

Fourteen Streams Camp
8th May 1900

My Dearest Mother

I was very glad to receive your letter dated the 4th of April. We were then camping at Dronfield where I last wrote to you. The morning I had your letter we moved out about twenty miles by train to a small place called Wendoorton Rd. We camped there in the open air for a few days and then started on a March up country. The first day we only went about 7 or 8 miles but the second we had it a bit harder, going about fifteen miles, and we had to cross two rivers which took us a long time as we had to help the transport across. Well the third was the greatest day of the lot as we had our first fight in South Africa on that day. It was on May 5th 1900. I shall never forget it as long as I live. We started from camp about 7 o'clock in the morning and marched about 5 miles and then we formed up in battle formation. They started to shell us at about 10 o'clock in the morning and our big guns soon answered. They make an awful noise.

I was just passing one of them as it fired. Well, I really thought my head was off with the noise and the earth shaking around the guns. We soon got used to the big guns fire alright. We could hear the shells going yards over our heads but there is no danger with them until they burst, and you can almost tell where they will drop so you have to keep well undercover.

Well, about 11 o'clock we were crossing a small open plane with no cover at all when they opened rifle fire on us. That frightened as a bit but every man kept well down and not one of us were hit. The next order was to advance, which we did in quick time. We were all down and in a ground trench in no time, and after that we had splendid cover all the way up, advancing in between bushes and stones all the way. We were not in the firing line, we were their support. As they lost their men we had to fill their places but they only lost six men and about eighteen wounded and that was just in the end. So, none of us got into the firing line though we were under very heavy fire until about half past four. So, you see, our first fight was rather a hard one. We soon got tea after that and our blankets and coats were soon there in the transport and we soon got down to rest.

I forgot to mention that the general complemented us very much and said we went to form up for battle first as if we were going to a parade. We are now camping at a place called Fourteen Streams. The Boers retired yesterday as we were turning up. They have blown the two ends of the bridge up. They say it is the largest in South Africa.

We are having splendid weather out here. The Boers lost around about twenty that we know of and about fifteen prisoners.

I have nothing more to say just now. With best love and kisses to yourself and all.

I remain your loving son, Norman.

P.S. It is our washing day today and think we shall have a small rest so I shall write again by the next mail. But if you do not get a letter you will know that we are on the move and cannot post them.

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