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Sunday 3.00 P.M.  
15-IV-07

Dearest Mother

I have a quiet afternoon likely ahead of me so will try and get my diary letter off. I have just sent you a line to catch today's mail and am sorry I could not get this away in time but letters now have to go in by ration lorry which has about 17 miles and cannot wait.

Sunday Easter 1917 after finishing my letter I packed up the accumulation of winter odds and ends and clothes and sent them over to Mrs Lanefield in two sand bags as my kit is very much over the supposed 50 lbs ?? Allowed a C.O. Other officers are only supposed to have 35 lbs but mounted officers who don't have to carry it on their backs often have more.

Went down to say au revoir to Mr. Barber who entertained me here for an hour assisted by his wife & daughter. We had a glass of wine, coffee and home made biscuits. I am very much attached to the old man and asked him to mess on Thursday but he is on diet owing to his rheumatism and would not come.

After dinner I sent off two liaison officers and talked with <sup>Capt</sup> Woodman who is to follow infantry over trenches and no man's land and shell area and make or select a route for us to lead across. He has a troop and a platoon of cyclists and tape and starts in the early hours. Sent Harwood's book to Sarah in which Wood had marked what he considered the best passage about Saul drawing back the

law of Sereal. Sorry I cannot remember it but Sabah can give you the page. Intended to retire early but coming events and the battle we have waited for so long got on my nerves so I sat up and read until midnight and then slept well. Have not had my clothes off since!! although having my pyjamas sent up yesterday.

Easter Monday April 9th 1917 Up about 7.00 and had a good breakfast and at 9.30 A.M. started off with over 200 swords and 12 Hatchets guide also 1 company of cyclists, the remainder of my regiment and cyclists being on police and other duty. Passed Corps Headquarters just before noon and the Corps Commander called me in and gave me his orders personally about sending a patrol to — and holding it if we got a lodgement. While rejoining the regiment I met Ware and the Gamm in a car which Gen Thacker had sent for Wood as soon as he heard he was wounded and they said he just had a nice "blighty" in the shoulder and would let me know as soon as they located him at the dressing station.

Then issued my preliminary orders and sent the regiment under Mr. Evans to our previously arranged advanced rendezvous and accompanied by King & Murry went to report to Gen Curry at — at — for latest information as I had to work on his divisional front. They had not much more to tell me except that the attack was going ahead according to schedule. Prisoners and wounded were pouring in on all sides, both very happy that is the "walking cases". The former

were employed all day carrying wounded and working at roads and worked well, officers too. Got my patrols started over our path (I don't know how we would have managed if I had not prearranged it and reconnoitred it as far as possible before hand) about 2.00. They got beyond our final objective on the crest of the ridge and overlooked the city and 1.5 miles of beautiful peaceful villages and farms beyond. Our objective (I was up a little later) was lying right in front of us and Germans and waggons and lorries were scurrying east on most of the roads. It did my heart good to see them run.

Murray took the northern patrol and made a very gallant dash to the left and entered the village from the north charging down the main street and sticking a few and making 1 officer & 10 men prisoners. He was fired at a little galloping up. The Germans then got a machine gun out in the road on a side street and opened on him which he was driving the prisoners along. Several were hit and he got a bullet through both knees (he was demounted) and the shoulder. His sergeant tried to get him on a horse but Murray ordered him to leave him and get back with the information. In getting out of the village several were killed and wounded and quite a few horses hit. They had to be left behind however. One machine gun was stuck out of a hole in the wall of a house

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<sup>upper</sup> a trench apparently in place making way for it. Murray had evidently taken them quite by surprise.

Theater patrol under a sergeant galloped out to the south but met a heavy rifle and machine gun fire which killed all the horses, only two men getting back on foot. The sergeant did a very gallant deed. Seeing a comrade being dragged by his stirrup he caught the horse and dismounted but the dragged man was dead. While looking at him the horse he caught and his own were shot and how he got back on foot under machine gun fire I don't know. The corporal who also got back was shot through the hand.

Arrived shortly after at the crest where the second troop had stopped ready to reinforce if the others had got a footing in the village. Each shot was with me and we had another troop following as fast as possible as we heard the enemy were running and I wanted to be ready to effect any success. I could see the long line of the German counter attack approaching in blind order about a mile away, a perfect line in 4 waves and felt we could do no more and that our own infantry behind us were getting well settled in a broken road so gave the order to withdraw. They had seen our horses on the crest where we had occupied 3 German gun pits (guns still there) or else

were trying to destroy the guns and were shelling us heavily with 5.9's. One killed 3 men and horses while I was there and King & Cackshutt were busy doing up wounded two of whom we had to leave in the gun pit but got later. I then started back alone leaving Cackshutt to help King. They overtook me later, the shells following them and getting some more. Horses are such a big target. In all we lost 25 <sup>horses</sup> and ~~was~~ nearly as many more were hit. They were a bloody looking lot as we came back through our infantry. When we back to our <sup>forward</sup> rendezvous orders were waiting to go back further where we could water. We got settled in a few fields about midnight. I telephoned Warsaw way back but he had not seen Wood and still said it was only a shoulder wound. Just as I was crawling into my bag about 12:30 A.M. Frank Ware found me and said Wood was reported very low by the A.D.M.S. so we at once started out to find him at CCCS at —. He was not there when we arrived about 2:30. I telephoned 3 others (all away back) and found he had been received dead at — in the afternoon. I don't think I quite realized it then. We got over about 3:00 and I saw the dear body so peaceful and natural that I could hardly believe it was for the last time. His effects had been taken off at the dressing station.

