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23 April
1916

Dearest Mother

I have received so many dear letters from home since my return that I hardly know where to begin to thank you. Your newspapers both Father and Mother, have been very well and especially the two bundles of magazines which are eagerly devoured by the officers and then passed on to the N. C. O.'s and men. Father's letters seem to have been hunched a good deal and are most interesting and encouraging. I am sorry that he has some additional worries and wish we could help him more. I have written him a long letter and will discuss his last one with Wood who I expect may be up for lunch this beautiful spring day (the first we have had so they tell me since our return). It is Easter day by the way. There is service at 1.30 PM and we are all going. I have traced your box now through Miss Ansden and it ~~is~~ was very welcome. I turned it over to the Mess except the raisins which I considered my special property. It was very well chosen, a big bogie & park pie very nice, two pound box of Fuller's Candy fruit cake and raisins. It has been thoroughly enjoyed. Wood received one too which suited him "down to the ground"

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I gave three letters Mother dear have been
sent on to Sarah after Wood read them. I
don't remember their dates and don't think
there was anything special to answer. They
were full of interest and news as always.
Alice's of Mar 13th 29th and 31st also to
hand and I will write her especially as
soon as possible. She always has
so many interesting little items of news
and her sense of humor about London
society and its doings is delightful. Am
glad she had the little change in Toronto.
She deserves a good holiday and I hope will
get it. I received another "news from
London" (ent) from Aunt Elizabeth.
Please thank her so much. They are
much appreciated and passed on to the men
after the officers have looked them over.
Also have a nice letter from Elaine Mar
29th which I will answer later, also
one from Gerold Fitzgerald & Sam Cook.
I had a letter from Sarah from the train
between Folkestone and London. She has
booked a passage for the 29th but I really
hate to have her cross and urge her to cancel
it if war should be declared between U.S. and
Germany. She does not want to go at all but
we both feel that she owes it to her mother
who would be seriously disappointed if

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if I did not see her this summer. It is hard to know what to do for the best as the risk is undoubtedly considerable.

I am delighted with our new billet, its only disadvantage being that it is so far from the Divisional Headquarters and the firing line. We are $3\frac{1}{4}$ hours ride from former and another $3\frac{1}{4}$ from latter so you can see our position is pretty safe.

The room I am now writing in (an officers mess) has been the parlor of this house (a small chateau) and has two large windows facing the south and overlooking some nice shrubs. It has been originally furnished in gold & white with dark red wall paper and has a nice fireplace, a wooden (not stone) floor and two large mirrors. I have a small table here in front of one of the windows near the fire which is burning cheerfully and in addition we have a large round dining table. The house has a huge staircase window facing west and the stairs are very grand and divide half way up at the landing. McEwen and I each have nice large rooms with beds upstairs. Mine faces the east and I get the morning sun when there is any and I overlook a very nice garden with flower beds, walks and fruit trees. As this is not

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a farm house there ^{IV} is no objectionable
manure pit at our front door which
will be a great boon if we are still here in
the hot weather. Clemens also has a room
here although he is on detached duty at present
and the other each have a room in nearby
houses. We are quite close to a small town
and Col Harrison (who married a friend of
Clames from St John) is in the house next
us although it is not as nice as this one.

Our men have a small house on the
other side of us and two good barns and
are comparatively as comfortable
as we are. The Sergeants have a mess
and a small conservatory with a huge
vine growing over it as a sitting room.

Our horses have a large stable which
holds them all built of haw poles and
thatched very cleanly. It has a good
footing and a corduroy road to the main
road so can get out without mud. Water
is nearby. There is also a recreation hut
for the men where the gramophone
Sarah had sent over for the men has
a table of its own and is in charge of
Corp Blumett. There are brick walks
between the mens quarters and the stables
and recreation hut. As we are so far
behind we can sound trumpet calls

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which helps things along. We all mess together which is much more cheerful than living alone and I always think we get better meals as we are able to keep one man as cook all the time instead of having our servants do it. I believe that Mrs Smith & Cockshutt are sending a gramophone over for the officers mess which will be very cheerful. In addition Campbell brought a violin for Mr Ewen and a guitar for himself back from leave and we hope to have some music from them later on. At present however they strum upstairs behind closed doors. Altogether we are in ideal quarters and hope we can stay here.

I will now pick up the thread of my diary once again.

Monday 17th April. Had a talk with Mr Blain over telephone and he sent some mail over that had come for me. He is always so nice to us. Assisted Sarah in packing and left Charming Cross for Folkestone.

Could not take Sarah low leave train from Victoria and as the boat sailed as soon as latter arrived I missed it, but was not very sorry as it gave me an extra day and I have a good excuse as boat sailed earlier than scheduled.

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Myself went to the Royal Pavillon Hotel near the wharf and had a nice walk along the beach in the afternoon. They seemed rather deserted, although it was a nice day. Met Mrs. ^{Mc}Arity (Mrs. Hogan) and chatted for a few moments. Had a nice dinner at the hotel and a very comfortable room with a fire as it was quite cold after dark. Quite a lot of officers there with their wives who had come down to see them off.

