



N.J. MacKenzie

The War Letters

of

Bert and Don MacKenzie

*1915 - 1919
Canadian Expeditionary Force*



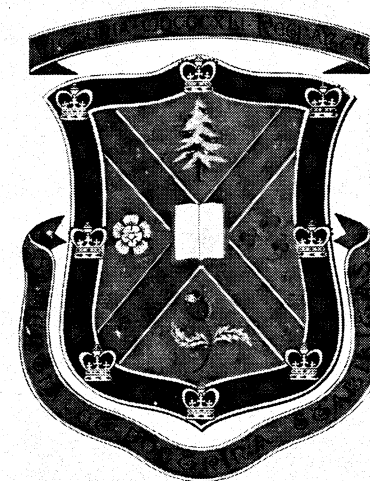
Bert



Don

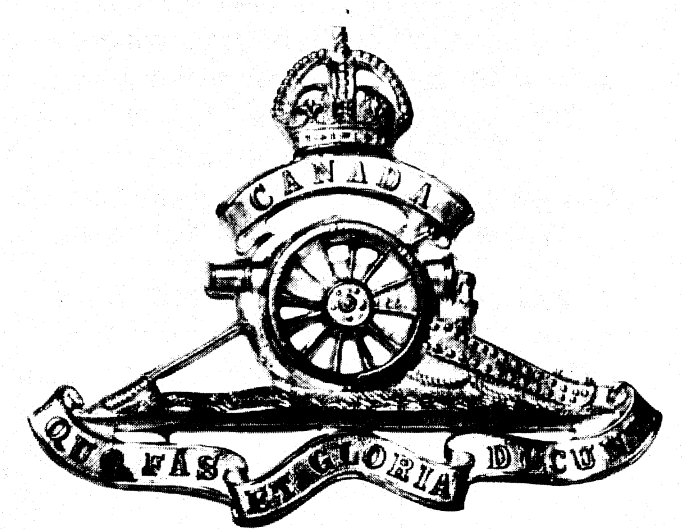


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"SAPIENTIA ET DOCTRINA STABILITAS"
(- wisdom & knowledge shall
be the stability of thy times)

- Motto of Queen's University



"QUO FAS ET GLORIA DUCUNT"
(- where duty and glory lead)

- Motto of The Canadian Field Artillery



Lt. R.J. "Bert" MacKenzie, C.F.A.



Lt. F.D. "Don" MacKenzie, C.F.A.

PREFACE

The letters contained in this booklet were written by two brothers, Robert James (Bert) MacKenzie and Frederick Donald (Don) MacKenzie, during their service with the Canadian Expeditionary Force in World War I. They were written to various members of their family - to their father, a brother, sisters, in-laws and cousins in Canada- and cover a period from the time they joined up while at Queen's University, Kingston in May, 1915, until they returned to Canada after the War in 1919. Most of the letters were written by Bert who was my father.

It was mainly good fortune that resulted in so many of their letters being preserved and gradually falling into my hands - in fact, the last two to do so were found in 1991 in an old trunk in Alberta, the trunk filled with the personal effects of a cousin in Owen Sound who made arrangements to have it shipped after her death in 1955. Some of the letters came from my cousin, Eva Pease (Lizzie's daughter): "When I was going thru some old records and papers last fall, I came across the enclosed letters, and thought you might like to have them. I have read them many times in the intervening years, but had not seen them for some time or I would no doubt have passed them on to you before. Your Dad and I kept up quite a good correspondence from 1914 to 1918, also Uncle Don, and I feel sure you will be interested."

Other letters came to me from my Aunt Grace, plus a few from other aunts. Perhaps I was perceived as being somewhat more interested in our family history than others, but in any case I feel fortunate to have as many letters as I do. Doubtless some were never kept, and others never came my way. I feel Don's and Bert's letters provide an interesting perspective on the War from their points of view at that time and in that context - nearly 80 years ago. For me, these letters have provided motivation to learn more about my family history, and I have found the process fascinating - it has been a labor of love. The letters show vividly the close bonding of the family members - their mutual respect, care, support and love are most evident. Besides developing the booklet for my own satisfaction, it has been done primarily for our family members and relatives, to try to capture something of the nature and character of a very fine family.

The letters are printed as they were written. I have added some maps, photos, plus some background and supporting context printed in the typestyle on this page (i.e. different from that used in the letters). The process of securing background information on the Canadian troops in World War I has had its own unexpected rewards - a deep feeling of pride and respect for the character and national achievements of the Canadian people, and for the country and institutions that produced them.

Jack MacKenzie
56 Fines Drive
Regina, Sask. S4N 5K5
1993

Note: The original letters are deposited in the Queen's University Archives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In preparing background information and commentary for this booklet, a number of reference materials proved very helpful. There are many good books on Canada's role in World War I, and the following were used as references:

The Western Front 1914 - 1918 by John Terraine; L.B. Lippincott Co.

To Seize The Victory by John Swettenham; The Ryerson Press, Toronto.

1918 The Last Act by Barrie Pitt; Macmillan Publishers Ltd.

General Sir Arthur Currie by A.M.J. Hyatt; University of Toronto Press.

* *Spearhead To Victory* by D.G. Dancocks; Hurtig Publishers Ltd.

Amid The Guns Below by L. Worthington; McLelland and Stewart.

We Stand on Guard by John Martenson; Ovale.

Thanks are also extended to:

Queen's University Archives - and archivist Paul Banfield for valuable help in locating and preparing relevant University documents and photos, and for permission to use them. Also to the Department of Alumni Affairs and Jane Kaduck for permission to use the Queen's crest, and for assistance in contacting relatives of Jim Odell and Bill Grassie.

Friends of The Canadian War Museum, Ottawa - for War documents, particularly the official diary of the 13th Battery, C.F.A.

National Archives of Canada - for war service documents for R.J. and F.D. MacKenzie.

Canadian Artillery Museum, C.F.B. Shilo, Manitoba - for materials and photos on artillery, especially the 18-pounder gun.

26 Field Regiment Museum, Brandon, and curator Ross Neale, for photos and information on the 13th Battery.

Special thanks must go to Lynne Sinclair of Winnipeg for typing the letters, and for her enthusiasm and encouragement. Her husband, Rob, is a great grandson of George MacKenzie, uncle of Bert and Don.

The assistance of a number of relatives is also acknowledged - among those who contributed information and photos were:

Don MacKenzie of Long Island, New York - son of F.D. MacKenzie

Isabelle Coghlin of Toronto - daughter of Lizzie

Norma (and Gordon) Urquhart of Winnipeg - daughter of Grace

Jean Pearen of Winnipeg - daughter of Grace

Bruce Odell of Florida - son of Jimmy Odell.

Lois Gowan of Grimsby, Ontario - daughter of Bill Grassie

Finally, many thanks to Ivan Jorgensen, Kelly Christensen, Mary Okumura and staff, U of R Printing Services, for the layout and printing, and for their interest and help.

* recommended reading



Presque Isle Point on Georgian Bay in Grey County, Ontario, about 8 miles north of Owen Sound. This is where Donald MacKenzie had his blacksmith shop and his home and where he and Christina raised their family, including Don and Bert. The view is to the south, and shows the "grove" at the end of the Point, the lighthouse operated by (uncle) John MacKenzie towards one end of the grove, and part of the village of Presque Isle.

The township is Keppel - appropriately named "Stoney" Keppel.



Donald and Christina MacKenzie Family - in 1904, on the occasion of Lily's wedding to Dick Horne
 Back: Robert (Bert), Jessie, Norman, Elizabeth (Lizzie), Don
 Front: Christina (Mother), Lily, Grace, Rose, Donald (Father)
 In Front: Aimee

THE FAMILY

Don and Bert's paternal grandparents, Alex and Barbara MacKenzie were born in Golspie, Scotland and emigrated to Canada in 1831. They settled in Aberfoyle, Ontario (near Guelph), where Alex was a blacksmith. They had 11 children, the fifth of which was Donald, born in 1835; he was to become the father of Don and Bert. Some years after Barbara's death in 1848, Alex and the family moved to the Presque Isle/Kemble area in Grey County, just north of Owen Sound. Alex died in Kincardine, Ontario in 1878 at the age of 81.

The maternal grandparents, Christian and Elizabeth Kaiser, were born in Beinstein, Germany, and emigrated to Canada in 1843. They settled in Roseville, Ontario (near Kitchener), where Christian was a blacksmith. Their fifth child Christina, was born in 1844; she was to become the mother of Don and Bert.

Donald MacKenzie married Christina Kaiser in Roseville about 1867, and they moved to Presque Isle on Georgia Bay in 1869. Here Donald set up his blacksmith shop, almost in the shadow of the lighthouse operated by his brother, John MacKenzie. Donald and Christina had eleven children, nine of whom lived to maturity - 3 boys and 6 girls. The children grew up in a home where Christian principles were strongly emphasized, the Church (Presbyterian) held in highest esteem, and the Bible given an honored place. This influence became very evident in the later lives and occupations of the children. All the children were born in Presque Isle except the eldest, Elizabeth (Lizzie), and they all took their early schooling in Kemble. Christina was a gifted musician, both vocally and instrumentally. After the turn of the century, the family moved to Kemble, where Christina died on August 5th, 1907.

The family portrait (opposite) was taken on the occasion of Lily's marriage to Dick Horne, in 1904. Since Bert's and Don's war letters were written to, and involved the various family members, a brief sketch of each one should help to place the letters in context. The sketches trace their lives up to the end of the war.

Elizabeth (Lizzie) - the eldest child, was born in Preston, Ontario, on August 17, 1867. In May, 1896, she married her first cousin, George Pease, whose mother, Betsy MacKenzie, was one of Donald's sisters. George grew up on the family farm near Kemble, and took up construction work such as building railway bridges. Elizabeth was a skilled seamstress and made all the dresses for her sisters at Lily's wedding - see family portrait. They moved to Port Arthur* about 1900; here George became a contractor for the Grand Trunk Railway, supplying ties and building trestles. Gradually the younger members of the family gravitated to Port Arthur, including Donald, their father, after Christina's death in 1907. Don, Bert, and Donald all worked at George's big camp west of Port Arthur. George was completely at home in the bush, and was a great builder - to quote Bert: "George Pease could build anything!" This included houses, boats and furniture - anything made of wood. George and Lizzie had 5 children - Lillian, Eva, Alex, Barbara and Isabelle.

* The twin cities of Fort William and Port Arthur became one city in 1980 - Thunder Bay.

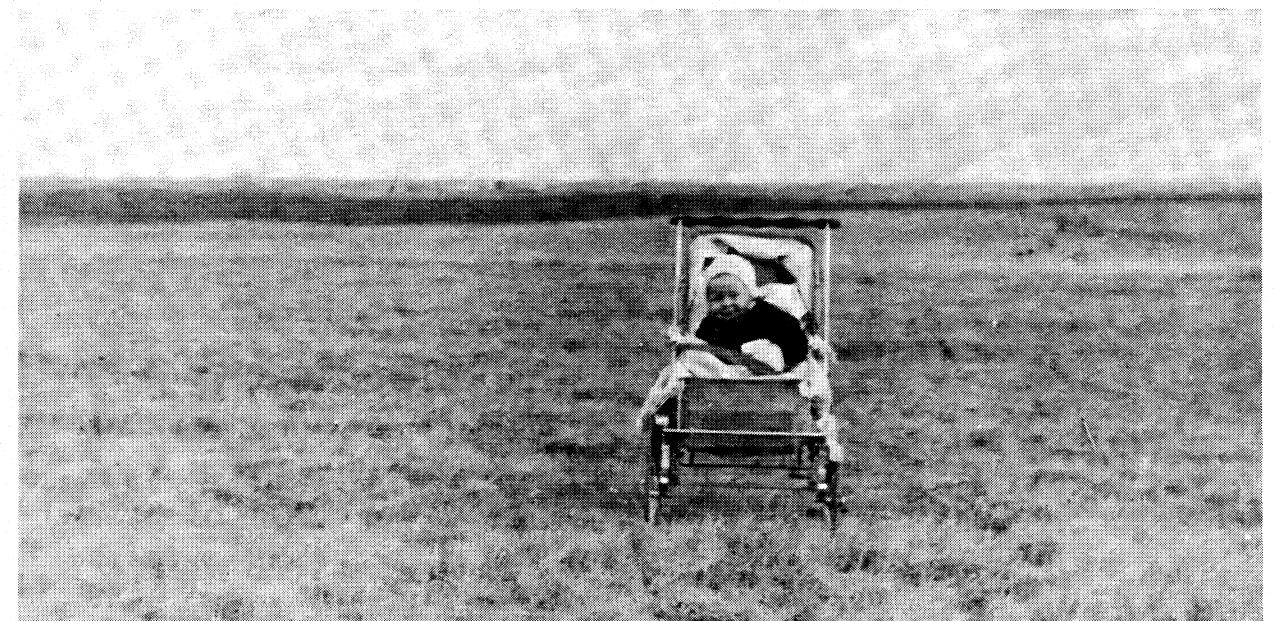


The Pease family at Port Arthur, shortly before leaving for Morse, Sask.
Eva, Lizzie, Barbara, Lillian, Alex and George

This family consolidation at Port Arthur didn't last many years, and by 1911 all had dispersed to Manitoba, Saskatchewan, or eastern Ontario. In 1910, George and Lizzie and their five children moved to a 1/4 section of "farmland" two miles west of Morse, Saskatchewan. Unfortunately, the farm was mostly marsh and alkali flat, and to make matters worse, all George's horses - about 40 - died that first summer from drinking the alkali water. The landscape was hardly George's style, absolutely treeless, and George was no farmer. Instead he sought work beyond the farm, e.g. commercial fishing in the north and railroad work.



The Pease homestead at Morse, Saskatchewan, where George had just finishing building the house in 1911



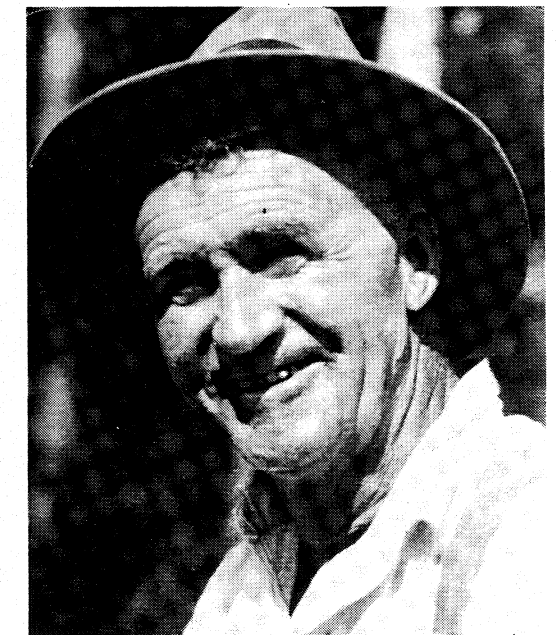
Isabelle Pease in her carriage on the homestead near Morse, Saskatchewan, shortly after the family moved from Port Arthur in 1910. On this bit of prairie the father George, built the big family house.

(Note: While travelling by train from Port Arthur, there was a half-hour stop at Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. The family, taking baby Isabelle in her carriage with them, got out for some fresh air and a break. Afterwards, they returned to the train which continued on west. Shortly afterwards someone asked, "Where is Isabelle?!" They pulled the emergency cord, the train stopped and then backed up all the way to Portage. At the station platform, they picked up Isabelle in her carriage - precisely where they had left her!)

Donald, Lizzie's father, joined the family before the war, and was with them for most of the war years. He helped with the work at the farm and garden; it was a difficult time for the family with George away a lot. Donald always kept two books at his bedside - the Bible and Robbie Burns.

Lizzie was an excellent cook and home-maker and generous to a fault. She was a devout Christian, and like her father, read her Bible and enjoyed Church. She was very opposed to any alcohol in the house, although George didn't share her convictions in this matter, and was not at all religious. He had a buoyant, outgoing personality.

It was Eva, the second of their children, who kept up a correspondence with her Uncles, Don and Bert, during the war. Lillian, the eldest child, died of a ruptured appendix in 1915 at the age of 18. Eva then left school to work in the local Post Office. After completing a Business Course in Winnipeg in 1918, she returned to



George Pease

Morse to take a position in the Bank of Commerce in 1919. She learned to accept a large measure of responsibility relatively early in life.

Alex tried his hand at banking for a time, but neither farming nor banking appealed to him, and he followed his father north.

Barbara attended school at Morse, and after the war went to Manitoba to take a nursing course at the Winnipeg General Hospital.

Isabelle, the youngest child, was something of a prodigy at the piano. She was introduced to the piano at the age of 7 when the family moved to the town of Morse following Lillian's death; at the age of 8 she took over the piano for the services in the local Church. She could read and play almost any music by sight, but nothing whatsoever by ear.

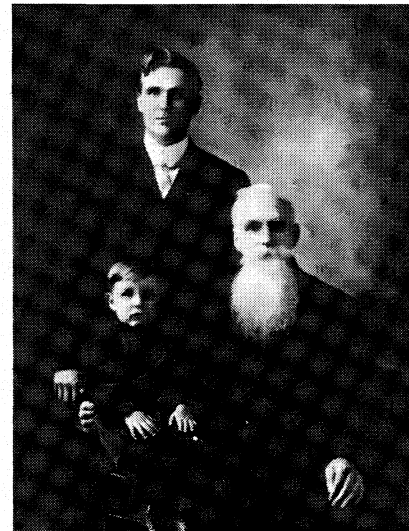
Toward the end of the war, George's initiatives increasingly took him to the Lake Waskesiu area of northern Saskatchewan where he and Lizzie and Alex later moved - to the north country where their interests and future lay.

Norman - was born on January 2nd, 1871. He went to Warton High School and entered Knox College in Toronto, from which he graduated in 1903, and was ordained for the Ministry in the same year. The call to preach the Gospel was the vocation to which his mother had dedicated him at birth, and for whom she never ceased to pray until her hope was fulfilled. Before the war he was the Presbyterian minister for various charges in Ontario, including Bruce Mines (on Georgian Bay) and Port Arthur. During the war he served the Church at Kinloss, Ontario.

Norman lived his faith. He was a strong and effective preacher, a kind and understanding pastor, and a loyal and comforting friend in time of trouble. He loved lakes, and had a cottage on Lake of Bays where he loved to sail his boats and paddle his canoe.

In 1905 he married Annie Gordon, and they had one son, Allan.

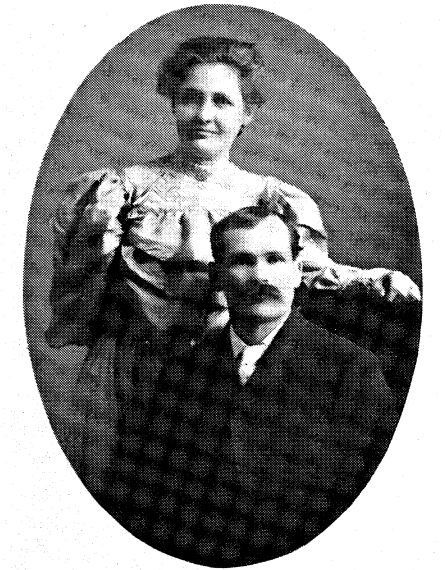
Rose and Lily - the "flower twins", were born on September 6th, 1872. The names were their mother's choice; the father wanted Ruth and Rachel. When the twins were small, they were "borrowed" by their aunts and uncles for visits. They were identical - only their mother could tell them apart.



Norman, with his son Allan and father Donald



Lily grew up at Presque Isle and married Richard (Dick) Horne in 1904. Shortly afterward, they moved west to Neepawa, Manitoba, where Dick operated the Neepawa Harness Company. They were there throughout the war years. Lily was an excellent artist as was Dick. Her letter-writing earned her something of a reputation among her relatives and friends; to quote from one relative: "...had a long letter from Lily. It was like a newspaper. She does not write often, but when she does she sure writes." Her father, Donald, stayed with them in Neepawa from time to time. Lily and Dick had no children.



Rose also grew up at Presque Isle, and turned to teaching. She was one of the first teachers at "Cedar Hill" School near Kemble in 1894, and gave the school its name. Rose followed Lily and Dick to Manitoba and attended college in Winnipeg, taking a deaconess' course. She taught in mission schools, commencing in the spring of 1915 at File Hills Boarding School (Cree) near Balcarres, Saskatchewan. Her employment was somewhat intermittent, but she enjoyed working with the Indian children. She never married.



Rose

Jessie - was born on October 13th, 1878. She moved to Port Arthur with her sisters Grace and Aimee, probably after their mother's death in 1907. Jessie (and Grace) worked in the Registry Office in Port Arthur before moving to Toronto to take her Deaconess' training at (now) Ewart College. This was completed in 1914 and she gained Church experience in Toronto, leaving in 1916 for Trenton, Nova Scotia, where she served as Deaconess in the Presbyterian Church. There her interest in the women and children of the many nationalities settling in Canada was aroused, and remained the absorbing focus of her life's work. She did not marry.



Jessie

Aimee - was born on May 2nd, 1881. After finishing her High School, she took her nurse's training at Harper Hospital in Detroit. She moved to Port Arthur where the bulk of the family were living, and nursed there. She left for Winnipeg before the War and nursed at King George Hospital before her marriage to Dr. Alvin Mathers, a psychiatric doctor who graduated with great distinction from Manitoba Medical College in 1913. She and Alvin had no children and later divorced. There are very few photos of Aimee - she disliked having her picture taken.



Don and Aimee

Grace - was born on May 25th, 1885. After High School, she moved to Port Arthur and worked in the Registry Office. There in Port Arthur she met a Scot from Aberdeen, John (Jack) Gordon, and they were married at Port Arthur in 1911, with her older brother Norman officiating. They made their home in Winnipeg where Jack was employed at the Winnipeg Grain Exchange. He looked after Bert's financial matters while he was overseas. He enjoyed golf, and was a keen ham radio operator - VE4ZK.

A daughter, Norma, was born in 1912, and their second child, Jean, was born in January, 1916. A third daughter, Ruth, was born in June 1918. Grace's father, Donald, lived at their home in Winnipeg at the end of the war until his death in 1921.

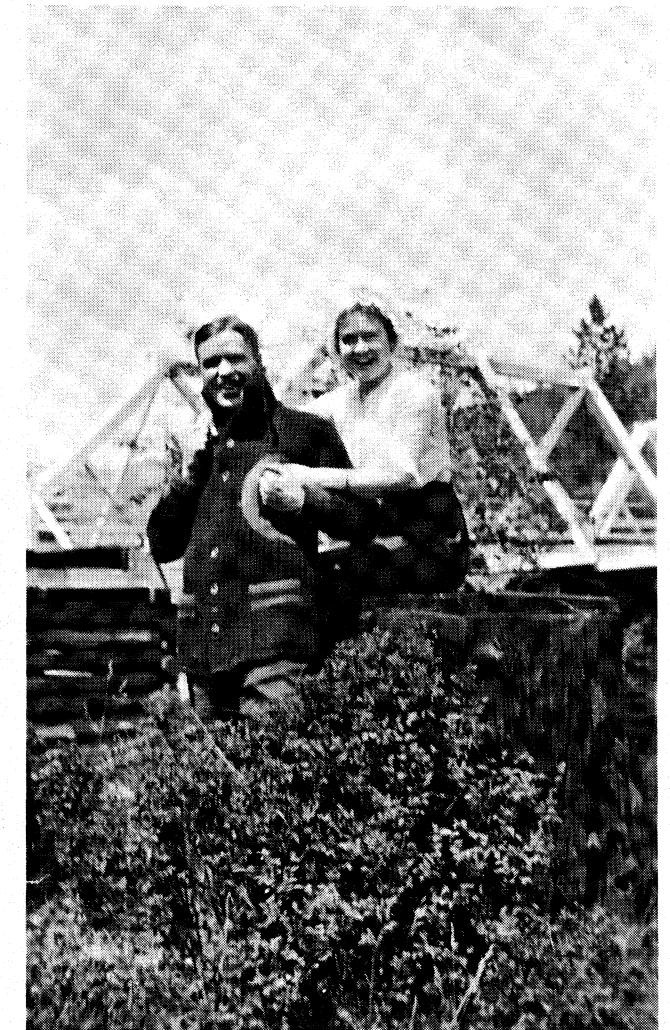


Grace and John (Jack) Gordon in Winnipeg

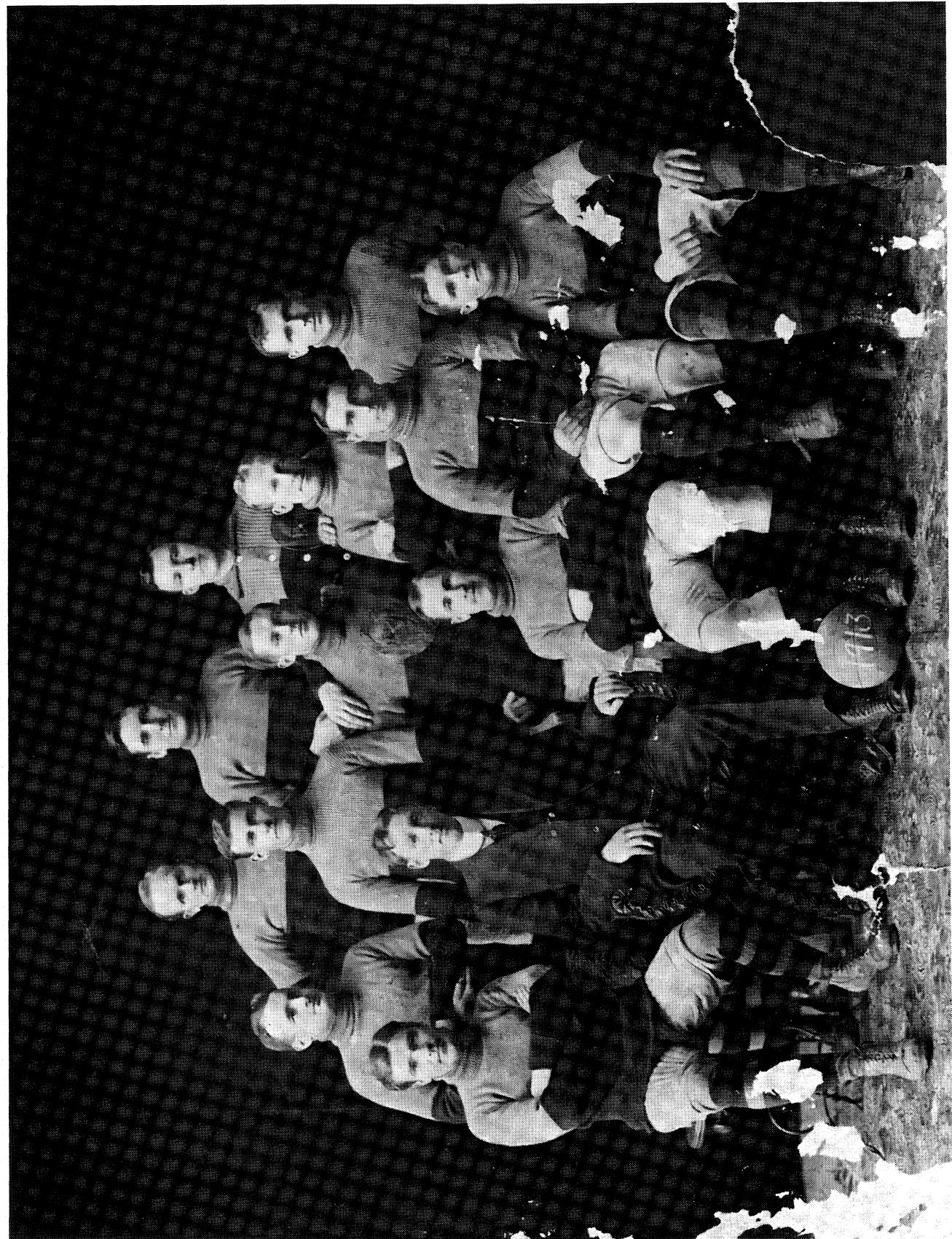
Frederick Donald (Don) - was born December 18th, 1882. He took his high school at Own Sound Collegiate, where he was Commander of the School Cadet Corps. He spoke of being "out of School for 10 years" before enrolling at Queen's University, Kingston in 1909. During those years he spent considerable time working for his brother-in-law George Pease in the Port Arthur area, doing construction work on the Grand Trunk Railway. Don, like Bert, loved sports, and played for the Port Arthur Y.M.C.A. soccer team - both were outstanding at the game.

