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Recd
Dec 27 1916 Sunday 10:30 am
Dearest Mother

Am sorry to have missed my midweek letter and also my cable but was saddled with a "job of work" (as the English expression puts it) by the Corps to revise the bulleting areas in rear for three divisions and since Wednesday I have been away most of the time. On Wednesday night my cable came but I found that addressing and sending my fifty was about all I could manage.

Letters have been very disappointing as we have had none now for 3 days so all I have to acknowledge is one from Marie written on Nov 16th and the business letter of Nov 20th written by Mr Holmes which sounded rather encouraging.

I had intended writing a Xmas letter on Wednesday but this even yet may reach you in time and bears every good wish for the once festive season even if under rather different circumstances. We are sometimes a little apt (at least I am) to overlook the real significance of the day on account of its generally being a day of family reunion and happiness such as it has always meant to our family especially in the past and I hope will again in the future.

Even if separated we have much to be grateful for as a family and I know I feel very thankful that we are all well and spared on these days of so much suffering and bereavement. You may rest assured that my

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Thoughts will very often turn towards Oakwood and the Skyport on that day as I know you all will be thinking of us all over here.

I have wondered if the helmets I sent over ever arrived safely. I don't think you have ever mentioned them and Leslie tells me today that his wife has acknowledged some little things I sent for him at the same time.

Tell Alice that I followed "her order" about getting my photograph taken when in England which will be my only I was present this year. Sarah tells me that she sent off when she last wrote but that they were not as good as the proofs although for my part I thought they were rather flattering although I might suppose by looking at them that I had grown fat, which however is really not the case although I have never been better in my life.

I do hope that Father had a good change at Niagara and is now feeling quite himself again and that the rest has done him good. I suppose he is back in harness again by this time.

I have not seen Wood since last Tuesday when I had dinner with him but it is just possible that he may look me up today.

I am going out again this afternoon so I had better get along with my dialy for the week. Sometimes I feel it is hardly worth keeping up, there is so little to report but I suppose

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that I had better persist.

Sunday 3rd Dec As I said Wood walked over and had lunch with us and recounted some of the most recent news from the south. Afterwards he came over to my room and sat by the fire chatting until 3.00 o'clock when he walked back and I motored to — with Colin by way of a change where we called on the family I told you about last week. We had dinner at a very nice little oyster shop and some excellent Portguese oysters and motored back in the evening. It makes a nice little break and gives me a chance to exploit a little French. Finished your nice fruit cake when I came back. Mother. It was quite a treat. I don't believe I thanked you for the tobacco which came last week and which I am using now. A $\frac{1}{2}$ lb a month will be really more than I can use.

I hope Alice won't mind forwarding the 3 mas cards to addresses I did not remember. I have managed to write Morgan's aunts Tully, Eliza, May Elizabeth and Miriam and Mrs Brinton and will try and reach some others this week.

Monday 4th Dec Rode over to Camp Commandant with Stawitzie in the morning. Cackshutt returned from Leane and brought me a line from Sarah. He & Campbell had been very good about taking her out which I appreciated very much as I know what these little breaks mean to her. They both were sick and got short

extensions of leave. White got over before they returned which made it very pleasant. Arranged for a regimental mess dinner for the officers and asked Sarah to buy some butter, favors and crackers for us. Worked at my French and had an hour with Barber at night.

Tuesday 5th Dec. Went for a ride alone in the morning and later attended stables as straw was up in front. Saw one of the brigades of the last Canadian Division under Gen St Pierre Hughes (brother of Minister) pass on their way up and I must say they looked very well. They have not suffered as heavily as the other three divisions and have done very well I hear. Campbell back from leave. In the afternoon I went down one of the neighboring mines with Wood and spent 2 hours underground. The shaft was nearly 100 meters and the passages and galleries down below seemed innumerable. We dressed in overalls and each carried a Davy lamp. In one place our guide showed us a little "gasseau" or coal damp and showed us how it extinguished the lamp. There were 7 or 8 horses down there to pull the trucks of coal to the bottom of the pit. It is the first mine I have ever been in and I enjoyed the experience very much but I think I would prefer to work in a foundry or boiler shop.

~~Wednesday~~ I went back to dinner with Wood. He has an entirely new lot of officers except the same who was on leave. We chatted until about 10.00 PM when I walked back alone.

Wednesday 6th Dec This is book no 11 I have just started. Will try and send no 10 over by Wood when he goes on leave. Rode to — in the AM alone and saw a very large aerodrome. After lunch I went to Corps and received instructions about the revision of billeting on which I am now engaged. Went to the theatre at — with Col Smith and saw a very good show put on by the soldiers to a crowded house. We walked over as it is only $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles away. The hour 6 to 8 is a little awkward but I had dinner with Smith on my return. The girl was not as good as the one last week. It makes a little change.

Thursday 7th Dec Made my plans for the billeting with the two officers who are to assist me and started out at 2.00 PM and interviewed the "Maires" of four villages before night. I slept at a nice Chateau at the last one as I had my holdall with me and Leschi to look after me. I had dinner of omelette & brown bread with the Maire himself as Mairielle at the Chateau did not offer me any hospitality. It was a very nice place with a beautiful garden behind on which my room looked.

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~~Friday~~

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9th Dec

Did not sleep well although the bed was excellent and started out about 8:00 AM and was on the go until 6:00 P.M. visiting and inspecting 8 more villages and small towns. Unfortunately it was wet so the trip was not as pleasant as it might have been.

I happened to strike Major Dawson at noon and he gave me a very good lunch.

Enjoyed my dinner but was tired for my hair with Barber. Made Sarah a few lines before retiring.

~~Saturday~~

8th December

Started out before 9:00 in the rain and was well wet when I got back for dinner. Saw the most beautiful chateau I have yet seen in France. One of the old towers (13th century) is incorporated in the modern building. It has never changed hands since then. The grounds corresponded but were sadly brached about by the buses and troops that had occupied it from time to time. The French soldiers are not so careless than our chaps. The old counters still lived there with 2 daughters one unmarried and some children. The men are all in the army. They still keep one horse and have 2 cars which they are not allowed to use by the government. It brings the war home to me in its most harrowing aspect when one sees homes like this and thinks of what was before.

Sunday 10th Dec I must be absent minded today as I have mixed up my dates again. Had my hot bath this morning in comfort after a very good sleep. Miss the papers on Sunday. Had to start walk and have been writing this since. I will have 3 or 4 more days work next week as report must be in by the 14th. This afternoon I hope to get the use of a car to visit three outlying places. as the long rides on hard roads are pretty hard on one's horses.

I have put in half my time towards my next leave but it still seems very far off. I often feel very useless in my present position and know my energy could be better applied elsewhere. It is hard to know just what to do.

Once again let me wish you three at Lakewood and the "jics" "schops" if they come of a very merry Xmas and every happiness in the coming year.

I hope you will plan to do less outside work rather dear as I sometimes fear that you overtax yourself. Good will likely spend his Xmas in England as I did last year.

very much love

Ibb