

Typed transcripts of letters from South Africa

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"Canto" SERIES (REGD)			

LETTERS FROM
SOUTH AFRICA 1849-1902

—
D.M. Greig
—

P17
Historical Valentines

457

Letter 1.

Tragedy "Uthiria"

Letters from 21. 111. 00

David H. Greig
M.B.Ch.B., F.R.C.S. Edinburgh, LL.D.

From the South African War, 1900.

Just as I descended below the surface
 went warning all passengers to go ashore as I was
 just in time to get your letter and so we were
 lying the wrong way to get out a tug had to pull
 the stern off to let us pass. The men stopped the
 rigging and the side as usual and when we were about
 a hundred yards off the quay one of the glowers
 fell overboard. He turned round a 3 round as he
 fell for the height was about the height of a house.
 There was a great commotion but when he came to the
 surface it was soon he was a good swimmer and he struck
 out for the shore. After a little he stopped and it
 looked as if he was exhausted and one of the glowers
 from the Uthiria dived overboard after him and so the

Letter 1. From the shore jumped in to help him. The bluejackets could not make much way but a life buoy was thrown and the fireman got it and pushed it to the Transport "Umbria" hanging on. Remember the poor bluejackets? 26. 111. 00 I think would have been only the fireman pushed him in that way. They were all hoisted on the tug and

My darling Dove,

Just as I finished your letter the whistle went warning all passengers to go ashore so I was just in time to get your letter off. As we were lying the wrong way to get out a tug had to pull the stern off to let us turn. The men crowded the rigging and the side as usual and when we were about a hundred yards off the quay one of the Glosters fell overboard. He turned round and round as he fell for the height was about the height of a house. There was a great commotion but when he came to the surface it was seen he was a good swimmer and he struck out for the shore. After a little he stopped and it looked as if he were exhausted and one of the firemen from the Umbria dived overboard after him and at the

same time a bluejacket from the shore jumped in to help him. The bluejacket could not make much way but a life buoy was thrown and the fireman got it and pushed it to the soldier and left him hanging on. Meantime the poor bluejacket was nearly drowned and I think would have been only the fireman reached him in time too. They were all hauled on the tug and the soldier and fireman got on board again. The men who came today were all sober and looked in good condition. At the wharf the "Absent Minded Beggars" fund of the Daily Mail had coffee and rolls ready and I think for each man some Illustrated London News and things to take off with him. We got off with great cheers and the band on H.M.S. "Howe" played "Auld Leng Syne", "Rule Britannia", "Say Au Revoir but not Good Bye" and so on. All the sailors turned out and crowded the decks, the fighting tops, the yards, the funnels and even stood on the top of the mast and they did cheer us as we got under weigh. Then luncheon came and soon afterwards we were out of the harbour. It has been a lovely warm day with a roll on and a fresh breeze but much to my astonishment

there has been no sign of sickness with me. Most of the day we have sat in our chairs and basked in the sun.

There is a awfully nice looking chap Sir John Milbank of the 10th Hussars going out. He was wounded and sent home and he is still very lame. Excuse the bad writing as the ship is rolling a bit and there is a constant tremor from the stroke of the screw.

27. 111. 00

We have had another lovely day. All day there has been the same stiff breeze following us and the same long roll and though there have been some empty seats at meals mine has not been one. I have been very fit all along. I am in uniform now and don't think I'll get much use of my other clothes for some time. At ten each morning the men parade on our deck. On the port side are the Glosters, Durham Light Infantry and Seaforths and on the starboard side are the Royal Irish Rifles, Artillery etc. As the ship rolls it is very funny to see all the lines of men leaning back and forwards to balance themselves. I called on the ship's doctor last night and sat for a bit with him.

He seems a decent sort of chap but older than I. He used to practice in Picadilly but the fogs gave him bronchitis and he had to leave that and since then has been at sea. Today I went along to see the Chief Engineer McHardy who is a Dundee man. He tells me he has ten engineers under him on the ship. He takes in the Peoples Journal and knows all about me. They feed us very well on board here giving us a menu for every meal about the size of a half plate photograph. We buy our drink in quantity by the bottle which is reserved for the owner and is set down at each meal. It looks a fairly hospitable table when it is all laid out. All today we have seen nothing but the sea with the exception of two sailing ships which passed far away. We are going nearly 19 knots an hour and expect to be at St. Vincent on Friday afternoon. If there are any special stamps you should keep them for Khannie. I have some in an envelope in a stand on my table. When she is old enough to understand them it will be a start for her collection.

28. 111. 00

Today has been cloudier and therefore colder. That is about the sum of the news. Things have got down to their regular routine now. There is the constant throb of the screw, the roll of the ship and the four hundred and twenty odd miles further south each day. Nothing to be seen but blue water very pretty and very blue. All the deck games are going full swing, deck quoits, cricket and a sort of curling. The awnings are up in anticipation of hot weather and we all read and sleep and smoke and eat daily as much as we can. The porridge in the morning does not taste so good because we get sterilized milk but everything else is fine. The chief amusement this morning was to watch the men doing physical drill while the ship is rolling. In one of the exercises the men had to balance on their tiptoes and then sink gradually down to a sitting position. Some of them fell forwards and some back and all had to stick their hands on deck to keep themselves from rolling over. Even the drill sergeants had to laugh. Many of the men slept on deck last night and

I don't wonder because the troop decks are very crowded and must be frightfully close and hot. There is a little engine forward on the starboard side - I don't know what it's for - but it goes all day and one of the Edinburgh Artillerymen discovered today that its quick puffing beat plays "The Cock of the North". It was very funny to see the men's delight and the way he called the other man's attention to it and to hear him sing the "Cock of the North" in time with this engine.

about 4 1/2 ... Yesterday ... 29. 111. 00 ...
the day before ... Whether tomorrow or Saturday will

Today has been better than ever. Warm and sunny and hardly any roll at all. When I got on deck this morning the first thing I noticed away on the left was land. This turned out to be Madeira rising like a hill just on the horizon its top hidden in the clouds. All forenoon there was drill going on and just after luncheon the fire bell rang. Everybody had been previously instructed in what they were to do in case of fire and where they were to go. Immediately the bell was rung the bugles went "Prepare for Cavalry" and

then all was bustle. The men poured up from below, sprang up from where they were sleeping and made for their stations. Within ten minutes the 2000 were all in order and then the bugle went "the dismiss". Today fully 50 of the officers were injected for Typhoid. Tell Stalker, that will interest him. They all had to go to bed all being more or less seedy some of them pretty bad. We have 600 doses on board for the men.

Another amusement we have on board is a daily sweep-stake on the run. As a rule the winning number gets about \$15. -. -. Yesterday we ran 436 miles, and the day before 435. Whether tomorrow or Saturday will see Cape Verde I don't know. Everybody is looking forward for news.

When telling you about our Mess I forgot to tell you we have been getting first rate cream cheese. It reminded me of Argate and Mrs White. Do you remember the one she got from England for me?

30. 111. 00.

We are to be at Cape Verde tomorrow and a notice is to go up to post letters which will be sent off by a

kind of battleship or trooper because there is no regular mail to this out of the way place. This morning we overtook the trooper "American" which left Southampton before us, so we have been tearing along well. We saw more life today in the shape of lots of pearly Nautilus floating on the sea, some flying fish and some Mother Carey's chickens. All day has been cloudy and the ship seems to be creaking and rolling rather more than she has yet done. In the afternoon I went aft to see the men shoot. They were arranged in a row of seven at a time and then an empty pork barrel was thrown overboard and the men blazed at it either independently or in volleys. The barrel got a good peppering before it drifted out of sight. A 1/- subscription has been got up for the fireman who jumped overboard at Princetown and as there are over 170 officers on board he should get not a bad present. It has been hotter today though not nearly so hot as it would have been had it been less cloudy and the wind been less in the North.

31. 111. 00

We get in to St. Vincent about 6 o' clock this evening

and things are to be posted now. We have had a grey day, hot and cloudy with a beam sea and a good roll. At breakfast this morning we had for the first time to catch the things as they slid across the table. All ports are shut to keep out the sea and at luncheon we have had the fiddles on. We expect to be quiet by dinner however. It is not very easy to write as cones arms and paper slide across the blotting paper as the ship rolls. No seasickness however aboard. Today the men have orders to dress only in khaki and to go about barefooted. At drill the thud of the bare feet sounded quite funny but the men seemed to enjoy it. I may get my first spool of photos sent off. As far as I know they are

1. Going into Queenstown Harbour.
2. do.
3. Men coming on board.
4. H.M.S. "Howe".
5. Queenstown, going out.
6. do do
7. Men resting on the forecastle in hot weather.

All the rest will be about St. Vincent. I think I

have missed one or two but you will see when they are developed. Get them put in order in a book with the names in pencil and I'll correct them when I get home. We hope to leave St. Vincent on Sunday 2nd and ought to get to Cape Town ten days later. I'll write again from there.

Ever your loving

Dave.

(Letter 2 lost)

Letter 3.

At Sea,

6. iv. 00

My dearest Dove,

I was very lucky to get your letter sent off yesterday before we left St. Vincent. The cooling went on all night and all day and I did nothing but

watch them. All shore leave was stopped but it was 6.30 before we weighed anchor. Before that however an Italian man of war came in and we saw our man of war "Cambria" run out her guns and hoist the Italian flag and fire a salute of 14 guns. The Italian then hoisted the Portugese flag and fired a 21 gun salute and then the British flag and fired 14. The Portugese fort on the hill then replied with her muzzleloaders so we had quite a fusillade. Almost as we started night came on, it comes on very quickly after the sun goes down and it was dark before our screws began to throb. We had to steam close past the Italian. Our cruiser - the Cambria - lit up and fired several rockets and the Italian gave us round after round of cheers and had their band up and played God save the Queen and shone their searchlight on us. Our men cheered like anything and we went down to dinner as we put out of the bay. At night we slowed down to bury two men and went on again. We have 2,400 on board and to be cooped up in that beastly bay for 5 days was no joke. We had a rocky night and this morning it was blowing fresh and we had a good roll on and several of the

officers were lying about sick but not I. At dinner we had the fiddles on and one or two left rather suddenly.

10. iv. 00

Partly from heat and partly from inoculation against typhoid I have not managed to get anything written since the 6th. But really there is little to say, day after day being practically the same. Before we crossed the line our watches were always fast and had to be put back about 20 minutes a day but now they are always slow and having to be put forward. The sun used always to be in front of us but now is behind since we crossed the line on Sunday about 11 p.m. Right up till then we had wind right behind us but since then it has been dead ahead. We had a good crossing though the water was not quite smooth. We saw thousands of flying fish and one day passed through a school of porpoises about 100 of them, all jumping clean out of the water and evidently enjoying themselves highly. The weather has never been anything like as hot as in India but for the past four nights I have slept on deck. It is very pleasant but has the disadvantage of being disturbed

about 5 a.m. There is only one thing one can fall back on in writing and that is the people. Our Commanding Officer is Colonel _____ of the Antrim Artillery Militia. He is a nice looking soldierly old man with grey hair. He is said to have been in the old Royal Artillery of the H.L.J.C. (?). I don't think he manages the trooper very well but he can have had no experience of the sort before. His Adjutant is Radclyffe of the 72nd (I think I put "Wycliffe" as his name in a previous letter). He is a nice looking chap, tall and always cheery and smiling and never able to be still a minute. He always carries a short cane and has his trews turned up so that the straps hang down and the buckle rattles on the deck. The second in Command is Lt. Col. Ditmarch of the Donegal Artillery Militia. He is a lawyer when at home and is rather a loudspoken pompous chap who wears an eyeglass and has his field service cap always far too far pulled down over his head. There is a funny story of him. He got the skipper who is a big bluff man to let him see the chart one day. The skipper has no idea of the self importance of a Lt. Colonel and as he gave him the chart he added "and its the only one aboard so

take care of it, for if anything comes over that chart there will be a vacancy in the Donegal Artillery."

The Edinburgh Artillery seems to be under a Major Lee, a very nice fellow. Sir John Milbank I have told you of already. He is ludicrously like Fred Sharp in manner and everything but not so tall. All day he wears blue clothes and a high cord "bayhat". His valet looks much smarter than some of the youngsters aboard. Captain Fargaherson of the 42nd I have also already mentioned. He is a very nice chap, knows Deeside and Donside and we have lots of shooting discussions. He has been in India with his regiment and has travelled a good deal. The name of the man who was in Trinidad is Long - I forget if I mentioned that before. He is just now in the 4th Somerset L.I. He and a man Rae - a captain in the Army Pay Department - travelled down with Jo and me in the same carriage from London to Southampton. We all sit together at dinner. There is a Pirie from Aberdeen going out to Jeget's Horse. He had an accident before he left and is rather lame. No 11 Field Hospital which we have moored on board here is under Major Carr. He is a nice chap I think. Is very Irish. Thin, quiet and reserved with a big moustache and eyes

better they will be pleased. All day they lie about on

that seldom look actively about or straight at one. He seems to have a good quartermaster in Houghton who like all quartermasters is obviously from the ranks. The adjutant to the Hospital is Capt. Manhill a very nice gentle chap who has had a good deal of fever since he came on board, the remains of having been at Fashoda. With two exceptions the rest of the officers of this hospital is made up of civilians. Amongst the civilians going out is a little chap called Tarr who was house surgeon at Johannesburg when war broke out and was sent down in a coal truck to Cape Town. He says he wants to go back to get his clothes and effects which he hid in one of the hospital cellars before he came away.

11. iv. 00.

We have had another very successful day's run, 393 miles, the weather continuing very good and cooler, so that I returned to my bunk again and left the deck. As I was not disturbed at 5 a.m. I nearly slept in.

The men seem to be enjoying themselves very well. They are fed by the Company and that is better than Government feeding so I fancy the longer this voyage lasts the better they will be pleased. All day they lie about on

deck when off duty and smoke, play cards and some other games which I cannot follow. It is evidently a mild gamble. At night they have sandwiches sold to any who care to buy and evidently during the day they have cooling drinks because as I write I can hear someone amongst the men crying "Who'll have a cooler? Plenty of ice this time gentlemen! Who says a cooler?"

There is a very nice fellow called Harper, an Irish doctor, who with two others are going out to join Carrington's Rhodesian Horse. He has previously been out in the Cape Mounted Rifles.

There are two brothers who are exceptionally nice men. Their names are Sidney and Edward Clive. The former is a subaltern in the Grenadier Guards and the other is in the Seaforth's.

Gibson, Wyndham and Stevenson represent the Highland Light Infantry. The first is such a nice boy but not very strong I should think. Stevenson who comes from Lanark has won about £35 in the daily sweepstakes. He has been luckier than anyone else.

12. iv. 00

I was speaking to the elder Clive yesterday and he was telling me that he had a relation in Dundee. It turned

14th April, 1900

out to be the Mother Superior! Wasn't that funny.
The Viscount Valentia is his uncle. We are still having
lovely weather. The wind being dead ahead we meet the
swell and pitch a bit which some of the fellows don't
like. This afternoon they had revolver practice. The
shooters were drawn up along the starboard side and
bottles were thrown well out, from the ^{to'se} ~~fore~~ head
and were fired at as they drifted past. It made difficult
shooting. I only saw three bottles broken out of about
three dozen. As a rule however the shooting was good.
We are now 2853 miles from St. Vincent and hope to be
in Cape Town on Sunday night. If I get the chance to
let this go I may do so at once without telling you of
our arrival. We are interested to know whether we will
go on in this vessel to Natal or whether we will trans-
ship at Cape Town. The general idea seems to be that we
will tranship as this huge vessel has to be a long way
out from Durban. The men had a concert last night on
our deck. The crowd and the swish of the water kept me
from hearing anything. The orchestra consisted of two
tambourecens, a fiddle, a banjo, a flute, a concertina
and two bones. A Tommy's sing-song is new to many and
we couldn't get near the performers.

14th April, 1900

Yesterday we again had a lovely day. In the morning the water was like glass though of course there is the constant swell. We saw ever so many porpoises and some whales and a huge turtle evidently asleep on the water. The ship woke him up and he dived and paddled out of sight. Captain Dutton says we were at least 400 miles from the nearest land so he must have had a long swim. Nearly all forenoon I hung about and enjoyed the sun and watched for beasts. Today has been another good day but more swell and therefore more pitching. We did 395 miles yesterday and 397 the day before. We had hot cross buns at breakfast yesterday being good Friday. Everybody is beginning to prepare for disembarkation and all is talk about what is to be done and what the news will be at Cape Town. It is three weeks today since we left Southampton and we are all disappointed the voyage has been so long, 23 days instead of 17.

15. iv. 00

This is I think the only bad day we have had, cold grey and cloudy with a damp air and occasional drizzling rain. It is like home but not so cold.

Last night some of the non-commissioned officers gave a nigger entertainment. It was given in our music room and very amusing it was too. It was a regular Tommy's entertainment with all the usual jokes about the canteen and things that only soldiers think of. The music was from two bones, two tambourines, and a fiddle and to keep them up to the pitch the elder Clive played the piano. It was all very funny and passed the time till 10.30. We have seen more vessels yesterday and today than all the rest of the voyage put together and as a sure sign that we are nearer land there have been many birds, and an albatross or two. Everybody is getting ready for Cape Town and in collecting their valises and kit the spaces outside the different bedrooms are pretty well filled up. Whether we go on in this boat or not many leave us at Cape Town but in any case we will probably have a day or two there. I am going to close this letter now in case there may be a hurry but will try to get another written before I leave Cape Town.

Ever your loving
Dave.

Letter IV.

H.M.T. "Umbria"

Cape Town

16. IV. 00

My dearest Dove,

Soon after I finished my letter to you yesterday we ran into a thick fog and had to slow down very much almost stopped indeed for a long time and had the fog whistle blown for hours every minutes. It is a ghastly invention and very uncomfortable to have this hideous noise interrupt conversation and everything once a minute. It was of course cold too and damp. About 9 o'clock however it cleared a bit and away off in front we could see the hills of Table Bay. As we came nearer we passed into ever so many fog banks. Each bank hid everything and the whistle was started again. Then after a little we got through this bank and saw the hills more distinct than ever and then in to more fog and so on. Soon after midnight we dropped anchor in 22 fathoms of water and rolled in the swell all night. This morning everything was looking wet and we lay in a dense fog still. About 11 o'clock it began to lift and we saw the "America" lying quite close to us - she had come in during the night. Later on Robin Island with its

lighthouse began to show on our left and later on the hills on our right and then we weighed anchor and moved slowly in. As we got in the shore cleared and we could see the houses and long lines of tents and the stockade where the Boer prisoners were kept. These lines are low down and close to the shore. In the bay we again cast anchor. It is very full of vessels of all sorts with H.M.S. "Daris" representing the Navy. We never saw Cape Town well nor did the mist clear off Table Mountain and later in the afternoon it came down again pretty thick. The quarantine officer came off and about luncheon time a smart little launch, the "Alyca" with some of the staff on board. They stayed to luncheon and gave us the news which was not much. What was more important they told us that the harbour was so full that we would not get in today. So here we lie until tomorrow anyway. We have had a long voyage and this will add another day at least.

