

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Raabe Gibbon Tschchow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
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Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntz
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Woman's Endurance

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To
THE REV. H.C.J. BECKER, OF BETHULIE, O.R.C.

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PREFACE.

DEAR READER,—

A perusal of the following "Introduction" by the Author, and of his true and touching "Diary," will assuredly carry the conviction into your own soul, if you still require conviction, that our South African women were the heroines of the late deplorable war.

May this pathetic relation bring us all nearer to one another in sympathy and love; and serve to awaken in every woman's breast the desire to emulate and perpetuate the pure faith and noble devotion which these Sisters of ours have handed down to us and to all posterity as their priceless legacy.

In undertaking the responsibility for the publication of this "Diary," I may simply state that the proceeds will be given towards the support of the Orphanage at Bethulie.

Yours, etc.,

D. DE VILLIERS,
Secretary, Boer Relief Committee.
CAPE TOWN.

INTRODUCTION.

This Journal was written in the Bethulie Concentration Camp just two years ago.

A few days after my return from Europe (whither I had gone for six months on the completion of a Theological course at Stellenbosch), a telegram came from the Deputy Administrator of the Orange River Colony, through the Rev. Wm. Robertson, inviting me to work as Chaplain in one of the Concentration Camps.

The Rev. Mr. Pienaar, who had received a similar invitation, and I therefore journeyed down to Bloemfontein a few days later. We received great courtesy at the hands of Sir Hamilton Gould-Adams, the Deputy Administrator, and every kindness from Mr. Robertson.

In a few days it was finally decided that Mr. Pienaar should go to Irene, in the Transvaal, and I to the Concentration Camp at Bethulie. Thither I forthwith travelled, arriving at my destination on the 21st August.

The thought suggested itself the very first day that I might desire, in after years, to recall my experiences in Camp, and so I decided to keep a diary. This thought, and this alone, prompted me in the matter. Of an evening, therefore, just before retiring, I noted down the doings of the day, consulting at such times always my pocket notebook.

What was written was done hurriedly, on the impulse of the moment—in fact, simply scribbled down without, of course, any regard to style, language, or form. Stress of circumstances must be held responsible for the many undignified expressions in which the Diary abounds. It should not be forgotten, moreover, that I was usually tired out after the day's work, when these entries were made.

For almost a year the Diary lay in my desk before I could summon courage to re-read it. After it had been hidden again for another year, I rashly promised a sick friend to send it for her to read. Fearing, however, that she would not be able to follow all the contractions, I decided to copy it over, and it was while thus engaged

that it became clear to me that it should be published. Cui bono? is of course, the question which must be faced. The only answer I wish to plead is that this work is a tribute to Woman's Endurance, and that it presents in the story of that endurance, and the fortitude of the Dutch women and children, one of the nobler aspects of the late war. And is not this plea enough? Cannot we sometimes forget the inevitable political aspect of things and see beyond into the human?

In conclusion, this: A diary is simply a confidential talk to one's self of one's self—such is its prerogative. While, then, sending forth into publicity this Journal in its entirety, so as not to mar its integrity, need it be suggested how hard it is occasionally to lay bare the naked soul within?

Durbanville,
Cape Colony,
September, 1903.

NOTE.

As reproduced here, the Diary is substantially the same as the original, except for:—

1. Contractions, which are written out.
2. Slang, for which, where it could be done, inoffensive words are substituted.

In form it is given absolutely unchanged.

I have found it necessary to add a number of notes, and to translate all the Dutch.

DIARY.

CHAP. I.

Bethulie Concentration Camp, August, 1901.

Wednesday, August 21. — Arrived station 8.30 a.m. (from Bloemfontein); tedious delay; no pass to village obtainable, official in village for breakfast; number of refugees in same train, among them a sick girl, with fever: "Pappie, Pappie, ach mij ou Pappie!" ("Daddy, daddy! O my dear daddy!" Thus she cried whenever she was touched, as they carried her out of the train, and lifted her on to the wagon. She was fever-stricken and terribly emaciated. (Reference is made later to this same girl.) Alas! Arrival village; visit parsonage (Becker's); dinner; things forwarded per wagon; arrival camp (mile out); meet superintendent; given a tent; dust; misery; the Van As's offer me a home; kind; bitter cold night; leakage; bad draught; bad cold; feel lonesome; orphanish; pipe to rescue; great consolation.

