

Woman's Endurance eBook

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Page 1

PREFACE.

DEAR READER,—

A perusal of the following "Introduction" by the Author, and of his true and touching "Diary," will assuredly carry the conviction into your own soul, if you still require conviction, that our South African women were the heroines of the late deplorable war.

May this pathetic relation bring us all nearer to one another in sympathy and love; and serve to awaken in every woman's breast the desire to emulate and perpetuate the pure faith and noble devotion which these Sisters of ours have handed down to us and to all posterity as their priceless legacy.

In undertaking the responsibility for the publication of this "Diary," I may simply state that the proceeds will be given towards the support of the Orphanage at Bethulie.

Yours, etc., D. De Villiers, Secretary, Boer Relief Committee. Cape Town.

INTRODUCTION.

This Journal was written in the Bethulie Concentration Camp just two years ago.

A few days after my return from Europe (whither I had gone for six months on the completion of a Theological course at Stellenbosch), a telegram came from the Deputy Administrator of the Orange River Colony, through the Rev. Wm. Robertson, inviting me to work as Chaplain in one of the Concentration Camps.

The Rev. Mr. Pienaar, who had received a similar invitation, and I therefore journeyed down to Bloemfontein a few days later. We received great courtesy at the hands of Sir Hamilton Gould-Adams, the Deputy Administrator, and every kindness from Mr. Robertson.

In a few days it was finally decided that Mr. Pienaar should go to Irene, in the Transvaal, and I to the Concentration Camp at Bethulie. Thither I forthwith travelled, arriving at my destination on the 21st August.

The thought suggested itself the very first day that I might desire, in after years, to recall my experiences in Camp, and so I decided to keep a diary. This thought, and this alone, prompted me in the matter. Of an evening, therefore, just before retiring, I noted down the doings of the day, consulting at such times always my pocket note-book.

What was written was done hurriedly, on the impulse of the moment—in fact, simply scribbled down without, of course, any regard to style, language, or form. Stress of

circumstances must be held responsible for the many undignified expressions in which the Diary abounds. It should not be forgotten, moreover, that I was usually tired out after the day's work, when these entries were made.



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For almost a year the Diary lay in my desk before I could summon courage to re-read it. After it had been hidden again for another year, I rashly promised a sick friend to send it for her to read. Fearing, however, that she would not be able to follow all the contractions, I decided to copy it over, and it was while thus engaged that it became clear to me that it should be published. Cui bono? is of course, the question which must be faced. The only answer I wish to plead is that this work is a tribute to Woman's Endurance, and that it presents in the story of that endurance, and the fortitude of the Dutch women and children, one of the nobler aspects of the late war. And is not this plea enough? Cannot we sometimes forget the inevitable political aspect of things and see beyond into the human?

In conclusion, this: A diary is simply a confidential talk to one's self of one's self—such is its prerogative. While, then, sending forth into publicity this Journal in its entirety, so as not to mar its integrity, need it be suggested how hard it is occasionally to lay bare the naked soul within?

Durbanville,
Cape Colony,
September, 1903.

* * * * *

Note.

As reproduced here, the Diary is substantially the same as the original, except for:—

1. Contractions, which are written out.
2. Slang, for which, where it could be done, inoffensive words are substituted.

In form it is given absolutely unchanged.

I have found it necessary to add a number of notes, and to translate all the Dutch.

DIARY.

CHAP. I.

Bethulie Concentration Camp, August, 1901.

Wednesday, August 21.—Arrived station 8.30 a.m. (from Bloemfontein); tedious delay; no pass to village obtainable, official in village for breakfast; number of refugees in same train, among them a sick girl, with fever: "Pappie, Pappie, ach mij ou Pappie!" ("Daddy, daddy! O my dear daddy!") Thus she cried whenever she was touched, as they



carried her out of the train, and lifted her on to the wagon. She was fever-stricken and terribly emaciated. (Reference is made later to this same girl.) Alas! Arrival village; visit parsonage (Becker's); dinner; things forwarded per wagon; arrival camp (mile out); meet superintendent; given a tent; dust; misery; the Van As's offer me a home; kind; bitter cold night; leakage; bad draught; bad cold; feel lonesome; orphanish; pipe to rescue; great consolation.

* * * * *

Thursday, August 22.—My tent untenable position; in the thoroughfare; speak Superintendent; obtain new site; private; buy 150 bricks 1s. 6d., hire three boys, barrow 1s. 3d.; with miershoop (antheap, excellent for making floor) make brick kraal; hard work; Mr. Van As[1] and Fourie grand; fine floor.

First visits: Young girl, orphan, bad; Weinanda, little girl, "Ja Oom, ik is nou bij mij Mamie" ("Yes, Uncle, now I am with my mother"); mind wanders. Third tent: Two babies wrestling with death; mothers raadeloos (in despair); 486[2], wife, babe at breast, measles; daughter, 14, convalescent; behind screen three children sick, measles; condition pitiable; husband prisoner Ladismith; great dirt; unbearable; the pity of it!



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Pitch tent; wet floor; inside dire confusion.

Meeting Church-square thirty-nine elders[3]; each a block; prayer; introduction Rev. Becker; kind words and cheer.

Early bed; restless night; hospital close by; commotion; groans; fifteen buried to-day; service for Mr. Van As.

* * * * *

Friday, August 23.—Early bird; wash spruit[4]; first shave (tears); Van As coffee; pathetic sight; old man leading old wife back to tent from hospital; Hugo; son just died.

Visit Hugo's; dinner Van As; outspan (rest); cigar grand.

Unpack; three Red Cross boxes (gift of the chemist); order out of chaos; spirits revive; visits 2.5 p.m.

Dying child; mother broken-hearted.

Dying mother; clear doorway; deathbed grim attraction for our people; prayer; understands.

Widow; husband found dead outside in night; heart disease.

Sick child (since dead); sick child; sweet face; Louw.

Visit sick child of yesterday, also Weinanda.

Stray; hear cough; enter; father invalid (wife dead); three sick children; youngest very bad.

Comfort mother of dead child.

Funerals (seven), Mr. Becker: "I was dumb and opened not my mouth."

Burial ground; about 120 graves; weeping mothers; visit dying child; fool of myself, broke down in prayer; the helplessness in presence of Death!

Throat hoarse; dead off; return tent; meditate; convinced this work the very hardest in whole world.

Avoid taking guide next time (handicapped).

Neglected to visit 486 and mothers of yesterday's dying children.



Stienie[5]; down measles; jelly.

Mr. Otto's dear loving daughter[6] died hospital.

Fourteen corpses (in morgue tents).

Very many old friends all about of Papa's and Oom Jacob's[7].

One man disappointed; had expected Oom Jacob.

Night: Strains of Psalm-singing; calm and fresh after shower of rain; follow ear; Snyman; short conversation.

* * * * *

Saturday, August 24.—Evening: Coughing; wailing; crying; groaning.

Exhausting day; pure, clear air after refreshing rain.

The misery in our Camp heart-rending; hopeless to cope with work.

Up early; coffee in hospital kitchen; work.

235a; six orphans; baby; dirt; sad!

241; mother died to-day suddenly.

239; boy 12, Ignatius; malignant growth shoulder; hopeless; pining away.

249; child; measles.

468; Venter; motherless infants; all sick; food scarce; despair; powerful grandmother (arms!); daughter; all measles; "Ziet, minheer, die dochter is nog'n lady: sij is nie getrouwd nie" ('This daughter, sir, is still a lady; she is not yet married'); Bengers; beef tea.[8]

485; Van Heerde; mother and tentful of sick children; pitiable; camphor; brandy.



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487; Engelbrecht; Mrs. P. de Lint[9]; wonderful discovery; yet withal sad; father India; children ill; wife broken-hearted; great rejoicing; thanksgiving for change.

321; Old Mr. De Villiers, grand old man; great cheer to myself.

268; Mrs. De Villiers; five children sick.

383; mother died last week; daughter this morning; “Minheer, dit was de prachtigste sterfbed wat ik ooit gezien het” (‘Sir, it was the most beautiful deathbed I have ever seen’); “Dag, tante, ik gaat naar die Heere Jesus toe” (‘Good-bye, Aunt, I am going to the Lord Jesus’); remaining daughter very, very bad; “Minheer, moet assemblief bid dat ik kan gezond word” (‘Sir, you must pray, please, that I may recover’); little hope; inflammation.

292; Van der Berg; wife died last night.

81; casual visit; Mrs. Van Staden; Mrs. Otto; sick children.

80; Mrs. Van der Merwe died to-day; old lady, Mrs. Pienaar, ill in bed; when I repeated some verses Gezang 65[10], old lady forestalled me line for line.

612; “Ach mij lieve ou Pappie”; better.

Five hours’ incessant work; wearisome; thank God when twilight comes.

Work here for ten men; no chance alone; no show; the helplessness of it all! and there are hundreds sick and dying that I know not of, and that I could not visit even should I know.

My brothers-elders must help me more.

Had I not seen body of 80 removed I should never have known.

Funerals this morning; twelve; rude coffins; rough and ready biers (six); young Hugo; “Gelijk een bloem des velds” (“As for man his days are as grass; as a flower of the field so he flourisheth”)[11]

Visit Mrs. Liebenberg, whose girlie was buried; prostrate; never saw glimpse of Mr. Becker.

Great concern because of the difficulty of cleanliness amid such dire straits; point determined; to warn and exhort one and all to the strictest cleanliness[12]; for “cleanliness is next to godliness.”

Saw long convoy travelling past.



Eighteen corpses in morgue tents.

* * * * *

Sunday, August 25.—Longish day.

235a; six orphans[13]; nice and clean; very satisfactory; boy bad.

383; still same; poor girl.

113; death; child; much misery; Olivier.

Church 1.30; open air; glorious weather; attentive congregation; singing impressive; majority stand; grand pulpit(!); regular rostrum.

Afternoon work begins 2 p.m., ends 7 p.m.; incessant, wearying.

Twenty-eight visits.

Our Camp one large hospital, with hundreds wrestling with measles, pneumonia, fever. The sorrow of it that I never can sit down and say, "Now I have visited all the sick." There are hundreds of whom I know nothing.

Horrible whistle that! It signals the morgue tent people to come and remove the dead. It is Death's shrill, harsh, jarring, triumphant shout! It shivers one through.



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176; great misery.

235b; child died; food needed.

375; dead child.

175; a most harrowing spectacle; Badenhorst; old father; old mother; bedridden 15-year-old boy; water head; simple; old mother feeds it mouth to mouth[14]; "Die kind, leeraart, het ik nou al lang afgege aan de Heere Jesus!" (This child, Pastor, I have given to the Lord Jesus long ago.") She dotes on this imbecile, poor mother. Such a simple, homely, gladsome, believing old heart. "Ik ben velen een wonder geweest" ("I am a wonder unto many"); me certainly; daughter with sick girlie; "De Heere het haar ver ons terug gege" ("The Lord has given her back to us"); there was a fire in their tent, and this young mother was badly burnt to the bone (wrist).

169; Heever; four children; all sick.

450; great distress; Du Toit; child sick; no nourishment; young mother sick; only child dead.

526; De Wet; daughter delirious; dying; two others sick on the floor; pathetic.

372; Kotze; baby dying; two others sick; great friends Oom Jacob.

156; Joubert (or Ackerman); daughter; floor; dying; measles and pneumonia.

15; Barnard; two daughters; one dangerously sick; poor anxious mother! While hurrying to relieve with some beef tea and Bengers's Food stopped on way by desperate mother.

471; Marais; eight children; all sick; no nourishment; two very bad. To think of it!

After tea called to 235; orphans; boy very bad; sisters' tears.

Also 211; Roux; daughter; pneumonia.

Again 383; much drawn to that child; large, soft, trustful brown eyes; asked yesterday that I pray she might get well; to-day otherwise; trusting.

Distributed beef tea and Bengers's food to some very urgent cases; the thankfulness melts one's heart.

Funerals; fourteen.

Found on getting home plate food on box; enjoyed same at tea; great cheer to be with the Van As's.



Closed Sunday School; children sing "Dat's Heeren Zegen!" ("The blessing of the Lord descend on thee.")

* * * * *

Monday, August 26.—That imbecile boy died to-day; the old mother sent for me, but I found no time to go.

Don't think 526 will last long; gave candles, beef tea and Bengers Food this evening.

383 much better; smiled this morning when I entered.

339; great tribulation; six deaths in one week.

440; girlie; sweet face; wonder if she will die or live; very, very bad; Cloete.

288; Mrs. Venter; young wife; sick; five children sick; gave beef tea and Bengers Food.

352; the lost little lamb found; one of my first, whose number I had omitted to take; Weinanda; five years; pining away; large grey eyes; far-away look; poor little mite; Ken jij ver mij, me kind?" (Do you still remember me, child?) "Ja, Oom; Oom is de Predikant" ("Yes, Uncle; Uncle is the Minister"). "Is Weinanda blij dat Oom weer gekom het?" ("Is Weinanda glad that Uncle has come again?") "Ja, Oom; Oom is goed om te kom" ("Yes, Uncle; it was good of Uncle to come") Wonder if I really am rather soft; but when this little mite clasped her tiny hands together when Oom began to pray, I was bowled clean over.



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35, 156, 15 rather better.

At 34 found old friends of Oom Jacob; Wernich; the old woman weak; very nice to meet so many great friends of Oom Jacob and of Papa from Colesberg; old Mr. Du Plessis can't get over it.

Wasted much time at weekly meeting of the Elders; impatient; each Elder has block of sixteen tents to care for; heard reports; nearly all report general sickness. The amount of sickness just now is terrible; a vast hospital; the bitter cold nights play havoc; most lie on the hard bare ground.

Fighting grimly with uncleanliness; the idea that it is dangerous to wash with measles; rot!

Another great point; must insist that friends and relatives abstain from all long-faced despondency, with total absence of any cheer and hopefulness; this bad effect on patients; if anyone seriously ill, they "hands up" and cluster around to await the end, lest perchance they miss seeing "zoo 'n prachtige sterfbed" (such a beautiful deathbed).

Mrs. Botha (outer Camp) sent for me; penitent; wonder if it is only the fear that drives her, or whether it is a genuine case of true repentance; she has measles badly.

91; mother sick; five children (and one in hospital).

Sad about 398; buried two children this afternoon; this is the third; mother also dead; husband sick; glad I found time to see him; poor fellow.

458; great distress; old grandmother; sick mother; sick children; no nourishment; no candles; very helpless; Bengers's Food, beef tea, and candles.

Made only about twenty-two visits to-day.

Relieved Mr. Becker funeral service; seven this afternoon; had no time to prepare; reckless; got through somehow; "Het wordt gezaaid in verderfelijkhed, het wordt opgewekt in onverderfelijkhed" (It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption).

"Ja, leeraar, hier in ons Kamp wordt daar nie droppels tranen gestort nie maar emmers vol" ("Yes, Pastor, here in our Camp it is not drops but bucketsful of tears that are shed").

There are about a dozen corpses in morgue tents just now.

* * * * *

Tuesday, August 27.—The blessedness of eventide.



Letters from Issie and Louise; seem to have forgotten for a brief space the sorrows around.

Record day so far; visited thirty-five tents; very hard task. It is so delightful to offer up a thanksgiving prayer for a change; the usual "noodgebed" (emergency prayer) is most wearying. Thank God, that in some I found "beterschap" (convalescence).

Am striking out in new direction now; there is too much despondency and heaviness of spirit rampant; anyhow, extremely difficult task, for the conditions all around are most lamentably depressing.

Am going to sew blankets into bag this evening, a la Hanglip[15]; last night bitterly cold; frost this morning; to-day very hot again; these two extremes so disastrous to the sick.



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440 little better, and 383 much better.

190; Mrs. Taljard died last night.

Deaths at 201, 312, and 460 also; and all these had never yet been visited. Here is where the dissatisfaction comes in; and yet, how am I to know?

In 436 a child died; mother in great sorrow.

Next to 416 is Mrs. Van der Walt; very sick; not at all serene within; such cases very hard. While at dinner suddenly called to Mrs. Van der Walt—death's throes; prayer; when at dinner, on return, heard the horrible whistle go.