17. iv. 00

After writing last night the fog all cleared away and when the full moon rose Table Mountain was quite clear of mist and the bay was beautiful. The moon showed all the dark hulls of the ships and their lights glistened wverywhere,

while away in a crescent at the foot of the black hills stretched the lights of Cape Town, electric and gas. It was most lovely. The morning was the beginning of a most lovely day, clear blue sky with a glorious sun and simply the swell to keep us rocking gently. I got a photo of the Lion's Head, Observatory hill, and another of Table Mountain. We hoped to get into the harbour but no such luck and we watched the "Bavarian" go in and later the "America" with her 800 horses and some other trooper but we got no orders. It was annoying. About noon a Major on the Staff came on board looking very smart in his khaki with scarlet facings and his white cap with scarlet band. He had a list of orders and we got definite orders where we were to go, at least the men did for I go to Natal as I told you already. Milbank slipped off to join General French. He was the first to go. Then the elder Clive (Sidney), Pryse, Wilsher and another got away. They are all what they call special service officers and I believe they are to organise some mounted infantry. Many of the men go ashore here for duty but the Highlanders go on to East London or Port Elizabeth - I forget which. The Edinburgh and Durham Artillery, the Rifle Brigade and others go on to Durban with me. In the meantime we are all stuck because the 6th division

that is General Hart's Brigade are coming from Natal for here to go to Wepener or somewhere and that is pressing so we have to wait. Then to make matters more difficult there has been a block on the railway and the men are blocked here. Some of the medicals on board are from Wynburg, Randsbosch, Naanpoort and Woodstock in Cape Colony and they disembark when we get ashore. One or two go to East London. Tell Khannie we have a battery of "Pom-poms" on board but they too go off here. Each Pom-pom is housed with six horses. But the horses are not with us.

Some of our fellows who were ashore yesterday went to see the Warwick Regt. who are guarding the Boer prisoners here. They saw the prisoners. I asked Gibson what he thought of them. He is such a gentle little chap. He said, "They are great big fellows. I wouldn't like to knock up against one unless I had something in my hand."

The officers who went ashore yesterday grumbled a good deal at what they had to pay to get off. Fancy £5 for a steam launch, 30/- for a row boat and the distance only a mile! Therefore I have not yet been ashore. I think there is plenty of time, for when we get in we have much to put ashore, another 500 or so men to take on board

and to coal, so if we get away this weekend we will be very lucky.

19. iv. 00

I was really ashamed to write yesterday because all day we stood still in the bay. A lovely day but very tiresome. This morning broke fine and warm. We were in hopes of getting in, because yesterday evening we saw the "Americain", "Cymric" another trooper and the mail steamer all come out. However rumour had it that as two troopers had come in during the night both with horses which are more precious than men we were going to pass another day doing nothing and our spirits fell accordingly. To our delight however about 9 o' clock the pilot stepped on board and the bustle at once showed that at last we were to move and presently anchor was weighed and we steamed right round the bay with all the shipping and into the dock. The dock here is a large tidal basin but with no dock gates. We were berthed close to the trooper "Winkfield" which ran down the "Mexican" out at sea on the 15th. We had passed through miles of wreckage and knew something had happened. The Winkfield's bows are doubled in and the plates split and twisted. The Mexican was sunk, I suppose you saw it in the papers. Well we shoved along the quay in front of her and soon after we

were tied up the "Glengyle" came in and tied up behind us. She has "Rhodesian Horse" on board. What a sight the quay is. Imagine a quay as long as Tay Street with enormous corrugated iron sheds all up the side like this (ink drawing of quay shed, ships and railroad) between us and the railroad. These sheds and acres and acres of ground besides are piled with stores. Millions of tons of compressed forage. Tons and tons of preserved vegetables, beef, sardines, jam, barley, oats, flour and so on. Thousands of blankets arranged in lots of 20 or so. Hundreds of bedsteads. General service wagons, Ambulance wagons, water carts, huge boxes of horse kit and so on. I did nothing all day but wander about looking at this wonderful sight. I have seen it before but never like this. Within half-an-hour of our tying up the unloading had commenced. The Medical Officer who came aboard was Major Latham who was at Netley with me. He knew me again though I did not recognise him and he asked me to undertake the arrangements for the medicals on board. Consequently I had to go ashore at once and off to Major Lascelles the embarkation officer to find out what we were to do and I learned the Umbria was to go on with us. Of course many men have disembarked and gone off and we seem quite a small number now. The whole

place is alive with men all in khaki and service kit. Every soldier as he lands takes 100 rounds of ammunition and things are very strict. We had at dinner two men from the Imperial Yeomanry. There are 4000 of them in camp at Maitland waiting to go on. The pom poms go to Stellenbosch where some 40 of them are collected. The disembarking officer marks off on the quay the spaces where the different baggage is to be put and it is all sorted out and piled up adding to the extraordinary collection. The men do most of the work but there are a good many Kaffirs working too, black men with broad noses and curly wooly hair and shining white teeth. The men threw half-pence to them and they jumped about and rolled over each other to get the coins in great excitement till some one in authority came up and "booted" them off the quay. Two men got on unnoticed and began to sell the troops grapes. As soon as one of the officers saw them he ran at them with his cane and the men fled. The soldiers then seized their baskets and threw the grapes to their comrades on board and what a scramble it was! It is all very well to see the men going about with loaded rifles, the officers with revolvers and the artillery drivers and transport men with revolver butts sticking out of their pockets and to see the seething

in
e
t,

mass of khaki. To know that every space for miles around is occupied by thousands of troops waiting while the railway is strained to its utmost, but what is more impressive is the tons upon tons of stores of which I have tried to give you some idea. Our men are working till midnight but we don't expect to get out tomorrow though we will be shoved out as soon as possible to make room for the other troops which are lying in the bay. Lord Brossag's yacht the "Sunbeam" is here just now. I saw her in the afternoon when I was walking round part of the decks with the Captain. I also saw a shipload of sick and wounded going off - I suppose home. They were brought down in ordinary Ambulance Wagons and taken on to a tender to be shipped off.

21. iv. 00

Yesterday was a fine day and in the forenoon Harper of the Rhodesian Horse and I went off into the town to hunt up Meckay. He is Keiller's representative out here and has often been at Tsy Street though I do not remember your having met him. Cape Town is a fine town with wide streets running mostly from the bay up towards Table Mountain. The main street is Adderley Street in which the post office, Standard Bank, Railway Station and so on are, and some of the buildings are very handsome.

The Post Office is something like ours at Dundee only more elaborate. These buildings are on a base of strong whinstone and then are built of a sort of yellow sandstone and the roofs are red or variegated slates in the better buildings while most of the other buildings are flat roofed. There are many good shops. At the top of Adderley Street are the gardens and the Assembly House and then this road goes on to the Mount Nelson Hotel, the most swell hotel in the place. The ordinary tarriff there is £2 - 2 -- a day. There is a splendid service of overhead electric trams here some of them running as far as 9 miles out.

Well we went to the post office first to get Mackay's address. He was not at his office and we went to Poole's Hotel where he stays. He was not there and we had to hunt elsewhere for him including the Club. We got him about 11.30 and he was very delighted and surprised to see me. He asked us to lunch with him at the Club at 1. So we went up to the gardens and sat in the shade. It was lovely and warm, and everything was so still and the foliage so fine, just getting their autumn tints on and everything was as still as anything only the croaking of some frogs and the rustle of a rat which we saw running among the leaves. We sat as long as we could and then walked over to the Club where in a few minutes we met Mackay. It is a nice club house with a large mess room with

an extensive wooden dado round it, an electric fan at
and
either end/at the head of the room a large painting of
Sir Alfred Milner. The luncheon was very good and it was
a pleasure to taste red meat again and bread. These were
two luxuries. While we were there a man came in and Mackay
introduced him to me. He comes from Dundee and I attended
his daughter at Auchterhouse at Christmas time. You remember
how often I was out there. His name is Miller and as he
wished his wife to see me Mackay insisted that we should all
dine at night with him again. Another Dundee man came in
and was introduced. After luncheon we went with our cigars
to the billiard room for a little and then off to the ship
again while Mackay went back to his office. We found
that Hayer is to go on with this ship to Durban and then we
read and smoked till it was time to go to Poole's Hotel to
dinner. We again wandered up and this time of course it
was dark. The hotel is a small one next door to the club
and it is very like a colonial house. It is small and
seems mostly wood with wooden ~~verandah~~ or stoep as it is
called here (pronounced stoop) all round. The public rooms
are small without any ornaments, simple muslin curtains, no
pictures and no fireplaces. Mr and Mrs Miller turned up and
we were joined by a Mr Armstrong who is agent of one of the
large firms here and lives at Bulawayo mostly. Mrs Miller is

colonial born and not very young. We had a fine evening and then after dinner went and sat out in the stoep. No hats or anything being required. Beside us though we could not see for the plants was a harp and violin and flute which gave us quite a concert and played very well. Right above us was the Southern Cross and away behind was Table Mountain quite clear and distinct. It was past 11 when I got down. We drove nearly to the ship but had to walk along a bit, and here were all the sentries with the guards lying asleep beside them on boxes, heaps of tents, blankets, bags of mealies or anywhere, with their arms beside them. We saw the day's work in the huge trains which were now nearly ready to go off to Blomfontein.

This morning after breakfast four of us went off for a walk to Green Point. You will see the arrangement from this sketch: (pen and ink sketch of Table Bay, docks, position, etc) It was a fine walk but warm and we got near the Point down to the sea and back by the camps. It was a wonderful sight. Many hundreds of tents of different Corps. Great big paddocks containing hundreds of horses all loose, and camps of Indian native followers and syces (grooms) and water bearers. There were some camps of employed Kaffirs. Many soldiers were drilling all in khaki and then we came on a lot of 4.7 guns all khaki painted with their wagons and everything in readiness to start for anywhere. Close to

these were the guns captured from Cranje. They were most interesting. Most were Fried-Krupp, one was an old obsolete gun and there was a pom-pom. All had got a bit knocked about. There were lots of bullet marks on them, some bits twisted and smashed by shell fire and the pom-pom had its jacket (the water jacket round the barrel) perforated in three places. From there we walked on and came to the Boer prisoners who are here. They are on the race course and are surrounded by iron pallisades topped with barbed wire. There seem to be two pallisades with small trees in between. Every few yards sentries are posted on raised platforms which are lit at night by electric light. The Boers themselves are as dirty and villanous looking a set of swine as I ever saw. I don't know how many there are and we are not allowed to stop and stare at them. After this we returned to town and had an ice and a lemon squash, and very fine it was too and then down to the ship for luncheon. After that I tied up your photos and went up to town and sent them off. I enclose a list of what they are and hope they will be all right but am afraid the focussing has been defective in some of them. However you will see. Then before returning to the ship I walked up to the gardens. I think there must have been a band playing, or

else it is the fashionable parade on Saturday afternoon. There were such a lot of ladies in their bright light dresses and kiddies with their nursemaids. It was a very lively scene. They were all coming down as I went up. Then back to the docks in time to see a huge transport train go off under a guard of Imperial Light Horse, 30 men and 4 officers and ever so many wagon loads of horses. The coolies don't work here after 3 p.m. on Saturday and I don't know if Sunday is a day off or not. Good bye just now for this letter is getting too large for the postage.

ever your loving

Dave.

Letter 5.

H.M.T. "Umbria"

Cape Town.

22. iv. 00

My dearest Dove,

I went up today and posted your letter because we are off tomorrow. We have left about 500 men here - Donegal and Antrim Artillery - but I hear we are to take some more on board tomorrow. Today a transport came in with the Scots Fusiliers from Ladysmith and they were

at once entrained for Kimberley. Then the "Templemore" came in with several field batteries with 15lb field guns. All day though it is Sunday has been work at the wharf and several huge trains have gone off. The 11th General Hospital which came out with us leaves tomorrow to go into camp at Green Point till they can get up country. The result of this has been that I have been busy as they have put the troops and hospital on board on to me and I have been busy taking over all their stuff, 25 beds, 25 pillows, 50 blankets, 3 spoons, 2 basins and so on. These I have to hand over again at Durban. I have no hospital orderlies and have to do everything myself but have got a corporal and two men under me from the King's Royal Rifle Corps. I am now P. M. O. on board! When I get my returns tomorrow I'll tell you the men I have in charge. There are luckily only some half dozen sick. I have operated twice since I came on board the ships doctor not being a surgeon. When I got up to town this afternoon it was very interesting to see every body in Sunday dresses but far the most interesting were the natives. The women in their brilliant colours and the native men in their bright European dress. Then back to the Docks

and there we met all the natives coming off work, fine big and very black men and they looked very well. Some of the men have been to see men they know who have just come from Ladysmith. They have got most interesting tales. One of them has got a programme of the last auction before the relief and the prices which the things fetched. The following are some:

1 doz. eggs	48/-
1 pot marmalade	£1 - 1/-
1 doz. cigarettes	£1 - 5/-
1 lb. coffee	17/-
1 pot jelly	18/-
12 bottles whisky	£148 - -
1 plate of potatoes	18/-
50 cigars	£9 - 5/-

I forget the rest. Think of the price of the whisky!

25. iv. 00

When I wrote the above it was blowing so hard that the Captain said we could not get out till it moderated but today it turned out a fine morning and all forenoon we were busy completing our stores etc. I had nearly three hours work in hospital and mighty poor fun it was too to be shut up in this hot place. I had then six in bed and about 25 reporting sick and all the returns to do.

Well about 1 o' clock the coalier which had been filling us up with coal put off and was towed clear of us and soon after two we gradually worked our way out. It was a lovely sight leaving Table Bay with all its vessels behind us as the sun was setting. We passed at least three troopers lying at anchor and exchanged shouts and cheers.

I think it blew a bit that night for I wakened several times with the rolling and yesterday morning had to dress with caution and had quite a little storm in my bath. Some of the officers did not show up all day and at every meal some left suddenly. It was precarious feeding for some. The day was windy and rough, grey and damp and part of the time we had the fog whistle going. I myself was very nearly seasick before I could put through my work in the hospital. The hospital is at the very stern of the boat down a dark stair and right over the screw and it did pitch and roll. I had over two hours of it and was very glad to get on deck again and I did not write last night because it was too rough. It was a rough night too and we were bucketed about a good deal. This morning at 6.30 I was wakened by hearing the anchor chain go and got up and dressed in comparative comfort for we were in the bay near Port Elizabeth. It is a shallow bay

and we had to come in very cautiously and on account of our size anchored outside all the other vessels about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from shore. It looks something like Newport but the hills are not so high and there are no hills beyond. The town runs right down to the waters edge. Almost immediately after we anchored the transport officer came off in his tug and made arrangements for the men to get ashore but none were allowed to land except those who disembark here. Consequently my knowledge of Port Elizabeth is through my field glasses. As I had two sick to go ashore the medical officer was sent out to take them over. He turned out to be Major Allport who was at Netley with me and we had a chat about old times and present doings. All the men of the Highland Brigade went ashore here. They go off in great big barges which are towed by a tug. I got a photograph of one of them and hope it will come out all right. This was all done by lunch time but I believe we are to take on board more Artillery and then off tonight for East London. We should get in there early tomorrow and then begin the final part of our long voyage.

East London.

26. iv. 00

We left Port Elizabeth last night about 6 o' clock.

The night came on very quickly after sundown and before we left all was dark but away behind the town we had a splendid display of lightning. The whole of that quarter of the sky was lit up by a constant flickering light with every few seconds zig zag flashes of lightning. It went on for hours. The phosphorescence was finer than I have yet seen it but nothing to the Aden to Karachi voyage. The night was quite dark and just the tops of all the waves wherever the water was broken were tipped with the pale blue phosphorescence. The Highlanders who landed at Port Elizabeth go off today towards Blomfontein.

Well we rolled on during the night and this morning I was wakened again about 6 a.m. by hearing the anchor chain rattle. So I up and dressed and when I got on deck we had just anchored off East London about a mile out I should think. It was a lovely day, hot and bright with a hot wind blowing off shore. All the coast is a series of low hills but greener than at Port Elizabeth. Away to the left was the harbour with a heavy surf breaking over the breakwater all day. There were some steamers and sailing vessels in here but it was too shallow for our hugeness. Above the harbour was part of the town and from there it stretched away to where we lay while further to the right

our example of that in the afternoon. We were lying quietly in the hot wind and sunshine while away to the south was dull and thunderlike. All of a sudden we saw the sea in the distance whitening and huge dust clouds on shore going right the opposite way the wind had been blowing all day. It came right on whirling the spray up and swinging us round while the dust blotted out all the shore and even reached us so that we could taste the land. It was very sharp during the hour it lasted and we had to let go another anchor. We have some stores to take on yet and hope to get away tomorrow. After landing the 300 odd troops at Port Elizabeth yesterday we took on board 80 Field Artillery. I do not know if I told you that the Donegals and Antrims who came out with us were sent after a three days stay ashore off to St. Helena in the Bavarian in charge of 1100 Boer Prisoners! We hear today that Wepener is relieved but as for news there is none out here! You have no idea how little people know here of what is going on. With the exodus of men and officers our mess is much smaller and I have got shifted up the table, opposite Lang, Hamilton, Grace and Scott of the 1st Durham Light Infantry.

They are nice boys. Lang has been in India (Poona) with his regiment but the others are mere boys. Next to them is a nice young sub in the Imperial Light Infantry and another in the 19th Hussars. Both are returning after being in hospital with wounds.

27. iv. 00

We are still here loading in our stores! These come out but slowly and the reason is that the wharf is piled up with stores which have been unshipped at one time or another and out of this mass our stuff has to be searched. There is only a very limited supply of railway wagons too between here and the nearest broken bridge and until the bridge is mended no more can be got, so that all trucks available are packed with stores then taken to the nearest broken bridge and emptied, and until the empty trucks are returned all work at the E. London wharf is stopped. A civilian tells me that there are about 7000 people in E. London and that the harbour runs up into Buffalo River up which boats can go for 5 miles. The country about Port Elizabeth is all absolutely bare with nothing growing on it but a cactus, but round here the country is good and green with plenty of trees, and buck to hunt and so on. The

loading of cargo here is done by lifting the stuff up in huge rope nets for the weather is very treacherous and there is always a good swell. I do not know if it will convey any idea to you to tell you that on a calm day the waves begin to break in 12 fathoms of water so that there is a fearful surf of many yards. There was some word this forenoon of getting ashore but I did not go and was very glad I did not. We had a quiet day with a good sea on and the loading was gone on with by the niggers under the superintendence of a man who had the most wonderful flow of language I ever heard and I have heard a good variety in my wanderings. The sea increased in the afternoon and at 4 o' clock we saw our tug returning with the officers who had been ashore and as it came nearer we saw that it was packed with men with their arms and rifles. When they got along side the swell was very bad and many of the men were seasick. It was impossible for any to get to the ladder and they all had to be swung up in a huge basket. The basket was about 12 feet high with a door in it and was swung up by the crane, the tug meanwhile plunging and tossing alongside at a great rate. I ran to the poop and got a photograph of the basket coming up. It holds about 3 men each time.

