

FROM Maurice F.G. Wilson

3rd April 1881, Capetown. I had intended to begin this diary ever since I came here, three weeks ago, but of course did not, as was quite natural; and the best thing I can do now is to give a kind of account of the place as well as I can remember up to now and then go on with it every day. The place, that is to say Table Mountain, looked very fine on coming in, and the day was beautifully fine and hot. On landing the ship was overrun with Coolies, (Coolie being a sort of word for "boy" for whenever you want anything done you just shout "Coolie" and they come by scores) who laid hold of all your baggage and wouldn't leave go; just like a lot of Irishmen. I put up at the "George" which they say is the best hotel in Capetown. If it is I can't say much for the others. These hotel keepers seem to have it all their own way here - for at this hotel, and I hear it is the same at all the others, they won't give you anything to eat unless you come at the proper Table D'Hote hour. For instance, Breakfast is at half past 8, lunch at 1, and Dinner at half past 6, and if you want your meals at any other hour it is next to impossible to get them. The town itself is at first sight foreign looking but soon turns into a seedy sort of English town. The houses are all white or yellow and flat topped, the streets are wide and regularly laid out and the principal shops very good. Such a town for smells I should say there never was? going down as I do from the station to the docks there are at least 20 different smells from dried fish to Typhoidal Sewage, and coming back again in the evening it is quite a relief to get to the dried fish; they are quite sweet in comparison. Of course I do not mean that at the Docks themselves there are these smells on the contrary where I have to work is thank goodness the best place in Cape Town for it is most beautifully fresh and cool,

Cape Town itself just now is, or rather last week was, a perfect oven, for Table Mountain shuts out every breath of air that might come to it. Here at Newlands where I am staying the air is quite perfect, and the scenery pretty. The place and the whole country about here is covered, with fir and oak trees at the back of which rises Table Mountain and the Devil 's Peak, covered for about two thirds of the way up with evergreens of various sorts and the rest an almost perpendicular precipice. There is I believe at this end of Table Mountain only one way up it, but I have not been up and do not suppose I shall do so till after the winter. Every thing here seems fearfully slack and no one seems to care to have any thing nice. The private houses (or rather villas which reach pretty well all the way from Cape Town to Wynberg, a distance of about 9 miles) are certainly nice and clean looking outside, and those I have been into are nice inside, but there is no attempt whatever at even a decently kept garden. The entrances and gardens (with a few exceptions which might be counted over again on one's fingers) are regular wildernesses. Bar the Governor's carriage I have not yet seen a decent turn-out of any sort. Every thing from beginning to end is filthily dirty, for it is impossible to get good white servants and the niggers are very bad. My introductions have turned out very well. Lady Robinson and all the Government House people being very nice and friendly. Captain Wright from Simons Town asked me down in time for the Squadron Regatta and put me up for it; and I had a very good time of it down there. Kitty Cradock (Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock, lost in the "Good Hope" at Coronel, 1914) was there and seemed very well but did not seem so keen about the Navy altogether as last time I saw him.

The Hazards seem nice, especially the Colonel, but I should say he had a temper and a will of his own, I have never seen Colonel Montgomery since the first day when I took my introductions to him though I have called twice. He promised to put me up for the Club, but I have heard nothing from him since about it. I can't make Head or Tail of Jenour but think I shall get on with him all right. He most certainly is a fearful toady. His wife is a sort of half cousin of General Roberts, and when that celebrity was here the other day he lunched with the Jenours, and we were occasionally informed of the fact by Mr. Jenour: also reminded of it occasionally afterwards. The General seems to have been pretty well disgusted at the peace and his having to go straight home again, as well he might. Every one here is in a fearful state about it, and Gladstone is being burned in effigy all over the country, though what they hope to gain by so doing I don't quite see; if they were to burn the original there might be some sense in it but to think that he is likely to care one bit what a Cape mob does seems great nonsense. They say there will be no standing the Boers about here now and all through the Colony, for they quite believe, and very naturally, that we were thrashed into this peace. Any how all the troops have gone out [?] though what for remains to be seen. The real Dutchman, or Afrikaner, as he calls himself, is about the most mean creature alive from all accounts. He will tell any lie and do any thing to get round any one; at least, so I am told but I have certainly had no chance of finding it out for myself yet.

The climate certainly, as far as I can see and hear is beautiful as far as temperature, etc. goes, but the dust at present and always through the Summer is simply fearful. It is bright red and very fine and wind or no wind covers your clothes and in a short time utterly spoils them, do what you will. It gets under your clothes, and covers your whole body and makes you feel quite filthy. I would never have believed it if I had not seen it; and when the South-Easters blow (and they do blow perfect hurricane!) it is unbearable; first comes the dust which blinds you, then after a bit gravel comes which hurts you; then small rocks which about finish you. But as I was going to say - the other men in the office are Thwaites, the Assistant Engineer, who really does all the work, and Bell the Accountant. Bell is a very nice quiet Scotchman [deadly sin committed here - they are Scotsmen?] and Thwaites rather a nice little man but vulgar and very fond of his liquor. This last seems the curse of the place? All these clerks, one and all of them, are always "having a drink" and when they are not doing that they are smoking. This boarding house is not at all bad in its way but shamefully dirty and badly managed, but I am going somewhere else next week so it is not worth while bothering about it. Here are staying Mr. and Mrs. Lascar. He is a German Jew who made his money at the diamond fields, she is a regular Cockney; This does not sound lively but they are really very nice especially Mr. Lascar. She would also be nice if she was not always abusing the house and drawing comparisons between it and what their own house used to be and which they have just sold for they are going to England. Then there is a Mr. Williams who is on the Colonial Office; he is very nice and pleasant and a gentleman, but he has a fairly good opinion of himself and seems to have been great friends with the Freres which fact he takes good care all should know. Then there is a very girlish youth who is harmless and has nothing peculiar one way or the other, except that he much prefers drinking other people's beer or wine to his own. The reason this house is badly managed is that Mrs. Adams the landlady was the wife of a rich City merchant who spent all his money and she does not like coming down as far as to look after things properly and has at least two servants too few - by way I suppose of making more money, but the result is every one is going to leave as soon as the chance

