

**Diary of Lieutenant F.J. Palmer, RAMC, in South Africa during the Boer War,
17 March-32nd Oct (sic) 1900**

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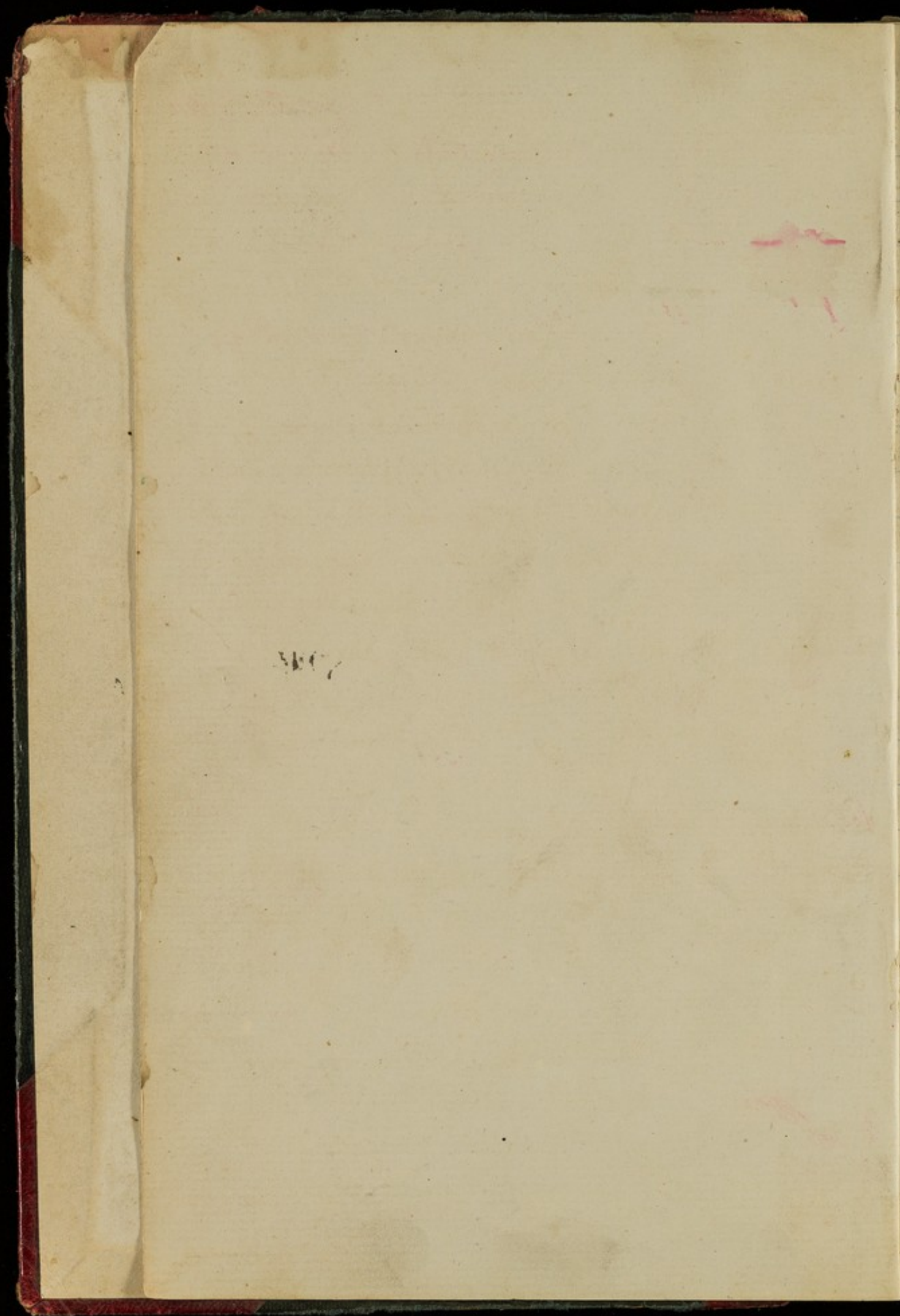
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F. J. Palmer Lieut. R.A.M.C.

F. J. Palmer Liôt RA 17c

(459)



Diary of life in South Africa during the war
(Continued) commencing with arrival in
Ladysmith from a few days leave at Durban

Saturday March 17th 1900. (Patrick's Day)

The "weavin' of the green" much in evidence everywhere amongst all classes & nationalities, in recognition of the gallant part played by Hart's brigade. Wagon did not turn up at station until midday, & I then started for camp reaching Sundays River about 5.0 p.m.

Sunday March 18th

SMH

Letters from home. Camp unchanged & all quiet here.

Monday March 19th Camp. Uneventful

Tuesday March 20th

Commandeered to serve in Field Hospital. Had to go with convoy of sick, carried on stretchers to Elandsburg Str. Delay of ambulance train. One man died at station. It is a pity that the exigencies of military service should require the removal of such bad cases. Wroughton left on leave.

Thursday March 22nd. Have now got about 60 cases under my charge. Over 30 of these are cases of enteric. Am beginning to realise that I am still a doctor. Will have great experience in typhoid if this state of affairs lasts. Extremely difficult to treat such serious cases with the resources at our command, but the base hospitals are simply crowded out with sick & wounded. Typhoid & dysentery rife in the camp here.

I thank my stars I have been twice inoculated. The inoculated cases seem to run a much milder course.

Friday March 23rd ——— Camp life & Hospital. Letters from home of Feb 23rd.

Saturday March 24th ——— Uneventful. Rumours of an impending move. A daily bulletin now circulated in camp.

Sunday March 25th ——— Mass this morning. To night arrived 100 men of the Imperial Beaver Coy, who have been enlisted for the course of the war to replace our men taken to attend the sick in hospital. They are a motley crew.

Monday March 26th Have to drill
the new beavers & try & lick them into shape
a bit. Wroughton came back to day.

Tuesday March 27th Court of
Enquiry over lost stretchers

Wednesday March 28th to Monday

April 9th ——— Uneventful

Tuesday April 10th ——— At last our
long spell of monotony has been broken & in
quite a lively fashion too. This morning at
7.0 I was sitting in my tent busily engaged
in drying some prints which I had toned &
fixed the evening before, when a well known
whirring noise made me rush out into the
open to witness a shell exploding in the midst
of a group of tents some 300 yds away. The
~~result~~ event was not entirely an unexpected
one as we had made no attempt to hold the
heights commanding our camp which lies on
the flat, & I had been speculating on the possib-
ility of such an occurrence for some time
past. Another & another shell followed in
quick succession, & soon the whole camp
seemed full of exploding shells. No portion
of it was spared, though the camps of the

4th & Naval Brigades which were nearest to the enemy suffered most. The alarm was quickly sounded & the men fell in on their different parade grounds, & as quickly were pushed out to the front in skirmishing order for the protection of the camp. The men of the 4th Bde, leaving their tents standing, ran over the crest of a slight rise & took cover there. In a very short time the thunderous roar of the naval guns was heard as they opened fire on the enemy. Very quickly they had located some of their guns & were pounding away in the endeavour to silence them, whilst fatigue parties lowered all the tents so as to furnish no mark to the enemies gunners, & the long lines of skirmishers advanced towards the dominating hills. For an hour the shelling continued unabated, & then gradually became less & less, finally ceasing entirely. In the midst of all this confusion I was sent for from the Field Hospital. On arriving there I found a man of the East Surrey with his thigh so fearfully mangled by

the head of a shell that we decided to amputate. Parry & myself did the operation between us & the patient had lost so much blood whilst being carried in that we thought he would die on the table. In the most critical part of the operation, a shrapnel burst in the air above us, the bullets falling round the operating tent. He did not die on the table & is alive now, 5 days after, though still not quite out of danger. As time went by things were quite lively. Our infantry were far out on the plain in skirmishing order, & the Boer guns, disdaining the tents, fired shell after shell amongst them. The rattle of musketry crackled up now & again, (as if a handful of salt had been thrown upon a fire), & then died away. By midday our men had seized a small kopje to our left front, lying under a much larger hill from which the Boer guns had been firing. Orders were received that afternoon that the whole force was to retire, & under the wan light of a full moon, field hospitals, sick, wounded, baggage, & men made their way behind

the hills occupied by the Boers in Elands-
laagte fight. We bivouacked on the
ground, no tents being pitched

Wednesday April 11th — Our loss on the
previous day was only 3 killed & 14 wounded
We are now encamped on the slopes ^{up}
which the Devons, Manchesters & Gordons
charged as evening fell on Elandslaagte
many months ago.

Thursday April 12th — Appointed
temporarily to to Yorks.

Wednesday April 18th — Marched to near
Pepworth Hill from Elandslaagte

Thursday 19th — Marched to &
camped at Surprise Hill near Nicholson's
Nek.

May 2nd — Appointed to 1st
Leicesters. Found them after some trouble
camped under Lombards Kop.

May 8th — Marched to day to
Pieter's Farm some 7 miles to the north
east with a composite force consisting
of our battalion, 19th Battery, R. F. A. & a
squadron of the 18th Hussars.

May 15th — Marched from Pieter's Farm

to Hodder spruit

May 16th — Started at 3:00 p.m. along with the 1st & 2nd K.R.R., some S.A.L.H. & 3 batteries of artillery & marched on the Newcastle road to Sunday's River, a distance of about 13 miles, arriving at 9.0 p.m. Passing the foot of Jononos Kop we marched through a great grass fire which blazed on both sides of the road for nearly a mile. It was an impressive sight. We had left our tents behind & the wagon containing our kits broke down & did not arrive until midnight, whilst we lay down shivering with cold.

May 17th — Up at 4:0 a.m. & stood to arms marching at 7.30 a few miles up the road & seizing a good & defensible position beyond the river.

Wednesday May 23rd — About midday we suddenly received marching orders & starting about 5.0 p.m. moved out some 4 miles to get our baggage clear of the very hilly ground around us, & bivouacked for the night.

Thursday 24th Reveille at 3:00 a.m.

Started at 4.0 a m after a cold & cheerless breakfast, & moving steadily reached water-kloof Farm, on this side of the Biggarsberg Nek about noon. Fearfully sick unable to take any food or drink, & often vomiting I had to travel in one of the supply wagons. For days I was very weak, then jaundice appeared, vomiting ceased & my appetite gradually returned. The disease is one which has run through the troops as an epidemic & seems to be peculiar to the country. My attack was sudden & severe, & not gradual in onset as mostly is the case, but I recovered much sooner.

Friday May 25th Still very sick. & long march to-day, about 14 miles. Rode in an ambulance wagon all the time. We marched over the Nek, & then by a very good road over rolling country & bivouacked at a small spruit.

Saturday May 26th Up once more at 3.0 & started at 4.0 a m. Still sick but feeling slightly better. Marched steadily & about midday reached the banks of the Ingagane River, a pretty large one.

as things go in this waterless country. The bridge over the river had been blown up by the Boers in most scientific fashion

Sunday May 27th — Halted here all day & enjoyed a good rest. Am feeling much better now, though slightly yellow all over. Went down to look at the bridge destroyed by the Boers. The diversion of the line was opened for traffic to day. Have now with us the stirring music of the pipes, as the G. G's ("Gay Gordons") are now in our division. Also saw a Pom-Pom for the first time & was much interested in it. I have heard it often enough!

Monday May 28th — Suddenly made a long march due east to-day to the banks of the Buffalo River some 16 miles away. We are now up in the narrow tongue of land which Natal pushes like a wedge, almost due north into the Transvaal. We passed over rolling ground, on all sides some 20 or 30 miles away rising the frowning peaks of the Drakensberg. Here I got my first glimpse of Majuba, a conical hill with flat topped summit on the left of Langs Nek. To the

right of the Nek rose Pougwana Mountain on which the Boers had mounted a Long Tom, & on which, though over 20 miles away, our shells could be seen bursting.

Our force consists of the 2nd Cavalry Bde, two batteries R.F.A., a howitzer battery, two naval 12-pounders, two pom-poms & a composite infantry brigade of Leicesters, 1st K.R.R., Liverpools & Gordons, the whole under Gen Lyttleton. About 2.0 p.m. we reached the Buffalo, a slowly running river between steep banks, & as broad or broader (at this place) than the Tugela which joins it later. The ground on the other side is pretty flat for 4 miles or so, & then rises to a steep range of hills across which we shall have to pass if we wish to reach Utrecht, our probable destination. Standing on the banks of this great river one could chuck a stone into Transvaal territory, & as far as the Natal Field Force is concerned, the Ladysmith troops will probably be the first in the enemys country. A curious incident occurred here. One of the volunteer stretcher bearers stripped, & wading

across the ford, planted a small Union jack within Transvaal territory, amidst ringing cheers from the troops. Within the upper corner was worked in a square of green, another proof of the fact that my countrymen are almost ubiquitous.

Tuesday May 29th — Reveille' at 5.0 a.m., but did not start until a couple of hours later, when we marched about 8 miles to another drift upon the Buffalo known as Stales'. On the march I was very busy as a flanker, riding out to all the kraals anywhere near & bargaining for new laid "m' kanda" (eggs), luxuries which can be obtained here at the rate of 4 or 5 a shilling. Hard boiled they form a regular godsend on the march.

Wednesday May 30th To-day we crossed the very sandy drift of the Buffalo known as Stales' & entered the Transvaal! our orders being to move to Inkuba Spruit & support Hildyards division. Our battalion, after going a few miles, was left behind to guard the ammunition column with orders to push on next day. No resistance has, as yet, been

offered to us, & the farms around are all deserted, as we soon found out when we went foraging. Judging by what I have seen rouge is not unknown amongst the simple maidens of the land of psalms & hypocrisy!