After the first basket came up and another one or two followed with some of the men when the adjutant came running over to me and cried "You had better come over to the port side these men are all wounded"! Well I got over and they began to arrive, 104 of them sick and wounded. Some walked and some were carried to me on the port side. What a sight. The men were dirty, unshaven, their khaki torn and patched, their scabbards red with rust, a most ghastly looking crew. Until all were landed none could be taken to hospital as the basket business blocked the companion. I climbed down to the hospital myself and set my men to lay out beds, get fresh bedding and prepare for a full hospital. Before I got back the sea was down and I sent down the two or three worst cases to bed. By that time it was dark. The poor men who had come from Bethulia, Aliwal North and about there had all lain down on the deck with their valises or helmets for pillows. Many were asleep and most had to be helped to rise. I got a fatigue party to help the worst cases - some 30 of them - to hospital and the rest I got told off to messes in the troop decks. I had a stiff few hours of it but got everything pretty well settled by about 8 o' clock and got this letter started about 10.30. This is our first touch with the war and it was not a

pleasant side to see. Everybody was very good and the men behaved well, everybody so anxious to do what they could. There was such a lot to see to and the whole thing happened without any warning and we had no idea any were coming aboard here at all. These all go to Cape Town or home but go on to Durban with us first.

I am anxious to get this letter closed so as to get it posted tomorrow in the hope that it will catch the mail which leaves Durban tomorrow. When the tug comes off early tomorrow I'll try and get someone to take this and post it ashore.

Ever your loving

Dave.

Letter 6.

H. M. T. "Umbria"
Durban.

29. iv. 00

My dearest Dove,

Durban at last! Yesterday afternoon we left East London in a heavy swell and rolled along over the last stage of our voyage. We got off about 4 o' clock but it was dark before we had gone far. The fiddles were on at dinner and everything went merrily till an

extra heavy roll sent the glasses bottles and all crashing to the port side, away from me, but what a smash! Many men jumped up wiping the broken glass and spilt wine off their uniforms and dinner proceeded on more cautious lines after that. Last night was a rough night and the baggage jumped about in my cabin considerably but did not inconvenience me. The morning was a dull grey Sunday and we rolled along with the fiddles on all day till we reached Durban. The coast line was a series of low green hills with mullahs and trees and bushes and possibly a house or two. By 4 o'clock we rounded the point and anchored off Durban. As far as we can see from here there is a flat plain backed by a semicircle of hills on which the better houses stand. There is a cruiser and a gunboat lying beside us and the "Tagus" hospital ship, the Carrisbrook Castle, Gaiha and other big steamers. Orders have come and most of the men go off tomorrow but I am stuck till I hand over my sick - the penalty of being P. M. O.

30. iv. 00

Today has been a day of disembarking. Most of the officers have gone and all the K.R.R. and the result is the most astonishing quietness on board ship. It has

been a fine day with a bit of a swell one which however interfered little with the work. All who were going were off by 3 o' clock. The officers climbed down a ladder to the tug where they were caught by two Zulus as the swell swung the tug close up. All the men were swung on board by the basket. The black boys who load the barges with baggage are ~~are~~ very (word missing) There are about 8 in each barge and each gets 4/- when the barge is full. The finest ones are Zulus but there are others of other races which I don't know yet. Some of these wear shells or huge earrings or things like pen holders stuck through their ears. When not working they sing and dance making a monotonous chant keeping time with their naked feet and working their arms and bodies in an extraordinary manner. I hope to get rid of my sick tomorrow and get off.

5th Divisional Field Hospital,
Brooks Farm,
Ladysmith.

4. v. 00

How is that for an address! It is my temporary destination and I have to tell you how I got here. I have scarcely got accustomed to writing on my knee again as of course we have no tables. Now where did I leave off?

On 1st May I was up early, 6 a.m. to see about things being put right. At breakfast Major MacCormack and two Naval Transport Officers came on board and things began to shape themselves for my getting away. All troops were to disembark at once into the lighters and tug alongside, and then my sick were to go ashore, at least the 7 who belonged to the regiments landed were to, and the 104 who came on at East London were to remain. The Umbria was then to be cleaned, fitted with awning cots and sail on Saturday for home with 300 sick men and 40 officers. All forenoon the troops disembarked and in the meantime Major MacCormack lunched with me and asked me all about the voyage and where he was to send the medical officers who came out with me to. All the best men I arranged were to go forward with me. About 3 o' clock all were on board and I had my sick carried off and I was the last man to leave the ship. It was a lovely day and we left the ship's side with no regret and round the two miles or so into Durban harbour up the Umvilo River. That part was lovely in the extreme. Pretty vegetation on either side and the broad though shallow river stretching away up for miles. We took two lighters with us and cast them off at the pier while we went on to the passenger jetty. I insisted on my sick

being disembarked first and got a fatigue party of juniors to carry and assist them round to the "Avoca" hospital ship. This was soon done and I handed them over to Major Rose in charge there. The Avoca is a fine ship, well fitted up, and looks an ideal hospital with a lovely view over the river from her port side. Just as I got there an ambulance train came in full of sick and wounded, mostly the latter, but I had no time to watch them disembark for as soon as I got off my sick I left to look after my baggage in the lighter. I had taken care that my baggage went on board last and consequently it came off first and in an hour or so I got a couple of rickshaws and was off to the Marine Hotel. The rickshaws are light two wheeled traps drawn by runners. They have bicycle wheels and solid tyres and a hood to put up if too hot and they get along at a good pace. The runners are natives of course dressed in light cotton jackets and drawers. The drawers come to the knee and are ornamented with string of red tape which hang down. Many of them wear anklets bracelets and so on but the funniest thing of all is their head dresses. Many wear huge hairy head-dresses ornamented with native ornaments and many have these

surmounted by cows horns which give them a very funny appearance. They speak hardly any English these men. What I saw of Durban was pleasing. The streets are wide and roomy with not very much traffic. I got to the hotel and disembarked my baggage and then went at once to the station for orders. It was just dark then - 6 o'clock - and I met the quartermaster who told me I was to go to Ladysmith by the 6.30. I said that was impossible so I was told to go on the 2.10 a.m. on the 2nd. I went back to the hotel, had a wash and dined with Butches, Tyler, Lawson, Wimby, Harper, Buss and Richardson all of the Rhodesian Horse. They sail for Beira on Saturday 6th. Then we went into the steeple and smoked till 10 p.m. Durban is under Martial Law and no one is allowed in the streets after 11 p.m. so I had to go to the station before then and get into a carriage. All sleepers have been commandeered for the transport of sick and wounded so I had to make the best of an ordinary first class carriage with no arms and no pillow. I had not had time to re-arrange my baggage to suit a night's work like this and could not get my valise and bedding into the carriage. I got out all the clothes I had in my portmanteau and rolled them into a pillow and turned up my collar and down my field service cap and used my leggings as blankets

and made the best of it. It was thundering cold and I found that I had to wrap myself in parts of my pillow to keep myself warm. I roused up at 6 and was mighty glad to see the sun rise an hour later and have a prospect of getting warm again. As daylight came on I could see the country full of green coppies with there and there large fields of mealies which grow about 10 feet high. The railway winds in and out among the coppies in a wonderful way so that the sun changed every few minutes from one window to the other. At 8 a.m. yesterday we reached Pietermaritzburg, called for short P.M.Burg. One of the things which struck me here was the number of Indians. In the refreshment room where I breakfasted all the waiters were Hindoo Kitmatyars and my Hindustani brought me the most abject respect and smart attention. I was properly hungry too. Almost on finishing the train started and now I had two charming companions, a Johannesburg stockbroker who left sixteen days before the ultimatum and Major Apthorpe of the 19th Hussars who had been in Ladysmith all the time. I wish I could tell you all the conversation. Apthorpe is the only officer except one left out of seventeen in his regiment - they are not all dead but either that or invalided. Apthorpe has not been out of Ladysmith till a week ago when he came to

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P.M. Burg. He never had any illness but he says all the horses in his regiment were eaten and not a man in the garrison could walk two miles when they were relieved. He told me that they often met the Boers after a fight and one asked him if people could see the whole of London from Cape Town. One day the Boers heliographed into Ladysmith the question "We hear Roberts is coming out. What is the matter with Buller?"

The Johannesburg man pointed out everything of interest till we came to Chèively where he left us and then Apthorpe took up the tale till we got to Ladysmith at 6 p.m. We were stuck here and there with trains coming on in front and were late at Mooi River where the hotel has been commandeered for military offices and we could get nothing to eat till we came to Estcourt where at 3 p.m. we had a very hurried luncheon off cheese and beer. I did not get enough but it was better than nothing. At Mooi River we began to see traces of war, all the stations having been repainted and some of them rebuilt. Before we came to Frere we passed patches with wooden crosses where soldiers had been buried in the field. Then after Frere came the bridge which had been destroyed by the

Boers but is now nearly rebuilt. We crossed on a temporary one. A little bit further on we came on the grave of those killed in the armoured train disaster and beside this little array of wooden crosses and white stones the upturned wagons themselves. At Chievely the station and the stationmaster's house were both surrounded by iron plates loopholed for defence. The bridge at Colenso over the Tugela is an awful smash but the workmen are rebuilding the piers now. Major Apthorpe pointed out where the battle was and where the guns were lost and all the other points of interest, Swarts Kop, Spian Kop and so on. The country at Colenso is awful and it is no wonder Buller could not get over without fearful loss. The skeletons of the horses are lying about here yet. The railway twisted and twined out and in and just as the sun set we passed Bawodna (?) where 'Long Tom' was, Lombard's Kop, and Gun Hill where Hunter destroyed the gun and on to the flat between the Boer and British position. Here there were still many dead horses and the smell was very bad even to me. The sun set behind C Camp and we saw Knox's entrenchments to the right and we stopped at Pieters and then into Ladysmith itself. I was met by Major Brotson and

told to get here and an ambulance wagon with 8 pairs of mules was waiting for me. The men put my baggage in and we rolled off but it was now dark and enveloped in a huge cloud of dust we rolled and bumped along $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles to this place.

I am at home here.

The post is just going.

Your loving Dave.

(No letters had been received by my father up to 10th This is noted in my mother's handwriting on the next letter)

5th Divisional Field Hospital
Ladysmith.

4. v. 00

My dearest Dove,

I went wrong a day in my date of last letter. The constant travelling upset my calculations. I really had not finished my letter when the mounted orderly came for the letters and I had to shut up rather suddenly. You would wonder what I meant by saying I was quite at home here. Well it is very funny but the Major in charge of this hospital is John Black with whom I lived for two years in India. When Major Brotson told me at the station who was in charge I spotted who it was but was scarcely prepared to find the bearded man who met me. It is

typical of the men here, they are all rough and weather beaten, bearded and dirty and about as unsmart as they could be. The orderlies live in shirt and trousers with bare arms and broad brimmed hats. I have fallen on my feet, for I get all the surgical cases as no one here pretends to such a thing. In the meantime we are busy getting our sick and wounded down country so that we can rejoin our division at Elandslaagte, or as Tommy facetiously calls it "Hell and Slaughter". Black was charmed to see me. There is a junior Major Caldwell, a very nice fellow, myself, a civil surgeon called White who came out with me - quite a youngster - our quartermaster Roberts. This completes the mess for the other man, a subaltern called Bobbington, is sick probably with enteric fever. Soon after my arrival we went in to mess. The mess is the operating tent and we dine on the operating table. We have an orderly to carve, one to wait and the third to wash the dishes for we have only one set of plates of course, and spoons etc. are not in duplicate. A smoke and a chat about old times finished my first night and I got to my tent and slept on a bed for the first time for 39 days. My camp bed is a great success. Next morning I had a wash - it was fine - the first for nearly 48 hours for water here is not thrown away. I had a regular

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has only half a roof, the chimney is ruined, no water.

bath out of my 16 inch basin out on the veldt a few yards from my tent. That is not the least advantage of having no nurses about. I have been teaching White the first elements of campaigning. Most of the sick are recovering from fever or dysentery. We have no beds and they lie on stretchers on the ground. Tell Stalker we get whisky (Scotch) from the Commissariat at 27/- a dozen. It is very good. Our food is camp food but so are our appetites and we feed well. After going round my tents yesterday and writing your letter Black and I rode down to Ladysmith. It is so interesting. Of course it is only military except the few Kafirs, Zulus and Indians. All the traffic is military, oxwagons with their teams of 16 shuffling oxen laden with stores etc., guns, water carts, ambulances with their ten mules constitutes all the traffic, mounted orderlies and patrols going everywhere. Everybody living here on pass and shut in their houses by 10 p.m. Ladysmith shows plenty of signs of the seige. We passed the remains of the Town House tower and tied our horses behind the remains of the Royal Hotel. The corrugated iron shed at the back is full of holes from a shrapnel evidently, and the room where we went to have a drink has only half a roof, the chimney in ruins, no mantle-

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piece, the chairs broken and the walls all indented with bits of shell. The house at the corner is being rebuilt about half of it having been carried away. Most of the houses have corrugated iron roofs and these show abundant proofs of shell fire. After a walk along the street we came home soon after dark. This morning after work Black and I rode round to call on the P.M.O. Colonel Allin. The road lay round Surprise Hill to where there has been built a corrugated iron town, partly hospital and partly administration offices. It is called Tin Town. I think it must have been 3 miles from here but Black takes riding like everything else very easy. From there we rode into Ladysmith to luncheon. Everywhere the country is bare and rocky - brown coloured boulders and everywhere are camps. We passed two pom-poms returning from somewhere North, and close to Ladysmith we met a battery of 4.7 Naval guns and wagons drawn by long teams of oxen. Everything was khaki of course, but had they not been, the dust would have made them so. It is awful, in fact indescribable. After luncheon we walked a bit and then rode slowly back and since then I have been re-arranging my things because I have too much baggage to move with and will require to send some down to the base.

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the Van Reenen's followed till 6. v. 00

Yesterday I got my own horse from the depot here. I am very pleased with her though such a rough ragged looking beast you have seldom seen. She has been in the 13th Hussars and is well trained and as gentle as anything. White and I rode over to near Nicholson's Neck in the afternoon. It is a more pleasant country than most places round here. Of course there is no green grass, but lots of shrubs and low trees. The road is very rough, cut up by spruits and dongas and covered with boulders. Riding is slow but better than walking. We did not get as far as we wanted to as the sun threatened to go down. Everywhere we saw outposts and pickets some of them in stone laagers with sand bags on top making formidable looking forts. In one place the road has been cut and a stone barricade built across it and in lots of places barbed wire stretched across between trees. Dead horses and cattle were common.

vi. v. 00

That yesterday was Sunday we knew first because there was no firing over towards Van Reenen's and because there was a church parade for the second division close to our camp. In the afternoon Caldwell and I rode along

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the Van Reenen's railroad till we could see our
furthest outposts and the Drakensberg range. Late
at night the second division got orders to move and
this morning were all gone before I was up. We our-
selves are not taking in fresh cases and we think that
probably means we will move soon too. I hope so. To-
day the ambulance train came up over here on the Van
Reenen's line and took off a lot of sick from one of
the field hospitals near us. They were taken on ox-
wagons and ambulances to the side of the Railway and
laid there till the train came up.

Major Eekersley called on us today, he is with the
Cavalry Brigade and was at Netley with me. It is
interesting to see these men again.

viii. v. 00

The hospital normally consists of 25 tents but now
we have 50 for patients. There are 5 oxwagons with 16
span of oxen in each, and 2 water carts with 4 mules
each. The ambulance wagons belong to the Bearer
Companies, of which we have none.

ix. v. 00

For the last two days there have been many changes
in the position of the troops though we are still as
we were. They were expecting some fighting as we were

warned to be ready to take in 100 wounded. All night wagons with stores and things were passing somewhere near us as we could hear by the rumble and shouts of the native drivers and there seemed to be a lot of trains going up to Elandslaajje but nobody of course knows anything except their own orders.

The worst nuisance here are the flies - they are getting less troublesome than they were. The food swarms with them, and when eating with the right hand the left is kept moving over the plate to keep the beasts off. In hospital when you ask a patient to show his tongue it is hardly out when flies settle on it. The sight of the beef at the cook-house yesterday has put me off meat for some time. Of course, the cook-house is not a house. The meat is kept lying on corrugated iron on the ground, the iron having been picked up somewhere. All our milk is Swiss milk. We have only once seen fresh milk, and that was the other day when two cows wandered into the camp and we commandeered their milk before a native arrived and claimed the beasts. The milk was given to the sick officers.

The greatest luxury we have is Quaker Oats which our Quartermaster got from somewhere. The rest is very plain food.

The Red Cross Society do very well for the sick and give us much that helps them. I don't know how the sick would have got on otherwise. Many of course have nothing except what they stand in and occasionally have to be left without anything till we get their shirts washed.

I am sending you a film of photos but I don't know if they will be worth anything for I had to open the camera as the roll stuck. The first two therefore will contain nothing, but I hope the rest will do. They are all about the camp but I have no list of them though I'll know them again. Now I must stop as this is mail day again,

Ever your loving

Dave.

5TH Divisional Field Hospital,
Ladysmith.

15. v. 00

My dearest Dove,

Things are going on quietly here, with us at least, though we are hoping to be on the trek soon.

On Sunday I went in the afternoon to Nicholson's Nek

where the Irish Fusiliers and Glosters were lost, and took a native with me to hold my horse. I rode along to the foot of the hill and left the native and my horse there and climbed the hill. It is not very high but is steep and very rocky and would make a formidable place to climb under fire. Up on the top I suddenly came on a picket and amongst them the Rev. Macpherson, an Inverness man and a chaplain in the Army. Do you know him? He told me he was there after the fight and buried 44 men there. He showed me where their graves were and I spent more than an hour wandering over the flat top. For the most part it is covered with grass 8 to 10 feet high. When one gets to the edge of the plateau there is a magnificent view all round. But the plateau is the interesting bit. There are a few trees here and these have plenty of bullet marks and signs of the fight still fresh. The piles of stones here and there show where our men had made entrenchments and behind them I found lots of bits of gauze and bandages, bits of the first dressings the wounded had tried to use. An occasional torn khaki jacket and cartridge papers and some dozen horses and mules. While wandering there I could hear the booming of the big guns over *Pefwout* towards *Keefmakaar* - and I hoped the Boers were getting

rin
he
it,

something for their days work here. Coming home I came round by Surprise Hill and behind a hill, I think they call it Bell's Hill, I had to walk as the black man was with me and if alone he would be arrested by our pickets. It was nearly dark when I got back and in trying a short cut came upon one of the Boer wire entanglements. They are all over the place here and are made of barbed wire wound from tree to tree, a perfect maze of prickly wire. Had I been a quarter of an hour later I wouldn't have known it was there until my pony ran against it.

