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Western Archives, Western University

December 21<sup>st</sup> 1916 -

Sunday 3rd Dec  
11:00 AM

Dearest Mother

As Sean my servant is going on leave this afternoon and ad Wood is coming for lunch I will write this morning so as to be free later in the day. It is quite like a Canadian December as the ground is frozen and the last few days have been really cold. This morning all the shrubs and trees are covered with hoarfrost and very beautiful. I am just in from an hours ride by way of morning exercise and am writing in my room in which Sean has just started the fire.

Your cake and socks were most welcome. It was just the kind I like and for which I used to raid the cupboards in days gone by. I am selfish enough to be eating it alone in accordance with present practice of our mess. I turned Elaine's cake in and only saw it once. The socks fit me perfectly and are just right. They prevent too tight up the leg to squeeze my calf under my boot, and are they too long in the foot to bunch at the heel. I am wearing nothing but your and Alice's socks this winter and have six or 8 pairs of them so am well supplied. It was very kind of you to send a package ahead of me and I really think they are of the more

acceptable when there is not such a surfeit hanging about. I think I told you that I have just started on pygamas you sent last Christmas and as Sarah has mended my winter combinations I am very well off in every way. Please thank Father for Montreal papers and Saturday evening post which I latter read last night before I retired.

Wood showed me your letter of 7th to Sarah which she has forwarded to him and also Elaine & Estelle's birthday letters which had a good deal of news. I wrote Father in the middle of the week as have answered his.

Have had a bit of a cold for last 10 days and felt miserable a week ago but am now practically rid of it. Do you know that I believe it may be attributable to living in a warm room with a fire and a real bed instead of out of doors as I practically have been since last May. I believe by that our men were healthier sheltered in barns and tents than in these miners houses.

I believe I overlooked acknowledging the dear cable of good wishes for 22nd & 23rd which Sarah forwarded early in the week and I sent one to Wood. It was sweet of you to think of us and helped the sadness of being apart. We both feel the separation very

much at times and it seems harder as time goes on to be apart for the best years of our lives, but we must be brave as it is for a great cause and is part of our little cross and after all we have been wonderfully blessed.

I begin to feel at last that I am making some little progress in my French and only wish I could understand as well as I can read, but they do speak so fast and run their words together.

Sunday 26th Nov after writing to you I had lunch and Calou sent his ~~rotor~~ over for me and we went into B — and had dinner with some French people he knew. It was quite pleasant and a nice break. They were quite gay and 2 of the girls were quite attractive, even to married men like ourselves. We did not get back until quite late. They gave us an excellent meal and good wine. I found my hot bath waiting for me as I had not liked to take it in the morning.

Monday 27th Nov. Feel better and think the little yesterday did me good. A beautiful clear day so I thought I would try for a flight but when I got the flying corps squadron in which I had been promised a joy ride I found they were all up. Went for a little ride and attended stables as straw as a court martial. Did some writing after lunch and at 5.00

PM rode into — with Smith and saw a very good show put on by the "Barn Devils" (Sarah will forward programme). They are all soldiers but must have been in theatrical life before as they were as good as professionals. They play every night except Sunday from 6.00 to 8.00 and change the show every week. We quite enjoyed it and the theatre is quite nice. We had tea and "petits gâteaux" before and I had late dinner with Smith on return and was too late for a mess and also had to miss my French lesson. I forgot to say the house was crowded as they allow civilians to come as well as soldiers.

Tuesday 28th Now straw up in trenches with Hazard (A Sqn) so after looking at a base that had been accidentally killed during the night I rode over to the R.F.C people and found Foster waiting for me. He ordered his machine out with 2 bombs and a Lewis gun as he was going over the line and I donned a fur lined leather coat, gauntlets and a fur cap that tied over my ears and goggles. They had a little trouble getting the engine started as it was a cold morning. I then climbed in the front seat and fast the belt around my waist although he said it was not necessary and I felt perfectly safe in my little box and the fuselage came up to my shoulders. The engine speeded up and