Thursday May 31st Marched to Inkuba spruit to-day, crossing the line of Hildyards division which was going out to the attack of Utrecht. All the spruits are completely dried up & consist simply of a wide hollow filled with silver sand.

Friday June 1st — Reveille' at 4:00 a.m. Marched at 6.0 a.m. to Moulies Drift on the Buffalo some 13 miles away, still keeping on the Transvaal side. During a halt a dense fog came down from the Berg & completely hid us, the air turning bitterly cold. In another hour it had melted away & a blazing hot day succeeded. Still no news, letters, or papers!.

Saturday June 2nd Reveille' at 5:00 a.m. At 7.0 a.m. we marched to Coetzee's Drift on the Buffalo, still keeping in the Transvaal. Hildyards division started at the same time, crossing the river into

Natal, & finally forming up on Clerys left flank, whilst we form the right. Our distance as the crow flies was only some 6 or 7 miles, but as the road wound towards the right & up the sides of the steep Doorkop it took us a long time, & going as baggage guard we did not get to the site of our camp until nearly 4.0 p.m. You can scarcely imagine how long a time it takes a couple of hundred ox wagons to get over a bad road.

Sunday June 3rd A day of rest in reality as well as in name. Our camp here lies on a gentle slope running down to a small spring which trickles into the Buffalo at this point. On the river's bank embosomed in trees lies the farm of the well-to-do dopper Coetzee. In one of the outhouses was found a large quantity of dynamite. From our camp can be obtained a splendid view of Inkwelwana, Inkwel, Mayuba, Laining's Nek & Pongwana from left to right successively. On all sides over the rolling hills the peaks of the Drakensberg tower up some 20 miles away.

As the sun sinks in a blaze of scarlet & gold behind the gloomy mass of Inguelo the view is a magnificent one

Monday June 4th An armistice commencing to day lasts until noon on Wednesday. Uneventful

Tuesday June 5th After lunch to day I set out to ride cross country to Ingogo to visit my old friends of the Beares Coy. Found a fordable drift of the Buffalo after about an hours search. I found the camp some 8 miles away startling a few buck in my lonely ride. Found Wroughton & Russell all right but Reckitt in hospital though soon expected to be up again. Their camp was situated close to a plain obelisk erected to the officers & men of the 3rd Coth who fell at Ingogo in /81. As it was dark & the road was a difficult one, I stopped with them for the night, a very cold one owing to the icy wind which swept down from the Berg. At daybreak I started off, & going straight across country, reached our bivouac in time for a late breakfast.

Wednesday June 6th The armistice terminating at noon, our guns opened fire at that hour & Pongwane replied intermittently, with apparently little result on either side.

Thursday June 7th Usual round of camp life & continuous bombardment.

Friday June 8th Shifted our camp a mile or so to day.

Saturday June 9th Uneventful. & very cold cloudy day.

Sunday June 10th Once more shifted our camp a short distance quite like a March day at home.

Monday June 11th — Uneventful

Tuesday June 12th — Uneventful

Wednesday June 13th — Uneventful

Thursday June 14th — As our forces are now over the Nek, & the enemy appear to be routed almost everywhere, I thought a little change might vary the monotony. Grant & myself started about 11.0 a.m. & rode about 11 miles into the Transvaal in the direction of Wakkerstroom. The first farmhouse we came across was deserted, & in the garden I managed to get

a few prickly pears (a kind of cactus) which however are scarcely worth the trouble of foraging for. In this farm we found mealie cobs, tied in bunches, thrown over the branches of the trees to dry them, presenting at a distance a most curious appearance. About 10 miles out, under the foot of the steep hills that guard the inner country of the Transvaal, we came across another large deserted farm, belonging to a "Dopper" named Englebrecht. There were only two of us, & one (myself) unarmed, so we had to keep a very sharp look out for the enemy, as we were beyond even our own cavalry patrols.

Over this farm too lay the shadow of war. The various buildings were unoccupied. Not even a stray chicken rewarded, what I flatter myself, was a most thorough & conscientious search. The farm was beautifully situated in the midst of a grove of trees, & from a small sugar-loaf hill behind it, was named Spitz Kop. Many of the trees were drooping with splendid oranges & lemons with which we filled our haversacks, saddlebags etc. It is a splendid thing to forage in the

enemys country. In the farm we found many official documents. A few shots were fired a couple of miles away as we left the farm, probably at our patrols, but we reached camp without adventure of any sort about 4.0 p.m. after a delightful days ride.

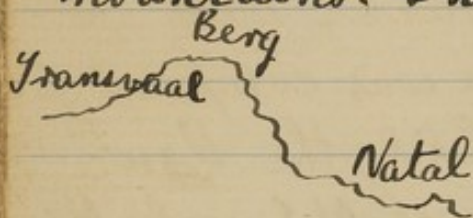
Friday June 15th — Uneventful.

Saturday June 16th — As our mounted infantry (M.I.), who had been sent out to take possession of Wakkersstroom (whose Clandroost had already surrendered) had found the enemy in considerable, they relinquished the attempt to penetrate to the town.

Accordingly we started at 1.0 p.m. this afternoon for Englebrechts Farm. which we had already visited. Our force was composed as follows — ourselves, 2nd K.R.R., the Manchester, a half battalion of M.I., a battery R.F.A. & a pom-pom. We reached Englebrechts Farm about 4.30, & bivouacked under the hills for the night.

Sunday June 17th — A day of rest! Reveillé at 6.0 a.m. Started at 7.30. The morning was bitterly cold, & a dry cold breeze swept down from the hills. The sky was overcast with

cloud, which, contrary to custom, did not shift as day wore on. The more knowing ones prophesied a little snow! We are in sub-tropical latitudes, but about 6000 ft above sea level & in the mountains, hence the predicted snow. But it did not come off, though for an hour a fine mist, which was really half frozen fog, was blown in our faces & showed as an odd spot of wet upon our clothing. The road clung along the hillside & was fearfully steep in places, leading ever upward to the higher levels of the Transvaal. It must be remembered that the Drakensberg are not as other mountains. In fact it might be more



correct to regard them as the free edge of the great central plateau of South Africa. Though very high & steep from the Natal side, they are by no means so imposing from that of the Orange River Colony or the Transvaal. We went up, then reached the flat surface of a terrace which we crossed for over a mile, & then another

great wall lay before us. On topping it, —
hey presto — the inner land of the Dopper lay
revealed to my admiring eyes. It was not
nearly so flat as I should have ex-
pected, but then we were in a rather
rough corner, & still in the Berg. Near
all the farmhouses we passed, there
were rough cairns of piled stones, some
with head-stones some without, for the
Dutch always bury their dead close to their
dwelling houses. About 2.0 p m we reached
a point about 8 miles from Wakkerstroom
where the Slang River (really the head-
water of the Buffalo) was crossed by the
road. Beyond lay a long valley with
several fine farmhouses surrounded by
trees. As our wagons had not yet appeared
in sight (taking a very long time, even when
double-spanned, to climb the heights) we
halted & picketed the hills about us. It was
bitterly cold, & we were cold enough when
the wagons, with blankets, ~~top~~ great coats
etc arrived. As by this time we heard
that Dundonald had entered Wakker-
stroom from the other side, we did not

get any further; at which I was much disappointed, as I wished to get a view of a Dutch town. It commenced to rain about 5.0 p.m.,⁴ with an odd lull, lasted until midnight. We wrapped ourselves up, & taking a lot of fencing from a neighbouring farm (deserted like all the rest) made a huge bonfire, which rendered things a little more pleasant. Went to sleep in the rain, but managed to keep dry in my waterproof valise, by means of a macintosh etc. At midnight the rain ceased & a pretty heavy frost succeeded, & when we awoke the ground was white with hoar frost under a clear starlit sky.

Monday June 18th — Rveille' at 5.30 a.m. Set off on our return march to Englebrechts Farm at 7.0. The baggage went in front, whilst we formed the rear guard, well covered by the M.I. & few of the enemy were seen watching us from the hills, but did not attempt to molest us. Reached Englebrechts Farm about 1.0 p.m. the baggage going gaily down hill

To-day when passing a kraal I witnessed a primitive yet effective method of winnowing the red Kaffer corn which the natives use for making beer. The women hold large dishes above their heads filled with corn & chaff.

Gently pouring it out on a windy day, the chaff is blown away by the breeze & the pure clean corn forms a gradually increasing heap upon the ground. In one of the farms I found a lot of tobacco plants growing, & dried leaves of the same hung in clusters from the rafters of a barn.

Tuesday June 19th — Reveille at 6'0" a.m. Started at 7.0 a.m. for Ingogo, a distance of about 12 miles. Marched most of the way for exercise. We crossed a drift of the Buffalo & crossing the line at the station reached Ingogo Heights about 1.0 p.m. The night following a very cold one.

Wednesday June 20th Had a look over the battlefield to day. The heights are not precipitous but are covered everywhere on the slopes by huge boulders which afforded splendid cover to the deadly Boer marksmen. The top is crowned

by a small obelisk erected by the 3rd 60th
Rifles to their comrades who fell here on the
8th Feb. /81. Out of a total of 350 engaged
over 50 were killed of the Rifles alone & half
the force were either killed or wounded.
Close by is a small stone walled cemetery
& some 100 yds away, another with a small
cross to Cptn Mc Gregor R.E.

Thursday June 22nd Walked to Ingogo
Station, & then down the line as far as the wrecked
bridge, of which I took a photo, returning across
country - altogether about 10 miles.

Friday June 23rd Had a regular field
day. Took out Major Griffiths mare, a good goer
but a trifle skittish, & started to ride to
Mazuba, about 10 miles distant. Passing
Davis' Farm, which lay in a hollow, surround-
ed by plantations, the road wound steadily
up hill for a couple of miles or more.

Reaching the top of a kind of plateau a
magnificent view could be obtained of the
Biggarsberg some 50 miles away. To the left
towered Inquelo, some 6800 feet above sea
level, & a great spur projected towards the
road, up which our 4-7's were hauled a

month ago. A mile further on Mt Prospect Farm
lay embowered amidst its trees. Passing it,
some $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile further on a small stone
enclosure lay some 400 yds to the right of
the road - a solitary thorn bush stood
near. A heavy fog lay over everything,
veiling the summits of Mt Inquelo on my
left & Majuba to my front, while now &
again a drizzling rain came down, & it
was very cold. The day was a gloomy one
for South Africa, & the sight within that
stone enclosure was more gloomy still, for
it was the cemetery of Mt Prospect. Tying up
my horse to a post I entered the enclosure.
Memorial crosses of plain design marked
the resting places of the officers who fell at
Laings Nek & Majuba, while metal crosses
painted white were erected over the graves
of the rank & file. Gunners, Rifles, Gordons,
all were there, & a plain stone cross
erected by his wife marks the spot where
the gallant but unfortunate Colley sleeps
his last long sleep. This war has been his
justification after 19 years; for what could
have been expected of a force which on

Mapuba mustered only some 850 all told. And that the Boer marksmanship was deadly the numbers lying within that enclosure showed only too plainly. Near Colleys grave, above which stands a blasted tree trunk, are the graves of Surgeon-Major Cornish & a Surgeon Captain Langdon & I have included all in a photo.

As I left the cemetery the clouds were just lifting from the summit of Mapuba, & I secured a photo showing the occurrence.

Below me lay a great valley stretching up to Inqelo & Mapuba, & in the hollow was O'Neills Farm where the Convention of 181 was signed. The road here dips into a great valley at the foot of Mapuba, & then rises by a series of gradual elevations to Laings Nek.

A range of low hills runs between Mapuba on one side & Pouqwana on the other, running somewhat in a semicircle between the two.

About half way there is a cutting in the range over which winds the high road between Newcastle & Charleston. This depression is the Nek proper, & under the hill to the right runs the Laings Nek tunnel. On this hill known as Deanes Hill stands an obelisk

similar in design to that at Ingogo, erected by the 58th Reg. to their comrades who fell at Laings Nek. From the top of the Nek I had my first view of the comparatively level veldt which stretches in rolling waves towards Charleston & Volksrust, with koppe ranges rising on all sides. Riding homewards I had the misfortune to lose my macintosh which I had unfortunately strapped too loosely to my saddle behind.

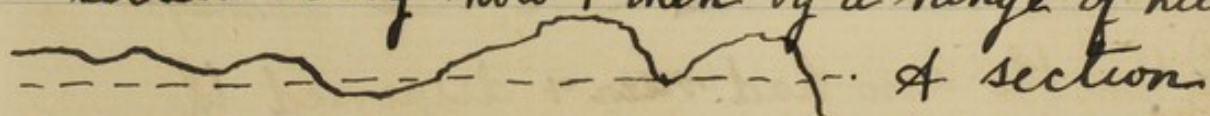
July 3rd — This morning I had just finished a batch of photo prints & was proceeding to wash them, when suddenly the order came to move in a couple of hours. I dried them as best I could in a stiff dust-laden breeze, intending to wash them thoroughly at a subsequent opportunity.

At 1.0 p.m. we started & marching all the time up hill with a gradient of about 1 in 20 to 1 in 30, topped the Nek about 5.0 p.m. The distance was not great, about 11 miles, but the gradients were steep & we marched slowly. Spent the evening & dined with a Field Hospital stationed on the Nek. It was a bitterly

cold evening, & the breeze which swept over the Nek was not very inviting. We bivouacked in the open, an icy rain coming down at intervals during the night & my sleep was not of the soundest.

