A BUDGET OF SCHREINER LETTERS FROM JULY 1913

During July 1913, Olive Schreiner wrote nine letters, published as part of the Olive Schreiner Letters Online (www.oliveschreiner.org). They are important letters, some of them especially so. Although written over a short period of time, and two of them the same day, they are all tailored for their particular addressee and feel and read differently. Read on!

2 July 1913: Olive Schreiner to her husband Cronwright-Schreiner. By this time they were estranged, with the troubles between them surfacing over the months from the start of 1913 until Schreiner left South Africa for Britain at the end of the year. Her letter is sad, pleading almost, but still raises the particular ‘trouble’ at issue’. It also discusses her decision to leave South Africa.

Olive Schreiner: S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner SMD/30/34/c
My dear Pal, You have so many letters to read I'll be as short as I can, darling. A year & a half ago when Emily Hobhouse...

5 July 1913: Olive Schreiner to her long-term friend Havelock Ellis. Starting with her worry that old friendships with people in Britain might have faded, this letter writes movingly about how much her sister Ettie changed in the period before her death from terminal heart disease, something Schreiner feared for herself.

Letters/520
To Havelock Ellis., De Aar, 5th July., Adela Smith, to whom I wrote saying I shrank from seeing my friends again, being so ch...

8 July 1913: Olive Schreiner to her much-loved close friend Betty Molteno. This letter is concerned with where she might stay, in South Africa, also in Europe, to try to cope with her heart problems; it also concerns Emily Hobhouse’s then-forthcoming visit to South Africa later that year to unveil the National Women’s Monument (the Vrouemonument, in Bloemfontein).

Olive Schreiner BC16/Box5/Fold2/1913/27
Dear Friend, Thank you for your letter. Dear Mrs Murray has offered me a little cottage on her farm close to Graaff Reinet &... 

17 July 1913: Olive Schreiner to her dearly loved brother Will Schreiner. Schreiner’s letter is deeply concerned with the railway strike then rocking South Africa, and the violence of the response of the government led by Louis Botha and Jan Smuts government, including calling out British troops against the striker. It also briefly comments about the politician Sauer.

Olive Schreiner BC16/Box5/Fold2/1913/28
Thursday , Dear Laddie, Thank you much for your letter. You don’t know what a few words of greeting to me on the road a..

18 July 1913: Olive Schreiner to her friend Isie Smuts, wife of the politician Jan Smuts. Largely about humdrum matters, Schreiner also writes that she has heard that the erstwhile liberal politician Sauer is very ill. She comments on Emily Hobhouse’s forthcoming visit to South Africa at the end of the year to unveil the national women’s monument.

Smuts A1/195/46
Friday night, Dear Isie, The beautiful box of fruit you sent me has come. The little apricots are delicious & do me such ...

20 July 1913: Olive Schreiner to the liberal politician John X. Merriman. Schreiner writes in a despairingly way about the erstwhile liberal Sauer having pushed through the ‘Natives Land Act’ which disappropriated land from Black people. On the intended removal of rights, she comments that a class, sex or race refused its rights will ultimately resort to the use of force.

John X. Merriman MSC 15/1913:134
De Aar, July 20th 1913, Dear Mr Merriman, I have not answered your last interesting letters because I have been too ill to wr...

23 July 1913: Olive Schreiner to her long-term socialist and gay rights friend Edward Carpenter. Schreiner’s letter discusses a recent labour meeting regarding the railway strike and comments on the Land Act; and also mentions Emily Hobhouse and their mutual friend Isabella Ford.

Olive Schreiner: Edward Carpenter SMD 30/32/n
De Aar, July 23rd 1913, Dear Edward, I am sending you an account of our Sundays meeting. If you want to understand the labour...
25 July 1913: Olive Schreiner to her brother Will. The erstwhile liberal politician Sauer had died following a stroke. Schreiner’s letter is concerned with the tragedy (and irony) that the last act of his political life was steering the Land Act through parliament and into force.

Olive Schreiner BC16/Box5/Fold2/1913/29

Friday morning, Dear Will, Jim Sauer’s body went past this morning at a quarter past two. Oh Will, the tragedy of it th...

25 July 1913: Olive Schreiner to the erstwhile liberal politician John X. Merriman. Sauer was a close friend of Merriman’s, and Schreiner sends her commiserations and writes that the train with his body had gone past De Aar, where Schreiner was living, that morning.

John X. Merriman MSC 15/1913:150

Dear Mr Merriman, Yesterday afternoon came the sad news & at a quarter past two this morning I heard the train go past wi...

/ends