on which this paper was based went back to that time, ten years before, when, stationed at Masinde, he had first felt the desire to investigate the fevers of Uganda. At that time he had suspected, on clinical grounds, that some of his cases of fever were relapsing fever but had not made the diagnosis because of his inexperience at microscopy and the fact that the cases were not associated with famine (as they were generally held to be) and nor did their temperature charts show the typical relapsing fever. During Moffat's years in Uganda relapsing fever, which is transmitted by ticks, became increasingly common since it was usually acquired in rest camps along routes of travel. During his last year in Uganda Moffat saw no less than 150 cases and he considered that the disease was 'one of the most serious dangers and drawbacks to travel in Uganda at the present time'. He had kept detailed notes on thirty patients and on this basis discussed in some detail the clinical features, microscopical diagnosis, differential diagnosis, prognosis and treatment of the disease. Some of the points of interest which Moffat brought out were the fact that twenty-one out of thirty cases, in which the diagnosis was proved microscopically, showed no relapses of fever, that, in a trial in parallel, a Leishman-stained blood film was diagnostically more useful than the examination of fresh blood and that antisyphilitic treatment with mercury was useless.<sup>4</sup> This paper shows clear evidence of careful observation and sound judgment and one cannot but regret that Moffat's contributions to knowledge of the diseases of East Africa were not more extensive.

The climate and environment of London could hardly have been expected to suit one who hated the cold and had once thought himself unfit for civilized life. Moreover, it did not suit Hilda's health. In 1909, therefore, Moffat and his family emigrated to Rhodesia. There Hilda died in 1912. Moffat returned to England once again but was soon off as medical officer to an expedition exploring the river Amazon. During the First World War he served both in France and in India and after the war again tried to settle in London with his second wife. But, again, he was unable to adapt himself to the climate of England and soon retired to the south of France. Here he lived until 1940 and only just managed to escape to South Africa from the German occupation in the Second World War. Moffat lived the last seven years of his life in Rhodesia dying at the age of eighty-one. He is buried on a farm belonging to his brother near Bulawayo.

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