Tuesday 18th April 1916. Breakfast about 8.30 and caught my boat at 11.00 sharp. Left Sarah at the hotel where she was to take the motor bus to the station to catch her London train at 1.45. I wired Campbell that she would take tea with him at 4.00 PM to make a break in the journey and also to cheer the little woman up a bit. He is such a cheerful little soul. There were three boats went over together under escort of two destroyers as all leave has been cancelled and officers & men recalled from generals down to privates. My boat was full of staff officers. We saw the masts of one sunken vessel off the British coast and another just off the French coast. They looked desolate. We passed a great many vessels in the

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channel nevertheless and one ^{2.30 PM} group
of mine sweepers. It was very rough and
the boat rolled terribly. A great many were
ill but I am proud to say that I was
not. I was fortunate enough to a motor
trip up with Col H Dixon, Reggie Brooke
and young Parsons the general's aid. We
had lunch together first and started about
3.00. The day was beautiful. One tire
blew out which we repaired but a second
one gave out about halfway home
and we were unable to fix it ~~and~~ or get
another. Fortunately we were near a
small town and got our dinner and
wired for another car which arrived
about midnight with repairs. I went to
my billet in one and the others used the
other. Arrived about 2.00 and found my
way to my room as I had visited the place
once before and was soon asleep in my
little bpg on a bed.

Wednesday 19th April. Very tired so did not
get up until 9.30 AM. Went out to noon
stables and saw horses. Reported at
headquarters and heard about the crater
saw Hill who hopes to get the R.C.R. on
the promotion of Col Archie Macdonell.
I hope he does. Made some arrangements
and called on Wood who is not far from

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our Sir Hqs at his waggon line as his battery is split up at present.

Others played cards while I wrote up diary letter in evening to catch the mail.

Thursday 20th April. Did not get up early as was up very late writing last night.

Was president of a Court of Inquiry with McEwen at 10.00 and when it was over

I called on Wood who I found alone and had lunch with him.

We spent the best part of the afternoon chatting together and discussed a number of Father's letters

very carefully. He is in a miserable little billet and his horses are in the

mud. A long ride home over some very bad roads. Lizzie back from leave after

having had a very good time. Wrote Sarah in evening about her proposed trip across

I almost hate to think of her going. Our Division is getting it pretty hard and

our casualties are heavy. This portion of the line is a warm one and the Bosh

seems to have got on to the charge and is doing all he can to make it as unpleasant

as possible.

Friday 21st April. Did not get up far

stabled. We have breakfast all together at 7.30. Porridge, bacon and eggs toast and marmalade. We have also

invested in a ~~table~~ cloth which is ^{23 apr} quite an embellishment. Rode down in front with McEwen to see Clemens who is in charge of a party looking after 2nd line trenches in a pretty warm corner. We saw a good deal of shelling and a German capture balloon closer than I have ever seen it before. Inspected a party of 12 of my men going off on special patrol and also sub transport. Then inspected all our bellies and stables which were filthy when we took them over but are now clean. The men have worked well. I am satisfied that our standard is better & higher than that of a good many Imperial units. The others played cards in the evening but I did not feel like it.

Saturday 22nd April. Miserable wet cold day. Started at nine for my compensation board at St. Helier. It took nearly an hour to get there over some horrible roads. Quite a few cases which had been deferred during my absence. Called on Falger and got some money back I had paid out for paint, also called on G. S. and saw a very favorable report on our training from the Cavalry Corps which was gratifying.

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I was late and ~~X~~ raining hard so I went
in and lunched with Wood and stayed the
afternoon hoping it would clear but it
did not so I left about 5.00 PM and got soaked
on the way back but changed and sat by a
fire. The Gunn was just back
from leave and we compared notes very
pleasantly. Spent the evening writing Father
and eating raisins. It was nearly midnight
before I turned in. We are certainly most
comfortable here. Enjoyed Sarah's gramophone all evening.

Sunday 23rd April Up for stables which
are an hour later today. Good day
(Easter) with bright sunshine and hedges
& trees budding. The little garden below my
bedroom window is beautiful. Had a jolly
breakfast with a couple of airs on the gramophone.
It is hard to realize that our poor fellows are
getting founded so close but the firing keeps it
constantly before us. The Ewen went down
in front and White to R.E. Park for lumber.
Had an early lunch and attended divine
service in Y.M.C.A. but in the town and
remained for celebration. Arthur Carlyle
offered and I must say I was proud of
the way he handled it. He came in to tea
afterwards and has only just now gone.
He particularly wanted to be remembered to
you all. It has been wonderfully beautiful

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29th April 1916

today and I only hope it will continue so.
I hear Mc Cune preaching on his violin
upstairs (5.30 PM). I think he really plays quite
well. I am enclosing my leave warrant
asa souvenir; it was never collected.

This sheet starts book no VI. I will
send no VII over by Sarah if she goes and
I almost hope now that she won't, as I
think there is very little doubt about the
seriousness of the American situation.

I will add a few lines tomorrow.

Monday 24th April. Another beautiful day.
Got up for stables at 6.00 AM and
after breakfast interviewed the Mayor
about some grass seed for the field we
occupy. I find the mail cart waiting
so will have to close at once.

Very much love and many thanks
for all dear letters.

your devoted son
J.H.