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22 Jan 1916

Dearest Mother

Have had such a feast of interesting letters from you this week with so much good news about dear Estelle that I feel very happy and much elated. Since writing you last Tuesday your letter of Dec 31st has come to hand from Sarah and been forwarded to Wood from whom I have also received one and also a number of enclosures which I am destroying.

You do write wonderful letters, so full of news about all your doings and so interestingly related. I wish often I had your gift for expression of thought in perfect English. I think Wood takes after you a little more than the remainder of the family in that respect. You are wonderful to write so much when I know you must have had your hands as well as your thoughts very fully occupied. I want to assure you of my appreciation of your letters and of what a great comfort they are, not only to me but Sarah and Wood also. Your last one of Jan 6th tells briefly of the dear girl's return home which is a sure sign of her improvement and the progress of the dear son. I am sure you are glad to have them under your charge and know they could not possibly be in better hands.

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I opened your box this morning and was simply delighted with its contents. I am sure my pleasure was increased by waiting and that many good things will be doubly enjoyed now that the Christmas surfeit is working off.

Wood said you had sent him maple syrup but that most of it had been eaten (or rather drunk I should say) during his absence as A.P.M. so I thought I would send him a little of the can I supposed would be in my box. I found a 5 lb tin of honey instead. How full you know our respective likes and peculiarities. The tin of corn spoke volumes.

The handkerchiefs were beautiful and I am having my name sewed on them. I suppose the socks were from dear Alice. I think I can recognize her stitches. I always like the ones she ~~says~~ sends and they wear wonderfully. I noticed the pygamas were not the same and as Woods initials were on one suit I will see him and make an exchange and I know your practice of giving us each an aw now pattern.

Altogether the box was a great pleasure and most useful. We will have the cake for our dinner party tomorrow.

Have not seen Wood this week as he has been away from the battery, acting as o. c. Brigade temporarily, but hope to see him soon.

22 Jan

Monday P.M. 17th January. Rode down to Corps Hqs to hear a most interesting lecture in a theatre there by a Colonel on the Loss fight last October. It was the first account we had had from a participant and was most interesting as well as instructive in case of a repetition in the future. It was illustrated by large maps and the place crowded with officers from Corps Commanders (3) to 2nd lieutenants. Rode back in the rain but felt well repaid and had a good appetite for dinner at 8.00 P.M.

~~Tuesday~~ <sup>Wednesday</sup> 19th January. Out on ride and spent the best part of the day going over the defences of a neighboring hill Q which we have instructed as guides for new troops coming up in case of emergency with McEwen and White. As the day was clear and a splendid view of the German territory to the east could be had from the top McEwen & I got into a shell hole with a map and our field glasses and spent an hour studying the ground. Several aerial encounters took place which were most thrilling and as there was a good deal of artillery activity we were much interested. We could plainly see our shells bursting over the German trenches which were plainly visible for 5 or 6 miles along our front and could be easily followed with the glasses. The Bosh tried to locate one of our field batteries about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile to our left but down below and must have come very close

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They "searched" for it changing the range or direction slightly each shot and must have fired about 30 shots while we were watching. It is wonderful how accurate they are and yet how a few yards means a miss. The necessity for perfectly uniform ammunition is very apparent. We have passes to this Hill as no one is allowed on it except on duty. Spent afternoon attending to office work and read and wrote and listened to Campbell's mouthorgan in the evening.

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> Jan. Out on rd again. Had a long talk with Mr. Ewen & Alex about latter's position as paymaster which has been uncertain. He is now to be considered as "seconded" for this duty which means that he does not lose either his identity with or seniority in the Squadron, which ought to be very satisfactory to Alex although hardly fair if he wanted to revert at any time (which he could) to the officers junior to him as it would hold them back.

However I am glad it is settled. Went for a long walk in the afternoon and called on White for a little chat. I find him very congenial. Spent the usual quiet evening writing Geneva, Aunt Emma, & Ethel Stahl.

[Am sorry I have interposed Tuesday and Wednesday but did not notice it until I had nearly finished so have just changed the day.]

