50 letters from Fell to members of his family, from the Boer War and afterwards, when seconded to the South African Constabulary. With summary list

Lieutenant General Sir Matthew Tulloch

50 letters from South Africa 1899 - 1903 to his parents and other members of his family.

Date	From	To	1.
1 22.9.1899	Rome Aldershot	Mother	Must now get South African kit. Beaver Coy attd. Highland Brigade.
2 16.10.1899	Rome Aldershot.	Mother.	Embark Sunday next with H.L.I.
3 22.10.1899	Southampton	Mother.	Off tomorrow morning.
4 8.11.1899	S.S. Aquaine	Brother James.	Copy. Coaling at St Vincent Cape Verde. Large convoy.
5 17.11.1899	No 3 Beaver Coy S.A.F.F.	Brother J.P.	Voyage and situation in S.A.
6 —	Go Pond 1 Div Beaver Coy 9 Bde Orange Riv.	Brother Bryan	"Wrote last home from Mafeking"
7 —		Mother —	Operations and Country Preparations for Belmont.
8 28.12.1899	9th Beaver Coy. Modder River	Sister Christina	Copy. Adverse Operations - Belmont. Graspan - Many wounded.
9 7.12.1899	9 Beaver Coy. 9th Bde. Modder River	Sister Nelly.	Copy. Country - Interrupted rail communication.
10 9.12.1899	Beaver Coy 9th Bde. Modder River	Uncle John	Copy. Hell after battle. Food good water bad.

11 17. 12. 1899	Beaver Coy 9th Bde. Modder River	Father	Copy - "Awful show of Monday last". Description of Magersfontein and defeat of Highland Brigade December 11th.
12 20. 12. 1899	Beaver Coy. Modder River	Mother	Refers to Magersfontein and other operations in South Africa - Description of wounds.
13 5 Jan '00	Beaver Coy 9th Bde. Modder River	Sister Masa	Minor operations Camp life, country etc.
14 10 Jan 1900	Beaver Coy. 9th Bde. Modder River	Mother.	Camp life. dull. Photo "day after Magersfontein"
15 25 Jan 1900	No 3 Beaver Coy 9th Bde. Modder River	Mother	Cases of bad enteric. Two days holiday to Orange River.
16 29 Jan 1900	No 3 Beaver Coy 1 Div.	Cousin	Now up at Kroonstadt. Bethmen and de Wet. Rail interruptions.
17 —	No 3 Beaver Coy 1 Div	Brother Bryan	"Trying to get to China". "Kitchener here and everybody Hell".

18 14. Feb. 1900	P.M.O. S.A.F.F. Modder River.	Mother.	Copy and original. Movements and operations Kimberley relieved.
19 28 Feb 1900.	No 3 Beaver Cor. Kimberley.	Brother James	Original and copy of part. "People in Kimberley look fat and well". Much interest.
20 18 March 1900	No 3 Beaver Cor 9th Bde. Kimberley.	Father	"Suppose rejoicing at home over Lord Roberts very great". Much interest and depressing
21 March April	—	Sister Nelly.	Copy. Describes operations and treks - country - farms.
22 21 April 1900	Modder River	Sister Teresa.	Has been "very seedy". Bad luck being sent to Modder River
23 27 April 1907	Modder River	Mother	All right now. Expecting attack. Has to make medical arrangements.
24 18 June	3 Beaver Cor. 9 Bde 1 Div. Bloemfontein	Father	"Have not yet got to Kronstad line only open today" War does not seem anything like over.
25 16 July.	3 Beaver Cor. 9 Bde 1 Div. Kronstad.	Uncle William	Trekking all over country guarding convoys. Good grass - well stocked farms.

26 16 July.	Kroonstadt.	Sister Elsie	Copy. Describes operations 4 Orders to go to Transvaal.
27 27 July.	No 3 Beaver Coy.	Brother Tom	Journey from Kroonstadt to Springsdorp. Describes operations.
28 8 August.	No 3 Beaver Coy. ? Iggersfontein	Mother Mother	Original; half letter 2 copies; describing moves and operations
29 28 August.	Beaver Coy. 9th Bde 1 Div.	Sister Christina	Got Mafeking refreshing. Taking over Carrington's force. Beautiful well watered country.
30 14 Oct.	Gopmo. 1 Div.	Sister Elsie.	Caption Vaalani River between Ruskenberg and Mafeking. Lovely place. Boers as a fighting force are done. Trouble with Boer women
31 25 Oct.	Botha's Farm near Leeuwt		Copy. "Continue epistle instead of starting new one." Some sheeping. 5th Yeomanry "in mess". Flirtation with Miss Mimi Botha & others.
32	Gopmo 1 Div Near Leeuwt. Yakobsdaal	Sister	"Western part of Free State "is up" again". In Botha's farm with severely wounded.

33 28 Nov 1900	C/o Pmo 1 Div Lichtenburg	Mother	Christmas letter. Flirtations with Dutch damsels. War keeps au-Skeyn at bottom of all troubles.
34 28 Nov 1900.	C/o P.M.O. 1 Div Lichtenburg.	Aunt Bella.	Been dashing all over western Transvaal for last 3 or 4 months. Concentration of bitter Boer families.
35 5 Jan 1901	C/o P.M.O 1 Div Vryburg.	Sister Christina	Divorcing coming South owing to troubles in Northern part of Cape
36 21. Feb. 1901	Vryburg Hospital	Sister Christina	Here in charge of hospital and part of railway. Wonder when we shall catch de Wet.
37	Vryburg Bechuanaland	Mother	Sowing seeds in garden keeping hens.
38 4. April '01	Vryburg Hosp'l.	Mother	Miss Hill, Station Postmaster's home. Ask her to stay. Twice mentioned B.P.'s despatch
39 25 October	Mulutang Hosp Vryburg	Father	No news. Tension life with Columns going out

40 31. 10. 01	Vryburg Hospital	Mother	Still getting "Graphic" addressed No 3 Beaver Coy. Cleared to Lesist 12 months ago. Great excitement at breaking of Redvers Buller.
41 13. 12. 01	Military Hospl Vryburg.	Father	Very hot Summer. In very heart of rebels here Van Zyl and Van de Merwe
42 14. 2. '02	Military Hospital Vryburg.	Father	Visit to Kuruman an oasis in desert. War making strides towards a conclusion.
43 15. 3. 02.	Vryburg Bechuanaland	Uncle William	Visit to Kuruman. associated with W. Livingstone Operation in which his General was "Scuppered". Most Gallant man in this Country.
44 6. 6. 02.	S.A.C. Hospital Heidelberg	Father	Suppose Great rejoicing at Game over, peace declaration Upon full of Amnestied Boers.
45 26. 6. 02.	S.A.C Hospital Heidelberg.	Sister Elsie	Just heard Coronation festivities to be put off. S.A.C. in State of chaos.

46 30. 7. '02	S.A.C. Hospital Heidelberg	Brother William	7 . Advising him not to come out to South Africa and describing conditions
47 2. 8. 02.	S.A.C. Hospital Heidelberg	Brother Bryan	
48 6. 9. 02.	S.A.C. Hospital Volksrust.	Mother	Care of his kit, uniform etc at home. All of old pattern. Asks for medical text books to be sent. Describes row with O.C. Troops
49 29. 10. 02	S.A.C. Volksrust.	Sister Thasa.	If any sign of S.A.C. medical dept. becoming permanent, shall stick to it.
50 26. 4. '03.	S.A.C. Heidelberg.	Father	Moved up here to be Divisional M.O. Shall stick it out in this country as long as I can.

1

ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS,
ALDERSHOT.

22. 9. 99.

My dear Lanna.

I am afraid I cannot help any longer getting my South Africa kit whether I go or not – as if we mobilize I shall not have time to get it.

Will you therefore write to Holt & Co – as I asked.

My Bearer Company is to be attached to the Highland Brigade – so if there is any fighting you may be sure we will be in the

think of it.

I met two boys curiously yesterday who were at school with me at Sedbergh.

The major in charge of our Bearer Co. was with the 90th years ago when Robbie married Mary - curious isn't it. Great excitement here.

Love to all -

Yr affec Son -

Matt. H. G. Holt.

I will keep a diary to amuse you when I am back.

2

ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS,
ALDERSHOT.

16. 10. 99.

My dear Emma

I hear at last that we are to embark on Monday next at Southampton with the Highland Lt Inf. and am very thankful. I have had an awful cold & feel very seedy lately.

We have just bought £30 of tinned vegetables – sausages etc etc.

for ourselves - as a variation on tough "trek ox" and "biltong" - Our reserve men have been very slow in coming in - but lots of them are here now. Our people in South Africa evidently don't mean to run any risks until we have enough men absolutely to squash the Boers.

I have got an excellent outfit everything of the best - and have paid almost everything but Flight - who has not even sent in his bill - which I think is wonderful considering the enormous amount of stuff that must be owing him over this campaign. The army tailors must be simply making fortunes - as everything must be got before you start. All the things I have behind will arrive early next week - I will have my gold lace all wrapped in yellow paper - and will send you

the keys - marked - of uniform case
& box of my jack boots etc the boots should
be taken out occasionally and cleaned
in case they get mildewed as they
are all quite good. and expensive.
We wear nothing but brown in a
campaign with our khaki and
are hung all over with water bottle -
Entrenchment case - glasses - revolver -
ammunition pouch - sword and belt
and haversack. in fact look like a
travelling pedlar - and you certainly
wouldn't recognise me.
I rather expect that I shall turn up
again next summer for a day or two
fishing yr offer so rate Fell

Southampton. 22. 10. 99.

Dear Mother.

Am off to-morrow morning. Came here unexpectedly to-day so mislaid my uniform cases – which will turn up at home.
Also my gold belts etc. I want to be wrapped up and put away in an old pillow case.
All my boots should be taken out and cleaned occasionally. Also Johnny's saddle which I will not want till the war is over.
My steel scabbard must have vaseline left on it – thick – or it will rust.
I don't know how much I have overdrawn – but Holt appears to be all right.
Except Flight – I owe not more than ten or fifteen pounds altogether.

I sent my watch home yesterday - and anybody can wear it - but Johnny ought to have it if I don't turn up again myself. Gwyther has given me a very nice wrist watch.

Give my love to all the girls and to Parson James and his wife and to Willy.

With best love.

Yr very affectionate son.

Lalt. H. G. Fell.

If they write from Aldershot for any money to cover the packing etc of my things - you might send it - but I think I left them enough.

1st letter

SS. Aurania
Nov 8th

4

Dear James

I thought I wld write to you as you will be wedded when you get this – send it on to the family – I would have sent you a present if I had had more time I wrote home from St Vincent – We had quite an exciting time there H. M. S. Diadem was lying in the harbour – got a telegram late on monday evening to say we had left Lagsmith & that our ship was to get all the coal she could and leave at once for Cape Town – The niggers had been so slack they had only got about 400 tons on board during the day – So at 9 at night with most terrific cheers 200 blue jackets were brought on from the Diadem, with their band. The band of the 1st received them with Rule Britannia & they started to help in the coaling

they began by wiping out every nigger in the place - most amusing it was & created the most awful row the band & pipers played all night for them & the whole ship got absolutely black - By 12 the next day we had 1800 tons of coal on board which chaos the way they worked - During the night the Malta P. & O. the Pavonia of the Cunard & Mongolian of the Allan line & 2 big colliers arrived all the liners with troops - a fine sight seeing all these big ships lying together - I went on shore in the morning - It is a very clean little town on a volcanic waterless island. Very hot but a beautiful trade wind breeze. Oranges - bananas grow on another island close to it - the best bananas I ever ate in my life - There are a good many English as the cable lands there & it is a large coaling station most of the coal being owned by English firms - There are about 3 Portuguese on the island including a governor & the rest of them are natives from W. africa - The place in the old days was a large depôt where the niggers were kept till there were plenty to take over to America

By four in the afternoon we were ready to start & I think I never saw a more splendid sight in my life. We steamed out close past the other troopers & within about 100 yds of the Diadem. as we passed each ship our band played the march past of the regiment on it accompanied by terrific cheers. The whole of the crew of the Diadem was on deck & the capt. & all the officers on the bridge & we gave them "auld lang syne" as we went past & could hear the bluejackets yelling a couple of miles down the bay. It quite made one feel lumpy about the throat. You at home all through this will of course know far more about what is going on than I shall except in my immediate neighbourhood The idea seems to be to march 3 columns up - 1 from Durban 1 from P. Eliz. & 1 from Cape Town. The H. Brigade is expected to go up from Port Elizabeth & I shall be with them but if we are back at Pietermaritzburg - I expect we shall all be sent on to Durban - However it is no good guessing as we shall know all about it in another 2 days. but I am sorry not to be able to

give me address - Please give my love to your spouse & dilate a little on the exceedingly handsome being that she has missed the opportunity of viewing - I shall go a trout fish on Ullswater the first spring after I come back to England & if all the trouters not landed by that time I shall tackle t' last ~~man~~ man. For all I know it may be six years before I see t' north country again - & there is no doubt that no Fell will come back home keener to see it again than

Yr. affec. brother

Matt. H. Fell.

5

No 3 Bearer Company.
R.A.M. Corps.
South African Field Force.

Nov 17th.

Dear J. P.

Thought I wd write and let you know how I am getting on.
We left Southampton on the Armania with the H.L.I under Major Kelham and had a beautiful passage to St Vincent in the Cape Verde where we coaled. It is a curious volcanic barren island. Portuguese but run by the English. We were told to hurry up and coal quick so the "Diadem" lying there sent over 200 blue jackets and they put about 1400 tons on board in 18 hrs. Shine was pretty good.
I was much amused with the flying fish all the way as I had never seen them before.
We sighted land at 7 a.m on Nov 14th and by 10 a.m were getting well into Table Bay. Table mountain looks very fine from the sea and very glad we were to see it as we had not seen land

for ten days. General Wauchope who commands the Scotch Brigade was aboard & expected to be sent to Port Elizabeth but we were told to disembark at once & come up here to De-Aar - leaving the H.L.I at different places to look after the line.
Lord Methuen is at Orange River Bridge & is getting the guards Brigade etc together for the relief of Kimberley - & we are to wait here till the Black Watch, Seaforths & Highlanders come up & then go up through to Free State. That at least seems to be idea at present.
Of course you will know all the news long before you get this. But at present all the country we hold is a line curved from Ladysmith through Cradock to De-Aar & Orange River Bridge.
Ladysmith is isolated - so are Kimberley & Mafeking. Cradock & De-Aar may be cut off any day if it is done quickly - but the Boers on this side do not seem to have the impudence of the Transvaalers though they are said to hate the English more.
The Boers did not lose anything like the number of men at Glencoe they were reported to have done and no guns were taken at all - and if we did win those fights at all they were not enough to prevent the investment of Ladysmith - which has a lot of Kaffs to give to the Navy.
This place is a base of supplies - and the Boers if they had come down here a week or two ago and blown up a few of the little culverts along the line south of this which they could easily have done would have delayed our advance for weeks.
There are now at Orange River - 5th Fusiliers - Yorks L.I. - part of 9th & 21st Lancers - 4 field batteries - Howitzer battery - the Scots & Goldstream Guards - & the Bridging Telegraph Battalions R.E. so they have nearly enough to advance on Kimberley.
This country is about 4000 feet up - very dry and covered with a sort of stunted fodder bearing stuff - which feeds thousands of sheep etc. Every two miles or so of this flat veldt you come to a range of rocky hills called Koppje's - which the Boers always occupy and from which we seem unable to drive them.
The fact of the fight at Belmont a few miles from the River the other day - they say there were never more than 500 or a hundred well posted

Boers: which will be magnified into thousands in the English Papers. However they killed Col Kent Falcon & we evidently got into a tight place.

It is very hot here & the dust and dust storms are awful and I am pretty sure as I am feeling a great deal from sun. Still I am very fit and hope to keep so all through.

Let me know how you are getting on. and hope you are fit and well

Yr affec brother
Capt. H.G. Fell.

The ponies they supply us with here are hardy little devils about 13.2 hds. grey or bay coloured. and almost untaken. It takes me about ten minutes to get on to mine – and I never know when I shall fall off.

6

c/o P.M.O
1st Division
S.A. 7.7

Dear Bryan.

I shall probably send you £25 or 30 about Xmas. which I want you to shove into something or other - that is to say if the war goes on so long and I think it will - I raised £250 from that Jackson when I went into the service two years ago - & as I pay 6% for it - it is a bit of a drag on £200 a year - & so I shall try & get it paid off. Flight I shall have paid off by the end of October - only I shall want about £50 worth of new stuff as soon as the war is over and I have to get the new pattern R.F.A. kit.

I wrote home last from Ladysmith. where I was v. angry with only getting two letters out of five weeks accumulated mails. We left Ladysmith about 3 weeks ago. I don't know the date or day of week at present so can't tell exactly. We went out East & South of the Modjadji & half of the division to the north of it - met Lord Grade with the

Bushman outside Ottoshoop & drove off a commando about 600 strong & took about 50 prisoners & 25 wagons. We then marched ~~both~~ north west to Ottoshoop & halted for orders from Pretoria. The Bushman goldfield is a most striking place. I got some nice gold specimens. A bare barren country. volcanic rock all on the surface & no vegetation but stunted mimosa except along the river where there are some very pretty trees & weeping willows & peaches & pears all out in bloom. The Bushmen are dd glad to get away from Lenington. I believe some of them wd have shot him sooner a later over the Vlaakfontein business.

at Ottoshoop we got orders to go south to where Schwezer Reineke below trying on the Harts River.

The country the whole of the way is flat with occasional clumps of mimosa but frequently not a tree for 20 miles. the grass still burnt up & dry & water only very occasionally & then v. bad after Moos Heuvel fontein. In fact to day we got to Barbers Pan we did 28 miles because there was not enough water. The Harts River is absolutely dry at this time of the year so the only water is from wells which are enough to supply about 50 people but nothing like for 5000 men & beasts.

The day before yesterday we were marching in search of water & met Mr Tolly du Beers commando doing the same. He went like blazes but our yeomanry got 25 of his wagons & a 15 pounder taken at Colenso and a maxim & 25 prisoners and only had two wounded. One lot of yeomanry especially the 3rd Yorkshires & the 5th Northumberlands are awfully good but devils to loot. Some of the wagons had women & children on them many of them sick so I was asked to go & do what I could for them. So I found a charming & buxom damsel who could talk English. Miss Annie Viljoen & she came & interpreted & I gave all the kids pills & powders & made

the fat old Vrouws roar with laughter at my wits
One old barrel shaped female sitting on a feather bed on the top of a wagon when the yeomanry were in pursuit fired four shots at Clayton in the 5th yeomanry. who took to wagon & kept him running round until another fellow got up and caught the old girls arms. I told her she was a "mooi meisje" which means "pretty girl" which delighted the old trout. Annie Viljoen was quite prepared for an affectionate farewell after it was all over but there were some very jealous looking women watching that I dared.