comes of getting elsewhere. The roads here are beautiful, and I wish I had my bicycle but I think it would hardly be worth it, but I will see about that later on. I was rather sold with some people of the name of Graham yesterday. A friend of theirs whom I met on the "Warwick" told me I was to call on them and that he had told them to expect me; so I called yesterday and found he had never said any thing about it which was rather a sell, but they did not seem to mind and said I might go up again so I suppose it is all right. This morning I went to Claremont Church about a mile off. It is a nice little church but the singing is not good. I was going to have walked to Wynberg this afternoon with Williams, but he seems to have gone to sleep and is not going to appear. The Post here is very irregular, the letters dropping in at all sorts of hours, but I believe they are generally all delivered in course of time. They ought to get my first letters from here early this week at home. I wonder if they will do so.

April 7 If I describe one day it will do for the lot, one being almost exactly like another. I get up in the morning at 7 a.m. Breakfast at 8. Catch the train at half past 8 having got a Cape Times at the Railway Station which I study carefully all the way up to Town, generally not with much result as far as the getting of any fresh news is concerned. Arrive at Cape Town at quarter or 10 minutes to 9 and do any thing in the way of shopping I want in the Town, and then walk down to the office through all the delightful smells above described, reaching that place at about half past 9 or quarter to ten. Have my lunch (a few sandwiches) at about 1 and read the paper or talk or wander about for an hour or so, and then to work again, leaving town by the 5 o'clock train, or some times if nothing particular is to be done, at 4 p.m. Get down here again at quarter to 6 and walk on the Hats till quarter past and dine at half 6. After dinner talk, play chess, and read till half 10 or 11, when we all as a rule turn in. This is the usual daily routine and bar a few exceptions is not, so far as I can see, likely to be altered.

Today Mrs. Lascar was fuller than ever of abuse of this wretched house and its management, and I really don't know which is the worst, Mrs. L. or the Boarding House. It is a great nuisance for it quite spoils one's dinner, and otherwise she is not at all bad - on the contrary rather nice.

I don't know what I should do if it was not for the fresh air out here especially on the flats, for really the last few days it has been fearfully oppressive at Cape Town and made one feel quite good-for-nothing by the afternoon, but I suppose one will get used to it soon.

They are certainly most annoying people here: I damaged my fiddle and took it to what I was told was a good place to get it mended, but the man there certainly seemed to understand what was wanted. This was last Thursday. He promised me I should have it on Tuesday. On Tuesday he had forgotten all about it. Then I certainly would have it on Thursday. Today Thursday he had had no time but would let me have it perhaps on Saturday. But the annoying part is that he did not care a bit and so it was not the slightest use getting angry, and it is just the same with every one about here; they are

the most free and easy people it is possible to imagine and untruthful and lazy into the bargain.

The "Warwick Castle" went off on Tuesday with a great lot of passengers. The debate on the Government is put off till Monday, but there does not seem any chance of the present Ministry staying in. I have never yet got up to the House but must try and do so soon.

Jenour has at last asked me to lunch or rather dinner (for every one dines in the middle of the day on Sunday) next Sunday. I wonder what Mrs. J. is like.

The Bay looked very pretty this morning going in: it was a flat calm with all the ships lying any way and there was a slight mist all over with the sun at the back which gave every thing a reddish yellow tinge, and as it rained a bit last night the ships had their sails unfurled to dry. However the Bay always looks pretty whatever the weather is. The winds here are most peculiar and I do not suppose one sees the same any where else. All this week it has been blowing a strong S.E. breeze getting at times almost to a gale all over the outer part of the Bay, but inland – that is on the Cape Town side - owing to Table Mountain which shelters that part of the bay there has been a strong back eddy. Consequently while it has been blowing S.E. outside (about a mile out) it has all the time been blowing N.W. and W, on the inside, and one could see vessels going full sail before the wind in exactly the opposite directions. Today it blew quite a S.E. gale all over and the dust was awful, quite blinding, but I am told it was nothing at all to a real summer S. Easter.

Talking of Easter, it never struck me before that Sunday week is Easter Day. What a pace the time goes: But all the same it seems ages since I came here. I see the "Pretoria" arrived on Sunday night so they should have got my letters on Tuesday. I hope they did. I must not forget next Monday to write to Matthews for I promised to do so when I left. It is about bed time now so I must turn in. It is a regular case of "Early to bed --- " etc. I wish the last part would come true also.

April 10th - Sunday Still the same beautiful weather and cloudless skies, day after day. It is certainly very pleasant, but for my part I think it is too hot. For the last few days there has been quite a strong S.E. Gale in the Bay, but luckily it did not come into the Town and consequently the dust was not blowing about very much.

Yesterday I dined with the Sivewrights. They have a very nice little house and in a beautiful situation rather high up along the slope of Table Mount with a beautiful view of the latter and also of the mounts on the other side of the flats. Mrs. S, turned out very pleasant, for I did not care much about her the first time I met her. She plays rather nicely but like all the rest out here she fancies she can sing and sang a lot of songs indifferently instead of playing a few things nicely, which she might have done.

Today I went to Town and Church at the Cathedral, The service there is nice and well done, but they can't sing an anthem but of course will try and do so which is a pity.

