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1916

30th April

Dearest Mother

I am sitting in front of the tall narrow window in the mess room of 'our chateau' looking out on the budding trees and shrubs on the driveway. The birds are singing and the sun has been shining for a change all week, that is in the daytime. It is fair in the afternoon and I picture you all at church and dear Lakewood beginning to assume her spring garb. It is comparatively peaceful here although we can hear the guns whenever they are firing, still we are about 8 miles from the front line and our windows do not rattle as they did at our former billet. The week has been ideal, quite warm, but everything green and beautiful. In spite of the war there does not seem to be a square of ground that is not under cultivation. Even right up within 1000 yards of the front line the farmers are busy in fields that are pitted here and there with shell holes and which are still occasionally shelled along our main roads where the Bochs keep them well registered. As I have said before we are in an ideal situation and the house will be cool this summer as the ceilings are high and the windows (which open sideways) go all the way up. We have

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a good sized field between the house and the stable where about 25 of our horses are loose today, grazing and enjoying the sun and spring. Their coats are looking better already and if I only had a few more men available we would soon have them in good shape. I saw Wood yesterday and neither her or I have had any Canadian letters this week but hope for some next week.

I received a wire from Sarah on Friday saying the "New York" did not sail until the 3rd (Wednesday) instead of on Saturday as originally intended. She went to London on Thursday to have her passport used at Downing street and give my Blair power of attorney during her absence to deposit her cheques as they come. I have Col Harrison of the Divisional Ammunition Column as a neighbour. He has another very nice house beside us. I have just paid a call on him. He knows Aubrey very well. I am still enjoying the magazines and papers you have sent over. We have a side table in our mess room on which papers and magazines are laid out like they are at a Club. My little table is just in front of one of the two large windows and I can file odds and ends on the wide window seat.

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It appears that the Bash had gas all along the front on one side of us and as the wind was favorable last night intended an attack.

We got word of it however from two deserters and at 1:00 early this morning our guns opened a "barrage" all along the front and the air fairly trembled for a couple of hours.

It was a steady roar punctuated by the heavies whose report always makes the ground shake. According to reports today the attack was forestalled and a lot of damage done. Of course we do not know their losses but can only hope they were considerable and made up for the way our fear division has been cut up to no apparent purpose this last month. We all "stood to" during the bombardment. The Bash has still every intention of using gas to the utmost.

We have our service in the afternoon now and I was just in when I commenced this.

We had "To the work" No 76 Moody's stanza as our hymn. The Salvation Army one that you say dear Father used to sing to Wood's when we were small. It seemed to bring those days very close and yet some time has elapsed.

I enclosed a clipping about Frank Reid. I think we must pay the magazine "Canada" something to advertise him. He is considered a quite

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by the 1st Divisional Chaps who are over here who say he could have come over if he had wanted to.

I fear my diary this week will not have much of interest in it.

Monday 24th April. After visiting the "Mans" I decided I would not ride as I had a slight cold and it looked as if it might rain, so I sent Mr Ewen out about some extra trench wardens and arranged about placing them and reported at Headquarters for me. I also had Mr White receive instructions about some filling parties we have to send out. The Waite payed us a visit in the P.M. and objected strenuously to a new brick incinerator, which we considered a work of art, but unfortunately we had taken one of his iron gates as a grate and he said it was worth 90 Francs. As I did not feel like paying a claim for that amount I agreed to beat down and breakfast and he was appeased. Spent rather a quiet afternoon and retired early, the others playing cards.

Tuesday 25th April Up for stables and inspected my horses when they went out for the ride at 9.00 under Cackshutt. They still look a little thin and poor. Rode over to Headquarters (nearly an hour

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side) and saw Col Shaker about some matters and objected to the way my unit was being cut up for various duties.

Capt Humphry finished a very nice map of our G.H.R. line and handed it in. Saw Col Her about detailing "trench guides" or men to lead new troops into the trenches from the rear if necessary.

Saw General Archib Macdonnell who saw has a brigade as Gen Watson (of Quebec) has returned to England to take over 4th Division and congratulated him. Read and wrote a little in the evening. Inspected rifles and bullets in the afternoon. Col Jamison called for a few pointers about the Cavalry training as they go back for it the end of the week.