Thursday, August 22. — My tent untenable position; in the thoroughfare; speak Superintendent; obtain new site; private; buy 150 bricks 1s. 6d., hire three boys, barrow 1s. 3d.; with miershoop (anheap, excellent for making floor) make brick kraal; hard work; Mr. Van As [1] and Fourie grand; fine floor.

First visits: Young girl, orphan, bad; Weinanda, little girl, "Ja Oom, ik is nou bij mij Mamie" ("Yes, Uncle, now I am with my mother"); mind wanders. Third tent: Two babies wrestling with death; mothers raadeloos (in despair); 486 [2], wife, babe at breast, measles; daughter, 14, convalescent; behind screen three children sick, measles; condition pitiable; husband prisoner Ladismith; great dirt; unbearable; the pity of it!

Pitch tent; wet floor; inside dire confusion.

Meeting Church-square thirty-nine elders [3]; each a block; prayer; introduction Rev. Becker; kind words and cheer.

Early bed; restless night; hospital close by; commotion; groans; fifteen buried to-day; service for Mr. Van As.

Friday, August 23. — Early bird; wash spruit [4]; first shave (tears); Van As coffee; pathetic sight; old man leading old wife back to tent from hospital; Hugo; son just died.

Visit Hugo's; dinner Van As; outspan (rest); cigar grand.

Unpack; three Red Cross boxes (gift of the chemist); order out of chaos; spirits revive; visits 2.5 p.m.

Dying child; mother broken-hearted.

Dying mother; clear doorway; deathbed grim attraction for our people; prayer; understands.

Widow; husband found dead outside in night; heart disease.

Sick child (since dead); sick child; sweet face; Louw.

Visit sick child of yesterday, also Weinanda.

Stray; hear cough; enter; father invalid (wife dead); three sick children; youngest very bad.

Comfort mother of dead child.

Funerals (seven), Mr. Becker: "I was dumb and opened not my mouth."

Burial ground; about 120 graves; weeping mothers; visit dying child; fool of myself, broke down in prayer; the helplessness in presence of Death!

Throat hoarse; dead off; return tent; meditate; convinced this work the very hardest in whole world.

Avoid taking guide next time (handicapped).

Neglected to visit 486 and mothers of yesterday's dying children.

Stienie [5]; down measles; jelly.

Mr. Otto's dear loving daughter [6] died hospital.

Fourteen corpses (in morgue tents).

Very many old friends all about of Papa's and Oom Jacob's [7].

One man disappointed; had expected Oom Jacob.

Night: Strains of Psalm-singing; calm and fresh after shower of rain; follow ear; Snyman; short conversation.

Saturday, August 24. – Evening: Coughing; wailing; crying; groaning.

Exhausting day; pure, clear air after refreshing rain.

The misery in our Camp heart-rending; hopeless to cope with work.

Up early; coffee in hospital kitchen; work.

235a; six orphans; baby; dirt; sad!

241; mother died to-day suddenly.

239; boy 12, Ignatius; malignant growth shoulder; hopeless; pinning away.

249; child; measles.

468; Venter; motherless infants; all sick; food scarce; despair; powerful grandmother (arms!); daughter; all measles; "Ziet, minheer, die dochter is nog'n lady: sij is nie getrouwd nie" ('This daughter, sir, is still a lady; she is not yet married'); Bengers; beef tea. [8]

485; Van Heerde; mother and tentful of sick children; pitiable; camphor; brandy.

487; Engelbrecht; Mrs. P. de Lint [9]; wonderful discovery; yet withal sad; father India; children ill; wife broken-hearted; great rejoicing; thanksgiving for change.

321; Old Mr. De Villiers, grand old man; great cheer to myself.

268; Mrs. De Villiers; five children sick.

383; mother died last week; daughter this morning; "Minheer, dit was de prachtigste sterfbed wat ik ooit gezien het" ('Sir, it was the most beautiful deathbed I have ever seen'); "Dag, tante, ik gaat naar die Heere Jesus toe" ('Good-bye, Aunt, I am going to the Lord Jesus'); remaining daughter very, very bad; "Minheer, moet asseblief bid dat ik kan gezond word" ('Sir, you must pray, please, that I may recover'); little hope; inflammation.

