

Glen Siding
Bloemfontein.

S. A.

Jan 5th 1900

Dearest Mother,

I don't have much to talk about this week. I pulled even out of bed & we two saw the new Century in with great solemnity & Scotch whiskey. We all had the jumps that night as the Boers were on the move in the vicinity & there had been heavy firing in the distance in the morning. On New Year's day Ewen & I partook of a slap-up lunch with Quin, our chief neighbour who is a great friend of all the officers. He is a bit of a Scotman & a bit of an Irishman & is a very good sort & a J.P. for the country. He has a immense farm, quite the prettiest in the O.R.C., & it is above with buck & ostriches. It was on his farm - though

curiously enough I have only just discovered it, & that quite by accident - that young James Plunkett lived & died. He is buried there now. My birthday passed off without much excitement. A nice little lunch-party which I had arranged with Quin here was very nearly upset by my being invited for to go up at once to Karsse to condemn stores with Ewen. Some rode up as fast as possible & dined for an hour in very 'nippy' meat & cheese & bread. Condensed the lot & came back just in time for lunch. I think if Quin had known that I had just been condemning all his bread that he baked by contract & recommending a change of contractors he would not have brought me the handsome present that he did, consisting of a fine basket of apricots, figs, peaches, all grown out of doors. Just think of that & say that you don't feel jealous, especially at this time of year & yesterday I had to go to Karsse again to sit on another board to enquire into

deficiencies in stores amounting to
tens of thousands of pounds. After
going through vast arrays of figures &
accounts from April last, the only
conclusion one could arrive at was that
the A.S.C. is wonderful in all its ways
& works, & certainly wasteful. Ever since
last April there has been an enormous
deposit of stores there, enough to last the
whole garrison there for years. It has
passed through the hands of several A.S.C.
men, each of whom have handed over the
deposit & the accounts thereof in a less
complete state than his predecessor, with
the result that when a wretched corporal
is left in charge, he gets run in for it.
Of course it was quite simple to see that
he was not to blame. Meanwhile all these
stores owing to exposure from weather
have been wasted to a vast extent. Tons
of sugar & cocoa have simply melted away.

Poor troopers! Everyone is furious
at the new proclamation offering the bch
to the men in arms: all agree that it does
not spell, K. K. K. but some notions at
home: it does seem a very thing to do.
As it is there seems very little doing, & that
homeward move does not seem any nearer.
A rather nice idea has come out that
Volunteers who have done a year's
service in S. Africa may claim to home!
I am counting the days to Feb 20th when
the back-shooting commences.
My best love to you all,

Yr affectionate son,

F. L. Simonds

Sunday 6th Yr mail just in & many
thanks for your nice long letter, also Father's.

H M. Transport Assaye

May 11th / 10

Dearest Mother,

Just a line to say that I
am fine & this will be taken on board the
pilot boat from Isle of Light. We are now
off Dungeness. I have been awfully busy
all the afternoon. I have seen the young
Mauiote who is on board both the Suffer
I'm not comfortable but the boat jolts
just enough to make writing rather
difficult. So glad to have seen Charles
& the Duke just before leaving. We stop
at St Vincent's not Las Palmas. We
are timed to arrive Cape Town May 30th
8 a.m. Best love to all.

Yr affectionate son
F. H. Semmonds

May 14th Inoculation successfully over comes I am
all right now except for a stiff side & lay in bed
all yesterday although as I was not really feeling
very bad - I hope you will excuse this pencil
scrawl but I am writing this ^{on} deck as it is
absolutely stifling in the cabin. We are
just entering the tropics. I have written
a joint letter to James & Charles. It's a lovely
idea of yours sending letters for me to open every
day they are most welcome I can assure you
It will be most interesting to get all the news at
St Vincent tomorrow. I have not got a letter
from "Effie" yet! Louise's is to be opened
today & will I am sure be most interesting
We had a grand view of Teneriffe yesterday
Its top was covered with snow about
the clouds. Madeira was unfortunately covered
with clouds so I could see nothing of it. Probably
it heard another of the Simonds tribe was coming
near as it went into mourning. I have seen the
proper monstrosities such as porpoises & a whale
spouting. I hope Grandpa is well again & enjoyed his
fishing.

There is a small parrot named Simon or was, a brother in
law of Nelson's who knows the Colons. Well best love
to all, & a cat's paw for you & yours.

H. M. Transport "Arsoye"
Off Porto Santo
May 15th 1900

Dearest Mother,
Everything is going along in
great style & I am having a most enjoyable
voyage. I hope you got my note from off the
Isle of Wight. I am writing this now as I am
to be inoculated tonight & may be unfit to
write anything on Friday when the letters
leave St Vincent. We do not stop at Las Palmas.
I have been ~~regularly~~ free from all 'mal de
mer', in fact have never felt better in my life
& of course the sea air gives me a roaring appetite
which is not very good for me as one only gets a
limited amount of exercise. Today we are
just approaching the Canaries & the weather is
glorious & the sea as calm as the Thames
though the boat still rolls a bit but I
rather enjoy it than otherwise. Not many
officers have been really sick but a good many

have been a little unhappy. A good many
of the men have been ill but that is not
surprising, ~~the~~ considering the condition of
the troop decks: it is awfully stuffy there,
my men have most of them been ill in town.
They are really better off than on lots of
other transports & ~~are~~ ^{are} feel very well. H.S.
Marratt is on board in command of
a Suffolk draft, also a Captain Rhodes
of the M^x who knows the family. We have
really been quite busy every day with
parades & odd jobs. Boxing competitions
have been started & other sports to keep
them men going. There are 1300 men &
about 100 officers on board; you should see
the variety of uniforms hardly 2 alike
& there is practically not one regiment
unrepresented among us. There is also a
Lieut Simonds (i long) on board of the
2nd North Fusiliers: of course he is an awfully
nice fellow: he knows of our great clan

even in Newcastle but disclaims all relation-
ship though his grandparents were in ~~the~~
We shall be able to see Madeira in an hour
now or there ~~a~~ of course I will remember
as per orders to think of Uncle Fred
& his giddy going in there when I pass
by. A whole crowd of most wretched little native
boats hovered all sorts of colours came out
to see if we would stop & buy things but
of course they kept far away owing to
the wash & we could only see them through
the glasses, by the way Capt Grandha's
glasses are really excellent I could tell the
colours of the men in the boats about a
mile off with them & can read a ship's name
at quite a mile with them. One foot of an
officer has just got scarlet fever so we shall
not be able to land at St Vincent as arranged:
his little trip has been brought to a most
ignominious end as he will have to come
back ^{by} with the first boat from Cape Town.

happy but like myself will ~~be~~ not be a bit
sorry to land as this sort of sedentary ^{life} gets
a bit monotonous & is not good for the health.

By some judicious gambling the other day
I got the crepe sole on the ship's run of
£6.00 & am now gambling it all away again.

I had luck back today in being only one knot
out & so missing £3.50. I have got to know
Marriott rather well: he is an awfully nice
fellow. One of my men has just got into the
final of the boxing competition which is a
very good thing to accomplish. One of the Irish
sentries quite excelled himself & his country's wit by
summarily his officer who asked him what
he had to do in case of fire, by Henry quietly
to the bridge & wake of the officer there.

The ship's officers don't think much of the V. ^{but}
now! The packet of ~~letters~~ letters still affords
great delight: I have got such a varied collection
from 37 Avonmore P's! I opened Charles's today
& most sweet were the contents. Please acquaint

I
Dear Mother

H.M. Transport Assys
Somewhere across the line

May 23 1900

I am just starting a letter to you which
will be posted when I get to Cape Town or wherever we
have to disembark. Everything has gone on swimmingly
I hope you got my letter from St Vincent all right.
We spent about 24 hours there, but were not allowed
to land owing to the case of scarlet fever on board.
It is a dingy looking sort of place, the harbour
being surrounded with great high sandstone rocks.
The heat was awful there all of course there was no
 breeze when we anchored & when the coal was
going on we all nearly perished as all the port
holes had to be closed to keep out the coal dust
& on deck we were simply smothered. There were
a heap of other boats in harbour including the
cruiser Juno which is stationed there & the West Indian
mail boat Clyde. The ship took on a large supply
of bananas & sweet hines there & they have been
most refreshing. While there the reported relief of
Mafeking was signalled to us also the capture of
Bethan. It came quite early in the morning

of the 19th so there was no excitement to speak of.
Of course we all hope for time but we should not
be surprised if it were exaggerated as they get
all sorts of wild rumors there: this boat once
came via Lisbon. I had the best bit of sea on
that I have seen so far on the night of our
leaving, some of the waves splashing over the
promenade deck: a few fellows at once collapsed
temporarily but in the morning it was quite
calm again: it has been as smooth as a mill-
-pond ever since & there has been a nice breeze
against us to keep things fairly cool. Of course it
is still very hot & a black serge suit does not
make one cooler: no waft is allowed. The
neties at S^t Vincent were a run looking lot, a
little bit of all colours: they came out in boats &
dined after luncheon & wonderfully good they were too
some of them dining right from one end side
of the ship to the other: the chief people on the
island are the Portuguese & if they are all like the
portentous fierce looking specimen called the
Hector officer I don't think much of them or the

Portuguese. We crossed the line about 4 o'clock
this morning: I happened to be the officer of the
watch from 12-4 but I didn't notice the ship
lump or do anything queer. I can't say that
being on the watch from 12-4 is much fun
as one has to go all round the troop decks
hourly & the atmosphere is awful, besides one
has to pick ones way with great care among the
crowds of men sleeping on the decks or one might
fall ~~on some~~ ^{on someone} & do some damage. I had to be up
by 6:30 for the officers' physical drill as I did
not get to bed at all but had a snooze in the
smoking room instead: it is just as well to
get as much practice at this all night
game as one will soon have plenty of it: we
crossed the ann's ecliptic on Sunday & it is
now very queer always having the sun always
to the North of one: we can see the Southern
is clearly every night. I have seen the fisher
monstrousities such as whales sporting, porpoise
& flying fish. The men are always quite

I suppose you will see me back a bit sooner than was expected as I am afraid they will send the Volunteers back as soon as they can. However I mean to have a good look about me first, so I am going on shore tonight to see the Theatre of course! What do you think the price is? The Passport! It will be fun seeing it done again, though by an inferior company. Well give my best love to one & all, & thank the numerous letter senders.

I opened a very nice one from Uncle Fred today. I am already contemplating a trip to New York after the war as the best thing has chosen to take this turn. My very best

love to yourself & I hope you are now enjoying Louise's company to whom also V. N. love.

To the brethren salutation & embraces. To SE

James & Charles the Twin Kisses,

From your affectionate son,

F. A. Simonds.

May 31st. Cape Town Harbour. Table Bay. We arrived here early this morning & anchored in the roads. We have received orders that we are not to disembark till tomorrow (June 1st & James's birthday, wish him many happy returns of the day & hope to be with him next year to celebrate the feast.) We all expected to land today so we are a bit sick at having to stay on board all day as the valises are all packed & beds stowed. Table Bay has a table cloth on at present so is not very imposing. It was very grand coming into the harbour about 4.30 with the sun rising just behind the town. The lights were still to be seen when I got up but the sun purged up quickly here & it was quite bright when we anchored. I shall try & get some photos of the place when I can. Hans has come and Robert is just getting to Johannesburg so it seems that we shall get up to the front till he is before Pretoria. The ship is surrounded with flocks of gulls of all sorts, some very curious beasts like small penguins being among them. They seem to have no legs & no wings, only small

flappers, they stop for ever so many minutes
under water. We passed the outgoing mail
last night so this will not leave till Thursday.
I will not close the letter till then & add some
more when I hear a ~~report~~ know exactly what
my orders are. I have written a letter like this one
to Father to Grandt. so I suppose he is there by
the best time the letter gets there. Cape Town from
board ship looks quite ordinary, the West of London
quarters looking just like an English suburb.

The Colonel has just been ashore & says
I may have to go on to East London
which would be the abomination of
desolation. The Berks are attached to the
1st 2^d Division under General Chomond
& in the 22^d Brigade under Gen. Allen.
The Cunard boat Bavarian has just
come in from St Helena where it has
planted a few Boer prisoners. You
ought let me know if I am likely
to see any Pongles or Brownjanters if

I have to go to Johannesburg. If you see
any chance of the war lasting much
longer you might send me a few odds & ends
such as a shirt, a vest, a pair of drawers, & a dobbie.
The Tantalion started on the Saturday after
us & reached us a Tuesday morning, 2 days
before us. I hope to receive letters from
you all & should very much like to get a
line from Charles B. with all the
Oxford news. Just heard that the Prince
has won the Derby & am very glad.

1st June at Anathemia Maranatha. We have
just heard that about half of us are to go
on to East London, also that Paetoria has
been captured. It is really most sickening
if those Boers not to have kept the pot
boiling a bit longer. All on board are
nearly mad with disappointment as we
shall probably never get beyond our
camps now. I shall probably not get to the
West East London till the 6th.

to be a credit to the great establishment
in Castle Hill, as he so nicely puts it.
We are now out of the Tropics & the
weather is rather cold if anything; the sea
is still like a mill pond. I suppose I left
behind my pyjamas but that does not
matter much. I expect Father will be
just starting for Norway - or gone when
this letter gets to you, & of course Grandpa
will have gone some time. I suppose you will
go to the Winchester match & support
the wrong colour! Like those young rascals
my hydro-mechanical brethren, that there
will still be at a kick in the old one
though I have left the place, so I break
Etana! also at Lords! I suppose you will
not go there without me. So much for today;
will send this from Cape Town.

11
I think a James of my arrival & get home, but
of course you will have seen in the papers
of my arrival. We are going to have a full-
dress parade tomorrow in honour of the Queen's
Birthday, that is to say we shall put on coats
& proper boots, & things usually discarded on
parade. In fact I am thinking of putting on
a white collar myself for the occasion but it
will melt & I feel sure of a row. Today was
the Captain's birthday - it was the occasion of
merry mirth at dinner (I am now writing at
9.30 p.m.). He is an awfully good sort & I
have great fun with him as I sit next to him
at meals. I am going to honour the Queen
tomorrow by breaking my solemn covenant
not to touch any liquor on board & drinking
some fizz. I hope my photos have been
distributed decently & in order. There is
no more to say just at present so I shall
stop for the present & push next week some
approach Cape Town: we are due there Wednesday

night of on Thursday morning, well I
will wish you all 'good night' &

'to be continued in our next'

as the magazine hath it.

May 27th On last Sunday on board we had
a church parade forth ranked on one of the
troop-decks, & sang hymns lustily. There has
been a strong head wind blowing for the
last 4 days & we have going much slower.
we shall not get in till Thursday night
I expect. We passed a homebound troopship
this morning & she signalled 'mapping'
relieved so now we are sure about it. The
Queen's birthday did not cause much
excitement. we had an 'all-khaki' parade
in the morning & sang the National
Anthem, the effect of which was weird as
they all started singing at different
times all over the ship. My men were all
on guard last week & will be to the end
of the voyage. I think they have had about

enough of the journey, & they are fed as well
& get so little exercise that they are a
bit 'livery' & will be all the better for a
week or two's hard work. My man in the
boxing got beaten after a close fight & I
certainly thought he had won. The officers
sports take place tomorrow: I have entered
for the egg & spoon race & potato race;
of course I shall win them though I have
not the least idea what they consist of,
only that it does not consist in eating them
in which case my chance would be second
to none. I have just opened the K-d's duck
& it was a most wonderful production, not all
his own I feel sure. Please thank all the others
who have written most charming letters
though hardly one has not contained
some morbid allusion to fishes - & tell
Mr Fletcher that I will do my best to
carry out his orders, even to the extent
of 2 or 3 extra in case of their not meeting
with approval. Tell him also that I hope

camp next to the Bear business & the office.
at present situated there have gone up to
the front. I am awfully afraid I may
have to do the same at East London which
would be fairly interesting as it is the dirtiest
& dirtiest place on the face of the earth.
Today being the Fourth of June I have
written a letter to Bowdler to tell him how
I am getting on. My best friend on board is
a certain Keasey from Hertfordshire;
a Harlequin boy about my age. Curiously
enough he knows Iotland very well having
stayed there many years in succession.
I wonder if Charles knows him
well, best love to all & will write near
time I hope from the Veldt. Hope you
can read this dock around. My best love to
yourself & Father, Yrs affectionately

F A Sommonds

H. M. T. average

June 4th 1880

Dearest Mother,

I am now ~~at~~ entering on the
last leg & tomorrow morning will be in East London.
We have just left Port Elizabeth where we stopped
to disembark a few things I managed to get ashore
at Cape Town for the last part of a day & most
enjoyable it was to feel one's legs again & daylight
& part of all due to Dennis Gates & Co. & I parted
my baggage. They were most obliging & promised to
do anything I liked for me. I had a long talk with
Mr Dennis on the subject of beer in S Africa & he
inadvertently thought I was a member of the firm as
my range of knowledge was so extensive. Great-
-ly we managed not to send any more beer as
yet & while owing to the great competition of a Mr
Olderson I then made a few purchases, including
the photos which I hope you have received; & nothing
of course was at a most absurd price. I also got
a cheque cashed. After dinner I walked with

with with another man I went to the theatre
to see the Pasport: the theatre itself is a very
quiet place but the acting was marvellously
bad! perfectly atrocious! Most of the officers
on board went to see it & were all horribly bored.
I had great fun in the evening: my friend
I sat into a rock chair ~~occupied~~ by an awfully
dirty looking nigger, - like I think he was,
& went back to the ship in great state. It is
really in an awfully jolly way of being carried about
as they go at a dog but the whole time & never
seem to know that I thought my wardrobe
would settle how my friend is about my weight.
Cape Town itself I found very nice of a
hole though of course I did ^{not} see very much
of it but there are one or two very jolly places
in it. It is half jolly English, the only things
that strike me as different being the large
number of niggers & mules. The houses etc
are very queer looking contrivances which look
as they must fall to pieces on any bit of

bad road. They are all named "Grade on the
called 'Ladas'! There are some however built
up to London style. The streets are very high
& all filled with English wares. The day
we arrived the news of the capture of Pretoria
came down & though the report was finally
believed yet there was no excitement in the
streets & only a few flags here & there. Of course
we are still in the dark as to whether the report
is true. One cannot help seeing on all three
that the Dutch element must have great influence
at the Cape. The National Anthem was sung
in the theatre just as though nothing out of
the way had happened. I hope you got my
wire all right. All the men are well & happy
especially as the journey is just about over.
One of them had to cut his teeth on prison
for a day for abusing a sergeant otherwise
all has gone swimmingly. Nearly all the
fellows who disembarked at Cape Town have
been stuck down there at the base in the

C. S. R. near St. Peter's room.

June 5th / 00

Orange is placed within a few yards of
the old one & so gave us a fine view
of the old remains. Several chimneys have
been nearly crumpled off in the centre
& the ends dropped into the river. The
Orange was nearly dried up. We had
in time to visit it Spring fountain
where I met a fellow called Henderson
late of Tucks, a fellow of vast intellect
somewhat smaller. He is unable to
be stuck there 2 months. We were
killed into a beachy duty train but it
has been speaking on its way to Blom-
fontaine at a fine pace of about
40 miles an hour. Of course I have
been all this time travelling on the great
veldt. It is very dull to look at & the
same in appearance the whole way. The
the herbage & shrubs are strange to
me, & I have seen a lot of queer looking
birds, including an ostrich. There are some
English birds to be seen.

Dearest Mother,

We have landed at last & are
fairly on our way up country! I must say
I am jolly glad to feel my legs again.
(June) Was interrupted in this yesterday.
We are now just beyond Spring fountain
& hope to be at Blomfontaine in 5 days.
I have just heard of some fine things
beyond Blomfontaine as if the Berkes are to
be sent up & may not catch them up,
& with any luck have a lot of a catch.
We left East London at 6 p.m. on the
5th of June. The station is the
Royal Cape (or North) Station & the
Berkes) I was so & they were
by a dozen of the Berkes regulars who
were trying to get some medical
from the hospital. Had them before
the medical & said they were not
specially sent for or with me.

I hope you will excuse an awful
error but the train is becoming freight,
we had drunk a last one & would not
stand for work in town when it

Perhaps I suppose were ordered to do then
go to a rest camp. We had a very
comfortable train of 3 Officers to a first
class carriage so needless to say I
slept as well as usual. We had our first
experience of being in a day-train

with a stop in the middle of course to
be returned. This day 4 weeks I left Reading
and was just a year yesterday that
Lord Roberts inspected me at Etos.

This is somewhat of a diversion from
my state. On to today through
Culworth & then a ^{station} at ~~Wentworth~~
train we stopped for a hour & I had
walk round the place. It did not seem
a bad sort of hole but a bit dull to stay
more than a day or so. The North-
Frontier

^{at Kaffer}
have just been ordered to be hurried out
of the train to get out again to the
front. I think much to believe
I am very nearly finished starts when
the train has done as it is possible
with a night's rest is travelling fast
we have just avoided a collision by a
few feet with another train coming in the
opposite direction, the line being only single
a bit trying in the narrow gauge.

We had dinner last night in the
waiting room which is the mess room
of the officers' quarters there.
I again had a fine sleep on the train
but we had to get out at ^{Erskine} ~~Burg~~
for orders. It was dark unfortunately
when we went up the Stomberg but it was
a fine climb, we had to have an engine
on behind to push us up. We went by Etos
this morning when the London train left
us. The new tanks on bridge there were the

I have been busy making preparations
in case of attacks by any of raiding parties
but I am afraid there is no chance of seeing
any fighting. We are having plenty of
duty work building canoes for a howitzer
battery. There are some 4.7 naval guns as
of course we are safe when the Navy is about.
Have seen lots of butterflies & will bring you
some if I can: Clouded yellows & painted
ladies are the only English ones. Harry de
Brett & his fiancée are here now, he in
charge of the howitzers & she in the hospital
looking after the sick; I like her very much.
Rather curious isn't it, finding them
here? He was very pleased to get your
letter re-termining with the budding wit of
youth. My respects to Doctor. I suppose
this will reach you about birthday time; if
so get a present from me & I will pay
for it. Keep well & prosper,

Your affectionate brother,

F. G. Simonds

June 9th /00.

The Lion's Nest

Near Bloomingfontains
(So Sam told)

My dear kid,

As I promised

In S. Africa,

In the Orange River Valley

where they fight

to write to you, I am now
trying to perform the same.

Well a bit of a tale indeed I have to unfold to
you! I had a most perilous journey by sea.
On twenty-eleventh day after I set out from
the happy coast of Ireland or Scotland, (I
forget now where I come from) I was awakened
from my sweet dreams by the meowing of the
ship's cat (you know, the one you sent your
love to) whom I found being slowly gobbled
up by a sea-serpent of monstrous size (green
pink & blue in colour & a squared-circle shape)
Anyhow I blew off the tip of its tail with my
pistol & put my head in its mouth till I choked
it. I then threw it overboard except for a steak
in the region of right flapper, one of which
I ate & the other I am keeping for you.

after passing through many other dangers from myriads of flying-fish which hoot like dogs & whales & porpoises (who sing like donkeys) & sharks (what eat men) I arrived on the shore of Africa. There my troubles began. Behind the first rock I saw 18 Boers who were holding a large rat at the end of a long string which they let loose upon my poor unfortunate army. After 9 of the 20 had been nipped in the left ear the rat was finally killed by eating a thirst-quasher which one of the men gave it; I then advanced boldly from the cave into which I had run for safety & shouting 'Now my hats for for Oriatreh!' doubled off to the right. Not so, however, said a young Boer who had escaped my ~~single~~ eagle eye & forthwith discharged his rifle which was loaded with chestnuts which we neatly caught & ate in our mouths & took my hat off the young Boer. During the first night

I was shaken up by the terrific noise of screeching bones! I looked carefully round & saw a huge mammal with the remains of 11 men in its mouth or hands, I of course took up a fine position behind a rock & poured volley after volley of stones into the right eye till he was blind ~~eye~~ in that eye & then scuttling round the left side I tied him by the tail to a tree by means of a honeysuckle bough. Well I will resume this nonsense at another date, suffice it to say that I am now in a lion's den writing upon him & feeding him with young jackals & hedgehogs, & am in a pitiful state: how I got there will be told 'in our next'.

Best love, yr affectionate brother

F A Simonds

June 15th. Forgotten all that I was going to say: in fact I was dreaming; the fact is I am living in a camp near Bloemfontein

June 9th Blomfontein Camp.

Here I am at last with the Regiment!
I got to the station at 9.30 on the night
of the 9th as the camp is some 4 miles away
across the veldt & it was dark we had to
pitch our tents on a kind of old rubbish
heap adjoining the station. As soon by the
time we had unloaded the baggage I got that it
felt as if we were for too long to think
of what we were sleeping on. The night
was very cold & there was a white frost
in the morning but I managed to keep
quite warm & snug in every respect. In
the aft. morning we started off with
the Regiment which is encamped about 4
miles N.W. of Blomfontein in a very
nice position. We all found every
mile a sack with facks on our backs
across the veldt under a hot sun & in
means a picnic after a months hollid-
ness. The whole Regiment is

This afternoon for Officers & NCO's
& men which will be pretty busy
work under a hot sun & in uniform.
The mail just off. I must scribble a
line to James so very best love to all
Yr affectionate son,
F. A. Simonds

Am sending a prayer from over the sea

encamped here except the number
definitely is likely to remain so as
it is the only whole regiment left
about & we have to practically
guard the town. About 1/2 of the
regiment is used up only in forming
my guards for the whole town for
weeks round. I have seen Jack &
had a long talk with him. He
is in great pain. I left last night
with them & think we may not
get any more pitched. There seems to be
absolutely no chance of getting any
chance of fighting, only dull routine
of camp work all day long. I am
expecting the English mail today &
doubtless will receive a letter from
home. I suppose you are sending
these epistles of mine round the family
so it is no use my writing to each
individually. I am playing football

Blossfontein Camp

June 15th / 00

about half of which has to be pulled up
with crowbars. A regular company finished
it yesterday & now we are told that it was
put in the wrong place & we are starting
again this afternoon in the new position.

Such are life & the R. G. officers! We have
all had our positions in the surrounding
kopjes assigned to us in case of attack &
all the outposts have been doubled: the North
Fencibles & Irish Rifles have just come up from
De laats Dorp so we shall presumably give
any enemy a bad time if they like to try any
games but I believe myself that there is
no chance of a scrap as they must know
that we are prepared. We have now got
our band up here & life is brightened
with the merry strains of Sam Tey & the
Rumoury Girl. We are going to have a band
of promenade concert in the town tomorrow
with the band, a great treat for the towns-
-people I expect & for everybody else except
your humble servant who is orderly officer of the day.

