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Marie Steele to Sam Steele

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26 Ste Famille St
Feb 2nd 1902

My own darling boy,

At last I have two of your dear letters appealing for answers, & come with much pleasure to acknowledge them my dear.

Yours of Dec 15th [commenced] at Hebron & finished on the 20th reached me on Friday morning & I cannot begin to tell you all the pleasure it gave me. Not having heard since yours of Dec 10th came so long ago, I was in despair not understanding the cause of your long silence, especially as Annie Clarke told me in a note that her father had had one dated Dec 18th.

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She wrote acknowledging Xmas gifts & to say that her father slipped when going into the barn & broke a small bone in his shoulder which the Dr. said would lay him up for some weeks. They have been rather unfortunate these Clarke boys this winter – Stuart, now Hugh.....

Your letter is as usual very interesting & keeps me well posted as to your movements. Evidently the Boer women possess the one quality of discretion or prove anyway that women can be silent & keep a secret..... The big chief Mamagalie is favorable to the British I suppose & not a traitor.. what is he like?

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How are your men turning out as scouts? are they as careful & observant as your old corps? That is I presume not to be expected, as they are new to that style of warfare or duty. They will no doubt be very proficient by the time you have finished with them. How awfully disgusting of the negresses to do what they did! is it not enough to prevent anyone ever buying a drop of milk in that country. Judging from the pictures you sent, nature has aided them by giving them large enough breasts to supply an army. The Indians in the far north are the same in that respect are they not?

I need not fear that you will get lost or entangled in the bush from what you say of the bush veldt – our [firsts] are very different & your [hybrid] experience will come to your help many times I am sure. Are the cattle you take any good for eating? they must be similiar [sic] to the old bull trains they had in the first days in the west. This is Sunday too & Flora & myself started to go to church, but the snow has been falling most of the night & it is so very deep that we could not get

there so were compelled to come back & pray at home. We are having a quantity of snow & the Quebec week of sport will be

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a success if that is required to make it so. It must have been nice to see [Lt. Steele] & where did you meet him? were you in Pretoria for Xmas, I wonder, it seems so long ago & time is passing. I am sorry Kerr is such a liar & that he has seen fit to talk too much – it is such a mistake & is apt to make so much trouble. He will no doubt feel bad at having his place filled by some one else & may impress later on. I am surprised that he said you had been to a [illegible] with him. I hope he is careful in his remarks about me, my dear & does not speak of me to any one. Is Morrison the one who lives in McGill College [Avenue]?

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I am sure he will regret having spoken as he did & a good lecture from you will show him how very foolish he has been & the great harm he might have done you. Well, the children did laugh at Morrison sitting on Charles' head & his head must be anything but hard & his fatigue great, if that did not waken him. Your [sic] [now] tell me of the strategem [sic] you used to deceive the enemy & of the wounding & death of your Major Ogilvy. I cannot tell you how grieved I am at it & his many friends here will have been glad to peruse the letter which appeared in Friday nights "Star" & which I enclose.

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Who is the correspondent? it is very similiar [sic] to your own letter as you may notice. I feel sure you must feel his loss keenly as you seemed fond of him in a friendly way & he evidently was a good officer – I hear his sister in England is very ill & that was the reason his father & brother went over on the first steamer leaving New York on the 22nd of Dec I believe. No letter came in my care for Mrs John Ogilvy, so I let you know in case it may be lost. As soon as it does, I will acknowledge it. Yes, I remember the influence used to get Capt [illegible] [moved] to the position of Inspecting Major & your determination that Ogilvy should get it.

As you say perhaps the poor fellow would prefer resting in Rielfontein for a time – later on, they might be able to bring him home. It pleases me to know the C. in C. wired congratulations, as he is rightly called "the man of iron" I fancy. His recent treatment will tend to make him sterner than ever. Your men being pleased will also do you good & prove that your old reputation was not without good reason, what it was said to be, & your men being ready to follow you everywhere will show the confidence they had in you, my darling, which was not misplaced.

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I thought it would please you to learn that I was at the reception & the details interest you. You do not seem to have a very high opinion of Mr Howard, L. S's son-in-law. He might be more useful I am sure but his appearance is not much. You no doubt saw that he had suffered from colds several times this winter & when a man reaches his years, it behoves him to be careful & Lord S. was altered I found, aged since his visit a year ago. I will go however & see Mr Taylor, if he is in the city & find out all you desire. I could not go yesterday the Bank closes early.

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You are right in what you say re commanding the regiment. You filled all requirements & know how to handle men, so in that way he could not have made a better choice. I will do my best to find out & tell Mr Taylor to be candid with me, for I can be discreet. I am glad you think so well of Mr Taylor – will you not tell me why? It was very nice of Mr Henry [Steel] to send you a diary for this year, strange to say I worried my very heart out trying to think of something to send you & I never thought of that & it is so very useful too.

O! my dear old darling – the cool way in which you tell me not

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to worry over you “that inside twenty four hours I would know of the death or wounding of your misguided but devoted husband” - why, my darling it is this terrible thing that appals me at times & almost drives me wild. The bulletins I read eagerly almost every day & always inquire the first thing in the morning, if I do not happen to go out myself.

You may not remember that poor Corpl. Greenacre who used to be in Macleod was killed during the Jameison [sic] raid – wounded in thirteen places the report was at the time. You of course, may not have any chance of seeing his resting place as a number were killed then, I fancy. I think it is better to leave poor Major Ogilvy where he is – his grave can be more easily found than were it in Pretoria. I think we will remain here – we have not seen the Judge, but live in hopes of going out to you or else of your returning – in either case, we would move, for of course you would know where you want to live & we would go with you. The house needs repairing, but we hate to move without knowing for how long a time it is for & our carpets & oilcloths would all have to be removed, an expense we do not want to go to until there is a change.