July 4th ——— Reveille at 6.0 a.m.
When we awoke it was to find that the rain had ceased, but a chilling mist enwrapped us & rendered everything at a distance invisible. A long days march was before us - about 18 miles - but it was either on the flat or downhill. My pony having an abscess above his fetlock, from a cut on a tent peg, I walked practically all the way. Some 6 miles across rolling country brought us to Charleston, the last town on the British side of the border. It consists of some 20 houses (or sheds?) of the usual type, chiefly inhabited by railway employes, & a few small shops. A little distance further on a small stream formed the dividing line between British & Transvaal territory. A couple of miles more brought us to Volksrust, a thriving Dutch town within the border. The houses of the Dutch railway employes were very neat.

with roofs of galvanised iron painted red. Quite a large force was camped about the town as an attempt to cut the line was expected at any time. A good many stores were open, & at one of these I succeeded in purchasing one of the gaily decorated Kaffer blankets which hung in the window, though at an extravagant price. A heavy fog hung over all the hills, & lowering every now & then brought with it a cold & drizzling rain. Our destination Tansfontein was some 9 or 10 miles beyond Volksrust. About a mile beyond the town I came across Major Hinde, now with the 19th Hussars, & had quite a long chat with him. All the farmhouses we passed were flying the white flag, & no one knew the moment when an attack on the line might be expected as Boers lurked on all the hills around, & yesterday even sniped at a convoy passing along the road. I passed a few Boers riding Basuto ponies who touched their hats to me as I went by. The veldt here is not level but consists of rolling country, sparsely covered by grass, & intersected every now & then by a range of hills.



A section.

across any given portion of the country would run much as in the diagram, the general level of the country remaining more or less the same. By the time we had arrived in camp a good many footsore Tommies were straggling miles behind us across the veldt. Land spruit is a small station on the line, & is guarded by a fairly large force, the objective of danger being the bridge spanning the muddy & stagnant spruit which gives its name to the place.

Around it lie a range of hills of no very great elevation. The force here on our arrival consisted of the Middlesex, Duby & 18th Hussars, with a couple of 4.7's & twelve pounders. Rain was falling on our arrival in camp, & we bivouacked in the open for the night, rising in the morning to find our bedding white with frost, & $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch of ice in the buckets of water at our heads.

July 5th — Our tents arrived by rail to day, & thank God, we are once more under canvas, which looks quite like home to most of us. I managed to wash the batch of photos already mentioned but several have been damaged. When the sun had risen & dispersed the

frost, it shone all day from a clear & cloudless sky, without a breeze to spoil its heat now so pleasant to us.

July 6th — Nothing but rumours of an attempt of De Wet to break through & join the commandoes in the north. All on the qui vive. Troops stand to arms half an hour before dawn. Froze very hard last night. Freezing still in a tent 2 hours after sunrise. Must take a photo of the frosty veldt with the sun shining brightly or you will think I am exaggerating. It is quite an Arctic scene — the frosty veldt, the brightly shining sun, & the smoke of the engines, getting up steam at the station, rising straight into the frosty air. No trains travel by night, & they do not move in the morning until the line is reported clear by the patrols sent out from the different posts at daylight. Even then a pilot engine always precedes the first train. The other morning some packages of dynamite were found placed upon the line, but were luckily discovered in time.

July 8th — Got leave from the colonel & rode into Volksrust to day to

visit Major Hinde of ours, whom I knew so well when in the Beavers Coy. Had tea with the 18th Hussars. He brought me to see one of two monuments near the town, erected by the people of Wakkerstroom to the men of their commando who fell at Laing's Nek. I took a photo of it. On it are some 16 names, & the other monument, I believe, has some 14 upon it.

It is a plain pillar of white marble, & on the front is a laurel wreath. On the pedestal are the names of those who fell at Laing's Nek & Majuba. Apparently their loss was much greater at the Nek, for at Majuba a panic seized our troops. Close by is a large farm, & stacked in a great mass covered by iron sheeting, were hundreds of bales of wool which must represent a large sum of money. As far as one can see them under their huge dirty-white coal-scuttle bonnets, the Boer women are very unattractive in appearance, but they always run when I try to photo them.

Returned across country at dark in time for dinner.

July 10th — . An alarm here this afternoon. A small party of BMS were

surprised on a hill some 6 miles out & surrounded. The troops here were about to be moved out to support them, but they made their escape in safety at nightfall.

July 14th — While down at the station visiting our picket there, an interesting thing happened. A little Kaffir lad gave information that the Hollander of the railway staff, who lived in the house close by, had buried his rifle, & pointed out the spot. In his stable a Mauser & bandolier were found buried under the straw. Under a rubbish heap a revolver & a lot of ammunition were also found. Then came the exciting part. One of the men noticed that a portion of the ground near the stable had been recently dug. On investigation a pit, some 16 ft by 8, was found to be full of symmetrically arranged logs. Everyone, officers & men alike, worked with a will, expecting to unearth a Creusot or pom-pom under the logs. We found enough timber to supply the whole force with a days firing, but nothing underneath. Why a man should have been at such pains to bury & conceal a large

quantity of timber I cannot understand

Monday July 16th — This afternoon we raised a scratch team at a moments notice & had a game of soccer with the Dorsets.

The match must have been an amusing one to the Zimmies, as most of us had not played for years. Whilst we were at tea with them the boom of heavy guns broke out up the line. The 4.7's on Paardekop & Fusilier Hill began blazing away until dark. What they are firing at we do not know, but it promises a spice of excitement as De Wet is reported to be quite near & will certainly endeavour to break north very soon. This evening we received news of a fierce fight near Pretoria, in which 2 guns of D battery were captured. One cannot help admiring these doppers for the stubborn way in which they continue to resist, when all hope of ultimate success must be over, & doubtless, when ~~all hope of ultimate success must be over~~, the prejudices of war have been removed by time, we shall ungrudgingly yield them the credit they deserve. Let me here give you a few ideas on African watercourses. They may be divided into three categories.

First rivers which run all the year round, though with greatly diminished volume in the dry season. Secondly a type of which Land spruit may serve as an example. Here, during the dry season, the spruit is changed into a number of muddy shallow waterholes or pans, which fringed with coarse grass or bulrushes. are dotted here & there denoting the winding course of the spruit. Thirdly, a class such as Modder Spruit, which dry up entirely in the winter. In all these a heavy thunderstorm, perhaps 40 miles away, may change a trickling streamlet, or sun baked bed into a swirling foaming torrent of a dull brown colour carrying all before it.

Tuesday July 17th — About 11.0 a m to day the Boers shelled our camp from Gras-kop, & a long ridge running out towards Amersfoort. The rocky koppe about $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile in front of our camp, occupied by a packet of the Dorsets, came in for most of their attention, though a few shrapnel burst some 400 yds from our tents, but so high in the air that they could do little or no damage. No one was hurt & the firing ceased after an hour or so. Our

twelve pounders (now horsed) were mounted on a ridge, in the gun-pits prepared for them, but by this time the Boers had withdrawn their gun from Gras Kop. On the left the gunners & cavalry went out, & the cavalry, pushing on ahead, drew a pretty heavy shell fire, which only succeeded, however, in setting up a grass fire. Finding our guns did not walk into the trap laid for them, the enemy desisted & left us in peace.

Wednesday 18th — Rode out beyond our pickets on the Amersfoort road. The gun emplacements on Gras Kop & the ridges already mentioned were plainly visible from beyond our picket line. To-morrow the regiment is to be split up into groups of companies holding all the hills around.

Thursday 19th — Headquarters with one company moved to railway station.

Friday 20th July — Have to ride round a long distance now to visit the different pickets.

Saturday 21st July — Great excitement to day. For the last few days stores have been continually pushed up the line & last

night troops began to arrive too. Flying columns are being formed to strike into the country in all directions from the line. This morning the scene was an extremely busy one. Trains puffed up laden with stores. The strains of the pipes were heard as the Gordons appeared once more with the K R R's & Manchesters. From Volksrust came the 19th Hussars with whom was Clowes whom I had not seen since Monte Cristo. Batteries, cavalry, 4.7's, twelve pounders ambulance & baggage wagons came pouring on in broad lines across the rolling veldt. Four of our companies go with the column, but unluckily I am not with them, as the colonel with the other half stops here & wishes me to remain too. Three columns are being formed & the Middlesex also have come up from Volksrust. The objective is either Amersfoort or Ermelo but we do not know which.

The left & centre columns rendezvous at Moorkraff Spruit near Paardekop. The right starts from here.

Sunday 22nd July - The various columns started this morning when it was fully light. Riding out to Volunteer Hill where I

had lunch, I had a good view of the operations of the right column. Gras Kop, a commanding hill north of our camp, was taken by the Dorsets, there being scarcely any resistance & only one man wounded. The attack was made in splendid time, the various lines of skirmishers starting from different points arriving at the top almost simultaneously. The Dorsets camped on Gras Kop, while the Middlesex joined the left & centre columns which united next day.

Monday 23rd July — A cold day with heavy lowering sky. Heavy firing towards Amersfoort all day. Our gunners seem to be having quite a field day.

Tuesday 24th — Still a cold day, & firing continues, but is not so heavy as it was yesterday.

Wednesday 25th — A cold drizzly rain fell last night, & this morning all the kopjes around were wreathed in mist. The sky remained lowering & overcast all day, the mizzling rain continued to fall & an icy breeze swept over the desolate veldt. Altogether an abominable day.

Thursday 26th July - Went down the line as far as Volkerut to day, & drew two new Medical Panniers from store. Also purchased shirts, vests etc of which I was running short.

Friday 27th July - Uneventful.

Saturday 28th " - Uneventful

Sunday 29th " - Moved this morning at 8.0 a.m., marching to Lombards Farm not far from Amerfoort. Our half battalion was already there with Gordons, Manchesters, gunners, 18th & 19th Hussars & naval guns, commanded by Gen Hildyard in person.

Monday 30th Meerzicht - Our camp here lies in a series of hollows with intervening ~~hollows~~ ridges, surrounded by larger hills which are all held by us. Grass fires are very common & dangerous here, the slightest spark being sufficient to ignite the dry grass. To-day I witnessed the burning of 6 tents belonging to the Manchesters. A high wind was blowing, & the flames swept along like a racehorse. Of course one can burn a patch & then camp on it, but it is like living in a chimney with the dirt.

Around here are a good many meer cats, small animals something between a squirrel & a pole cat, which live in small warrens of 20 to 30 holes. Nowhere is the veldt as level as people at home imagine it to be, & unless on very high ground, one can see very little except the top of the next rise on the skyline. We are now some 12 miles from Landspunt & some 6 or 7 from Paardekop str. A column of cavalry & guns left camp this morning to make a reconnaissance, & from one of the hills close to camp I could see them some 4 or 5 miles out, shelling & being shelled by the enemy. The column returned at dusk as is the habit of reconnaissances in general.

Tuesday July 31st — To day we heard that 5 men had been wounded yesterday including Cptn Welby of the 18th Hussars, the well known explorer. Grass fires in all directions.

Wednesday Aug 1st A huge grass fire started about $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile in front of our camp to-day. & half the battalion had to turn out to put it out. The whole country round is now a blackened waste as far as the eye can reach. Many of these fires have been

started by the Boers, for khaki shows up distinctly on the blackened surface, though almost invisible at a little distance against the sun browned tending grass. All the signs of a great impending move now on, & I expect a big touch soon.

Monday 6th August — Handed in our tents to day & changed our camp, moving some little distance to the right so as to be near the rest of our brigade.

Tuesday 7th Aug — Moved at last. Reveille at 6.0 a.m.; started at 7.0 a.m., moving a mile & a half from camp, & then lying down to await developments. Our baggage train is a huge & they say now that we are going straight across country to Machadodorp. We have with us 2 incomplete infantry brigades, a couple of 5 in guns, 3 batteries of artillery & a howitzer battery, several 12 pounders, & a couple of 4.7's. The cavalry brigade with us, under Brocklehurst comprises the 18th & 19th Hussars with the 5th Lancers; the cavalry on the left under Donald, consists of Strathcona, S.A.L.H & Thorneycrofts. The morning was bitterly

cold & an icy wind swept across the veldt.
In fact I never got properly warm all that
day. For a couple of hours we halted a little
distance outside our camp, & after midday
at last moved forward, half of us in
support of the Liverpools, half in support
of the guns. Far out on our right & left
flanks Dundonald & Brocklehurst scoured
each rise & fall in the ground. Our march
was over ground completely burnt by the enemy
& the black dust was most annoying.

About 4 miles out we encountered our first
resistance, the 12 pounders rapidly clear-
ing for action, & pouring a hail of shell
on two kopjes to our right front. There the
enemy soon evacuated, & on we moved once
more & out of the burnt zone. The long
lines of skirmishers pushed the enemy before
them, as fast as we could march. We
passed several farms, most of them occupied
by women, children, & old men, all the able
bodied men being away fighting. Before
retiring either the enemy, or our own shells,
set fire to the grass, & speeding before
a high wind a line of flame, curt-

ained by black smoke swept over the veldt
our skirmishers on the left having to ad-
vance through it. Desultory sniping still
went on but did not affect our advance.

A shell exploded under our Maxim killing
the mule, & taking one of the mens arms
completely off. & wounding another slightly;
our only casualties during the day, although
the K R R had 2 officers & 13 men wounded.

At dusk we entered Amersfoort, the enemy
using a high velocity gun & a pom-pom
on us until darkness closed the fight.

By dark we were all huddled close together
in the little town of Amersfoort. Our baggage
did not come up & we spent a bitterly cold night
lying in the open or walking up & down to keep
warm. There was little food, & the men of the
Gordons & Rifles & a few of our own, broke into
& looted two stores, for which they cannot be
much blamed considering all. A hotel in the
town was converted into a hospital, & I
assisted at a few operations there, finally
spending the night on the floor though with-
out blankets. It was very cold, but still,
better than outside.