Dearest Mother,

Here we are still & here we are
likely to be till ordered home. Yesterday was
a day of most pleasant surprises! First of all
I heard that the Portland Hospital was quite
close so I bolted off at the first opportunity
to investigate all the charms of my future cousin
Miss Davies. After duly introducing
myself as one of her future relatives she
informed me that Harry was still here
with a howitzer. Unfortunately I could only
see her for a few minutes as she had to be
off but my impressions were decidedly
favourable & the verdict is 'A decided
addition to the great clan. I am not good at
describing ladies' personal charms but she is
rather short, dark hair, not perhaps the
very perfection of beauty at any rate in my
eyes but a tall very nice & ladylike: in fact
the real article & worthy of Harry I think

Well I think that is a very good attempt
at a description. I feel very proud at being the
first of the family to see her. I hope she will
not break off the engagement on the strength
of it! They seem very fond of each other
anyhow as they see each other every day.
She is evidently quite an old campaigner as
she has been all through the Turk-Suek
war as a nurse so she is not one of the
sham baby-nurses. She asked me to tea
today but I find I cannot off a fatigue.
I went made off to Harry's camp & found
him there in great form & spirits. He was
very astonished to see me as he thought I was
still at some depot down country & had
written to me at East London whilst I
had written to him at Pretoria. He has
been here ever since the capture in March
(curious they should both be here together
isn't it & he is about the only garrison officer
left!) I had tea with him & he is coming
over to our mess tonight. He is in charge

of a ~~to~~ half battery of siege howitzers,
in which with another half battery of
field howitzers & some naval guns constitute
the sole defences of the town. The
General (Kally Henry) is for ever having
the pumps for fear of the Boers making
raid, as apparently they have been playing
all sorts of pranks higher up the line
though to what extent none of us have
the least idea as true news is an unknown
quantity here & was a rumour of wars
grow apace. I believe the town was in an
awful state of fright the other night owing
to a rumoured attack. I hear the Dorby Miller
had a bad knock the other day. I hope he is
nothing more than a prisoner. We have been
kept very busy carrying out various fatigues
in connection with defence schemes. I had
to see a sizer built for a howitzer battery
the other day & the Volunteers found it no
fun digging trenches in the ironstone rock,

we have to stop in camp all day. I have not
yet thanked you for the most welcome
letter I got by last mail. I have been really
enjoying myself immensely as the weather is
all right though very cold at night - ice being
formed on all water left out to the thickness
of about 1 1/2 inches - ~~the~~ the whole life is
a delightful experience. All the other officers
are very nice fellows & it is very nice having
Jack with me. The mess of course is merged
as though in barracks except for the tables &
chairs being rather crude. The messes at 6
which is very early & a time for lots of whisky
afterwards: we usually turn in at 10 or 11.30
as we have to be up at 6.30 as it is cold too then!
To those I hope is with you by now: my best
love to her & hope she is not expecting a letter
from me as it would only be a repetition of
what I write to you & doubtless she sees that.
I wonder if you have sent on my letters to
Norway for Father. I have only written one there
myself & they go via England as it is ~~not~~

just as quick for you to send mine on.
I have written a mad letter to Kid & am
writing another to Charles. Harry was
very pleased with Kid's ~~spotted~~ epistle.
The popular idea is that we shall be
sent home about the middle of July
so what ho! for the portulago or a trip
to New York. By the way I am gazetted
as a 1st lieutenant in the Army! rather
ridiculous isn't it: it makes me senior to
some fellows in the regiment who
have been in it years, a rather false
position! Well no more news, very
best love to all,

Y^r affectionate son,

F. A. Simonds.

Saturday
June 16th - 1910

Bloufontein Camp.
S. Africa.

Dearest mother,

Since posting the last of the

the English mail has arrived containing
yours & Father's letters, also ones from
Gavin Charles & Frank Jackson, all of which
were most welcome indeed. I am writing
this on the chance of my being able to post

it at the G.P.O. at Bloufontein when it
will catch the train for the mail. They
always collect the letters in the Field Post Offices
here a day early. I am so glad you have
practically bought Chidley Wood: it will be
strange for me not to tell my cabbie home
at the Point when I get to Reading. I hope
I shall at any rate ^{be} too late home for the
moving! Rather ungrateful isn't it? So sorry
Father has not been able to see his way

to getting to Norway. I suppose my letter
to him there will turn up some day. I have
written a line to America as to my grandson.
What are you doing about old Evans? Is he
going on with you? I hope he is not being
away with thoughts of my safety as her
usual! At present a little excitement that
may well be a welcome change as throwing
up trenches & sangars all day long with
only a very remote chance of a scrap is
not very exhilarating. As a matter of
fact they ^{did} are believed to have a laager some
25 miles away but I don't suppose they will
have the energy to attack. Kitchener was here
today having a look round the defences; I
did not see him as I have been stuck in camp
all the blessed day being orderly officer.
I was to have been at ~~the~~ the Hospital with
Miss Davies & Harry but of course could not
go. I suppose I am lunching with Harry & leaving
with her tomorrow (Sunday) but I have a

shrewd suspicion that I shall have some
infernal snail or trenchdigging fatigue at the
last moment: they don't give us subalterns
much time for frivolities such as tea parties!
We generally have our day well occupied:
in fact I have only been able to get out for
camp for one afternoon from 2-6 when I
called at the Hospital. The only time for real
slackness is when one has to go away for a
week at a time on outpost duty: I expect
to have my time shortly. By the way did you

notice that I was gazetted as a full lieutenant!
Many blunders have been committed in the war but
this must be the worst! It is rather silly as it makes
me for the time being senior to men like Jack
& others senior to him but of course it makes no
real difference to me here. It is raining cats &
dogs here tonight, the first I have experienced.
Praise heaven we have got tents! mine has been
well loosened but creaks ominously & may collapse
in the night. Just seen the Mercury, most wonderful
account of a voyage out of one of the first company:
a bit too picturesque!! ^{Henry's 5th} Vincent Flemechouse!
Was I not seen at Dover or London on the 11th? I was about
Picton's night. But don't tell me.

was a the men say they ought to have
a crossed pick & shovel instead of a clash.
Jack Collins is in the regiment so I mean
to get shown round the place & my
duties all night & there are also 4 or 5 other
fellows that I have met before. I suppose
I cannot grumble at getting up so far
than this as lots of men have been left
much further South. We are encamped in a
very good spot about 3 miles outside of Port
as the climate is good there is very little
sickness in the camp though there are some
thousands of cases in the hospitals. We are
doing ourselves far too well to call ^{ourselves} ~~ourselves~~
camp signs as the regiment of course has
all its mess stores up here now having
been quartered in the country originally.
I had a most enjoyable voyage out & as the
weather was fine I was not in the least
sea sick. We took 20 days to Cape Town
where I was 2 days & had a look about me.
I went to the theatre there to see the Bandport

acted by a particularly villainously bad
Company. (There is a theatre in 3rd fort
which I mean to go to: they are playing
Jane this week & Charles's Aunt next
we reached East London on 26 ^{days} ~~days~~ all told.
Thence we had a sailing journey of 5
hours up here: we had a most comfortable
1st class carriage to 3 officers but made our
first trial of belly help biscuit & soup &
very good to start with but apt to get weak
after a bit. There were some very nice
fellows on board, one being a very nice
Hartley man called Keasey whom I
made great friends with: he is very well
with Huntley Wright & most hearty folk
we have got our band instruments up here
now & they are practising up to date times
all day long: Rhode & Howton sound
most refreshing as they float over the
hoppers. I have been most fortunate in
finding Harry de Brett here in charge of
the howitzer battery, also his young lady.

out of the camp was made by the
junior cook! The party consisted
of Miss Davies, Miss Russell (a nurse)
Harry, his relation by name Hammond
whose birthday it was myself + a fellow
called of the 12th = Hamilton B. Taylor who
has just returned from a 31 weeks
trip to Pretoria. His brother saw Harry
sitting + went down with Esterne the day
before his brother arrived. After seeing
the young ladies home Harry + I messes
together + toasted Eddie + later made my
first acquaintance with pumpkin which
seem to be a mixture between peas
and a very small amount of marrow. It was
most interesting talking to the girls
from Pretoria. naturally I did not
seem very sorry to be out of the place
as they were all sure to be ~~dead~~ dead of
dying nothing. He is playing himself as
far as possible. Heermony Dinter whom
~~is~~ he accomplished water eventually

Blamfontein Camp
June 20th / 00

Dearest Mother,

Here we are still + just as likely
to stop where we are. I hope you got my last
card with the rest of the mail. I am going
strong as ever + enjoying myself very much.
I went to lunch with Harry on Sunday
+ then went with him to tea at the Potters
with Miss Davies whom I found as agreeable
+ nice as ever. It is a great thing having
drawing room (in a tent) afternoon tea in
these parts. I never knew I could enjoy them
before! I went into Blamfontein again
yesterday + wasted money in exchanging
for Kruger silver which may be interesting
one of these days but hardly worth the
money I gave for it now. I have also got a
Kruger half-guinea. I also invested in some
uncharged V.R. I bought a few State Stocks
which I am sending to Jack. There is a

terrible ones on stamps & of course the people who have them put on fabulous prices at which they are bought by the dealers. Mepikung ones are not to be had anywhere, but I have my eye on some Comando Brief stamps which cost about 5/- to buy now. Everything is at a wonderful price now, common English tobacco being 1/- the oz. I met Harry in the town & accompanied him on his daily visit to tea at the Hospital. We got there just as one of those little storms for which the country is famous burst over the place.

We found Alice had gone into Bfontain & was probably taking shelter somewhere, so we first indulged in a tea at the officers mess & then at the nurses mess. After tea Harry set out to find his young lady & I ~~had~~ borrowed a mac & waded home. The lightning was simply grand. All the dogs were at once converted into running streams & everything got in a grand mess. This

reminds me of a very pretty little story about Harry which the nurses told me, on the night of their arrival at Bfontain it rained cats & dogs like last night & the dogs that they had to cross to get to the Hospital were knee-deep in water: they all arrived wet through to the bones except Alice who was quite dry! Harry says she jumps very well. Ahem! We are still quite without any definite news of what is going on but apparently our chances of seeing any fun are rapidly diminishing. Barring duties I have got another little tea party on in Harry's camp tomorrow & being the occasion of Eddies' birthday. The papers have just come in & are as welcome as usual. They contain great accounts of Mepikung day, it will be most interesting to hear how you all behaved! also on Pretoria day.

June 22nd. I went over to tea with Harry & did things in great style. Real hot steam

They managed to get supplied with plenty of decent food but of course they had to pay very heavily for it all & were surrounded right & left. They had a shed 100 ft long by 30 to sleep & feed in, & for exercise they had a piece of ground 100 yds by 50 which was surrounded with wire entanglements & armed guards. They all grew very fat from want of exercise. The mail has just this moment come in, so many thanks for your nice long letter. I also received a most entertaining epistle from James. I am so glad Magdalen has gone head of the river, at any rate it went up 2nd day & ought to have stopped there. I am surprised you did not get my letter from St Vincent before the 31st as we left there on the 10th. What a high old time you will have changing houses, I am so glad I shall be able to miss it! I have written to Arthur Flatman to know if he is all right & if I can do anything for him. I am very glad to hear he has had some of the

foraging, lucky fellows those Yeomanry!
They are all frightfully ignorant from
what I have heard of their goings on
& yet they always see the fun. I am
beginning to feel a bit of a grand, stuck
down here doing nothing instead of
undergoing bits of hardships up North.

The men are all getting fat & lazy &
grumbly & fairly keen on getting home
again. The draft are all having a time
at dysentery & I have daily applications for
Dr Puce's Pills which are now running
very short; I wish they would vary the
complaints a bit or else I shall have to
vary the pills; I don't know whether
thrust-punchers will have good effects
or not. I hope Louisa is not expecting a
letter from me as there is nothing to tell her
besides what I tell you & I presume she
saw your letter I have written to Sam^{sent} &
a few stamps. Salute Uncle Fred for me
& remind him that I have not yet heard

from him. My greetings to Charles &
James & any other of my friends you
may meet. Please tell Feather of my
well-being if you see him. I am getting
a few ostrich feathers through a fellow
in the regiment who knows how to obtain
them: I suppose Pollack won't object to
a pair for Brixton Holiday on Bucklebury
Heath but I forget, that is a thing of the
past I suppose. I am still longing to
see a truck of sorts, there are lots about
within a few miles but it has not been
my luck to see one. Shooting of any
sort (bar Bows) is absolutely forbidden
well best love to you all & let me hear
all the news,

Yr affectionate son,
F. A. Simonds.

Jack sends his regards, also Harry

all family expectations & turn up like a
bad penny somewhere in August early & in a brief
case I shall contemplate a visit to the U.S.A.,
(2) the regiment wanted for China in which
case I shall try and follow them, & I dare say
the CO will let me go, wherefore my next
address may be Yantai-fang - ~~at~~ ^{of} ~~you~~
- so - lung - ~~at~~ ^{of} ~~you~~ ~~or~~ ^{some} ~~such~~ ~~name~~,
(3) the regiment may be about to fulfil
its appointed destiny & go to India, in which
Case No. 1 will be again my programme. For
further communications see below.

June 30th - a last. all the above a
front! owing to the eccentricity of a
staff-officer: so my dreams of hopping
my way through millions of pig-tails
have been rudely shattered! also the fond
hopes of the many medals that must follow
after that war! Have got your most welcome
letters & their equally welcome enclosures
& return the paper signed for Father. So glad
to see such a cheery letter from ~~the~~ Spa.
I hope you will excuse this delightful mixture
of colour, but I have just managed collar one of
the 2 mess pens. I have written a whole

Blenfontein Camp
S. Africa

June 26th / 00

Dearest Mother,

Still here & going strong as ever,
any chance of seeing any fighting being
diminished day by day. Tomorrow the company
is going off on outpost duty to a place called
Nasal Hill, a strongly fortified place to the
North of Blenfontein with another company of the
regiment: besides ourselves there is a detachment
of the Nasal Brigade with some big guns.
Harry is with his battery on the next ridge which
is ratherilly. It will be a change of scenery
after being in this camp just 3 weeks. I don't
think I ever told you that Alleyne left the
company very soon after they got into the
country & got a staff billet as stationmaster
at Blenfontein, as my arrival was perhaps not as
unwelcome as it might have been as I got
the command of a $\frac{1}{2}$ company. We have
been employed lately as per usual in taking up
defensive positions round about the camp
& town: it affords a certain amount of exercise

a instruction but is not what I came out for
I see the remote possibility of any Boers wishing
to attack us they would have news ages before
from the town people as to our positions
It seems a beastly shame these Dutch
tradesmen having a jolly good time now
surrounding the English who are in the town
while the loyal people who joined the
English troops have had all their stocks stolen
& can of course get no more up now.
Curiously enough the other day I heard by
accident that there was a Magdalen man
lying ill with enteric in one of the hospitals
here so I went off to see him as soon as
possible & he was very glad to see me: he had
had a pretty bad attack & had been in bed over
a month but was getting all right now though
still very weak. His name is Blake, a 3rd year
man, whom I knew but slightly, but he is
I believe a great friend of John's: of course
he was very glad to hear the latest from Oxford
also the glorious news that Magdalen had
gone up to the head of the river: we both
joined on thinking of that ~~the~~ bump rubber

which mentally followed: he more so than
I, as I am afraid he is down on his back a bit.
He came out with the Duke of Cambridge's Coy
of G. Y in March & had seen nothing but
very hard work (as a trooper of course) all the
time of his getting ill. I hear that Southey
is on his way out with a draft for the battalion
everybody is awfully pleased as he is a jolly
good sort. There ~~was~~ ^{was} a big 'at home' given at the
Portland on Saturday last, our band being
in attendance. All the elite & myself were
present & I was assistant-waiter to Mrs
Dames & handed about tea to the general
& their wives who abound (the 9th I mean).
Altogether we had a great afternoon, a game
of football being got up for the general
amusement. Harry of course was there.
No more news for the present.
Just heard that the Adjutant had had a
wire ordering the battalions to concentrate
the depot at East London which may mean
some ~~kind of~~ ^{kind of} things, that the ~~looting~~ ^{looting}
will accompany them & in that case send some
by one of the first boats so that I shall expect

It would be bringing coals to Newcastle
to take anything from here to England.
Harry sends his love. I suppose you are
hearing PTC cards for me: mind you
give me a nice row at Audley!
Best love to all with v. v. for yourself.

Yr affectionate son,
F. A. Simonds

P.S.

They have raised the Colonial allowance
from 1/6 to 3/- now so I now pocket 12/- a day.
I was not gazetted till May 19th so I served
almost a month at the depot without a son of
pay; I shall have to kick up a row to
get ante-dated when I get back unless
Father cares to be beforehand.

file of letters this week, including ones
to Buz, Cousin Lotty, Captain Feltham,
Mayer & Charles, & the 'Pre'. I would
write to She but I am afraid he would
have started from Norway by the time
~~that~~^{it} reached him. Has not a multitude
of theatres muddled your head? the song
you quote - 'the life I lead is all I need' -
came out of Florodora when I saw it
& not the Rose of Persia as you state,
though I saw both plays on the same day
I feel quite certain it was sung by
Kate Cutler in Florodora. Harry came
to mess with me last night we had tea
at the Portland. They seem quite over-
stocked there with 'comforts' from home:
they were most anxious for me to take
away any shirts & socks I wanted, but
I did not feel greedy enough: I only collected

a bottle of Eau-de-Cologne, a very useful article out here. What a rag Parsons letting down one of the horses! I suppose he only walks them now. I am feeling so pleased about your getting Audley Wood. I hope there is a workery there as I am bringing back - or rather I mean to if I can get one cheap - a Mauser Pistol which is just suited for young rooks. Today is the last day of the Winchester match I believe & I can picture to myself the dejected countenances of the wipers as they are 300 runs behind & 1 wicket to fall. I went to see my Magdalen friend again in the hospital yesterday: he seems fairly all right now & will soon get home: he doesn't mean to go home as a trooper on the lower deck this time! His father is Governor of Hong Kong

& has heaps of money: he is beginning to think he is an awful fool for ever having come out. A curious thing you & Father both saying that the other spends all day gazing over at least 3 of my photos. I wonder what the result is! Face-ache - toothache - or epileptic fits? All I trust is that no one in the Service ever sees them because they would ashamed of the Army nowadays! Clarke has just moved from here with 25 men to the rest-camp near the station: he has to send 6 men daily up the line to Kwootah as escort to those hughers going up the to their farms under Roberts' last proclamation. It is very dull work for him but a change for the men: I may have the job soon. I wish I could find something nice in these parts to bring back as souvenirs but

who is in the Post and Hospital here.
She is quite nice a decided addition to the
great & miserable clam. I go over to her to
afternoon tea periodically; it is a great
thing to have tidbits from our tea
in these parts but after all it is painfully
civilized & English here. The whole place
keeps with officers. I recently broke my own
records by making them salute officers at
all sorts when I first got here but I soon found
out the only person to salute is a general.
What they call a General. So glad I can
present to you from my 14th. I
wonder the previous enemies of the
over the King! I wonder what happened
over the town. I suppose I may expect to see
all again in September all being well. No
more news what back to you in your
office & the best of success. My love to your
parents & every one, also Ralph & Helen
& of course Effie if you love answer.
W. W. W. W. W.
F. A. W. W. W.

Bloomfontain Camp

June 13th / 100

S. Africa.

My dear Frank,

So many thanks for your
most acceptable letter: it was most kind
of you to write to me. I am going strong
as per usual, though not in the right
direction mainly Northwards. I am with the
Regiment which is what they call out
here is rather lashed that is a kick for good.
We have the doubtful pleasure of having the
greater part of the town's person. The rest wait-
ing of some hours & march gear, a bit
of North's Engineers & details. There are are going
to be reinforced later on. The General (Hull-
kenny) is always having the jumps for fear
of a raid & we have been busy building sand
etc round about the town. We have to be up
of the duty work of the place such as town
fickets & parcels as the men are pretty well
occupied. The regiment has been put to all the
hard work with no fighting all through the

Love to
Ralph & Helen
Effie
F. A. W. W. W.

Deerforter. July 7th 1880

7/7/80
OXFORD.

Dear Harry, So many thanks for your most entertaining letters & the cards which you so kindly & fully sent. I return one of them. This will reach you about your birthday & many happy returns of the day & don't forget a present from me for yourself. I am well & hope to move North soon. Keep stamp on outside. Don't rush for to feel my respects to Doctor. Write soon again; no be hard & don't see up the Mary Rose. Ever.

Bloufontein Camp.
S Africa

Saturday
July 7th 1880

Dearest Mother,

I am afraid there is very little to tell you this week. We went to Kani Hill on Monday presumably for a fortnight's stay, the party consisting of Col Rhodes, Owen, a subaltern called Harris & myself. The first day we were there it rained for all it was worth & we lived in a flood, most of the tents letting water through like a sieve. I was on outpost & did not necessarily ~~be~~ a frame during the night as I had to climb down young breeches in pitch darkness & grope about for sentries. Of course it happened to be the day that I had given one pair of breeches to the master-tailor to be mended so I had to huddle for hours ~~was~~ exchanging wet garments, better fun even than getting wet out

2
rifle-shooting! Lots of the men have got rather knocked up owing to the wet but I think it rather agrees with me. We had just settled down & pitched the camp in a new spot & I had become to like myself there when on the 4th day, three informed Staff men decided on a new scheme of defence & off we had to go ^{headquarters} to camp again. There were two 4.7 guns & two 2.5 (12 lbs) guns on the hill, the next ^{officer} command of the sailors there was a very decent fellow by name ~~Robertson~~ of the ~~Bores~~ & an interminable string of yams. It is not a month since we got into camp here & a change would not be welcome. I don't want my knowledge of Africa to be confined to 3 miles round Bloufontein. I had tea with Harry one day this week, the ladies also being present. I had a look at my magazine found the day before yesterday & found ~~him~~ ~~was~~ ~~as~~ ~~well~~ ~~as~~ ~~well~~ ~~as~~ ~~well~~ & he will be able to get

home soon of course we discussed a long while
 on the great things we should do at Oxford
 when we got back & how we would enjoy
 ourselves! We have had absolutely no news of
 what is going on but apparently Bob is
 taking as long a holiday at Pretoria as
 he had here: our departure will not be hastened
 thereby & it now seems to be the general
 opinion that we shall be home by October
 at the earliest. I think it is safe to ask you
 to be good enough to send us some myrtle &
tobacco or Craven Myrtle & some Chocolate
 for both of which I have a great longing
 here, & ~~label~~ label the parcel, Chocolate
 to avoid customs. A loud yell from the
 Tommies has announced ~~the~~ the
 arrival of the Home mail so Sam just
 to seek my treasures which I am sure
 are awaiting me. . . . Hurrah! 4 letters,
 one from you, one from Sam, one from
 Kid & one from Bug. Many thanks for
 yours, & Sam's & Kid's (the latter a most


interesting contribution & a still
 more striking envelope) Bug addressed
 me as "of the Volunteer Coy of the
 Berkshire Militia" & also inserts a
 double mn in the name in one place
 I am writing to Chide her. We have
 just been distributing comforts for the
 men supplied by Berkshire people.
 The tobacco was the most eagerly
 sought after: I did not ask for it before
 I came out, but I thought it likely
 that you would collect some stuff
 for the draft I brought it out. I hope
 some things are on their way out
 but if not, never too late! even supposing
 we are gone there will be lots more men
 left in the country who will be glad of them
 & after the war they will be very short of amusements
 & I will tell Jack to collar anything
 sent out for me. I also hope some
 Spiritine is on its way, I am reminded
 of a very pretty little incident that

happened the other day at Harry's tea
He had collared a huge box of stuff
called Chocolate which he produced
for the benefit of the ladies after tea. It had
been sent to a subaltern in his battery who
had been invalided home so was looked upon
as lawful game. When opened amidst
breathless excitement & watering mouths
it was found to contain 2 tins of
tobacco wrapped inside a garment! Well
So glad to hear of James's triumph in the
muzzing line! I am writing v. few letters
this week, will write to James & Sam &
others next week.

Ernest has just been buttonholing the
Colonel & saying what rot it was the
Volunteer Coy being kept here & that it was
quite contrary to the original idea in
sending Volunteers out because the men
would all go back & say that they had
seen nothing & that it would be a great
blow to the Volunteer cause. The Colonel
quite fell in with his views, & promised to
do his best for us, so after all there is just

the chance of our being sent up
with a convoy or of getting in the
rounding up of De Wet! Hurrah! my
next may be written to you from Pretoria!
My best love to all

your affectionate son,
F. A. Simonds



Dochrand

Thursday

July 12^E / 00

W. Kroonstad

S. Africa

Dearest Mother,

Here I am, in course of
having my ^{light} hopes fulfilled, namely of
getting to Pretoria: by the time you get this
you will doubtless I hope have received
Emmie's telegram from Pretoria announcing

our arrival, but there is many a ship
etc & we may get dumped down at
some unearthy place for some time &
never get to Pretoria. At present we are only
at a small siding a mile or two South
of Kroonstad & in order to let another train
pass but it shows no signs of appearing
yet. I must post this at Kroonstad to
catch mail. The right half battalion
is a few hours ahead of us with 6 officers in-
cluding Jack, whilst the rest with staff &
baggage & transport is in this train which

is about 400 yds long. Thanks to the magnificent arrangements of those Egyptian
arcs, railway staff officers, accommodation
was afforded for 16 officers including the
C.O. in one miserable little guard's van,
which needless to say has prevented my
writing before this owing to the slaking it
quickly being placed at the end of the train.
We are all astounded when the news of
our move was given out as we had
made up our minds that we were to
be at Bfortem for good & all. I can just
five weeks there & must say that I was
tired of a change of scenery. We hardly
at the queer hour of 1. a.m. by moonlight
& marched across the valley to the station
& announced our departure forcibly to
the town by giving it a good dose of drum
& fife. The men of course have got only
few benches, 25 to each one, but it is a bit
odd at night with these hard seats. 12 of
us slept on the filthy floor of the van from
4 to 6. Even Charles & 2 others slept among
the men, but the redcoats would not let us

as I am under his orders at present
for a cold: he insists that I have one but
I don't believe it myself. The Colonel
who is not the man to hurt us with the
least discomfort has nearly kept himself
dry by us, fast with the cold night, & rest
with the hot day. Anyhow I am very glad
I am not marching up, & the scenery is a
bit different now, being much less hilly
& there are a good many groves of pines
etc. there are lots of interesting sights
such as the bridges at the 2nd & 3rd
crossings, which have been beautifully done
up. The temporary bridges on piles of
logs are also great feats of engineering
skill. at Virginia we saw the armoured
train which was used at Kimberley.

I was sorry I could not say goodbye to Harry
he is a lucky beast getting to China, and just
- out too! I went to the Postland to say good
to Major Dango (who is also coming home now)
thinking to find him there but he had at the
same time come to me! I hope you will
see Miss D. soon, I am sure you will like
her; than now off to Baker's - best love
W. J. S. P. A. S.

1848-1854.



24th May, 1900.

Pretoria!

Gloemfontein,

Orange River Colony,

July 13th /00
8.50 h.m.

Transvaal

Dearest Mother,

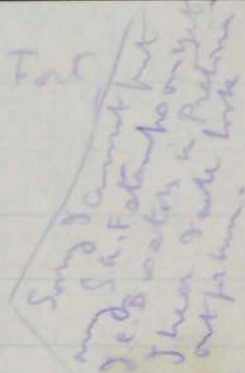
Arrived at this mighty place at a few minutes to 5 this evening. Unfortunately there has been a heavy mist so far & we have seen nothing of the town so far; the station is right on the outskirts. We are all sleeping in the station yard tonight. Luckily I had brought my sack on the van otherwise I should be all right & some sort of a staff officer at Vereeniging shunted off in the middle of the night the 6 trucks containing all the men's rations & our valises without any of us noticing it, all being asleep; you can imagine the men's disgust about breakfast time; anyhow we forced them up with rations about 12 when we get to Vanderfontein, a big town 5 miles East of Johannesburg & the junction for it. We saw considerable gold mines on the way up ^{from the Rand} ~~from the Rand~~ for a few miles; these famous East Rand mines is at Vanderfontein & we saw some of it. The most curious thing about the mines is that they all look white owing to the quartz ^{quartz} ~~quartz~~ that colour on being crushed it is piled in great

keeps all round the mine. The scenery for the last 50
miles is really quite pretty for these parts, quite a
lot of trees & some really good imitations of woods. ^{Every} says it is very like Wales. We fairly rattled along from
Elandsfontein as we descend about 1000 ft in 40 miles.
They kept us waiting some time at Irene, an awfully jolly
little station with creper etc around it & my mind at
once turned to another pretty thing of that name but with
a dark face (no must, please, Uncle Fred!) Tomorrow we
all go to a place some 8 miles North of the town, one of
the Boer forts called Doodendop or some such thing. Apparently
the enemy are having courage to attack again & after all
I believe I shall see some shooting. At any rate they might
do a bit of sniping. I am writing this in the waiting
room of the station. I hope this will catch the same mail
as my letter from Kroonstad but I am doubtful. This
is I fear the last letter that I shall address
to The Point & it is only fitting it should be from
Pretoria! Audley Wood will be the most honored recipient.
By my next I hope to have seen a shot or two fired.
I think I told you Mrs Devereux is coming home now, I hope you will
see her. I am afraid my hopes of slaying the only hardiness to
be widely disturbed, my best love to all,
Yr affectionate son,
F A Swarbrick.

Very curious to know when that first shell was coming & where it would pitch: they had seen only the evening before building sangers for their guns so they might have had the decency to give some show. For the rest of the day we marched North & altogether covered 14-15 miles, a very good performance considering the heat & rough ground.

