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22nd Sept
BELGIUM.

1 Dearest Mother

Fear I have neglected my writing for last ten days but it has been unavoidable due to our many moves to get here. I cannot say just where we are further than that we can see YPRES in the distance from our Headquarter Farm and at present there is only one British Division between us and the 1st Canadian Div so I may be able to see Wood if he is not on leave at an early date. We are all very well and in good spirits having had perfect weather for our move in England and also so far over here. We are now getting settled in 3 Farms and I have a brief respite while the troop officers get their men and horses settled. I am at present sitting in the front room of a Belgian Farm house per appended sketch with the manure pile in front of my window and pigs & chickens and calves running about. The farms are all the same however and this one is considerably better than the average, and we will be glad to be under cover when the bad weather comes. No mail for nearly 2 weeks as p.o. closed in England before we left but hope to get it tomorrow. Will resume diary where I left off on 12th and fill in as I get opportunity.

II

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Monday 13th Sept Sward Practice with Stanford in morning and again for men in P.M. as well as another kit inspection. Busy getting various odds and ends straightened out. Had dinner with Sarah at SELLDIDGE in evening and arranged with Mrs Lancefield about starting trucks. Mr Ewen had had cold so had him spent day in home at Sellidge as rather wet and damp.

Tuesday 14th Sept Same programme as yesterday. Rufus came out for dinner with us and remained over night. He is a nice chap but does not speak very well of Mills & Greenless.

(I did not let on I knew them well), the former has been given a How. Battery in this Division but may not hold it if he acts indiscreetly, which I hope for his own sake he will not. Gave Sarah my first pocket diary [from which these letters are written] and Mother Father my first "Daily Letter Book" together with the complete nominal roll of the Squadron as I brought it over and next of kin. Sarah has a copy also and will look after any in hospitals near her in England. As you will see I turned over 16 men (who were sick or not wanted) when we left to base details, our strength now being 163 and 161 horses instead of 172.

Wednesday 15th Sept. Last sward practice with Stanford. Practised the charge several times

III

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Sarah up to get umbrella (left at YANCA tent) and to say good bye to others. Ferguson came over found Base to take over our surplus and camp stores and clean up our camp. I had to pack in A.M. but did not finish until late in P.M. and will have to leave it to be sent over tomorrow. Had dinner for last time with Sarah who was wonderfully brave and made it so much easier for me. Reared camp again about 8.00 P.M. and found tents struck and men sleeping. Gave each of Lonsfield boys a nice leather wallet.

Thursday 16th Sept. Slept very well in a few until 1.00 AM when revellie went. Slept latter pool at 3.30 AM with first train load [The Emen following an hour later second]. Everything pitch black. Loaded at SHORNCLIFFE at 6.15 in 20 minutes.

English horse cars comparatively easy to load and R. T. O most competent. Reached Southampton at 1.00 and all on board "City of Benares" [an Indian liner with lascars] before 2.00 when second train arrived. Had a good sleep both on train and boat and found ourselves in HAVRE the next A.M. Two Destroyers escorted us across.

Friday 17th Sept. Breakfast at 7.00 AM when imberkahan officer boarded and I handed over my papers as C.O. of Ship. All off here 11.00 AM. Splendid facilities and perfect arrangements, not a hitch or mistake and no one hurt or anything damaged.

IV

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Spent the day resting very comfortably on docks. When equipment in way of cranes derricks slips sailing bridges etc etc seemed to me to surpass Southampton. Let the boys ^{officers} go up to the town which is reputed as very wealthy and residential but remained with new horses. White bought me a tooth brush as dropped mine in dark yesterday AM.

Beautiful weather. Cabled Sarah "arrived safely". Expect she will remain at FOLKSTONE over week end and then go to Mrs Leonard at OXFORD. Moved across town at 6.00 PM and loaded on ~~the~~ train (50 coaches & trucks) for port. Horses (8) and men (40) in same kind of freight trucks only latter have benches and tables. Mrs Pitt's daughter (English) sold coffee and rolls to men up to 9.30 PM ^{at station} when we pulled out. They have been there since December and have signatures of all officers who have gone through in books. They were quite charming. We had a very comfortable first class coach and our lunch hamper was invaluable and most complete in every detail.

Saturday 18th Sept. Halted at 3.30 AM for water & feed horses. (Coffee provided by French (Dutch) for men) and again at 7.30 but not again until we detraind about 5.00 PM & one hour. Passed numerous camps and hostels on the way and also saw the

Channel several times ^V en route. (22nd Sept)
Passed quite a number of very large Portland cement
works all idle but a blast furnace and chemical
factory going. Beautiful sunshiny day.

