

CAUGHT UP IN THE CROSS-FIRE: A BRITISH CITIZEN IN THE ORANGE FREE STATE DURING THE ANGLO-BOER WAR, 1899-1900¹

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Vasgevang in die kruisvuur: 'n Britse burger in die Oranje-Vrystaat gedurende die Anglo-Boereoorlog, 1899-1900

Hierdie artikel is die dagboek van Charlie Moses, 'n Britse burger en bankamptenaar wat in die eerste sewe maande van die Anglo-Boereoorlog in Lindley in die Oranje-Vrystaat vasgekeer was. Die dagboek, wat deur Fransjohan Pretorius geannoteer is, is in die vorm van 'n brief aan sy vader in Engeland, en dek die tydperk 12 November 1899 tot 19 Mei 1900. Dit gee insae in die ervarings van Moses as geviktimizeerde Britse burger in 'n Boeredorp en sy siening van die Boere, en verwys na al die belangrikste gebeure van die tydperk soos hy dit uit amptelike en nie-amptelike oorlogsberigte aan Boerekant verneem het. Die Britse besetting van Lindley op 17 Mei 1900 stel Moses in staat om na Engeland terug te keer.

This article is the diary of Charlie Moses, a British citizen and bank official, who was trapped in Lindley in the Orange Free State during the first seven months of the Anglo-Boer War. The diary, annotated by Fransjohan Pretorius, is in the form of a letter from Moses to his father in England, and covers the period 12 November 1899 to 19 May 1900. It gives insight into the writer's view of the Boers and his experiences as a victimized British citizen in a Boer town. It relates all the major events of the period as gleaned from official and unofficial Boer war reports. The British occupation of Lindley on 17 May 1900 meant that Moses was able to return to England.

Historia welcomes the opportunity to publish the unabridged diary of Charlie Moses, with extensive annotations by Fransjohan Pretorius. Moses was a British citizen and bank official who was trapped in Lindley in the Orange Free State during the first seven months of the Anglo-Boer War (October 1899 to May 1900).²

My sincere thanks to Iain R. Smith of the Department of History at the University of Warwick, who has brought the diary of Charlie Moses to my attention.

A much shortened version, annotated by Fransjohan Pretorius of the Department of History and Cultural History at the University of Pretoria and Iain R. Smith of the Department of History at the University of Warwick, appeared in *History Today* 48(4), May 1998, pp. 21-28.

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Figure 1. Charlie Moses in 1927

Maurice Charles Moses was born in Southampton on 25 March 1879. At the age of fourteen he left England for health reasons and arrived in South Africa in 1893, having served as a clerk to the captain of a steamship. In Bloemfontein he lived with his uncle, Russel Moses, a dental surgeon. Charlie matriculated at Grey College, joined the National Bank of the Orange Free State as a clerk in 1895, and was sent to Lindley. When the Anglo-Boer War broke out on 11 October 1899, Moses, as a British citizen, took the oath of neutrality and was given permission to stay on in the town. On 12 November 1899, because no mail could be sent to England, he began keeping a diary in the form of a letter to his father in England.

Soon after the British occupation of Lindley on 17 May 1900, he left for England, but when the war ended in May 1902, he was sent back to South Africa by the bank in order to establish a branch at Frankfort. In 1910 he joined the firm Harding & Parker as manager of their Frankfort store. Harding & Parker subsequently became a leading department store and retail business in the Orange Free State. Moses remained in Frankfort with the firm until his death on 11 March 1969, just two weeks before his 90th birthday.

Charlie Moses was mayor of Frankfort for many years. He was also master of the Freemasons Lodge, Chairman of both the Hospital Board and Agricultural Society and a Justice of the Peace.

Moses married Carrie Dixon on 28 November 1910. They had two sons, Clive and Guy. On 24 November 1928, five years after Carrie's death in 1923, he married Nini Maude Rozelaar. They also had two sons: Michael and Peter. The diary is in the possession of Michael (also known as Charlie), who lives in Fourways.³

Lindley
12.11.99⁴

My Darling Father

I do not know whether you will have either the time or patience to wade through this letter but I thought I would just make little notes from time to time which might prove interesting reading after the war is over. The day war was declared⁵ the Country was put under martial law & the Public Prosecutor,⁶ who is a very nice gentleman, but later on turned out a regular beast informed me that I was given 10 days to get over the Border but if I wished to stay I could do so provided I took an oath of neutrality which I did & was then provided with a passport which I have to carry about with me; we are 3 British subjects here altogether & we have to be jolly careful what we say & one does not know who is one's friends, one lady? in town reported me to the Magistrate because I said I did not beleive [sic] the English employed Kaffirs to fight against the Boers at Two Mountains n[ea]r. Mafeking;⁷ the Magistrate, who by the way hates the English like poison, said he was going to speak to me but has not done so till now; two men happened to say the Government wires were [p. 2] lies & they were promptly hauled up & fined £5 each. On the 16th Oct[o]b[er]. the Boers

3. M. Moses, "Biographical notes: Maurice Charles Moses", p. 1.

4. Sunday 12 November 1899.

5. On 9 October 1899 the government of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (South African Republic, also called the Transvaal) issued an ultimatum to the British government demanding that all points of mutual difference between Britain and the ZAR be settled by arbitration, that the British troops on the borders of the Republic be instantly withdrawn, and that the troops en route to South Africa by sea should not be landed at any South African port. The British government rejected the ultimatum. At 17:00 on 11 October 1899 the South African War broke out. The Republic of the Orange Free State honoured its political and military alliance of 1897 with the ZAR which meant that she became involved in the war on the side of the ZAR. See F. Pretorius, *The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902* (Cape Town, 1985), p. 13.

6. His name could not be ascertained.

7. There was a tacit agreement between the governments of Great Britain and the Boer republics that it was to be a "white man's war". Both parties, however, made use of blacks for non-combatant purposes such as wagon-driving, minding the horses and offloading supplies. But both parties, and particularly the British army, used armed blacks against the enemy, especially in the guerrilla phase (or last two years) of the war. At Mafeking, both the besieged Col. R.S.S. Baden-Powell and the besieging Gen. J.P. Snyman used armed blacks against each other. See P. Warwick, *Black people and the South African War 1899-1902* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 31-33 and F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902* (Cape Town, 1991), pp. 282-322.

occupied Newcastle which they found evacuated⁸ & on the 24th they took Dundee;⁹ at the Battle of Elandslaagte which took place on the 21st the Boers had a tremendous reverse and the German brigade suffered so terribly that it had to be sent back to be reorganised;¹⁰ of course we only get very onesided wires here & I do not think the Boers give a correct estimate of their killed & wounded as generally it is about 2 Boers killed & 8 wounded & about 500 English¹¹ killed & 1000 wounded and taken prisoners.¹²

Yesterday morning¹³ the reserves were commandeered¹⁴ & there was great consternation in town at several British Burghers being commandeered¹⁵ to proceed to Norvals Pont;¹⁶ four of them however managed to get off by the skins of their teeth; they even took youngsters of 16 years old several of whom had hardly shot a gun in their lives before;¹⁷ I was sitting reading a book during the afternoon when all of a sudden a Boer drives up to my door & after shaking hands,¹⁸ tells me he has just come from Ladysmith to see his wife who is very ill; I [p. 3] asked him inside & had a nice long chat with him; he

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8. The first Transvaal commandos to cross the Natal border were the German Corps under Comdt. A. Schiel and the Johannesburg Commando under Comdt. B.J. Viljoen on the afternoon of 11 October 1899. The first to reach Newcastle, however, were the Hollander Corps under Comdt. J.P. la G. Lombard on 14 October. Later in the day Gen. D.J.E. Erasmus's force also entered the town. It was found nearly empty of its inhabitants and the Transvaal Four Colour flag was hoisted at the magistrate's office. See J.H. Breytenbach, *Die geskiedenis van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog in Suid-Afrika, 1899-1902 I* (Pretoria, 1969), pp. 180-183, which differs considerably from L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history of the war in South Africa 1899-1902 II* (London, 1902), pp. 142-143.
 9. The Boers under Gen. Erasmus took Dundee on 23 October 1899 (Breytenbach I, pp. 277-283; Amery II, pp. 208-209).
 10. On 21 October 1899 the Boers under Gen. J.H.M. Kock suffered another severe setback at Elandslaagte, between Dundee and Ladysmith. Kock had moved too deeply into enemy territory and was cut off from the main Transvaal force. The battle was noted for Maj.-Gen. J.P.D. French's fierce cavalry attack, the 5th Lancers cutting down some of the fleeing enemy with their lances. Though forming only a small part of the Boer force the German and Hollander contingents both suffered severely. Both contingents were disbanded, the men individually joining the other Boer commandos (Breytenbach I, pp. 237-263; Amery II, pp. 175-195).
 11. Despite the fact that the British army consisted of English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish regiments, and that it was assisted by Australian, New Zealand and Canadian contingents, the Boers generally referred to their opponents as "the English".
 12. Besides wild rumours, official Boer propaganda attempted through "oorlogsberichten" (war reports) to urge the Boers on to maintain the struggle. Often British defeats were exaggerated while Boer setbacks were euphemized (Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 359-360).
 13. That is 11 November 1899. We have created a new paragraph.
 14. Initially between 56 and 65% of the burghers were commandeered (mobilized) - the Transvalers on 27 September and the Free Staters on 2 October 1899. Their number amounted to between 32 000 and 35 000. Commandeering continued thereafter, probably reaching a climax in December 1899 when c. 45 000 burghers were on commando (Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 351).
 15. Probably the confusion about the British subjects being commandeered was due to the fact that the republican commando laws stipulated that "ingesetenes" were liable for military service. "Ingesetenes" can mean both "inhabitants" and "citizens".
 16. Norvals Pont was on the Orange River on the southern front, on the border between the Orange Free State and the Cape Colony.
 17. According to the commando laws of the Boer republics the call-up age was between 16 and 60 (Breytenbach I, p. 32).
Solemnly shaking hands was a typical Boer way of greeting. See *F.W. Reitz - outobiografie* (Cape Town, 1978), pp. 47-48.

said there were 30,000 Boers round Ladysmith¹⁹ but they could not get within 7000 yds. of the town as the British Artillery was too good²⁰ but still he thought they could not hold out much longer; he said a Boer dare not show his head above a stone otherwise it simply rained bullets in that direction; he said that [the Boers] had simply pillaged every farmhouse they had come to on their way down if the owner had cleared but if the man was still on the farm they left everything alone.²¹ A wire came in from Kimberley way saying that the Boers had tried to storm one part of the town; the British let them get up to within 500 yards & then didn't they give them H-, I do not think the Boers will try that game again in a hurry. I have received order to sleep on the Bank Premises now & am thus exempt from sentry duty for which I am very thankful; it is no joke to have to pace up & down for 9 hours on a high kopje overlooking the town with a cold wind blowing. I have had quite enough of it; you should have just seen me rigged out with revolver gun to [sic], I am sure I looked more like a brigand than any ... [p. 4] in the way of business at all, I usually read a novel in the morning in the office & from last Thursday²² we closed at 1.0 [sic] & have the afternoons off during which we play Golf. As you can imagine I have plenty of time for reading now & today I finished "Under Wellington's Command" by G.A. Henty²³ & before that I read *Les Misérables* which I enjoyed immensely.²⁴

14th Today a wire came in saying that the Boers had occupied Aliwal without opposition & cut the wire between there & Baustoland [sic] & that the Burghers were busy taking up the line to Burghersdorp;²⁵ of course the British have abandoned all points north of the Stormberg for strategic purposes. The Revd Bull came over from Bethlehem & held service here this evening but there were only seven in Church which constitutes nearly everyone in town, it is raining now & I only hope it keeps on through the night as everything is looking very dry just now.

At the time of writing there were 11 500 Boers besieging Ladysmith - 6 700 Transvalers and 4 800 Free Staters, with 19 guns and 5 machine guns. The next day Comdt.-Gen. Joubert departed for southern Natal with 1 600 of these men, leaving less than 10 000 Boers laying siege to Gen. Sir George White with his total of 13 745 men with 51 guns and 18 machine guns. See Breytenbach II (Pretoria, 1971), pp. 414-417.

20. Not so much the British artillery but vacillating and poor Boer leadership under Comdt.-Gen. P.J. Joubert.
21. Having invaded the British colonies Natal and the Cape Colony, both individuals and groups of Boers looted farmhouses of British subjects on their way to the front. Proclamations by Comdt.-Gen. Joubert and Pres. M.T. Steyn against looting were to no avail. (Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 234-241).
22. That is Thursday 9 November 1899.
23. George Alfred Henty (1832-1902) was war correspondent in the Crimea, Italy, Abyssinia, Ashanti etc. He wrote some dozen novels for adults, but was very successful as the author of stories for boys, mainly based on military history. See M. Drabble & J. Stringer, *The concise Oxford companion to English literature* (Oxford, 1996), p. 269.
24. *Les misérables* (1862) was a novel of Victor Marie Hugo (1802-1885), the grand figure of the Romantic movement. See J.M.H. Reid (ed.), *The concise Oxford history of French literature* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 295-297.
25. Aliwal North was occupied by a Free State force under Gen. J.H. Olivier on 13 November 1899. The next day, Comdts. J. Swanepoel and F.J. du Plooy, operating with the Smithfield and Bethulie Commandos on Olivier's right flank, occupied Burghersdorp, about 60 kilometres south west of Aliwal North and on the main railway line to East London (Breytenbach I, pp. 444-447). The *Times history* II, p. 293, incorrectly gives the occupation of Burghersdorp as 15 November 1899.

