

Henry Symonds (F24 on the Symonds Pedigree chart) was born in Dorset on 5th November 1863, the 5th son and 6th child of Daniel (E15 on chart) and Mary Ann Symonds of Ashton, Dorchester.

He was educated at Sherbourne School 1880-1882, and trained as a doctor (M.D.; M.R.C.S.) in London, then set sail for South Africa – whether with the intention of settling there or simply as a young man going to see the world, I don't know. However, having disembarked at Cape Town the story goes that he was approached by a rep of Cecil Rhodes to come up to Kimberley to act as an intern in the diamond

mines and this he did.

There in Kimberley, 100's of claimants struck up their claims and dug wildly for diamonds, forming the notorious Big Hole, of which apparently there are, I am given to understand, many photos in the Kimberley museum. As anyone who saw the TV series on Rhodes will know, conditions were appalling and whether or not it was Henry's original intention to settle in South Africa, in the event he was to spend the rest of his working life there, marrying Frederica Annie Tyrrell in St Cyprian's Church, Kimberley, in 1892, and bringing up a family of seven children, six of whom (five girls and one boy) survived to adulthood. He in fact became a friend of Cecil Rhodes, who consented to be the godfather of Henry & Freda's second son, appropriately christened Cecil in Rhode's honour.

Cecil was born during the Siege of Kimberley and sadly died shortly afterwards. I have in my possession a copy of the record Henry kept during that siege, when at first the Boer attack was laughed off as only likely to last a few days, but which in the event was to last many terrible months. I understand that there is a photo at the museum of the Relief of Kimberley in 1900, which shows Freda and some of her children among the group of survivors. Henry made himself so useful tending to the sick and wounded – especially the military – that after the relief, a grateful mayor gave him a silver medal (actually a star) as thanks.

Freda whom Henry married, incidentally was a nursing sister working in Kimberley Hospital. I have always pictured her as a fiery-spirited Irish woman, but I am told she was not Irish at all. She was born in Ilfracombe, North Devon, and despite the Tyrrell surname, the family's only definite connection with Ireland was the few years they spent there before emigrating to South Africa. It was perhaps in memory of these happy childhood years that Freda persuaded Henry to name their family home in Kimberley, Armagh House.

Freda was the third of ten children. Her father, Colonel Frederick Tyrrell, was the son of the Frederick Tyrrell, FRCS, who specialised in eye surgery and invented the "Tyrrell Hook" – the mind boggles at the purpose of that!

Freda's family had many other connection with eyes and surgery through the Dollonds – of Dollond & Aitcheson, opticians – and the Coopers: the famous Sir Jacob Astley is the source of the name Astley which appears among the male descendants of Henry's family, and also of the Coopers and Tyrrells.

Whether this had any influence upon Henry becoming an eye surgeon or whether it was simply that he was appalled at the level of eye injuries in the Kimberley mines, I don't know, but soon after he was married, Henry returned to England specifically to train as an ophthalmic surgeon.

I understand that this was just one of many trips to and from England, often with the entire family and I imagine they must have ploughed through the 1890's and the Atlantic on Union Castle ships many times.

The South Africans of that generation still considered themselves British – they were the colonial British of course and Henry loyal to the core, enrolled to serve in the South African Medical Corps during World War 1, along with his only surviving son, Astley, who returned to England to join the Tank Regiment based at Havering.

This left Freda and family to look after the farm that the Symonds had bought six miles outside Kimberley. Both Henry and his son survived the war, and once his children were off his hands, Henry decided that he and Freda should do a Grand Tour of Egypt and Europe.

Alas, sadly, Freda, who suffered from diabetes became quite ill and whilst on a Nile cruise, she passed away on the 10th of March 1927, and was buried in the British Military Cemetery in Asswan. The blow was severe, but he tried to rebuild his life. He returned to South Africa and settled in George and married for a second time, a teacher, Jessica Linnel. However, he never got over the shock of the loss of his first wife and died on 26th December 1943.
So, without further ado, I herewith publish for the first time, a transcript of Henry's intriguing letter to his brother Edward:-

KIMBERLEY CLUB,
KIMBERLEY,
October 26th, 1899.

My dear Edward,

As we are in a state of siege I know not when this epistle will be sent off, but we live in hopes of the siege being raised sooner or later; we have had nearly a fortnight of it; it began on October 15th. My first intimation of it was when I went to the Railway Station, about 9 o'clock a.m., to see about a train by which I proposed that day to go to Warrenton. I found a notice that no trains were to be run either way till further notice, and on enquiry I found that the line had been torn up on both sides of us and the telegraph wires cut. The whole affair has been more like a huge joke as far as most of us are concerned, as we feel perfectly serene in our defences. A well-organized town guard had been ready for some time before, and on the eventful Sunday we really did expect an attack and everybody stood to arms all day. I belong to an ambulance detachment and am located at a certain spot with 3 stretchers and 14 men, ready in case of emergency. Mine is a soft job compared with the fighting men, as they still have every night to repair to their redoubt and sleep or keep guard as the case may be, and a few are there all day. The town guard of civilians numbers about 3,00c, and besides these we have about 500 regulars (infantry and artillery) and about the same No. Volunteers, all under canvas, and as well a mounted corp of so called Rhodes' light horse, only recently got together—they are really mounted infantry, more like the Boers themselves, and should, with a little training, be a very serviceable body of men ; they number about 6oo. Captious people say that they were made light horse, as the horses available were not good enough to carry anything over 12 stone, which is the limit of weight allowed. The Lee-Metford rifle is served out all round and there seemed to be no lack of them when they were required; we have about 10 field guns, 7 pounders I think, and other smaller ones with several Maxims. The earth works erected all round the town are very complete. For weeks before hostilities began a few engineers had been here and planned the whole thing, and the works sprang into existence in about 24 hours about a week before war was declared. In most cases they made use of debris heaps and where these were not, a big bank was made faced on the inside with stout wooden planks. On the top of the bank bags of sand or soil are laid in a line about 9 inches apart, and then across the top of these other bags are put, so that this gives a small porthole to shoot through; the diagram will explain. They are still completing the defences, but we all think there is not the least chance of the Boers attacking us, though it might have been quite otherwise had we not been well prepared. There is a further inducement for them to attack us as Rhodes is here, but they wont get him. I should be sorry for him if they did. The only damage done by the Boers so far is raiding cattle and destroying our pumping station on the Vaal River. This last has made us obliged to be very careful with water, there is plenty available for house purposes but the gardens will suffer. However we are having nice rains and today especially a heavy fall. I have been busy preserving all I can. One thing we shall miss more than anything, when all is over, is our thorn trees; we have all too few around the town at any time, and these have been almost all cut down for the double purpose of removing cover for the enemy and also as a means of defence. As the trenches are heaped up, long lines are placed with the stems inwards, making a sort of hedge; in other places barbed wire fences are put up. The town guard of civilians is very keen; the "prentices" of old were nothing to them in the way they rush to quarters at an alarm. To begin with we had several false alarms. These consisted in the steam whistles at the various works all going simultaneously; many of the women folk were in a great state of excitement. Mine being the comparatively peaceful duty of looking after the wounded, I considered that I should be sufficiently discharging my duties if I went out when I heard guns, so since the first alarm I have slept comfortably in my bed. Of course the fear of famine has arisen in the minds of many and great was the rush to buy Stores. Frieda of course, rose to the occasion nobly, and forthwith stocked her store-room to such an extent that I feel sure our household could stand a siege for a year and live on the fat of the land all the time. You should have seen the heaps of bags and cases that came in. I tell Frieda her store-room is more like what the Dutch call a "good korp winkle" (pronounce "winkle" with a v. milord, not the name of the irredoubtable Mr. Winkle). This institution is what the English call a general store; they are to be found dotted about in small country centres. Of course the price of eggs has gone up, and our fowls are encouraged to do their utmost to produce eggs to be sold at 3/6 a dozen.