292; Van der Berg; wife died last night.

81; casual visit; Mrs. Van Staden; Mrs. Otto; sick children.

80; Mrs. Van der Merwe died to-day; old lady, Mrs. Pienaar, ill in bed; when I repeated some verses Gezang 65 [10], old lady fore-stalled me line for line.

612; "Ach mij lieve ou Pappie"; better.

Five hours' incessant work; wearisome; thank God when twilight comes.

Work here for ten men; no chance alone; no show; the helplessness of it all! and there are hundreds sick and dying that I know not of, and that I could not visit even should I know.

My brothers-elders must help me more.

Had I not seen body of 80 removed I should never have known.

Funerals this morning; twelve; rude coffins; rough and ready biers (six); young Hugo; "Gelijk een bloem des velds" ("As for man his days are as grass; as a flower of the field so he flourisheth") [11]

Visit Mrs. Liebenberg, whose girlie was buried; prostrate; never saw glimpse of Mr. Becker.

Great concern because of the difficulty of cleanliness amid such dire straits; point determined; to warn and exhort one and all to the strictest cleanliness [12]; for "cleanliness is next to godliness."

Saw long convoy travelling past.

Eighteen corpses in morgue tents.

Sunday, August 25. — Longish day.

235a; six orphans [13]; nice and clean; very satisfactory; boy bad.

383; still same; poor girl.

113; death; child; much misery; Olivier.

Church 1.30; open air; glorious weather; attentive congregation; singing impressive; majority stand; grand pulpit(!); regular rostrum.

Afternoon work begins 2 p.m., ends 7 p.m.; incessant, wearying.

Twenty-eight visits.

Our Camp one large hospital, with hundreds wrestling with measles, pneumonia, fever. The sorrow of it that I never can sit down

and say, "Now I have visited all the sick." There are hundreds of whom I know nothing.

Horrible whistle that! It signals the morgue tent people to come and remove the dead. It is Death's shrill, harsh, jarring, triumphant shout! It shivers one through.

176; great misery.

235b; child died; food needed.

375; dead child.

175; a most harrowing spectacle; Badenhorst; old father; old mother; bedridden 15-year-old boy; water head; simple; old mother feeds it mouth to mouth [14]; "Die kind, leeraart, het ik nou al lang afgege aan de Heere Jesus!" (This child, Pastor, I have given to the Lord Jesus long ago.") She dotes on this imbecile, poor mother. Such a simple, homely, gladsome, believing old heart. "Ik ben velen een wonder geweest" ("I am a wonder unto many"); me certainly; daughter with sick girlie; "De Heere het haar ver ons terug gege" ("The Lord has given her back to us"); there was a fire in their tent, and this young mother was badly burnt to the bone (wrist).

169; Heever; four children; all sick.

450; great distress; Du Toit; child sick; no nourishment; young mother sick; only child dead.

526; De Wet; daughter delirious; dying; two others sick on the floor; pathetic.

372; Kotze; baby dying; two others sick; great friends Oom Jacob.

156; Joubert (or Ackerman); daughter; floor; dying; measles and pneumonia.

15; Barnard; two daughters; one dangerously sick; poor anxious mother! While hurrying to relieve with some beef tea and Bengers' Food stopped on way by desperate mother.

471; Marais; eight children; all sick; no nourishment; two very bad. To think of it!

After tea called to 235; orphans; boy very bad; sisters' tears.

Also 211; Roux; daughter; pneumonia.

Again 383; much drawn to that child; large, soft, trustful brown eyes; asked yesterday that I pray she might get well; to-day otherwise; trusting.

Distributed beef tea and Bengers' food to some very urgent cases; the thankfulness melts one's heart.

Funerals; fourteen.

Found on getting home plate food on box; enjoyed same at tea; great cheer to be with the Van As's.

Closed Sunday School; children sing "Dat's Heeren Zegen!" ("The blessing of the Lord descend on thee.")

Monday, August 26.—That imbecile boy died to-day; the old mother sent for me, but I found no time to go.

Don't think 526 will last long; gave candles, beef tea and Bengers' Food this evening.

383 much better; smiled this morning when I entered.

339; great tribulation; six deaths in one week.