20th I feel in a happy frame of mind this evening so will have a chat & tell you what has happened during the last few days; on the 16th an armour [sic] train came from Estcourt to do some reconnoitring [sic] & the Boers placed some stones on the line & derailed a portion of the train; a skirmish took place [p. 5] & the British managed to get half the trucks & the engine alright [sic] again but the Boers took 56 prisoners amongst them being Winston Churchill special correspondent of the *Morning Post*;²⁶ a skirmish also took place at Belmont n[ea]r Kimberley in which Sir Evelyn Wood's son was shot & also Col. Falconer the officer in command.²⁷ A yarn came in the other day that the English had tied 15 Boer prisoners to a maxim & pulled them along with it; mind you this was official news & I told the Public Prosecutor I did not beleive [sic] it; curious to relate he did not run me in; oh! we hear most fearful yarns about the cruelties practised on the Boers by the English, one Dutchmen [sic] told me that the Lancers when they came across any Boer women they stripped them & left them naked.²⁸ Sunday morning²⁹ I went down to Spence's & there were a couple of "Rooineks"³⁰ there so I asked Mrs S to play "God Save the Queen" & we shut all the doors & then we sang it & meant every word we uttered & it sort of relieved [sic] our feelings a bit. A Mr Roos who came from L'Smith³¹ a couple of days ago says that unless the place is stormed, it will never be taken, the British are entrenching themselves stronger every day.³² Plucky little Mafeking still holds out & Baden Powell wires to say that all is well

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26. On 15 November 1899 Gen. Louis Botha with the Krugersdorp and Wakkerstroom Commandos captured an armoured train which was on its daily reconnoitring from Estcourt northwards under the command of Capt. A. Haldane with 164 men, mostly from the 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the Durban Light Infantry. Winston Churchill, 24 year old correspondent of the *Morning Post*, who took command and was responsible for the train to get back on track and steam back to Estcourt, was subsequently taken prisoner. The British lost four dead, fourteen wounded and 58 taken prisoner, while the Boer casualties were four slightly wounded. On the evening of 12 December 1899 Churchill escaped from prison - the State Model School in Pretoria - and made his way by train to Lourenço Marques (Maputo), only to reappear on the Natal front in January 1900. See C.J. Barnard, *Generaal Louis Botha op die Natalse front 1899-1900* (Cape Town, 1970), pp. 35-38.
27. On 10 November 1899 a reconnaissance party of the Ninth Lancers under Col. G. Gough had an engagement with Comdt. J.A.P. van der Merwe with his Fauresmith Commando at Belmont on the western front, on the terrain where the battle of 23 November 1899 was subsequently fought. On the British side Lt.-Col. C.E. Keith-Falconer was killed, and Lts. F. Bevan, H.C. Hall and C.C. Wood were wounded, the latter mortally. Two burghers were slightly wounded (*Times history II*, pp. 290-291 and Breytenbach II, p. 17).
28. Clearly a rumour to stir emotions. After the Battle of Elandsplaagte where the 5th Lancers cut part of the fleeing Boer force to pieces with their lances, the Lancers became the focal point of Boer hatred for the British.
29. 19 November 1899.
30. "Rooinek" (lit. Red neck) was the Afrikaner term for an Englishman. It refers to the sensitive skin of an Englishman in the hot South African sun.
31. Read: Ladysmith.
32. Already at this stage the Boer siege of Ladysmith had got stuck in a situation of lethargy and inertia as there was no leader present with dash or enterprise. After the battles of Lombard's Kop and Nicholson's Nek on 30 October 1899, when the Boers missed the opportunity of taking Ladysmith, they leisurely began to cut off the town from the outside world. It was not before 9 November that they attempted to take the town and when this was a failure, the officers decided to apply less dangerous ways of forcing White to surrender. The plucky attack by the British on Rifleman's Ridge on 14 November made the Boers even more cautious than before. They therefore resorted merely to a heavy daily bombardment of the town. Meanwhile the besieged - 13 745 soldiers with 2 412 black body-servants and about 5 400 civilians, totalling about 21 500 persons - had got the opportunity to

& the relief force need not hurry up on his account.³³ There was a long wire came in this afternoon but beyond the fact that the Boers had captured about 100 head of cattle there is nothing in it at all. I went round the Golf course this afternoon & had a record score of 62 the best I have ever done it in.

[p. 6] 26th I feel as jolly as a sandboy today; there was a terrific battle [that] took place between De Aar & Kimberley on Friday in which the Boers had to retreat, their loss being (according to their wire) 10 killed & 40 wounded, the British came up to within 6 yards of them & the Boers estimate the English loss about 2000;³⁴ a wire has just this minute come in saying there was another big battle yesterday in which the Boers were surrounded & had to fight their way out with great loss & retreat on Randdam³⁵ (50 mls S of Kimberley),³⁶ the Boers are now bringing down 5000 men from Mafeking & a large number from Ladysmith;³⁷ the former place is still holding out & making brilliant sorties; there is rather a good yarn about Major Gould Adams who is in the beleaguered town; he sent out a message to Commandant Botha of the Boer forces & asked him if he would not take part in

entrench themselves effectively in bomb-shelters (Breytenbach II, pp. 414-428).

33. On 13 October 1899 the Boer force of 3 000 men under Gen. P.A. Cronjé had Mafeking completely surrounded. After Cronjé's departure for the Modder River on 18 November his successor, Gen. J.P. Snyman, had 1 400 men under his command - slightly less than the besieged British force of about 1 600 men under Col. R.S.S. Baden-Powell. Both parties had five or six guns, the Boer number changing regularly as the pieces were required elsewhere. See Breytenbach VI (Pretoria, 1996), pp. 3-7. The figures of between 9 000 and 11 000 Boers around Mafeking given by the *Times history IV* (London, 1906), p. 570, are totally exaggerated.
34. There was no battle on Friday 24 November 1899. The previous day saw the battle of Belmont on the western front, approximately 24 kilometres north of the Orange River and south of Kimberley. In his attempt to relieve Kimberley, Lord Methuen made a frontal attack with a force of 10 500 men on 1 500 Free State burghers under Gen. J. Prinsloo at Belmont Station. The Boers were forced to retreat, but Methuen was unable to cut them off. The Boer estimate of a British loss of about 2000 men is way off the mark. According to the official *History of the war in South Africa I* (London, 1906), pp. 227 & 466, the British casualties were 297, of which 3 officers and 51 non-commissioned officers and men were killed and 23 officers and 220 non-commissioned officers and men were wounded. However, the *German official account of the war in South Africa* (London, 1904), p. 82, estimates the British losses at 366, of which 4 officers and 71 non-commissioned officers and men were killed. Boer losses appear to have been 15 killed, 30 wounded and 36 taken prisoner of war. See Breytenbach II, pp. 32-33, who also mentions a telegram from Pres. Steyn to Pres. Kruger with the incomplete figures of about 10 killed and 40 wounded amongst the Boers (which correspond with the numbers given by Moses).
35. Read: Ramdam.
36. In the battle of Graspan (also called Enslin or Rooilaagte) on 25 November 1899, Lord Methuen drove the 2 000 Transvalers and Free Staters of Gens. J.H. de la Rey and J. Prinsloo out of their positions. The Boers retreated in a northerly direction towards Ramdam. British casualty figures range from 168 killed, 143 wounded and 7 missing (*History of the war in South Africa I*, pp. 242 and 467) to 320 of which 155 were killed and 165 wounded (J. Ralph, *Towards Pretoria* (London, 1900), p. 176). Boer casualties were probably 103 men of which 19 were killed, 41 wounded and 43 taken prisoner of war (Breytenbach II, p. 53).
37. Already after the first military contact near Belmont on 10 November 1899 Pres. Steyn requested reinforcements for the western front. On 26 November Gen. Cronjé joined De la Rey and Prinsloo with 300 burghers from the siege of Mafeking, subsequently to be followed by probably 900 more burghers from the Western Transvaal commandos - but not 5000 men as Moses suggests. By the middle of November 550 Free Staters from the Heilbron, Kroonstad and Bethlehem Commandos were also sent to the western front (Breytenbach II, pp. 55-57 & 115).

a race meeting as he had a horse in the camp which could beat anything in the lager; war has its humorous side after all.³⁸ The Boers occupied Weenen (Natal) on the 23rd without opposition & bombarded Estcourt on the 24th but the British made no response.³⁹ Today a friend of mine gave me the tip that the English residents here are being watched, so that I had better be very careful what I say or do; the Magistrate said "God pity the Englishman who is brought before me"; I would give up all my prospects to be out of the country [p. 7] just now & shall feel jolly lucky if I come through with a whole skin.

Dec 11 Since I last had a chat with you some very heavy fighting has been taking place near Kimberley; at the battle of Belmont (50 mls S of K) the Boers were surrounded & had to cut their way through the Lancers but according to their own account there were very few lives lost on their side, whilst the British loss was 1500; the English seem to have taken a good many prisoners & they also captured 22 wagons;⁴⁰ on the 28th ult the British relief force, was at Modder R[iver] (20 miles S of Kimbly [sic]) & since then we have had no news at all & are completely in the dark, my own opinion is that Kimberley is relieved, because on the 28th the Free State troops had to evacuate all their positions & I believe [sic] would have lost their guns had not the Transvaal burghers covered their retreat; Lord Methuen [sic] the English Commander is said to have been wounded.⁴¹ Down in Natal there was a fight between Weenen & Estcourt on the 22nd in which the English drove the Burgher forces from a kop which they afterwards retook killing 110 British, their loss 2? killed & 1 wounded;⁴² the Boer forces then retired on Colenso & are now encamped this side of the Tugela R[iver] & the English relief force for Ladysmith on the other side;⁴³ as far as I can make out the English have repaired the Tugela Bridge & are preventing the Boers from breaking it up

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38. It was this kind of incident which in some quarters gave the South African War the name of "Last of the Gentlemen's Wars". Maj. H. Goold-Adams was Resident Commissioner of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, while J.D.L. Botha was commandant of the Marico Commando.
39. Weenen was occupied by Gen. D. Joubert with the Middelburg and Carolina Commandos as early as 17 November 1899 (Barnard, p. 39).
40. See note 34 on the battle of Belmont. According to Methuen he destroyed 64 Boer wagons on the terrain (Breytenbach II, p. 33).
41. At the battle of Modder River on 28 November 1899 the British troops walked straight into the Boer positions - the result of Methuen's poor reconnaissance and De la Rey's ingenuity of placing his men on the banks of the Modder and Riet Rivers and not further back as expected. Despite causing heavy casualties among the British forces, the Boers were once again forced to fall back when the Free Staters under Prinsloo left their key positions, exposing the Transvalers to danger. British casualties amounted to 478 killed, 389 (amongst whom Methuen himself) wounded and 18 missing (*History of the war in South Africa I*, pp. 260 & 467). There seems to have been 82 Boer casualties - 37 killed and 45 wounded (Breytenbach II, p. 89).
42. The battle of Willow Grange between Weenen and Estcourt on 23 November 1899 was part of Gen. P.J. Joubert's expedition deeper into Natal. British casualties were 11 men killed, 1 officer and 66 men wounded and 1 officer and 7 men taken prisoner of war (*History of the war in South Africa I*, p. 272). The Boers lost 2 men killed and 2 wounded (Barnard, p. 41).
43. The British force under Gen. Sir Redvers Buller was south of the Tugela River. Along the northern banks of the river a Boer force under Gen. Louis Botha was entrenching itself in defensive positions. Behind their backs, further north, the rest of the Boer force was laying siege to Gen. White and his men in Ladysmith.

again.⁴⁴ I heard in a dead secret yesterday that 700 Boers had been taken prisoners near Estcourt.⁴⁵ I was told today that [p. 8] General White (who has made a muck of matters) sent out a despatch to General Joubert asking him to inform the War Department in London that his loss at Modderspruit on the 30 Sept was 850 men & his total loss since then till the 17th Octbr. was 1670 men,⁴⁶ if this is true England had better give the war up since the Boer *total* loss since the war started is 200 killed & about the same number wounded; this is given officially but I know for a fact that the Boer loss is much heavier than that.⁴⁷ They say that the stench at L'Smith is fearful & there are hundreds of cases of typhoid⁴⁸ & the Boers firmly believe [sic] the town will fall before this time next week; my opinion is they will never take the place, still this remains to be seen.

