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Sunday 11/1/18
1.00 PM

Dearest Mother

I was a little hurried with my letter last week I fear as I had to go out for the night. This week I am just back from a similar job and only got up at 11.30 after turning in at 4.00 this A.M. I have had no Canadian letters since I wrote you a week ago although it is just possible some may arrive before I finish this letter as today's mail is not in yet. Wood has not had any word either as I had an hour with him in his dugout at midnight last night. I don't hesitate to say that he is in one of the most exposed and furthest forward positions in the salient within 1000 yds (and consequently rifle fire) of the German lines. He has a section of another battery as well as his own and is working day and night at his dugouts and gun pits to strengthen them. He is shelled continually and there are craters all around his guns. I will be heartily glad to see him safely away from there. Col Mitchell has been promoted to C.R.A. and returned to England and Wood should at last get the Brigade but I suppose he will have to finish this job first. I sincerely hope there will be no hitch this time. I had some good news yesterday ^{as} (two) and my seniority to Smith has been confirmed by the Base. This

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makes me second in command at once and as there is a great likelihood of Elmsley getting a Brigade ~~in~~ I may get the Regiment sooner than I expected. Of course this latter is only surmise as I have nothing definite yet.

As I have not home letters to acknowledge I will take up the thread of my diary once again. I forgot to say that our training had been cancelled altogether. We do not know for what reasons but suppose the present situation.

Sunday 4th June Took working party out about 7.00 P.M. and after picketing our horses where we thought they were safe about 9.00 we walked another mile on foot to where we were required to dig. We dug from 10.00 to 1.00 when we had to start back so as to get out of sight before daylight. A few shells had dropped about 50 yds from our horses but none were hurt. We got back about 5.30 A.M. now

Monday 5th June We did stables and then turned in until noon. Ike Robertson, paymaster of Woods Brigade was up for lunch, a very nice chap who I have mentioned several times before. Elmsley called while he was here to enquire about the party. Last night, I congratulated him on his D.S.O. Several bundles of papers from London but no letters. I hear Harry Lockhart is killed and Claude Hill wounded amongst a great many others. Our

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Crosses I believe, have been a great deal heavier than the 2nd battle of YPRE over a year ago now. This party of the line has been a burying ground for Canadians. McEwen Campbell & Cacho left out with working party tonight

Tuesday 6th June. Started a class for the instruction of N.C.O's and men in the use of the Hotchkiss automatic rifle with which we are now equipped. It seems a very good and handy ^{weapon} as it can be carried like an ordinary rifle. Twelve from each Squadron are taking the course. Elmsley called and intimated to me privately that he might soon get further promotion. McEwen saw his brother Allan last night who told him that the Brigade was moving up to a very advanced position. No letters. Read and retired early after seeing the working party off at the usual hour.

Wednesday 7th June. Party back about 5:30 AM. pretty well tired out. Rode around the neighbouring country to try and find a suitable range for the machine guns. Was caught in heavy rain but found a very good place. Elmsley called at noon stopped and told us about the loss of the Hampshire and with Kitchiner on board.

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things seem to be going against us just at present. It seems hard to think of his being taken from us just now when the fruits of his labors were beginning to show. Two letters from Sarah but none from London. She tells me she intends sailing on the 10th and I will apply for leave as soon after her arrival as possible. I don't know whether I will be able to get it as it is greatly restricted just at present on account of the general situation. Wrote Father and Sarah in the afternoon and took out the working party of 210 men (70 from each squadron) to dig a new support line about 800 yards in rear of our front line. We went up in lories this time as too much time is wasted with horses and 25% have to be left as horse holders. We had no casualties although one big shell hit right beside Campbell's troop but fortunately it was a "dud" and did not explode. Most of our men have "tin hats" which are a great protection against shrapnel. We met many wounded being carried out on stretchers. The call is "going way for stretcher bearers" and everybody gets out of the way. You cannot help feeling sorry for the poor devils. An infantry man has not much to look forward to unless he is lucky and gets

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a blightie" (minor wound) and gets away.

He got out to our lorry again at 2.00 just as it was beginning to get light once again and home about 6.00 A.M.

Thursday 8th June. Got up at noon and

after lunch looked in at machine gun course which is still in progress. Walked over to regimental Headquarters and saw Elmsley about carrying stretchers up with us on these working parties as I think we certainly should have them. Major Cartwright and Major Sellman (both APM's) were there and we had tea. Spencer & Everett our new adjutant called in the evening and we played the gramophone. White who is on leave has sent over another box of records. Letter from Sarah but nothing from London yet. Bed about ten and slept well. Stiff after long walk.