Don took Arts at Queen's, with his intended profession being Law. He continued his athletic interests, including teaming up with Bert again on the soccer teams. The Arts '13 Yearbook states, "Arts '13 have done their part in upholding the honor of their College in Intercollegiate contests. F.D. MacKenzie and R.M. Fisher won fame for themselves in soccer."

During his years at Queen's, Don spent at least 2 summers on mission fields in S.E. British Columbia near the U.S. border - at Elko and Midway in 1912 and 1913. With the onset of war in the fall of 1914, he joined the Canadian Officer's Training Corps (C.O.T.C.) on the campus, training in infantry. The purpose of the Corps was to train young men to become officers in the Canadian Army. However, when recruiting began in March, 1915 for a new Queen's Hospital Unit, Don (and Bert) transferred to that unit and went overseas in May with the (Queen's) No. 5 Stationary Hospital. He received his B.A. degree - specializing in political economy - in April, 1915, just before leaving for England.



Don on a mission field at Midway, B.C., 1912 with Grace visiting



Queen's University Association Football Team, 1913

R.J. MacKenzie (back row - center)
 F.D. MacKenzie (front row - left)

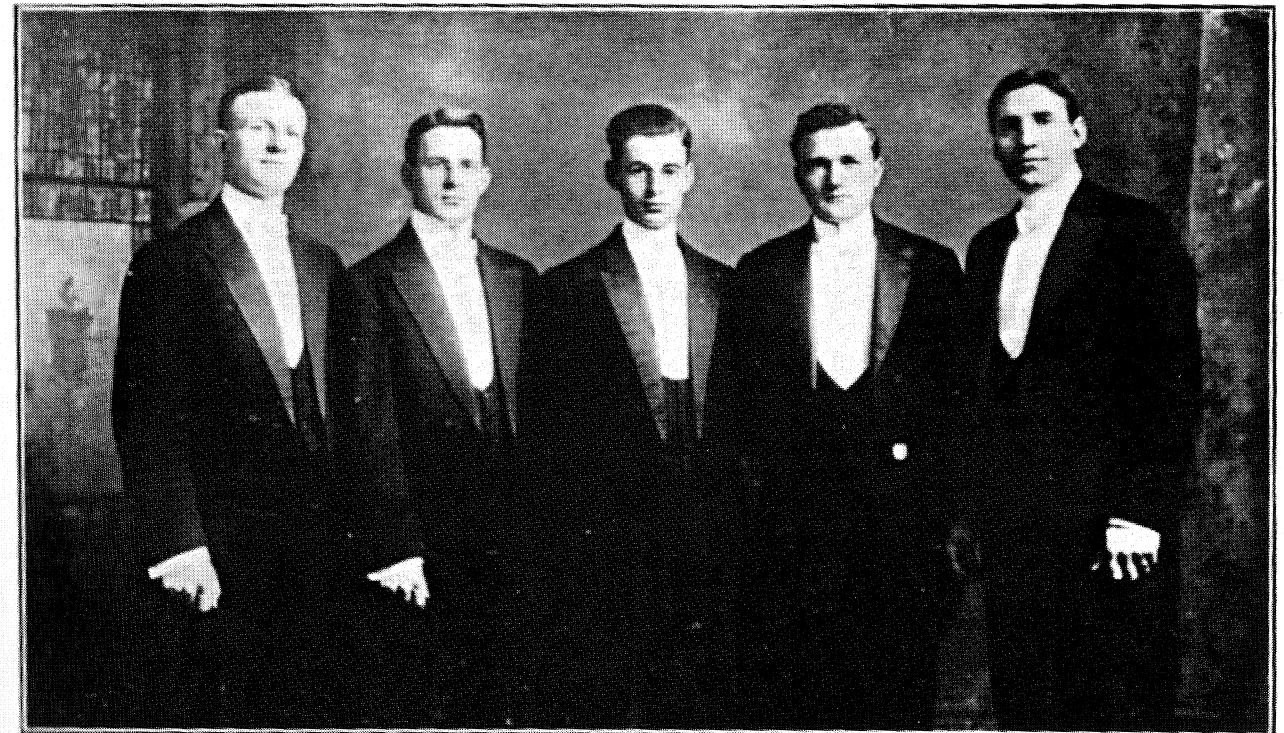


ARTS '15 YEAR BOOK COMMITTEE.

Top row (left to right)—J. Steen, J. Gilchrist, Miss E. Guthrie, Miss R. C. Kilgour, Miss M. L. Govan, J. S. McCormick, W. R. Urlin, W. S. Holmes.

Middle row—M. I. Beeshy, Miss B. Gilhooly, R. J. Mackenzie, Miss E. Chown, J. A. McInnis.
 Literary Editor. General Convener Finance Convener.

Bottom row—Miss M. V. McDougall, J. L. McKinnon, Miss G. M. Grant.



ARTS '15 QUINTETTE.

Left to right—J. A. MacGregor, G. S. Macfarlane, J. A. Gale, C. P. McArthur, R. J. Mackenzie.

Robert James (Bert) - was born December 6th, 1887, although his war and professional records list the year incorrectly as 1888. He took his high school at Bruce Mines where his older brother Norman was the Presbyterian minister. He then went west to Port Arthur to work for his brother-in-law George Pease on railroad construction, including some of the blacksmithing. He was very active physically and participated enthusiastically in whatever athletics were available. His favorite sport was soccer football and he played with the Y.M.C.A. team during his Port Arthur years. He followed Don to Queen's in 1911, bringing with him a great reputation in soccer. He enrolled in Arts, with his intended profession the Ministry.

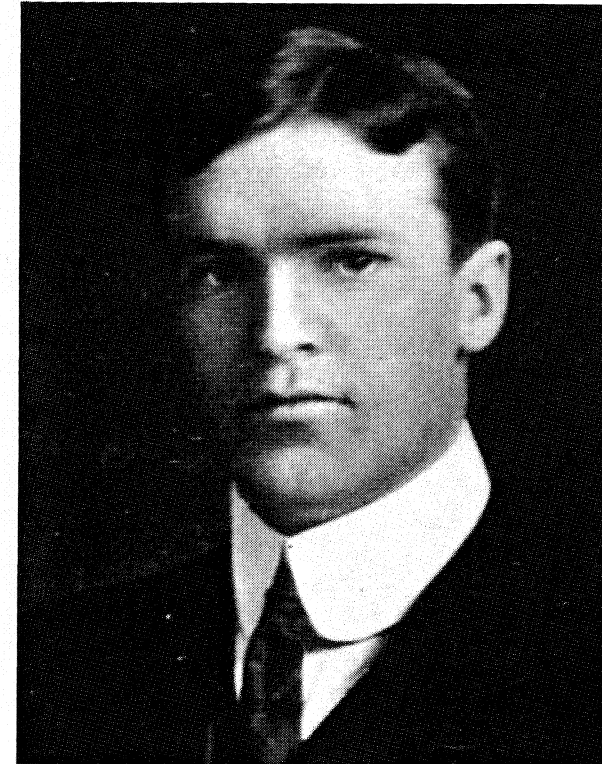
He was extremely active in University life, singing in the Arts Quintette and playing on most of the sports teams. He played fullback for Queen's when they won the Canadian Intercollegiate Soccer Championship in 1912. In 1913 he won the Intercollegiate Heavy-weight Wrestling Championship, although he weighed only 187 pounds. In his last year he was the convener of the Arts '15 Yearbook Committee. Like Don, he spent some of his summers on mission fields - in rural Saskatchewan near Lashburn in 1913, and at Collins Bay (north shore of Georgian Bay) in 1914. Although he had not taken any theology, those summers gave him a chance to try his hand at preaching - under a variety of conditions: his Lashburn diary entry of Sunday, June 8th reads, "Preached in (railway station) waiting room to 4 persons seated on bags of grain." It was his first service. However, on Sunday, July 20th: "After church everybody stayed and we organized church and Sunday School. Great enthusiasm! More satisfaction to me than \$20,000 a year."

On returning to Queen's in 1914, war broke out. He joined the University C.O.T.C. and trained in the infantry. However, when recruiting began in March, 1915 for a Queen's Hospital Unit, Don and Bert both immediately transferred to that unit, and went overseas in May with the (Queen's) No. 5 Stationary Hospital. He lacked Senior Hebrew for his B.A. degree.



Bert (on the right) in his Port Arthur Y.M.C.A. soccer uniform. An item in his 1908 diary for Monday, September 7 reads, "(Labour Day) Climbed Mount MacKay. Played football at Fort William with winners of the Scotch-English match on Canadian team. Won, score 2-1, I scored 1st goal, Don scored 2nd."

YEARBOOK PHOTOS AND WRITE-UPS



F.D. MACKENZIE

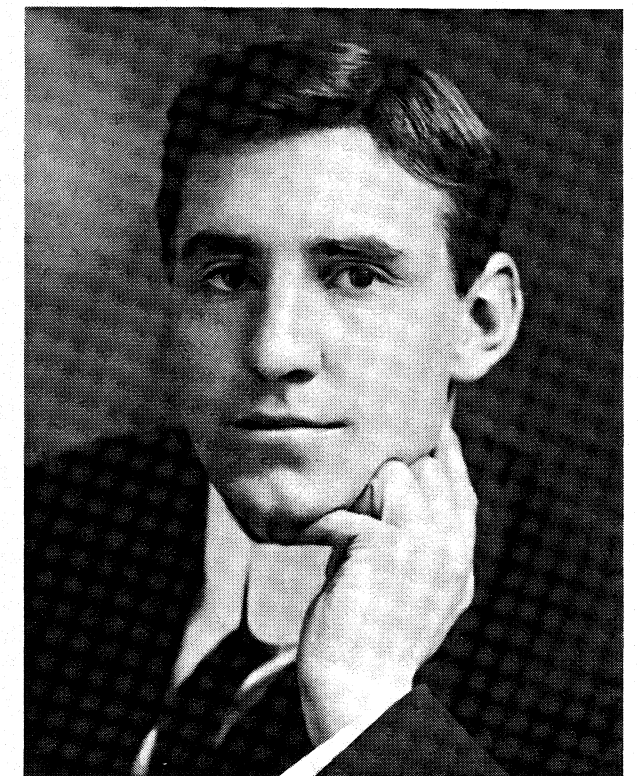
Born at Presque Isle, Ontario, "Don" migrated to Owen Sound when he matriculated from the Collegiate Institute and came to Queen's in '09 to study Political Science and History. He was secretary and marshal for his year, and was a prominent figure in sport, notably hockey and "soccer." His genial disposition will prove a valuable asset in his chosen profession, law.

"For what I will, I will, and there's an end."

R.J. MACKENZIE

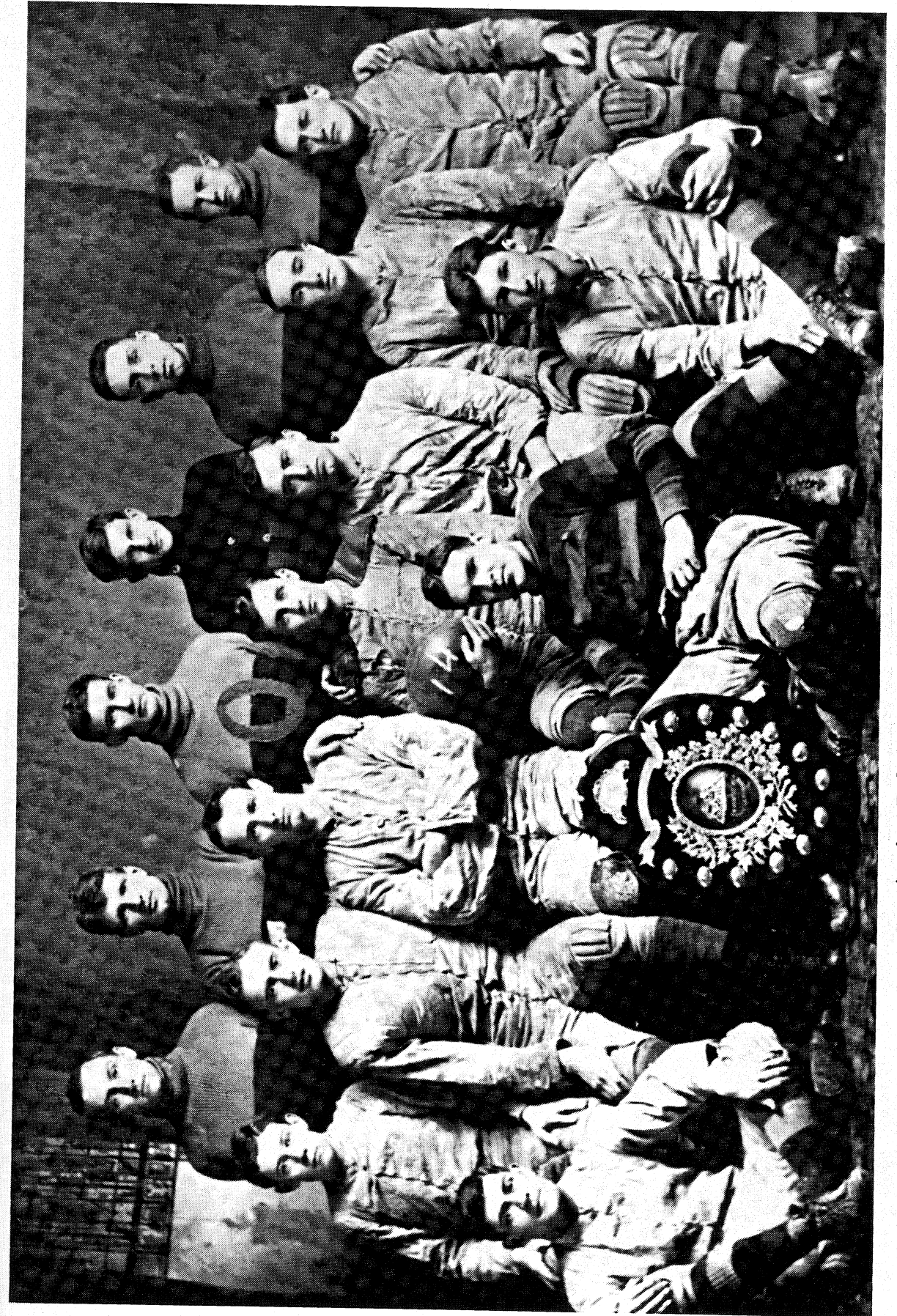
"Bert" came to Queen's from Port Arthur, although his birthplace was Presque Isle, Ontario, and his school days were spent at Bruce Mines. Blacksmithing, construction work, and school-teaching prepared him for his University course. Few men at Queen's have taken as active a part in College affairs as he. Football, wrestling, the Choral Society, and dozens of Committees, have known his value. His genial nature, wide experience, and sincerity of purpose assure him success in the Ministry.

*"How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!"*

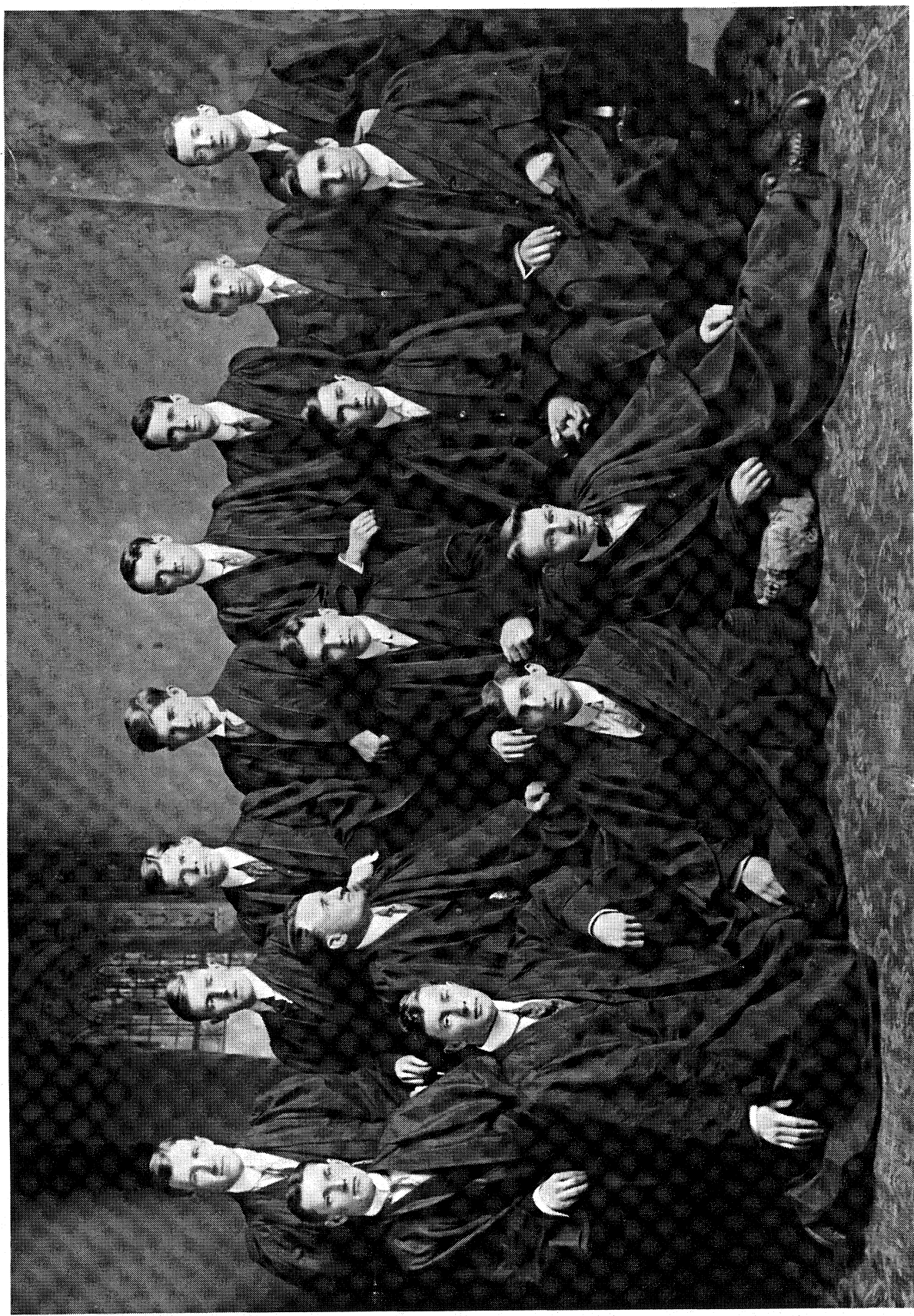




Don's Graduation Picture
Don received his B.A. in April, 1915
(Bert didn't receive his B.A. until October, 1923)



Arts' 14 Rubgy Team Don - front row center



O.S.C.I. Old Boys' Association of Queen's University, 1911-'12

H.M. McDONALD	J.S. FLEMING	W.N. McLEOD	J.A. McINNIS	S.A. WILKINSON	J. GILCHRIST	G. WILLIAMS	E.M.A. OLDFHAM
			Comm.				
G.R. MILLER	D.M. BAKER	F.D. MacKENZIE		J.M. BROUGH		R.J. MacKENZIE	
	Vice-Pres.	Pres.		Sec.-Treas.			
	A. McINTOSH	R.A. GARVIE		J.F. MATHESON			
	Comm.	Comm.					

Arts '15 Championship Rugby Football Team
 (Winners of the Mitchell Shield, 1914-1915).



H. T. DONALDSON, (Spare)	J. G. McINNIS, Right Scrim.	L. R. CALDER, Left Inside Wing.	D. A. SUTHERLAND, Left Half.	G. E. WILSON, Right Middle Wing.	C. G. GRAHAM, Left Scrim.	F. D. MacKENZIE, Right Inside Wing.
M. B. MacLACHLAN, Outside Wing (Spare).	R. J. MacKENZIE, Centre Half.	L. G. KEILL, Flying Wing.	E. W. PILGRIM, Coach.	J. STEEN, Left Middle Wing.	E. J. MELVILLE, Right Half.	W. P. J. O'MEARA, Quarter.
	L. S. CRUESS, Left Outside Wing.		W. G. MacINTYRE, Centre Scrim.		W. S. HOLMES, Right Outside Wing.	

INTRODUCTION

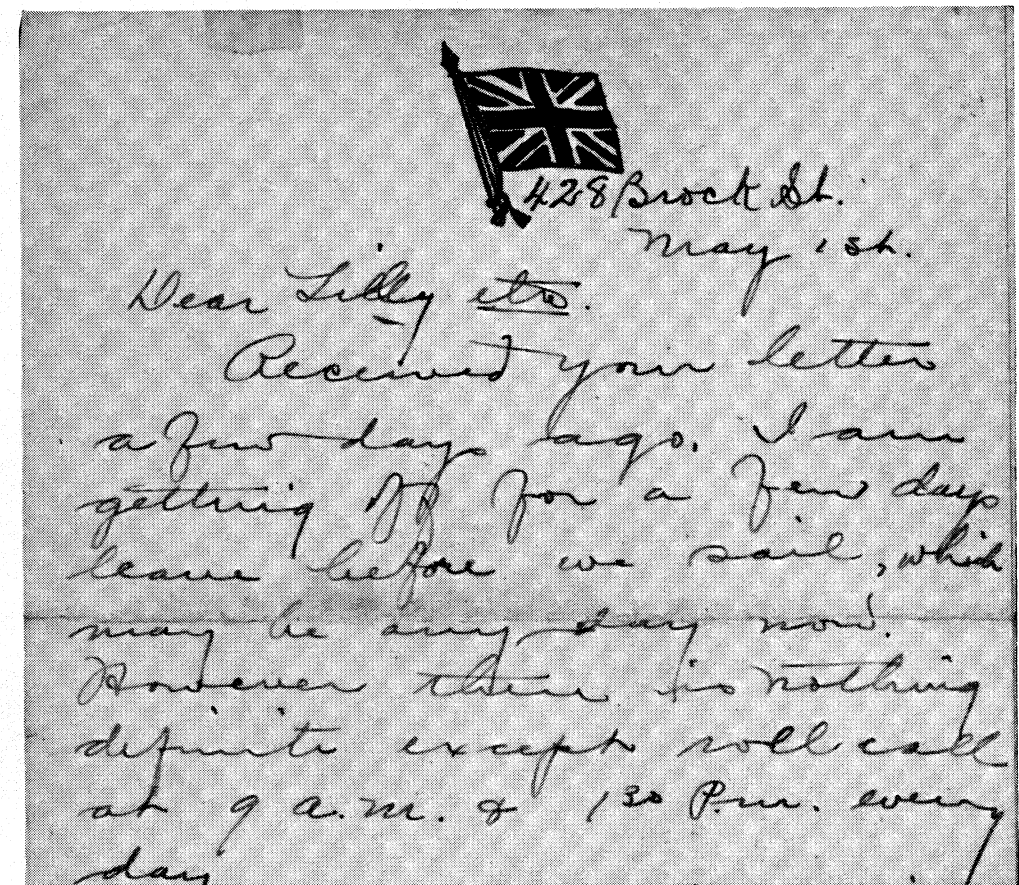
Canada was not at all prepared for war in 1914, with only 3,000 men in the regular army. Equipment was almost nil, and of poor quality. The Government issued a call for volunteers who became the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Over 600,000 Canadians enlisted voluntarily during the course of the war, and two-thirds of these went overseas. Four Divisions made up the Canadian Army - the "Canadian Corps" - which under Canadian command (Sir Arthur Currie) established a great reputation as one of the most formidable units on the Western Front. After the 1916 Battle of the Somme, the British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, said the Canadians, "played a part of such distinction that thenceforward they were marked as storm troops; for the remainder of the war they were brought along to head the assault in one great battle after another."