Wednesday 8th Aug. A foggy morning but a bright sun soon put that to rights. Our baggage only arrived about 11.0 a.m. Spent the day lying about & sleeping & washing in the glorious sun. No one allowed to leave the lines after last night's row. A little sniping this morning from the hills around only succeeded in killing 3 horses.

Thursday 9th Aug. Reveille at 6.0 a.m. Woke up to find the ground white with frost, & over an inch of ice in the bucket at my side. It continued cold for a couple of hours, but there was every sign of a warm day when the sun got up a bit. We had to form the rear guard, going behind the baggage, & consequently had a very long wait whilst the stream of baggage wagons disengaged from the cramped spaces of the little won-roofed town. Our march to Schulp spruit was quite uneventful, we camped for the night close by an old Dutchmans Farm whose daughter resembled very much an Irish farmer. We had our dinner in his barn, & as we have by this time found that dried cowdung, the fuel of this treeless country, makes an excellent fire albeit a little smoky at first, we made

ourselves warm too. Noticing some freshly heaped up earth close to the house, we formed a party after dinner & proceeded to see what the pit contained. After digging in relays for an hour to a depth of 6 feet or more, we came upon a coffin, & presumably a similar deposit lay under a mound close by. The body had evidently not been long buried, as there was very little odour of decomposition. No buried flasks for us that time! Froze at night as usual.

Friday 10th Aug - Drank running water from spring close by, the best we have tasted for many a long day. Reveille at 6.0 a.m. Did not move until 9.0 & then started for the baal. I walked the whole way, about 11 miles. We formed the rear guard & very great precautions were taken. At every rise the battery with us unlimbered & cleared for action, though our foes seemed to have completely disappeared. We had a weary wait throughout the whole afternoon.

whilst our long baggage train got to the sight of our future camp. Under a full moon we crossed the bridge over the baal about

7.0 p m. This is a substantial stone arched bridge of some 14 small arches placed on the high road from Amersfoort to Ermelo. Far below flows the tortuous Vaal in its deep & narrow sandy channel.

The great size of the bridge is to enable it to span the raging torrent which a thunderstorm or a days rain brings down from many countless hillsides. I am sorry we left too early next morning to secure a photo. We camped about 2 miles beyond the bridge, & after a very good dinner went straight to rest.

Saturday Aug 11th — Advance guard to day. Moved out from camp about 8.30 a m.

It was a breezy morning & as the sun rose the breeze soon freshened to a strong gale. The dust was whirled everywhere, & one could neither see, nor hear with the roaring of the blast. To make it still more unpleasant the wind was a cold one. We reached a spot about 6 miles from Ermelo about 1.0 p m, & waited hours for our baggage to arrive. There has not been a shadow of resistance since we left Amersfoort, & Dundonald is, I believe, already in Ermelo. We had barely arrived at our camping ground when a grass fire sprang

up, lit by the 60th, & was only put out by our men with the greatest difficulty. Fanned by the gale the flames in the thick grass sprang to a height of 4 or 5 feet, & licked up everything before them. A good deal of damage was done to mens kits which had just been laid down, & the fusilade from exploding cartridges scattered on the ground was quite a hot one. Our track from Paardekop is a wide burned waste one of some 10 miles across, clean over the country. With camp fires etc, it is absolutely impossible to avoid them. What with the dust & the fire; our bleary red eyes, 4 days beard & absolutely nigger like countenances made us look a fearful lot of ruffians, & one could almost dig the dirt off of us with a shovel! The gale did not abate at night, got under our blankets, & made us thoroughly frozen miserable & sleepless, so that we hailed morning as a relief.

Sunday Aug 12th — Blowing still, but not so much as yesterday. Started at 9.30 to form guard on right flank of the baggage. About 3.0 p m we reached Ermelo.

It is a pretty little spot quite unlike Amers-
foort. Coal is present here, & I heard that
gold has recently been found also. The
whole town is evidently of recent growth, &
the red brick villas looked quite pretty
surrounded as they were by the golden yellow
of the wattle in blossom. The church is a
plain unpretentious building, & there is also
a strongly built "tronk" or jail. At the Town
Hall a battery had halted & the townspeople
had gathered round to watch, whilst farmers
had driven or ridden in from the country
round & were handing in their weapons in the
offices within, whilst others who had just
received a pass stood upon the steps
chatting. (photo). A house to house search
was also made for hidden Mausers & ammun-
ition. The courthouse or town hall was
built of splendid white (quartz sandstone?) &
the characteristic outcrops of this fine
stone are now becoming quite a feature
in the monotonous undulatory land-
scape. About 4 miles before reaching Ermelo
we came upon a curious sight. Surrounded
by quartz bluffs on every side was an oval

arena-like plain, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile across
in one direction & $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile in another. 24

The plain was absolutely level, & black in
the centre, while around it & beneath the
bluffs ran a ring of the finest white silver
sand. On marching on to it, we found the
floor to be composed of dry black mud;
cracked in every direction like a mosaic.

This curious spot was evidently the bed of
a small lake, which had completely dried
-up in the long winter drought. After march-
ing about a mile beyond the town, we bivouacked
for the night, and a bitterly cold one it was.

Monday Aug 13th — To day we were on
the right flank & marching about 14 miles
up & down hill over very steep slopes, camped
for the night at a small stream, which
I found by the Intelligence map was the
source of the baal. Our march was unevent-
ful.

Tuesday Aug 14th — Formed support-
ing line to-day & did not move until 10.45
a. m. On our march we passed many well-
to-do farmhouses, which looked quite pict-
-uresque. Bowered mud blooming wattle &

gum trees. We are now in touch with French who is at Carolina. To-day, as our oxen are completely done up, (some 30 having died yesterday) we marched only some 6 miles or so, & halted for the night close to some pans.

Wednesday Aug 15th — Marched to day to baal Water River (running water), arriving there about 4.0 p.m. The distance was about 10 miles & I marched nearly all the way in a pair of ammunition boots, which, judging by the way they wore to day, I should say are most comfortable, though heavy & ungainly. We have almost no matches now, & I light my pipe every day by unscrewing the lens of my field glasses, & using it as a burning glass. We crossed the watershed yesterday, & all the spruits about here run north to the Komati River instead of south to the baal.

Thursday Aug 16th — We did not move to-day, & are likely to remain here for some time, our wagons having gone to wonderfontein near Middleburg to refill. French's various brigades are camped around us at distances of several miles from each

other

Tuesday Aug 21st — We are now thoroughly in the swim, & about to take a part in Roberts operations to secure the remainder of the Komati Poort line. After a few days rest we are now on the trek once more. We marched to day to Van Wycks Vlei, some 9 miles to the north. We formed right flank guard & our march was uneventful, until within a couple of miles of camp, when it was quickly apparent that the Boers were offering some resistance. Down the valley where our camp was to lie ran a small spruit, & all around it was quaking bog into which one sank deep at every step. Another smaller morass lay to our right. We had barely reached camp, when orders came that we were to go to the right in support of the H.I. & Gordons, who were holding a ridge over 2 miles to our right, & thus securing the entrance in safety of our huge baggage train. We are now on a slightly lower level, & the ground is getting more hilly each march we make. Twice we had to cross bog to reach our position, but one

could pick out the safe places in daylight. Half the battalion halted a mile out, & after an hour went on to camp. The second half with which I stopped pushed on into the firing line & relieved the M. I. who had been engaged since 2.0 p m. We were soon under a heavy sniping fire & had a couple of men hit, but not seriously. The fire only lasted half an hour or so when darkness put an end to it. About 8.0 p m I started to get back to camp, & after blundering & staggering into bogs, wire fences, stone walls etc succeeded in doing so in about an hour & a half & found a good dinner awaiting me.

Orders were sent out to the rest to return, but as they lost their way, some did not get back until 1.0 a m, & one company not until 4.0 a m.

Wednesday Aug 22nd We spent most of the day in camp here, sleeping & washing. A reconnaissance went out to day & guns were heard at intervals during the day. Our losses yesterday were about 42 altogether, mostly in the cavalry & M. I.

Thursday Aug 23rd Marched a few miles to day to Teluks Farm, about 6 miles away. The ground here grows more rocky every day. Huge boulders of quartz crop out in every direction on the hills, bleak & rugged looking. And yet these fragments from Nature's workshop have a beauty of their own to the enquiring eye. Sitting down on one during a halt, I inspected it carefully. It was covered all over with a delicate carpet of lichens of various colours, red, green, yellow, blue & black, producing an effect bizarre but not unpleasant. Crossing a deep valley through which flowed a clear as crystal spruit, we ascended the slope on the other side. Up to this all was peaceful progress, but when we reached the top, we were saluted by pom-poms & common shell, but had no one hit. (The wind is blowing a gale & a grass fire is burning all round me as I write so don't wonder at the dirty appearance of the page). Our batteries took "action front" on the hill, & shelled the enemy

who occupy a strong position on a steep range of hills in front. We camped in the hollow by the stream for the night. While writing this a happy opportunist took advantage of the grass fire, and, adding some dry cowdung to an already smouldering heap, proceeded to boil some water in a tin & make tea! It was only when we had got into camp that we realised things were not going on as well as we liked. When we sent out our pickets to occupy the ridges above the river, the enemy, snugly ensconced behind huge boulders, commenced sniping at them from close range. Keeping well under cover, however, we only lost one killed & four wounded. And we could hear nothing through the infernal wind sweeping over the hills, unless when a bullet, missing the ridge, dropped in our camp which was only 3 or 400 yds behind the picket line - & there were many such. On our left the Liverpools met with a disaster. A company pushed on, contrary to orders, & got cut off from its supports, while unseen marksmen poured a

deadly fire into them. Result-over 60 killed & wounded are known to us, & the fate of the rest is uncertain. I was kept fairly busy when the wounded began to drop in. I was roused about midnight to see one of our three missing men who had just been found by a search party. He was shot through the head, heart & thigh, & was, of course, dead. As he had taken off his accoutrements the slighter wound was evidently the first received, & the other fatal wounds were given as he lay exhausted on the ground. It would give me keen pleasure to see the hound who did it writhing on a bayonet point. Seniency is of no use, & we shall have to commence farm burning etc to stop the guerilla warfare. A strong position lies in front of us, & will have to be taken when Roberts, whose right wing we are gives the order to advance.

Friday Aug 24th.— Remained here to-day. Busy from quite early this morning. Two men shot by stray bullets in our camp, one, I fear,

fatally through the head whilst asleep.
A bedstly day - high wind & dust every-
where. The double crack of the snipers
Mausers all around us. Had 6 men
wounded to day, some pretty severely.

The enemy also threw a few pom-
pom & ordinary shells at us. Our
guns fired at intervals on chance, but
could never see anything to fire at, & could
do little to keep down the sniping

Saturday Aug 25th We still remain
here. Sniping continued all day, some of the
bullets falling in camp & one man was
killed. A slight earthquake shock occurred
to-day. Before dusk the sniping gained in
energy, & the enemy threw three shells into
the camp, one falling in the field hospital
but no one was injured. As one of our
fellows said he never before realised so
fully the truth of Napoleons dictum that
"an army fights on its belly": as after
spending a day on picket with his nose
glued to the ground. The greatest of
warriors, however, only referred to the
commensariat, though his words are

true in a different sense in these days of long range rifles & smokeless powder.

Sunday Aug 26th — Reveille at 6.0 a.m. The bulk of the force moved a few miles to the left under cover of the high ridge in front of our camp. while we were left behind to form a rear-guard on the same series of ridges. Sniping still continued & we had one man hit in the shoulder & 2 men grazed. whilst dozing with another fellow my head resting on an ant heap, a bullet buried itself in the ant heap about an inch from my ear. Strathconas were with us in the rear guard. & their pom-pom did good service raking each ridge as we left it in retiring. Later the enemy opened on us with a high velocity gun & a pom-pom but did little harm only 3 of Strathconas being hit. About midday it was evident that pretty heavy fighting was going on in the direction towards which we were advancing. Our batteries on distant ridges could be seen working their guns quickly, while Long Tom

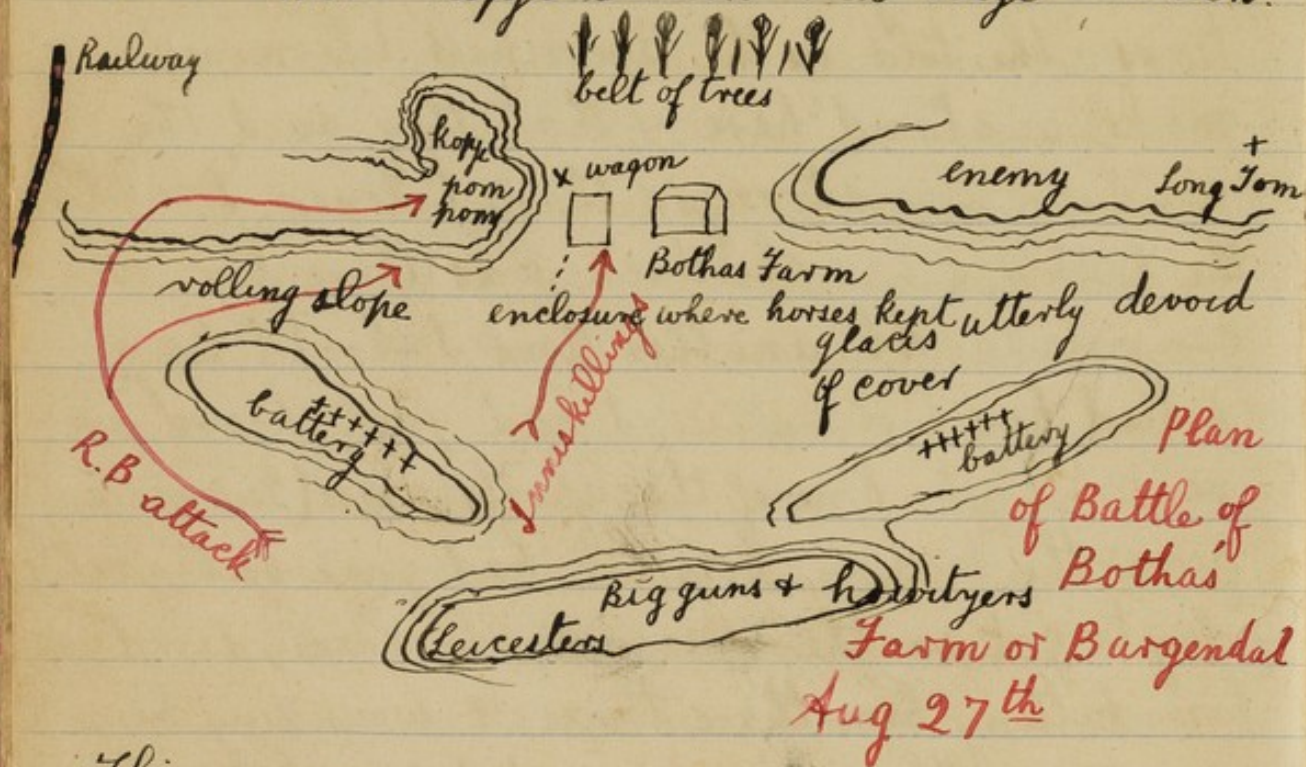
seemed to throw shells pretty nearly everywhere. As darkness drew on we were retreating very slowly, & it became very cold. News came that Buller had attacked, the Devons getting to within 300 yds of the Boer trenches, when it was found that to advance further would mean great loss of life. At dark Buller withdrew. Stumbling along in the dark over absolutely new ground, it took us a long time to find our camping place although only a few miles distant from our last one.