Friday 9th June. Attended machine gun course in the morning and took the ride out myself in the afternoon as the other officers were pretty well tied out with the working party last night. They were up at the same place. McEwen had a bullet through the shoulder of his jacket but it did not touch him. He and I ~~had gone~~ ^{went} for a ride in the afternoon and met some of our friends of the Cavalry Division who

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are up dismantled. Clemens is leaving us for the trench mortars and has been transferred to 18th Btn as they only take infantry or artillery officers for this work. I am very sorry to lose him in some ways. He was a good little worker but the familiar with them men. McEwen of I sent the evening assembling and playing with one of our new groups.

Saturday 10th June. Sarah sails today according to her last letter. I do hope she will have a more comfortable trip than coming over. I will hope for a cable in a day or so and another when she arrives. I cannot help feeling a little anxious about her and about Wood this week and hope both will be all right. Lectured the machine gun class on the tactical use of the gun. Had a note from Emsley establishing my summary over Smith by our dates of leaving from Canada June 9th & July 17th respectively. He asked me over to lunch and we talked over the list of officers and he intimated that he would not be there for long. I took the working party out again as previously arranged and we had one or

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two exciting experiences. The Major in command of the Field Company of Engineers who we were working for turned out to be Benaw Simbar, ^{of Simbar} a very nice young chap indeed. He undertook to lead me up by a route of his own and got lost. However we landed at his dug out finally and found our working parties had all gone out. I had previously sent a note to Wood that I would be near his new position and asked him to send a guide for me as I wanted to discuss the agreement Father had sent over to be signed. The guide met me and we started out to the south of the lake and through a tunnel under the railroad embankment passing a dressing station (dug into the embankment) with a dozen stretchers lying outside awaiting attention. After going across fields and shell holes and getting caught in telephone and other wires we approached the ruined farm where Wood has a dug out and a little way off was the battery and 2 extra guides. I found Wood in his telephone dug out about 4 feet in the ground with a steel frame and 4 or 5 piles of sandbags for a roof. It was about 6' x 7' inside and there were three in when I crawled in beside them. He has simbar

structures over his gun pits and the men
 live right in them. They had been firing
 150 rounds every 3 hours for the last
 two days. They are only 1000 yds from the
 front (very advanced for guns) but are
 firing to a flank at about 3000 yds. We
 had $3\frac{1}{4}$ hours together and they started up
 again at midnight as I left. He looked well
 but is in a very trying position and I hope
 will get his Brigade and get back before
 long. There were big "crump" holes all
 around his position some right at the guns
 and they shell him nearly every time he
 fires. He has so far had only 7 men
 wounded but is bound to have a good many
 more as he is under rifle and machine gun
 fire as well. I would not write all this
 except that I intend to write every week
 while conditions remain as at present so
 you will have later news. He said he
 had not written and that you must expect
no letters from him for the present so I
 am giving you all I saw. He has 3
 good subalterns with him and his team
 of the waggon line. I must say that
 I have the greatest admiration for the
 ammunition waggon drivers who bring
 the shells up at night. They have to use
 certain roads which the Boer knows

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and shells at intervals. These brave chaps never stop but gallop right on with shells bursting right beside them. Unless the shell actually hits the hard road the burst is "up" due to the walls of the crater it makes in the soft ground. But when it hits the pavement it bursts "flat" in every direction and gets everybody around. [We saw six horses all in a pile the other night] Then when they get past these roads they have to drive across country through shell holes and ditches to deliver actually to the guns. It is all that six horses can do sometimes but you never see them stuck. The animals seem to know their danger and strain every muscle when required. The same applies to some extent to the infantry pack transport which has to take rations up even further to the men in the trenches. These mules only have two horses and cannot go as fast as the others. The greatest credit and praise is due all these brave fellows.

When I got back to the lake I found my party had gone in so had to start off alone and after missing my way once followed another working party into it by an old Sally port as the main gates were generally use were being shelled ~~regularly~~. I got through the town past some historic buildings

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saw "dust heaps" not ruins and reached our
 barries just in time. They could not have
 waited as the corner where we meet them
 is shelled regularly. Altogether it was
 rather an exciting night as all our "heavies"
 were opened up at 2:00 o'clock to the second
 and the sky was bright as day and the sound
 enough to shake you off your seat. It almost
 at once started to pour; I think as a result
 although some say it has nothing to do
 with it. Rained hard about 4:10 AM and slept
 until 11:30 on Sunday 11th June when I
 changed my clothes after a hot bath and
 compared my comfortable lot with that of
 all those poor chaps living in dugouts up
 in front, who can hardly stand up straight
 most of the time. Campbell and Coshell
 slept until 3:00 PM and we even had
 lunch alone. Saw handing the Squadron
 over to him today and making to Headquarters
 likely in the morning. Went over after
 lunch to see if there was anything I could
 do. We looked at some remnants that had
 come up as "pack ponies" for our machine
 guns. I then came over here and after
 reading the papers have been writing this
 letter. I hear our Canadian losses since
 2nd June have been heavier than the naval
 losses in the recent sea fight.