ABBREVIATIONS:

B. E. F.	British Expeditionary Force
C. A. M. C.	Canadian Army Medical Corps
C. E. F.	Canadian Expeditionary Force
C. D. A. C.	Canadian Divisional Ammunition Column
C. F. A.	Canadian Field Artillery
C. O. T. C.	Canadian Officer's Training Corps; also just O.T.C.
D. A. G. O.	Divisional Artillery Gas Officer
M. O.	Medical Officer
N. C. O.	Non-commissioned Officer
O. A. C.	Ontario Agricultural College
O. C.	Officer in Charge
O. P.	Observation Post
O. T. C.	Officer Training Course



Bert in uniform at Queen's, 1915



Beginning of Bert's First Letter

Morse, Sask.
April 12th, 1915

My Dear Rose

Lizzie is writing and I thought I would write a few lines as well as we had Grace and Jack here for a few days. Jack had a great time shooting gophers. He bought Alex a new gun and they were out every day shooting. They killed 140 while he was here. Had a letter from Bert, he said they were going off to the war on the 15th of this month. I would like to see them before they left but hope to see them when they come back. We are all pretty well at present. Trusting this will find you enjoying yourself among the Indians. The weather has been very cold for a few days with high winds, but warmer today but high winds yet.

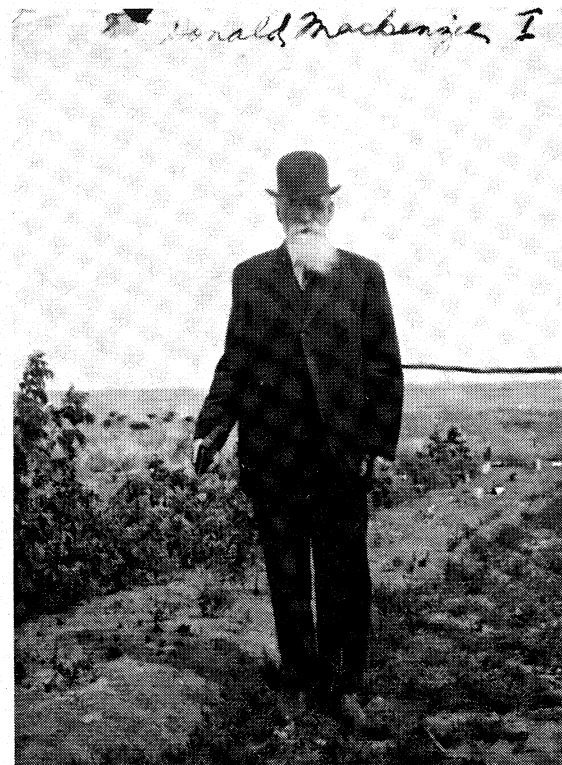
I can't write good today I forking manure and I am very shaky. So I will close. Lizzie will give you all the news. You may be shure we all send our best wishes. Lillian, Alex and Barbara is at school.

from Father with Love xxxxx

Isabelle Pease had to write loves and kisses to Auntie Rose



Ready for a gopher shoot at the front door of the farm at Morse. George, Lizzie, Isabelle, Alex, Barbara, Jack Gordon, Donald (father)



Donald - probably on Sunday walking to or coming from Church in Morse, Bible in hand.

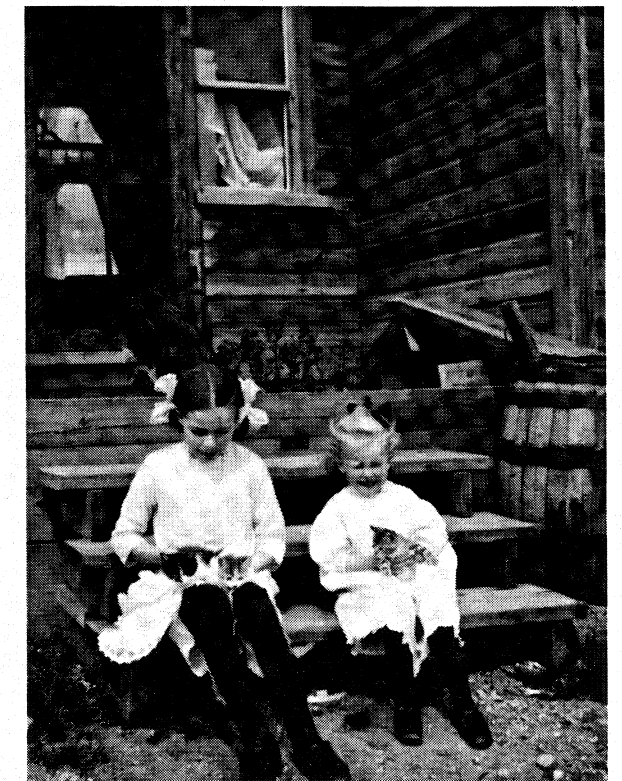
Morse Sask
April 12th 1915

My Dear Rose
Lizzie is writing and I thought I would write a few lines as well we had grace and jack here for a few days Jack had a great time shooting gophers he bought alex a new gun they were out every day shooting they killed 140 while he was here had a letter from Bert he said they were going off to the war on the 15th of this month I would like to see them before they left but hope to see them when they come back we are all pretty well at present trusting this will find you enjoying your self among the Indians the weather has been very cold for a few days with high winds but warmer today but high wind yet

I cant write good today I forking manure and I am very shaky so I will close Lizzie will give you all the news you may be shure we all send our best wishes Lillian alex and Barbara is at school
from Father with Love xxxxx

Donald's letter to daughter Rose

Isabelle Pease had to write loves and kisses to Auntie Rose
+ 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
+ 0 0 + + + + + + + + + +
0 0 0 + + + + + + + + + +
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+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +
the use is loves and kisses
is Kisses Isabelle Pease



Barbara and Isabelle at the front doorstep

428 Brock Street
May 1st, 1915

Dear Lily etc.

Received your letter a few days ago. I am getting off for a few days leave before we sail, which may be any day now. However there is nothing definite except roll call at 9 a.m. & 1:30 p.m. every day.

J. P. McLeod and I are going for a little motor trip. This afternoon we are going out north of Belville where he preaches, and on Monday shall run to Toronto and on up to Collingwood.

Was inoculated this morning for typhoid. That is the 2nd dose I've got for that; have to get one more yet. Was vaccinated a week ago last Monday.

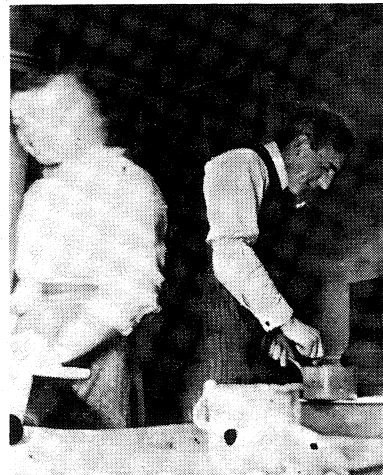
Last week was Convocation week here. Don got his degree. Sr. Hebrew stands between me and mine. Shall get it when I get back into Theology.*

I sent you a photo a few days ago; hope you got it o.k. Am also sending a snap in uniform. It might be better but is good enough.

We've had a fine spring down here, warm and bright. Lately it has been raining a bit and today is cooler. I hope the West has a good season this year, for it will mean a lot to the country.

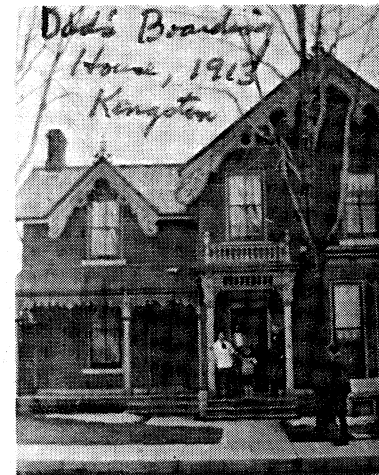
We are going to be in a Stationary Hospital somewhere in France. There are what are known as three zones, "Collecting" - "Evacuating" and "Clearing" zones. The stationary Hospitals are in the Clearing Zone and are capable of accommodating 200 beds with possible expansion to 500. They are equipped fully for detailed treatment, Xray - Laboratory etc.

Well we shall write before we leave so that you will know. Meanwhile everything lovely. We are staying on at our original boarding houses while in Kingston.



Lovingly Bert

Bert's boarding house in Kingston, 428 Brock Street during his Queen's years. He gradually paid off his debts to his landlady, Mrs. Bruce, during the war.



* Bert did not receive his degree in Arts until 1923. He returned to Queen's for a summer school session in 1922.

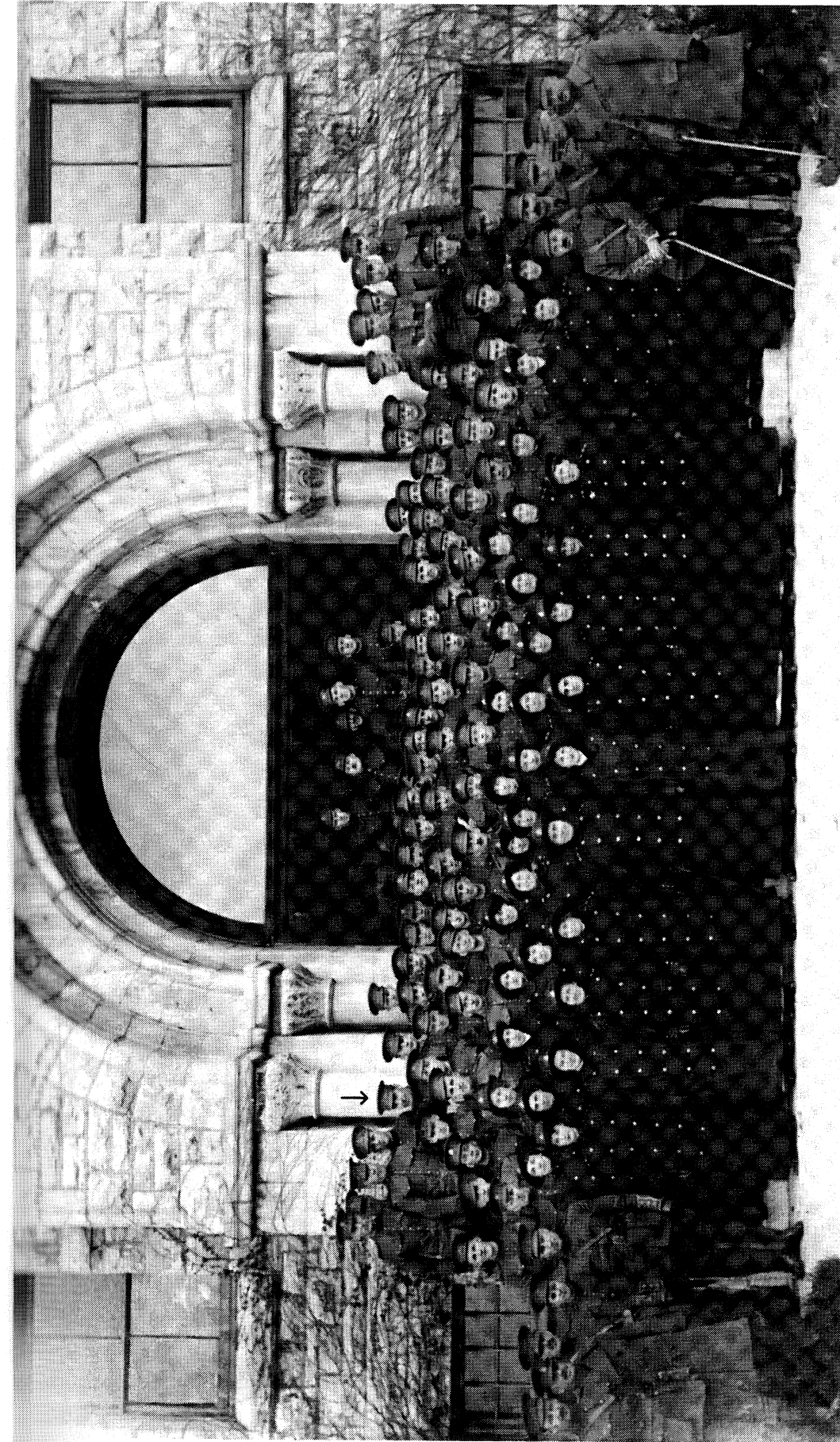


Photo courtesy of Queen's University Archives

#5 Queen's Stationary Hospital 2nd Contingent, Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force

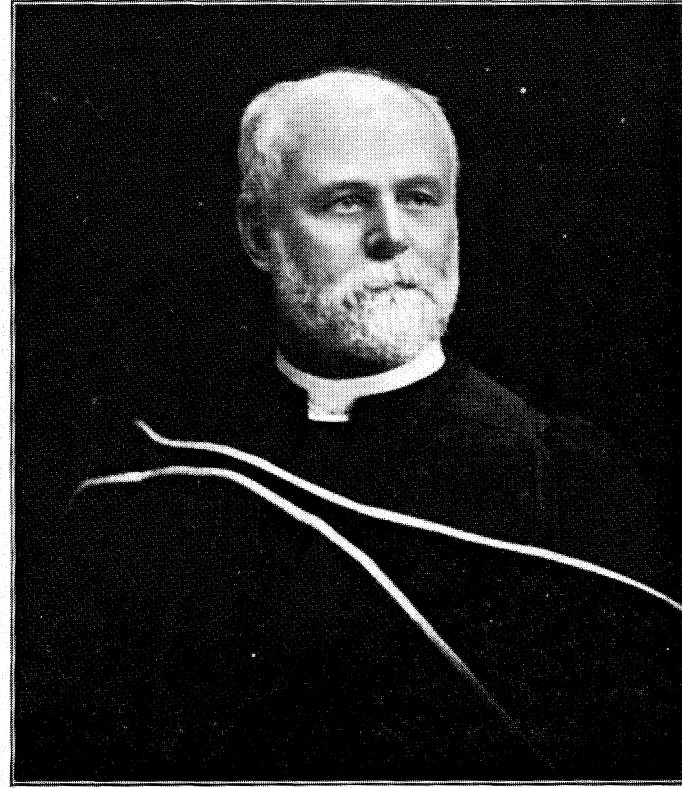
A general muster of officers, nursing sisters and men was held on the University campus on the afternoon of May 5, 1915. A picture (above) was taken in front of Kingston Hall, and a farewell tea given in Grant Hall by the ladies of Kingston. Immediately afterwards, the unit marched to the railway station and entrained for Montreal. The streets were packed with citizens to wish the group (and a battalion from Eastern Ontario) a hearty "Bon Voyage" and a safe return. Arrow indicates Bert. Don ??

THE QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL UNIT

Even before the beginning of World War I, Queen's University had a military training program in place, patterned after the system in Britain, except that in the Canadian universities, uniforms and arms were provided. Principal Gordon of Queen's had insisted on this since "the Canadian student has not as a rule the means to pay for anything himself". By 1914, Arts students began voluntary military training, and a contingent of the C.O.T.C. (Canadian Officer's Training Corps) was formed on campus. Principal Gordon promoted enrolment enthusiastically: - "I could never have faced the Principal if I hadn't been in uniform", said a Queen's graduate. Various companies were formed including infantry, artillery and ambulance units. Some remained as Queen's units, but many served overseas with other Canadian units or as reinforcements.

One such organization which made a major contribution to the war effort, and which maintained its Queen's identity, was the hospital unit formed by the Medical faculty. It was open to all Queen's students and graduates of all faculties, and there were many volunteers. (Eventually most of these men, including Don and Bert in 1916, transferred to other services where they received commissions.) It was called No. 5 Stationary Hospital.

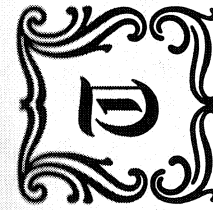
The 200 bed hospital had 94 men including doctors, plus 35 nursing sisters. On May 5th, 1915, they embarked for England. Although hoping to get to France immediately, they were assigned to set up a 400 bed hospital at St. Martin's Plain (near Shorncliffe, Kent). Reinforcements of men from Queen's arrived to bring the unit up to that strength.



Principal Gordon

Photo courtesy of Queen's University Archives,
Tricolor Yearbook, 1915

A PARTING WORD



THE GRADUATES of '15 leave the halls of Queen's amid the stir of men preparing to take part in the greatest war of history. This of itself makes the year memorable. Some are sanguine-enough to expect that the war will not continue through another winter; but, even though the only terms of peace our Empire would accept may not be quite so near at hand, this present year is unique in experience and in calls for service.

Already this unparalleled conflict has greatly affected our views of life and duty. It has called us to recognize the service we owe to our country, the claim resting upon us to maintain and defend our national honour and freedom. It has led us into larger views of our citizenship as Canadians, and of our relations as sons of the Empire. Many have formed a new conception of their country in finding it worth dying for, and a new idea of their own life in becoming conscious that they are willing to die for their country.

We are not surprised that University students should respond to this call, and we are glad that Queen's was the first among Canadian Universities to be represented in the fighting force of the Empire. To those of '15 who have already gone, and to those who yet may go to do battle for our national ideals and interests, for the cause of liberty, honour and righteousness, Queen's whole-heartedly bids Godspeed.

Yet, while the courage of some impels them to offer their service in the firing line as soon as they can find a place there, conditions may constrain others to let their courage express-itself in home defence and to maintain the less exciting, but not less needful work from which the nation derives the sinews of war. But the experience of this conflict will be largely lost upon us unless it serves, like the refiner's flame, to deliver us from the dross of self-indulgence and from the love of ease and indolence, and fires our spirits to higher service and self-sacrifice.

Queen's may well expect that the graduates of '15 will receive a permanent impulse to the service of their country from the experience of this memorable year, and in that hope she lays upon them her fervent benediction as she bids them Good-bye.

DANIEL M. GORDON.

Metagawa
Mid Atlantic, May 11, 1915

Dear Grace & all

I am going to start this now and finish when we land. Let Aimee read this and then send it on to Father and Lizzie.

We left Kingston on Wednesday May 5th at 6:30 p.m. and sailed from Montreal at noon the next day. Got a great send off from both places, and it was all pretty impressive.

Our bunks are pretty good - Don and I are in with a couple of other fellows, both pretty good. But the grub is served up in pretty punk form, everything sloppy and dirty.

Saturday May 15 (Morning)

Well we have arrived. Last night four cruisers came out and escorted us through the danger zone into Plymouth harbor. We sailed in about 4 o'clock this morning, and in the grey dawn the green fields with their well trimmed hedges and trees, the forts, battle ships and the city looked great. After such a trip it was grand to see land and especially such a land as this is.

I do not know when we leave the boat or to where we shall go, but I'm all packed ready and I want to get this posted as soon as possible. Am writing in my bunk, Wednesday & Thursday were terribly rough and I felt pretty fuzzy for awhile but yesterday was fine and even the fear of being torpedoed failed to keep down our spirits. The grub we had thrown at us has pretty nearly put my stomach out of commission. I didn't eat anything for a couple of days nearly. However, we'll live through it I guess.

Send mail to: Pte R. J. MacKenzie
No. 5 Stationary Hospital
Can. Expeditionary Force.

Hope everything is ok there. We'll have a celebration when we get back, and I hope that's not too far away.

Bert

Morse, Sask.
May 27th, 1915

My dear Rose

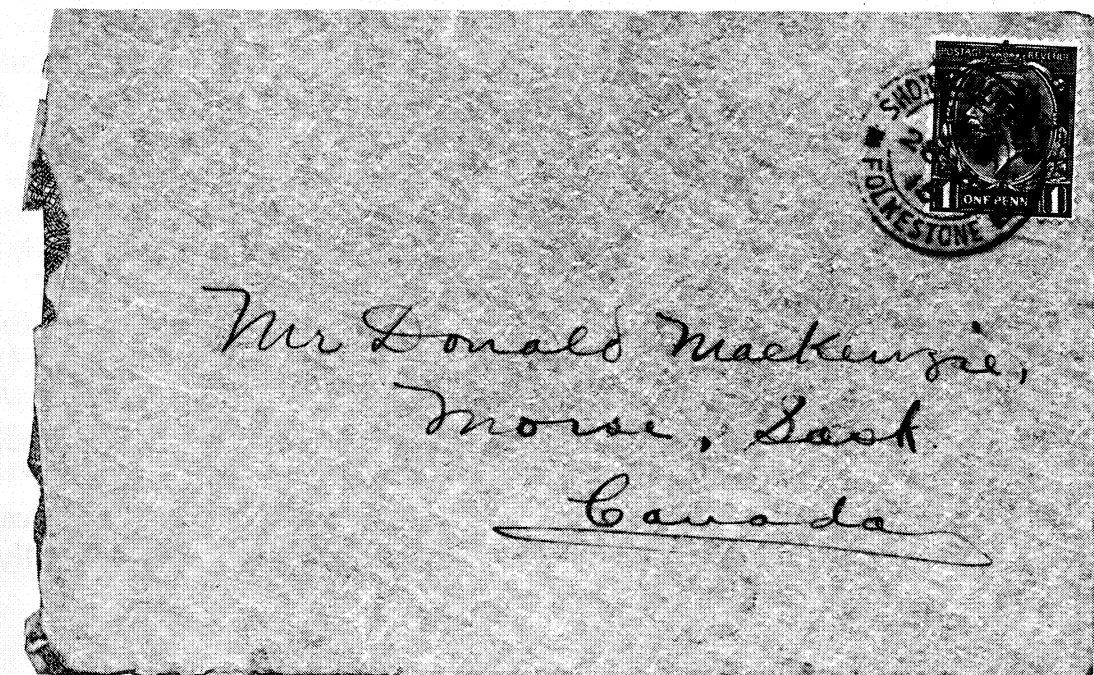
Lizzie and the girls wrote you a letter today but there was no room for me to write a few lines. I wanted to send a few lines from the poet's corner. I have not been very well for some time but am quite a bit better now. I have been working in the garden and have quite a nice garden. We have got Eva home now. She looks fine. She is a good worker and her Mother will not have to work so hard. Lizzie was killing herself. We had the worst rainstorm I ever saw for two days. It just poured down and heavy East wind blew the rain in sheets. The house was flooded and every pond was filled.

We have not heard from Don or Bert since they left Montreal. We saw in Times the death of Thomas Lines. The Canadians are getting thinned out pretty fast it is a fearful war. I lost 3 days from Church and Sunday this winter on account of a very bad cold. Had a letter from Norm and one from Lily and not answered yet. It's hard for me to write.

Lizzie would tell you all the news so I will close. I like to get letters from all the girls and Boys, and lots of them but it is hard to answer them. I hope you will watch your health and be strong for your work. Give my love and best wishes to Kate* and her husband and everybody and love and a kiss to yourself. Write when you can, I like to get your letters.

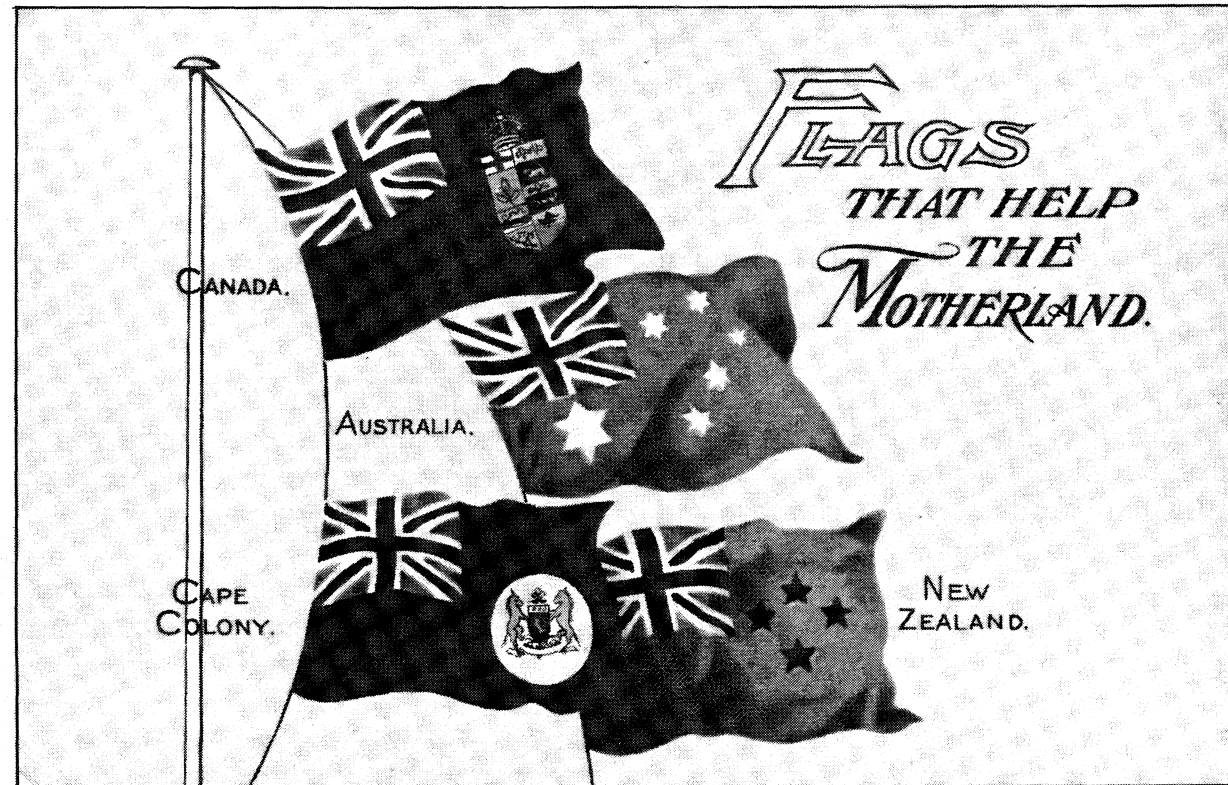
So good by just now.

from Father



* Kate Gibson and her husband Will. Kate was Rose's first cousin, a daughter of John MacKenzie, and worked at that time as Matron at the File Hills Residential School near Balcarres, Saskatchewan, where Rose was teaching. Will Gibson was the Principal of the School.

June 28, 1915



Dear Lizzie, Father & All

Your letters came the other day. We are rather busy now in a temporary hospital (Tents). Our outfit is being recruited up to 500 bed strength and in a couple of weeks more, I understand, we shall be off for France. I hope it's right. Three weeks ago we (Don & I & a few more) were to London for 5 days and had a good time. Last week 8 of us, including Don & I were chosen as escorts to 100 patients who were being transferred to Newcastle-on-Tyne, up in the North East corner of England. It was a good trip, allowing us to see some country. We passed through London, Peterborough, Chatham, York, Durham and some other smaller places. It is nice living in tents as the weather has been quite dry and fairly warm. We can see the channel from here, a half mile away.