The countersign tonight is "Piddle" - we are supposed to be going through the English lines. & I suppose it was put in instead by mistake. anyhow the men are shrieking with delight over it & I don't know what the sentries will do when they challenge for laughter. We have got 7000 sheep & goats and 1500 cattle with us so we rather like Abraham.

I feel as if a week in town & a most horrid bust would do me more good than anything at present.
Remember me to Lavin & the kid
yr off. bother
Walter Stell

Bearer Co. 9th Brigade.
Orange River

1

My dear Mamma

We were moved up here hurriedly yesterday from De Aar. The Guards brigade is now Lord Methuen's reserve of the Division. The Northamptons. 1st Fusiliers. ½ North Lancashire. Yorks Lt Inf. & Munsters Fusiliers. We belong to the latter brigade now. & they form the advanced guard. ½ of our bearers are with the advance every day. & we are going up to Kimberley probably to-morrow or Tuesday by forced marches.

Officers are wearing menus belts & carrying rifles. and all badges of rank. medal ribbons etc are cut off & buttons dulled.

There will probably be a big fight at Belmont and at the Modder River where the bridge is broken down.

I am very well so far. The heat very great in the middle of the day. Water v. bad. Food good but all tinned.

The army corps has all got mixed up
We hope to be in Kimberley in about 40
days.

Love to all Raffaela

Lett Hazell

Yesterday Miss Hall's brother was here
wounded.

(Copy 2nd letter
Octavia M. Bell)

Beaver Co
9th Brigade
S. African Field
Force

Modder River
Dec 2nd

Dear Christina

Since I last wrote from Orange River, we have had an awful time of it and there is far more to tell than I can possibly write about. You will know from the papers all about Belmont, Enslin or Graspan and Modder River Battles. At the first two we drove the Dutch out of tremendously strong positions & at the last we very nearly got a buster ourselves, attacking a very large force with strong artillery, strongly entrenched across an absolutely open plain, not even knowing

that the place was occupied until we got close to it, and but for our artillery we should have been beaten. It all looks like something wrong in high places - I have as you may imagine seen plenty of horrible sights & have had some very hard times, unwashed, unshaved, bad water, very hot sun. You would never recognize Thomas Atkins here as the same man that the Queen reviewed last summer. I have had plenty of bullets whistle past me & at Modder River 2 shells burst with 15 or 20 ft but I dont think I was in any worse funk than anybody else & not so bad as some. The finest show from a spectacular point of view was the attack on the Koppies at Graspan - there are three in a row like the Flat Hill - the Boers were shelled off one of them by the artillery - perfectly beautiful watching the shrapnel bursting along the hill side & the infantry went up one side of the middle one the Marines in front. It was splendid to see - We were about 2000 yds away & got dozens of bullets around us. The Marine Artillery lost 46 out of 48 men & most of their wounded were shot in 3 or 4 places which shows what a terrific fire the Boers kept up. We found one Marine on the top after the fight shot in 2 places - dead as a herring & plastered with blood - with

his bayonet & about half his rifle stuck through a Boer the only one I think who has stood for a bayonet – My first experience of a battle at Belmont was bad enough & I thought the sight of the poor fellows lying about yelling for water & covered with blood was the most sickening thing I had ever seen. after Graspan – where our Beaver Co collected all the wounded – the mules were so done that we had to camp out on the field with about 500 wounded with very little water & very few blankets & I can tell you pretty miserable it was as we were five miles from the troops & expected to be taken prisoners all night. Today we heard that the Guards

Beaver Co was mentioned in despatches & if true it is a damned shame as we have done two thirds of the work – I only got 3 hours sleep between the time we left Witteputs & the day after Graspans – four days – & was so done I could hardly stand. This battle here was of course about as big a mistake as there ever was & our losses are enormous. The finest thing I saw here was the 45th Field Battery come into action at about 1000 yds from the bridge. They came along a ridge behind which we were lying at full gallop from the extreme right & turned sharp to the right – straight for the village – unlimbering & coming into action

just like aldershot. They simply knocked the village to pieces but had 3 officers & 14 men killed & wounded & 23 horses killed & could barely get out of action. The Naval Brigade have some very good guns here and kept down the fire of the Dutch Long Tom's for half the day. The Blue Jackets work like demons as as they pull their guns about themselves - The wounds here were not so severe as at Belmont where we had only about 10 out of 120 cases at the station able to sit up - an enormous lot of body hits & bullets through the thigh bone - very bad wounds - The 91st got heavily here, though they did not do anything much but of course their kilts make them a splendid mark. The Loyal North Lancashires are here and look as fit as fiddles I was getting some Boer wounded they were guarding out of a house yesterday & told one of the sentries I was "frae North Lancashire" & that I came "frae laal Preston" & the sentry beamed with delight & told me that he was from Carnforth & had been up before "John Fell" at Lancaster - The others all came from Preston. Compared with the 9th Brigade of 5th Fusiliers 58th Northamptons Kings own Yorks - Lt Infantry & Loyal North Lancashires, the guards look absolutely worn out wrecks - But they will

get fit soon I expect. a sudden come down from luxury to bully beef, biscuit & bad water does not suit them.

Love to all

Your affectate brother

Matt Fell –

Now dont say I never write as I think I have been very good – We are expecting a terrific fight between Ken & Kimberle – You might send Tom on my letters.

Copy -
5th letter -

9

Modder River
Bearer Company
9th Brigade
South African
Field Force

Dec 4th 1899

My dear Nelly

I enclose a stamp from a letter from Major Senton - I doubt if there is any chance of my going to Egypt now as even if we finish this war off in six months we shall have to keep a tremendous garrison out here I have not yet had a letter from home but suppose it is because they were addressed to Port Elizabeth. We have been here eight days waiting for the sappers to get the train across the river They have been working like de-

mons as they had to make an earth cutting 400 yards long and 12 feet deep to get the line down to the river level as the railway bridge has been so damaged by the Boers that it will want new girders - It is rumoured that we start with four days food to march through to Kimberley tomorrow, but ofcourse you will see all that sort of thing in the papers while I am writing - It is a funny thing being out here and knowing nothing of what is going on except in one's immediate neighbourhood. Everyday we hear that the Boers have cut the line behind us - and every day there is a skirmish about three miles out and one or two troopers and Scouts or mounted Infantry lost. This place is most fertile all down the river and all that it wants to make the country fertile is water as it is it makes one wonder why we want to get hold of it at all —

Lord Methuen went out driving yesterday - He is nearly well and will resume command on our advance - I am rather seedy today with dysentery - due to bad water and the amount of sand we have to swallow with our food - The most killing sight here is to see the Argyle & Sutherland Highlanders coming down to the

Field Hospitals to have the back of their legs dressed - dozens of them hardly able to crawl and holding up their kilts behind to keep them off the sores - They lay on their faces eight hours on the day of the battle and consequently whenever the wind blew up went the kilts and they are terribly blistered by the sun - This is I suppose rather shocking to tell but would do for a poem.

I expect you cant read half my letters but I cant get ink except to address them - We have got a very big force here now but I am afraid there will be a terrible battle in a few days and a great lot killed -

FLAM HOW,
BLYTHESTON,
LANCASHIRE.

The Boers at this place with their smokeless powder were impossible to see and we had a very narrow shave of having a fight again on the 29th Nov. I am very sunburned and dirty - but have no doubt in spite of all an elegant appearance. Please send an occasional letter of mine on to Tom - I will try and write to him if I get time - There are about 10.000 Boers at Jacobsdal on our right flank and about

the same between us and Kim-
-berley and it is just possible
that we might wait till gen-
-eral Gatacre gets up a bit
and draws some of them off-
all this is of course pure
guessing - as we are told
nothing very naturally
till the order comes to
move -
The nights here are perfectly
lovely and the days but for
the heat and dust would not
be so bad -
give my love to all
the family -

Your affect^te brother
Matt - Fell

I will send my diary
home when I get to Kim-
berley if we are able to
post letters there -

10

Modder River. Decr 1st

Bearer Company
1st Brigade
S. A. Field Force

My dear Uncle John

I thought you perhaps might like a letter from out here - as at present we have very little to do - though we may of course move out of his place at any minute. We are all wishing we could read the accounts of the battle here in the English papers just to see how much was kept dark - Camp life here is very dull because you cannot go more than a mile or two without being fired at - & the railway line gets

cut behind us every other day which blocks letters etc. as the only things they let through are supply and sick trains if they are at all pressed - We are wonderfully well fed, fresh meat everyday - fresh killed beef or frozen mutton - bread made of a rough brown flour but not bad, biscuit & cape jam twice a week - lime juice twice a week - occasionally potatoes and tinned vegetables.
The water all through has been bad - full of sand and so thick that it blocks a Berkefeldt filter at once. after a battle they give a lot of rum all round. At Orange River station they have an enormous quantity of stores - but are moving a lot up here because of the difficulty of keeping the line open - all our transport is run by mules which were at first a great nuisance as a lot of them had never been in harness before. Each wagon has two niggers who get £4-10 a month to look after & drive the mules. & each unit has a white conductor who looks after the niggers - & nobody dare curse them or kick them whatever they do for fear they should bolt - One of the funniest sights I ever saw in my life was at the battle here. I was lying with some of our men behind a ridge when a q1st man came & asked when

Modder River.
Dec 20th.

Beaver Co. 12
9th Brigade
Sth African Field Force.

My dear mother.

I am writing to wish you a merry Xmas & Happy New year. It is hardly like Xmas here. The heat in the middle of the day unbearable. & the sand blowing making everything filthy & filling ears eyes.
I wrote Daddy an account of the attack on the Magersfontein Ridge. so you will have seen it. The deplorable mistake which led the Highlanders into such a trap naturally has had a bad effect as Lord Methuen had done better than anyone else up to that. But for that mistake we should not have lost ½ to men & might even have taken some part of the Boer position. We are now stuck fast with a ring of redoubts

all around us & the railway fortunately still open. The engineers have done splendid work in repairing it & bringing it across the river here.

Our guns & the Boer guns have a little duel every day. About 4.30 every morning one is woken by a Boer shell bursting on the ridge above the camp or else one of our naval guns banging off at them – but one gets quite used to it. You must have been terribly disheartened by the news of Redvers Bullers reverse at the Tugela as we were here & there is no doubt Orange has become very impatient since our show here. The English papers of a week or two back are very amusing reading by the light of the present – they were so terribly sanguine & also ignorant of the real state of affairs & the Boer armament.

We have about 13 or 14000 Boers at present sitting in a semicircle round us in a strongly entrenched position. Just this minute two shells have burst about 2000 yds away on the ridge above us.

Round Kimberley there must be 5000 or 6000 Boers to keep the garrison in, & unless they have plenty of food we shall never relieve them, as we cannot advance without another division. I expect you were sorry to hear about Guy Gregson. I had not seen him since we left the Aurania.

By the way you have never told me how much I overdrew at Holts. it must have been over £50 as the day before I left I paid the interest on the money I raised 18 months ago & drew £10 for cash on the voyage out etc.

I get £16.10 a month & Holts are sending half of it out here, but whether they are stopping the rest for my overdraft or not I cannot say. We have very few expenses except in a standing camp like this, where everybody opens a set of mess. I am very glad I got some good pairs of boots before I left. They are indispensable and cannot be got out here. The people of the country wear a sort of soft, untanned hide slipper called "veldschoon" which must be very cool but last no time at all if hard used.

Tell Bryan I saw Carrie Tait in the Black watch. He

was shot through the thigh. but no bones broken so will soon be well. The Mauser bullet if it does not hit bone makes a very easily mended wound. You feel may men recover when shot through the stomach & chest. who in the Martini Henry days would certainly have died.

Some of the Boers are armed with Martinis and a few of them use sporting bullets which make horrid wounds.

The burying of the dead here after the fight was a terrible business. many of them had lain out three days in a tropical climate so you can imagine the state of affairs. The Presbyterian Padre aided by copious libations of "whisky" did it all. The last night he was out burying he got very tight & nearly fought the R. Catholic padre when he got back to camp. If I can manage it I will send home the Queens Chocolate. if I get any as I daresay the boys might sunday he work something as recreation, & besides I should like it kept.

Young Douglas the doctor of the Black Watch got an awfully nasty wound in the face from a piece of a shell. disfigures him for life - & a very nice chap. Love to the family.

Yr affte son

Late H.G. Fell

(S. M. Feb
copy)

Modder River
Dec 20th

Beaver Co
9th Brigade
South African Field
Force

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Love to the family

Your very affec. son

Matt. H. G. Fell.

collect Transvaal & Free State stamps - as after this war - all S.A. will have to raise stamp. I had a lot of letters from Cape Town Retreat - but had to give them up - so I have got the stamps.
When we get into the Free State I will look a Post office if I can get at one -

Beaver Company
9th Brigade -
South African Field Force

13

Modder River Jan 5th

My dear Mama

I will send you a cheque for £4 before long but cannot at present as I don't know what Holts are doing about my pay for certain.
If I can get my diary in to the envelope I will send it on but have only kept one to the middle of December as I got too lazy.
So far as I can make out we may stay here for a long time so as to keep the Boer force in front of us where it is and allow another division to get round without much opposition. But we really know nothing about our future movements whatever.
The men have really done very well considering that the large majority have as yet never actually seen a Boer - they keep so well hidden. Nothing would knock up their spirits like getting well into them "we're bagging" - It is what the English soldier lags for - but with very rarely get the chance of with modern rifles. He can't get near enough

Life here is getting terribly monotonous. The dust storms are awful & the heat some days simply stifling. The naval guns plug away at the Boer trenches every day & the Boers plug back & have got the range of some of our positions exactly.

Occasionally we get an odd man hit but very rarely. It would be awfully sickening to get killed by one of these chance shells. Such very long odds against it & yet always a possibility. One can get some fine fish in the river called "Tugela" not bad to eat but with a lot of small bones. Also some cheerful ugly brutes with long suckers out of their heads & heads quite flat & very broad. V bad to eat & made me very ill one night. I think when the next move on our side comes it will be via Jacobsdal to Bloemfontein & another column will go up from Orange River to Bloemf. I believe George Barrington is here out this Regt.

What will happen to us I cant say but we may get split up & sent on. I hope sent on as you have a splendid view of a fight with a Beaten Company. I was awfully sorry about Louis Hughes being killed at Colenso. He was a marked man in our corps & an awfully nice chap & very good to me at Aldershot. Pro. Sergt's letter is right here in the Seaforth. I met him the other night. Dined with us.

It would excite Tessa's military spirit tremendously to see a battery going into or coming out of action with all the great bad horses tearing out at full gallop & the shells kicking up the dust all round.

At this point the barber - who is a soldier in the next tent arrived & cut my hair which consisted in running the horse clippers all over my head. It looks awful for a few days till it grows a bit. There is great diversity of opinion here about Lord Kitchener. But most people seem to think he is a bit mad to attack the places he does & in the way he does.

The Boers are tremendously strong at Ladysmith now. Three lines of trenches & lots of ammunition so built round with sand bags that it is only by a fluke our naval fellows can hit them. We have two big naval guns on the ridge above

the camp. As soon as you see the smoke of a Boer gun bang goes one of them & the shells always burst very close to the place they aimed at. In fact at 5 miles they shoot as accurately as a rifle at 1000 yds. only the difficulty is the difficulty of seeing what to fire at at that distance. There ought to be some great news from Natal during the next ten days. I hope to goodness it will be successful. General French only seems to have done consistently well.

The colonials had a show up here all to themselves the other day. and are now so full of bumph that I believe they would tackle the Magersfontein Ridge by themselves. They took 43 prisoners mostly rebel farmers - and we are all wondering whether a few will be shot as an example. All the colonials up here seem to be Boer spies.

Love to Tasar & the family. Remember me to Miss Cox. Kiss Lily Twomlow & Alice Budden for me with a brotherly kiss. yr affec brother

Lab Felt.

If Mr Williams is still at Moordown - remember me to him & tele him that I will come and stagger his working men's club with horrible stories - when I get back again.

cannot help the dirty paper -

14

Ton. 10th. 1900

Beaver Company
9th Brigade -
South African Field Force

Golden River -

My dear Mother.

I enclose a picture out of a paper in which you will see my noble carcase. As you will see by the address we are still here with the 9th Brigade - but may get a change soon as some of the brigades coming out have no Beaver Cos -

Life up here is pretty dull - much the same as when I last wrote - only that our camp is now south of the river - & west of the railway

They are building a line round to the west to go round the hills in our front. & the brigade has come across to look after it at night.

We know of course much less here of what's happening than you do at home - except about our immediate neighbourhood. I heard the Boer guns bombarding Kimberley to-day & we are afraid it may have fallen. There will be many a hundred poor fellows killed out here before this war is ended. The Transvaalers are terribly bitter & will fight to the

again.

We have put up our operating tent as a mess

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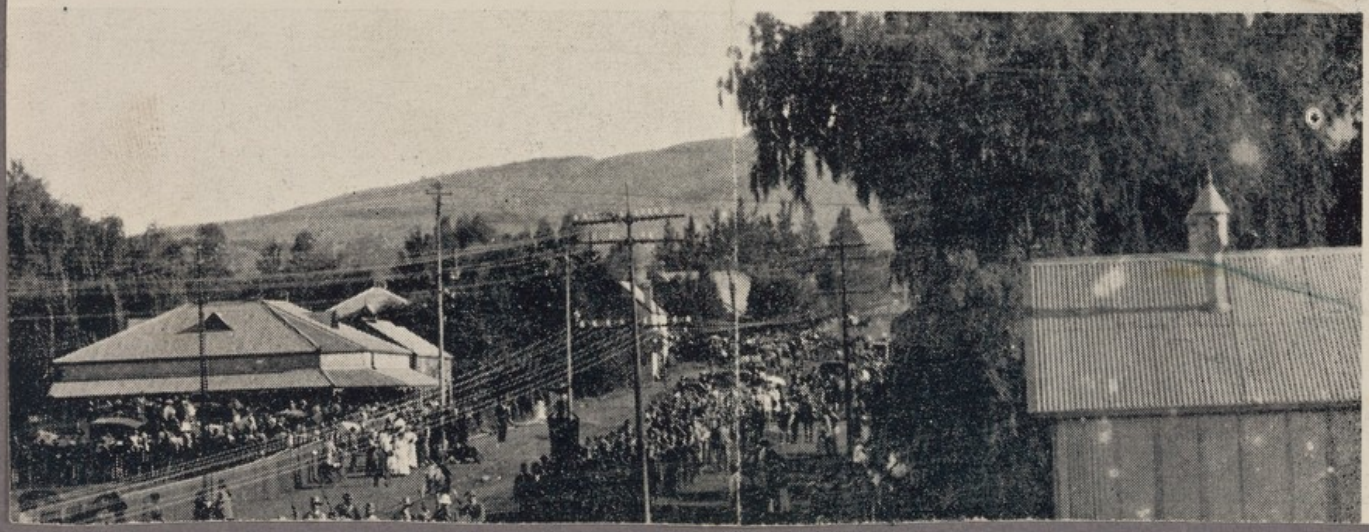
Our camp is on the flat plain south of the river which we attacked - Nov 28th badly chosen in a way as 150 yds in front is where about 50 losses were buried after the fight - & 150 yds behind are the Boer trenches - in which about every 100 yds on this side of the line you find the remains of a Boer covered only about six inches deep. The climate is so dry that they dont smell much after the first week or so & the ants soon clean the bones. I shall have plenty of letters to amuse you with when I get back again.