28th. Business generally is of course greatly at a standstill in the town; we doctors are about the only people doing regular work We have a fair number of refugees in the town, but nothing like they are down at the coast towns; a good large relief fund has been raised. It is a very difficult matter to see that it is not abused, as Kaflrs and coloured people have no conscience in that respect. We have been under martial law during the last fortnight and all who do not belong to the defence corps have to be in by 9 p.m. It is quite easy to do something that merits the punishment of being shot at a very short notice, but one is nothing in Kimberley just now if not military, and almost everybody is rigged out in khaki clothing. Having a few regulars here gives us a much better feeling of security than it would have been without them, The men of the Lancashire regiment here are very smart, and I think would give a good account of themselves. We had a little brush with the enemy a few days ago A few hundred of the light horse with some guns went out to reconnoitre on some low hills near the line to the north; they came across some Boers and blazed away for some time and were soon joined by some of the Lancashires sent out by train.

They dislodged the Boers but had 3 killed and 19 wounded (mostly slight) besides losing a good lot of horses; it is not known exactly what damage they did to the enemy, we know their leader was killed. The general opinion is that the affair was not very well managed on our side, and that if it had not been for the regulars a very different complexion might have been put on the business. Two officers of the regulars had severe wounds on the thigh (bones broken) and we doctors had a busy time at the hospital for about an hour. One great drawback of our position is the scarcity of news from the outside world, it has been rather better the last few days, and of course we were greatly delighted with the news of the victories at Glencoe and Elandslaagte. We anticipate a rapid end to the war as soon as the troops arrive, the victories already won will have a strongly deterrent effect upon any of the Colonial Dutch who might be thinking of joining the enemy. No doubt a large number along the border have already joined in but they won't make much difference. Yesterday through a powerful glass I could see some of the enemy across the border in the Free State, they have a large fort with big guns there; some of our men were out scouting in their direction with a view to draw the Boers out into range of men who were concealed, but the badger was not to be drawn.

31st. A very sad occurrence happened to my partner, Dr. Fuller, just before the war began. At the last moment he decided to send his wife and 3 children to Cape Town (his wife is Dutch and her brothers are fighting on the other side). About half way to Cape Town there was an accident to the train and her baby boy (the only son) was killed. Dr. Fuller left immediately he heard the news, and communications were broken just after, so that he had not been able to return; fortunately Dr. Watkins returned from England the day before Dr. Fuller left.

Nov. 1st. From to day butchers have been prevented selling meat except for a few hours, as they are afraid of the supply running short. Ordinary groceries, and meat and bread have been forbidden to be sold beyond the ordinary price for some time, as the shopkeepers at one time wanted to run prices up; so this was stopped. Martial law simplifies things a good deal or any way the methods of dealing with them. When at lunch just now we heard an explosion and felt the house and windows shake; I hear it was due to a magazine of dynaniite about 6 miles away being blown up by the Dutch. Before hostilities began the authorities thought they had too much dynamite in the town, so 2,000 cases were removed out to this place: it is lucky it did not blow up in the town Of course we are all debating how long this state of siege is going to last, we fully anticipate it will be for another fortnight and perhaps a month, as we think it possible we shall be left to look after ourselves, while the troops when they arrive will march on Bloemfontein probably from Orange River. We get very little news of the troops, but probably the military people know more only say nothing so that the enemy may not learn too much. Our hopes of spending December at Muizenherg are getting beautifully less every day; it is to be hoped that by the end of this month the war will be over. I daresay you have heard that our Bishop died a few weeks ago in Basutoland; it seems a strange fate for a man like that, who was essentially a scholar and who always seemed as if he should never have been away from a university, to have died in such a place, though he had every comfort at the last and was staying with a doctor. I heard from Dr. Brownlow just before war began, he said he had decided to remain on his farm with his family.

Nov. 5th (my birthday). The last few days have been more exciting. Two mornings ago, the whistles started blowing and great was the commotion; all not at their posts rushing off, shops were all closed at once, women looking everywhere to see what was up. I went about my work much as usual. It seems that the enemy made a raid on some of our cattle grazing just outside. They were driven off by our mounted men, one of whom was wounded; while they were occupied on one side some more of the enemy raided some cattle on the other side of the town; this was more serious, as they got about 200 head and these were the oxen used for sanitary purposes, removing night soil, &c., and this has put us to some inconvenience. Meat has been getting scarce for some days and only a limited quantity is sold. Frieda's poultry yard comes in useful, and my birthday is to be celebrated with a couple of ducks and tinned peas, so we are not starving.

Yesterday the whistles went again as the enemy appeared in force not far away; it appears that they are fixing up some guns so as to try and do some damage with shells, so we may expect a warm time in a day or two. They sent an ultimatum yesterday to say that if we did not surrender by to-morrow we were to look out; we have not much fear of what they can do.

Nov. 6th. We had expected a bombardment this morning but so far nothing has happened; the people from one end of the town, which would be within range of their guns, have been cleared out to a safer side, but judging from the news we have this morning of the shelling of Mafeking much harm will not be done if they do drop some shells into the town. A small telescope I got when at home is coming in useful. I go round to the forts, of which I am in medical charge, and have a good look all round; the enemy, wherever I have seen them, is a good many miles away. We had another alarm yesterday afternoon but

nothing came of it.

Nov 7th. A quiet day yesterday; there was no alarm till just after dark, and that was a very feeble affair. It seems that at the Premier mine, which is some little way outside Kimberley, and is strongly fortified, they were doing a little blasting, and the enemy thought they were firing big guns and opened fire themselves; there were only a few shots fired but this was enough to arouse everybody. Another instance happened on Sunday afternoon where an alarm was started by a very small affair. It seems that at the Premier mine they had two old decrepit mules which they wanted to get rid of as they were not worth their keep, so they turned them adrift outside; they wandered towards the Dutch, and when they got close enough they sent out some men on horseback to round them up thinking they had got something worth having. Dutch on neighboring hills saw these moving, thought something was up and began moving out, and they started others, so that there was a general move of the enemy for miles, so much so that those on the lookout, not knowing the cause, thought it advisable to sound the alarm. We have had a few shells sent into the outskirts of the town to-day and I hear a dog has been killed; if they can't do better than they have done to-day they won't hurt us much; they are very careful not to get at all near. They managed to return a few shots from the Premier Mine this morning that scattered some groups of men pretty quickly. The enemy's artillery firing seems to be very bad and few of their shells burst, but it is wonderful with what precision the Royal Artillery shoot when they get the chance. There is a rumour to-day that troops are on their way up to us from Orange River, but we know nothing for certain. There ought to be a lot of troops in the country by this time and they should be doing something soon.

Nov. 10th. The last three days have been quiet, a few occasional shots only; I believe something is going on to-day as I hear the armoured train has been out, but I don't think much can have happened. The general feeling is that we have had enough of this sort of thing, nearly four weeks now shut up. I can't say there is much hardship about our position, still it is a nuisance; it comes especially hard on the men who sleep every night at the forts, though most of them seem to enjoy it, and are wonderfully well on it. Some are worried by being kept away from business, as only 25 per cent, are allowed to be away from the forts even by day, at one time. Men of all classes take part from the man to whom the 5/- a-day pay is all he and his family have to live on, to a De Beers' Director like Mr. 0—, worth perhaps 10,000 a year. A certain Section is allotted to me for medical attendance (I have not heard that I get 5/- a-day for my trouble), and it seems I am expected to go to a certain post; on these occasions I sport a khaki suit with a red cross on the left arm.