Lovingly Bert

12 Sharia El Mahdy,
Cairo Sept. 6th, 1915

Dear Jessie;

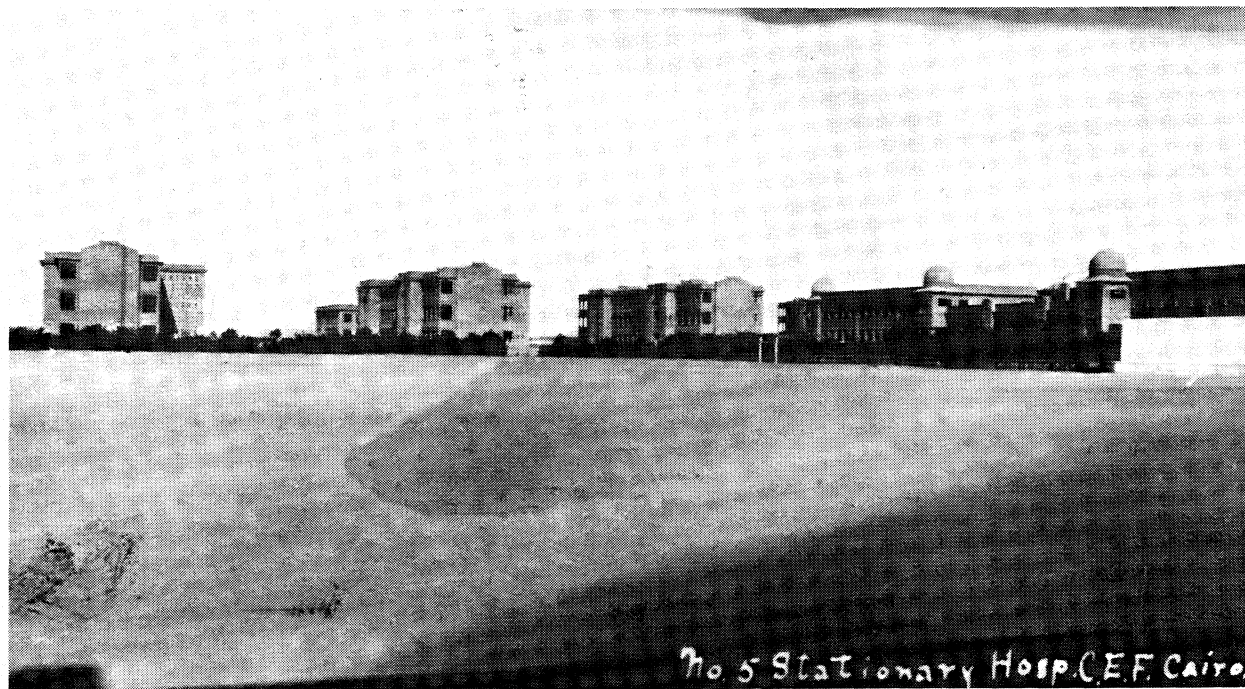
Your letter received the other day forwarded from England. We have been in Egypt for three weeks and have things around the hospital somewhat organized and about 300 patients in. Of course there will be more, we are equipped for about 500 patients when all the wards are filled. One hardly knows yet when to write to catch the mails. We are to get mail once a week at least. That isn't too bad, is it. We do not know very much of what is going on at the various fronts. The English papers do not give us much news. I suppose that the reason is that the British Government not being sure of the sympathies of the Egyptians, will not have much of the news published.

Well I am sure glad we are sent down here. I always wanted to go to the Dardanelles and altho' we do not get right to Turkey, this is very good and we may get to Constantinople yet, who knows..

This is a queer world, this eastern world in many ways. A dirty filthy world, but a very interesting one. For a student of human nature or sociology it would well repay close scrutiny and so rich in history thro'out all the ages. Here Joseph bot his corn and Pharoah's daughter found Moses in the Bull Rushes; Romance without parallel. The mighty Caesar and the great Alexander made this part of their stamping ground, and Anthony and Cleopatra, but that is for lighter minds. Napoleon left his stamp on the country and the barracks he built are still among the best in Egypt, just next to ours south, Cromer and lastly Kitchener who the Egyptians consider a King. It is all wrapped up in this great city, Cairo and its vicinity and a great deal more. The pyramids the sphynx, the obliks, the tombs of the mamluks, the Roman Aquaduct, the citadel, the mosques and the Nile Irrigation System. That is just another way of writing world history or at least designating historical land marks rather than by naming personalities.

Now I must stop and go after mattresses for our beds. We have been sleeping all this time on hard iron bedsteads or on the cement floor which is softer with only two blankets for bed and cover. The reason, probably, is that our quarter master captain is a preacher and having a wise head of his own cannot understand why common soldiers should not be contented on iron slats or cement floors.

Later. It is just sundown (6 p.m.) and I must finish this and go down to the post with this to-night, to the Central Office, Cairo.



Abbasiyah Barracks



Bert and friend at the Barracks

We have splendid barracks to live in, three storys high, very cool and roomy and sanitary. Shower baths on each floor which certainly go good during the great heat of the day.

One of the noticeable things is the dress of the women. You know the veils worn in the East. It seems that those who wear the white veil are of higher caste than the black veiled women. Certainly there is a difference in the costume apart from the veil. There is first of all usually a difference in the material, then in the style or pattern of the dress. I believe it is more graceful and becoming than 90% of the New York and Paris fashions and more of the person is concealed, not a bad fault for some people. There might be one objection, of too much sameness, but even at the cost of becoming monotonous a high average of perfection may be as beautiful and restful as a great variety of vulgar nothings. Well this isn't the Delineator, just a letter, but all the same there are some girls in Canada I should like to see in the better class of Moslem dress. It certainly dignifies the person.

Next time I will tell you something about other things. I could go back to Canada at any time now to get a good square meal. We have a pair of preachers as chaplains. They have already given the Unit a distaste for their profession and one is a good Presbyterian at that, Thompson, of Ottawa.

They seem to think that soldiering is compatible with Christianity. Seven men turned up to their service on Sunday last and we have the cleanest corps in the British Army without exception.

Love to all, Don.

THE GALLIPOLI CAMPAIGN

In October 1914, Turkey entered the war on Germany's side. This threatened Russian ports on the Black Sea, and Russia appealed to the Allies (Britain and France) for help. Turkey controlled the Dardanelles, thus preventing the flow of munitions to Russia via the Black Sea. The Allied response was to plan an attack on Turkey and take the Gallipoli Peninsula (Churchill's plan). This would relieve Turkish pressure on Russia, and with access to Constantinople by sea, knock Turkey out of the war. An Allied naval attack early in 1915 narrowly failed. After some delay, the Allies landed troops on the Peninsula, but by then the Turks were ready. The beach-head landings bogged down in a vicious trench war stalemate, and after eight months of attrition, the Allies withdrew in January, 1916. Estimated battle dead: Turkish - 100,000; Allied - 46,000 including many "Anzacs" (Australian-New Zealand Army Corps).

The campaign was badly managed by the Allies, and tarnished Churchill's reputation during the War.

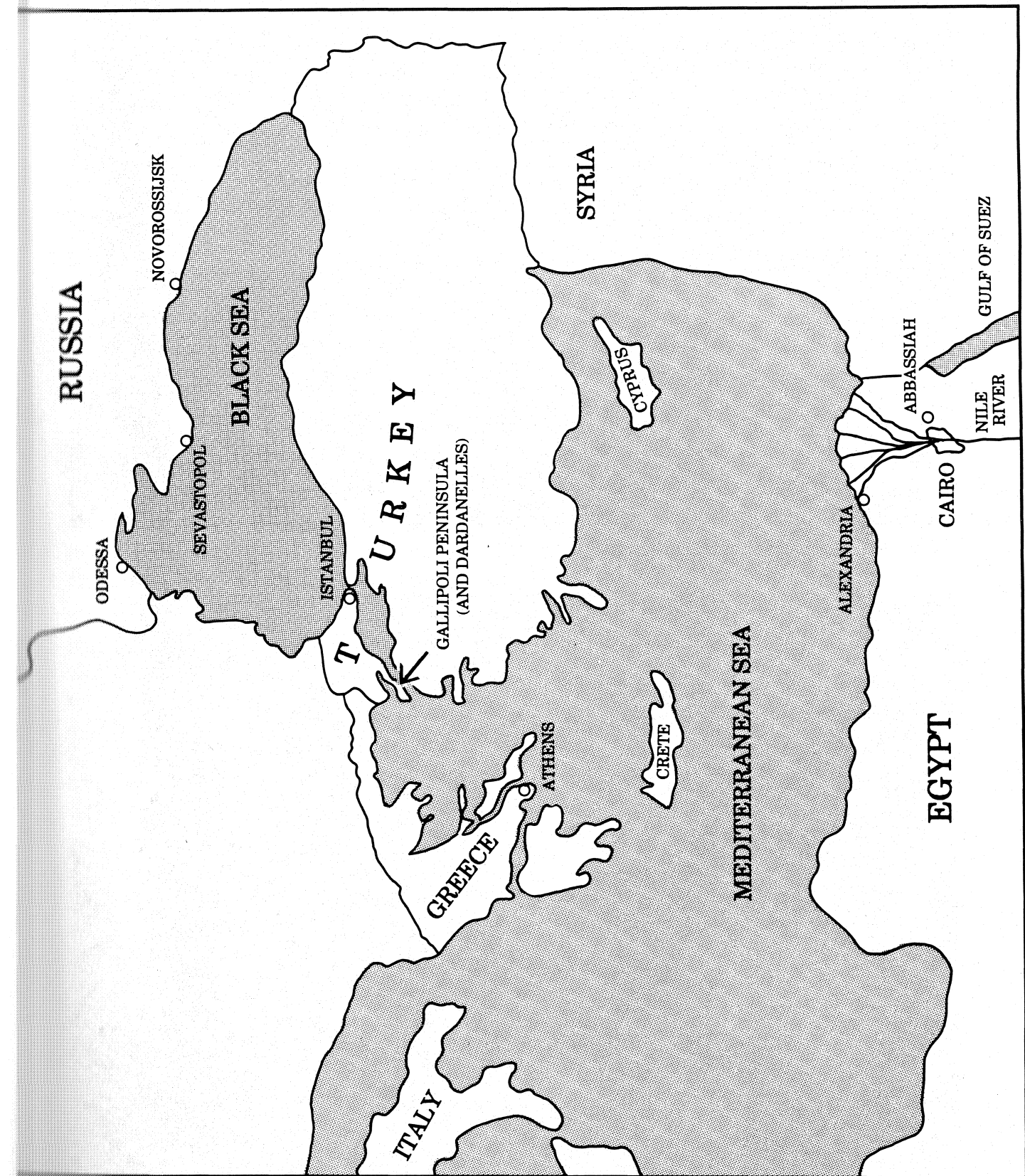
The Queen's University Hospital was sent to Cairo to care for Allied casualties from Gallipoli - Egypt was under British mandate at the time.

It is interesting to speculate that had the attack been successful and the Dardanelles opened, aid to Russia **might** have saved her from collapse and revolution in 1917 - and the world from Communism.

Note re the Hospital Unit - Update

On August 1st, the unit embarked from Southampton on H.M.S. Asturias for "Overseas Eastern Service" - wherever that meant. After touching at Malta, they arrived at Alexandria, Egypt on August 11th to find their destination was Cairo. Here they took over Cavalry Barracks at Abbassia, and converted it into a hospital. The Barracks, of excellent and recent construction, were on the N.E. outskirts of Cairo, near Heliopolis. The patients consisted mainly of wounded and sick - casualties from the Gallipoli Peninsula campaign in Turkey, but also sick and emergency cases from the troops stationed in Cairo - e.g. accidents, camel bites, and wounds from working with horses. The size of the hospital was increased in Jan. 1916, and became No. 7 General Hospital.

Beside the wounded soldiers, there were many "sick" soldiers - victims of various diseases caused by exposure and strain, including Tropical Diseases such as malaria and dysentery. Dysentery was very common among the Gallipoli casualties - it sapped the strength, and persistent severe diarrhea led to complete exhaustion. Pneumonia was also frequent among troops in Egypt, possibly due in part to the wide range of temperature each day.



Cairo, Egypt, Sept. 14th, 1915

Dear Jessie;

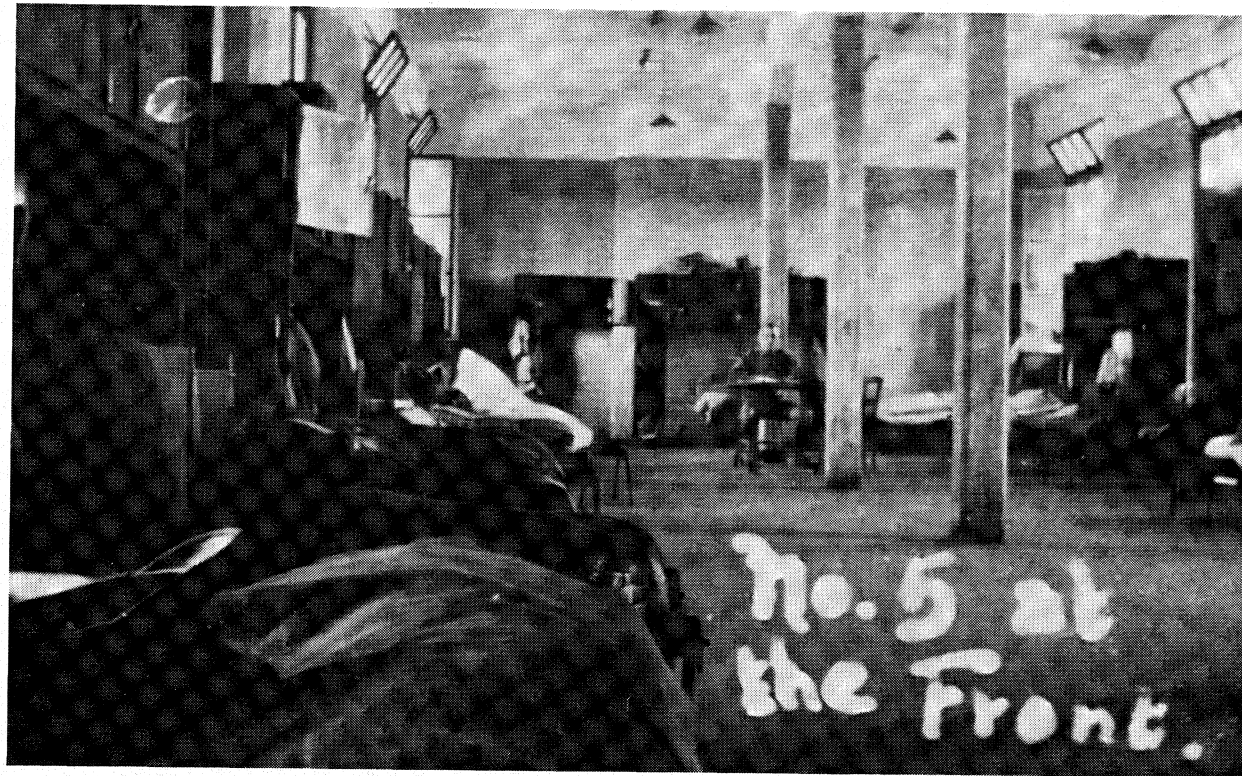
We received your letter some little time ago but I have done no writing of any kind since coming down here. You will already have heard that we are in the Mediterranean sphere of activity and I must say that taking the heat into consideration we are active a plenty. The days in Egypt are very hot, altho' we are still some one thousand miles from the equator. The one consolation from the day time heat and supply of pestering flies is the fact that the nights are comparatively cool, a sort of soft balmy coolness that is delightful to be out in.

I believe Don wrote you a few days ago. He would tell you about the trip down here and also about the visit to the pyramids so I can omit that just now. Don is not very well. I was just up to the ward to see him and take him a magazine. He has an attack of dysentery which is the common trouble down in this heat. What he needs is quietness and dieting. There is nothing serious and he is in the right place for treatment. The army grub that we privates and non-coms get is rotten. We should be getting good vegetable and fruit foods, but instead the bulk is beef. The bread is so hard that one fellow in trying to cut off a slice, letting his hand slip accidentally, he knocked a big chunk of skin from his knuckle on the crust. That is a fact. The belief is that the War Department has unknowingly got its bakeries and shell factories mixed somewhere. Nearly everybody has got a poor digestive system now as a result of such grub, but there are some good shops down town where we can get a civilized meal frequently if our money bags are flush.

Our barracks in which we have taken up abode, and charge of the hospital, are the most modern and well equipped in the world they say. I am sending you some snaps, but have none printed just now of the block in which is my shop. Will send more again. I have a fine little shop with two rooms off of it, one of which Parker and I sleep in, and the other having no window, Parker uses as a dark room and he is doing the developing for the X ray work. We have fitted the room up pretty well and so I have the advantage of being able to use the equipment for my own developing and printing.

Last Saturday night our male quartette had the honor of singing at a concert in which the leading role was taken by a French Countess - Countess de Laveson and her troupe who go about putting on concerts for the soldiers. We were introduced as the Canadian Quartette and sang them "Far away in the South". We had to go back, so sang for an encore "Stars of the Summer Night". On Sunday night we sang at Elizabeth Gardens and have been doing a bit of other singing round about.

On Sunday, Scott, Nicholson and I started out to see the museums, but found they had both closed at noon, so instead we took a walk thro some of the native quarters. At the corner of one street we saw girls coming to a public tap for water. A man was filling the tins and another was placing them on the girl's heads, girls 8 and 10 years of age carried the five gallon tin of water balanced on their heads as tho the tins were empty.



One of the Barrack's hospital rooms



Bert and Rollie Parker in the sleeping room off the blacksmith shop



Jessie and friend



After completing her Deaconess' training in Toronto, Jessie spent the summer months of 1915 at the Niagara Falls YWCA, as secretary; then returned to Toronto.

At another spot we found a girl grinding corn with one of those old grinding stones the same as used in Biblical times. A goat was standing near, so after considerable and futile attempts to get the curious crowd of children and young men to stand back I managed to get the mill, two little girls, a dirty baby and a relatively clean goat in the centre of a group and snapped a picture. Then as is always the case, the crowd commenced yelling "backsheesh, backsheesh", meaning, present, tip or gift for those who were kind enough to pose for us. One young man who was especially frantic in his clamors, I asked, "What in the mischief are you making such a racket about?". He said "Yes! Yes! Backsheesh, He is my sister", pointing to the girl turning the stone. "Well", I replied, "it's your sister that gets the backsheesh, not you, you lazy lubber". I gave the girls each a couple of miliemes, a milieme being equal to half a cent, but let the goat and baby go with a pat and smile. Goats and dogs and hens are members of the family among the low classes of Egyptians.

From there, after getting rid of the horde who followed us in hopes that some of the coins would drop by the wayside (with which we were supposed to have been loaded) so they could gather them in, we went on down town and had lunch.

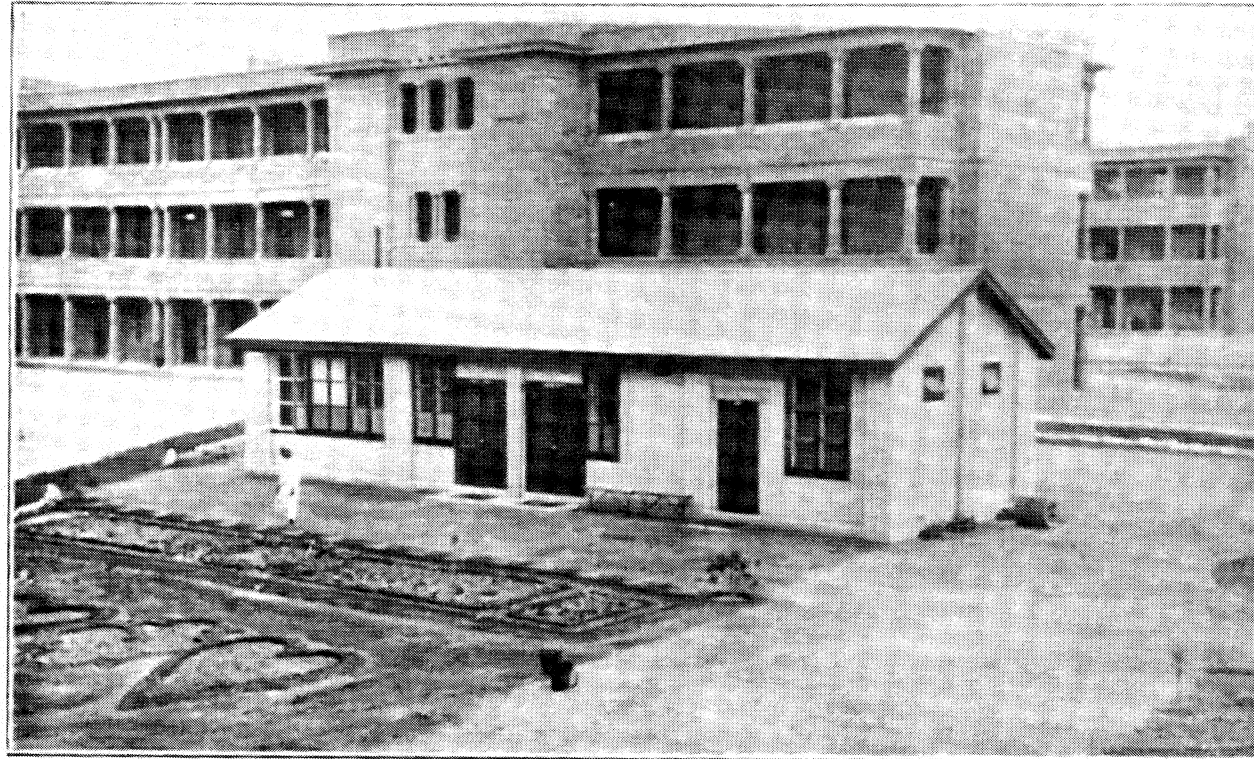
At six o'clock we went to the only Presbyterian Church in Cairo, a city of over a million and a quarter population. but it was good to get to a real church service. The minister was an elderly scotchman and the service was decidedly scotch Presbyterian. The singing was slow, but the whole was staid, solemn and entirely reverential, which after all is lacking to a large degree in our Canadian Churches.

The sermon was short, practical and sound, taken from the 14th Chap of Isaiah and the 23rd verse - the words "I will sweep it with the besom of destruction". He drew his lesson by illustrating from spring housecleaning when the sunlight shows up the accumulated dust of the winter, then the housewife is cranky and the meals hurried and scant. But he said we could save all that trouble by watching daily that no dirt should collect at all, and keep always clean in the little things day by day then our lives, tempers and all will be sweet.

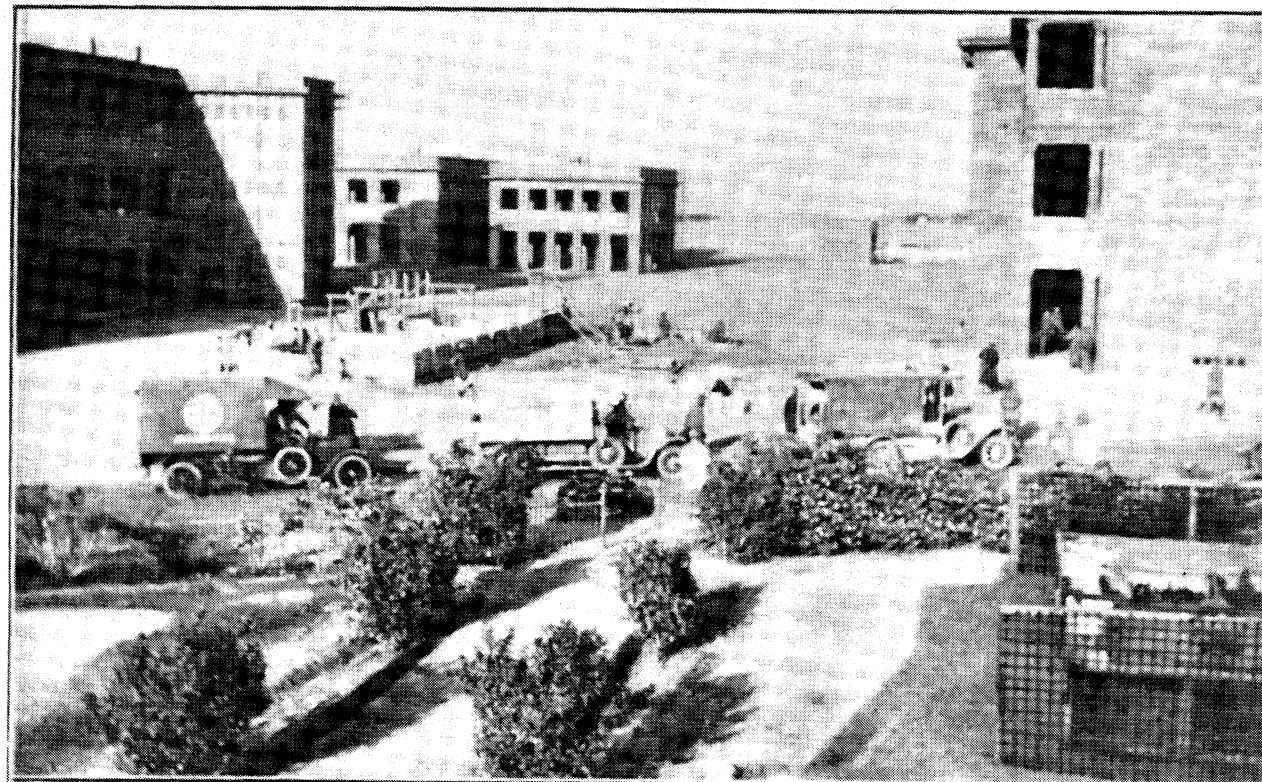
After church we had a good meal at a Greek restaurant and then went over to the gardens and did our stunt and then came home. Well, we are farther than ever from the fight down here, but are busy at work and get some pretty bad cases in here, altho' it is supposed to be only a convalescent hospital. Some of the poor fellows are in a bad state. It certainly makes one see the inconsistency of the whole thing - spending millions to kill men and then turning right around and spending millions for the purpose of healing them again. The whole idea of war and militarism is a negation. But I must go now as Scott is waiting. I suppose you will soon be leaving Niagara, or are you going to stay on there? I would like to be going back to Queen's this fall, but "nix on the glow worm", I guess,

Love to all, Bert.