We have put up our operating tent as a mess

Day after ~ agent taken
Removing wounded Hdrs to Hospital train
Pile of kits - rifles etc

L OF GENERAL KOCH.



tent now & some of the regts have built houses of bricks for themselves Boer houses -
We feed very well - good rations supplemented by tinned stuff we buy ourselves - & fresh milk & occasional butter & eggs - latter pretty expensive - It costs about 5/ a day - food & drink - We drink whiskey & limejuice & put all our water through a Berkefeld filter - Some beer came up for the men at Xmas - not bad stuff & I got two quarts myself and ~~naturally enjoyed the unaccustomed taste~~ but had a bad mouth next day - You might send me a Cardigan jacket sometime during February as the weather begins to get cold at night about then - I have plenty of socks - good boots - & flannel shirts which shrink a lot but will last me another six months - One gets filthy in the dust storms out here - & eyes full of grit -
We are anxiously awaiting news from Natal - Ladysmith must be having a v bad time - & I hope we don't get cut off like it -

Yr affte son
Walter Fell

Just had a letter from Uncle John Buck.

No 3 Beaver Co
9th Brigade
S. African Field Force

15

Modder River. Jan 25th.

My dear Mother.

I hope the family's influenza has got all right again & that you & the pater are better. We are still much as we were here but daily expecting to hear of the relief of Ladysmith though I expect we shall lose 2 or 3000 killed & wounded in doing it. I should like to be over there as life here is very dull just as it has been for a month past. We have now got a number of bad cases of enteric fever here. This & the next two months are the worst for it out here. Ladysmith must have had most terrible sufferings.

I suppose you know all about poor Saunders Rachel. I saw him the day before he died. There is a midshipman called Saunders up here. Aunt Alexina wished me to see. Nice young chap. The same morning & evening shelling goes on & they have got the siege train 4·7 in guns

all banging away at the kopje.
I had two days holiday the other day - was sent down to Orange River with 10 convalescent officers - very interesting seeing Grasspan & Belmont again & all the troops down guarding the line - mostly colonials - Splendid looking men - Queenslanders especially - George Robertson is at Belmont. He was away with an expedition into the Free State when I went through. All at Orange River seem to expect Lord Roberts up this way & a move from here into the Free State with the division coming out - but of course all depends on events in Natal.
I got a very good dinner in the Refreshment Room at Orange River - China plates and glasses - which I had not seen since we landed out of Orange River - all our mess kit being travelled thro - They had plenty of fruit down there & I bought a box of pine apples which are much appreciated -
There are four civilian doctors at Orange River now - feeling a bit strange I think - and we have now got four nursing sisters up here for the enteric hospital.
The railway bridge is rapidly being repaired though of course the stone piers take a long time as all the stone has to be cut & quarried first. Esther's friends the Massys have a brother out here in the 1st Coldstreams. He is dining here to-night - a nice chap very like the tallest sister -
I was much amused to find myself travelling in a Lancaster Wagon to - Carriage - & to see the rails at Orange River - marked Barrow Hematite. I must write & tell John Greg. The 1st class carriages on this railway are awfully good & the engines excellent - but the line is bad as it is simply laid up hill & down dale & the gradients in places are very heavy.
Hector Macdonald has come up & the Highland Brigade are very pleased. He will probably have the gordons up from Enslin -
Mind you see Edward Polishes up my Jack Boots & Wellingtons occasionally as they are very expensive boots - Also look at the gold lace on

my tunic occasionally. It is quite new & ought not to tarnish if kept well wrapped up & dry. My mess kit is a good deal tarnished & does not matter so much.

Getting on much better with my boss now which is a good thing. I think it is because he is better fed here in a standing camp.

At Orange River I saw all our wounded Scandinavian officers for Ingersfontein when I dressed up for. They were delighted to see me again & I had a long talk with them. One of them was the son of a Roland in the Danish Army. A very nice man and thorough gentleman. He says he tends to Transvaal with Lord out as long as they have a man able to hold a rifle.

Love to all the family

Yr affectn

Lathbury.

I sent my diary to Elsie. Don't let her loose it & don't go letting everybody read it.

I have got the Lucas's Chocolate & will try & keep it like I get here.

16

No 3 Bearer Co.
9th Brigade
1st Division.

Sth Afri. – Field Force

Jan 29th 1900

My dear Maisie.

I thought I wd write & send you two or three stamps which you might like.

I am up at Kroonstadt and going to Ficksburg tomorrow when my Bearer Co is with Lord Methuen. This part of the country is in an extraordinary state. The Boers cut to line & blow up the bridges into impunity – Lord Methuen is more pursued by the Wet than pursuing him. Food is pretty scarce – plenty of meat & fresh meat but generally no milk or sugar in one's tea & coffee. Whisky 30/ a bottle. nothing

I suppose full accounts of the surrender of the Derby Militia at Rhenoster have got into the papers at home. We know here far less of what Lord Roberts is doing than you do.
Letters are a great trouble. I have missed a lot of mine & I am afraid there was a lot sent in to train the Boers burnt the other day. 200 bags of mails. 13 000 overcoats with a lot of ammunition & stuff.
I have put my name down to go to China so if I am lucky I shall get a turn. I suppose some of us will also have to go to West Africa where I hope Tom is all right.

much in the way of luxuries obtainable at any price. The men with Kruger and Piet De Wet & the Eastern Free States are caught & some of them shot & hung.
Lord Kitchener is here fussing everybody & himself. There are two miles of trucks unable to proceed north in the station and there is generally a set of dead lock. The temporary bridges made by the Engineers over the Vaal & Sand Rivers are wonderful concerns. The deviation over the Sand River wd make yr hair stand on end going over it in a train.
I have not seen Willy Parkin or any of the Cumberland yeomanry. They are about Pretoria somewhere.
There is rather good boating here but nobody nice to boat with.

This pen is awful & the ink worse. Collect 2½d. 4d & red 6d V.R.I. Freestate stamps. They have ceased issue & cannot be got up here.

Please give my love to Uncle John & Aunt Bella & any relations you may happen to see.

Yr affec cousin.

Arthur Hy Fell.

17

No 3 Bearer Co
9th Brigade
1st Division.
S. Africa Field Force.

Dear Bryan.

I enclose a few stamps. The 4d one has run out at present & whether more will be printed I cant say. I sent Elsie some sets of all but the 2½ & red 6d. which are the only really valuable ones but I am not going to buy them at 10/ apiece.

I am trying to get to China as I don't want to get stuck out here. I might even get out to the West Coast. Barring occasional expenses one has very few expenses out here. & I have paid all my bills but 7 light the long suffering.

Kroonstadt is an awful place at

present. Milk 2/6 a tin. Whisky 30/ a bottle & so on. owing to De Wet & his bally commando. He gets the line where he takes catches train loads of stuff. & takes up a few buckets into every truck that goes past. But I think he won't last long. There are four flying columns after him & it is really wonderful the way he escapes them and appears the day after in quite a different direction. I am going up to the Bethulie at the Orange Riv. & I believe we are going to reinforce Hilton Artillery with half our Brigade.

I am very fit & well but can feel myself developing into a second J. P. Felt. I am writing to Mrs Bush by this mail. I have come to the conclusion that absence makes the heart grow fonder so I am "making sicker" work.

a few V.R.I. stamps & an epistle just as a sort of reminder. How is Marion & the kid. I hope she & the baby are no more little Boyers.

I got rather in love with a Dutch frau in Bethulie because she couldn't talk English & I couldn't talk Dutch. so one day I had to squeeze her finger.

If you see Esther or Mrs Grey give them my love & tell them that I will write soon. Tell Mrs Grey that too war has reduced my belligerent spirit to a minimum and that if she will not accept the olive branch when I return I shall open my fire and entrench [illegible]

Kitchener is here going everybody shell all round. They say he is going to Stellenbosch Pretoria & Pretoria

To "Stellenbosch" perhaps you see the expression of home sense means out here to end

to the base. I am a better rider
now but have made one or two awful
exhibitions. I had an awful puter in the streets
in Kimberly off an Argentine brute frightened
by a steam tram & having taughed.
There are a lot of sick up above but we
can't get to them. I expect they will
end by going down the Pretoria Durban
line. Nobody here has had any news
of Bob Roberts for a fortnight & we
shall have to wait for the English papers
to get any. Altogether Active Service
after eight months of it isn't bad at times.
I shall want a complete new outfit as
I am in rags externally but have lots
of sweaters & socks so keep warm. The
nights are pretty nippy - ice on the water
every morning. My moustache hasn't grown
& I have a thick layer of dust all over it
which I find very warming. Like to Bess.
Give my love to aunts & uncles & to Bella
& my office brother
Yours affectionately
Bob

Where is the bold William.

18

B P. M. O.
South African
Field Force

Modder River
Feb 14th

My dear Mother

You will see from this that I am still in this beastly hole. Since I last wrote I have been out with the weapons down to Koodoosberg. We had a very hard day & were woken up at 2 in the night - started at 3-45 a.m. and did not get to Koodoosberg Drift till about 12 noon. The road was very bad in places as there are large patches of rough boulders and then miles of sandy veldt -

very hard work for the mules.

Macdonald evacuated the place at 6 p.m. and I returned with full wagons - as far as Frazer's drift which we reached about 12 midnight & had to sleep on the ground — very cold it was as I had not gone prepared to stay out the night — My pony was a good deal done as I was 14 hours on his back & he is not up to my weight — Lord Roberts left here two days ago after general French's column and we have heard heavy firing on our right flank which has resulted in the occupation of Jacobsdal but we know more here. 8 regts of cavalry - 4 Batt. R.H.A. & R.F.A. & two brigades of infantry formed

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here - To-
have been
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a prisoner
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charge
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and death
hope I
I began

(1) BO P.M.O.
S. Africa Field Force

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writing this we have heard of Kimberley relieved - a great battle round Jacobsdal and Magersfontein is evacuated. The Boers left it in a great hurry last night - and it is in a very filthy state and stinks - spades, picks, cartridges, food etc all over the place - I want to go over it myself to see the effect of our shelling - We are to pack up ~~to-night~~ at once and move out tonight

no time for more

Your affect^ate son

Matt. H. G. Fell.

(1)

B.O. P.M.O.
S. African Field Force

Modder River Feb 14th

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(7)
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(3)

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As time forms

Yr aff son

Lat Hy Jeh

19

No 3 Beaver Company.
Force.

Kimberley Feb 28th

PLAN HOW
ULVERSTON
LANCASHIRE

No 3 Beaver Co
S.A.F.F.

My dear James

I have written home since we got here but I suppose you may not have seen the letter. The people in Kimberley all look fat and well and they never got less than ½lb horse and 1lb of bread and vegetables on any day of the siege – The last few days the Boers had 6in gun plugging into the place, which has left its marks here and there but barring a few shells from that gun very few fell in the town itself and the people look ridiculously clean and tidy compared with the relieving force, who of course have had to live out in the open, instead of sleep-

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shells from that gun very few fell in the town itself

ing between sheets and spring mattresses, and most of us have at times looked a rare looking lot of dirty devils – I once went 8 days without washing, and what with sand and mud and sunburn must have been quite unrecognizable We are now camped out with the K.O. Yorks. L.I. and Loyal N. Lancs – on the edge of Kimberley, waiting for troops to advance up the line to tackle the bridge over the Vaal at Fourteen Streams – We have 2 6in quickfiring guns here on railway trucks which ought to clear the way ahead a bit – They shoot 100lb Lyddite shells like rifles at 6 miles & will carry about 10 miles – The Boers have cut the pipe bringing water from the Vaal River to Kimberley, but we are going to buy and get that mended tomorrow – Hundreds of wounded are coming through this place from Paardeberg where old Kruger is absolutely had on toast as far as we can make out – He is a plucky man and good soldier, but is a brute. I am fairly hard worked as I have been given the Drill Hall Hospital here, until we can get the wounded down or are ordered off ourselves. 3 Doctors have come down, shot, and my greatest pal, old Goddard among them with a bullet through his ankle – Between you and me and the post, the much-blackguarded Army Med. Corps has done d-d well – sacrificed themselves nobly and worked like blacks – For non-combatants our list of Killed and wounded shows up very well considering the number of fellows actually in the firing line are very small, as the majority of the army doctors are in Field lines of communication & Base hospitals in absolute safety and never hear a bullet whizz over their heads – This place was to some extent saved by the great heaps of 'blue clay' rubbish thrown up from the great Diamond mines, which act

like a rampart round the town. The Boers cut the water supply from the Vaal and it is not yet mended but Rhodes got water laid on from the De Beers deep levels and pumped it all through the town. No food but military rations and trek ox beef which is almost unchewable, is as yet available and the town's people grumble but of course they cant expect themselves to be considered first. The population here, black & white, is something over 40 000. It is awfully funny to see shops and churches and beds and white sheets again after about 4 months abstinence, also the English damsels strike one with their beauty very much after not having seen one since I left Cape Town, I am carrying on about 6 not flirtations already. They have no whiskey in the town but lots of 'Cape Smoke' and stuff which Thomas smuggles into camp and gets blind ~~drunk~~.

Remember me to any old friends

Your affect. brother

Matt. H. J. Fell.

19

No 3 Bearer Company.
Sth African Field Force.

Kimberley. Feb 28th.

My dear James.

Glad to get your epistle and to hear that you are well and are still surviving the horrors of matrimony. I have not had the pleasure of seeing Mrs J. yet but hope to do so before long. Spank her well and keep her under your thumb. That is what I mean to do with Mrs Mathew when I astonish the world with that beauteous apparition. I have written home since we got here but I suppose you may not have seen the letter. The people in Kimberley all look fat & well & they never got less than ½lb horse & 1lb bread & vegetables on any day of the siege.
The last few days the Boers had a six inch gun plugging into the place which has left its marks here & there, but barring a few shells from that gun very few fell in the town itself

& the people look ridiculously clean & tidy compared to the relieving force who of course have had to live out in the open instead of sleeping between sheets & on spring mattresses – and most of us have at times looked a rare lot of dirty looking devils – I once went eight days without washing & what with sand & mud & sunburn must have been unrecognizable.

We are now camped out with the K.O. Yorkshire L.I & Loyal North Lancs on the edge of Kimberley – waiting for troops to advance up to line to tackle the bridge over the Vaal at Fourteen Stream. We have two 6-inch Q.F. guns here on railway trucks which ought to clear the way ahead a bit – They shoot 100 lb Lyddite shells like rifles at six miles & will carry about ten miles. The Boers have cut the pipe bringing water from the Vaal to Kimberley but we are going to fix it & get that needed tomorrow.

Hundreds of wounded are coming through this place from Paardeberg where old Kruger is absolutely had on toast as far as we can make out. He is a plucky man & good soldier but is a brute.

I am fairly hard worked as I have been given the Drill Hall Hospital here until we can get the wounded down & are ordered off onwards.

E. Doctors have come down short – my greatest pal old Goddard among them – either bullet through his ankle. Between you & me & the lamppost the most blackguarded thing Redvers Buller has done did well sacrificed themselves nobly & worked like blacks.

For non-combatants our list of killed & wounded piles shows up v. well considering the number of fellows actually in firing line are very small – as the large majority of the army doctors are in Field Lines of Communication & Base Hospitals in absolute safety & never hear a bullet whizz over their heads.

This place was to some extent saved by the great heaps of "blue clay" rubbish thrown up from the great Diamond mines which act like a rampart round the town. The Boers cut the

water supply from the Vaal & it is not yet ended but Rhodes got water laid on from the De Beers deep levels & pumped it all through the Town —

No food but military rations & Kaffir ox beef which is almost unchewable is all yet available & the town people grumble — but of course they can't expect themselves to be considered first —

The population here — black & white is nearly over 40 000 people.

It is awfully funny to see shops & churches & beds & white sheets again after about four months abstinence — also the English damsels strike one with their beauty very much after not having seen one since I left Cape Town — I am carrying on about six hot flirtations already ...

They have no whiskey in the town but lots of "Cape Smoke" & stuff which Thomas smuggles into camp & gets blind.

Remember me to any old friends.

Yr affec brother

Zulu Hy Tek

20

No 3 Bearer Company
9th Brigade
S.A. Field Force

Kimberley
March 18th

My dear Daddy

I got a letter from you by
morning's mail. I suppose the rejoicing at home
is very great over Lord Roberts and it is a great regret
to me that we were not with his column. The hardships
they have endured are pretty bad as the men have
been on about 100 biscuits a handful of flour per
diem and the horses mostly on nothing. In fact
it is said that the Horse artillery can barely raise
a trot. So you can imagine the condition the poor
brutes are in. They will stay & feed up in
Bloemfontein for a bit & rest themselves.
I hope the people at home will not think of giving in
until we have marched through the Transvaal.
It is essential that the Boers should see and feel
that the Roosbeatje master strong enough to crush
him which he is only now beginning to realize.
I fear we shall have a tough time of it at

Fourteen Streams. A brigade of Milner's is coming up with us – so many people are rather nervous about the result if we have a hard fought like the Robber.

I am here now on general duty till the advance begins & we have to place ourselves with such mostly atypic Tommies for Roberts column.

The last convoy of 580 sick – mostly bad cases came in a four day trek on open bullwagons with practically no shelter available & possible. A very large number of the children & dysenteries are dying from the effects of that exposure. Which they felt as was unavoidable to enable that Roberts to advance.

The weather is now delightful – occasional terrific sandstorms – but mainly bright sunshine – hot in the middle of the day still but much cooler than it was at night.

I have not have any Chocolate Rec – & from Kruger ½ sovereign & which you might have made into sleeve links or a brooch or a buckle or something. They will be welcome soon.

I had a very nice five day trek ten days ago to Bethof & back & was given sole charge of ½ the Beaver 6 – so felt very pleased to have no one over me to fuss. The Free State country is very green at present & very pretty tho' the side roads have Kaffirs but with numerous koppies standing up above it.

