

and creepers, looking most cool, but we don't *feel* cool. Temperature in my room is 84. All sisters and nurses sleep right away near the front entrance in a square of one-roomed cottages, each nurse's name on her door.

"The Boers have cut off our water supply, so we are depending on a small quantity lasting till the rains come, and we have to do without clean clothes; several of the soldiers are ill, one, Lieut. Fletcher, died here last week of sunstroke and pneumonia, so we see something of them all. They have a good band which plays every day, and we thoroughly appreciate it."

"Saturday, November 25th.—Just a short note. We are getting so fearfully busy with so many wounded brought in, that I sincerely hope the siege will soon be over, or we shall certainly be in a bad way. Food is getting woefully low, we have now no butter and only potatoes for vegetables.

"Just fancy, sometimes the shells go right over our heads and burst in the road outside.

"Having one of only two theatres lets me in for some exciting work, and I feel all my old enthusiasm back. When will the mail go I wonder?"

"Sunday, January 7th—Still no news of the siege coming to an end. Everyone is getting so sick of it. I feel, too, that I may never get my luggage, and think of all those nice new things I bought, and wish—*how* I wish I had them here.

"There is much sickness in the camp, chiefly typhoid and scurvy. The last dread disease comes from want of good food.

"We are all rationed off, and don't find ourselves over fed. I am saving newspaper cuttings for you to see what restrictions one has to endure in a siege."

"Tuesday, February 20th.—Just a line to go by first mail to let you know I am alive and well. What a terrific time we have had. We were only relieved last Friday. Roberts's Horse came in, and so the Boers and their guns are silent. During the siege shells burst inside the hospital. One large piece came through the roof of my ward and smashed up everything, yet no one was really hurt.

"We have been so busy, and have felt it all much less than the townspeople, for the last week they have nearly all been living down the mines, and don't look up to much now they have come back to daylight.

"I am longing to hear from you; so many dispatch riders were killed, and therefore letters could not be got through. I have sent you a good many since January 1st."

The South African Mail brought us two letters from Sister Child—one written on December 5th, the second on 22nd February. The delay of letter No. 1 brings home to our mind one of the most trying things in the late siege—the long, weary, monotonous weeks passed without news and letters. We all love our letters, and the postman's hourly knock is one of the most chirpy sounds in a London house. Fancy never hearing this welcome sound for month

after month! We can well imagine with what impatient delight the relieved inhabitants of Kimberley and Ladysmith seized and tore open their accumulated mail. We know the letters went up from Cape Town in tons.

On December 5th Sister Child writes from Kimberley Hospital:—

"We are daily expecting the Relief Column and when it arrives I believe the postal communication will be established, so send you a line of Christmas greeting.

We have had a most exciting time ever since here I have been. The train I arrived by was the very last, as the Boers blew up the line and Modder River Bridge on the following day, none of my worldly goods are yet here, but I am told they are quite safe in Cape Town, safe and of no use to me, so of course it meant a new outfit. The fighting has been so near the shells flying right over our hospital, but so far, fortunately, few people have been injured, we have already had several wounded from each skirmish, and last Wednesday a sad loss—Colonel Scott-Turner was killed. On that occasion we had twenty-eight wounded and twenty-one killed. Scott-Turner and others were shot in the head and fearfully injured, as those inhuman explosive bullets were used. The horrible sights are never to be forgotten. I and my staff-nurse helped to wash the dead; we did ten. Oh! it was sad, sad work. Poor fellows, they had been dead about twelve hours, lying out on the veldt. They arrived about 2 p.m., and we finished our last offices for them by 4; the Matron (Miss Isabella Gordon) and three Sisters did the rest. At 5 o'clock the funeral left the hospital, all identified and reverently placed in coffins; it was a fearful business, but it gave us some consolation to do this for our brave heroes. The soldiers all looked so fagged out, poor things, as they marched past with guns reversed. Our provisions are getting very low, but Mr. Cecil Rhodes is taking every care that the hospital shall be well supplied, and so far the patients get all they need. We do not get quite the same as in the time of peace, but that is of no consequence—preserve and treacle instead of butter is the order of the day, and meat once instead of twice.

I am enjoying the work here greatly, and feel my work in Athens during the Greek war has been a good training for the present crisis. The climate suits me well, and I feel equal to much more work than in England. Of other matters I will write later when experience permits."

This little letter, presumably, reposed in the Post Office until the relief of Kimberley, so we did not get our "Xmas Greetings" to time.

Sister Child's second letter is dated 22nd February. She writes:—

"I have just received my first batch of letters since my arrival in Kimberley, and with them yours of 13th October. Many thanks for remembering me so kindly. I should like this letter inserted in the NURSING RECORD for my friends' sake, but fear my time is too limited for an interesting and detailed account of our past trials and experiences. We have ever since the siege began been very hard at work, as there has been

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)