Our wood is done, and there remains nothing wherewith to make coffins; will have to bury in blankets to-morrow I fear; this will cause extra affliction and unhappiness. Pitiably to see husband of Mrs. Van der Walt pleading for boxes which could not be given; and he was "schatryk" (very rich) they say. There will be a great outcry, I'm afraid. And yet, after all, will a coffin save the soul?

After dinner, 169; baby died; mother sorely stricken.

Visited old mother in 25 again, and spoke few words of cheer; she is an old Christian; blessed me for coming.

In luck's way to-day; felt inclined for handwash, and was taken into tent 335; Horak's; relations of old Jaap's[16]; nice, clean, tidy; delighted; happiness; mother; daughter; autoharp; lemon syrup; must go again if I can.

"Wie is daar? Wat is dit?" ("Who is there? What is it?")

"Zal Minheer L—— assembleef gou kom naar Mrs. Meintjes? Zij le op sterve!" ("Will Mr. L—— please come quickly to Mrs. Meintjes? She is dying!")

Just returned; delirious; called her by name after prayer, and she became conscious for a few seconds; fear her moments on earth are numbered. How good of those girls to watch over her! Husband rushed out of tent in tears. Now, what could I do?

"Is there no pity sitting in the clouds can see into the bottom of our grief?"

10 p.m., walked through Camp.

Great coughs; little coughs; deep coughs; shrill coughs; hoarse coughs; long coughs; short coughs; coughs that are no coughs at all. Wonder how many are to die to-night!

* * * * *



Wednesday, August 28.—Now if there is anything that rubs me up the wrong way, it is to see a crowd around a tent doorway, watching the end. Yesterday I lost my temper at 35, and gave it hot all round. Such barefaced curiosity is revolting; I hate it.

Yes, 35 (21 years) passed away last night, and so did 415 (Mrs. Meintjes), whom I visited late last evening.

This morning the black list was laid on my table; twelve^[17] in the night—339, 415, 125, 253, 180, 526, 419, 35, 353, 450, I didn't expect 415 to live long.

The night has been a most restless one; “Ja, minheer, ons het vannacht nie rust gehad nie” (“Yes, sir, we had no rest last night”) (morgue tents men).

I woke at 2 a.m. with the tramp of these bearers removing corpses^[18].



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One longs for day, and the night seems never to end.

Twice funerals—morning at 11 a.m. (six), “Leer ons alzoo onze dagen tellen” (“So teach us to number our days”); afternoon, 4 p.m. (six), “En de dooden werden geoordeeld uit hetgeen in de boeken geschreven was, naar hunne werken” (“And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works”).

Our wood has given in, and we are forced to bury in blankets. But let me not think on it! It is painful to remember, and our people feel very deeply.

The Van der Walts managed to put together an apology for a coffin, and there was something pathetically comic about that production. I think it was made of candle and milk boxes.

That reminds me, what queer pastimes some folks can have. One man casually informed me that he attends all the funerals! But some folks unconsciously delight to wander in the sombre shadows of life. A funeral to me is a most fatiguing duty; more so when one has to give an address at the graves, and there is no time for preparation except on the march to the burying ground. I am getting reckless, for I am forced absolutely to rely on impromptu grace. I tremble, when I think what I risk each day.

Visits only a dozen, owing to funerals.

Sad about 91; very bad.

599, 602, 606, 16, 238, 327, all new tents, with great affliction; must go soon again.

Called to 117; Nel; young wife; just received tidings of her husband's death in Ceylon; desperately stricken; hard, hard case.

Called to hospital; Annie Bothma[19]; strong young girl (twenty); very bad; just struggling to live; mother holding hand. Foeitog! (alas!) So well and strong; horrid pneumonia; have visited her again, and cannot get reconciled that she should die. And yet she yearns to be “ontbonden” (loosed), and begs of me to pray to that effect. Now, God forgive me, but this dying girl's request I cannot, cannot accede to. Humanly speaking, she simply cannot live; it is only her abnormally strong constitution that fights so grimly. I have wrestled with God for her life. Oh, she must not, may not, die! Think of the weak, frail mother—of the father far, far away in Ceylon! “O ye of little faith”; and yet I firmly believe God can still spare her life.

Yesterday, row about the miserable meat[20]. Some women rather violent and loose with tongue; to-day committed to imprisonment. Yesterday my letters were returned by the Censor. I boiled over for some time; such a little snob, who is too big for his boots! Pinpricks; will fight it out to-morrow.



* * * * *

Thursday, August 29.—Went back to hospital after writing above, and then I did indeed pray as the sick girl desired. God took her home at about two this morning. Poor child! she did suffer so very much, and yet withal so patiently; “Die doctor het mij gif ingespuyt en gif ingege daarom lei ik zoo zwaar” (“The doctor injected poison into me, and gave me to take poison; that is why I suffer so bitterly”); very likely morphia had to be injected. Whenever I repeated a verse to her she would say the lines in advance.



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After breakfast I went to village for first time; saw Magistrate; obtained residential pass; hunted high and low for boards for coffin for Annie Bothma. At last, after despairing search, succeeded in getting six boards and two boxes; hope they will be enough wherewith to fashion some sort of a coffin.

Dined with the Beckers.

Deaths last night—8, 129, 401, 52, 427, 213, 239, and one in hospital.

Very trying afternoon among the dying.

One woman just giving her last breath when I entered to pray for her; lamentation. Roaring lion, because of the crowd of inquisitives; stood at doorway and addressed them; said I was ashamed of their conduct; boiled over. Simply will not stand such things; and yet such things are inevitable with a camp of 650[21] tents all crowded together; with hundreds swarming all over, and countless children. Am going to put a stop to children visiting morgue tents[22]; should not be allowed; will see Superintendent to-morrow.

91 very bad.

I usually make a last round after the day's work to take Bengers Food and beef tea, *etc.*, to urgent cases. When I got to 268, found she had died soon after my visit.

Have written to Issie and Mr. Robertson.

Wonder how long my things will last, and what I shall do after that.

Dead tired.

* * * * *

Friday, August 30.—Village; morning visits.

Found 91 died in night.

Dropped in to speak few words to old woman in 25; don't think she will last very long.

79; boy sick; relapse; Van der Berg; baby died yesterday

Mrs. Castelan lies sick in 76; husband Bloemfontein Camp; three children sick; also daughter just out of hospital (1-1/4 months).

Called in at 217; Du Preez; very nice, clean people; daughter very sick; pneumonia; found her very much distressed, and that because the thought of being buried without



coffin was so repulsive; “Net sous een beest” (just like an animal). We must not anticipate God!

Am much distressed that 383, who was getting well so nicely, and who smiled when I looked in yesterday, has died.

Mother died few weeks ago, and sister few days ago.

Near the coalfields[23] I was called to see Mrs. Van der Walt; 191; heart bad; most desperately anxious to be taken “home,” and quite ready too; wonder if she will live through the night!

When a person decides and is determined to die, the chances at recovery are very poor indeed.

Mr. Otto called and asked me to take prayer meeting 2 p.m. “En Samuel bad den Heere” (And Samuel prayed unto the Lord).

Then came the inevitable funerals, ten, among others Annie Botha. Oh, the sorrow of it! the sorrow of it! Nothing is more regular than that dreary procession every afternoon at four o'clock.

Several in blankets; “Ik ben verstomd, ik deed mynen mond niet open, want gij hebt het gedaan” (I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because thou didst it).



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Met old Tollie's[24] brother; rejoiced.

Found sick orphan girl I visited first day; much better.

Nice dinner; nice supper; “vet schaapie en vet ou bokkie” (fat lamb, fat little goat), which we bought.

Wonder what I would have done were the Van As's not here; so happy with them; everyone always so cheerful[25].

At tea called to pray with dying little girl; went immediately, and found tent full of weeping and wailing women; the little girl was in death's throes; short prayer, and when I finished her spirit had fled; mother frantic; hard, very hard to know how best to comfort. A woman is a wonderful network of cross-wires, and when these wires get unstrung or entangled, the result is most distressing. In presence of such, one feels hopelessly lost, and all one can do is to—walk away. And yet, for downright, dogged perseverance—for silent, struggling endurance—for quiet, patient suffering—commend me to a woman. What would become of Man without the Woman!

* * * * *

Saturday, August 31.—Glum; just returned from dying boy, Herklaas; young, strong; father Ceylon; visited him yesterday; said he did not want to die because his father was away, and he had to care for the mother. Touched late last night, and found him very bad; went down again with doctor[26]; this morning he was better, but this afternoon worse, and now (10 p.m.) I find him dying. I am very, very down-hearted to-night, and am tempted to think that, after all, God—No! I won't write it, because I believe this is a temptation of Satan! But oh! we did pray so fervently that God should spare his life; he is still so young and so strong. Found some more inquisitive onlookers. Some folks will put themselves to endless inconvenience to be able to witness a deathbed. They revel in it. I am vexed in my soul, and feel as though I could knock down everyone of them.

Funerals twice to-day.

This morning I buried seven; “Het wordt snellijk afgesneden” (For it is soon cut off).

This afternoon Mr. Becker buried six.

There were twenty corpses in morgue tents this morning.

This afternoon a column struck camp half a mile north of our Camp.

To-morrow is Sunday; I am quite unprepared, and must hold two services.



Walked through Camp this evening (10 p.m.); found several women busy round fire; all to warm “pap” (poultice) for sick children. Pneumonia is playing havoc.

Better stop; feeling tootoo to-night; and besides, my two letters have again been returned by the Censor, and I am too cross for anything.

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 1: Mr. Van As and Mr. Fourie laid out the floor for my tent, and encircled it with a 9-inch wall.]

[Footnote 2: Each tent was numbered.]

[Footnote 3: Not real church elders; each, however, had a block of tents under his care.]



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[Footnote 4: Stream between Camp and village; it only had running water, though, after rain.]

[Footnote 5: Mr. Van As's eldest daughter.]

[Footnote 6: Sannie Otto was the bosom friend of Sarah van As. Sarah has since died.]

[Footnote 7: My father was for many years minister at Colesberg, and my uncle again at Fauresmith.]

[Footnote 8: Some friends at Durbanville subscribed about L20, with which I had bought some invalid food, to take down with me from Cape Town (beef tea, Bengers Food, jelly, arrowroot, dozen bottles of port). While visiting the sick I noted down the most distressing cases, and after the day's work I made a final round to these tents with some of this invalid food.]

[Footnote 9: Pieter de Lint, an old College friend.]

[Footnote 10: Our Hymnary is divided into Psalms and Evangelical hymns (Psalmen en Gezangen).]

[Footnote 11: I decided to note down always in diary my text for the address at the gravesides. Our people expect the pastor to give an address before reading the Burial Service.]

[Footnote 12: What with water to be carried, rations to be fetched, wood to be brought and chopped, food to be cooked (in the open), bread to be baked, washing to be done (not to speak of the menial sanitary duties), it was indeed hard for a mother (herself perhaps weak), with a number of sick children, to keep her tent clean.]

[Footnote 13: Van Huysteens. The mother was shot while they were fleeing before the English. There was a babe of five months.]

[Footnote 14: As a pigeon feeds its young.]

[Footnote 15: Where I have often camped out.]

[Footnote 16: College chum.]

[Footnote 17: The twelfth was probably in hospital.]

[Footnote 18: When removing the dead from a certain section of the Camp, the bearers had to pass my tent.]



[Footnote 19: She was a probationer.]

[Footnote 20: The women, brandishing the meat ration on high, literally laid siege to the official tent. The meat supplied was miserably lean, quite unfit for consumption. I myself wouldn't have given it to a dog. When thrown against a wall, for instance, it would stick. Throughout the Camp it was dubbed "vrekvlys" (a man dies, an animal "vreks"—vlys is meat). The flour given was good, for the bread was usually excellent.]

[Footnote 21: This number soon grew to 800.]

[Footnote 22: There were three such tents about 100 yards beyond the hospital; they were the most dilapidated tents in the whole Camp, always open; they were occasionally blown down.]

[Footnote 23: A ration of coal was sometimes served out.]

[Footnote 24: Another old College chum.]

[Footnote 25: The Van As's received my ration (which was same as theirs), and I took all my meals with them.]

[Footnote 26: This doctor, a most capable man, was always most friendly to me. I had learnt to humour him, and he was ever willing to accompany me, even at night, to desperate cases. He was, however, almost as universally detested as he was feared, and ultimately was knocked down by an irate husband.]



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CHAP. II.

Sunday, September 1.—Recklessness; preached twice to-day without any preparation; “sommer uit die vuus uit” (literally, straight from the fist); simply compelled to; very unpleasant day; wind and dust; made services very short; fifty-five minutes.

In afternoon a large crowd of young people.

Mr. Otto took funerals for me this morning (eleven buried).

This afternoon Mr. Becker buried six.

About fourteen have died since last night.

It is pitiable to see the innocent little children and babies suffering and struggling against the accursed pneumonia; and there seems no hope when once they get it. Poor little mites!

A census taken lately gives 683 as the number of sick. Milk ration[27] has been stopped since yesterday; new sorrow. Our Camp a veritable valley of desolation. For the very essence of sorrow and misery, come here! For weeping, wailing mothers, come here! For broken hearts, come here! For desperate misery and hopelessness, come here! What would become of us if we had not our Religion to fall back upon! What, if we had not the assurance that a Good and Merciful God reigns above! What if there was no Love! What, if there was no hope of the Resurrection and Life Everlasting! What, if there is nothing beyond the Grave!

The nights here are so awful, and one yearns for day; and then the fearfulness of being awakened repeatedly in the night by the tramp of those who carry away the dead to the morgue tents. I woke last night in such a way, and knew that they were bearing young Herklaas away. One grows a bit pessimistic under the circumstances. Despite my services, I had to visit several sick—mostly dying children, with weeping mothers. It is so hard to pray, and so very wearying. And then, to comfort and cheer, when your own heart is lead within.

In the hospital there are many sick; am neglecting the hospital, and my conscience hurts, but am going regularly from to-morrow; must find time somewhere.

Mrs. De Lint's children are all sick; baby very bad; poor woman; am so sorry for her; Peter away in Ceylon.

Those deep rings round the eyes, which one sees all about, bear testimony to nights of watching and of anguish in the heart. May God take pity!



Monday, September 2.—Bitter day, the bitterest I have yet had; Superintendent furious because of my last letters[28]. The worst is I see that I am altogether misunderstood, and that I am suspected now of interfering and working against the Superintendent. And yet this is not so, for I would go to-morrow if I knew I was at all hostile to the authorities. I fear I have been indiscreet in what I wrote; shall have straight talk to-morrow, and ask Superintendent to let me resign if I have not his confidence; there must be no suspicion, otherwise I cannot stay. This matter is a load upon my heart.



Page 13

Busy day; new tents 63, 552a, 50, 40, all with sick children except 552, where young man is very sick.

Called to hospital; Mrs. Retief dying; prayer; expired just after. Hurried to 34, but found I was just too late; Mrs. Ackerman just died.

156; very sad case; mother, Mrs. Joubert, died this morning, and when I came I found three helpless little ones all alone, and sick too; father in Bloemfontein Camp; the grandmother will provide, I understand.

Had short conversation with Mr. Branders, Superintendent Sunday School, and decided to exhort parents to send children to school.

395; Mrs. Botha very ill; twenty-eight days in bed; advise removal hospital; this afternoon doctor called and said she was dying; she leaves a baby.

Went to few cases with doctor; very interesting; get on well with him.

Visited 239, Ignatius, with malignant growth on arm; must soon die.

Took doctor to see 36; young girl suddenly sick; great misery there; bad ventilation; four others measles.

Funerals this afternoon (about nine); "Hetgeen gij zaait wordt niet levend tenzij dat het gestorven is" (That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die).

Visited hospital to-day, and mean to go regularly each day.

* * * * *

Tuesday, September 3.—Went to Superintendent first thing to-day; reasonable[29]; long talk; reconciled; thank God.

Found boy in 34 very, very bad; this afternoon stopped bearers on way to morgue tents, and learnt that they were carrying him away; poor little fellow; he suffered so very much!

In 35 there is also great sickness.

27; Mrs. Taljaard; very sick baby; also sick boy; husband commando.