17. v. 00

A couple of days ago we changed from Brooks to Hydes Farm. It took nearly all day to take down and put up our tents again and transfer the sick and we didn't get dinner that day until 9 o' clock. For nearly a week now we have watched down in the plain below a great trek of troops, horses, foot and artillery wandering in a long black line along the Slandslaagt road. The P.M.O. was up yesterday and he says we will be on the move within a week. We hope so. Our division is at Dundee but we are here till we can get our sick down country. Yesterday the Manchesters who were beside us left and all day and all night their transport was passing our camp. Today the Iniskilling Fusiliers

have come into camp close beside us. Just as I had got this written Black came in with a telegram for us to evacuate and move on but no address yet as to where we are to go. The trains will probably come for the sick tomorrow and we should then get off at once. There is only one drawback and that is that if letters were difficult to get before they will be even more so when we are on the move.

Good-bye just now then.

ever yours affectionately,

Dave.

Hydes Farm,
Ladysmith,

20. v. 00.

My dearest Dove,

I am to send this to be posted tomorrow morning as we march tomorrow and I may not get the chance of posting another letter in time for this mail. Along with this I send a spool of photos and also three other photos for you besides the spool. I wish I knew how what I have sent you have turned out. Major Mackenzie

of the Inniskillings told me that he got a letter of March 14th last Tuesday so I hope my turn will come yet. When last I wrote we had just got orders to trek to Waschbank but since then they have been altered to Glencoe and perhaps when we get there we may have orders to go further. These orders made us pretty busy preparing for their going. There are such a lot of details in transferring men. Yesterday morning I was up early and rode down to Ladysmith before breakfast to see 43 convalescents off for Mooi River convalescent camp. The men and kits had gone on before me in ox-wagons and I went there to see that everything was right and got them all away. Then in the afternoon we had all the other men carried or walked to the Van Reenen's Railway close beside the camp here and one of the hospital trains came up at 4 p.m. for them. I had charge of most of the work here too and we got them all on board, 63 men and 3 officers, one of the officers came out with me and was laid down 3 days after his arrival and has been sick ever since and is off down country. He is very young and evidently missed his home comforts very much. Before we got him away he got quite childish. The day was very windy and dusty and the veldt caught fire outside the Inniskilling camp. I got a photo of the men trying to put it out and prevent it going to the tents but I don't

Coffee

Missy and John

Good news and better cooked than we have it.
know how it will turn out. The flames don't show in the
sunshine. The hospital train is very comfortable and
well fitted up. We had a drink on board after the work
was finished, and then took what we could get, odds and
ends of tobacco, cigarettes and half a dozen cigars. The
letter were my capture but they are done already! The
train had to wait a long time till the other engine came
up because they are not allowed to drive a train backwards
on account of the steep gradients and sharp curves in
Natal. While we were waiting the Colonel of the Innis-
killings came up to see the R.M. Officer who manages the
railway just now, Captain Phillips. Phillips got into
a lot of barbed wire by not looking where he was going
and he had some fun getting the pony out. When the train
went off Black and Roberts went with it to Ladyemith and
the Colonel of the Inniskillings asked Caldwell and me
to dinner. Arthing is a change and so we went and had a
very good fried dinner. They had got some vegetables
from Durban and we had Woolwich. He seems a better man

and Hotch potch day doing my week's washing - two
Roast mutton Potatoes
French beans
Beetroot
That is all I have to tell you just now so to remain.
Rice and stewed prunes
Love to
? Lax Your affectionate,
Coffee
Whisky and soda.

Good menu and better cooked than we have it.

Our daily menu is:

Breakfast 9 a.m.

Quaker oats; condensed milk.
Fried tinned bacon (very greasy!)
Dry bread and marmalade
Tea in basins.

Luncheon 1.30

Tinned tongue, sardines, or potted chicken
and ham.
Chicken and potatoes.
Sago or rice.

Dinner 7.30

Bovril (called soup) or tinned soup
Chicken and potatoes or a bit of a dead trek
ox (like indiarubber) and just now pumpkin
(which our mess waiter calls pompom)
Sago or rice.
Whisky and soda.

As a rule we get bananas.

Today we have been striking the empty tents and packing
all our stores etc. in oxwagons. Then we start after
early luncheon tomorrow for Modder Spruit. My late
servant from Somerset has gone back to his regiment and
I have now a man from Woolwich. He seems a better man
and has spent the day doing my week's washing - two
handkerchiefs and one pair of socks without any holes!
That is all I have to tell you just now so au revoir.
Love to Khannie.

Your affectionate,

Dave.

Near Glencoe,
5th Divisional Field Hospital.

25 . v. 00

My dearest Dove,

I wrote you a pencil note from Sunday's River in hopes of getting it sent off somewhere but was not successful. I told you the first day's march to Modder Spruit was an easy one. Most of the way I rode with Black in front of the men but behind the wagons and water carts. It is very slow going and the oxen have to rest every hour or so. We turned down from our camping ground towards Ladysmith and struck off to the left where the Van Keenen's and Elendslaagte lines meet and away along the road where we have seen regiments and baggage going for the past ten days. Our band consisted of a mouth organ, a penny whistle and a Jew's harp. The men sang as usual on the march and we got along cheerfully enough though it was close on dark before we got in. The men preferred to sleep on the ground to the trouble of pitching tents, but we have always had tents.

Glencoe.

27. v. 00

The next day we started earlier, about 8 a.m. and marched on to Sunday's River where I expected to get your pencil note posted. We got on to the wrong road at Elendslaagte and on to the old Newcastle road and struck

the river four miles above the railway. The mistake was that we were directed to the bridge at Sunday's River instead of the ford lower down. As we came to Elandslaagte we passed several railway bridges which had been blown up by the Boers and which are now being rebuilt, temporary ones having been run up to let the trains get on. By the time we reached Sunday's River it was dark and we halted on the South side and walked down to the bridge and spoke to the guard there. On the other side we could see the lights of tents and camp fires, evidently a lot of men. Next morning we saw all the show of tents though everybody seemed to be getting on the move again. As soon as we were ready we set off and it was only after we had crossed the river a bit we learned we were on the wrong road. After crossing the bridge we went through a part with a lot of trees with a farm house and hotel and some other houses there, all empty and looted and then on to where we had seen the camp lights the night before. There were infantry and cavalry and such a lot of field artillery all marching off. From there we had such a stiff hill to climb with a road like a disused burn and in places our oxwagons stuck and had to be double spanned. By luncheon we had got to a place called Moss Farm on the map where we saw from the map that if we turned to the right we

we could get down to the north of Westbank. We lunched here first. Our fare being now bully beef and biscuits as it has been till we got here. There is a monotony about the diet which is tiresome. Before we went up to the farmhouse Roberts and I rode over to a native kraal to see if we could get some hens, but got nothing. I delighted them by giving one of the children a tin match box which was much admired. Then we went to the farm to outspan for lunch. The farm from letters we picked up seemed to have belonged to a man called Henderson and was called Belbrogie. It is in the Biggarsberg range. I enclose one of the letters, an English one, for your amusement. (No record of this letter found). The man had evidently not been a pro Boer and the farm had been properly looted. Everything was smashed to atoms, the fireplaces had been dropped out and broken on the stone verandah and the farm implements as well. We took our horses in at the back door and let them stand in the different rooms. The garden was all overgrown with 6 foot grass and the vines had been torn off the walls of the house. We lunched on the verandah, the horses looking out of the windows all round from which the sashes had been torn. The men got some lemons in the garden but that was all. After two hours to let the oxen feed we

pushed on, being desirous of reaching a place called Nuran where a post office was marked on the map. This however we did not reach but stopped about two miles short just as dark set in. Here we got fresh eggs and some milk, a great treat, from some natives. It is a much finer country here and North than about Ladysmith, with plenty of hills and fewer rocks and stones and some trees. Next morning we got on and reached Nuran where a native told us that there was a post office, a store and a police station. The Godfearing Boer however had been there. The post-office and police station had been wrecked and looted and the store had been burned and only showed four blackened walls. Another mile or two took us to Westbank River where there is a Coalierly (?) whose bridge had been burned by the Boers and we had to cross by a drift and outspanned for bully beef and biscuits on the north side. There was a very tempting farm not far off and Roberts and I went up to forage. It had belonged to a Boer called de Jaeger who had eloped with his friends. Everything had been removed, but there was not the awful destruction as in farms not pro-Boer. We wandered around and I enclose one of the letters I picked up. It was a fine house and steading. In one outhouse we found a pair of stays and some ladies and childrens stockings. Some lesson books

childrens copy books, two bits of lace and a doll's pinafore which I commandeered. From this we went on a long trek to just outside Glencoe where we stopped for the night. It was the first day of the railway being open past Westbank and we saw train after train, sometimes four, one after the other quite close, carrying stores up to Glencoe. All next day we stayed in the same place but Roberts and I went in to Glencoe to find out orders. There is no village only a station and one or two tin sheds. There is not a civilian to be seen. The trains are all unloading to send stores up to Newcastle. The station is being repaired but is not very much to boast of yet. On our way we passed an upturned Boer trek wagon where I got a ripping Boer shell. I have emptied the powder out and taken it on. Yesterday we came on here and before we got our tents pitched sick and wounded began to come in and kept on coming long after it was pitch dark till nearly 10 p.m., 202 men and 4 officers. The P.M.O. was here this morning and we are to remain here for a bit, he says. Our division had left Dauhauser yesterday morning for Newcastle. In the station I saw the engine which had been armoured with ropes. The men call it "Hairy Mary". There were some armoured trucks too and the searchlight trucks.

We were informed that there was no post office but one has arrived to-day so that I hope to get letters sent off as usual.

29. v. 00

Today the railway has been opened to Newcastle and the first three trains have gone away up with supplies. We heard fighting going on somewhere this morning but it did not last long. This morning my servant brought me a sheet of ice he had got off the water pool. I was not surprised as it was very cold last night but we have had a fine warm day to make up for it. It is very interesting to see the trains here. There are few carriages and everyone climbs into ordinary wagons and consider themselves lucky if any trek wagons or guns are travelling for they can get under the shade of these. Trains start at any time when the way is clear because nobody travels but soldiers.

Ever your affectionate

Dave. He looked like a lunatic

jumping into all sorts of ridiculous positions brandishing his spear and shield. Perhaps he had had some Kaffir beer - a filthy stuff made from fermented molasses, I think. Then we went on to the farm and found

Glencoe.

5th D.F. Hospital.

6. vi. 00

My dearest Dove,

We are going on here with the regular routine though there is some word of our trekking to Ingogo when we get rid of our sick. Most of the afternoons I have been riding to explore the country. The first day I started to go across the veldt to Dundee which we can see distinctly from the edge of the plateau lying under Talona Hill. I left after luncheon but got little nearer than half way on account of the holes and dongas and barbed wire. It made riding very slow and difficult. I only just managed to get onto the road when it began to get dark. I'll go by the road the next time. Another day we rode over to a farm house away to our right to see if we could get anything to eat. As we got near we passed a Zulu with a spear and shield doing a solitary war dance. It was very funny to watch, he looked like a lunatic jumping into all sorts of ridiculous positions brandishing his spear and shouting. Perhaps he had had some Kaffir beer - a filthy sour decoction made from fermented mealies, I think. Then we went on to the farm and found

brother and his brother-in-law. They had all left after it looted and empty. It is a fine farm house with a big garden and orchard with roses and strawberries and lots of fruit trees and shrubs but no fruit. As it was getting dark we left without completing our examination but went back earlier next day. The only thing we found was a fine churn and a double bed, both too heavy for the Boers to take away.

The Army Service Corps have sent us 60 cattle, about 200 sheep and 125 hens, captured Boer stock. We get chicken now twice a day regularly and sometimes fresh milk or eggs. One day we went to an old Boer camping ground where we got a lot of Mauser cartridges and other stuff and a cloth doll which I am bringing home.

(Khannie, his daughter, played with it for years)

Yesterday Forde and I rode to another farm which seemed to have been used as a hospital from the amount of empty bottles we found there. There was the usual desolation and destruction, but they had evidently left in a hurry because there were some light chairs and a single bed left behind. Leaving there we rode on a mile to another farm where for the first time we found people. They were very nice and asked us in and gave us horrible coffee which we drank as if we liked it. The farmer told us that the other farms we had visited belonged to his

brother and his brother-in-law. They had all left after the fight at Dundee and this man had recently returned. He was grumbling much at the Boers for having burned the veldt and so destroyed the grass for the cattle for miles. There had been an encampment of Boers near his house and we could see the remains though we did not go down because it was too near sunset. It is always difficult to cross the spruits unless in a decent light. As we ride home from this direction we face the setting sun and the hills are lit up with a purple light that makes them look like the heather at home. But all round us the ground is black for the grass has all been burned here. For some days we have heard no firing so we hope things are going on to finish the war. That seems to be the general impression and I have no doubt that long before you get this the war will be over. I think it likely that if this occurred we would go no further on but we do not know the troops' movements though it will be necessary to repair the railways through Leeny's Nek. If mays are kept up here we may be delayed a bit in getting down country again. I really can't get more written as some one has come in and is sitting talking. So good bye just now.

Ever your loving

Dave.

5th Divisional Field Hospital,
Glencoe,

7 . vi. 00

My dearest Dove,

Yesterday was a day in camp because in the afternoon we got in 40 sick from Newcastle and the front line. None of them were very bad, and as usual I got all the surgical cases. They came by ordinary train and, as the others had been, were a dirty untidy looking lot with their uniforms in rags. We had those who were unable to walk put on bullock wagons and taken to hospital with their kits.

12. vi. 00

Since writing the above I have had three days lovely wander, leaving camp early and taking luncheon with me. Two days I rode and Forde went with me and the third day I walked and went alone. Except towards Dundee there is only one other direction we are allowed to go on account of prowling Boer scouts who have been so near as on Monday to shoot a Kaffir two miles from here. The direction we go in is down Glencoe on the opposite side to where we came up, i.e. on the Dundee side of the spruit. The first day we rode over to the hill on the East at this end of Glencoe and wandered all over it. We found plenty of evidence of recent Boer occupation. There were any number of camping grounds and here in one we found

about half a cart load of dynamite in which we waded knee-deep. Also any number of cartridges and the remains of Boer loot. We came across three large tins and three sacks of mauser and maxim ammunition. As we climbed to the top of the hill a thunder storm came on but though we waited it passed towards Dundee and we went on. The hill has an immense flat top about 7 miles long and here we knee halted our horses and had luncheon off bully beef and biscuits, and when our horses had fed we climbed down the Glencoe side of the hill. It was no joke with the horses as the hill was very steep and stony but we got down at last and found a Boer emplacement for a big gun splendidly built and in grand position to command Glencoe and Westbank plain beyond. Here we wasted so much time that we had to scoot for the road before dark. Next day we began by riding at once for this spot, and then working our way down Glencoe finding other big gun positions and any number of trenches. The Boers must have had much work and all for no good because we came round by Helpmekaar instead. The third day I went alone and tried to get a couple of sketches of the place which I will show you when I get back. Since then we have done nothing. All the troops here are bivouacking on the hill tops in anticipation of an attack which seems to

me very improbable. We see the 5th Dragoons posts and their patrols daily and the N.R.R. are close to us making dongas and trenches to protect themselves.

"Hairy Mary" got up steam and the armoured trucks came up from Westbank to go on to Newcastle two days ago but the order has been countermanded so I suppose things have settled down there.

The P.M.O. came in this morning and says we are to move to Charlestown or Standerton so the fighting has evidently cleared Leeney's Nek.

As a rule we are having lovely weather though sometimes windy and at nights very cold. Last night we had a heavy mist just like an East Haar at home and this morning the tent was as tight as a drum.

Writing in the open on one's knee does not improve one's penmanship but I hope you'll be able to read it. I had a letter from Nell today. I expect yours some day soon. Please send two of the enclosed to Jo and keep two for Khannie, they will be very valuable some day. I also enclose a letter I picked up in the trenches. Caldwell and I walked over to see if we could buy some butter at a farm near here belonging to an old woman called Schroeder. She says she has two sons fighting for

(Two letters were of a private nature and my mother did
us in the Umvati Rifles but I fancy from the preservation
of her farm that she has pro-Boer sympathies. She is
about 80 she says and looks as if she had never been
washed in her life. We got the stamps from her but no
butter. The farm house is very dirty and untidy looking
and the only thing we were glad of was that she did not
offer us coffee. All round the house were mimosa and
eucalyptus trees making a marked contrast with the brown
bare veldt. All farms are the same here in plan and
wherever one sees a clump of trees one knows there is a
house there. We get eggs at 2/6 a dozen and butter costs
2/- a lb. but we have never been lucky enough to get any.
It will be a luxury when I get home for I have tasted
none since leaving. Twice a day we get fowls which in
camp are our staple article of diet. So if you wish to
give me a treat when I return don't give me hens.
Winfield, a sub. in the 1st K.O.S.B. came in to mess
last night. He knows Green of the 60th and was in
Ladysmith in the siege.

That is all my news just now, if we trek I may have
more to give you next time.

Ever your loving,

Dave.

(Two letters were of a private nature and my mother did not keep them as she did most of those my father wrote to her and which were circulated to the 'family')

houses should where the Boers had been for long. All

afternoon we 5th Divisional Field Hospital,
Volkrust,
just like the soft part of Transvaal.

2. vii. 00

sinking up to their fetlocks at every step and on either

My dearest Dove, Close as sundown the conductor came to

us and I am afraid you found my last two letters a bit shorter than usual but I will have more to tell you this time, and I write now in case I don't get time again for a day or two, and before I forget the order of events.