we started to skid along the ground gaining speed all the time. About  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the way across the aerodrome he dipped the planes and up we soared; truly a wonderful sensation and one which after the first moment did not bother me at all even when spiralled home lastly with the engine stopped, or when he dipped one plane to turn. Unfortunately it was a little cloudy and at times we were in the white Teesey mist, but again it cleared I could see everything perfectly as the sun was shining. The most beautiful thing was the LABASSE Canal which stretched like a silver band across the country. I saw the enemies lines but we were not fired at and saw nothing to drop our bombs on. I was really surprised how clearly I could distinguish small details and even movement at about 7000 to 8000 feet. I was not in the slightest sea sick and my pilot had warned me <sup>not</sup> to lean over the side if I were as he would then get it all. He was very kind as he could very easily have "put the wind up me" by doing some fancy stunts as they always do when visiting beginners. I was up  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour and we reached 60 to 70 miles and I was sorry to come down.

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3<sup>1/2</sup> hrs

and also not to have seen the Channel which is easily visible on a clear day when you are a little way up.

He said he would take me up again if I came on a clear day and I likely will avail myself as I thoroughly enjoyed it. They gave me a very good lunch and I rode back about 40 miles in the afternoon. There has not been a clear day since so I am glad I seized the opportunity. Spent an hour chatting with old Barber in the evening. He is well informed.

Wednesday 29th Nov - Dull and cold. Took an 8 mile walk in the morning and attended stables. Said good bye to Col Hudson Gosson our camp commandant who is going back to England with General Tucker who is going to take command of all Canadians in England, and be Pearly's military adviser. There are going to be a good many changes I believe and I heard quite a few heads will likely fall. We have not heard who is to take his place over here yet. Rode to B — about 8 miles with Smith where we visited an antique shop where he purchased 3 old pieces of Louis XIV pewter. I was more interested in some old books and prints that I saw. B — is a very old town

we afterwards had tea at very nice  
with peace and rode back, I rode with  
his peatens and my tied to his saddle.

I had to do all the bargaining for him as  
he cannot speak a word of French.

Did some writing and studying and  
spent an hour with Barber after dinner.  
did not retire until midnight.

Thursday 30th Nov Just cold but bright  
although misty. Took about an 8 mile walk  
before stable. Made Aunt Louisa. Heard  
the Canadian artillery were coming close  
to us so I may see Wood soon. Had an  
hour today with madame and wrote  
and studied the balance of the day. Lizzie  
took the horses out

Friday 1st Dec Now I can say next  
month I get (or hope to get) leave again. It  
seems to be the great thing to look forward  
to. Took an hours ride and then helped  
straw inspect all our mens bullets  
which was quite a job. about 4 men  
live in a house which all have 4 rooms  
and are all made exactly alike. Comparing  
them with our working people I think they  
are very comfortable but of course are  
not nearly as independent as if they had  
their own houses. Made after lunch and  
then walked over to the next village about  
2 miles away where I found Wood and

his whole Brigade just getting settled. He looks remarkably well, really I have never seen him better, in spite of all he has been through. I haven't seen him since 11th Oct, nearly 2 months. He expects to get a few weeks rest and hopes for leave very soon and I am sure deserves it. We chatted a couple of hours then I walked back for dinner. Read rather late.

Saturday 2nd Dec Motored up to the front and then walked up to the front line, a 2 hour jaunt while I spent most of the day with our men there. Went down in a mine once again and heard one "minnie" land about 50 yards away.

The cold weather has dried things up very much. Our men have a grievance as they get no rum while the miners do and as they work together they should be treated alike. Got back about 5:00 and was glad of a hot cup of tea.

Anderson & Warrifaw up for tea and we heard a little Corps gossip. Short letter from Sarah who was going out with White. Wrote Aunt May after dinner and read Saturday evening post until midnight.

Sunday 3rd Dec Had my hot bath and put out your new socks Mother dear



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which as I said before are the best fit  
yet. Quite cold and raw but went for  
an hours ride all the same on my  
pony and have been writing ever since

3 Dec

I am trying to write some of the aunts  
and uncles but it is not very easy and  
I find it hard to find enough to say without  
repeating. I feel again a little guilty  
about presents as I see the big pile of  
packages going out each day.

I wonder if Father ever got the helmets  
Spencer says that his arrived safely  
and I sent mine about the same time. I  
will close this after I see Wood.

Lalir  
Wood has just had lunch with  
me and we have had a nice  
chat.

Am going out now so must close  
to catch Wood

very much love  
Jff