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Marie Steele to Sam Steele

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26 Ste Famille St
Jan 12th 1902

My own darling Sam,

Your two dear letters of Dec 3rd & 4th written from Bokfontein now lie open before me calling for answers. As you know no letters between that of Nov 25th & Dec 3rd have come to me, so I suppose you wrote more between those dates, although I find it difficult to believe, especially as you did not [leave] Pretoria until the 30th. Before I proceed I must acknowledge the receipt of your cabinet photos & told you so in my last. your groups & the Presidency have also come & how lovely they are!

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What a fine, distingué lot your officers are – such splendid looking men & yourself not the least so among them! I cannot tell you what pleasure it gave me to see you surrounded by them & to get an idea of what your staff looked like – we have [ours] & all admired them immensely & never tire of looking at them. How lovely the house also is & what beautiful, graceful looking trees wave their branches near the entrance – what kind are they? They look perfectly lovely I find & I am more anxious than ever, if such is possible, to go down –

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Mr Lighthall asked me to lend them one for the Chateau de Ramezay, as they are anxious to have one on exhibition for a time. I shall certainly grant his request when I have them framed. You have lots to keep you busy dear & will scarcely be able to find time to write me a line. You are fortunate in having a good horse & I hope he will be all right as long as you require ~~you~~ him – have you not more than one? Poor Ogilvy! I feel so grieved when I read of him. You must not fail to tell me who the different officers are who are in the group, please, in order that I may be able to tell others.

I thought it was considered against modern warfare to use explosive bullets, but I suppose the Boers cannot be thought much above the savages, at least, the majority of them. I am bothered every moment by Flora or Gertrude who are writing you & they make me almost forget what I was going to write or make me repeat so pray forgive me.

How very much better it would be for them to surrender & get what Britain always gives, fair play. They would be much happier & their country saved from

further destruction & no more lives sacrificed on either side. I wonder how much longer they will remain in darkness?

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I am trying to get a good S. A. map so as to keep track of your movements – it is hard to get them here, but Mr Colmer may be able to oblige me. I have no doubt you find the Force was organized in a hurry. Now that the Gen. in Command is there, it may make a difference, as Baden Powell sailed from Southampton early in Dec. A number of “Strathcona's” are in the next contingent which sails in a few days. Leckie was presented with the D. S. A. in Halifax a few days ago. The horses down there are giving a great deal of trouble & several of the men were severely hurt. Almost thirty of the men were dismissed for bad conduct &

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not being able to ride & they wired west for thirty more. It shows how well the recruiting must have been done, when so many incompetent men could creep in. Cameron I did not see, as he has not called on me. I am not surprised – if he were going to you he would have treated me differently but he has nothing to gain by being polite now, as I could not put in a good word for him, if perchance he should need it, you see. Such is life, my dear. Well, my darling, you miss me & how I miss you! Day & night you are constantly in my thoughts so much so, that your image is impressed in my brain I believe & I see you all the time.

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No matter where I turn my eyes I see you between the object & my sight – at night I cannot sleep thinking of you dear, wondering where you are & what you are doing – whether you are in danger or safe from harm!

Yes, love is a strange thing! how enduring, undying & magnetic it is in some, while for others it has no attractions, dies almost as soon as born & never revives again!!..... I know mine has lasted for ever – since the first day we met, I may even say before we ever gazed at each other it has seemed to fill my ~~hope~~ whole being, & I even yet cannot define the feeling that thrills me at the mention of your name, my own darling one – may I soon be cheered by a meeting with my darling is the wish nearest my heart.

I wonder where you are today? it is snowing hard, has been all night & the walking heavy. We went to church, Torla, Mamma & myself & as usual the first thing I do is write to you, my pet. Are there strawberries in Africa? I have often wondered if they grow there. The youngsters enjoyed hearing of the baboon having a fine time with the fruit & laughed heartily & saw themselves watching them too. They form all sorts of plans & are going to have a perfect menagerie by the time they all have their pets.

Poor dear! it amuses them to talk of all they will do when “we live with dear old Papa again, Mamma dear” ____

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I suppose the great chief was in full dress when he called! - he is friendly to the English no doubt – where did he learn to read & write the language? They are a fine race, their physique is grand, judging from the photos you sent some time ago. Such [illegible]! - What a lot you will have seen my darling, in your busy life – how interesting it will be to hear you converse, it always is & will be even more so after your experience of the last two years. As I told you in my last letter these two last were undoubtedly opened somewhere, for all the sealing wax was carefully taken off & only a

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spot of grease remains to tell the tale. The other envelopes of the same kind came sealed all right, so it is not due to the paper.