Nov. 11th. A little more excitement this morning. About 5.30 I was awakened by our big guns, and occasionally a sound like a rocket bursting; these latter were the Boer shells that they were throwing in from much closer quarters than at any time before. I got up about 6.0 to go out and see what was going on. Just before I went out there was a big noise which seemed overhead, but which must have been due to a shell which burst in the road about 100 yards away and killed a Kaffir woman who was passing. Anyway a good sized piece of the shell was carried over our house and fell in the yard, nearly hitting my groom and all round, just after the report, pieces like the sound of stones falling on the iron roofs were heard. There was great delight in our household, and everybody rushed out to try and find some pieces; it never seems to strike anybody that another shell may come where one has been. The Kaffir boys about the town are all on the qui vive to try and get pieces of shell, and some people are giving high prices for them. I heard this morning that as much as a sovereign had been given for a large piece. After about an hour's firing our guns seem to have silenced that of the enemy. When I went out I could not manage to get a view of the enemy, they had already moved off.

Nov. 13th. The bombardment two days ago was quite the most exciting day we have had; about 100 shells must have been sent at the town; the Kaffir woman already mentioned was the only casualty, however. In several instances shells went right through peoples' houses, and one shell burst between the roof and ceiling of a house but hurt nobody; there seems to be long odds against a shell doing anybody any harm, and at Mafeking they seem to have had the same experience. Yesterday (Sunday) all was quiet. I heard a few guns early this morning. I dare say we shall get some more shelling, as the enemy could be seen yesterday very active on the hill where their guns are I got a very good view with a glass.

Nov. 14th. Since writing yesterday I have begun to have a little more respect for the Boer shells, for I got uncomfortably near one this morning. They began firing about 11 am., dropping shells into one quarter of the town where I happened to be. While I was in a house one burst within about 50 yards, and we could hear the pieces falling all round on the iron roofs. When I came out I was driving away and my groom was pointing out the place on the road, just in front, where the previous shell had burst, when just on our right, within a few yards, another went off, fortunately neither my horses nor ourselves were hit, but it was unpleasantly close. A more vicious looking specimen of concentrated force I have never seen than this bursting shell, it tore up a considerable hole in the hard macadamised pavement, and all

the pieces entirely disappeared from the spot. I saw a boy run up just after and fail to find anything there. At just about the same time, near the same spot, a cab horse was killed and the driver had his arm broken by a shell; this, and another injury of the neck, were the only casualties with us, and oddly enough both men were Dutchmen.

Nov. 15th. The enemy gave us a merry time yesterday between 1 and 2 o'clock; they dropped about 40 shells all about the same neighbourhood of the town near the centre Our casualities consisted of 2 cats killed in a store-room of the Queens Hotel, where a bursting shell stirred up the contents; a good deal of damage was done to property, but it is astonishing that no one was injured. One shell fell into our church, St. Cyprian's, but I have not heard how much damage was done. Frieda's sister was shopping in the town at the time and 3 shells fell near her before she could get home; it gave her a great fright. Kaffir boys have no fear of them, they congregate where the shells fall most so as to get pieces to sell. Early this morning the enemy commenced again and sent about another 40 shells in. Several houses have been damaged I hear, but no casualties except one boy's arm injured. One patient I have been seeing daily for some time has, I hea,r moved, as the shells got very hot around her. In spite of the shells yesterday there was a most successful concert given at one of the forts, where all the elite turned up. We have an excellent band here now as our own volunteer band has combined with that of the regulars. We know nothing definite about being relieved; it was confidently reported yesterday that the relief force was within 40 miles, but I am sceptical. We have had no news of the outside world for some days. Our fear is that the Colonial Dutch may rise and that we may have a civil war. There should be a lot of troops in the country by this time, and it is to be hoped they will bring the war to a close soon. We have had no rain for a long time and the days are hot; my garden is in a deplorable state; if we don't get rain soon I am afraid all the fruit on the trees will drop off.

Nov.16th. No more shells yesterday after the morning, but a good thunderstorm instead all the afternoon, which was most acceptable. I was busy collecting all the water I could off the house for future use in the garden. Early this morning a few hundred of our mounted men went out with a view of trying to silence the gun that has been bombarding us. I am afraid they were not successful, they got 1 man killed and 8 wounded; they think the enemy got wind of their coming for they found them waiting for them safely placed behind rocks.

Nov.18th. Later accounts of the engagement on the 16th give the Boers' loss as 19 killed, but I don't think any reliable information can be obtained. It is a week now since we had any information of any sort from the outside world. We might be at the North Pole for all we know of what has happened lately. The last 2 days have been comparatively quiet; we have only had a few shells in the town. Beaconsfleld has had rather more of the enemy's attention. Yesterday our mounted men went out again beyond Beaconsfield, more to find out how the enemy are placed; we had one man slightly wounded. The Boers keep well behind protection and seem to have no idea of coming to close quarters with us. We surmise that troops are on the way up here from Orange River, and all kinds of reports get about as to their proximity, but nothing can be known for certain. The military authorities have taken over all food stuffs and horse keep, and so are able to regulate the consumption Our meat is very bad and quite devoid of fat; no mutton, only beef. Fortunately for the time of year the weather has been cool and the health of the town is good. An amusing incident is told of some men in the fight two days ago; a shell fell right among half dozen mounted men amid immediately all suddenly dismounted and it was thought they had all been hit; the real object of the hasty dismounting was their anxiety to obtain the shell.

Nov. 22nd. The last few days have been quiet, no shells have come into the town; the enemy has harassed the guard looking after the cattle beyond Kenilworth, but the firing has been at long ranges and there have been no casualties on our side. Our wounded are doing well in hospital. There is no doubt that the small bullet now used in warfare (the enemy use mostly the Mauser rifle) inflict a much less serious wound than the larger bullets used to do. We have men shot right through the lung, and one man right through the liver, and they have not been so very bad; the internal wounds are very small. Our men mostly use the Lee Metford, which fires a similar bullet I don't think any dum-dum bullets have been used on either side. Our greatest hardship now is getting no news of the outside world; goodness knows what may have happened in S. Africa during the last fortnight; but we know absolutely nothing I cannot help suspecting sometimes that the military authorities have had news, but that it is not good enough to publish for fear of creating a panic. Our great fear is lest the Dutch in the Colony are in arms. As to the relief force we hear all sorts of rumours, but really nothing for certain. The weather has been very hot and sultry the last few days; it looks like rain now.

Nov. 25th. Up to this morning we had been very quiet; no fighting except some skirmishing near the cattle, in which we had one man badly wounded. This morning, however, about 4.30, we began hearing our guns firing rapidly and it was kept up longer than usual, and once we heard rifle firing. It was not till

after breakfast that I heard what had happened. It seems that the enemy had been gradually getting nearer at one spot and it was thought advisable to attack them. So about 2 a.m. this morning a good large force of our men started to go out, the mounted men and some 2 companies of the Lancashire infantry. They seems to have had some severe fighting; they attacked a farm which was the enemy's head quarters in that direction, and here the Dutchmen played a trick they have practised several times before; they hoisted a white flag and then when our men were coming up they fire on them. It is said that this morning when this occurred our men rushed the place with bayonets and gave them a lesson; thirty prisoners were taken, and it is pretty certain that the enemy's loss was heavy; we had four killed and 25 wounded, besides bringing in some badly wounded of the enemy. It is reported that there are two other men of ours missing. One of the officers of our mounted men, a young solicitor named Bowen was badly wounded in the lower jaw. We were kept busy at the hospital for some time. I don't think many of our wounded are dangerously so; they were nearly all among the mounted men. Two days ago it was officially announced that a relief force was coming up from Orange River, but we don't know at all where it is or when to expect it. It is rumoured that they have had some severe fighting, and there is likely to be more just outside Kimberley where the railway runs over some hills between this and Modder River. Up to now we have had absolutely no general news of the outside world and this is most annoying.