We encamped close to National Station, the place where our prisoners we kept. Some of our fellows had a look at the prison & also the tunnel which had been nearly finished starting from the altar of their church: however they were reasoned before they had the chance to attempt an escape. We have got two six guns & a battery of Canadian gunners with 12 pioneers & a section of P-Pos which I am bringing to see at work. French who is on our right with his company evidently had an enjoyment in the evening as we heard some heavy firing. B-Pos command of a Canadian brigade on the left.

I Camp N. Vanderboom Fort
Sunday N. Pretoria
July 15th - Transvaal
S Africa



Dearest Mother,

I am writing just a line tonight before I go to sleep as I don't know in the least when I shall be able to write any more. We have just had orders tonight to join Hamilton's Division at yam for operations in the North, which means that we are to take part in a big round-up somewhere: what we have done out will of course know by now & all I hope is the Vindictive Coy will have a decent chance to perform creditably: of course we are all pretty excited at our first chance of a real show: I little thought that I should see anything a week or two back. No doubt we are in for a bit of marching & hard work & I rather regret the slack we are at Bofalan as I am not in very good trim

All the officers are now dressed exactly like the Tommies & carry rifles or carbines. We marched out of Telma early yesterday morning & went by Bob's to his standing outside his house. I believe we created a very favorable impression. I saw Lord K. at the station. I only got a glimpse of the town but it is very fine, especially the municipal buildings etc: every thing is at former prices: I don't hope I shall have the chance later on of seeing it thoroughly. We are encamped about about 5 miles out at the foot of a very tall hill on which is one of the Basa forts built by German officers. No guns were left on them, & our fellows say that it is a very bad fort & certainly if it is held by the other half of Haveray's battery. The Basas are on kopjes & we got off with a few light guns: they exchanged a few shots the night before & were on both sides but could not reach each other: we can see them with

glasses. Now I must stop, as it is past 10 & we breakfast at 5:15. Heaven knows what we may not see tomorrow! I will add more later: in the meantime best love to all,
yr. affectionate son,
F. A. Swords

July 11th. Hamman's Korral. Still going strong. We have had two days of marching. Yesterday we started out with the whole Brigade under Col. Comperham of the Dorsets, the Division being under Dan Hamilton. It was a most onerous sight for a novice like myself! You can hardly imagine the space a brigade takes up more to transport etc for we have to take food for a week or two. We first of all marched out & drew some kopjes to the left of those mentioned above but drew blanks & then we went for those on the right & in fact mostly found them too encamped on the right. It was very strange advancing to the attack & feeling that it was really not a field day but real earnest: I can kill you I was

Mahara's Brigade. Today my half company did a whole day's work; we started N.E through the Bush Veld as the left flankery screen to the baggage waggons. We had to extend for nearly a mile from the (Pretoria) road to the left as there was a tremendous hole made keeping in touch as the men were 50 yds apart & one could only see about 100 yds on either side & there was a very good chance of the Boers sniping us. We marched straight on from 8 to 1 without any halt to speak of over a very difficult ground & covered about 13 miles. I suppose I covered about 16 myself as I had to ~~take~~^{be} up & down the line the whole time keeping the men together: they were cooked.

There is an enormous camp here now consisting of most of Hamilton's Division. What on earth we are going to do but we seem to march gaily along without seeing any enemy day after day but Boer is pulling the wires so we are just

²² Today we have marched 12 miles to a small station along the line called Hamkrood & the nature of the country has altogether altered, it consisting of scrubby - along woody country which is very tricky for fighting in. Our brigade came into touch with the enemy's patrols & the last I heard of MI I suppose the Boers had me killed. Smith's Division had some fighting on the night as there was heavy fog. We only had 30 shots fired altogether but it of course caused vast excitement. It is great fun seeing these Colonel M. I fellows working the our front. They are absolutely invulnerable. They also took everything they could across as the poor rascals come off badly; orders have been issued to burn all farmhouses etc en route. We are bivouacked in a small clearing in the woods where the Boers have also been for the last week & directly the lights are out & the moon is up we shall probably be in for a little sniping. We have

still got some business in the mess-cut
which follows around but bread is an
unknown quantity & is finished. The last
bit of letter tonight. Thank heavens we have
lots of whiskey left & Honey who has been
sent down to the Cape with prisoners
has just turned up with three large
bottles of brandy, a god-send I can tell you
these cold nights, though it is not so cold
as at Bfontana: if worse we get no tents
here but it is not too cold in the pen. It is
a great thing being ready at the front!
in fact no British force of any size has ~~ever~~
been so far North I believe. One of the
letters I brought it has just got in for
showing an MCO which means that I shall
probably have to appear on some big general
court martial & also that he will be very sorry
he ever came out! Goodness knows when
I shall be able to get this sent off, &
when I shall receive any news as we
shall soon leave all news of command

behind. I have had no mail for 10 days
sherry: must stop now as we have to finish
at 5.30 & it is past 9 now & I am quite
knock out.

July 19th Boekshoutbloof Draft, Flourens
as usual, yesterday we started back from
Hammans Kraal & came S SE; it was
awfully hot; we only marched about 12
miles to a place called Wehmansthal; it is
a German Missionary station (marked
on most maps) consisting of a small church
a small white house & a number of native
huts. We were in luck as there
were a lot of fowls about & we collected about
10 for the mess & the Tommies did themselves
proud: if worse the mess had to buy
the natives according to law but I am
not quite sure that the Tommies
paid for all they took! There were
also a lot of pumpkins to be had.
It was a very hot day, lots of the men
fell out: we knocked off at 11.30. In the
afternoon we came in touch with the

insects which about choke me as I
am still unable to quite master them in
they are only one degree better than
Spratton in fact they are made by him in
I must bring a few home for Paddy
to try! Somehow I smoke very little
now as it is too hot on the march & one
has not time to set a pipe going in
the early morning. You notice that
sheer force of habit compels me to
address this to The Post! I am most
anxious to have a look at Audley
Wood & I often think about it I can
tell you! I am afraid my happy
visions of shooting in September will
be disappointed! I hope Fleaton will keep
a few head of game for me: I have written
to Dutton to know if I can do anything
for him. This will reach you I expect about
35 days hence: I am sending it on Pretoria
by some Mr. I. man whose of that way.
Don't expect another letter yet at any rate.
Again love to all & kisses for yourself. Ever

3/
to manage to hunt somebody through
I suppose we ~~ought~~ should be caught
some trap or something with a few
-horns: both the last days our parties
have met & Mazed at each other but
we have not yet ourselves fired a shot
in anger. I was horribly startled to
to hear 3 shots fired quite close to me
on the left flank & I had the men on the
floor, my quick! I found out it was
some of the men of a Yeoman who
had been trying to kill his horse when
had gone sick: he had reared it first & then
altogether, grazed its nose ^{with No. 2} & then the trunk
he managed to down it! A useful fellow
to try & hit Boers when he can barely
see at 100 yds. We are getting into much
more interesting country, in fact the
real interior: I could have had glorious
sport on the march today if I had only
made a shot gun: one ruck had got up
under my feet & there were others about.

I also put up any numbers of a kind of
black duck which afforded magnificent
shots; also some ordinary looking duck
& some partridges, very similar to the
partridge above all. I flushed a bird
very much like a ~~woodcock~~ woodcock
in fact just the same shape but distinctly
differently marked. Pigeons & owls & hares
abound, also lizards. I forgot to mention
that yesterday evening I indulged in the
most bracing bath in a stream about
15 yds wide, which is about 100 yds across
make them out here at this season: it is
called the Plemeas I believe & comes from
the Injoko: I saw a number of musk
rats there; fellows in other places
also saw a kind of crocodile whose name
I forget, about 2 ft 6 in to 3 ft long.
Please give my love to James & Charles
& say that I really do want to visit to them
but have very little time to spare,
as one must eat & sleep also the time

one can spare when one is not on
duty or marching. We shall soon
I am afraid be reduced to ordinary rations
except for what we can pick up by the
way side such as pumpkins & fruits.
Unfortunately the watermelons are not
yet ripe: monkeys are dry up
however very zealously by Tommy
whenever we halt near a forest.
Thank heavens we have got enough
whiskey to last us a long time: it is
an awfully good medicine I am sure
at night time: we have also got a
good supply of Sharklets - most excel-
-lent out here - & Quaker Oats
which are really excellent things for
a 6 o'clock breakfast in the pen.
Today any quantity of treks were
were shot & all ranks have had a
ration of fresh meat for supper:
he is a rather tough customer when
he has drinking missions for some
months but I prefer him to the

which the Boer guns were & they replied
for some time gaily but their fire
was very erratic though they pumped
one shell within a few feet of a company
on the right without luckily doing
any damage, & a shrapnel also burst
about 30 yds short: we could hardly
see a single Boer the whole time though
there were 200 of them there somewhere.
I could make out 2 bolting somewhat
hastily from some Lyddite furnes.

I don't think they touched one of us but
I think we must have hurt some of
them. The firing continued in a desultory
way all day. Next day the Boers took
up a position in front of us we shelled
them for some time & then made a frontal
attack, only to find they had bolted.

Our guns got on to the kopjes & blazed
away at these retreating guns but could
not hit them & the M.I got the shells
& somehow did not get round them so they
escaped & they managed to get their great

Royal Berke Reef

Postfontein

Transvaal

July 22nd / 00

S. Africa

Dearest Mother

I have not been able as I expected
to get my last letter sent home so it has
been crumbling away in my pocket ever
since. I am now starting another one so
that you will probably get two at once. I
shall address this one also to the Point so
that you will not get it before the first
if you have shifted to Audley Wood. Well
we have been having a much more interesting
time lately & though we have not done
any shooting ourselves yet we have seen
enough to wet the appetite. After leaving
Bakenburg Drift we had a 16 mile march
a most trying day under a blazing sun & to
end up with, we had to go 2 miles to water
& another 2 miles to an out post where we
spent a horrible night with only one blanket
apiece & a great coat which is really very little

nowadays as the grass was very long
+ there was a sharp frost to make things
worse. Even would not let us light even
a pipe so as not to offend drill book etiquette
though every other picquet had a bonfire as a
rule. After all what is the chance of being
sniped at compared with the loss of ones
evening pipe? - Horrible alarm, a
shell just burst into the camp nobody hurt
I believe. On the 29th began the best days
show we have had yet. 3 miles of the 4 of
convoy that accompanied us had just gone
round a corner of a Kopje outside camp
+ the Boers had just got to the corner itself
when we were suddenly ^(startled?) by a shell falling
just beyond the convoy + bursting without
doing much damage. A moment later
another burst slap among a team of
mules killing 4 + a muzzler + wounding
another. All our guns that were at hand
then unlimbered + opened giving them a
fine dosing of shrapnel, Lyddite, Pom-pom
+ other delicacies, but the brutes were too

well hidden + after we had fired 30 or
40 shells we gave up. It is a mystery how
they got up 2 guns (one Creusot 40 lbs
+ one 12 lb) in the night without being
spotted unless they were hidden there the
evening before. They were only about 200
yds off + they also gave us a little
rifle fire without doing any damage.
We could hardly claim to have been inter-
fered ourselves but our baggage guard
+ servants had quite an exciting time.
We marched on for about an hour when
the two Boer guns again turned up
smiling or rather barking + let loose
at the Convoy from a line of Koppes
running N to the road at a range of
4 1/2 miles. Well we had a grand time
for the next 3 hours. We lay down
on the veldt + chewed our biscuits while
we had a panoramic display of the
effects of Lyddite, pom-pom etc. We seemed
to blow great pieces out of the hole but
always managed to miss the piece on

Creusot about, they use any number of horses while we use great plodding oxen. Today we have taken the customary day's rest ^{after} 7 days march, which if not absolutely necessary for the men is quite necessary for the beasts. It is a place called ~~Proper~~ ⁶ miles NW of Brankfont Spruit. We have done just under 100 miles during the 7 days & I am not sorry for a rest though I am quite fit still & far from foot-sore.

July 25th ^{5:15 a.m.} Brankfont Spruit Station (scene of 1880 disaster). Just been woken to say mail goes in at 5:45. We reached here yesterday without opposition - there was more shelling & sniping on the 23rd.

We have joined hands with Potl-larew & the Guards, Bobs is just come, also first train from Pretoria perhaps mails! enclosed is only flower I have seen in Transvaal. No more time. Best love to all. Yr affectionate son,
P. A. Smuts

Hamiltons
Division

Pretfontein Camp.

July 22nd /00
The Kids
Birthday!

24 miles E of Pretoria
S. Africa

Dearest Mother,

Just starting a letter now as I have some spare time. We are now at a small place called Pretfontein, 24 miles E of Pretoria, whither we are now wending our weary way. We have just done a 16 mile march & the men are heartily sick of foot-slogging. All our operations have apparently turned out futile, & it has been decided to send us back to Pretoria with the whole Division as the Boers have made such advances of the line East of Bronkhorst Spruit that it has been found impossible to maintain sufficiently to allow of supplies being sent up for such a large force as is now collected round Middelburg & wheeled

transport is very difficult to get up. On the 25th we had one of the storms I have ever seen, much less been in in fact it was about a record even for this country. I dare say an account of it was in the papers as Bennet Burleigh is with us the whole time. We were supposed to start in the morning as escort to a convoy of 70 wagons which were to have arrived there right before. Of course they never turned up till 4 o'clock in the afternoon & as supplies were running short at Middelburg it was decided to push on during the night. Well at 4.30 it began to rain in buckets, helped along by a bitter east wind: there was a big drift just beyond the station that of course soon became a torrent & the men, cheeky soon out, had a terrible job getting them across. It was pitch dark by 5 the drift muffled.

3
One company went on with each 8
wagons & as it was our turn last we
had to stand out in the rain till 8:30
when the conductors found it absolutely
to get any more over across. There
was nothing for it but to wade back
across the stream up to one's knees &
try & find shelter in & around the
station & we beached the men (about
4 companies of us were left) in some
board tin sheds near the line where
they lighted fires & dried or rather
smoked their muzzing wet clothes
to a certain extent. The officers took
possession of a big room which had been
part of a Jew's store but had been wrecked
it had been fitted up temporarily as a
field-hospital: here I found the
provincial friend in need in the shape
of one S^r John's Ambulance man
in charge who is a volunteer from London
& of course knew me when at the ~~officer~~
major

he quickly got some coffee going
& we made a sumptuous meal off bully
& biscuit & also some butter (for use
of patients) he chucked off all our
drinking clothes & managed to borrow
a blanket under which Jack, Clarke,
& myself managed to sleep till 5 very
faintly well despite the fact that there
were 2 dying men in the room & other
sick men. The worst part of the whole
show was getting into one's wet clothes
again! It was like walking into one's
grave but it was great when the
sun came out & one gradually
thawed! The only effect on me afterwards
was that it drove off a sore throat & cold
which I had started with. Some
companies had to be out all night
as they were on the railway track but
nobody seems any the worse for it.
On the other hand a few men of
the Anzlys died from exposure & any

number were laid up. So much for the storm. We marched next day to Bell River where it is intended to refuel for Pretoria within we have been burning for a long time.

July 29th Christman's Trade Company, agents
of Pretoria business almost back to
enough to buy a couple more to buy
matches & candles. Doubtful if we
shall be able to stop in Pretoria for a
bit & get a few things but I fear not.
We only came 10 miles today & ought
to have got in by 10 o'clock but that
doddering lumberjack of a hunter
called our colonel, insisted on waiting
behind for a conveyance where he was not
in the least wanted & which he was
told not to escort so we did not get
in till 4. I must close this tonight
as I expect mails will be collected
as soon as we get in tomorrow.
This will very likely arrive with my

Last two so you will have a fine
budget. We are encamped close to
a big whiskey distillery owned by a
Jew named Marks who has a house
of great size & pomp for these parts.
Best love to all; return home no
nearer as far as I can see! shall
manage that trip to New York
instead of October term yet!

Your affectionate son,
F. A. Smoaks.

Pretoria July 31st / 00

Dearest Mother,

Just a line now as

I may not be able to get off another letter by the next mail - we came in yesterday & marched past B's, cheering lustily the while, only to find that we are to go on again tomorrow to the S.W.

Had a rest today which was most necessary as the men were quite 'fed up' with yesterday's 12 miles march. Just heard that one of the Volunteer boys has died of dysentery at B's station which is my heart's blood: he was not a fellow of mine - a manderhead man called Snows. Just to think that ~~as~~ the sun rises tomorrow the silly flapper will have been ruthlessly slaughtered by the powder; I am not sure that it is not better for them having a well goosedness after the fleet-footed Boer. Went into the town this afternoon for a few hours in the van hope of buying something

useful but the whole town is absolutely
cleared of everything, matches, candles
Kibacco, chocolate, all quite sold out.
Had tea at the Grand Hotel where one
could neither get milk or even a bit
of bread or biscuit. I found a shop
with a lot of sweet stuff, udder & bought
a pound of acid-drops from sheer
desire to spend. However I got some
candies & a few current stamps.
I had a good look at the various buildings
& they quite ~~pass~~ ~~impress~~ ~~impress~~ ~~impress~~ ~~impress~~
in fact they are v. fine. I hope to get
some photos of the place if I get back
here but at present they too are sold
out. I met Arthur Flatman in the
town but unfortunately could not
speak to him for long as I was in a real
hurry. He looked very fit & like most,
been on getting home. He is now
attached to the Transvaal police &
actually gets 10/- a day & as much

as a subaltern! I also met 2 others
of my acquaintance - Lord Vorn
& Bastard: the town presents a
wonderful sight now with its various
sorts of uniform - some of them very
scratched & old - & representatives of
almost every colony under the
B. flag. Received 2 marks, making
2 shillings long ago from you
for which many thanks - also one
from James & one from Halsby.

so sorry to hear about Maledin's death.
So glad Father has got to Norway but
am sorry about the earnings. I suppose
thought as the mid-^{up} of the lease
of the dear old Point. Accounts
of masts going wrong greatly exaggerated
it is really wonderful how they have
managed. I hope you have not been
deterred from sending goods such as
S. spiritine etc. Best love to all, V. affectionately
Flinders

heavier equipment behind, the Argylls were ordered to attack the big Kopje A while the Berks had to go for the little Kopje B & the big one C. The Borders & K O S B being in reserve. We advanced about 2 miles across the veldt the gunners lobbing a lot of tin-tacks etc into their position without doing harm as per usual as they were too well covered. The Volunteer Company formed the fourth line of the right half battalion. We had advanced well into the bushes & ~~the~~ scrub which covered the ground somewhat sparsely for about 1000 yds from the foot of the kopjes when suddenly the Boers started shooting for all they were worth from the kopjes. Fortunately they had no guns & only one maxims which was luckily soon put out of action by one of our guns. Then the fun began & the band began to play: they got a very warm

August 6th 1900
The Sabbath Day

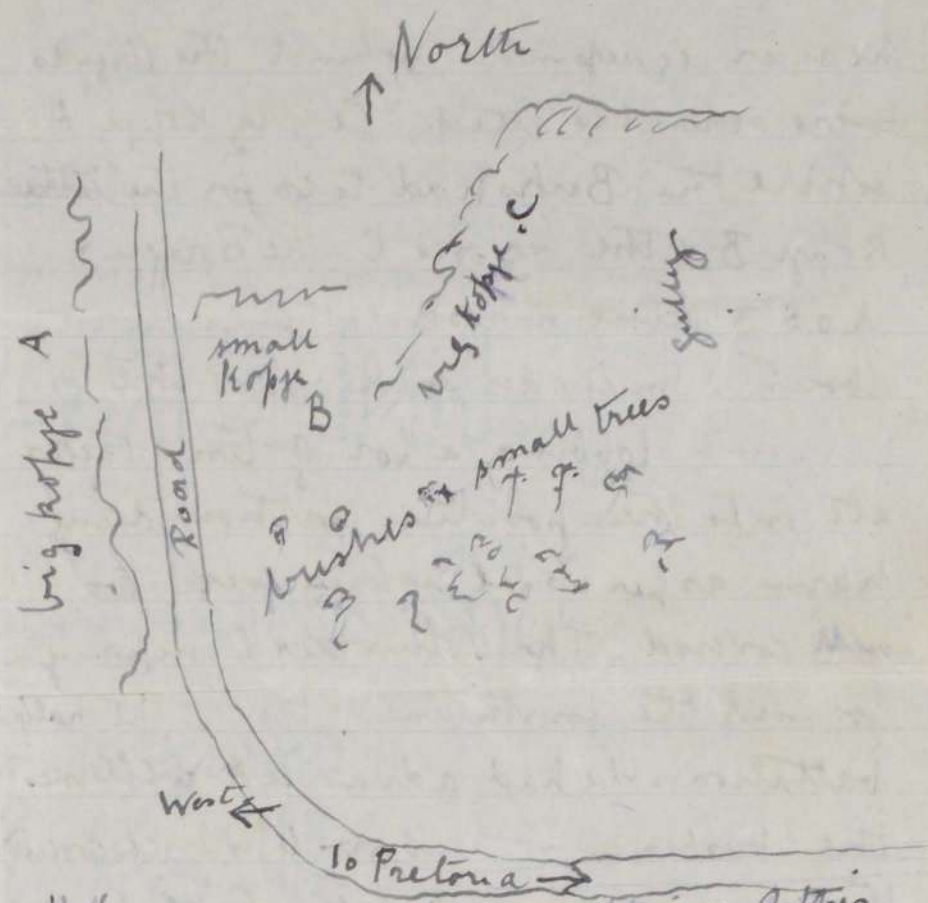
Rhenisterfontein
S. Africa

Dearest Mother

We have got a half holiday today so to speak as we have reached camp by 12:30 having paraded $\frac{3}{4}$ hour earlier (6:30) & having done our 14 miles in very good time as the roads was very good so now I must set to work & try & give you a more or less true account of the event of the Boer potting season. Of course you will have seen in the papers by this time of our performance & our losses. To begin at the right end of the story we sallied forth from Pretoria early in the morning ^{of Aug 1st} along the road running west to Rustenburg & Mafeking, the Brigade ^(under Cunningham) consisting besides ourselves of the Argylls, Borders & K O S B^{rs} with a ~~large~~ number of guns of all sorts including 3 Pom-Poms (very nasty little toys!) Mahon's force of Mounted Infantry completed the Division the whole being under Jan Hamilton. On either side

of the road there runs a range of very high kopjes, about 3 miles from the road each way. About 7 o'clock in delightful contrast to the bang-bang of the shots men at that very moment in the Hampshire water meadows we were treated to the merry click-click of the Mauser, though in this case not being the wily mallard but the unfortunate Bushmen who constitute a great part of Mahon's force & which was marching along to the North of the kopjes on our right. They were up a running fight all day long, along the hills with the scouts & we occasionally laddled out a little pom-pom & shrapnell but nothing of any importance occurred. About 16 miles out when our outposts were sniped somewhat vigorously. At this point there is a big break in the hills on the Northern side & the road runs through a big meek of which I will

attempt to make a rough sketch



Hope you can make something of this but I never could draw. I must just mention that this was the identical spot where the Lancos got into a hole some weeks ago. Well we had discovered that a body of the enemy held this place though we did not know their numbers in the least so we left camp about 9^(11?) in the morning the men having left their

he looked wonderfully well & had got much lighter hair than one would think from his paper photographs we are now supposed to be on the way to relieve him at Rusterburg 12 miles off but apparently he doesn't want much as he has ridden out here to have a confab with Hamilton.....

Some of the fellows however whose bloodlust was not to be easily ^{appeared} rushed off into the firing line & had a little on their own. Even was I believe the hero of the day, he got up the kopje almost first with a handful of H company & a few of A under Capt Pasley. They of course could not be seen when they got directly under the steep bit & when they got to the top they made a rush & were within 20 yds of the sangars before they bolted & when these bolted the others were also got on the run & the

time in the firing line & we all sat ² very tight even in the reserve as the bullets began to whizz about rather thickly even there. We crawled along a few yds at a time taking cover for all we were worth. Though from the height that the enemy were above us (as we noticed afterwards) they could easily see us. Luckily their shooting was wonderfully bad. We had been under fire about half an hour when our 3 Maxims got to work & did excellent business in keeping down the fire which had got a bit too thick, especially from the centre kopje. It was just about this time that our fellow Lee got a bullet through the head, & soon afterwards our Colonel like a lunatic being unable to find the captain of H Coy which was in front of us detached Even to command that company & also sent Clarke with 10 men on detached work.

To the right of the company which left me in sole charge of practically the whole company, a fact which was never communicated to me & of course caused confusion as I never received any orders & could not very well advance without any. However I gradually advanced till we got to the foot of the Kopje, which the firing line & supports had to the number of about 25, already captured, though we did not know what was happening as we could hear heavy firing still going on at the top. It was the most awful climb as it goes up at an angle of about 70 degrees & is all slippery grass & loose stones. The last 50 yds of it were quite inaccessible except by means of a narrow gully. We reached the top just in time to see the Boers running away for all they were worth from the foot of the other side. There was a flat top to the

Kopje on which they had built beautiful sangars. Meanwhile the centre Kopje had been cleared, also the farther one by the Argyls, there being very few on it. We then got a few Pom-poms to work & speeded the parting guests but did not do much damage. The worst feature of the whole show was that Mahons force never turned up when it ought to have otherwise we should have either captured the lot or else they would not have stopped for so long as they did, but bottled directly he got up most of the fellows under me did not fire a shot as among other things one never saw a single Boer the whole of the 3 hours we advanced, but the fellows under Clark got right up into the firing line & had great sport. ----- Just got up to honour the great "B.P." who has this moment ridden through the camp & within a yard or two of my shelter

Our two stretcher bearers did wonderfully well & worked hard till almost midnight bringing dead & wounded from the side of the kopje an awfully stiff job.

We have now done 3 days trek since the fight & are in the bushveldt again. Last night we bivouacked close to an enormous orange grove & to night the orange grove is bivouacking inside us! They are the most magnificent oranges I have ever come across, fit for the Queen's table & I should imagine every Tommy helped himself to from 6-50 of them, lots fell out from pains in the inside today on the march: at any rate the ^{division} can be tracked now by the orange peel along the road. Presumably Herr Boer the owner is out on Commando; Frau asked one bob for 20, which I regret to say T. Atkins was not always in fact very seldom,

3
position was won: it was a mercy neither Paisley or Even were shot. 1 sergeant & 2 men were shot dead as they reached the top. The General complimented Even & asked him what Company he belonged to & he of course said the Volunteers & so perhaps we shall get false praise for it. I must say our company did thundering well & went forward as straight as a die, & listened to the word of command & took cover, as they have never done on parade before. One fellow besides Lee got slightly hit & another got a bullet right into his ammunition pouch where it stuck, a miraculous escape & it knocked the wind out of him for a bit. The total casualties in the regiment were 4 killed & 36 wounded including Colonel Rhodes & Major Williams who were slightly hit but are all right now. I suppose it is the

proper thing to say how much one enjoyed one's "baptism of fire". Well when the first shots came whizzing by well one's head, one smiled + was generally pleased at having been under fire then when they came a bit closer + knocked up the ground in front of one, one began to look a bit serious + hunt for big stones. Two or three times I put up my hands round my head to keep off bullets from sheer instinct though of course they have gone by some miles before one can hear them! Soon I became much too busy with the men + one has to keep one's wits about one as the men were extended over 200 hundred yds + I had to be going up + down the line seeing that all was right + then one got used to the ping-ping. I was very thankful that there ~~was~~ was practically no firing at us from the centre kopje as we came up the big kopje otherwise we must have

lost men. One fellow evidently took a fancy to me as I was trying to hide my back by 3 of carcass behind a slender stem as he put 2 shots through the top of the bush + a third by the side + I was in an awful funk to see where the next was coming! Altogether it was a very smart performance turning from 400-500 Boers out of such an enormously strong position + our losses were really small considering the vast amount of ammunition used. We found 7 or 8 wounded Boers which represents a loss of about 25 as they generally manage to carry their wounded away with them. The place is called Tilikato Nek. The Company is of course awfully pleased with itself now + doubtless some of the letters home will be marvellous! We buried poor Lee by the roadside next morning before marching: he is a Maidenhead fellow + has a brother in the regiment.

