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Marie Steele to Sam Steele

[pg 1]

26 Ste. Famille St.
Montreal, Aug 6th

My own darling Boy,

Your dear letter of June 23rd came to me last Monday, just after I had sealed the envelope containing the letter & answer concerning Col. Herchmer: that is, his letter to me & my answer which will, I hope reach you safely & receive your full approbation. In the letter I received on the 30th ult., you acknowledge mine of April 25th – it takes a long time for the missives to reach their destination, but I suppose one cannot complain when one realizes the awful distance that separates us! – You must have done some very heavy marching & the many [places]

[/pg 1]

[pg 2]

of renown you have passed will not be forgotten – the different items of interest surrounding them will be more than ever stamped on your memory & how you will entertain your little wife when you return, eh dear? “The Strathcona’s” are in good company & should do some good work. Lord D.s brigade must be a fine one – he is a cousin of our friend, [Tom Cochreau] is he not? The ladies gave you a warm welcome, you say, as you [crowd] into the town of Standerton? are you surprised, when they could feast their eyes on such a splendid lot of fine fellows? You have been in several fights from press reports & have lost several men – any news of Capt. Howard? it would be a con-

[/pg 2]

[pg 3]

consolation at any rate, to be sure of his fate – if a prisoner there is hope that he may come safely out of his danger. Your regiment must be very fine to get such praise from men like Sir R. Buller & Lord. D! – If you get through the campaign unharmed, what an experience you will have had, my dear. Take good care of yourself dear & dress as warmly as possible under the circumstances. It is a comfort to learn you are well fed for one reads so many things in the papers, but really does not know what to

believe. The emergency rations given the 2nd Batt. has caused a great deal of trouble in parliament; owing to the death of Lieut. Borden the enquiry was hastily ended, I believe – otherwise they would have investigated the matter thoroughly & I fear the Min. of Militia would not have been whitewashed too much. there was great indignation about it, Oliver of Alberta being one of the [batters] once more. They partially investigated the matter & things were against the Min. & Dr. Devlin – who disappeared at once – it looked very bad indeed. I thought George Scott must be a friend of yours – he wrote so nicely of you, after all these years – my act in writing & sending the photo pleased him very much. The photographs you will have will be very interesting to us, I assure you & we will enjoy them. I send Dr. Samuel Steel a photo & Miss [L]. Thomas

[/pg 3]

[pg 4]

also the very day your letter reached me. I also wrote short notes explaining who they represent & the reason they were sent. I trust they will reach their destination safely. I must now tell you dear of the loss poor Elmes & yourself have met with. Aunt Margaret died on the evening of the 3rd that is Friday about half past six. Viv wrote me on Saturday, but the letter only reached me this morning & as the funeral took place from Viv's house this afternoon, I had not even an opportunity of sending a few flowers & she was so fond of the fragrant blossoms. She had been growing weaker for some days – she suffered no pain & was conscious up to a couple of hours before her

[/pg 4]

[pg 5]

death – she died very quietly, just seemed to breathe her life away like a little child” – poor old soul! she was so energetic & full of life this time last year, it seems impossible to believe she is really gone! – She knew she would see Elmes & yourself no more & when I endeavored to persuade her she would, she would shake her head & say no! no!. I had not heard anything of her since July 2nd when Viv came down for cricket & he seemed to think she would last for a long time yet. Mamma & Alice went up to Vaudreuil today to return tomorrow. The latter leaves on the 13th & has gone to bid good bye to the folks up there. Flora came home this morning, accompanied by [Coroconne] – the former looks very well & fat after her

[/pg 5]

[pg 6]

three weeks stay in the country – she is tanned & had a fine time – went fishing, berry picking, etc. [Coroconne] returned home tonight – they are all

reaping benefit from the change. Flora & Gertrude were delighted to get your letters, I assure you. Mamma & myself went to Terrebonne for the day – yesterday. Auguste & Mrs. Masson met us at the train – we went for a lovely drive after dinner & enjoyed it very much – it is a very pretty place & the Masson residence & grounds are fine. The boy looks well & is very lively. I had a letter from Essie Miller today – they have invited me to go & spend a few weeks with the little ones & really, I believe I will accept the invitation. I am particularly anxious to meet Uncle John & could not have a better opportunity of making the acquaintance of them all & the change will I am sure, do me good – if so, I will go next week some time as Sept. will be on us ere we are aware of it. It has been such a very rainy summer that we have had no outings whatever – if you were only here to accompany us, my darling, what very welcome guests we would be, I know. It is now very late & my eyes are closing against my will, so I must say good night, my darling. God bless you, my own dear boy, & many sweet kisses – good night –