The 28th was a fine morning and we got carts packed - or rather the packing finished - just at daylight and then breakfasted. This sounds early, but as it is midwinter here light only begins about 7 o' clock. So we got off about 9, a lovely warm sunny day, and marched over the railway and up the hill where the N.R.R. have their camp and entrenchments. From there, as far as the eye could see the whole veldt had been burned and was a blackened stretch towards the Drakensberg. We marched on through this for some miles and then halted for luncheon. I am afraid the 96 oxen found little to eat and nothing to drink and the men all crowded under the carts to get out of the sun. Just after we crossed the railway at Hotting Spruit,

but the spruit was dry. Here some ruined and burned houses showed where the Boers had been for loot. All afternoon we marched on on a good road but very dusty, just like the soft part of the sea shore, the horses sinking up to their fetlocks at every step and on either side burned grass. Close on sundown the conductor came to us and told us that the boys informed him that there was no grass unburned at Damshauser and no water, and as we had reached a patch not burned beside a spruit we outspanned there for the night. Tents were pitched for the men and very luckily too because when my servant called me in the morning there was $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch of ice on the water pails. We had a tub and breakfast and were off before 9. We found we had camped close to a hill occupied by the Devons and artillery and their dongas lined the skyline all round the hill. The Boers had once held this and we noticed that on the side facing the hill here and there all round the ant hills were painted white so as to let the enemy know the various ranges for they are mostly poor shots at long range. A mile or so further on we reached Damshauser where the houses and some half dozen corrugated iron stores were being rebuilt. They had evidently been all levelled, and half the stationmaster's house was obviously new. It is

the only stone building except the station. All the kopjes had dongas on them and the railway was entrenched and protected with dongas all about the station and a fine stone protection built in the stationmaster's garden. We halted here for a little to let the oxwagons get up and then on again through the same burned veldt and the same dust to luncheon at a dried up spruit which must be a 30 foot deep river in the rains. Then all afternoon we marched till sundown when we were quite close to Ingagane. Here we again came in touch with military activity for there was a guard on the water and we were warned not to leave camp in case we were shot by mounted patrols. We could see there were many troops near but it was dark before the tents were up and we sat at the cook house fire till we could get under shelter from the cold wind. Next morning, 30th, we started as usual about 9 and rounded the hill where we came upon any number of camps, 1st Royals, 18th Hussars, Artillery, etc. and down the river where the Boers had effectively wrecked the railway bridge. The railway was however carried round on a temporary bridge which will last till the rain sets in. Then we continued on to Newcastle through dust and burned grass till about 4 o' clock, when we got in. The few farms we passed had all been looted and some burned, and

fresh vegetables, mutton, curry and rice and so on was the nearer we got amongst the troops the more dead horses we found on the road. We got into Newcastle about 4 and camped on the south side close to No. 4 Stationary Hospital. The town looked nice with its trees and the high Drakensberg hills in the distance though they too were all black from fire. That night it rained like blazes and we heard about the fighting that had been a few miles out and so to bed - damp. Next morning was lovely. The veldt smelt of rain though there was no grass and the trees in Newcastle looked so fresh and the red houses and corrugated roofs and white tents were very picturesque. The night patrols passed coming in to breakfast. Most mounted, but a good many Gordons with their khaki flaps and all looking as if they had been roughing it. Their quarters were close to us and soon their fires were going and the men stripped to the buff were washing off the night's discomfort. I got a sketch of Newcastle from our tents and then walked down through the town with Black. We got orders to entrain by 2 p.m. which seemed an impossibility but we had to try. Our orders were to go on to Standerton and send our wagons by road. It was a hard days work for the men but we managed it by 3 o' clock. A whole train full. Then we were told we could not get on till 6.40 and we had dinner at the Station. Heavens! what a lot I ate. The change to

fresh vegetables, mutton, curry and rice and so on was lovely. Then came a message we could not get on till midnight and as it was then pitch dark we got the men into the train and went at had tea. Again what a feed! About 10 o'clock we got all ready and we had two second classes for the six officers, candles for light, our kit in beside us and every prospect of a poor night. The stationmaster said we would get to Volkrust early in the morning, so we arranged ourselves as best we could and we started about 10, went on for a mile and then were shunted into a siding where the searchlight train was working and searching the veldt all round to prevent attack as the Boers were known to be quite close, and here we stayed till 3 a.m. When I woke again it was six o'clock and we were up at Mount Prospect station well up the Drakensberg. It was a fine sight to see the sun rise over the blackened hills. Every now and then we came on pickets guarding the line and nearly all the culverts had been destroyed so we crawled on about 6 miles an hour up to the Leings Nek tunnel where there was a strong guard and which the Boers had made a very poor attempt to destroy. Through there we crept on to Charlestown, the last town in Natal. The houses were left here, but all looted and wasted and pulled about, the station itself showing plenty of traces of who had been there. None of the inhabitants had returned, only a few

railway men and the place was very cold in the early morning and very deserted. Close behind us now rose Majuba on the left with Mt. Prospect on the left again and on the right Pogwona where the fighting had been lately and where the Boers had a big gun.

After a little wait we moved on into the Transvaal and drew up at Volkerust. What a difference! The station larger, well built and perfect, not a pane of glass broken. On the left a row of houses with iron roofs some painted red and built of stone. The gardens with white pailings.

3. vii. 00

To be continued in our next as we are off on an hour's notice to Standerton.

Love to all.

Ever your loving

Dave.

5th Divisional Field Hospital,
Standerton,
Transvaal.

9. vii. 00

My dearest Dove,

I left off my last letter rather hurriedly just as I had got to our arrival at Volkerust. Well after our

discomfort and cold in the train it was an immense treat to go into a proper refreshment room and have a real good breakfast - curry and rice and all sorts of things, though of course all except the fruit, vegetables and trek ox were tinned. The fruit and vegetables come up daily from Durban! The station here is a splendidly built stone one on continental principles with a large HEEREN at one end. We were told we would probably go on at noon, so we sat about and watched Pogwana, Majubo and Mt. Prospect (where Colby's grave is) all day in a dull and very cold condition. All the wagons are marked Z.A.S.M. now except the N.G.R. from Natal. At noon we were told we would get off about 4 probably as the Boers had cut the line at Zaudspruit and there had been some fighting and the line was nearly repaired. Later on Hairy Mary came in with the working party. The only interest was to watch the soldiers making trenches at the station to repel attacks. It did not look like Sunday. Well four o' clock came and at five it began to get dark so we knew we were fixed for another night in the train as the line is not open after dark. We lit our candles because there were no lamps for the carriages and read and smoked. No water was obtainable and we had not washed since Saturday morning early. Whatever the Boer

Breakfast and all else were details. Now we say that we may be he is a dirty beast and however fine the stations are there is no provision for water. The sanitary conditions also are most primitive and before night the HEEREN was flooded over on to the platform. Phiech! Well, after dinner we turned into our carriages again and went to sleep assured we were to start at daylight. Before daylight, however, - before 6 on Monday morning the Railway Staff Officer came to us with a telegram to say that on account of the necessity for stores at the front no transport was to go by train and as we had our water carts, mules, oxen, our wagons loaded, and ponies, we had to turn out in the cold and stamp about till the refreshment room opened at 8. Good breakfast again. Quaker oats and tinned milk, tinned sausages, tinned liver and bacon, curry and rice and tea and Keillers jam. Then another loaf about till afternoon when news came to unload and pitch tents for officers and men till further orders. By dark we got into our tents and had dinner and to bed. Next morning, Tuesday -

1st item - wild beast hunt. I got 12 brace on my cholera belt and shirt.

2nd item - an almighty wash in well iced water and a shave and clean underclothing.

Breakfast and all else were details. Now we saw where we were. In the Market Square in Volksrust. All round were the houses with tin roofs and such a lot of troops. A sentry over the water supply to prevent waste showed how we valued the water. Everywhere were tents, orderlies riding here and there and convoys well guarded starting and arriving. An animated scene but beastly cold and windy and dusty. I was very anxious to get a sketch of Majuba etc. but I could not face the cold and the wind, one's fingers got so stiff, so I wrote to you instead. What with the knocking about ^{and} the want of sleep I put your letter on the wrong day so you must put all our movements a day back. Next day after a freezing night it was bright and sunny but too cold and windy to sit out. Then at 5 o'clock we got the order to have all our things packed in the train by 6 p.m. and we had a rush for it. On my way down to the train I posted your letter. In the post office is written up by a Boer "To Tommy - We are to let you have this post office for a little as we have used so many of yours, but we will be back." A funny thing happened when I posted the letter. The postmaster (military of course) was a non-commissioned officer. He took the letter and said, "Excuse me, Sir, but could

you tell me what day this is? A pal and I have a bet on and we know the date but not the day." Fancy in a P.O. !

Well we dined again at the station and turned in to our carriage - a first class this time and cleaner and more comfortable. We shook the seat cushions and the floor mat and went to sleep. It was thundering cold. We started next day about 8 a.m. and had tinned breakfast, bully beef and biscuits and a little tea most of which we lost by the awful bumping and shaking of the train. Our ponies etc follow by road as soon as an armed convoy can be provided. Everywhere now we saw the interminable veldt with no high hills and all along the line pickets and outposts and camps. Every bridge is guarded and entrenched and we flung our old newspapers to the men as we passed. The distance is about 80 miles I believe and we did that in 12 hours. Good going? At the first station along, Zandspruit, we werestopped a long time and saw the Boer lines in the distance and our pickets moving about and the cavalry going out to reconnoitre. Then on to Paardskop where we were again stuck but got our tea and bully and biscuits in peace. Then as we neared Standerton darkness came on and we dined during a halt off bully, biscuit and tea and jam. Major Black we left behind at Volkerust with a sprained knee and Major Poole came on with us. I am the

camping ground and all our tents pitched, 100 of them for only one left of those who were with the hospital at "adysmith except the quartermaster. It was not nice sleeping five in a carriage but we put in a very cold night at Standerton on the south side of the bridge which the Boers have blown up. Next morning was very raw, cold wet and misty and we were shunted about from 6 till 10. We had to turn out at 5.30 but were allowed to go back about 9 as our carriage was not wanted, so we had breakfast. By this time we were again very dirty and unshaven you may be sure. It cleared up later on and broke out fine and warm and we got orders about 8 where to go. Things were unloaded, out in carts and taken across the Vaal on a road bridge called "Krugers Brug" which had not been destroyed. We had 2 to 3 miles to go to our camp and though we only pitched tents for the men and ourselves we did not get dinner till nearly 9 - bully, biscuits, tea and jam as usual. We could not get a wash yet as we had no water carts but that was remedied early next morning when we had the luxury of a shave and wash - not before it was wanted, and only one creeper - the last one. I will sketch it for you one day. Yesterday

Friday was a fine warm day after a freezing night and we luxuriated in the sun. We got our permanent

camping ground and all our tents pitched, 100 of them for patients. We hear that on account of some break down on the other side we are to get the sick and wounded from Pretoria way and Poole has given me all the surgical tents as Black did. We are to get some large F.A. tents too and beds and bedding so the patients should be comfortable. We are a bit short of grub here but that will improve as rations come from the base. We are lying near the 2nd Queens and some Artillery but the camp is a very large one of all arms and very busy. We got in 25 enterics today but they don't come to me.

Yesterday, Saturday, was a fine warm day but this is a wonderful place for changes of temperature. There is generally 80 degrees variation daily - about 20 degrees during the night and 100 degrees in the tent during the day. Of course every morning the water in our tents is frozen about an inch thick and we have to wash in this, ice and all. It is such a funny sensation pouring the water with lumps of ice in it, over oneself. If one does not get one's sponge thoroughly dried during the day it is like a stone in the morning. As we lie here we overlook the town. It is the third largest in the Transvaal. I will sketch it for you one day. Yesterday

300. They snipe each other when they get the chance.

Last night they were riding after some Boers and his horse
afternoon I went down to the Vaal and sketched the blown
up bridge. It was lovely and warm. At night one creeps
into one's sac blanket, and covers oneself with ones
other blanket, ones great coat, cape, spare jacket, and
all clothing one wears during the day and above all a
doubled waterproof sheet. I wear also pyjamas, a sweater,
a Balaclava cap and bed socks, so that I am fairly warm.
The only discomfort I feel is that the breath condenses on
my moustache and runs down in a little stream on to my
pillow and the point of my nose gets most horribly cold.
I often have to wake and rub it.

Near here is an ammunition supply column under Major
Findlay with whom I was once on the march for eight months
in India but I have not had time to call on him yet.
I think that is all my news just now but will leave
it open another day yet.

9. vii. 00

There is no more news to add today except that the
railway beyond has been all broken up last night again.
A man who came in today to me says they were on outpost
duty last night about 4 miles from here. They are there
close to about 70 Boers who are supported by a commando of
300. They snipe each other when they get the chance.

Last night they were riding after some Boers and his horse put its foot in a hole and he broke his arm. Later on they came to a Boer outpost who opened fire and shot the sergeant dead but hit no one else. This sort of thing goes on constantly. We expect more fighting here.

Ever your loving,

Dave.

5th D. V. H.
Standerton,
Transvaal.

11. vii. 00

My dearest Dove,

After sending off your last letter Forde and I walked through the town of Standerton. It is difficult to describe the place, it is so different from home towns. It covers a good big area but is very straggling with grass grown veldt everywhere close up to the house gardens. There is a main street very wide and grass grown and very rough, being just ordinary veldt not in any way made into a road except by use and wont and by being bounded on either side by houses. Most of the shops are general stores apparently but the whole place is much deserted though nothing seems to have been wrecked like the towns in Natal. Roberts' proclamation

is nailed outside the Provost Marshal's office as also a notice that all inhabitants must give up their revolvers and no one is to be in possession of loot. There is a small Boer Hospital here with some wounded Boers in it who are looked after by our men. We came home by the new railway bridge which the sappers have made over the Vaal in place of one which has been blown up. They took only a week to make it along with a long diversion of the railway. As we came up we saw some wagons standing on the line, empty, near our camp. In the middle of the night we heard explosions, as we thought, and fancied there was fighting closer than usual but in the morning we found some Boer sympathisers had started these wagons and that they had rushed down the new line and that eight of them had crashed over the bridge tearing up the rails and making a proper mess. This we went to see later on. When we got there it had been decided to leave the wagons as useless and in consequence the men had gone for them with axes and picks and in an hour only the iron work was left. This may seem destructive to you but we are all very hard up for firewood here, there being no trees except in the gardens at the station and the men carried^{off} every stick they could for their own cookhouses. It took 24 hours to repair the line but trains got over yesterday with much needed stores. The

The night before last the wires were cut between us and Volkerust and the nearest farm house in consequence was burned. This is the 8th burned for the same crime between here and Sandpruit. Between us and Pretoria the line has again been badly smashed up. Close to our camp in a low stony kopje is a tombstone "Erected to the brave Englishmen who died in the defence of Standerton 1880-81" and then follow the names. I did not know we had been besieged here before. The other day it was in general orders that the flag which had been hoisted at the Town Hall was the identical flag pulled down in 1881 when Standerton was evacuated by the British. Close to us yesterday we found encamped a small Naval detachment with two 12 pounder naval guns. On the hill behind us - Standerton Kop - are four 4.7 guns so we have a good show of Jacks here. We got in 50 more sick of whom I got all the surgical cases so all my tents are full.

13. vii. 00

Last night we had our P.M.O. Col, Allin to dinner. His Secretary, Major Bateson, was also asked but could not come as he had asthma. I enclose you the menu. We got tumblers glasses and plates for the occasion, all of which will be smashed whenever we trek. Forde and I laid the table and

we had about 2 dozen candles for warmth rather than light. I don't know where the eatables came from but I made the cheese paste and it was the only thing Allin asked about. He asked for more, said it was splendid and asked where we bought it. He is a big tall handsome man with any amount of medals. He is good company and talked a great deal. It was a very jolly evening and this morning he told Black he had not had such a dinner since the campaign began. Black came back yesterday so Poole returns to Volkerust. Our transport and horses arrived on Monday without any accident.

The railway has been broken close to us between here and Greylingstadt and Allin says there will be a good deal of fighting yet and we will move about the end of the month to Middlesburg. That is his idea just now but things may of course shape differently.

14. vii. 00

Yesterday we received orders to prepare to evacuate our sick today and so we had a busy day getting all our papers etc. ready. The Princess Christian Hospital train came in in the afternoon and Black, Forde and I went down to see it. It is really a splendid train about 4 - 5 carriages all connected so that one can walk right through from end to end. There are no seats and the beds are arranged in 3 tiers, 22 in each carriage lying along the train, not cross-ways. At the rear end is a kitchen like on board a yacht

and at the front end a surgery and dispensary. It is now in charge of a Dr Lowe since Forrester died and there are two Army Nurses on board. In each carriage is a stove, a gasogene, filtered water, wash-hand basin and lavatory. It is a perfect ambulance train. Well this morning we were up by 5.30 a.m. and mighty cold it was too. The men had breakfast at 6 and all who were to go were got ready. The bearer company of the 2nd Brigade Field Hospital (Major Ricketts) sent over 6 ambulance wagons into which the bad cases were carried. The remainder were carried by hand and we were off to the station just as the sun began to show over Standerton. When we got to the station the beds from the train were laid in a long row on the platform and the stretchers put along side and then each patient lifted from the stretcher to the bed and then the bed put in its place. We put in I think 117 patients and (that) has left me with only 6 cases and 2 natives. I do not know why we are being emptied in this way but rumour says there is to be fighting, but of course nobody knows. Almost every night we hear firing not far away but it does not disturb us. Today at luncheon we saw three Boer women pass in charge of Tommy with fixed bayonet. It looked so funny. The women had on big white Dutch caps. They are the first informers

of what we are doing and they hate us like the devil. Today has been a day of intolerable wind and dust. We expect every now and then to have our tents blown down. Our food is reduced again to bully beef because the fire can't be got to cook anything in the wind. Once the sparks blown out of the fire set the velvet on fire and we had a nice little excitement getting it out. It spreads about an acre in 4 minutes in this wind and one has to run to keep up with the spreading edge of the fire. We saw the Naval Brigade have a similar experience and also the gunners. It looks like Hades to see the natives and men rushing into smoke and laying about them with empty sacks -

The Army Service Corps man who supplies us has had the misfortune to get jaundice. It has turned out a blessing to us for we have been able to complain about the tea and bread through Forde who is attending to him, with the result that we have had both changed much for the better. The tea we got was Natal tea. It was awful and produced a kind of dirty water so that we all changed for coffee which is mostly chicory and has wonderful abdominal results. The bread we got first was like sodden cake a week old and we all changed unanimously to biscuit again but now we can eat the new bread though I am afraid the home people would not face up to it.

16. vi. 00

Yesterday we had a message from Greylingstadt to prepare for 64 sick and wounded but they did not come in till late. They all went off again this morning down country at 6 a.m. except one Basuto Scout. Our hospital is again empty except for three niggers whom I retain - a Basuto, a Kaffir and a Bulu. Today there were some races got up for the men and I rode over after luncheon and spent the afternoon there. It was great fun, and not the least interesting part was to see the number of different regiments, regular and irregular. Buller was there with his Chief of Staff and looked well. He wears no ribbons but otherwise is very like his pictures. It is not worth while starting another sheet.

