

22 December 1903

*Dearest Helena,*

*My love: by the time the Royal Mail Ship makes her way from Port Adelaide to London, by the time your soft hands hold this letter, a New Year will be long since begun and I will be at the very bottom of the world. I shall long for you that day, as I long for you now.*

*I know what pain my absence brings; I know you cannot understand the hunger that drives me to leave your side. But my love, I swear to you: this grand adventure shall be the last. By the time you read this, I will have "drunk life to the lees," my hungry heart will be satisfied, and I will need journey no more. We shall be together again, and shall not be parted.*

*Until my return, I remain sincerely, passionately,*

*Your devoted surgeon-errant,*

*Stephen*