They came to great grief over one of the Psalms which was meant to be sung very softly, and they got so very soft that at last they could not be heard at all and the organ (which had stopped) had to come in with a bang to wake them up again. After that I went to lunch or rather mid-day dinner with the Jenours. He is not bad at home at all, nor is she, but that is all. However I had a good dinner and the Bay looked quite lovely. It certainly is a beautiful bay and grows on one every day. He has got a horrid little daughter about 9 or 10 years old who kept bullying a very nice little retriever pup about 6 weeks old which made me very angry.

The "Conway" arrived last night but I shall get no letters I'm afraid till to morrow. I did not get away (and then with difficulty) till half past four and then went on to the Governor's for tea. He and my Lady and the two daughters and Captain St. John were there. I took a dislike to Captain St. John (the eldest daughter's husband) at first but am beginning now rather to like him. Lady L. was of course still abusing (and rightly) the people here but of course I don't care; it is nothing to me.

I got my fiddle back yesterday and he has made a very good job of it, but it is not quite right so I must take it up to him again to morrow.

I always thought foremen and the like most awfully pig-headed but had thought Stere (the clerk of the works here) above the common herd, but that delusion was dispelled yesterday after spending 2 and a half hours trying to shew him how and where he had made a mistake in his setting out of the head of the dry dock.

The general management of this place is steadily getting worse (if possible), and Mrs. Lascar's stock of abuse and complaints at dinner more and more plentiful, so I am very glad I am clearing out of this on Wednesday next. I had a great argument this evening with Williams as to what was, and what was not Sacred Music. I said that Sacred Music proper consisted of Oratorios, Anthems, Hymns, Chants, and any music that was used especially in connection with Sacred things; that there were many other things, Sonatas, Symphonies, etc. that the most proper and religious people would play or listen to on Sunday or even play in Church, but still they were not necessarily Sacred Music; in the same way that there are many Good Books that can be read on Sunday but still are not Religious Books. He said that anything that was played on Sunday by strict people, whether it was Oratorio, Sonata, or what you will, was Sacred Music, and that was the Argument.

I wonder whom my letters will be from to morrow.

April 16th - Saturday My letters were from Willie, Mary, Bassett, and Aggie, and the Cornish Telegraph from Robins giving an account of a great run with the Western Hounds, Aggie as usual riding like any thing. The "German" arrived this morning bringing me another letter from Willie and one from Mary at Seacroft. I wonder how they are there, she never said a word about them.

I left Adams on Thursday and came here (Bone's, Rondebosch) and like it very well so far as it goes. It is vastly better managed. They call one and get one's bath and all the rest of it and brush one's clothes occasionally, but so far I have not "cottoned" to any of the inhabitants very much yet but I daresay they won't be so bad after all. I had a good walk this afternoon from Mowbray round by the Sivewrights, It is the most puzzling country I ever was in; the roads twist and turn about so and come out at all sorts of unexpected places so that unless you actually know for certain where the road you are on leads to you can't possibly guess; or rather if you do guess you are sure to guess wrong. The reason for this is first the twisting and fuming of the road itself and secondly the fact of the whole country being overgrown with trees, and you can't see the general country at all as you walk along and if you get up a hill and see around you you can't then make out the roads because of these trees.

There are some most beautiful avenues of oaks and firs here, one in particular, near where the Sivewrights live, is a double row of oaks and about 2 miles long with a splendid view of the best side of Table Mt, all the way. It is a grand old mountain and looks well from wherever you see it. Except for the scenery and a few nice people here I am beginning to come round to what most of the people here think of the place, viz: that it's the very last place in the world; a mistake altogether in fact. Some say that after the rest of the world was finished there was a bit of stuff left over from -the scrapings, and as these scrapings were being taken away a portion of them fell out of the cart and fell down here forming South Africa, Others say that they were so disgusted with the rest of the world that they never took the trouble to finish this at all. That is what they say but I'll not answer for it,

The whole thing is the fearful laziness and slackness of every body and every thing here. Nothing is ever done well and no one cares to have things looked after, Every thing is slovenly and untidy and servants and shop keepers and officials and all are most fearfully free and easy, not to say cheeky. The upper classes here with a few exceptions are a sort of Anglicized Dutch (though of course there are some real English) who talk always of going "home" to England and toady to Government House, The Freres used to have all these people and pet them till they got so much above themselves that they used to cut all their friends whom they "did not know at Government House". But the Robinsons just gone on the opposite tack and had nothing to do with them and so they are left in the lurch. There is very little goes on here I believe, very few parties of any sort, I believe the climate has a lot to do with it for it makes one more inclined to sleep than any thing else.

The Rains have come at last and it rained most of yesterday and to day making - the air beautifully fresh and cool but the roads in a frightful state, I go to lunch with the Coles to morrow, I rather think the Wrights are staying there; I hope they are. Mr. Cole is a very nice old man but very deaf and they say hard up and in debt, but no one cares and he lived on just the same.

April 27th - Wednesday I have written nothing in this book since last Saturday week which is too long but any how there has not been any thing very exciting happen since that. The "Garth" arrived Saturday afternoon bringing letters from Mary, Gerty,

Aggie, and Gerald all of whom seem very well which is something. The "Garth" is certainly a very fine ship but slow and, I think like all the rest of the Castle ships, clumsy and stiff and not so comfortable as the Union, The Union all round is much the better Service and I shall certainly go back by it if I can.