Monday Aug 27th — Did not get to rest until midnight & had to turn out at 4.30 a.m. A bitterly cold dust laden breeze swept across the veldt. Had a cheerless breakfast with dust as a condiment in everything. About 9.0 a.m. we received orders to join the 7th Bde which was about to attack the enemys position. Marching about 2 miles under cover of a rolling ridge we came within about a mile of the railway. There we lay down in reserve. At a farmhouse passed by us,

a woman with her children watched us as we marched by, & seemed ready to burst into tears. She told us the Boers had determined to make a stand here, & that they said the position was stronger than Colenso. Doubtless the father of her children was there too on commando. At another time I should have pitied her, but a tale I had just heard prevented that. One of the apothecaries (Eurasians) from the Indian Hospital had gone out yesterday to get in the wounded. The enemy fired on him, hitting him three times, & wounding him mortally. They also wounded two beavers. When we reached our position, I went up the ridge on which our big guns stood. The artillery preparation for the attack was about to commence.

Here I had my first view of the enemy's position. They occupied on our right a long ridge, in front of which stretched a great glacié, bare even of ant heaps & utterly devoid of cover. Separated from it by a valley stood another long ridge on which one of our batteries was placed. On the left of (their right) at the place attacked

by us was another bare ridge, terminating
in a small kopje strewn with huge boulders.



This

This kopje formed the central objective of our attack. Below it was the farm belonging to the well known Chris Botha, & around it were stone enclosures & rows of trees. On the kopje numerous small sangars were erected, while a pom-pom placed there raked the ridge. Opposite this ridge, along which the attack was made, another ridge was occupied by one of our batteries, & behind it the troops deployed for the attack. The Rifle Bde advanced along the ridge, & at the same time the Inniskillings were

launched in front. The chief loss however fell on the Rifles who had 95 casualties, 2 officers being killed, & the colonel & 2 others wounded. The Inniskillings had 25 men killed & wounded.

Just as we reached the hill on which our great guns were, the battle began in earnest. On the hill were 4 twelve pounders, two 4.7's, 2, 5 in. siege guns & a howitzer battery. The din was simply deafening as all these guns poured a hail of Lyddite & shrapnel upon the Boer position. The rocky kopje in the centre seemed like a volcano spitting fire & smoke, sometimes as many as 6 shells bursting upon it at once. The battery on our right played upon the Boer left, whilst the battery to our left front, poured its hail too upon the kopje & the adjacent ridge. Forced off the ridge by that rain of hell the enemy retired upon the kopje & the farm, where the rocks & trees gave them shelter. And still under that hail of death their heroic gunners on the kopje despairingly worked their Pom Pom, &

raked the advancing infantry until they were within 200 yds of the position. These gunners may have been peasants, cruel uneducated if you like, but they had in them the stuff of which heroes were made. A last dash & the Rifles were amidst the boulders of the kopje, whilst the Inniskilling reached the farm from the front. The officer of the Staats Artillerie dead, his gunners tried to withdraw their gun, but shell & bullet struck down their horses, & they fled before the bayonets of the Inniskillings, who reaching it first claimed it as their trophy. Some of the enemy jumped upon their horses & bolted followed by shrapnel, others, whose horses had been killed, ran away on foot. & a solemn silence came down upon the field. Six of the enemy lay dead amongst the boulders, 12 more bodies lay scattered about at a little distance, some 14 wounded were there too, & about 20 were taken prisoners. The pom-pom & a wagon of ammunition also fell into our hands. Within half an hour the enemy

were in full retreat, presumably on their still stronger position at Dalmanutha near Machadodorp, covered by their big guns. Desultory firing continued on their left however until late at night. About half an hour after the position was taken, we got orders to advance & camp near the farm, so that I had a good look round within an hour of the termination of the attack.

The six dead on the kopje itself (for there were a dozen more scattered about) were fearfully torn by shell & their faces & clothing yellow with lyddite fumes. Easily recognised by his braided jacket was a lieutenant of the Staats Artillerie, he who had so heroically fought his machine gun against such fearful odds. "Bobs" had been at the farm only 10 min before, so I just missed seeing him. Tomorrow we advance on Dalmanutha, & if the enemy stand there & we defeat them, we may soon reach Komati Poort & so end the war.

Tuesday Aug 28th - Rear guard again. I am quite sick of it. Of course Kitchener's

Brigade is the favoured one in this division, where from the General down everyone of importance seems to be a rifleman. It seems that the enemy's rout yesterday was greater than we imagined. A large number of their dead have since been found, & when we entered Machadodorp in the evening we heard that they admitted a loss of 70 killed. Another pom-pom with its breech-lock removed was also captured by us.

An American trader in the town told us that the fugitives began to stream through Machadodorp about 5.0 a.m. this morning & that the last train of their wounded left about 11.30. Kruger was present & held a meeting in the town, exhorting the burghers to retreat to the mountains, saying that, entangled there, God would deliver us into their hands. Our guns fired now & again at the fleeing enemy, & dead & dying horses, mules, & oxen lay along the road, some of them ours & some the enemy's. I saw "Bobs" (for the first time in S. Africa) to day. He looked quite fit, & I believe, afterwards visited the wounded

& told them he had never seen a better fight. As a result of yesterday we shall now get the Transvaal clasp. They have had little attacking of entrenched positions with Roberts force, owing to the flatness of the country, & he considers that we gained a difficult position at small cost. Perhaps he will appreciate more the fighting in Natal against a then unbeaten enemy, now that his force is among the mountains too. At sunset we topped a ridge which showed us the little town of Machadodorp in the valley beyond, through which flowed a large branch of the Komati River. I had marched the 12 miles to day, & was glad when we had a good meal & turned in. A fearful misfortune has happened to me; my box fell off the wagon when crossing a drift & many of my best photos etc are irretrievably ruined.

Wednesday Aug 29th — Reveille at 5.0 a.m. A dull dark morning, light rain coming down for a couple of hours, & the hills veiled in mist. Did not start until 7.0 a.m., moving along the Lydenburg Rd.

Crossing a spruit the men had to wade up to their knees in a drift. Alongside the spruit was a farmhouse set on fire by our cavalry. Leniency having proved unavailing, we are now burning all deserted farms to put a stop to the guerilla warfare into which the war is fast degenerating (photo). There were some fearfully steep hills to cross, & as we were rear-guard, & the baggage animals were done up, we did not get into camp until 2.30 a.m. An icy wind was blowing & made the men with wet feet & no greatcoats thoroughly miserable. Our road was dotted out by dead & dying mules, oxen & horses, & many wagons upset on the steep hillsides in the darkness.

Thursday Aug 30th (Helvetia) Remained here in camp to day, whilst Buller pushed on with the 7th Bde. The Guards of Carew's division passed through this morning. French crossed our front on the Lydenburg road yesterday & is making a dash for Nooitgedacht to endeavour to release our men prisoners there. Spent the cold

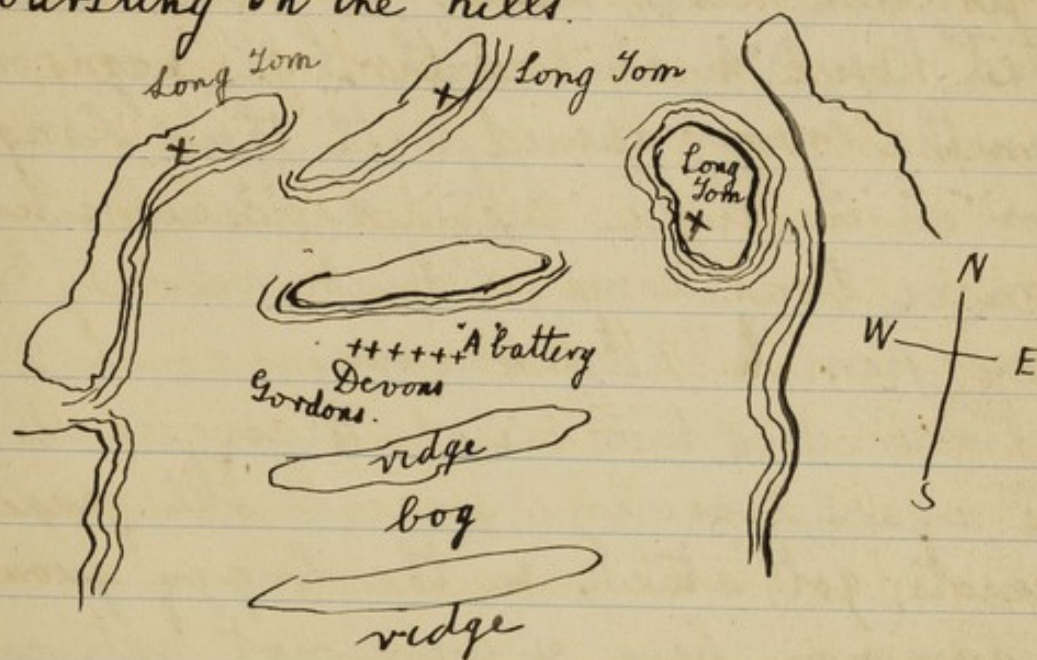
& cloudy day in eating, sleeping, & badly needed washing.

Friday Aug 31st — Still halted here. Made a great haul to day. Started out after breakfast to dig potatoes for the mess, at a deserted farm a mile beyond our picket lines. They were very small & few in number. Wandering along the banks of a spruit close by, one of us found a pit filled with splendid rose potatoes & we afterwards found another one. We sent in for the mess cart & must have secured $\frac{1}{2}$ a ton of tubers. Later on we found about a stone ^{& a half} of haricot beans. The men were sent out for the remainder, & they came back also with bales of tobacco leaves, but these are quite unlike tobacco until cured; however they have no other, & I have only about 10 pipes full, & 40 cigarettes, with little or no chance of obtaining more. Heard this afternoon that French reached Nooitgedacht by the road from Helvetia, & released 7 officers & 1500 men. Three wagon loads of them, half starved & bootless, passed through our

camp this evening.

Saturday Sept 1st — Reville at 5.0 a.m.
were in position at our picket lines by 7.0 a.m.
& started on our 12 (or more) mile march
to Crocodile River. About 5 miles on we
came up with the 7th Bde, & 2nd, & 3rd
(Dundonald's) Cavalry Brigades. The road
(a good one & well kept) wound up & down
steep hills for many miles, & then curving
in a steep descent round a great hill-
side plunged into a long valley. On the
right were low hills, whilst on the left
ran a great flat-topped mountain
range intersected by great valleys &
gorges. In this fertile, well grassed
valley were many tree girt & farms,
while thorn bush clothed the hills here
& there making a splendid picture. We
halted about a mile on this side of the
Crocodile, the 7th Bde camping about 2
miles in front of us. Grass fires covered the
hills in all directions, presenting the appear-
ance of a great illumination at some summer
garden

Sunday Sept 2nd (Badfontein) Revelli at 6.0 a.m.
this morning, & we were ready to move in
about an hour. About 8.0. the boom of
guns was heard to our front, & we suddenly
received orders to join the 7th Bde north
of the river, leaving the Inniskillings &
K R R's, the other regiments of the Bde
behind. We crossed the Crocodile (a
pretty large river considering we have had
no rain for 4 or 5 months) by Van
Nierks Brug (bridge) & ascending a gentle
rise came in sight of the head of the
valley. As we did so we could see shrap-
nel, which we recognised as our own,
bursting on the hills.



