

Symons letter 5

Private Mail Bag, Wynbring Siding S.A., 9/8/41

Margin note: I am not crossing the little cheque and Martins or Birks will cash it. I usually cross all my cheques when in camp.

My dear Kilmeny

How can I thank you adequately for your lovely courtesy in undertaking your 'quest' to find me my beloved Dickens! The little flowers herewith are my thanks and thoughts. Those paper covered books! How did they come to this country? I had a full Household' Dickens in green hard covers but with the old double column of these paper ones and I carries that full edition with me throughout Australia and Tasmania from the 80s till I lent the last copy which was Edwin Drood and some lighter short stories. None of these copies ever came back to me, but I always had the pleasure of thinking that they had given pleasure to the borrowers! I have made a list of those you sent and I will keep them in a parcel by themselves, but will not lend them and the parcel will be addressed to your dear thoughtful self. These little flowers are growing round and about my tent and are a lovely sight to me all so tiny yet so "alive and growing".

I've hurt my writing hand just at the junction of hand and wrist and the muscles have all been affected, especially the thumb which is useless almost at present, but as I have no natives, I am taking care of my hand and arm and the young fettler's wife from whom I make small purchases kindly does little services. I can get a meal from her and she launders for me but I must keep my tent out of bounds and so I have not had any white people (tho I've only seen 2 white young women at the Siding).

Within my brush breakwind the delight and comfort of Dickens can only be gauged by a fellow Dickensian and one as keen as I am. I can hear Grandma reading bits to us when we were allowed down among the grownups between their afternoon tea and our evening meals and the paper-covered print just brings Grandma back to mind. I had a habit of imitating her as she read and as I read now I remember it all so vividly. So curious how we can bridge many years yet forget yesterday's happenings.

I am sending you a small cheque for your War Efforts. You are preparing something I know and I hope it's going to be a big success and that my little sum is the first of its kind towards your work. It's only half a guinea Kilmeny. Success to your efforts.

I miss my natives greatly but this is their season for initiation assemblages and all have gone to the West Coast, Fowlers Bay etc. for the ceremonies, mainly orgies as only vestiges of the initiation ceremonies are now practised. It is a pity they have lapsed as they made for discipline of the young lads. Had a shock when I found that all my young novices had turned into young thieves since I left my camp in 1935 and have been roaming along the line from Kalgoorlie to Port Augusta robbing fettlers' tents and houses.

Thank you again dear Kilmeny, for your most generous and kindly thought and act. My beloved Dickens! Affly yours, Daisy M. Bates