Ever your loving,

Dave.

5th Divisional Field Hospital,
Standerton.

17. vii. 00

My dearest Dove,

I finished your letter yesterday saying the hospital was empty and we spent the afternoon at the sports. The best fun there was the boxing. It went on all the time

and was first rate. Being mounted I had a good view. I saw some of the colonials standing and some kneeling on their saddles to see over the crowd, and Buller himself spent quite a time looking on. After dinner I turned in about 10 to read the papers you sent me and about 11 I thought I heard the rattle of ambulances and the trot of a pony in our lines. I heard our quartermaster shout out "Is that you Russell" (of the 2nd Brigade Bearer Company) and the answer "Yes." "What's up?" "Some wounded from Veal" and in five minutes I was in my boots and what else I could wear on top of my pyjamas and was off down the lines. Except for the guard I was the first there. There were only 9 for me and 5 medics. I had an hour getting them put all right and fed and then back to bed pleased to have some new cases to see to. Today has been very windy again the best place being in our flepping tent and I have written to Halley.

90. vii. 00

On the afternoon of the 18th I got in some more wounded and another today. In the evening of 18th Forde and I went to dine with Col. Allin, the P.M.O. Captain Jennings of 2nd Brigade Field Hospital and a colonial called Lenser were there. Colonel Allin lives in a house

up near the church and we had the pleasure of seeing a fire and sitting on a sofa before we went into dinner. The table napkins were obviously bits torn off sheets and of course unhemmed. The tumblers were marked "Royal Hotel Volkerust" and the Chartreuse was drunk out of egg-cups. We had soup, not up to much - evidently mostly Bovril. Then tinned salmon. Then the pièce de résistance - pork. Fresh pork excited our envy and curiosity. Allin told us that the other day he got up early and looked out and saw two pigs asleep in his garden so he sent out his servants and has had fresh pork ever since. Mashed potatoes and tomatoes and apple sauce made of tinned apples made the pork go down fine. Then we had tinned apples and custard and then coffee. Whisky and soda as a drink. Port and green chartreuse which I did not touch. We came home in a pitch dark night, though mild and warm, and nearly gave the countersign 'pork' instead of 'cart' when challenged by the various sentries and pickets.

Today and yesterday mornings have been thick and misty till nearly 11 but after that lovely weather. Yesterday I went a ride round Standerton Kop in the afternoon. It was lovely and I had a glorious gallop over the veldt which has hardly any hills for miles and miles.

Unfortunately one cannot go more than 4 miles or so in any direction without getting sniped. Every night too there has been irregular firing going on all about and one morning we wakened to the tap tap tap of the pom poms near Standerton Kop way. Yesterday I got your letter of April 3rd. Many thanks for it! Today I got one of June 20th which was quite as pleasant and I am delighted you have had such a good time at Bervie. I was so interested too about Baldoan. I wish I had been there. Don't let them forget me.

24, vii. 00

When I tell you that we had another dinner on Sunday night entertaining as our guests Major Ricketts, Lt. Houghton and Russell of the 2nd Brigade Bearer Company and a young lad Mackinnon who is attached to the Supply column; when I tell you this you will think we are doing little but entertaining. I have not got the menu but the pièce de resistance with us was a turkey which our quartermaster had roused somehow. The other things except the trek ox were tinned and we had some difficulty in getting potatoes which we had not seen for some days. We made the trek ox into Irish stew. In order to make it properly tender it was stewed from 2 till 7 and was fairly

estable then. I think however that everybody was more concerned that it should be hot than that it should be tender for it is cold in the mess tent at night. The turkey, wonderful to say, was exceedingly good and everyone enjoyed it very much. One reason we were able to do the cooking better was that we got permission to commandeer a kitchen range out of a house here and have it stuck up behind two blankets on poles. When the bullock cart went down for the range they brought away a piano which we had for two days when it suddenly disappeared. Probably some one on the staff heard of its being taken and ordered its return but we ask no questions about such things.

For two nights and days there has been a huge veldt fire in the direction of Greylingstadt though not nearly so far away of course. The first night it was very fine and the houses stood out against the red glare as if the fire was close to them. That was about bed time and suddenly one of our cocks saw it and I suppose thought it was dawn and began to crow. Another cock answered and in a few minutes it seemed as if Standerton contained nothing but cocks, then the mules began and with the howling of the dogs which goes on all and every night made a most marvellous chorus till I fell asleep.

The day before yesterday was very windy and at night we had rain but not bad. Yesterday was better and today lovely though the ground was all white with hoar frost for an hour after the sun rose.

We are again beginning to empty the hospital and 16 men go down tomorrow. Amongst my lot I have three from Aberdeen and one who has been out here 20 years who says he comes from a farm in the North of Scotland in Forfarshire!

Now I have no more news just now so will say au revoir.

Ever your loving,

Dave.

5th Divisional Field Hospital,
Standerton,
Transvaal.

SG. vii. 00

My dearest Dove,

I don't know if this is the 26th or 27th - anyway it is said to be Thursday. Tuesday was a fine warm and sunny day and in the afternoon Forde and I went over to the 2nd Brigade Field Hospital to afternoon tea and to meet the Rev. MacGormack and his three daughters. He says he has ten of them! He is an old man with a long white beard and is

English Padre here and also to our hospital. Jennings and Leske of the 2nd B.G.H. and Forde took charge of the girls and Major Buchanan and I took the old man. The Rev. Drake - Army Chaplain - also put in an appearance but went off after tea. The Padre has been 15 months in Standerton and was very entertaining in his stories about the Boers. He has been in South Africa 35 years and knows what he is talking about. After tea we walked slowly up to the top of Standerton Kop. We saw one of the 5 inch guns there and I got one of the gunners to open the breach and explain about the arrangement. The gun has an effective range of 10,800 yards. Standerton Kop like all the hills about here is quite flat on top and the view from it is very fine over the brown veldt. As we went up we saw General Buller coming down with two of his Staff. It was nearly dark when we got back to camp here.

Staff Surgeon Hughes who was here with the naval 12 pounders told us two weeks ago that the minimum thermometer in his tent one night registered 20 degrees of frost. That will give you an idea of how cold it was then but it is not nearly so bad now. Yesterday and today however have been bad days, cold and cloudy and very windy, the wind blowing so that we have to keep our tents shut up all day and we live in a sort of permanent gloom. At intervals we go out

and walk up and down to warm our feet but otherwise we have spent 48 hours in the tents. At nights it has rained and been stormy a bit. Yesterday just after dark we got in 35 but only 6 for me. We hear that there has been severe fighting at Plastrand yesterday, 40 casualties on our side, but unfortunately they have a field hospital there so none come our way.

I got your note saying you had written to me through Mr Rennie. Poor Mr Rennie, he has no idea where I am but I have no doubt he will forward the letter to Glencoe.

29. vii. 00

In my last letter I meant to tell you about young Mackimmon who was dining with us one night. His history might interest Jim. This youth belongs to Edinburgh and has a brother an officer in Artillery, at present serving in India. He was going to be an engineer and was an apprentice at Ramage and Fergusson's at Leith but a short time of getting up at 6 a.m. and of evening classes in addition was enough for him and after the usual row at home he enlisted in the 5th Lancers and after 6 months at home was sent out to South Africa to join his regiment. With this he served three years and rose to the rank of Corporal when the war broke out. At Elandslaagte he

managed to ride back to pick up a wounded man and brought him out of action on his horse. For this he got the V.C. and his commission. Lately he has been attached to the supply park and there we met him.

We have been bad here with lung sickness among the cattle and the other day we had ours inoculated for it. We had lost two previously. In consequence of this many of the cattle have been replaced by mules which is a much more rapid transport but the mules don't carry so much weight. Each mule wagon has ten mules in place of sixteen oxen in an ox wagon.

Things have been going slowly since I wrote last but there are signs of more activity. We hear for instance that some of Buller's troops have gone on to Heidelberg from Greylingstad and that Roberts is near Middelburg. Then on Saturday last all day we heard fighting going on at Kromdraai - eight miles from here towards Volkerust. This morning about 4 a.m. I was wakened by the Artillery beside us moving their guns and some noises in the S.A.L.H. camp. When I got up they were all off on a reconnoissance. They are expected back tonight. I hope they get some fighting but it is so windy today we can hear nothing at a distance.

1. viii. 00

The reconnaissance in force returned in the evening having captured the Boers' blankets, stores etc., only one man hit and that slightly. In the fighting at Krandrui on Saturday we lost 4 killed and 31 wounded and as usual the Boers were driven back everywhere and well shelled. This morning early the troops here began to move and by breakfast time most had marched. We could see the long black line of men and wagons away over the veldt. They say they are for Vryheid and Utrecht way, to go for the Boers wandering there. When the S.A.L.H. left this morning they sent us all their sick - 18, and only 3 surgical. Amongst the medicals I heard the name of Corporal Storrer called out and I hunted up and found him to be the son of Mr Storrer in Whitehall Street. Mr Storrer wrote to me about him when I was leaving. I think he came out on account of his lungs and was in Johannesburg, I think, when war began. He looks rather thin now and as if he would be better of a rest and plenty to eat which I have no doubt that he will get when he goes down country tomorrow.

Last night Major Buchanan, Captain Jennings and their quartermaster Mr Spekman dined with us thus completing our social entertainments. Buchanan is a north of Ireland man, married, fatter than I am, and very amusing. Of course they

were all away before ten. They told us that in their field hospital (which is much smaller than ours) they dine at 6.30 and turn in at 8! Jennings is also very nice - a teetotaler and doesn't smoke. After being at the post office yesterday afternoon I met him and we had a long ride about and I rode home with him to his hospital and then had a fine trot and canter round Standerton Kop. All the grass from the base away to the north has been burned and in places was still smoking and the lovely veldt I told you about was one huge sheet of black as far as the eye could reach. The outposts seemed much nearer and this probably preceded today's departure of troops and I hear that now we are not allowed on the other side of the Kop at all. Another new order is that all the women in the place are confined to their houses - I suppose to prevent them communicating with the fighting Boers. There are not very many but the confinement must be a bit trying after a while.

Today is very windy again and we are in clouds of dust. That seems to be the way out here, two or three days wind, some showers, and then a few days lovely weather. That is of course at this season for later on the weather gets better until it rains properly towards the end of the year. Now I think that is all my news just now though it feels

like a waste of good material to leave one side nearly blank. I suppose you will get this at Golding so remember me to Alice and Jim Simpson. Love to Khannie,

Every year loving,

Dave.

5th Divisional Field Hospital,
Standerton,
Transvaal,

6. vii. 00

My dearest Dove,

For the first time since I left I have got a table to write on. It was one we commandeered by permission in Standerton and have put in the mess. It will make a difference in the legibility of my writing. I think it was last Wednesday I posted your letter on, and this is Monday. Well after I posted your letter I went down to the station for something and heard that the Devons were coming in from Waterval. I waited to see the train and it was funny. They were all as usual in open trucks and my word they were dirty. Some of them looked like niggers they were so messed with earth. It was laughable. A detachment of Sappers and some East Surrey got out and I was watching them when Col. Goggen, R.A.M.C. came up to me and said he was sending over a badly wounded man to the hospital so I hooked it at once to prepare to receive

I could see the bearers bringing him along and could hear him too for that matter, but took a short cut and got here first. He is such a nice boy, one of Strathcona's Horse and very badly shot in the thigh with an explosive bullet. That kept me busy until after dark. It would make your hair stand up to hear his story but I am not to write horrors in any of my letters. Most of the next day I spent in making a splint for him and got the iron work down at the engine shed at the station. Nearly all the N.G.R. are Scots and I get on well when I go there. I think I told you that I had a Corporal Barr of Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry in. He was shot with a pom-pom in the leg - Bother! I seem fated to write 'shop' today. Well, he is a native of Aberdeen and knows all Deeside well and Sister Dawson's^{*} father, besides some people in Dundee. He is an accountant in Pretoria when not soldiering and is a very nice chap. He is a great friend of young Friedlander's who is also in the T.M.I. Friedlander however out here goes by the name of Freeland. I suppose to hide his origin. Freeland has had a touch of dysentery and has been in hospital down at Mool River but was to return to his regiment last week. Barr says he is such a nice fellow and gets on well and that his pay

* My Father's "Female Ward" Sister in Dundee Royal Infirmary.

in peace is about £50 a month and that where he lives it only costs him £10 a month.

Corporal Storrar of the S.A.L.H. was only here over night but I went down after mess and had a long talk with him. He is a stockbroker in Johannesburg and knows Dr. Mackie Whyte's brother well. Storrar bought mules in Transvaal for us just before War broke out and in consequence was put in prison and condemned to be shot. He appealed to Pretoria and was tried again and the capital sentence was commuted and later he was taken to the border and turned adrift. He made his way to Delagoa Bay and came down to Cape Town in the same boat as Whyte's brother. There, after seeing Forriester-Walker he joined the S.A.L.H. and was through everything after the second Colenso till he was shot near Watervaal three weeks ago.

One night we had three patients taking pot luck with us, Capt. Martin T.M.I., a volunteer sub. called Clark of the Scottish Rifles and Capt. Kitchin of Strathcona's. The latter is a nice fellow and an officer in the Canadian Mounted Police. On Friday night during dinner we heard one of the pickets firing and afterwards we heard Maxim fire and then things quietened down. On Saturday at daylight we were wakened by heavy guns firing and the pom-poms barking and after breakfast found that

nearly all the troops had gone out towards the Orange River Colony Frontier. The firing seemed about 6 miles away and from the top of Standerton Kop we could see it all. It was 8 miles off and we had 3 field guns, 2 pom poms, 3 companies of Infantry and a composite regiment of Irregular Horse. We could see the Infantry advancing with the Cavalry on their flanks and the guns on the left and could see the flashes of the Boer guns replying and the shells bursting. Our men burned three farm houses and then retired, the Boers following them for some miles. It was very interesting and at luncheon and all afternoon we watched the troops returning.

On Sunday - yesterday - I had to go up to Standerton and rode past the nigger church. It was so funny. The girls were all dressed in the most marvellous colours and the men in what they considered neat. It seemed to me that the people walked in at one door and out at the other and all the time one man with a voice like a 4.7 gun kept up a long slow song. I was afraid to stare lest they should think me rude.

To-day has been a most awful day of wind and dust and cooking next to impossible. That kind of day always puts us on short rations, generally one dish and then bread and jam.

5th Divisional Field Hospital
Shanarwan
17. VII. 00

Do you know that the man who leads the ammunition mule in Strathcona's Horse is Lord Edward Seymour. When he does not lead the mule he acts as cook to the detachment. The No 1 of the gun is also an Honourable somebody but I forget his name. What an aristocratic pom pom !

9th August, 1900.

The next day after writing the above was still very stormy and dusty but yesterday and today are fine and warm though every night has been cold enough to freeze the water in our tents. Major Kilpatrick of No 4 General Hospital Newcastle was up here yesterday. His hospital is coming up here soon. It has 500 beds and it is possible its arrival may send us on elsewhere but if it does not interfere with the work I'm getting I shall be pleased enough to stay on here. The day before yesterday I got in three batches of wounded at different times. This is a short letter, but I am not going to begin another sheet.

Love to all.

Your loving,

Dave.

5th Divisional Field Hospital
Standerton

12. vii. 00

My dearest Dove,

The other day I thought we were in for a shelling for in the afternoon there suddenly came an explosion and the whirrrr of a ricocheted shell over our camp. I was in my tent at the time and jumped up to see what it was but I found they were breaking up the girders of the damaged bridge with dynamite and that a piece had come over our way. There are as I told you not many troops here now and all outlying ones have been ordered to draw in a bit so that they can concentrate easily. We knew this and would not have been surprised at some attempt to pot our pickets.

Wednesday I rode in the afternoon through Standerton and across Kruger's burg to the hills where the Boers had their guns in '81. The bridge is sand-begged and has a strong guard on it and from there one climbs up by the road - or what passes for a road on the veldt - to the skyline where the remains of the fort is. There is a fine view from there towards the town but a far better one in the other direction over the veldt. Most has been burned in the distance and is black but for about 4 miles the veldt here is the usual brown yellow. It was a glorious hot day and I cantered to the next ridge where I met a cavalry picket. They were enjoying themselves lying in the sun and smoking

and their horses standing cropping the grass beside them. They must be trained not to go away. I then rode back again calling at the Canteen for some tobacco.

Thursday was rather cold and windy after a cold night and I was not far from the camp that day and went to bed at 9.50! This is really to keep warm for it is very cold sitting in tents at night. I then read until bedtime and then blew out the candles. Well that night I had just blown out the lights when our outpost which is about 100 yards from us was fired at and promptly replied. The firing was pretty brisk and it was lively hearing the whiz of the bullets but by and by it got tiresome and I fell asleep though I was told next morning that we opened on them with a maxime and put a stop to the firing. It says a good deal for how accustomed one gets to rifle fire that a maxime a hundred yards away did not waken me, doesn't it? Since then we have never been disturbed.

Friday I was on duty and so was confined to barracks all day. We had the Rev. Father McCabe an R. C. Chaplain down from Greylingstad (where the Scottish Rifles are) to bury a man and he stayed all night and dined with us. He was a wonderful idiot and amused Forde and me very much he was so dull in the uptake! We pulled his leg properly

and he never saw it.

Yesterday was Saturday. We had a pretty good night but just after dawn the tents began to flap ominously. The sky was clear blue without a cloud which is a bad sign in this place with windy weather and by breakfast time it was blowing a gale. All day we had a regular dust storm and never could see more than 100 paces and when it was bad not 50 paces. It was impossible to wear anything on ones head and as soon as I saw what we were in for I covered my bed with my greatcoat to keep the blankets as free as possible. Before breakfast all our fires were ordered out and were never lit again all day. The tents flapped and broke their ropes and many were blown down. Before the day was half through we were all like coal heavers for we had no washing water. Though our fires were out sparks were blown from somewhere across the veldt - probably one of the other camps - and no less than six times our grass was set on fire. That and holding up one's tent kept us busy. Every now and then above the noise of the flapping tent and the roar of the wind we heard "Fire! Orderlies turn out!" and we all jumped up, seized the empty sacks we had for the purpose and rushed to beat out the fire. By the time we got back with eyes stinging with the dust on's tent would be almost away with it and the ropes had to be

tightened and the pegs driven in further. We were thankful when the wind fell at sundown and we got washed. Meals were dust, bread and tinned tongue. No hot water for tea or anything. The mule harness was burned and twenty five tents destroyed. My tent is like a petticoat with lace all round and the ropes so broken I can't get it shut at night. In contra distinction I suppose, to let us see how nice South Africa can be today has been lovely. After luncheon Forde and I went through Standerton to a sand-bagged block house on the hill beyond and then cantered, trotted or walked over the burned veldt away round Standerton Kop and home. I suppose ten or twelve miles. It was lovely. When on the hill we had a splendid mirage. We saw close to us a great lake with rippling water and islands in it and whenever we got near it all vanished and there was nothing but the black burned veldt. Anyway, it was a jolly ride and I don't think we went out of bounds for we saw no mounted videttes.

