

From the holdings of
Western Archives, Western University

Dear Mother
Monday 2nd Oct '16

Did not get a chance to write yesterday as we moved back to Corps Reserve after spending 8 days up in front as I started to tell you in last week's letter. It was the most strenuous week we have had since being in France and there were a good many empty saddles as we came back yesterday. In all we had 81 casualties which includes 9 killed and several others who cannot last very long. I will enclose a list of names and numbers of old 7th C.M.R. men who came over with me originally and if any are in London (I have not recorded their addresses now) perhaps it might be well to look them up.

I saw Wood on Saturday night in fact arrived just after one of his officers had been killed and Fred Betts shaken up, and stayed to dinner. We discussed Father's letter of 10th Sept pretty fully; I will try and write him in answer to it today. Whilst dining Wood messes very well now and I had an excellent dinner in spite of its being in a dugout. Your nice long letter of 11th Sept came to Wood (via Sarah) and I got the benefit of it. All the news was most welcome and I read it all very slowly and with great interest. Your midweek note (about Sept 6th?) came also with interesting enclosures from Elaine which I let Wood

have. He also showed me a nice letter from Aunt Emma (I feel so guilty for not having written her) and also one from Mrs Betts which I enclose. Woodcut Edward Arkman a present of £4 to buy a pair of field boots which I think was very handsome of him. He will try and get him in the Brigade when he comes to France. That is about all he can do for him.

Tell Father the new blue envelopes are fine and strong and the address correct. Why not you and Alice use the white small ones too as I think the printed name after comes quicker.

Sunday 24th Sept Rode up to Woodsdragout situated on the side of a hill overlooking his four batteries and cut right into the chalk. We chatted all afternoon and had a nice nit together. Harry Greenless dropped in and also Cal Anderson who got his brigade when Wood did. The former has been ordered to turn a German trench mortar on the Huns at our next attack. It is one we captured with about 20 rounds of ammunition. Rather a ticklish proposition as he does not know much about it. Did not stay for dinner. Sent a big party up to carry ammunition and bombs during the night. I followed them later to very nearly the sugar factory but could not

locate them. Things seemed much quieter than a week ago when I was ranging around that area trying to pick a cavalry route out amongst the shell holes and trenches. Got back about midnight. The stretch in some places is terrible. Some shells had landed in cemetery just by our horse lines during my absence but no casualties. This is the closest they have come and we must be 3 miles in rear of actual front.

Monday 25th Sept. South back to — for my bath as I miss it very much and it looks as if we might be out for some little time. Harry Greenless took lunch with me by invitation. He is always amusing. He won't have to operate the trench motor as he found out from a German prisoner that its extreme range would not clear our lines and it too heavy to move over such country. Took a ride with Strawbengeil in P.M. and rode through the remains of two towns that were taken earlier in the offensive to the south of us. We saw a British cavalry division which is evidently going to try and break through when the show comes off tomorrow. Country is full of troops and roads and paths so congested that riding not very pleasant. Guns everywhere. We saw two 8" hows at the side of the road ready to fire and the

subaltern waiting to give the word with his megaphone on the other. He waited until we were right behind the gun, not 6 feet from it and then yelled "fire". Of course both our horses who were fresh tried to climb into or over a dugout on the other side of the road much to the amusement of the guy crew and onlookers.

Sent 240 men up as stretcher bearers for Lt. Sir who battalions have been so weakened. They are out for 48 hours or longer. Also sent 60 more up to carry ammunition for the machine guns. This pretty well clears us out and we had to send some officers' grooms and servants to make the numbers up. We had hoped to have been able to use our own Hotchkiss rifles but apparently not this time.

Tuesday 26th left Hada had bath outside, water being heated by Leslie via a bucket boy. Was glad of clean clothes even if not pressed. Nice day for the offensive which Mr. Ewen and I watched from a favorable hill. The barrage started at 12.35 and the whole valley in front of us was a mass of flame from the field guns. It lifted our many yards every few minutes and our infantry walked forward behind it with rifles slung over their arms and bayonets fixed.