And then a well known ball of white smoke floating slowly away on the breeze. & 30 seconds later, a long drawn shriek & a crash announced the advent of a messenger from our old friend Long Tom. The long valley in which we were was closed towards the north by hills not so high as those at the sides. Over the neck formed by these hills rose the Lydenburg Rd. To the right of the road rose a low kopje & round it ran the valley, getting shallower & ~~so~~ shallower till it finally blended with the hills. Expecting little resistance A (chestnut) R H A battery had taken up a position close under the last mentioned kopje, & shelled the hills vigorously when the enemy opened with their Long Tom on the right, later on disclosing 2 more Long Toms, a high velocity & a pom-pom. Endeavouring to come into action, our two 5-in guns, the only ones which could answer the great Creusots, got stuck in the boggy ground so common here, & were not extricated until 4.0 p.m. The bogged guns & "A"

battery got it pretty hot from the giants, which shifted position several times in the endeavour to get at the battery which lay under shelter of a long shoulder of the kopje. Though they fired over 400 rounds, assisted by the high velocity, during the day, we had only one man killed & 9 wounded in the entire force. As we lay beyond reach of the great guns, no shell coming nearer to us than 200 yds, we had no casualties. Several times to day the big guns deliberately fired on our ambulances following them up & down the road. At dusk we camped on the north side of the river. Finding the position so strong, Buller is not going to attack it, but as the Belfast-Lydenburg Road is a few miles further on, it will probably be turned from that direction.

Monday Sept 3rd — Stopped here all day. had a swim in pool of river. very warm.

Tuesday Sept 4th — Still no move. Jan Hamilton is moving from Belfast

on the road already mentioned. White ants here necessitate a lot of watching to prevent destruction of kit.

Tuesday Sept 5th — We had just settled down for a quiet day & were enjoying our after-breakfast cigarettes, when suddenly a long shriek ending with a loud bang, announced the arrival of a messenger from our old & respected friend Long Tom. There were two of them, & a high velocity & they selected our bivouac as a mark, & stuck to it most conscientiously for more than a couple of hours. Though shells flew everywhere only two of the Rifles were hurt, although many of our men had very close shaves. The battalion formed up & marched to a donga for cover with the others, but I stayed with our wagons, as there, if anywhere, men were likely to be hit. I had been with the baggage for some time, whilst the men left behind were packing it on the wagons, when a message came to join the battalion. The enemy were

preparing to mount another gun on a fearfully steep range of hills on our right & we were ordered to attack it. Our battalion formed the first while the K.R.R. formed the second line. We went up in broad lines of men in very open order, now up a slope of 1 in 20. now up one which had nearly to be negotiated on hands & knees in places. Some up the gullies where steep kranzies ran down to the bushes & trees of the cul-de-sacs, the haunts of buck & hares, many of whom were started by our advance; some up the projecting spurs, on we went, & reaching the top of the steep slopes, found that a slope less steep ran up for a length of nearly a mile to some small & very rocky kopjes. We found the bodies of 4 of Strathconas Horse shot on the previous day, lying on the hillside. Up to the moment of our reaching the rocky kopjes on top scarcely a shot had been fired, but beyond them lay a dip & then another rocky crest, on which we could see small parties of Boers riding about, & soon a slight hail

of bullets sung around us. But nothing serious was intended by the enemy, & darkness & silence fell simultaneously. No one ~~would have~~ been hit, & we would have spent a very good night had our baggage reached us. But the hill was too steep for that, & though a battery got up by dint of double spanning, our baggage wagons did not, & we spent a cold cheerless & blanketless ~~night~~ (which meant more or less sleepless) night. We made a fire of some fencing, & I had my greatcoat & B. L., but the men had nothing, & we were heartily glad when the sun rose once more.

Wednesday Sept 6th A few companies moved out to the further crest line & were unopposed. Scouts at the head of the valley reported that part clear of the enemy, & we could see our wagons in the valley raising great clouds of dust upon the northern road. About midday orders came to descend the hill & join the rest of the column. By the way, going down a steep hill is nearly as bad as

going up it, for one has perpetually to, as it were, keep the brake on. We descended into the valley in a broiling sun, but it was brilliant moonlight when we topped the steep of the road at its head, & entered upon another tableland with hills rising on either side. We camped about 3 miles beyond the head of the valley, the men greatly done up after their sleepless night. They had marched about 11 miles, climbed two great hills, & had had little food & rest for 48 hours. Had the Boers defended the position, it could never have been taken, so strong was it, but Ian Hamilton's advance threatening their line of retreat had compelled them to evacuate it.

Thursday Sept 7th—Owing to the steepness of the hills, our baggage did not get in until 1.0 a m., & reveille was at 5.30, so we had none too much sleep. We were in position to move off as advance guard by 7.0 a m. Our march was uneventful over splendidly watered country dotted with numerous fine farms nested in gum trees & black

wattle. By 11.0 a.m. we were outside Lydenburg, & pushing on ahead to see what I could pick up. I was soon in the town. All the shops were closed by the Provost Marshal but I bought 4 loaves of brown bread (a regular treat after so much biscuit) & some Boer tobacco.

In front of the Town Hall the Union Jack was hoisted & for good this time, for it was the Lydenburg garrison which, marching back to Pretoria, fell into an ambushade at Bronkhorst Spruit. A good many townspeople had surrendered & given up their arms. whilst the women & children, dressed in holiday attire, chatted with the irregular horse; but then I believe the population of Lydenburg is largely British. The town itself is about $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the size of Ermelo, & bowered in trees, & peach & plum in blossom, looks very pretty, lying as it does in a fertile well watered valley, surrounded by mountain ranges on the east & west.

On my return I found the regiment had halted near the 60th on the southern side

of the town close by the drift. The baggage train was just beginning to arrive & we sat down on the ground to lunch. Happening to look at the high hills, six miles to the north east of the town, we saw a well known ball of white smoke, & after what seemed a very long interval a shell passed close over our heads. And soon they came fast & furious for 3 guns opened on us. Some flung shell into the drift of which they had the range to a nicety, & we had our turn too - both of common shell & shrapnel. The regiment quickly fell in & moved under shelter of a low rise, which, however, was just high enough to hide us from view, but before we could do so we had 4 men wounded, whilst the Rifles had two more. The baggage also halted, & did not cross the drift until darkness fell, & finding nothing to fire at, the big guns turned their attention to the other side of the town.

Friday Sept 8th — By the way
yesterdays march brought us over the
watershed between the Komati

tributaries & those of the Limpopo, & all the rivers now flow north to the latter river, the boundary between the Transvaal & Rhodesia. Reveille this morning was at 5.30 a.m. but we did not move until about 8.0 a.m. We passed through the streets & through the market square, the Gordons & K.R.R.'s in front of us. The intention was to assault the hills from which the Long Toms had opened, & a wide turning movement was attempted, but the mountainous nature of the country did not render it a distinct success.

Crossing a long swell of ground on the north side of the town, the Gordons (who crossed in column!) had their volunteer company (London Scottish) enfiladed by Long Tom, & a single shrapnel killed two & wounded 13 of them. We crossed the exposed ground extended to 8 paces & they never even fired at us. Long Tom rarely fires except when he has a chance of making a good bag. After a long detour we began our usual Alpine work, heavier this day than any

day yet, for the hills were almost precipitous in places, & there seemed no end of them.

The guns had to give up the attempt to go across country, & make for the road which was not very good either. Before we had closed in on the highest point on which the enemy had their guns, they of course were gone, & a cold breeze swept a clinging fog around us.

Leaving two companies on picket there we wended our way back to camp near the foot of the hill; for it was so steep that only a few wagons got up during the day, every one of them double-spanned. During the days advance, on the slope of a neck between two hills, I came across the remains of a Kaffir war kraal. Where formerly stood row upon row of terraced huts, were now only the stone terraces, paths & enclosures almost hidden in the waist high grass. Summer is coming on & vegetable life is beginning to bloom again, & the scene of former busy life is now overgrown

by bushes, mingled here & there with the brilliant scarlet of the aloe blossoms on their long stalks. What a land of bloodshed this has been! The Boer defeated the native by his better arms & marksmanship, & by a strategy copied from that of his opponent. While now - *tempora mutantur* - we are endeavouring to oust the Boer with even greater bloodshed.

Saturday Sept 9th This morning we rose early, & were quite ready to start, when an order came from Buller in person that we were to be left behind to form portion of the garrison of the town. The others left behind were the R B's, Devons, a battery & the 18th Hussars. Buller is bound for Spitz Kop & the Nauch Berg the highest & most rugged portion of the whole Transvaal, & I & most of the others were only too glad to be left where we could make ourselves a little *clean & comfy* once more. Hearing ^{we} were going to occupy a line on the opposite side of the town, I spent the morning most

agreeably in foraging & shopping, the latter only done by Provost Marshals pass. Ended up with a very good lunch & some delicious hot scones at the "Standard" Hotel. Felt rather seedy & had slight sore throat when evening came.

Sunday Sept 10th — My old acquaintance tonsillitis once more, temp 103° all day. Lay in my valise in the open all day, but my servant rigged up a waterproof sheet on two sticks to keep the sun off my aching head.

Monday Sept 11th — A little better to-day & temp down a degree. Will soon be all right.

Tuesday Sept 12th — Still here. Feeling much better & able to eat something. Fever all gone though throat still sore.

Saturday Sept 22nd — A reconnaissance in force was made by the cavalry to day & a couple of our companies went out with the guns to support them, so I had the luck to go too. The purpose of the expedition was to drive out a small commando of about 200 from a

Kaffer location & German Mission Station
some 5 miles north of the town. We saw
very few Boers & these fled as soon as the
guns opened, firing a few shots at the
cavalry. The Kaffer location lay near the
mission station on the slope leading down
to the river & consisted of some 150 houses
(not huts) They were all comfortable &
well-to-do & I bought some fowls & eggs
for the mess, but was unable to secure a
much coveted Kruger penny. One of our
companies went out about 2 miles to the
left to a deserted farm, expecting to get a
lot of mealies, but there were none to be found,
so our information must have been false.
We secured a buggy however into which I
intend to put my pony, if I can break him
to it. Returned to town about 5:0 p.m.

after a pleasant outing. Though no rains
have yet arrived the veldt is becoming
carpeted with flowers of every shape & hue,
making with the young green grass a very
pleasant picture.

Tuesday 25th Sept - Visited Glossop's
Post on steep hills about 7 miles away

to-day. Country beyond one of precipitous gorges & flat table topped hills. & fearful country for transport. Near one of these krantzes I saw through my glasses a small group of 5 large baboons playing about.

We are now in new quarters near the town & use a small deserted house as a mess room. We received news to day of the surrender of 2000 Boers in Portuguese territory, & every day a few families come in sons & all, & surrender, giving up their Mausers & horses. To day a man whom we had let out on pass returned bringing in five of his friends who had been hanging about the hills, wishing to & yet half afraid to surrender.

Sept 30th ——— Started to day on our expected trek to Krugers Post to meet Buller who is coming back from Pilgrims Rest by that road. With us were about half of the 2nd Cavalry Bde & a battery the whole under Gen Brocklehurst. Reveille was at 30 a.m. & before daybreak we were well outside our

picket lines. The road was very hilly in places but well kept, for it leads to a mining district. We crossed the Klein (small) Stekboom by a good bridge far beneath which the river plashed & gurgled over stony ledges. Reaching a high nek beyond the river, the road wound down into a long & very level valley about 7 miles long & $1\frac{1}{2}$ broad, high hills rising on either side. A few of the cavalry had been wounded & one man killed but we did not fire a shot. At the northern end of the valley the road wound over a nek, between high hills & about a mile or more away lay the village of Krugers Post. It is a pretty little spot, embowered in trees, the principal house being that of the noted Erasmus who owns the whole surrounding district. Coming up to the village we were fired at by a Pom Pom from a hill in another valley which joined the first at right angles, but no one was hit & the battery soon put it out of action. The cavalry fell back on us reporting the nek in front as strongly



Transvaal Stamps bought in Middelburg Oct 17th
1900

held, so up we went without a shot being fired, until we reached the top when a few snipers opened on us but were quickly driven off. Over the neck the road ran down into a valley with great precipitous hills on all sides, & others extending in front far as the eye could reach. Thick bush clothed their sides & at the bottom ran the O'rigstad River, while the road to Pilgrims Rest turned off at a sharp angle round a great hill to our right front. Holding the hills around with pickets we encamped on the

nek for the night.

Oct 1st All was quiet last night. This morning about 9.0 a.m. the arrival of a troop of Strathconas Horse showed that Buller was at hand, & a couple of hours later his infantry - Devons & Gordons

appeared. About midday the long train of wagons began to trail up the steep hill & over the Nek, & descending the hill towards the village camped in the surrounding flats. The baggage was still coming in when, like a bolt from the blue, a shell fell in the bivouacs about 4.0 p.m.

It came from a long ridge at the head of the intersecting valley some 5 miles away. The baggage scattered in all directions but not before 5 or 6 men & many animals had been killed or wounded. For a couple of hours the enemy fired their Long Tom & high velocity as fast as they could bursting shells everywhere amongst the bush of the valley. They then ceased & through a Zeiss glass I could see the guns being drawn away by ox teams surrounded by about 100 mounted

men. Our 5 in guns could not reach those of the enemy. All was quiet again, & at 7.30 p m the camp fires twinkled gaily in the valley, when the enemy (whose departure had been merely a blind) opened once more training their guns upon the lights.

These were put out quickly, but we had two officers of the Devons hit, one of whom was killed, & the other wounded in 6 places by shrapnel; & some twenty others were wounded.

For three quarters of an hour the enemy fired faster than I have ever known them do before, & then they ceased as suddenly as they had begun. This was more than flesh & blood could bear & volunteers were called for from the cavalry, who led by a guide, with the Gordons in support, went out about midnight & reached the ridge about 3.0 a m. only to find the Boers had flown & that a heap of empty cartridges alone remained.

Oct 2nd A dark windy, cloudy, day
evidently threatening rain. Our march
back was uneventful & we reached
Lydenburg about 6.30 p.m., the rain commencing
about an hour later.