Hospital; read and prayed in the three wards; glad I went; some very seriously ill; so sorry to hear that Miss Hendriks died this morning; she was very bad; spoke to her yesterday, and prayed with her; she enquired restlessly, time after time, "Is dit nog nie vijf uur nie?" (Is it not yet five o'clock?). At five this morning she passed away.



The men's ward quite full; all ages; all were so glad to have me read and pray.

541; Mrs. Steyn; two children gone; very sore; glad I went.

500; Mrs. Schoeman; eight children; two sick; husband Ceylon.

503; Mrs. Robertson; baby dead; two boys sick; husband fighting.

In 418 great misery; Mrs. Herbst ill and three sick children.

In 322 called in to pray for dying baby.

Very busy afternoon; always stopped on way and called in.

Neglected 475.

The poor little mites! the horrid, cruel pneumonia! and there seems to be no saving them when once the pneumonia, grips them.

Mr. Becker took funerals, seventeen; several in blankets.

And so we go forth day by day; the dread whistle; the regular tramp of the bearers to morgue tents, and the slowly winding procession every afternoon.



Page 14

Called hurriedly to hospital twice; dying girl just brought in; could understand.

Hysterical girl Martie[30], swearing and cursing all round; each nurse in particular, and the whole lot generally.

Old Mrs. Van Zyl, 492, evidently dying.

Called to enquire after old Mrs. Oosthuizen; found she had died soon after last visit.

Pleasant evening; stories of my travels; in Italy once more.

* * * * *

Wednesday, September 4.—My visits to hospital I love.

That one girl such a sad case; fever and most terrible headache; they say it is sunstroke.

Hysterical girl quiet.

Filth and stench in some tents almost unbearable.

Nos. 34 and 35 very bad; ventilated tent myself; some folks built that way, and sickness becomes their trench behind which they shelter. But I will persist in maintaining that no matter the sickness, no matter the distress and poverty, cleanliness is a possibility anywhere[31]. But what an opportunity for the careless to degenerate!

Managed to get bedstead for Mrs. Van Zyl; fear she won't last long.

I wonder what the safest policy would be when two women pour out their griefs into your ear at the same time. When they simultaneously tell you all about their departed cherubs? Some people selfish in their sorrow. Took little camphor brandy Mrs. Niemand's; tent full lamenting womenfolk; and the helpless babe casting her black eyes from one to another. Some people will insist on anticipating the Almighty (the child is dead, though).

Saw a child to-day the very image of a mouse; two months' illness; large ears; black eyes; thin, bony hands; huddled together.

Very busy afternoon.

Funerals at 4 p.m.; eighteen corpses; "En God zal alle tranen van hunne oogen afwisschen" (And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes).



How can one's heart remain hard? Can one be unmoved when you see weeping, stricken mothers kneeling in anguish beside their infants' graves?

Love, after all, is the greatest and most mysterious of all things.

Explain it that a mother can cling to a helpless, idiotic, deformed boy for fourteen years, and feed him mouth to mouth! Explain that a mother can sit up night and day, day and night, with a sick child! Look at those deep-set eyes, sorrow-sunken, their care-wornness, and tell me what is this Love that endureth all things!

Two things have I learnt during these fourteen days which till now to me were "all fancy"—the meaning of Love and the thing called Religion.

* * * * *

Thursday, September 5th.—Tent overhauled; floor rubbed and "smeered" (coated); very miserable, windy day; dust; dirt; towards evening cold south winds; fear it will work havoc with the children to-night.

Hospitals; so sorry about Miss Snyman; quite delirious to-day; wonder if she will live.



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Hysterical one[32] quite tame; “Ach, minheer zijn hand is tog zoo koud; ik wens, minheer, wil die heele dag mij kop hou” (“Ah, sir, your hand is so very cold, I wish you would hold it to my head the whole day”).

Found things cleaner at 35; still great misery.

Fear old Mrs. Van Zyl will die.

The De Wets (526) sad way; so many sick; one daughter dead; two children in hospital; this afternoon baby died.

Neglected to go to Mrs. Niemand—poor little mother!

De Lintz in great misery; gnashing teeth girlie[33] weaker.

Some people selfish in their sorrow; but I don't suppose a man can fathom the love a mother bears her child!

Near Church (!) great misery; sick mother (husband Bloemfontein) and four sick children; all helplessly ill; no one to help; and water has to be carried and wood fetched and chopped.

Milk supply has been stopped in Camp; this causes great distress.

What sorrows one is to find tent upon tent with sick children and no nourishing or invalid food; not even milk.

Wonder if there can be suffering greater than what some folk endure here.

Mr. Becker funerals; four, I believe, only (!).

Eight died since yesterday afternoon; may a change come speedily.

* * * * *

Friday, September 6.—Handicapped with a horrible cold, which won't go away; throat hoarse; unpleasant day, very; wind, dust.

Daily routine: Hospital; visits; dinner; visits; funerals; visits; supper; bed.

Nine buried this afternoon; “Heere gij zijt ons een Toevlucht van Geslacht tot Geslacht” (Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations); dreary business.

There have died during one month (August) about 230 people.

A new doctor has come, and now I hope things will grow brighter.



Miss Snyman in hospital little better.

Sad case this evening; found mother at bedside^[34] of sick child; she has lost two already this week, and this one is the last; husband died Green Point. The sorrow of it! May God spare that child's life.

Hear from Mr. Becker that the old Tante^[35] beyond the Camp, with sick mother and sick children, has broken down. What on earth will become of them?

Some here unconsciously overdo it, and overtax their own strength in their grim fights with Angel of Death. A sort of superhuman power sustains them for a time, and then—the collapse!

But there sings the kettle!^[36]

* * * * *

Saturday, September 7.—To-morrow is Sunday, and my sermons? O, the recklessness of it! I had determined to set aside this afternoon for preparation.

Morning very busy.

Mrs. Mentz' child dead.

Hospitals; hysterical girl very bad; fear she won't pull through; others betterish; except the fever one; very weak.



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In men's ward, old Mr. Petersen dying; quite conscious; waiting on God; Ps. 23.

Another youth also very bad.

Arrangements upset; funerals this morning (seven); had to rush to overtake procession; Ps. 39, "Handbreed" (an hand-breadth).

Found I was burying Mrs. De Lint's infant and also "she of the gnashing teeth."

Sorrowing mothers; I always hurry away when the first sod falls with its horrible thud; it unstrings the chords of one's being, and the best thing is to depart.

Spent afternoon in; at five, went to few tents.

Old Tante yonder; the great collapse; very sorrowful; faithful unto death. Weeks of toil; untiring efforts with sick daughter and her three sick children; poor; helpless; no one to assist save little Billy, who herself is sick. And now—now the daughter is better, the three children on the way to recovery, and the faithful old grandmother? Nunc demittis. She has lain there like a log since yesterday without nourishment; took beef tea; kind neighbour brought broth; made her sit up, and she gulped down the food; will try and get her removed to hospital to-morrow.

Visited Mrs. Naude of yesterday; anguish; the last child died this morning; husband gone; three children gone; alone. Made fool of myself. O, the pity of it all!

Long visit from Doctor; desperate; at wit's end; and with a sermon hanging upon my mind.

* * * * *

Sunday, September 8.—Most awful day of wind and dust. May I never see such another.

Church (!); open air; clouds of dust; people just simply buried in dust; could scarcely read; whole service forty-five minutes.

During sermon compelled to turn round and shut eyes; saw on opening them that my black hat had changed to my brown one.

Met wailing women on return; Mrs. Lubbe; news of husband's death; shot in war; frantic; visited this evening; hopeless. What could I do? frantic despair; cruel anguish unconsolable. Grief makes one unreasonable. I think one should fight against grief and not collapse so readily; and yet—and yet!



Funerals five; old Mr. Petersen; large crowd; availed myself of opportunity; “Alleen wiens namen opgeschreven zijn in het Boek des Levens des Lams” (But they which are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life).

May God not let His word return to Him void; read also Psalm 25, which I read to old Mr. Petersen just before he died.

Accompanied Mrs. Mentz to see husband in hospital; youngest child dead; father knows not; in fear and trembling lest she should tell. He gave her half an orange to give the little girl (buried already); I must tell him of child’s death to-morrow; bitter task.

Disappointed about hospital; could not go through thoroughly; some there who won’t pull through, I’m afraid.

On way home from funerals called in to pray for dying children; found I was too late at the first tent; much grief and wailing; second tent; baby dying.



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Neglected to go to old mother beyond; wonder if!

This evening two girls came to ask for candle; great misery no light; gave half a candle; visited this evening Van der Walt; sorrowful; three children ill; saw my candle burning. What if I had not been able to give! Other sick children; sent brandy and Bengers' food.

Mr. Becker service afternoon; same old dust.

Heard there were some of the Ladies' Commission present; good! May God bless their work and give them His Spirit in their work. May they see all.

Nice singing at our Church this evening; Miss Dussels; new doctor sick; "ipperkonders" gave him cocoa.

Weinanda dead; thank God! another burden of suffering ended.

Woman I prayed with in hospital this afternoon, dead this evening.

Girlie (35) Ackerman also dying.

Mrs. De Wet called me to her bedside (hospital), and asked me to pray that she might sleep. May God's angels guard over those hospital tents this night.

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Monday, September 9.—Ladies' Commission; one of them, Dr. Jane Waterston. Glorious rain. How nice it will be to sleep with the soothing music of falling showers.

Our new kitchen getting on famously. What a comfort it will be when finished. It takes 800 bricks to build a kitchen here, and few there be that possess such a luxury. Spent half an hour in kitchen of hospital after visits; delighted with the sight of walls again; more determined than ever to go and do likewise. Am sure won't need more than 3,000 bricks to build a regular palace, and won't it be glorious! Besides, one does not know in the least, how long we are still to remain here, and even were it only a month longer it would be worth while.

Doctor gave up 71; went and found woman dead; child very sick; found Mr. Becker there.

Just after dinner was called to see one of the little orphans of few days ago; went at 2.30; too late; bad of me; should have gone immediately.

To-day saw the thinnest, boniest woman imaginable; Mrs. Booyesen; just a skeleton; husband Ceylon; daughter here; son and daughter still at the front.



Saw also the most emaciated baby imaginable; puny; nine months; mother dead; lives on "genade" (mercy) of other mothers whose babies are dead; a regular "kannie dood" (literally, a "won't die").

Got the Van Huysteen girls to undertake case of outside tent with old grandmother; opened bottom to-day to ventilate; foul.

Visited old Mr. Van Heerde; very bad; wife "praat soos een boek" (talks like a book); quite a change to do a bit of listening on points of Theology!

Found the Fouries of first day; daughter much better.

The quack doctor deserves to be kicked; found bottle of medicine on table somewhere; pure water; five shillings. He is coining money and fleecing people most scandalously; child now luckily in hospital; spoke strongly to parents on the point.



Page 18

In hospital things are rather glum; Miss Snyman utterly weak and fearfully excited; hysterical girl still alive; so are all others; but I fear some of them won't see light of morning.

Doctor actually in bed in hospital; bad too; rather a sell; tables cruelly turned on us.

* * * * *

Tuesday, September 10.—Ladies' Commission here again; can more or less predict what report will be.[37]

Rain all night; soaking showers; this morning everything very muddy; some streets in Camp awful; and then to see the "gesukel" (distress) this morning all round among the women trying to cook breakfast.

Yesterday met several women carrying heavy buckets of water; "Dit is daarom nie vrouwen's werk nie" (This truly is not work for women).

The women here have a rough time; what with no servants, no kitchen, scanty wood, and poor rations; it is hard to make ends meet. Were it not for the little extras[38] we have (golden syrup, jam, oatmeal, tea and until yesterday fat), I wonder what I would do.

Went to village to-day; nothing to be had there; was absolutely refused permit for rice and beans; got 4 lbs. peas; candles not to be had for love or money; dined Beckers.

Owing to presence of Ladies' Commission, unable to do my daily visit to hospital; three have died—Mrs. Kruger, Miss Ackerman, and a lad of seventeen.

Superintendent called me to-day, and said I could issue "briefies" (notes) for food to-morrow; very glad, for I know many tents where there is dire distress.

Very weary and sickish; eager for bed.

Funerals nine; "U te kennen is het eeuwige leven" (To know Thee is life everlasting.)

Yesterday Mr. Becker buried eleven.

* * * * *

To-day most were in blankets.

Wednesday, September 11.—Waylaid doctor; throat bad; got two bottles medicine; seedy.



34 and 71 great distress; the girl in 71 actually still alive; some people die hard.

Hurried back to hospital; Miss Snyman now so hysterical removed; tent to herself; wonder if!

That Lotz girl too is still alive; but what a wonderful constitution she must have!

Saw some distressing and heartrending cases to-day.

626; mother in agony; strong daughter (18) in throes of death and fearfully "benauwd" (in agony), pneumonia. Little sister; insensible; far gone; no doctor.

Hunted for doctor; gone to village; took him down this evening at nine. O, the sorrow of it! Can never imagine a more harrowing spectacle; we got medicine down; stayed three-quarters of an hour; left doctor there and returned. Here go the bearers with their lifeless burden; the elder sister died little while ago.

The little one, too, is dead; poor suffering innocents!

That sweet little girl at 128, whom I visited late last night, and with whom I prayed—she, too, died early this morning; and now she has the desire of her heart: they were laying her out when I called this morning.



Page 19

Visited tent to which I sent little brandy yesterday; found child had just died; too late.

Gave old woman at 34, children and grandchildren, earnest talking-to this afternoon; old woman, over seventy, quite callous as to religion; no “behoefte” (sense of need): “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.”

Old Mr. Van Heerde, whom I visited two days ago, died in night. Great consternation about little boy in 348; was getting on so well, and actually dead this morning. Doctor completely upset; he took great trouble with this child; poor little chap, he had such a bonny little face.

Our kitchen we are building, getting on famously; I stand good for bricks and wood; we need about 1,000 bricks; quite a great affair, and will prove a blessing.

Gave out “briefies” to-day, but fear that I shall give up the job; what use, when they return empty-handed, or with but half the things! Sorely vexed in my soul at the treatment I receive. Why ask me to issue briefies?

Washing-stand looks handsome, thanks to Stenie; oilcloth will make it quite spruce.

Young man addressed me quite intimate-like this afternoon, “En wat schrijf maat in de boekie?” (“Mate, what are you writing in that book?”)

Mr. Becker funerals; don’t know number.

* * * * *

Thursday, September 12.—News from Steytler[39]; sent away from Potchefstroom; let me be doubly careful. I am so attached to my work now, love it, that it would be a grievous burden were I compelled to give it up[40].

Only there is too much, too much to do, and if I visit one side of the Camp, the other side has to be neglected. Five would have their hands comfortably full here, and then there would be less “oor slaan” (neglect).

I am continually asked to visit new sick people; there seems to be no end to all the sickness.

The woman in 34 is very bad; next door to 626 is also great misery; children very sick and without medical attendance. That is so sorrowful; the number of tents where no doctor comes[41], the absence of invalid food and nourishment; the hard, bare floor (heard of a case yesterday where grass had begun to grow under sick bed); the despair and helplessness of the mothers.



Another burden—no lights! There are numbers of tents where there is sickness, in some cases dying people, and where to-night there is not an inch of candle.

Pathetic sight yesterday; mother melting odd ends and scraps of tallow and fat to make some sort of candle; daughter on brink of death.

Wonder what plan they have made to-night for light!

Girl 71 still alive; wonderful.

Funerals—nine, I believe; great crowd; calamity; one grave short, and coffin had to be returned; women faint; consternation.

Upset, and couldn't pick my thread in address, "En ziet een groote schaar die niemand tellen kon" (And lo! a great multitude which no man could number). These funerals most painful and wearying, and then the burden of having to give address.



Page 20

Small quantity boards arrived; may we have no more burials in blankets now!

Mrs. Snyman in tears yesterday in hospital, and her great trouble was that there would be no coffin for her daughter, who is in jaws of death; reprimand; should not anticipate God; besides, the sorrows of to-day are grievous enough, why bear to-morrow's in the bargain?

