

How did I spend my life?

I'm reading a letter from a former associate
Who has spent many years in Bhutan and Nepal
Now the sole doctor in a hospital,
His letter contains gripping stories
Of a mother nearly bleeding to death postpartum
The neighbours won't donate blood, having none to spare
The hospital staff steps in, four bagfuls are needed
The placenta is removed manually
Uterine atony. No halt to the bleeding even after injections
It is stopped by a saltwater balloon
The mother survives
There, as elsewhere, two boys are beaten
by their drunken father
One dies, the youngest survives after heroic efforts
A young man is picked up at a roadside
with large, infected wounds, possibly sepsis
Treated and recovered, he refuses a skin transplant
These are excerpts from just one letter
Others have equally gripping tales to tell

I have lived in a sheltered world
Working in well ordered surroundings
Ringed by helping hands and heads
By state-of-the-art technology
I ask myself: Should I have done as he did?
Sought out new challenges where knowledge is scarce?

Would I feel better then
When I have grown old
Wondering how I spent my life?

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Dedicated to Erik Bøhler. Illustration Elin Karlsnes