We could see them leave the trench and then lost them as they went down the slope into what looked like a clearing fire furnace but really our own barrage. There were some casualties from our own fire but this cannot be avoided. Before 15 minutes had passed we saw the first batch of Hun prisoners come back about 50, they looked white and scared. Before we left (about 3.00) five more batches went by. They had not hailed for our men but simply ran to meet them with their arms up calling "komrade". The barrage lasted $\frac{3}{4}$ hour when it lifted to the other side of the line of trenches we had taken as intended. It was then that the Huns began to find out what had happened and began to come back at our traps in what had been his own trench. This is the trying time for the infantry, "hanging on" to what they had taken. It is no joke. I believe however that we held all our objectives except one small trench in which we only had a few men. I shall never forget it. It was the first attack I had ever seen under such favorable circumstances and it was well worth a risk to see. We walked back and saw a 15" howitzer two shots weighing 1440 lbs each. It was a monster

but one cannot help rejoice to think that we are at last able to give the Hun a taste of what we have suffered "without squelching" so long as Lloyd George said in that wonderful speech he made to the American Press. I forgot to say that our brave chaps followed the first wave of the infantry right over and brought back the wounded in a way they seldom were handled. We have just received a letter of thanks and congratulations for their work from General Curry. They even went over the parapet after the objective was won in several instances and brought wounded in.

They suffered but made a name for themselves and I don't think will ever be called "safety firsts" again. One battalion commander told the officer in charge that they went where his own stretcher bearers would not go and where he would not send them.

The stream of "walking cases" (slight wounds) was almost constant as the enemy walked back and the ambulances followed each other pretty fast when we reached the main road.

Just a few had on German helmets and seemed quite happy limping alone to the linnies which take in these cases as the ambulances. They are filled with "stretcher cases" only.

We began to hear of our own casualties

in the evening when several men were sent in
 suffering from real "shell shock". One shell
 hit a ~~de~~ dugout where four or five of our
 men were waiting to go out and there was
 practically nothing left of three of them. White
 told me afterwards that he saw ~~three~~³ stretchers
 at regimental HQs [where he was working
 with his party] with serious cases that the
 M.O. had just attended to bying in a row
 awaiting the CAMC bearers. (Our men only
 worked from regimental HQs to front line)
 when a 5.9 hit the center one and scattered
 bits of them all over. It also threw up a
 corpse which had been buried there and it
 landed near them. He said to even the M.O.
 was sick at his stomach, but they had to
 stay and carry on as the wounded were
 coming in fast. He also told a funny
 story about Billings his groom who later
 on in the day was working in the same
 spot (Sarah knows him). Says Billings
 "He bring a stretcher", says someone else
 "What for?" says B. "Why for me of course
 I am hit" and so he was in the leg but
 not seriously only a nice "blighty".
 Missed my lunch but made up for it
 at tea time. Our own M.O. assisted at
 one of the dressing stations at night and
 himself attended to 130 cases overnight

and 115 the next -

Wednesday 27th left another nice day for which we are thankful as it means so much to our poor fellows down in front. Had a cold bath outside my tent. Wrote your mother dear for your birthday and hope you will get it in time. We hear our stretcher bearers will have to stick it tonight - again (3rd night with no real rest or sleep). We have already over 50 casualties and 6 or 7 killed. Did not leave the base lines in the morning as sort of felt we might have a call. In afternoon rode 6 or 7 miles south until we struck the French area at the river. Troops everywhere saw a lot of Japs in French uniforms driving French motor buses filled with soldiers. Came back across country as well as we could but country is simply covered with old trenches and gun pits.

That evening it was reported that our infantry had lost touch with the enemy on a section of front near where we tried to break through a week ago and one troop was ordered to go down to our front line that night and be ready to send two patrols out at the first glimmer of dawn. Campbell took it over with 25 men who we scraped up from what was left (stretcher bearers were still out) and after carefully explaining it to all the men left

2:00 A.M. and got into jump road on front line about 4:00 A.M. with some difficulty. Cackshutt went with him. They filled in the front trench and about 5:30 at first glimmer of day the patrols went out at 5 minute intervals 8 men each. After three or four tries by different routes the north one reached its objective and found that the items were not on a certain hill which was the information they wanted. They were surprised at of course but kept extended and rode fast as the going was fairly good after they got over the point. Several were wounded and I think 2 horses killed, but the riders eventually got back on foot. One man brought in a wounded comrade at great risk to himself. They said German dead and wounded were everywhere, apparently no attempt had been made to clean up latter.