Note, at the end of the letter: "Got Bert's letter today, so made a copy to send on. You can send it on to Morse, File Hills, and Neepawa. Bert sent me a lot of snaps. I know the Morse people and Rose are anxious to hear from the boys." Jessie.



Operating Theatre, X-Ray Department, Laboratory, and Block I., Cairo



Patients arriving from Gallipoli – Cairo, 1916

Photo courtesy of Queen's University Archives

**The Young Men's Christian Association
with H. M. Mediterranean Expeditionary Force in Egypt**

Cairo Egypt Sept. 25, 1915

Dear People -

Surely I can get something written today. Everything is fairly quiet in the ward and I have nothing else to do this afternoon. Have been in Hospital for two weeks now with a light attack of Dysentery or Enteric Fever I suppose is about the same thing. Of course I don't want it any worse than I had it. Was in bed three days before I came in to the hospital. In fact those three days were my worst. All they do with you is put you on diet and physic the insides out of one. They put you on fluids for a number of days. I told the captain that must mean salts & castor oil. There are about twelve of our unit down with the same thing. One of the boys is dangerously sick. I am sending you one or two snap shots & will send some picture post cards which will give you some idea of the country.

Bert & I are doing all the mechanical work that is to be done, both carpentry & Blacksmithing; that is repairing. Any new work of importance is done under the direction of the engineers in charge of the barracks. Bert stays right in the shop, it is on the ground floor at other end of this building. All the hospital buildings have stores, shops & offices on their ground floor. These are splendid buildings built by Kitchener in 1911 I think. They are of concrete three stories high. All very comfortable, well laid out & sanitary. Shower baths on each floor.

The blacksmith shop is a dandy little place of three rooms. One is used for a dark room for developing the X-ray plates; Bert & Rollie Parker use the other for a bed room & the large one is used for blacksmith & carpenter shop. When I'm on the job sometimes I work a little. As I have a stripe* they use me in looking after other fellows working. You know a non-com is not supposed to work and I try not to prove any exception to the rule. However sometimes there is a little job to be done & I make an effort to do it. About the hardest thing Bert has to do is to remind the quartermaster captain what tools & materials are needed. Of course in the army you are supposed to steal what you think you need.

You people will know what is going on as regards the war much better than we do here. There are two English papers printed in Cairo of two sheets each but there is very little in them and what there is, is all old news. We are farther from the front than ever with little chance of ever getting there with this hospital. We are as safe here as possible any place.

This is a queer world, a dirty one but very interesting. Now that the British have really made it a protectorate in fact, there should be progress & improvement after the war.

* Don became a Lance Corporal on July 1st.

There is a rumor afloat here that there are 15,000 Canadian troops at the Dardanelles, but we don't know whether such is the case or not*. They say some of their wounded came to one of the other hospitals yesterday. However that is only rumor. At this time it looks as though the Germans are near the end of their march in Russia.

(Monday Evening Sept. 27th)

Well I didn't get this finished on Saturday so will do so now. We are waiting for General Maxwell to come around to inspect us. He is head of all British troops in Egypt. In fact he is just about supreme head of the government as Egypt is a military protectorate just now. This is his third visit to the hospital.

We just got some news from the western front that is satisfactory. Heard that the French had advanced five miles & had taken twenty thousand prisoners. If they could do that every day along the whole western front for about ten or fifteen days they might be able to bring the Germans to some decent terms. But it's going to be a tremendous job getting them out of Belgium.

Just got my inoculation for cholera today. There is an outbreak at Alexandria so we have heard & the Port is closed. That is why they inoculated us today. We are lucky at a time like this in being with the hospital, although all the troops get the inoculation.

Have been feeling fine for three days now so guess I can get out tomorrow, or next day. It certainly takes some time & a lot of salts to knock the microbes of Dysentery out of one's stomach.

The railroads here are more like our own than the English. They have a good service between here & Alexandria.

Love to all
Don.

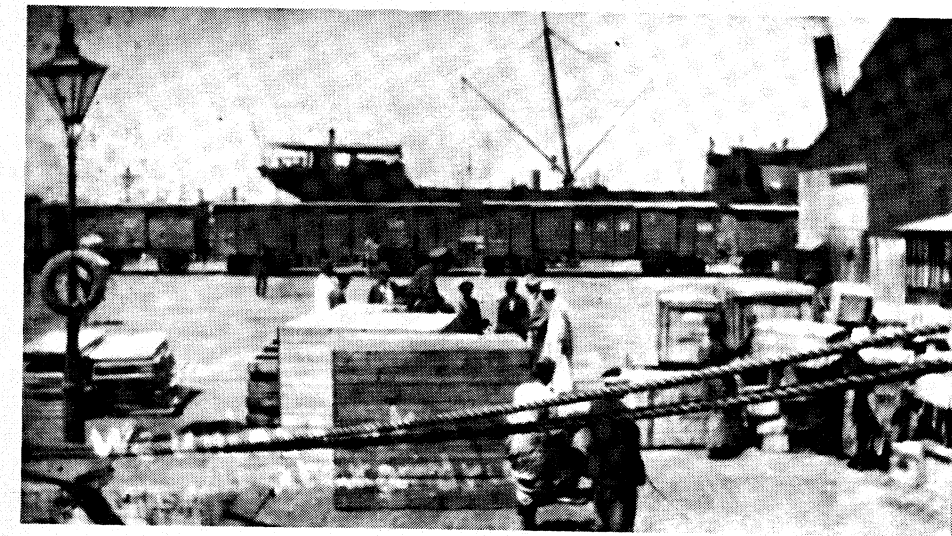
* The Newfoundland Regiment was sent to the Gallipoli peninsula in September to help the hard-pressed British. Bitter trench fighting and terrible winter weather combined to result in very heavy casualties - only a remnant of the Regiment was left when the allies evacuated the peninsula in January, 1916.

Cairo, Egypt, Sept. 25, 1915

Dear Grace, Jack & All.

Probably I owe you a letter altho' we haven't had a letter from out there since we came to Egypt nearly two months ago. The mails have been fierce, for it seems that no one is getting his mail in decent time or manner.

We left England on Aug. 1st and started to work in this hospital on the 17th. The trip down on board the Red Cross steamer "Asturias", was on the whole a good one despite the fact that as per usual we privates were packed into the "glory hole". Crossing the channel and also the Bay of Biscay a good many of us were sick. We were in sight of land most of the way with the exception of the Channel, Bay of Biscay and from Malta to Alexandria. It was night when we sailed through the Strait of Gibraltar so we did not see it. On a Sunday morning, just as the sun like a ball of fire was rising out of the Mediterranean we stood off from Valletta on the Island on Malta. There we received orders to proceed on to Alexandria and, after two more days run we reached that harbor. In another couple of days we docked and next day came on up to Cairo, where we are now, in the most modern barracks probably in the world. I'm enclosing some maps. I am doing the carpentering and also the blacksmithing and have a complete little shop for myself. Off the shop are two other rooms, one of which Parker uses for his dark room (He does the developing and printing for the Xray work). The other he and I use as a bed and living room, thus we are by ourselves instead of in the large sleeping quarters.

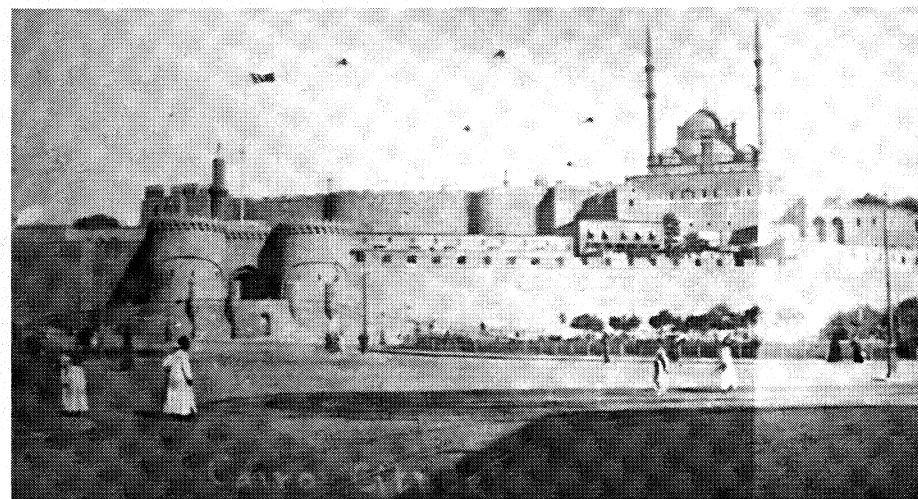


We unload at Alexandria

Six of us have formed a Club for the purpose of having little "eats" in the evening or any other times we might be hungry; also for other joint purposes peculiar to boys. We meet in our room and have something decent to eat as a change from the "army grub". We call ourselves the "Lotus Club". The Lotus flower is the flower of Egypt. Last night we did a little stunt which wasn't quite parliamentary I suppose, but we entertained five of the nurses on the quiet, as we were afraid of the officers and other fellows finding out, and we had a dandy time - just a little touch of civilization



Bert on a donkey



Bert at right on a camel

again. The nurses want to try another stunt sometime which will also need to be kept quiet, I suppose, for they are not supposed to be out with privates. They suggest a moonlight trip out to the Pyramids, and the Club is game! It is a common Egyptian belief that to eat a meal on the back of the Sphinx by moonlight will give you your strongest heart's desire. We are going to give it a tryout. The nights down here are the salvation of the country; their cool, balmy, starry, moonlit air is great after the day's blistering heat. But now the days too are becoming cooler as the winter season carries on. There has been only a couple of hours rain in the last year, and consequently we have appreciated what we have seen of the greatest irrigation system in existence, at least the oldest, and they are still using the same old systems to move the water up to the higher plains from the Nile; big bucket water-wheels run by the native cattle are common sights along its banks. From the ditches along the fields natives dip the water into their fields by means of buckets on the end of a pole which is balanced over another pole and weighted at the opposite end.

This is certainly an interesting part of the world from an historical point of view. We are seeing the places of Biblical times and history. Of course the first place we visited was out to see the Pyramids and Sphinx. Keeping clear of guides and donkey and camel drivers was our biggest difficulty, for there are crowds of them that flock about you when you get off the train and press their services upon you. I rode both a donkey and later a camel for the novelty of the thing. We were inside of "Cheops", the largest of the three Pyramids of Giza.

Another day we visited the Citadel and went through the Mohamed Aly Mosque. It is a dandy; the front and all the pillars are solid alabaster - semi-transparent, the floor is carpeted with the best of rugs, big thick ones; one big one in the centre was brought from Constantinople at a cost of \$500. The mosque is built after the style of the famous one in Constantinople, only is twice as big. It can't touch the R. C. Westminster New Cathedral in London even at that. The Zoo here is good too, the monkey section being perhaps the most complete. Of course all the animals of this section of the world are well represented.

A week ago yesterday (Sunday) we went over to old Cairo, saw where Moses was found by Pharaoh's daughter by the Nile, & an orthodox Greek church, through a native pottery establishment, over the dead city, and up to the tombs of the Mamalukes. Wandering about through the native quarters is most interesting as they are full of conditions similar to those of 2000 years ago.

Yesterday we went out by Heliopolis to the Obelisk and saw the Church of the Holy Family built supposedly on the spot where Mary & Joseph rested during their flight into Egypt. The tree under which they sat and the well from which they drank are still protected, and we had a drink from the well. The tree is dead now, probably killed by people cutting off souvenirs. From there we walked through a dandy corn district to a station where we caught an electric train for Cairo, got to the little Presbyterian Church just as it was coming out. Had a good dinner at the Soldier's

Cairo, Egypt, Sept. 30, 1915

Dear Father & All.

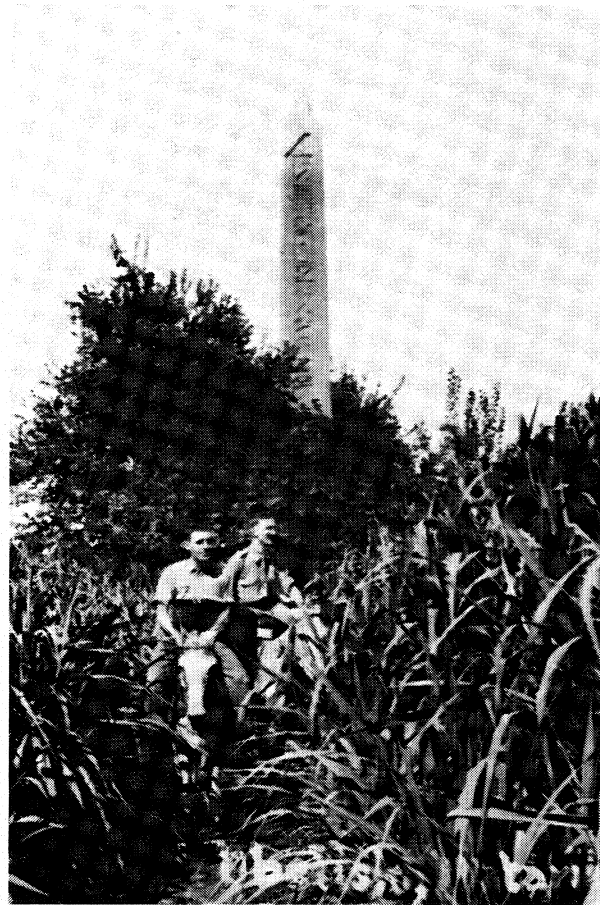
Don is sending a letter so I shall put in a line as well. He will likely have told you where we are & what we are doing as a hospital, so I can scratch that.

Don has been sick and in a ward for several weeks, but is about all O.K. again. A large number of our fellows are down with something or other, principally dysentery, and that is the result of the food we have been getting, together with the heat and flies. However our grub is getting much better and the weather cooler so that now we are in fair shape. The hospital is doing good work, and taking precedence over the other hospitals down here, even the Imperial ones. I guess there is no other Stationary hospital in the world that has as good equipment as ours has, and there is certainly no other that has the staff. Every department has a specialist at it's head and these are top notchers, even to the Xray department. Almost all the orderlies are Medical students or graduates and the big majority of the men on the Corps are University men which, without a doubt, shows its effect on the kind of work done.

Another thing; don't fancy that we are having a hard time, for so far it has been an excursion of travel and sight-seeing. We are farther from the trenches than ever and our Corps is intact so far. We are settled now, I guess till the end of the war, and are in a good healthy place especially during the winter months.

This is an interesting place from the standpoint of old time associations. In our wanderings about here in the little time that we have had to spare, we have seen some of the spots that we'll tell you about later. Am sending some pictures along.

Sincerely Bert



The Obelisk near Heliopolis



Virgin's Tree near Matarich
where Mary and Joseph rested

Gardens and instead of coming back to barracks by train we hired donkeys at 5 piastres a piece (25cents) and rode home.

Well we are down to work at last and altho we are farther than ever from the front, the wounded are coming in pretty fast. They come from the Dardanelles by boat to Alexandria and on up here by train. This is apparently about the healthiest spot in this war theatre, the greatest danger being from dysentery & disease carried by flies. The fear of sunstroke is gone. A lot of our fellows are laid up with dysentery but for the most part are getting better. Our hospital is still intact. Nos. 3 & 4 (Mary McLeod is in No. 4) Stationary Hospitals, came down from England with us and went on to Lemnos and several of their nurses & men have died since, so we hear. Don is in a ward just now, but is getting better.

Let Aimee read this and 'twill save rewriting the same stuff.

About my Insurance and the money being sent to Winnipeg for me, is it all O.K.? Should be \$21 per month go to my account there excepting for the month of Oct. which I am stopping here.

Love to all.
Bert

Cairo, Egypt, Sept. 30, 1915

Dear People -

This is an opportunity of getting a note away without addressing a letter so here goes. It is also the last chance I shall have of writing before leaving the hospital in which I have been held captive for almost three weeks with a light attack of dysentery, it's no cinch in this country.

When did I write you people last, I can't remember, I think this country & the disease goes to a fellow's head as I am even more stupid than usual and that's going some.

I suppose Bert has told you all about the city so there won't be any necessity of repeating. There are of course many interesting things in the country but there is so much filth mixed up with everything, even with the food you eat in a hospital dining room that it detracts from what might be a very pleasant military campaign. Of course it is pleasant in many ways but unfortunately we who have been taught a small amount of cleanliness are handicapped to some extent in our enjoyment under the present circumstances, and that's a shame in war time.

After seeing much of Eastern life, country and conditions, one should be able to understand many of the Bible stories, (the setting of the scenery, the conclusions arrived at, and the allusions) much more clearly & obtain a much deeper conception of the truths attempted to be taught. For instance such stories as Moses in the bullrushes, Joseph and his collection of corn, the stories about the flat roofed houses etc. are made much more vivid when you see the pond where those bullrushes grew, etc., etc. We could go on enumerating instances without end if - we knew our Bible better. I've made up my mind that when I see some more of Egypt I shall read that book again & get more out of it than I have in the past at times.

By all reports the crops in almost every part of Canada are A 1 this year. That will be a good thing for the Allies, they need all the food & money they can get. Aren't the Russians some people & some fighters. They are surely the biggest thorn in the flesh of the Germans, always of course excepting the Colonials (Canadians, Australians & New Zealanders) and the little Gurkhas of India. They are wonderful, their only defect is that it takes another battalion following one of theirs picking up their rifles. When they make a charge they drop everything but their knives and then they fight like demons. Nearly every one of them who come to hospital (their own hospitals) are cut in the left hand where they grab the Turk's bayonet. Then with their curved knife, with one swift cleft, off comes the Turk's head. It's probably the easiest & least painful method of killing a fellow mortal. The Australian troops are good men much like Canadians in that they don't give a hoot for discipline or danger.

This trip to Cairo has made at least a little impression on me with regard to the old Empire. When one meets men from every part of that extensive combination of loosely far flung states, Australians, New Zealanders, New Foundlanders,

Canadians, all the different Indians, Africans, English, Scotch, Irish and all the rest of them, all seriously bent on one common purpose, determined to see that purpose pushed to the death, and every man, not downcast but with the cheerfulness of a hope of ultimate attainment - well - it's hard on the cynic in one, isn't it? Both as regards the Empire and one's fellow man. There's something in the British Empire, an idea or something worth dying for; and there is something to admire & respect in the common soldier, the man, when he goes off to almost certain death with a smile or a curse on his lips; yes & sometimes with a smile on his breath.

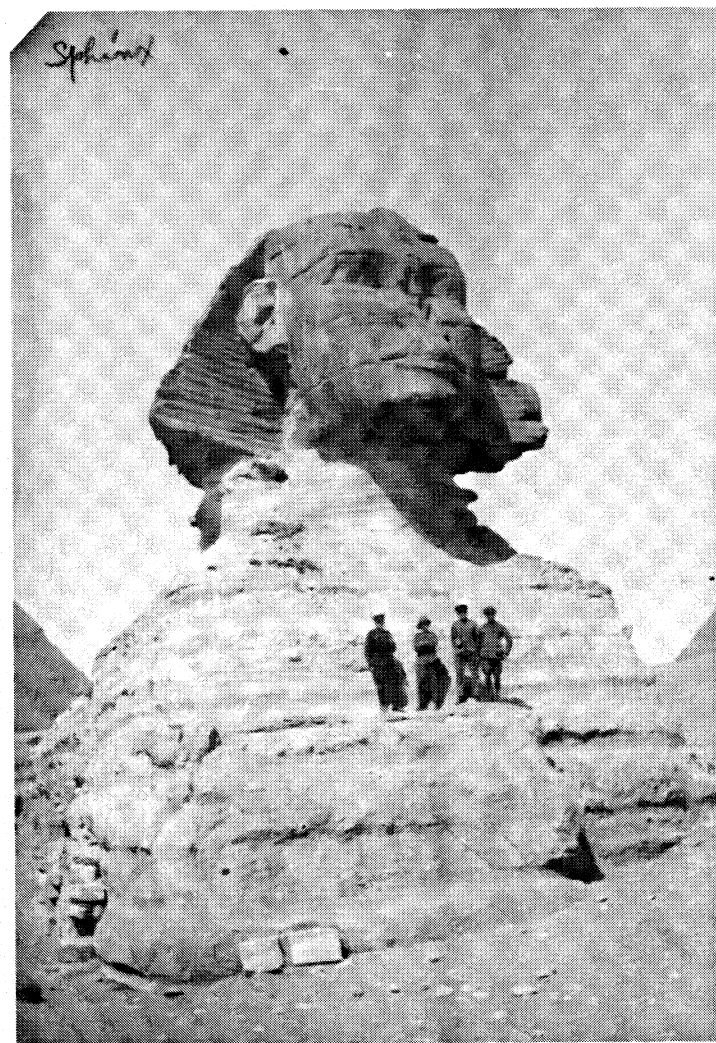
Now this is a somewhat uninteresting scramble but really there is little happens around here and we get little news from the outside world.

How would an investment in wheat go this fall, Jack? Be sure & give Norma lots of kisses from the Uncles. Would sure like to be in Wpg. to have a car ride but we'll be back in 1921 after the peace is made and then we will joy ride to our hearts content.

Love to all.
Don



CAIRO - Mosque of the Curiéh.



POSTCARD - MOSQUE OF THE CURIEH

Cairo Oct. 20th, 1915

Dear Lily & Dick.

Today is Mohamedan Xmas & all the natives are celebrating today. I am trying between work to get letters answered. Am doing double duty now as Parker who was doing the X-ray developing is sick in the hospital; now I have to do that as well as the shop work. (Just finished mending one of the nurse's parasols — a good way to get on the right side of them!) Sometimes I'm rushed, other times, nothing doing! On Friday night a number of us intend going out to the pyramids and eating a meal on the back of the Sphinx by moonlight. An Egyptian legend has it that eating thus gives one his deepest heart's desire. Must think up a good one! Don and three others aren't recovering properly from their attacks of dysentery so are being sent to Cyprus to convalesce. I rather envy them their trip. A big bunch of our fellows were laid up since coming down here, but all are safe yet. We are under good care. Last night the officers picked up a team & played the men a game of base-ball. All were like a bunch of boys. We are not a very military bunch, thank goodness for that. At last however we are where we can do our "bit", and our beds are pretty nearly always full. In the event of Greece entering in favor of Allies we may be transferred to Athens which is at least two days nearer to the Dardanelles. Otherwise we are here I guess until the end, which can't come too soon. I'd pack up for Canada right now if the order came.

But Egypt is an interesting part of the world and we are fortunate in being sent here. Heat, dysentery and flies are hardest to put up with but the nights are great! (too bad we have to waste them, eh?) But wait until we get back to Canada, we'll make up for lost time!

You're an awful Grit, Lily. I was interested in your account of the Manitoba clean-up, and amused at your mixing church work and politics up in one breath. Were you out stumping at all? Don and I had perforce to laugh as we read. Well anyway I should like to be there to help eat some of those pies and tarts you speak of, and I hope it won't be long until we are.

Lovingly Bert



We climb Cheops
Oct. 24/15.

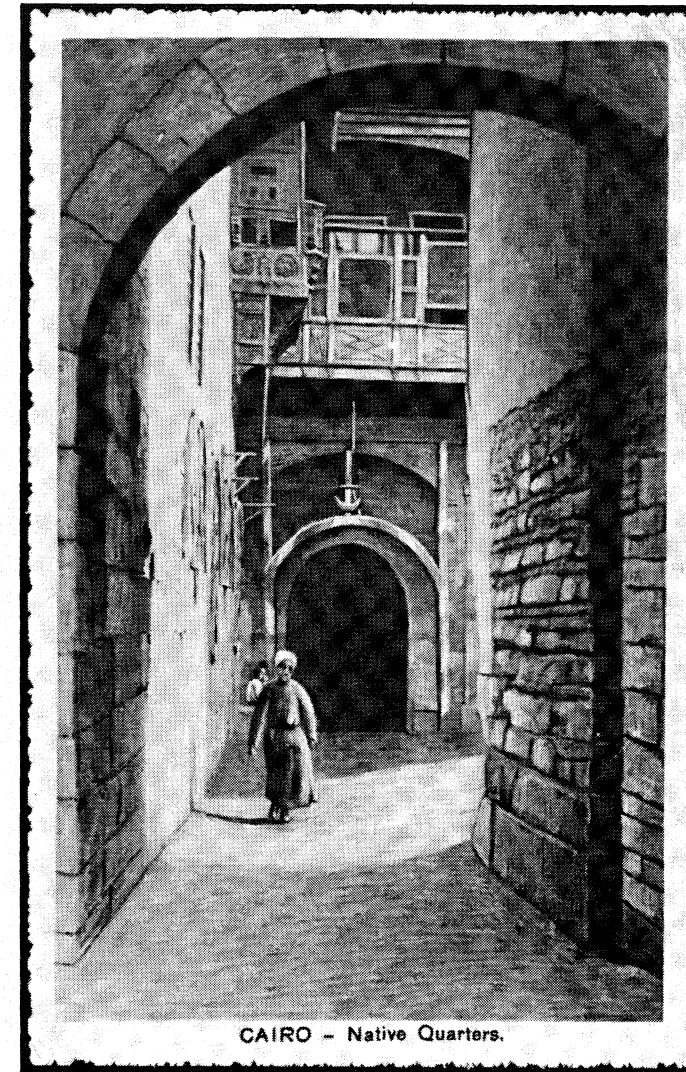
Bert with guide



South-east from top of Cheops while in flood.

POSTCARD - CAIRO - NATIVE QUARTERS

Cairo, Jan. 24, 1916



CAIRO - Native Quarters.