Dec 18 Since I last sat down to have a chat to you the news that has come in has been enough [sic] to knock a fellow completely off his legs. On the 7th the Boers caught 6 Lancers n[ea]r Jacobsdal, they would not surrender till they had been completely disabled two being killed & all the rest severely wounded;⁴⁹ on the 9th the Boers occupied the battle field of Rooilaagte but had to leave it on account of the scarcity of water (jolly good excuse was it not), they were attacked near Modder R[iver] & had to retire to take up better positions (as the Irishman would say).⁵⁰ The same night the British down at Ladysmith made a night sortie [p. 9] spiked two of the Boer cannons including a Long Tom (siege gun); a company of Lancers got through the outposts without being seen & got on top of the kop & found the gun only protected by 25 artillerists who must have evidently cleared; the Boers swear there is treachery & are holding a very close enquiry; the British blew the guns up with dynamite & took a small maxim away with them, they were seen by the outposts on the return journey & 9 of them were killed by the Boers.⁵¹ On the 10th 1000 Boers were attacked by 2000

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44. On 28 November, the day after Joubert's force had crossed the Tugela railway bridge at Colenso on its return journey, the bridge was blown up by engineers of the Dutch South African Railway Company (NZASM). See Barnard, p. 42.
 45. There was no truth in this assertion.
 46. The battles of Modderspruit and Nicholson's Nek (collectively known as the battle of Ladysmith, or 'Mourful Monday') was on 30 October 1899 (not 30 September). The number of prisoners of war taken from White's force is uncertain. According to the *Times history* II, p. 255n, 43 British officers and 925 men were taken prisoner by the Boers. Boer official telegrams make mention of 1 284 British prisoners (Breytenbach I, p. 337).
 47. Moses is correct, but the exact number of Boer casualties by 11 December 1899 is difficult to establish.
 48. Typhoid and dysentery and the other traditional diseases of poor diet and worse hygiene took their toll in Ladysmith. Every week since November the death-toll from disease rose, till by January 1900 it had reached the rate of ten to twenty a day at the British-run hospital camp. See T. Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London, 1979), p. 353.
 49. No other reference to this incident could be traced.
 50. This incident took place on 7 (not 9) December 1899 when Gen. Prinsloo with 1 000 men attacked the British force of 200 men under Capt. H.C. Godley at Rooilaagte (Enslin). The British resisted bravely, and Prinsloo withdrew with the excuse that the Boers were short of water. The British casualties were 1 officer and 15 men wounded, while 6 Boers were wounded of which two were taken prisoner (Breytenbach II, pp. 109-112).
 51. With the Boer vigilance around Ladysmith at a low the British in Ladysmith made two night attacks on Boer gun positions, the one under Lt.-Gen. Sir Archibald Hunter with 650 men on Gun Hill east of the town after 02:00 on 10 December 1899, and the other under Lt.-Col. C.T.E. Metcalfe with 488 men on Surprise Hill north of the town twenty four hours later. The 25 Boer artillerists bolted when

British at the Stormberg which is a place admirably adapted for the Boer mode of warfare as the country is very rough thereabouts & it is difficult to use artillery with any effect; well the British attacked with 12 cannon & were badly beaten 682 of them being taken prisoners besides 3 cannon (the prisoners are at present safely lodged in Bloemfontein) the Boer loss was only 8 killed & 26 wounded.⁵² On the 11th a terrible fight took place at Scholtznek 6 mls from Kimberley; it appears that Lord Methuen intended to surround the Boers but instead of that he marched right up between the horseshoe-shaped nek & was met by a terrific Mauser fire on both sides. You will see the position by my rough sketch; both sides fought most valiantly [p. 10] for 13 hours; the Scandinavians [sic] suffered most heavily on the Boer side; the British took their position & very few came out alive but when the British tried to get through the nek they were beaten back time after time, the Black Watch Regiment was almost totally annihilated; 60 Gordons were taken prisoners but after the Dutch had disarmed them they were allowed to go back again, several regiments flatly refused to face the music & the day ended in the total rout of the flower of the British army who retreated on their camp at the Modder R; the Boers estimate their own loss at 100 & that of the British between 3 & 4 thousand.⁵³ On the 14th a skirmish took place at Colesberg in which the British came

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- Hunter's men stormed Gun Hill, and with the aid of gun-cotton the jubilant soldiers - including 100 men from the Imperial Light Horse - blew up the barrels and breechblocks of a Howitzer and a 155 mm Creusot siege gun (generally called a Long Tom). Taking a breech-piece of the Long Tom and a hand Maxim with them, Hunter's party reached Ladysmith with the loss of 1 officer and 7 men wounded. A Howitzer on Surprise Hill met the same fate, but at a cost: 26 British soldiers were killed, 14 were wounded and 10 were missing. Two Boers were killed, 2 died of wounds, 2 were wounded and 3 were missing. The Boer authorities attributed the disaster at Gun Hill to gross negligence and the officers concerned - Comdt. J.D. Weilbach, Field Cornet J.G. Meyer, Maj. P.E. Erasmus and Lt. W.C. Malan - were temporarily suspended, but the contemplated court martial was never held (Breytenbach II, pp. 437-449).
52. Before dawn on 10 December 1899 Lt.-Gen. Sir William F. Gatacre with almost 4 500 men (amongst whom the 2nd Irish Rifles, the 2nd Northumberland Fusiliers and the 1st Royal Scots) and 14 guns attacked the Free Staters numbering about 1 000 men with 3 guns at Stormberg on the southern front. The idea was to drive the Boers out of the Eastern Cape and prepare the way for the British offensive towards Bloemfontein. Gatacre was not familiar with the terrain, some of his columns got lost in the night march, and his force went into battle exhausted after a trying 24 hour period before the battle. Although taken by surprise, the Boers under Gen. J.H. Olivier recovered well, and, having been reinforced by 400 men under Gen. E.R. Grobler, they ensured victory with accurate rifle fire. Gatacre was forced to retreat to Molteno, the Boers missing the opportunity to round his force up. The British casualties numbered between 700 and 800, with between 25 and 28 killed and between 51 and 102 wounded. Olivier took 672 prisoners. According to Grobler the Boers lost 5 dead and 16 wounded (Breytenbach II, pp. 196-225; *Times history* II, pp. 362-382; *Official history* I, pp. 285-303).
53. The Battle of Magersfontein took place on 11 December 1899. De la Rey with the aid of Pres. Steyn persuaded Cronjé that the burghers dug themselves into a well camouflaged line of trenches in front of and parallel to the hills. With his fourth attempt to relieve Kimberley, Methuen and his 15 000 men and 33 guns made a night march towards Magersfontein Hill. At 04:00 the unsuspecting British troops, with the Black Watch Battalion of the Highland Brigade in the vanguard, marched in closed formation straight into the deadly fire from the Boer trenches, thereby suffering enormous losses from the outset. By twilight, when the guns fell silent, the Boers had suffered 255 casualties - 87 men killed and 168 wounded. Most of the 50 to 60 men of the Scandinavian Corps fighting with the Boers were either killed or wounded. It is generally accepted that the British casualties were considerably higher than the 971 (23 officers and 182 men killed and 45 officers and 645 men wounded) given by the *Times history* II, pp. 415-416. The figure of 3 000 to 4 000 given by Moses from Boer sources are much too high, although Cronjé did believe them to be at least 2 000. See Breytenbach II, pp. 123-183; G. Duxbury, *The battle of Magersfontein 11th December 1899* (Johannesburg, 1974).

off best, the Boers tried to surround them but were completely outmanoeuvred.⁵⁴ On the 15th there was another terrible fight at Colenso starting at daybreak; the Boers are very strongly ensconced [sic] on the other side of the Tugela & the British came along with 12 cannon down to the river & as soon as the horses were outspanned the Boers who were hidden from sight opened a murderous fire with their Mausers on the gunners & managed to kill them all & seize 10 cannon with 13 ammunition wagons & place 5070 men hors de combat with a loss on their side of only 30 killed & wounded (These are the yarns that come in & we are supposed to believe [sic] them but although they go down with the Boers who [p. 11] believe [sic] every word, we English here cannot swallow them).⁵⁵ Yesterday I heard in the strictest confidence that those guns were placed there as a bait for the Boers who only captured four which were recaptured again & that a force of Boers are cut off & surrounded at Colenso, I seem to think there is some truth in this yarn, what wouldn't I give if there is.⁵⁶ We got hold of a Cape Times a few days ago which had been smuggled through Cape Town & we simply devoured every word in it, we are quite willing to pay a guinea a copy if we can get hold of any outside newspapers, you have no idea how excited we were about this Cape Times which gave quite opposite accounts to what we got.⁵⁷

4 Jan 1900 It is a long time since I last had a talk to you but nothing of great importance has occurred since then; on the 21st ult British patrols crossed the O F S border & came into contact with the outposts at Luckhoff; the O F S authorities are in an awful funk & fear an invasion from that quarter; on the 23rd Winston Churchill escaped from Pretoria, I suppose the Morning Post had a tremendous circulation when the news became known.⁵⁸ I went

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54. This probably refers to the skirmish at Arundel, 32 kilometres south of Colesberg, on 13 December 1899. British casualties were 1 officer and 7 men wounded, while the Boers had 3 men wounded. See Breytenbach IV (Pretoria, 1977), pp. 15-16; *Times history* III (London, 1905), pp. 125-126.
55. Having arrived on the Natal front on 25 November 1899 Gen. Sir Redvers Buller, Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in South Africa, decided on a frontal attack on the Boer force lying across the Tugela River and blocking his way to Ladysmith. The Boers - 4 500 Transvaalers under Louis Botha of whom eventually 3 000 with 4 guns were to take part in the battle of Colenso - had dug trenches and built outworks of rocks and sandbags in front of the hills near the river. Inadequate reconnaissance had failed to determine the positions of the Boer entrenchments. Buller also failed to correct mistakes on his maps. At 01:00 on 15 December 1899 his force of 19 400 men with 44 guns and 18 machine guns marched towards the Tugela. From about 06:00 Maj.-Gen. F. Hart's 5th (Irish) Brigade and Col. C.J. Long's 12 fifteen Armstrong pounders and 6 twelve pounder naval guns were simultaneously pinned down by accurate Boer rifle and gun fire from well concealed trenches. In an attempt to save the guns Lt. Freddie Roberts, son of Field-Marshal Lord Frederick Roberts, was mortally wounded. He was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously. Buller suffered a disastrous defeat. According to the official *History of the war in South Africa* his losses were 1 139 - 7 officers and 136 men killed, 47 officers and 709 men wounded, and 20 officers and 220 men missing or taken prisoner. Botha was convinced that the British casualties numbered about 2 000. Ten guns and 10 to 12 ammunition wagons were captured by the Boers. The Boers lost 38 men - 7 killed, 1 drowned, and 30 wounded (Barnard, pp. 46-73; Breytenbach II, pp. 263-332; *Times history* II, pp. 421-459; *History of the war in South Africa* I, p. 470).
56. There was no truth in this rumour.
57. Opposite accounts, indeed, and just as slanted as the Boer reports.
58. On the evening of 12 December 1899 Churchill escaped from the State Model School in Pretoria where he had been held prisoner of war, made his way by rail to Lourenço Marques (Maputo) in Mozambique where he arrived on the 23rd. From there proceeded to Durban and in January 1900 joined the South African Light Horse on the Natal front as lieutenant and war correspondent. See W.S. Churchill, *My early life* (London, 1947), pp. 264-303.

over to Heilbron with Mr Oates for Christmas & had a jolly time, it is quite an English town & I had an interesting talk to one of the fellows who had come back from Ladysmith. On the 26th the British tried to storm one of the Boer forts at Mafeking but, although they got right on top of the walls, they were beaten back with a loss of over 100 killed & wounded;⁵⁹ on the 28th some English patrols destroyed several farmhouses on the O F S border;⁶⁰ on the 30th it was rumoured here that the British had retaken Dordrecht which has since been confirmed. Last ... (Page 12) was great excitement in town on account of everyone, excepting the officials & we 5 British subjects, being ordered off to the front immediately; I am pleased to say they decided to leave one in every shop so there are still some people left in town. New Year's day fighting took place between Dordrecht & Jamestown; the British also attacked Colesberg & they are now in possession of the koppies on the west side of the town; the English collared the S.S. Bundesrath & took her round to Durban as she had a consignment of saddles on board for the Transvaal Govt.⁶¹ I spent a very jolly day at the river where we had a picnic. The Boers took up part of the line on the 2nd near Colesberg & tried to take possession of a goods train full of provisions but the British fired on them so hotly that they had to retreat.

Jan 9 On the 7th we received a wire here to the effect that the Krijgsraad had decided that the Boers were to make a general advance closer to Ladysmith & they had to take possession of Bestersrand; according to the official wire the Boers performed the task successfully & the Kroonstad & Heilbron burghers captured a cannon & 2 ammunition waggons from the British & that the latter had charged to within 40 yards of the Boers [sic] lines to recover same but were repulsed with terrible loss; I tell you the Dutch in town here were simply elated & the Magistrates Clerk (Page 13) wanted to bet me a sovereign that Ladysmith would fall within 4 days, in fact he had decided to go down so as to be there at the death, the news made me very "down in the mouth" to use a vulgar expression, but a wire came in next day which made me so excited that I did not know whether I was on my head or my heels, it was to the effect that the Boers had to give up all their positions which they had taken the day before & retreat with heavy loss; the Free Staters gave us their loss 54 killed & wounded of which half were killed. I do not know what the Transvaal loss was; after this these fellows walked

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59. Baden-Powell's attack on Game Tree Fort to the north of Mafeking on 26 December 1899 was a dismal failure, mainly due to poor reconnaissance. The British troops were checked about 300 meters from the fort by accurate rifle fire. Of the 260 attackers 51 were put out of action: 25 killed, 23 wounded, and 3 taken prisoner. One Boer was killed, another mortally wounded and 7 others were wounded (Breytenbach VI, pp. 29-30; *Times history* IV, pp. 590-591).
60. No reference could be found to the incident of 28 December 1899, but during the first week of January 1900 troops under Maj.-Gen. J.M. Babington burned down farm homesteads in the western Free State. Arthur Conan Doyle considered that it had been done as a warning that such depredations as the Boers had carried out in Natal could not pass with impunity. See S.B. Spies, *Methods of barbarism?* (Cape Town, 1977), *passim*; F. Pretorius, *The Anglo-Boer War*, pp. 54-56).
61. On 29 December 1899 the German mail steamer, *Bundesrath*, was forced by British war ships to Durban on suspicion of her carrying ammunition, officers and men for the Boers. A week later the same happened to the *General* and the *Herzog*. This British action caused a storm of indignation in Germany. The British government thereupon issued orders that German mail steamers could not be held up on mere suspicion. See L.E. van Niekerk, *Kruger se regterhand. 'n Biografie van dr. W.J. Leyds* (Pretoria, 1985), p. 244.

about town with faces as long as pikestaffs.⁶² The Boer commandoes up Kimberley way are very short of food & there is no coffee or sugar obtainable in the Country nor even at Delagoa Bay.⁶³ Of course I see a good many of the Boers who come back wounded or otherwise & they do bring some funny yarns; one chap told me the British big gun ammunition is up at Ladysmith & they are now firing out of shells made from wood. English patrols are still destroying farm property on the O F S border & on the 6th a patrol went into Douglas & made things warm for a few Griqualand Burghers (rebels) who were there. The Boers occupied Kuruman on the 1st & took 120 prisoners; the place, which is right in the centre of Bechuanaland, was too out of the way to defend itself against heavy artillery;⁶⁴ at Colesberg on Saturday the Boers captured 100 men of the Suffolk regiment but they had to give up their positions on the west side of the town.⁶⁵ I heard from a very reliable source that Colesberg is surrounded by the British so (*Page 14*) the town may be taken at any moment & then the Boers will have to retreat back into the Free State, as Colesberg is only about 20 miles from the Border.