Nov. 28th. Yesterday we had our first news of the outside, a dispatch rider getting in with newspapers; on the whole there has not so much happened as I expected; the time has been mainly taken up with moving troops into position. If the Boers stand, the next few weeks should see some fighting; we are looking forward almost hourly now to the arrival of our relief force under Lord Methuen. It is reported that their guns were heard early this morning, so they may come in to-day, though to-morrow was when we expected them. We shall be very glad to have our communications open again. I suppose the troops will go on to Mafeking; it would be a great pity if this place were to fall, after its splendid defence. The engagement on the 25th was quite the largest we have had, there were close on 1000 men out, eight of ours died, 7 at the time and one since; the other wounded are doing well though many of the wounds are severe. Up till now it has not been necessary to amputate a single limb, though most of the severe wounds are in the limbs. Of course many of our casualties are very sad, and the Light Horse of local volunteers have suffered most; one of the killed was a boy of 17 only, another was a man I know who leaves a wife and children. We fully anticipate there may be severe fighting just outside the town before the relief force gets in. We are all well, but Frieda is having serious mortality among her chickens. Measles are rife in the town, I hope our children will escape. We have given up all idea of going to Cape Town in December. Last night they were using one of the searchlights for signalling by code to the relief force at Modder River, 30 miles away; the light was kept moving backwards and forwards, throwing the light on the clouds in the direction of Modder River.

Nov. 29th. Our men had a bad time yesterday, they went out early in the afternoon and attacked the Boers round the same neighbourhood as on the 25th. They took the Boer camp without any difficulty, but the Boers got into a strong redoubt with open ground all round. I watched the fighting for an hour or more, and the firing from the redoubt was fearful; our men never got in, what our casualties are we don't know for certain; we know of five killed and about 25 wounded, who got into hospital late last night. I was there with others till nearly 2 am. seeing to them as they arrived. Colonel Scott Turner, the commander of our light horse was killed; he is an unattached man who has been here some time; he was a captain in the Gordon Highlanders; he is a distant connection of Frieda's. We feel that this loss was very unnecessary, and that our men should never have gone out; the losses were almost entirely among the mounted local men. They have sent out this morning to ask for our dead and wounded left behind in the night. No sign yet of the near approach of the relief column.

Later. Our loss yesterday was even greater than I anticipated, 18 more dead brought in this morning, making 22 in all; wounded total 28, making 50 killed and wounded. The Boers seem to have cleared quickly out of three or four redoubts, leading our men into a regular trap when they got to the last strong redoubt. Feeling here is getting rather bitter against the authorities who send these men out; we can't see what possible good can come of it, even if the Boer position be taken, and at the best this can only be done with great loss to ourselves. What makes it worse, is that the men who suffer are volunteers or Cape police, whose duty it is to act mainly as defenders. Possibly there was more reason for the fight than we know of, but many have their doubts. A regular gloom is over the town today, all flags are half-mast; the death of Scott Turner is specially regretted. He was shot in the head while in the act of cheering on his men, and this caused great confusion as nobody else seemed to know what was to be done.

Nov. 30th. Yesterday was indeed a very doleful day; an immense crowd at the funeral in the afternoon; there can be little doubt that a good number of the killed brought in during the morning were originally only wounded and were shot in the night on the ground. The Boer is an individual who would have no

compunction in this way; it is said that as the search-light from the town was turned in that direction, they shot at all they could see; it would be a very strange coincidence if no wounded fell into their hands, and the proportion of killed to wounded was too great to be natural. We know nothing yet about the relief force; the persons who heard their firing near 2 days ago must have drawn on their imagination; it is certain they will have a stiff job to get through the hills where the Boers are in strong force, and they can retire from one hill to another when necessary; this is the sort of fighting in which they excel; they are not well organised enough to attack to advantage, but they shoot with great precision when under protection; there will probably be a big death roll before the war is over.

I)ec. 2nd. More definite news of the relief force shows that they are still a long way off (30 to 43 miles) they can only travel as fast as they can rebuild the line, and that they say, means about 5 miles a day, so we are not likely to see anything of them for another week. All has been quiet the last few days, a few shots exchanged over the cattle sometimes. It is terribly hot now, and this is when we should have been arriving at the sea. Acute diarrhoea is very prevalent among all sections of the community, more disagreeable than dangerous except for small children.

Dec. 5th. Almost our only thought now, as far as the enemy is concerned, is how the relief force is faring, and when they are likely to arrive. News has got through of their successes near the Modder River, and by this time they should be nearing the most difficult part of their work, where we hear the Boers are in great numbers, and are very strongly placed. We have not been troubled to any extent for some time; the thing we are most running short of is horse keep, and to-day everybody has to report to head quarters what quantity he has.

Dec. 7th. Things are looking serious, and we may have to surrender after all. Beer is running short, and tobacco and mineral waters are also difficult to obtain. To rob a poor man of his beer has always been known to politicians as a very dangerous procedure. I hear we have enough food to last another two months if necessary. We are still in blissful ignorance as to what the relief force is doing; they have been within 20 miles or so for about a week, but never a sign of them have we seen. One of the many reports (believed by some), circulated yesterday was that, as they could not come over the hill on account of the enemy, they were making a tunnel under it; other facetious individuals are prepared to bet evens upon the race between their coming and that of Christmas. It has been extremely hot during the last week; we are longing for rain. We have begun on our apricots, but they are very small on account of lack of water. We are all getting very tired of the siege, except perhaps the children; ours talk learnedly about cannons and Maxim guns, and are never tired of running to see them when the soldiers pass in the street. Life will be quite tame for them when the war is over. The possibility of some of us getting killed seems to be quite clear to them. Their great delight is to go with me to the hospital and see the wounded soldiers.

10th. We begin our 9th week of s1ege today (Sunday). We are again having a long spell without news; the relief column still seems to sit tight at Modder River. We, who are not in the know, can only imagine they are waiting for some other columns to get into position before they advance, while they stay where they are they keep a good number of the enemy in the hills, and so incapable of fighting elsewhere. The military authorities must know all that is going on, for every night they keep up their flash-light signalling for hours, but they tell the public nothing—we think it rather too bad; We don't want to know military secrets, but we should like to know what is going on elsewhere. One of the numerous rumours that has got about lately is that when the troops do get in, they are simply going to keep the railway open long enough to revictual the place and allow anybody who wishes to clear out, and then retire again to do some work elsewhere. Whatever happens it is evident that we shall have to see it through here, as we can't go away now. There is a great scramble for meat every morning; there is only a limited quantity, and the butchers' shops are full of a surging crowd every morning. We are better off than most people as poultry come in nicely; boiled rabbit yesterday, and ducks today with peas of course. Our cow still gives us a little milk; condensed milk is very scarce, and can only be obtained by producing a doctor's certificate that a sick child is in need of it. Frieda laid in a case of it when the siege began, so as in most things we lack nothing. Butter is almost unknown, we still have some of the tinned variety. The sale of flour is strictly regulated, and all kinds of cakes and pastry are not allowed to be made for sale; we still have several bags left and consume apricot tart almost daily. The price of all necessaries of life is fixed; martial law simplifies dealing with these matters immensely. I trust you will all sympathise deeply with our sufferings as regards food. Yesterday our artillery had a duel with some of the enemy's guns; they amused themselves by firing shrapnel shells at one another for some hours after daylight and again in the evening for an hour or two; we had one man killed (a sad case, he leaves a wife and seven children) and several slightly wounded. The enemy has a very formidable weapon in a gun that fires with cordite; its range is long and it shows no smoke when fired, nor can the report be heard. The first indication our men get is the bursting of the shell near them, when it is too late to get under cover; the

enemy keep moving the gun to different places so that it is practically impossible for our men to hit it, as they never know quite where it is. A cool rain to-day; a pleasant change; some firing being heard in the direction of the relief column.

