

Poetry from the Second Anglo-Boer War

1/96 While **Jameson** is preparing for his trial in London (arising from the **Jameson Raid**), Alfred Austin, the official Poet Laureate, publishes a piece in the London *Times*, portraying him as a hero, but basing his work on the fraudulent “women and children” letter to justify his actions and divert public opinion away from the planned *coup d'état* to one of gallant rescue instead (Meredith, 2007:349):

When men of our own blood pray us
To ride to their kinsfolk's aid,
Not Heaven itself shall stay us
From the rescue they call a raid ...

There are girls in the gold-reef city,
There are mothers and children too,
And they cry: 'Hurry up! For Pity!'
So what can a brave man do.

At the same time, Rudyard Kipling writes a poem called “If”, based on his absolute admiration for **Jameson**. This poem, now famous, reads as follows:

If you can keep your head when all about you,
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;

If you can wait and not be tired of waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look for good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream – and not make dreams your master;
If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim;
If you meet with triumph and disaster,
And treat those two imposters just the same;

If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken,
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stood and build 'em up with worn-out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings,
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings,
And never breathe a word about your loss;

If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew,
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you,
Except the Will which says to them: “Hold on!”

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,

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Or walk with Kings – nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;

If you can fill the unforgiving minute,
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And – which is more – You'll be a Man, my son!

20/10/99 As the **Second Anglo-Boer War** starts, the British are slow to mobilize a major force, because they still believe that the war will be short and easy. The first infantry transport ships leave for Cape Town. The British public mood for the impending war is captured in a short poem by **Rudyard Kipling** (Meredith, 2007:429):

When you've shouted 'Rule Britannia', when you've sung 'God save the Queen',
When you've finished killing Kruger with your mouth,
Will you kindly drop a shilling in my little tambourine
For a gentleman in Khaki ordered South?

He's an absent-minded beggar, and his weaknesses are great –
But we and Paul must take him as we find him –
He's out on active service, wiping something off a slate –
And he's left a lot of little things behind him!

2/11/99 No. 2 Vol. 1 of the **Ladysmith Bombshell** dated 24/11/1899 carries a poem that is written in longhand, referring to the shelling that occurred on 2/11/1899. This reads as follows:

The Borough of Ladysmith was Shelled on November 2, 1899.

(Anonymous)

All within the leagured Bobs,
Calm and peaceful as of yore,
Sat the people silently waiting
The dread cannon's awful roar.

Overhead the sun was shining,
All serene the landscape lay.
Waiting for the great disturbance
All expected on that day.

Then broke forth a voice of thunder -
With the shock the air was rent -
Overhead there came a something -
Instantly every head was bent.

Part a whistle – part a howling -
Part a scream. And part a yell –
Then a shock – a noise of bursting.
'Twas the "murmur of the shell".

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18/11/99 In order to build morale during the **Siege of Ladysmith**, No. 1 Vol. 1 of the **Ladysmith Bombshell** is published. This is a hand-drawn newsletter containing a mixture of cartoons, poetry, military orders and a number of other items that collectively serve as snapshots in historic time. Original documents in the hands of the author reveal a deteriorating state of mind as the siege sets in. Extracts from the Ladysmith Bombshell over time give an insight into the psychological condition of the British forces living under siege. No. 1 Vol. 1 reveals the following poetry about the Boer artillery called Long Tom located on M'Bulwana:

Long Tom O' Pepworth's Hill (Anonymous)

He doth not speak in parable
Or whisper soft and low,
So all the folk of Ladysmith
His ever every accent know;
For he can bend the stiffest back
And mould the strongest will,
He's quite a little autocrat,
Long Tom o' Pepworth's Hill.

We listen when he speaks in wrath,
We're braver when he cools,
Yet he is very kind to men
If somewhat rough on mules.
He brings us bounding out of bed
When we would fain lie still,
We grumble but we all obey
Long Tom o' Pepworth's Hill.

A breezy bluff intrusive sort,
He visits everywhere,
Sometimes he seeks your cellar cool,
Sometimes your easy chair.
Sometimes he enters by the roof,
Sometimes the window sill,
It's vain to say you're not at home
To Tom o' Pepworth's Hill.