Great wailing and lamentation round morgue tents this morning; daughter and wife of old Mr. Van Heerde; and she boasted so big three days ago of her boundless faith. Gave her straight talk; fruit of our faith is our resignation and peace of heart. Thank God rather for the blessedness of so long and happy a union; cross with daughter; a woman can become so unreasonable in her grief.

Arrival of my autoharp; gladness.

* * * * *

Friday, September 13.—Spat fire. Now let me never have occasion to get so annoyed again; wished for a bag of chaff to pummel for half an hour just to let off steam.

458 the very essence of misery; old mother helpless (since dead); young mother sick; three wretched and sick children; and yet when I presented myself for rice at office was cold-shouldered by Assistant Superintendent; and these be the things sent by friends from Cape Town to relieve distress here; and after permission from Superintendent to issue "briefies! I got rice and two beef teas after all; but sparks inward flew all the same.

Got to 458; found old grandmother dead; wished Assistant Superintendent could have been forced to look in; but what an if!

There comes the pity of it all—total absence of sympathy of any kind!

Wonder of wonders; 70 new person; much better; returned from the very borders; now let me never doubt on the subject of miracles again!

Saw crowd (hateful) round 34; worked way in; dying. Singing of hymn; prayer (and after, strong words to crowd). This horrible attractiveness of a deathbed! Where does it originate?

34 and 35, Ackermans; these people have had ten deaths since their arrival in Camp; they are dying out altogether. There is one in hospital, and she has small chances of recovery.

Long visit to hospital; all four wards. Spoke to Mrs. —, who lost her babe in night.



Betty Lotz quite “plezierig” (cheerful); Betty Kruger (mother died few days ago in hospital), sweet little girl; languid dark brown eyes; much suffering; wonder if!

Snyman girl very low; mother there; very pathetic: quite delirious; fear!

Went to see Mrs. Welgemoed, 518; very bad; don't think she will “make it.”[42]

Mrs. Hett called me in; very concerned; Annie, ten years, very ill; sweet little thing; took her some Bengers' Food and milk; wine. Mother in mortal dread of seeing child sent to hospital; but what foolishness! Selfish, and altogether disastrous policy.

Saw Mr. Becker; not here yesterday; poor man; new misery; new cross; and he looks like a bit of leather already. The military contemplate taking possession of his parsonage (he has wife, four little children), and this good man has slaved ever since the Camp has been here, day after day, indefatigably, out of pure goodness and charity. [43]



Page 21

Our kitchen has the woodwork of its roof finished; hope soon to see it completed; glorious anticipation; a masterpiece!

Tramping about from 1.30 to 6.30, and now exceedingly tired. Wonder how about Sunday's sermons.

Mr. Becker; funerals—nine, I believe.

* * * * *

Saturday, September 14.—Great day; this way: inspected this afternoon immense new marquee tent put up for hospital; glorious within; charmed; mindful of our sufferings when trying to hold and attend Divine service; idea spontaneous; immediate action; bee-line to Superintendent's tent; psychological moment; agreeable. Hurrah! Strike iron while hot; enlist men to help at 3 p.m. Resultum: Fine large tent between the two school sheds; "Alles achter mekaar" (everything in order). Can have use of school forms, which will seat 300 people. Position grand; bit aside, but quiet and clean neighbourhood. Inauguration to-morrow.

And sermon? That still to be made. It's no absolute good; busy whole morning; planned to reserve afternoon for preparation.

Afternoon comes; new church; funerals; final visits, and where does the preparation come in? No show! Never mind; too satisfied to grumble to-night; "Alles zal wel recht komen" (all will come right).

No chance for hospital to-day; sorry; Betty Lotz dead; poor child. Yesterday I still teased her with her cropped hair and the orange she was eating; always so glad when I come; "Betty, gij kan moes mooi hoor als ik lees en bid neh" ("Betty, you listen very nicely when I read and pray"). "O ja, minheer, ik luister baing mooi" ("O yes, sir, I listen very well").

Buried her this afternoon, also seven others; "Dood, waar is uw prikkel?" (Death, where is thy sting?)

She belonged to 627, from which two daughters were buried in the week; parents far away; aunt still very sick.

Found Mrs. Barkhuizen dying; passed away soon after I left.

518, Mrs. Welgemoed, died in night; baby also dying; great sorrow.

Called to console mother whose babe had just died, Mrs. Van der M.



Next door old Mr. R. dying, and, worst of all, unprepared. Oh! how unspeakably difficult is my work and how fearful the responsibility!

Wonder if he is still alive? Mr. Otto^[44] went to him too, and I asked Mr. Becker to visit him also.

Rather ashamed this morning; had taken down Nos. 268 and 263 some days ago, and never yet been there. To-day "voorgekeerd" (waylaid).

268, Mrs. Steyn; very sick for one and a half months already; glad I went; in other tent found Mrs. Fourie; heard that her two children already dead; very resigned; glad of my visit even though so late in day.

While in official tent, woman came with note, for maizena, brandy, and milk from doctor; was simply told there was none. (And where are the things that came down lately, with two dozen brandy and 24 dozen milk?)



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Gave her arrowroot and milk. This is no isolated case. How many go away empty-handed who present “briefies” at the office? The cry for a little brandy or wine is simply pitiable. And candles! Fie on it! O fie!

Our kitchen nearly done; grand tin roof, out of coffee tins (one shilling a tin); must inaugurate on Monday with pancakes or something.

Now for sermon (10.30 p.m.).

* * * * *

Sunday, September 15 (the Great 15th)[45].—What a day!

Yesterday ecstasy over new church; to-day in the depths again. Joy shortlived. This way: very stormy night; soaking rains; morning whirlwind, frightful; hurried to the church; one side already blown loose; mighty burst wind; whole show laid low. Such are the vicissitudes of Camp life.

Service out of question. Thankful!

Similar tent, hospital, also blown down same time. A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind.

One of morgue tents also blown down.

Last night very restless one; bearers with their horrid tramp always waken me, and it is fearful to be so awakened.

Mr. Roelvert they bore away last night, and several others. It was frightfully dark, and on one occasion the men walked bang against my “airing structure”[46] to their great discomfort.

Woke again 3.30 with peculiar noise. “There goes Dr. Maddon’s[47] tent,” says I, “the pole has snapped.” Rather helpless sort; guessed he would come to me; and so it was. Made him call out five times before I answered, just for fun; got up and helped him; delightful to get into bed again.

So sorry. I hear Betty Lotz was buried yesterday in blanket; glad I was unaware it was she. She asked me the last time I saw her, “Wanneer gaat, minheer, dan mij stukkie lees uit die Bijbel?” (“Sir, when are ou going to read my little portion out of the Bible?”) “Wat is dit dan, Betty?” (“What is it, Betty?”) “Minheer, van Jairus en sijn dochtertje” (“Sir, about the daughter of Jairus”). I promised to read that for next day; but this promise unfulfilled; couldn’t go to hospital yesterday; besides, she was carried away by then. Never mind, I’ll read about Jairus’ daughter to-morrow all the same.



Betty Kruger betterish; poor little thing; her mother died in beginning of week, also in hospital. She knows nothing though, but to-day she asked her sister to make her a black frock because her mother was dead.

Miss Taljaard very much better; if she pulls through it will be a miracle. Mr. Van der Merwe very, very bad indeed (enteric); wonder if! Sad; mother died some days ago; then young wife, and yesterday his little daughter was buried. Is there a sorrow like to our sorrow?

Little boy is dying in hospital.

49; child also dead.

156; of these remaining orphans (Joubert's), one little girlie is dying. Foeitog!

70 very much better.



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Got bedstead for 631; three little children dangerously ill; and all three “deurgele” (bedsores); “Mammie, mammie, mij boutjes is zoo zeer” (“Mother, mother, my legs are so sore”).

The misery there is heartrending; hard ground; cold and wet as well. Poor little mites; and nourishment?

Second visit. Found mother down too; terrible pain. What will happen now, I wonder!

Called in to 620; old Mrs. Roux; sick; prayer; asked me to come again.

Wish I could press a button and summon papa to do the praying part for me!

Number of deaths so far (according to Mr. Becker’s funeral lists) about 420.

Since I’ve been here (25 days), we have buried about 300. Appalling figures!

This afternoon (Mr. Becker), funerals eight.

* * * * *

Monday, September 16.—Flood.

Our Camp one sheet of water and mud; furrow too small for the rush of water; great inundations; many tents flooded; great misery; and how about the cooking business? Everything to be done outside (we are among the few privileged with a kitchen). Women have to wade through water and mud; wet wood; raining continually. Just picture the scene!

Came to one tent; in front of door one mass clay and mud; inside awful; and yet there lay a girl very dangerously sick, and another also down.

425, Mrs. Booyesen; skeleton; completely flooded; everything wet; and the floor! Yesterday they got her a bedstead; till now she had to lie on the floor; sick daughter; wonder where she will sleep. Floor? Impossible.

In another tent rain leaked through; water all over.

Another matter which tells of fresh misery. The sanitary sheds and screens are all some distance out of the camp. Imagine the painfulness of affairs on days like this, when one hardly dares put head out of doors.

Overheard conversation between old man and doctor:



You, what do you want here? Go away from this — tent! Voetzak, voetzak! Get away from this — tent!" This was to an old man. It makes one's blood boil. There is no real—no, not a particle of—sympathy.

In 631, wife told me doctor (another) came past, and she, meaning that he was looking for her tent (third morning already and he had not yet come), attempted to direct him. "You go to —!" was all she got; and she has three little ones in very precarious state.

Visited in New Camp; several sick there.

652, sick wife and child. (Nice biltongs[48] hanging up; but for all my hints, got nothing!)

631, Kotze; doppers; two girls measles; prayer; repeated Psalm.

518, little child (mother dead two days ago) died this after noon.

Found another very sick girlie, 532, Venter; took orange wine, arrowroot, milk; but I doubt whether she'll "make it"; too far gone.

Talk with Mrs. Steyn, who has lost three children; such a good little woman; while there an old Tante came, evidently to tell all her tale of woe, so I cleared.

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Funerals ten, all children.

Meant to have spoken on “Heere, maak mij bekend mijne einde” (Lord, make me to know mine end), but on discovery at graveyard that all were children, spoke on “The Reaper and the Flowers.”

Miss Snyman in hospital, moaning awfully just now; just been there; poor girl; and she disturbs all the others.

Spruit nicely down; Mr. Becker not come; can't get across evidently.

Visits to hospital. In women's ward “beterschap”; little Betty and Miss Taljaard much better; wonder if!

Read to them about Jairus' daughter; but the other Betty “wasn't there no more” to hear.

Pancakes; five easily.

* * * * *

Tuesday, September 17.—Fine, glorious day; people all busy airing and drying things; life again.

69, old Mr. Theunissen, very weak; old man; old wife; floor. Hard luck; “Ach, Minheer, ik het zoo gewens dat mij zoon mij ooge moet toe druk, en nou is hij in Ceylon, en ik voel dat ik nie langmeer hier zal wees nie” (“O sir, I did so wish that my son should close my eyes, and now he is in Ceylon, and I feel that I won't be here much longer”).

Saw Mr. Mentz being led home to tent (from hospital) by Mr. Booysen; anxiety; knows nothing about daughter's death, and his wife lies ill in bed. What's to be done? Mr. Mentz (one month in hospital) still very weak. Brought him to the Van As's for some tea while I planned how best to act. Decide to break news to him just before he arrives at tent; very painful task indeed. Caught the two up just before tent door, and told him to stop a minute. Now God help me and him!—Thank God, it is over! Rude, cruel awakening! O the sorrow, the sorrow of it! Prayed with family, and left with heavy, leaden heart.

Why is there so much sorrow and bitterness in this life?

Last week, when his wife visited him in hospital, he gave her half an orange to give his Nellie, and on another occasion a biscuit—and all the while his girlie was under the cold, dark sod.

Visited Van den Heever, 68. Also 626, 631, 624, 70, 74.



Went with trembling heart to 532; “Waar is die kind?” (“Where is the child?”). “Nee, Minheer, zij is vannach om een uur dood” (“Sir, she died last night at one o’clock”).

Found the Van Zyls, 499, and the Robertsons, 503, had also lost babies during last few days.

424, Hasebroek; sick child; baby died yesterday.

482, Hetts; little daughter very sick; wonder if! Such a sweet little thing.

Getting sick to death of doctor; such a terrible amount of brag and big talk, always about himself; always dread his calls; can never get so far as to return; a regular thorn in the flesh.

Visits to hospital.

Mr. Van der Merwe still very bad; men’s ward full of boys; some very bad.

Martie Snyman recognised me to-day, and asked me to pray for her; mother there too.



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Mr. Becker funerals; six.

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Wednesday, September 18.—Bitterly cold night; frost; glorious day.

Regular holiday; did precious little “leeraarts” (pastoral) work to-day; grand clean up; fine bookcase of big box; grand!

Baby[49] comes regularly now to clean up.

Tent very close to-day; hot weather; contemplating building house; busy with estimates to-day; will need about 3,500 bricks; such edifice will be real boon when hot weather sets in.

Our kitchen is palatial, and the admiration of the whole camp, and I guess hundreds have cast envious eyes upon it. And yet within it is but 4 feet by 7 feet, its height is 5 feet 10 inches; but it has a pitch roof, with coffee tins beaten out to serve for zinc. It is built of good, raw brick, and the walls are 4 inches thick, plus two more inches of substantial clay plaster. It has a window without panes, and a doorless doorway, and yet a marvellous structure both in workmanship and usefulness. Total cost about L3. Let me not forget its chimney—made of a half-sheet of zinc, and beaten into a cone (1s.). Now with my mind’s eye I see the structure sparkling in the gentle moonbeams. A thing of beauty is a joy for ever. Enough!

Rigged up church again; little nearer in, and this afternoon three of us went and put everything geometrically straight—poles, pegs, ropes, *etc.*—to prevent second collapse. We are going to sink heavy stones into the ground as anchors, and the whole structure we are going to make rigid with wire ropes. This all to be done on the morrow. It is going to serve as school; good!

There must be some two thousand children here, and yet I doubt if fifty go to school; pity; children run loose, absolutely neglected.

Too much sickness about; fear the deterioration.

Funerals this afternoon five; all children; “Heere, maak mij bekend mijne einde” (Lord, make me to know mine end). May those graveside addresses bear fruit!

Called to 104, Hugo’s; great sorrow; baby died this morning; poor mother; talk about tears rolling down! Let me not think on it!

179, Roelvert’s baby; convulsions after measles; also dying.



A mother's heart: the most delicate, mysterious, profound piece of architecture in creation. Let a man not attempt to fathom its depths; there are mazes which he can never pass through; and there are recesses (illuminated, I guess) which he can just barely know of, let alone enter.

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Thursday, September 19.—Two women cleared last night; burghers evidently in near neighbourhood. There are always numbers of women who go to hills to collect wood, and for long, weary distances they carry their loads of oven wood, like so many Kaffir girls. It hurts to watch them return.

Camp continually getting bigger; there must be some 800 tents now, and quite 5,000 souls.



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Feel bad at thought of so many thousands whom it is impossible to reach just now, because of the sickness all about.

I have been here just a month, and have, during that time, done nothing but visit sick and dying.

Hospital, too, grown larger; five big marquee tents; began visit there this morning; disturbed by arriving patients and doctor.

Found Martie Snyman dying; dead a quarter of an hour after. We gathered round her bedside and committed her spirit into God's safe keeping; poor child! she had such a time of suffering; mostly always delirious; and her mother! Let me not think of it!

Many new arrivals in women's wards; some dangerously ill.

Poor Betty Kruger; fear she won't "make it."

Meant to go again this afternoon, but disappointed; had to take charge of books which had come; great work, and unsatisfactory too.

Meant to have made long visits to New Camp this afternoon; "Alles verijdeld" (everything fell through).

Visits 432, 482, 268 (old Mr. De V.), 494 (aunt of Miss Van Rooi, who died in hospital), 458, 424, 499, and 503.

Went again with couple of eggs and milk to 432 and 424.

Poor little girl; so very sick, and on ground too.

Found 458 in total darkness; no lights, and little boy dying. Foeitog! Borrowed half a candle from Mrs. Van As.