Wednesday 26th April. Another glorious spring day with everthing budding.

Accompanied White on the exercise ride at 9.00 and quite enjoyed it. We are not very far from the Trappist Monastery on a high hill that I have described on a previous occasion and the rides near it are very beautiful and roads softer, now the mud is drying up. Saw Harry Greenlee who has transferred to a trench mortar battery "in route". Clemens is also thinking of doing the same.

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Write also a few hurried lines as a beginning as she has been so good about writing all three of us over here. Sent White out to supervise the instruction of our trench guides. He will have to stay off in trenches for a "tour of duty".

Col Jamison and his Captain Tiplow down very dinner and spent a very pleasant evening. We borrowed Sarah's gramophone from the men and some extra records from the Cyclists. They stayed until after 10.00.

Thursday 27th April Rode up to our new rail head with the Emen to take over 62 remnants for the Division. We had six coming and managed to get them fairly good ones although two turned out later to be broken winded. Had an inspection of the transport in the afternoon. Col Palmer D. D. R. paid us a visit and looked over all our horses and had tea with us. I find all these old British officers so approachable and decent in every way. He must have spent two hours with us. While at tea he asked me as a great favor if I would mind sending someone to his chaffeur as he said he always liked to feel he was having some at the same time. Of course I did.

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The Evans & I were guests of Jamson and his officers in the evening and had rather a lively time. Smith O.C. 3rd Divisional Mounted Troops was there also. It was midnight before we returned.

Friday 28th April. Sent out a detail of 24 men to relieve 1st Division who go far training. This reduces me to 16 men to look after 76 horses. It is too much of a good thing and as I had already taken it up with the A & Q branches I decided to lay it before the General.

He gave me a very good hearing and at once arranged to tell me about Gornes as he said the horses must be looked after if the unit was to be kept efficient. He could not have been kinder. It is the first time I have had to take any matter to him. Tried out two of our new horses over ~~the~~ jump in our field. One was too rough and the other broken minded so decided to stick to my own. Rode down to see O'Brien in front and as a result did not get home until nearly dark and had a cold dinner. Word from Sarah telling me sailing deferred. Jamson & I again about the training. I told him what I could.

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and gave him a map and some schemes
saw our A.D.V.S. about exchanging
some of our horses and he agreed if they
were unsuitable.

Saturday 29th April. Had to punish
Sgt Carson for neglect of duty. I think
it did him good. Went back to boat
again and at 11.00 o'clock started off to take
bluch with Wood. Picked up Mr Gann
at the 12th waggon lines on the way and
arrived at the Chateau about 1.00 P.M.
He is acting as o.c. group in Col Mitchell's
place. He should have it permanently
and the Col should have had the 3rd
Divisional Artillery and would have, if it
had not been for Carson's blunder. Saw
Allyn and Ewen also and we chatted
all ~~the morning~~ ^{afternoon} and returned about 6.00. After
having had afternoon tea, quite a
luxury. Was late for dinner again
read about the Irish question. It seems
as if Great Britain were having her
hands very full. Found my officers
playing rummy when I returned. Slept
well until awakened by the bombardment
of 1.00 which I have already described.
Sunday 30th April. Slept a little late
after very disturbed night and had a
hot bath in the morning and changed

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my clothes, donning my new breeches for the first time. They seem to fit very well and are quite a pretty color selected by Mrs Hobson Leonard. Another glorious day. attended stables at noon and church at 1:30. Have spent 2 hours (now 6:00 PM) writing this and will desist until the morning.

Monday 1st May Another gas attack on one of our flanks last night about 10:00 which our artillery put a stop to in about an hour. I lost a little sleep however. Another beautiful day, trees coming out and birds singing everywhere. McEwen has just taken out the ride and I have my war diary to write up as it is the first of the month so will not be able to add very much more. Spent the balance of yesterday afternoon reading when not watching the flashes of the bombs being dropped on our nearest big towns by planes or Zepps. we could not see which as it was dark. I hope dear Father is not being troubled too much by the changes in shell contracts. I am afraid he has his hands pretty full. Very much love dearest Mother & your devoted son
Hh.