Last week was most awfully hot again, perfectly stifling - I don't think I ever remember such disagreeable damp any where} but yesterday and to day have been cooler and a little rain has fallen. I went to a reception at Government House last Thursday which I thought very slow for there were very few people there, Montgomery mounted me on a very nice hack on Saturday and we had a very pleasant ride, calling on Mrs, Manuel and Mrs. Fleming, both of whom I liked very much and on Sir D. Tennant who was not at home, Captain O'Connell came with us; he seems very nice indeed. Afterwards I dined with him at the Club and had a good dinner. He has put me up for it now which is all right.

Sunday I was to have walked round the Kloof with Page but it was so fearfully hot we did not go but went back to the Sivewrights and spent the rest of the day there. Mr. Brand, a barrister and son of President Brand of the Free State was there and seemed very pleasant and quite took our part against the Boers. There are all sorts of accounts coming from Transvaal now saying that war will break out again and there certainly seems to be a lot of dissatisfaction up there and they seem to wish to back out of their agreements and say they won't give up any of the country at all and now there are all sorts of meetings being held all over the country by loyalists protesting against the peace for they say they have been misled and they certainly have, and now are having their property confiscated and are altogether in a bad way. The "no confidence" debate keeps on steadily, having been going on for nearly a fortnight now. There are only 70 members in the House but every one of them like a lot of babies will have his say and a pretty long say too.

I went to the Theatre the other night and heard "Somnabula" which was hardly perhaps as good as when I heard it last Summer at Covent Garden, but still all things considered it was not bad. There is a very nice little fellow here called Woodcock, an engineer, and I should say rather clever. He is well sick of the Colony and has come to the conclusion that it is not a place for engineers to get on in. They get to a certain position and there they stick; there is no getting on and being so far from England the English engineers never hear of them or care to hear of them and so they never get a chance of getting on. Woodcock has been out here about 4 years, he and two others, and they are all disgusted with the place and are off home this Winter most likely. As in every thing else out here — nobody cares for any thing. The whole line is most disgracefully managed and they have just made General Traffic Manager a young Colonial who never saw a railway in his life before this one, much to the disgust of the other engineers in the office.

April 30th - Saturday A very wild day with heavy rain and strong N.W. Gale, I had to go and take the positions of ships in the Bay this morning to see if they shift at all but I don't think they will though tonight the wind seems increasing. I lunched at Government House and found them all in a very good humour. We were a very small

party, Lady B, Mrs. St. John, Miss R and myself; the Governor himself had just sailed for Natal in the "Orontes".

The Debate finished Thursday with a Government majority of 5 which will be a lot of use I think.

The races this week seem to have been a success but I did not go to them. Woodbine Cloete[?] an awful smash. His horse shied and got entangled in some wire fencing but some how neither were any the worse. He has just gone smash for £75,000 but does not seem to care much but goes on racing just the same.

I dined with Bell the other night: he has a nice little house and prettily furnished but I did not care much about Mrs. Bell and I am sure she will go out of her mind some day, she has such a fearful look in her eyes. To morrow I lunch with FitzGerald quite one of the nicest fellows I have met yet. He comes from near Killaloe and knows all the people about, Jim, Marcus Patterson, Will Spaight, Massey Dawson, the old church people and all. It is very funny meeting him out here. He is a sort of general agent for any thing and every thing and I believe is doing very well.

I am getting awfully sick of little Thwaites. He is so very pleased with himself always and is always giggling and drinking whiskey and abusing Jenour of whom he is evidently very jealous. The "Nubian" has not arrived yet but I suppose will do so to morrow. The letters by her ought to be in answer to my first lot. I think my fiddle is all right now but some how I get very little time for practice.

May 7th - Saturday Another week gone since I last wrote this up. It is certainly wonderful the pace the time slips away. I had dinner with FitzGerald on Sunday and then went on to see the Sivewrights and Curreys. This has been a very uninteresting week, the only excitement being the heavy rain and its consequences. Here alone 7 new houses simply fell down. They are all run up wholesale with soft new bricks and some sand and water with a very small proportion of bad lime for mortar and so when the rain comes they simply get washed away "stock and block" as Tom would say,

About 7 on Monday we were all roused up by a chimney collapsing, and down the Kitchen Chimney all the time it was raining there was a perfect stream of clay and sand from the dissolving bricks!! It really is shameful and I should not be the least surprised if the whole house fell some day. However it is quite in keeping with every thing else out here. Now that the rain has come there is no more thought about the water supply of the Town but they will wait till there is another drought probably next summer. Cape Town has no proper water supply, no drainage, no places for depositing rubbish, no pavements, no nothing - in fact it is without any exception for a so-called civilized town the most benighted and forsaken place it is possible to conceive. The gutters along the street sides till the rain came were full of dead cats and dogs and filth of all sorts. All the rubbish is thrown anywhere on the beach. The sewers run out anywhere and everywhere and while they were dry the smells from them were truly delicious. One

really could not turn a corner without coming to fresh stench each one worse than the last. If it were not for the South-Easter which blows during the Summer nearly every day for a while there would most certainly be a break out of yellow fever or some thing equally bad and all solely and simply because that lively lot of old women calling themselves the Town Council are so utterly stubborn and pigheaded to do any thing but wrangle among themselves as to which is the bigger fool. They did make a reservoir last Summer but never made any arrangements for filling it, I suppose they thought it would fill itself. One of the warehouses at the Docks too got flooded and of course a great deal of jabber and jaw and squabbling between Jenour and Hewat (Dock Superintendent) who hate each other like poison.

I went to the Theatre again last night and saw 'Ixion' which was not up to much. But that again is quite as it should be for any thing good here would be quite out of place.