& the head for dinner. I will keep
this open to make additions if necessary.
Please let Charles & James see this
as I shall not be able to write to them
for some time I expect. Above
all Charles I almost forgot, I
must heartily congratulate you on
your success in Mods. I suppose you
will say it was because I was not up
& around to bother you, but I feel
sure it was through my looking after
you at Tolland. You will please
give my best regards to your people &
I trust your Gouernon is all right again
now. You James, I congratulate
in anticipation for success at Merton,
& thanks for the letter: convey my
love to 43 Gloucester St. And send
good night & best love to all & with
very best to yourself. I remain
your affectionate son
F. A. S. ~~Son~~

was honourable enough to hang up. The
mess was also in luck there was besides the
oranges we got, a calf, 4 chickens & some
candy & a sack of mealie flour, which
can be made into suet or else powder,
a wonderfully substantial foundation
for ones breakfast. I think it is called
"homilly" at home. I believe I should
rather turn up my nose at it if it was
offered to me at home especially without
plenty of milk & cream. However one
does not think twice about eating
anything at ones 5.30 out in the
dark & out in the open breakfasts.
Today we have come in touch with
Colonel Kekewich's force & apparently
also with B. P. whose force is at
Reer tenburg. There are a lot of loose
commandoes about whom we shall
probably now try & scupper between us,
they have ^{been} blazing away at our patrols
all day long, I have not the least idea

as to when I shall be able to send this
back to Pretoria probably it will go with
with me as I suppose we shall soon
return there. I am awfully glad
I have had a chance of seeing this
part of the country as it is much the
prettiest
well watered & very fertile. We crossed
the Crocodile the other day at an
awfully pretty spot. I suppose you
are frightfully busy now shifting
into Audley, the more I think of it
the more I want to have just one peep
at it! However the chances of our
getting home seem smaller every day &
it seems as though we shall be here till
Xmas at any rate. I have been in
this country just over 2 months &
things are in just the same state now
as then. I hope you will be able to keep
a few pheasants for me. I have got
my eye on a possible trip to New
York with you. I do hope Father &

Grandpa did well in Norway. I am
longing to hear the result of the Stone
& Winchester matched Lords. I hope
Louise will not be expecting a letter
from me but these from me must
do for the whole family: they require
a great effort on my part. I can
tell you I hope Mary Collins Wedding
went off successfully: would you
please get a present from me for the
Percy - Blanche affair? My congrat-
ulations to Uncle Fred on getting
his picture hung: I will condescend
to come & dine with him some day.
My best wishes to all for a good partridge
season at Savernake. I really must
stop now & turn in as it is very late.
Tomorrow is August Bank Holiday,
& perchance we may have a fight,
but I go to bed with a light heart
for tomorrow does not the mess -
-calf yield up its liver for breakfast

Friday
August 10 - Camp by Crocodile Bush
S Africa

Dearest Mother,

A mail goes out this morning for Pretoria so I may as well take the opportunity to write a line in case I miss the next mail which seems probable as we are moving off West again. At present I am in the hospital ~~where~~ where I have been for the last 3 days with a

slight touch of fever but I am all right again now & again the regiment this afternoon I was taken over on August Bank Holiday night & sent into Hospital which means that you get a ride in an ambulance all day & sleep in a nice warm tent at night. I felt an awful vom for a bit & thought I was in for enteric but that seems that is averted. I have been pecking on sleep for sleep & shall renew my acquaintance with belly & back - or with some anxiety. I must say that riding in an ambulance is much of a catch especially when one has a headache as one is thrown about from side to side the whole day & one comes out a perfect wreck.

One is getting fairly sick of the hot now!
Two days ago he was, as usual, covered by yesterday
just as we were within a days ride of
Pretoria & the mails, we hear that he has
escaped & we have to turn about & are waiting
further orders. I was so looking forward to the
two next mails with the account of the Kimberley
water, now I suppose I shall not get one for
another fortnight. I hope you have not been
deterred from sending out things by any rotten
letters: I am all but out of tobacco & there is
none to be had in Pretoria but 3 or 4 lb
which is absolutely unworkable filthy, even
Tommy objects to it. I am very sorry we did not go
quite into Rustenburg: I believe it is a very decent
sort of place & worth not stopping either side
of a place & then coming away. I suppose directly we
left the Boers came down & looked right & left.
The Army Service Corps commandeered my
mule for over the other day & for some days
our ration was raised to it the of real beef
per day. I hope sincerely we shall get out
of this country before the hot weather comes
on in earnest as the bush-bird is a hot bed

of melon & there would be a full section
among the troops. I have written a short
letter to the Pres to tell him of my affairs,
& to say that my return in October is very
unprobable. I am beginning to look upon it
as lucky if we get back by June. Never
mind, I am getting on both a day & night to
have some money to spend, what ho!
I am longing to have a look at Dudley.
I wonder why you don't send me a
photo of it, if or at any rate give me
some description of it. I am also all
for killing some of those Savannahs plain.
No more news; why no letter so far
from James, or his her long stay in
Switzerland persuaded her against the brutal
English soldier? I suppose we shall not
see each other for a whole year by the time we
see each other again. Well best love to all
at home, & very best to yourself. Affectionately
yours
F. A. Lincoln

My love to the city that they have on
understanding of the source, but they
could find the source the other day.

has been sold out: chemists shops + beds
habsedding aboard. I can Arthur Plater
again looking very well & like most of us
wanting to get home. I met a great big
Fat of mine yesterday who had been having
any amount of fighting with the Oxford
Yeomanry + he was in the most awful
state, his clothes could hardly hold together
on his back: we are going to have tea together
tonight: it will look rather queer a trooper
& an officer feeding together in the hotel.
I had a good look ~~at~~ at Bobo + Mrs
& Miss's yesterday when they were visiting
a hospital just above the Orange river
needless to say enjoying himself immensely
I am, he lives with the hospital orderlies
who do themselves pretty well. It is most
satisfying, I left the regiment part when
15 bags of mail turned up, confusing
wholly and I don't know where I
shall get them. Even if course will keep
them for me but will not know where

Imperial Yeomanry Hospital!

Pretoria

August 14th / 00

Dearest Mother,

Rather a startling address
isn't it? but don't get frightened as I
am just five miles & living in the lap
of luxury! Just when I thought that I
was going to rejoin the regiment the
doctor said that he thought me unfit
to join as the dinner was going to mess
off again. Well he decided to send me
in to Pretoria with a huge conveyance of
sick & wounded, so here I am. The journey
on an ox-wagon was not an immense
pleasure, as the jolting is simply frightful
& the crossing of a drift is sheer agony.
My two companions were quite unique.
One was a Bushman subaltern from
Ireland who had got a Meakin's billet
in the Moor point & was in a bad way;
in fact the doctor said I might accept

a corpse into Petone: he made the
night hideous with his groanings!
The other was also a Incanlander, a
most extraordinary creature whom one
might be tempted to call an outsider:
anyhow he insisted on having breakfast
upon the wayer to take breakfast with
us, rather embarrassing! This hospital
is a grand place as you conceive it
belongs to some Borneo who has fled.
There is a fence in front of the house
which lies in the midst of some good
trees. There is a big house near door
which is used for the sick men (200 beds)
while this place is used for the sick
officers & doctors & nurses. Of course I was
put in bed directly I got in & the
doctor said I was as much as a dead
& could get up & that if I could
require was a good rest for a day or two.
My first job was to undress & a magnificent
bowl in the bathroom & I did

enjoy it, my second to get a real good
shave which is a thing I can get in
Petone if nothing else I have been here 3
days now & just about like myself!
I feel as fit as a fiddle & am only waiting
for a conveyance to go out to the Division
which I am accompanying: unfortunately
Hamilton is brooding about all over the
place & there seems no chance of getting out
to him yet & I fear they may insist to
clear me out of here soon to my great
regret there is a beech of 1000 only
officers to 15 beds; 2 are down with
outlets, the other 2 are up like myself
& we have a sitting ^{room} to ourselves where
we are fed like gods - bread & butter
great business after a month of hard
& it is a treat having one's meat beautifully
cooked. Above all it is grand getting into a
real bed again after not knowing one
for 3 months. I have been spending most of my
time walking about the town & trying to buy
a few things everything however of any use

to forward them, & of course any other
that may come in postscript to the
regiment without my being able to get at
them. I have been able to get heaps of
papers, beginning with the Winchester mater
might any day to Lords: it must have
been a grand volume at Winchester though
of course we should have had it. I have
managed to buy some paper for the news
& I only hope I shall be able to get it out
to them: some embossed & over-official
transparent paper may also be taken
it by the roadside, which will be a
financial loss too. Stamps are the one
thing that are on sale in every shop
under & if I had ~~as~~ a lot of money to
spare & knew anything about them I
might pick up a bargain or two. As it
is they are all immensely dear & one is
amazed right & left; I have left spent about
£4 on them already: a set of the fishing stamps
can be had for £35. I had a look at the
Museum this morning but one comes

out now the more as to the name of my
first or just as all the names are in D. L.
Everyone here is so deep in it to when
the war is likely to end: unless some
great surprise is shown it seems as tho
I shall not get back by Xmas!

Aug 16th - No more news except that
I'm kicked out of hospital & am
going to do duty in Red Camp

till I can get back to the Regiment
Enclose a photo of Miss Alice
Dames when you can get developed.

I fed with my pal Walker of Memphis
last night Best love to all & my
best wishes to the slayers of pertrudges

Your affectionate son,

F. A. Simonds

to my disgust that miss Brooks had sent all over the house to find me & make me escort them to their pens in front! (mistaken 102). I fed in the hotel with a waiter the other day who had been through the siege of Mafeking. His name was Daniels & he was a really good sort especially as the BSA P. he looked very fit certainly; it was the first time I had had first hand details & he told me some quite new B-P & other news: apparently they had got food for months left still: Lady Sarah whom I do not seem to have had such a late time after all according to his account. He was a great friend of Marchmont's & worked in the battery with him; he seems to have been a magnificent soldier & nobody hardly knew that he was mad, though he had a curious notion that every stranger was a Boer spy. So much for today; weather is really beautiful hot nowadays & flies are innumerable.

Rest Camp
Sunday
August 19th 1900
Pretoria

Dearest Mother,
Just time now to begin this week's mail before going out to feed in the town for Sunday lunch. I have been here 4 days & am quite sick of it & am going to get back to the regiment: they are 3 weeks on their way back here now & I hope to return in a few days. This is a most extraordinary place - the prison used for our officers - an excellent drawing of which appears in the Ill. Spitz - Dramatic of July 21st. I am at present writing this in the officers mess in the left corner; my tent is the best one in the left top corner. There are about 700 men here from every regiment almost that is out here: it is a regular hotel for men either convalescing or waiting to rejoin units. Officers also get comfortable going about & when doing the usual

numbers. There are no extras except one
officer per night on picket: it was my
happy lot last night. The line of outposts
extends about 3 miles along the most
hair-curling slopes. It took me from
1:15 to 4:30 to go round them so I did not
get much sleep. I wonder I did not break my
some limb as the ground is awfully rough
& would ruin any but really good boots
in a very short time. anyhow I had not
much difficulty in finding the men as in
most cases they had large red burnings
I have a batch of about 30 for nearly
noon this morning including one of the
great non-morally stout sergeants
he does not altogether seem being dropped
by the young & innocent Volunteer soldiers!
I have been employing myself lately on
the philanthropic line going round hospitals
& buying round Box tobacco for the sick
sick & wounded I can discover. I have just
found out that one of the Vol Coy named
Cox of Windsor died of dysentery here

3 weeks ago: he was a very good sort
that makes 3 deaths that we know of.
I have also been helping at the Soldier's
Institute under the wing of our chaplain,
Jones, a real good sort, & the great Miss
Brookbank whom I dare say you have
heard about as the great soldiers friend:
well, I was out of luck the other day,
I left camp for the town about 3 & just
outside ~~at~~ I passed the two Miss 'Bobs'
who were going to inspect the place, & as
there was only the D.C. left ~~so~~ he had to
show them round, a job which he would
have certainly entrusted to me if I had
been there as he is a distinct misogynist.
(misfortune No 1, I went to the Soldier's Institute
at 5 & helped plant the Tommies in their
seats for a concert that was coming on & at
5:30 I left for camp: just outside who should
arrive int. 'Bobs' & the messes & I had
not got the checks to rush up again in post
& get into the officers tea room when they
came through: I afterwards found out

Aug 25th / 00

Still here & no prospect of getting away just yet. There are 24 bags of mail for the Regt waiting at the station waiting to go to them as soon as they find out where the division is. most tantalizing & annoying to say the least of it. I went to see the conclusion of the trial of that young rogue Lt Hans Cordua of the Staats Artillerie who invented - if one may call it an invention - that scatter-brained plot. He looks about 17 & the ideal of a wild German doll that student. It was a very interesting but the whole show fell flat when the Judge said that the Court found him guilty, & just when everyone was expecting to hear him, "sentences him to be shot or whatever they do say on such occasions, the sentence will not be announced till confirmed by Lord Roberts. Anyhow he will, as everybody expects, go the way of all such scoundrels. I had dinner last night with a friend of mine who introduced me to a

Clinton J. Trickman who ~~intended to~~ was
a Russian doctor settled on a farm in these
parts: the 3 here commandeered him for
their ambulance but he got sick of them
& has now become head of Capt Roberts'
intelligence dept. he was all through
the Natal snow. he stood us a bottle of
Jing each & a bottle of grand old Cognac,
also a fill of the best honey I have ever
had in my life which he had grown on his
own farm: altogether I had a rare good
evening: I also met in the hotel a magazine
man in the C.I.V. with whom I dine tonight:
he has got his discharge to go back to
Oxford for October term, also a fellow
called Wild, an Old P.H., & a friend (?) of
the Myers. I enclose some stamps for Face just
to keep his pecker up! that old set from id-
to 55 is very valuable, quite worth 50 now, so
don't let them lose them. I got them from a man
who got a lot of sets wholesale some time ago. I have
also put 6 on the outside to get them used: I dare say
the Post office will buy them. ~~Bye~~ No more news
so goodbye, & best love to all, y^r affectionate son,
I hope the folks are adding well. F.A. Simonds.

as they are a bit rusty & one
has just been off at some
imaginary job. Sorry I cannot
write more but there is no news
except that I have ^{had} no marks now
for 6 weeks. I am just going to
have a wrap up in my great coat
& toss it for a couple of hours before
going on my last baker before the
moon goes down & it gets pitch dark
- just the time for an attack. I have
also been using a tolly to write by,
a frequent abuse of outpost regulations
but what are such trifles as a victory
or myself wrapped in boxes with you
not getting a nibble of potato! very
very best love to all, & ever as much
for yourself. An affectionate son,
T. A. Diamonds

Thursday Provisional Battalion
September 6th - Kriemhild

10.30 hrs

Dearest Mother,

I hope you will
excuse only a short letter this
week but I have been living in
troubled times lately & have put
off the writing like too late though
I have managed to write to Sarah.
I have been staying here ever
since you I last wrote being transferred
here to do duty, & work it has
been with a vengeance: thank
heavens tomorrow I am going North
again to Pretoria where I shall
renew my efforts to repair. The
whole place is on the alert all day
& night now, owing to the recent
raids on the line (it has been damaged

5 times in 10 days) & we have
the most careful & stringent
outpost regulations. For our
own outpost there are only myself
& another sub available, & in
consequence out of 5 nights I
have been here, I have sent
3 on outpost & last night - my
sleep - night - just before 1 the
C & rumbled into my tent &
ordered me out to help the manning
of the trenches. The General
(W. Knox) having sent word
to say that an attack was expected
any moment. So we crowded into
the trenches; Manning came on to
look after, & from 1 till 6.30 we
sat & shivered & of course saw no
Boers. I prayed for them to come

as we were in nice snug trenches
with all the ranges marked out &
no cover in front of them, & we
might have rendered a good account
of ourselves. The score was raised
away to two of Thoms' scouts having
been caught in the town - carrying
weapons & having in them sketches
& maps of all our positions round
the town! There is rather a score
or tonight too for some reason
or other: I am writing this like
young on my petticoat: this is the
third night running that I
have been up & had ~~no~~ ^{no} ~~best~~ ^{best} to
~~peak~~ ^{peak} of, but I don't seem much
the worse though: 4 nights out
of 5 is a bit stiff. I have had to
double most of the sentries tonight

R.S. 06 office
Middelburg Station
Transvaal.

Model 68a.

BIJLAGE.

N^o

L^o

Sunday
September 9th 1900.

Antwoord op brief dd.

No.

betreffende:

Dearest Mother,

Gelieve bij het antwoord dagtekening, nummer en
letter deses nauwkeurig te vermelden.

Telegram adres:

EXERCISE.

Here I am at last fairly on
the trek up to the regiment again, they are
apparently quartered permanently at Belfast
a 3 hours run from here. I brought up 250 men of all sorts from
Kroonstad on the 7th & had a very slow journey not reaching Pretoria
till late afternoon of yesterday. At Edardsfontein I am thankful to
say I received my glasses which had been returned from Johannesburg.
On reaching Pretoria I rushed off to the A.A.S. to report arrival
& see if I could not get up this way at once & luckily a wire had
just come up from the C.O. to send up his mails so the D.A.A.S.
(Major Filton of the 1st Bikes) told me I could take them up to-day. Of
course the O.C. Rest Camp was furious at the idea of my going
again at once as he considers that every officer ought to stop there at
least a month! Anyhow you can imagine I did not stop one minute
longer than I could help. I am a bit fed up with Rest Camps. I went
to early service at the Cathedral this morning. It is a tiny little place
but quite a neat place but nobody seems to go much only nurses & one or
two residents. The train left Pretoria at 12; it is only a supply train
with 25000 lbs of stores aboard, & there are 4 men every day to feed the
vast quantity of troops up this way. I had a very comfortable journey in
the guards' van, only 3 officers in it, 2 of them taking up Bolo's mails.
I forgot to mention that I am bringing no mails at all as there were none
to bring. The line here performs the most aerobatic snake-like feats.
Constant round & about kippies in the most startling manner; of course
the country is fairly level compared to that last of here; it is looking
really pretty now as the recent rains have put a respectable green colour

into the wild, & all sorts of flowers are springing up; the peach & apricot
trees which abound in every little garden are all in full bloom & look
very bright. The ground was of course more or less familiar to me as
for as Balmoral as we came over it 6 weeks ago. I reached here at
9.30 this evening & I got leave from the R.S.O. to sleep in his office
& I spent five cents & this most respectable paper lying about so I
thought I might as well commandeer them while my servant is preparing
an evening meal of porridge & coffee for me. As I write there he before me
letters addressed to Col. Barker, D.C. Lines of Communications, & I
have made enquiries & find that he has just come here to take over
that job from Gen. Hutton. I shall accordingly leave a line for him here
to acquaint him of my well being though I don't suppose it will interest
him a bit. Curiously enough just as I came in I met Clarke just arrived
from Belfast: he is going to take over R.S.O. work here as the regiment
has apparently come to a full stop. I was offered the job just a month
ago when in Pretoria but of course refused it, as it probably means not
seeing the company again which is not to my liking & I think it very
stupid of him: that makes both of the original outstations always doing R.S.O.
work. Somehow I don't think that sitting behind an office stool all
day (& most of the night) firing off telegrams, getting down the telephone
& being the general butt for everybody's abuse is quite after my style; at
any rate not at here: I shall get plenty in after years perhaps!
Sommer for tonight. I must just fire off a line to Col. Barker, then
supper, & then a dose on the office floor. Everything comes alike to me
nowadays when one is sleepy. I can sleep anywhere now!

September 11th /00 Belfast. Here I am at last with the Regt after
just a month's absence & jolly glad I am to be back. I find that we are
quartered here permanently, at any rate for a fortnight or so, to
garrison this place & guard the communications. Colonel Barker
is our O.C. Two companies are on permanent duty at the next
station down the line W. de Fontenay, Jacks being with them; 4 companies
only are here now at all the other 3 being in various outposts. The whole
battalion is absolutely done up with marching, having done nearly 500
miles in 40 days with only 3 days rest which is pretty stiff, & they certainly
deserve a rest: only about 600 remain fit for duty & some of the officers
are far from fit. Even is quite tired out & 2 others have gone down country.

BIJLAGE.

N^o.

L^a.

Antwoord op brief dd.

No.

betreffende:

Gelieve bij het antwoord dagteekening, nummer en
letter deze nauwkeurig te vermelden.

Telegram adres:

EXERCISE.

The Volunteer Company can now only number
60 men, the rest being in hospital or Rest Camps.
I do feel a little not having been with them for
the last month; I feel sure I could have
managed the marching ~~right~~ all right.
This place is tremendously high up. The altitude
allowing this we are being the highest
to in the Transvaal: we came up 1000 ft
from Middelburg, a tremendous pull for
the engines, one being at each end & then we
simply crawled. I found on arriving that the
mails for me (6) had been readdressed for Pretoria & would have gone
in an hour's time! What a glorious sight they were too when I
spread them out on the ground in rows: I had 44 altogether of various
sorts, & had a whole afternoon's sitting to get through them & most
welcome they were! now I suppose I must answer them, a rather
difficult matter at present as there is a violent wind blowing making
sitting in the open a tough job. First of all I must apologise for not having
acknowledged the Weekly Times all of which I have received & they have been
most welcome. Secondly I must thank you immensely for all the packages
which it was so fully good of you to send: they are none the less
welcome by reason of their not having come in a heap: the tobaccos
(especially Gamin's for which many thanks) are simply ripping, the socks
too will be very useful if we get on the march again, which I doubt,
as also the cocoa. Needless to say the chocolate has had my immediate
consideration! Now for two bones I should like to pick, (1) Could not you
have stretched your conscience a little or somehow made your hen write
LAND - INE or the like instead of SPIRITINE? of course heeds of it
is sent out here under other names (2) When you were so good as to order
me a new coat, why did you not order a drill coat instead of serge,
which is what I want now that the warm weather is on, but of course ~~any~~
new coat will be very welcome. I received an awfully nice letter from Mary
Collins thanking me for the present. I hope the wedding was a success. I also
got 3 from James 3 from Louise & 3 from Gamin & one a wonderful production
from the kid, 2 from Father, & needless to say none from that slack least Lunny

also one from Uncle Fred, one from Charles L T, one from Charles B, one
from Frank, one from Guy, one from Harry Dawson & sundry others,
above all, a most delightful one from Aunt Emily with an enclosure
from Uncle Bache begging for stamps which has come rather late now
that I have left Pretoria but I will do my best for him. I doubt that
people when they write would not discourse on the war or De Wet. I
get quite enough of both, also China, & the news in general is always
stale & generally wrong! I have also heard enough about Garrow
& his sufferings (in every letter except his own) to fill a book on dentistry.
What a time you must have had with the movings! I hope Garrow
will find it exactly to his liking. I wish I could get a look at the place.
The best I can hope for is to eat my James dinner there now. My respects
to Paddy & a hobby time to him among the rabbits! Please thank Uncle
Fred for his most entertaining letter. I am so glad he is practicing giving
dinner parties ultra vias to giving me a good one when I get back. Is his
grinding tackle still allowed to exist? The wind is too much of a good
thing as I must stop for today.

Later have just discovered that I have to go away on another
tour tomorrow so I must post this now. Sorry I have not written more,
must defer till next week. My best love to everybody, & tell
Louise I am obliged to her for her letters; I hope she does not
expect one from me as I am only having one life & I am busy
killing you all that happens in it! Heaps of love for yourself.

Your affectionate son,

F. A. S. Summers

feat which I have accomplished more than once in the same. There are absolutely no distinguishing features (except dead cattle which abound) nothing but rolling veldt for miles South of the town, & it is most bewildering if once you lose your bearings which is very easy to do & a compass is not at all reliable owing to the quantity of ironstone in the ground. The quantity of dead cattle about here is appalling; most have been killed by French's march out here: within a thousand yards of here there is a heap of over 70; so far the wind has been favourable. The vultures are having a great B KO & if we ~~got~~ cared to go near one could knock them over with a stick as they are so gorged. I am very sorry Charles has left us as I am afraid he will not be able to repair us on our return; I think I turned up just in time as it would have left her all the work to do & she has been quite done up with marching & yet sticks to it undauntedly & is awfully energetic. I am very fond

Outpost near Belfast

Sunday
September 15th 1850

Transvaal Colony.

Dearest Mother,

Thanks very much for your letter of last week, so glad to hear you are at last getting fairly straight at Andley. I also received one from Father for which many thanks, also one from Face containing the usual 90 per cent of rot, & one from Boy. I am on outpost on a hill 2 miles away from Camp; for the first 2 days here I was with the Volunteer Company, but for the last 3 I have been in charge of Harvey's Company who relieved them as Harvey himself is away surveying & I don't know when he will come & relieve me. It is a bit dull & here a very windy, dusty & filthy dirt. I have built into myself a hut from some sheets of corrugated iron taken from a house wrecked by the Boers close by. There is not much to do by day except sit outside the dranty & smoke & survey with the glasses the various parties building

sensar etc but at night it is rather hot as
I have to be up at 3 going round the
posts & patrolling & we have to stand to arms
at 5. Thanks to the better meat & cocoa you
sent me & some jam I got up from Kronstad
I am living pretty respectably. Yesterday
as they persisted in sending the men out
most disgraceful rations of meat from
camp, only 2 commandeered sheep, as thin
as vessels, among a whole company, I took
the law into my own hands & snipt out
an ox from among many which have
been let loose as unable to take any longer
so that they can feed up again, & having
stretched my conscience as to believe
that he was likely to die & was useless, I
tried to kill the beast. Unfortunately he
was a bit too lively & refused to let me get
at his head with my pistol so I had to take
two running shots just to steady him a bit
& then the expert got an end-on shot with
a rifle & within an hour or two there was

a fine supply of fresh meat in the pot.
Needless to say I collared a bit of the heart
& liver for myself! The men are having a fine
feed now, ox tail soup & steaks galore & poor
fellows they deserve it they get just enough
to live on & that is about all. I am sure
I could not live on what they get - 4½
biscuits, 1 lb of coffee to 3 lb tea, 1 lb (chiefly bone)
meat, 1 pot of jam among 4 men men in 2 or
3 days, 1 lb sugar, occasionally some
compressed vegetables or cheese, now that they
are in a stationary camp. It seems pretty
settled that we stop here as a garrison
as long as the war lasts as the officers
are building a mess hut & tents are I believe
being sent up. Bols has his headquarters
here at present. Our camp is really rather
a force as only 2 companies & headquarters
staff are there at all the remainder being
on outpost. It takes me about 2 hours to
go round my outposts if I don't lose my
way & a good deal more if I do, a

staff man. I have heard great accounts
of the wedding from Jack. I have written
to Aunt Emily, Bess & James. Best love to all,
& longing to have a look at you in your new
surroundings. Remain

Yr affectionate son,
F. A. Simonds

P.S. Order has come out that only English
stamps have ~~not~~ to be used, but I
have only got French ones.

Please excuse dreadful marks but my
nerves are unwell! it is not yet.

of him & so are all the men. I am sure
he will be very glad to get back & have a holiday,
I am sure he deserves it & he has got so dreadfully
tired. I am simply reeling in all the
letters that have been sent me & I notice
with honor that I have almost smoked
through the walls of the lovely pipe James
gave me. It is awfully good of you to keep
thinking of sending out such a lot of parcels
~~at once~~ when you must be so busy with
things. I forget if I asked you to thank
Uncle Fred for his most entertaining epistle,
please tell him that his 'timepiece' as he
insists on calling it is flourishing, but like
himself is not quite 'flashy' at night, in fact
very dull when it gets dark! ~~It~~ has also
got a crack in front which has rather
spoiled the symmetry of the glass. Please
thank Grandpa for his love & tell him that
his glasses are very fit & excellent; also thank
Cousin Fanny & give her my love: I suppose
she is a bit off 'sky piloting' in the East

just now: I recommend to her notice dent-
-lodging among the Kamitah as equally
suitable. By the way I read a very curious
thing in a book 'tother day which seemed
to apply to her 'a young lady whose only
consolation in this world was the belief that
John Bull was the Bull of Bashan!'
I suppose I must thank Gavin for that most
excellent tin of tobacco which was to my
taste the same as Myrtle Grove under a
different name.