The other patrol was not so fortunate and the corporal riding beside the sergeant was killed by about a dozen machine gun bullets before they got very far along main road. [He had predicted the night before that he was "going to get it" and left all his papers and private articles with the adjutant]. They had to return and tried once again with no better success except that they located the machine gun in a big farm. They then

went out again on foot but could not get their objective. They said also that German dead & wounded were everywhere and the sergt gave water to three himself but of course could do nothing more for them. They finally returned less 2 men. Campbell had now obtained the information he wanted and decided to pull out. They had about 2 miles to go in full view and the Hun was waiting for them and was banging them (field guns) all the way. They scattered and rode "hell for leather" for the crest of the hill. Campbell says the horses seemed to know what was wanted and went over shell holes & trenches in grand style. Two or three were hit and several went down but no men were killed. He made his report and the division was very pleased with the information and took advantage of it.

The two men who Campbell did not wait for had crept on soon until they ran across a Hun officer and some men in a dug out. They shot one man, the rest ran, and they captured the officer & brought him back near our lines where they met 2 of our (infantry) stretcher bearers with a wounded man on the stretcher. They sent the Hun ahead and took the rear of the stretcher the 2 infantry men taking the front. After they passed our lines a shell came and killed the wounded man and the

two stretcher bearers, wounded one of our men badly and the other slightly in the shoulder. The Him officer was untouched and as our remaining man Clark was feeling sick he thought it best to take no chances and shot the German (who was not like a prisoner who had surrendered) in the arm and managed to get him to our infantry a little further on where some very valuable information was obtained from him. He then went back with another stretcher party and got his wounded comrad. His name was "Knoply Clark" and he has a very bad conduct sheet. He then reported in and went to hospital with his "blighty". Our casualties were not so heavy when one considers the conditions and it is only the second bit of cavalry work done on this front since the offensive started. The other was Decker's horse as you may remember.

Rode over and called on Wood in the afternoon in his new position 1000 yards nearer the front due to our recent advance. Walked back in time for late dinner at 8.00 P.M.

Friday 29th Sept Our achievement was reported in the "communiqué". Wet and miserable all day. Letters from Father in newly addressed envelopes, one of which I sent right over to Wood by Peshie. It cleared later

but was very slippery when I went up with a party of 23⁸ to bury cable over the ground we had recently won. It has to go down 8 feet and even then I sometimes cut by the crash of a big shell. There was a heavy straff on our own infantry sent up a s.o.s which called forth a terrific barrage from our guns. The ~~for~~ air was fairly alive with whistling shells and you had to shout to be heard. The Engineer officers (two) who were in charge of the work did not want to risk going up so I got the A.D.A.S. on the telephone from an advanced point and he said to use my own judgment (Col Smith was with me) but that the line was urgently needed. We decided to go and after passing through the line of our own machine guns (indirect fire) reached advanced battalion HQ from which we were to dig 400 yards forward and bury the cable which was there. We had been joined by 150 cyclists and each man had a yard to dig 8 feet deep, and they certainly went at it. The signal (engineer) officer was all in and stayed in the dug out and the other was very jumpy so I took a sgt and went out to the end of the tape line about 200 yards beyond where we were working to see how far it was laid out and know what we were doing. I saw safe in saying there was a shell hitting within 200 yards of us every 2 or 3 minutes

2 Oct

I was digging at the end of the line with King
 matter officer and the sergeant. Three were
 so close that we were splatted with mud,
 at various when they hit. Presumably one
 hit in the trench about 25 yds behind us, at
 first I thought it was clear but also it was
 right in the trench and took one poor fellows
 head clean off. It was some minutes before
 we could get into the crater which was all
 aglow with phosphorus and fumes, to dig
 the poor chaps out and it was 26 minutes
 before we got the last one out with his head off.
 We buried what was left of him in a shell
 hole near by. Another with both legs
 shattered died on the stretcher going in. ~~Five~~ ^{Five}
 more were wounded (two badly) and 3 had
 shell shock. Saw in all. The only satisfaction
 was that the Hun did not know how many
 he got. One of the shell shocked was literally
 a chattering idiot and had to be almost carried
 back. The sappers who were to put the cable in
 had had four of five casualties amongst 8 or
 9 and said they could not do it then, so when
 we had our 8 feet or nearly so I decided it was
 no use keeping the men out longer and went
 back to Cal lunch in the dugout and we
 got back without casualties. All our men
 had to wait their turn at the dressing station
 near the dugout (the same one where White was