Oct 3rd — Rained all night & all
day, but luckily we are in a house once
more & do not mind it.

Oct. 7th — To-day Buller left
Lydenburg with the Corps' Troops, Strath-
conas, & the S.A.L.H.; the two latter about
to be disbanded. The troops lined the
homeward road & cheered him as he rode
through. He seemed much pleased with
his send-off.

Oct - 8th — Selby, who was with
them during the siege, has rejoined the
Leicesters, whom I am very sorry to leave,
& I had to join the 2nd Gordons to day.
I had just joined them when I heard
that they were changed to the 8th Bde,
& we were all to go down to Middle-
burg by road direct.

Oct 9th Reveille at 5.0 a.m.

~~Started at 5.30 as advance guard~~

We marched about 10 miles to day, bivouacking for the night at the mouth of a pass, 6 miles long & very narrow, which runs through the Steenkamp Berg. About a dozen snipers fired on us from the hills, but the cavalry & Leicesters in front returned the fire with interest & 2 of the snipers had to be carried off by the others dead or wounded.

Oct 10th Reveille at 4.0 a.m.

Started at 5.30 a.m. as advance guard moving along the tops of the hills & leaving small parties upon each hill — a fearful grind. Tree ferns 7 or 8 ft high grew in the gorges, & the view from the heights was magnificent.

We reached the site of our camp in a well watered valley about 4.0 p.m.

Oct 11th — Marched to day to the little town of Dullstroom, a distance of about 9 or 10 miles over very hilly country. A few snipers were brushed aside here & there. We camped in the valley in which the townlet lies.

Two of our boys who went out.

to drive in horses which had strayed a bit whilst grazing were fired at from a farm.

One had only a slight wound but the other had his thigh broken. A party was sent out at daybreak to burn the farm.

Oct 12th Friday. Snipers around as usual but they can scarcely even delay us now. The country round here is very hilly & rock strewn affording these pestilent enemies excellent cover. The Gordons have heard that they leave for India very shortly. Perhaps I may be sent too.

Reveille took place at 4.0 a m & we had started by 5.30. Ground at first pretty open but afterwards got more & more hilly. About 3.0 a m after a march of 15 miles we descended into the valley of the Steelpoort River, our baggage following. All resistance seemed to be over, & the tired men closed & lay down. Suddenly without a moments warning a hail of bullets poured into us from some fearfully rocky kopjes in front. For a moment there was some little confusion, the next men ran forward in

twos & threes, dropped on the ground & blazed away. a company took up position behind a low stone wall, & we were soon in what seemed from the noise to be a pretty hot fight. But it was not so in reality. The absolutely unseen enemy were probably not more than 100, & of these I should say only about 20 waited to see the thing through. The rest bolted as soon as we began to advance.

The Gordons had two men hit but not badly, & in about an hour & a half we had occupied all the kopjes on this particularly rocky piece of ground. Some of the rocks were as big as a small house, & with the numerous bushes afforded perfect cover. The whole loss was only 1 killed & 3 wounded.

A little later the enemy opened with a Pom Pom, but they had to take it away so quickly owing to our rapid advance that they left 40 rounds behind them. At dusk, about done up, most of us returned to camp.

Saturday Oct 13th A thunderstorm & rain during the night, but I managed to keep fairly dry. Reveille at 3 0 a m. In rain & storm we left camp with a half battalion to seize all the hills on the left & hold them until the baggage had passed. Dawn broke grey & stormy. There was no opposition beyond a little sniping, & the baggage passed all right, getting into camp at the foot of a range of hills known as Botha's Berg. about 5 0 a m., just as a thunderstorm rolled up & made us very uncomfortable.

Sunday Oct 14th Marched to day about 15 miles. Crossing the high hills which lay south of our last camp, our route lay over the typical monotonous, undulating, ill watered, treeless veldt. Though easier for men & horses I prefer the wild grandeur of the mountainous bush veldt.

Monday Oct 15th Marched to day about 12 miles. We had just arrived at the site of our camp, when a little bitch belonging to Bethune the adjutant made

a dart at a shallow hole & the next moment drew back yelping with a patch of blood on the side of her nose. At the same moment we saw the head of a snake flash back into the hole. Looking down we could just catch sight of one of his coils, & procuring a rifle & bayonet, he was transfixed & drawn out hissing venomously. He was soon decapitated & proved to be a puff adder of very large size, & one of the most venomous snakes in S. Africa. Though I injected strychnine & bled the wound freely, the poor little animal died in about 45 minutes. Probably if she had not been killed some more valuable life might have paid the penalty.

Tuesday Oct 16th Reveille at 5 o a m. We were on our way by 6.30, & after going about 6 miles, topping an undulation of the veldt, the town of Middleburg lay beneath us in a valley some two miles off. We entered in state, the pipes & drums of the Gordons playing 'Highland Laddie'.

their regimental art. Middleburg is a larger town than Lydenburg, but not so pretty a one, because its streets are not so thickly planted with trees. It straggles out along the railway line with its churches & its shops, bowered in roses as are most S. African towns. A neat stone bridge spans the Olifants River & gives access to the town from the north. We camped about two miles west of the town, heartily glad to be once more in camp after our trek.

Wednesday Oct 17th Became a member of the Officers Club to day. It is quite neat, with a fair billiard table, & it is a pleasure to spend an afternoon there after our wandering life.

Monday Oct 22nd Our tents arrived & were pitched this afternoon. We had scarcely pitched them (& badly at that for we were short of pegs) when a thunder storm burst upon us. I had just finished a bath when a fierce gust swept away the tent & left me standing naked on the veldt in pelting hail. Many

other tents were blown down, & my clothes etc were simply soaked in water. We go to Pretoria to morrow to take part in the great review.

Tuesday Oct 23rd Reveille at 3.0 a m in utter darkness, & by daybreak we were packed like sardines in the open trucks which a generous Government provided. We passed several coal mines on our way, & the large distillery of Eerste Fabriken, where is manufactured the only whiskey in the Transvaal.

Nearing Pretoria our first intimation of its proximity was the appearance of a fort upon one of the surrounding hills, & lines of sangars & trenches were also seen. The train swept round a curve & a huge city of tents glittered under the blazing sun. They were the aggregated hospitals of Pretoria, & when I visited them afterwards I wished that I too might become an inmate (with something not serious you know!) At the station square we were kept drawn up for an hour & a half.

& then the order came to march by "Bobs'" house. & Gordon & a Ghoorka are the supporters of his coat of arms as Lord Kandahar. Anderson the Quartermaster is the only one left in the regiment who took part in the famous march, & Bobs wished to see him but he was away looking after the baggage. We bivouacked out at Sunnyside about half a mile from the great hospitals. In the afternoon whilst we were cleaning up a bit a carriage with outriders was seen approaching, & the men cheered wildly when they saw it was "Bobs." He was accompanied by Lady R. & had come to see Anderson. Next day by his order the men had a complete set of new clothing for the Review.

Wednesday Oct 24th — Had a look round the town to day. It lies in a long valley running east & west for many miles, & with its many large buildings & its tree- & rose-embowered streets looks very pretty.

Imagine a town entirely composed of pretty little detached villas with wide streets set at right angles, & you have Pretoria. Round the Church square cluster the Govt Buildings - the Palace of justice, a fine building now a hospital, - the Raadyaal, a magnificent building - the Grand Hotel, Cathedral etc.

Almost in contact with these may be found here & there the small corrugated iron houses only to be found in a S. African town. Krugers House is a plain unpretentious building in Church St, & the two marble lions by the steps look placidly out upon the passers by.

Thursday Oct 25th The great Review! Having made the acquaintance of a Co Mayo man named Laing, who was in Montmorency's Scouts & has now got a commission in the police; I had a splendid view of the scene from the O's office windows overlooking the great square.

The Royal Standard was hoisted

mid bursts of cheering, & a Proclamation read declaring the annexation of the Transvaal. Then were distributed the V.C's, "Bobs" himself stooping on his charger's neck to pin them on the breasts of the proud recipients. Then at a stately march across the square came "A" Battery R.H.A & two batteries of R.F.A. Next the Lifeguards & then to the blare of music, Grenadiers Coldstreams, I.Y. Mounted Infantry & Lineamen poured across the square in front of the saluting post, & passing it doubled out of the way. It was a magnificent sight & one which will live long in the memory of all privileged to witness it. As they swung with a quick step across the square, moving onwards like a wall, with bronzed & ruddy faces, the men looked fit to go anywhere & do anything, & equal to 1½ times their number of any infantry in the world.

Monday Oct 29th Our baggage came up by train from Middleburg last night, & this morning we received orders to escort a convoy to Rustenburg.

We found the convoy about 4 miles outside the town; it consisted of nearly 300 wagons & was the largest we had ever seen. That night a thunderstorm came down wetting us completely.

Oct 30th Marched about 12 miles to day to Rietfontein, held by the Worcesters. Our route all day was the long valley stretching east between the Magaliesberg on the north & the Witwatersrand on the south.

In this & the neighbouring valleys is grown the best tobacco in the Transvaal. The Magaliesberg is in places quite a low range of hills, nothing to those we have seen already, but communication between one wide valley & another is only over certain necks. Nitrals Nek lay above, not at all the frowning gorge we had been led to believe. Those who

have been in Natal would think little of it. Found Ashe, with whom I had lived at Aldershot, with the Worcesters.

Oct 31st. — Our oxen, a poor lot to start with, are very weak to day. Crossed the Crocodile River by a bridge, & then over the low Commando Nek into the valley lying north of the Magaliesberg. Covered with bush like an English park, trees large & small afforded shade in every direction & we thought we had never passed through such good country. As our oxen were dying in all directions, it was decided to halt next day & rest them.

Oct 32nd Met Cantor of Yorks to day. He joined the convoy yesterday, & the regiment is at Rustenburg. Commenced to rain this evening & poured down steadily all night.

Very much alive +

Sir—In the article, "When Dublin Shook Hands With the Devil," by J. M. McCarthy, Sweeney Newell referred to other wounded prisoners with him in George V Hospital—Gen. Sean MacEoin and the late Commandants Carbery and Mason.

I am glad, thank God, to be able to say that I am still very much alive.

I am also glad to know that Sweeney Newell is also alive.

I send him my sincere good wishes, and hope he will write to me, if he reads this letter.

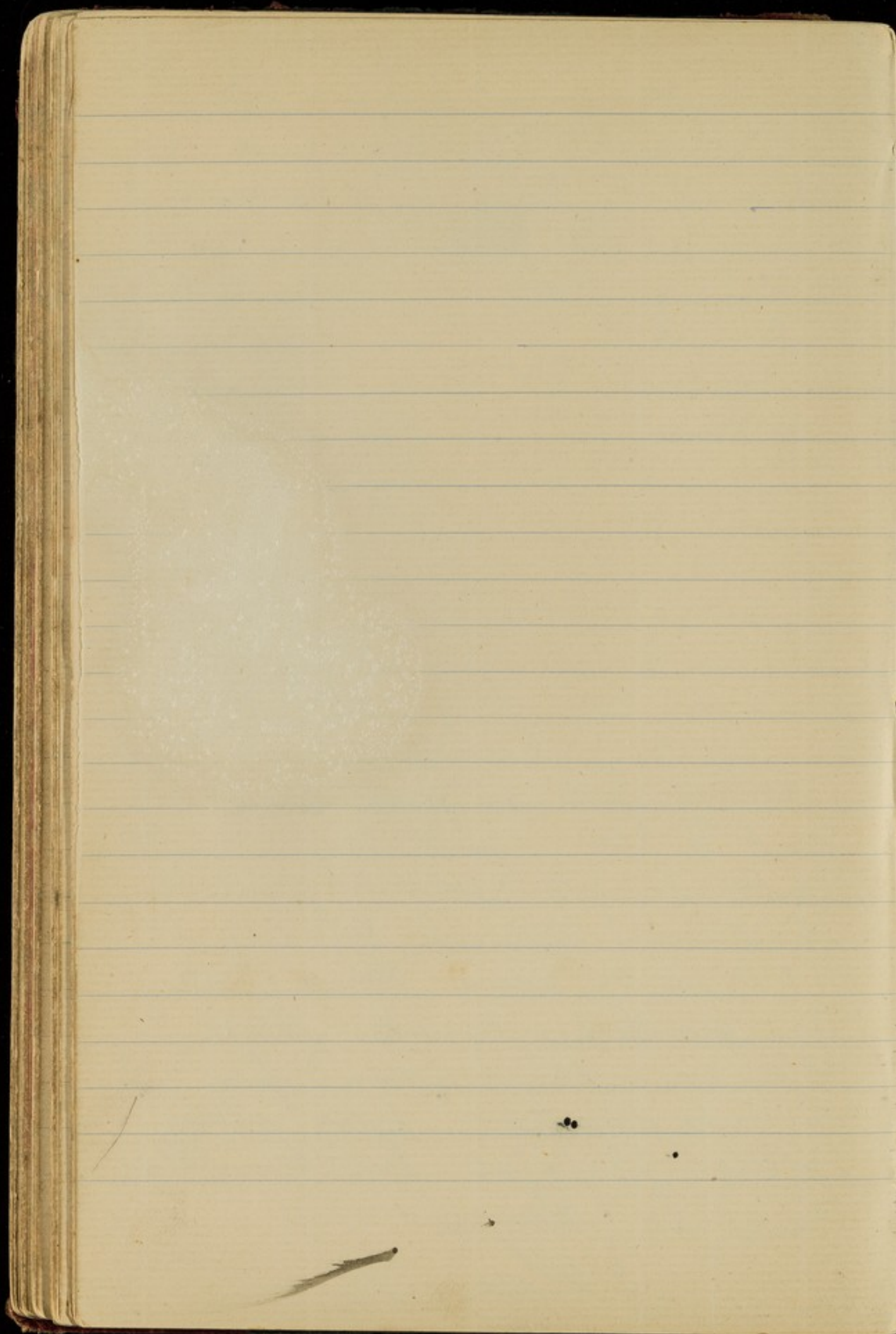
The operation without an anaesthetic on Gen. MacEoin was performed by Col. Palmer, R.A.M.C. He later complimented Gen. MacEoin on his wonderful courage, and gave him the bullet which he had extracted from the base of his right lung as a souvenir.—