Sat 15th Back in camp again; there are only
2 companies ~~here~~ here at all & they have a
lot of fatigues to do & altogether it is very dull.
We have to attend to arms every other morning
at 5 o'clock reports come in from the outposts.
this morning we had to wait about 6:20 in
a horrible fog & bitterly cold it was: it is like
being in the mountains, in fact we are continually
enveloped in clouds: I don't think the prospects
of a happy existence here are very bright as the
rainy season will soon be upon us, & when

it does rain it does not do so in sheets
but regular side-down quills! No one is
allowed to go into the town as the place is
swarming with measles! English I know,
& some I know but what of the rest?
We seem to be getting very good news just at
present, & the new proclamation seems to be
working wonders. Col. Barker, accompanied
by Count Glenhien, came & called on me the
day before yesterday, just said 'howd'ee'
& sent love to you & sent off again, very very
thankful no doubt to have performed an
obvious but necessary duty: he looks at a
bit older than I should have thought, but
just the same as ever as regards manner
of conversation. Apparently he has, like
most of the big & color staff creeds, got into
some mess for he is fairly 'stollen' this
time & got a very poor job. I also notice that
he has ~~been~~ gazetted A.S. for Khampat
which is rather a come-down ~~for~~ ^{for} an R.C.

so they come out this way at night & have a look at us & see if they can strike anybody: they murdered one of our Hussar patrols this week: it is quite certain that they will stick there for years on their herds & meshes - if someone does not clear them out, & their numbers are naturally being increased. There has been a fight at Nand's River (near Balmore) & all the trains have been stopped for a day, but there has been wonderfully little interruption of traffic on this line. Unfortunately we have very little in the way of stores here, as the mess is practically empty & it is most tantalising to think that there are 85 cases of groceries for us somewhere on the line & the colonel absolutely refuses to let anybody go down & fetch them up. We can only get bully beef & biscuits instead of bread & beef which are pretty freely issued nowadays to the troops, & we have also to share our scanty stock of stores with the three other officers who have got nothing: we are trying to get a goat of two off some Kaffirs who have a kraal

Dalmanutha Station

Sunday
September 23rd/00

Near Machadodorp
Transvaal

Dearest Mother,

As you may gather by the above address we have moved on a bit since my last letter. On Friday we had sudden orders for our company & one other to march here at once to relieve two companies of the K O S B^o who had been originally stationed here as they in company with the rest of the Brigade have been ordered to Pretoria. Cunningham came through here yesterday & professed to be at a loss to know why he had been ordered back; at any rate he brought us great news to the effect that all was practically over in the East. We were very thankful to get away from Belfast & headquarters as it was awful hot there, nothing but fatigues & outposts. It was about ~~an~~ a nine mile march all across the country which had been forgotten over by Buller & the Rifle Brigade 3 weeks ago & the ground

was simply littered with cartridge cases & ~~snare~~ bullet-bullets. This place is about 650 ft lower than Belfast & is consequently warmer & less windy & dirty. Machadodorp is about 6 miles off down a tremendous dip, while the next stations Waterfall Onder & Boven are ever so much lower than that. The whole country round about is terribly mountainous & impossible for anything but infantry. The garrison here consists of our 2 companies, half a squadron of 1st Hussars, & a naval 47, quite sufficient. I should thank for the place, & it is not a likely place for them to attack ~~at~~ as it is only a siding really, the 'town' consisting of the station which is used as a hospital & the stationmaster's cottage, one room of which the garrison officers (7) are allowed to mess in. As soon as we can get up any tools we are going to set the men to work digging for ~~coiled~~ buried magazines & ammunition which are supposed to be in the neighbourhood. The men will doubtless work with unusual zeal as this is in the

gold-district & they will perhaps cherish hopes of finding nuggets! There are great prospects for this part of the country I believe; at present the dynamite monopolies have absolutely ruined those who hold the mineral rights. We are expecting great developments in the next few days as our spies have just brought in news that there is to be a huge gathering of Boers at a place close to here to consider the advisability of a complete surrender. The worst of it all is the Boers never get a look at any of Bolo's proclamations as they fall into the hands of the veld-cornets who destroy them at once. They are really at the bottom of all this hanging-on & a terrible number of their commands who at heart wish to surrender & would certainly do so if they could only see the proclamations. There has been a lot of about 60 living in a big ravine near the Komati River 10 miles off - we can see their fires every night & they have vast herds with them nobody seems inclined to molest them & the consequence

headquarters & will be sent here some
day when it suits their august pleasure.
We had 7 trains through here yesterday
& the day before & none the day before
that. You cannot imagine the pleasure
it gives us to see each train come in;
they all stop for about 2 or 3 hours &
one has a chat with any officers that may
be on board. Otherwise our life is singularly
uneventful. My best love to everyone
& with all love to yourself & hoping that
you are all settled down comfortably to the
joys of Dudley's Wood.

I remain,

Your affectionate son,

F. A. Simonds

P.S. Please tell Father to be good enough
to put in a little more money for me into
Cox's in case of accident. I have not the
faintest notion how I stand for money,
but I have got through a fair amount I
am afraid.

Closely. I have never eaten one yet but I
believe they are not bad when not too old.
We have also had great rumours here from
fellows coming down the line of De Wet
& Botha surrendering & of peace being
declared but it has to be taken with many
a grain! We do believe however what
we see with our own eyes, namely Bols
going down to Pretoria on the homeward
track which looks very promising. It also
means that K of K will be left in charge
& he will certainly not have so many
samples about running farms & will not
stand much nonsense, & by that means
will perhaps make himself useful for once
in a way. Certain it is that the 3rd Division
have been ordered home, & the W. Yorks have
gone by here on their way back (so they
imagine). ~~Let~~ I dare say within a few
weeks of receiving this you will have a wire
saying when we said! I suppose this will reach
you just about your birthday so many happy
returns of it & all at Dudley's Wood! I hope
they will be a cork pleasant or two for me

at Sarcobolus. I met a fellow of the U O S B⁶
here, by name of Dodgeon, a first cousin of
Mrs Jim's. I am expecting the railway
train, they are very behind hand this week.
There are any number of pretty flowers
growing up now, which are quite unknown
to me or even one of our sergeants who is
second gardener at Enylefield. I enclose one
or two for your inspection. I am getting quite
a collection of them from putting one into my
pocketbook every time I come across a new one.
Eucalypts also are beginning to show up a bit
though I have not seen any of the
big clouds yet, but doubtless shall soon.
I will finish this in a day or two when I
hope there will be great developments: I hope
none of the Boers who are going to attend
the great gathering will want to come this
way afterwards for dinner. We are thinking
of placarding the kopjes with lists of the
fare they ~~are~~ are likely to get. By the way,
all the Boers are instructed that Kruger
has been granted 6 months leave by their
government to finally settle up with the Powers

and the way in which they are going to win back
the country, & that also Bobs has been obliged
to go home owing to a mortal wound or illness!
They firmly believe it too! de Wet's feats too
are greatly magnified. he seems to have vanished
into thin air at present & we are all speculating
as to whether he will turn up in the Colony
or Swaziland next!

S. Mt 25th/00. Heard last night that Bobs is
today holding a big review in Pretoria in
order to officially proclaim peace. I am rather
surprised that he has not waited till his
birthday next Sunday. Altogether things
are beginning to look rosy: the C. I. V &
Canadians have orders to sail: it really
seems very probable that we shall be back
by December. The men are getting very
keen at the prospect & consequently very
slack. We also have just heard that the
elections are coming off soon. I wish we
could be back for them! I was Palmer.
We have had no mail in this week yet
so I must thank you in advance for
your letter. I suppose they are being sorted at

of impending attacks on the line in these parts but nothing has come of it yet. Last night 2 Bohees came in to report that there was going to be a raid on the line that night or tonight & the Colonel said "Let 'em", it only takes an hour or two to repair & no power on earth can stop them if they want to, as it is quite impossible to patrol 10 miles of line carefully enough to prevent anyone ~~else~~ slipping in in the dark & blowing up some yards of rail. I am expecting Col Barker down this way ~~on~~ any day as it is part of his command; he certainly ought to have been down before if he was energetic. We have just heard that Col Evans-Gordon has been placed on half-pay! needless to say everybody is delighted: it is a perfect mystery to me why he has not been sent home ages ago. Major McClacken the second in command will almost certainly get the command: he is a most

Royal Berks Regt
Friday
Sept 28th / 00
Dalmanutha
Transvaal

Dearest Mother,

Two mails arrived last night & in them of course your two very welcome & interesting letters also ones from the whole of the rest of the family: youngsters please note: unto you greetings & thanks! also letters from the faithful James who writes every fortnight & Charles. I am so sorry my letters cause family squabbles over the breakfast table; I personally should give my undivided attention to the breakfast! I have made it my mind to never leave off eating fish & eggs for breakfast & perhaps sausages hereafter: no more steak & chops or bully! You cannot imagine how much I enjoy any details about Andlers: sorry to hear there is an affliction of rabbits; can I

bring back a little byddite to help shift
a few.² I am glad Sam has met Sgt
Hoare: he is a friend of mine but I admit
that he is a bit queer! 'Dotty' + 'Siddy'
are the two names that he is usually
known by. I fairly roared with laughter
on seeing the order for me to attend 'Diners'
on Oct 6th. I have written a line to the
Senior Tutor to say that I couldn't fail
to be amused! So glad Flatman has
been pleased about my seeing Arthur; I
suppose that means one or two nice
'corners' when I get home! I am afraid
Arthur has rather misquoted my words!
I am sorry you have had been worried
about my not getting your parcels
but they generally arrive some time after the
letters: I have received 2 as told, 6
of them in a heap at Belfast. I have
got the peppermints & they are very welcome
to myself but not anybody else, in fact I
have been nearly kicked out out of the mess!
Unfortunately some official in the Post
Office with a sweet tooth & a predilection

for Fry's chocolate has helped himself to some
in write!

Sunday September 30th We are settling down
now to a most peaceable existence, in fact
I am getting into a groove & shall soon
not care about coming back! The
stationmaster has gone so we have
got the whole of his cottage, also his
fowl-house & 15 fowls, so we get about
8 eggs daily which are a great treat. I have
~~never~~ yet taken such an interest in
fowls as now. Some niggers bring us in
fresh milk daily (1/- a quart) & we have
also got some goats which make very good
eating. The Army Service Corps have
sent us 10 oxen to kill as we want
them so we are pretty well provided now
We get about 4 or 5 trains through
a day & they all contain Guards &
other troops on their way home. Officers
released from Barberton, among them
Col Shragge of the Yeomanry & Col Roberts
of the Lincoln's have just passed through.
We are continually hearing rumours

Lalby's late correspondence in the papers
has caused no small amusement, & the
universal opinion is that he ought to be
lynched. I rode into Mathadobah yesterday
& I don't think I have ever seen such
a dingy hole in my life. It lies right
down in a basin & consists of about 30
hovels & a railway station, the whole
everlastingly enveloped in a sandstorm.
There is a huge 9.4 gun there on a truck
which I duly admired. I only stopped
about half an hour & then came back
hanting & chock full of dust. Not having
been on a horse to school for some years I
was stiff & sore after a 10 mile ride & think
it very creditable that I did not do a tumble.
Last night being the first for 3 nights
that I had not ~~been~~ been on outpost I did
a fine sleep all round the clock 8.30-9,
a very difficult feat to accomplish considering that
I always sleep in the open now owing to the nights
being so calm & the mules or men generally
trample on me after six o'clock. Best love to all
& hoping to have a look at you all safely installed at
Andley's, I remain, ^{you} af, in F.A.S.

delightful man & a thorough soldier &
the men would follow him anywhere.
Even I groan in chorus to think
that tomorrow is October 1st: I wonder if
you are having a small day at Savonake
just to christen ~~the~~ the peasants. I hope by
the next mail to hear the results of Sept. 29th
shoot. I am so sorry to hear that Sam
Cuthbert could not shoot on the 1st. Please
give him my kind regards when you
see him next. A trainload of Boer
prisoners came through yesterday, among
them many who looked the biggest
rascals unhung, all nationalities under
the sun, many Scots ~~among~~ being
included: there are lots of them about
the Lydenburg districts & they have all
been fighting against us. I must try
& find time to write to kid this week.
Please give my kind regards to Mr. D. H. H. H.
Tuesday October 2nd. Still nothing but
impending attacks none of which have
yet come off. However a trainload of

Coldstreams which have just gone through
has been derailed near Wardenfontein
& had a few casualties which prove
that Boers do still exist & may perhaps
pay us a visit. We have got an Intelligence
agent here, a curious specimen, an
Englishman by birth & a 'mechanical'
dentist by trade, who daily gets hold
of the most wonderful rumors by
means of his staff: they consist of a
half-caste boy named Alexander
Africa alias the Ferret & a Zulu
named the Snake who go out every night
into the Boer farms & bring in news,
or if they cannot hear anything startling
they have to make something up. We
hear that after all Major McCracken is
~~not~~ not going to have the command
owing to Major Burney of the 1st Batt
stepping in. We heard that he was just
about to retire. Anyhow he is a very good
man, & will not stay long & M. will get
it soon. The late Col^o departure was
fringed with many an exciting & amusing

incident. Being a man who never writes
or looks at a paper he did not see his
name in the Gazette & for two whole days
sat stolidly at the head of table & was
still unconscious of his downfall, till
at last it became unbearable & the
Command had to show him
the Gazette. He was awfully annoyed &
couldn't imagine what he had done
wrong & chided us for not having
pointed out his shortcomings to him!
Anyhow within a few hours he was
packed up & had shunk off round by
the back of the Camp, without saying
adieu to anybody, & was safely caged in a
truck & sent off to Pretoria. It was a very
good job the men did not know he was
going or they would have pooted or even
stoned him. They are keeping a high holy
day at Headquarters, & wonders are being
worked: the Adjutant's cut hand healed, a
boil on the Quartermaster's neck vanished
& the S^y-major smiled. Nobody has
expressed a word of sorrow at his departure.

bravely shot in the leg whereupon
the other nigger fell from the Boer,
barged his rifle, & shot him dead, & came
home in triumph with the rifle! You
must be very sorry that I am not
back to give you lunch or your exact
as Gauri cannot give you half as
good & one at New Collyer. I am sure!
Give my respects to the Doctor. We have
got a ripping shower-bath rigged up here
under the tank used for watering the
engines: it is a most ingenious contrivance.
Today being cooler than usual, we have
started a battle against the flies which
had become unbearable & slew a million
& one! So long, keep well, & I will
soon be back & have a rare good time with
you all: don't you wish we could have a
few days together in the water meadows about
Xmas time? Yr aff^l brother,

F. A. Simonds

Royal Berke Rgt

October 2

Dalmanutha (or) Machedorp

Transvaal

My dear Harry,

Very many thanks
for your most interesting letter. I was
most glad to hear from you again. I
suppose you are back at school again
now & enjoying that enticing pastime
football. I suppose you have been
having a rosy time at Andley's work
& wish I could have a look at the
place & the rabbits etc. Shall I bring
back a little hydrite to help shift a
few? I am having a pretty good
time & hope to be on the wing &
steaming home in a few weeks. The
Boers are tanning down a bit now &
are only going about in small bands
seeking what they can slay. They hover
round about here in the hills but rather
fright shy of myself & a 4.7 gun

terrors both of us - are not likely to
attack, though they will probably
try & amuse their little selves by
derailing trains & such innocent amusement.
Yesterday they upset a train full of
Swards going home 2 stations up the
line, & killed 2 & wounded 13, awfully
hard luck. I will try & get you some
fowl or feathered pine but this is the
wrong time of year for them as they are
in winter plumage, 2 months later
would be better. I did some revolver
shooting at vultures yesterday but did
not slay any: there are thousands
about & having a magnificent time
feeding on the dead beasts which cover
the line of Roberts' march. They are
awful looking brutes & much ^{more} ~~more~~ ^{orrid}.
I have ordered the ~~niggers~~ niggers to try &
get some beasts of sorts. There are v few
hogs about. I should like to get the
skin of an ant-bear but they are very

hard to get at as they live very far
underground & never appear except by
night. Face has sent me a most
extraordinary letter asking me for stamps
I have never heard of, much less an
ever likely to go near. He seems to think
I am made of money out here. We are
living very nicely & comfortably nowadays,
having the stationmaster's cottage to
do feed in & we have built a lot of
shelters to sleep in from corrugated iron.
I generally sleep out in the open now
though as it is nice & calm by night.
I shall feel quite uncomfortable when
I have a bed to sleep in & a roof over
my head. We have also got a fowl ^{house} ~~house~~
& fifteen hens which lay about 8 eggs
a day. Two niggers went out from here
the other day to do a little spying for us
& were collared by 2 B's: one of the
B's went away to get the orders to shoot
the niggers, so one nigger bolted & was

to the engine & wore smothered the whole
time with clouds of food smuts, & my
eyes are full of them now & fairly smarting.
No doubt you will have got a wire by
now as to when we sail. The Volunteer
Companies are all being huddled together
here at Bloemfontein & I suppose will be
kept here for weeks if they choose to treat
the Volunteer Coys like they did when
they first came out. The town is now
full of all kinds of stores through at
vast prices. I believe even strawberries are
obtainable. I hope you are keeping a
pleasant one too: I think December it
will show see me home. Best love to
all.

Your affectionate son,

F. A. Simonds

R. Berke R95

Sunday
October 7th 1900

Dalmanutha

Transvaal.

Dearest Mother,

There is very little to
tell you this week life here having been
singularly uneventful. The chief
excitement has been the breakdown of
our 'aeromotor' which pumps up the water
for the engines - in consequence no trains stop
here now unless we stand on the line
& wave red handkerchiefs at them. About
5 or 6 trains go through daily most of them
full of troops homeward bound. The Boers
are getting a bit more cheeky now that
they are left alone & amuse themselves by
sniping at our patrols & passing trains,
but it becomes too much of a joke when
they whet trains as they have done
twice lately near Wonderfontein.

Yesterday we took a party of men to a
farm close by & tried to find a manna
& some ammunition, which is supposed to be

buried there but we could not locate it: the
men employed there spent their time digging
up onions in the garden & made a big haul
of them. There is some rhubarb there which
will be grown big enough to devour in a few
weeks though I sincerely hope that by
that time I shall be homeward bound.

The great K of K came through the night
before last & his train stopped here for the
night: he disdained the shelter of our
humble cottage & small flame to him -
preferred his luxurious saloon. A few days
ago we took out a party to another farm
3 miles away with some waggons to bring
away ~~some~~ a huge quantity of nechie
which are hidden under the stock: however
as the place was right in a hollow & some
Bholes showed themselves on the hills round
about, we decided to leave them, as we might
have got in a nice mess if they had smelt
some of our deer. I was so pleased to
get the letters with the details of the
first shoot in September: it is ~~grand~~ ^{grand}
mannigall that extra Hackwood shooting.

— ! — !! — !!! — !!!!!
We just come from Headquarters
to say Volunteer Coy are to hold
themselves in readiness to proceed to
Pretoria with a view to going to Cape
Town. What ho? I suppose we
shall be at messing about here for a
week or two all the same. The mail does
not leave here for a day or two, so I will add
a few words then.

Thursday October 11th Arcadia Camp Pretoria.
Arrived here last night after a horrible
journey of 25 hours in the dustiest of
dusty cattle trucks. We marched from
Dabmanuthe on Monday night & left
Bellfont by train on Tuesday. We departed
from Headquarters to the sound of the
sackbut battery & other music, a hearty
cheer. It took us just 25 hours to do the
150 miles, we go through 9 stations altogether
& there were none that we did not stop for
half an hour at. We were in the neat trucks

October 16th

The Club
Pretoria

Tuesday

Dearest Mother

Many thanks for your letter which was sent back to me from Belfast also some most delightful tobacco. I also got letters from Gann & Kid for which many thanks. Cousin Lottie also sent me a very nice letter & Frank Jackson too. There is a mail in here today & we are getting ours from the bag before it goes on to Belfast. at present I cannot say things look very bright for our moving down to Cape Town just yet & everything is further hindered by a hitch over the enlisting of B-1's Police. they have decided to reduce the pay from 10/- to 5/- so there is a general strike & no wonder. If only I was an equestrian & a bit lighter I should certainly try get a commission in the Police for a year as it would be great fun rounding up these Boers if a free hand is given one & the pay - £450 - a year is not so ducky. There are about 20 Volunteer Companies in camp with us now & of course among them many of my 'Assaye' friends including Marriott who is in great form. I hope I shall go home by the same boat as him. He seems to have been having a glorious time & to have had quite the fun of the last part of the show & was one of the first into Barberton, & spent some time in that most interesting country. He tells great yarns of monkey shooting & buck hunting: in fact every Vol company has had a more interesting time than us & it was very unfortunate for us

that we had to stop just short of where the interesting
country commences - all due to our late C.O. I cannot
understand why you have not acknowledged any of the
stamps I have sent. I hope you have got them as some of
them are valuable. You also state that you enclosed photos
of Andleys but they are again left out. I have not written yet
for those clothes & boots as they might cross me on the way
down. I hope they will be of use in the Volunteers at home as
I shall never put them but once or twice now: at any rate I
shall have a decent something to wear on board as at present
my garments are not garden-party like, in fact I am ashamed
to be ~~seen~~ seen in them. My eye worried me so much the
other day after that journey in the train that I went to the
I.V. hospital & had it looked at: the leech found a big needle
of coal dust sticking in the cornea so he rammed cocaine in
& hooked it - the needle, not the eye - out & gave me a gorgeous
green shade to wear which needless to say I did not do: anyhow
it is all squared up now. The place ~~where~~ where we are encamped
is nothing but a glorified dust-bin & our tent is inches deep in
dust & dirt; everything we eat & drink is smothered with it.
Reckon that there is $\frac{1}{1000000}$ of a grain ^{of} gold in every ton of earth round
here, & assuming that one eats 3 pecks of dirt a week, find out
how much gold there will be in the inside of the British Army
after 3 months in Pretoria: Give it to Face: he will probably
tell you the answer is $3\frac{3}{4}$ kippered sardines. Clarke has
joined us & even he sd have a very jolly but dusty little
mess & test the cooking capacities of our servants to the
utmost as one can get all sorts of vegetables now-a-days such
as peas & beans & we are doing ourselves v. well: we have also bought

3
some Lager beer & we toast 'the homeward journey' in flowing
words every night. We had rather a disaster the other night: we
had just been supplied with beautiful new patent burgoacs made
to hold 20 stein & Eben & I had had ours rigged rather
hurriedly in the dark & just after we turned in suddenly
an enormous sand storm burst upon us, got under the bottom
of the tent, sent everything - liftable ~~beating~~ round the tent,
then the poles gradually collapsed & brought the whole thing
down on us! At the start I had buried myself in the valise
& wrapped my head round with a shirt & prayed for a change
of plaques! but when the tent came ~~down~~ down I crawled
out just in time to meet a sharp shower of rain which followed
for 5 minutes. However any discomfort I felt was quite overcome
by my amusement on finding Ed Eben with just his head
out under the ~~flies~~ flies & completely pinned down, looking
most awfully miserable! The comfort was that many other tents
mishandled themselves similarly & I really think Eben & I
enjoyed ourselves. The place is most frightfully now & it's hard
going about in a serge uniform & seeing all the young ladies &
gents going about on their bikes in flannels & playing tennis;
still worse to see the young Dutchmen doing the same. The
gardens now are really lovely & it is extraordinary seeing
numbers of ~~amaryllis~~ amaryllis growing in every little front garden &
Every verandah or step is covered with honeysuckle & roses,
& every hedge is a flowering one & generally covered with double
dog-roses. I went to the Cathedral for evening service on Sunday,
& all the big men, Bob K of K etc were present, Canon Knox-Sittle
preached. On Saturday there was a big concert to raise a memorial
to those who have died here & all the elite & myself & Bob were

4 present. I am going to tea this afternoon at the Hospital where
I was detained & shall have to have a big clothes - scrub first, as
we get perfectly filthy here with all the red dust flying about.
I hear that there has been a lot of fighting ^{during} the last few days
round Dalmeath & Belfast, doubtless the result of the
Boers hearing that the fiery Volunteer Berks had tricked
away but it is rather annoying having missed it. Gen Barker
is still at Middellurg: Clarke dined with him just before he
left & found him very fit. I am sorry to see the Unionists are
not increasing their majority more: I suppose W. T. again is
elected as the champion of all wickedness & faddism in Reading.
It is a pity not more of the men out here could not be at
home to express their opinions on the subject of the Opposition.
It is only too evident that the war is to a large extent
being carried on now owing to the help looked for from the
Pro-Boer writers who once backed up the Republic & from whom
they still expect to receive support. So long for today.
I spot Dec 6th for the day of our landing: even is more
sanguine & says Nov. 25th.

The Dust-bun, Arcadia, Oct 10th. many happy returns of
yesterday & may you have my company next year!
I toasted you in Pilsener & rum! There is no more
news about our moving home & our prospects are
not very bright, as several Colonial corps have come
in here & thrown down their arms refusing to fight any
more! rather lively isn't it? & there is likely to be a bit
of a fire. They are all furious about the C.I.V.s being
sent home, their only consolation being the feeling that they
might have been home all the time for all they are worth.

I had a most interesting little chat with B-P yesterday on the subject of Lieut Murchison: apparently the doctors all agreed that he was sane but B-P thought otherwise & refused to confirm the death sentence for that reason; ~~and~~ he also told me that he had behaved with the greatest bravery on May 12th when, as B-P said 'If you remember, ~~you~~ ~~me~~ had rather a sharp knock', ~~and~~ & for this he had recommended Lord Roberts to diminish the sentence. I find that he has now gone to Parkhurst, but I suppose you have heard about that. B-P is a most unattractive creature & nothing like so inaccessible as the average general, but I suppose he is a bit above the average & that accounts for it. We have been assailed by a new pest in our tent in the shape of swarms of white ants which devour everything in the form of leather they can lay hold of. Every morning one finds hundreds of them devouring one's waterproof sheet & they have to be doctored with boiling water. I have just discovered that I had a great escape the other day from an adventure of doubtful pleasure. The other officer who came with me to Kroonstad went up some a few days later with remounts & supplies & I as nearly as possible went too, when near Kip River about 4 a.m. he was woken up by the noise of volleys being poured into the góxvan he was in which continued for some minutes till the Boers thought everyone inside was hit. Luckily only 3 of the 6 were killed & he & 2 others were untouched: they were then hauled out & found they had been captured by de Wet & Theron. The engine was blown up with dynamite & the train set on fire

after they had taken away all they could carry. The
prisoners were released in a few hours, & after saving as much
stores as possible from the train & burying the dead they marched
into Kith River station, to find that the relief force
was just starting out - 8 hours late. One never knows one's
luck! I suppose I ought to bring back a lot of conveniences,
as that seems to be the correct thing but as a matter of
fact I have got nothing so please don't cherish false hopes!
I have only got a few stamps & a few coins; there^{are} some shops
with kaffir curios etc but they are very expensive & probably
made in Birmingham; there are also some numbers of unprinted
unhinged stamps which I am perfectly certain never saw the
inside of that much repaired city. I see that by a new
warrant I am entitled to a \$100 on my return unless
they do me out of it by saying that I gave up my Vol Comm.
to take one in the Regulars, which duty tricks the Pay Dept will
blay if they possibly can. My love to everybody &
tell them to have a pleasant trip. I hope the photos have
come out nicely. Best love to yourself,

Your affectionate son

F. A. Simonds

see that it was clear in the dip to the East of
us: Under ordinary circumstances of course
we should have all been up & standing
to arms at that hour, but it had been
so beastly wet & the men were for the
most part soaked that we lay in bed,
never dreaming of the possibility of
Boers being about in the vicinity. About
5:15 one of the servants said to us, "there are
a lot of horsemen coming out of the
dip so even I got up & looked at them
There were about 500 ofds away when we
first saw them, & about 250 of them.