The Ministry resigned yesterday and so the others are going to take their places and form themselves as they like. The Governor is away but still they don't seem to mind that at all. I called on the Grahams this afternoon and they seem rather nice and have tennis every Wednesday when it is fine. I went on to call on Mrs. Fleming but there were people sitting on the Stoep which frightened me and I did not go up, so I must try again another day. I got worried again by mosquitoes last night which is a nuisance to say the least of it. It is teaming rain again now and I am sure the house will go. At any rate I must go to bed for I am horful sleepy. I am rather in hopes my hair is growing again with some stuff Thwaites gave me. I have to dine with him on Tuesday which all things considered is rather a nuisance.

May 12th - Thursday I dined with the little man on Tuesday which was not so bad after all. Just before dinner we went out to the observatory and saw Mr. Finlay who took us over and shewed us round and tried to explain every thing to me but generally had his words taken out of his mouth and inferior ones substituted by Thwaites who will always have his say whether wanted or not. They have some very nice instruments there which were most interesting to me for I had never done more than read about them before. The Transit there is about the finest in the world, with a 6 ft. Circle read by 6 equidistant verniers - the lower one reads the degrees and to 5 minutes of arc, the others read the minutes to the one thousandth part which is pretty accurate. He is off to Aden soon when Gill (the Astronomer Royal here) returns from home to get the exact Longitude of the Cape for that has never yet been accurately obtained.

After dinner we had music from a Miss Newman who did not play badly and some things (walses) she played very well. Little Thwaites who knows no more about music than an old stick and has no more ear than a fish though he thinks himself a second Mendelssohn was in raptures and stood over her all the time looking round periodically with a most "intense" smile of placid, satisfaction. It was great fun.

I have been taking soundings all day to day at the end of the Breakwater which was at any rate a pleasant change, but the boatmen of course were most aggravating, invariably pulling the wrong oar, or backing when told to pull and vice versa - but that is

as it should be out here. I am going to dance to morrow at Mrs. Flemings which I hope will be nice, and have just got an invitation for one at the General's for Saturday. But I can't go unluckily for I am going to the Cloetes? to dine and sleep. But there are to be some more I believe soon; the Government House one is next Wednesday.

The shopkeepers here are certainly most amusing in their free and easy manner. I went into a boot shop this morning to get a pair of evening shoes, Mr. Boyes was sitting there quietly but never took the slightest notice so I said I wanted a pair of dress shoes. "Oh!" "A pair of dress shoes please". "Yes! Patent leather". "Yes". "Won't you sit down". Then he walked over and began talking about the weather. "Take your boot off please", which I did. "I wonder what day of the month it is. Do you know?" "12th, I think". "Oh! I have an almanac here only it's a year old and so it won't help us much", "It is the 12th". "It won't do to go backwards, that would be like the Klief. Have you ever seen a Klief? It is a sort of Crawfish which strikes out forwards and goes backwards - curious, isn't it? Fancy walking forward and going back all the time. That is what the boys say in the streets of a lazy fellow; "Augh em Klief". Now I'll measure you please; thanks, that will do, you can put your boot on again if you like and I would not advise you to walk out without it if I were you for it is rather muddy. "Name please". "Wilson", "So many of them Please give me an initial, though, (soliloquising) Patent leathers will distinguish him for I have no patent leather Wilsons here at present". "Can I have them by Wednesday?" "Well, I daresay you might; are you in a hurry, Bad plan to be in a hurry for any thing in Cape Town; However, I daresay you shall have them by then. At any rate you might look in in the morning and see how they're getting on".

The weather since the last rain has been beautiful, nice and cool and still fine and bright though the sun is hot about midday. The Bay looked beautiful to day going in for there was all over a sort of dreamy haze through which loomed the various ships in the Bay all lit up with a yellowy light from the rising or rather lately risen sun, the sea all the while being perfectly calm. Afterwards this haze cleared off and the atmosphere became clearer than I have ever yet seen it, the Blueberg Mountains about 4 miles distant being so clear and distinct that one could fancy he could see a man even if he chanced to be walking there. And coming back this evening they were looking most magnificent being lit up by the setting sun with the deepest red and purple, the tips of the highest Peaks being of the brightest gold and above them the Moon, nearly full, which had just risen. Altogether this has been the most beautiful day we have had yet. At any rate I am fearfully sleepy now and am off to bed.

May 21st - Saturday There is nearly 10 days gone since I last wrote up this but somehow it only seems about a day or two since. A lot of things have happened, of more or less consequence. We (Woodcock, Nichols, King, and myself) went to Great Constantia to the Cloetes on Saturday to dine and sleep and found there a bachelors' party which might have been great fun and very pleasant, but it wasn't. It was all very well till Woodcock, Nichols and myself turned in about half past 1, but the rest kicked up a fearful row all night and two got very drunk and we had to take them back next day which was far from pleasant for they were still very much the worse. Constantia is a very nice old house but like all the rest out here very dirty and untidy. The vineyards

there are very fine and the Cloetes are very irate at a certain Mr. Fluentes who has been writing down the method of wine making out here.

The night before I was at a dance at Mrs. Flemings at Wynberg Hall which was very pleasant indeed and I got lots of dancing, and on Wednesday there was one at Government House which also was very nice for the "nice people" are very nice but the converse is equally true. I did I think a very good afternoon's work today going to Wynberg and calling on the Flemings who were at home and then going up to Town and calling at Government House, General's, Hazards and Montgomery - only finding the Hazards at home. I am to lunch there on Sunday next being the Queen's Birthday which is the great holiday here.