We passed one or two exceedingly well built – evidently rich farms absolutely deserted and all the cattle driven off.

The ladies of Bethof were rather nervous of wicked Thomas at first but appeared quite pleased after a bit. We found a wounded English officer there.

We arrived back in three weeks – pretty hung for the men & for the cattle, horses several of which died en route.

I have a very good pony now & have got him a new bridle & he is very proud of himself. I got him shod the other day as his feet have gotten tender – & he is much improved. He had never been in a town before and I have

an awful business getting him past the trains & momentarily expect to be publicly seated upon the ground.

Please send this on to Uncle John Bush - I got a Christmas card & newspaper from him posted before Xmas only last week which shows how upset the post still is.

Tell Annie that I have written to Tapson Battersby about the box but think it doubtful if I ever receive it. Also tell Cousin Isabella Pegge in case she fusses about her socks I hope they polish my boots occasionally and look after Johnny's saddle when I had done up.

The Imperial Yeomanry are to be our cavalry when we advance north. Some of them are here now but not the Cumberland & Westmorland.

Glad you got over influenza with eight & hope that Annie & all the family are well

Yr affec son

Walter G Fell

21

Dear Nelly

I am writing this, partly as a sort of letter, partly as a sort of diary, as we are likely to be away from railways, etc for two or 3 weeks, and as I have plenty of spare time. In the first place its object is the rebellion in the district to the west of Kimberley where there are several marauding bands of Boers in a country where it is pretty difficult to find them. I was in charge of 25 enteric fever patients in the Masonic Temple and 30 enteric fevers in the

Drill Hall in Kimberley - and was kill- ing them with exceptional rapidity - On March 22nd I suddenly got orders that I was to be ready to start with half the Beaver Co. at 5 a.m. the next morning with 5 am- -bulances - 4 stretcher squads. some medical & surgical equip- -ment and a water cart - I was allowed 35 lbs of baggage and the men about 10 lbs each. All baggage and surgical equip- -ment was to be carried on one buck-wagon. I took - as it may interest you - a waterproof valise - (weight about 11 lbs) two blankets (weight about 9 lbs) one waterproof sheet - one shirt one sweater, one small pil- -low, 2 pairs of socks - sponge - brush - tooth brush & powder - which about made up the rest of my 35 lbs - In addition I had the clothes I stood in - my great coat and macintosh strapped on my pony - Principally you see to ensure as far as poss- -ible a fairly dry and warm night I also took about half-a-dozen tins of sausages and that sort of thing and a bottle of whisky all surreptitiously hidden under the seat of an ambulance in charge of an orderly - That evening we had a sort of birth- day in the mess and I swall- -owed a bottle of fizz - the conse- quence being that I was too joy- ful to pack that night, and had to get up at 2-30 a.m. the next morning, to get my tent cleared and see the men, mules etc - were all ready.

March 23rd was a lovely morning and we followed the 11th Co. R.E. out on the road leading due west. Orders were issued that no dogs were to follow the line of March but every dog in Kimberly came with us and Lord Methuen was very angry. One big dog, called by the men "Orange" followed for four days, in spite of much bad language and many applications of the boot. The column consisted of about 300 Cape Police and Kimberley Light Horse, with one battery R.A. and ox wagons with supplies for about 20 days. We marched for about six miles along a metalled high road passing through the Boer trenches made during the siege of Kimberly

The country about here is fairly grassy, with a certain number of mimosa bushes stuck about here and there, and is at this time of the year very green and fresh looking as the rains are still on up here - The road gradually becomes an ordinary Veldt road and is very soft and sandy in places, and heavy for the mules. We reached a fine farm with three large water dams about ten miles from Kimberly - and camped there at 8-30 a.m. Had breakfast about 9-30 and walked round to see the Imperial Yeomanry who had just arrived - a fine looking set of fellows but not as yet used to bivouacking and never even got a fire

to for about 24 hours - however they will soon get used to it - I heard we were to march via Schmidt's Drift on the road to Campbell Griquatown. Rain began about 2 p.m. and we had showers all afternoon - We had orders at 5 p.m. to stay the night where we were as Schmidt Drift was occupied by the enemy. Jameson with F. H. & self sat down to a great dinner of bully beef, stewed with compressed vegetables and good when hungry - We took a tot of whisky and made our beds on what looked a fair dry place - Whilst we were feeding one of my niggers came up and said "Me want be sick" I told him to go and be sick for all I cared, so he commenced operations about ten feet from us until removed by an application of big toe - after we had finished he bounced up again and rubbed his stomach so I gave him 2 pills - Half an hour after he turned up again to say that another of my boys called Slinger had given him some poisoned meat - so I investigated the case which caused great amusement and gave him two more pills of another sort which settled him for the night. I lay down — raining hard — about 6-30 p.m. and tied myself into my valise. put my waterproof sheet over my head and like the proverbial ostrich imagined I was dry. It rained like blazes all night, and I found about 12 I was getting very wet as the ground under me was soft and I was collecting a puddle - I slept on and off till 5-15 a.m

(March 24th.) and could stand it
no longer and got out to find
my bed in the middle of a pond
much to my amazement. I
met Jameson's servant bringing
some coffee so as I imagined he
was still asleep I ~~drank it~~ com-
-mandeered it. Still raining.
We breakfasted in the rain.
Swore and sat and smoked
in a wagon, wondering what
was to be done with us.
We heard that five companies
of the South (?) Staffords and Dub-
lin Fusiliers were coming up and
that we were to stay till next
morning. We changed camp to
a dry place and slept well.
March 25th. We marched seven
miles west to Secreterieus (?) Farm
It was a lovely morning but
the roads heavy. grass and
bush country. We got into

camp at 8-30 - Breakfasted
and slept till 3- when
we moved off again
north to the bend of the Vaal
River below Barkly. We had a
lovely ride over the veldt - I saw
many flowers which I should
have liked to have brought home.
Bryan would have been in
great form. We got into camp
in pitch darkness - There was
some confusion on arrival, but
all got settled on a dry sandy
place within 100 yds of the river.
I slept well but was woken by
two of "Slinger's" mules getting
loose and nearly walking over
me - March 26th - We left the
bend at 4 a.m. so saw the
place well before we started.
The river runs exactly like

a Fell -

the crook of Lune, though on a much larger scale.
Vaal means 'grey' which is the colour of the water. We marched to Barkly through a country of stones & scrub along the river. There is a very fine bridge at Barkly which is a picturesque place. ———

It is now April 8th and I am at Modder River after a very busy time and unable to continue. Our march after Barkly was to a place called "Kassikama" on the Vaal, a very heavy march over bad roads. The Dublin Fusiliers having all got drunk fell out by the dozen also some Staffords. Many of these Militia men are only about 18 and though full of pluck have not the physical strength to carry a rifle and 150 rounds of ammunition. I think there will be a good deal of trouble and a good many will have to be sent back. One Dublin told me he had an "overwhelmin' pain in his side. I saw he had also a black eye and found upon enquiry that he had been drunk before starting in Kimberley, and had when arrested by the picquet, fixed his bayonet and charged them. This was the cause of his overwhelmin' pain.

We had another wet day at Kissikama and next day marched to Likatlong across the Harts river. fine open country but the roads very bad and heavy.

When at Likatlong, we were suddenly ordered to return with all speed to Kimberley - We got back in three days after hard marching - only to find all my things etc and the rest of the Beaver Co moved to Diafield I was ordered to report at 1 a.m. next morning and then got counter orders to go down with a sick convoy to Orange river and catch up the Beaver Co at Boshof - I got back from Orange River and when actually riding out of Kimberley, was caught by an orderly and ordered down to Modder River as the Doctor there was sick - Imagine my disgust. Modder is a changed place, still very unhealthy - only ½ batt. K.O.S.B. Militia are here with some sappers making the bridge. We expect the railway to be cut by rebels from the west - I have no clothes until I can get up to the Beaver Co again, am not very comfortable. Matt.

22

Modder River. April 21st.

Dear Mase.

I hear that another little female facsimile of Tasa has arrived. I enclose two or three stamps. The ones on the letter from Bloemfontein will be valuable as they are surcharged for the use of the troops only. I may be able to get one or two more but it is very hard. All the stamps in Mafeking have been surcharged & ought to be valuable.

I hope Thomas is all right - as I see there is a rising on the Gold Coast.

You will see I have been sent down to this beastly place again. I have been very seedy indeed but am all right again now.

Genl Hunter is said to be coming up to command the advance on this side in a few days. so we are all on the qui vive for a move again.

Emma's cake is a splendid one but I cannot eat it as largely as I would owing to the flesh being weak. the spirit is very willing. The 3rd KOSB's are here. All the officers are from Dumfries & Kirkcudbrightshire and so we have many mutual friends. This place

It was unhealthy but is now getting
over & is becoming a good deal better than
it was.
It is very bad luck my being sent here as
I am out of everything. I had a long
talk with Walter Whitworth the other day.
He manages the Koffyfontein Diamond
Mines. He does not look very strong.
He was evidently glad to hear about Barrow
& I told him Dora Wadham was still
pining for him.
Absolutely no news.

Ta Ta.

Yr affec brother
Lett Hy Gill

April 29th 1900 Modder River

23

My dear Mother.

I am all right now after being a bit feverish for about a week. I shall as far as I can see be stuck here for a long time yet - but am hard at work making myself obnoxious by means of telegrams semi official up & down the line so they may get a bit sick of me.

I am living in the police barrack & as the Cape Police have come back I have been ordered to clear out but don't mean to as long as I can help it. I hope to goodness Thom is all right in Ashanti - & doesn't get wiped out. It will be rather funny to see which of the boys is the first to get wiped. We can't all last for ever.

They have been expecting an attack here which has been a great trouble to me as I have to make all medical arrangements in case of accidents. & considering that in the case of a fight

the South side of the river will be cut off from the north - & that my entire hospital will be outside the lines defended altogether - It is rather difficult to make up one's mind as to where one had better go oneself.
However I don't suppose the Boers will come now - The Fusilier Brigade from Natal has just gone up the line - & we are expecting fighting to come off at Bantly or Fourteen Streams any day now - I shall be sorry to be out of it altogether as it was such exceptionally bad luck my being sent here at all.
The cake is about done now and I have done my fair share during the last few days - The 3rd KOSB's are here - very nice most of them & very good home -
This place will be unhealthy for a long time to come - There were so many bodies langed out here - & the ground is fouled for miles - The veldt is getting green again where the corpses where which stops the dust a good deal.

I am sorry I have nothing interesting to write about - I have seen Walter Whitehead & Fradgeley for Koffyfontein - They wished to be remembered to everyone at home.
Bethanway bridge is mended here now & the sappers are taking up the temporary bridge & sidings - preparatory to tackling the 14 Streams affair which will be a big business.
Poor Lafeking - everybody will be so sorry out here if it falls - It is an awfuil long way off yet - & Colonel Plumer cannot get to it -
Love to all
Yr affec son
Lett H G Fell

24

Bloemfontein No 3 Beaver Co
June 18th 9th Brigade
1st Division

My dear Daddy

I have never got to Kronstadt yet as the line is only just open today - The Beaver Co. is at Kronstadt or thereabouts. There has been a lot of scrappy fighting lately The Boers succeeded in blowing up the Rhenoster Bridge and all the culverts for about 20 miles There is no news here so I shall not attempt to tell you anything as all the main events are so fully described in the English Papers that we get our own news out here practically from them

I came round to Bloemfontein from Kimberly in a cable truck and had my great coat and half my kit stolen - an awful nuisance as you cannot get much here. The railway bridge at Norvals Pont is now in full working order and there is a pretty big garrison to look after it, in fact it is the same all the way up - half a company or so at every small bridge and the Free State Boers dont look like giving in one bit and the war does not seem anywhere near over in the outlying districts and food is still a distinct difficulty.

This is not a bad little town with some fine buildings - all now used as Hospitals crammed with enteric cases - The roads are bad and there are a lot of deep dongas cutting up the ground which carry off the water when the rains are on - Since I have been here, the weather has been more like November at home than anything else - wet-foggy and miserable but fortunately it never lasts long. West of the town there are some high and steep koppies strongly fortified and now occupied by the Naval Brigade - to the east and north the ground is open rolling veldt - you see the distant hills about Thebahdia as

We are all heartily sick of the war and simply longing for its conclusion - The settlement of the country will be very difficult as a lot of bitterness will remain which nothing can wipe out.

We are expecting to go to

China or to North and West India to fight after this. China looks as if it is inviting its dismemberment by the Powers – I hope Tom is all right and all the family at home – No news at all –

Your affect.te son
Matt. H. G. Fell.

25

No 3 Beaver Co
9th Brigade
1st Division
Sth African Field Force

July 16th

My dear Uncle William

I am writing from Kroonstadt where we arrived last night having marched in from a place called Wyebrook between Lindley & Heilbron with sudden orders to entrain for the Transvaal - Kruysdorp I believe. Lord Methuen went on yesterday with the Yeomanry.

We have been trekking all over the country about here guarding the railway and convoys into Lindley & Heilbron. Lindley is always being taken by the Boers & retaken by us. It's a nasty place to stay in - a little town in a hole with big kopjes all round it which it's take about 10,000 men to guard properly. Consequently you never know when you will see a puff of smoke from the top of one of them & have a shell coming over the place.

The veldt about this part of the Free State is all good grass & the farms are well stocked.

The grass gets lit by the sun setting at night & you get a relief from wind rising with a cool breeze for days. It is a fine sight on a night round seeing the fires & smoking through them.
Christian De Wet has been got out of the cordon of troops that were round him near Bethlehem & so we shall probably hear of him up here again. He knows the country very well as his farm is only about 35 miles from this place and he knows about the best to place when we went through it. A very nice house indeed.
Krugersdorp July 19th
My letter was interrupted by orders to entrain at once & we got here after a rather miserable journey of 27 hrs in fine weather. It is time to have made Vereeniging the way to this place you see sometimes but mining shafts & white heaps of crushed quartz. We did not stop in Johannesburg so I only saw it from the train – a great big straggling town – plaited here & there with patches of gums but mostly built of corrugated iron with here & there rather nice looking brick built places.
We detrained as soon as we got here & had hardly were moving off almost immediately into the hills Gatsa Hyaadens & the Stryden & I added & were marching across to Pretoria. There is a lot of trouble going on round here – the Boers are very active and have an Army of Dd Germans & Italians who seem to fight as if they had a halter round their necks & I hope they some with them if De Wet here caught they would give no up here – Half of the women of Johannesburg have been sent down as prisoners for plotting & raising money to rebel. We have been for two days so far with the enemy & there are such a lot of people who think that to be with out by being a war of extermination if no conclusion arrives soon.
Everybody is horribly sick of it – both sides I believe but we cannot stop till the

county is settled
I have to go again – Please send box
to Aint Elma

Yr affec nephew
[illegible]

Love to Cousin [illegible]

Kroonstadt

Konstadt

26

16th July -

Dear Elsie

We got back here after marching about round Lindley yesterday - There was an exciting thing out here the other day. Two guns of the 38th Battery got in a mess - all the officers shot down - all the horses and several men and the guns taken. The New Zealanders however fixed bayonets and charged on horseback and collared the guns again and downed a lot of Boers - these Colonials are awfully good - the North West Mounted Police saved Colonel Bullock's lot at Honing Spruit

three weeks ago. They are the finest looking lot of scallywags I have ever seen. The Division is hard at work entraining and the 9th Brigade will entrain to-day and reach Krugersdorp on Monday about midday. We were ten miles north west of Lindley two days ago and got sudden orders to come here to go up to the Transvaal. I hope they have not got into a mess up there. I hear the Pretoria Durban line is open which is a splendid thing as it will allow supplies to go up so much easier. The stamps enclosed. I procured after a very rapid flirtation. in fact I think our sudden removal north only just saved me from having to pop. disgraceful is it it. I wonder where the blazes we shall be sent to. this war is getting horribly tedious and makes me long to get away somewhere. Trekking up here is very jolly but very cold at nights. Plenty of food as we drive all the sheep off the neighbouring farms if the owner is on commando and slaughter them as we go. I am very fit indeed, never felt better in my life. You had perhaps better send this letter home as I may not be able to write for a week or two.

Your affect.ate brother

Matt. H. E. Fell.

27

No 3 Beaver 6
9th Brigade
1st Division
S. African Field Force

July 29th

My dear Tom –

We marched down to Bank siding yesterday where De la Rey cut the line and have just got our last two weeks mails. I am glad you are safe home again. Sorry the family affairs are in such a bad way, but so long as I can remember it has always been the same & I suppose a crash must come sometime. Tell Christina I will send her a cheque for £18 at the first place where I can get ink to write me – but that if there is any possibility of being able to check my shares in the L & C – she is not to cash it as I wd sooner pay flight than send good money into a rotten company unless it is essential.

I believe I wrote an account of our wanderings in the Free State after De Wet to one of the family. I suppose you have seen we were suddenly sent up by rail from Kroonstadt to Krugersdorp where we arrived after a miserable journey in cattle trucks – taking

zyfers to do about 150 miles. We stayed overnight in Kingsburg which is not half a bad little place at the top end of the Witwatersrand reef and at two the next day marched out the next day north west to attack some Boers who had stuck up trucks down a week before. Of course they did not wait & we marched on to a place called Blaauwbank one of the tributaries of the Crocodile R. a stream which looked perfect for trout but none in it. The country quite different to the Free State. more like a subtropical vegetation. rich farms. corn fields just coming up green. any amount of oranges. Fired a few shots from our Pompoms at some Boers retiring across the valley as we came down into it. Marched out through a narrow pass into direction of Rustenburg where B P is. a tight place owing to all the farmers coming again. Very bad roads & sprouts on the road knocking the wagons to pieces. Two scouts bitten by Boers who killed as soon as rifle was fired at them. One an old man of 65 with a son with him. Found an awful spruit which broke half a dozen wagons. none of ours abandoned as yet. The nights up here much warmer as we are getting lower every day now & farther north too. Left Wagendrift at 5 am & got into a lovely valley crossed another awful spruit which broke the trek chain of one of our wagons & stopped the whole transport crossing for about ½ hr. much cursing. Boers began firing at us from bushes on the right bank to Magaliesberg Nbs. a splendid precipitous range of mts. replies with a pass called Olifants nek over it into Rustenburg.