Marched about 8 miles that night and the dark
along beautiful roads with very tall poplar trees
(with bare trunks $\frac{2}{3}$ up) along the side, though
several cobbled stoned quaint French villages
and past several beautiful chateaux.

Midnight night ideal for a bivouac. Water
hard to find. All slept very well and new most keen.

Sunday 19th Sept. Beautiful bright day again. Rev.

at 7.00 and marched off again at 10.30 AM

halting at quite a ^{large} town about 14 miles along

for lunch & feed. Men like the Me Conky ration

(most vegetables etc tinned) which is warmed and

makes a quick palatable meal. Resumed march

at 2.30 and got into billets allotted for us

about 5.00 PM but did not like them so

bivouaced in fields again. Germans were

here last fall in same place. Reported at

Headquarters and orders to move again

in A.M to where we are now. Slept well

again on ground. Men look very funny

carrying rifle, sword, 100 rounds, haversack

belt, haversack, waterbottle, picketing gear,

water pail, hel rope mallet, wire cutters

cloak and grooming kit as well as saddlebag

and clashing. Horses are pretty well

loaded also with 2 lumbered waggons, cook

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cart, also own 3 A.S.E. waggons, one for baggage ^{22 wt}
and the other two for forage and rations. (6 in all)
Monday 20th Sept. Glorious day again even if
a little dusty. My little mare shied at a motor which
was holding ^{disembarked} her with reins over arm and dragged me
across road, but I held on and was not slightest hurt.

Dear Mother I have not had a trace of hay fever
cold for which I am most thankful. Passed
through several Flemish towns with beautiful
churches and small old fashioned cottages, all
full of troops (practically all British). Saw
several German "tanks" being fired at by
anti-air-craft guns, and could hear sounds of
ordnance with increasing distinctness
all day. Saw several 1st Gen. Serv. Transport
Waggons. Can hardly realize that we are so
close to "the show" that we have been preparing
for so long. Crossed Belgian frontier
about noon and reached here about 2.00 PM.
where we were most kindly received and looked
after by Surrey Yeomanry Squadron (28th Div) whose
place we take. They have only had
2 casualties to date (16 Jan) which I am sure
you will be glad to hear. Spent afternoon
getting temporarily settled and answering
accumulation of despatches and wires.
Slept in fields again as don't want to disturb
our friends who move on Wednesday A.M.
From a windmill here near us, saw the
line and Y— in distance and incidentally

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a couple of mines go up, 150 feet in air but of course a couple of miles or so away. Country everywhere even right up to trenches under cultivation and Belgian farmers & children & women (who work like men) every where as if nothing were happening. They get hit occasionally however, but take it as a matter of course and won't move unless compelled to.

Tuesday 21st Sept. Slept well again under apple trees in orchard. An unexploded shell from one of our anti-A.C. guns fell in centre of road near our watering place while we were at morning stables. We left it there. Spent the day (Officers & sergeants) going over second line trenches with Officers of Surrey platoon as we are to be able to act as guides to these trenches for other divisions brought up in a hurry in case of a drive. Most interesting saw many shell holes (especially at cross roads) and our batteries were firing over our heads quite frequently as we went along. Have already furnished two guards, one of which has to go out at night just behind first line trenches over a narrow gauge R.R. to take supplies into trenches. Visited it last night with two Sigs & Campbell getting back about midnight. Star shell going up continually and rifle fire almost continuously, but perfectly safe if one keeps to certain marked spots under cover. Machine guns going occasionally.

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22nd Sept Wed Our friends left us in possession this AM. Hered farmer here is a very decent old chap but his wife is a "Jane" as Campbell says. Cockburn and Jane live with Staff. Transport & one troop; Campbell & McEwen of another farm about 200 yds off with one troop and Spence & White at another about 400 ^{with 400 troops} making a change. We don't like being split but it is necessary to get all horses and men under cover in bad weather (as we may be here a long time) as Officers have a room in farm houses, and men in lofts or 2 tiers (which our friends left us). We are getting settled today and I think will be very comfortable.

Been searching for enclosing list of a dissembled hamper once a week for our mess. They can be ordered in London regularly but the big firms are very high in price. If not too much trouble you might see what you could do in Oxford and send McEwen the bill and we will remit. You might also drop the Times another line about my paper in case some unfortunates as P.O. upset at last, also Hill Bros 3 Old Bond St. to send dyed breeches over here.

Will try and look you up on Sunday, Wood if I get the chance, but don't quite know what freedom an Officer is allowed in this respect, and don't want to get into trouble. Will close now with much love to all especially dear Mother for you and Father. You from Jbt.

C.S. Thompson Estelle's birthday and yours on 14th Oct so had better wish you many many happy returns now.