I am afraid there is going to be a row with the Harbour Board and Jenour but I hope it will blow over. On the Board is a great man of the name of Murison, (Captain Murison of a small trader years ago) who cares for nobody nor for what he says of or to anybody; he can hardly read or write but abuses whom he likes and lays down the law all round and everybody is afraid of him (especially little Thwaites though he doesn't know it or at any rate doesn't own to it). Murison dislikes Jenour, Jenour distrusts Murison; Barrowes the chairman of the Board is a very nice quiet gentlemanly man but gives in to Murison. Hewat the Dock Superintendent (not on the Board) hates Jenour (and Jenour hates him) and lets him know it, and sucks up to Murison. Thwaites sucks up to Murison and abuses Jenour to him while all the time he tries to keep in with Jenour too, but Jenour sees through him. Fforde is the only man on the Board who will really stick up for Jenour.

Now during the last rains the docks have been in an awful state and a lot of goods have been damaged owing to stopped drains, and the Board have come to the conclusion that something ought to be done, and Murison thought Jenour should be hung and Thwaites did his little best to insinuate the blame on to Jenour (he is always insinuating but seldom says anything out) and altogether to agree with Murison. Murison proposes at the next Board meeting that Thwaites should be made Maintenance Engineer and Jenour left the Constructive part which would of course be taking his (Jenour's) assistant away from him and which of course is a great shame and he is consequently against it, and Fforde is the only man who backs him up. Thwaites can't think what they can be going to do and pretends before Jenour to know nothing about it though all the time he is doing his best to egg them on. It seems to me a great shame and to be done entirely out of spite towards Jenour. Most certainly he does not look after the Maintenance properly but still he could do so quite well if they told him to do so and let him knock off some of the men from the dock which he does not seem inclined to do of his own accord.

There is going to be a great Regatta on Tuesday but I don't suppose it will be much.

May 27th - Friday Another week nearly gone since I last wrote and a week of rain and squalls and all sorts. The Regatta on Tuesday went off very well and I had a seat in the Governor's stand where all the Robinsons and Hazards and everyone were. I lunched with the Hazards on the day after the Inspection which was pretty good as

inspections go. Captain Michaelmas very nearly got landed on his back at the volley. The rain held off very well though there were a few showers fell in the evening. There was no wind which was bad for the sailing races though of course it made it much better for the rowing.

Last Sunday I dined with the Manuels where were Colonel Thynne who was at Windsor the last half I was at Eton, a Mr. Mooney and another man both M.R.A.s, and so they talked politics all the time, and seemed to think we ought to have finished off the Boers while we were about it but that Shepstone had misled us all round before, in saying that the Majority of Boers in the Transvaal were in favour of the Annexation whereas in reality it was only those in the towns who were at all of that opinion, the country people being entirely against it; and they said that Sir B. Frere followed in the same way and entirely misrepresented the real state of things. And so altogether we were well let in.

This last rain has been damaging this wretched house again and last night Woodstock and King and I went down and routed Cowper out of bed and brought him up and I think pretty well frightened him, for he says now he will put it right, and certainly he has been fiddling about here all day.

The "Trojan" arrived last evening and ran it rather too fine and had a narrow shave of damaging herself. Letters from Jim, Gerald and Mary bringing accounts of a new niece at Summerville [May Bannatyne]. Gerald in a great state about Mr. Gladstone's doings both in Ireland and at home. I dine with the Curreys on Sunday and go to another dance at Mrs. Fleming's on Thursday.

Thwaites has got the Maintenance of the Docks now, and is in all his little glory. He is a most diminutive, skinny, and puny man and always wears a tall hat and frock coat and reminds one muchly of the "Hatter" in "Alice in Wonderland". But now he's more important than ever though to my mind he has become by this new arrangement little more than a sort of work surveyor or Clerk of Works. He is certainly on the permanent staff and there he is likely to stick I imagine.

This chimney arrangement here is getting a great nuisance for it is beginning to get quite cold now and we can have no fires. It is raining again now like cats and dogs. It certainly rains with a will here when it does rain - just about the only thing that is done with a will in this benighted hole. The reservoir is gradually, I believe, filling itself, but as yet they have taken no means to get it properly filled.

June 7th - Tuesday Ten days gone again - I shouldn't wonder at all if even now it was the middle of next week, the time goes so quickly, I don't think there has been any thing particular happen since I last wrote this up. Last Thursday I was at a dance at Mrs. Fleming's at Wynberg Hall. It was a very pleasant dance but I had rather a headache all the time which rather spoilt it, but still it was very good fun. It is a pity there is only one room there, for one gets tired of sticking in the same place all the

time. There is another Ball at Government House on the 15th which I hope will be as good as the last.

I had some tennis last Saturday at the Manuels. It is a very nice court but catches the wind a great deal. Miss Shaw the Rondebosch Lady Champion was playing but was a very ordinary player I thought. There is a great Ladies' Tournament at the Castle soon which is going to be won I believe by the youngest Miss Hazard who is also going to be married. They were both at the dance the other night and seemed very much afraid of each other and to wish they were out of it.

We have been having the most extra ordinary weather lately. Last Sunday week the glass was at 29.52 which is very low indeed for here - almost unheard of - the usual height being about 30.00 and varying very little one way or the other. On Monday the glass had risen in less than 24 hours to 30.63! and next day was down at 30.00 again and blowing a furious S. Easter which is an utterly unheard of thing here at this time of year. Last Saturday again it blew a strong S. Easter and the dust was simply fearful. To day it has been raw and wet but the glass is on the rise so I hope we will get some fine weather.

There is very little news now in the papers either from Home or the Transvaal. The Commission have finished sitting at Newcastle and are now going to Pretoria. Mr. Saver started to day for Basuto-land to try and bring them to terms; I wonder if he will. They seem to be going to pass the Railway Bill which will be a great thing for the country if they do. According to the Saturday Review which Geraldine has sent me today peace was made with the Basutos a month ago, I don't know where they got it from, but certainly no-one heard of it here and it is equally certain that it is not yet settled; most of the chiefs have agreed to it but Lethorodi[?] will not do so.