Tuesday 10th April. Got back to my field about 5:30 arranging with Frank to cable Jack Labatt to try and forestall official wire.

Reported at Divisional Headquarters about 10:00 AM

Everybody that know Wood was most sympathetic. My report was apparently satisfactory and I was ordered to stand by for next show which however was later postponed 2 4 hours and then again as the them retired further without being pushed.

After lunch the doctor and I rode up to see how they were getting on with the roads and if possible to find a quicker route across the 3000 yards of <sup>chaotic</sup> battlefield. I was very much incensed at seeing two German stretcher parties drop the wounded and run for a dugout when a shell burst near them. I felt like shooting a couple and am almost sorry I did not. We rode as far as possible and then walked back ~~passing~~ 3rd Brigade in their advanced position and seeing Creaner, McTaggart and Fred Belts. The latter had not been told nor any others as they did not want to depress the men. They felt terribly.

The water in every other shell hole was bloody so I think we took our toll of them and I hear our prisoners exceed ours wounded in numbers. The Canadians have taken the ridge the French tried for times and partly succeeded last time, their success later being lost by the British who first took over this area. It is a proud day for Canada but a sad one for many of us. It seems so

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hard that Wood did not live to see the result of his work and of the success of our arms. Smith says everything was so perfectly worked out and arranged in his brigade that his plans were carried out without a hitch and everything worked like clock work. Others said the same. Met and 6" of snow - 6 slush. Went for a walk alone with my sad thoughts after our dinner eaten in the open snow storm and on my return was much touched by a little shelter built for me. All my officers and men too have been so kind and considerate all week.

Hammuch the Brigade Major R.F.A. said Wood was the bravest man he ever met. Smith says lately that shell fire effected him more due no doubt to increased responsibility but at first he never minded it at all and yet the men sent a man where he would not go himself. It is a worthy record to leave and to fall out. Could not sleep much in spite of shells.

Wednesday 11th April about 6" of snow & slush which is a great handicap to our advance and keeps the battlefield a quagmire instead of letting it dry up. It really seems too bad. Called on Col Hearsby at 1st Div who said how sorry he was also saw Gen Thacker who said he would write you. I arranged to move to advanced rendezvous where we now can get water and we moved in afternoon to where we now are, in an old battery position

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the men in gas pits and the officers in dugouts  
whom we have shelled at least. (I saw writing in mine  
now who was so mess.)

In afternoon Mr. (Crew?) started out to reconnoiter  
a further advanced rendezvous beyond shelled area.  
I saw Col. Kearny again en route and he said nothing  
during that night.

We found a place just this side of top of ridge and a  
better route up and on way back I saw Sgt. Brucky (or Kelly)  
Wood orderly officer and he told me all he knew. They were  
on the way back and nearly past the shelling when one  
hit beside them about 30 yards away getting him in  
the knee, Wood in left shoulder and killing another  
man. There was gas but also a strong wind which  
dispersed it quickly. He cut away Wood's satchel and  
jacket and put in the iodine and a bandage on, thinking  
the wound very slight, in fact he said he was surprised  
Wood could not walk out. Wood said look after yourself  
and I am done for. <sup>and take Greener to carry on.</sup> The got a stretcher in about 5 minutes  
and had him carried out. On the way he held Wood's  
hands and the latter asked if there were anything on  
his chest and if his legs were stretched out straight. He  
was not in much pain which bears out my supposition  
that ~~the~~ the piece penetrated to the spine. At the  
first aid post Col. Simpson DAOMS 1st Div saw him  
and talked to him but Wood said again he was done in.  
as there was no bleeding he was sent in at once on  
a special ambulance with no stretcher above him  
(generally 2 up or 2 down in an ambulance) and Sgt. Brucky  
went part way with him. Sgt. Brucky had covered  
him with his own coat as he complained of the cold



Had sent a cablegramme Wednesday and wrote again today. very tired when I got in but had a good sleep ~~with~~ with my boots off!! a letter from Sarah each day this week has been a great comfort and today encloses and a line from your dear Mother. Also some dates from aunt Elizabeth and an Easter box from Sarah which are very acceptable.