They were coming up from the very
place that our patrol had just gone to
& at their backs they had the yellow blaze
of the morning sun. They rode up at a
hand canter & of course we said there must
be our M. & patrol coming in or some
of the ^(3rd) Cavalry Brigade's advance guard
who were only 10 miles to the North of us.
They rode up to within 30 or 40 yds of us
& I was just going up to ask if they had
anything to report when the

Rest Camp

Saturday

Nov 3rd

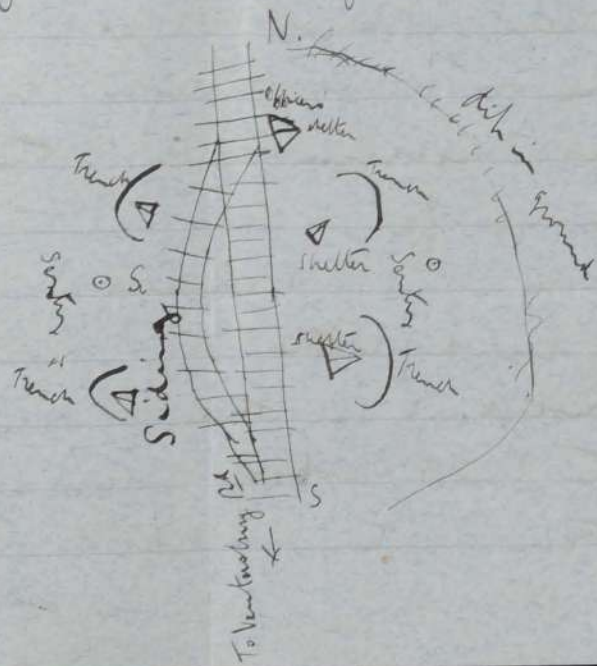
Bloemfontein

O. R. C.

Dearest Mother,

I hardly know how to
write home & describe what has been our
misfortune during the last week. As I
dare say you have heard by now, we
have fallen from our high estate & are
now in disgrace, & the whole thing has
been a perfect nightmare to me. I will
try & tell you what happened to us
from beginning to end. We suddenly
had orders after we had gone to sleep at
Pretoria on Thursday night to start at
4 next morning with 3 other Vol.
Companies for K. Kroonstad. We did not
reach the Vaal Kili evening, & there the
train stopped for the night. We reached
Kroonstad at 12 & there we met some
of the Berke's Jeoboy officers & lunched
with them. We then had orders to go to a place
called H. O. fontein, 30 miles South which

we reached shortly before 3, the other companies being disposed of at other places along the line. The officer commanding the troops that were there, consisting of some M. I. & a few militiamen, sent us down the line 5 miles to a place where there is a siding. It is situated on a rising ground from which one could just see Venterburg Station 10 miles away. About 500 yds to the East of the line there is a sudden dip in the ground. I had better draw you a sort of sketch map of it thus:-



We threw up hasty intrenchments before dark & put up some shelters made with railway trestles which we had taken from the trucks as we came in. The O.C. M. I. camp said that he would come up at once & see that we were doing what he wanted & give us any orders that might be necessary. Well about 5 o'clock it came to rain such as it only can rain out here & continued to do so till early morning, so of course the O.C. never turned up & we only got a message from him about patrolling. We officers were trying to sleep in the ditch alongside the railway with a tarpaulin spread over us but we were soon flooded out & had to roll up our valises & sit on them. Just about this time a vast thunderbolt pitched within 2 yds of my head & exploded with the noise of a 100 lb shell. Well that ought to have been an omer indeed! About 2 a.m. the water had mostly run off & we got to sleep again. At 4.30 just as it was getting light Eben sent out a patrol of 3 men to

+ Clarke's equipment, including glasses & camera. In fact my own pair of glasses are the only ones left. One little thing I forgot to mention was that our patrol blundered like blind idiots right upon the Boer scouts who were hiding behind ant-hills & collapsed at once, which of course added to our confusion in the identity of these Boers. I would have staked my last farthing on those men being our cavalry scouts, especially as they were all wearing long cavalry cloaks & slouch hats with rifles slung across their backs, & though of course in the night that there was then we could not see it, yet numbers of them had khaki on under their cloaks! They also had several armed niggers among them. Personally I thought of course they would take away the officers with them & I looked with no great pleasure to a month's tramp on the veldt with them! Needless to say the men are all furious at being snaffled like this just at the

utter dismay they suddenly covered us & the few men who were walking around to 'hand up' at the same time they rode all round us. Of course everything had to be considered in the twinkling of an eye; there were about a dozen men strolling about at the time, all of them perfectly ignorant as to their real identity, & all without their arms. The only course open for Ewer was to chuck it at once & trust to luck, & in the end I am positive that he did the right thing & time will prove it. In the first place, before any of us could have got to our arms they would have emptied their rifles at us & then simply shot down the other fellows as they came out of their shelters. Viljoen who was in command headed us together & sent us to a place 400 yds from the line. While this was going on another lot of them had held up a train some 2000 yds further South & were employing

themselves in pursuing it & helping themselves
to provisions. At this juncture, an armed
train fortunately appeared on the scene from
the South with a couple of ^(hand, 12th) guns aboard
& two maxims, & started playing on
them with the result that they halted
knowing of course that the Cavalry
would be attracted by the firing & try &
cut them off. Our own escort was the
last to move off & some of them
fired 3 shots at us for 'an reason' but
they did not hit any one. Our men
cut off a few of them in their retreat
& put three in the game cart.

I next rushed off with a party of
men to try & save as much of the
train as possible, but two or three
trucks full of kits were burnt outright
& several boxes of stores were burnt too.
General Porter then turned up with the
Cavalry but as usual instead of trying
to cut off the Boers confined his
attention to us & slanged us up & down
& wanted to know why this & why

that & personally I very nearly asked
him what was the good of his cavalry
scouts if a force of 800 Boers can be
within 8 miles of their main body without
their knowing it. I came across some of
their patrols afterwards & they admitted that
they knew of the presence of the enemy
but "thought that every one else
knew!" great heavens! For the half
hour that ~~we~~ we were guarded as
prisoners the Boers got among our
kits & broke up or took away 39 of
our rifles & several equipments but the
worst of all losses to the men were
all the field glasses given them by
Prince Christian & they are awfully
sick about that. By a happy chance
mine happened to be covered up in my
valise & escaped their notice & all the
property of mine that they got was
my belt & revolver & water bottle, & also
that almost full tin of Myrtle Grove
tobacco (even a Boer you see has a taste
in Tobacco). Unfortunately they took all men's

though doubtless if they had seen us ready
they would have contented themselves with
firing upon us & keeping us from getting
at the party who were burning the train.
Poor old Eben is terribly cut up about it
& worrying himself into a shadow: it is
really hard luck on him that this
should have happened just at the close &
he has done such a lot for the Company
too. Well it has been an experience & I
never want to have the like again. Of
course any amount of hard things
will be ~~said~~ said about us & have already
been said by people who know nothing
of the true story. I sincerely hope the
entire family will not look down upon me
henceforward as an absolute fool & idiot.

My best wishes & many happy returns
of the day to Sam in his birthday.

Best love to all & hoping you will not think
very much the worse of your

affectionate (but very down
in the dumps) son

F. A. Samonds.

Enclose a letter which seems
to belong to John

close of the whole show, & though the greater
majority being sensible take it with as good a
grace as possible, yet a certain number
of the 'Braves' are very loud in their
denunciation of the officers in having
given in & don't mind expressing an
opinion as to what they could have
done under the circumstances. Even
has written to Lord Warrington giving
a full explanation of all that
happened & also to the Commanding
Officer, & has I believe asked the
Berkehire papers not to publish any
letters on the subject yet awhile as
doubtless some of the fellows will like
to air their views on the subject in
them: perhaps Feetham will give the
Reading papers the straight tip. I
was sent here at once with the men
whose arms were taken away, &
the rest followed next day. Of course
as being prisoners-of-war released we
were all under open arrest till after the
enquiry which took place the day before

yesterday, as a result of which we were all
released except of course Ewen who will
be an afraid to be tried by Court Martia
& doubtless get a good mugging. The
chief ~~accusation~~ accusation against him of
course is not standing to arms at before
daylight which is the universal rule
all through this part of the country
though he never had any orders to that
effect, & at the same time it seems
perfectly criminal of the people on
either side of us not letting us know
of the danger: for all we knew the place
was as safe as a house there had been
an attack on the line only a few days
before in the same place but of course
we were never told of this. It is awful
to think of our having been all the time
watched in the Transvaal & then directly
on coming down into the O.R.C. to be
scuppered instead of some of the people
who have been messing about there the
whole time & ought to have ~~been~~ cleared the
country ages ago. It would have been

only fitting if some of them had been caught. Things
seem to be going from bad to worse here now &
the Boers are rising again actually South of
this & our picquets have been daily fired upon
& trains have been held up & the line broken.
We ourselves are going this evening to Glen
10 miles North to strengthen the post there.
There seems to be not much chance of
getting home before Innes I fear: the
Snarks though are now going through here
on their way down. It is sickening reading
about the C.I.V. rebels! I suppose we
shall have to sneak into Reading without
attracting any attention: I should think
the town will be ashamed of us as well as
the Battalion. Thank heavens I was ~~not~~
on duty that night so personally I am
legally not responsible for anything, though
to my dying day I shall never forgive
myself for being such a dunderhead as
not to recognise my own enemies & it is
maddening to think what a drubbing
we might have given them if we
had only been in the trenches & ready for them



Free State Hotel

Bloemfontein

O. R. C.

Wednesday

Nov 21st / 00

Dearest Mother,

Yesterday we had to go through the trying ordeal of giving evidence at Ewen's Court-Martial. Unfortunately he has been found guilty - though of course we could hardly hope otherwise, & the evidence has to go up to Bolo before sentence can be passed, so we shall not hear for some days about it. Everyone says that the worst that could happen will be a severe reprimand. Gen. Porter was President & 6 other officers were on the court. Legally Porter had no right to be on the court at all as he had been close to the scene of action at the time & in our own estimation was to blame very much for not being much closer still. In fact one of his staff himself told me yesterday that the Brigade would have started 2 hours earlier that morning if Porter himself had not been late! Such are generals! However the court behaved very decently over the affair as far as they could. Thank heavens my evidence was only of the very shortest as I was in no position of responsibility that day & knew nothing of what really took place as regards the receiving of orders etc. Of course Clarke had a tremendous long time of it as he had to give every detail having been on duty. We had one great bit of luck namely the fact that David Maurice happened to be in Bloemfontein at the time - he had been de Gallais' A.D.C. & has got no billet now - & being an old friend of Ewen's most generously volunteered to act as prisoner's friend for him. This was a great turn-up as Ewen knew of nobody in the place to defend him & Maurice was just the



man having been once Adjutant of an 1st Battalion & being
 well versed in the quips & cranks of military law. He took
 the matter up fully & was of the most inestimable service to us
 but he saw at once that there was no getting over the fact of Evans
 not standing to arms in the morning. He certainly deserves the
 thanks of the Battalion as he was taken any amount of trouble
 on our behalf. He recognised me in the street yesterday though I
 am sure I have never set eyes on him for years! I hear that the
 Prince & Lord Wintzla have both been writing about us. I expect they
 must feel a bit sick of it about us. Even wishes me to thank
 Father very much for his kind letter & hopes you will excuse him
 writing now ~~later~~ because he is very busy. It has been a great blow
 for the poor old man: he will have yet sick leave to the Cape after
 the show as he is pretty well knocked up. Things are beginning to
 look most uncommonly serious again in these parts: some two
 or three thousand Boers are hovering in the neighbourhood of this
 place & there has been heavy fighting at Thabanku & we are
 expecting an attack at Slen any moment! It does not look much
 like home yet aside! I see 3 companies of the Natal-side Volunteers
 have gone home, huddling heads. My great consolation is that we are
 in no worse a place than Slen. There is very little work to do there though
 one has to turn the night into day. I had a good long day yesterday,
 up at 2.45 standing to arms, breakfast 4.15: then we started off -
 the actresses - at 4.45 for a three hour's ride in a mule waggon. (I can



honestly recommend it as a sure cure for a bad liver; the C.M.
took all day, then in the evening Clarke & I went to the theatre
& Ben deavored to buck up a smile over a villainously written &
acted piece of rubbish called Turned up. Between ourselves I confess that
I went fast asleep between the acts so dead tired was I! Actors &
Theatres are things, which is generally the case out here, - do not shine.
Great was the joy though of at last turning into a real bed with
sheets - the first I have had since I was in hospital in Pretoria -
& then getting up at 9 for breakfast! I am off again to Glen by the 6 train
tomorrow morning. The ^(arrived) General visited Glen the other day & seemed
pretty satisfied with our defences though he shared our wish for a few
more troops to be there as we have none too many at present in case of
an attack. He is a very queer little chap, smaller than Bobo, & more fitted
I should think from his appearance to sit in his club in Pall Mall
& discuss dinners: in fact he is a notorious gourmand! therefore he gave
him a big feed of the very best & he had a horrid liver next morning, &
to tell the truth so had I! which was most unfortunate as we had
made great preparations for receiving a party of 6 nurses on a picnic
from Bloemfontein! However I pulled myself together & made myself
as pleasant as possible under the circumstances. We amused them
considerably by letting them fire the howitzer to the great risk of
any unfortunate cattle that might be grazing on the kopjes opposite
us. One of them is a relation of the Laues of Carleton & said she
knew the Rev Simonds of the Rectory! So much for today.
I hope you advise the crests!

4
Saturday 24th Glen.



Received your letters this morning & was rather astonished that you had not yet heard about our article. The papers apparently have heard about it with vengeance & there are some choice remarks. We are naturally sitting the result of Lord Roberts' deliberations with some anxiety. I have received a letter from Sam giving his account of various going on with a certain actress named Miss O'Malley, a name I seem to remember as having played a part in my career as a young man at Dorset. Well, well, boys will be boys, especially at the Variety! I had also a letter from Vickie & the ever faithful James. I am so glad you had a look at the E.I.V. (Chamberlain's Infernal Vote-Snatchers). ^{as they are now called} I am afraid we shall get more of a reception like theirs! We have got the fair jump here now I can tell you! First of all, this morning we got a wire to say that a big commando which was trying to force its way through to the South had been lost sight of near Kamee, 8 miles North of this; then this afternoon our M.G. patrols ran across some 60 Boers near a farm 9 miles East of this, & they are now watching them. Altogether we are expecting a picnic tonight, & our fellows are just about keen on having a scrap with the chance of getting a bit of our own back. I somehow feel that they won't come here though as they might find it a bit to get out of the bushes if once they got in, & might get cut off by cavalry from Bloemfontein. I have sent some stamps over to Uncle Zach as a Xmas offering. I hope they will get there in time. Q.C.D.

I have been amusing myself this afternoon in birdnesting among prickly-pear bushes: the result though painful has been instructive in that I shall in future refrain from trespassing on farms, even though to be one of a peaceable Dutchman. After searching through his straggling hedges in the vain hope of finding some ripe fruit, I paid a call on the owner with whom I partook of a really excellent cup of coffee, & also in a palaver neither of us understanding a word the other said. Anyhow I was not sniped at on going away so I enjoyed myself on the whole, though I am still bristling with a thousand or so nasty little thorns. I hear from my serpent who has just returned to England that we are not expected back at the Depot till March & I think they is about right. Everything seems hopeless at present, all the Boers being now in the bush into the bargain. It transpires that out of the guns we lately captured from De Wet, 7 came right away from Krommeti Poort, De W having promised Botha that he would capture Krommeti if only he had the loan of the guns, & I expect he just about would have, if he had not been surprised just before making the attempt. At present he has vanished into thin air!

My love to all & everyone. Thanks for those photos: they are lovely I think: I do like the look of that S.E. side. My blessings to you all & with all love to yourself,

I remain,

Yr affectionate son,

F. A. Simonds

of us who were up at the time, including
Self + Skipper, & who had no arms near
us. Of course any resistance would have
been murder, as we should all have been
in the same cart long before we could have
got to our arms, & the remainder of the
men shot down as they got down out
of their shelters. It was a pretty little
experience, I can tell you, & I don't want
another of the same sort! However it
all goes to make up a real experience of
warfare, & I suppose I shall have a
good laugh over it one of these days!

N. B. our fellows were not in the trenches
as per papers, wherefore my Skipper is
blamed above all things by the Com.
there being a standing order in the
Lines of Com, that all troops

Monday
Dec 10th 1900



My dear Frank,

So very many
thanks for your delightful chistle.
I am so glad you have joined the
H.A.C.: I wish I were in them. It is a
much better game than footslogging.
I am so sorry that you must have been
by this time disappointed in your
surmise as to the truth of that
report about an unpleasant little
surprise the other day. It was certainly
true in substance but very false in

detail. I think it unfair not that
correspondent naming but in all about it
d. in names, when Bobo said nothing.

As a matter of fact these little things
often happen & never come to light at
all! Why he should have thought
fit to have mentioned the fact
that the officers were in arrest, ~~and~~ I
cannot of course, as a matter of
course, all released prisoners of war,
men & all, are under arrest - of
course, till after a Court of Enquiry,
as a result of which ^{we} were all released
except my skipper who had to go through
the grand of a Court-martial, as a result
of which he was severely reprimanded
for not having taken sufficient
care to prevent a surprise. Personally

I think it very unfair, & all the big
boys who know the real facts of the
case, among them Hunter, are of the
same opinion, & think he ought to have
got clear off. I suppose you have heard
from the family about the details of
the matter, & I certainly don't feel equal
to repeating a yarn I have told
some thousands of times. Suffice
it to say that in the early morning of
Sunday Oct. 28th at a place called
H. Mountain Siding, whether we had
arrived 14 hours previously from Pretoria,
ostensibly down country on our way
home, a party of some 200 Boers
rode up to our bivouac, whom we
mistake for our men No. 9. & when
within 35 yds of the us, waved the few

about. Very little work to do, but we have to
be up at 2.45 daily, which is trying, which
I regret today we sometimes think! Our Commandant
is a certain Capt Broad of Plymouth who
knows you Sumner. We are very jovial
company & are living like fighting cocks, not
naturally men that we have returned
to civilisation again after bully beef &
biscuits. Champagne, whiskey, etc simply
flow, & in consequence of the necessity
excluded life that we have to lead, I am
getting into such bad training again, & have
just in the whole of that store again that I
took when trekking! Our life is presently
brightened by visits of ~~the~~ little picnic parties
of nurses from B protein, which are great fun.
I am at present in B protein buying & was
paid for the troops at Slen from a fund
we have raised. I have bought 260 plum
puddings (1 lb each) & I think the hospitals will be
full next day! We certainly mean to have
a festive day & had told Boro's permission we in



should stand to arms one hour before
daybreak, an order which our temporary
C.O. who was in charge of an M.D. camp
5 miles off never thought fit to give us.
All we knew was that a Cavalry Brigade
under Porter was encamped 10 miles away
and moving on way in the morning.
& that there was an M.D. camp
5 miles off, wherefore it seemed that
one small company of footsloggers
ought to be safe enough from a surprise,
but such a sad are our cavalry
squads! As a matter of fact we had a
patrol out when the Boro's collapsed. No doubt

It seems marvellous to you at home
that we could not have told Bors from
Britain at 100 yds, but it is the most
difficult thing in the world & the mistake
has been made thousands of times, &
our difficulties were increased by the
fact that they came up with the full
glare of the rising sun behind them.
We have to be very thankful to that
armoured train which rescued us
& put the Bors to flight, otherwise
we officers might be at the present
moment potshooting still with friend
Hans Botma, our captor! Well it is all
over now & we must try & forget it.
No C.I.V. reception for us in Reading!
I foresee who of 'c' who caught KK sniper!

I hope you all won't think much
the worse of me, all the same, for being
a Mithering idiot. Alas, our prospects
of getting home don't seem increase with
time, but we look to K. to do great things.
He is going great guns at present!
It seems a bit rough having to miss
the first Xmas at Audley's Wood; it is
the first Xmas I have been away for;
may it be the last! I fear I shall
miss the Easter term at Oxford too.
For the last 5 weeks we have been
having a very decent time at a place
called Glen, a lovely spot, 16 miles N of
Bluntpeterin, situated at the junction of
the middle & Rhemeter rivers. Unfortunately
shooting is out of season, as there
are crowds of birds, quince & plover

& that is the weather: but come
 I think I could sooner be back in
 England if it was only to have the
 privilege of spending my days in a
 yellow London fog! Altogether I am
 a bit fed-up with ~~war~~^{war} & the apparatus
 there to & think they ought now to be
 able to dispense with Volunteers. Just to
 think of dinners & theatres again; &
 gas! & do for the joys of a flannel suit
 & tennis shoes! I rejoice that Effie
 is still an unconquered Mission: what
 fools fellows are to be sure nowadays!
 They don't know a good thing when they
 see it! she must be waiting for a bit of
 blackie. We have had a most polician
 of new centuries to you all, & with best
 love to me + all of the family & Cousin Mary
 if you see her, Yours ad nauseam!
 F.A. Simonds

27-1-1852
 2-0-0
 10-10-0
 10-10-0

3
The mess seem to make things here
a bit & draw me some in the pretty
bank! Bloorfontine is now a most
civilised place again, with a most decent
club wherein we can get a real good dinner
& a theatre where we can get to sleep in
under half an hour. It is a most extraordinary
democratic sort of place, you drive out
to the barber's, say, in the morning, get
lunch in the club, you find colly & hair-
-teacher dining at the same table with you!
The tradesmen seem to be the only
people & necessarily the snobs of the
place. We have been playing football
& cricket lately at the Glen to while
away the time, but of course we cannot
play in the evening as it is too dark
but in the day time. One thing I think
I can say I am having better than you

Glen Siding
Bloomfontein
S. A.

Saturday Dec 15th 1900

Dearest Mother,

I am afraid there is not much news to relate this week. The monotony of existence was brightened by a little picnic party the other day of Bloomfontein nurses. Things look perfectly hopeless about our going home - in fact it seems to be an established fact that we are not to be sent home till March, so we must be ever patient though it is really very rough on the men being kept on over their year of service as in many cases it means a tremendous financial loss & I suppose the country will not again open its purse strings to help them. Everyone in Bloomfontein is

getting over a bad attack of 'hitcher'

& looking a bit happier. I have still continues to disprove the theory of the rotability of water & is giving endless trouble. I think you may expect me home any year after this with luck.

The powers that be have tried to show their diligence & activity by arresting all the civil male inhabitants of the Glen, 4 in number & they have been taken into Bloomfontein today as prisoners of war; never known why, so they have been allowed to stay here for 9 months & have given no trouble that we know of. I suppose it is only a middle-headed freak of the adon brain of what is called the Intelligence, but is always known as the Ignorance Department. I am very sorry that I have not been able to send you off your James present yet, but the truth is

3/
that it consisted of a few photos of the
5len which I gave to a chemist to print
which he has considerably lost,
only temporarily I hope. I have just
negotiated for the purchase of
270 Xmas plum puddings, which with
a quart of ale all round ought to
help down hell care for one day at
least & fill the hospitals for many
days afterwards. There is practically
no work for me to do now, so I am
really wasting time significantly,
things standing to arms at I is a
bit trying. My sole business is the
writing of passes etc for the Dutch
singers, a rather good fun it is with
the latter, as we can neither of us
understand each other & many a piece
a fair word is paid at their heads
for being unable to speak English.
Some of them having most weird
names with 2 or 3 chicks in them
have to be rechristened by me.

I can tell you I am treated with
some respect in these parts now &
'the big ofpissier boss' has a bit
of a reputation. No Dutch woman
comes without a present of eggs, if
she wants a pass, or a promise that
I shall be able to find some on one
of her neighbour's farms! Anyhow
I don't indulge them much so they
are as deceitful as serpents & I never
give beyond what the law allows them
& very often not that. It is rather
kiddish work as one might find it
that a pass had found its way
into the hands of a Boer spy (they
are up to every kind of trick) & you
would then look a bit foolish. One thing
I pride myself on having better than
you at home now & that is the weather!
I feel certain you don't feel equal
on Dec 15th to sitting out on the street
at 10 o'clock & enjoy cigars, but
that is the best time of day with us.
My best love to all, ever affectionately
Pa Simons

charitably disposed of Reading people!

Unfortunately my camera has gone wrong & may not be mended by Xmas day, which is a great pity as the men were anxious that I should take a photograph of them at their Xmas dinner & send them to the Berkshire.

I have seen the most wonderful account of our Holtfontein show in the Reading Observer, evidently the imagination of some ingenious reporter.

I am enclosing in registered letter a plenary of the B.V.S. bank which may be interesting one of these days though of course they are in use now. I don't quite know where I am going to lay my head tonight as I intended to sleep in the mail train which leaves Bampton at 4 in the morning but this not

Friday
Dec 21st 1900



Dearest Mother,

Nothing much to relate this week except that the Boers seem to be playing the dickens all over the country, & making our chances of returning soon smaller & smaller every day. There seems to have been a fine smash up in the Magaliesberg & there was a very-much believed rumour that Clements was killed, the which however has proved to be untrue, thank heavens. We had the pleasure, unknown to us,

of training Steyn & De Wet hasgered within
12 miles of us the night before last
but he did not see his way to pay us
a visit. I can't help thinking we
should have a pretty bad time if we
were attacked by any numbers, & I
don't understand why the Boers have
not attempted to blow up one of the
bridges as it would be a tremendous
hindrance to traffic if they did.

There are startling rumours afloat
that the Xmas mail train has been
looted & burned but I trust it is not
true: anyhow it is 36 hours late
already. I am at present occupied in
buying stores & arranging for a big
'at home' the officers of Glen are
going on Dec 27th. We are getting up
shirts for the men & asking out lots of

fellows from Bloemfontein so as to
make it a big day of it! Needless to
say I am in the throes of organizing
the programme of tea & lunch for
about 30 people, with only about 10 knives
forks & spoons to eat with. I will send you
a programme, also an invitation^{card}, which
I wish you could accept. All the
refreshments are of the very best, wines
included, & will please Father take
note of the fact that these festivities
during Xmas week, falling as the expenses
do on the shoulders of 4 officers,
make rather a hole in their Cox's account,
& could be a good enough to put in a
little more for me. Personally I think
the bill for the men's shirts & dinners
ought to be left at the Dearly Room
50, many's Butts & paid for by the more

having arrived yet will probably mean
my having to ~~stay~~ sleep on the platform.



Clarke's plum bedding arrived by last
mail. I suppose I shall have to
write to the President & tell him
that I shan't be up next term.
I will finish this on Sunday before the
mail goes out by which time I
hope to have received a few James
letters. By the way, I have issued
orders for all niggers in our district
to present themselves for a big indaba
on Dec 21st /00 for me to renew their
passes & register them again, as there
ought to be some fun.

Sunday Dec 23rd 9^{AM}. Xmas mail
not yet arrived; the train was delayed
& days owing to snow being washed

away near novel's point. Been out
this morning from 5-8 after
deal with the doctor on a dam a few
miles off: borrowed an old single
battered gas-pipe & did no excavation
beyond 2 cuts. Doctor got a snake
& a teal (silver), saw some wild
geese going there again. Train
train just in! Best love to all,
& many happy returns of the
day to Louise! Acceptances for
Sports rolling in.

Yr affectionate son

F A Simonds

Am sending photos by next mail.
Am wishing you greeting on Monday.

96.

Bloomfontein,

S. A.

Xmas Eve

1950

Dearest Mother,

So many thanks for your Xmas letter & for the sympathy for us contained therein. Twelve letters in all came for me one each from all the members of the family though that rascal Uncle Fred has not written me a word Harry has sent a most glorious Xmas card self-illustrated. It is good of you sending all that tobacco for my men; they appreciate it tremendously.

Rather a hamper has been cast upon tomorrow's dinner as it has been discovered that instead of having 144 quarts of beer, we have only got 215 pints, some mistake having been made at the canteen. There will just about be a pint among those who have to go

without! I have been very busy decorating the mess with mistletoe. It is a very inferior stuff though & has red-berries. It is not quite a touch of home sweet-home to it. I enclose a specimen, also a part which has gone under my most watchful eye in my very tent. I rode out early this morning with the doctor & did a little shooting, the bag consisting of 3 Kudu & 2 Plover. I must confess that the shooting was abominable. 6 brace of Kudu ought to have been accounted! I have had such a nice letter from Gen. Gubbins, I am going to answer it. I am so awfully sorry to hear about Cousin Willie Campbell's loss. It is hard times. We all sent cables home last night & I hope they will arrive all right on Xmas Eve or Xmas day. I have decorated the mess also with cuttings from sketches; altogether it has a very fine appearance.

3/
Christmas Day, 1.50. a.m.