24/11/99 No. 2 Vol. 1 of the **Ladysmith Bombshell** gives yet more insight into the mindset of the besieged British forces at the **Siege of Ladysmith**. A short inscription reads: "The latest information is the effect that the Boer fleet composed of the captured armoured train on two ponts is sailing up the Thukela *en route* for Gilestown to intercept any flank movement on the part of the British Troops". Another inscription reads: "Someone was enquiring on Friday about the rainfall. He was told that statistics of the shellfire only were now taken". A third inscription reads: "Gordon Highlander (whose pannikin has just been filled with sand by the bursting of a shell not three yards away), 'Damn it all, that's the third time they spoil my tea'". A fourth inscription reads: "Say, old man, if it takes **Joubert** and 23,579 Boers 23 days and three midnight hours, to kill four White men and two ... [sic], at what hour on what date will the last of the population of Ladysmith be exterminated?" A poem in the same edition written by one of the besieged soldiers reads as follows:

This is an extract of a longer text presented on **My Family History** page at
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Maloney. (Anonymous)

I was a rolling blade of the Irish Brigade
Of **Joubert**'s, and fond of orating,
I'm hungry for foight, shore
I'll kill 'em all right,
I'm hungry for want of a bating;
Have a houl't no me head
Let me at 'em he said,
Put me up on a horse or a pony.
An I'm sthrong, an I'm talle talk
I'll slaughter thim all
For there's no sich a man as Maloney.

He was a bombardier gay
of the gallant R.A.,
And the pride of the force
and they know it,
Went out for a walk,
Heard that orator talk,
His answer was simply "ere stow it".
He slipped in a shell and he rammed it home well,
It burst on a ridge bleak and stony,
It grieves me to say. When the smoke cleared away,
There was no such a man as Maloney.

A second poem in No. 2 Vol. 1 of the **Ladysmith Bombshell** dated 24/11/1899 gives yet more insight into the mindset of the besieged British forces at the **Siege of Ladysmith**. This reads as follows:

To General Slim Piet (Anonymous)

Hail Mighty Oom; Jew Beer [sic]
Proud leader of a dirty crew
Who shell at night, instead of fight.
As savage Bowibon [sic] Tartars do.

Your deeds of valour at the sound
The nations well may quake
The sick and wounded down you strike,
The Church and Town Hall break.

The native folk you blandly strip
Of cattle clothes and money,
And thus you prove you're closely bred
To sow and wolf or monkey.

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Oh' slippery one at last you've hit
The biggest marks in town.
Day's twenty four you've done your best
To shell the Red Cross down.

But still it waves and at it's back
Stands honour, brave, and true
Our warrior lads but wait the word,
To meet and shave [sic] and square with you.

2/12/99 No. 3 Vol. 1 of the **Ladysmith Bombshell** dated 2/12/1899 gives yet more insight into the mindset of the besieged British forces at the **Siege of Ladysmith**. This carries the following notice: "Lost. My adopted child named **Transvaal** Independence, when last seen was in the company of her sister named Free State followed by a German Band. Anyone finding and returning the same to my new Residence "St. Helena" will be rewarded with a confiscated gold mine". Another notice reads: "The Natal Carbineer Sports are being held today under the distinguished shadow of Lombard's Kop and Umbulwana [sic] – there is a long and varied programme – music is being supplied by Long Tom, Slim Piet, Baby Jack, Boys in Blue, Big Ben and a host of others". British racism is confirmed by a short story that reads: "Harry Sparks the M.L.A., has come up to Ladysmith to further enquire into the Asiatic question. He finds the town full of them [sic] and feels himself bound to take immediate action. He is inducing the Mayor to convene a public meeting and has already prepared a carefully worded speech for the occasion." A hand-written poem in the same edition reads as follows:

The Shells

(With apologies to Edgar Allan Poe)
(Anonymous)

Hear the shrieking of the shells, cursed shells
What a host of Dutchmen their presence foretells.
How they yell, and scream, and whistle, at morning,
Noon and night,
While old Sol, who's hotly burning,
Smiles to see the people twining,
In a dickens of a fright,
Keeping time, time, time,
With the most infernal rhyme,
The shrieking and the screaming that so constantly foretells
Of the coming of the shells, shells, shells, shells,
Of the shrieking and the bursting of the shells.

See the little damage done:
What a waste of powder, 'tis wasted by the ton:
How the Boer's would storm and bluster, and be
In a perfect fluster;
Oh what fun,
Nothing done
By the shells.
Though they come along in dozens, bunging sisters,

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Aunts, and cousins,
They are practically harmless, those big shells,
Oh the screaming of the shells, shells, shells,
Oh the shrieking and the bursting of the shells.

We are growing quite accustomed to the shells.
No one seems to mind their screaming and their yells,
They may hiss, and shriek, and whistle, at morning,
Noon and night.
While old Sols keep brightly shining
On the citizens' reclining
In a state of calm delight,
Making fun all the time of that most infernal rhyme,
The shrieking and the screaming that so constantly foretells
Of the coming of the shells, the useless futile shells,
Of the shrieking and the bursting of the shells.

