

Luebo, N. C. Africa  
Dec. 27, 1894 -

Dear Nellie: -

First of all let me on behalf of Matie and myself wish you many returns of your birthday, and a Merry Merry Christmas, and a happy, happy New Year. Please extend these wishes as far as Christmas + New Year, to Fannie and Family. Of course Sunday and your dear Children are included in all this. We are wondering how you spent the holidays and have no doubt but that you are wondering in what way we are spending ours away out here in Africa! - Well, you would never guess. So I will tell you. Matie spent her time in bed with a heavy fever and she is still in bed; but there were peculiar circumstances that led up to this sickness, the first in more than six months; and it is of these I want to write you in this letter.

A missionary ought to be ready for any emergency; but you will agree with me when you hear my story, that we were put to an unusual test. You are acquainted with the fact of there being

New missionaries on the field; Mr Sheppard  
 and his young wife being of the number.  
 They have been with us for the past three  
 months and we have become very  
 much attached to them, Mr & Mrs. S. are  
 educated and although Mulattos are  
 very agreeable company. Well in the  
 natural events of married people the  
 Olive branch sprouted, and as the time  
 drew near for the culmination of the  
 event. We naturally enquired who was  
 to see her through, she told us Miss. Fearing  
 one of their party, would attend her as  
 she had experience in such ways -  
 and so we rested easy, Matie did not  
 feel equal to caring for her, and I,  
 well, I had never been a babe born  
 and knew nothing only as I had  
 read it in books, more properly speak-  
 ing I had studied the subject for  
 many years back, but knew nothing  
 of the practice work, Well, Mrs Sheppard  
 was sure of the date, as all young  
 married people are. and it was  
 to come off "not earlier than the first  
 of February 1875. and so we rested

Mrs. Sheppard has been suffering from a flood  
 on her finger and I have been doctoring it.  
 Last Saturday when I went in to see her  
 she told me she was not feeling at all well  
 and from the uneasiness she exhibited <sup>and</sup>  
 from what she told me I advised her to  
 look up her nurse. I came home and told  
 Matie that in my opinion Mrs. Sheppard had  
 miscalculated some six weeks and unless  
 I missed my guess there would be a new  
 missionary in a short time; My wife  
 went over to see Mrs. S. and I soon met  
 the "Nurse" who coyly informed me that  
 "she know how to do everything but <sup>tying</sup> <sup>and</sup> cutting  
 the Cord" bless her heart the mother knew  
 how to do the rest and I failed to see where  
 we were to get help from the nurse; Well,  
 I said "all right" "I will attend to that," you  
 see it was too late to make other arrangements.  
 Saturday evening at about eight o'clock  
 they sent for me, & my wife and I delivered  
 her of a fine girl and I "tied & cut the  
 Cord" in a very proper way - so far  
 every thing was fine, but the placenta  
 was retained, less twenty minutes passed  
 and still no letting up - Well, this was

interesting. I had three medical books - One of them said "do so + so, and send for a physician". The nearest one was twelve days march away; One other book said the hand must be inserted and it must be taken away by all means, tearing away those parts where the adhesion was. It read all night but I was ignorant of where to tear, I didn't care to go on that kind of a tear. The third book said "if the placenta fails to come away in several hours, a wet cloth laid over the abdomen will suffice". Well, here was a respite, of several hours, and a chance to think, I felt positive of this if an hemorrhage took place there I must try and take away the placenta even if by force, but happily no hemorrhage took place, the patient was strong and cheerful. Several hours took their flight and the wet cloth was applied, it brought on "pains" but still that placenta stuck. I tell you I was in a quandary. I was so afraid of hemorrhage or prolapsus of I attempted to deliver it forcibly; I left the bed side and came home to pray & study. I found one of my medical men said "Some physicians never try to take the placenta

"Obstetricians differ as to the time a retained placenta should be left to the efforts of nature before proceeding to extract it - by force. Some are for waiting only an hour, others several hours; and others still oppose its forcible extraction at any time, except when hemorrhage attends. It is certain that it will slough off and be expelled sooner or later." Well, here was another respite. These two questions met me and had to be answered. If forcibly extracted by a green horn what will result? If left to slough off what will result? To the first question I answered, hemorrhage and numerous other things, injuries I might in ignorance inflict. To the second question I answered "Very likely Peritonitis" Here I had to choose and choose quickly. So after more prayer I resolved to follow a medical writer's advice which is - "When you don't know what to do, do nothing" And so my wife and I quietly all fears and silently prepared to treat symptoms - feeling sure we would have inflammation of no small proportion to fight. All night we sat up with her, the next day passed, the next night, the next day passed, Monday night we retired for rest at half past twelve leaving strict orders to be called if any change, Tuesday morning at four o'clock we were called. I went