I now take up your long letter of Dec 20th in answer to mine of Oct 23rd & 24th. I knew you would not care very much for the photos for they do not flatter [us] in the least & I must confess I would like to be. I know where Krugersdorp is quite well, I mean on the map. I have also studied de la Rey's [commando] for some time. The press prints his name all in one with a small "R" so I thought him Irish. I knew you had said Sir Redvers had not taken too much [A]! be joyful – although so many were under that impression & still are I may say.

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We have had great comfort with our present girl – she is very nice & a good cook. I only hope she will remain some time with us. Really it just about broke my heart when I think we may have to stay on here without you. What will you do? apply for longer leave after June 1st? There is no use saying anything, I must submit, but I think my hair will be white by the time we meet again. I shall do all I can to keep the Govt. in mind of the pension question you may be sure. Where on earth should you want me to buy a home? I will not go anywhere without you, so there is no use thinking of that. With you I would go back to the west but never under any other condition & there would be no use buying property anywhere, even if it is low. The death of Pretoria & capture of Erasmus may hasten the end of hostilities – I hope it will, I must confess. I know quite well you will never return to the N. W. M. P. under old conditions – things would have to change very much ere that happens. I hope the pension will be more than they said last spring. I would live anywhere & on as little as possible to be with you, so do not let the amount worry you, dear. You know me well enough after all these years & that I can be as economical as extravagant when necessary. Keep young my darling in every way – old age creeps on

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on us all speedily enough & one cannot bring back youth – I find you look well & as I said, too young to retire into civil life. You would be lonely unless you had a great deal to occupy you.

You know in what way parents should not be foolish!! Gertrude expressed the sentiment when she heard of the birth of Jane's little girl - "Well, I never thought Cousin Jane would be so foolish as to go & buy another when she had four others to look after – one would think big people would have more sense." What do you think of that wise six year old head? Yes, I know if they were not here to comfort me, I should feel your absence even more keenly –

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still, on the other hand, their very presence keeps you continually in my mind. Indeed! I do not know whether I am to rent the house or Mamma – you see were I not here a small one would suit her – anyway I shall do for the best, be sure of that – it is being compelled to rent for a year that bothers me. Well, I hope the coal will turn out all right. I have not heard from J. B. Bethune since – in fact, sent photos & letters to Mrs Davis & they have not been acknowledged either – perhaps the mail was lost en route.

Your mind will be at rest re the Strathcona's, as I called & did all I should – I wrote you

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all about it at the time, telling you everything – his kind reception of me, etc. It was true others had not called, but I did not think my absence would be noticed, when the rest were invited under the same circumstances. The divisions were different & only Cabinet ministers asked here & the same persons were in Ottawa – that was strange. Lord S thinks a great deal of you, that is very evident. I do not want to creep into my shell, but am not among those who entertain my dear. I go out when asked – I enjoyed Mrs Power's euchre very much. Mrs Hope, with all her professions of friendship has not called yet – now that Jarvis is not with you she does not bother herself about me – that is the way, you see, my dear. They are all the same - & it is as easy for her to call as for me – in fact, she owes me one for I called after her baby's birth the day before I went to Halifax last spring & brought her a lovely little jacket. You comfort me when you say you will have me with you as soon as possible, so I must be patient & keep up my courage. All join in wishing to be remembered to you & hope to hear from you soon. We have not heard from Frank since he left, but he likely writes today. Alice wrote you a letter I enclosed in my last – she seems in good spirits.

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Young Bess is to be married at the end of Jan. to [Maj] Mathews of Toronto. She is a pretty girl & must have money, otherwise I hardly suppose Jack Ross would have chosen her. I have never seen him. There is not much news – Grace wrote

me a bright cheery letter saying they had had a letter from you written on Nov 23rd "that you were not at war just sitting in the window, [illegible] & smiling at the Dutch ladies" - she advised me instead of worrying over you "to put on my "[illegible]" & go & buy a [divorce] & then you

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would be sorry you had done so much smiling etc" - quite a cheery letter & she must have been feeling well. I was glad to see her so – they are such nice people. I have so many letters to write that I cannot finish. I cannot find time to read a book – the "Starr" is all I read & find it difficult to do even that. Baby had his hair cut yesterday & he looks well, but he is thin, poor pet, tall & lanky – he needs to fill out, his eyes look so big, poor little chap. He is anxious to write you a few words, so I will

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close. All are well & send many fond kisses to you, dear. Write as often as you can. Be sure & take good care of yourself, my darling. Heaven bless & protect you dear & may we soon be re-united is the prayer daily said, by

Your ever true, devoted, lonely, heartsick little wifie,
Maye.

My own darling Papa,

Your Dubbie misses you all the time & would dearly love to see you again. I would like to see the monkey playing ball with the oranges. I would eat them I think, because I love oranges.

A big Kiss X from
Your Dubbie.