9/12/99 No. 4 Vol. 1 of the **Ladysmith Bombshell** dated 9/12/1899 gives yet more insight into the mindset of the besieged British forces at the **Siege of Ladysmith**. This carries the following news item that gives an insight into the situation in the town:

“Sydney Thorold appeared before the Magistrate this morning charged with committing an offence viz., the displaying of lights after a certain hour in the store of Sparks Bros on Saturday last. Mr. Thorold pleaded guilty and asked the Magistrate to take a lenient view, it being his first appearance. **Col. Robert Walker** and **Capt. Bulleier** [sic] of the Town Guard briefly stated the facts. The accused elected to give evidence and informed the bench that the lights were intended for Mr. S.W. Sutton's cat. He understood from Mr. Sutton that Mr. Marshall had arranged to send them earlier in the evening. This however, he neglected to do. Both Mr. Sutton and himself much regretted the inconvenience and they attached considerable blame to Mr. Marshall. Mr. Giles pointed out the absolute need of observing very carefully all orders and regulations issued during the siege, without doubt the offence had been committed, he regretted he had no power to deal with Mr. Sutton or Mr. Marshall but he ordered Mr. Thorold to forthwith leave the town. Mr. Thorold we understand has now taken up his abode at Bellair.”

Another brief message reads as follows: “Messrs Scott and Hyde, duly favoured with instructions from Mr. Lotter, will sell at his residence (or whatever is left of it) on Boxing Day the whole remains of his household furniture and effects including several fragments of a handsome wardrobe. Special terms to most purchasers. To **Joubert** and Co., terms strictly cash.”

No. 4 Vol. 1 of the **Ladysmith Bombshell** dated 9/12/1899 also carried the following two poems:

Nevermore
(With more apologies to Edgar Allan Poe)
(Anonymous)

Once upon a midnight dreary while I pondered weak and weary,
Over all the quaint and curious yarns we've had about the war,

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Suddenly there comes a rumour (we can always take a few more)
Started by some chaps who knew more than others knew before,
We shall have the reinforcements in another month or more
Only this and nothing more,

But we're waiting still for Cleary, waiting, waiting sick and weary
Of the strange and silly rumours we have often heard before
And we now begin to fancy there's a touch of necromancy
Something almost too uncanny in the undegenerate [sic] Boer
Only this and nothing more

Though our hopes are undiminished that the war will soon be finished
We would be a little happier if we knew a little more
If we had a little information about **Buller**
News about **Sir Redvers Buller** and his famous Army Corps
Information of the General and his fighting Army Corps
Only this and nothing more

And the midnight shells uncertain whistling through
The nights black curtain
Thrills us, fills us, with a touch of horror never felt before
So that now to still the beating of our hearts we keep repeating
Tis some visitor entreating entrance at the chamber door
Some late visitor entreating entrance at the chamber door
Tis this and nothing more.

Oh how slow the shells come dropping, sometimes bursting, sometimes stopping
As if they themselves were weary of the very languid war
How distinctly we'll remember all the weary dull November
And it seems as though December will have little else in store
And our Xmas dinner will be bully beef and plain stickpant [sic]
Only this and nothing more.

Altham, Altham tell us truly if there's any news come newly
Not the old fantastic rumours we have often heard before
Desolate, yet left undaunted, in the town the Boers still haunted
This is all the news that's wanted, tell us truly we implore
Is, there, is there a relief force? Tell us, tell us we implore
Only this and nothing more.

For we're waiting rather weary, is there such a man as **Cleary**?
Are there really reinforcements? Is there any Army Corps?
Shall we see our Wives and Mothers, or our Sisters and our Brothers,
Shall we ever see those others, who went Southwards long before?
Shall we ever see fresh butter? Tell us, tell us we implore
Shall be answered evermore.

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Song of the Besieged

(By J.S.D. – full name unknown)

When **Buller** wheels round Lombard's Kop;
When **Piet Joubert** has done a "hop",
We'll sing, if only over "Dop", -
"For this relief much thanks!"

Of rations short we've had enough;
Of milk condensed quite quantum suff [sic]
Of biscuit hard and "bully" tough –
"For this relief much thanks!"

"Long Tom be hanged!" we bravely cry,
But when his shells go whizzing by –
And miss us – then we gently sigh –
"For this relief much thanks!"

To "Tom" "Big Ben" and "Silent Sue",
To "Weary Willie" "Tired Tim" too,
We're ready quite to say – "adieu"!
"For this relief much thanks!"

When once again from flies we're freed,
When Southwards merrily we speed,
Our "*Mercury*" and our "*Witness*" read –
"For this relief much thanks!"

When no more heard are "Who goes there?"
"Of martial law are you aware?"
And "Half-past-eight! Lights out! Beware!"
"For this relief much thanks!"