a few days before) but we carried them out with us to the tram way and put them on a car, and brought them to an ambulance on the main road. Smith of felt the responsibility keenly as we might have got out of it a working that night but I feel now that as the work was urgently needed we did the right thing in going out. I cannot say too much for our men who worked like Trojans and were not flurried although I know we all felt it, but after all it is what the poor infantry are often exposed to continually and I don't say they would think I was making a lot out of a very little. King and I walked home alone getting back about 4.00 when we were glad of a cup of hot tea with the men.

Saturday 30th Sept I forgot to say that going out last night a "dud" lit 6 feet from Smith of so close that mud splashed us. It was a 5.9 too from the third it made. I slept until 11.00 and changed my clothes after a bath. Bright day and I enjoyed the sun. Feel sorry for our men who went out on same job again after looking after their horses in the P.M. Fortunately it was a quiet night and we had no casualties although some close calls. They finished burying that section. After tea as I heard the one to go back tomorrow I rode over to talk Father's letter

over with Wood. The Hun is getting thin rally which is full of gums pretty well lined up and I arrived just after the telephone dugout of the 12th had been hit, an officer killed, Fred Betts pretty badly shaken up and old Sgt Major Barnhill thrown in the air and bruised and battered pretty well.

Fred was lying in a dugout at Woods Hqs. and was asleep when I went in to see him but old Wood I would take him out to the ambulance with me after dinner. We had a good dinner as I already mentioned but I am sorry to say that Ross (Woods M.O.) had got Fred out before I knew it so I was unable to see him or go back with him. It is perhaps just as well as I was followed (by carterence) by six or seven small shells that lit close beside by road, one flashing me again. Once more they were all duds. Wood is in a dangerous place I fear and I am anxious about him as his dugout is not deep and would only keep splinters out. Got home about 11.00 P.M. and slept well on my assumption box bed.

Sunday 1st Oct Lovely bright day. We let the men sleep until noon and broke camp at 2.00 P.M. and returned here. I secured a German helmet for Father and several other souvenirs. They are not hard to pick up in front or take off prisoners as they come in. White tells of how one of his men was

cutting the badges off a Hun officer's shoulders when the officer objected to being so treated by a private. The private swore at him and going behind him gave him 2 or 3 good kicks in the back side. Then drew his knife whereat the officer put up his hands and his badges were cut off.

Another of our officers (educated in Germany) was escorting prisoners from the front to the "Cage" (a barbed wire enclosure here —) when a Prussian officer asked him where the motors for officer prisoners were. Sharp (an officer) answered in German that if he said another word he would make him carry a pack on his back!!!

One of our regiments I hear was put under temporary arrest for not sending in any prisoners. It is said that a sergeant of that regiment was found crucified at VPRES 18 months ago.

We have one battery of German 77 field guns shooting back at the Huns on this front. We have ample ammunition for it too. We are also using their machine guns.

Found a new officer when we returned here named Lubus who recently joined the 1st Hussars. I don't remember him but you might tell Col Abbott I will keep

26 Oct

17

an eye on him. Things seem comfortable
back in our tents and our mess but looked
very home like.

Sunday 2nd Oct Wet and cold so we are
back just in time although personally I
would much prefer to be up in front doing
our part, but our men are pretty well done
as they have only had one night off in 8
days and I don't say if I had done as much
as they had I would be as glad to be back
as some of our officers, who have not
done even the little I did, are.

Had a mild hair cut after lunch as it
is too cold to be cropped again. Show my
coat on as I write as it is cold although
I hope we will still have some good
weather. There was another attack of
dysentery after we left yesterday and I
hear some of the cyclists were hit by
a shell on a road coming back as they
returned also.

I fear this is rather incoherent and as I
have no time to reread you will have to
overlook mistakes. I know that what
I have told you of details will be for
family ears only.

Very much love

This finishes book no IX Ill