Dear Lily

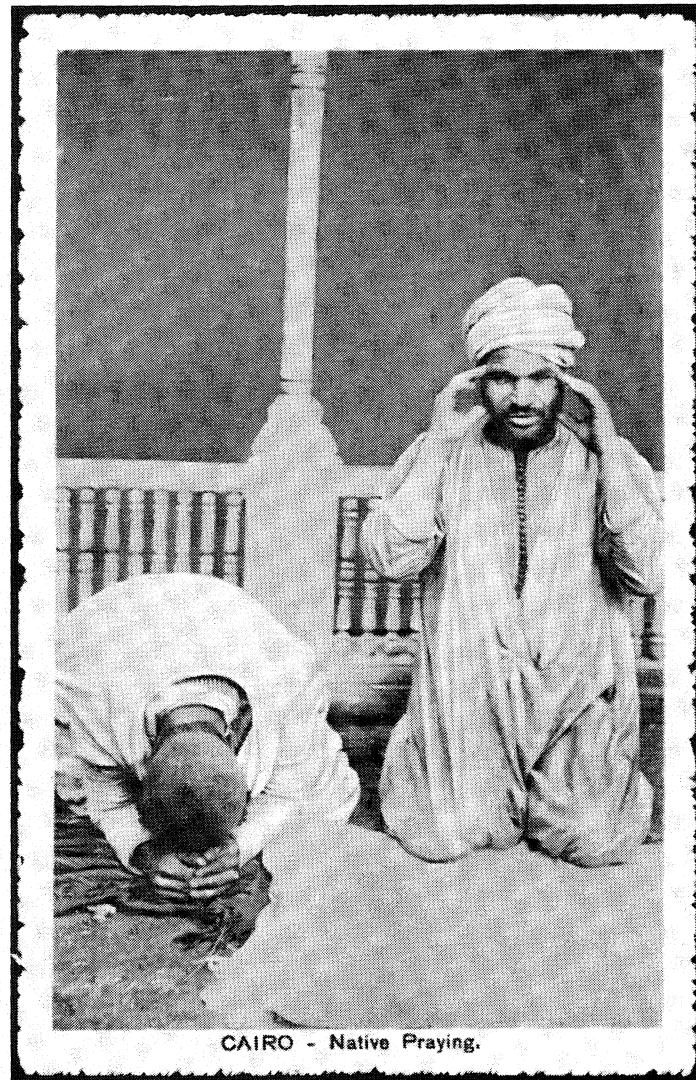
Just a line to let you know that Don & I are both kicking and well able to. We recv'd several boxes from Canada for Xmas a month late but great, just the same.

Nothing doing here just now since the Dardanelles have been evacuated. I hope you are all fine and keeping Canada in fighting trim.

Lovingly Bert,

POSTCARD - NATIVE PRAYING

Cairo, Jan. 24, 1916



CAIRO - Native Praying.

Dear Rose

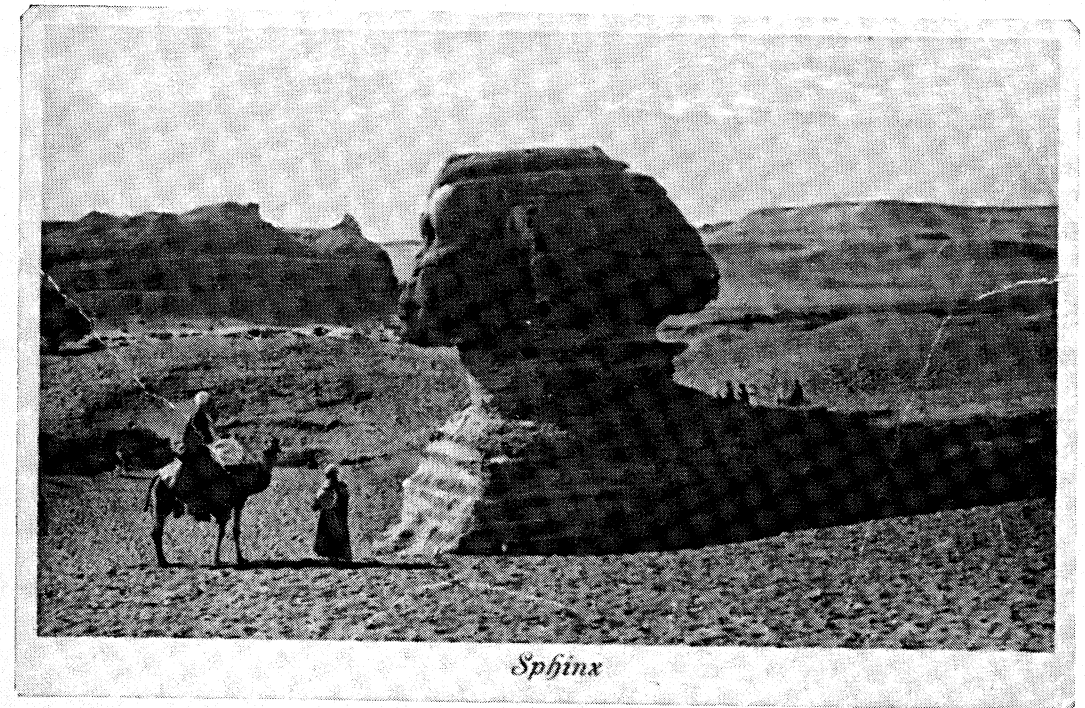
I am on night duty now in the hospital, Don is doing the carpentry work. It is five o'clock Monday morning and pretty soon I shall have to be giving out the morning medicines. There is very little doing here now, most of our patients are sick from surrounding camps.

Don and I are both tip top and I hope you are feeling quite alright too. We got several parcels from Canada, all arriving about a month after Xmas, still they were fine even at that and in good shape.

Lovingly Bert

POSTCARD - SPHINX

Cairo, Jan. 24, 1916



Sphinx

Dear Father.

Just a line to let you know that we are fine. Don & I are quite up to the mark. I hope you all are as well as we. There is very little doing here just now most of our patients are sick from the surrounding units. The weather is still cool here at nights but will be hot enough in another couple of months.

Lovingly Bert

Cairo, Jan. 25, 1916

Dear Grace

I wrote you a card last night so you will likely get both it and this letter in coninuatio. But there are a few things to be squared away, anywhere in February or the first of March so I shall have to instruct you now. There are the following bills to be paid for me, thusly:-

I \$17.50 (Seventeen dollars and fifty cents) to Mrs. W. J. Bruce, 428 Brock St., Kingston, Ont.

and

II \$21.00 (Twenty-one dollars) to Mr. Roy Ainslie, Comber, Ont.

There should be to my credit there by the end of Feb. \$126.00 plus whatever Miss Campbell left for me (you didn't say) and minus the \$28.40 Life Insurance & costs. I am sorry to have to bother you, but it must be attended to. Thanks terribly, a priori.

Well, as the Egyptians say "Mafeesh" business, so shall I cut the finance and try to string some news.

As I probably told you on the card, I am on night duty this month on a ward, and to say the least the last couple of nights have been a sort of strain to my nerves. All alone during the night with anywhere from thirty to forty patients suffering from diverse diseases, sitting by the coal-oil stove in the little kitchen of the ward, listening to most wondrous snores, and fiendish howls of men in night-mares, and listening for calls for "orderly!" or signs from one of the patients, who is an epileptic, going into a fit (he had four last night inside an hour). It all has its effect on the stillness of the night.

Tonight I spent most of the time reading Cunningham's Anatomy, but one can't study that for more than three or four hours at a stretch, so I decided to write for a change. It is now 4:20; at 5:30 I shall get me some breakfast and then get the morning's medicines out. At seven o'clock I hike to bed, sleep until one or one-thirty and then dissect for three hours. At 7 p.m. I come back on duty again.

Don is in the shop now. I asked to be put on a ward as I have decided to go into medicine when I go back to Canada, and I want to get some medical experience. Have had almost two months of it now, and by the way I think I'll go to "Toba" for my medicine as it is a higher grade Medical course because of the better hospital facilities than at Kingston.

Could you have them send me a Medical Calendar. I would like to look over their course. What do you think of the plan?

Through the Egyptian University we have a couple of subs and have started to get off what at Queens is second year dissection, and first year's ostiology also.

Things are pretty quiet in this zone of the war, since the evacuation of the peninsula. Fighting is expected at the Suez, and some preliminary skirmishes were reported there yesterday. I do not know how true it is.

On Thursday last the night staff of six nurses and eight boys took a donkey trip out to the Petrified Forest. It had to be done on the quiet as we aren't supposed to be out with the sisters. However, we manage to put one over the authorities once in a while. Last Thursday we left as soon as going off duty in the morning and were back shortly after dinner. The Forest is about five miles outside of Cairo, across the hills of the desert.

Well I must cut this out and do a bit of reading for half an hour.

Love to everybody
Bert



The donkey trip to the Petrified Forest - Arrow indicated Bert (in center)

Cairo, Feb. 26, 1916

Dear Father & all.

Received your joint letters last mail and shall try to answer tonight for next mail out, and first of all my address will be "No. 7 General Hospital, C.E.F. C/O London War Office".

Everything is very slack here now, not enough doing to keep us out of mischief. Several of our wards are empty and closed up, the others are emptying out fast. We all are expecting a move pretty soon, either to England or to Salonika. I hope we go quickly for the warm, or I should say, hot weather is setting in again. The winter weather here is quite contrasty with that of the Canadian northwest. Here water will boil if placed near a stove with a fire in it. There it will freeze, so you said. During the winter season tho' the nights have been quite cool, so cool that we need a couple of blankets over us, but in a few months more we should be kicking off everything but a frown.

The other day one of the fellows & I took a little walk into the country and had a very interesting experience. We went quite a distance out of the city and were entertained right royally by a native farmer, a regular old timer, Beduin with customs and habits of 2000 years ago. Going inside his little enclosure consisting of a fence made of cane, he spread carpets for us on the earth floor of his house. The house was a shed like structure made of cloth upheld by poles and open on one side. This was divided into two parts by a cloth partition. The roof was too low to allow us to stand upright. Some of his neighbors came in to help entertain and he proceeded at once to prepare the coffee. Taking a stick he cleaned some ashes out of a hole in the ground and exposed some coals preserved there; on these he placed some twigs & sticks & soon had a blazing little fire. Then he put some coffee beans in a ladle and roasted them over the fire. While these were roasting they brought in some flat cakes made from crushed grain of some kind (probably corn) and some goat's or camel's butter milk in a bowl. All broke off pieces of the cake with their fingers and dipped them into the bowl of milk placed in the centre of the group, thus making a "sop" which they conveyed to their mouths with their fingers; no such useless things as forks or spoons. We did like wise in order to be sociable.

All this time in the next compartment the good wife of the house was preparing hot cakes and fried eggs over an open fire. When the coffee was browned to perfection it was placed in an earthen mortar and with a wooden pestle powdered exceedingly fine while water was boiling in a copper coffee pot containing about 2 pints of water. Into this boiling water one of them placed the two handfuls of powdered coffee and again boiled it for a few minutes after which they pored into 3 small cups without handles. There being 6 or 7 of us we had to take turns at using the cups, and I must say that even without sugar or cream the coffee was great. Along with the coffee we ate the hot biscuits and fried eggs, always with our hands for knives & forks and dipping into the common bowl. I tho't of the Biblical expression "He who dippeth with me in the bowl etc." and it made those 2000 year old stories more real.



Visit to Beduin farmer - building the fire



Bert drinking Beduin coffee



In honor of our visit the old man put on his white robe and hood, rolling a black soft cape of camel hair about his head. After we had eaten, the old fellow bro't out his pipe with a stem so long that the bowl rested on the ground. Attached to the pipe near the bowl was a small chain and pair of tweezers. After filling the pipe he picked a live coal with the tweezers and placed it on the tobacco. Soon he was puffing out clouds of smoke with grunts of satisfaction as he squatted tailor fashion on his mat. The wife bro't in a little baby for our approval and we each gave it a half piastre (2 1/2 cents) as a "backsheesh" which pleased the old couple mightily. Goats, chickens and dogs were apparently part of the family & immediately outside the hut was tethered a ragged donkey.

Coming away the old man accompanied us on our journey as far as a canal where we crossed on a ferry and bid us good-bye, shaking hands and touching his forehead and heart vicinity with the tips of his fingers. On leaving him we made out a few words he said, "I want you tomorrow". He knew no English and we knew little or no Arabic, but not withstanding we had a most interesting visit.

Love to all.
Bert

Abbassiah Barracks
Cairo, Egypt, Apl. 8, 1916

Dear Lily & All -

Don't have too much of a shock when you get this letter from me. Probably I should have sent a card ahead to notify you of my intention to write but it's as hard to write cards as letters so here goes for the letter. I have really intended writing you all winter but I'm awful lazy or something. The conditions of life are not normal (have not been for a good many years for me) and it is difficult to get an opportunity to write when you feel like it & that isn't very often.

I am using a little pad that each one of us got at Xmas. Was glad to know the things we sent got there alright. Much of our mail is lost in transit now owing to so many boats being sunk. Its an awful nuisance. Would have liked to have sent better things but it wasn't possible at the time, our money ran out too soon.

The winter has been very fine here, could go without a coat at any time. We played tennis & football & baseball right along. The games and the horse races every week sort of broke the monotony of this quiet winter. One would never know that a war was on either here or in England while we were there. Everybody seems to be having as good a time as usual or a little better since there has been an increase in the circulation of money due to so many soldiers floating around with government money in their pockets.

We haven't heard anything from Winnipeg for some time now. The last word we had Grace was slowly improving. We are hoping she is altogether well by this time or at least steadily improving. We have been quite anxious about her & so little mail comes or goes we hear very little. It's a question of getting the mail away on the boat that doesn't sink. This submarine business is about the only part of the war that makes me sore on the Germans. It causes one so much inconvenience don't you know. I can forgive almost anything but tampering with letters I write. They cost me too much mental effort, although you'd never guess it from reading them.

So Mr. Norris* is making you women full citizens. Well I don't see that he is doing anything more than common justice. It is ludicrous at any time to learn the various reasons men have for voting for or against a man or a measure & I suppose they may as well add some more reasons by giving the ladies a vote. I don't know but on the whole they will use the franchise as intelligently as the majority of men. Although as far as I am concerned I prefer a commonwealth where men do the voting, for when all is said & done, Lil, the majority of women will vote for the man who has the nicest hair or for a measure championed by that man.

* Hon. T.C. Norris, Liberal Premier of Manitoba, 1915 - 22. His government was responsible for female suffrage, temperance legislation, etc. Manitoba was the first province in Canada to give women the vote - in January, 1916. Saskatchewan and Alberta followed suit later that spring. However, women first actually voted in the Saskatchewan election of 1917.

You know Democracy is still on its trial and will be for many many years after you & I are underground. I haven't an unmixed faith by any means, in the People. "Trust the people" may be a good political catch phrase but when you are saying that you mustn't believe there is much ground for your trust, & act accordingly. But I mustn't ramble on so.

They are moving our goods to the station so we expect to be out of Egypt in very short order & thank the "powers that be" for that. There are more than frog & locust plagues in Pharaoh's land & some of them are always after me. Have just got over a month's isolation from Diphtheria & I have got to be quite careful for some time as it goes for the heart in this country. Like all the plagues in Egypt the results accruing may be much more dangerous than the original sickness. I got quite stout while in the hospital. They make you lie flat for eleven or twelve days, then you can sit up in bed for dinner & so on till you get to walking a little. I wasn't sick at all with the thing, but my stomach which is weak from the Dysentery of last summer is not as good as it might be. I expect the change of climate in England will set me up again. No more hot countries for me.

They got a positive swab from Bert's throat but it didn't affect his throat. The Dr. told him he'd never have the dip. The hospital has been closed for about three weeks & the boys are sure ready to go. It gets tiresome.

Now I must close and get this to the post. We hope to be in England when we get your next letters.

Don

Address: #7 Canadian General Hospital
c/o Army P. O.
London, England



Envelope for above letter to Lily.

Havre, April 23/16

Dear Father:

I am writing this on my knee sitting on the deck of the "Delta" which boat brought us up from Alex. We have certainly been moved about some during the last couple of weeks.

Took us first to Southampton, but we turned around and a few hours later came straight across to Havre.

We had a good trip up from Egypt although I was half sea-sick a lot of the time. We were also fortunate in passing Gibraltar in daylight; as a matter of fact we were lying outside the harbor for an hour or so, and this gave a good chance to see the place. It is surely a formidable hulk of rock, bristling with guns. The town looks quite Spanish with its pavilions and red roofs. The gardens look English. The buildings looked as though they were stuck on to the side of the steep escarpment leading up from the water. The Bay of Biscay got rough as usual, and I stayed in my bunk a good deal of the time. However when we reached the English Channel, everything was rosy again and consequently we forgot our sea-sickness, but were disappointed when we found we couldn't land or remain in England for awhile.

Now that we are here in France, we are becoming reconciled to our lot, and I sit here waiting for our next move with all my kit ready to hang on my back. I can look across the slip and see the town of Havre with its neat streets running down to the opposite docks. The buildings, here at least, are fine high four and five story grey and red brick ones. One of the prettiest sights I've seen was when coming in night before last, a dozen big search-lights were playing on the sky from Havre, keeping their eyes open for air raids. Just now a guard with fixed bayonet marched a German prisoner past me down to the "stateroom" in the bowels of this ship. They are taking him to England, and he appeared to be happy enough; in fact he's fortunate.

We are all well and I hope you people can say as much. I'll write again when we get settled and have more comfortable conditions for writing.

Lovingly,
Bert

Note re the Hospital Unit:

When the Allies withdrew from Gallipoli in early 1916, the Cairo Hospital moved to France to care for casualties on the Western Front in France and Belgium. In April they sailed on H.M.H. Ship Delta to Le Havre, and took the train to Etaples on the NE coast of France. Here they established a tent hospital of 1040 beds, and in winter moved into huts.

Of the thousands admitted to the hospital in Cairo and France, about 1/2 were eventually returned to duty, and 1/2 transferred to hospitals in England. Only about 1% of those admitted, died. Casualties in France included gas poisoning which produced bronchial and gastric problems. Shell shock symptoms included loss of speech, extreme nervousness and depression.

The Hospital gradually increased to over 2000 beds and maintained that level until the end of the war. In all respects it was a success.

"Somewhere in France"
May 5th/16

Dear People: -

Bert wrote you on Easter Sunday from our Port of landing in France, and no doubt you will be wondering what has happened in the meantime. Well that could be written in two words, almost nothing.

We left the boat and came here by train on Easter Sunday afternoon and night. The train crawled along very slowly and as it was very cold we almost froze to death. It is somewhat cold after being in Egypt. I think I shall soon get over the effects of the Diphtheria here. The country (we are right on the coast) is very beautiful - the town at the foot of the cliffs is not very large but for us that is all the better. The fields and orchards look so good after the sands of the desert, and it's apple blossom time in Normandy too.

We have found a little village inn out in the country which is very quiet and where we can get good food, fresh green stuff right out of the garden like radish and lettuce and onions, also good eggs and butter. That will help us out a lot with our army grub.

So far we have erected our own tents to live in and also a few store tents, but all our stores have not arrived yet and we won't likely be ready for work for a month yet. Our letters are very closely censored here in France, so if you just get notes saying we are well it's about all you can expect. There was a bundle of Owen Sound Suns came to us this morning from Isa* and we were very glad to get them.

I think we will like this country very well, it is very much like Ontario - more so than England, but it's the air that makes us feel good.

How is everything in the west this spring?

Had a long letter from Bert Martin and one from Bob Wilson this week.

Love to all
Don

* Isabelle Eager of Presque Isle, daughter of John MacKenzie, and first cousin to Don and Bert.



Jack, Grace, Norma and the new arrival - Jean MacKenzie Gordon

(Location censored ie.cut out)
May 27, 1919
(although year really 1916)

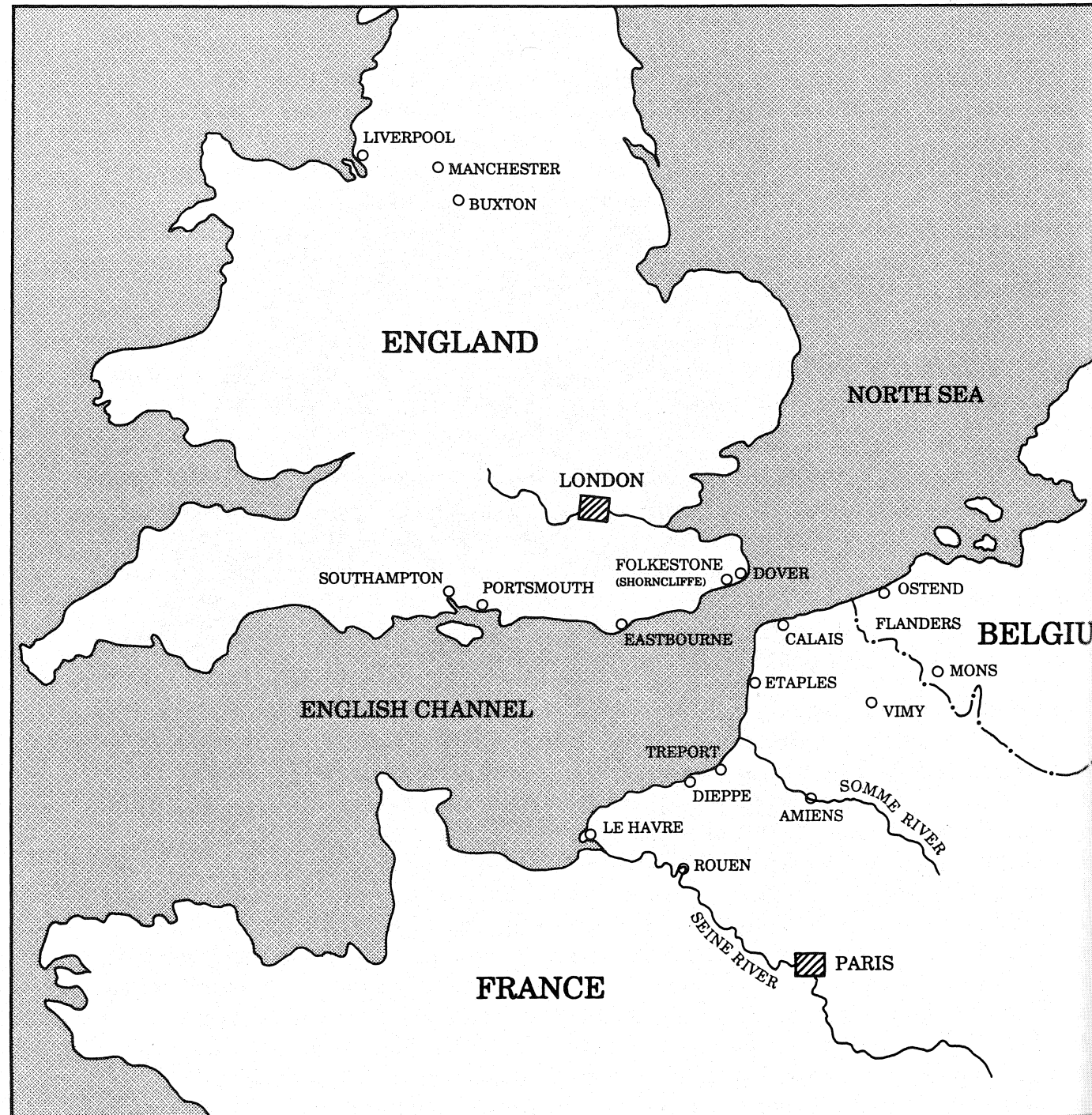
Dear Jack.

Some days ago I received your note dealing with my monetary matters. I'm terribly much obliged! The only thing I do not get is the fact that every month there should have been, beginning with Aug. 1915, a credit of \$21.00. with the exception of the two months Nov. and Dec. Those two months I had the money come to me. I notice Oct. and Jan. are missing from the statement. I shall have to see about it here through our paymaster. By the way when I look over the statement again I notice that Jan. is accounted for by the ck. on Feb. 11/16. So there is only one month missing. In..... (reverse of above censored location)..... note there was also one from Grace, so I'll answer both in this.

I'm glad Grace is quite well and that "Jean MacKenzie Gordon" is turning out to be a real success! We'll be sending along a real, Egyptian "Key of Life" to her right away quick. Don and I got it before we left Cairo but haven't sent it so far.

Well we have at last reached France, and find it a decided improvement on the land of heat and sand. We were very fortunate in getting away from Egypt when we did for the heat and flies were beginning to get fierce again. We were certainly in that country during the best eight months of the year, and I hope when we get back that the trip will have made an improvement on us. One can see a decided change for the better in all our fellows since coming to this climate; they have more "pep" and vim, which terms I suppose are one and the same thing.

We sailed from Alex. exactly eight months to a day from the day we landed in Alex. last year. Our boat was the Hospital Ship "Delta" and tho' not big, we were the only unit aboard and our quarters were good. I believe the day we landed in L'Havre either Don and I sent you a letter as we tried between us to get word away to all the people. We spent our Easter Sunday loading our stuff into box cars, about half as big as an American car. This took up the forenoon and in the P.M. we came up here by train. This was a dandy trip. The transition from the everlasting sand and desert heat to the verdant hills and vales of France was great. The day was bright and some of the hardwood groves we ran through were so much like Canadian bush that for a moment I imagined myself back there. We passed through Rouen but of course saw little of it but house tops and the spires of its famous Cathedrals. Sometime in the morning we reached Treport and at daybreak, without any breakfast, we commenced unloading our fifteen or twenty car-loads into motor Lorries and unloading these again at our camping ground. We worked our heads off at this and had had nothing to eat since noon the day before except a few hardtack some of us happened to save from that meal. By noon we were beginning to feel pretty weak. Such a thing was a military crime on the part of the men who were supposed to be looking after our welfare. But of course these same men being their own jury as in all such cases against privates, it was criminal only in theory. The tough part was



this that while we were doing all this slaving, moving hospital stores.....censored section removed....

Well here we are pretty well settled down, and given a bit freer hand combined with our growing knowledge of the place can at least get enough to eat while our money lasts.

To walk about the country here is great. It is much like England with its hollow, winding roads and fenceless fields,reverse of censored section..... base at high tide is washed by the Atlantic. The sunsets are glorious, and as the sun goes down in the direction of Canada and sinks into the bosom of the ocean, one thinks of home and wishes the time were ripe to go. I'm afraid if this homegoing is postponed much longer there will be some big life-changes. About all I'll be good for in a couple more years will be a homestead or country school.

Well, all well here, & I hope everything goes lovely there.

Love to all,
Bert

No. 7 General Hospital.



Grace

France, June 4th, 1916

My Dear Lily:

I shall try to get a letter off to you tonight. About all one can talk about is the weather on account of the censor. Even at that you can imagine how one feels like writing when someone else is to read it before it reaches its lawful reader - a million times harder than writing a treatise or thesis for a cranky old Prof. to make a mess of. That's a weak ending, but we'll let it pass this time. You can send this on to Morse and they can let Rose have a glimpse. That will help some, for I have before me seven letters leering at me their demand for answers. It usually takes me a day or more to write one decent letter so you can sympathize with me in the task before me.