And "Who are you?" and "Where's your pass?"
"Get out this you wretched ass!"
"He-haw! [sic] Hee-haw! And my eye-glass!"
"For this relief much thanks!"

We know we've earned eternal fame;
But somehow, and just all the same,
We're all quite ready to exclaim:
"For this relief much thanks!"

Dear Ladysmith! Sweet, pretty thing,
Fond memories you'll always bring,
But please excuse me while we sing –
"For this relief much thanks!"

11/12/99 The second of the Battles of the **Black Week** takes place at Magersfontein on the border between the **Cape Colony** and the **Orange Free State**. A British force of 13,000 men under

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the command of **Lord Methuen**, engages a Boer force of 8,500 under the command of **General Piet Cronje**. The British, intent to break the **Siege of Kimberley** where Cecil John Rhodes is trapped, advance along the line of rail. Having successfully tried the new tactic suggested by **General Koos de la Rey** at the **Battle of Modder River**, the Boers dig trenches that dominate the flat ground in front of Magersfontein Hills, from where their Mauser fire can be brought to bear on the movement of British troops along the line of rail. Believing that the Boers are entrenched in the hills and still unaware of their changed stratagem, a blistering artillery attack is followed by a night-time deployment of the newly-arrived Highland Brigade under the command of **Major General Wauchope**, using standard British military doctrine. The night-time advance to battle is hampered by the presence of iron deposits in the underlying geology that affect the compasses, so the Highland Brigade, arriving late at their objective, is spotted by the entrenched Boers and is brought to contact. **General Wauchope** is killed in the first volley, throwing the British forces into turmoil. Elements of the Black Watch launch a frontal attack and make it to the foothills of the Magersfontein Hills. British artillery still continues to pound the Magersfontein Hills, believing the Boers to be entrenched there in terms of conventional military doctrine, and the Highland Brigade is forced to retreat. The final outcome of the **Battle of Magersfontein** is the second Boer victory with 1,000 British casualties, against 70 dead and 250 wounded on the Boer side. The British defeat causes **Lord Roberts** to requisition 12,000 horses from Australia and Argentina as it starts to become evident that mobility away from the line of rail is a key tactical element of the guerrilla war being waged by the Boers. During the **Battle of Magersfontein**, the soldiers of the Black Watch invent a new slang word for the sun – Old McCormick – and a famous poem entitled “The Black Watch at Magersfontein” is written (Pakenham, 1982: 233; Mills & Williams, 2006:99):

Wire and the Mauser rifle, Thirst and the burning sun,
Knocked us down by the hundred, Ere the long day was done ...
All day in the same position, Watching our own shells burst,
Lying with our dead men and wounded, Lips swollen blue-black with thirst.

16/12/99 No. 5 Vol. 1 of the **Ladysmith Bombshell** dated 16/12/1899 gives yet more insight into the mindset of the besieged British forces at the **Siege of Ladysmith**. This carries a short inscription that reads: “If the Relief Column takes a day-and-a-half to march a yard-and-a-half, how much longer will the price of eggs be 10/7 per dozen?” Another short story hints at a growing fear as morale deteriorates, by stating the following: “Wanted to know. Whether the Boers have not formed a murderous idea to drive our Troops [sic] to the horizon and over the edge? Whether this is not contrary to the Geneva Convention? If the ‘Powerful’ is only waiting for a heavy dew to be able to get steam up for the relief of Ladysmith? (See references to ‘Powerful’ on 18/11/1899 above). If Kruger has received the appointment of Governor of Britain’s latest acquired colony? How war correspondents are to be distinguished from camp followers in the forthcoming battle and whether they are likely to have the same influence on Bruce’s memorable following at B-bwin [sic] and whether they are not as numerous as that following?” The same edition carries the following poem:

The Home Coming (Anonymous)

The Flags unfurl! Beat loud the drums!
Shout out the victor’s song
At last the day of triumph comes,

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For which we've waited long.
Yet while o'erhead bright garlands wave,
And fragrant roses rain,
Forget we not those heroes brave
Who'll ne'er come home again.

Hail Lancers swift, and old Dragoons!
Leicesters and Rifles true!
Staunch Dublin lads; stern Gordon "looms";
The gallant "Powerful's" crew!
Yet, as ye march with heads upheld,
A vacant place retain
For those whose graves are on the veld,
Who'll ne'er come home again.

On! Volunteers, Natal's stout hearts!
Light Horsemen of the Rand!
And all ye braves from many parts –
A noble conquering band!
But there were others fought and won:
Yet they behind remain
To rest beneath the Southern Sun
They'll ne'er come home again.

Ye thousands raise your deafening cheer
As onward proud they go!
But there are wives and mothers dear
And sisters with locks of snow,
Who scan with tears the serried rows
They look – but oh! In vain –
To catch the longed for smile of those
Who'll never come home again.