A devil of a fire began but we could see nothing as there are too many trees and bushes. I was cut up a bank to 5th Fusiliers & thought down a man who died on the way. Shot through the chest below the heart. When got him to bottom. Had a splendid view of the Boers cutting away over olifants nek. The shells from our guns bursting among them. We hit their Pompom & killed two on it but B P being too late out of Rustenburg

failed to cut him off. We camped over the Nek
in a beautiful country – warm – well wooded
& well watered. grows heaps of oranges, lemons
tobacco etc. Stayed here last Sunday and
then heard Delahey had cut the bally line &
De Wet was loose again – to Frankfort. We
were marched straight back here leaving behind
with the Lancashires to garrison Olifants Nek.
The last two or three days very wet & took a
bit of science to keep one cursing about.
The general says Kitchener wires to Irenites
we are doomed to wander for a space –
Love to all the family & tell Fannie to
favour a Burnside Behemoth for my
return.

Yr affe bro

Walter G. Field

(1)

28

Typed copy

No. 8 Bearer Co. 9th Brigade
4th Division

August 8th

My dear Mother since I last wrote from Bank Station we have not been able to get away a mail owing to the disturbed state of the country about here. We left Bakkerspruit the day I wrote & marched about six miles in the direction of Ostrepstroom.

(Aug 20th I have not had time to write a word since I began this – so recommence)

The day after we reached Twee Riviersdrift about 12 noon some Boers on the Getsand Kopjes to our left began firing at our ox convoy so the guns came and anything went up to the left to drive them off while the convoy went on into camp.

We drove off the Boers & captured 8 wagons of food from the convoy & only had four men wounded. I did not get to sleep till about 9 pm as I had to go back with an ambulance and look for a man in the kopje. I was very done up as my pony had a sore back & I had to feed it all the way

(2)

The day after that we marched to a place about five miles from Potchefstroom & halted at 10 a.m. till the next day when we marched into town crossing the Mooi river - along which there are many excellent farms.

Potchefstroom is a long straggling little town with plenty of water & trees - the streets are good & well laid out. We managed to get a few tins of food of various sorts & have had no drinking water for six days and have been the most exciting week I have had for many a long day. We got there late on Sunday night & were down to the road to guard Sir Ian Hamilton & his prisoners De Wet crossing - & if he had should cross to follow him up. We marched at 6 a.m. & got to drift about 12 noon. Lord Ian & his staff one of De Wet's men had already crossed at Schoeman's Drift about 9 miles east so he took off the infantry & mounted troops.

At 5 a.m. next morning we started - leaving a garrison at Schoeman's drift & after going about 20 miles heard Lord Ian's guns in front - he

(3)

Lord Ian had decided to continue the pursuit of De Wet

33
Old

1)

Ysgersfontein (?)

PLEASANT HOW
ULVERSTON
LANCASHIRE

No 3 Bearer Co 9th Brigade
1st Division

August 8th -

My dear Mother

Since I last wrote from Bank Cr Station, we have not been able to get away a mail owing to the disturbed state of the country about here - We left Bank. the day I wrote and marched about 6 miles in the direction of Potchefstroom - (Aug 20th I have not had time to write a word since I began this so recommence) The day after we marched towards Fredichstadt about 12 a.m. some Boers on the Gatsrand Kopjes to our left began firing at our convoy so the

(2)

The day after that we arrived to a place about five miles from Potchefstroom & halted at 10 am till the next day when we marched into town crossing the Mooi river along which there are many excellent farms.

Potchefstroom is a long straggling little town with plenty of water & trees. Its streets are good & good shops. We managed to get a few tins of food of various sorts & have had two days. We stayed there for six days and then began the most exciting week there had for many a long day. We got about late on Sunday night to move down to the road to occupy Scheepers Drift & to prevent De Wet crossing & if he had shown inclination to follow him up. We marched at 6 am & got to the drift about 12 noon. Had no idea that some of De Wet's men had already crossed at Scheepers Drift about 4 miles east. So he took off the Wittebergen & Mounted troops.

At 5 am next morning we started leaving a garrison at Scheepers Drift & after going about 20 miles heard Lord Kitchener's guns in front. We came up & found he had been engaged with De Wet since 7 am. The country at this place consists of a series of broken stony quartz topped covered with scrub & tropic antigonots & is very fine. Our baggage was stopped & we moved on behind the 58th to a valley for which the Boers had been cleared by the R.S.F. & R.A. There we found plenty of grey beard with two wounded in a house. The shelling of the hill was a grand sight. Our gun very followed up to Boers in a high rocky hill overhanging the road & had a few wounded & I went up for two with a stretcher & had a most unpleasant time from the top. We had a awful business getting to wounded & with any degree of comfort. Total casualties 1 killed 15 wounded. De Wet is said to have lost about 70 but I don't believe it. We halted all next day as De Wet seemed uncertain whether to recross into the Transvaal or to go north. He chose the latter alternative & this was a tremendously stiff force behind him. We before started off about 5 am & marched

(3)

came up & found he had been engaged with De Wet since 7 am. The country at this place consists of a series of broken stony quartz topped covered with scrub & tropic antigonots & is very fine. Our baggage was stopped & we moved on behind the 58th to a valley for which the Boers had been cleared by the R.S.F. & R.A. There we found plenty of grey beard with two wounded in a house. The shelling of the hill was a grand sight. Our gun very followed up to Boers in a high rocky hill overhanging the road & had a few wounded & I went up for two with a stretcher & had a most unpleasant time from the top. We had a awful business getting to wounded & with any degree of comfort. Total casualties 1 killed 15 wounded. De Wet is said to have lost about 70 but I don't believe it. We halted all next day as De Wet seemed uncertain whether to recross into the Transvaal or to go north. He chose the latter alternative & this was a tremendously stiff force behind him. We before started off about 5 am & marched

in a N.E. direction about 9 miles & halted to breakfast. Whilst unharnessed an orderly came galloping in to say that De Wet's commando was on ahead of us with his convoy & the guns & artillery saddled up at once & we got off as soon as possible. And soon saw the Boers in a position & a fast & furious fight went on about 6 miles & we captured a few wagons but the Ammunition & convoy were splendidly managed by De Wet & got clean away. We had guns fired & were unsaddled. The gunners behaved very plucky & wounded Boers told us that Steyn was with De Wet & that the Boers were getting a bit done. Somewhat running we were off again at 5 am & got up with him as the tail of his convoy was disappearing through a gap in the Gatsrand leading to Wolmaransstad. We shelled his back view a bit but I don't think did him any harm.

By the way to day before I am sorry to say two men were very badly hit by a shrapnel shell bursting in a room in the farmhouse. The Boers were firing behind the walls so it could not be helped.

(5)

Lord R. then decided to continue the pursuit of De Wet in conjunction with Broadwood & Kitchener.

We therefore marched next day to Frederikstadt on awful days blowing a gale & the dust so bad that one was nearly blinded. The Colonial Division under Col Dalgety joined us – a smart looking lot of men. We heard De Wet had crossed the line & was going north west.

Lord R. decided to leave the Infantry with Genl Douglas to bring on food of which we were badly in need & to start with Anything & Yeomanry & Colonials. I went with ½ the Beaver Co.

We started at 3 am & at early crossed the railway & Vaal River & marched towards Vetkraal at 12 noon & halted for breakfast. Here we were suddenly roused by firing – started off & found that the Cam Rifles had captured 5 wagons of forage and about 10 Boers. From here we got the direction of De Wet & the mounted troops went off after him. Left up as best I could my mules being very poor & on ½ rations.

About 2 pm we began shelling the Boer laager.

(6)

and the pursuit was carried on for about 12 miles over open veldt very stony. But it was too dark. We took a gun & one of the captured 77th & about a dozen wagons & about 80 prisoners escaped from the Boers.

We only had two men wounded. I lost the column so wounded until I heard the noise of the baggage coming up some distance away, & joined it. After a most awful journey over ground which one wd have thought no wagon could have crossed we found the camp. Awful confusion. No water & but little food. No tea & coffee left & much cursing & swearing.

After wandering in camp at 12.45 pm. Office at 3.30 & to march. It was to say the least of it annoying to be ordered to be on the move at 3 am next morning. Very little & sudden were done & during the next days march of 22 miles I was myself in a sort of dreamy state all day. We only saw De Wet's dust in the distance. Got to camp about 4 pm. Ordered to start at 1 am. No lights & talking

(7)

a shaking to mules allowed. Marched in a sort of semicircle so as to head off De Wet at the Zagalieskerg where we imagined Elphinstone's laager was held by us. After about 28 miles we halted. 30 of my mules died of exhaustion & it was only by dint of much persuasion that we got them on at all. We saw De Wet's convoy going over Elphinstone's nek. Poor Lord M. evidently was waiting for him & his disappointment was sad to see. We camped that night. After having had no sleep for three hard days & the men so done that they could hardly get anyone to peg. I was absolutely fagged out. We rested next day & got the glass & our convoy caught us up & very glad we were. The men must have tea & coffee very much when the only alternative is water like pea soup.

The day after that we marched through Zegats Nek after a heavy shelling & got orders to go to Zeipfontein to rest. The wagons are worn out to the men but out boots & buckles in need of a rest. We are now at Elands River & the

(8)

road to Zeerust. Col Hore with a convoy escorted by 300 Bechuanas was stuck up at the Drift here for 3 weeks by Delarey & only got away yesterday relieved by Broadwood. Sir J Carrington ought to be hung over it. They lost 15 killed 75 wounded out of 300. All the horses & cattle were killed just outside this fort by the time Boershells & the sight was very pleasant. The fort is a wonderful place & the ladies fine. We expect daily & will remain for a time memorial for a big force of a party of very brave men. I will write for 2 offering if I can get leave & shall not be able to post this till then.

Sorry my letters are illegible

We get splendid turkeys out here.

Yr affec son

L M H Gatt.

11

Ingersfontein (?)

No 3 Bearer Co 9th Brigade
1st Division

August 8th

My dear Mother

Since I last wrote from Bank (?) Station, we have not been able to get away a mail owing to the disturbed state of the country about here - We left Bank the day I wrote and marched about 6 miles in the direction of Potchefstroom - (Aug 20th I have not had time to write a word since I began this so recommence) The day after we marched towards Fredichstadt about 12 a.m. some Boers on the Gatsrand Kopjes to our left began firing at our convoy so the

Yeomanry and artillery went up to the left to drive them off, whilst the convoy went on into camp – We drove off the Boers and captured 3 wagons of food from their convoy and our had four yeomen wounded I did not get to camp till 9 - p.m. as I had to go back with an ambulance and look for a man on the kopje. I was very done up as my pony had a sore back and I had to foot it all the way. The day after that we marched to a place about 5 miles from Potchefstroom and halted at 10 a.m till the next day when we marched into the town crossing the Mooi river along which there are many excellent farms – Potchefstroom is a long straggling little town, with plenty of water & trees in the streets and a few good shops. We managed to get a few tins of food of various kinds and a ham but no whiskey – We stayed there for six days and then began the most exciting week I have had for many a long day. We got orders late on Sunday August – to move down to the vaal to occupy Scandinavian Drift and to prevent De Wet crossing, or if he had already crossed to follow him up – We marched at 6 a.m. and got to the drift about 12 - noon. Lord Methuen then heard that some of de Wet's men had already crossed at Schoeman's Drift about 9 miles east – So he took off the artillery and

mounted troops. At 5 a.m. next morning we started, leaving a garrison at Scandinavian Drift and after going about 6 miles, heard Lord Methuen's guns in front. We came up and found he had been engaged with De Wet since 4 a.m. The country at this place consists of a series of broken, strong quartz kopjes covered with semi-tropic undergrowth and is very fine - Our baggage was stopped and we moved on behind the 58th to a valley from which the Boers had been cleared by the Royal Scots Fusiliers & the Royal Welsh Fusiliers - there we found Harvey of my batch with some wounded in a house-

The shelling of the hill in front was a grand sight - our pom-pom followed up the Boers on to a high rocky hill overhanging the Vaal and had a few wounded - I went up there with some stretcher squads and had a most magnificent view from the top - We had an awful business getting the wounded down with any degree of comfort. Total casualties 1 killed - 15 wounded - De Wet is said to have lost about 40, but I dont believe it - We halted all next day as De Wet seemed uncertain whether to re-cross into the Free State or to go North - He chose the latter alternative

as there was a tremendously strong force behind him — we therefore started off about 5 a.m. and marched in a N.E. direction about 9 miles and halted for breakfast — Whilst out-spanned an orderly came galloping in to say that De Wet's commando was on ahead of us with their convoy. So the yeomanry and artillery saddled up at once and we got off as soon as possible, and soon saw the batteries come into action. A sort of running fight went on over about 6 miles and we captured a few wagons but the main body and convoy were splendidly managed by De Wet and got clean away. We had 4 killed and 4 wounded. The yeomanry behaved very pluckily — A wounded Boer told us that Steyn was with De Wet and that the oxen were getting a bit done, so next morning, we were off again at 5 a.m., and got up with him as the tail of his convoy was disappearing through a gap in the fats (?) and leading to Welverden (?) station. We shelled his back view a bit but I don't think did him any harm — By the way, the day before I am sorry to say two women were very badly hit by a shrapnel shell bursting in a room in their farm house. The Boers were firing behind the walls, so it could not be helped — Lord Methuen then decided to continue the pursuit of De Wet in conjunction with

Broadwood and Kitchener. We therefore marched next day to Frederickstadt, an awful day. Blowing a gale and the dust so bad that one was nearly blinded. The Colonial Division under Col. Dalgety joined us. A smart looking lot of men. We heard De Wet had crossed the line & was going north-west. Lord Methuen decided to leave the Infantry with Gen. Douglas, to bring on food - of which we were badly in need - and to start with Artillery, Yeomanry and Colonials. I went with the Bearer Co. We started at 3 a.m. next morning. crossed the railway and Moor River and marched towards Venterstorp about 12 miles and halted for breakfast. There we were suddenly roused by firing. Started

off and found that the Cape Mounted Rifles had captured 5 wagons of forage and about 10 Boers - From them we got the direction of De Wet and the mounted troops went off after him - I kept up as best I could, my mules being very poor and on ½ rations - about 2 p.m. we began shelling the Boer convoy and the pursuit was carried on for about 10 miles over open veldt - very stony - till it was too dark - We took a gun one of the captured 1/1 7th Batt. and about a dozen wagons and about 80 prisoners escaped from the Boers - We only had 2 men wounded - I lost the column so waited until I heard the noise of the baggage coming up some distance away and joined it after a most awful journey

over ground which one would have thought no wagon could have crossed. we found the camp - awful confusion - no water and d-d little food - no tea or coffee left and much cursing and swearing - after arriving in camp at 10-45 p.m. after a 33 mile march, it was to say the least of it annoying to be ordered to be on the march at 3 a.m. next morning - my men and mules were done, and during the next day's march of 21 miles - I was myself in a sort of dreamy state all day. We only saw De Wet's dust in the distance and got to camp about 4 p.m. ordered to start at 1 a.m. - no lights or talking, or shouting to mules allowed - marched in a sort of semi-circle so as to head off De Wet at the Magaliesberg where we imagined Olifants Nek was held by us - after about 28 miles in which 3 of my mules died of exhaustion - and it was only by dint of much persuasion we got them out at all - we saw De Wet's convoy going over Olifants Nek - Poor Lord Methuen - everybody was sorry for him and his disappointment was sad to see. We camped that night - after having had no sleep for 3 hard days - the men so done that they could hardly get anyone for picquet - I was absolutely fagged out - We rested next day and general Douglas and our convoy caught us up and very glad we were - the men miss their tea & coffee very much when the only alternative is water like pea soup - The day after

that we marched through Magatas Nek (?)
after a heavy shelling and got orders
to go to Mafeking to refit. The wagons
are worn out & the men without
boots and badly in need of a rest.
We are now at Elands River on the
road to Zeerust. Col Hore with a
convoy escorted by 300 Bushmen was
stuck up at the Drift here for 3
weeks by Delarey and only got away
yesterday relieved by Broadwood.
Sir T. Carrington ought to be hung
over it - they lost 15 killed & 5 wounded out of 300. All the horses and cattle
were killed just outside this fort
by the Boer shells, & the sight is
most unpleasant - The fort is a wonderful place made under fire, the
1st & 2nd Acys & will remain for a
memorial for a long time of a
party of very brave men.
I will write from Mafeking if
I ever get there and shall not
be able to post this till then -
We get splendid turkeys out here
Yr ever Matt. H. G. Fell.

Eppersfontein (?)

August 8? No 3. Mean Coy 1st Regt
1st Division

My dear Mother

Since I last wrote from Maritzburg Station we have not been able to get a mail owing to the disturbed state of the country about here. We left Maritzburg the ~~Tue~~ day I wrote & marched about 6 miles in the direction of Pietermaritzburg. August 20 I have not had time to write a word since I began this to recommence. The day after we marched towards Ladysmith about 12 o'clock noon on the Pietermaritzburg Ladysmith road

left, began firing at our convoy, so the Yeomanry & Artillery went up to the left to drive them off, whilst the convoy went on - into camp - we drove off the Boers & captured three wagons of food from their convoy & only had some women wounded. I did not get to camp till 9 p.m. as I had to go back with an ambulance & look for a wounded man on the Spruit - I was down up as my pony had a sore back & I had to foot it all the way. The day after that we marched to a place about 5 miles from Potchefstroom & halted at 10 a.m - till the next day when we marched into the town crossing the Mooi River along which there are many excellent farms — Potchefstroom is a long straggling little town with plenty of water & trees in the streets & fair food supplies. We managed to get a few tins of food of various kinds & a barrel of whiskey. We stayed there 6 days. Then began the most exciting week I have had for many a long day. We got orders late on Sunday night to move down to the Drift & to prevent De Wet crossing, but he had already crossed & to follow him up - We marched at 6 a.m. & got to the drift about 12 noon. Told methinks then heard that some of De Wet's men had already crossed at Schoeman's drift about 9 miles east. So he took

up the Artillery & Mounted troops, at
5. a.m. next morning he started
leaving a garrison at Glandenabein
Drift & after going about 6 miles,
heard to the Northwards guns in front
We came up & found he had been en-
gaged with De Wet since 7 a.m.
The country at this place consists
of a series of steps of broken
ironstone quartz covered with semi-
tropic undergrowth & is very fence-
bom baggage was stopped & we
moved on behind the 58th to a
valley from which the Boers had
been cleared by the Rogan Tots
Irishers & the Rogan Welsh Fusiliers
there we found a party of Kay
batch with some wounded
in a house. The shelling of the hill
in front was a grand sight. our
Geomany followed up the Boers
on to a high rocky hill ob-

hanging the bad & had a few
wounded — I went up
there with some & the other
squad & had a most
magnificent view from the top —
We had an awful business getting
the wounded down with any
degree of comfort — Total
casualties 1. killed — 15. wounded —
De Wet is said to have lost about 70,
but I don't believe it. We battled
all next day, as De Wet seemed
uncertain whether to escape into the
Free State or to go North — He chose
the latter alternative as there
was a tremendously strong force
behind him — We therefore started
off about 5 a.m. & marched in a
N. E. direction about 9 miles &
halted for breakfast — While
out I passed an orderly

came gallopping in to say that De Wet's commando was on ahead of us with their convoy.