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I would willingly buy a place in Ont. & live anywhere with you, but it would be folly for me to do so now. Things might not be as one would wish & I would never live there without you, my dear old pet. If you care to leave, my darling, you know I will be delighted, for my constant anxiety would then end – it is for your own sake that I say you are too young – no one would be better pleased

than your poor wee wifie & her little ones to have you all to ourselves again – to see you when we please, which would be always. The pleasure of listening to your dear voice once more, would lighten my daily life I assure you.

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Your next dear letter is dated Kroondal Dec 22nd & as Mr. de Havilland was returning to Pretoria you dropped me a few lines. Bartram will know more when he returns than he did when he left, I fancy. It is fortunate that you were not hurt when your horse slipped, my own dear boy! God certainly watches over & protects you my darling & He alone knows how deeply grateful I am. You are lucky in having a good rain proof tent, for you have thunder storms often – not to be wondered at considering what a mountainous country it is. Is there always horse sickness in summer? What a fine thing

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it would be if something could be found to destroy the cause of it. You have not yet told me of Baden-Powell's arrival, but of course he had hardly sailed when you wrote – stupid of me to forget that. Yes, dear the same mail brought me a draft for £1'75 [etg] sent by Capt C. B. Strutt, which I shall send a receipt for at once. Needless for me to tell you how delighted I am to get it, for although I do not waste, it goes – one has expenses always where there are children, but you are good & kind to me dear & keep me well supplied. Thanks so much, I had almost twelve dollars left in the Bank that I was saving like my eyes for a rainy day. I do hope you had as pleasant a Xmas as possible under the circumstances & that my little parcel came to brighten the day.

I have recommenced treatment, having let off for a little while & Dr Macdonell finds me better. I have also commenced massage & they tell me I will derive much benefit from it. I hope so, as it certainly did Mamma much good – her shoulders are much less stooped & she feels better. I am taking malt & other things – one thing I must confess is that I feel stronger than I did last year. I took Mamma & [illegible] to hear “San Toy” an English-Chinese [music]

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opera last night. We enjoyed it very much. the actors wore very good costumes & scenery lovely. “Tommy Adkins” was introduced & several verses of local hits added. One of the two Contingents & “Strathcona's Horse” took well & people clapped heartily when the last was mentioned. I was not the last & was delighted to know that although they are disbanded that they are not forgotten. We are also going to hear “Florodora” this week which they say is very good too. That is the only extravagance I allow myself & all the time I am there I am thinking & wishing you were near to enjoy it with me.

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Mary Hebdon gave a very nice tea on Wednesday. Mrs Borden was there & I did not know it until I was leaving. The lights are always so very subdued that one cannot see people's faces. Mary herself was very nice & asked me to come often. Jack Ross was married on Wednesday & it was a grand affair. They have gone to the Southern States, sail for Europe for some time & on their return, settle in Montreal. A number of guests went up to Toronto for the event from here. Earl Grey & his family are visiting the Minto's just now. His daughter is said to be very lovely & caused a great sensation when they landed in N. York. There are four young ladies

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in the party & they are all beautiful. The daughter of the Earl of Cromartie, Lady Constance Mackenzie, the champion Lady Athelete [sic] of Eng. is there too – she is also a very lovely girl, so N. York's four hundred will go wild, as she is staying there for a time. Poor Lord Dufferin is nearing the end I fear – he has been a great diplomat & the people of Canada have retained a warm regard for him. Mrs D. W. wrote me a nice letter on the 7th & said herself & husband were writing you by the same mail. They are well & do not seem to think much of Zack Wood, eh? Starnes must feel big, running things all his own way. Mrs Wroughton evidently thinks Dawson society not fit for such as she & [drafts] are a convenient excuse. I wonder how Theo likes it – there were rumors that all there were to be changed in the spring, but they would scarcely bring him out so soon. [Mordie] went back as a Capt. in last contingent – wonder where his wife is, just now. Mrs Davis never got the children's photo sent for Xmas, not having heard from Jarvis, I fear his has been lost too – strange! - perhaps they are sending only letters, although they were mailed early in Nov.

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All the family are well & enjoying good health – John & Mabel write & seem happy. I have been making some purchases for Mabel for the little one which is expected in April. She will be much disappointed that Louise has changed her mind & is not going up until she has a diploma, which will not be for fourteen months or more from now. Regie's unsettled state was the cause of that, as he threatens to move every few months & she would run no risk, but it comes hard on Mamma, so many expenses & they are all taken as a matter of course &

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as if she is obliged to do all this – she gets angry at times, she meets with so little gratitude.

Flora & Gertrude are well & go to school every day – they still are ambitious & study well, poor little things. Harwood knows his letters too & would soon learn. They are taking Scotts emulsion, that helps to keep them in good health I find, & they do not dislike it too much.

Parliament opens early in Feb. a week from Thursday – it cannot be this week, so little is said about it, but it may be.

The elections for Mayor took place yesterday but I do not yet know who is elected. I believe it is Cochrane, that Wilson Smith was defeated. Pretontaine retired from the contest – he is now in Paris & the press says he is being lionized there – too bad his wife is not there too!! a wife's place in triumph as in danger is by her husband's side.

My dear old darling, you will I very much fear, be worn out perusing this long letter, so I had better cease my chat for today. God bless & protect you dear until we meet again is my fervent prayer.

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Do not forget to tell me about the visiting cards & what you want printed on the plate I want to have made. All the dear wee ones join in much love & many fond kisses to dear old Papa. God bless you again dear. Write as often as you can to

Your own true, devoted, warmhearted, lonely, little wifie,

Maye.

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