Jan 15 One of the farmers here who I know well has just come back from Colesberg wounded with 3 lance thrusts & related how he got wounded; he says the Lancers were charging & all the Boers had retreated excepting him & 4 Lancers came for him; he ran as hard as he could to his horse & cut the rein loose but he was galloping down such a steep incline that his saddle slipped on to the horse's head, so, as the Lancers were nearly on him off he jumped & shot the first one, then the second & then number three, he shot at the 4th but missed him & killed his horse whereupon the Lancer gave him 3 prods & left him for dead; to prove to you how this Boer was lying, he received one thrust in the back so he must have been trying to run away & to use a vulgar expression the Boers are getting H—l down Colesberg way & the British are knocking corners off the buildings in town & yesterday there

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62. The inertia of the Boer officers and men around Ladysmith eventually made way for a serious attack by both the Transvalers and the Free Staters on 6 January 1900 from the south on Platrand (Wagon Hill and Caesar's Camp) which was regarded as the key to taking the town. In a battle which lasted from 02:40 till the evening, the British defenders were able to repulse the enemy attacks. Casualties were high on both sides, the British numbering 424, of which 14 officers and 135 men were killed and 31 officers and 244 men wounded. Of the latter 3 officers and 23 men were mortally wounded. Boer casualties were probably 181 - 56 burghers were killed and 125 wounded of which 6 died of their wounds. See Breytenbach III (Pretoria, 1973), pp. 1-61.
63. Already by the end of November 1899 the commandos on the Western front were running short of supplies, except for meat. By December 1899 coffee and sugar were unobtainable. In a secret Anglo-Portuguese treaty on 14 October 1899 - three days after the outbreak of the war - the British government undertook to protect all Portuguese colonies in exchange for a Portuguese promise to forbid the import of arms and ammunition (which was regarded as contraband) to the ZAR during the war. With the co-operation of the British consulate in Lourenço Marques the Portuguese officials soon regarded foodstuffs as contraband too (Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 29, 51-52 & 71-72).
64. A Boer force of 300 Transvalers and Griqualand West rebels under Field Cornet J.H. Visser took Kuruman, 190 kilometres north-west of Kimberley, on 1 January 1900 (Breytenbach IV, pp. 27 & 81; *Times history* III, pp. 112-114).
65. A night attack on Saturday 6 January 1900 by the Suffolk Regiment under Col. Watson against the Heilbron Commando on Grassy Hill, just to the north of Colesberg, ended in failure, costing the British 11 officers and 150 men, of whom 5 officers and 32 men were killed or died of their wounds, 4 officers and 48 men were wounded, and 2 unwounded officers and 70 men made prisoners. The Boer loss was between 7 and 9 killed or died of wounds and between 15 and 26 wounded (*Times history* III, pp. 136-138; Breytenbach IV, pp. 5-55).

was a skirmish about 6 miles from Aliwal North which is a border town on the S. East. The Boers say that the English are eating horse flesh in Kimberley⁶⁶ & thousands of Kaffirs are being driven out of the place daily⁶⁷ & they also say that the British soldiers are rebelling against their officers & that Brabants [sic] horse have refused to serve any longer when their time expires.⁶⁸ No one is allowed to go between the two States now & there is no sugar or coffee to be had. A friend of mine went up to Johannesburg on business & on his way back had rather a nasty experience; at Viljoens drift his train stopped for a couple of hours & the train with (Page 15) the Suffolk prisoners who were caught at Colesberg stopped there too; my friend put his head out of the carriage window & when these soldiers saw him they were simply delighted (of course he is a rooinek) & immediately started talking & they were telling him how they were caught; he said wait a minute & I will come into your carriage with you, so off he went up the platform & just as he got to the door one of their armed guards came up & caught old S — by the waistcoat & simply tore every button off & asked him what he wanted there calling him spy & they had a bit of a scuffle & fell down between the two trains, in the meantime all these tommies were watching the contest & when they saw my friend was likely to get the worst of it they started getting out of the carriages through the windows & swore they would murder the guard if he did not leave him alone, the guard relaxed his hold a bit & S — got away & cleared for all he was worth to the other train & got into his bunk & when they came round to find the "English spy" as they called him he was snoring away till further orders & they consequently thought he had gone off in some other direction. They are talking seriously of putting all Uitlanders over the border; there are a lot of Englishmen in prison in Bethlehem who refused to go on commando when commandeerd [sic] ; a wire was received from the President yesterday saying they were to force them to go but how they are going to do it I do not know. I had a rare treat on Saturday afternoon; I read some Natal papers of the first weeks in December & by Jove they do put a different complexion on matters to what we hear here per our official wires.

(Page 16) 24 Jany Since the 20th hard fighting has been taking place at the Tugela daily; the British are supposed to be attacking with 16000 men & 30 cannon;⁶⁹ they are trying to break through 15 miles higher up but from accounts that have come in they seem to be making no

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66. With rations being reduced from time to time by the British officer in command in Kimberley, Col. R.G. Kekewich, horseflesh was included in the ration on 8 January 1900 for the first time. From that date till the end of the siege on 15 February 1900 some 600 horses were slaughtered (*Times history* IV, pp. 560-561).
67. Although many successfully escaped from the area before the siege began on 6 November 1899, over 10 000 black workers were compelled to endure the subsequent five-month investment. On the night of 6 November an attempt was made by the British forces to expel 3 000 Basotho workers from the town, but most of the men were turned back by the Boers and a number shot by the garrison in the confusion that followed. Later on in the siege, when provisions grew scarce, renewed attempts were made. Though some parties were turned back, as many as 8 000 probably got out in the course of the siege (P. Warwick, p. 129; *Times history* IV, p. 546).
68. The Brabant's Horse Regiment was not present in Kimberley during the siege. The *Times history* does not mention any dissatisfaction of British soldiers. On the contrary, it claims that Kekewich's staff and subordinates, regular and improvised, "supported him with loyalty and ability" IV, p. 567.
69. Buller's new offensive west of Colenso, higher up the Tugela, started on 10 January 1900 with 24 000 men and 58 guns from Chieveley and Frere in a westerly direction, Lord Dundonald's mounted brigade in the vanguard occupying Mount Alice just to the south of Potgieter's Drift and Spion Kop (Barnard, pp. 77-79).

headway whatever & I doubt very much if they will relieve Ladysmith; on the 21st the British made a tremendous effort to break through & it was all the Boers could do to keep them back posted as they are in almost impregnable positions; the British must have lost heavily & I know for a fact that the Boers did.⁷⁰ President Steyn is at present at Ladysmith, he had to go down there as there was a tremendous row between the Free State & Transvaal Burghers re the fight at Platrand on the 6th in which the Boers had to give up all their positions with a tremendous loss.⁷¹ At Colesberg the English have the best positions round the town & if French only knew the Boers' weak point he could take the town to-morrow; the Boers are short of supplies & if French was to send a strong force round to the Norvals Pont Bridge & the Colesberg Bridge & blow them up their supplies would be cut off & about 8000 Boers would be at his mercy; I have it on the best authority that the Boers do not intend to try & hold Colesberg if they are attacked as through the bad generalship of General Schoeman, they (*Page 17*) have the worst possible positions to repel an attack on the town. Up Kimberley way everything is quiet, the British are shelling the Boer positions but are doing not the slightest damage; I think it will be a long time before Kimberley is relieved [sic] .

Febv⁷² I have not had a chat with you for over a month now so here goes:- On the 24th ult fighting began at the Tugela again & on the 25th the British took Spion Kop which was the key of the positions to Ladysmith, next morning a small party of Boers stormed the position under cover of a thick mist & when the mist lifted the English discovered the Boers lying close to their schanses & they had to retire on account of the reinforcements not arriving, had they held it for another 12 hours Ladysmith would have been relieved [sic] by now, the English loss on the whole 7 days fighting was 1800 killed wounded & missing & the Boers lost about 300; the Lancashire Fusiliers are said to be almost totally annihilated & several of the Boers have told me that the British loss was 12,750 & the blood was running in streams.⁷³ On the 5th inst. the British crossed the Tugela again & they bombarded the

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70. On 20 and 21 January 1900 Maj.-Gen. Sir C.F. Clery, at the orders of Lt.-Gen. Sir Charles Warren, made a frontal attack on Tabanyama Hill to the north-west of Spion Kop as part of the British onslaught in the Upper Tugela region in order to relieve Ladysmith. Clery's attack was against the orders of Buller who had wished Warren to outflank the Boers to the west. In the two days the British casualties were at least 492, while the Boers lost about 72 men - 8 or 9 killed and 63 wounded of which 3 mortally (*Times history* III, pp. 233 & 238; Breytenbach III, pp. 146-147 & 154).
 71. Steyn apparently did succeed in encouraging the burghers who at his request retook the positions around Tabanyama on 22 January which they had left that morning (Breytenbach III, p. 162).
 72. The date is illegible, but it is in the last week of February 1900, since Moses mentions that he has not had "a chat" with his father for over a month (the last was on 24 January) and remarks that Gen. P.A. Cronjé is surrounded (which was after 18 February).
 73. The Battle of Spion Kop on 24 January 1900 was one of the bloodiest in the entire war. It seems that Warren wanted to occupy Spion Kop from where he could dominate Tabanyama Hill to the north-west. A force of about 2 000 men - consisting of Thornycroft's Mounted Infantry, the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers, half a company Royal Engineers, six companies 2nd Royal Lancasters and 2 companies 1st South Lancashires - under Maj.-Gen. E.R.P. Woodgate reached the crest (or what they thought to be the crest) of Spion Kop at 03:30 on 24 January 1900, dispersing about 200 Boers from the Vryheid Commando and German Corps who had been stationed on the hill. The British then hastily dug shallow trenches in the hard ground. At day-break 84 men of the Carolina Commando under Comdt. H.F. Prinsloo, later reinforced by about 300 burghers from the Commandos Pretoria, Krugersdorp and elsewhere, stormed the hill from the north, supported by well-targeted artillery fire. Pinning down the British on the hill, the battle lasted until after sundown, the men in some cases firing at each other at point-blank range, before the British companies one after the other withdrew in confusion. Buller,

Boer positions with about 50 cannon & attacked the Johannesburg positions which they eventually took but a few days later evacuated; the Rand men under Ben Viljoen lost very heavily about 51 of them being killed & over 100 wounded.⁷⁴ At Kimberley things have been going swimmingly it appears the British have been using Colesberg as a decoy & the Boers have had 8000 men there until they discovered the English had only a few hundred there & the camp consisted of a lot of empty tents; in the meantime the British had gone round to Kimberley; General French with 3000 cavalry crossed the Riet & Modder rivers (*Page 18*) went round Magersfontein via Koffiefontein passed over Alexandersfontein & thence into Kimberley,⁷⁵ I nearly went off my head with excitement when I heard the news & also that a force was advancing on Bloemfontein; the Govt. immediately wired instructions to commandeer every available man & at midnight all the Merchants here were ordered to proceed to the front immediately, so they closed up all the stores in town & went off next morning but they soon sent them back again as they could not get on with all the shops closed. Heavy fighting is now going on at Koedoesrand, a rand running into the Modder R. about 72 miles from Bloemfontein, Genl. Cronje is surrounded & the Boers are doing their best to relieve his lager which I think will be taken.⁷⁶ Dordrecht & Colenso are both in the

shocked by the disaster, ordered the men back over the Tugela. On the morning of 25 January the Boers, who had also withdrawn during the night, found Spion Kop evacuated by the British, and men from the Heidelberg, Krugersdorp and Pretoria Commandos re-occupied the hill, thus ensuring a Boer victory. It is certain that the number of British casualties (1 185) at Spion Kop on 24 January given by the *Times history* III, pp. 294-295, is far too low. Breytenbach III, pp. 230-231, estimates their number between 1 800 and 2 000 of which 187 unrounded were taken prisoner of war. According to Breytenbach Boer losses were 198 - 58 killed and 140 wounded. The fighting between 16 and 24 January was the heaviest British defeat during the entire war. They probably lost between 2 500 and 2 700 in this period.

