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Apr 15/17

Sunday 3.00 PM
15-IV-17

Dearest Mother

I have a quiet afternoon, likely a headache 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 rail, lovely which has about 17 miles
and cannot wait.

^{8th April}
Sunday Easter 1917 after finishing my letter I
packed up the accumulation of mended odds and ends
and clothes and sent them over to Mrs. [unclear] in
two sand bags as my kit was very much over the
supposed 50 lbs. I allowed a C.O. (then officer) and
myself supposed to have 35 lbs but recruited officers
who don't have to carry it on their backs of the home
were (I tried to talk French with him) the village school teacher at ~~the~~ DIVISION

Went down to say adieu to Mr. [unclear] who
entertained me (he for an hour) seated by his
wife & daughter. He had a glass of wine, coffee and
biscuits. I am very much attached to
the old man and wish him up to Miss [unclear]
but he is so old seeing to his [unclear] and would
not come.

After dinner I sent off two liaison officers and
left with [unclear] (he is to follow in [unclear])
over bushes and no main land but a hill and
and make an [unclear] route for us to [unclear] the
base - roof and a [unclear] of [unclear] and [unclear]
starts in the early hours. Sent [unclear] back to
Sarah in which [unclear] had [unclear] what [unclear]
[unclear] passage [unclear]

2 15 IV-1,
town of Loreal. Sorry I cannot remember it
but Sarah can give you the page. Intended to
retire early but turning events and the battle we
have would far so long but on my knees so I sat
up and read until midnight and then slept well.

[Have not had my clothes off since!] although having
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 guards and 12 Hatchless guns
also 1 company of cyclists. The remainder of my
regiment and cyclists being on patrol and other
duties. Passed Corps Headquarters just before

noon and the Corps Commander ^{Sir Julian Byng} called me in and
gave me his orders personally about sending

a patrol to WILLERYAL and holding it if we got to
lodgement. While returning to regiment ^{which had moved on}

^{Wld} ^{Major} Ware and the ^{Major} 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 the cover of our preliminary
arranged advanced redeployments and accompanied
by King & Murray went to report to Gen ^{Thacker} Curry - at

divisions for latest information as regards to
work on this 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 roads, both
very happy that is the "walking cases". Inform

were employed all day carrying wounded and working at roads. And worked well ^{loped by Capt Woodson} officers too. But my patrol started over our path (about snow here we would have managed if I had not prearranged it and reconnoitered it as far as possible before hand) about 2:00. They got beyond our final objective on the crest of the ridge (KIMK) and overlooked the city and 1.5 miles of beautiful peaceful villages and farms beyond ^{stretching to DOVA} them. ^{down below} Objective (I was up a little later) was lying right in front of us and Germans and waggon and horses were scurrying east on most of the roads. It did my heart good to see them run.

Lt ^{Quade} 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 ^{Hans} and making 1 officer, 11 men prisoners. He was fired at a little ^{while} galloping up. The Germans then got a machine gun out in the road on a side street and opened on him which he was drumming the prisoners along. Two were hit and got a bullet through both ^{MAODER} shoulders (he was dismounted) and the shoulder. His sergeants 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

see letter in scrap book

a trench apparently in place making way for it. Murray had evidently taken them quite by surprise.

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Smith

The other patrol under 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 machinegun fire I don't know. The corporal who also got back was shot through the hand.

Larned stayed after at the crest where the second troop had stopped ready to reinforce if the others had got a footing in the village.

St. Lachshutt, ^{now President of Lachshutt High} 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 exploit any success. I could see the long line of the German counter attack approaching in extended order about a mile away, a perfect line in squares and felt we could do no more and that our own infantry behind us were getting well settled in a Dunkirk road so gave

orders 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 and ~~was~~ nearly as many more were hit. They were a bloody looking lot as we came back through our infantry. When we got back to our ^{forward} positions orders were waiting to go back further where we could "water". We got settled in a few fields about midnight. I telephoned Waroway back but he had not seen Wood and still said it was only a shoulder wound. Just as I was crawling into my ^{sleeping} bag about 12:30 AM 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. CCC's at ~~---~~. He was not there when we arrived about 2:30. I telephoned 3 others ^{C.C.S's} (all away back) and found he had been presumed 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 boy ^{out} 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.

On Tuesday 10th April. Got back to my field about 5:30 AM arranging with Frank to cable Jack Schatt to try and force all official wire. Reported to Divisional Headquarters about 10:00 AM

Everybody that knew 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 men 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
possibly to find a quicker route across the 3000
yards of ^{chaotic} battlefield. I was very much impressed
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. No roads for us possible and then
walked back speaking 3rd Brigade in their
advanced position and seeing Crean, Hoagart
and Fred Bell. The latter had not been told nor
any others as ^{Crean (who had taken over 3rd Bde)} they did not want to depress the men.
They felt terribly. Dead lying all over - but
5 of ours & 1 Bob's but of course latter were
buried in breaking ground while our men were
on top where they had fallen. The water in
every other shell hole was bloody & I think
we took our toll of them and I should say prisoners
exceed ours wounded in numbers. The Canadians
have taken the ridge the French tried for years
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 - (shush). Went for a walk - alone with my sad thoughts after our dinner eaten in the afternoon 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.