The vacant chair stands as it stood!
Fresh let their memory live!
Sweet life they gave for others good,
'Tis all a man can give!
They, too were victors in the fray –
Then let us not restrain
A tear for those far, far away,
Who'll never come home again!

23/12/99 No. 6 Vol. 1 of the **Ladysmith Bombshell** dated 23/12/1899 gives yet more insight into the mindset of the besieged British forces at the **Siege of Ladysmith**. This carries two short inscriptions that read:

Ladysmith
(The Aldershot of South Africa)

White: Welcome, Sir Redvers. Glad to see you here,

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Although I cannot offer you the festive season's cheer.

Buller: How do, Sir George! I'm sorry you have had to wait so long,
But Boers were thick as bumble-bees,
And in position strong.

White: Ah! Well, our waiting's over.
Triumph's ours all'long the line.

Buller: Yes, I think our troubles ended with 1899.

Kruger

(Anonymous)

Know that the end draws nigh,
Rash man, and thou must die!
Useless resistance won't await thee,
Germans, Frenchmen, all will fail thee
Easy times are nearly o'er,
Revenge is Britain's, wily Boer.

No. 6 Vol. 1 of the **Ladysmith Bombshell** dated 23/12/1899 gives yet more insight into the mindset of the besieged British forces at the **Siege of Ladysmith**. This carries the following poem that speaks volumes:

The Six Inch Gun

(Anonymous)

There is a famous hill looks down
Five miles away on Ladysmith town,
With a long flat ridge that meets the sky
Almost a thousand feet on high
And on the ridge there is mounted one
Long range terrible six inch gun.

And down in the street a bugle is blown
When the cloud of smoke on the sky is thrown
For it's twenty seconds before the roar
Reverberates o'er, and a second more
Till the shell comes down with a whiz and a stun
From that long range terrible six inch gun.

And men and women walk up and down
The long hot streets of Ladysmith town.
And the housewives work in the usual round
And the children play till the warning sound
Then into their holes they scurry and run
From the whistling shell of the six inch gun.

For the shells they weigh a hundred pounds

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Bursting wherever they strike the ground
While the strong concussion shakes the air
And shatters the window panes everywhere
And we may laugh, but there's little of fun
In the bursting shell of a six inch gun.

Oh! 'Twas whistle and jest with the Carbineers gay
As they cleaned their steeds at break of day.
But like a thunderclap there fell
In the midst of the horses and men a shell
And the sight we saw was a fearful one
After that shell from the six inch gun.

Though the foe may beset us on every side
We'll find some cheer in this Christmas tide
We will laugh and be gay, but a tear will be shed
And a thought will be given to the gallant dead
Cut off in the midst of life and fun
By the long range terrible six inch gun.

No. 6 Vol. 1 of the **Ladysmith Bombshell** dated 23/12/1899 gives yet more insight into the mindset of the besieged British forces at the **Siege of Ladysmith**, specifically with regard to the need to build morale. This carries a number of short stories, with the following giving an indication of the humoristic propaganda of the time: "Saturday morning. It is reported this morning that a picket of the N.M.R. captured a Dutch General during the night's outpost duty. It seems there was an attempt to enter our lines by the picket. Being on the alert as usual, the enemy's plan was frustrated. The companions of the General succeeded in escaping and the General himself was only secured with the greatest difficulty. The name of the General has not yet been ascertained. ... Saturday afternoon. It transpires that the capture effected by the N.M.R. picket last night was that of an old he-goat. In imagining that they had taken a Dutch General the N.M.R. were probably misled by the smell." Another short story speaks of the water supply, but also alludes to the mentality of the Boer people: "Mr. Holliday in his interesting '*Dottings on Natal*' written some 35 years ago, gives a brief account of Ladysmith. He thus describes the little arcadia as he found it. 'Ladysmith. Situated on a bend of the Klip River, a very dry spot. About fifteen years back a dam was erected across the river, at a heavy cost, to enable the town that was to be, to obtain a supply of water; but that dam broke down, and the damned water got away. One extra dry season an account was published in the newspapers stating that, as no water was obtainable, the inhabitants had to live on bottled beer. The buildings comprise about sixty houses, magistrate's office, gaol, chapel, and a gallows. Inhabitants 250.' ... The population now numbers 20,000 thirsty souls, with as many more waiting outside. The water reported as unfit for 'drinking purposes' and again the inhabitants will have reluctantly perhaps to fall back upon the 'Bottled Beer'."