74. This was the Battle of Vaalkrans, 5-7 February 1900, on a hill between Colenso and Spion Kop. Having again taken control of the British columns in the Upper Tugela region, Buller mustered about 24 500 with 72 guns and 19 machine guns against a thin line of 3 600 Boers with 10 guns and 2 pom-poms spread over a distance of 30 kilometres. Buller's failure here must again be attributed to his poor intelligence regarding the Boer positions across the Tugela, as well as to the courage of the Johannesburg Commando under Comdt. Ben Viljoen and the well-directed Boer artillery. British casualties amounted to 374 - 2 officers and 23 men killed, 18 officers and 326 men wounded and 5 men missing. Boer casualties amounted to 87 of which 38 were killed, 45 wounded and 4 missing. Ben Viljoen suffered no less than 67 casualties of which 30 were killed (Breytenbach III, pp. 288-330).
75. On 10 January 1900 Field Marshal Lord Roberts assumed supreme command of the British forces in South Africa in place of Buller. By mobilising a large sector of his forces at Colesberg in the south, Roberts subsequently detracted the attention of the Boer military leaders - all except Cronjé - from his true target, the relief of Kimberley in the west. The British force at Colesberg engaged the attention of the Boers to such an extent that they neglected the defence of the western front. In order to relieve Kimberley, Roberts held the attention of Gens. Cronjé and Christiaan de Wet with an infantry division, while Gen. Sir John French's mounted infantry division moved off in a wide arc through the Free State to the east of Jacobsdal, past Cronjé's left flank at Magersfontein. After a forced march, French rode into Kimberley on 15 February 1900 - a military feat that confirmed Roberts' abilities as a tactician. However, it should be borne in mind that he had at his disposal a far larger force with more artillery than both Methuen and Buller had commanded in their failed campaigns. See Pretorius, *The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, p. 21.
76. When French passed Cronjé's left flank and relieved Kimberley the Boer leader was taken completely by surprise. His faith in the defensibility of his positions at Magersfontein had blinded him to the possibility of Roberts leaving the railway line in his advance. The British were now between Cronjé and the republics; to avoid being cut off, Cronjé was forced to move eastwards as fast as possible. His refusal to rid himself of his cumbersome wagon train made it easy for the British to overtake him.

hands of the English & the Boers are beginning to feel uncomfortable, the President has proclaimed Sunday & Tuesday as days of humiliation & prayer.⁷⁷

Mch 2 This has been a most exciting week; yesterday morning we received a wire from one of the Chief Generals that Kaffirs coming from Modder R reported that Cronje had surrendered, of course all the Boers here said this was a lie & merely a kaffir yarn but last night after I had gone to bed the Postmaster sent me round a message that a wire had come in (*Page 19*) stating that Cronje had surrendered on Tuesday morning;⁷⁸ I was simply overjoyed & just put on an overcoat & went round to see my friends in my pyjamas & eventually got to bed again some time this morning; Cronje is the Kitchener of the Republican forces & all the men with him are tried Transvaal Burghers, in fact the pick of the forces. The English have also been doing splendid work at the Tugela & have repaired the Railway bridge at Colenso, the last news we had was that the British had taken the Krugersdorp positions which are very near Ladysmith & my own opinion is that the place is relieved [sic].⁷⁹ The Boers have all cleared from Colesberg so I suppose the British are in possession of the town.⁸⁰ On the 26 ult. at Mafeking the Boer General wires that Baden Powell is

On 18 February Lord Kitchener attacked Cronjé at Paardeberg on the north bank of the Modder River, advancing on three fronts and under cover of heavy artillery fire. Cronjé repulsed Kitchener with minimal losses (not more than 70 men killed and wounded), but the British lost 1 270 men (303 killed, 906 wounded and 61 taken prisoner) in what was to be the largest casualty totals for a single day during the entire war (*Times history* III, pp. 420-458; Breytenbach IV, pp. 286-323; Pretorius, *The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, pp. 21-22).

77. The ZAR government proclaimed Sunday 25 and Tuesday 27 February 1900 (Amajuba day) days of thanksgiving and prayer. The fact that these days correlated closely with the alarming national situation, with all fronts on the verge of collapse and the British forces on the Modder River closing in relentlessly on Cronjé and his 4 000 men, was not explicitly stated in the proclamation. But on various fronts the burghers understandably linked Cronjé's desperate situation with the days of prayer (Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 189-190).
78. At the Battle of Paardeberg Cronjé suffered a serious setback: so many of his horses and draught animals had been killed in the battle that the wagon lager could not be moved to safer terrain. He had no alternative but to hold fast to his defensible position at Paardeberg on the bank of the Modder River and hope for reinforcements to arrive to relieve his force of 4 000 burghers and some 60 women and children accompanying them. In the meantime Roberts and 40 000 men completely encircled the Boer lager, keeping up a continuous bombardment with his 100 guns. Hygiene and food supplies were seriously affected in the lager. Gen. De Wet's attempt to relieve Cronjé failed because the latter's battle-weary officers were not prepared to dare a crossing of the flooded river. Overruled by his council of war, Cronjé had no alternative but to surrender to Roberts on 27 February 1900 with his 4 000 Transvalers and Free Staters (Pretorius, *The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, pp. 22-24).
79. Charlie Moses was right - Ladysmith was relieved on 28 February 1900. After his defeat at Vaalkrans on 5 February, Buller had at last realised that the key to success at relieving Ladysmith lay in taking Hlangwane Hill south of the Tugela River, where the vulnerable left flank of Botha's force lay. Buller's capture of this hill between 17 and 19 February signalled the effectual collapse of Boer resistance in Natal. Spurred on by the news of Cronjé's surrender on 27 February, the British on that day eventually succeeded in breaking through at Pieter's Hill. The Boer forces around Ladysmith fell back to the Biggarsberg and the Drakensberg, and the town was relieved (Pretorius, *The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, p. 24).
80. Again Charlie Moses was right - Colesberg was abandoned by the Boers on 27 February 1900, Maj.-Gen. R.A.P. Clements occupying the town the next day. After the surrender of Cronjé the Boer leaders considered their forces on the southern front threatened in their rear if Roberts were to push on from Paardeberg to Bloemfontein, capital of the Orange Free State. The Boers were, therefore, ordered to retreat through the southern Free State, east of Bloemfontein (*Times history* III, pp. 487-488; Breytenbach IV, p. 458).

sending all the kaffirs out of the town as food is getting very scarce & the garrison have to eat horseflesh, I believe this is an infernal lie.⁸¹ The Government would not tell us that Jacobsdal was in possession of the British & I had strong suspicions that it was so, so I sent the following to Thomas Atkins⁸² Jacobsdal "wire me when you are proceeding to Bloemfontein", the telegraphist sent it back with the answer that the office was closed & then of course I knew what that meant. I did a very risky & foolish thing in sending that wire as [= and] if the Magistrate had seen it, I do not know what would have happened to me.

Mch 5 Hurrah! Ladysmith is relieved at last, we heard this news on Friday after dinner; I simply went off my head & as a result will most prob (*Page 20*) -ably be put out of the State; I happened to be at work in the office when a messenger from the telegraph office came round to inform me; I did not stop to put on my coat & waistcoat but rushed off to tell Mr Oates the news & in this state I almost ran into the arms of the Public Prosecutor who is fearfully bitter against the English & he went at once & informed the Magistrate of my conduct & they are now in communication with the War Council re putting me out of the State, I do not think they will succeed & I do not care if they do; the Public Prosecutor said he was coming round to the office & going to catch hold of me by the neck & give me a good hiding but he has not turned up yet & I do not think he is likely to, at any rate after it is all over (D V) a lot of us are going to tar and feather him; well after this little incident I put my books away & stopped work for the day & went up to the Hotel & had a couple of drinks with about a dozen other fellows & then didn't we have a fine talk about it, if we had our way Buller would have been made a Peer on the spot, (*Page 21*) I stood champagne for dinner & if any of the Govt. officials had come in, we should have asked them to join us. I hear to-day that Cronje had 5000 men with him & the Free State Boers say when Bloemfontein fall [sic] they are dead off going over the Vaal River to fight for the Transvaal. Kruger is at present in Bloemfontein having a confab with Steyn.⁸³ Boers who have run away from Natal say if the whole Boer army had been there they would not have been able to stop the English getting to Ladysmith; they say they have never seen such bravery in their lives before, nothing could stop the soldiers & the Boers had to simply run for their lives.

Mch 13 I am still here although I had a very narrow shave of being put over the Border; the Landdrost Clerk reported me to the War Council & it was only through the influence of a friend in the Council that I got off; of course the General Manager got to hear of it & he sat

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81. This time Charlie Moses was wrong. On 8 February 1900 Baden-Powell conceived the idea of trying to get all the refugee and foreign blacks (about 2 000 of them) to leave Mafeking by laying down stock through Col. Plumer at a place called Kanya to the north of Mafeking. Faced with a leave-here-or-starve-here policy, these blacks broke out of town whenever possible, relieving the strain on the food supply within the town. However, before the end of February the only available meat in town was mule- and horseflesh. See Breytanbach VI, pp. 33-36; T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 407.
82. Thomas Atkins being the popular name for a British soldier.
83. Kruger and Steyn met in Bloemfontein on 5 March 1900. They immediately sent a cable to the British Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, stating that they were fighting to retain the indisputable independence of both republics as sovereign international states. On 9 and 11 March this was followed by requests to various powers to intervene in order to prevent further bloodshed. Before these governments could react, Salisbury replied that Britain was not prepared to agree to the independence of either the ZAR or the Free State. Immediately all hope of intervention by other powers was quashed, giving the governments concerned the opportunity to refuse Kruger and Steyn (Pretorius, *The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, p. 85).

on me properly. The Boers make out that the British loss at the taking of Cronje was between 5 & 6000 killed & wounded;⁸⁴ on the 6 inst. heavy fighting took place at Dordrecht & the official news re same was that the Boers had captured 2 cannon & a maxim but later on they tell us the Boers retired 9 miles to take up better positions & found they could not take the cannon with them;⁸⁵ the same day they blew up the Bridge at Norvalspont & retired to Donkerpoort. On Wednesday the 7th there was a big fight at Poplar Grove & from a conversation I had with a Boer who was there, I gathered that (*Page 22*) the Boers had to run for it & two commandoes very nearly got surrounded, as it was the British isolated about 100 at a certain kopje & shot all their horses & then took them prisoners.⁸⁶

On Friday the 9th the British occupied Aliwal North and Petrusburg, a small skirmish took place at Pomeroy (Natal) & a railway accident occurred at Glencoe (Natal) in which 3 Boers were killed & several hurt. On Saturday the big fight took place at Abrahams Kraal in which the Boers had to give up all their positions & retire on the Capital; I also had a talk to a Boer who took part in this fight; he said "the English came on like ants & I should estimate their number at 80,000, as soon as we fired with one cannon they fired on that one spot with about 10; fortunately for us Genl de la Rey turned up with reinforcements towards nightfall otherwise we would have lost all our waggons & as it is I fear de la Rey with about 200 men has fallen into the hands of the enemy".⁸⁷ The Boers have now taken up positions at

84. These figures were grossly exaggerated. See e.g. note 76 on the British casualties at the Battle of Paardeberg where the largest casualty totals for a single day during the entire war occurred, viz. 1 270 British officers and men.

85. A heavy fight occurred on 4 and 5 March 1900 at Labuschagne's Nek north of Dordrecht in the Cape Colony when Maj.-Gen. Sir E.Y. Brabant with his Colonial Division of 1 000 men attacked Comdt. M. de Wet with his 400 Cape Rebels who were covering the general Boer retreat from the southern front which Cronjé's capture had rendered inevitable. The Boers captured 2 guns and a maxim, but when forced to retreat had to leave the guns behind. According to De Wet he lost 25 men - 8 killed and 17 wounded - and the British 43 - 14 killed and 29 wounded. See Breytenbach V (Pretoria, 1983), p. 133; *Times history* III, pp. 490-491.

86. After Cronjé's capture Roberts advanced with a force 30 000 strong and 116 guns in an easterly direction towards Bloemfontein, capital of the Orange Free State. On 7 March 1900 he attacked De Wet who had taken up position with 5 000 burghers and 7 guns over a wide front at Poplar Grove. With 3 divisions in front of them and French's cavalry seemingly about to encircle them, the burghers, demoralized by Cronjé's surrender, fled in the direction of Bloemfontein. British casualties were 57 - 8 killed and 49 wounded. The Boers lost 1 man killed and 1 wounded. British claims that the Boer casualties were about 50, were unfounded (Breytenbach V, pp. 50-63; *Times history* III, pp. 557, 560-570). No information could be traced about Boer prisoners of war.

At Abraham's Kraal, about 50 kilometres north-west of Bloemfontein, the Boer flight partly came to a halt, where about 2 000 of them under De Wet were reinforced by 1 000 men under Gen. De la Rey. On Saturday 10 March 1900 Roberts launched a massive attack in what became known as the Battle of Abraham's Kraal (or Driefontein). Although entrenched in good defensive positions and fighting with greater spirit than at Poplar Grove, the Boers who were running out of ammunition, were unable to hold out against superior numbers in a frontal attack assisted by cavalry on the flanks. By nightfall a general retreat towards Bloemfontein took place. British casualties were about 424 (6 officers and 76 men killed or died of wounds and 18 officers and 324 men wounded). Boer official casualty lists account for 30 Boers killed, 47 wounded and 20 taken prisoner, while the *Times history* gives the numbers as 100 killed and 200 wounded: The British were, of course, not 80 000 men as Moses's informant asserted, but 30 000, and they possessed 116 guns. De la Rey did not turn up towards nightfall of the fight, but awaited the Free Staters on their arrival at Abraham's Kraal. And he did not fall in the hands of the British (Breytenbach V, pp. 64-96; *Times history* III, pp. 573-586).