[/pg 6]

[pg 7]

I will now my own darling boy continue this letter commenced two nights ago. John & Mabel came in both evenings & as Mamma & Alice did not return until noon today, I had to do the entertaining at the cost of your letter. Marie came in today & I had to go out with her – not being well she would not go out alone & she wanted to get some of her [mourning]. I now turn to your dear letter of the 27th of June. You will know by now that the enclosures were correct & Perry is now Comr. of the N.W.M.P. Lt. Col. Herchmer's own letter enclosed to you in my last will prove the truth of my statements – the reasons given in "The Herald" for the change

[/pg 7]

[pg 8]

were "on account of old age (Col. H. S.) & for the sake of efficiency". They evidently did not give poor Col. H. much credit for all he had done – he is just sixty some papers say & rather active I find to retire on that pretext. He feels it very keenly I think. We will see how the people take it – so far, nothing is said whatever concerning it. I keep my ears open you see & although you are so far, I have your interests deeply at heart & do what I can – of course, I did nothing whatever in this case, as I did not know your ideas on the subject & thought I had better mind my business, for fear of making a

[/pg 8]

[pg 9]

mess of things. my later letters will have told you that I am feeling stronger, & looking better, so do not worry over me – now that it is passed, I will say I was very ill & did not know how it all might end. We have a servant now – she is old but does fairly well – kind to the little ones. Elmes will feel his mother's death I feel sure – he seemed so fond of her, poor old lady. I am glad your officers are keeping well – the fever must be a terrible disease in every way. Tonight's Star & Herald tell of the way fifteen Strathcona's & a seargent [sic] went out to take a Boer surrender & the Sergt. was killed in their usual treacherous way. I hope they will avenge his death, the traitors & cowards!. Auguste has looked into the letter in the "Witness" & written you fully concerning it. It was penned by one of your own men who must have had a very vivid imagination & queer idea of discipline. I do not remember seeing it, although I fancy Bob mentioned something of it without entering into details. You will have a lot of relatives ere the war is over – all the Steele's will be connections, if you do well. The papers tonight say "that the hope is strong that the war in S. Africa

[/pg 9]

[pg 10]

will soon be over, the troops are wanted for China". I sincerely hope you will not be compelled to go, my own dear boy. The little ones are looking forward to their visit to Orillia & I hope we shall go & enjoy it as much as possible away from you, my own pet. I now take up your dear letter of July 3rd & it was found so interesting that at Auguste's request I let the Herald publish some extracts. You are fighting now, no doubt & how I pray you will come safely out of the fray. It is too bad you are losing your men. I know that is the price of war, but how sad it is that some of those fine fellows must sleep

[/pg 10]

[pg 11]

their long last, sleep so far from the land of their birth, or the country of their adoption. Is the Jenkins killed one of those who used to ranch near Calgary & who was kind to me on my first trip down from the West. It is a shame the little respect the Boers have for the white flag & they should be [shewn] no mercy after the way they have acted. You must be pleased when you halt for a time, as you all need rest. Mamma says Uncle Henry got your letter but that is all she knows of it. There is not much news – it is a case of rain, rain all the time.

[/pg 11]

[pg 12]

in fact, it rained for twenty one (21) days in July & so far the rainfall this

month is unprecedented – it is simply awful & we have not been able to have one outing – owing to the excessive dampness – it is hard on the children too who are on the back verandah all the time, the back yard being too wet for them to play in. They are well & troublesome at times. Mamma & all are well. Frank may open an office in Pt. St. Charles – he has the offer of a furnished flat & the good will of Dr. [Burs]. The one who owned the flat was his eldest son, who is a heavy drinker – there are not many good paying patients among his collection at present. Antoine is having a good time in Vaudreuil. John & Mabel enjoyed their visit too. I will write soon again. God bless you, my own darling & pray take good care of yourself for my sake & the sake of your three dear little children, who talk of you constantly & hope you will never leave them again. With ever so much love from all, loads of kisses from our ties of love, believe me ever
Your own true, warmhearted, devoted
sweetheart & wifie,

Maye.

[/pg 12]