Just penning a line between the
acts so as to be possibly the first
to wish you a merry Xmas if not in
person yet in spirit! We have been
having a great evening; camp fire
concerts were held at the various
posts & an extra tot of rum served
out all round. at 12 o'clock a
party conducted by Clarke started
youling cards & the effect was perhaps
rather pleasing on a fine cool night.
However a party of the militia -
their spirits being a little better
than ought to have been the case
owing to the rum - started a rival
show on the off - dance of Repetition.
I had a nice job ~~in~~ sending them off
to bed & they did not get much reward
for their trouble. 'Noll' floating over the
valley at midnight had a decided
homely touch about it, & hardly spelt
W & R. Having just gone my rounds

40 find that I have only got a little
over an hour before standing to arms
so I may as well make a night of
it! K. P. K. is coming through early tomorrow
so of course we must all be up!
I suppose at this hour the gentlemen
are just having that. Very best
100 wh at Whiskies & Gavin has
gone to bed with his head full of figs,
& Jack's rummet full of mince pies.
However we have got most excellent
plum-puddings ourselves, made by Crosse
- Blackwell, & horribly nice! I enclose
the menu for Xmas eve.

P. Soup à la Lyonnaise.
Roast Mutton
Shreds, Beans & Tomatoes
Cold Roast Beef
Plum Pudding & Cognac
Jama Tart
Dutch cheese.

Desert of all kinds.

Well, I might be much worse off than
that in these days! Good night! Oh dear, so sleepy!

which ~~started~~ started at 3 o'clock
in the morning with tearing around
to find knives etc, then laying
the table, opening tins, & tearing
my hair in anger because the
people from Blwenfontein never
sent out the ice which they
promised faithfully. People
started coming about 12 & we gave
them lunch as fast as we could
& then I had to go & start the sports
& they were a job: I am sure
I lost 3 stone in one afternoon,
rushing around in a blazing hot
sun, shouting for the starters -
generally superintending the show.
My task was not lightened by the

(2)



Friday
Dec 28th

To continue the letter ended at
that unearthly hour on Xmas day:
the great day passed off as well as
one might expect though unfortun-
-ately half our company had to
go without beer, & it is for that
reason that I am at present in
Blwenfontein endeavouring to get
some more to make up. Of course
the Canteen repudiates any responsi-
-bility & I am the loser to the extent
of some 54/- We officers had
a most gorgeous lunch in the course

of which every conceivable beast was
brink. I enclose the menu. Having
subsequently indulged in a siesta
that lasted till dinner time, we
tried to attack the fare that still
lay before us but were fairly beaten.

On Boxing day ~~we~~ we went in
turns to lunch ~~to~~ at a neighbouring
farm where we were done in the
most regal style: however my turn
of course coming last, I got there
in the middle of tea & found all the
turkey, on which I had set my
hopes for weeks past, devoured by
the others. I should mention that
the sucking pig that we had for
Xmas lunch was a dream on

please therein was not diminished
by the fact that we had ~~seen~~ ^{seen} it
gone under our very eyes for days
past & it has also been known to
have found its way into the tents
& slept therein! On Xmas evening
our gay carollers under Clarke's
leadership paid surprise visits to
three farms in the neighbourhood,
& in consequence got 3 meals &
enjoyed themselves muchly: someone
singing "Peace on earth, goodwill to
men" & the like, with a rifle over your
shoulder & your pockets full of
cartridges savours of the ludicrous!
Now I must try & describe all
the events of yesterday: all it seem
to me now is one long busy-busy,

labeled up that 'very special' Chart
Cup! I give the recipe for it. 1 bottle
of chart, 2 of verbe, $\frac{1}{3}$ brandy, or 4
large dashes of Cinzano & Port, &
cucumber ^{or cucumber} for flavour. The ladies
thought it simply delicious. They do
like something with plenty of 'meat' in
it! Unfortunately the champagne
was rather cast aside in favour
of the genuine article & we got
through an awful lot. I suppose
we shan't be quite so happy
when all the bills roll in!

Fourteen dozen of minerals were
swallowed, & more was wanted!
Having finished the sports &
seen the ladies away, I just took

(3)



fact that the other officers
disappeared most of the time
(shall we accuse them?) with the
ladies. However it ended at last
& our fellows were 12 out of the
15 went & only lost the try of one
on a technical point after pulling
the others over. Most of the
guests were off about 5, save
a few who stopped with us all
night. Among the visitors was
the sub-editor of the Bloemfontein Post

who has today brought out the most wonderful account, copies of which I send you: I think they are worth keeping! Perhaps the names of the visitors do not in every case give a clue to their scattered positions:


Mr & Mrs S. & S. might often cover the title of Mr & Mrs Telegraph-Works, or Mr & Mrs Railway Porter; and we had some real shells among the crowd, & the Director of Railways brought out a party of Officers & ladies in a special saloon train.

Altogether there must have been 75 # visitors @ the place resembles a kind of court with all the carriages drawn up & we had also erected

a hospital marquee (once condemned as dirty but now resaturated & scrubbed) for tea purposes, also a big house of branches to keep off the sun.

The Commissariat Department went off A. & I take upon myself great credit therefore. By means of threats & bribes I had collected a most delightful lot of country produce & vegetables & with the addition of things of the very best purchased in Bloemfontein we laid out a repast that everybody confessed had never been beaten anywhere in the S. A. C! & which certainly was never to be equalled in Bloemfontein. My word, how they

thanks for your letter, also the envelope
from the kid. I also received letters
from Charles La T. Charles B. James
& Sami to whom many thanks.
The photos by Alice Davies are
delightful. I am afraid the night
I spent in Bloemfontein did not
turn out such an unadulterated
pleasure as I anticipated, as the
night was unbearably hot & I
was simply mutilated by mosquitoes.
I am afraid I shall not be able to
send the photos till next week. It
costs me a small fortune having
them printed (10/6 a dozen) & I have
given most of the prints away to
the people concerned. I hear Prescott

one ⁽⁴⁾ small glance at my bed
& could not ~~not~~ resist the tempta-
-ation of seeing  what it felt
like to sit down for a minute, &
the result was that for in $\frac{1}{2}$ a
second I was dead asleep absolutely
done up with the tearing about in
the sun, & on waking up later
I heard an awful riot going on in
the mess, someone being given
by several of the officers who
had stopped behind, so thinking
that that could be no place for
me, I turned in at once & slept on,
having had nothing to eat since
breakfast, & was awakened at 4.30
& pulled out to be photographed in

a variety of gumps which a prof-
-essional from Bloemfontein
had come out to take. Today I feel
just as tired as I can be, but it
is compensated for the fact that
everyone votes the affair an unqualified
success. I am sleeping at the hotel
tonight & mean to get my
money's worth of real good sleep.

I think you must be very
weary after reading the history
of all our notions being so I will
stop now. Perhaps you will say
this does not sound much like
active service but I can assure
you we did not in any way relax
our vigilance & lessen the guards!

We have been caught once; never again!
After all it is just as well to
enjoy oneself nowadays as far as
is compatible with safety! I must
now thank you very much for
your most welcome cable which
arrived yesterday evening: it took
much longer in coming than mine
in going; the delay was curiously
enough in London: I suppose they
would not send it off on a weekday.
Please thank the kid for his
bally which arrived on Xmas morning,
also his most wonderful drawing
which now adorns the mess walls.
So much for today.

Sunday, Dec 30th 1914. Received the
mail on returning last night: many

Bloemfontein.

S. A.

5

19

has been gotten to the S.W.B's

(General Ross' late regiment will soon be at here. I dare say I shall run across him though I have not the least notion where his regiment is at present. I forget to mention in my description of the spots the performances of the most unique band ever invented! The instruments were as follows, a piccolo, a concertina, a broken violin, 5 reed instruments which came from crackers, 2 cornophones, a penny whistle, a harmonium, a hail-handle, & an empty cistern for a big drum! with this wonderful assortment after 24 hours practice the band buzzed forth all sorts of patriotic airs & quite added to the amusement of the day. One of the

Reading men has sent home an account of it to the Berkshire Chronicle & next

week is sending home the cutting from the Post & also some of my photos. I don't know if they publish photos or not. One of my men by name Burnett who works at the Factory complains that on his leaving England Mrs James Simonds promised to help his wife from some fund but that nothing has been done & his wife is very badly off indeed. You might jog her memory. We were all delighted to get a Xmas note from the Mayor, even though it was late, & still more so at receiving £25 to distribute among the men.

I am sorry to hear you are giving up the Saveramake shoot. I had hopes of getting a day there. I have sent Mr Cantelant a line. No more news, Best love to all,

Your affected son

F.A. Simonds

century went off his head into
a truck of iron & was very violent,
& it was a ticklish job getting him
across the railway bridge across
which only one man can get go
at a time. Later on it transpired
that one of the men who had been
in all day had disappeared & vague
rumours of suicide floated about,
though in my own opinion he has
drowned not himself but his troubles
in Kaffir beer at some board.
Thanks so much for the spiritine
& can de Woppe. can do with any
amount of the former: cannot get it
out here, but I can the other.

Glenn Siding

10/1/01.

Dearest Mother,


First of all
many thanks for the wire &
the good notes contained therein,
which were none the less
welcome from the fact that
they arrived on the 9th of
the month, having done a
good travel up & down Africa.
I cannot help thinking that
you were led into the trap laid
by an ingenious Cable Company

which pretends to appeal to people's
economical feelings & send what
they call 'indulgence' wires at
2/- a week; the only indulgence
which the wire gets is generally
a week's rest at Capetown & is
then posted on! However I must
not look a gift horse in the
~~mouth~~ mouth! Jack Collins
writes to say that Annie B. is engaged
to one of the Barringtons. surely
~~no~~ he is wrong? - that blatant
hypocrite Long Tom has won
the day? Last evening was
fringed with some excitement

in the hospital line: first of all
one the little business boy who
frequents the place was brought
all but dead from a snake-bite
in the car. However by filling
him with ammonia & brandy
we kept him going & this morning
he is practically all right again.
The funny part was that
when he was roaring drunk
- for such is the treatment for
snake bite - he made great
revelations about a Manner
which a native has got hidden
somewhere & which we hope to
trace. Later on one of our fellows on

myself, perched (I won't say riding!)
upon my patient Argentine. I
hope it will make you smile.

We had a large group taken of the
five officers of the garrison
the other day, but the light was
too harsh, & I looked such a duffer
(it was at 4.30 a.m.) that it has
been condemned & we are having
another done. I have just had a
new suit made which of course
fits like a sock & is very expensive.
However I will get photod in it just
to please you. Heaven knows what
has become of the one you sent out. Dixie
Gates know nothing of it. Now for a pretty little
game on the next page. not true but unbelieved!

Will you be kind enough to buy
a bag for me an strong case
(leather) containing 2 scissors
& 2 razors. 

I have lost Clarke's for me
& cannot get a new one out
here; the A & N stores will be
the best place. I hope you will
like the new lot of photos.
I have already taken one print off
each. My camera is certainly
very useful as an article of
commerce nowadays: a promise
to photo the baby will produce
a dozen eggs or a lot of U.S.

from some proud mother at
any time!

Saturday Jan 12th Many thanks
for your nice long letter, also
Louise's, which arrived very early
this week. What a grand time you
must have had at that ball,
personally I think it something
to have missed. I wish somebody
could tell me about the shooting
& the bags: you always omit that!
I have had a long letter from
Frank with glowing accounts of
his trip to Paris. I really do
hope you to keep writing in very

letter how everything was spoiled
everywhere by my not being present.
Dearest it was just the same for
everybody else & no shoes or dresses
were smashed! Just to please me
don't think about me till next
April when there seems a chance
of our getting home. You must
excuse these little whines of mine!
What a wacker of hearts that
Effie must be! By the way
many thanks for the little book
which I shall treasure. I am writing
very straight to James about
that minute adornment. I
enclose the very latest photo of

Some of the Reading men were looking
at my photos when they saw the
one sent by the Kia in which Evans
was a leading figure: of course
they all knew him & said that's
the old Crusian warrior & it's
a pity they're not all like him
out here nowadays & the war
would be soon over. I suppose he is
as anxious for me to be back as
I am myself.

Sunday Jan 13th. Many happy
returns of the day to Louise.
Just to think that it is a
whole year nearly since I saw

her last! Today being the
Sabbath, I have not been to church,
but have been eating prickly
pears to some time, & my
mouth, face & hands are bristling
with their thorns. Do you
happen to know of a certain
Victor Wickura who has come
to England to bring out
a march he has composed
called Roberts' March, & which
his fond pa & family - who keep
a distillery (do!) here - think is going
to bring him a fortune. It is a
very fine tune I must confess.

He himself fought with the Boers
before the capture of Bluffton.

The locusts still continue an
unful pest: they are a wonderful
sight. We have had a very
decent Gunner officer added
to the mess. We had ~~as~~ a
sucking pig dinner the other
night. Best love to me & all,

Yr affectionate son

F. A. Simonds

Our mess is famous throughout
S. Africa & I suppose Kitchener
will move us up the line soon.

Perhaps ~~we~~ I can almost hear
your post-bitten lips smack
when I tell you that we now
get peaches & apricots ad lib. &
presents of lambs & sucking pigs
are common! a nice spring lamb
can be had for eight bob. There is
nothing like having a little authority
in this country! no black or white
ever dares to come a-ask for a
pass (in Indian matters I am the
sole administrator for the district)

Glen Station

O. R. C.

Saturday
Jan 12 = 1901

My dear Frank,

So very many
thanks for your delightfully
long & interesting epistle. It
is perfectly graphic of you to
peck writing to me as you do.
What a lucky chap to have
had that trip to gay Paris!
Personally London or even staid
Reading will be quite gay enough

for me when the fates decree in
the course of the next few years
that I shall come home. At
present things look as hopeless as
ever they did, what with the
rising in the Congo & sundry
smashes everywhere: to tell the
truth everyone is getting sick to
death of the war & naturally growing
a bit careless to which fact Brother
is now fully alive & takes advantage
of it. It is so sickening being
stuck in a place like this & not
being able to land a bomb. Boers
Boers everywhere & near a one to pot!

I suppose one of these fine nights
(a wet) they will pay a visit when
we least expect them & the first
intimation of their presence will be
the ruin of ~~the~~ one of our £3000
bridges over the Modder (4-2
centres) hurtling through space!
I could do the job myself with
20 men on a dark night. In
fact we are in a regular death
trap if attacked in any numbers.
(for heavens sake don't alarm the
Mater). Anyhow we can't quarrel
so we are in probably the ^{is} ~~the~~ ^{present} ~~the~~
shot in the O. R. C. in fact ^{is} quite
an abomination for the rest of it.

Certainly should not have!

Xmas week was celebrated here
with all sorts of revels. I dare say
you have read about them by now.
They were expensive if nothing else!
I am writing a line to Cousin Issy
by this mail. We really got
together quite a respectable looking
lot of 'musicians' for our sports,
chiefly nurses. Tomorrow being
Louise's birthday will afford ample
excuse for cracking a bottle of boy
all love to your people + 'terminations'
to that you! yo ad nauseam
F.A. Simonds

without a dozen eggs or a lot of
cream & butter! There you are
you see again! Official bribery,
corrupt officers, & every sort of
scandal you ~~can~~ wish to make
out of it! Better write to Parliament
about it. We certainly live on the
very sound principle, eat, drink &
be merry, for tomorrow we die,
& really enjoy ourselves despite the
~~ever-present~~ gnawing at the
heart - longing for home sweet
home. The Volunteer Companies
have been promised that they will
be able to go home after completing

a year's service in this country,
which being interpreted meaneth
that at the beginning of April
we may be hearing home, all being
well, & probably not before.

I only wish it was March now
as the buck-shooting commences
then & there are any amount
of them about. The heat is
simply awful now, & my chief
complaint is that one cannot
sleep in the middle of the day owing
to it, & the flies make it all the
more unbearable. It is rather tiring

work getting up at 3 in the morning
& having to go round the sentries
every other night, (the which means
an hour's tramp twice in 6 hours)
though I must confess one's duty
is sometimes shirked & ~~at~~
corners cut. I am sorry old
Ralph is not coming out here,
it would have been grand to
have seen him, & very nice for
him to have started with a medal.

What a grand ^{time} you must have
had at that dance & how very
very noble of you to have given
up that dance with Officer 9

all sorts of horrid words & looking into
accounts for the unfortunate officers
& rather a bad time for the quaters.

According to my promise I have
been duly photographed & by dint of
great efforts Deale has got a print
ready to send home this mail. I
hope you like it: I consider it rather
flattering although my neck is all
awry. It is stated semi-officially
that new Volunteer detachments
are coming out to relieve some of
the present companies. I can hardly
believe it to be true, & trust it is not.
Much though I long to get home

Saturday
Jan 19th 01.



Dearest Mother,

Very little to talk
about this week: first of all so
very many thanks for the most
delightful parcel, especially the
spiritine which is a most valuable
article. I have been spending most of
my time messing about in Bloemfontein
on various affairs of duty: & have
been having for from an enjoyable
time, as this place is a perfect inferno
for just a heat. Yesterday afternoon

fairly baffles description as the dust
simply covered everything & the town
resembled London in a pea-soup fog.
Horses absolutely refused to face the
dust storms & men's eyes were filled
& a flame with sand. Owing to the
peculiarities of the train service (over
which David Maurice is now the
presiding genius) I am always 'left'
as the train by which I intend to
go back by is invariably cancelled,
& that means another night in this
place & a horrible mangling by
mosquitos in the hotel bedrooms.
I simply cannot sleep now anywhere

except in the open. It is far too hot in a
room & in a bed. I think I shall have
to bring home ~~that~~ platform bench
with me that I always sleep on!
Yesterday I came in on the rather
uncongenial duty of finding out
the whereabouts of our civilian quar-
-master who came in some days ago
& whose accounts in the meantime
have turned out rather 'fishy'. I hunted
up every hotel in the place but could
find no trace of him, but I find out
this morning that he returned to Glen
early today, having evidently heard that
the 'kecs' & that death-hound (F.A. Smith)
were on his track! I suppose it means



I certainly object to being relieved
I would prefer to see the show through.
I hardly imagine they will get many
more men to come out. I hear
Pasley has got the Volunteer
adjutancy & am duly rejoiced she
has a real good sort & a splendid
officer. Next week I hope to be able
to send you a copy of a group of
the officers at Blm. ~~at~~ in which I
have moved & consequently spoiled it.
I will also send more copies of self.

Today if my memory serves me
right I ought to be Miering up to
deford for Lent Term: great heavens
it nearly takes my breath away: to think
that I shall have missed three whole
Terms & probably will miss a fourth.
They will have forgotten all about me!
All this time that I am spending
at the Glen doing garden work seems
a pretty fair waste of lifetime but I
suppose it is a good experience. My very
best love to me & all, & be patient till you
hear news of my return,
Your affectionate son,
F. A. Simonds.

Glen Siding

D.R.C

JAN. 26th / 01.

Dearest Mother,

So many thanks for the most delightful & lengthy letters of Dec 28th & Jan 4th. There is as usual very little to talk about this week. Of course the chief event has been the news of the Queen's death which has cast a profound gloom over everything: we knew what to expect for some days so it was not striking upon us suddenly. I suppose it will put a stop to all kinds of gaieties in England for a few weeks: just as well to be out here perhaps. It will be curious to see what effect it has upon the war. Everyone seems to think it will be for the better. I have just had a new pair of breeches made & as you are sending me out another pair I shall be well supplied. Please thank Grandpa ever so much for the photos which are lovely, especially the one of himself. I am not sure whether I have acknowledged the last parcel you sent me, do some baby from Gavin. The Bers seem very active again in these parts; yesterday a couple were on Ives farm 2 miles away scouting around: there are several small parties knocking about & a police patrol was murdered

a few miles from here 2 nights ago. The other day I drove
out with a farmer in a Cape Cart to a farm 18 miles
off to see about buying some cattle. we found
from the niggers that a Boer scout had been there the
day before making inquiries & stealing horses though of
course the Dutch farmer's wife knew nothing of it!
we should have looked queer if we had turned up to pay
a call on the same day. I think Brother would have come
off worst so we had a mounted escort. At a farm
hard by I was presented by the Boeren with a beautiful
jackals (silver skin, also a wild cat) so I went on my way
rejoicing. This is all supposed to be conquered British
territory yet you can't go ten miles from the line
without running the risk of being shot at: people at
home won't realise that. It is perfectly maddening to
see the numbers of horses which the Dutch are still
allowed to keep on their farms & which are simply waiting
to be taken by the Boers. We give the Dutch gratis, of
& whose husbands are prisoners, so-called protection passes
which means that no soldier can touch their stocks, or
that if I dare to lay my hands on a nice looking horse
I could get the boot, whereas naturally any Brother
coming along helps himself & yet one wonders how
they get remnants & stock: any fool except a gilded politician
of a staff idiot sitting in an office stool all day, whose sole
idea is reconciliation & other such milk & honey, can tell me that.



only yesterday a Boer was snaffled while trying to
 dig up ammunition on a ~~farm~~ kopie just outside
 Bloemfontein. That letter which was opened by
 the Press censor was done so because I posted it
 foolishly in the civil post office. I don't think any
 remarks which I made about it are likely to be
 censored at by the authorities, much less by a Press
 Censor! yesterday I had a most interesting & ~~most~~
 productive ride into the country. First of all I
 potted a most beautiful wild goose on a dam: it
 was a manellous shot! I never really meant to kill
 it but only to stir it up as it ^{was} a long way out on
 the water: somehow the shot 'balled' & caught the
 bird full on the neck. Later on I got 2 pedigree
 sucking pigs presented to me: they are real dreamo!
 I also bargained successfully for a supply of butter to
 be sent in cheap to a certain hospital weekly, not for
 the patients! Today is our garrison officer's birthday
 so ~~we~~ we are having a spread: sucking pig, wild goose,
 asparagus & Heidsieck is not bad for active service is it?

I have had a nice letter from Harry Dawson.
I am sending or some more prints of my
photo, also some groups, not perhaps till next
mail. It is hateful seeing the photos of
Audley's Wood & not being able to get there!
My love to ~~one~~ all.

Your affectionate son,

F. A. Simonds

enough sleep as it is awfully hot
in the day-time & one has to be
always up & about at night.

Walter Morrell went through
the other night by train, at
any rate I was told he was
on the train but I could not
find him so I suppose he must
have been asleep. I should very
much like to have seen him
again. I am sending you by
post some skins, one a silver jacks
the other a wild cat. I think they
will look rather nice on a bit of
red cloth.

Glen.

Thursday
JAN 31st / 01

O. R. C

Dearest Mother,

So very little
to tell you this week I am
afraid except the usual thing
Boers, Boers, everywhere but
never a one to pot! There
have been great moves on lately
all round trains full of troops
& armoured trains have been
flitting up & down incessantly

all of which has caused us to
be very much on the alert,
in fact lately we have all
slipped in the trenches or adjacent
trenches for fear of attack. Our
fears came to a head yesterday
when we had a wire from
Headquarters saying that DeW
was coming in force from the
N.W. with Knox full belt
at his heels & that he was
going to try & break through
the line between here & Karree,
so you bet we were on tenterhooks

& sat in the trenches all the
afternoon & night, but as usual
nothing happened. These expected
attacks are really very trying
on the nerves. Our fellows
were awfully keen to get a
slap at them especially as they
were fully prepared. It would
have been particularly appropriate
as today celebrates the anniversary
of the Company being sworn
in. I am in a perpetual state
of sleepiness now & cannot get

Friday Feb 1st / 01.

To-day is the nominal opening day of the game-shooting season (bar-tracks) likewise as it is the last at home. I went out at 5 this morning & tried to denoise ^{quince} ~~the~~ butes were too wild & I could not get at them. Just off to Bloomington to draw pay.

Best love to all, I suppose it will a big show tomorrow in town.

I have written to America.

Yr- affectionate son

F. A. Simonds

will have done a bit of globe-
-trotting. We have an Engineer
officer here now who is building
some block houses for us at
each of the bridges, which will
make things a good deal safer for
us. De Wet must have passed
pretty close to us the other day.
Unfortunately the horse from
has been taken away from us
to replace the one taken from
him by de Wet. Quinn's
brother who has a big farm
near Thebaïchen has just
come in here in a hurry having

Glen Siding

O.R.C

Friday

Feb 8th / 01

Dearest Mother,

No letter from
you this week so I suppose you
missed the mail or the letter
went up to the regiment by
mistake. Louise says you are
forwarding a letter from Eddie
de B. The chief item of interest
this week has been de Wet's escape
South again through Israel's Post:
everyone is rick as death about
it, as his way ^{into} ~~with~~ the Colony


is now open if he wishes to get there
as the Orange is fordable almost
anywhere. Nobody apparently
seems to know where he has
got to at present but presumably
he is in the Demitsdorf district.
Troops have been dashing South
continually & we have been feeling
people here at all hours from
General's commands. General Lytle
Paget & Plumer have all fed here
this week. I found out where
Colonel Keightley was so I sent
him a line & he has sent me
back a very nice letter imploring

me not to call him Col. K but
Cousin Charlie. He promises to pay
me a visit on his next journey
to Bfonten. I am sending you
by this mail a tin containing
a few flower seeds (7 sorts) which
S^r Johnson has collected for me.
I think they will do very well
if you keep them in a hot house
& plant them out later in the spring.
No doubt Brooks will water them
with fatherly care. The Solanum
or 'Stink plant' is certainly very
pretty. Any ordinary soil will do.
The tin is the one that James
sent my Xmas pipe in, so it

but in the excitement of the
chase doubtless I shall take
some Belgian purters.

I have received a letter from Louise
for which very many thanks, also
a bit of paper from Face which
might be meant for me, but as
I have forgotten my Greek &
Herren (whichever it is) it is not very
interesting. ~~Only sends kind regards~~
Best love to all, your affectionate son,

F. A. Simonds



^{3/}The same night we also had
a number of 'Orange Peelers'
just out from home who were
exporting a mob of horses.
as the river was in flood there
were some grand scenes while
the horses were made to swim
across. The S. A. C. men certainly
seemed a very capable & sound lot
for recruits. The funniest scene
was reserved till the last when
a Cape cart drawn by four mules
tried to get across. the wheels
were well ^{under} the water & things

were looking a bit queer so the
nigger driver took a header out, &
one of the leaders turned round
& jumped up into the cart!!

However a seemingly inevitable
disaster was averted by the whole
being forcibly dragged out in a
heap with ropes. One cart containing
whiskey & jam was upset & is
probably in the sea by now.

The powers that be have decided
that buckshooting may commence
so I hope shortly to be eating venison,
but it is not safe at present to
go out very far, & there is more

danger of being shot by your
own patrols when out shooting
than by Boers. Information
has been brought in that seven
Boers visit a farm nightly
where I occasionally go & shoot
koodan so I am 'off' it at present.
Even Box & Cox game comes to an
end, a shot gun versus maner
is pure sport. We hope to get at
them some day but we really
have not got enough mounted men
for the job. I have got hold of
a great lumbering horse which
I intend to do some shooting from

does not bring in correct information,
whereas we only look a native
up & give him a good feed if
caught skying around. The other
day a Brother dressed in khaki
asked a nigger where the Boers
were: of course the nigger
unwittingly told him & got whacked
out at once: these sort of things
produce a holy terror of Boers among
the natives. We had a crowd
of Disceoll's scouts here the other
night on their way North; they
are a set of scoundrels & thieves of
every nationality under the sun.

2
everything behind him which he
could not take in a light Cape
cart. De Wet lagged on his flanks
both when coming North & South
& he was made a prisoner both
times but released on their going off,
but he is not going to run
the risk again so they have promised
to shoot him if found wandering
from his farm. He certainly
gave some excellent sidelights
on their way of doing things:
in the first place they have
all got 4 or 5 lb fat horses

on which they ride alternately &
carry over so many days provisions.
Riding like this of course they
can do 60 miles a day easily &
they are unencumbered with waggon.
Whereas our fellows riding
only one horse laden with blankets
great coats etc & with a string of
waggons to guard can only do
about 30 miles & are dead beat at
the end. De Wet has 3500 with
him & 3 guns. Last time he
made that dash through Springbush
Nek to the North, he loitered on

De Wet's farm & the horses & men
were so absolutely beat after an
enormous ride that they could
have been easily scuppered but
Thornycroft apparently did not
like the job & was afraid to
take the initiative (perhaps not
after Shimon's kill!) so a great chance
was lost. Another great factor in
the Boers' success is their great
system of native intelligence:
the nigger gets in mortal funk
of the Boer who treats him in a
proper manner if caught spying
& shoots him, & shoots him if he

far too lazy. However it will win
a lot of good. I hope he will
get into the Sappers, not the

R.A. Those guns are such noisy
toys. I have had letters from
Sam, James, & Alice Davis &
Father for which many thanks,
I have heard from Divine Bates
that they have now received my
things from Bowley & Holson.