Dec.12th. Yesterday morning on awaking about 4.30 a tremendous cannonade could be heard in the direction of the relief column I went up about 6 am. to the rising ground above the town, but there was little to be seen; an occasional puff of smoke, probably from a Boer gun; the only other object of interest was a balloon, which must have been floating over the English force. The cannonade was incessant and some say they could hear Maxim firing. It was kept up till about 8 a.m. and then ceased for good. We have heard no firing since and are in absolute ignorance as to what has occurred; we live in hopes of seeing the troops soon; something ought to have happened, after such consumption of ammunition. The great topic of conversation now is about what the inhabitants here are to do when the troops come; as far as I can gather it is a question whether non-combatants are to be compulsorily told to leave or only encouraged to do so. Frieda and family can only go if I go, and if I go I shall take ship Instanter for England, the coast towns will be too crowded to stay in.

Dec. 14th. The monotonous siege still goes on. We got a little old news yesterday from a Johannesberg paper which a man brought in who escaped from the Boers. No news whatever of the relief column; we have come to the conclusion that they are besieging the Boers in the hills, so goodness knows when we shall see them. Everybody has been greatly disturbed the last few days by the report that the military authorities will require all non-combatants to leave Kimberley when the troops do arrive; the idea seems preposterous and nearly everybody strongly objects. Meanwhile we sit tight and are prepared to wait till the troops come. The odds on Christmas coming first get greater every day. I hear that late news of the outside world got through last night.

Dec. 16th. Nothing new except that we got more news now from the outside; we hear of everything except of the relief column and of this we know absolutely nothing for certain It is reported that they are advancing round the Boer position, with a view of shutting the Boers up in the hills and cutting off their supplies, as the place is too strong to attack by assault. The weather has been intensely hot, though now we are having a shower. Today ends the 9th week of siege. We never get shelled by the enemy now. I don't think I have mentioned that the other day, when shells were coming in rather thickly, many people had holes dug in their gardens, and these covered with bags of sand and having only a small passage of entrance; into these dungeons the owners and family are expected to crawl when pieces of shell are flying about; personally I feel quite safe inside a good brick wall of a house, specially if there is a room between me and the direction the shells are coming. I think few people take the shells into consideration when they are coming in, except the small boys who seek out the most likely spots so as to obtain pieces. Colonel Kekewich was saying the other day that he wished the people would take the shelling seriously; he feared a disaster for one day, when a shell struck the face of one of the forts, almost every man cleared over the side to pick up the pieces. Had a succeeding one fallen on the same place the casualties would have been serious. Many of us thought at the time that the shells came into the town by accident, and that they were really fired at a fort and came over. But, from a Free State paper we saw, in which the bombardment was described from a Boer point of view, the commandant reports that he had the shells sent as near the centre of the town as possible, as he thought they would there do more damage. I don't think I have mentioned either that when anything is on, the headquarters of Colonel Kekewich are on what is called the "Conning Tower." This is a platform erected from the top of the headgear of the shaft of the De Beers mine and gives a good elevation from which he can see round the whole country. Every fort is connected by telephone, through a central exchange.

Dec. 18th. In this morning's paper we had an official though meagre account of the fight the other day, when we heard the artillery. As we suspected they found the place practically impregnable, and as it was seem to have lost a lot of men. We can only imagine they now propose to try and keep the Boers shut up where they are. Meanwhile we stew here in the heat and have considerable difficulty in getting fresh provisions. People still discuss the going away question, and most of us find it difficult to decide which is the worse of the two evils, staying here in heat and indifferent food, or facing the long journey to the coast in crowded carriages and then not knowing where to go.

Dec 22nd. We are now really beginning to feel the pinch of the siege, and as far as we can see are likely to have to stick it out for a good long time to come. Horse keep is very short, specially chaff to go with the mealies; my horses lately have been eating packing straw and the straw casing of wine bottles. As for ourselves meat is scarce and very bad, though we personally are doing well as we are living on the fowl yard; no more corn is to be got to feed fowls, so it is no use trying to keep many; so really we continue to fare sumptuously. The large stock of things Frieda laid in at the first come in very well and has saved us an immense amount of trouble in getting provisions, as practically nothing can be got except in

driblets with an order from the head of the commissariat department.

Dec. 24th. Anything but a Merry Christmas Eve for us, in fact there is very considerable depression all round. We are really now feeling the effects of short commons, and the news that we have received of the doings of the various columns in the country is anything but inspiriting. I fear that the strength of the enemy has again been under-estimated, and this war will not be brought to a successful termination till large reinforcements are sent out. Meanwhile, what is going to happen to us, goodness only knows, we fully anticipate having to hang on as we are doing for several weeks. I think about six weeks is the limit that food will last and if by then Lord Methuen cannot relieve us, it will be a bad look out. Frieda not being well, it makes the outlook particularly anxious for me. The heat has been most intense with no rain during the last week, and only having a limited supply of water, the gardens are looking terrible. I fear several of my fruit trees are already dead The temperature is over 90 degrees now in my room (at my office) at 10 o'clock in the morning. I am glad to say the children are all keeping well. I have never been so busy before attending other people.

Dec. 27th. We have spent Christmas in as happy a manner as possible under the circumstances personally I had nothing to complain of as to diet, but I am afraid many others were not so fortunate. The great question now seems to be the regulation of food supply; our store will hold out for a long time yet, so we shall not be bound to the certain number of ounces per head of flour, &c., that others who buy have to conform to. We continue to get a little news in, but we feel there is little prospect of relief for the present, and many already question whether we shall ever be relieved. The enemy are still further strengthening their defences, and whether they can ever be turned out of their positions by assault appears doubtful. We are turning out all the natives we can, by sending them away in detatchments by night. We have 20 to 30 thousand of them here, and if we could get rid of them our food supply would last very considerably longer. Our condition has got beyond the joke stage now.

Dec. 30th. Our greatest interest now is the food supply, and this is the main topic of conversation. Nobody now can buy vegetables at any of the outside gardens, but twice a week they are brought in and sold at a certain price. Some alteration will have to be made in the present system, for there is only one place where they are sold and this morning early there was a surging crowd outside it long before any were sold. It is absurd to expect so many people to buy at one place, especially when the supply is limited; everybody wants to be first. The same trouble has arisen in connection with the meat supply, and many go without it rather than contend with the crowd We get a much more regular supply of news now, you seem to have woke up a bit at home after the many reverses. News of the battles reaches us always long after they have taken place, and we never get the whole truth at once. All the columns seem to have been most unfortunate, specially General Buller's in losing its guns. We hear the guns sometimes of Lord Methuen's force, it seems evident he can do nothing without reinforcements. It is to be hoped he gets them soon enough to get in before our food gives out. We are still without rain, though it has been cooler for the last few days. I should have some nice fruit if we only could get some rain. As it is it seems likely to be all spoilt by the drought.

