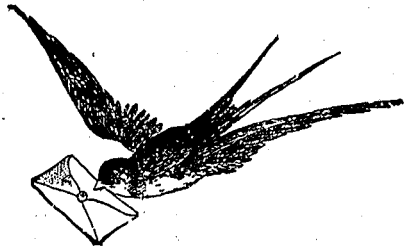


Our Foreign Letter.

Chieveley, Natal.



I wonder if you received my last letter, or if it was lost in the *Mexican*, as I believe it was about that time I wrote to you, so in case it has not reached you, I

can write you a short letter from here. I was sent up to this hospital about five weeks ago, it is a Field Hospital, all tents and marquees, real active service, for we sleep, eat, and nurse in tents, it is on the veldt, surrounded by mountains in the distance, quite near to Colenso and not very far from Ladysmith. We are simply full of enterics and dysenteries, about a fortnight ago we had 240 cases of enteric in, and very likely at present we have more, mostly all come down from Elandslaagte, judging from the bad cases that come, the place there must be in a dreadful condition, I expect by the time I return to England, I will never want to see another case of enteric or dysentery. It seems such hopeless work sometimes, for the number of deaths is terrible, both young and old, and what seems so bad about it, is, that a great many of them have gone safely through all the different battles, and then end in this way. Certainly, at present, all the work has completely turned round, from surgical to medical. During the last six weeks two of our doctors have died of enteric and the Chaplain taken it, and two Sisters who left here and went to their hospital at Estcourt, now have it, so everyone is alike, orderlies included, but I must try and find a lighter subject to write about. About a fortnight ago I had my first day off since coming to Africa six months ago (except two through illness) and another sister and I spent it by going to Ladysmith, and it was really one of the most interesting days I ever spent. We left the camp, or rather the station, which is close to us, at 4.40 a.m. It was quite dark then, but as we got near Ladysmith the day began to break, and looking at all the hills and battlefields as we passed one after another in the deep red light of the sun rising made us feel rather strange. We arrived there at 6 a.m., as the train simply crawls. The Natal railway is considered one of the most wonderful railways; it goes up hill and down hill, and such turns it takes, it is most like a snake winding in and out amongst the hills, and the views lovely, it is certainly a beautiful country all about here. It was an unearthly hour to arrive at any place, so we first went for a walk and saw different places the Boer shells had left their mark upon, but were quite surprised to see so little damage done. Then we went to see the cemetery, and saw the graves of all the officers and men killed, and who had died, during the siege, names that we have watched all along in the papers. We were very glad to return to the town, only you can hardly call it a town, and have some breakfast at an hotel, for that part of the place is in a dreadful condition; it is not a wonder that people get fever there, the wonder is that

anyone escapes getting it. It was delightful to find ourselves again in a house, and a carpet to walk on, although we are perfectly happy in our canvas homes, with sandy grass for carpets, and field rations for food, only it was a change. About 12.30 we started on our return journey, had a pass given us to go by luggage train, and come in the guard's van, who kindly told us all about everything on the way. First, we passed the place where Intombi Camp was, the neutral ground that the hospital was on. The Boer gun, Long Tom, used to fire right over it, as Bulwana was quite near it. Then came the Klip River, and thousands of bags full of sand lying on the banks, as it was there the Boers were trying to dam up the river to flood Ladysmith with, and very near they were to doing it, as it was almost completed when General Buller arrived. Pieter's and all the different hills our troops had to take, we passed one after another, and every now and then groups of graves with small wooden crosses at the head, sometimes two or three under some trees, then a little further a few more, it made us feel so sad, for we thought of what each of those graves meant to someone at home, and who would never be able to see them. At Colenso we got out to spend the afternoon there. We walked over the wooden bridge, which is a temporary one, as the iron one was quite wrecked by the Boers. The river is deep and swift there, the Tugela, so we were quite glad when the train was safely over. There is a guard on both sides of it, and a new one is being built, but, every bridge we passed over, there was a sentry on each side. We climbed Fort Wylie, a steep hill, now all reddish soil and loose stones. There are Boer trenches on the top, as they had big guns up there, which made a splendid place for firing down upon our troops as they tried to cross the Tugela. No one who has not seen this country will ever know what our poor men have had to go through. It is wonderful how they took those hills one after another. Really, no one can admire them half enough. Brave is not the word for them. They have suffered in every way, as no one at home knows, or can understand, and come in wounded and sick, and yet never one word of grumbling or discontent. Some of them when dying are very troubled about their wives and little children, which makes us feel broken hearted over the whole thing sometimes. Then, again, when we came down from Fort Wylie we went along the other side of the railway and by the Tugela for a couple of miles, and visited most of the Boer trenches out on a lonely part. We saw a poor wounded horse evidently left behind. It was so thin and the grass was all dried up or trampled down to such an extent, as good as none. I don't know how it was there as there is a hospital for them at Maritzburg, and many of the wounded horses recover there. All along the line we saw numbers of dead ones. We were getting very tired by then, so sat down by the river under the trees to rest. It all seemed so quiet and peaceful, it was hard to realise we were in the midst of a big war. Just below us, for we were up a steep rough bank, was a piece of the pontoon bridge over which the troops had crossed. It is most interesting to listen to the different accounts of the battles from the men; I often waste five minutes asking them all kinds of questions, and they are all so pleased and ready to tell you anything. Three different days since I came here we have heard firing at Elandslaagte, and we can tell the different guns that are firing—the Boer ones have a

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