440; girlie; sweet face; wonder if she will die or live; very, very bad; Cloete.

288; Mrs. Venter; young wife; sick; five children sick; gave beef tea and Bengers' Food.

352; the lost little lamb found; one of my first, whose number I had omitted to take; Weinanda; five years; pining away; large grey eyes; far-away look; poor little mite; Ken jij ver mij, me kind?" (Do you still remember me, child?)" "Ja, Oom; Oom is de Predikant" ("Yes, Uncle; Uncle is the Minister"). "Is Weinanda blij dat Oom weer gekom het?" ("Is Weinanda glad that Uncle has come again?)" "Ja, Oom; Oom is goed om te kom" ("Yes, Uncle; it was good of Uncle to come") Wonder if I really am rather soft; but when this little mite clasped her tiny hands together when Oom began to pray, I was bowled clean over.

35, 156, 15 rather better.

At 34 found old friends of Oom Jacob; Wernich; the old woman weak; very nice to meet so many great friends of Oom Jacob and of Papa from Colesberg; old Mr. Du Plessis can't get over it.

Wasted much time at weekly meeting of the Elders; impatient; each Elder has block of sixteen tents to care for; heard reports; nearly all report general sickness. The amount of sickness just now is terrible; a vast hospital; the bitter cold nights play havoc; most lie on the hard bare ground.

Fighting grimly with uncleanliness; the idea that it is dangerous to wash with measles; rot!

Another great point; must insist that friends and relatives abstain from all long-faced despondency, with total absence of any cheer and hopefulness; this bad effect on patients; if anyone seriously ill, they "hands up" and cluster around to await the end, lest perchance they miss seeing "zoo 'n prachtige sterfbed" (such a beautiful death-bed).

Mrs. Botha (outer Camp) sent for me; penitent; wonder if it is only the fear that drives her, or whether it is a genuine case of true repentance; she has measles badly.

91; mother sick; five children (and one in hospital).

Sad about 398; buried two children this afternoon; this is the third; mother also dead; husband sick; glad I found time to see him; poor fellow.

458; great distress; old grandmother; sick mother; sick children; no nourishment; no candles; very helpless; Benger's Food, beef tea, and candles.

Made only about twenty-two visits to-day.

Relieved Mr. Becker funeral service; seven this afternoon; had no time to prepare; reckless; got through somehow; "Het wordt gezaaid in verderfelijckheid, het wordt opgewekt in onverderfelijckheid" (It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption).

"Ja, leeraar, hier in ons Kamp wordt daar nie droppels tranen gestort nie maar emmers vol" ("Yes, Pastor, here in our Camp it is not drops but bucketsful of tears that are shed").

There are about a dozen corpses in morgue tents just now.

Tuesday, August 27. — The blessedness of eventide.

Letters from Issie and Louise; seem to have forgotten for a brief space the sorrows around.

Record day so far; visited thirty-five tents; very hard task. It is so delightful to offer up a thanksgiving prayer for a change; the usual "noodgebed" (emergency prayer) is most wearying. Thank God, that in some I found "beterschap" (convalescence).

Am striking out in new direction now; there is too much dependency and heaviness of spirit rampant; anyhow, extremely difficult task, for the conditions all around are most lamentably depressing.

Am going to sew blankets into bag this evening, a la Hanglip [15]; last night bitterly cold; frost this morning; to-day very hot again; these two extremes so disastrous to the sick.

440 little better, and 383 much better.

190; Mrs. Taljard died last night.

Deaths at 201, 312, and 460 also; and all these had never yet been visited. Here is where the dissatisfaction comes in; and yet, how am I to know?

In 436 a child died; mother in great sorrow.

Next to 416 is Mrs. Van der Walt; very sick; not at all serene within; such cases very hard. While at dinner suddenly called to Mrs. Van der Walt—death's throes; prayer; when at dinner, on return, heard the horrible whistle go.

Our wood is done, and there remains nothing wherewith to make coffins; will have to bury in blankets to-morrow I fear; this will cause extra affliction and unhappiness. Pitiably to see husband of Mrs. Van der Walt pleading for boxes which could not be given; and he was "schatryk" (very rich) they say. There will be a great outcry, I'm afraid. And yet, after all, will a coffin save the soul?

After dinner, 169; baby died; mother sorely stricken.