1/1/00 No. 1 Vol. 2 of the **Ladysmith Bombshell** dated 1/1/1900 gives yet more insight into the mindset of the besieged British forces at the **Siege of Ladysmith**. This carries a short inscription that reads: "It is reported that the members of the Town Guard who so smartly out-manoeuvred the Boers by evacuating the town before it was invested are now anxious to return in time to take part in the approaching peace celebrations." Another inscription reads: "After 60 days siege it is little wonder that people are not eager to know the time of day. One

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occasionally meets with the enquiry, 'Let me see today is ...' In the future the question will be, 'What month are we in now?' To remedy this perplexing state of affairs, and to satisfy all manner of doubt, there has been a sharp run on pocket knives and the thoughtful inhabitant is carefully 'notching' each day on his walking stick. It is surmised he will require a good many of these sticks before the difficulty is over". Another short piece refers to the **Natal Mounted Rifles** (NMR) by saying the following: "The C Squadron of the N.M.R. known as the 'Forty Thieves' have formed a band. By kind permission of the Officers they will perform on the Market Square this evening. Each item on the program will be performed with variations. A prize of one Guinea will be given by Mr. Allsopp to any member of the audience identifying any particular air". Another piece refers to rationing difficulties: "**Capt. Molyneux** is having a good deal of anxiety with regard to the outfit of the members of the Town Guard. By dint of much perseverance a supply of Madagascar meat and bread is now obtained at 6 o'clock in the morning, but the genial Captain is not satisfied with this and the order now goes forth that the watchers on the Klip are from the beginning of the year to wear kilts, as owing to the extreme dampness of the ground the men's trousers have so considerably shrunk as to make it impossible to get their feet through." A final short inscription reads: "Regret. One of the Naval Brigade was removing a fuse from a live shell, when it exploded, carrying away his left arm. 'Well, that's too bad', exclaimed he, for it was only yesterday that I had paid 10p for having that same arm tattooed."

No. 1 Vol. 2 of the **Ladysmith Bombshell** dated 1/1/1900 also carries three poems that give insight into the changing mindset among the besieged:

Buller

(Anonymous)

Buller, **Buller**, hear our loud entreaty,
Under dire bombardment we are laid;
Let thy legions come to us in pity,
Let them come, and lend us all thy aid.
Endurance has been tried, and stood the test right well,
Relieve and aid us, oh, hear the besiegers' yell.

There Was an Old Nigger

(Anonymous)

There was an old nigger, and they call him **Piet Joubert**,
And his fighting's awfully slow.
Buller's coming up behind him, and it's very, very clear
To the nether regions soon **Joubert** will go.

Chorus: So saddle up your horses, keep your rifles clean,
Sling your cartridges around your manly chest:
Buller's men will do their share, but it's easy to be seen,
That our garrison will have to do the rest.

Piet Joubert he has no conscience, he's an awful, awful skunk,
On our sick and on our wounded he has fired;
But judging from the symptoms, it is plain he's in a funk,
"Long Tom" and "Big Ben" are growing very tired.

This is an extract of a longer text presented on **My Family History** page at
anthonyturton.com

Poetry from the Second Anglo-Boer War

Chorus: So saddle up your horses, keep your rifles clean,
Sling your cartridges around your manly chest:
Buller's men will do their share, but it's easy to be seen,
That our garrison will have to do the rest.

But in fighting with true Britons, he is dealing with brave men
Who will, never strike below the belt:
They will fight on lines humane, though outnumbered ten times ten,
They will fight fair, however angry they have felt.

So saddle up your horses, and go in to fight,
Like true Britons ready for the fray:
Strike 'em hard, but strike 'em fair: on our side we have the right,
And grand victory will crown that glorious day.

Marking Time (Anonymous)

The New Year comes, so let us fill
The glorious bowl with right good will
Though **Buller's** at Colenso still,
Marking time.

We hoped in human hopes we see
The idlest form of vanity –
Ere this we should no longer be
Marking time.

We dreamed of battles fought and won,
We dreamed our scattered foes would run
Before us – but we haven't done
Marking time.

Our lingering faith is growing small
“Where's **Buller's**?” is the weary call,
“Where's **French**, where's **Cleary**?” They are all
Marking time.

November passed; we smiled and said
“Another week!” that week soon sped
But still we smiled, “Next week” that fled
And we marked time.

The New Year comes, and we are here
With every prospect still to fear
The dawning of another year
Marking time!

