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Western Archives, Western University

Flanders

29 Apr 15.

Dearest Mother

I wrote a few hasty lines yesterday but fear they were hardly legible. I was worn out as is everyone else and more or less on the edge with the tension of the past week.

The Germans have made a gain of a mile or so along a front of probably ten miles. The Canadian infantry fought like heroes but the French and the former were attacked on three sides as a result. We did our best with the guns and I think helped the situation a whole lot but our allies' behavior put the whole thing to the bad. As I said yesterday two of my guns were put out of action and we were lucky to get them out of 2 of the positions we occupied with no little loss; in fact on looking back I cannot understand how we got out at all.

Although there is no danger of a serious defeat I would not be surprised if we abandoned our present position and retreated across the canal. The little salient that the British

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held on the East side is being  
shelled from north, south and  
East and although it can be held  
the authorities may perhaps consider  
that the cost of holding it exceeds  
its strategic value.

I went back today and reconnoitered  
new positions for the Brigade and  
passed through Ypres on the way. Two  
weeks ago it was a city with certain  
of the public buildings in ruins; now  
the city is no more and practically  
every house is smashed. We dashed  
through at top speed as the Boches  
still shell the place but hardly saw  
a soul. When you consider that the  
place is about the size of London  
you can get some idea of the scene.

The Canadian division (except  
the artillery) has been withdrawn  
some miles to re-organize. The infantry  
losses are very heavy and you will  
probably have seen from the casualty  
lists. Chester Butler of London is  
among the wounded but I think his  
battalion (the 1st) escaped with fewer  
losses than lots of the others. The  
artillery of our division is attached at  
present to the Lahore division and

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we are in the midst of Indians of  
all sorts Sikhs, Gurkhas, Pathans  
and Dogras.

We hear rumors of successes at  
other points and I sincerely hope  
they are true or at least some of  
them. I am sure the official reports  
of this action will state the facts  
as far as they can but they  
won't mention the part played by  
the French and it is the cause  
of the whole trouble. The English  
are very fond of talking about "our  
gallant allies" but where their  
gallantry comes in I fail to see. It  
looks to me more and more as if  
the British will have to carry  
matters through on the western front.  
We can and will do it but unless  
things improve it will be a long  
business.

Tonight the moon is full  
and shining brightly from a star  
specked sky. It is the same moon  
that is shining down on you all  
at home but the scene here is  
different. In Canada, peace  
and comfort; here, misery, desolation  
and ruin. I wonder what the moon

so bright and cold and stately,  
 would say about war if she could  
 speak her mind. As I write the  
 little village of St Jean (about 1/2 a  
 mile from here) is burning fiercely  
 and the burning parties are  
 forming up to march out for  
 their mighty work - so humble and  
 yet so necessary. I am sure she  
 would say that this thing must  
 be carried through - even if it takes  
 our last man so that the fiends  
 who are to blame may never inflict  
 such desolation and carnage on the  
 world again.

I lost my pipe and diary the  
 other day. Just where or when I  
 don't know but have done a good  
 deal of crawling on my hands and  
 knees lately and suppose they fell  
 out unnoticed while in this attitude.  
 I have become quite an expert at  
 binding up wounds and for three  
 or four days we hardly went about  
 at all without getting an opportunity  
 of helping some poor devil. The loss  
 of my pipe does not matter but am  
 annoyed about the diary as it  
 contained a fairly full account of

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all our doings to date. However it  
seems rather petty to regret its  
loss when my skin is still  
whole and my Battery losses  
are so slight.

I shall be glad when the  
present fight is over. We have now  
had a week of it, more or less  
continuous and today the shelling  
has been almost continuous. One  
is physically and mentally tired and  
more or less deafened. In fact the  
majority of the men at the guns  
cannot hear anything except when  
it is shouted. The strain has been  
terrible and I would give a good  
deal for a few days or hours  
absolute respite. However that  
cannot be and we shall go on doing  
our share. In spite of the fatigue  
all the men are in good spirits and  
they have all behaved splendidly. Our  
rations, which could not be brought up  
for a couple of days, are once more  
coming in regularly and there's  
nothing like lots of good food for  
the fighting man. Shot and  
ammunition are the two essentials.  
Salt Lard and Alie that

I shall write them as soon as  
opportunity presents itself. I fear  
these letters and all my other  
papers have been lost with  
considerable other Battery and  
personal equipment but such things  
count for little under present  
circumstances.

Love to all  
your devoted son  
Wood.