Jan. 5th. 1900. Our days are now quite monotonous; we get a few shots from the Boers sometimes on the outskirts of the town. It takes most people all their time nearly to get their provisions, which are doled out daily by weight through a special order. Our stores, however, hold out well, and the fowl yard provides the meat, so we have to apply for nothing from the authorities; vegetables we have almost to do without, but I have a little fruit which comes in most acceptably, specially an apple tree which is bearing this year for the first time. Eggs are fetching 7/- a dozen, but at that they are almost unattainable. Frieda has hardly any to spare to sell. Scurvy is very rife among the natives, especially in the mine compounds; numbers die every day and shortly I expect the deaths to be much more numerous. They continue to send them away at night, and a fair number manage to get off. I lost my cow yesterday while being brought home from grazing (on nothing); if she be not found we shall feel her loss a great deal at the house, though we get barely a quart of milk daily from her. The siege seems to suit the children for they are in the best of health.

Jan. 8th. We are really now doing the thing well, for the sale of horse flesh began to-day; I am most anxious to try it, and as Frieda reports that she cannot see her way to keep up the supply of poultry for the table, I am going to apply for a permit to buy some meat. I have been granted a special permit to buy vegetables twice a week, so we ought to get fat. We are very badly in want of rain, we have had none of any consequence for about two months, so that absolutely nothing grows; no water is allowed to be used on the gardens except, of course, what has already been used in the house. I have some tomatoes coming on. We get a fair amount of news; everything seems to be at a stand-still as far as the war is concerned. You people at home are waking up, indeed, to the situation; it is most gratifying to hear how all are anxious to assist. I am afraid the Boers, however, will not be turned out of their strong

positions without very great loss of life. Our artillery continue to exchange shots at times with the enemy, but we hear of no damage being done on either side. In the De Beers' workshops they are making a 40-pounder gun; shells they have been making for sometime. On some were stamped "With C.J.R.'s (Rhodes') compliments." I hear today that the Boers are allowing the natives sent out to pass through; probably they use them to dig their rifle pits, &c

Jan. 11th. Horse meat is not at all bad eating, we tried it yesterday for the first time stewed; on the whole it is preferable to the beef; many can't stomach it, but they will come to it yet. We have got rid of all the healthy natives from the compounds, and have left three or four hundred ill, mainly from scurvy; seeing these poor fellows dying at the rate of about 20 a day is about the most pitiful sight of our besieged town; very little can be done for them, for fresh food is so scarce that little or none can be spared for them. We hope soon to hear of some forward movement of the troops. Lord Roberts should have arrived by this time and large reinforcements should be at hand. From the reports that reach us you have certainly not been lazy at home recently. We feel very anxious for the safety of Mafeking; they have made a wonderful defence, and it will be too bad if they are not relieved. News has reached us today of a big attack on Ladysmith, successfully repulsed after severe fighting. No doubt, under modern conditions of warfare, defence is an easier business than attack, though everywhere the Boers have shown themselves very canny about attacking; their forte is shooting from behind cover. We hear they are again placing guns in position to shell Kimberley, it will be something new after the prolonged quiet. On the whole the town is healthy, not so much sickness among children as there was, no doubt most of the worst cases have died. Typhoid fever is rather prevalent, but it is so most years about this time. The sameness of food is very trying to many, but there is no actual want. We had some heavy rain two days ago which was most acceptable, and since it has been beautifully cool. Frieda has ladies to play croquet about twice a week; golf has been "off" for along time, one is liable to get a little dangerously near the enemy.

Jan. 14th. Today we begin the 14th week of siege; things still remain quiet. The getting of food is the main matter of interest to most people. Nothing except the actual necessaries of life can now be bought except with a certificate from a doctor, the result is that all day one is bothered by people coming for certificates, in many cases complaining of imaginary diseases so as to obtain a certificate to get butter, milk, biscuits, bacon, meat-extract, &c., &c., and a good deal of discretion has to be exercised in granting these. The greatest difficulty has been with the milk; this, of course, is such an essential for small children that nearly all the condensed milk has been used up. They have lately started a central depot, where everybody who can spare a little fresh milk sends it, and milk is distributed from there by a doctor's order at 6d. a bottle. All healthy adults are requested not to drink milk, but to send all they possibly can to the depot; so far this has worked well, but I doubt if the supply will equal the demand. The De Beer's Company are the main suppliers of the milk. Their gardens at Kenilworth have also supplied large quantities of peaches lately, though none have come our way; we have a little fruit of our own however. The meat supply is well regulated, and everybody has to line up according to the ward in which they live, and get their scraps of mainly horsemeat; vegetables are distributed in the same way.

Jan. 16th. A little more excitement today as this morning a few shells were dropped into the town. As they were rather unpleasantly near where I was on my rounds I thought it advisable to do what work I had in another direction; they seem to have left off now. Astley nearly killed himself, and his mother as well from fright, this morning, by getting a marble down his throat which must have stuck over his windpipe, for from all accounts he nearly suffocated before vigorous thumps on the back helped him to expel it. He is a fearful young monkey. The children take it in turns to go round with me each morning in the carriage. I am glad to say they are all in the best of health. Typhoid fever and dysentery are very prevalent in the town, and a good many deaths occur. The scurvy among the natives has not been quite so fatal lately.

Jan. 20th. Our great event lately has been the completion of the big gun manufactured in the De Beers' workshops; it is a 4-inch gun and fires a shot 281bs in weight. It has proved a great success and fires with the greatest precision, with a range infinitely greater than any gun we had here before. It has been christened "Long Cecil," after Mr. Rhodes, at whose order it was made. I expect the military authorities will order several to be made at once, now they have seen what can be done. It is reported that relations are strained between the military authorities, as represented by Coloned Kekewich and Mr. Rhodes. The Colonel has not inspired the community with much confidence, and probably Mr. Rhodes resents not being consulted in any way or let into any of the secrets of the military people. We all feel that we might have been allowed to know more of what is going on in the outside world; when the Colonel was in constant communication by signal with the relief column we were kept for days or even weeks without any news. Every few days now we get a little in, and to-day we have been cheered with news of some advance having been made in Natal by General Buller's column. We only hope that this is

the beginning of a general turning back of the Boers; the last six weeks, while nothing has been done, have been particularly tedious to us shut up here, with very few of the luxuries of life obtainable. Most people turn up their noses at the horseflesh, and are worrying us doctors all day long for certificates allowing them to buy some extras. The following is a list of things we are allowed to order "to patients for whom it is absolutely necessary " :— Butter, bacon, barley, treacle, lard, baby's foods, corn-floor, oatmeal, meat extracts, cheese, chickens, rice, preserved meat and fish, and lime juice. To these should be added biscuits, flour (where bread is allowed), and milk. The new arrangements for dispensing milk are working very well; about 500 half-bottles are sold daily. Children suffer most from present conditions, they get so tired of eating dry bread and drinking black tea or coffee. I am glad to say that we at home are comparatively well off, as a good many of our stores are still holding out We eat the "gee-gee" in various forms, and sometimes buy the soup which is served out in large quantities to people who don't take their ration of meat. Frieda thickens it with some pea flour she has, and it goes down very well. We get a few shells into the town most days now, but not a very systematic bombardment. In talking of Mr. Rhodes, I should mention he has all through the siege spent a great deal of his time and a lot of his money in giving relief where wanted; he keeps the hospital stocked with fruit, &c., and is most liberal in every way. He gave £1,000 to one local relief fund, which I hear is now £300 in debt. He no doubt feels being shut up here very much; I believe he had originally meant to get through to Rhodesia, but communications were cut too soon. As to how long this is going to last we don't know; some say that the forces that are now leaving England are for here, and that we must look forward to another six weeks of siege.