Poetry from the Second Anglo-Boer War

8/1/00 No. 2 Vol. 2 of the **Ladysmith Bombshell** dated 8/1/1900 gives yet more insight into the mindset of the besieged British forces at the **Siege of Ladysmith**. This carries a short inscription that reads: "It was a wet drenching day. The Carbineers had been in the saddle some four or five hours. An order was issued from Headquarters that on returning from duty the men were to change their shirts. So the Captain sent for the Sergeant and gave the order. 'But, Sir', said the Sergeant, 'the men have only one apiece left'. 'No matter', replied **Capt. Molyneux**, 'they must change with each other'." Another short piece states: "The umbrella hospital, Ladysmith. Fractured ribs and dislocated joints scientifically mended and set by an eminent Professor. Debilitated frames revived and strengthened and recovery guaranteed while you wait." A short story tells of requisitioning: "There is a man in the front room, wants to see Mr. Banbeuf [sic]. Mr. Banbeuf, 'I'll be there in a minute, ask him to take a chair'. 'He says he's going to take them all. He's from the military authorities I fancy'." A short story speaks of the rigours of guard duty and the apparent stupidity of enlisted men under orders: "**Capt. Bulleier** of the Town Guard generally has some difficulty in making out the orders. The other wet night he was placed on sentry duty near Matthew Brown's, the usual smelling bottle not being omitted. After a while the Adjutant visited him and enquired what would be the first thing to do if the enemy were to surprise him. 'I'd get the countersign, Sir'. 'But they are the enemy and don't know it', said the Adjutant. 'Well Sir, I'd make them repeat it after me 'till they did know it, and if they didn't succeed I'd get Brother Dunkley to let fly with his rifle'."

No. 2 Vol. 2 of the **Ladysmith Bombshell** dated 8/1/1900 gives yet more insight into the mindset of the besieged British forces at the **Siege of Ladysmith**. This carries a short story that speaks volumes about the schism between Officer and enlisted men when nerves are fraying: "A Warrior Bold am I (heading). It will be generally conceded that a few of the Officers of our Volunteer forces have a very good idea of their own importance; and it is a well known fact that an impression is ingrained in these few that their personal comfort and convenience are items of the utmost importance to the final success of the present campaign. There is an old proverb concerning the destination of a beggar when mounted on a Pegasus: but swiftly a worse fate will be provided for the Volunteer Officer when astride of his high horse 'Self Conceit'. Certain of these gentlemen have the good fortune to be quartered in a garden adjoining a residence where a very tiny dog is kennelled, who does his utmost to earn his food by acting as a small watch dog giving vent to occasional miniature barks, the best he can do, poor little mite, as a warning against intruders. A native servant was sent by his master to ask that the dog might be destroyed, as its barking disturbs his slumbers. Just imagine an Officer, living on premises by courtesy of the owner, actually requesting that a dog belonging to that owner should be made away with because its barking annoyed its officership. Here we have a 'Soldier of the Queen', used to the hwitle [sic] and bruit [sic] of battle, accustomed to bivouac in the open, actually unable to sleep because of the yelping of that wee, tiny dog, whose only fault is that he does his duty. 'Oh, wad some poubi the giftie gi'e us; Tae see oursels as ithers see us'."

No. 2 Vol. 2 of the **Ladysmith Bombshell** dated 8/1/1900 also carries three poems that give insight into the desperate mindset among the besieged during the final days of the **Siege of Ladysmith**:

The Civilian's Complaint (Anonymous)

Who made a mess of this 'ere war?

This is an extract of a longer text presented on **My Family History** page at anthonyturton.com

Poetry from the Second Anglo-Boer War

Who dilly-dallied from afar?
And left us in this 'nasty jar' ...
Who told us when the siege begun
Our enemies right soon should run!
(Upon my word it takes the bun) ...
Who wasn't that told us to provide
Ten days of rations, so's to tide
Us over **Joubert's** monstrous stride! ...
Who then swooped down, and commandeered
All stoves, when famine once was feared!
And left us all to 'dree our weird' ...
Who heck's not if we live or die!
Who will not let us victuals buy!
Altho' the stoves can yet supply ...
Who has the best of this affair!
We citizens who live on air!
Nay, we're worse off than our Bugbear. The en-em-y
Thanks to Woodhouse and Frank Reid too
They get us beef eno' to stew,
Some people make a great ado, Tis tough they say –
Let **Buller** come, or **Buller** stop,
We'll stick this show out till we drop,
And never leave this blessed shop, though had it be.
We'll stay to see the fighting o'er
If needs be, we will do our share;
And then we'll advertise galore.

The hard times we have had to bear:
We'll slate Great Britain right and left,
We'll curse the British Parliament:
Of friends and property bereft
We'll show to all the world we meant
To demonstrate the sad delay,
That's caused our misery today;
Confound J – C.

Untitled (Anonymous)

When friends frae friends are gaun to part,
An' parting causes many a smart,
A wee, wee drap cheers up the heart
And mak's them pairt fu' fuskey O.
And when retwined – been absent lang,
And absence brings them many a pang –
Their joys maun hae an auld Scots sang,
Wi a drap 'o Heilant Whiskey O.
A drap 'o barley brae sae clear,
It drooms oor care an' flags oor fear,
Mak's friends and Dutch like brithers dear,

Poetry from the Second Anglo-Boer War

A drap o' Heilant Whisky O.