So the yeomanry & artillery saddled up at once & got off as soon as possible & soon the battery came into action - a sort of running fight went on over about 6 miles & we captured a few wagons but the main body & convoy were splendidly managed by De Wet & got clean away. We had some killed & wounded. The yeomanry behaved very plucky. A wounded Boer told us that Steyn was with De Wet & that he was getting a bit done. So next morning we were off again at 5 a.m. & got up with him as the tail of his convoy was disappearing through a gap on the Jal(?) road leading to Welbeyden (?) Station. We shelled his back & gave a bit but I don't think did him any harm. By the way - the day before I am sorry to say two women were badly hurt by a shell. They were in a room in their farm house. The Boers were firing behind the wagons. So it could not be helped. Lord Methuen then decided to continue the pursuit of De Wet in conjunction with Broadwood & Kitchener. We therefore marched next day to Ficksburg - rested on Sunday blowing a gale & the dust so bad that one had really blinded. The Colonial Division under Colonel Dalgety joined us - a smart looking lot of men. We learnt De Wets had crossed the line & was going northwest. Lord Methuen decided to leave the

Separating with Genl Douglas, to bring
on food - of which he was badly
in need - & to start with Artillery,
Yeomanry & Colonials - I went
with the Bloem Co at 9.a.m. - Next
morning - crossed the railway
& Moor River & marched towards
Ventersdorp about 12 miles and
halted for breakfast - shortly before
suddenly roused by firing.
started off & found that the
Cape Mounted Rifles had captured
5 waggons of forage & about 70
Boers - from them we got the
direction of De Wet & the Mounted
troops broke off after him - I
kept up as best I could my
mules being very poor & on
½ rations - about 12. p.m -
we began shelling the Boer

convoy of the Zulus has caused
on for about 10 Miles
over open veldt. very
stiffening - till it was too
dark - We took a few of the
captured 77th Hats. about a
dozen Kafirs & about 80
prisoners escaped from the
stocks - We only had 2 men
wounded - I lost the column
I waited until I heard the
noise of the baggage coming
up. I took distance away and
found it after a most awful
journey over ground which
one would have thought
no Kafir could have crossed -
We found the camp in awful
confusion - no water and a-d
little food - no tea or coffee left &
much cursing & blaming -
after arranging in camp at

10.45. p.m. after a 38. mile March — the least of it to be ordered on the March
or has to tap
damaging
to be
at 3. a.m. next morning — my men & mules were done & during the next days March of 21 miles. I was myself in a sort of dreamy state all day — wrong I am. Dr. Watt's chart in the distance & got to camp about 4. p.m. ordered to start at 3 a.m. ~~[illegible]~~ no lights — or talking, or shouting, to miles allowed — marches in a sort of semi-circle so as to head off Dr. Watt at the Magheberg where he imagined Elephants such was held by us — after about 26 miles in which three of my mules died of exhaustion — it was only by dint of much persuasive fire that they on at all — we saw Dr. Watt's convoy going over Elephants Nek — Poor Lord Methuen — poor body was sorry for him & his disappointment was sad to see — We camped that night — after having had no sleep for three hard days the men so done that they could hardly get any one for picquet — I was absolutely fagged out — We rested next day & General Douglas & our convoy caught us up & very glad we were the men made their tea & coffee very much — where the other alternative is water like pea soup — the day after that we marched through Magatas Nek after a heavy shelling & got orders to go to Magheberg to refit — the wagons one worn

out & the men without boots & badly
in need of a rest. We are now at
Hands River on the road to Heretsi.
Col. Hore with a convoy escorted by
300 Bushmen was stuck up at the Drift
here for three weeks by Delarey & Kolly
Kobwaay yesterday relieved by
Broadwood. Mr F. Carrington ought
to be hung over it. They lost 15 killed
& 75 wounded out of 300. All the
horses & cattle were killed just outside
this fort by the Boer Shells. The weather
is most unpleasant. The fort is
a wonderful place made under
fire the 1st & 2nd days & will remain
for a memorial for a long time
of a party of very brave men.
I will write from Mafeking if I can
get there & shall not be able to post
this till then. We got 8 splendid
Turkeys out here.

Yours &c. F. Mott

Was my Dunlop £3 paid into Holt?

Bearer Co 29
9th Brigade
3rd Division

Aug 28

Dear Christina

I am at Rafeberg - refitting - & we want it badly -

Landed in here yesterday - had some fighting about Zeerust which is a lovely place in a beautiful well watered - well wooded - hilly country but a damnable place to fight in. We are to take over Carrington's force. He has made a b-f-of himself.

I enclose cheque £18. If there is no need to take up the shares - or you don't think it worth it - cash the cheque & send the money to Flight -

Carry Tagos -

90 - High St Winchester -

I have got £60 due to me for allowances - so will be able to pay that in to him - if the war lasts another two or three months -

Has R-B gone to China? I have written to him but have not heard -
We are much interested in the Hospital Commission - A good deal of Burdett Coutts story is true - but an awful lot of rot is talked - It strikes me a lot of men want their mothers to follow them about & pet them.
Half of the trouble at Bloemfontein lies at the door of the chief of the Staff - I believe - I hope people are not sitting down to blackguard the unfortunate RAMC - & civil surgeons attached - They have worked like slaves when work was necessary - although many of us may be ignorant asses -
Ladysmith is full of stores but everything is expensive - plenty of whisky knocks - a few shell holes & trenches of B P still to be seen - but the place is mostly patched up again - Rainy season just coming on - & we shall have a lot of sickness - Malaria & enteric - as we are now a long way north -
We have been given a few tents - which all blew away in a terrific rainstorm last night - I have lost half my things - Five weeks marks were due to us when we got here - I thought it very typical of the Zulu family that when we got here we had about fifty letters and a lot of newspapers - I should get only one letter and one newspaper - In consequence I shall not write home again unless something happens like the war ended - Zululand has been doing awfully well lately and everybody in this division is very sorry he has not had the luck to do something which would catch the public eye - I thought I was afraid at first it looks as if they thought Bloemfontein was an easy thing - as a good

I have volunteered both for China & West Africa but shall probably go to India in the ordinary course and get into debt trying to keep good Offaskand way of if I live to the end of this war

One or two of the small commandos about here are very bitter owing to the burning of their farms & say they seem to shoot prisoners on anything flimsy they can get hold of

Much amused to hear today that Steyn is back again in the Free State. He ought to be made chief of the staff today with a house & [illegible] and the war w^d turn out quickly

There are some rich mines near Ottos Hoop on the Kaliman gold field

I think the family ought to have enough time to write me one letter a mail amongst them it isn't much to expect

Yr affec brother
Reginald Tell

Bearer Co - 9th Brigade -
South African
Field Force -

Modder River
Dec 17th

My dear Daddy

I got your letter of Nov. 18th and one from Javie a fortnight before so I thought I would write you something about the awful show of Monday last though I expect some accounts of it have got into the English papers. Since the battle here on the 28th Nov. we had been reinforced by the Black Watch - Seaforths - H. L. Infantry & Gordons also a howitzer battery, horse battery a 4 - 7 naval gun & the 12th Lancers, so with the remains of the 9th Brigade and the guards who are still a very strong brigade, we were a very strong

force - I enclose a sort of plan of the first lot and ridges in front of us which may give you some faint idea of the Boer position. On Sunday Dec. 10th - a rumour went round that the Scots Brigade was to move out that night and attack at dawn, with the Guards brigade to protect their right flank and support the 9th Brigade to make a feint frontal attack from a place I have called B. in the map where the big Naval guns were, but not to press it. Sunday was very wet and as the men marched out in pelting rain with practically no kit and as it rained heavily in the night, they were naturally a bit damped to start with. I was sent up to B. at 6 p.m. with half an ambulance being rather weak as I had suffered from a very bad attack of dysentery for 3 or 4 days. I slept in an ambulance to avoid the wet ground, as I should only have made myself worse. I woke up at 4 a.m. and got out of the wagon and thought I heard heavy infantry firing on our right but could not believe it - as it was barely light. At 4-30 the Naval gun began - it is very fine watching the shells burst from it especially the lyddite. By 5-30 a.m. when the sun was up the whole Magersfontein ridge was a mass of bursting shells, an awful row. but a wonderful sight - lyddite and shrapnel - sometimes half a dozen bursting at the same time - at 6 a.m. Major Harley came up to say I was to be relieved at 4 a.m. by Heal and I remember remarking to him that it sounded as if all was not well with the Highland

Brigade as they were to have attacked the trenches in the dark. Healy came up at 4 – and I went down and was just getting something to eat, when the ambulance arrived in with wounded and the news that the H. Brigade had stumbled on the Boers, with unfixed bayonets in quarter column and had been badly cut up. I was ordered to go at once, with the remaining half of our ambulance and all the Field Hospital buck wagons (things without springs) and bring in the wounded — I went about 5 miles and then came across the dressing station of the Volunteer Bearer Co (who were with the H. Brigade) crowded with wounded "Jocks" and dozens of 9pt men lying about among the bushes, skulking. I got away a lot of their worst cases and then went on to the collecting station behind the firing line.

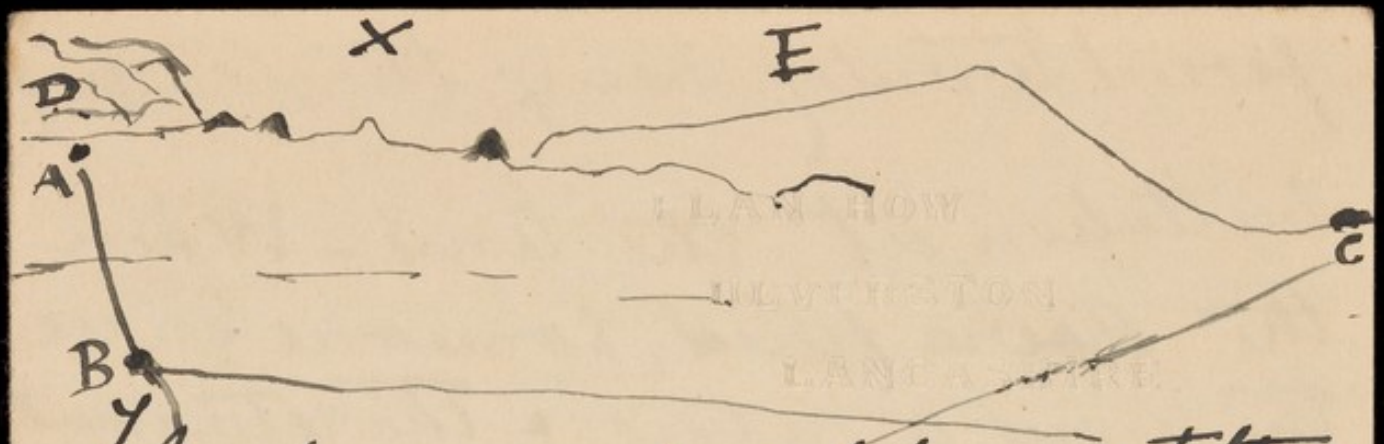
every bush had men skulking behind it, and there was no doubt that the 91st and H. L. I. were ~~R. F. 1900.~~ demoralized, the Black Watch cut to pieces, the Seaforths and Gordons behaving very well. I had a very hard day out there - beastly work - as we had to retire again in the evening, and very disporting - I was awfully done up being weak with dysentery and but for copious libations of brandy could not have stayed out. The truth appears to be, that orders were given for the High-land Brigade to rush the trenches in the dark, but they walked on to them before they expected - or else owing to treach-

ery, as the Boers evidently knew all our plans and

that they were too late in getting into fighting order. The Black watch as you will know suffered terribly being the leading battalion at the time when the Boers fired. Someone gave the word to retire, and the retirement became a panic, officers & men being knocked down in the rush. None of the men wounded by the first discharge of the Boers could be could be carried back as they were close to the trenches and were left out all night. Next morning there was a truce to collect wounded and bury dead and it was not till then we realized how terribly we had lost. Poor old General Wauchope was found close to the trenches, dead, but he must have lived all through the day and numbers of others also lying out 30 hours in a scorching sun with a bitterly cold night after it without water except what the Boers brought them, this place has been nothing but Highland funerals ever since and is in a very depressed state – everybody has lost confidence in Lord Methuen & though old General Wauchope is dead and will be made scape goat for it all I suppose there seems to be some cause for saying that he disagreed with Lord M.'s plan of attack and said it ~~had failed~~ was fatal. We cannot advance on Kimberley now and everybody is

expecting Buller to come up
now, the Boers must have
a very large force round us.
I am quite well now. so
dont let the family worry
about me — give my love
to Mama & the family —
Merry Xmas — happy New Year.

Your affectate son
Matt. H. S. Fell.



I had a very hard day out there beastly work as we had to retire again in the evening - & very dis-
-piriting - awfully done up being weak & but for copious libations of brandy I could not have stayed out - I marched my men back to Modder River Camp about 9-p.m. utterly fagged out - The truth appears to be that orders were given for the H. Brigade to rush the trenches in the dark - that they walked on to them before they expected - or else owing to treachery as the Boers evidently knew all our plans - & that they were too late in getting into extended order - The Black Watch - as you will know - suf-

fered terribly being the leading battalion at the time - When the Boers fired, someone gave the word to retire & the retirement became a panic - officers & men being knocked down in the ~~[illegible]~~ rush. None of the men wounded by the first discharge of the Boers could be carried back as they were close to the trenches & were left out all night - Next morning there was a truce to collect wounded and bury dead & it was not till then that we realized how terrily we had lost - Poor old General Wauchope was found close to the trenches - dead - but he must have lived all through the day nearly and numbers of others also - lying out 36 hours in a scorching sun with a bitterly cold night after it - without water except what the Boers brought them - This place has been nothing but Highland funerals ever since & it is in a very depressed state - Everybody has lost confidence in Lord Methuen & though old Wauchope is dead & will be made scapegoat for it all I suppose - there seems to be some reason for saying that he entirely disagreed with Lord Methuen's plan of attack & said that it was fatal - We cannot advance on Kimberly now and everybody is expecting Buller to come up here - the Boer must have a very large force round us - I am quite well so don't let the family worry about me - Give my love to

Mama - the family - merry Xmas
& Happy New year
Your affect Son
Matt. H. G. Fell.

x This is a sort of view of the Boer position as seen from about 3 miles from the river on the railway. On the left of the line there is a long range of kopjes continued from D which is known as Schatz's nek (?) the strongest position in the Spyfontein range I believe - A. to B is meant for the line of the railway. B to C is the sort of line of the Modder river - E is the Magersfontein ridge where the battle was. The Boer trenches extend the whole way from A to C & across the river as well. Our 4.7 in naval gun was at B & shelled the kopjes at a range of 6800 yds. All the country in front of the Boer position especially towards the river & the Magersfontein ridge is covered with grass & vaal bushes. Our troops marched out from the camp at F on a line almost parallell from E to C. i.e. to Modder River. They camped out about 3 miles from the point of the Magersfontein kopje - Started again after a few hours bivouac & moved towards the ridge to try & rush the trenches, arrived just before dawn within 2 or 300 yds still in quarter column & ignorant of the proximity to the Boers who appear to have known all our x

Beaver Co.
9th Brigade
South African Field Force -
Modder River -

Dec 19th -

11

Finished over this page

Jack

My dear Daddy

Got your letter of Nov 18th and one from Jack a fortnight before, so I thought I would write you something about the awful show of Monday last - though I expect pretty true accounts of it will by that time have got into the English papers - Since the battle here on the 28th Nov. we had been reinforced by the Black Watch, Seaforths - H.L.I. and ½ the Gordons also a howitzer battery - a horse battery & a 4-7 naval gun - and the 12th Lancers. So with the remains of the 9th Brigade and the guards who are still a very strong

Brigade - we were a very strong force. I enclose a sort of plan of the first lot of Kopjes & ridges in front of us - which may give you some faint idea of the Boer position. On Sunday Dec 10th as had been expected a rumour went round that the Scots Brigade was to move out that night and attack at dawn - with the guards brigade to protect their right flank & support & the ninth Brigade to make a feint frontal attack from a place I have called B - in the map where the big naval gun was - but were not to press it. Sunday was very wet & as the men marched out in pelting rain with practically no kit & as it rained heavily in the night they were naturally a bit depressed to start with. I was sent up to B at 6 p.m. with half our ambulance being rather weak as I had suffered from a very bad attack of dysentery for 3 or 4 days - I slept in an ambulance to avoid the wet ground as I should only have made myself worse - I woke up at 4 a.m. & got out of the wagon & thought I heard heavy infantry firing on the right. but could not believe it as it was barely light - at 4-30 the naval gun began. It is very fine watching the shells burst from it, especially the lyddite. By 5-30 a.m. when the sun was up - the whole Magersfontein ridge was a mass of bursting shells an awful row but a wonderful sight - Lyddite & shrapnel - sometimes half a dozen bursting at the same time. At 6 a.m. Major Harley (?) came up to say I was to be relieved at 7 a.m. by Healy and I remember remarking to him that it sounded as if all was not well with the Highland Brigade as they were to

X Plans - notionally a Cribbe Wrs. There was a large Boer force under Kopje at C firing to right flank & front & rear when we made our attack on the Kopje & some 2 days & several hours running about terrifyingly while the battle was going on. The Guards must Scots Brigade & they could not find a great spot from F. Where the camp is the ground gradually slopes up to B which is probably about 80 or 100 feet above the river. From B to the Boer position the ground is a matter of contour. B a little of course, but only the river. Wind - rain - night - up to the Magersfontein Kopje.

have attacked the trenches in the dark
Healy came up at 4. & I went down &
was just getting something to eat when
the ambulance arrived in with
wounded & the news that the High-
-land Brigade had stumbled on the
Boers with fixed unfixed bayonets in
quarter column & had been badly
cut up. I was ordered to go at once
with the remaining half of our am-
-bulance & all the Field hospital
Buck wagons - things without
springs - & bring in the wounded -
I went out about 5 miles & then
came across the dressing station
of the Volunteer Bearer Co. who were
with the Highland Brigade - crowded
with wounded "Jocks" & dozens of
91st men going about among the
bushes, skulking - I got away a lot
of their cases & then went on to the
collecting station behind the fight-
ing line - every bush had men skulk
-ing behind it & there was no doubt
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were demoralized - the Black Watch
cut to pieces - & the Seaforths & Gordons
behaving very well -

C/o P. M. O. 1st Division
S. A. F. F.