Spitskop 11 miles from Bloemfontein & yesterday we received a wire that the British were two (*Page 23*) hours from the Capital (Bloemfontein) which has now been shifted to Kroonstad about 130 miles North. I would not be a bit surprised if Roberts is not already in possession of Bloemfontein.⁸⁸ About 1500 Boers are passing through here to-day from the Drakensbergen (Natal Province) on their way to Kroonstad, they are coming through on horseback by twos & threes & do look sights.

19 March Things are getting jolly lively now, Chief Commandant de Wet came down here for a few days to collect a new force & he said that everyone he commandeered & who would not go he would shoot like a dog⁸⁹ & he told we few British subjects that if we said one word against the Boers he would shoot us on the spot.⁹⁰ Several ambulance parties have been passing through here this week on their way to Kroonstad & as they are mostly English fellows we get some reliable information from them. At Glencoe the Lancers charged a party of 600 Boers & they went through them three times & only 50 got out alive & they say they would not have escaped but it got dark.⁹¹ I saw some very realistic photos of Spion's kop & there is no doubt the British had a fearful loss there & it is disgraceful to see how the Boers have rifled the soldiers' pockets & stole all their boots & even took off some of their socks and then they expect God to help them after such sacrilege.⁹² I had a chat (*Page 24*) to a feldcornet who was at the taking of Bloemfontein; the Boers took up position at Spitskop, the highest hills near Bfn. & also at some small kops at the Kaffir Location, on Monday night Genl de Wet rode over to give his men some orders at the latter place & found all his men gone & the British in possession, they came from all quarters & simply surrounded the town from Bainsvlei; Wessels fearing the Boers fled without firing a shot scarcely & if the British

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88. Charlie Moses was right. On that very day, Tuesday 13 March 1900, Roberts occupied Bloemfontein with little resistance from the Boers. He appointed Maj.-Gen. G.T. Pretzman as Military Governor of Bloemfontein. The Free Staters shifted their capital to Kroonstad (Breytenbach V, pp. 101-102 & 112-128; *Times history* III, pp. 590-591).
89. Charlie Moses is probably referring to the re-commandeering of burghers who had laid down their arms and had sworn the oath of neutrality to the British government after Roberts's proclamation of 15 March 1900. This De Wet was entitled to do, as no army in time of war could allow its citizens to decide for themselves whether they wanted to take up arms or not. Although there is proof that some Boer officers threatened burghers who had laid down their arms, De Wet certainly would not have said that he would shoot the unwilling like dogs. He stated in his reminiscences that he instructed officers not to compel anybody to join, because he was of the opinion that a coerced burgher would be of no real value to them, and would besides be untrustworthy. In a letter to Gen. Louis Botha in December 1900 he again stated that they did not force anybody to join. Moreover, after Cronjé's surrender he sent his men home to rest and rejoin on 25 March, expecting that those who came back would fight with renewed courage. He stated that he preferred to command ten men who were willing to fight, rather than a hundred who shirked their duties. See De Wet, pp. 78-79 & 200; A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"* (Cape Town, 1979), pp. 31-34; Transvaal Archives, Preller Collection, 1, Letter, De Wet - Botha, 10.12.1900, p. 212.
90. There is no indication as to the truth of this assertion by Moses, but it is not impossible.
91. This is a reference to the Battle of Elandsplaagte on 21 October 1899. See note 10.
92. The looting of personal belongings of dead or wounded British soldiers occasionally did occur. It seems, however, that most burghers were extremely indignant at such atrocities. Taking boots from the dead and wounded British soldiers often was out of necessity for not having shoes anymore (Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 166-167).

had only followed them up they would have caught all their waggons & half the men as well.⁹³ Cronjes [sic] capture has completely demoralised them & now when they are fighting they are always looking round to see if they are being surrounded & if they think there is the slightest chance of it being done they clear for their very lives.⁹⁴ We are not allowed to get any more newspapers here any more & we get no more official news; there was a rumour last night that the English are an hour from Winburg. I hear that Steyn has resigned & has been made Commander-in-Chief of the Federal forces & that Kruger has proclaimed the Free State,⁹⁵ I have heard several Boers say that they absolutely will not fight for the Transvaal.⁹⁶

(Page 25) A wire came in today to the effect that a report was received from a fellow who had escaped from Bloemfontein, that Gatacre had been caught with all his men by General Olivier & the British had sent 17000 troops down to Edenburg by rail to try & cut him off; my own opinion about this yarn is that one must just reverse the names & substitute Olivier for Gatacre.⁹⁷ One Burgher told me today he was sure the war would not last long now, he said there were 40000 Boers at Brandfort & they were going to give the English one good hiding & then they would sue for peace. There is a Commando of about 500 strong whom we have heard nothing of for about 12 days & the general opinion is they have been caught, as all our town men are amongst them we are naturally feeling very anxious.

21 ? March Yesterday 3 chums of mine turned up from Bloemfontein from whence they had been freed on parole, I had a long chat to one of them & it appears he was sent up from Donkerpoort to get some provisions & was leaving Bloemfontein on the Monday night & mistook the English camp for his own & walked straight into the enemies [sic] hands; an officer said to him "hullo! old chum, what are you doing here" S — said "I don't know I have evidently come to the wrong place, do you smoke won't you have a cigarette" the officer who was none other than General French said "Yes" & then he asked him where he wished to go to & said he must come round to his office on Thursday. In the meantime S — was walking up the street & met Lord Roberts who stopped his carriage & asked him his name & then told him if any of his men ask him anything about (Page 26) the Boers he was to say he knew nothing; on Thursday they all got their certificates & after taking the oath were told that if they were found fighting again they would be shot. They were all thunderstruck at the splendid way in which the troops behaved themselves in the town & at Roberts' magnanimity in letting all Burghers who laid down their arms go to their homes in

93. The British approach to Bloemfontein was from the south from the direction of Sterkfontein, and not from Bainsvlei in the north. They were, however, so tired after their march from Paardeberg, that there was no chance of their cutting off the Boer retreat towards Kroonstad (Breytenbach V, pp. 106-123).

94. This was true - as was proved at Poplar Grove on 7 March 1900 and Abraham's Kraal three days later.

95. There was no truth in these rumours.

96. With some exceptions, relations between Transvalers and Free Staters had all along been somewhat strained during the first part of the war, particularly after the surrender of Cronjé. The fall of Bloemfontein saw a continuation of this situation with reciprocal accusations of cowardice and of misdoings to private property or seizing of each other's supplies. See Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 261-262; W.L.v. R Scholtz, *Die betrekkinge tussen die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek en die Oranje-Vrijstaat, 1899-1902* (Unpublished MA thesis, Rand Afrikaans University, 1972), pp. 63-64.

97. There was absolutely no truth in this rumour.

peace.⁹⁸

23 ? March The British reached Leeuw River Hills, half way between Thabanchu & Ladybrand yesterday & succeeded in cutting off Commandant Olivier but General Grobler with about 2000 men managed to get out just in time & they are now trekking up the Caledon on their road to Brandfort; either Olivier or Grobler had a large convoy of about 300 waggons with them & I suppose a large number of these have fallen into the hands of the British.⁹⁹ Both Steyn & Kruger were present at the battle of Abrahamskraal (nr Bloemfontein) & Kruger lion hearted though he is was found sobbing like a child because his men refused to fight any more.¹⁰⁰

3 April The town is full of excitement to-day, there is a commando of 500 strong who are collecting here to go off to the front; they all seem to be full of courage and determined to drive the British out of their Capital (Bfn).¹⁰¹ A very plucky incident happened a week or so ago on the Basuto land Border; at one of the lagers there are three Englishmen named respectively Thorold, Sam & George Mosely; their Field Cornet is a very Anti English beast & one day Thorold had a quarrel with a Dutchman (*Page 27*) about a trivial matter; the Field Cornet rushed out of his tent & not waiting to hear anything about the row struck T— on the head & then told 4 Boers to collar hold of him & ordered him to receive so many lashes; well

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98. On 15 March 1900, two days after his occupation of Bloemfontein, Roberts issued a proclamation, assuring the burghers that they would be allowed to return to their farms and that their property would be respected by the British forces, provided they signed an oath of neutrality and thereby agreed to abstain from taking any further part in the war. Nothing was said (as Moses asserts) that such burghers would be shot if they were found fighting again. See S.B. Spies, pp. 34-35; Grundlingh, pp. 14-16; Breytenbach V, pp. 123-125.
99. On 11 March 1900 Pres. Steyn ordered the Boer commandos on the southern front around Colesberg and Stormberg to retreat and join the main Boer force north of Bloemfontein in order not to be cut off by the British success from the west. The retreating force consisted of about 6 500 men under the Transvaal Gens. F.A. Grobler and H.R. Lemmer (from the Colesberg-Norval's Pont and Bethulie areas) and Free Stater J.H. Olivier (from the Stormberg area). After joining hands near Commissie Drift their route took them in a northerly direction past Smithfield, Wepener and Ladybrand along the Caledon and Leeuw Rivers and the Basutoland border. The wagon train, consisting of 750 ox-wagons, was 40 kilometres long. Grobler was in the vanguard, followed by Lemmer, with Olivier and his 2 000 men in the rearguard. With reports that the Boers were in complete disarray Roberts ordered French with only 1 700 mounted infantry and two batteries to cut them off in the vicinity of Ladybrand. Moreover, French sent Lt.-Col. T.D. Pilcher with only 243 men and two machine guns ahead to the Leeuw River. Although their horses and oxen were in a poor condition, the three Boer commandos managed to slip past the British, and reached the main Boer force near Kroonstad by 27 March (Breytenbach V, pp. 129-155).
100. Kruger and Steyn were not present at Abraham's Kraal. There is no evidence that Kruger "was found sobbing like a child", although he must have felt very disappointed at the flight of the burghers. See Breytenbach V, pp. 56-57; N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn* II (Cape Town, 1921), p. 7.
101. Since the broken Boer spirit after the surrender of Cronjé and the fall of Bloemfontein, there had indeed been a change of heart amongst the Boer officers and men. On 17 March 1900 a council of war of both republics at Kroonstad decided to continue the war forcefully and with guerrilla tactics. Eight days later the Free Staters who had been given leave by De Wet assembled according to agreement at the Sand River with renewed courage. That the tide of Boer surrendering had been stemmed to a large extent and that their fortunes were changing, was made evident by new Boer successes, such as Sannah's Post on 31 March (*vide infra*).

the whole lager numbering about 40 Boers & the 2 Moseleys [sic] turned out to see the man flogged; the two M's waited till the Boers came up to fasten Thorold prior to flogging him & then off came their coats & up went their sleeves & the both of them stepped up one on each side & after freeing Thorold turned round to the armed Boers & said "We'll knock down the first man who lays a hand on Thorold" several Boers came up to collar them but got more than they bargained for from these three plucky chaps and deeming discretion the better part of valour they all slunk away like whipped curs & the Veldkornet told these three next morning they had better clear out of his lager which they were only too pleased to do.¹⁰² We heard on the 26th ult. that Olivier had got through the English lines alright but had not got Gatacre with them; if the British had only attacked the Boers who were retreating from Norvalspont they would have taken the whole lot, numbering about 5 to 7000, prisoners as they were all completely done up & had a huge convoy of about 600 waggon [sic] with them which seriously hampered their movement. I have just been out to see the Burghers off; it was a pitiful scene to see them saying good bye to their wives and children, as each one is the head of a family, & then a little group of girls collected in the Church square & sang the Volkslied & (Page 28) wished them God speed; one cannot help but thinking how misguided they have been & are simply led like sheep. On the 26 ult. the English took Ladybrand but according to an official wire after being there merely an hour & a half they were chased out again.¹⁰³ I have heard on good authority that the Transvaal were willing to lay down their artillery¹⁰⁴ & Kruger to resign if Great Britain would guarantee them total independence but of course Salisbury would listen to no such thing.¹⁰⁵ On the 28th Genl. Potgieter wires from 14 Streams (between Kimberley and Mafeking) that he compelled the British to evacuate their camp after ½ an hour's bombardment of same; on 29th a heavy fight took place at the Modder R. in which our friends the Boers were compelled to clear for their lives otherwise they would have been surrounded; they give us their loss 2 killed & 15 wounded.¹⁰⁶ On the 31st the British made another mess of things, the Boers attacked them at Sannahspost (the waterworks 30 miles from Bloemfontein) & captured 6 cannon, 100 waggons, & about 200 prisoners; it was through pure carelessness that this happened; the Boers lay concealed in the river bed & they let the British get right on top of the banks of the river with their cannon