I believe Don shipped an epistle to you the other day, but no matter. I'm going to answer the one I have here from you with Rose's enclosure. I guess you'll outlive the ordeal of getting one from each of us in one week.

Here I've covered a page & a half and nothing said. I'll begin by rereading yours and jot down a few notes and comments.

I suppose you are a bit anxious about us. I can understand how you feel - it's quite natural when you think, no doubt, that we are at least within sound of bursting shot and shell. But you needn't be, for I believe I can safely say that I'm sorry I've never heard a German cannon roar, nor have I seen a British trench, except some at the Suez one Sunday three of us managed to get passes for Port Said. So why need you worry? I only wish it were all over, I'd like to get back home.

You people have certainly had a tough time of it this winter, but I'm glad that all the sick ones are nicely recovered.



Jessie in Rosedale (Toronto)
May 24th, 1916

Had a letter from Jessie the other day but she mentioned nothing about "who's who, and why". I owe R.O.Y. a note. I wonder if he'll put on the clamps now! Wow!! I may need him yet. I wish Jessie had asked my stupendous advice before jumping to a too hasty conclusion! You see, I look at it from the selfish point of view. My College days are over not yet. I wish I were there with you so that we could laugh right and talk more freely too.

By the way Lud Horne* is in Prince Albert n'est ce pas? Rev. Mr. McIntosh went there from Kingston. I sang in his choir the last winter I was at Queens. Mr. McIntosh is a dandy man and he will be meeting Lud.



Bert in the choir at Queen's

Now for a few notes and criticisms on Rose's letter to you dated April 29, 1916. I wasn't very much interested in her first page, it was all about a new hat. Still I gleaned a few facts re this spring's styles so the page paid for itself on the round. She says she joined the "Assoc. for Better Schools in Sask." because "all the teachers were supposed to do so". However the few duties or objects she mentioned and the general idea seem good so maybe she looked into it before joining. I would like to take the opposite platform and argue the question with her. As one of our "clips" says, the less you know about a thing the better chance you have of arguing for or against it because you are then not bound by the limits of knowledge and can speak the more freely. Well, Rose, I'm glad you have a good school and congenial surroundings. I tell you things are going to come right in the not too distant future.

Weather seems to be very backward all over Canada this spring. I hope the latter end of the season will, in results, annul the effect of late seeding. But don't try doing too much in the way of organizing Sunday school along with your other work.

I'd like to get to Morse. I've never been there and it's so long since I've seen the people there, but there's a good time coming!

Well we've been having dandy weather here and our camping ground is about ideal on the brow of 400 foot chalk cliffs. We can watch the sun set into the Atlantic away off toward Canada. Our hospital is going to be entirely under canvas, but is not yet ready for opening its doors. Lights out will soon be sounding and I must get to the blankets.

Goodnight
Bert

* Dick's brother Lud. Dick and Lud started off in partnership in harness-making in Manitoba. Dick & Lily then went to Neepawa and set up Horne's Harness Shop; Lud went to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, and set up the Royal Oak Saddlery Co.

Y.M.C.A. H.M. Forces on Active Service
Letterhead

July 23, 1916

England

Dear Rose

Received a letter from you some time ago, before leaving France. But we have been terribly busy over there getting the hospital into shape and receiving convoys of wounded. Don & I were both working in the shop (a couple of tents) along with four or five other fellows and we had to hump all the time. Our hospital was entirely under canvas and we had to make much of the furniture together with splints of all shapes and sizes. Anyway we were busy! But France was interesting and a great change from Egypt. There are very few fences, and many hollow, winding roads. The people congregate in curious little villages with their farms out around the collection of tile or thatched roofed cottages. The people are a happy step up from the Egyptians and since coming back to old England we find another step up the ladder of worth. The English people are a great people after all and I suppose when we go to Scotland we'll still see a change for the better. Certainly when we go back to Canada we'll be able to appreciate the fact that the New World has all the rest "licked" to a frazzle. Canada is the first place on earth! There is absolutely no doubt of that.

You may be wondering what we are doing back in old "Blighty". Well, before Xmas we (ten of us) wrote or rather cabled Col. Hughes for commissions* and as time wore on and nothing came of it we tho't it had all petered out; but last Tuesday morning a letter came to our O.C. telling him to strike us off his strength and have us report at Shorncliffe for the purpose of trying out for vacancies to be filled here. So we came across and here we are. We shall make a try for artillery commissions and in three months or better we should go back to France with a couple of stars up at least. Meanwhile we must try to get to Scotland as we have had no official pass or leave for 16 months. I'm glad we're out of a medical unit, especially a Base hospital. Both Don and I are fine and are with six great men, eight of us came across**. At Boulogne we saw Mary McLeod for awhile. Lots of love.

Bert

* A copy of this telegram to Col. Sam Hughes, Canada's Minister of Militia has been misplaced. Apparently Don was one of, or the spokesman for the group. It was a request to get some of the Queen's contingent out of the hospital unit and into action in France as artillery officers. The British Army staff in Egypt were furious at having a group pulled out from their authority (and over their heads) by a "colonial" even if he were a Cabinet Minister. Throughout the war, there were continual difficulties for the "colonies" to achieve any sort of autonomy in their relationships with the British military. This action (telegram) by the group of eight (or 10) may have been a precedent, which paved the way for other transfers among infantry, navy and airforce, as well as artillery.

** The eight were all Queen's men, and included Corporals F.D. and R.J. MacKenzie and Privates W.R. Grassie, J.M. McIlquham and J.H. Odell. They transferred to take out Commissions in Artillery in England. Don and Bert had both been promoted to Corporal in June, 1916.

For God, For King, and For Empire

Y.M.C.A. AND THE CANADIAN WAR CONTINGENT ASSOC. WITH THE CANADIAN CONTINGENT ON ACTIVE SERVICE

Y.M.C.A. H.M. FORCES ON ACTIVE SERVICE

Y.M.C.A. AND THE CANADIAN WAR CONTINGENT ASSOC. WITH THE CANADIAN CONTINGENT ON ACTIVE SERVICE

PATRON
Y.M.C.A. NATIONAL COUNCIL
H. M. THE KING

PATRON
MILITARY CAMP DEPT.
H.R.H. DUKE OF CONNAUGHT
(Governor-General of Canada)

Reply to _____ Company _____ Batt. _____ Regt. _____ July 23rd 1916

Stationed at Dear Rose

Received a letter from you some time ago, before leaving France. But we have been terribly busy over there, getting the hospital into shape and receiving convoys of wounded. Don & I were both working in the shop (a couple of tents) along with four or five other fellows and we had to hump all the time. Our hospital was entirely under canvas and we had to make much of the furniture together with splints of all shapes and sizes. Anyway we were busy! But France was interesting and a great change from Egypt. There are very few fences, and many hollow, winding roads. The people congregate in curious little villages with their farms out around the collection of tile or thatched roofed cottages. The people are a happy step up from the Egyptians and since coming back to old England we find another step up the ladder

Central Station Hotel
Glasgow, July 30, 1916

Dear Grace & Jack

We have very nearly gone over Scotland. Did you know we were back from France? A couple of weeks ago eight of us - arts men - received orders to proceed to Shorncliffe in order to take out commissions. While waiting for school to open we got six days leave and came straight to Scotland.

First of all we hit Edinburgh, and put up at a Soldier's Rest or something. We did not care much for the accommodation so since we have infested the best hotels we could find. Well we, being short of time, planned to stay only a day and night in each town. I liked Edin. very much and was sorry we could not have stayed longer there, but hastening on we landed next in Aberdeen which, I believe, is the finest place I've seen yet, probably because they keep it so clean, and because of the substantial appearance of the white granite buildings.

From Aberdeen we went to Inverness, from which District came the famous Clan MacKenzie - Rothshire was their native haunts we were informed, and from there they used to sally forth and steal the neighboring sheep and chickens.

We put up at the Caledonian Hotel in Inverness and the hospitality shown us could not have been more complete. There were only three of our crowd left by now - McIlquham, Don and I. We arrived there about six on Friday night and after eating dinner we went for a walk upon the banks of the River Ness. Next morning we telegraphed for four extra days leave, and then to help us put in the forenoon our host got us a car and very kindly sent along a couple of bonnie Scotch lassies to explain and help us enjoy the country about Inverness. We ran away up the river and along Loch Ness. It was great! A sort of mist hung down like a mantle over the peaks of some of the hills and these were made more beautiful by the effect of shadows and sunshine upon them, distance lending a deeper blue to the shadows on the hills. So far we were growing ever fonder of the land of our forebears, but since then that fondness has been a bit dissipated, for apparently we have been leaving the aesthetic Scotland and have come into the sordidly material aspect.

Leaving Inverness by the "Highland Line" we came down through the high lands to Stirling, intending to stop off at that most historic spot. We did; and made our way to the "Golden Lion". But everybody there was hilariously drunk; moreover the whole town seemed in like condition, so after we had eaten at a restaurant we gave up our rooms at the "Golden Lion" and caught the eleven train for Glasgow.

This morning we got up in time for church and found the Glasgow Cathedral. After lunch we took a sight seeing trip out to Loch Lomond via train. We slept most of the way out. Out there we made ourselves part of a launch load and enjoyed a whirl around on the bosom of Loch Lomond - the "Queen of Scottish waters". There is no doubt about it, the Loch is grand, but I've seen more rugged banks and lakes with

more of native beauty than it has, right in Northern Ontario. Maybe we haven't the same bluish colouring to the hills, but that's all we haven't got.

By the way, in case we get a chance to come up here again, are there any places or relatives, or what not that we could visit? It might make the trip more interesting to us at least, I do not know how it would appeal to those we visit. However you might send along some addresses if you have any. Girl's addresses preferred!! - if they're good cooks!

Well it's bed time so bye bye. You might let Aimee read this if you people live through it, after Canada I like Scotland better than any land we've struck. There is no doubt the Scotch are the salt of the earth. It's too bad they hadn't the country to themselves. As McIlquham says, "If I lived here I'd long to fight the English as in days of Bruce!"

Lovingly
Bert



No. 5 Stationary Hospital "Queens" Vehicle "Donated by A. Davis and Son, Kingston, Canada"
The Unit arrived in France from Egypt in April, 1916 and was entirely under canvas. Bert and Don left the Unit after 3 months (July, 1916), transferring to the Artillery.

**Y.M.C.A. H.M. Forces on Active Service
Letterhead**

Folkestone, Aug. 20, 1916

Dear Jack & Grace

You will probably have had word ere this that we are in England. If I remember rightly I wrote you from Aberdeen, at least we sent some few parcels home from there and other spots we touched in Scotland.

The first thing I want is some money, and if there is anything to my credit there I wish you would send me five pounds by express order, i.e., I want the full five here. We are lying around here doing nothing just now waiting for the school to open for us, and as we may get another leave of absence I'll need some extra cash. We draw only two pounds per month and that doesn't go very far in England. They certainly fleece us Canadians in this country.

We had a dandy trip through Scotland; that is certainly the country to go to on a vacation. We felt right at home as soon as we crossed the border and got a whiff of the blue hills and heather. France was a wonderfully pleasant change from Egypt and so was England over France, but the best we've struck yet is Scotland and especially the taste of the Highland which we had around Inverness. From London we went over the Eastern line to Edinburgh. There we stayed over night and most of the following day - Wed. That evening we ran up to Aberdeen via Dundee. We stayed the same length of time in Aberdeen, and if I ever take any post grad work I want to take it there. Aberdeen seems to be a very pretty place, everything is so clean and substantial, and the girl conductors on the trains are so obliging!! Then we went across to Inverness. Don and McIlquham and I were together, the other five having hiked off to other places.

At Inverness we were afraid we might be stopped as it is in a special military area and we had no special passes. But nothing was said to us, altho' all civilians were stopped at the station. We found our way out into the street and almost immediately McIlquham saw away up the end of a street the big brass letters spelling out "Caledonian Hotel" and nothing would do but we should go there, he said it looked and sounded like home. So there we went and it measured up to our highest hopes, even to the old full dressed servant who so proudly sounded the wondrous dinner gong just as in days of yore. That gong was one of the features of the trip. It had a deep, deep, mellow tone, and grandly it swept from a low growl into a crescendo of wondrous power, just as a mountain torrent finding its source in a cloud-swept peak flows downward and gradually increases into a mighty flood. Then it would die down and burst forth in frenzied gusts and crashes until it died away in spent elation. So much for the old Highland gong! Next morning we wired headquarters for a four days extension to our passes and got it. That forenoon the proprietor of the house got a motor car for us and sent his daughter and another scotch lassie from Edinburgh along with us. That's real scotch hospitality - quoth I.

We motored up along the Ness River to Loch Ness. The Loch was all broken up with a choppy sea and lent a suitable wildness to the rough, brown hills whose sides were spotted with the purple bloom of heather and whose distant peaks were enfolded in a grey mist, and more distant still, softened by a haze. There is no doubt about it, yon was a grand picture, but I can't see where it can beat our own Canadian beauty spots. The girls said we had an "awfully beautiful accent". But we disclaimed all credit, assuring them they had it all and more.

On that drive we crossed the Caledonian Canal twice, and going over the first time we had quite a task to get past the kilted guard on the bridge. The girls had their passes O.K. and we finally appeased him by letting him see our furlough passes. We journeyed on! Well, we left Inverness reluctantly, and hied ourselves to Stirling, at which most historic burg we counted on putting in a most profitable Sabbath.

We landed via the "Highland Line" in Stirling about 8 o'clock o' a Sat. evening, and having been recommended to stay at the Golden Lion we hiked to that stopping house of fame. No one seemed to be stirring, but finally we were met in the hall by an old "hen" who gave us the wobbly highball and at great length at last understood that we were badly in need of rooms. She led us upstairs laughing and making herself generally ridiculous, on tottering "pins" we asked her if we shouldn't register, but "bless you, no! any time will do for that, noo". We washed and hurried down town for a warm meal, which having procured and demolished with dispatch, we sought out information as to churches and means of getting to points of interest 'of a Sunday'. But the whole town seemed as pickled as the Golden Lion Staff which led us to think that if it weren't a regular Saturday night celebration, peace must have been declared. No one knew of churches that we asked, but "there was a good moving picture show in town". Feeling that Stirling was a poor place for us to spend the Sabbath in, we paid up our rooms, caught the first train and beat it for Glasgow. McIlquham's enthusiasm over Scotland was slightly squelched but in due course was revived again.

On Sunday morning we went to service in Glasgow Cathedral. I enjoyed it. In the p.m. we went out and had a sail on Loch Lomond while it very kindly rained for us, but being war hardened veterans we minded it not.

Don left us in Glasgow. He journeyed back over the border to hunt up Jack Scott who was invalided back to England from Egypt. Jack was much better, by the way, and yesterday, I understand, left for Canada.

From Glasgow McIlquham and I went south west to Maybole where Mac had friends he was to visit - a Mrs. Gunn who had lived in Montreal for a time, but came back to Scotland with her husband when his health played out in Canada. Mr. Gunn died after they got back in Scotland, and Mrs. Gunn with her daughter and another lady look after a convalescent home for slum children from Glasgow. Her only son is with the Argyle & Sutherland Highlanders in France and so far is unhurt. They gave us a great time there, drove down to the west coast and saw

dimly the outline of Ireland's coast. Also Ailsa Craig or "Paddy's Mile Stone". There were 76 kiddies, boys and girls, in the home while we were there and they certainly were an interesting lot.

Mac & I played football with the boys for a while and that p.m. while it rained, the children put on a sort of a concert for us and incidently to amuse themselves. Miss Gunn & Miss Moody certainly took a great interest in training the children and some of them were real good. Mac and I sang a verse of the "Maple Leaf" for them, and they listened till we were finished.

From Maybole we went back to Glasgow and down over the Midland Route to London where we spent our last two days. I spent most of the days in Book Stalls and at night we all went to plays. Saw "Daddy Long Legs" and "Faust".

Since coming back here we have been doing nothing but dodge parades and get out of camp at every opportunity. The other day McIlquham, Grassie and I hiked over to an oat field and showed the blokes there how grain was stoked in Canada. They're awfully slow, but poor ginks, I don't suppose they can help it. They own no land and have nothing to look forward to but drudgery all their lives. One fellow (about 45 years old) we talked to, had never been out of Kent. He said he got "nearly to London once"!

The English people seem to look on this as simply a great commercial enterprise. They aren't worrying, except the mothers and such. Probably therein lies their strength. But war certainly demoralizes Christianity - people can say what they like otherwise.

Well everything is pretty good, and I must get ready for dinner. Send my mail c/o Luton Hut, Y.M.C.A., Folkestone, Eng. You might let Aimee have a look at these sheets also and 'twill save my writing an extra letter.

Love to all.
Bert

Y.M.C.A. H.M. Forces on Active Service

Folkestone, August 22, 1916
c/o Luton Hut Y.M.C.A.

Dear Lily & Rose

I have a few minutes to spare before dinner and shall send you a note. I have been reading the "Cloister on the Hearth" all morning and am tired of the said reading to the extent that I need a rest and so shall write you.

McIlquham has just told me an old Yorkshire yarn. I tho't it good so pass it on. An old Yorkshire Lady took a little girl from a poor-house and gave her a home until she was 16 years old, at which time the girl was becoming a fine help to her. But one day she was enticed to leave the old Lady and accept a position as servant to a farmer. The old lady was sorry to see the child go, but when a friendly neighbor sympathized with her, she answered that one could but expect such things, and quoted this Bible passage as proof. - "Train up a child, an' away it do go".

Well, enough of frivolity! Let's to work! As you probably know, Don & I along with 6 others were recalled from old No. 7 to England to train and take commissions (if we can qualify). We've been here a month and haven't got started yet. Just now we are attached to the C.A.M.C. Training School and are awaiting orders to report to the school.

A few days after getting back from France we got 10 days leave of absence and all hiked for Scotland. As France was ahead of Egypt, and England better than France, so was Scotland far removed from them all. The best land we've struck since leaving Canada. Leaving London by the Eastern line we went first to Edinburgh, stayed there over night and part of next day. We put up at a soldier's Club and in the morning I arranged to have a bath. I climbed in and at that point an attendant brought in a big black bottle, some of the contents of which he proceeded to pour into the hot water and then I tho't that it must surely be true that Scotchmen bathe in whiskey. However the bottle contained a strong disinfectant which every soldier is supposed to be in need of, coming from barracks. I like Edinburgh very much, but had too small a space of time in hand to enjoy it in full. The most interesting things I saw were Holy Rood Palace, John Knox's house and Glasgow Castle.

From Edinburgh we went via Dundee to Aberdeen. It is a clean substantial grey granite city, very much like German towns they say. It is about the cleanest looking city I've seen. From here McIlquham, Don and I went across to Inverness. The others had gone to other points. At Inverness we could look across the Firth into the hills of Rothshire, the home of the clan MacKenzie. We began to feel at home, somehow, Scotland gives freely that feeling. We stayed at the Caledonian Hotel and were used the very best possible. We had good names to go to the Highlands with.

The proprietor of the house supplied us with a motor car and a couple of Scotch lassies to show us the country. We motored up the River Ness to Loch Ness,

crossing the Caledonian canal, which being the boundary of a special military area, was guarded and we had quite a time getting past, even tho' we were Canadians in khaki. Loch Ness is a long, narrow lake with high, rough hills around about. On that day it was cut up with a choppy sea which lent a harmonious wildness to the brown ruggedness of the hills, picturesquely patched with bloom' purple heather. The hills, whose peaks were capped in mist, in the distance faded away in a warm haze. It was all as beautiful as could be, but no better than our own Canadian beauty spots.

From Inverness we travelled over the famous Highland Line across the Grampian Hills, and rushing down the Southern slope landed in the middle of Stirling about 8 o'clock of a Sat. night. We expected to spend Sunday in that Historic Town. So, as directed we hunted up the "Golden Lion" and tried to get rooms. Everybody was soused to the eyes - maids and men, at last tho' we all got into one room with two beds, and after getting washed up we went down town to get some what to eat. We also tried to find from the citizenship some information regarding ways and means of spending the Sabbath in Stirling. About all we could gather was that modes of travel to points of interest would be silent on the morrow. "Didn't know anything about the churches". "There was a good movie in town"! Everybody seemed to the casual observer to be drunk. We went back to the Golden Lion, paid for our beds and catching the first train, beat it for Glasgow.

Glasgow is first and last, a hard headed commercial city and the home of the "Clyde boats". The greatest in all the world. We, in the a.m. attended service in Glasgow Cathedral and in the p.m. ran out to Loch Lomond on whose famous bosom we made merry in a motor boat while the heavens quietly weeped, so they did. Glasgow University is much like Queen's. It is up on a hill and quite close are the Art Gallery, Museum & etc.

From there (Glasgow) Don hiked back over the border to see Jack Scott, one of our boys who was invalided home from Egypt. Jack was much better and the other day got his discharge and has gone to Canada. He was in second year Divinity at Queens. McIlquham and I went out to Maybole to see friends of his there. They look after a Convalescent Home for Glasgow slum children, and there were 76 very much alive children inside while we were there. They were very interesting. Mac's friends took us for a drive in the evening down a beautiful Scotch road, winding, wooded and wonderful, to the south east coast of Scotland. We could see the dim outline of Ireland and quite close, Ailsa Craig or Paddy's milestone. Scotch hospitality can't be beaten and regretfully we started back to London via the Midland Route. The last two days of our leave we spent in London, the most of which time I infested the book stalls. This is the country for books. But they don't know of Nellie McClung yet!! Those two nights in London we saw a couple of plays - "Daddy Long Legs" and "Faust".

And here we are back to camp with no word about starting to school yet. I wish they would start something. This bally war is going to run well into next year yet.

Excuse scribble, I must stop and leave room for Don. Let Rose read this if you think it feasibly worth while. It will save elbow grease at this end. "How are you fixed for money"? "We must economise"! I'm broke; such rendereth me secure. Am enclosing a bit I read in the London news this morning. There are some real English ladies yet. Letters are poor mediums of conversation, there is much that should be talked over. Some day soon I hope we'll be able to sit over some dozen or so lemon pies, apples pies, butterscotch pies, pies, pies and coffee cups, and "conflab". I want it all. Here's hopin'!

Love to all.
Bert

2nd Battery, Reserve Bgde., C.F.A.
Ross Barracks Shorncliffe 30:9:16

My Dear Jack.

Received your dandy letter a couple of mails ago, and also the order. Thanks very much for your trouble in this, and also for looking after my monetary affairs etc. in Canada. I little thought I should be away so long and what is more I'm afraid we'll be away for another year yet. But we're living in hopes of being back, at most, a year from this Xmas if not before. This Xmas we shall spend in England at the rate we are now moving. Those in "high places" are apparently in little hurry to send us into action. We are getting a very thorough course, and it is a very practical one. I tho't when we left France that we should be back there again in at least four months, but here it is running close to two and a half months and we are still "unfinished". I hardly expect we'll leave England before next spring, as activities are bound to lessen very much with the winter weather and consequently they'll not need many men. And I have no very great desire to go over this winter and live among the muck and frost of a winter's campaign.

Yes we are (Don & I) well recovered from any bad effects that Egypt may have had on us, and I hope we shall remain so. Even the shaking up we get in learning to ride seems unable to hurt us, so I guess we're O.K. We were sorry too, that we didn't know the address of your people, while in Scotland, but if we get another chance to go up there we shall try to look them up. We miss the social side of life very much. While in Egypt I was one of a male quartet and as a result got to know the American Mission People in Cairo. There were some fine families and gave us a good time which included some great meals, just like home. We, being the only Canadians in Cairo, rather appealed to them; said we were really Americans, or very similar. We have met none such in England.

It was certainly fine that Grace should be able to get back to old haunts. There is something alluring about going back to a place of childhood, after a long absence. By the time this reaches you, Grace will be back with you again. You people there should not worry about us. We're not worrying so there is no sense in anyone else doing so. But still I can understand how those at home pay the price much more so than those who go to the front. It's the disheartening waiting that kills, and the right thing for those at home is to be cheerful over what has to be. I think that is possible and should be attempted at least. We are unlikely to be in France again before the late spring and much may happen in that time. So why not be happy for six months anyway - We are! Candidly, altho' I'd be mighty glad to see peace declared tonight, I'd like to see fighting before I go back home; I'd like to pump some 18 pound shells into old Fritz and gallop a Battery towards Berlin before the final setting. That will be about next August. I'm mighty glad Alvin is making good, but I "suspected" as much. It is well that we get something clever into the family even if we have to marry it in, eh?* That's the way I'll have to work my share, I think.

* This is a reference to the marriage of Aimee to Dr. Alvin Mathers of Winnipeg

Yes, Norman is looking after Don's Insurance, and has fixed up this year's premium. It is terribly good of you to wish to help me through college. I wish you could give me some brains or concentration of latent powers. That would help. Really this war is lasting so long that I shall be "over-old" to think of a five year's med. course. I'd like it fine but time and money are at a premium at this stage of life and what I want is something that will get me into a life's work quickly. One of my troubles is that of liking mostly anything I've tried excepting soldiering. I could never be a permanent military man. I'm seeing the craziness of the thing more and more every day I live and the more I have to do with it. But a course I feel very much inclined to go after is this:- one more year at Queen's in Arts and Science combined and one year at O.A.C.* in manual training. That will in two years, give me a degree and standing worth while in any collegiate or normal school, which also would be fine work. As for preaching, I've about given up that idea. The Churches have to be vastly remodeled and I think one can do more in that line outside the pulpit. I can't discuss that here; it would run into volumes. What do you think of my plans? I've certainly learned a heap about men these last two years.

I haven't taken many pictures since leaving Egypt, but shall send along some more negatives in a few days. I'm glad you like the ones I sent. They'll be more interesting when explained, and to me they'll bring back the trip in a way nothing else could.

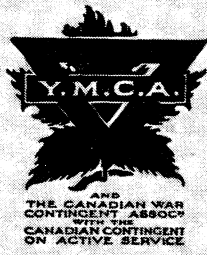
Thanks very much for the girl you have picked for me, and return the love and kisses she sends. Tell her she might write me, - that we may thusly become slightly acquainted before I return. But what if I have already picked one for myself? Lights are going out, so I'll write again soon, Love to all.