I am writing this after dinner so you may guess it is not so cold as we have had it sometimes but it is windy a bit and my toes are beginning to feel it. So good night just now.

13. viii.00

I don't know if I have conveyed any idea of the storm we had. The Rev. McCormack was here at luncheon today and

says that no one in Standerton remembers such a day. One very funny thing I forgot to tell you was that every now and then in the dust we would hear a noise like theatre thunder and suddenly out of the cloud would bound a huge 3 ft. empty biscuit tin or a sheet of corrugated iron. There are hundreds of these tins lying about and nearly all the temporary stores and kitchens are covered with corrugated iron. Our temporary cook house was blown over and the cook escaped by making a dive through the floor as the house turned up.

Now goodbye just now as I am going to post this early.

Love to everybody,

ever your loving

Dave.

5th Divisional Field Hospital,
Standerton,
Transvaal.

16. viii. 00

My dear Dove,

This daily chronicle of my doings I have begun early this time but without very much news to give. This is Thursday. Well yesterday in the forenoon we heard the pom pom barking from the top of the Kop and as soon as I

had finished my dressings Forde and I rode up to see what was going on. It was a lovely bright warm day and as we cantered up to the foot of the hill we met a News Paper man in slippers and trousers riding up too. By the time we got up we just saw the pom pom hook in and trot off but we learned that they were only trying ranges so as to know how far this point and that point were from the hill. However we had a ride over the flat top and saw the 4.7 and the 5 inch guns. The top is a wonderful sight. The West Surrey are encamped there and say it is warmer than lower down. The place is immensely strong and all the place is entrenched and shelters built, shell pits dug for shelter and everything in a splendid state of defence. Barber wire is freely used, like cheveux de frise in the older days - say Crimea time. It was very interesting and the heat gave us a thirst for luncheon. Then in the evening Forde and I went to dine with Dr. Simmons. I think I told you he was a local practitioner here - a Barts' man and a very nice fellow. His wife is a colonial and they have two children. It was funny being in a room with a fire and especially to see a white cloth on the table. I don't think I have seen a man in a white shirt either since I left Cape Town. What a difference he was to our dusty and dirty khaki! Mine has the variety of a few

blood stains which the others lack. We had a nice dinner with a magnificent roast turkey but we did not get enough of it to satisfy us. The only drink was claret. Major Buchanan and Jennings were there too. They were half an hour late, with the most wonderful excuse you ever heard. It was this. The railway here was taken over that day by the military under the name of the Imperial Military Railway and at noon the time was changed from Pretoria time to Cape Town time and all clocks had to be put back half an hour. I fancy such a good excuse only occurs once in a life time!

The postal authorities here surely deserve credit on some things. One of our orderlies the other day got a letter whose only address was

No 7361 R.A.M.C.
Natal.

Fancy that finding the man and this within a decent time.

17. viii. 00

A few days ago I was in Colonel Morgan's office and met Major Winter and Braik (quartermaster) of the 11th Brigade Field Hospital from Paardekop. Winter had a snapshot camera with him and as we came along to the station he had such a rare chance. A barrel of treacle (which they mix with mealies for the cattle) had fallen and burst and the natives were round it like flies dipping their fingers in

and licking them with such grins of enjoyment.

Last night Simpson came up as a forerunner of No 4 General Hospital. He is staying with us till the Hospital arrives. You may remember I met him at St. Vincent. He was going home on board the Majestic and came over to the Umbris to dine. Since then he has returned and has been on duty at Newcastle since. The same night Captain Fecmie of the R.A.M.C. came from the half 10th Bgde. Field Hospital at Plantrend. He is a very nice chap though we saw very little of him. I think that our views about the Boers and their treatment coincided very closely.

19. viii. 00

Yesterday was the first day we dined without great costs. So the spring is evidently coming. This afternoon Forde and I rode over to call on Simmons - after dinner call, you know. It was a jolly day and they were both sitting out on the stoep where we joined them for an hour. Forde took his camera and photographed the baby (10 months) and the little girl (4 years). Simmons was telling us that before the British came here there was a fairly well to do woman who was about 50 and very fat. She had some stock and when the Boers left she prepared to go. Simmons advised her to stay saying the British would do her no harm. She said to him she would not stay "because when the British come in General Buller might come to me and say 'You are a

fine old cow, you come along and cook for me!" And so she went! Imagine General Buller! We got some cake from Mrs Simons. She told us that all that cake - ordinary Sultana cake - comes in hermetically sealed tin boxes from Australia.

The only other practitioner here is Dr. Blood, a brother of the Miss Blood who figured in the Colin Campbell divorce case. He is not a credit to his country or profession and is much given to drink. He and Simons are just as different as they could be, I think. I have not met Blood and don't want to. When we came here he was under arrest on account of his sending information to the Boers about here. It is a pity hanging is out of fashion here just now! After we left Simons we rode towards home and did some shopping. Sunday too! The only shop however in the whole place is the N.F.F. Canteen, two for us and one for civilians. The civilians are charged more than we are. The store is rather limited but fortunately our wants are few. Forde wanted a pair of velatshoen and we had to go to two canteens to get them.

20. viii. 00

Today Forde and Roberts went off to Pinetown. Forde expects to return in two or three weeks as he has only slight eczema but Roberts will probably go home. His

complaint is the usual Quartermaster's one, a little too much beer before he got his commission. He has gone down with every intention of getting home, has developed an invalid's shuffle, a beard of two weeks' growth and a general appearance of bad health. Pinetown Hospital is about half an hour's run from Durban and about 24 hours from here according to the time table, but just now often 48. A train load of sick passed here today from Pretoria en route to Mool River. Brasin Creech who is in command of the train said hospitals were in an awful muddle at Pretoria but we got no details. Babbington who went down sick from us at Ladysmith wrote the other day that he had been sent to Pinetown for duty but there were only about two or three sick to each Medical Officer. They say there are 2000 sick coming through Natal from Pretoria and Johannesburg. I think No 4 General is for some of that lot. Last week I got my servant - Waller - a pass to go to Johannesburg and he brought ^{me} back two shells from the ruins of Begbie's factory, a piece of gold quartz and a paraffin lamp. The latter looks awfully well in the tent and its soft light reminds one of student reading days.

21. viii. 00

Today I have been on duty and it has been a dusty and windy day and that is about all. I spent nearly all day down to Cape Town. All the same we have had quite a busy

making a champrois-leather-lined-khaki watch-pocket and stitching it on my jacket with a flap over it and a break button to fasten the flap. You will laugh I know when you see it but I doubt if anything could possibly get it off except a knife. An interesting day's record, isn't it? and as I have no more news for this letter I will shut it up now though it is a day before the limit.

Love to Khannie and everybody,

ever your loving

Dave.

5th Divisional Field Hospital,
Standerton.

22. viii. 00

My dear Dove,

I don't know if you will get my letter I posted today but if you do it will probably be by Cape Town because we have been cut off all day from the South. Early last night the wire and line was cut somewhere in the South and the Railway people say that the Boers have occupied Danhausen station. That would be unfortunate. As it is it has stopped the mail from getting up and your expected letter has not arrived. No trains have gone down either. The town mails have been sent on to Mlandsfontein and so down to Cape Town. All the same we have had quite a busy

day. Quite unexpectedly we got in a lot of sick from Heidelberg and that direction. Seven were for me and about thirty for the medical side. With them came an Irish gubalturn of the R.A.M.C. called Ormsby. He has amused me with his chat which is interesting gossip of what is doing elsewhere. He is such a boy. I had hoped to get out a ride today but was too busy and besides it was a bit windy. We seemed to be in the direct line of the dust devils for we had several go through camp. They are just like waterspouts, only dust. They vary from an inch or two to 60 feet or more across and from a foot to 200 - 300 feet high. You can see them coming with a swirl of dust on the plain, gradually increasing in volume, height and density and sweeping on till it rushes through the camp, flepping the tents, lifting blankets etc. which may be on the ground, and filling everything with dust.

23. viii. 00

It has been blowing hard all day and very dusty. Major Kilpatrick thinks it is awful and cannot believe we had worse last Saturday, whereas today was calm compared with that storm. We have had no veldt fires and have (not) been able to cook food. I had to put off my dressings till nearly sundown and since then it has been quiet. I heard too that

the railway has been repaired and therefore I expect
your letter tomorrow.

25. viii. 00

Today has been a fine day and the peach blossom is
beginning to come out. The trees have the green tint of
spring and yet last night our water froze in our tents.
I had a letter from Mary which I have already answered.
Most of the day was occupied it seems to me by a funeral
we went to of one of our men who died of pneumonia. The
Essex Regiment supplied the firing party and some of the
men from No 4. General attended. Black and I went and we
had to march right to the other end of Standerton. On
the way back we called in to Dr. Simmons and had a chat
for an hour. He showed us his orchard of plum trees,
apples, pears and nectarines and was bewailing the drought.
He says the spring is late and it will not rain properly
till October. The night before last there was some
picket firing but I slept through it all.

26. viii. 00

I forgot to say about your letter that you must not
repeat that story about Harry Wright demanding the wounded
from Kronjic on Spion Kop. The incident occurred I think
after the second Colenso. I remember the picture. We

got such a lovely rise out of Jennings of the 2nd Brigade P.H. He was tying up some papers to send to the Rev. MacCormick and he went out of his tent to get a bit of string and Leuser slipped a "Pink Un" amongst and he sent the lot with his compliments ! The Rev. Mac Cormick I suppose never saw such a paper before and will not understand it a bit.

Yesterday and today train loads of horses have been going up past here. On the line not far off one has been shunted and left for the night, 9 wagons, that is about 225 horses. We can hear them constantly trampling. Today my mare has been clipped and looks so sleek and cold. It took the groom nearly all day and he has done it well but the rough skin and the dirt would make William's hair turn white. Jennings and Russell came over to get me to go with them to call on the McCormicks this afternoon but I was able to refuse partly because it was Sunday and partly because my mare was not ready but also because Jennings wanted support till he had got over the "Pink Un" incident!

22 . viii. 00

There is some movement going on here again though it may not mean any movement to us. The Derby and Devon Regts. come to replace the E. Surrey and Queens. I enclose

you a programme of a Gymkhana which was to have taken place on Thursday but has been scratched on account of these changes. The T.M.I. come in place of the composite Cavalry which left this morning. It is said that the 5th Division are to go over to Wakkerstroom district. I wonder if we will go with them? Today has been a fine day but cloudy at sunset, lightening since and now threatening to rain. I wonder if we are in for a night's flood.

28. viii. 00

Well all night off and on it thundered and lightened but there was little rain. I was up soon after six and could hardly see to shave then on account of the dark clouds. I went to the station at seven to see some sick off and I think it was heavier rain and better lightning then than it had been all night. The deep veldt has such a lovely smell. I had such a jolly ride this afternoon about 6 miles out and back again a different way. My objective was Bostaff's farm, though I did not go in I wanted to see it. It is a typical South African farm and in that it has a white flag flying from it, it is a typical Transvaal farm too. I saw two women on the stoep and lots of stock. It seems a good farm of its kind. There were cattle, sheep and goats and lots of horses. Mostly they were in the old wealie fields and in one place

they were ploughing with a team of 10 oxen. Further on I came across two "Khoran" a sort of large peafowl. I wished I had had a shot gun. About a mile from Camp I overtook Captain Cleave A.S.C. who pointed out where the Beer Commando is lying, well out of range of the big guns. When I got back I found that General Clercy had come in with the Second Division and the opposite side of Standerton was black with troops. What they are doing here or are going to do I have no idea. Then the last but not the least pleasant surprise when I got back to my tent was to find your letter. It has got up here earlier than usual for it does not generally come till Wednesday. You say that Col. Smith's son is severely wounded. It was reported here that the wound was very slight. I hope this is true. Give the Colonel my sympathy and tell him most of the mauler injuries are of no permanent importance.

Now goodbye just now,

Love to everybody,

Your loving

Dave.

5th Divisional Field Hospital,
Standerton.

30. viii. 00

My dear Dove,

I don't know that I have much to tell you as yet this week for yesterday and today it has rained incessantly both day and night with plenty of thunder and lightning thrown in. The ground has got a proper soaking and the tents were flooded. It has not been disagreeable though because the weather has been milder and the rain not in such torrents as to beat through the canvas, and though everything is thoroughly damp one is not wakened by rain pattering on one's head. The day passes shut in one's tent reading or playing about. The trees are all covered with light green and we hope soon to see the veldt green too. For a while this afternoon it faired and I rode into the town to get some whisky for the mess. What a soak the place was in and the mud was awful. I was very glad I was not walking. In town I met the Manchesters coming in with their transport. They have come from Gen. Bunde and they were a sight. Their clothes were in rags, the ponies were shaggy and mostly saddle galled and the men had bivouacked last night and were very evidently soaked to the skin. I got my whisky and got home before the rain began again. Some of the Manchesters

were very funny. They have come from Vrede. One of the men had a hole in his jacket he could have come out through. Several had breeches made out of old sacks and one had his made out of a worn waterproof sheet. I have got such a nice chap in with sore feet. He is a subaltern and I have clothed and fed him and made him quite happy. He says they have marched about 20 miles every day for 3 months, have not seen a Boer and have had no fighting. Probably this is a slight exaggeration but he needed a rest badly. There have been more troops moving, some up and some down country and loads of horses and food going up.

Sl. viii. 00

I saw Colonel Thorneycroft today who says the war will be officially over next month and surely some of us will get away immediately after that. It would suit me first rate to get home then - but don't say anything about it just now. Also I saw young Friedlander today and had a long chat with him in my tent. He is a very nice fellow and very anxious to get back to Barberton where his mine is. Today cleared up fine and the sun came out and I think I shall be able to look forward to getting into blankets which are not damp. Tell Khannie that when I was bathing this morning I found such a large centipede in my sponge. We have got a lovely new tent for mess with high sides like a room. I'll

sketch it for you to let you see when I get back.

1st ix. 00.

Today has been such a lovely warm day and I had a jolly ride. I left after luncheon, i.e. at two and got back about 5 or soon after. About three miles out I met a convoy from Waterval with guard and scouts. It was very picturesque. You could see the convoy sway on the skyline with the trains of oxen like little black streaks and then extending from this the scouts in open order about 100 yards apart. As I passed one of the scouts I asked how far they had been out and he said "nine miles to meet the convoy". I asked him if there were any Beers and he sang out "Not even if you advertised for them." So I had another good stretch. I think I rode about 18 miles altogether. I had my pistol but though I saw 2 hares, 4 guineafowl (Khoran) and a duck I did not get a shot. This is the first time I have got out here with my revolver because previously there was a chance of being caught and if any arms were found on one under the red cross it might have meant Machadodorp or somewhere.

I am on duty tomorrow but will hope to get out the next day and try some other direction.

2. ix. 00

This has been such a lovely warm quiet Sunday and as I have been on duty I have not been out of the place all day.

5th Divisional Field Hospital
Manderson.

This evening we got a telegram to reduce our 300 bedded hospital immediately to 100 beds. Of course we are all keen as to what this means. Does it mean a move and if so to where or does it simply mean a reduction previous to breaking up the field Hospitals at the end of the war? The men bring all their pets and beasts to me. Yesterday I got a snake and today one of the men brought me his pup which has distemper. Poor little beggar it is very bad like the first Belu was, and I think it is not going to get over it. It is curious that all our 4 dogs in camp have had distemper since we came here.

3rd September 1900.

Last night near Waterval the train was fired on by a number of Boers and the stoker shot so that he died soon after. The Boers blew up a culvert and we have had no trains from the North today. One of our youngsters left for duty elsewhere today and so we are again only three officers. I am not going to start another sheet for I think my next letter will finish my paper.

Ever your loving

Dave.

5th Divisional Field Hospital
Standerton.

4. ix. 00

My dear Dove,

I have been on duty today and fixed in camp. The camp looks so empty now it has been reduced by half and I feel just as if the campaign were nearly over and that the thinned camp was a prelude to our moving. Where we go is the difficulty, we all love here and all hope it will be Durban and so home. We are not yet quite quiet all about here and last night some Boers captured a picket of 6 T.M.J. and when their officer came down to visit the picket he walked into them and was removed too. I notice that the overseers of the native labourers who do the street mending etc. are all armed with revolvers on their belts. Clery's division has now moved from the other side of Standerton over to beside us. We have had no firing here though now for a long time.

5. ix. 00

There has been nothing doing today. We sent off 22 sick down country this morning at 6 and our diminished camp looks even more deserted than ever. Everyone seems to be expectant of orders about going home. The time expired men and Section D first I suppose. It would suit me fine to get home by the end of October in time for the wintercession.

7. ix. 00

This is Nell's birthday - Many happy returns to her. Last night Black and I went to a concert in the temporary Town Hall here. I enclose the programme. It was great fun. I don't know when I laughed so much.

The pianist, Mr Smith, is a telegraph clerk here. He was that too under the Boers but was dismissed by them and after being imprisoned by the British when they entered for 3 weeks he was restored to his duties, being thoroughly sober by that time. He played first rate, and played thoroughly good accompaniments as well. It was rather funny to see him in evening dress with ammunition boots on.

Miss Heald was a girl in white about 14 years old and sang without much of a voice. The T.M.J. man who played the mouth organ was splendid. He played a march first and then as an encore the Hornpipe. He was in khaki, had boots on which had not been brushed since he began, I should think and we could see his stockings through his boots and his feet through his stockings. His heels had gone and his spurs were red with rust. Otherwise his kit was passable.

Mr Job is a resident magistrate's clerk here - a sort of Dan Leno. The two officers of the Queen's who did "baby sisters" were very funny. One was about 6 ft 1 in

and both were moustached. They were dressed in short white dresses with bare arms and short sleeves, pink sashes and baby natches, white stockings and shoes. They sang and danced. It was very funny. I think Miss Louw was under 60 but I don't know. She has by far the best trained voice of the lot and unfortunately sang in English with a vile pronunciation. She is a Transvaaler and they have no songs. Miss C. van Beckstrom was a high coloured, over dressed very Dutch built girl of 16. Far the best looking of the crowd but not much of a singer. I think the only other one was Private Jackson. I think he must be a Music Hall singer at home. His songs were very 'musichally' and I was rather ashamed of laughing so much. He sang four times. I met Lang and Hamilton Grace of the Durham L.I. there who came out with me on the Umbria. They asked me to come and see them on top of Standerton Kop but I could not go today as my mare was being shed. I'll go when off duty the day after tomorrow if they are still there. They may be away for I hear that two companies of the D.L.I. have left for Waterval and the T.M.I. leave tomorrow to try to get a shot at the Beers who shot Capt. Molyneux and some of the T.M.I. at Waterval last night. They broke the railway and all the sidings here were blocked with trains of stores all day.