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102. Generally English-speaking burghers who went on commando under duress appeared to have had a hard time. There were, however, also English-speaking burghers who went on commando unprotestingly and who enjoyed life in the field, identifying them completely with the Boer cause. See H. Taylor, *Doctor to Basuto, Boer & Briton, 1877-1906* (Cape Town, 1972), pp. 160-161; Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 262-265.
103. Pilcher occupied Ladybrand on 26 March 1900, raided the court-house and made prisoners of the landdrost, ex-Field Cornet Smith, and the landdrost clerk. However, with the approach of Comdt. R. Crowther and his Ladybrand Commando an hour and a half later, Pilcher just had time to escape to Leeuw River with his force (Breytenbach V, pp. 144-145 & 152; *Times history* IV, p. 10).
104. Read: arms.
105. See note 83 for the appeal of 5 March 1900 by the Presidents to Salisbury. There was no Kruger offer to resign if Britain would guarantee them total independence.
106. On 29 March 1900 there was an action at Karee Siding, near the Modder River and north of Bloemfontein. With Gen. De Wet on his way to cutting off the waterworks to the east of Bloemfontein, Gen. Tobias Smuts had the order to cover his rear in the vicinity of the Modder River. Lord Roberts realized that Smuts's men had to be driven further north in order for him to repair the railway bridge, without which he could not continue his offence in that direction. After a hard battle Gen. French and Lt.-Col. P.W.J. le Gallais succeeded in flanking the Boers, whereupon the Boers retreated towards Brandfort in the north. Roberts reported that the British casualties were 216 men. Three Boers were killed and 18 wounded (Breytenbach V, pp. 186-191).

before they fired a shot & then all the horses being shot down the gunners were compelled to abandon the guns, of course if scouts had been employed this catastrophe would have been averted; the Boer loss was only 2 killed & 5 wounded & the English must have lost very heavily.¹⁰⁷ The Raad opened its sitting at Kroonstad on the 2nd inst. & of course we had the Presidents [sic] Speech soon after & I have never read such a mass of diabolical lies in all my life; he accuses Great Britain of the misuse of (*Page 29*) the white flag & red cross & told the poor innocent gullible members of the Volksraad that England was determined from the very first to annihilate the two Republics; he also says it was never the intention of the Federals to acquire [sic] new territory [sic] (this is an infamous lie as proved by Reitz's manifesto) but only to defend their own borders.¹⁰⁸

23 April There has been nothing much to write about these last 20 days & it will not take me very long to give you an account of all that has happened; on the 6th General C.R. de Wet took 459 of Brabant's horse prisoners but according to the Boer account the British fought grandly against overwhelming odds;¹⁰⁹ on the 10th we received a wire which made we English feel very ill; namely that Wepener had been retaken by the Boers & that 1500 British were surrounded & entirely cut off from all supplies & their surrender was merely a matter of hours; up to date they have not surrendered yet & if the Boers are not very careful they will be landed in a nice kettle of fish as I think it is Roberts' intention to send a large force over from Bloemfontein & cut them off. On the 14th I went over to Kroonstad, the present Capital, I went over because I thought I might see things there which I would not see again in my lifetime; I found the town full & all the Govt. officials seemed to be very happy with the exception of the President who seemed to have aged considerably; I had a talk to his

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107. With his attack on the Bloemfontein waterworks at Sannah's Post, 30 kilometres east of Bloemfontein, Gen. Christiaan de Wet achieved one of his most brilliant victories. Sannah's Post lies in the delta between the Modder River and Koring Spruit. On the morning of 31 March 1900 his brother, Gen. Piet de Wet, opened fire from the east of the Modder River on the British camp of Brig.-Gen. R.G. Broadwood at Sannah's Post. The British, withdrawing hastily in the direction of Bloemfontein, ran straight into the ambush prepared for them by Christiaan de Wet, who was lying in waiting with 400 men at the Koring Spruit Drift. The British suffered 578 casualties - 3 officers and 15 men killed, 134 wounded, and 426 taken prisoner. The Boer losses were 16 - 5 killed and 11 wounded. The entire British convoy consisting of 117 wagons and livestock, and 7 guns and 250 Lee Metford rifles with a large quantity of ammunition fell into Boer hands (Breytenbach V, pp. 191-225; *History of the war in South Africa*, pp. 275-298 and 596).
108. "Reitz's manifesto" referred to here was the pamphlet *A century of wrong* (London, 1900), actually written by State Attorney Jan Smuts and Jimmy Roos. This treatise probably did the Boer cause much harm with its conclusion of the dream of a united South Africa, when it will be from the Zambesi to Simon's Bay "Africa for the Afrikaner" (p. 98). However, as Iain R. Smith has recently mentioned, British fears of Afrikaner solidarity proved to be greatly exaggerated. Investigation by historians has revealed no conspiracy between the two Boer republics to impose an Afrikaner and republican dominion on the rest of South Africa or to achieve a United States of South Africa under Transvaal leadership. See I.R. Smith, *The origins of the South African War 1899-1902* (London, 1996), p. 392.
109. On 3 and 4 (not 6) April 1900 De Wet continued his counter-offensive. In a sharp clash against a British force under Capt. W.J. McWhinnie of the Royal Irish Rifles at Mostertshoek near Reddersburg, he took between 459 and 546 British soldiers as prisoners of war. The British further lost 10 killed and 35 wounded. The Boers lost 3 men killed and 3 wounded (Breytenbach V, pp. 248-258; *History of the war in South Africa II*, p. 310).

Private Secretary who is an old school chum of mine;¹¹⁰ the Secretary of the War Council¹¹¹ invited me to dinner with him & the State Attorney.¹¹² Sunday afternoon I had a stroll down to the camp of the French corp [sic] & I really think they must be the scum of Paris, I have never seen such a lot of scoundrelly looking fellows in all my life & 2/3 of them have never been on horseback before.¹¹³ I saw all the political prisoners who were awaiting their trial for high treason, they are very well treated being allowed to have their meals (*Page 30*) at one of the hotels & there is a large house hired for them to sleep in. On account of knowing one of the patients I was allowed to visit the military hospital, where everything is beautifully clean & sweet; the place was not very full as most of the Burghers prefer to go home when they are wounded. If the Government moves from Kroonstad we are likely to be the next Capital. I hear the British are advancing, to the relief of Brabant's force at Wepener, from three points & it is also said that Sir Godfrey Lagden is on the Basuto Border with thousands of Kaffirs to prevent the Boers crossing the River Caledon. I have just heard that the Dynamite factory at Johannesburg has been blown up & 100 men, women & children killed, if this is so, it will have a most serious effect on the Boers who are naturally superstitious; they manufactured their shells & powder there, I would not be a bit surprised if Kruger does not put every English resident in the Transvaal over the Border as he is sure to blame the poor Uitlander for the blowing up of the Factory.¹¹⁴ A detachment of 50 Burghers left here to day for, Thabanchu, they did not seem particularly anxious to go.

5th May There is great excitement here to day as the British have occupied Winburg¹¹⁵ & we are cut off from all telegraphic communication with the present Capital, all the Govt. work is collected here & sent per (*Page 31*) despatch riders to Kroonstad 52 miles away; they commandeered my bike this evening for the use of one of the riders but fortunately, I sent

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110. Gordon Alexander Fraser, born 5 March 1879 at Philippolis and the brother of Pres. Steyn's wife, was educated at Grey College in Bloemfontein and the South African College in Cape Town. During the war he was President Steyn's private secretary. On 13 July 1901 he was captured and sent to Bermuda. See M.C.E. van Schoor (ed), "The diaries and recollections of Jacob Abraham Jeremias de Villiers", *Christiaan de Wet-Annale 8* (Bloemfontein, 1990), p. 12.
 111. A.W. McHardy acted as Secretary of the War Council. Like Gordon Fraser, he was taken prisoner of war on 13 July 1901 and sent to Bermuda. See M.C.E. van Schoor (ed), "The diaries and recollections of Jacob Abraham Jeremias de Villiers", *Christiaan de Wet-Annale 8*, p. 12.
 112. Jacob Abraham Jeremias de Villiers (1868-1932) was admitted to the Middle Temple in London as barrister in 1893. During the war he was State Attorney of the Orange Free State, but was wounded and captured on 6 November 1900 and eventually sent to Bermuda as a prisoner of war. In 1929 he became Chief Justice of the Union of South Africa. See M.C.E. van Schoor (ed), "The diaries and recollections of Jacob Abraham Jeremias de Villiers", *Christiaan de Wet-Annale 8*, pp. 5-9.
 113. This was a few weeks after the death of their commander, General Georges de Villebois-Mareuil at Boshof on 5 April 1900. The foreign volunteers corps were in confusion. In due course, as some of the units disbanded, individual volunteers joined the Boer commandos, while others left for home. See R. Macnab, *The French Colonel. Villebois-Mareuil and the Boers 1899-1900* (Oxford, 1975), p. 240.
 114. Charlie Moses must have written this on 24 April 1900, because on that day a dynamite explosion blew up the Begbie ammunition factory in Johannesburg. Kruger strongly suspected sabotage, which led to measures giving all British subjects on the Witwatersrand or in Pretoria without permission to remain thirty-six hours to leave the state (S.B. Spies, p. 20).
 115. Starting with his mounted infantry division from Thaba 'Nchu to the east of Bloemfontein on 30 April 1900, Lt.-Gen. Sir Ian Hamilton occupied Winburg, 110 kilometres north of Bloemfontein, on 5 May, after encountering some Boer resistance by Gen. J.H. de la Rey (*Times history IV*, pp. 96-107; Breytenbach V, pp. 415-436).

it out to a farm 18 miles from here so they cannot get it. One of the Transvaal artillerymen, a friend of mine, left for the front two weeks before his leave expired as things are looking very critical & they are commandeering boys from 12 to 17 years old;¹¹⁶ one Boer came back home a few days ago & said "I kept on retreating till I got to my bed which was the best position I had ever taken up".¹¹⁷ It was a very bitter disappointment for the Boers to have to give up the idea of taking Brabant's force at Wepener & they are fighting in a very disheartening sort of a way now; the explosion of their powder factory in Johannesburg has weakened their position considerably as the machinery & buildings are a total wreck; all the window panes within a radius of a square mile were broken & any amount of houses were wrecked; as a consequence of this mishap all the British subjects in the Transvaal have orders to leave within 48 hours, excepting the few who are working in the Transvaal Banks as their own National Bank is almost completely staffed by Scotchmen. A couple of official wires came in to day saying that Lord Roberts had commenced his advance & was rapidly coming up on both sides of the Railway line.¹¹⁸ Yesterday we got the British wires from Maseru, of course they are most carefully smuggled through & there are only about half a dozen of us who see them, it is a real treat to get the (*Page 32*) English version of how things are going, did not Lieut. Colonel Dalgetty hold out splendidly at Wepener; of course it was in a great measure due to Sir Godfrey Lagden's foresight that the British were able to hold out so long as he immediately brought up 3000 armed Basutos & said the first Boer who crossed the Caledon would be shot & this prevented the Boers from getting positions on the farther side.¹¹⁹ We got some London Daily Telegraphs & a copy of the "Sphere" from Delagoa Bay this evening & by Jove! they were grand reading. To-day is Sunday¹²⁰ & small parties of Boers have been turning up all day, 1000 of them deserted at Thabanchu & said they were going home to their farms; Steyn left Kroonstad & went down to try and get them together again but had to beat a hasty retreat for fear of being caught. It is great fun to see the tricks the Boers are resorting to, to get out of going to Commando; you will see a man walking about as lame as can be & all of a sudden a friend will call him to come quickly & he will forget all about his lameness & clear off as right as anything; then another one who has never had anything the matter with his eyes, will suddenly discover he cannot see more than

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116. This was not true. Boers between 16 and 60 were liable for service. It was only by a proclamation of Steyn on 2 November 1901 that boys of 14 could be commandeered if their constitution allowed that. At the beginning of May 1900, however, the men who had left the commandos in the previous six weeks for home were recommandeered. It met with little success, as many were tired of the war and had laid down their arms (Breytenbach V, pp. 417-418, 427-428; Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 256).
117. British figures indicate that a total of 5 939 Free State Boers laid down their arms in the period 15 March to the end of July 1900 (Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 22).
118. On 3 May 1900 Lord Roberts started with his advance from Bloemfontein along the railway line in the direction of Kroonstad, Johannesburg and Pretoria. His force of 24 754 men with 80 guns and 49 machine guns was protected on his right flank by Hamilton's mounted infantry division of 18 627 men with 58 guns and 24 machine guns (*History of the war in South Africa III*, pp. 536-539; Breytenbach V, pp. 413-416).
119. When Christiaan de Wet laid siege to the Colonial Division under Dalgety in Wepener (on the Basutoland border) on 9 April 1900, Sir Godfrey Lagden, British Resident Commissioner of Basutoland, was convinced that De Wet would enter Basutoland. Lagden consequently completed arrangements for a Basotho frontier guard of 3 000 men to resist any Boer encroachment. The guard was maintained for the duration of the siege, until on 25 April the Colonial Division was relieved by Maj.-Gens. A.F. Hart and E.Y. Brabant from Bloemfontein (P. Warwick, pp. 59-60; *Times history IV*, pp. 56-66).
120. That is Sunday 6 May 1900.