Jan. 22nd. Flags flying today to commemorate the 100th day of siege. Helen has gone to school for the first time, much to her delight, and Astley is even more glad, as now he says he can drive with me every day.

Jan. 27th. On Wednesday 24th we had a record day for shelling, the Boers began at 4 a.m. and kept it up practically throughout the day all round us from nine guns in various positions. As a rule, when shelling has been going on, I have been able to leave my work in that part and go to another, but that day wherever I went, though in places a mile or two from one another, there were always shells dropping somewhere near. One coloured girl was killed early in the morning, and this was the only casualty in spite of about 500 shells having fallen into the town; of course all kinds of hair-breadth escapes occurred. I heard of one shell which actually passed between the knees of one person lying in bed; of another that went under the cot where two children were sleeping Numbers passed over our house and we became quite familiar with their sound, and this went on right into the night; we could not sit in the garden in the evening because of shells going over. We moved the children's cots into the hall which runs through the centre of the house, as their room was on the side on which the shells were coming from, and our spring mattress and bedding we moved into the dining-room for the same reason; this we have done ever since, and when active shelling is going on the children keep in these parts of the house; fortunately the house has thick walls, so that I think they are practically safe with two walls between them and a possible shell bursting. On the 25th, after going on to some extent all night, the shells came in thicker than ever during the early morning and several fell near our house, both common and shrapnel shell A horrible tragedy occurred in one house where a woman and three children were injured; one child has since died, the woman has had a leg amputated, and another child is very severely injured in both arm and leg Since then we have been almost exempt, but we are told that on Monday, the 29th, we are to expect worse treatment, as 15 guns are being got ready for our benefit. Feeling is very strong against the Boers for such cowardly behaviour; they know as well as we do that nearly all the men in the town are at the forts and that the inhabitants of the houses are mainly women and children, yet they have not fired on the forts at all but confined their attention to the town. Very many people are having shelters made, consisting of holes dug in the ground and covered with sacks of earth; I am trusting to my thick walls for protection. I have been more busy than before during the past week, on the go the whole day, from 6 o'clock in the morning to 8 at night, with very little intermission. I am obliged to use my bicycle a great deal as my underfed horses can't do any extra work. The streets are very empty of vehicles now as horse keep is only allowed to certain people (doctors of course) by the military people. One of my horses is getting more like a camel every day, he will certainly never be any good to eat. We want rain badly, we have only had two storms this month and none before; at this time of the year we expect an abundance of rain.

Jan. 31st. The last day of January and no alteration in our position; everybody wants to know "how long?" but I suppose that is a question no one can answer. The question that comes closest to most people here is their food rations still further cut down, this week to 10½ ounces of bread per diem; we doctors are fearfully pestered all day by people asking for permits to buy butter, bacon, cheese, &c., something outside the bare rations they are allowed. We can't please everybody, and we are strictly instructed not to recommend anybody for extras who is not bona fide ill. Of course everybody says he or

she is ill and all the children; not so ill that they require medicine, but only food. The following is the daily allowance allowed to Europeans :—Boer meal, 6 ozs., flour, 2 ozs., or bread, 10½ ozs.; mealie meal, 2 ozs.; crushed mealies, 1oz. ; sugar, 2 ozs.; coffee, ½ oz. ; tea, ½ oz.; meat (practically nothing but horse) ¼ lb., a lot of which is bone or skin. After a few weeks of this the desire for some variety will make a saint lie to any extent with a hope of getting some other sort of article for a change, and we have to make the decision whether such can be granted or no. You may be sure we can't please everybody, and the lower grades of society are the most persistent, the better class people as a rule being content to stick it out as best they can. Our supplies at home still hold out, so we suffer comparatively little, though Frieda declares she is dying for the want of a beef steak and a glass of stout. Ethel is getting thinner than ever on it. Driblets of news reach us, more encouraging than usual lately from Natal, though to-day we hear that Warren's force has re-crossed the Tugela. Today, too, Mafeking is reported to have been relieved. As a specimen of how news reaches us, the other day a dense cloud of smoke was seen over the Boer position at Magersfontein, and it was surmised that a magazine had been blown up; it was not till a week or more later that in news from London it was reported that such a thing had happened. We have not been treated to any more shells from the Boers, wonderful to say, or only a few stray ones; almost every morning we can hear in the distance the guns of the relief column.

Feb. 5th. Nothing very eventful lately, occasional shelling, but not enough to take any notice of We get a lot of work giving certificates for "medical comforts;" unfortunately, this work is gratuitous, so if the patients get fat on it we doctors shall not. We have all taken kindly to horseflesh; it is really very good eating; it requires to be soaked in vinegar before frying as a steak, with some onions. Judging from the vigorous prancing condition of Astley, I think he must be taking on some of the characteristics of the animal he eats. Marian is of opinion that "it does not seem like siege time to her." Helen looks white but is all right I think. We are longing for rain I have never known such a season; none at all yet, and it is rumoured that water will be very short soon, because the coal is running out and they will have to stop pumping. The streets have been very empty of vehicles for some time as very few are allowed horse keep. I nearly lost one of my horses 2 days ago; he got blown up from eating mealies without sufficient chaff. Typhoid fever is very prevalent, especially in the camps, and many deaths have occurred from it.

Feb. 8th. Great consternation here yesterday when we began to experience the effect of some 100 lb. shells, sent from a comparatively close range. They explode with terrific force and do great damage to any house, &c, near. I have only heard of one child having been injured and that not severely; a horse was killed by a piece while being shod. These shells make a great noise when going overhead; I heard several while I was out in the morning. Some of the pieces picked up were very heavy and of great thickness. These shells are one of the things of which it can be said, that a "little goes a long way",

Feb. 9th These big shells are having a most demoralising effect; about 20 were sent in yesterday and to-day since early morning they have been going on practically all day. Yesterday one man was killed and considerable damage to property done; one store in the main street was set on fire and quite destroyed, and at one time our store of flour and meal was in great danger from the fire. The small shells we had had before were child's play to this; they make a most horrible swishing sound as they travel which can be heard a long way off. We first hear the loud report, and then, 2 or 3 seconds later, the sound of the shell coming, and then in about another second or two, the report of the bursting. (One has just fallen now about 50 yards away from my office). If they go through a wall they make a hole about the size of half an ordinary door; the impact bursts the shell and then numbers of pieces of all sizes get carried in all directions. Yesterday afternoon while I was here one burst opposite the club and did some slight damage to it. This morning a child of a year old has been killed and its mother very severely injured. You may imagine what a nervous condition the community is in, and some women are almost off their heads. The shops are all closed to-day and many people are spending the day in shell proof shelters made on their premises. I have given orders for one to be made at my house today into which we can send the children. A hole will be dug in the ground about 8-ft. by 5-ft. and about 3-ft. deep, around the sides are arranged bags filled with sand; then short deals are laid across and thick sheets of iron laid on them, and then more bags of sand put on the top of that; of course a hole is left at one end for getting in at.

Feb. 10th. We had a terrible day yesterday; the big shells continued coming in till nearly dark. About 5.30 p.m. I was passing the Grand Hotel when a shell struck the top of it, the pieces coming right through the building and killing the chief engineer of the De Beers Co — Mr. Labram. I heard the shell coming towards me and I felt sure it was going to be close. From the line it was taking it would about have come on me had not the Grand Hotel come between. All are grieved at Mr. Labrams death; it was he who directed the making of our big gun. Frieda had got so upset with the shells, and nervous for the children especially, that early this morning I took them down to a friend's house at the far end of Du Toit's Pan, 3 miles away, and later we got some furniture on a wagon and I have taken Frieda there, and I

propose going down each evening. We were treated to about a dozen shells this morning up to breakfast time and then they suddenly ceased, and it is reported that the gun is damaged so that they cannot fire it. I hope the report is true; it is most comforting to feel that the wife and children are safe even if the shelling begins again. A terrific dust storm blowing now, I had hoped it would rain, but this has come instead.