over in a hurry and found the placenta  
 in bed and the mother doing well, I  
 felt for the uterus and found it hard  
 as a rock. And every thing normal. I  
 sent for matie for I knew how rejoiced  
 she would be - and we stayed till  
 morning still fearing a hemorrhage.  
 At daylight we came home, and ate  
 breakfast, after breakfast Matie went  
 over to do certain little jobs needed, but  
 in ten minutes she was attacked with  
 vomiting & chills. Bilious Permittant fever set  
 in at a double quick, poor child the strain  
 was too much for her and as soon as the  
 reaction came down she went. You see  
 Mrs Sheppard clung to her neck all through  
 the labor and Matie is not strong, and  
 then followed the anxious days. Well,  
 Matie's fever passed all day, not much  
 better the next day, but to day temperature  
 has kept at 100° - to night 99°. I hope for  
 a normal temperature at six A.M. to  
 morrow. The nurse, well it turned out  
 she had never seen but one case, and  
 she was in the next room when the  
 child was delivered, Now Nellie tell  
 me what ought I to have done? I thought  
 of ergot but was afraid to use it in orsh

large doses, of course we repeatedly tried gentle traction: I presume you will laugh at us.

Jan. 24, 1895

Dear Nellie: It is nearly a month since the above was written and no one but our selves can ever know what we went through with. When I wrote the above, Matie was still under the weather but gradually improving. Sunday Dec. 30<sup>th</sup> three days after I had begun the first part of the letter, Matie felt well enough to walk over to see Mrs Sheppard and in the afternoon I was called over the river. Matie's fever had risen again but I thought it was because she had gone out too early. She said she felt able to let me go over the River, and so I went not even clearing anyone to sit with her. I was gone about three hours and when I returned I found Matie still lying in the out side of the bed, but with a very queer expression on her face. Almost her first words were "Do you think you can be very brave?" and I said "What is it Matie" and she told me to look in the vessel and then I knew she had had a hemorrhage and that the dread disease Hematuria had entered our lives —

and while I was talking another hemorrhage  
 came on worse by far than the first; and  
 although my heart sank in my shoes I  
 knew I must go to work; there was no  
 doctor to call in; with a bleeding heart I had  
 to doctor my own wife. First of all I gave  
 a good Cathartic, Jalap, Quinine, Rhubarb and  
 Calomel, and then gave her 8 grains of  
 Hydrobromate of Quinine by hypodermic injection  
 in the arm. - That night she had 9 hemorrhages  
 including the two spoken of. and with all  
 so sick at the stomach I could not retain even  
 the water that she craved. What a night for  
 me. Thousands of miles away from home, from  
 friends, (although Mr & Mrs Jackson & the others were  
 here they were not like white friends) from any  
 help of any kind; unacquainted with the dis-  
 ease in every way but in its deadly power.  
 I can assure you it was a trying time -  
 I had seen three cases of hamaturie previous  
 to this, one I had doctor'd on my way up  
 and of which I wrote you. Mrs Adamsen  
 was the next and she died - then I had  
 doctor'd a Portuguese gentleman who recover'd,  
 and now my wife, till the next day  
 the fever ceased and the hemorrhages continue  
 but not so frequent and with less force

That night the hemorrhages came only every  
 2 1/2 hours. And the next day early in  
 the morning they ceased. Oh how thankful  
 we were; but later on ~~the~~ all that day  
 the pain was clear, and Mattie's strength  
 was sufficient, I thought, to carry her through.  
 The next morning she complained of being  
 very much exhausted, after a mild enema,  
 Ann also complained of being very faint  
 a bad symptom, and at ten o'clock or  
 thereabout the hemorrhages returned and  
 away went all our hopes, I could see  
 no help for her then, but while there was  
 life we thought we would fight and so  
 we did, that night the hemorrhages <sup>ceased</sup>  
 for the second time and with fear and  
 trembling we commenced to bring her  
 up from the edge of the grave. Can you  
 imagine one having rolled to the edge of  
 a precipice and just as he looks into certain  
 death his foot catches on a root and slowly  
 and carefully he begins to crawl back to  
 safe ground and all the while he feels the  
 gravelly ground slipping under him and  
 not till he grasps a strong tree and feels  
 the solid earth under his feet does he  
 dare to look back into the hole from  
 whence he had escaped. So it was with us

It was not until ~~seven~~ or more had passed  
that we breathed freely -

On page 68, 9 lines from the bottom, the word is "**precipice**": *a steep rock face or cliff*

**Note:**

Since at times, mailing going out and received is 2 or 3 times a year, letters are written on various days. This letter started December 27<sup>th</sup> 1894; again on January 24<sup>th</sup> 1895, and again in February 3, 1895 (Which is covered in the next letter: "[DeWitt Tells of Visits to 2 villages](#), Kalamba and Kapunga via Caravan" Page 69 finishes the January 1895 letter and begins the February overview of the village visits.