What News! (Anonymous)

What news! What news! What anxious ones are waiting
Far off to know if with us all is well!
What news! What news! With pulses palpitating
They wait and hope, for there is none to tell.

What news! What news! Oh anxious one, thou fearest
To listen yet for what may give thee pain
What news! What news! Perchance thy best and dearest
Will never clasp thee to his heart again.

What news! What news! What homes are desolated
What mothers' hearts must sorrow ever more
What loving ones can never now be mated,
What constant vows no more be whispered o'er.

What news! What news! Perhaps no more hereafter
Thy friend will meet thee with a smile;
No more thy heart shall echo to the laughter
Of happy children whom thou loved'st erewhile.

What news! What news! Are not the hosts engaging
In some fierce conflict under the sun's glare!
What news! What news! What battles, then, are raging
Mid rocky hills! What streams are reddened there!

What news! What news! Our Leader hath he left us,
And shall his voice no longer call us on!
Too well we know that Fate hath thus bereft us
That voice is silenced and Harry Escomb gone.

What news! What news! Still in the balance pending
The right and wrong, the future that will be,
What news! What news! With hopes and fears unending
Yet strong and steadfast till the Victory.

6/01 **Emily Hobhouse**, of the South African Women and Children's Distress Fund, visits various **British Concentration Camps** and is shocked at what she finds. She drafts a report that is sent to the Committee of the South African Women and Children's Distress Fund. This report creates an immediate public outcry and prompts the following poem to be composed.

The terror reigns! Our lips are dumb:
The terror reigns, Our hands are tied:
Yet hither did a woman come
Across two oceans wide....
Those Camps of death where Horror lowers,

This is an extract of a longer text presented on **My Family History** page at
anthonyturton.com

Poetry from the Second Anglo-Boer War

All summoned her away...
O Englishwoman, tall and fair,
O Englishwoman, calm and brave,
Within the breach thou standest there
Those innocents to save!
Thou standest there with outstretched arms,
Like some Madonna, strong to bless,
To sooth their childish wild alarms,
And comfort their distress.
They seem'st [sic] to say, in accents low,
"If on these babes ye mean to tread,
Then ye must o'er my body go,
And trample on my head...
If at these babes ye dare to strike,
Ye strike at England's heart as well;
Then hang and starve us all alike,
Complete your deeds of Hell! ...

(Van Reenen, 2000. **Emily Hobhouse**: Boer War letters. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau. Pp 158.159).

The reference to the "childish wild alarms" is about the story of **Lizzie van Zyl**, who **Emily Hobhouse** saw just before her death at the **Bloemfontein Concentration Camp**. Lizzie was crying for her mother and **Emily Hobhouse** tried to soothe her fears, to be chased away by a camp official accusing her of upsetting the child. Lizzie died moments later. The attached image of **Lizzie van Zyl** tells the story better than words. It was such images that **Emily Hobhouse** took back to England, mobilizing public opinion against **Lord Kitchener's Scorched Earth Policy**, but also resulting in her being vilified to this day back in England (see Hasian, 2003 for details). It was these images and memories that led to Afrikaner bitterness for generations to come, driving the desire for independence from Britain (see 1961) and ultimately the policy of Apartheid. **Emily Hobhouse** goes to be honoured by future generations of Afrikaners, with a submarine being named after her (see 2/1971 and 1972) (Photo of **Lizzie van Zyl** shortly before her death courtesy of the Anglo Boer War Museum).



31/5/02 When Boer leaders gather in **Melrose House** to sign the final peace agreement, **Kitchener** shakes their hands declaring, "We are good friends now". For **Milner**, however the war remains unfinished business, telling a journalist (H. Spencer Wilkinson) later, "It has changed its character: it is no longer war with buckets, but war it still is. It is quite true we hold the winning cards, but it is not true we have won the game, and we cannot afford to lose a trick". In **Kipling's** memorable verse, the war had given Britain "no end of a lesson". A total of 450,000 Imperial troops had been deployed, and the original estimated cost of 10 million Pounds had run into an actual cost of 217 million Pounds. A total of 22,000 British military

Poetry from the Second Anglo-Boer War

were dead, two thirds from disease. It was thus less of a victory than a relief, for as **Kipling** wrote (Meredith, 2007:469):

“Me an’ my trusty friend ‘ave ‘ad,
As you might say, a war,
But seein what both parties done
Before ‘e owned defeat,
I ain’t proud of ‘avin won
Than I am pleased with Piet”.