The "Argos"[?] (Orient Boat) arrived this morning and went on this afternoon to Australia. The "Durban" is the next mail from England and being a fast boat will most likely be in on Thursday morning if not to morrow night.

June 14th - Tuesday It has suddenly turned most fearfully hot again just like the middle of Summer at home. Guide books and Whitakers Almanac and Geography books and the rest all persist in calling this an equable climate which is the most utter nonsense. They say that the difference between the Summer and Winter mean temperatures is small and they are right, but they conveniently (in advertizements) forget that the mean between 40° and 100°, and 65° and 75° is the same; and that is just where it is that they get wrong, for the changes here are most sudden. In the morning and evening it may be, and often is, very cold, while in the middle of the day the heat is very great. Last Saturday morning when I started for Simons Town it was quite frosty and the ground white and I was very glad of a thick coat, - the same afternoon I was very glad to get both my coats off and fish in my shirtsleeves; and yesterday and today have been most unpleasantly close - this afternoon especially. But still the weather is beautiful and one ought not to grumble.

I had a very pleasant visit to Simons Town and found them all well. On Saturday all round the "Flora" was swimming an enormous shoal of very large Mackerel followed all

the time by a lot of what they call here "Yellow Tails" - large fish with bright yellow tails. About half the Mackerel at least were gashed and cut about all over as if they had been worried, whether by these yellow tails or no I can't say, and one of them was swimming about with 2 yards of line in his mouth. We caught a few of them and put them alive on to great big hooks and put them back again and then watched these yellow tails go for them, and caught a couple of them. In the afternoon we caught some stockfish which are quite the best eating fish there are here.

Dr. Mahon of the "Flora" has just got back from the front. He was or rather is about the only man who can give an account of Majuba Hill for he was there all the time. It seems General Colley never told any one where he was going and left no orders about a reserve, or what was to be done in case they got beaten and made no arrangement about communication with the camp or any thing but just took these 400 or so men and climbed the hill at night, and in the morning when the Boers saw them they opened a sort of fire on them from about 1000 or more yards and succeeded in mortally wounding Commander Romilly whom Mahon attended. The General then ordered them back from the Brow of the hill out of sight and left no one on the look out and he and the officers had their lunch and smoked when all of a sudden some Boers appeared over the hill about 50 yards from them having quietly walked up while they were lunching. The men wanted to charge them at once and if they had done so it would have been all right, but they were not allowed to do so and then more appeared on the other side, and our men got seized with a Panic and off they went and Colley when he found he could not stop them was holding up his hand to the Boers to stop firing for he was going to give up when he was shot. It turned out afterwards that there were only 120 Boers altogether, 60 on each side.

Mahon all this time was tending Romilly, and a lot of young Boers came up and were for shooting them at once only they knocked their rifles up (He had put a handkerchief on a stick but it was shot down two or three times) and then he tried to explain who he was but before they would believe him he had to untie Romilly's bandages to shew that the wounds were real! What a fearful mess we seem to have made of it.

The "Duart Castle" was in the other day with some of the 92nd [2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders] wounded and they were walking about the Docks, some without arms, others without legs and all of them wounded and maimed in one way or another and it was really too horrible to see them and think that it was all done for nothing; all these lives thrown away and all these poor men wounded and many of them maimed for life and nothing what ever gained by it.

A German Man of War came into harbour to day. She is a fine ship ("Skosck" by name) very heavily sparred but like all other foreigners that I have seen is very dirty and untidy as compared with ours.

There is another Ball at Government House to morrow to which I am going and one on Thursday week at Wynberg Hall given by the Grahams to which I have just got an invitation. I felt very guilty when I got it for hearing they were going to give one and thinking they had not got my address I called there this afternoon but found them out

and when I got back I found the invitation. I am afraid we are going to get more rain for we have now been nearly a fortnight I think without it.

June 17th - Friday We had a very pleasant ball indeed last Wednesday and I don't think I have ever been at one I liked better. My Lady was great fun - when I went in and said How do you do she asked me if I knew many people there and I said I thought not and she answered no more did she but that did not matter she would introduce B» to any one I liked and then we went round and she kept saying "What do you think of her, will she do?" and then asked her name and introduced me and then on to someone else.

The weather has been very close and sultry the last few days, worse than ever and quite as hot as a hot sultry and rather dull June or July day at home, and this in the depth of Winter!

The "Warwick" got in at 10 this morning having made her quickest run of any. It brought letters from Aggie and Gerty and a fine long one from Tom. He seems to have had a good time of it in Switzerland. There was a letter from Gerald as well which I had forgotten. I am very sorry Geraldine is not well but I hope she will be all right when she gets home from Ireland. My bicycle has all arrived I suppose but I have not seen it yet.

We caught a small snake at dinner to day, I believe poisonous but did not make experiment to see. Woodcock goes away on Tuesday in the "Trojan" I am sorry to say for he is quite the best of the lot here.

They seem to be making a great deal of Lady Florence Dixie at the front - I wish them joy of Sir Beaumont, that's all. Thank goodness it will soon be bed time.

July 17th - Sunday It is a month and two days now since I last wrote up this. How on earth the time has gone and how it is I never wrote all the time I am sure I can't say. I heard of poor Nigo's [?] death the other day. It seems to have been most fearfully sudden and no one knew what was the matter with him till the last two days.

The weather has been beautiful all the time but some days have been very hot, and today the rain has come again but I do not think for long for the Glass is on the rise again.

The Scanlens' ball was very good indeed and the Claremont ball was not bad but rather a bear fight. There are two this week on Tuesday and Friday at Claremont and Cape Town. For the latter I am going to dine and sleep at Government House.