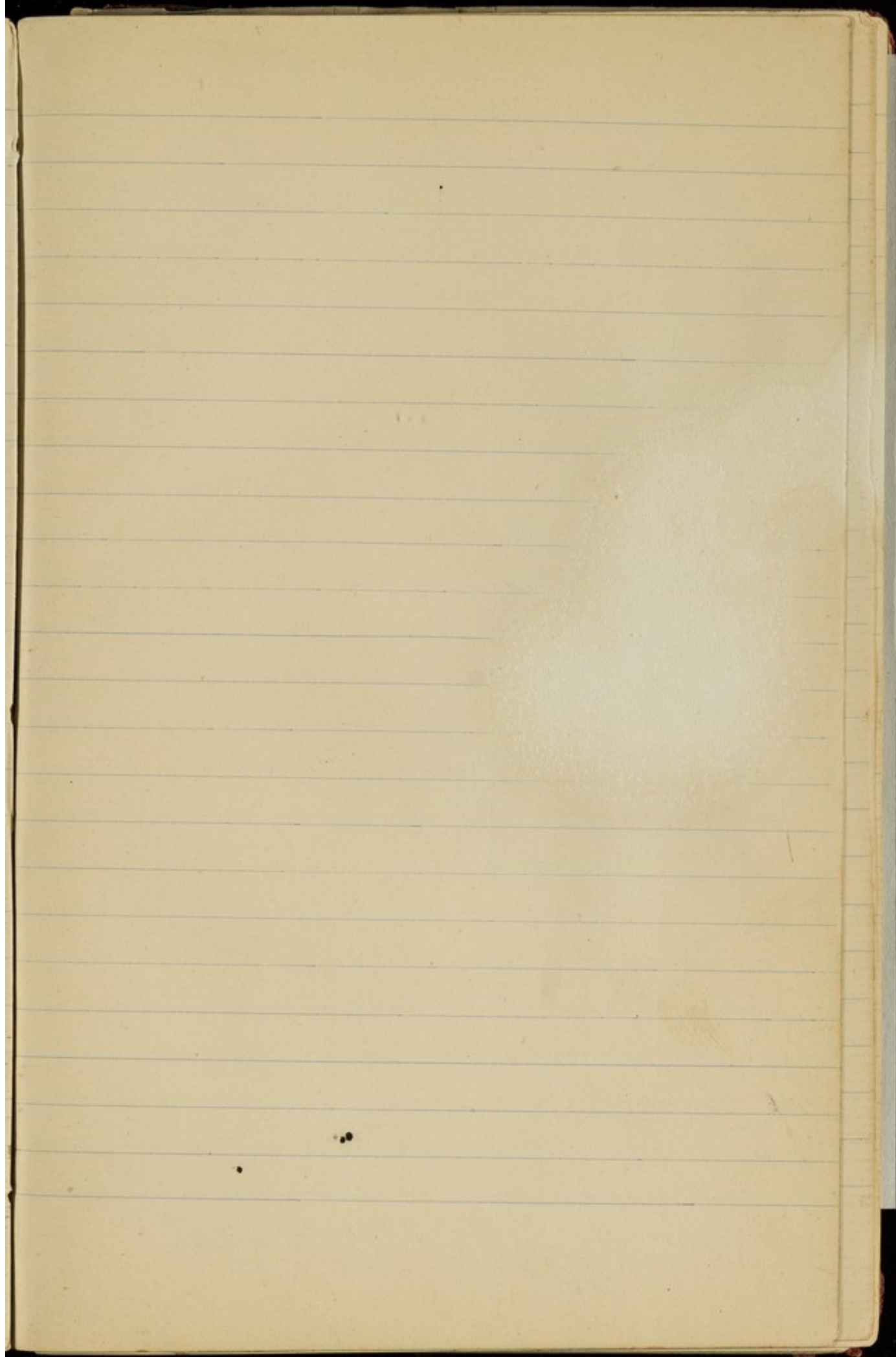
THOMAS MASON (Comdt.),
Church St., Strokestown.


No water +

Cutting from an Irish paper,
sent to me about '53.
Incident was during Sinn Féin
trouble. I was a student at
TCD at the time. 'Black & Tans'
often searched 'wonder boys'
who on distrid cases from
Rotunda Hospital - were always
polite & helpful. But their help
could be dangerous.

Jan 1962. J. H. who was ex retired

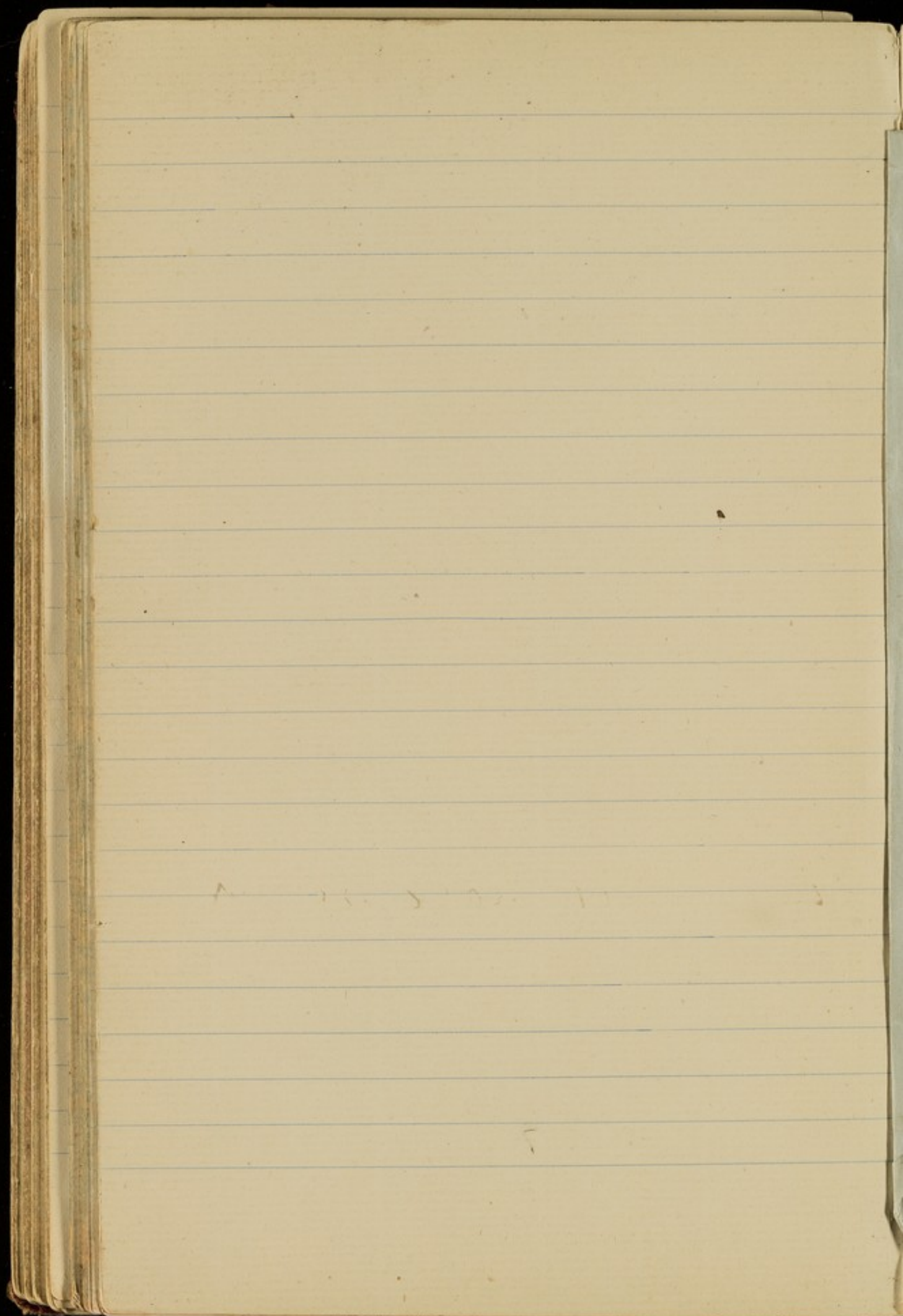




An open notebook with two blank, cream-colored pages. A white rectangular label is placed in the center, spanning across the gutter. The label contains the text:

**A Number of Blank Pages
Follow, which have not
been Photographed.**

**A Number of Blank Pages
Follow, which have not
been Photographed.**



WALTON & SONS
MARINE ENG.
GT. BRITAIN
BOOKS

Shift with
Ackd 19/11

WALDINGFIELD,
MARTING END,
ST. MISSENDEN,
BUCKS.

9

24 Sep.

Dear Eric

I don't know if enclosed
is of any use to you.

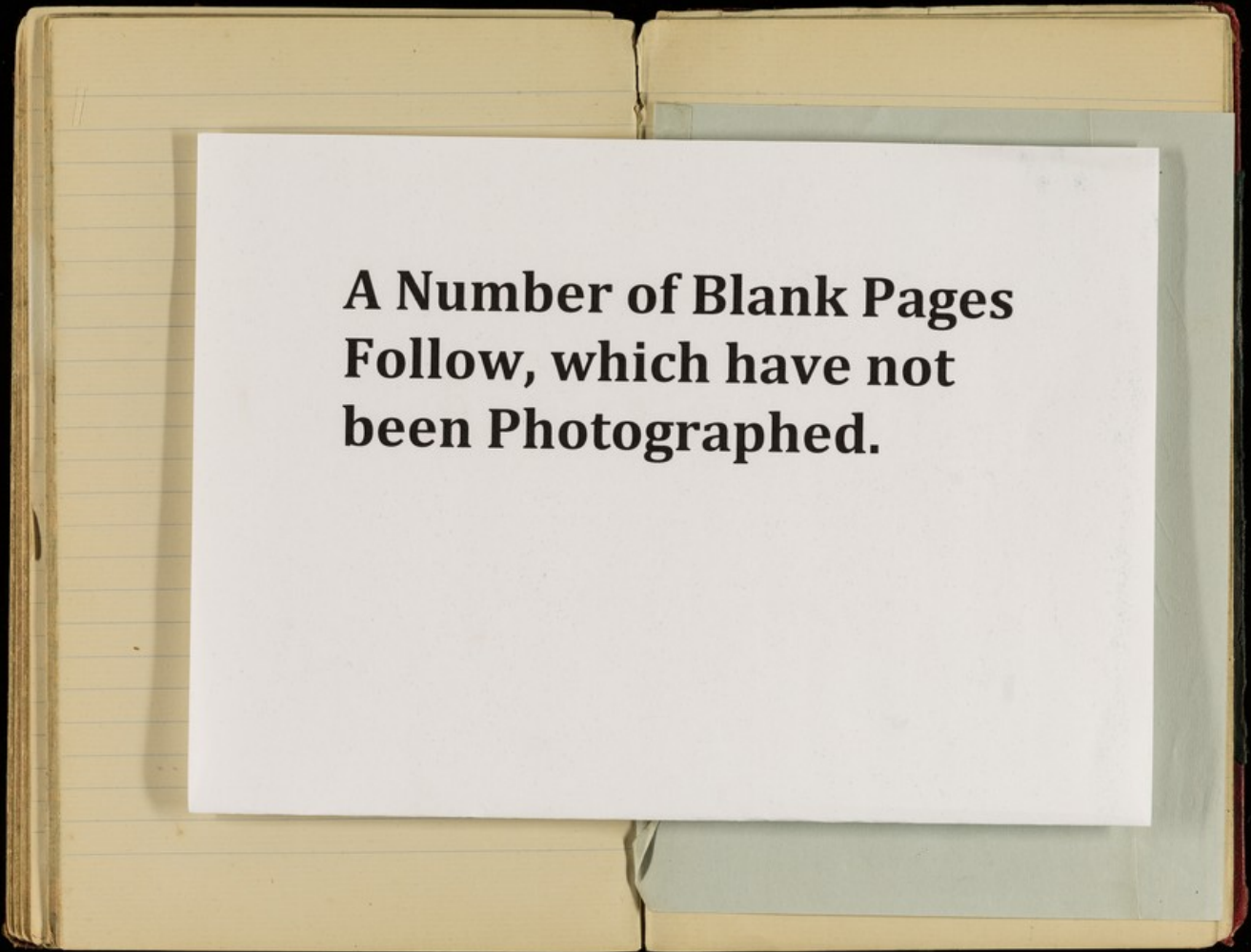
Hand writing is better than
mine

Yr. Obedient
P. Palmer

Annex
photocopy of and away
Gold

Who was
Col Palmer on
last page?

Annex for Boers

An open book is shown from a top-down perspective, lying flat. The pages are a light cream or yellowish color. A white rectangular label is placed in the center, overlapping both the left and right pages. The label contains text in a bold, black, serif font. The book's binding is visible in the center crease. The edges of the pages show some wear and slight discoloration. The background is a solid black surface.

**A Number of Blank Pages
Follow, which have not
been Photographed.**

F. J. Palmer
Lieut R. A. M. E.
17th March 1900.

1459

