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Saturday 26th Feb
8.15 AM

Dearest Mother

As I am alone tonight (Campbell being out to dinner) and there was no mail today and no papers and as Hughes (our faithful cook) is in hospital and his substitute forget to get some weekly papers and as our stock of literature here is pretty well exhausted, I will start my diary letter tonight instead of leaving it until tomorrow as per usual. I fear my find of news this week is even more limited than last week but I will be hopeful as I see I managed to write 9 pages then. The week has been quite "Canadian" as far as weather is concerned as it has been quite cold with continued snow and frost for the last few days. Our prevailing winds all winter have been south and west which possibly accounts for the very mild weather we have had. Now they are north and east and the real winter weather has come. An east wind also means gas from the Bush so we continually wear our helmets and take other precautions. This cold weather is hard on the animals as roads very slippery and those that have been clipped (not many of mine) must suffer even if blanketed.

A nice letter from Father this week which I have already answered also one from Alice and some enclosures from you. Sarah also forwarded a most interesting letter to her from

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Alice which had a fund of interesting news so
 I sent it on to Wood as Alice suggested. Glad
 to hear "Pretty little Fellow" is still living. What
 a pleasure he has been! Do you remember Alice,
 when we first got him and hardly knew what
 to do he was so frightened of us. I wish poor
 old Psi was here I wish if he had to be
 muzzled. Campbell paid 25 francs for a
 mongrel collie pup but it runs away, although
 well treated and the last time has not returned.
 Have missed not seeing Wood all week. Although
 I have had two short notes with enclosures.
 He says the weather back where he is has been
 execrable. Generally speaking there has been
 more activity in a military way than usual.
 The bombardment to the north of us is almost
 incessant sometimes and air craft have
 been over us on every bright day and the Bosh
 has dropped a good many bombs. We also
 get bits of news of the big fight at Verdun
 but only through the Press the same as
 you. Will be glad when the cold weather
 is over as hard to keep this old barn warm.
 I am sitting over our improvised stove at
 the present moment but even its "oil drum"
 sides are not able to combat the richly
 windows and tile floor. We use oat sacks
 as mats and they help considerably. The
 water in my wash basin was frozen this A.M.

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Monday 21st Feb. Ride at 6.30 AM as usual. Mellem acting as A.P.M. and will be away all week. White still on leave. I hope he is having a nice time. Went over to Hqts with proceeding of a Court of Inquiry which I think I brought to a satisfactory conclusion. Saw Billy Besome and Folger who both seem to be worked pretty hard and sticks to it too. Walked up to White's billet (3rd troop) to have a look around during his absence and plan the week's work for them. Intense bombardment to the north at night. Went for long walk in PM and back by the P.E. quarry on the top of the hill where they dig out rock and stone for the roads and screen sand and mix it with cement and put in in sand bags for use in the trenches. These bags are dipped in water and placed on parapet or elsewhere and as the cement sets become like big stones or cement blocks. A lot are used around machine gun emplacements. Usual quiet evening when our thoughts turn to home and loved ones far and near. The evenings are after hard to put in. Sought for substance.

Tuesday 22nd Feb. Out on ride. It is now light at 6.30 which shows what long days we may expect later on. You ask about Faulkner. He is in 4th Troop (Campbells) and I have had no fault to find with him

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and I have never regretted making him a sergeant. All he needs is being kept after and Campbell is good at that. He is also a very smart soldier and an excellent instructor. I am very pleased with him over the whole. Was so grieved to hear through Alice letter about Mr. Lewis's son. I had not heard of it. I must look him up as soon as possible. It does seem so sad. Inbarwood is better where he is although I suppose, if restless, will not be happy until he makes a change. He would be very much missed I am sure. Rode up to 3rd Troop in P.M. and then down to R.E. Farm to see Clark. On the way an 11" bomb went off almost beside me and nearly put me in the ditch. It very nearly jacked my cap off. It was so well concealed that I had not dreamed of its proximity although I knew there were bombs in there somewhere. A 15" howitzer also came into our front this week. Saw Alexander of 24th also on the way. He is now second in command under Col. Sumner. Another quiet evening.

Wednesday 23rd Feb. Froze hard and roads so slippery that I was afraid and made the men get off and lead their horses for many miles. Wrote Father, Estelle and cabled Elaine for her birthday, also dropped Jerry Fitzg a few lines. He wrote me at Christmas.

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Went to dentist at 3.00 to have a small filling in.
 My teeth are getting more attention than they would
 in London. Capt Blair who looks after us is a
 very decent little chap as well as most painstaking.
 Had tea with Major Bogart (captain) of Signal Co
 and bribed him to send a wire to White for me
 in answer to three I got which were sent by 21st
 and arrived by mail today asking for an extension
 of leave on account of an operation in his nose
 he had had performed. Poor chap. It is too bad
 and has spoilt his leave. I believe his sister
 came over to see him. I also understand his
 father is very ill. Very sad indeed. Sent
 Mrs Munn a high card. It does not seem
 much but all I can do. Campbell busy
 making a report for the General Staff to
 exhibit a liquid fire demonstration tomorrow.
 Freezing hard and a little snow.

