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20 Feb 1916

Dearest Mother

Many thanks for two most interesting diary letters written partly in Ottawa and Montreal and after your arrival at latter place. I at once forwarded them to Wood as I knew how much he would appreciate them.

I do not see how you find time to write so much and fully about your movements. Your letters always make such interesting reading. You must realize how much they mean to us under present conditions and how eagerly we look forward to getting letters from you all. They seem to be more necessary and I know are more appreciated by all ranks than presents and dainties. This is the universal feeling over here. The arrival of the mail and especially a Canadian one is the event of the day, and when it does not come everybody's face falls. I wonder if the friends as well as relations of men at the front realize how much their letters mean to men, over here, some of whom will have been away from Canada 18 months very soon.

Thanks also for enclosures which Wood forwarded and which I destroyed as per instructions although I sometimes feel they would be appreciated in England but orders are orders and must be obeyed.

II

I had such a nice letter from dear Estelle today all about the boy but not half enough so great is my interest. I will answer it later. She said nothing about the present for him I asked Alice to buy and send when I write early in January. I wonder if she got the letter. If not it will be the third important one that has miscarried. ^{So} I wanted to spend \$15 to \$20 on something that the dear "kid" really needed and if no needs on a silver sugar spoon or something of that kind. Father will pay bill out of my \$140 & etc. If she has not already done so well dear Alice once again act as my agent?

Have not seen Wood all week and miss a chat with him very much but expect him back in another couple of weeks, and in the meantime communicate by letter generally with home enclosures.

Damn afraid I have a very quiet week to record as although a good deal of fighting on our left our divisions has not been seriously engaged.

Monday PM. 14th Feb. The river has a slight cold and is staying in today as weather miserable. Called on him in late afternoon after my usual constitutional before dinner. Heard Cl.

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live together and their bell is about 5 minutes walk from here on the top of the hill. They seem to hit it off very well and have a much nicer family (or rather farm wife) to live with than our old dame here. She always has some grievance or complaint and nearly always is grumpy. Sometimes our faithful Hughes has trouble to get near the stove to cook our meals. Our evenings are very much the same as there is nothing to do except read, write or chat over the war situation. I have two good maps of Mesopotamia and the Balkans and try to follow the Eastern situation pretty closely.

Tuesday 15th Feb. Out on ride. A terrible wind blowing which will make a very rough crossing for White who went on leave early this AM with 3 other men and four Cyclists. Quite a number of the tall poles and poles which adorne the sides of all the main roads in this country were blown down and communications consequently interrupted. Attended a Court of Enquiry at 10.30 all morning and rode down to see the S.S.O (Senior Supply Officer) Col Shaw about some straw I had bought to supplement our ration of hay (5# per horse used at 10

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at present] at 4 francs 50 c per kilo which is practically 100 lbs. This is all they are allowed to pay and it is hard to get. The horses eat oat straw sparingly but do not care so much for the wheat straw - which is more plentiful. The farmers here and also in England stack all their grain as it is reaped and only thrash weekly or fortnightly as they require it. Such a thing as thrashing a whole crop at one go like we do in Canada is never thought of. Nearly every farmer has his own horse power and small thrasher to do this with and the whole family turn out to help. Those who have no horse power still use a flail.

Wednesday 16th Feb. Out on ride as usual. Weather colder. In office most of morning. Sent Clemens and his troop about 15 miles to the rear to bring up about 15 remounts for distribution. Rode down to rail head with Campbell to meet a draft of 10 men from the Calgary Depot to replace casualties. They arrived in due course and appear to be a very fair bunch of men, principally all from Western Canada. We made a few purchases and had a nice ride back, as the afternoon glarious. Saw Arthur Carlyle for a few minutes in the

B. E. F. Canten. He is a nice chap. The railroad that I told you about, built by the Canadian R.R. Section and commonly called the C.P.R. is now being used to bring an armed train up ~~at~~ night and pound the Bush and then get away. A very quiet evening.

Thursday 17th Feb Went on ride as usual.

Inspected the new draft, had a few words with each individual man and drafted them to their various troops after giving them a 15 minute talk about various matters (as a whole). Walked over to Hats in the afternoon about some matters and then had a glorious walk. A most beautiful day. Read B. Redpath's "Through closed Shutters" in the evening. Sally sent it over at my request. Found it most terribly sad but many of the poems beautiful. She seems to have a very deep insight into the realities of life far above so young.

