

Symon letter 22

Flinders Hotel, Streaky Bay S.A., 1/10/46

I am so near my 87<sup>th</sup> milestone that I'm asking God to let it be my last.

My dearest Kilmeny

I have not been well since I returned from my fruitless effort to establish myself again amongst my natives but I think I have sent many a little "atomic thought" to your dear self, wondering how you were faring in the dreadful times of scarcity in Adelaide and wishing so much to have you here with me where there is plenty of food which I cannot eat sitting here by myself.

Are you well? Have you been well? I went to Fowler's Bay and can you believe it! My natives – some of them had "heard by snake [?]" I was coming up and Beeradhugurr and Inyagaji and some others ran the 80 miles from Ooldea and when the car came to Bookabie Koorabi (a Mrs Wiess, storekeeper, drove me there from Fowlers) they ran and ran to get round the car their eyes streaming with joy, their closeness to the car frightened the German woman I think, but they were so glad! And when a native is 'glad' he shows twice as many teeth and eyes as he normally possesses! And poor Mrs Wiess shrank into the corner of the car so I got out and they didn't even see the food in the car that I had brought for them. Kabbarli, Kabbarli they cried, yet they did not touch me because their hand may not have been clean. I shouldn't have minded but because of my white 'busman's' coat they knew they would have marked it.

My old Yuria campsite has been taken up by Mrs Wiess's husband I think and so I could not rest any more there. I must have an area free from any kind of white people. My poor natives quite understood that we could not go back to Yuria Camp and so I told them to "look out" for another place with a permanent waterhole and I should come back to them. I was keen to have them think I should be with them again. Mrs Wiess saw how their poor faces brightened. She told me she had never seen them like that. I have arranged with her store that she should give "my food gift" to them if they came to her store. I had taken out with me a goodly supply but just consider! They never even thought of looking! They were so glad to see Kabbarli. I am still under the Dr's care here – Dr Catton – a quiet good man – he operated on a small toe which I had injured at my Ooldea camp.

My dearest young friend, I must thank you for the "Times" of April and June. They've been lying at Ceduna for some weeks and yesterday came from you. I'm in touch with Ernestine Hill who is in W.A. and I've asked her to come to me. I need her with my MSS. She helped me so splendidly with my first book. God bless you my dear girl. I would like to have you with me here and smother you with joy.

My dear love to you

Daisy M. Bates