Feb 15th Friday The powers that be
have now decided that backshooting
is not to commence till March 1st
so we must possess our souls in
patience for another fortnight.

Glen Siding

Wednesday
Feb 13th / 01

D.R.C

Dearest Mother,

We have I been
at Brookhurst Spruit, wet at
Holtfontein, but never have I
been so wet as I have been the
last 12 hours. We have been treated
to a terrific deluge all night long,
& I have had a fine soaking. Our
discomfort was increased by the fact
that our patrols have been chased
into camp on two successive days

wherefore it behooves us to be especially on the alert, & small bodies of Boers are known to be in the district. Of course it is impossible to hire into the ranks of the big-headed idiots of militiamen that I have the pleasure of looking after that the Boers are not as afraid of rain as I am sure they are, a fact which a certain father experience has taught me. The result was that several of the men stuck to their ~~weapons~~ & would not face the trenches till ~~promptly ordered~~ & I had to be on

the more most of the night keeping the sentries awake etc. That was no picnic either as I had to be climbing up slippery banks & splashing through dongas full of slime & water, till I got so wet & dirty that my own father would not have known me! I received a large budget of letters this week: many thanks for yours. I am so awfully sorry to hear of Bill Collins' death, & Uncle Arthur's illness. I must say I am very much astonished to hear of Face's intention to take up the trade of arms. I should have thought him

We have had a mild excitement lately in the shape of a visit of 50 Driscoll's scouts who have been sent to try & catch some of the beggars who are playing about in these parts. They set out last night to a farm some 5 miles out where some Bero frequently come & sleep & steal horses. They surrounded the house & entered it, only to find the wind blown, the same result took place at another farm so they drew blank. It was rather

disappointing as we hoped to
get a few scalps. It is rather
silly to see in the papers that
the Tedworth net at Red Hill
I had a splendid breakfast, all
being so glad to see Capt & Mrs
Best back in their ancestral halls
or some such nonsense. It makes
me mad. There seems absolutely
no news of any chance of Volunteers
getting back yet while: some have
been out here these full year already
& they have not yet received any
notification of being sent home.

Have you met Sir Thomas Pasley
yet? He is a first class fellow. I suppose
Feetham will be at here in April.
I have told Durne co to send
my things on at once. I am not
sure ~~that~~ whether they are the original
things or the last lot you have
sent out. I will keep the old
garments; they might do yet for
Face. My very best love to
all,

Your affectionate son

F. A. Simonds

A small horse to him either.

The English papers (of course we get any amount, only 3 weeks old, including Skelton) always give us the first news of what has happened.

K. came racing through here the other day a back the next: he seemed in a most happy frame of mind about something. Two Mr. D. & a few from Kamee (15 in all) were sent a few days ago to meet a prominent lawyer of Bradford who has just returned from a command: however before they

Glen Siding

Tuesday D.R.C
Feb 19th / 01

Dearest Mother,

Many thanks for your nice long letter, also for Louise's. I have also received one from Harry de Breta from Wei-hai-wei: I am so glad to hear he is on his way home: I will write him a line by this mail. I was so sorry to hear of Bill Collins' death: it is very bad luck

Best love to all,

Your affectionate

Fa. Simonds

on Jack being out here at the
time. I have written to console
with him, also Mr. Collins.
We are being treated to the
most delicious weather now:
rain, rain, rain. One lives in a
perpetual state of moisture: however
this country possesses such a
delightfully drying climate that
when the sun does peek out things
dry up very quickly. Our four
new block houses have now been
finished & we are therefore in a

much safer position than before.
All our fellows are of course in a
great state of excitement about
their being relieved: no one seems
to know if all or only some
will be sent home. I suppose if
any of us have to stop it will
be little more than a draft. Presum-
ably no one will reach us till April.
Feetham in a letter to Emma says
nothing about Cooper coming etc.
I certainly hope he is. We have
been absolutely without news of any
sort for ages: K. keeps everything
of what is going on very dark

night. However we always
have a bottle of our deers in case
de hot is collared here & wants a
little breaking up.

Friday No more news except that for
some reason or other everybody seems
brighter & the sharemarket is up.

Madaren the American scout,
came here yesterday & set out to
find out about the lager at Salt Pan.

A fellow called Nash of the 39th Coy
D.I., who has now got a commission
in the R.S.C., stopped here last night.

He was on the Resting Mercury for some
time & claims friendship with Mrs Jim Somonds

had got 15 miles out they got
almost surrounded by a bunch
Bad men & had to race home
for life under fire. There is now
a big laager of Boethren out at
a place called Salt Pan. No British
troops have yet been through that
part except on the march from
Kimberley. The other day a
few of the militia at ~~Emery~~
Emsgeronden who have been lately
mounted went out for a ride a
little too far with the result that

they were fixed upon in their
attempt to grab home five
of them fell off + were collared!

They were stripped & sent into
camp minus everything but those
garments that ladies don't wear.

I had almost forgotten to thank
you for those lovely photos: some
of them are really splendid, especially
the one of you & Father & little
Eric in the centre. I can't say that
the 2 family groups are wonderfully
flattering. Please thank Father

very much for putting some more
money into Cox for me. I am
afraid I have been less than enthus-
-iastic out here lately; but one can't
live on nothing out here if one
does it decently, & we entertain
on a lavish scale: it is becoming
a curse to us in a mild way that
everyone in Blenheim looks upon us
as a free Restaurant, & everyone
travelling up or down the line
jumps out at us as a matter of course
for a drink, while we have eight
or ten people to dinner some nights
when a train stops here for the

thousand pounds. Tomorrow the
back shooting commences but I
am not sure whether I shall have
to ~~go~~^{stop} at home & look after the
shop. Yesterday was the Commend-
ant's birthday: today is a day of
lionsness. We had a great
sucking-pig dinner, various visitors
being present. All our neighbours
sent us puddings & birthday cakes
ad nauseam, the result being
that the sight of them is repellent
today, & we are living on slops.
I am sending you by this mail

Glen Siding

Thursday

O.R.C

Feb 28th - last.

Dearest Mother,

Many thanks
for your nice long letter, also
the snowdrops. I am sorry the
photos were not so good as they
might be. I have had a print
taken off each & they are pretty good
in my estimation. I have written
a paternal-like epistle to the
Kid containing some advice which

✓ not parcels of clothing
which from H. Moore
Baking for which ever as
many thanks. The cost
was given too long for me.

he may make but not learn
& inwardly cheer. I am very
glad to hear of the big Harry's
return, but it is bad luck on
him losing that battery. The news
this week has been distinctly
better, French having put a good
few in the game-cart, & De Wet
having lost a lot of staff & a few
men. I believe he got into that
'corner' again which has so many
holes in it. The Boers have become
abominably cheeky lately. A

party of them the other evening
raided 1600 of Ivin's cattle which
were grazing on a farm $\frac{1}{4}$ miles
away & disappeared with them,
while another lot raided a farm
near Kamee & looted a lot of sheep.
They are some men who have escaped
from de Wet's commands & crossed the
line 400 strong in sight of
Kamee. We might have had the lot
with some mounted men but as
their horses were worn out but there
are none to spare in this part.
Ivin is horribly annoyed about it
as it means a loss of some

about so. We are sending one back
into Tucker as a sol. I hope it won't
mean a memo referring to Army
Order no 2 which says officers
may never leave their stations
before 12. a.m. & other little regulations
that one is forced to break if one goes
out shooting. I'm has not been
able yet to get a headstone for Jim
Thurkett's grave owing to the war,
but I will photo the place at the
same. I hope Gen Cuthbert got my
letter all right. I will write again if he
presnt. Best love to all. Yrs affect an
P. A. Simonds.

the uniform of a corporal of
President's Brand's Rifles, an old
cape found in the Boer war,
composed chiefly of Englishmen.
It was brought in here by the
American scout MacLaren who
has been in the neighbour hood lately.
He looted it from a farm house
some distance out from here.
He also brought a beautiful sword
which the Com^{dt} has bagged &
a good telescope which I have in
collared. N.B I have sent them

by civil post so as to put on
the higher O. R. C stamps, but it
is a good deal more expensive.

Saturday. Had a great day
yesterday with the springbok, though
personally I failed to score one.

There was only myself out from the
garrison, the rest of the party
being Linn, Van Tonder for whose
valut we shot a a renouant man.

We bagged 5 all told of which Linn
got three. We only shot from
10 to 1.30 but that is quite long

enough I can tell you after tearing
about in a fizzing sun as one
has to. It is most exciting work
galloping for all ones worth after a
herd till one gets within two or three
hundred yards & then jumping off
& firing at them, especially when
one's horse, like mine, is nearly
pulling one ~~on~~ to one's back while
trying to take air. We saw
hundreds of bucks & I certainly fired
away a good deal of ammunition
but it seems the merest fluke
ever hitting one as they keep moving

disgust, & I could not find it
again anywhere. They take a lot
of killing & one really wants
dum-dum bullets for them. However
I was very thankful to have killed
one at all, & came back triumphant
tired & very thirsty. On Sunday
there was a house shooting party
at Quin's, officers & civilians chiefly
from Blenheim, 11 guns in all.
During the afternoon they all
made through a net - just where
I was shooting the day before -

Glen Siding

Tuesday
March 5th 1901

O.R.C

Dearest Mother,

Very many thanks
for your letter, also one from
Louise for which much gratitude
as also for the copy of the
game-book which is vastly
interesting to me. I have had
a letter too from Uncle Harry
I am glad you got the photos
safely. We have been having a

good deal of excitement lately.
On Saturday I rode out to the
hills close by in search of
rebucks & after climbing about
without seeing a thing till I
was nearly fagged & the tongue
was hanging out of my mouth,
I was about to chuck it, when
I espied five rebuck running
away from me. I let loose 5
rounds without result, then
they stopped so I did a most
terrible kneescraping stalk till

I got within 500 yds & then
bowed me over, & after reloading
quickly, rolled over one standing
next to him. I rushed up & was
just going to knife one of
them when the other crawled
up & dragged itself along
to the edge of the kopie & gave
me a lot of trouble before I
could deliver the cut-throat.
On returning to No. 5 I found
he had disappeared & just viewed
him vanishing over the further
edge of the kopie, & to my intense

I have written a letter to Gen
Cutbert as he never received my
first: & I cannot conceive where it
got to. 600 Beatty ones
leagured almost within sight of
us last night - some of de Wets
rattle I suppose; this sort of thing
two or three times a week makes one
very jumpy & must be very bad
for the nerves, but it ought to be
a lasting antidote to nightmare
home. Best love to all.

Yr affectionate son,
F. A. Simonds.

without seeing anything suspicious
but about 10 minutes afterwards
a young fellow ~~was riding~~
who was riding with them to
help carry the meat, came along
the same road & was held up
by 4 Boers who took his money
& pass & let him go! Well that sort
of thing rather adds a piquancy
to shooting in this part of the
world, & rather puts one off it!
The Pelk of a Beatty one
would be a decided addition to the

collection of skins which I hope to
make before coming home! The
party itself was of a decidedly
X-massy description as far as I
can gather & the firing was fast
furious foolish & on the whole
I am rather glad I did not attend.

Yesterday I went out by myself
again in the afternoon (with an
orderly of course as escort) & did some
more stomach-scraping over
bodies & again succeeded in getting
a rabbit, though I had to put

6 holes in him before finally
getting him. I have been unable
to get a decent head yet, both mine
having been done. It is most
interesting sport but I should prefer
to partake of it in more peaceful
times & when one can get away
for a few more hours at a time!

Friday, 8th. many thanks for
the ruyro & case which was the
very thing: it was very "knowing"
of you to have been able to send
the right thing; many thanks
also for the Spiritine & chocolate

most trust-enticing Poppies
I have downed a couple of rabbits,
the skins of which I shall value
greatly in years to come. The
Boers have been a bit cheeky
lately: last week they lifted 1600
sheep off an adjoining farm, &
another day held up a young
Dutchman who was out with
some of us helping to carry the
game & had got separated from the
rest. We have just had the

Glen Siding

Tuesday
March 12th / 01
O. P. C

My dear Frank,

I am sitting
down to write you (& others) letters
as it is a pouring wet day &
there is nothing else to do but I
am bothered if I know what
to gas about. Everything is
going along the same as ever,
including the Boers who are as

usual in the war. The war seems
as far off the end as ever: troops
keep tearing up & down the line
but very little tangible result is
obtained. We have been pretty
quiet here lately: we have a lager of
350 fifteen miles West of us
but so far we have been content
with mutual admiration. We have
been informed that Volunteer Companies
have left England to relieve those
out here & that those relieved can
go home if they wish to. But

unfortunately there is no company
coming from Berkshire so I don't
quite know what will happen
to us. The Berkshire boys have
been sensible enough to take
the 5/- a day & join the Yeboys.
The chief ^{item of} interest lately has
been the buckshooting at which we
have had some great fun: I
have wasted some scores of
rounds of ammunition, & as a
result of much galloping over the
veldt & stomach-scraping of the

& I am sure is taking years
off my life! I am in sole charge
of a big bridge boys long
with \$30000 & heaven share the
day when I shall see it
vanishing into space! Well

here's love to you & best love to
all your people,

Yr aff cousin,
F. A. Simonds

Excuse scrawl but it is biting cold.

office to clear off every single
horse & mule from the face of
the country, no receipts or money
to be given the which of course
has caused great heart-rending
& sickness among the loyal
- so-called orthodox, the former
predominate - inhabitants, &
we are daily besieged by blubbering
pious & niggers who want to know
where they can get the 'Kaalen'
for them; however they go away

more or less consoled by fond
assurances that it will all
be put right after the war: yegods!
I am afraid they will have to wait
a bit! I hear that lucky
beggar Gavin is off on a trip
to Greece: I hope he will not
be overcome by the charms of
any ~~one~~ of the Swarthy,
daughters of the land of olives,
- like one other member of
the clan we know of!

I have been in this place just
10 weeks & am beginning to know
my way about! We still live
on the fat of the land & our
mess dinners hardly reach the
level of one's ideal of active service!
We certainly can't complain of
existence by day but by night one
gets very sick of oneself, having
to be up & round the centres, & then
up again for good at 4. Besides there
is the everlasting responsibility
which really is a strain on one

with a tin on its head. I fear
I am spared to go back I hope
to have a terremerous
but, as a grateful country will
pay me nearly £200 for 'batter'
etc & that ought to keep the
water down the spout for a month
or two, & enable me to take the
family & kids to town, if only
in a 4-horse char-a-banc! But
I am not going to take them to
see Bill acted, much though I
like the Twelfth Night.

Glen Siding

18/3/01

O. R. C

My dear Frank,

Great art thou a
wonderful: thy name is Scile.
I have just this moment opened
your letter & cold though it be
I early to boot (6.15) I am sitting
down to answer it, the reason
being no doubt that from you
I receive the first intimation of
Oxford's kicking the Tabs, where
I greatly rejoice. Perhaps you will

think it very nice & patriotic of me
but as a matter of fact I had
a bottle of the boy on the result
with an old Tab, so my
Patriotism was ~~rather~~ fostered
in my Tom rather than in my
heart! It makes me smile to
think of you people in the throes
toasting frosts while we are
enjoying most beautiful weather
if nothing else. However it is
getting monstrous cold in the
early mornings which is compensated
for by a blazing heat in the day.

However I think I would sooner
be home ~~tho~~ even though it was
to have to spend a month on
the Underground in a prison
for. What a noble fellow you
are to be sure! fancy taking
your people to the theatre on your
first pay: I wish I could say
I had ~~the~~ done the same. I am
afraid I am beastly extravagant
out here as it costs a good
deal to live like a Christian &
prices are dreadfully high. I am
longing for food that does not give

on having a horse that is used to the
game, & will stand still when fired
from through the rains & will pick
its ^{own} way through the anthills &
holes, & above all will not sneeze
too violently! I took an Imperial
toss 'tother day owing to a difference
of opinion ~~ed~~ between mare & self
as to which side of a mud-hole we
should go: the mare had the whole
of her own way in the matter, I only
got half of mine & a pair of very
muddy bags! Yesterday I went out
some distance up the river into
the bush to try & get some small

Whirrao! what times there are
in store! At present I see very
little prospect of being able to get
back for some time though
only £. lately they have promised
to send home Volunteers on completion
of a year's service: most companies
have already done their year & mine
is up in a few days but we have
not had the office to go, ~~or any other~~
either. There is a man called
Kitchener what is fierce & cares
for nobody & miffin what they say.

The chief excitement now is of course the plague at the Cape which has tremendous & horrible possibilities & will certainly not hasten the end of the war or precipitate our own home country for home. I must say I have been enjoying myself a good deal lately having had some fine times after bucks. at present I have only bagged 2 rabecks & 1 springbok, & I shudder to think how much Gov^{nt} ammunition I have wasted on ~~them~~! They are

frightfully hard to hit & even when hit they often take 5 or 6 more shots before being downed. My springbok is a magnificent old ram with a fine pair of horns. Fox-hunting cannot be in it with a good gallop after springbok! One first has to find the bucks on the veldt & then gallop "hell for leather," as the sportsman I believe would say in England, when within a hundred yards or so one has to get off & blaze at them, & it is no mean feat to hit the brutes running at 100 yds. of course & a great deal depends

back called ~~thunkers~~ (spelling not
guaranteed) which are very scarce
& very much prized. However just my
luck, the only one I saw all
day got up under my feet just as I
had taken out the backshot from
my gun & was putting in some small
shot for some quineafoot I saw
ahead, & I had to go on my way
morning in the sweetness of the
humerous temper. I bagged 3 quineafoot
, 1 teal, 1 hare & 1 boost-bird so I did
not do so badly after all. We have a

being of nurses coming out for a
little picnic 'par la rivier' this
afternoon. Gen. Tucker has been
heard to make uncomplimentary
remarks re the nurses coming
out so often here; quite unwarranted
I assure you! My congratulations
to your General on having routed
the fox! An Oxford pal writes that
it is all over the Variety that Jones
collared in bed by the Beastly Dues
& that I shall never hear the end of it.
With good-bye old man & good luck to you;
best love to your people. You tell the Cauldron

F. A. Seward

feel like whipped cuss. Give 'em
an inch & they take a mile.

They are the most delightful
going double-tongued blackguards
that ever rode a horse. Anything
that we may do to try & con-
-ciliate them would be interpreted
as weakness on our part.

Whiroo! just had such a
compliment paid me! Brook
has sent home my photo to
his sister & she says I am the
very image of DeWet about the
eyes & nose! she says she is sure

Glen Siding

Wednesday
March 20th /01 D.R.C

Dearest Mother,

Very many thanks
for your letter also one from
Father. Glad you had a good
time in Africa - what am I
writing? got it on the train
London I mean, wish I could
have a turn round the Village!
The Boers are getting wondrous
perky nowadays round Karree

which is 6 miles North of here:
there is a laager of one hundred
& fifty Smiles east of them;
they amuse themselves daily
riding horse races & shooting
on one best buck preserves,
the bally poachers! Dought
such a nation of rascals be
allowed to exist? Of course they
can do nothing at warre but
sit still & watch them as they are
not mounted & have to guard
the station. If only they would
train up a few M.D. from Blythe

by night they might do some
damage but they seem to be too
fond of camping on this war
on paper at Headquarters. It is
too maddening to see these lily-
-livered milberry-faced rascals
talking at home about offering
the same army terms: it is
nothing but crass ignorance that
makes the dunderheads talk like that.
Anybody who has once seen the
brutes would ever let them have ~~it~~
their own way: they still hates
us & always will do & will never
be subservient to us till they

Kranio ran so we had to harness
one wretched pony & my mare
into a Cape Cart & send them in.

I have not yet heard what happened
to them but I suppose we should
have been informed if they
had not arrived! I suspect the
rigger was run in through a for
driving in town without a light.

Saturday. No mails to arrive this
week owing to breakdown of the boat.
Some of the new German
drafts arrived yesterday on their way
up country & I hear that there are

that I am to be the wretched
captor of him! Well I always
knew I was a bit of a rip but
did not know that I was
such a downright cunning
one! Then our bête-noue
P. Boltha is dead: I hope they
will find a warm corner for
him down under. So Miss
Louise has got a fine contralto
voice, has she! Great braying-
"mules, it must be like a
caricature of the dorklesucks!

I went some way up the river
but the other afternoon I
tried to shoot some druyper (I
can't guarantee spelling) a kind
of very small bush hawk: they
are very scarce & very wild, nipping
through the bush at the shortest
notice. However just my luck,
the only one I saw all day
got up under my feet just as I
took out the trigger from my
gun so I saw some quinesford ahead,
& I was empty & could not get in a

shot; wretched luck! However I
bagged 3 quinesford, & teal &
1 more as a result of 3 hours'
walking which was not bad work.
We had a party of nurses out
here on Monday & they brought
me out a most beautiful pair
of muslin curtains for the mess;
it gives it a most distinguished
appearance & quite removes all
doubt as to which is the best mess
in S. Africa on the Lines of Command!
The picnic had rather an unfortunate
termination as none of the 4

some Vol Coys already in the
country: we may know something
definite by Easter. This Plague
is really getting awfully serious
now that it has got hold of the
military: there are so many
terrible possibilities in it.

Henry Ayres went through here
yesterday on his way home: I see
they have been fitting Giles
in terrific style. I notice in
the Berkshire Chronicle that Father
played the organ at ~~what~~ ^{what} these

with a Basing man.

Major Massey's column is
coming through here this
morning so we are preparing
(it is only 6 a.m. now)
to have to feed many hungry
souls including Donald Borett

who is with them. I always intend
to send some more films by each
mail but I have lent several of
them to various people to take copies
from & they won't return them.

Best love to all & a hilarious Easter
if this is not too late!

Your affectionate son
F. A. Simonds

I certainly think that Gavin
is doing well in checking the
G.C.S. it will be much better for
him to stop at home & keep
little Eric from a superfluity
of roughness! Can't think of
anything to talk of, & it is O.T.

Thursday 28th/01. Am finishing letter
early this week as I have to be in
Bloufontein tomorrow to draw
the off of him. We heard firing
yesterday to the East of us,
Thornycroft having gone out

Glen Siding

March 26th/01 O.R.C.
~~~~~

Dearest Mother,

No letters last week  
owing to mailboat having broken  
down: hope to have 2 lots on

Saturday: Very little to tell you  
I am afraid except that a few  
Volunteer Companies have been  
sent down to Cape Town also a  
good many new Jerboys have  
gone up country including

the new Company of Bikes joining  
who are up at Klerksdorf.

I wasted yesterday up at Brandfort  
over a most uninteresting Court

Martial. I met a Magdalen  
man named Boyd at lunch at  
one of the farms on Sunday. He

is the author of a 'Thousand Miles  
with the C. I. V.' - has now got  
a billet as Crown Prosecutor at  
Bloumfountain. I hear that one

of the men of my draft, Ballara,  
of Wantage, is very very bad with  
entire in Blfth. I do hope he

pulls through: He is a fine great  
fellow, the best + most popular  
man in the whole company.

Things have been much more  
quiet lately in these parts.

Masseys column having stepped  
the Boers further withough I  
suppose they will turn up again soon.

I notice in the army list that  
Geoffrey Shea is first on the  
Unattached list - that Maurice  
Simonds is on the Indian  
Staff corps unattached list.

with a column from Blythe, to  
try & hammer a larger out  
Brantfort way. I did my  
level best to be allowed to go out  
with some of our M. G. who  
acted as guides to the column  
but Bross refused, rightly, I  
suppose, as I had no real reason  
for going. Van Nieke one of the  
Peace Delegates has just come in  
after having been all over the country  
trying to persuade the burghers to

come in to say they are  
hopelessly destitute & do not dream  
of going in: they are entirely  
brought up by the hope that the  
Cape Colony will rise & they are  
both openly & secretly encouraged by  
various Bond members in whom  
they have the greatest confidence  
& it is these inhuman Mackquants  
that are responsible for the  
prolongation of hostilities more  
than anyone else, & they of course  
do it solely for their own ends

knowing well whereabouts they  
would come in if we got the  
upperhand throughout S. Africa!  
They are just now employed in  
cremating a farmhouse near  
Karee whence our patrols were  
fired upon last night.

Ever sends kind regards to both of  
you. Excuse such a scabby  
letter. All love to everyone.

Yr affectionate son

F. A. Simonds  
W W W W

niggers & livestock, but the  
Boers of course vanished before  
them, most of them crossing  
the line N of Kame. In consequence  
a pretty little expedition did plan  
to a farm some 16 miles away  
where turkeys & sucking pigs  
galore abound; also intending to  
take away a fine piano on a waggyn  
whereunto to beguile the weary hours.  
Unfortunately the patrols brought  
word yesterday evening that the Boer  
men were back on the farm again.

Glensiding

Ye Feast of O.R.C.  
Fools.

April 1<sup>st</sup> / 01.

Dearest Mother,

I suppose your  
two letters this morning must  
be meant as a kind of 'April  
Fool' as I had failed to receive any  
for nearly 3 weeks & had almost  
given up hope of getting them.  
I am surprised to hear that Charley  
Simons is coming out as I

never thought his Governor would  
allow him but I am very glad  
to hear it all the same: how  
clear Simonds! I don't know  
how far his coming out will  
affect our going but if any of  
us have to stop it will be the  
unfortunate old ~~Drift~~ who will  
perhaps have to finish their  
year out here. Several Volunteer  
Corps have gone South on their  
way home. I see that Geoffrey Shea  
is gazetted to the Royal Munster  
Fusiliers a jolly fine regiment: I

suppose he too will be coming  
out here - Just heard that  
dear old Oxford took the  
Boat Race. Whinoo! though  
I am rather disgusted that Mayhew  
did no better in Troggers. I have  
had a very nice letter from  
Uncle Arthur who seems pretty  
cheery again. Thomeycroft's column  
have been engaged in the most  
wholesale looting to the <sup>N</sup> East of  
us. Every living thing has been  
cleared off in the way of women

mail but I shall keep them  
& bring them along with me.

Yesterday being Good Friday  
several of us engaged ~~in~~  
in a little bottle-shooting across  
the Mother River at which  
game my steady hand struck  
me in good stead & made me win  
an honest penny. In the  
afternoon we went out buckshooting  
& covered a tremendous lot  
of country, 25 miles about, but  
failed to kill a buck though

wherefore the business is  
postponed sine die, as I might  
have had some of the escort shot  
& the loss of them in such a cause  
would be hardly justifiable in the  
~~loss~~ eyes of the brass hats!

Easter Saturday, April 6<sup>th</sup>: At last,

the very best of news: we are  
expecting every day, hour,  
minute the office to clear,  
& we are only awaiting the  
redispotion of troops along  
the line before going. This

will probably be my last  
letter from the Glen & by  
the time you receive it I  
hope you will have had a  
wire from me from Cape Town.

It appears that other Volunteer  
Companies have been run  
straight from the train  
on boardship to prevent plague.

I hope they will give me  
time to go to Divine Sales &  
get my kit & I should very

much like to have a day  
there & take a few photos.

Barring mishaps of all mishaps  
of all sorts I ought to be back  
within a year of my sailing  
May 11<sup>th</sup>. I think I might  
even go so far as to ask  
you to get my room ready  
look up a little mufti & dress-  
-suit for me & kill the cat.  
Father might look round  
the cellar! I was going to send  
a few more films by this



I knocked the hind leg off one  
& chased him for 3 miles  
in the end having to give it  
up my pony being absolutely  
beat. These Springboks are such  
hardy brutes & in consequence  
one wounds such a lot of  
them without being able to  
kill them.

I see that Beford won the  
Shorts too, good! We gave  
Ivan a send-off dinner

last night he is going to  
England next week family &  
all. Well, good-bye, Glen,  
may this be the last letter  
from you, though I may  
be with you another week yet!  
Anyhow I shall probably write a  
line from Cape Town.  
Best love to one & all,

Your affectionate son,

F. A. Simonds  
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