Thursday 24th Feb. Cancelled early ride
 as roads too dangerous and had a ride in
 a field from 9.00 to 10.30. Witness
 the FLAMMENWIEFER demonstration which
 was really to show our new how harmless
 it is although very terrifying. The flame
 carries about 20 yds and is made of a mixture
 of petrol and crude oil projected from a hose
 under high pressure. The outfit was
 captured from the Bush and its effect is
 purely of a moral nature as was shown.

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Heard about the donkeys down below at Verdun. The Hun seems to be able to carry out an offensive with more or less success whenever and whenever he wants to. That was supposed to be one of the strongest parts of our line. Plute's servant back from leave with a note from him explaining. Urates him to stay as long as he needed to. Took a long ride in PM through a ruined town and tried to locate Minhead (Rufus) but without success. Saw McParland of Kingston who has a battery in 2nd Divisional Artillery. Very cold riding home an unusually quiet evening although a bombardment to the north of us but these sounds are now almost necessary to insure a good night's sleep. Am starting diary no V but want mail no IV home as it apparently no III never reached you. Quite a snow fall at least 4 inches.

Friday 25th Feb. Had ride on the hill after breakfast. It must be colder than 20° and a bleak wind blowing. Attended to office work most of morning. Heard from McEwen that I saw Siskind yesterday but for a few minutes last night but did not see him. Made a tour of inspection of all my posts and billets in foot in the afternoon and had to make some corrections.

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remarks in one or two places. They all need getting after occasionally. Was walking from 2.00 until after 6.00. Clemens down for dinner and played "jeanickie" and "shot craps" with Campbell all evening. I read two interesting letters from Sarah about her trip to London to see White and watched the game. Campbell upheld the honor of the billet and cleared 24 francs out of our guest. His leave is postponed so I was glad he had some diversion as he was feeling pretty blue. He expected to get away next Tuesday.

Saturday 26th Feb More snow and cold although bright and sunny. Am my compensation board all morning. The Ewe still away. An air fight right over us just after lunch. We could hear the machine guns. Our vaunted aerial supremacy is a myth as far as I can see around here. The Boss comes over just when he d = - well please and stays over if he wants to. A couple of Zeppelins have been over at night this week but of course make for the towns and a lonely John like ours is perfectly safe. Rode down to rail head after lunch with Campbell and saw a "movie" and had tea with the pretty French girls I met about last week. Saw Sid Parrot who asked me

to dinner but declined as did not want to leave Campbell although he left after all. The R.F. Corps O.C. (to whom we lend some boxes) also asked me to stay. Am sorry I did not as it would have saved a lonely evening (now 10.10). Find the little change on Saturday marks the week and gets me out of the rut as will repeat.

Heard today that I am to have a machine gun added to the Squadron establishment. Don't know how it is to be carried but will get more particulars later and tell you. Will close for tonight and turn in. Sleep in gobs nice sacks these nights and occasionally put on Lady Beck's cap.

Sunday 27th Feb. Still cold and bleak Had my weekly hot bath at 8.0 AM and went to church in a nearby "boys school" at 11.00 AM. The men sing wonderfully well and hardly need a lead. The service is always short but very sincere and hearty. They teach Flemish at the school rather than French, all the maps and pictures are in both languages. Capt Blair (art dentist) in for dinner. A very nice little chap. Campbell has a little touch of tonsillitis so is staying in. Feels blue about his

leave being postponed and being 37 Feb -
Sarah will miss the little change his
visit would mean. A note from Wood
today with your interesting enclosure
dearest Mother of 6th Feb which Sarah
had sent to him first also some
enclosures which I have just burnt.
Am so glad you are having such a
nice visit in ~~Paris~~ Paris. How glad
you will have been to see them all
again. Am sorry about Marwin.
Poor Uncle Jack has his troubles.
Such a nice letter from him today.
to Wood & together I will write him
soon. Feel so badly about poor Mr
Lewin. Walked down to the ruined
village where he has been living the
last 5 months (under shell fire) in
an old cellar to offer my sympathy,
but found he had moved back with
his Brigade. He lived there because
Lewin knew the men in the trenches
all the time and on hand for burials
etc. Only one or two of the parsons
stay right up like he did. Will drop
him a line tonight and see him at
first opportunity. It was quite a
long walk but gave me a good
appetite for tea. Have just written

I Sarah and am thinking of dearest
Claine tomorrow. Was she born in
1892 or 1893 I don't just remember?

Have another survey to make so
will be busy for a few days. Our
division is taking over a little more
frontage to the north. Hope to hear
that road will be moving up in
another week or so as I have
missed him very much. Will add
a few lines tomorrow

Monday 28th Feb Claine's birthday and very cold.
She must be 24 as this is leap year and
she was born in a leap year I think. Hope
she will have a happy day. Many thanks Father
for nice letter of 31st Jan which Wood sent
over this week. So glad you got a 40,000
contract. What was the price? Will be
glad to see cost of first batch when it is
made up. Is Mr Plant still taking
a holiday?

Will close now as nearly lunch time. I see
I reached the X page mark this week but
won't promise to keep it up, although I
always do my best but fear the letters
must have a streak of "sameness". Love
to Father, Alice and also Claine and
Eselle and the "boys" when you write
M.