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16 July 1916

My dearest Mother

Am just back from a very nice
little church parade, the first I
have had for nearly two months and
will make a start at my weekly
letter.

Your letter from Kingsville to the
family duly came to hand also yours
to Sarah's dated June 26th came in
one of hers. I also had one from
Elaine and one from Alice both
written in your absence but as
Wood was with me the day they came
I handed them on to him and overlooked
noting the dates as I usually do. There
were also some enclosures in another
of your letters from Aunt Lizzy and a
nice letter to me from Aunt Ella in
answer to one I wrote her. I am
rather expecting a Canadian mail today
so may have something more to
acknowledge before I finish. Two
bundles of magazines also came from
you Mother dear and four bundles
of papers from Father, all of which
are most welcome. Please thank
Aunt Elizabeth for news from London

16 July

when next you see her. Aunt Ella wrote me a very nice letter indeed; they seem to like California very much and appear to be loathe to return.

We have had an uneventful week and I fear I will have difficulty in making out very much of a letter after writing to you on

Monday 10th July. Drove up to our large town, ~~into~~ which they are occasionally dropping a shell out of pure wantonness, to buy some cigarettes at the E.F. Conter. 1.25 for 50 Gold Flake for which we used to pay 75¢ in London. Beautiful summer day when I started out but was caught in a rain storm on the way back with my purchases. After lunch walked over to our Hotchkiss range and back via "B" Squadron where I spoke to Mr Ewen about Mrs White for Abel. Through some misunderstanding the bulk of a regimental staff had been sent over to us from England consisting of 4 officers and about 35 men and many ~~the~~ ^{horses} ~~horses~~. We will have to attach them to the squadron until the wheels revolve and we find out what to do with them. Major Hazard

16 July

who is in charge of them seems a very decent sort in every way. We managed to get two extra tents to accommodate them.

Tuesday 11th July Up a little early as General Byng spent the best part of the morning inspecting us very thoroughly. He was greatly taken with the Hottentots but was not so pleased with the appearance of our horses. One can see that he is a very keen soldier who is thinking about his work all the time. Mr. & Mrs. Father and Alice in the afternoon and at 7.30 PM rode down in front with Strawberry and inspected our working party. He passed through the town I spoke about and saw five or six new shell holes, two right in the road. About 30 were killed or injured here today. It makes one heart sick to think of its being turned into a mangled ruin like the larger one where we left our horses an hour later and walked out to our men who are still burying telephone lines up in front. The engineering officer in charge is very pleased with the way they work which is gratifying. They evidently

have taken ⁴ photographs since we ^{16 July} have
been working as they have the line
pretty well located and have dropped
quite a few shells right along it.
Things were comparatively quiet. I got
back about 1.00 AM and after a drink of
"Benier" water retired.

Wednesday 12th July. Orangemen's Day
but I believe they have foregone all
celebrations in Ireland. After doing
some writing, rode down to the 3rd
Brigade waggon lines but Wood was
out and not likely to return so I did
not wait almost missing my own
lunch. Did a little studying and took
a walk before dinner.

Thursday 13th July. Did not go out in
the morning as I wanted to do some
reading up on certain subjects. Four
letters from Canada including a very
nice one from Ball. Did a little
tent pegging and jumping after
lunch and was agreeably surprised
by a visit from Wood & Robertson in
the evening. They remained to dinner
My hut is not large enough to
accommodate many guests but we
managed to squeeze in. We were
both delighted with the pictures

16 July

of the boys and Mally. What beautiful
 lovely children. I wish I could see
 them. I am going to replace some of
 the earlier ones I carry in my cigarette
 case with them. Good but I will get some back. It
 rained miserably in the evening.
Friday 14th July They spent the whole
 day shelling — and we could hear
 the bang of the gun the whistle of
 the shell and then its explosion.
 regularly about every 5 minutes. A
 lot of the shells were "duds" (did not
 explode) but when they did the
 dust went up above the Church spire.
 They hit it once and I hear there
 were over 200 casualties and
 certainly when I rode through the
 streets later that on my way up
 in front I could notice the
 unpaired damage. They let up about
 5.00 PM. One shell burst in the
 military laundry which is run in
 connection with the baths and killed
 or wounded 12 of the girls working
 there. There were dead horses
 and even bodies in many
 places and men unchoked everywhere

The town is of no military importance and there is only one railroad so it is hard to see their object in shelling it now after having left it alone so long, unless it is because it is the last town of any size between the line and the French border.

Went up in front and took Hazard with me to see the sights. Our men have 3 days more work to finish their line. Things very quiet although we saw a couple of four chaps laid out and one of my old men was hit earlier. He may lose a leg. Reached our billet about 11.00 AM

Saturday 15th July. Midsummer and quite warm and sunny. Had a long chat with Major Hazard (one of the new officers). I like him very much. He is from P.E. 1 and is a cousin of the Dawsons whom Bonnie knows and one of whom went to R.M.C. Tried out a new pony in the afternoon which first ran away with me and then fell in the ditch. Had tea at our billet and then rode down to Corps HQ and dined with the Corps Chaplain. Lt Col Almon. Canon Hill came in also and amused us by reciting

16 July

some of his poetry. Two of his pieces are in the Crown of Amaranth that Sarah sent over to Alice I think. I walked home about 11.00 P.M. It was rather close so I sat in front of my hut for half an hour to cool off and meditate as to why I was over there and how long this murderous war would go on.

Sunday 16th July. Had my weekly hot bath and walked over to the Church parade at "B" at which nearly 200 men were present in spite of our working parties. Mc Sier officiated very nicely. Major Gillman (CofS APM) was up for lunch. Rained all afternoon but I rode down to 3rd Brigade Maggion lines and had dinner with Wood and did not leave until nearly 10.00 P.M. He is looking remarkably well and the 10 days rest he has had back there has done him a great deal of good. He had no Canadian letters nor had I but we always find plenty to chat over. It turned quite cool in the afternoon in spite of midsummer. They have not shelled ~~the~~ yesterday or today as I believe we retaliated by a 12" gun being turned on - a town or there.

16 July

side of the line. Of course our people do not like doing that without the sanction of the Belgian Authorities as it only tends to destroy another Belgian town but if it saves this one I suppose the effect is neutralized between the two.

Monday 17th July Another dull & muggy day but I suppose it is a good growing day. I don't just know how I will put the day in. I try to do a little reading and study but after find it hard to concentrate.

I hope that you and Father have had a good rest at Kingsville and I fancy the quietness of the place would appeal to you under the circumstances. Young Creber was in to see Wood last night & his wife is returning to Canada in August. I fear there is very little chance of leave for some time yet.

The news from the Somme seems encouraging at present and I hope we can keep on exerting a steady pressure which I am sure is the only way to ultimately win.

Very much love

your devoted son
D.B.