Ordered bricks to-day for my house—3,500, at 1s. a hundred. Hope to see it standing "moet 'n boog" (for show) by next week.

Split in connection with church; old lot near old church-stand dissatisfied; some folk hard to please; rather vexing; they want us to keep up service at old place as well.

Mr. Becker referred matter to me; said I was quite agreeable if there was possibility of drawing two congregations. Mr. Otto may be induced to conduct one.

Well, certainly, we have enough people for a double service.



Concerned about Catechism class; there must be hundreds who ought to be confirmed. Concerned also about Sunday school. How are we to collect these thousands! If the sickness in camp would only decrease, what great things we could attempt.

Found packet Sunlight soap in tent; my ration; large family Van As gets two cakes; I, single, whole packet; not very complimentary!

Sent parcel books to hospital as library; decided to divide miscellaneous books into four small circulating libraries.

Mr. Becker funerals; eight.

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Friday, September 20.—Early bird; brought over all books from store tent; also cask of Quaker oats[50]; very glad of latter; will serve out like mad next week.

Tent now regular chaos; boxes; feel need of house all the more.

Four circulating libraries—Otto's, Dussel's, Van As's, and Lubbe's. Reading, however, rather an impossibility here in camp; one has always something to do. What a blessing that everyone has work in plenty, because in one's work one can derive a measure of happiness and satisfaction; it detracts one's thoughts from the seamy side of life just now.



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Immediately after breakfast visited two dying babies, 585, 695.

Great crowd of children assembled in front of church, several hundreds (I hear a weeping and a wailing close by; evidently someone just died); hurried thither; gathered children in circle; Psalm 146; prayer; address (privilege, obedience, faithfulness); also exhorted them to take good care of church and to be careful of lines, ropes, pegs, *etc.*

Ordered 3,500 bricks at 1s. 1-1/2d. per hundred; saw Superintendent, who promised to provide roofing; hope he won't disappoint. Busy whole morning with books.

Called after dinner Mrs. Pelsler; ill and concerned about soul; same one I had long talks with before; afraid she is still ignorant of primary step, reconciliation with God; spent long while in making way of salvation clear; Doppers; tent full; "Haar Leuze" (her delight), Psalm 62, verse 1, and when I read it aloud I was on the point of remarking, "Nee, wach, ik het die regte vers ver jou—Gez 39, vers 3, 'Komt gij allen" ("No, wait, I have the right verse for you—Hymn 39, verse 3, 'Come ye all, sinners come, what dare hold you back"); saved from this calamity[51] by mere chance (grace); perhaps they are Doppers! and so it was. Narrow shave; second time!

Had to hurry to funerals; eight; Martie and Annie Erasmus; "Leer ons alzoos onze dagen tellen" (So teach us to number our days).

(Here go the bearers with another corpse.)

Met another brother of Tollie's; regular reproduction; brought me to several new sick people; Mrs. Venter very, very ill. Fear! Asked if I should pray for her; "Ja, Minheer" ("Yes, sir"). "En wat zal ik bid?" ("And what shall I pray?") "Ach, Minheer, dat die Heere mij gouw moet kom haal" ("O sir, that the Lord come quick to fetch me").

Poor old dad! He has lost eight children and grandchildren in camp already, and this is his last daughter.

Neglected hospital again; disgusted; those troublesome books!

Had hurried walk round; Mrs. Kruger dying; prayed, but quite delirious.

Met weeping mother on coming out; "Minheer, zal minheer tog nie ver mij help nie om vir mij man een telegram te stuur, hij is in Doornbult Camp. Ik is alleen hier en twee van mij kinders is al dood, and nou le die dochttertje ernstig ziek in die hospital?" ("Sir, won't you be able to help me to send a telegram to my husband, he is in Doornbult Camp. I am alone here; two of my children are already dead, and now my daughter lies dangerously sick in hospital")[52]. That is the saddest part of all. Mothers here alone with sick children, and fathers far off—some in other camps. And then, when Death comes and takes a child, the loneliness of such mothers is too hard a burden to bear. Many children here and many who have died, never yet seen by fathers.

Led prayer meeting at young Otto's tent; six young fellows.

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Saturday, September 21.—Longish day; called early to see 270 and 269; again in evening to 270; last stage of consumption; won't last long. (Here go those terrible bearers again! When, O when, will the Angel of Death sheathe his scythe and depart out of our midst!)

Made church straight for morrow; fine stout "doornhout" (mimosa) pins—(more bearers, here they go again!)—and two strong wires fastened to stones buried in ground (anchors). There are some 24 school forms, and these will seat about 400 people.

Quaky about tomorrow; sermon unprepared; meant to have had afternoon to self, but quite impossible.

Another death, 128; croup; Smit; tent removed on doctor's orders outside camp while child dying; cruel; entreaties of mother vain; child carried in dying condition; expired little after; when I came, found woman in greatest distress; things bundled outside; indignant; poor defenceless, helpless women. May God help them!

Visits 386, 424, 432, 489, 519.

Called to Mrs. Steyn, 541 (three children gone already); daughter suddenly sick; looks like fever; found Mr. Becker there; poor little mother! She is so reconciled and patient in her tribulation.

Called to tent near shop; Mrs. Theron; great pain; three children, sick; no help; dependent on charity of neighbours; no light; God alone knows how many tents there are without lights to-night and with very sick inmates.

Hospital; talk with Mr. V.d.M.; very sick; delirious somewhat; Psalm 27, prayer.

Girlie in ward 1 very sick.

In children's ward found mother and grandmother sitting by bedside of dying boy five years; mother broken; after my prayer there was a tear glistening in the boy's left eye; pathetic to see mother wipe it away as the tears rolled down her cheeks.

In the upper ward lies a girl^[53] of fourteen, with the softest, sweetest face imaginable; two clear, languid, blue eyes; very dangerously ill; wonder if!

Prayed at bedside; daughter of the mother who asked me to wire to her husband yesterday. Spoke to Superintendent; quite unsympathetic; fruitless.

May God spare that child's life!

Mr. Becker funerals; seven or eight, I believe.



Called in by Mr. Kruger; wife died in hospital this morning; son (16 years) buried Monday; another child some days ago; poor fellow; he himself sick; subscribed 5s. to assist him to obtain coffin.

Now for to-morrow's sermon!

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Sunday, September 22.—Grand day; ideal weather; longish.

Up six o'clock; sermon; sweat; veld; "Om te doen gedenken" (To bring to remembrance).

Inauguration of church; huge crowd; packed; hundreds outside.

Impossible to use even the tiniest bit of notes; "broekscheur." Made rather mull of first half; "Ik gedenk heden aan mijne zonden" (I do remember my faults this day). Introduction and second point more satisfactory; luckily (?) girl fainted; seized opportunity to give out hymn; grasped notes to refresh memory; "Ik gedenk heden aan de weldaden des Heeren—God's liefde" (I remember this day the mercies of the Lord—God's love).



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Feel the utter insignificance of my best efforts; sore point; no time at all to prepare; I tremble when I think of what I venture in coldbloodedness.

After service went to 207; saw bedding outside, and knew the worst. "Gister aand, minheer, is zij gestorven. Ach, minheer, zij kon tog die minuut nie afwag nie, zoo haastig was zij om wegtegaan" ("Yestereen, sir, she died. O sir, she scarcely had patience to wait, so eager she was to depart").

Great tribulation and bitterness on account of doctor, who insisted on forcing hot coffee down her throat, and for whom Mrs. Venter was desperately afraid; also on account of his violent conduct and harshness in the presence of Death. She could not even die in peace.

Mrs. Steyn's girlie very bad; fever; so restless, and so much pain.

There again in evening; still so restless; no sleep last two nights; advised Mrs. Steyn to send her to hospital; environment disastrous; too much to remind her of her two brothers and sister, who died last week.

Rounds in hospital; girlie No. 1 very bad.

In No. 4, girlie of Mrs. Van der Berg very low; did not know me to-day; too beautiful a child, really; got mother permission to stay with her to-night.

Mrs. Bonig's child still alive this afternoon; died towards evening. Thank God!

Another little chap passed away quite suddenly in same tent this morning.

Autoharp in convalescent tent.

Hurried to funerals; four; large crowd; several hundreds; Rev. 7, chapter Mrs. Venter gave as comfort to her people, "Deze zijn het die uit groote verdrukking komen" (These are they which come out of great tribulation).

Hurried from there straight to church to lead girls' prayer meeting; some sixty turned up; off the point, though, in their prayers.

And now for the cream of the day's work. Announced meeting for young people, 7.15, in church; service of song; borrowed two lamps; scanty light. Found immense crowd; many turned away; threw up side of tent; numbers outside; some 500 young people and several old to watch.

Shall never forget how they sang Psalm 146. It was glorious! We sang Psalms and gezangen and some "kinder harp liederen" (children's hymns); and for the last, Gezangen 12, "op lieder wijs" (to new tune). Beautiful! Short address on Zaccheus—



“Moeilijkheden” (difficulties). The heartiest and most refreshing meeting ever yet attended; had to stand in middle all the while, with hardly room to turn myself. So delighted that announced another meeting for Tuesday; fine moon just now.

Great point is this—singing sounds lovely at distance, and can be heard all through the camp and in hospital, and who knows how many hearts are not refreshed as the strains come rolling by.

Mr. Becker afternoon service; great crowd also.

Now the day is over!

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Tuesday, September 24.—Seedy all yesterday; no diary; straight to bed; hot water from hospital; footbath.

Managed to get half a dozen sheets zinc from Superintendent for roofing.

Distributed books to Elders yesterday afternoon.

Felt rather hopeless to-day; so much to do; quite at loss where to begin; inclined just to sit still.

Visited southern corner of camp; Mrs. De Lint poorly; read letter written by husband.

Gave out “briefies” for rice to some tents.

Astounded this evening by doctor, “Well, now, wasn’t it fine that I got you the right to grant briefies?” And this is the Donation Store, quite independent of all Government Stores! A gentleman gave Mr. Becker L50 for things; these goods arrived yesterday. Really, doctor takes the cake—with baker and all! Told him a few gentle truths about these goods.

Letters from home; hope those groceries of mine will come along all right; and that order for L20 worth of stuff[54]. May I succeed in getting the sole right of distribution when that arrives.

Champion[55] writes that at present he cannot fulfil order; disappointing.

One does long so for something nice—some extras which here are quite unobtainable[56]. Dry bread gets a bit monotonous after a while, and the “vrekvlis” becomes nauseous as the days roll by. It thrusts its miserable, lean presence upon us day by day, and now it has become a dreaded nightmare.

“Kerkeraads vergadering” in tent this afternoon; six Elders to discuss Sunday services; the grumblers would not rest until they too had their own big marquee tent on the old site.

Suggested that we have only one morning service in new place and two afternoon services—one for old people at old place and one for young at new place; could take further steps later on for a double morning service if necessary; Elders agreeable; disperse.

Funerals; four; Mr. Van der Merwe died last night; felt sick myself, and made fool of myself at graveside; but really could not contain myself as they lowered the remains of Mr. Van der Merwe into grave; so big and fine a man; in flower of manhood; wife dead, child dead; so gentle and patient in his suffering; felt so drawn to him because of his huge helplessness. Hard lines! Hard lines! Poor Nurse Rouvier! After all these weeks



of devoted, patient, hopeful attendance. It does make one feel rather low. Quite unable to make any sort of address at grave; sorry did not ask Mr. Otto.

Went through hospital; Mr. V.d.B. and Mr. Norval both dangerously ill; fear the worst; pneumonia; former hard character, but to-day quite softened; long talk; not yet saved; prayer; great suffering.

Read Psalm 27 to latter and prayed; very thankful.

Girlie Van der Berg in new ward very low; so weak. May God in His tender mercy hear our prayer and restore her!

Lenie Steyn; hysterical; delirious all day; last night great consternation; got her into hospital this morning.



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Girl opposite her dying; mother's only child.

In men's ward little boy (14) died too.

Splendid meeting this evening; packed within and without(!).

Service of song; crowd half an hour before time; singing can be heard all through camp. May many a sad and weary heart have found in our singing a balm for the aching, longing heart.

Now for bed—glorious bed!

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Wednesday, September 25.—Deathbed; sorrowful topic to write upon, and yet why shirk it? Let me attempt what I have never before done—a description of a deathbed. It is but human to hasten over the tragic scenes of life, but this evening I want to tarry.

Something prompted me to make early visit to the hospital, so went before breakfast. In first ward went straight to little Mita Duvenhagen's bed, and her I found very bad—struggling hard to breathe; so young and yet so bitter a suffering!

From there called by Mrs. Van den Berg to new ward, to come quickly, as Lenie was dying. I went, and when I entered saw that God was going to take her away. Let me not attempt to describe her angelic little face of marble white, her beautifully chiselled nose, and her sweet little mouth! Silently we knelt around her bedside—mother, nurse, and I. Of her beautiful blue eyes I have said nothing, for they were closed—the lids gently drawn, and the lashes trying hard to kiss the soft smooth cheeks. “O God, come and help us! O Saviour, come and take Thy place beside her bed—hold her hand—take her in Thy tender arms and press her to Thy bosom! Bear her, Saviour, where Thou wilt, for with Thee she is safe. Comfort our hearts and give us to bend our heads in humble resignation—Thy will be done. Amen!”

“Lenie, Lenie, Lenie, mij kind, jou mammie is hier bij jou, en Jezus ook is hier om jou hand te hou—moenie bang wees nie, mij kind” (“My child, your mother is here, near you, and Jesus too is here to hold your hand—don't be afraid, child”). Under her weary eyelids she looked at us, and a large tear gathered in her left eye. It glistened like a diamond for a moment, and then became the possession of the sorrow-stricken mother. Then we were silent and watched. Slowly and gently the lids opened—now again we could look into those clear blue orbs. Wider—wider—and still wider they grow—uplifted, right away beyond the three forms of clay before her. See how the pupils dilate—they seem to swamp the blue! And so for a few short moments they remain. It was a gaze right beyond us to—what! Will it be old-fashioned to suggest “Angels,” perhaps! Until I grow wiser I shall hold fast to Angels. O, the mystery of the Unknown!



And slowly, gently those lids sink once more to rest—to rest indeed—for her spirit has fled. Peace, perfect peace!

How passing strange, how majestic in its simplicity, how weird in its tragic stillness—the passing of a Soul—the disunion of Body and Spirit! Is this Death? Then may I never fear its shadow!



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Sunset and Evening Star!

* * * * *

Thursday, September 26.—Another day gone. What a day of sorrow and tribulation!

Slept like a log.

Took round through camp late last night; heard distressing groans in certain tent; made gentle enquiries; heard this remark after leaving, “Nee, dit is een van die nach police wat hier rond loop” (“No, it is one of the night police wandering about”).

Foundations of house laid[57]; yesterday got use Scotch cart and brought over some 1,000 bricks and stones for foundation; good beginning to-day; now things will go swimmingly if weather remains fine.

Unbearably hot to-day; tent untenable; thankful house in course of erection.

Old story again; supply boards for coffins stopped, and now there is the pitiful cry of those who seek wood to make coffins for departed dear ones.

Yesterday old Mr. Duvenhagen came in distress to me; begged from Superintendent, and got him two little boxes[58].

This morning had to tramp round to get hold of few boxes, for I promised Lenie’s mother I would provide wood. One does make very rash promises sometimes—but anything to comfort stricken heart of lonesome mother.

That Mrs. Van der Berg has now lost her three children; her husband sits in Bloemfontein Refugee Camp. This to me so inexplicable, so unreasonable, so cruel. Why cannot husband and wife be allowed to go in same camp?

Well, I (next to) stole two nice planks in store tent, and what with empty condensed milk box and my box which I used as chair, able to give quite small fortune in wood for Lenie’s coffin.

Buried her and Mita Duvenhagen (both 14) this afternoon; also two small children; “Laat de kinderen tot mij komen en verhindert ze niet want derzulken is het Koninkrijk Gods” (Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for such is the Kingdom of Heaven).

Mita’s grave away other end of cemetery (next her brother’s), and so I went and spoke few words at her grave too; sang “Voor eeuwig met den Heere” (For ever with the Lord).