The carriages at 10.30 were mostly horses. Two were real veldt carriages however and the T.M.I's had a wagon and 10 mules which they rushed down Standerton at a great rate.

Today has been rather windy but good enough.

Freeland came in to say goodbye in case he is kept or buried at Waterval. We have been on rather short rations for the past month and the others grumble at the monotony.

Breakfast - Tinned bacon, bread, jam, tea.

Luncheon - Trek ox, onions, rice, whisky.

Dinner - Trek ox, onions, rice, jam, whisky.

The patients are better off than we. You will see the monotony. There are no potatoes to be had and no hens. No eggs of course, though Black gets them for himself at 4/6 for 11. I have been offered a sucking pig for 8/- but am not at all sure of the cooking. I run the mess and manage the accounts so I am held responsible for all the "Scoff except the take" as Tommy says. Tell Jo that when 'Jam' is 'Keillers Marmalade', which is very seldom, I myself eat a whole pot a day for the promotion of the trade. The varieties of jams we see is awful and the structure of some is curious, but the vacancy has to be filled and I manage better than some of the others.

10. ix. 00

Yesterday I was out a long walk principally in order to sketch a farm house which was held by the Boere against us. It belonged to one Potgeiter and has been considerably knocked about. I gathered a lot of used Boer cartridges as a memento. In one room, or what remains of it, is a painting of the Boer coat of arms and their motto "Eendrecht Maakt Maakt". The place has been destroyed but I think all the furniture had been removed in anticipation of flight for there is not much lying about. After I left this I went through their garden now blossoming in the peach trees and the leaves on the others beginning to come out, but the place mostly over run with weeds. There is a fine cactus hedge down one side and a large dam for water near the house and the usual cemetery about 200 yards from the house. From there I went a good bit down the Vaal River and then walked home. On the way I got a shot at a heron but missed. It is difficult shooting with the mauser pistol at game. I saw several flights of duck and after the sun had set over so many owls. They looked so funny with their horns like little demons perched on stones. I don't know how many dead horses I had to pass after I left the river. One smelt them well away and twice I walked right on to them with their legs sticking out of the ground. It was quite dark before I got home and I got through our pickets without

being challenged.

Today I have been on duty all day but my spare time does not hang heavily I find so much to do. I will be able to give you a very good idea of the view from our camp when I get home. There is no word of our changing ground yet and as I said before things are very slack and there is no news. The railway was broken again the other night and we had a train of 300 horses in the siding near us all night. There must be very many required up country for 300 to 800 go up every day just now in addition to long supply trains of say 12 wagons, each wagon carrying 20 tons of stuff.

You see that I have finished the stock of paper I brought with me and this is some sent out by some society for the sick and wounded and others like myself.

Love to every body, till next week au revoir,

ever your loving

Dave.

* Sir Reginald Ogilvy of Baldoon, near Dundee, Angus.

5th Divisional Field Hospital,
Stenderton.

37.viii. 00

My dear Dove,

I got your letter from Invershin on Tuesday. You all seem to have enjoyed yourselves. I wish I had seen Khannie catch the fish! I think we will do a bicycle ride in the North next summer.

The other day I presided at the sale of the kit of one of our men who had died. The whole realised £1. 17. 6. The men enjoy these sales though you would almost expect that they would be sad about their companion's effects being sold.

One day I saw a native woman beside one of the wounded natives. I noticed she had a peculiar chain on - not like ordinary native work. She could not speak English and I took hold of the chain, when up came a crucifix from under her dress. She nodded her head and said "Ya Beas! Roman Catholic."

On Tuesday I dined with Captain Sevabey (?) of the A.S.C. Lt. Gibb of the A.S.C. was there too and Capt. Bettye, 13th Hussars - the same regiment as Sir Reginald's* oldest son is in. He is at Newcastle but Bettye is here with a troop. We had a nice dinner, especially the venison which was first rate though no potatoes or red currant jelly. I don't think we had

* Sir Reginald Ogilvy of Baldovan, near Dundee, Angus.

any pudding - I forgot, we had roly polly and it was very good. Sevaby was lucky to get flour for we have not seen any for ever so long.

On Wednesday we had the Rev. MacCormick and Dr. Simmons dining with us. I got most of our food up through the station people. Potatoes only 4d a pound were the first seen here for long. I got some mullet for fish, cabbage and some fruit. Some tinned French beans and made the menu.

- Potages - Kidneys (a present from Service Corps Sergeant)
- Poisson - Mullet - washed potatoes
- Entre - Liver and Bacon
- Roti - Minced trek ox - baked potatoes,
cabbage, French beans.
- Pudding - Custard (Birds powder) Tinned pears.
- Fruit - 12 bananas, 12 oranges (tangerines)
3 Pineapples.

Total cost £1. 10. 3 I have underlined all we had to pay for.

Two days I have been out on the hunt again but the horse is very in the road when stalking so yesterday I took Waller with me. Waller who is my servant you know, rides well as he was in the 8 Middlesex Mounted Infantry. He took a rifle with him and we left about 11 o' clock. I had given my mare four days rest and she was fine and fit

for a heavy days work. We took a tin of chicken, some biscuits and had our water bottles filled. We rode out past Patgeiter's farm - the one I sketched for you and right on till we were about 5 miles out. Then I began to get an occasional shot at duck on the river, Waller holding the horses. When we were about 8 miles out we off saddled and knee haltered our horses and let them feed while we had lunch. It was gloriously warm and as we had not watches we guessed time by the sun and saddled up in an hour and went on for another 4 miles. We carefully scrutinised all things with the glasses as we went in case we would drop among Boers but we saw none and were not sniped at. Just before luncheon we rode up to a very small farm because we saw a man on the steep but though there were two men and a woman we could not make them understand us at all. At 12 miles out we came to a fine big house up on a hill on the other side of the river. With little difficulty we forded the river and had a shot at a sort of turkey whose legs I broke but it got away. Then as we thought we saw someone moving on the steep we rode up there. The house is a fine big one with two stories - a most unusual thing here. As we pulled up at the front door a girl of about 15 came out. She looked a lady so I touched my cap and said "Good afternoon" to which she replied in good English. I asked

if she could give me a drink of milk. She said I could have coffee but I said "No, milk!" She then said, "You may come in to the parlour." So I gave Waller the reins and left him to roll cigarettes and I went in. The people were the Eloffe and this girl was the oldest at home. She was very plain looking with spectacles and had been at Bloemfontein at school before the war. Her younger sister aged about 18 was better looking and there was a little one like Khannie. I had my milk brought by their Kaffir women. The eldest girl is called Sunny Eloff. They spoke nicely. Their mother was in at Standerton. Their brother is in prison here. Their father is in Ceylon. Their Uncle was the Eloff whom Baden Powell captured at Mafeking. Sunny showed me a photograph of Mrs Kruger to whom the Eloffe are related. I nearly laughed. She looked like some of the old people from the Incurable. I wasn't there long but will go back as soon as possible and take the girls some jam - of which we have plenty. We came down the South side of the river and had not got far when we saw three buck. We had a good chase for a couple of miles but never got within 300 yards. In one place I passed two big crows at whom I blazed as I passed from horseback much to my mare's astonishment. We hung on to the buck as long as we dared and then set off home. As the sun was going down then we had a hard ride for it and

what with heavy ground and mullshs and having agaln to ford the river it was dark before we got near the outposts and we were stopped and challenged and investigated before we were allowed to go on and then a few hundred yards further we were again held up and then we rode into a barbed wire fence and then got home. How good whisky and soda was at dinner for we had a heavy day. The most glorious part was the gallop after the buck. Nothing could beat that sort of thing. There is no doubt that we are not to be moved from here because the other day we had an order to return all our transport and we have nothing left now but two water carts and a Scotch cart and 8 or 12 mules. All our oxen have gone. We have got no more sick or wounded in and altogether the game seems about over. I hope so. The veldt is all so beautiful and green now especially where the grass has been burned and they say no more rain falls here till the end of October and we all expect to be away from here long before that. We have been here 2½ months. Surely that is long enough in one place. The Hospital Commission passed through here yesterday but did not bother us. Probably they knew how few patients we had. I'll save the other half sheet till next time.

Your loving

Dave.

5th Divisional Field Hospital,
Standerton,

22. ix. 00

My dear Dove,

I think I have three days news to give you so far. On Wednesday I got off early immediately I had done my dressings and had a lovely though lonely ride out to the Kloff's. It was such a fine day and I wasted no time and I did the 12 miles over the veldt in 1½ hours arriving about noon. I rode up this side of the Vaal and forded the river near the house. The little girl who attended to me last time came to the door and invited me in. I tied up my mare and had filled one of my wallets with jam so I took these out and gave them to her in return for the drink of milk she gave me last time. This time the whole family except the men who are all prisoners were at home. Mrs Kloff was there. She spoke only Dutch, was about 50 years old and simply huge, ugly and so fat. There was a second edition of her, I think a sister, Miss Kloff, a nice looking girl of about 22 or so. Two older ones are married. Then twins of 14. Then two little ones. I did not stay half an hour and then went round to the dam to give my horse a drink, off-saddled and knee haltered my mare and let her graze. Then I started to have my biscuits and tinned meat and water when suddenly my mare saw some other horses and started off and I had such a race

to catch her! My word it was hot! After that I fixed her up. I had some lunch then and then a chase after some buck but got nothing. Then a nice ride home getting in before 5 o' clock.

Next day a 13 Mauser was shot about 3 miles out and that has again curtailed our wanderings. Thursday I was on duty. Forde came back well from Pinetown Hospital and brought me half a dozen lovely tomatoes and for the mess a cabbage and a pineapple which we enjoyed immensely.

Friday was a fine day and in the evening Forde, Black and I went to Simmons to dinner to meet General E. O. Hamilton. He used to command the Queens. He was very interesting though slightly deaf and his stories were most enjoyable. He does not smoke, says he never has but his wife "sometimes enjoys a cigarette".

Today I rode up to the Provost Marshal to try to get a Mauser rifle. Then I went round the town and as my mare was rather fresh and playing the fool a bit I gave her a proper gallop about 4 miles round the veldt and back here. I was just in time to miss a severe dust storm and shut myself in my tent till it was over. We have Father McCabe dining with us tonight as he has service here tomorrow. He is rather an ass but we put him up when he is about here.

Most of his life seems to have been spent in Spain and France and he speaks of firearms as "arms of fire" which sounds funny.

Love to Khannie. My enclosed explains the shortness of the letter.

Ever your loving

Dave.

Walter S. Craig

1012 E. 12th St. S. Minneapolis, Minn.

to

his daughter

Walter S. Craig "Khannie"

1012 E. 12th St. S. Minneapolis, Minn.

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Edinburgh, Scotland
21st Dec.
1900

My dear Khannie

Letters from

David M. Greig

M.B.Ch.B., F.R.C.S. Edinburgh, LL.D.

to

to his daughter

Catherine I. Greig "Khannie"

From the South African War, 1900.

Yesterday before we left St. Vincent three great big
whales came into the bay. They rolled over and over and
threw great spouts of water up into the air whenever
they came up to breathe. They came quite near the big
ship and some of the officers ran and got their revolvers
and rifles and shot at them but if they hit them the whales
did not care for they dived right under the ship and came
up on the other side and after a little came back and then
went out of the bay. Today it has been blowing pretty
hard and the ship has been rocking all day. but it has

LETTER I

H.M.S. Umbria,
at Sea.

6. iv. 00

My dear Khannie,

I know you will be wondering when I am going to write to you, and you must get Mother to read this letter to you. How would you like to be here? We get oranges and bananas and dates to breakfast but no nice cream or milk to our porridge and no fresh butter either only salt butter with a lump of ice in it to keep it from melting. We get ice creams every day to luncheon since it began to get hot weather.

Yesterday before we left St. Vincent three great big whales came into the bay. They rolled over and over and threw great spouts of water up into the air whenever they came up to breathe. They came quite near the big ship and some of the officers ran and got their revolvers and rifles and shot at them but if they hit them the whales did not care for they dived right under the ship and came up on the other side and after a little came back and then went out of the bay. Today it has been blowing pretty hard and the ship has been rocking all day, but it has

David H. Craig

been nice and warm. I saw a shark today, what they call a "Thresher" shark, jump out of the water and drop in again with such a flop. There are birds too called stormy petrels or Mother Carey's Chickens that fly along close to the surface of the water, you would almost think they were going to be drowned but the water never touches them.

They are like swallows but bigger and with longer wings.

We have seen such a lot of flying fish today too, hundreds of them. They jump out of the water and spread their wings and fly along about the length of the dining room and then flop into the water with a splash. They are about the size of herrings and all blue and silver in the sunlight and look very pretty. Last night one of them flew into the bedroom window of one of the officers bedrooms. The windows are called portholes in a ship and are round and just about big enough to let you put your head out of. Sometimes when it is stormy the water splashes into the room through the window and then it has to be shut with thick glass which is screwed on tight so that the water can't get in.

I think that is all the news I have to tell you just now but I will write again when I get to the Cape.

With lots of love and kisses from

your loving Father,

David M. Greig.

LETTER II

5th Divisional Field Hospital
near Ladysmith.

14th May, 1900.

My dear Khannie,

I hope you got my last letter to you all right.

Here I live in a tent as Mother will have told you away out in the country. Not a country like Bervie but a bare stoney country with no big trees and hardly any little ones. There is no green grass for the hot sun has burned it all up and it is short and brown wherever we can see. The natives are all black and the little children wear no clothes and the big ones hardly any. The places where the natives live are called kraals and look like bee hives with low doors that one can't get into without going on one's hands and knees. The houses are built of mud and straw and have no windows or chimneys or fires in them (Picture in pencil) This is a Kraal. How would you like to live in a house like this? Mother would tell you about the ox wagons we have. Sixteen oxen to drag one wagon. The oxen are very tame and when it begins to get night the natives call them and bring them to where the wagons stand and they all line up in a long line in their proper order and each is tied to the long chain that they drag the

wagon by. Each ox has its name and knows where to go and when they are all in harness the native cries "Umbagi weria" which is Zulu for 'go on' and on they go but always very slowly. All night the oxen are tied up but in the day time they wander about but never loose themselves or go far away. At night and in the morning the natives take them down to the river to drink. The river is so low now that there is hardly any water left only muddy pools in which frogs live. We can hear them croaking at night. On the rocks here too live lots of pretty lizards and some nasty snakes. We have lots of scorpions too with nippers like this (pencil drawing) and they have stings in their tails. They live in holes in the ground and we can get them out by pushing a bit of straw into the hole and the scorpion catches hold and we pull him out. There are big spiders called Tarantulas too who can fight the scorpions and kill them and there are lots of big centipedes. The other day I was riding along the veldt and a little deer not much bigger than Baloo* (our Scotch terrier) jumped up and ran away. There are not many flowers here just now because this is the winter time, for it is winter here when it is summer at home but up on the hills are some flowers and ferns but not such nice ones as we have at home. On the top of the hills the grass

is long, so long that it is higher than the top of my helmet. The soldiers burn the grass so that they can see if any Boers are there and at night it is like an illumination. In the camp we have a puppy dog, a sort of spaniel called "Jock", and a little black and white kitten and a tame chicken. We have lots of hens for food for the sick soldiers and they often come into my tent and waken me in the morning.

Now good bye just now with lots of love and kisses from

your affectionate

Father.

Behind where the horses stand all the oxen and their wagons are kept and the black men who look after the cattle sleep under the wagons. The mules are tied up beside the horses. I have put in one mule in the picture. We have just now seven horses, eight mules, eighty oxen, eighty cows with some calves and a lot of hens. For the hens we

5th Divisional Field Hospital,
Standerfontein,
Transvaal.

14th August, 1900.

My dear Khannie,

Thank you very much for your letter. Because I am big you write to me in big print, so because you are little I write to you in little print. I wonder if you will be able to read any of the words. I do not think I will be able to bring "Khannie" (his mare) home with me because it is so far and horses do not like the tossing about on the sea. This is a very nice horse but its hair is getting very long and it will have to be cut as soon as the nights are warmer, but just now I have to bury my head in the blankets and under a waterproof sheet it is so cold. The horses have no stables here to keep themselves warm in. They are tied on to a rope fixed on the ground and have a collar round their necks like this:- (pencil drawing)

Behind where the horses stand all the oxen and their wagons are kept and the black men who look after the cattle sleep under the wagons. The mules are tied up beside the horses. I have put in one mule in the picture. We have just now seven horses, eight mules, eighty oxen, eighteen cows with some calves and a lot of hens. For the hens we

have made a hen house but I think it must be too cold for them to lay eggs. On Sunday I caught a lizard for you and a centipede and have put them in a bottle to bring home when the war is over which I hope will be soon now. The same day I saw a serpent too but some of the natives killed it before I got to them, and they cut it in two.

Mother would tell you about the storm we had on Saturday. Well I have now got a new tent but it is a much thinner one than the one I had to live in before and so much colder at night and warmer in the day. I have also made a drawing of the view of the camp from my tent door and will bring it home too when I come so that you will see what like a place this is.

The other day I saw some soldiers coming home after being out fighting and one of them had a live hen tied on to his saddle. Another had a dead hen which he had plucked the feathers off while he was riding home.

I have only seen one little girl here and she could only speak Dutch and could not understand what I said. The officer I was riding with that day bought some eggs from her Mother. Her Mother could not speak English either but her Father could. His name was Mr Young.

Today I got a soldier in to my tents in the Hospital. He is a Canadian and belongs to a regiment called Strathcona's Horse. The Boers had shot him in the arm and he had fallen off his horse and they caught him and made him a prisoner, and then after a lot of days our soldiers fought the Boers again and made them prisoners and set this Canadian free and he was sent in here for me to make his arm better.

When our men were changing the tents for the sick soldiers after the storm, they unfastened all the ropes first and then lifted the whole tent off without moving the sick and then put the new tent on over them again. It was funny to see the sick lying out on the grass in their beds without any house or tent over them. The tents are fastened down with strings like this one in this picture. (pencil drawing of a bell tent). You can see the door at the side.

Now, my dear, this has been a long letter because yours was a nice long one to me and I hope you will write to me soon again. You will give the letter enclosed in this one to Mother, it is for her, and you must get her to read this one for you. Do you think the printing is neat?

with love and kisses to you and please give Mother one from me too,

ever your loving Father
David M. Greig.

(Picture of an ambulance drawn by oxen, and an R.A.M.C. orderly)