Last Thursday we had a great walk up the mountain with about 18 ladies young and middle aged and about 10 gentlemen. It was not at all bad fun on the whole but we did not go far enough for we stopped before getting out of the trees and so lost what would have been a very pretty view. Friday I dined at the Rosses and danced a bit afterwards. Yesterday we danced here in Mrs. Boyes' Room and to day I dined with the Curreys.

Mrs. Boyes is a very nice little woman indeed but very delicate I am afraid. Major Boyes arrived here this morning after having been away 5 years.

I am getting very sick of this house - the servants and landlady are so fearfully impertinent, there is no standing them and I think I shall go to Mrs. Welby's at the first opportunity. I have been all wrong this last week but am getting all right again now I hope. The Dr. says it's liver and I mustn't drink beer which is a nuisance for the Cape wines are not nice to say the least of it. We have got FitzGerald as assistant Engineer now I am glad to say and little Thwaites is more self important and interfering than ever. I had all the Quarterly measurements to do this time and strange to relate they came out very near indeed considerably more by good luck than good management, I'm afraid.

September 20th Two months this time since I last wrote, but how the time has gone I am sure I can't tell. I don't seem to have been doing much. In the way of work I have been busy sounding with Captain May for the last four or five weeks and at times it has been very hot and disagreeable but we are getting through with it now. I am going to start a lot of experiments next week on the strengths of the different woods used on the works.

The "Trowbridge" arrived all safe after a long passage of 99 days bringing out the Caisson which they are just beginning to erect. The weather has been very nice and pleasant with the exception of a few very close muggy days which ended up in a thunderstorm. The whole country now about here is looking perfectly lovely. I never saw any thing to equal the wild flowers. The flats are a mass of Africandus Orchids and Bulbs to say nothing of Arams and commoner flowers without end and heathers, while up the Mountain are more bulbs, wild roses and geraniums and arams and most beautiful flowering trees, Maiden hair ferns and ferns of all sorts, Anemonies, Heathers, Everlastings, and all the flowers you can imagine, besides of the trees being in fresh leaf again. The view of this side of the mountain from near the Railway station [Rondebosch] beats any thing I ever saw for grandeur and colour.

Tennis is the order of the day. Tuesday the Tennants, Wednesday the Grahams, and Friday the Flemings, and others I believe to follow. I have been to a lot of dances lately and among them to a Fancy Ball in a Tyrolean peasant's dress lent me by Mrs, Currey. It did very well. The Hunting is over and I never got out after all and I can't say I care very much after all.

The chief excitement of the last two months has been the loss of the "Teuton" with 235 lives!! A most awful thing and they say the Captain's fault for going on the old game of hugging a dangerous and badly surveyed coast.

They say Bassett is talking of coming out in November. It will be great fun if he does only I would rather he came later on instead and then we could go home together. I suppose in about six months I shall be off again. I know I shall be very sorry to leave for it is not at all a bad place and the people about are very nice and most hospitable. It is horrid to think that having got to know a lot of people well one must go and probably never see a quarter or perhaps any of them again.

November 1st - Tuesday The pace the time slips away is really too horrid to think of. When I first came out here I used (as I was told every one did) to abuse the place right and left and would have given anything to be off by the next steamer. However I was told that no one came here and was not very sorry to leave and generally came back again, and I am coming to the conclusion that they were quite right, for in many ways this is much better than England. The people are a vast deal more genial and generally hospitable; they are always glad to see one whenever one turns up, and to have a game of tennis or whatever happens to be going - and altogether one sees a great deal more of one's neighbours than ever in England: and then there is no comparing the climate of the two. I am very glad I do like the Cape for I suppose I shall have to go somewhere when I have done with Sir John [Coode] and if he gives me anything to do I hope the goodness it will be somewhere in this Colony and not in New Zealand, that is always supposing it is not at home.

The Gerald's have let Cliffe at last; it really is too horrible to think of; but I suppose it was necessary or he would not have done it, but it will certainly be very very unpleasant going home to Snow Hall and not being able to go to Cliffe, I do hope the result will be satisfactory.

Since last writing I have again changed my quarters and am now at Mrs. Welby's and like it very much indeed.

Last Friday week little Thwaites broke his leg under the wheel of the Fire Engine but is I am glad to say progressing favourably. Last Saturday Harry Currey and I went down to Niekerk's farm near Durban to shoot quail but saw none, only getting a brace of snipe.

There have been some large tennis parties lately notably at the Farmer's and Ebden's. Both are very nice English looking places especially the former. From Belmont (the Ebden's place) there is a most lovely view of the Mountain which they are having painted and it will probably be in the Academy next year or the year after. Aggie doesn't seem to care a lot for Yankee land to judge from her letters. She will soon I suppose be on her way home again now. The General gives a ball on Thursday which I hope and expect will be good. It is given I believe as a farewell to the Hazards who I am very sorry to say are very soon going home. They are all of them very nice and all of [us] will be very sorry to lose them.

It is funny how different people turn out to what one expected: I had introductions to the Hazards, Sivewrights, and Col. Montgomery. After the first sight of them I did not expect much from either the Hazards or Montgomery. But Sivewright was going to do everything "anything for a friend of dear Frank Sullivan". I might almost if not absolutely say that either directly or indirectly I have got to know all the people I do know through either the Hazards or Montgomery while the Sivewrights have never introduced me to a one single solitary soul and have never asked me to their house to dine or anything unless I happened to call there when it was getting on for dinner. I don't think they mean to be inhospitable at all for they are always very nice and pleasant when I meet them, but it just shews how differently people turn out to what

one expected. I have not been to Government House for a long time now, but my present intention is to call there tomorrow afternoon if I have time.

... ends ...