Just before funerals went to see Lena Steyn; very low; “Zien, minheer, nou, hoe waar dit was wat zij geze het” (Do you see now, sir, how true her words were?). She always persisted in saying that she was going to die; shall write more of her on another occasion. We prayed at bedside and committed her into God’s keeping, Psalm 23; but she was unconscious, I think, although her eyes wandered from mother to me.

The procession had started already when I had still to hear wail of old man of 76, “Ach, minheer, waar zal ik tog planke krij; mij vrouw is dood, en ik kan nerens kiste krij nie” (O, sir, where can I get boards; my wife is dead, and I can’t get wood anywhere?).

Last night carried out some papers in my box I use as chair and burnt them outside. Soon man stood next to me, “Minheer, zal ik dan nie daardie kisje kan krij nie? Onze ou baby is dood, en ik kan nerens vir haar een stukkie hout krij nie” (Sir, won’t I be able to have that little box? Our little baby is dead, and I can’t get a scrap of wood anywhere).



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Early this afternoon another man came to me in great distress; also no wood for coffin. It does seem so bitterly hard.

Visiting whole morning, mostly down New Camp way.

There is one man always at my back; times a day; came with most wonderful request two days ago; wants me to get him a—guess? Baby! Wife's died last week, and he is now loafing another.

This afternoon two prayer meetings; men and women; took men's down in old church (big tent there now), "Heere zijt mij genadig" (Lord, be merciful to me). The women's, I hear, was packed. I had over 100 men; very good, seeing so few men here; nine prayers.

This evening children's service again; beautiful moon; glorious singing; "Ik ga heen om u plaats te bereiden" (I go to prepare a place for you); told about Lenie's deathbed; she is now in the mansion prepared for her.

Went straight thence to see Lena Steyn; saw women standing in front of tent; heard sobs, and knew the worst. Poor, poor Mrs. Steyn! "Ach, Minheer, ik het daarom nie gedenk nie dat dit oor die helfte zou gaan nie" (O, sir, I really never thought that it would go beyond the half); had six children; four gone now; husband Ceylon, and she is the dearest little mother in camp almost.

Knelt and prayed, and then mother said, "Kom, laat ons nog eenmal ver haar gaan zien" (Come, let us go and see her once more); so went to see Lena once more in morgue tent.

Rest after weariness; calm after storm; light after darkness; day after dawn.

She passed away while the children were singing Gez. 11. While I spoke to her (Mrs. Steyn) at tent she was laughing and sobbing alternately; and then the thought flashed through her that there was no wood for coffin, so I immediately took whole thing into my hands and assured her I would provide and see that Lena gets coffin.

Another rash promise! The Lord only knows where the wood is to come from! Late this evening, when I took her some cocoa, Mrs. Steyn told me that Lena had said that I would provide coffin. So guess it will come out well in end. The presentiments this child had of her death and other things simply marvellous. Am going to write at greater length about her when I see mother again.

And so these three girlies have gone to Jesus. Now, what has become of all our prayers and supplications?

* * * * *



Friday, September 27.—Longish day.

Great question; where to get material for coffin for Lena? Remembered that I saw that the school was supplied with bookcase, and that the box in store tent (full of matches for distribution) could now be otherwise used; removed all matches[59], and lo and behold! grand big box empty and ready for carpenter; got matches distributed, each tent got two boxes; Roos set to work, and with two more milk cases (loafed at hospital), he was able to make quite respectable coffin. (A decent and respectable coffin here made of scrap wood and small boxes fitted together, and whole coated with preparation of boot blacking and oil. A swell, extra fine coffin has a covering of cheap black material, 1s. 6d. yard.)



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Several came again to-day seeking wood; some even wanted the galvanized iron for my roof.

At graves this afternoon saw that they had made a shelf in a grave to hold body and prevent ground falling directly upon it; made me think of catacombs Rome.

Seven buried this afternoon; stood right in front of Lena's grave.

It was Mr. Becker's turn, but he was hindered from coming; rather glad, for wanted to be there myself to-day; "En palmtakken waren in hunne handen" (And palms were in their hands).

Mrs. Steyn found the lost kinderharp (hymn book) I had given Lena few days ago; found under her pillow in morgue tent this afternoon. When I gave it to her she said, "Maar, minheer, moet tog nie vergeet om mij naam in te schrijve" (Sir, you must be sure to write my name in it). So I must remember to do it still. Poor Mrs. Steyn, how resignedly she bears her cross! Sang "Voor eeuwig met den Heere" at grave.

Visits to-day on other side—269, 268, 487, 379, 178, 171, 262.

Called at 329, and found it was same tent where I heard such groans last night; imbecile woman, 53 years; very sick; great suffering; spoke to her, and she actually called me by my name; glad I found tent again; old father of 86; always so keen and hearty at wood-chopping.

Weeping woman came to me after funeral; "Minheer, zal minheer nie zoo goed wees nie om vir Mrs. Engelbrecht in die hospitaal te vertel dat haar kindje dood is, zij word nou begrave?" (Sir, will you be good enough to tell Mrs. Engelbrecht in the hospital that her child has died; she is to be buried now). So another painful task is in store for me.

Received short note from Assistant Superintendent requesting me to discontinue briefies for foodstuffs, "I have now three medical officers who are well able to attend to the sick and needy." And this man (Superintendent) himself requested and authorised me to issue such notes but four days ago. Comment on whole matter superfluous. O for a little more logic and consistency with some people! However, I suppose I can interpret these things in my own way.

Held woman's prayer meeting this afternoon; good audience; "Viel aan de voeten van Jezus en vertelde Him al de waarheid" (Fell at the feet, of Jesus and told Him all the truth); six prayers; but O! such long and wearying ones; thought men could drag it out, but let me be silent about the women.

House 3 feet high; doorway up; grandish.

* * * * *



Sunday, September 29.—No diary yesterday; too tired and listless; eager for bed.

What a grand thing to rest after work! Sleep, glorious, blessed sleep; feel like writing an ode to extol its virtues. Yesterday scorcher of a day.

Spent morning in old quarter; work most wearisome.

So many who call me in and pour out all their sorrows, and it is so terribly hard always to be ready and willing to listen and sympathise. One actually grows “dof” (dull) from sheer weakness. O the monotony of sorrows and troubles!



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Called in to see woman who had just received news that husband had fallen in battle. Such sorrow is too great to realise; one can only stand afar off to behold—and weep.

At 3 p.m. suddenly told that no one to take women's prayer meeting; so had hurriedly to go without so much as minute's preparation; quite large crowd.

Mr. Becker played me trick; he took funerals; four I believe, so I had time to make short visit hospital.

Doctor stopped me two days ago, and said the man B—— in hospital wished to be left alone; so left him alone; but this evening he has gone to meet his God. Could never make him out. Was it ignorance or obstinacy or indifference? May God have mercy on his soul.

Old Mr. Norval also died this afternoon; thank God; too terrible to see him struggling with Death; unconscious the last three days; glad read Psalm and prayed with him a few days ago.

And so our fellow-men around us are carried off by Death; and now they are solving the great mystery of the Hereafter. Stupendous thought!

These same men, women and children with whom I prayed, to whom I spoke about eternal things—they know now what we are burning to know. Is there Life after Death? Is there a Heaven? Is there a Hell? What do the departed do just now? Is there perhaps a purgatory where souls are purified? Is there a Throne above, around which a crowd that cannot be numbered stand clothed in long white robes? What about the palm branches? And a thousand more questions.

“The just shall live by his *faith*.”

Last night children's service in lower church; great crowd; “En tot zich zelven gekomen zijnde” (And when he came to himself).

This evening similar service in upper church; very bright and hearty; Miss Dussel sang hymn and solo part of “Mannen breeders” (Hold the Fort); nice change in programme; accompanied her on autoharp.

This morning went over to village and exchanged pulpits with Mr. Becker; felt quite lost in big, empty church.

Old sermon had to “bite off spit”[60]; goodness knows where I would have found time to prepare one.

Had nice chat with Macdonald's father.



Grand dinner; roast mutton and actually a dish full of gravy! Could scarce believe my eyes; real gravy; how glorious; and rice too. Think of it! Let me be silent about the dish of stewed peaches—I might fill pages—a dish fit for the gods. Wonder what the look and smell of a vegetable is? Have just faint recollection of such names as potatoes, onions, beans, cauliflower, pumpkin, but I get a bit blurred when try to discriminate; long absence has stunted my memory. Believe there is a vegetable called beetroot too, and wonder if the name cabbage is correct. By the way, what do we call that stuff one sometimes puts on bread for breakfast and tea? I believe, too, having heard and partaken of a preparation called jam in days gone by. And what, now what, do they always put in tea and coffee in other places? Fancy it has whitish colour; have an idea it can be drunk pure too.



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Authority (Assistant Superintendent): “En wanneer eet julle Boere dan breakfast?” (And when do you Boers eat your breakfast?)

“O, ik het laatste in Brandfort breakfast ge’et; hier het ik schars genoeg vir dinner” (O, I had breakfast last at Brandfort; here I get scarce enough for dinner).

Had nice nap on sofa after dinner; what a noble thing a house is; how spacious, how high, how cool! How unnecessarily large people do build houses nowadays.

At 2.45 had to race back for afternoon service; young people; great crowd (700 about); prepared sermon during the fifteen minutes’ walk. Record service; forty-five minutes.

Went through two wards hospital.

Mrs. De Wet dying; poor old mother! But she said all along she wouldn’t get well again; several very sick there.

Now for glorious bed.

P.S.—Not yet; there came wail from hospital; so I went up; as I surmised, Mrs. De Wet “gone home”; and shall I soon forget that little band of women in black returning to their tents while the pale sad moon cast its shadows of sympathy!

“Ach, minheer, het ik nie gezondigd dat ik nie wou zien en geloof dat zij gaat sterve?” (O, sir, did I not sin, in that I would not see and believe that she would die?)

“Neen. Dank God liever voor die Liefde in u die u verblind heeft. Dank God dat gij hebt liefgehad” (No. Thank God rather for the Love within which blinded your eyes. Thank God that you have loved).

Another solving the great problem of the Unknown!

* * * * *

Monday, September 30.—End of month; cannot help remembering that this was our finest, loveliest month in the Boland (Western Province); and here we have been grovelling in the dust.

Another frightful day of wind and dust; two evils; open the tent to ventilate, and anon everything covered with layer fine dust; close tent and one gets suffocated. And one’s clothes! Let me rather change topic.

After burdens of yesterday felt more inclined for good quiet rest, but tent too unbearably hot; so decided to do the hospital; there knew I would find things cool.



First to men's ward; then through three women's wards, and finally to convalescent ward; nice and cool in wards, but grew horribly tired. What with a word of cheer all round and a straight talk to boot, and after a Psalm, short address, and finally (and hardest of all) a prayer—great weariness becomes master, and one feels regularly “pap.”

Hospital grown so large lately; takes few hours to “do” it thoroughly.

Best of all, one has assurance and conviction such visits are indeed source of comfort and blessing; mindful now of that sick mother in No. 3; so despondent, and how she thanked me after visit; “Ik voel nou weer blij in mij hart” (I feel glad at heart again). Psalm 115; “Vertrouw op den Heere; Hij is mijn hulp en mijn schild” (Trust in the Lord; He is our help and our shield); “De Heere is onzer gedachtig geweest” (The Lord has been mindful of us); beautiful.



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To my utter surprise found Mrs. Fourie in hospital; ailing lately; sure this is much best for her. (The Van As's and Mr. and Mrs. F. form one family circle here.)

Anyhow, this afternoon simply "dead off"; lay on bed till 3 p.m.; and yet one always feels uncomfortable to be idle one hour; it feels like neglect of duty. What one longs for is possibility to have one day or afternoon off regularly; something to look forward to; some time when one can sit still.

Funerals four (Mr. N., Mr. B., Mrs. De W., and girlie); "Dood, waar is uw prikkel?" (Death, where is thy sting?).

Felt unhappy and uneasy all through address, for B. had requested me to leave him alone. Well, anyway my address was directly for the living and not about the dead.

Girl at door this afternoon; "Minheer, het min nie vir mij een Wonderboek?" (Sir, havn't you got a Wonderbook for me?) "Hoe'n soort boek?" (What kind of book?) "Een Wonderboek" (A Wonderbook). "Een Wonderboek!" (head scratchings) "Nee, dit het ik tog glad nie. Maar hoe'n soort boek is dit?" (A Wonderbook! No, I havn't that at all; but what kind of book is it?) "Minheer, daar is tekste in om te leer" (Sir, there are verses in it to learn). "Maar is dit dan nie een Bijbel wat jij wil he?" (But isn't it a Bible you want?) "Ja, minheer, dit is een Bijbel wat ik wil he" (Yes, sir, it is a Bible). New name for Bible —Wonderboek. Not bad!

After tea called to visit very sick old man; long talk; no assurance of forgiveness of sins. Spoke earnestly on Reconciliation with God as first step; am afraid old man disappointed in me; fear he wanted me to recite beautiful Psalms and so forth.

Now for line re house; walls nearly done; two windows; to-morrow roof; edifice stands "met 'n oprechte boog' "(with great show); talk of day; Pastorie.

Just returned from hospital; fear Mrs. Engelbrecht won't last through night.

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 27: Condensed milk.]

[Footnote 28: I had in my innocence written to Mr. Robertson to enlist his sympathy on behalf of some people who wished to be removed to other Camps where their families were. In this letter I casually mentioned the meat affair. In the second letter, to my mother (who was collecting to send me a fresh small supply of invalid food), I stated that she was on no account to send such things unless it could be guaranteed that I should have the sole right to distribute. I adopted this precaution because I found that the authorities reserved for themselves the right of distributing all goods (foodstuffs) sent by



private Relief Committees, doing with such as they chose. Needless to say, both letters were destroyed.]

[Footnote 29: This can be altogether misconstrued. The “reasonable” was only in comparison with the stormy interview of the day before, when the Superintendent attacked me most fiercely. When I began the second interview by saying I wished to resign, he changed front altogether. It had been purely a game of bluff on his part.



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It would perhaps be well to state here my attitude towards the authorities in Camp.

It did not take me very many days to see exactly how things stood, and I determined to have absolutely nothing to do with these men: to ask no favours, and to be under no obligation to them for anything. Of course, there came days when I was forced, under stress of circumstances, to eat these resolutions.]

[Footnote 30: Martie Snyman.]

[Footnote 31: My great zeal in this matter led me to be rather severe and inconsistent; just the same as a teacher who will stand no excuses from his pupils.]

[Footnote 32: Betty Lotz.]

[Footnote 33: This child of four years gnashed all her teeth to pieces before she died. She obstinately refused all nourishment, and told her mother she did not want to live longer. She was indeed a marvel. I gave the mother beef tea, which was all this child lived on for two weeks. The mother used deceitfully (!) to give it beef tea when it called for water.]

[Footnote 34: On the ground.]

[Footnote 35: Aunt; she was really the grandmother, though. Reference is made later to this same case.]

[Footnote 36: For cocoa.]

[Footnote 37: These ladies never approached me, and yet they might have known that I would naturally know more about the state of the Camp than anyone else. The Superintendent led them about—where he chose, I suppose. They were regarded with universal contempt by the people. Their report I have not yet seen, but I know this: that the Superintendent was not immediately dismissed as he should have been. (This was only done in December.) Perhaps the subsequent extension of the hospital and removal to a better site were due to these ladies' suggestions. I remember, though, that we had quite decent meat (beef) during the few days that they visited the camp.]

[Footnote 38: I had brought with me six tins syrup, a few tins jam, 1 lb. of tea, and a little oatmeal.]

[Footnote 39: The Rev. J. Steytler, who had also gone to labour in a camp. He was sent away for political reasons.]

[Footnote 40: This was my daily dilemma: Speak out and protest, and be removed or imprisoned—hold silence and [Transcriber's note: illegible word] the coward, and remain in the work. And I chose the latter.]



[Footnote 41: The rule was that a card, with the number of any tent where medical attendance was desired, should be pinned to the Chemist's Tent before a certain hour in the morning. Many chose to have no attendance, so great was their fear and dread for two of the doctors. Many, too, in spite of their cards, were never visited.]

[Footnote 42: Dutch idiom, literally translated, "pull through."]