30

like to get to Pretoria as I have been 3 times Oct 14th close to it and then suddenly marched westwards each time. Rustenburg is a lovely place at this time of year – Beautiful flowers if it is semi tropical

My dear Elsie

We are at a lovely place on the Joelani River about half way between Rustenburg and Mafeking on our way to Zeerust. We have a little fighting occasionally but the Boers as a fighting force are done, though they will keep up shooting men from behind rocks and trees and cutting up small parties if they are in overwhelming force for some time to come as far as I can see. I will try and get a set of Brit. Bechuana-land stamps and

enclose them when I get to Mafeking
Some of these stamps I have
sent ought to be worth some-
thing someday - so dont lose
them as I look upon them as
an investment. I mean to buy
a set of unused stamps at
every place in the world I go to -
and will send them home -
We have got several fellows
very ill in hospital and it is
rather pitiable having to drag
them along on the march with
no but quite unavoidable :
There is a great deal of grain
grown in all these valleys
up here - and heaps of oranges
and tobacco - The Elands River
Valley is full of standing
crops and looks very pretty
and almost English in places :
but it is very unhealthy and
the Boers from the Highveldt
dont like being driven into
this country as they fear the
fever more than they do us -
We take all the forage we can
lay hands on as we go along
for our mules and horses -
Sending out all our Kaffir
Boys to cut the crops - much
to the horror of the weeping
Boer women who this year
have done all the ploughing
and sowing themselves -
A woman was unfortunately
killed the other day by a Pom
Pom shell - but either she or
her "man" had been firing
from the house and you could

could not see at the range whether they were men or women. There was a laager of Boer women at Lindleys Pont on the Elands River - filthy old hags most of them - fat and frowsy with a lot of dirty sickly children - Most of them had ammunition buried under the floors of their shelters - so they had of course to be burnt out. The ladies are real more ferocious than the men. We have not had a mail for more than six weeks so I ought to hear a lot of news if the family have been energetic enough to write -
We are all wondering who will be left in command out here when 'Bobs' goes home - I would

here to Mafeking
infantry
about 1st
August -
Your affect.
brother
H. G. Fell.

31

PLAN HOW
ULVERSTON
LANCASHIRE

Oct 25th -

Botha's Farm
N. Zeerust -

We have not got into Mafeking yet as I was left here with some wounded men - so I thought I had better continue my epistle to you instead of beginning a new one - We have had several adventures during the last ten days. Commandant Lemmer stuck up a gun among the trees on a hillside just over our camp and got 12 shells fired right into us before our gunners could spot the place he was firing from - The shells came most unpleasantly close to the Field Hospital - one of them struck a blanket shelter in the Legal

North Lancs Regt, it killed one man asleep on the ground, blew the hand off another and smashed his legs to smithereens - another killed a gunner and four horses. wounded 1 man and 2 horses. It was pretty hot I can tell you while it lasted - The day after we left Zeerust the 5th Yeomanry got into an awful mess, and we lost several men trying to get them out of it. They had two killed and four dangerous wounded and I was left here with four more to look after them until dead or fit to move. I was in this farm before with General Little before so knew the people who have been very good to us - but considering that our being here has saved them from having the house burnt over their heads. they ought to do as well. I am doing a terrific flirtation in Dutch with the aristocracy of the neighbourhood. Miss Mimi Botha, Miss Nelly Bilsen - and Miss Annie Kerstein who come here to cook eggs etc - for the men. Old Mrs Botha is always on my tracks when I depart into the orange grove for a tête à tête with Mimi or Annie. The Boers round here snipe every man who goes down the road and are never seen - Old Botha in whose farm we are is the commandant up here - and combines with Lemmer - Snyman and Steinkorp(?) Delarey is still somewhere over by the Elands River so I suppose we shall have to go back there again - The heat in the middle of the day now is very great and the rains have begun with

heavy thunderstorms. I have not managed to get my mails yet and shall be very glad when I do so. One of our wounded men, Farmer of the 5th Yeomanry has died - We cut his arm off. He was terribly shot with an expanding bullet I think - He had just come down from Oxford and lived near Ludlow. He was one of the plucklest fellows fellows I have ever seen.

I am trying to get one of the farmers here to drive me in to Ottoshoop tomorrow - and hope they wont shoot me on the way. Not much chance of the war ending up this way for some time - I expect we shall have to go into the towns for summer quarters and start again in the spring, as it gets too hot up

to all the line
Jacobsdal near Zeerust

cutting it.
I wish we
could catch
him and
stringhim
up - let
me know
whether public
opinion at home
is as much
against L. matters
as the
papers
leave one
to think

Mr Smith
et al
U.
matter for
Division
S.A.F.F.

32

Dear Jamie

got a letter from you yesterday - xx we have been knocking about this neighbourhood for about 3 weeks, eating up the crops, occasionally collaring a few Boers - killing a few - and getting a few of our own poor fellows killed - we have just heard that the western side of the Free State is "up" again. That means at least another month or two, tacked on to the war. I have had five days in a farm house with four dangerously wounded men. The Boers never bothered me, and Mimi Botha Nelly Viljoen and Anna Kerstein were very kind indeed although all of them have had relations

killed in the war. I made desperate love to them all in the orange grove and we came to the conclusion that the only thing to suit me was a harem — I am sorry to say one of my men died. Longmore and I cut his arm off — as it was getting gangrene and he never got over it. Crocker of the 3rd Yeomanry who seems to know the Millers of Merlewood pretty well, is still pretty bad — Longmore is still in the farm with them. Crocker is a damned good chap and full of pluck and I hope he does'nt snuff out — The other two who were the worst wounded of the four have both in some extraordinary way got comparatively well already — They say Botha Viljoen and Delarey are going to combine forces and come down this side now — It is an awful country to fight in — mountains and bush — and the wet season is on top of us — So we have not much fun to look forward to. I went out yesterday, with an ambulance about ten miles to fetch in the body of a Bushman from a place called Kaffirs Vraal — and met a charming creature called Wilhelmina Van Wyk. She gave me a carnation for a button hole. She could'nt talk a word of English, but we got on very well, as all the Dutch I know, is either of an amatory or expletive nature — and the

combination of the two made her laugh so that I thought she'd bust. I suppose after this you wont think I have improved very much - It is more than a year since I sailed and it has passed very quickly as you may imagine - as I have still four more years foreign service to do in some part of the world, there is not much chance of my getting home, as I am very unlikely to be able to afford a passage home for 3 months leave. They have changed all our uniform and by the time I have paid for the new one I suppose they will have altered it again and put me to another large expense - xx I hear Dewet has a German Colonel with him who runs his show and puts him up

33

C/o P.M.G.
1st Division
SA 77

Lichtenburg, Nov 28th

My dear Mother

This is by way of an X'mas letter. I can't send you any X'mas present as I can't get near the railway. I will send you some of the local fly whisks when I get to Mafeking. They will be very useful at home in summer. They are made of the tails of the black wildebeest a species which is now getting rather rare up here. I was sorry to have to write to you to look a draft at Holts. I don't really think I can be more than a few pounds overdrawn if any, and will refund the money as soon as I know what it is, as I have three drafts on the Standard Bank which I can't get cashed at present or send away.

We came down here again two days ago as we heard the garrison and convoy which were

6 guns here were held up outside.
We left Vryburg at 1pm on Sunday & reached
Mafeking left Mafeking at 1am and reached
Lichtenburg about 12 noon on Monday.
It is 22 miles. We had no infantry
just guns & Bushmen. Fancy the roads all
the way and the road very long. We got here
to find the guns safe in Lichtenburg wondering
why we had come. I think Lord Kitchener
must have been a bit sick over it.
We are at present transporting a lot of the
women and children to Kopjes. They say
that Botha has encircled Kitchener now too
anyhow we have got home.
I believe I wrote and told you of the family
of my Uncle with Wilhelmina van Wyk.
She gave me a pink carnation. I am now
doing it very fast with a charming creature
called Annie van Zaarten.
What would you think of a Wilhelmina & an
Annie as a daughter in law. They will both
get like balloons by the time they are forty.
The first is just saying yes and the
other is getting it for being pro-Boer
& pro-Pro. I suppose you are awfully disgusted
at home at the way the war hangs. But
what people like the Dutch and a country
like South Africa you under words at times
We are getting rather short of food here now
as some of the Boers have gone out. I still keep
very fit but am awfully fed up and
I've given a lot for a week on the bust in
Kimberley.
Delany and Lemmer are just outside
this place with about 1000 men and 2 guns
between them. I suppose before we go
back to Zeerust we shall have a go at them
The country just here is more like the veldt
undulating monotonous grass veldt. But
at present with the rains on the whole place is
a brilliant green & the veldt is full of
lovely flowers.
I am getting quite an old soldier now and up
to all the tricks. My CO has just got a

had go of liver so he may get set down
I wish we could get Hyp – He is the
bottom of all these bothers. I believe if one
of the big generals was caught some all the
others would give in. The difficulty is to catch
them as they gallop off on fresh horses as
soon as we make a dash at them.

Merry Xmas & happy New year to you &
dear Pater and all the family

Yr affec son

Dougl McGill

34

c/o P M O
1st Division
S A 7.7

Lichtenburg. Nov 28th

My dear Aunt Bella.

I am writing to wish you a merry Xmas and a Happy New year.
and I wish I had the chance of spending mine up in the North Country.
We have been dashing about all over the Western Transvaal for the last three or four months at present we are trying to settle Zeerust & Lichtenburg
We have garrisoned the bits which ought to have been done months ago and we are sending the wives and families of the bitter type into Mafeking.
It is rather amusing seeing the different ways they take it when they are suddenly pounced on and ordered to pack their household goods like a wagon
One lady yesterday told Lord Methuen she wouldn't go on any account and that he was no gentleman

and ought to provide a proper living wagon for her. He didn't care a pin of course but had her carried into the wagon and put on the top of a feather bed & two stalwart military Policemen kicking and cursing. It was very funny to see it. At Lichtenburg there is a Boer hospital where all the seriously wounded Boers are taken care of - and the Dutch nurses are very amusing. They are very bitter against the English - worse than the men. They say they are quite sure that the Boers will retake Pretoria and that there are not more than 20.000 British Troops still left in the country. Some of the money which the Transvaal Government stored up many months before Kruger's departure has come over into this district. One smuts the State Attorney who is with Genl Lemmer is said to have £15.000 in gold with the laager - so I hope we shall catch the Smuts before he has got rid of it. I have neither seen or heard anything of Bob since he came out here - I hope he will get home reasonably soon.

The Zeerust and Lichtenburg districts are very nice to be stationed in. But a great contrast to each other. Zeerust is 1500 feet lower than Lichtenburg - and is in the Limpopo watershed - and semi-tropical. whereas Lichtenburg is right on the top of the high grass veldt without a tree for miles and no hills round it. In summer there is very little water there but just now we get terrific rain nearly every day - mostly in thunderstorms. The horses are beginning to get "Lung sickness" and the Lichtenburg people are kind enough to tell us that by February we will not have a horse left and will fall an easy prey to the local commandos.

We are all much amused by the papers of the last month we got here giving a great account of the reception of Col Hore - the defender of Elands river. It is all so ridiculous because the whole thing was done by an Australian. They say that the Bushmen used to drop notes into Col. Hore's "dug out" saying they wd shoot him if he talked any more rot about surrendering. We came through the place the day after it was relieved and it was a wonderful sight indeed

with the laager of biscuit boxes - rock cuttings all over the place - and dead horses and oxen lying in rows outside just where DeLaRey's guns killed them. The reason why the Boers in this district are so short of gun ammunition now is that they fired it all off here, to try and get the convoy. We all thought that the defence of Elands River was one of the best things of the whole war - and I hope Col Hore won't get all the kudos for it at home because he doesn't deserve it.

I hope that you are keeping well and will be going strong when I get home again.

Yr affec nephew

Matt H. G. Fell

35

c/o PMO
1st Division.
SA77.

Jan 5th Vryburg.

Dear Christina -

I enclose a letter of Paul Kruger's to our PMO. A letter written by Kruger's Secretary & signed by Kruger from St Helena - and a signature of old Joubert - I could not get a letter. I will get you Delarey and probably De Wet - but I cannot get hold of oom Paul's first.

I came here from Lichtenburg with sick about a week ago only to find the greater part of the Division coming south owing to the troubles in the northern part of the Cape Colony. Things out here do not look very well just now. Though I think the invasion of the Colony is more in search of food and ammunition than anything else.

I got a parcel containing shirts - drawers etc

which was most welcome.
I got a lot of letters a month ago at Jacobsdal many of them six months old. So I will withdraw my accusations against the family.
This is rather a nice little town in the middle of the bareest and most monotonous veldt I have yet seen. part kopjes and part veld and very poor after the Lichtenburg veldt in its Christmas condition.
All the "undesirables" were packed off south yesterday rather late in the war you may think. Let me know what you think of my photos when they turn up. They are very like and people tell me rather typical of my usual appearance out here.
I see little chance of anything but Trek Trek Trek for another six months unless I get fixed up with a general hospital somewhere. I wd soon wd had it out with the French in which case I am inclined to think I should give up the pill for a rifle.

I hope the mater & pater are well and that the family affairs are in a no worse state than customary.
Aunt Alexina is very good about sending me papers and as I get the Westmorland Gazette. I get on very well for news.
I am rather frightened of committing myself for Breach of Promise or something of that sort in my hurry for autographs for you. But it is rather fun. Lichtenburg & my indiscretions there are quite safely disposed of now.
I have just had a long letter from R B urging me to cast myself at the feet of the fair Irene whilst she is on the "rebound" and post from the Playfair cure.
What is the Playfair cure? I never heard of it whilst I was a medical student.

Johnny has not written to me since May so I am probably under the same ban as the rest of the family. He is certainly insane

I am now the only Rhine officer with Lord Kitchener's column - except the Pres & Secretary - and am consequently buckling up so as not to get left in over anything if I can help it - but I feel it rather a responsibility

Give my love to the family - I should not mind getting invalided home for the spring on the same terms as many of these interesting invalids from South Africa get home to be fussed over by the women folk - I have had about 15 months of it now - and I can tell you that it wears one out by degrees -

Yr affec brother

Capt. H. G. Fell

36

Office of the Resident Magistrate,

190

Vryburg Hospital
21. 2. 01

My dear Christina -

I hope you & all the family are all right as I am. I suppose by this time you have realized that I am here in charge of the hospital & railway for Mafeking to Warrenton & I have a great deal to do.

I hope you got the autographs - If I can get back to Lichtenburg I will make more love & get more autographs.

This hospital is delightful & I am quite glad to have a rest for a bit though I missed a biggish fight the other day.

The 3rd Welsh are here - I don't care

very much about him.
I sent a hyena & silver jackal
Kaross to Mama the other day -
I meant the small silver jackal
for a mat for the pater's
dressing room - It is rather a good hand
of skin.
There is absolutely no news here - as
Kitchener has stopped everything in
that way & very rightly I think.
There is an officer of the Welsh here
dying of enteric called Masterman -
his brother died three weeks ago of
the same in Pretoria rather sad -
don't you think.
Heavy rains here now and all the
country is green. Frost begins in
another two months & browns the
whole bally veldt - Every farmer
in Bechuanaland has taken up arms -
I wonder when we shall catch
DeWet - He is an extraordinary
man -
Give my love to all the family -
Aunt Bella - Maisie & any
relations you may see -

Yr affec brother
Walter Gell

37

Vryburg.
Bechuanaland.

My dear Mamma.

I suppose you are all blooming as usual. Things much the same here. My begonia seed & nasturtiums have come up but wont get any forrader.
I want you to get Mary Ann to make me a cake of a reasonable size. I am not going to be married. it is only to eat.

Richard Gaisford is coming through to-night and I am going down to see him.
I expect he is about as "fed up" with this infernal country as most of us in south africa.
What an extraordinary amount of lies get into the papers.
My garden is the joke of the place as I have sown so many packets of seeds about that everything is jumbled up and nothing comes up.
We had a great ball here about a fortnight ago and I hung about the supper room and gentlemen's boudoir most of the night - enjoyed myself immensely but didnt get over the headache for two days.
My speckled hen after faithfully sitting four weeks and two days has failed to produce anything so I knocked her off the nest to day. The black hen has got five chickens left - the rest died of the pip and the white hen which is the third and remaining one is laying again in an old oven - and is watched in and out every day

by one of the orderlies.
The speckle & the black ought to start again soon - and as I have interested in a game cock I expect terrific results.
a turkey cock & two hens from a house not far off came over to feed on the waste oats round my mule stand. and I have made a place into which I can one night going to secrete the lot. Did you ever get the Karosses I sent in February.

Yr affec son

Walter Ayres

things of any interest out here are kept - as I shall look forward to reading them again sometime.
I have become a second Bryan in the gardening line - and have just planted an oleander hedge which should be fine in a few years if my successors look after it.
Love to Daddy and all the family
Yr affec son
Lieut. H. G. Field

Don't forget Miss Hill - as I shall take to writing letters beginning "Sir" & "Madam".

38

Ladysmith Hospital
4.4.01

My dear Mamma.
Miss Hill who was matron here a short time with me is going home on sick leave. I have told her to write to you when she gets home. and I want you very much to ask her up to stay and give her a good time. She was matron of the hospital in Ladysmith during the siege and was twice mentioned in B. P's despatches.
I am getting on very well here

now and like the place - though I have a great deal to do.
Hetherwick is sick in Kimberley but is better again - He had a sharp go of Malaria.
The column will be up here again in about three weeks and I may go on with them though I should like to stay here and get the garden nice for next spring.
The garrison here is going to change and I shall not be sorry as they are rather a rotten lot.

I will try and get you a really good silver jackal kaross for a golden wedding present for your bed. They make splendid counterpanes and are rather valuable at present.
The rains here are now nearly over and we shall be getting the frost again - and get bucked up by the cold.
You cannot realize at home how invigorating the winter climate of the veldt is - though the cold is rather uncomfortable when on the march.
I hope my letters I write about

Military Hospital
Vryburg.

October 25th.

My dear Daddy.

Very glad to hear from you - and to know that you are going to have your eyes operated on.