V

22 Jan

Thursday 20th Jan. Beautiful full moon for the start of our ride but dimmed before it set by a glorious sunrise with most exquisite tints over the German lines. Spent the morning with Campbell on the same hill as yesterday but not so clear and rained before we reached home about 2.00 PM so could not see as much. Several important orders had come in during my absence adding some new duties to our already long list but relieving one or two others. Also went to meet and distribute 115 rations. As the crew went on leave this AM sent White down for horses and got out my orders for other changes which take place at 10.00 AM tomorrow. Reported at Headquarters and had hardly finished dinner when horses arrived. We had quite a time as only about 10 were available to feed them and they were a lot of kicking and squealing. The moon was clouded and wind trouble but we finally got things quieted down and a picket posted for the night.

Friday 21st Jan. No ride all hands looking after horses. Picked one out for Billy Gibson and 2 for myself as one of mine is beginning to stumble and the other new one not satisfactory. Our billet was like a horse fair all morning and I had to be pretty firm and not allow too much choosing.

VI

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and changing. Rode about a dozen myself  
to try them out, both for self and others.  
Miss my former sergeant Cook is on leave  
but got them nearly all away by the P.M.  
and went for 4 mile walk in the rain and  
consequently enjoyed my dinner. Alex spent  
the evening with us chatting and smoking.  
Saturday 22nd Jan. Married a year and 2 months  
today. It seems hard to realize. I wonder  
sometimes when all this will be over. Beautiful  
morn again for ride followed by sunrise.  
Rode a new horse and quite liked him but hardly  
up to my weight. Arranged <sup>new</sup> dates between  
White and Cockshutt and answered some  
official letters. Picture Mrs Ewen and Sarah  
taking lunch together in London and likely  
doing a matinee. Glad of the change for the dear  
little woman and feel sure they will have a happy  
day together. Rode another new horse around  
the control posts in afternoon. Campbell in  
for dinner but out later since (11.00 PM). He  
is making a night of it. Haven't have  
written Mr Morrison, Percy Britton, and Cantin  
and Ball as well as this. So have put in a  
busy evening eating some of your  
delicious gum drops rather as I worked  
away. Will add a few lines on Monday  
and in meantime good night.

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weekly

Sunday 23rd January. Had my usual <sup>weekly</sup> hot bath followed by a cold bucket about 8.00 AM as no tide now on Sunday mornings. Had to complain to Major Hemmely about sanitation and waste at some Cyclist posts. Had a good sized turnout for church parade at 10.30 and went for a walk afterwards. No guests for dinner and we miss Mc Ewen very much. He is a bright spot as Cocksbutt very quiet and others often reticent. Clemens has been taking a bowling course all week but so far as I can see is very satisfactory. Went for a ride in afternoon on one of my new horses and called on the P.C. of 5th Co. A.S.C. who look after us. He has only recently come out and is a good man to stand in with (Major Knox). Campbell and I have just finished our tea and I have read one story in "Nash". Please thank Father for Saturday evening post and Landon papers which duly arrived. I wonder if my last diary book reached him safely. The cinders are getting more strict and might have held it to look over although I am sure it is quite in order. We had your cake dearest Mother for dinner and it was delicious and not too heavy, and have been eating the fascinating "jub jubss" all afternoon. They are in great demand.

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As the wind is easterly we are all sleeping with gas helmets handy, in accordance with instructions as it is well known that the Bosh has gas in front of us and even if not contemplating an attack would let it off. It has one excellent effect, in that it kills all the rats, even down in their holes and so temporarily frees the trenches and dugouts from these pests. No news to relate so will again say good night to finish in morning. No letters today.

Monday 24th Jan. Have just finished my breakfast porridge and toast and honey, a great treat. Musty drizzling morning. Rode another remount but do not like him. We have been a road surface map of our divisional area to check over which will keep us riding pretty hard for a few days. Cackhutt is taking the bombing course this week. I wonder if Elmie remembers a St John girl who married a Harrison of the same city. He is o.c. Div Army Col. and said his wife knew her at school. Wrote Sarah last night and read Father's Saturday evening post; always some good stories. Will put it over to Wood. Will close now with very much love to all, especially dear Estelle and Leonard Jones. I am so glad to hear of their favorable progress.

Dbb.