Thursday 12th April Called on Herasby after lunch but nothing new. (The reconnaissance with Mr Ewen was today night Wednesday as I have given it here). Major Ball has been in the dugout with me here and have been so glad of his company. He is in his old position. I sent you a letter from him. Capt Hyde (his capt) is now here with me. Our guns are having great difficulty getting up over shelled area ~~and~~ which steady rain and snow has made very bad.

Friday 13 April Sent officers up to reconnoitre the route I selected and then went over to 3rd Bde waggon lines and went over dear Wood's belongings with Robertson. I am keeping a juchit and proof benches that I can use and a few other little things. The other things are being sent to Sarah through usual channel for disposal of officers kits and I will send you a full list as soon as I can copy it. Robertson is going to give over two little things to some of the officers that Wood was especially attached to. I hope you will agree but I think it is what Wood would have wished. I can tell you it was a very trying ordeal but Robertson was as kind as he could be and I feel very close to him.

Poor Rattan (Woods servant) is terribly cut up and has asked to come to me and I think I can arrange it.

about 4:30 PM we got orders to go up again as enemy was reported to have retreated from ~~where~~ where poor Murray did so well on Monday, and they wanted contact patrols to follow up and locate him again.

Started out myself on foot with Campbell so as to get latest information at forward Bin Hqs before sending them out while the regiment and my horses followed the route I had selected.

Campbell and I made it in about 1 1/2 hours. I got further orders about securing two guns they were supposed to have left behind. about 6:30 PM

I got my patrol off from there and then followed them as far as railroad with Campbell on foot where I had again sent a reserve troop. The first one got back soon after dark after finding the Hqs in the next entrenched line about 1 1/2 to 3 miles back. The second one got in about an hour later, the N.C.O. had halted and dismounted and then crept up to the wire and heard them talking. He thought they were our people at first so had to wait. They were both fired on and located a machine gun but only a horse hit.

The larger patrol for the guns found the Hqs had got away with them which I much regret and after reaching until nearly midnight came. They were under St Bernard (provided from the squadrons) They shelled the station and Woods with a heavy

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battery all night and stampeded our horses once but hurt no one. It was a long way off and just covering the retreat of the other ~~German~~ heavies.

I went back to Ben Hots in a German dugout belonging to the battery that ~~was~~ whose position my recon troop had occupied last Monday. There I spent the night sitting with the o.c. — Ben. I pulled my people back about midnight.

Saturday 14 April 1917 Our infantry attacked again at dawn and it was a very pretty sight to see them advancing across the open about 2.43 miles in places, my first experience of open war fare.

However our artillery was hindered too far back to give support so they only occupied the ground up to the new line. I sent in my observations which I think helped and was surprised that there were no staff officers or even a Ben o.c. up with me (the latter stayed in his dugout during the whole move). at one time I started out a patrol but they were heavily shelled & were being crushed off his base and as the information required had meantime come, I decided to recall them. It was the most interesting morning I have spent for a long time & I watched the them deliberately ~~the~~ <sup>shell</sup> village of — to destruction. The one where poor Murray was wounded. (I must write his name in Hamilton)

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They knocked down the <sup>12</sup> spire of the church and hit the building times while I was looking. They did the same with a beautiful old Chateau. It made me heart sick.

We came back here at night as no water forward. I met McDonald of 7th Battery on way back. He went on leave once with Wood and I thought so much of him. He spoke so nicely of the bay. I located our German battery myself and sent in its position. It was a beautiful day and wonderful how quickly the sun and wind dried things up. Good weather would help so. all our guns moved up ~~to~~ yesterday and are rumbling constantly now. Had a good wash and changed my socks and slept well as I was up all last night.

Sunday 15th April another wet day. I have been writing and ~~no~~ working here in the dug out all day. I have some of Wood's letters to attend to so think I will draw to a close and add more tomorrow.

a nice letter from Lorna Harris came today with snaps of skating on Lake Erie. They are very good. Mc Ewen was good enough to go to the dressing station and I think I can get the diary. The other things on him (watch money clothes etc) will be sent home through usual channel. He did not see the doctor who dressed his wound and gave

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a restorative but got his name. Capt GALLAGHER  
 1st Field Ambulance. He is up in front and I will  
 see him soon. They said there was no hope for  
 him when he came in and wondered he had lasted  
 so long. He also saw Capt EARP (16th Bn) who  
 was with him while there.

Monday 16th

I have to go into Camps so must close.  
 Am reading this over it sounds hard and  
 strained about dear Wood and I don't like the  
 way I have told it. Please make allowances  
 as I tried to tell everything as I thought it  
 best. I am satisfied he did not suffer and  
 perhaps we should be thankful he did not  
 linger. You <sup>all</sup> know I feel you more  
 than I can say or write. Will write  
 again and as often as possible

very much love

your devoted son Jbh

Last business letter written by RSH. Its  
 hope dear Father is better.