Feb. 12th. The last few days are ones to be remembered. From the time I was writing, on the 10th (Saturday afternoon), the shelling of the town was incessant. I left for Du Toit's Pan about 5.0, and had pieces of shell falling all round as I rode my bicycle up the main road. The worst experience the town has had was that night when the Boers kept up the shelling till 11 p.m. you may imagine the fright people were in during those few hours of darkness, with the horrible noise of the passing shell and then the report of the bursting. It was a relief that we were not in it; the reports could be easily heard where we were three miles away; one shell dropped in the road just outside my house and made a big hole. The only damage of my house is one window broken and a hole in the roof from a piece of shell. While this was going on the funeral of Mr. Labram was taking place, they were afraid to have it by day as the funeral was sure to be well attended, and a crowd of people would have drawn the fire of the Boers upon them. Kimberley is known to be full of traitors, and some think the shelling at night was done on purpose with a hope of disturbing the funeral. Yesterday, being Sunday, we were left alone; large numbers of natives were employed in making public shelters for the women and children, and all were warned to take advantage of them during last night or were accommodated down the mine. I hear that about 1,000 women and children are down the mine to-day. About 7 a.m. this morning, as I arrived from Du Toit's Pan, the shelling began again, and I saw one land in the hospital grounds. No shelling has taken place since about 10 a.m., and it is reported that the big gun is being taken down. Another report says that the relief column is busy in the opposite direction to where the gun is, so perhaps it is going to be taken round for their benefit. In spite of the shelling on Saturday night only one native man was killed. On Saturday morning I hear one of the regulars was killed in his tent. It is wonderful that more casualties do not occur. We are having fearfully hot weather, 970 in my room (office) now.

Feb 15th. The last three days have seemed very strange, it has been an open secret that the relief force is working hard all round, but no definite news can be obtained. We have to judge by the satisfied expression of the face of the Colonel that everything is all right. The town is very empty, nearly all the women and children being packed away in the mines or in shell-proof shelters, for up to this morning the shelling of the town has gone on pretty severely. I do my work in the morning, and in the afternoon go back to Du Toit's Pan where it is quite safe. All the shops keep closed. The newspaper has been forbidden to be issued since the 10th, because on that date the leading article expressed rather strongly that we had had enough of it, and that the relief force ought to move. We have been very fortunate to be able to live at Du Toit's Pan, as it must be fearful being shut up in the mines or shelters. However, the general feeling now is that we are at an end of our troubles; let us hope so.

Feb 16th. A different face on everything to-day; one column (General French's) of the relief force arrived yesterday afternoon, they came in at the Du Toit's Pan end of the I)iamond fields, and from a debris heap down there we saw the advance guard coming along, all mounted, in the distance. A few rode through the township, and very brown, weary looking fellows they were; the men camped near some water outside the town. I know very little, definitely, about the men, but it is reported to be a flying column come right through from Colesberg. The Boers still hold the hills south of us, where the railway runs, and Lord Roberts with Lords Methuen and Kitchener is said to be dealing with them, but as I have said we know nothing for certain To-day, thank goodness, we have had no more 100-lb. shells; the big gun gave us a few more shots yesterday morning, and now to-day the relief force with our men are out trying to get hold of the gun and to disperse the Boers on the hills to the north-west of us where the railway runs to Mafeking, &c. There has been fighting all day, and the Boers have disappeared from our sight. The gun is known to have been moved. We are all most anxious that it shall be captured, it has given us such a horrible experience that we feel that a fitting ending would be for us to possess it as a trophy. A singular thing happened two days ago from one of these shells, which well illustrates the enormous force with which they fall. One fell in front of Dr. Fuller's (my partner) house just across the street from us; I was in our house at the time. In falling the shell just caught one of the large curb-stones, which form the edge of the pavement, and displaced a stone measuring about i8 in. by 12 in. by 9 in., and weighing, I should say, quite 50 or 6o lbs. This stone was sent up bodily into the air and landed Just short of the top edge of Dr. Fuller's house (a double storied one). The iron roof was bent in where the stone fell and then the stone slid down and now rests on the roof of the upper verandah. You may imagine that no house is safe against such force as this. Today flags are flying everywhere, women and children are emerging again into daylight, and we feel that this is the beginning of the end of our troubles. To celebrate the arrival of the troops another son was added to my family last evening. Had he been born a few hours later I should have had time to have brought Frieda home first; as it is she will

have to spend about a fortnight in a small hot house three miles away. Ethel had been with us since the 11th. I was very glad to have a reason for taking her out of the shelling in Kimberley, and she was glad to come. The son is said to be a fine specimen of the race, and I am glad to say that Frieda is doing well.

Feb. 11th. (Sunday). A day of rejoicing and great relief all round; it was officially announced yesterday that the Boers had evacuated all their positions in the neighbourhood, and we imagine that our forces are busy trying to stop them somewhere in the Free State. General French left us yesterday with most of his men to join the main English forces outside. He has left about 1,000 men of all sorts here to strengthen the garrison. It can now be a question of only a few days before the line will be repaired and free communication opened with the south. We have much to be thankful for. I must try and get into church, if for a few minutes only this morning, to join in singing a hymn. Frieda and baby are getting on well, though the latter has a terrible capacity of keeping everybody awake all night I got the children home last evening while Frieda stays at Du Toit's Pan with Ethel their house is very hot anid the weather is most trying. A storm for quarter of an hour today, almost the first rain this year.

Feb. 19th. Nothing fresh, no news of what is going on with the forces which are pursuing Cronje's Beers; we hope and trust they are smashing them up. A regular tempest of hot wind blowing.

Feb 21st. Nothing special going on the last two days; of course there is a great feeling of relief that the siege is raised, flags are kept flying, &c. Some trains have already come in, but, except for loot cattle, which give us beef instead of horseflesh no food can yet be bought in the shops. To-morrow trains are advertised to begin running south, and there is sure to be a big exodus from here during the next week or two. I should like to take the family away in about a fortnight but I don't know where to go, all the coast towns are so crowded. Frieda is going on well; I hope to bring her home in a few days. No news yet of the troops fighting. Lord Methuen came into Kimberley yesterday.

Feb 23rd. My siege letter I must close today as to-morrow I must post. All is quiet around and so far we have no certain news of fighting in the Free State Lord Methuen has taken over the administration of Kimberley and district; people began clearing out yesterday for the coast. Our town guard is to be reorganised, all who wish resigning. In a day or two we shall sink into a monotonous state of existence, but shall hardly wish for another siege, especially if there is to be any shelling. Yesterday the mail arrived and most people were deluged with letters; they were delivered alphabetically and letters for R reached; I expect mine to-day. As this letter has become rather a valuable diary I am going to ask you to return it to me when all have read it who care to. Ask everybody who reads it to take care of it.

Your affectionate brother,

H. SYMONDS.

P.S.—24th. I brought Frieda and baby home from Du Toit's Pan this morning, both very well. We hear that General Roberts has cornered Cronje and his men. There is a report of there having been severe fighting —1,000 of our men wounded—but we know nothing for certain. The outlook, however, all round is more cheerful. The stone that I mentioned on Dr. Fuller's house has been taken down; it is fully 100 lbs. in weight. I can just manage to lift it an inch from the ground. Just had a lot of letters—3 from you. No papers yet. — H.S.