[Footnote 43: This calamity, fortunately, only cast its shadow—it never fell. The Rev. Mr. Becker used to come over every afternoon, and continued this labour of love until the end of November, when he was prohibited from visiting the camp any more. How faithful he was! How well I remember the little figure in black flitting hither and thither among the tents. We seldom met in camp, but many a time I smuggled into a tent where I had seen him enter, just to learn from him to pray.]



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[Footnote 44: Mr. Otto, the Schoolmaster of Dewetsdorp, a God-fearing man, with a large heart and a great soul—a blessing to many.]

[Footnote 45: The last day for the Boers to lay down arms, according to Kitchener's great proclamation.]

[Footnote 46: Whereon I used to hang out my bedding.]

[Footnote 47: Never was there crueller irony of fate than in this doctor's case. He was altogether unpopular with the authorities, and was at last dismissed for incompetence. When the news of his dismissal became known, a petition was drawn up in his lines, praying that he might remain. This was granted. The day I left hospital he was carried in, stricken with enteric—and he died.]

[Footnote 48: Biltong is dried beef. These people were new arrivals. Mr. Van As and I often remarked to each other that one could readily distinguish the new arrivals from the rest—the former always appearing ruddy and in good health.]

[Footnote 49: Baby Van As.]

[Footnote 50: Which I practically stole.]

[Footnote 51: Members of the Afscheidene Kerk (Doppers) sing only Psalms, never Hymns.]

[Footnote 52: This was Mrs. Van der Berg—Lenie's mother.]

[Footnote 53: Lenie van der Berg.]

[Footnote 54: My brother packed a box of groceries for me, and my mother bought a fresh supply of invalid food.]

[Footnote 55: Merchant at Bloemfontein, to whom I had written for groceries.]

[Footnote 56: The two shops in Camp contained precious little, and no foodstuffs.]

[Footnote 57: Mr. Van As and Mr. Fourie were the contractors.]

[Footnote 58: How well I remember this incident; how we hopefully approached the Superintendent's tent; how he gave two little boxes; and how he said, "That's the way you spoil them," as I myself unpacked the bottle straw for the old man. (The bottle straw had to be saved for his horse's bedding.)]

[Footnote 59: I got permission first.]



[Footnote 60: Literally from Dutch “spit afbijten”—bear the brunt.]

CHAP. III.

Tuesday, October 1.—Village whole morning; barber (at last); came back wiser and sadder man; can safely stow away comb and brush for a month; two packets of candles by piece of luck. Grand dinner; roast mutton, rice, mealies, and canned quinces. May I never forget that dish of gravy!

Found goods from Champion had arrived; life again; pickles, jam, “domel simmel” (golden syrup), cheese, and few pounds butter.

Supper sumptuous; good spirits.

Went through hospital wards.

Young Joubert (20) dying; visited him twice; quite ready; waiting to be taken; found mother at bedside.

Old Mr. Plessis pleurisy; great agony; restless; fretful; fearful; fear the worst; wonder if prepared to die?

Straight to convalescent tent; reproaches; “Ach, minheer, het min dan ver ons vergeet?” (O, sir, have you then forgotten us?); Psalm 103.



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Mrs. V.d.W. very, very bad; greatly comforted; beseeched me to come again.

In old ward also; some very sick; Mrs. Griesel, Mrs. De W., Mrs. Steyn, Engelbrecht—all very low.

Feel more and more to neglect hospital would be criminal.

Then still two other women's wards, where had to read and pray and speak word all round; and finally the children's ward; girlie very bad.

After rounds (seven wards) felt like king; happy; weary, yet withal happy.

And our camp? Total neglect. But will I ever here roll me snugly in my blankets with the satisfaction that all the sick and suffering have been visited?

There have died up to September in our camp over 500. Appalling!

Only one buried this afternoon (Mr. Becker); died in hospital.

* * * * *

Thursday, October 3.—No diary yesterday; listless to-day also; hot; oppressive days; one just longs for day to end. Towards evening (sunset) usually nice and cool, and wind goes down.

What shall I write about? Diary becoming monotonous; too great a sameness. Hospitals; visits; sick; dying; funerals; morose topic; oppressive.

Boer khaki in camp to-day. Result of visit, about a dozen have joined forces of the English. Wonder if a worm wouldn't have more self-respect! Such characters make themselves despicable and contemptible in eyes of the English themselves. To us it brings deep-down humiliation. Can a man sink so low? Enough.

Two night ago some women and children cleared off—"for," said they, "lest we starve here."

Can a man (let alone a woman—breathe not of a child) remain healthy and strong on bread, meat (miserable half-pound), coffee, and condensed milk? And so, when a sickness comes there is nothing to fall back upon—no resistance. And with a wasted constitution who can battle against fever, pneumonia, and other things?

And for those that grimly struggle through, there is nothing wherewith to nourish and strengthen; no real milk; no eggs; wine; no delicacies such as convalescents should be tempted with. About as saddening sight as one can dream of is a peep into the children's ward—poor wasted, withered little innocents!



Mr. Otto buried eight this afternoon.

* * * * *

Friday, October 4.—Let me have a clean blank page for to-night in honour of my new home! Here I sit in glorious solitude, actually in a room! Four walls, four naked walls, but walls withal—stare down upon me with their muddy countenances, and I have an idea that they smile upon me in affection—four muddy brown smiles!

And so my ideal has been realised; and I am proud possessor of a house. Really word "house"[61] seems too inadequate, too insignificant wherewith to name it.

(Later)—Short joy; rudely awakened to sorrows of life; mother just gone by weeping bitterly; went out and took her home to her tent; daughter dying in hospital; Ferreira (admitted yesterday, fever). This morning still conscious when I spoke to her, and when we read and prayed together. And now?



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Have just returned hospital; father there; girl evidently dying; fever 105; quite unconscious; strong, strapping girl of nineteen; knelt by bed and prayed; nothing impossible with God; while there is life there is hope.

Will postpone description of house till another occasion; under this cloud one's ink gets cloggy and one's pen listless.

Spent morning in hospital, and after—little visiting.

Funerals, five children; “Laat de kinderen” (Suffer the little children). Mother fainted at grave; great consternation.

Large laager troops close by.

* * * * *

Sunday, October 6.—No diary yesterday; spent morning at river[62]; hour's walk; small party, seven; persuaded Mr. Fourie to join; wife betterish.

Forgot for the while there was such a thing as a camp, and in the beauties, rugged and rude, of Nature able to enjoy life once more and banish thoughts of sickness, hospitals, deaths, funerals, etc. The grand old river!

Returned early with Mr. F. and did few hours' visiting.

To-day most busy and tiring day, as all Sundays are.

Service at ten and again at three.

Funerals at 5 p.m., four; after, prayer meeting.

Luckily (!) weather threatening, so announced there would be no meeting to-night; thankful in my soul.

And now the gentle drops making music on my roof; really it is too grand; one feels like living again to be in room where you can stand upright all over.

Miss Ferreira died last night; buried this afternoon; “Zalig zijn de dooden die in den Heere sterven” (Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord); large crowd at cemetery.

But to think that so young and so strong a person should so suddenly be called away; “Levende gaan zij de eeuwigheid binnen” (literally, Living they enter eternity).

Miss Van Tonder very, very low in hospital; cannot bear thought of her perhaps dying; it will be too, too sad; so young, so good, so patient. God only knows!



Yesterday eight buried; mostly children.

Let me rather fill pipe; get into bed, and listen to soothing rain without.

* * * * *

Tuesday, October 8.—Getting lazy with diary; effects of comforts of house, no doubt. Just copied Dr. M.'s list of patients; total 150; mostly in new camp; wonder how on earth am to find time to visit these tents; and this is but one of the three doctors' lists! So one's time is just made up with visits to sick, and for other work there is no opportunity. One gets "daarom" (literally, therefore) a bit hopeless with the amount of work. O for a few more to help!

Hospital runs away with whole morning; and positively cannot neglect that work, and then come the funerals every other day.

Buried four children this afternoon; one girlie I often visited; "En zij brachten kinderkens tot Jezus" (And they brought children to Jesus).



Page 42

One cannot help smiling sometimes in midst of death; the comic element will crop up everywhere and the sublime verges on the ridiculous. Old Mrs. Griesel, delirious, “Ach, minheer, en moet ik nou sterve en dit zonder eers een glas karren melk to kry?” (O, sir, and must I die now, and that without one glass of buttermilk?); wonder, wonder how many will get well in that fatal ward. Give Miss Van Tonder up, also Mrs. Steyn and Mrs. Griesel—but!

Four children struggling with Death just now; among these a tiny little girl three years—the dearest, sweetest, little cherub imaginable. It knocks one over completely to see mother kneeling silently by bedside. There is pathetic element in the utter helplessness of human love. How hard to witness suffering with a breaking heart and to be—helpless!

Our new hospital matron arrived; let us hope for better things now.[63]

Found old Englishman (Hockins) in hospital; chat and prayer in English; my first in camp.

Big load of boards arrived this morning; now there will be coffin material again for a short season.[64]

To-morrow afternoon is service, and nothing ready yet.

* * * * *

Thursday, October 10.—Sad and gloomy day.

Early visit hospital, and on entering fatal ward saw the two empty places—Mrs. Griesel and Miss Van Tonder. O, the sorrow, the bitter sorrow, of it! Went to morgue tents and saw her again in death who had suffered so long and patiently these last few weeks. Rest after weariness—sweet rest at last. But where, O where, are our prayers? May God save me from sin of unbelief and doubt during these days!

“Nie pijn nie, Minheer L., maar net zoo gedaan” (No, no pain, Mr. L., but only so weary). Thus, when I asked her on my last visit if she had any pain.

That tent too much for me now, and could not enter there to-day. God forgive my neglect!

Three others (children) also dead hospital.

Went late last evening to tents in “infected area”; found three children all very bad, and one boy struggling in Death’s throes; poor little chap; he is gone since, and we buried him this afternoon.



Thirteen coffins; so sad, so painfully sad. May I never forget the weeping crowd around the open graves!

“En God zal alle tranen van hunne oogen afwisschen” (And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes); sang, “Voor eeuwig met den Heere” (For ever with the Lord). And now, where are these dead? What would I not give to have short minute’s talk with that good young girl! What would she tell me? We read together so often, prayed so often, spoke about eternal things so often. And now! What now? How good and wise of God to withhold from our knowledge some certain things.

Our life here on earth must be one of Faith and Hope.

Feel so horribly low this evening.

Visits in camp, before hospital; again before funerals; also after funerals; but making no headway; hundreds of sick all about, and hundreds who can never be visited.



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Great concern yesterday; officials want now to remove my tent[65], and I positively cannot do without same; and with all this worry had to prepare afternoon service; sudden inspiration and wonderful grace to boot; “Komt herwaarts tot mij alien” (Come unto me all ye that labour).

Service of great comfort to own heart.

Saw Superintendent this morning; inflexible; I am powerless because I was given the roof.

One has to stoop greatly during these days.

It hurts, it humiliates, it chafes; and one needs extra grace.

* * * * *

Saturday Night, October 12.—Saw most distressing case yesterday; Mrs. Herbst, 398; bare and empty tent; one bundle of things; one small bundle wood; few cooking utensils, and on the floor a bed (!)—couple bags as mattress and a few blankets. And there sat the mother with hands clasped round her knee and a little girl beside her; “En het jij dan nie ander goed nie?” (And have you no other goods?) “Nee, Minheer, dit is al wat ik bezit; hulle het alles van mij weggeneem” (No, sir, this is all I possess; they took everything from me).

“En waar is die ander kindje?” (And where is the other little one?) “Minheer, hij is gister begrave” (Sir, he was buried yesterday). Alone and cast-away; no friends; poverty-stricken. Such sights enough to make one’s heart freeze within.

Called at hospital again before afternoon visits to find out tent number of Nellie van Tonder’s parents; no one could tell; so came away determined to find tent all same; passed doctor; “Hullo, Padre, forgot to tell you of very bad case 715; afraid you won’t find child alive though;” so hurried away to 715; and actually there found myself in very tent I wanted to visit. But I was too late for the child. Carried him away ten minutes before I came. Such is life! “When sorrows come, they come not single spies, but in battalions.”

Instead of having to comfort and cheer in their loss of loving daughter, had to pray God for grace to bear a new and grievous burden of grief.

(Later)—Just returned hospital; a little girl moaning most pitiably, so I went to see what was matter; admitted this afternoon. Inflammation of stomach; fearful pain; such a dear, sweet little thing (can hear her moaning just now). Talked to her this afternoon, and asked her if she knew Who had made her sick? “Ja, Oom” (Yes, uncle). “Wie dan, my kind?” (Who then, my child?) “Khaki Oom” (khaki uncle). Collapse on my part.



Six coffins this afternoon; “Heere, maak mij bekend mijne einde” (Lord, make me to know mine end); great crowd; painful delay; one grave too short; had to sing three long verses while it was being lengthened.

Talk of day—Doctor got knocked down in camp this afternoon. Have not seen him whole afternoon; offending party marched to gaol; wonder what the issue will be!

* * * * *



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Sunday, October 13.—Glorious eventide. What grander than to sit still at perfect rest after burden of a long and heavy day! What a day to look back upon! I tremble when I think of what I am compelled out of sheer compulsion to venture. Service this morning; “Deze zijn het die uit de groote verdrukking komen” (These are they which come out of great tribulation). This afternoon, “Hoe zou ik u overgeven, O Efraim? U overleveren, O Israel?” (How shall I give thee up, Ephraim. How shall I deliver thee, Israel?)

“Scant and small the booty proved”—more’s the pity!

When will I find time to prepare myself decently?

Anyhow, comfort myself with thought that if hearers knew (and no doubt they do) how pressed I am for time, they will deal gently with my scanty productions. For myself, whole subject very unsatisfactory and unsatisfying.

Immediately after service; funerals; Mr. Becker unable; seven or eight, all children; huge crowd; splendid opportunity; “Gij dwaas hetgeen gij zaait wordt niet levend tenzij dat het gestorven is” (Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die).

There is a Reaper whose name is Death,
Who with his sickle keen,
Cuts the bearded grain at a breath,
And the flowers that grow between.

After funerals, girls’ prayer meeting.

Last and best of all—Service of Song, evening. Now what on earth can be more beautiful than our meeting this evening? Such a crowd, and such singing! Ten minutes, John iii., 16. And now the day is over.

And the sick? And the hospital? All neglected; too pitiable to contemplate. And Mrs. Grobelaar dying; when, two days ago, visited her, said as I drew napkin from face, “Ach Minheer L., het min. dan vir mij vergeet?” (O, Mr. L., have you then forgotten me?); she was delirious most of day, but when I spoke to her she was quite conscious. And how inwardly thankful when I prayed with her; poor mother; her days on earth are numbered; both lungs gone.

Little babe, Van Huyssteen, also dead this morning (mother shot on their flight by English; babe pined away out of sheer lack of nourishment).

* * * * *

Wednesday, October 16.—Getting lazy with diary; mindful of old Mark Twain.



Hear woman's voice calling "Ambulance! Ambulance! Ambulance! in 172 moet een meisje weggedra wordt" (Ambulance! in 172 a little girl has to be removed). Here go the bearers!

172 is just thirty yards from 177, where I take meals, and next to 171 old Mrs. Van Straten, whom I regularly visit, and yet I know absolutely nothing of this girl's sickness nor her death till this very minute. Enough to make one discouraged.

Of Monday's work can't remember much except that I found the "summum" of misery and distress in 678, Pelser's; whole family down measles; poverty; filth; baby ill at breast (died yesterday, buried this afternoon); sent food, but made her promise faithfully that children would be washed to-day.



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What horrible thing is dirt! Surely one of greatest gifts is to be able to appreciate the “clean.”

Funerals again Monday; “Zalig zijn de dooden die in den Heere sterven” (Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord); so many children again.

Visit old Mr. Du Toit on way home.

Now am I positively dead![66] “Mijnheer, min. moet mij tog een ding beloove; om als de oorlog verbij is, die preek van min. te laat druk enz enz, Om te doen gedenken” (Sir, you must promise me one thing, to publish your sermon on ‘To bring to remembrance’ when the war is over).