There is no news much round here - day after day the same - A column goes out - meets the Boers - we get a few casualties - they get a few casualties - we have to go back to a garrisoned post for food - they stay where they were and laugh - so it goes on - and one does not see how it can be altered. The pity of it is that we ever brought in refugees at the beginning. If all the Refugees now fed - housed - and clothed at our expense had been left out on their farms - I myself believe a lot more men would have been forced to come in by the distress of their wives and families - Now they laugh

at us for fools for keeping them and it is too late to send them back now.
I was in charge of the camp here so know a little about them - and all I can say is that amongst a number of other people at home I should like to give a dose of Prussic acid to Miss Hobhouse.
I suppose the Golden Wedding will be over and done with by the time you get this - but if not I hope it will be a great function and wish I was there to enjoy the family festivities.
I heard from R. B. the other day he seems to be heartily sick of Graylingstadt and South africa generally and to wish he was back in India.
I imagine from what people tell me that I must be getting peppery like Johnny - but this life after two years begins to tell on me a bit.
How has the shooting gone off this year I haven't heard anything of any salmon being caught - What a lot of correspondence is going on about the Lure fishing!
We have had terrific thundershowers lately and everything is beautifully green - plenty of food for the Boer and his horse as it will be a good mealie season so the prophets say.
The fruit gardens here are exceptionally full this year up here but I suppose hail - or wind or locusts may turn up some day.
The Enteric Fever season is just beginning so I shall be busy after a month or so.
Love to the Mater and all the family

Yr affec son

Lathbury

40

Vryburg Hospital
31. 10. 01

My dear Mamma.

Thanks very much for clothes and cake which did not last out against my enormous cake-appetite very long.
There is one thing I have frequently written about — viz. did some skins I sent home last February ever arrive. also someone is sending me the graphic still addressed No. 3 Beaver Co. 9th Brigade. which ceased to exist twelve months ago. Can you find out who it is & say "Military Hospital. Vryburg"

I enclose some photos of the Taungs railway accident which may interest you - you can see the juntruck of the armoured train on top of the armoured truck where the men were killed.
We are all fairly fit here - things much the same. Much amused at the rot the home papers talk.
Great excitement about the breaking of Redvers Buller - quite right I think.
I am rather in love with Sister Bortwick - at present. This is the third desperate "affaire" of the year 1901.
I shall probably return to the Fete fold with a flock of little Matthew Fells.
I hope the Eton event will be a success and that old Mr Jay will soon get all right - I am very sorry to hear about him.
My seeds are doing well on the whole - but I am sorry to say that a late frost has nipped the Tomatos - which were doing well.
The bees cabbage to be a source of much amusement to my rural mind.
I am seriously thinking of leaving the Army when the war is over.
Hope the golden wedding went off well and that you & the

paper enjoyed it all.

Give my love to Uncle William and Aunt Alexina and Aunts Bella Bush & Woodburne.

I see old Arbour Dickson is dead.

Love to the family

Yr affec son

Matt G Fell.

Military Hospital
Vryburg

13. 12. 01.

My dear Daddy.

I am glad to hear that your eye has been operated on and that you are doing all right. It will be a great relief to you to be able to see again.

We are having a very hot summer in Vryburg but occasional rains and thunderstorms make it variable. I get on very well here and like it because of the garden etc. and being much amused of Miss Bostwick

find the pepper trees an excellent flinting ground. However I may get started off trekking again at any time.

We are in the very heart of rebel dom here. and there are some large rebel commandos near. the Bechuanaland rebels with Van Zyl and Van de Merwe. and the Griqualand rebels a bit south with De Villiers. altogether about 800 strong. and mostly armed with captured Lee Metford rifles.

The volunteer company of the L.H. Lancers theyt arrived here the other day but I have not met any of their officers. They have been out in the country for some time.

The town here is in spite of the weeding out of undesirables full of people of doubtful loyalty. the most serious thing we have to contend with at present is the rinderpest which has practically knocked up Paul Kruger in Klerksdorp as his trek oxen have got it.

You sometimes find people who are sanguine enough to think that the war will be over in six months. but I cannot see it myself. although the blockhouse lines seem to be limiting the fighting areas in the Eastern Transvaal and the Free State.

If we could only catch and hang steps the end would not be far off. The photos of the golden wedding look very well and I am glad to see you and the mater looking so young and blooming. Best wishes for the new year to you and all the family

Yr affec son

Lab. H. G. Fell.

42

Military Hospital

14. 2. 1902. Vryburg.

My dear Daddy.

I was pleased to see your handwriting again and quite as good as ever. I had a very fairly enjoyable trip to Kuruman. Any quantity of buck of all sort. and partridge and khoraan galore.

Kuruman is well worth seeing. An oasis in the desert. Any amount of water. fruit and vegetables and an old mission

station that reminds one more of an English homestead than anything I have yet seen in this country.

Lord Methuen is making his headquarters here so as they may bring a big hospital here. I may get moved to Mafeking or somewhere else.

I should much prefer if you did **not** write to war office as I think it is more of a mistake in our corps than others and can do me no good

The war seems to be making genuine strides towards a conclusion and I should think you would probably find the end of everything over in Bechuanaland and Griqualand West.

We have had some very hot weather lately but recent rains have cooled it again.

My being a captain means the large increase of pay to me of 6d a day. I have not heard of R. B. for some time but suppose him to be over Ermelo way somewhere.

Hope all are fit & well

Your affec son.

Capt. H. G. Fell.

Have heard nothing of Robbie lately.

43

Mafeking
Bechuanaland.
15. 3. 1902.

My dear Uncle William.

Thank you for the letter you wrote me some time back. I have been very busy lately and have practically not written home at all for some time.
I went out to Kuruman in January and enjoyed the trip very much. and was much interested in the place and its connection with Dr Livingstone. We had practically no fighting but got the camp well peppered one night and had a lot of mules killed and a few men wounded. These night performances are most uncomfortable as in addition to the Boers blazing away all sorts of odd scallywags in your own camp begin to loosing off in the most indiscriminate way.

We have had much excitement and turmoil round here lately and the place has been full of released prisoners from the Blockhouse and Klip Drift shows.
The General left here only a fortnight ago with the Kimberley column. his own column being at Wolmaranstad with Van Donop. They had fighting for two days previous to the big fight of the seventh.
The truth appears to be that when moving out of camp on the 7th the rear guard was rushed by ~~the~~ a four hundred Boers - both flanks were attacked - the mounted troops got scared and bolted and the guns - the regular troops - the general & staff were left to do the best they could. We are all awfully grieved at this sad ending up for the General - who is more popular with his men than any other general out here. He has been most awfully good to me and I very nearly shed a bitter tear when I heard he was scuppered. especially through going out with such an infernal rotten lot of mounted troops.
He was the most gallant man in this country - with a couple of thousand mounted men on whom he could rely he wd go anywhere.
Well it means a complete change in this district and I shall get myself

transferred somewhere else - perhaps
try the S.A.C. as after being
2½ years with the same general and
staff I can't stick a charge.
I am a captain now but the
large difference it makes to me
is only 6d a day field allowance
for the next two years - so it's
not much to jubilate over.
I often think of coming to show and
settling out here and making money which
if you are not over particular about your
methods - seems fairly easy.
It seems funny to be in a place standing
to arms every day just as at the beginning
of the war - now that DeLaRey is loose with
four guns & 3 pompoms.
Love to Aunt Alexina - I have got the
blues a bit just at present. Give my love
to Aunt Augusta - and please send this letter
round the family as I haven't written. It appears rather
in a hurry

44.

S.A.C. Hospital
Heidelberg.

6. 6. 1902.

My dear Daddy,

I suppose there are great rejoicings at home over the peace declaration. A lot of surrendered Boers are in here. and the town to-day is full of them. riding their little shaggy ponies and buying stuff up at all the stores. They nearly all of them have military saddles and cavalry pattern greatcoats. Some of them garments made off of bits of everything. They are allowed absolute freedom and as the whole seem fairly pleased to have finished the show off.

The different troops of this corps will also be sent out as garrison to the towns. which will be headquarters for small districts for the settling of the farms. The restocking and rebuilding of the farms means a tremendous business. You cant realize the enormous amount of stock killed off during the war. The difference between the first trek with Kitchener when the farms still had their stock on them and now when you can ride day after day without seeing a beast is extraordinary.

The weather is very cold now but as the winter gales have not begun yet it is delightful - but we are so high above the town here that I don't think we shall get much dust.

I am glad Tom & Willy have been getting some trout in the lake - and I hope before many years to give it a real dongover myself. I think the general impression is that the peace terms are very fair to both sides as in another twelve months the Boers wd not have been in a position to get any terms. I hope they suspend the Cape Government. Love to mamma & all the family

Yr affec. son
Lieut. H. G. Fell.

45

S.A.C. Hospital
Heidelberg.

26. 6. 1902.

My dear Elsie.

I have to-day posted to you a blue registered envelope containing a complete set of the new stamps and a few old ones and I hope they will turn up all right.

We have just heard that the coronation festivities are to be put off - and we all hope the king is not very ill really - as he is I think popular out here and his death may mean a big shake up all round which w^d be a terrible thing.

R. B expects to be here next week so I shall probably have a sad headache the next morning as we shall probably sit and buckle for many hours.

The S.A.C appears to be in rather a state of chaos to my mind and I dont think the

man at the head of it has much idea of managing a big show.

Give my love to Nelly and Maisie if they are still with you.

I hope old Tager is all right and not doing too much fasting in the early morning. He wd soon learn like the police out here a the trick that if they haven't got something in their tummies before they start they aren't worth a hapenny at praying a anything else.

You may hear anything of me before long as I don't see any certainty in this show at present and there are a few things about it which rather give me the pip. However I shall stick to it for the present unless turned out.

I wd like to be at home when the troops come back. What a lot of fellows there will be telling whopping lies but I suppose no worse than it has been for the past two years.

Give all the belles of Bournemouth a chaste kiss - or Paul will pay

Yr affec brother

Lieut. Hugh. Fell.

46

S.A.L. Hospital
Heidelberg.

30. 7. 1902.

My dear Willy.

I had a letter from one of the girls the other day to say that you were possibly coming out to S. Africa. If you take my advice you will not come unless you leave home with something settled to do when you land here. The whole country is overrun with men discharged from Irregular Corps - Australians - Canadians everything at a loose end all trying for odd jobs. I think it is a pity you did not come out during the war and take your chance with other men. You could then easily have got a commission in this corps which for a year or two wd have kept you & kept going. There will be no boom out here for many a long day - and there will probably be a lot of political trouble - not I think with the genuine burghers again but with the thousands of wasted scallywags who are knocking about in every town whose livelihood came to an end with the war.

Johannesburg is tied for a long time by the inability

to obtain boys to work the mines - and the chances of striking ile in the Pietersburg or Zeerust districts are I think small.
If you had sufficient capital I think the most paying thing a fellow could do is to get a piece of land with water in the Zeerust - or Pietersburg districts either of which may become great mining centres and grow corn. tobacco and oranges. But all the land in those districts is so expensive and hard to get that I doubt it being much use to you.
An introduction to miners might do you some good. The Railways are another opening.
All billets like Resident magistrates etc will probably be filled up from the Army or S.A.C.
However for all I know you may be able to get a good chit to some of the big men out here and get a start.
I am probably off to Rhodesia in a few days to start a hospital there. but I dont expect I shall be there long.
There is an old West Australian. in charge of the

S.A.C. Standerton district. called Robson who knows you. He came out with the W.A. Contingent and transferred as a Captain to the S.A.C. He dined with us the other night. He is a hard case but has a head on his shoulders and runs his show well. Kenyon was out here with the Vol. Coy of the 5th Fusiliers. Tell R. B when you see him that I will write home a list of things I want him to bring out to me - also tell the Pater that I shall pay off my overdraft at Holt's this month. Also tell R.B. that I want him to bring me out a decent gun and will send him £25 or £30 or whatever it costs. The stock of a gun always cracks out here it is so dry unless it is a really good piece of wood.
Give my love to Kate and the little Billies and I hope you will have decent luck and get a show of some sort.

Your affectionate brother
Matt. H. G. Fell.

Diary M.H.G. FELL

Oct 23rd 1899 on leaving Southampton in SS. AURANIA
up to Dec 11th When Highland Brigade was cut up and General Wauchope killed

Major General J.M. Macfie,
C.B., C.B.E., M.C.,

Torbeg,

10, Heathfield Drive,

Milngavie,

Glasgow,

Scotland

Original diary in pencil on small leaves has been inked in and a copy.
There is also a copy which does not go quite as far as original.

1954

47

S. A. C Hospital
Heidelberg.

2. 8. 1902.

My dear Bryan.

I got your letter to-day. I thought you might like to read the enclosed from the Young Leader. There is a lot of truth in it. I have written to Willy this mail what I think of this country.

Don't call too many B. Falls before I come back. Keep peaceable with R. B.

I will send home a lot of photos of Hagenstein Ridge & Hodder River which I want kept with my diary for my own future amusement when I get home as I know the amount of interest the average Fell takes in a photo sent from abroad.

Spank the family if it is old enough to be spanked and give my love to Marion, Aggy & Bogie and Edie.

I have sent Elsie a set of stamps. I will send you some sometime.

Yr affec. brother
Lots of Fell.

S.A.C. Hospital 48
Volksrust.

6. 9. 1902.

My dear mother -

Thanks for your last letter. Everything you sent turned up all right and if you send me the bill I will pay it.
With regard to my kit. Nelly may have the overcoat if she likes. but dont give away my boots as they cost a lot of money.
My mess kit and tunic are now obsolete - in fact all the uniform is. If you can get anything for it which I dont think you can you might sell it - otherwise give it to the girls ~~for~~ ~~as~~ to take the lace - or to Wiley's wife to cut down for suits for the little William's as it is made of good stuff.
I want you to send out with R. B. - a new norfolk jacket - I had - also my dress clothes - and I believe there is a respectable suit of gray - also one pair of Wellington boots - and the books called - "Osler's" system of medicine - "Treves" - system of surgery - a book on

pathology if you can find it. and "Notes + Facts" Hygiene.
This is not a nice place - very wet and cold and windy at this time of the year - but fine scenery all round - I would much sooner be in Wakkerstroom.
The latest rumour is that we are to be mobilized into a Field Force so I suppose that means Swaziland or Zululand or somewhere as both lots are said to be restless - but nothing is known for certain.
Tell R.B. also to bring me a gun and a fishing rod. I will send a cheque for them as soon as he lets me know what they are.
I have paid off my overdraft at Hlobo so at present am starting to finish off old Hart Jackson which I should manage in about eighteen months if I stick to this show. ✕✕

I had a row with the O.C. Troops the other day. He told me I couldn't camp anywhere without his permission. I told him I was under the civil government and that by leave of the Magistrate and Health Board I'd camp where I liked. We had no end of a tiff which ended in his giving me a written order to shift. I sent in my resignation with the written order attached to headquarters and the old man came off second best as things being now on a peace footing he can't give the civil administration orders. ✕✕

Johnny's friend Miss Logan's brother is the Magistrate here and is very ill with enteric. He is a good chap and so is Capt Bertrick R.M. of the Wakkerstroom district.
I rode up to Amersfoort last Saturday. on Sunday to Wakkerstroom and Monday back here - all the veldt burned except ~~one~~ occasional half mile. However there was heavy rain last night so the appalling loss of mules and oxen from starvation will come to an end.
There has been a great fight at Durban and we are getting a sort of secondary effort up here. R.B probably knows this place well - it is right under Magubu.
Everything is harder to get and more expensive

than when the war was on - but that must all come to an end - especially if they reduce the customs duties at the beginning of next year - I suppose everything at home is much as usual and I wish I could have got back with R.B. Give my love to the Pater and family.

Yr affec son

Lat[illegible] Fell.

Dotty & Aunts
Dotty from
Letter
S.F.A.

49

S.A.C.

Volhorst.

29/10/1902.

My dear Rasa.

I enclose a few odd stamps - with a couple on the outside by way of specimens which I will send from time to time.

I will send you a cheque £12 at the new year which will pay off what I owe I believe. I am going to try and save enough money to pay off that Jackson. If I can keep going in this corpo for a couple of years.

That Lenoos I sent you is well worth a fiver. I will send a set of the new Natal stamps as soon as I go over to Charlestown.

I think you are perfectly right to buy the

picture however Extravagant Tasa calls it.

If there are any signs of the S.A.C. Medical Dept becoming permanent and getting a pension. I shall stick to it as I like this country and probably when I have got a couple of thousand pounds buy a farm and settle and grow mealies and pigs and keep a harem full of Swazi ladies who are peculiarly ugly.

I am afraid my matrimonial arrangements are in rather a bad way - but I can't help making love and there's no good pretending I'm anything else but a rip.

Give old Tasa a digit in the ribs from me and spank the progeny

To appear below.

Yours H. G. Fell.

50

S.A.C.

Heidelberg.

26.4.03.

My dear Pater.

I have just been moved up here again to act as Divisional R.O. but shall be moved again in about three weeks.

R.B came down to take a trip round with me but I got my orders to leave Rothenburg the day he came so couldn't go.

He started off on a circular tour with a cape cart and mules and was waiter in charge of his kit and culinary performances. but I haven't heard yet how he got on.

They are reducing the garrison out here apparently very much - are taking birds rather unnecessarily fast. However I suppose they know best.

The cold weather is beginning and I am in a tent again after a most comfortable house at Volkmarsdorf but I shall soon get used to it again.

I will try for leave next summer but I cant possibly get more than three months which only gives me about six weeks at home - but I may as well come if I have the money for the trip.

They are still dithering away at his blessed caps and nothing is apparently any more settled than it was this time last year - I shall stick it out in this country as long as I can - because the longer I stay the more senior I become in the Rifles - and if I go back to it I shall not have so many roosters to boss me up as I might otherwise have.

I hope you and the mater are going strong but you are getting old now and will have to take care of yourselves.

Robbie expects to be home next summer I think.

We have a Capt Alexander of the Dasels in hospital here - who had two friends to see him yesterday. The friends turned out to be Harry Templar and his wife. He is now the engineer of the Jumpers Sup with about £1000 a year. He remained staying at Dan Gayle well about 20 years ago.

Love to all the family

Yr affectionate son

Latt H G Fell.

& wounded pills shows
up very well
considering the
number of fellows actually
in the firing line are very
small, as the large majority
of the Army doctors are
in Field lines of commun-
ication & Base hospitals
in absolute safety & never
hear a bullet whizz over
their heads - This place was
to some extent saved by
the great heaps of "blue
clay" rubbish thrown up
from the great Diamond
Mines, which act like a

rampart round the town.
The Boers cut the water supply from the Vaal and it is not yet mended but Rhodes got water laid on from the De Beers deep levels & pumped it all through Town – No food but military rations & trek ox beef which is almost unchewable, is as yet available & the townspeople grumble but of course they cant expect themselves to be considered first –
The population here, black & white, is something over 40 000 people –
It is awfully funny to see shops & churches & beds & white sheets again, after about four months abstinence – also the English damsels strike one with their beauty very much after not having seen one since I left Cape Town, I am carrying on about 6 hot flirtations abroad –
They have no whisky

in the town, but lots of "Cape smoke" & stuff which Thomas smuggles into camp & gets blind. Remember me to any old friends –

Your affect – brother
Matt – H. G. Fell.