Hammock 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 shelling.

Wednesday 11th April about 6" of snow - (shush) a great handicap to our advance and keep the battlefield a quagmire instead of letting it dry up. It really seems too bad. Called on Col Stears at 1st Div who said how sorry he was also saw Gen. Hooper who said he would write you. I arranged to have 6 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 shelter at least (I saw writing in mine
now where was a mess.)

Capt. F. of B. group

In afternoon, in evening started out to reconnoiter
a further advanced positions beyond shelled area.
I saw Col. Kearny again in mine and heard 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 Lt. Bruce. He told
Wood orderly officer and to the wall to know. They went
on the way back and nearly past the shelling when one
lit heard 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 tunic and
jacket and put 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. He got a stretcher in about 2 minutes
and had him carried out. On the way he held Wood's
hands and the latter asked if there was anything on
his chest and if his legs were stretched out straight. He
was not in much pain which bears out my suspicion
that the piece penetrated to the spine. At the
first aid post Col. Simpson D.A.D.M.S. 1st then saw him
and talked to him but Wood said again he was done for.
As there was no bleeding he was sent in at once on
a special ambulance with no stretcher above him
(generally 2 or 3 down in an ambulance) and Lt. Bruce
went part way with him. Lt. Bruce had a good
time with his new coat as he complained of the cold

D.M.S.

Had out a cablegramme Wednesday and wrote again today. Very tired when I got in but had a good sleep with my boots off!! a letter from Sarah each day this week has been a great comfort and today includes one from your dear mother. I also have 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 reconnoitre with his men was today not Wednesday as I have given there). Major Ball has been in the dugout with me here and has been so good of his company. He is in his old position. I sent you a letter from him. Capt Hyatt (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 wagon lines and went over dear Wood's belongings with Robertson. I am keeping a jacket and pair of breeches that I saw 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 saw tell you it was a very trying ordeal but Robertson was as kind as he could be and I feel very close to him.

former groom of Sir Adams

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

about 4.0 PM we got orders to go up again as enemy was reported to have retreated from WILLEAVA 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 ^{Lt} Campbell so as to get latest information at forward Bn. Hq. to before sending them out which the regiment and my bases 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 Hun in the next entrenched line about 1/2 to 3 miles back. The second one got in about an hour later, the N.C.O. had halted and demanded and then crept up to the wire not heard them talking. He thought they were our people at first so had to wait. They were both fired on and Hecolida machine gun but only a bare hit.

The larger patrol for the guns found the Hun had got away with them which I much regret and after reaching about nearly midnight ^{back} came. They were under St Bernard (pounded from the adjacent). They shelled the station and woods with a few

battery all night and stamped air hoses once but heard 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 on the position my own unit had occupied last Monday. Here I spent the night sitting with the O.C. ^{10th} Ben. I pulled my papers back about midnight.

Saturday 14 April 1917 Ben infantry attacked again at dawn and it was a very pretty sight to see them advancing across the open about 2 to 3 miles in places, my first experience of open warfare.

German artillery was ^{moved?} ~~so~~ far back to give support as they only occupied the ground up to the new line. I sent in my observations which I think helped and was surprised that the new staff officers or even a Ben O.C. up with me (the latter stayed in his dugout during Howlabe move). at one time I started up a patrol but they were heavily shelled and being knocked 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 Ben deliberately ^{SHELL} the village of ^{WILLERVA} & destruction. The one who was killed was wounded. (Must write his name later)

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They marched down the steps of the church
and hit the building twice while I was looking on
They did the same. Just a beautiful old Chateau
It made me heart sick.

We came back here at night as no water
forward. I met Mr. Donald of 7th Battery on way
back. He went on leave one week with Wood and I
thought so much of him. He spoke so nicely of
the boy. I located one German battery myself
and sent in its position. It was a beautiful
day and wonderful how quickly the crew did
wind dried things up. Good weather would
help so. All our guns moved up today 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 13th April another wet day. I have
been working and see working here in the day 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 photos on Lake Erie. They are very good.
The crew was good enough to go to the delivery
station and I think I can get the money. I hear
things on him (watch money called it) will be
right usual channel. Had not
see the doctor who decided his wound and gave

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a mistake but got his name. Capt GALLACHER
 at 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.

Small

Monday 16th

I have to go into ^{see} Corps ^{Commander} so must close
 my reading that overest 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 ^{all} know I feel you more
 than I can say or write. Will write
 again and as often as possible.

Small

very much love

your devoted son

J.H.

Last business letter written by R.S.H. His
 hope dear Father is better.