“Kan jij nou meer!”[67] Really now, after all there is nothing like a good, long, square ear-to-ear grin in this world!

Shall I deny, though, that there is just a wee drop of cheer and comfort, huge as the joke is!

Yesterday fellow who knocked down doctor returned; fined L5; and since Saturday no one to do his lines[68].

Found 597 very bad; young girl (Kruger); wants to die.

245, Mrs. Du Preez; great pain; died last night, buried this afternoon.

Two little children remain behind; saddening.

Buried six this afternoon; “Ik ben verstomd, ik deed mynen mond niet open, want Gij hebt het gedaan” (I was dumb. I opened not my mouth because Thou didst it). Saw motherless boy and girl weeping at grave (Mrs. Oliver, 107, 62, 50).

In 62 the thinnest, skeletonest babe ever seen. How old and withered up these little mites become!

Asked Dr. M. visit 262, and try and get her admitted to hospital.

Next morning actually—I repeat actually[69]—I found her there. Am wonderfully thankful; now the old grandmother can take her rest; poor old soul; so faithful; so willing, and so gentle always. One can understand better such sayings as “Faithful unto Death” when you watch those around sickbeds here in camp.

Found in 167 young mother (babe); arm very bad; no friends; alone; Mrs. Van Staden took mercy on her when she arrived ten days ago; all relatives in Norval’s Pont Camp. How could she get well here!



Got doctor yesterday to give her note to headquarters, and this afternoon, after repeated visits, at length succeeded in getting her off to Norval's Pont; poor little soul; may she now find rest for her weary, fainting heart. (Feel rather satisfied with myself when I think of her (Mrs. Van Wyk) and Mrs. Grobbelaar!)

Saw this afternoon most marvellous "en aandoenlijk" (touching) thing in camp.

Mrs. Jacobs, 721; little daughter was shot through stomach on their flight from English, some three weeks ago, and the child lay 'twixt life and death for days; now she is quite well again; too wonderful for words; "Minheer, kijk hier!" (Sir, look here), and the mother unrolled a little flannel vest before my eyes. The front part had two cruel, ugly holes, one an inch, other almost two in length; the whole was as though dipped in blood. Let me be dumb—words would be wicked!



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“Ja, minheer, die hempie zal ik bewaar als die grootste schat op aarde, en aan mij kinders en kinds-kindens vermaak” (Yes, sir, this little vest I shall cherish as the greatest treasure I have on earth, and shall bequeath it to my children and children’s children).

Splendid meeting this evening; hearty singing; Joh. iii., 16, last Sunday; to-night “Een iegelijk” (Whosoever).

Service this afternoon; “De Heere is mijn herder” (The Lord is my shepherd).

Glad to be able to go through hospital again.

Good news; quantity of things arrived this afternoon. At last!

* * * * *

Friday Night.—“Joy cometh in the morning,” so it is written, and yet it was grief and disappointment which came yesterday morning. One case goods missing; and the very one which belongs to me personally. After all these weeks of waiting—hard, hard luck! Never mind! Read few days ago of remedy for “lowness of spirit,” “neerslagtigheid” (down-heartedness), “Think of the burdens of some individual you know.” Excellent! Now let me think of the sorrows of that unhappy little mother, Mrs. Van Wyk, 167. When last wrote, she had left; but yesterday morning she was sent back; papers not in order; and on inquiries at office to-day was told point-blank (with a snub in the bargain) that she could no more think of going. Such a life; had not the heart to bear the news, for I heard she has been crying all day—poor little castaway. Is there no pity? Feel like Kit Kennedy. Would there were a bag of chaff somewhere near which I could pummel soundly for half an hour, just to let off steam; just to pummel something, seeing one cannot pummel somebody; it might ease the strain.

Why, this innocent creature, with bandaged arm and suckling at breast, she couldn’t hurt a fly if she tried; and yet, and yet all this worry, all this endless trouble and disappointment, just to get her from here to her mother in Norval’s Pont—and now? Let me not think on it! She will eat her heart away in sorrow, and no doubt soon will be at rest in a bit room six feet by three.

In hospital yesterday, found young girl (20), Henning’s, dying; enteric; so young; so strong; in flower of life; it seems too awful, too contrary, “Levend zij den dood in” (Living they enter eternity); and others again, little infants, will struggle and battle for life for weeks and weeks, regular “Kannie dood” (Cannot dies, literally). Great mystery!

Mother at bedside; told me she said she was going to Jesus; “Ma, jij het nou ver mij twintig jaar ge had en nou wil die Heere vir mij he” (Mother, you have had me twenty years, and now the Lord wants me); quite unconscious when we prayed; poor mother, the helplessness, utter helplessness of Love!



In other ward Mrs. Du Toit and Mrs. Grobbelaar very, very bad; saw the worst, and prayed for them—and the end? End is this:—that this afternoon we buried these three, and sang over open graves, “Ik geloof een eeuw’ge leven” (I believe in life everlasting), “Ik ga heen om u plaats te bereiden” (I go to prepare a place for you).



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I often marvel that never yet been at loss for suitable text to talk about at graves. In beginning I used to have half-hour's quiet before funerals to meditate; now my meditation comes off as we slowly wind to the sacred acre; and yet there has always been "sufficient" and "according to the need."

Visited old Mrs. Dussels, mother of Mrs. Grobelaar—"zoo tevreden, zoo stil, zoo olijmoedig, door God's genade" (So content, so quiet, so glad, through God's grace).

Village to-day; jam; autoharp tuned; roses; treat for supper; "rooster koek (scones) and grape jam.

After supper called to sick old man; old Mr. Hennings very, very weak; words of cheer; prayer; wonder if I shall ever see him alive again; don't think it; tent 8.

N.B.—So all my brag of last day "nul en van geene waarde" (null and void).

Mrs. Grobelaar, dead and buried.

Mrs. Van Wyk, "As you were."

Moral:—

* * * * *

Sunday, October 20.—The blessedness of eventide, the satisfaction after long and hard day's work; delicious feeling of rest and contentment; soothing is such solitude.

Yesterday rather "offish" whole day; felt just as though "it wouldn't come."

Visited family of Afgescheiden people; sterling Christian old lady, Mrs. Van der Heever.

In so far am at rest now with regard Mrs. Van Wyk; with doctor's help we have got her and baby safely lodged in hospital; some consolation anyhow.

In fever ward found Mrs. Olivier dying; fine, strong woman. How cruel and relentless is Death; prayed at bedside; quite unconscious, and passed away some minutes after.

Very painful task yesterday, matter which has been awaiting investigation some days already. Young girl of sixteen ran away to River with view to getting into British lines. Bad character since last year, when British entered Bethulie. Sent with mother to Bloemfontein Camp on that account by military. Weeks ago she was brought back from river, but refused to return to mother; found she was staying with notorious villian E——, whose wife ill in hospital....



Yesterday afternoon Mr. Becker, Elder du Toit, and self straight talk with E——. But oh, what a blackguard he is, and how devilishly good and obedient! Made himself out a second good Samaritan.

Took her to mother; willing to forgive and receive her back, if she is truly repentant and promises to remain and obey. And now? The Lord only knows. Mr. Becker promised to call this afternoon; must hold eye on her; must make her feel and know that we desire only her welfare. Feel convinced that unless we get her converted to God everything will be in vain.

Hurried off to village; breakfast parsonage; return with magnificent leg of mutton and salad; flowers.

Church service soon after; fortunately could use sermon prepared for last Wednesday afternoon, “Het leven is mij Christus, het sterven is mij gewin” (For me to live is Christ, to die is gain). Splendid congregation at both places.



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Visit Ottos; boy very, very bad; enteric; fear worst; prayer.

After dinner, repose and preparation for afternoon service; restless hour and half with no progress; 110 texts; no go, so in despair at 2.30 got up, and after bit prayer decided to preach to young people on “En de Heere keerde zich om en zag Petrus aan” (And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter); immense crowd; wonderfully helped.

Funerals four; very large crowd; hundreds; splendid opportunity again; “En de dooden werden geoordeeld naar hetgeen in de boeken geschreven was” (And the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books). We are all busy, each with his own book, and each day we add a page; but one day, like with these dead, we come to our last page. What have we written? How do we write? When we become God’s children, God writes in letters of red—with Christ’s blood as ink—over the pages of sin we have till now written, “Cleansed in Jesus’s blood,” and thence we write only to the glory of God. And the little children we bury to-day—they too have their little books completed, but I believe there was an angel to hold the pen of each child, and that therefore their little books will be pure before God.

After funerals, girls’ prayer meeting; very enjoyable gathering; regulated prayers somewhat; first for our own special needs, second and third for our camp—sick, weary, sorrowful, careless, unconverted, hospital; fourth and fifth, relatives and friends far away; Land en Volk.

Tea, and at 7.15 our evening service of song (went to tea at 6.30, people already going to service).

Glorious singing, place inside and outside (?) simply packed; reserved seats for nurses, who arrived few minutes late; “Prys den Heere” (Praise the Lord) again; temptation too great; sudden inspiration.

“Wederzien” (God be with you) beautifully sung; also several kinderharp; so hearty, so enjoyable; quarter-hour over time; announced next meeting Tuesday night (D.V.).

And now the day is over.

Mr. Becker had huge crowd in lower church this afternoon while I had young people. May God’s Word not return to Him void!

And now for a good old pipe, and a few good long thoughts of home, dear ones, and friends.

(This almost long enough for sermon, and needs only the Amen!)

* * * * *



Thursday, October 24.—Long break, four days gone by; but one day is like the other except that on alternative days I take the funerals; for the rest, each day is like preceding morning, noon, and afternoon—sick! sick! sick!

O for a change in my work! The continual cry is “Minheer, kom tog hier” (Sir, please come here), “Minheer, gaat tog daar” (Sir, please go there), and one grows so weary of scenes of suffering and sorrow; always red and tear-stained eyes; always Love, helpless, hopeless, impotent, despairing; always face to face with Decay, Change, Death; always the same close, stifling, little tent.



Page 49

Such a life here as “leeraart” (chaplain) full of dull, oppressive, burdensome, wearying, saddening hours. O the monotony, the horrible monotony of my work. How welcome the hour of sunset! How blissful to lay me down to sleep! Thank God for his unspeakable gift of sleep—that period of forgetfulness, of rest, of void.

And yet let me confess, can there be any work grander, more glorious, than just this work of mine? How one can revel in it! The unspeakable bliss of being able to ease the burdens of one’s fellow-men—the supreme honour of being able to be a blessing. Surely the purest pleasure here on earth—to bear one another’s burdens.

To-day a grievous, burdensome day—full of worry and trouble.

Found that my tent had been unceremoniously pulled down and removed during my morning visit in camp.

Hurried home to find things lying in dire confusion, and unprotected.

“Ai, maar dit was ook genoeg om’n mens regtig moeilijk en nukkerig te maak” (Ah, but it was enough to rouse and irritate a person). But what an utter absence of the faintest traces of some respect and deference. There are men whose cold-blooded brutishness and irreverence knock one over completely. One’s person, one’s profession, is no guarantee, no safeguard—nay, I verily believe some glory and revel in the act of making a fellow-creature miserable.

So I sent in my resignation on the spot. “The indignity which I had suffered at the hands of the authorities makes it impossible for me to continue in my office.”

And of course this made a mighty change, and there were explanations and apologies, *etc.*, and at 1 p.m. I had another tent, and my resignation safe in drawer.

May I never have occasion to undergo such a mental, internal struggle again. One positively has need of extra grace each day, so much as regular supply and so much extra.

But now day is over and the turmoil is over. Thank God!

Funerals four; “In het huis mijns vaders” (In my Father’s house); felt offish; visited old Thomas du Toit; fear he won’t make it.

Thence old Mr. Van der Merwe; dying.

Too dead beat to go to Mrs. Van der Berg, who I believe is dying.

Girlie 169 also in Death’s throes; horrid, cruel, wicked fever.



168, girlie, pneumonia; wishes to die. “Minheer, ik wil tog liever bij Jezus wees, hier is dit al te zwaar” (Sir, I would much rather be with Jesus; here it is too hard).

Visited Mrs. Van der Walt, 184, who lost three children some weeks (in twenty-four hours); also old Mr. Venter; alone; wife and two daughters died few weeks ago; poor old fellow! what cup of suffering.

At the graves spoke to mother, “Dit is nou mij zesde, minheer” (This is now my sixth, sir).

Several in hospital dead too.

Very sorry about old Mr. Hockins (he had died); did not visit him during last few days.



Page 50

Hospital removed to-day; right out of camp; great undertaking. Will mean so much more time lost for me.

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 61: Size of this house (!), 10 feet by 7 feet; height, 7-1/2 feet.]

[Footnote 62: The Orange River is an hour's walk from Camp.]

[Footnote 63: This is no reflection upon the two nurses, Miss Rouvier and Miss Roos, who had the management of the hospital. The arrival of a new matron simply meant more help.]

[Footnote 64: These boards were sold at 7s. 6d. a piece to the people.]

[Footnote 65: This room was built at my own expense, but I was obliged to ask the Superintendent for six old sheets of galvanized iron for the roof. When the building was finished, I was told, to my dismay, that my tent would now have to be given up, as I had been given a roof.]

[Footnote 66: Exclamation of amusement—a literal translation from the Dutch.]

[Footnote 67: Literally again, Can you want more?]

[Footnote 68: Two very sympathetic doctors came about ten days later. One was Dr. Stuart, the other's name I do not remember.]

[Footnote 69: This emphatic surprise because of the great dislike that was usually shown to accept dying patients.]

CONCLUSION.

Here the Diary ends abruptly.

The last entry is Thursday, the 24th October.

I continued work until the Sunday following; but after the services of the day I felt a little more than simply tired. On Monday, however, the funerals had to be taken in the afternoon. That was the last duty done in camp. Then I knew enteric was upon me, and on Friday, the 1st November, they carried me into hospital.

After more than a month in hospital, during convalescence (but while mentally affected) I ran away to the Van As's. It was a case of mental delusion. The whole issue of the



war depended upon me—could I be kept in hospital, then the English would win; was I allowed to escape, the Boers would win.

After ten days in camp again (for I was wisely left alone), it slowly dawned upon me (while waiting for a permit to return home) that every one had been bought over to conspire against me. So I left the camp one evening after dark. Mr. Becker was the only man to be trusted, and to the Beckers forthwith I fled.

In another ten days my brother arrived to take me home.

During these days of blank, my chief pastime was to recite the Burial Service.

When once home, complete recovery came speedily.

NOTE TO CONCLUSION.

A.—Three subjects there were which, while writing the Diary, I decided to treat fully later —“The Daily Funerals,” “The Sanitation,” and “The Officials.” This could be done from memory, and could well stand aside while devoting my time to the daily experiences.



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There is, however, too much of the morbid in the Diary already without wilfully adding more, so “The Daily Funerals” is let alone.

The second will be too disgusting, so it must stand over too; and as for “The Officials,” two have since died (December, 1901—enteric), and so that chapter as well may not be written.

B.—One word more on the mortality of the Camp. Here is the official record of the deaths:—

1901—May, June, July	47
August	175
September	236
October	154
November	236
December	276
1902—January-March	183

Total	1,307

The Rev. Mr. Becker, however (who made a point of noting down the exact number of deaths each day) gives 206, 246, 157 as the totals for August, September, October respectively. The amended grand total would then come to 1,351.

TRANSCRIBER’S NOTES:

Variant spellings have been retained. In a few instances, punctuation and spelling errors have been corrected. These are listed below.

- 1) In Footnote 20, the original reads: “The flour given was good for the bread was usually excellent.” A comma has been added.
- 2) In Chapter II, page 16; the original reads “A census taken lately”.
- 3) In Chapter II, page 39; the original reads “same one I had long talks with before”.
- 4) In Chapter II, page 49: the original reads “so had hurriedly to go”.
- 5) In Chapter II, page 52: the original reads “What one longs for is possibility to have on day or afternoon off”.
- 6) In Footnote 51, the original reads: “... sing only Psalms. never Hymns.” A period has been replaced with a comma.



7) In Chapter *iii*, page 58: the original reads: “you won’t find child alive though;,”.

END OF TRANSCRIBER’S NOTES