10 yards ahead & will immediately go & buy a pair of spectacles. It is marvellous how men are beginning to find out now that they were brought up under the British flag, & how well (*Page 33*) they were always treated. I have spoken to several Boers who have run home & they all say they had a very narrow shave of being caught at Winburg & the majority of them seem to think that it is all over with the Free State; The Transvaalers say they will not fight any more in the O.F.S. & the Free Staters declare they will not cross the Vaal. I cannot make out why Buller is doing nothing in Natal; at any rate the Boers are getting tired of having to sit still & do nothing on the Berg! We have not heard what has been going on at 14 Streams lately, I do hope Mafeking will be relieved; I think Colonel Plumer will be the first to enter the besieged town if it is to be relieved at all.¹²¹

10th May I was out playing golf this afternoon, when I saw the head constable approaching me, Hullo! thought I, this time I am sure to be put over the Border; he said "In the name of the Government (my heart was already in my mouth) I commandeer your bike to go to Kroonstad at 5 o'clock this afternoon"; it was just on the tip of my tongue to tell him to go to — the other world; but I thought I had better be diplomatic, so I told him the chain was broken & the machine was unridable; I might tell you I had taken the precaution a few days ago to take the chain off & put it away in case they wanted my bike; things have got so far now that one can afford to be a little independent. I heard on very good authority to day that the President, his private Secy. & the Government Secy. are coming here within the next few days; they have commandeered the best (*Page 34*) house in town for them, belonging of course to an Englishman. The Boers are sending back all their horses from Zand River, which is between Winburg & Kroonstad, so that they must stay there & fight & they will not be able to retreat.¹²² I heard last evening that the British had managed to break through at 14 Streams, so there seems to be every chance of Mafeking being relieved. The Govt. are getting ready to shift from Kroonstad, I think they intend going to Heilbron; all the commissariat [sic] has been sent to Pretoria.

12th May The last two days have been truly exciting times; without any warning whatever the Government Secy, Mr. Piet Blignaut,¹²³ turned up here last evening with his suite & at midnight the rest of the Govt. officials arrived & Lindley was proclaimed the temporary Capital of the O.F.S. in a special Govt. Gazette; to-day the town has been the scene of the greatest excitement; Govt. officials hurrying all over the place looking for offices & a force

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121. It was not to be Col. H.C.O. Plumer who was at the head of the relieving force. On 15 May 1900 his column came under the command of Col. B.T. Mahon, and it was Mahon who practically was responsible for the relief on 17 May. However, already at 19:00 on the evening of 16 May Maj. Karri Davis of the Imperial Light Horse and about ten men had marched into the town, to the frenzied delight of the inhabitants (*Times history* V, p. 596; Breytenbach VI, pp. 55-58).
122. With barely 8 000 men Botha attempted with De Wet to halt Roberts at the Sand River, between Winburg and Kroonstad on 10 May 1900. It was the most important action fought by Roberts during his advance to Pretoria. Unacquainted with Roberts' tactics of encirclement, Botha found French slipping round his right flank. The Boer force was compelled to retreat further north to avoid being attacked from the rear (*Times history* IV, p. 124; Pretorius, *The Anglo-Boer War*, p. 25).
123. Pieter Jeremias Blignaut (1841-1909) was State Secretary of the Orange Free State from 1879 to 1900. After responsible government had been granted to the Orange River Colony in 1907 he became a member of the Legislative Council, which he remained until his death. See M.C.E. van Schoor, "Pieter Jeremias Blignaut" in D.J. Potgieter (ed), *Standard encyclopaedia of Southern Africa*, Vol. 2 (Cape Town, 1970), pp. 361-362.

of the mounted police in their picturesque costume mounting guard on the highest hills round about town. The question on everyone's tongue was "Where is the President and when is he to arrive?" but no one seemed to know his whereabouts at all. At 2 o'clock a despatch rider came in great haste with the information that Kroonstad had been taken¹²⁴ & the Govt. Secy. immediately gave orders for the Government to shift (*Page 35*) to Heilbron & they are all leaving early to-morrow morning, so we have the unique experience of having been the Capital for only one day. To-night after dinner a large force of mounted police rode into town, having come from Kroonstad & I suppose they will proceed to Heilbron (8 hours from here) with the Govt. I have been spending the evening with one of the chief officials & they all see the futile effort of trying to withstand the British arms. Chief Commandant Piet de Wet, who I know personally, passed through here yesterday on the way to his farm & he says he is not going to fight any more; now this man is the finest General the Free State has & if he refuses to go the O.F.S. can just as well give in.¹²⁵ The President begged the Burghers at Kroonstad, a few days ago, to stand together; but he might just as well have been talking to a brick wall for all the impression he made as when they heard the British were advancing on Kroonstad, most of them went home & refused to fight. I have just heard that Mr. Steyn has gone to Heilbron & I think the next place the Govt. will shift to is Vrede, which is near the Natal border & the Treasurer General has already gone there.

14th May Yesterday morning early our Govt. proceeded to Heilbron, I had to get up at 6.30 as we had to attend to some business for them before they left, if the British had only sent out a patrol they would have caught the whole lot of them. There was a Council of War held here yester- (*Page 36*) day & it was a real example to show one in what a primitive way things are done & how the Federals are just playing at war. The scene lays in the Church Square; General Prinsloo, a typical old Boer, with an old coat, & a pair of trousers which is made of patches the original having disappeared long ago;¹²⁶ meets Chief Commandant Piet de Wet, & a few more minor officers coming up, the former proposes they discuss plans for the future; soon quite a nice little crowd gathers round these warriors & everyone hears the plans discussed & now & then a voice from the crowd makes some suggestion; eventually they decided to make a line from Doornkloof to Heilbron and endeavour to keep the British from invading this part of the State. The Free State Boers' great idea now is to get the

124. Roberts occupied Kroonstad on 12 May 1900 (*Times history* IV, p. 124; Breytensbach V, p. 481).

125. Up to now we have been aware of Gen. Piet de Wet's letter to Lt.-Gen. Ian Hamilton of 18 May 1900 offering to lay down arms voluntarily, which was rejected by Roberts on account of De Wet's prominent role in the war up to that point; also of his granting of a six days' armistice to Lord Methuen at the beginning of June 1900. But this is the earliest indication of Piet de Wet's sentiment on the futility of Boer resistance. Although he was still to achieve a victory over the Imperial Yeomanry near Lindley on 31 May 1900, De Wet eventually surrendered to the British at Kroonstad on 26 July 1900. He subsequently became the leader of the Heilbron section of the Orange River Colony Volunteers (Boers who had taken up arms on the British side to end the war). See Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, pp. 244-251.

126. Marthinus Prinsloo (1838-1903) became Commandant in 1867 during the Third Boer-Basotho War, was member of the Free State Volksraad, and was elected as Chief Commandant at the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War. He was extremely inactive during the siege of Ladysmith and resigned in June 1900, only to be re-elected in July, after which he surrendered with more than 4 000 men to Lt.-Gen. Sir Archibald Hunter in the Brandwater Basin on 29 July 1900. See J.J. Oberholster (ed), "Dagboek van Oskar Hintrager saam met Christiaan de Wet Mei - September 1900", in *Christiaan de Wet-Annale 2* (Bloemfontein, 1973), p. 41n.

British to cross the Vaal & then they will all go home to their farms & let the Transvaalers fight it out themselves. I hear to-day that Ficksburg has been taken,¹²⁷ I wish the [sic] goodness they would send a patrol over here so that we could have communication open again.

17 May This has indeed been a red letter day & I have not had such a grand time of it for the last eight months (*Page 37*) as I had to-day.¹²⁸ About 10 this morning I was standing outside the office sunning myself when on looking at the hills about 8 miles off I saw a crowd of something coming along which I took to be a Boer commando, I immediately procured some field glasses & then saw that they were the British; I was simply frantic with excitement & the Burghers immediately saddled up & took up positions in the neighbouring kopjes; about 11 o'clock a messenger came in with a letter signed by General Broadwood saying that to save the town from being bombarded a messenger must come out with a flag of truce & deliver over the keys; in the meantime the British were getting their cannon (12 of them with 6 maxims) into position & a messenger immediately went out to tell them not to bombard the town. Desultory rifle firing kept on all the morning with now & then a cannon shot in between; after lunch the Boers got into a kopje near town & we all stood & watched the British shelling the position & then all at once the Boers cleared for all they were worth & the English occupied the kop & sent shells at the retreating foe; it was a grand sight & I was so situated that I could see everything; shortly afterwards an officer came into town & the place was formally handed over to him. The British were about half an hour's drive from the town, so Spence & I inspanned a couple of horses & filled our pockets with (*Page 38*) cigarettes & drove out to the positions; we were the only Britishers who went out, the others being afraid of the Boers turning up again as they did at Ladybrand. When we got near enough we hoisted a white flag & an officer coming up said "Who are you & what do you want" we said "We are Britishers & right glad we are to see you" this was quite enough for them & they treated us like Princes & immediately took us to the Colonel¹²⁹ & they were simply delighted with us & our cigarettes; the Colonel after a short chat handed us over to Captain Drange of the Household Cavalry & he showed us round all the positions; we gave lots of the privates cigarettes & lots of them amused me very much by asking for "Kruger" money in exchange for British.¹³⁰ The Captain took us over to General Broadwood's tent to see him but unfortunately that officer was away & we had not time to wait for him as it was getting dark & we had to go home after spending a most delightful afternoon; there will be over 15,000 of them here to-morrow; a Squadron of the New South Wales Lancers came into town this afternoon & bought bread &c. from the inhabitants & to morrow morning the

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127. This rumour was false. Ficksburg was occupied by Maj.-Gen. E. Y. Brabant only on 24 May 1900 as part of Lt.-Gen. Sir Leslie Rundle's sweep in the north-eastern Free State (*Times history* IV, p. 242).
128. Small wonder Charlie Moses saw this as the best day he had experienced for eight months. On this day Broadwood occupied Lindley, and Moses felt that as a British subject he again was among his own people. However, the town was to change hands several times during the war, the Boers with their guerrilla tactics often retaking the town when the British moved out, as was the case as early as 20 May 1900 (*Times history* IV, p. 128).
129. It is not clear who this Colonel was.
130. "Kruger" money was the coinage of the ZAR with Pres. Kruger's head on the one side and the coat of arms of the ZAR on the other. The first were minted in 1892 ranging from 1d. to £1. The 10/- and £1 were gold coins. See E. Levine, *The coinage and counterfeits of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* (Cape Town, 1974), *passim*.

officers are coming in to have a look at the place; they all praise this climate but some of the men were telling (*Page 39*) me they have had some very hard marching to do lately.

18th May I have had another fine day again to-day; I got up early this morning & on going out saw a squadron of the Lancers drawn up in the market square & after breakfast officers & men continued to roll up & the stores did a roaring business; I did no work in the morning & just merely walked round & talked to the officers & men; of course we could not supply half their wants & all the stores in town are cleared out of everything; the men behaved themselves splendidly & there were no complaints of any kind. About 5 o'clock the Derbys, 1000 strong, marched into town headed by a few companies of the Gordon Highlanders who are fine looking men & a few minutes later some of the R.H.A. with their guns came in; the town is one huge camp & wherever one goes there is a sentry; we all had to be indoors by 8 pm but being an officer of the Bank & having some business to attend to I had the countersign & thus could stay out as late as I liked. General Ian Hamilton turned up this afternoon with the infantry brigade¹³¹ & we now have about 16,000 men here; it is a pretty sight to see all the watchfires on the hills for miles around, I am going out to the camp again to-morrow; I know several of the volunteers in Marshalls Horse & it will be quite a treat to have a chat with some of them. Some of the British (*Page 40*) were out scouting to day about 4 miles from town & one of the men was shot from a mealie field with a soft nose bullet through the arm¹³² & shattered the bone to pieces; the General immediately ordered the farm house to be burnt to the ground,¹³³ I can tell you, he stands no nonsense whatever; this poor chap will have to have his arm amputated.

19th May I was sitting in my office this morning & who would walk in but 2nd Lieut. Oscar Harris, of course I did not recognise him; I had a long chat with him, he was fairly nice; he did not ask me to come out & see him in camp which I thought he might have done but of course I suppose he would have been ashamed to introduce me to his fellow officers, these chaps think such a lot of themselves when they have obtained a commission in the army. Both the Duke of Marlborough & Winston Churchill were here to day¹³⁴ & I believe the Duke of Westminster is also here. I am going to try & get this letter off to night so I will

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131. On 18 May 1900 Ian Hamilton moved into Lindley with Maj.-Gen. Bruce Hamilton's 21st Brigade (*Times history IV*, pp. 79, 88 & 505).
 132. Both Boer and British combatants made use of "dum-dum" bullets, but it was not common practice and in any way not allowed by their authorities. Dum-dums were either made of soft lead which spread out on impact, or were fashioned on the battlefield by individuals who cut through the hard outer-case of a standard bullet. This information is from E. Lee, *To the bitter end. A photographic history of the Boer War 1899-1902* (Harmondsworth, 1985), p. 66 who only mentions Boer abuse of the "dum-dum" bullet, but Breytenbach points out several British abuses of the "dum-dum" bullet. As early as the first military contact of the war at Kraaipan on 12 October 1899, the Boers found open and half-used cases of "dum-dum" bullets in possession of the capture enemy (I, pp. 84, 282, 298, 299, 390, 421 & 424).
 133. This incident occurred a month before Roberts's proclamation of 16 June 1900 wherein he gave sanction to the destruction of farmsteads from where Boer operations were directed against the British forces (S.B. Spies, pp. 43-44).
 134. Winston Churchill joined Ian Hamilton's column as correspondent of the *Morning Post* on his march to the east of Roberts's main force. Churchill's cousin, the Duke of Marlborough, was appointed on the General's staff at the proposal of Churchill himself (W.S. Churchill, p. 342).

say good bye trusting you have not been very much bored by reading it with fondest love to you all from

Your loving Son

Charlie¹³⁵

135. Thus ends Charlie Moses's letter without the news of the relief of Mafeking the previous day - an incident which he dearly would have wanted to record. The National Bank sent him to the local store, told him to buy some clothes and then despatched him to Cape Town and thence by ship back to Britain (C. Moses, "Biographical notes: Maurice Charles Moses").