

# **Studwell - Letter March 1917**

## **Jim Bower to Graham Bower**

March 1917

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March. 17. 17  
My Dear Dad.

I am addressing this to you, as I fear my suggestion of leaving Studwell disturbed you. In a way, I confess, I intended when making it, to draw you.

I wanted to find out whether you really had settled into your

"Habitation enforced", or still chafed at it, and. I am glad to see that you do not face the idea of pulling up stakes with pleasure. So I think, in spite of the superficial troubles of life you are really happy, at heart. One trouble I think you have not outgrown, and that



his ambition - now you had  
your own ambitions, but your  
honour interfered with them.  
Now you have ambitions for  
your sons, and I am sorry  
to see a wedge between the two.  
That you are feeling disappointed  
in my career; personally I don't  
confess myself a failure yet.

You did me the best turn  
possible by putting me in  
Hammond's hands. I owe him  
a very great deal. I got an  
exceptionally good mining edu-  
cation, and afterwards, as broad  
an experience of mining business  
as could be given me.  
I was doing very well in  
America, and I believe,



would have continued to do so -  
 I had homes to whom I could  
 give whole-hearted loyalty. Perhaps  
 I was a fool to leave, but I imagin-  
 ed I would jeopardize my loyalty  
 as an Englishman by staying -  
 then you introduced me to  
 South Africa. You could not  
 know actual conditions there, nor  
 could I, till I had tried it -

Now with proper perspective  
 I can see that I was perhaps  
 not positively misinformed, but  
 I doubt for a minute, I can  
 see in substance. I will sum-  
 marize them now, not to per-  
 suade you to agree with them.  
 From my point of view, it does  
 not matter if all the world



held them wrong, so long as  
I thoroughly believed in them.  
In America reputable financiers  
engage able technical men, and  
give them as free a hand as  
they care. Foreign financiers don't.  
They employ some able men  
with reputations, but these, I  
know, have not always the  
authority that is due to their  
position, and ability - some  
other men in responsible posit-  
ions are technically incompetent.  
I don't believe foreign financiers  
are less shrewd than American  
and the only conceivable reason  
for this is not to the credit  
of their good faith - but  
if through an elastic conscience



or ignorance, I had been able to accept conditions there, as I did in America, I daresay I would have got on as well in Yokohama.

However I should only have come in touch with the men in control of principles, if I had reached one of the higher positions. I only mention <sup>it</sup> because I think I could never have succeeded there, beyond a certain point.

However I early felt foul of a particularly in competent, and in parts dishonest clique. I wrote my paper on labour conditions generally to my best chance. One of the biggest engineers there thought well of it, as did my managers at the time. I had



However the managers, went on  
leave, and immediately he  
went to on leave, some of that  
incompetent clique I had a-  
gainst me, got me out of it.

I was too proud to go begging  
again, and found a job on my  
own, without asking for assist-  
ance from influential people.

When leaving for German West  
I called on the big engineer, I  
mentioned - He said he had  
lost sight of me, and had  
expected me to get into a job  
immediately under the managers  
who went on leave. I saw  
the manager after German West,  
and he genuinely seemed to  
find my discharge unaccountable.  
It took place practically



immediately he went on leave.

I may be quite wrong, but my conviction is that S. African mining is not controlled by men actuated by sound motives - they wish to see a pleasing balance sheet, and are indifferent how it is obtained, - and there is a good deal that goes on in the details that doesn't show in the final result. I do put it in a way that you would appreciate.

I suppose I was a trained naval architect, and I thought in aid. Usually contractor was acting deft. in material, or workman, who could not do turn put sound work in the construction, in the building of which I was engaged.



would it be right to pretend  
I did not notice it?

However I think the point  
that really worries you is that  
I am now without a firm  
connection in the mining busi-  
ness. I admit it, and agree  
it is a pity I haven't my  
mistake was that I did not  
drop S. Africa earlier. You  
can read my remarks to Perkins  
if you like, and see if he agrees.

I dare say he will find, and  
is finding his own position now  
not too cheerful. We are all  
in the soup, but some people  
are in deeper than others.  
My interest in Abyssinia  
makes you wonder at my



plans. I haven't any, as I have nothing to base any on -  
 Meanwhile I find this an interesting hobby to study, which might have some value one day.  
 I have a hope I may establish a connection with Horrie. I think he is probably no better than any other financier, but he is an engineer, and won't encourage bad engineering for the temporary benefit of his balance sheet. Also I could maintain my connection with my hand under him -  
 By the way the American paper Mother forwarded was nothing but a crude puff for a very obvious swindle. However it tried to borrow plumes, and



included some authentic figures  
on reputable mines I know  
which interested me.

I have been called back to  
the regiment, as they required  
me; but I know the general  
and his staff were satisfied  
with the work I did for him.  
I am very sorry to leave him,  
he is a fine chap, and makes  
everyone, who works for him,  
want to do their best for him.

All your parcels and things  
appear to have successfully waded  
the submarine. The gramophone  
is in Nairobi, and the other  
day I got a very opportune  
parcel of soap, and provender.  
We are, or rather I am, rather



up against it now, having been  
 so long in the field, as things  
 are getting worn out. However  
 I was able to get back to a bare  
 a few days ago, to get my  
 teeth fixed, and managed to  
 visit at the same time to  
 some extent.

The sleeping bag seems to live  
 up to its boasts. As the birds  
 are getting multitudinous, and  
 aggressive, but don't enter the  
 bag.

In the watch, I am sorry to say I  
 have lost. I was getting a mule  
 across the river, and doing most  
 of the work myself, and must  
 have broken the buckle, and  
 dropped it in the river -



However it too lived up to its  
name, and always kept good  
time under any conditions.

I had a letter the other day  
from Mr. Garrison, full of  
fire and conviction.

By the way I saw a par in  
the Bystander would amuse you  
as I remember it quite.

"But at any rate Mr. Asquith  
was a gentleman, and war is  
not any less so, is not

likely to, & really these things  
are very difficult to say in print.

This a lot of paper to load  
a ship with, and I had  
better cut it short -

Love from  
- a friend in firm approach