Friday 18th Feb Rained during the ride. wrote letters all A.M. as Sgt Cassan who attends to my orderly room work is in hospital. Some bombs dropped near a town behind us from Bush planes in early afternoon. Inspected all belts and packs except one on foot in slicker and rubber boots as raining hard. Suit

a heavy bombardment to the north of us all evening. Sky lit up almost continuously in spite of rain. Various rumors of what is going on but very little actual news ever. Changed my clothes and looked over a bundle of old (some 1906) magazines that some kind person had sent us. A most welcome gift. We pass them on to the men after pyjama.

Saturday 19th Feb. An ride as usual. An a "Board for compensation of Officers for lost or destroyed kits" of which I am President. We meet every Saturday A.M. and decide whether the claim is valid or not and if so how much necessary to replace same. There were 5 cases. A shell had hit one officer's dugout (while he was out) and every possession he had was scattered to the 4 winds, another had lost his pistol to a scout who had been captured and is now a prisoner in Germany. Rode down to rail head in P.M. and saw a first class movie in a very nice theatre. A good regimental band also played. Afterwards I had tea very daintily served with "petit gâteaux" at a tea room for officers run by two enterprising young Frenchwomen

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which is very popular and usually
 cramed as rail head is also Carps Hats.
 Made one or two small purchases and
 heard the pipe band ^{of a famous Scotch Regt.} play ^{the town}
 square with as much dash and style
 as it would in Scotland. It was inspiring
 and much appreciated by the crowd. I
 saw young Cooper (of the A.S.C.) of London.
 He seems a nice chap although I don't
 remember him. He is S.O. with the
 company that feeds us and says he
 always sees that we get our share
 and a little more if possible. Certainly
 we have no complaint to make. Read
 alone all evening as Campbell with
 Spencer & Cackhutt for dinner.
 Rode part way down to B with Percy
 Emattiger this P.M. He is as fat
 and jolly as ever. He said he had lost
 his mother and that he hoped the Judge
 would cover over and spend his leave
 with him in England. He congratulated
 me about road.

Sunday 20 Feb. 11 bombs dropped
 from planes in this area soon after
 dawn. The Bash gets up too early for
 our chaps who always seem to
 arrive only in time to see things go
 back over the line. No harm done

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just here as it is only luck if they hit a target smaller than a large town. For that reason we are perfectly safe being in a farm with all our boxes hidden in outhouses etc and tents painted green and drawn or grey, or rather I should say "daubed". Waggon and tarpaulins and roofs of huts are similarly treated so as to be as inconspicuous as possible.

Had my weekly hot bath. No church today so after my letters went for an hour's walk before lunch. Rather lonely as Mc Ewen acting as A.P.M. for about 10 days and White on leave and no guests. Went for a 10 mile walk in P.M. today beautiful. A lot of aerial activity and saw several scraps and could hear the machine guns on the plains and also saw 2 more bombs dropped. I fear our aerial supremacy is rather a myth.

Had a couple of eggs for tea as very hungry and have been writing this ever since. Campbell is having his hot bath and I think I will soon follow him to bed (9.00 PM) Will add a few lines in morning.

Monday 21st Feb. Quite a heavy frost this morning and mud hard enough to walk on. Campbell has a little cold so did not go out. German planes up again very

II

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early. We saw several on the ridge and later
saw four planes, but no bombs were dropped
that we could see or hear. Am enclosing
"The Brazier" edited by 16th Bn. In it you will
see your dear friend Heddes mentioned. I am also
enclosing an article on "What to send men in
the trenches" which I consider contains a lot of
common sense and shows a knowledge of
actual conditions. I have made a few notes on
it as I consider that such an article should
have wider circulation. I do not send this as
a personal hint as I am well supplied and
really do not need anything but thought it might
be useful in your Red X or other Societies.

As a matter of fact I am sending a package of
extra clothing books and odds and ends that I have
accumulated back to Mrs Lane in England
to put away with my trunk and other things.
It is better than leaving them behind if we
had to move in a hurry.

If all goes well I hope to be thinking
about leave again in about a month
and hope to get it before it is cancelled and
if I get over Sarah B will likely define her
plans for the next few months. I hear I
will advise you later. Will close with
very much love to all at Lakewood, Ottawa
and Montreal. Ever your devoted son
H.H.