Bert

* Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph



For God, For King, and For Empire



PATRON
Y.M.C.A. NATIONAL COUNCIL
H. M. THE KING

PATRON
MILITARY CAMP DEPT.
H.R.H. DUKE OF CONNAUGHT
(Governor-General of Canada)

Reply to _____ Company A Batt. 9th Batt C.T.D. Oct 4 1916

Stationed at St. Martins Plains.

Shorncliffe Tent.

Dear Mr. Home.

No doubt you will be surprised to get a letter from the boy who used to bother you occasionally when my mother was in Nepeawa Hospital, but father wishes me to write to you so I will try and tell you something about this life.

I came over to England on May 5 1916, with the 63rd Battalion from Edmonton Alberta, and have had quite a few changes of camps. Our Battalion was broken up to reinforce some of the battalions in the 1st Division in France and a few that were not lucky enough to get to France were sent to the 9th Reserve Battalion C.T.D.

When I will be sent to France I do not know as I am a bugler and have a pretty good job for a while.

Our camp is near Folkestone so we have a good chance for a change, though Folkestone may be a good place in peace times it is not much now.

The 9th Battalion is a Training Depot where drafts of different battalions come for training before being sent to the front. This is a sample of a days work. Reveille 5³⁰. Parade 6⁰⁰. Breakfast 6⁴⁵. Parade 7⁴⁵. till 12 noon Parade 1⁰⁰ till 4³⁰ P.M. From 4³⁰ till 9³⁰ we are free. The men we taught Bayonet fighting, Musketry, Bombing Trenching and Physical Training so you can see they are pretty busy.

There are thousands of Canadians here Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, Transport & Medical Corps besides there are smaller detachments of Machine Gun Corps, Bombing schools

There are many more things I would like to tell you but our letters are censored going out so it would be no use writing.

I am on guard just now and have not much time so you will pardon this short note. Please remember me to Mrs. Home.

I remain

Yours very truly,
Alton Millin

P.S. This address will always find me.

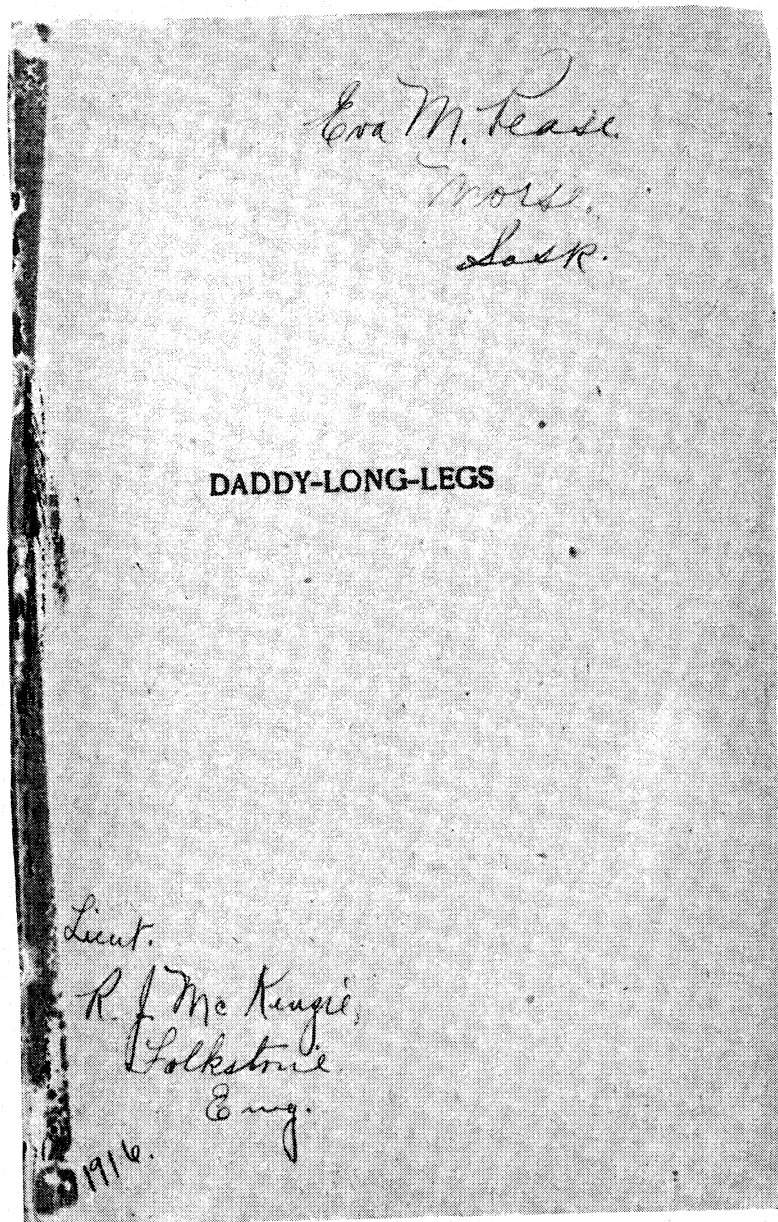
Bugler A.W. Millin

No 466987. A. Coy

9th Res. Batt C.T.D.

Army Post Office.

London Eng.



First page of the book Bert sent to Eva



Eva Pease

Y.M.C.A. H.M. Forces on Active Service

2nd Battery Reserve Bgde.,
C.F.A. Ross Barracks
Shorncliffe 2:10:1916

Dear Eva.

I was awfully glad to read the letter of yours. It was well written and made me think! Do you like reading and what do you like? I mean what sort of reading do you like? Last night I mailed a book to you, "Daddy Long Legs". It is a story of an orphan girl (told in her own letters) who had as a start in life very much of a hard time but who made good when given the chance. I saw it played while in London and tho't it grand. The book is great too and I think you will like it. Am glad you received the things we sent from Scotland and am only sorry that we hadn't more money to get more for the people at home, because there are so many pretty things in Scotland; as a matter of fact I would like to take Scotland home with me. I'm going to send some more books as time goes on, because this is, "of a truth", a land of books.

It will be much nicer when you can live in Morse*, especially while you are in the office there. I hope you continue to like the work. You must have grown so much since I last saw you, and you have had quite an insight into life, but by the tone of your letter you certainly have the courage to meet and walk over all the rough places. Rough places make the sweetest lives if properly tended, and you apparently look on life from a sane viewpoint. Write when you can, and talk over your affairs, for you made me interested in you. I should like to see you again!

We, Don and I, are at last well started into our training here at Shorncliffe. We have been at the artillery School about 4 1/2 weeks; the first 2 1/2 weeks we did nothing but work on the big guns - 18 pounders - and I found it very interesting. Since then we have been learning to ride a horse according to the military way. This is very hard work but also funny at times, as often some of the riders get into peculiar positions. For instance, one day the Instructor had us trotting about the school without stirrups and one short fellow was so shaken up that he slid around until all I could see of him was a foot sticking up over the saddle, a couple of hands grasping the crest of the horse's neck and his eyes peering over just between his hands. The poor fellow was doing his level best to climb back on again, but the gruff Instructor roared, - "Who in hell ordered you to dismount"? Later when taking the jumps this same fellow left his saddle and landed astraddle the horse's neck just back of the animal's ears. While the Sergeant Instructor remarked with sarcastic

* The family moved off the farm into the town of Morse in 1916, following the death (appendicitis) of Lillian, on November 11, 1915 at 18 years of age. Eva worked in the Morse Post Office.

THE 18 POUNDER Q.F. (QUICK FIRING) FIELD GUN

The "18 pounder" was developed by the British in 1906 after the Boer War. It was designed to be highly mobile and quick firing, and along with the trench mortars, to work in close support of the infantry - up to 400 yards behind the front line. Other heavier artillery with longer range, e.g. siege guns, were employed from further back. The 18 pounder fired an 18.5 lb. shell of 84 mm calibre up to 9000 yards at a maximum rate of fire of 20 rounds per minute. It was mounted on two wheels and generally horse-drawn with the aid of a limber - a container of shells also mounted on a pair of wheels which could be attached to the gun for transportation. Ammunition columns using mules and horses brought shells up to the battery. There were usually 6 guns to a battery, although this number varied during the war. (One of these guns is currently in the CFB Shilo Museum in Manitoba.)

The 18 pounder was the backbone of the British (including Canadian) field artillery in France during World War I. It and the Lee-Enfield rifle were the two weapons most representative of Canadian arms in that war. Canada's artillery record in the war was unsurpassed, due in part to effective scientific techniques of locating enemy guns by sight and sound. This method was developed by General Andy McNaughton, the commander of the heavy artillery. The 18 pounder gave tremendous protection and support to the advancing infantry because of its rapid accurate fire and mobility. General McNaughton was described after the war as "the greatest gunner in the world". His philosophy was to win battles with accurate gunfire - not with the lives of men. By 1918 the Canadian artillery was probably the best in the entire European theatre.

The effect of artillery was devastating on both personnel and materiel, and possibly over half of all World War I casualties were caused by artillery. About 100 million 18 pounder shells were fired during the war. Canada entered World War II with the 18 pounder, but it was fitted with a 25 pounder barrel, and thus modified, became one of the best field guns of that war.

The Canadian Field Artillery standard badge, worn on the cap, was a gun with a wheel, and the artillery motto:

"Quo Fas Et Gloria Ducunt" -- "Where duty and glory lead".

The lapel badge was the grenade bomb with a distinctive flame.



Cap Badge



Lapel Bomb

"The guns - thank God - the guns!" - Wellington's hard-pressed infantrymen.

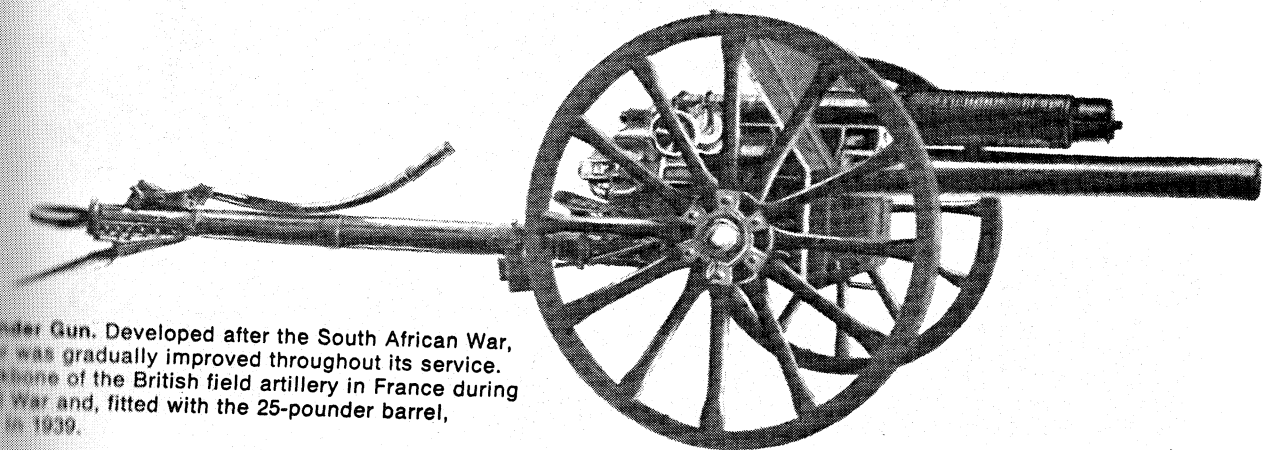
smoothness, - "Now, bombardier, that's not the way to dismount", and so it goes from day to day. One wants to laugh, but the Instructor would be quite angry, and we get "bawled out" very often as it is. We have much to learn yet, before we become officers, - signalling, military Law, Interior Economy, Lines of Fire and a dozen, dozen other things that I'll be able to tell you more about when we shall have finished with them.

I expect we'll spend this Xmas in England, in fact may spend all winter here. I'm not anxious to get to France during the winter. We're quite well and I only hope you are all just as well.

Love to all.
Bert



An 18 pounder field gun at Shilo Museum
(picture courtesy of CRA Artillery Museum, CFB Shilo, Manitoba)



18 pounder Gun. Developed after the South African War, the 18 pounder was gradually improved throughout its service. It was the backbone of the British field artillery in France during World War I and, fitted with the 25-pounder barrel, continued to be used there in 1939.

- courtesy 26th Field Regiment Museum, Brandon

Luton Hut, Y.M.C.A.
Folkestone, Oct. 15:16

Dear Jack.

Sorry to trouble you so soon again, but I need some more cash. We have to do some studying on this course and we can't manage to do so in the crowded tents; moreover the weather is getting wet and cold and the ground about the camp like a barnyard after a weeks rain, so the five of us have secured rooms in Sandgate, just below our camp and we are spending our nights and spare time here at "Canterbury Cottage, Castle Road, Sandgate". Then a show once in a while combined with getting a good meal down town in the evenings (we grow stale on army grub) runs us pretty close each pay. I expect we shall be given our full commissioned pay when we are through, that is we shall get it dated from the time we've commenced this course. The Col. says we shall get it, so that will help out quite a bit when we get that lump sum of back pay. But if you will send me another Post Office Order of five pounds it should hold me until Xmas. and then I shall be able to navigate by myself.

We are fine here in our rooms; sleeping between white sheets again and the lady of the house looks after the room. She can't do too much for us, makes tea and gets lunch for us every night, and, at the end of the week she gives us a bill of the grub and we settle with her. She merely charges us the cost price of the stuff and she can buy it more cheaply than we can. We have an upstairs room and a downstairs front room. Three of us sleep in this latter, and we also do our writing, studying, eating and entertaining in it. It contains a dandy large table, easy chairs, a double & single bed, a fire place & cupboards etc. Much better than board floors and coarse, gray blankets.

Don has gone on a weekend pass to London, he'll be back tomorrow morning. We finished our ride Friday afternoon and right glad I am. The Col. and Riding Master were in to look us over and put us thru' about as hard a drill for about two hours as we could ever expect to do. The horses were wringing wet when we finished, but I enjoyed it all, the wilder the better, and the harder the horse bucks now the better the ride. We go back on gun drill tomorrow and I expect we shall be at least two more months on this course. One sure thing we'll be here over Xmas.

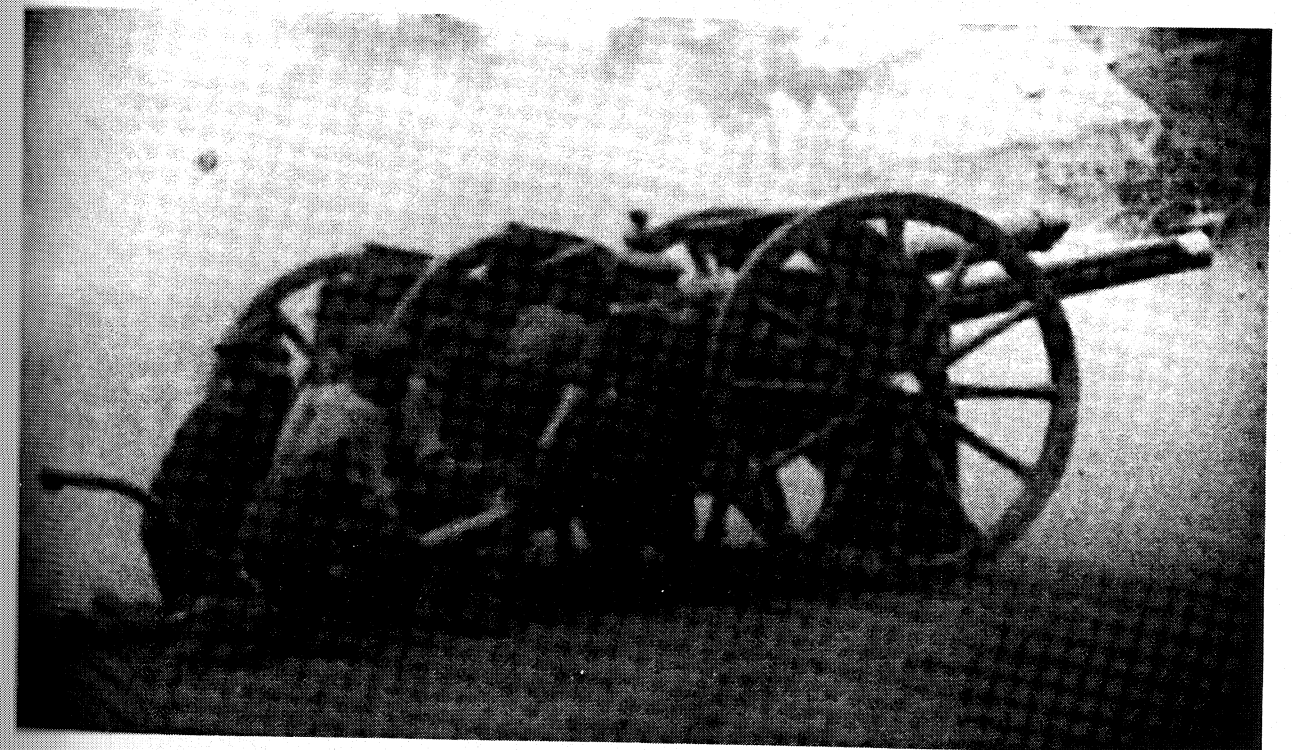
Had a letter from your mother, and if we get a chance to visit Scotland we shall call around. I hope we can get six days or so around Xmas.

Well, everyone is O.K. here. Hope you are fine at 502.* I suppose you'll be glad to have Grace and Norma back again. Make out the Post Office Order on Folkestone Post Office. They pay the face value, but the Express charge me 1/6 exchange.

In one more year I hope to be back in Canada. This war will last well into another year I believe and then we'll hike for home as quickly as we can.

Sincerely
Bert

* 502 Camden Place, Winnipeg



Training with the 18 pounder field gun
(picture courtesy CRA Artillery Museum, CFB Shilo, Manitoba)

Luton Hut Y.M.C.A.
Pleydell Gardens
Folkstone Oct. 25, 1916

Dear People -

It is time for another letter in your direction. Have been going to write for some time now but it's the usual story.

We have been kept pretty busy since coming to the artillery and we like the work very much. It is very interesting after being in a hospital. We were first put on gun drill on the 15 and 18 pounders for about three weeks.

Very few (if any) 15 pounders in service now but we took the drill on them to get accustomed to laying them. The 18 pounder quick firing (field) gun is a fine piece of machinery and nice to work around. It corresponds to the French .75 but is not as fast in action.

After three weeks on the guns, we were put on the ride and were at riding for four weeks until we passed out of that class. During that time we did nothing but attend to our horses and ride. We were fed up with that before we finished.

Attending stables as they do it in the army does not appeal to me. We had some rare sport on the ride. Most of the work is done without stirrups, and trotting & cantering and taking the jumps for two hours at a stretch without stirrups gets pretty tiresome. They teach you to grip the saddle with your knees. Well about half an hour of gripping with the knees and your legs become paralyzed and you've got to sit your horse by balance alone. Some of the fellows have never been on a horse & you can imagine the fun when they go around the school for the first time. Of course if a fellow falls off, the sergeant instructor angrily asks him "who told you to dismount" generally in lurid language.

After our ride was passed out (there were 17 in the class) we spent another week on practical gunnery (section, drill & laying) and passed out last Saturday. This week we entered C class where we are getting lectures on equipment signalling, veterinary lectures, - feeding care & ailments of horses, etc. etc. The equipment takes up harness & saddlery & all the parts and workings of an 18 pounder etc. etc. also limbers & wagons and ammunition. It's a pretty stiff course but practical and very interesting. Then later we get advanced gunnery lectures (largely mathematical), range finding and all connected with it, map making & reading and all that's connected with that. The signalling takes up the Semaphore, (Morse code) buzzer (like a telegraph instrument) & the field telegraph, telephone and line work. We won't be through with the course by the end of the year by all appearances. Then when we do get through goodness only knows when we will get a position.

We will no doubt be in England all winter. That's a pretty safe bet. Well if they leave us in this part of England we can't kick as we have things pretty comfortable here. Five of us have two rooms in a cottage in Sandgate just ten minutes walk

from camp right beside the sea and we have sleeping out passes, so we spend no more time than necessary in camp. Its very muddy around the tents now - blankets & everything gets full of dirt and we certainly appreciate coming to our rooms at night taking off our clothes & getting into some light clothes & sitting beside a grate fire in the fire place. It isn't much like soldiering but its very comfortable. Then we can do a little studying although many of the boys like to come in beside our fire and talk or sing. We have quite a library but so far all the reading I've done has been on the work. However from now on we shall have to study pretty hard as we are getting into the study subjects.

As usual I owe everyone letters but have written more letters in the two months I've been here than I did in the last year.

Sunday before last I spent the week end at London & Croydon. Had an invitation to visit an English family at Croydon. I had met the lady on the train coming from Scotland & she invited me up. A married daughter of hers stays with her while her husband is at the front & her own husband is also at home. They were very fine people & have a beautiful home. Spent Saturday afternoon & evening with Arthur Husband in London. Met him on the street just back from the Somme, going to Canada for a commission. Spent Sunday forenoon and to church with Bert Martin. He is better again. Enjoyed the week end. Must close now. Hope everyone is well.

The war still going strong. French did a big days work yesterday at Verdun. Great fighters. But the Rumanians are in bad shape just now & the allies don't seem to be able to give them much help.

Love to all.
Don

Canterbury Cottage, Castle Road
Sandgate, Kent, Oct. 25, 1916

Dear Grace.

I wrote Jack a few days ago. Before you finished your last letter you and Norma were safely back home. I wish I were there too!

You surely had a dandy trip. It would be fine and certainly interesting to visit around the old home. How was Selena? I wonder if Mr. Beckett still thinks that there must be something wrong since Selena and I grew tired of sending a postcard once in a while.

Well, we are getting along very fairly on our course. Have finished riding and gun drill and are taking mostly lectures now. We shall be pretty well finished by Xmas we expect. I hardly expect tho', to see France again before spring. But that will be soon enough. The weather is getting wet and muddy now and must be bad in the trenches.

We are quite comfortable here, having secured rooms near our Barracks and have the permission to sleep out nights - our tents were getting wet and cold and having quite a bit of studying to do we decided to get away from the crowd and be by ourselves. One of our rooms is a front one downstairs and is quite cozy with a fire place, good table, double bed, single bed, upholstered chairs and carpeted floors. The landlady is exceedingly kind and cannot do too much for us, gets us things to eat and makes us tea in the evenings. For instance tonight four of us devoured a loaf of bread & butter, a pot of good tea and about a pint of pure New Zealand honey. A fine meal! Our landlady thinks it very queer that none of us drink whisky or beer. I believe she likes a snort herself once in awhile. Her kitchen is a real English one. You can hardly turn around in it. It has never been cleaned up since we've been here. The table is always littered with dirty dishes and her six cats crawl all over everything. However we have become now that we can eat out of the same dish with cats. One gets that way by knocking about the world I suppose. Still we try not to be around when she is preparing the grub and what we don't see hurts us not, and we are all happy altho' we have to get up early and grind through the day's curriculum.

Sincerely, Love to all.
Bert

Canterbury Cottage
Castle Road, Kent
13:11:16

Dear Eva.

I have a few spare moments before going back to barracks and to work, so I'm going to answer your letter if I can.

This morning I had off, and went down to Folkestone for some things I needed. It has been a great morning; the sun is as bright as can be and the English Channel is sparkling like one big diamond. The weather has been so wet that this is a pleasant change. It is almost one o'clock so I must needs hurry on!

Thanks for the snap of yourself altho' I can't tell just what you look like now except that you appear to be healthy enough. Keep that way.

We are not living in Barracks now, but instead Don & I and three others have rooms in Sandgate where we can be alone and away from the noise. We have some studying to do and a barrack room crowded with a noisy bunch isn't a congenial spot for such.

Here we are quite comfortable, have fire places, cozy chairs and good beds. Our landlady is very kind to us too; can't do too much it seems, in the way of getting lunches, etc. for us. She lives here alone with her husband and six cats. The cats at first were a sort of plague to us because they would persist in coming into our rooms. But we educated them by means of boots and other tender agents of persuasion, to the point where they entertain a healthy dislike for our domicile.

It is probably a good thing, where boys are concerned, that Mrs. Lilley isn't overly particular where cleanliness is concerned, but truth to tell I never saw such a kitchen as she keeps in all my travels among civilized beings. The table I have never seen cleared of dirty dishes or cats busily engaged cleaning up those dirty dishes. The floor and in fact the whole extent of the small room, is so littered with truck and paraphernalia that one has to be exceedingly careful where the feet are placed. This kitchen, I take it, is typically English and Mrs. Lilley is typical of the English servant class - a class that because of generations of class distinction is quite satisfied with its lot, with no healthy ambition to rise above that state. Probably they are happy in that, but it doesn't appeal to a democratic Canada. But Mrs. Lilley is the essence of kindness; just now she is setting a lunch of fried sole, bread & butter and tea for me. She wouldn't hear of my going out to a restaurant. If I'd been up at the barracks of course I'd have eaten there, but having the forenoon off I stayed down here in the rooms to read and write and Mrs. Lilley would have ~~me~~ eat in my room. The hardships of war, eh?

I'm glad you like music. Do you get any chance to learn piano? I often and often wish I had learned to play. I wish they had made me learn. If you can possibly do so, keep right after piano, especially if you are fond of music.

Eva, I do not know what to think of your staying away from home and leaving your mother to do the work, as you say.* But you know the circumstances and I think you can do the judging. It will be nice when you can get into your new house. Is it in Morse? I suppose by this time it will be getting pretty cold out there. I certainly wish we could be all together for Xmas., but Don & I will be in England while you people will all be in Canada, so that all we can do is wish one another the best that is going. I expect we shall be in this country most of the winter.

Why do you not get a chair in the office** and sit down when you feel like it. It is too bad that you have to stand so much. But if you can keep people smiling along with yourself then you are doing something worth while. There isn't any too much of smiles in the world. I hope this finds you all well.

Love and kisses Bert

I haven't read this over, so try and puzzle out the mistakes.



Eva Pease on the farm

* Eva went to Winnipeg to take a business course, returning to Morse to take a position in the Canadian Bank of Commerce.

** Eva worked in the Morse Post Office.

Canterbury Cottage
Castle Road,
Sandgate, 3.12.16

Dear Grace

Received your letter the other day. You said you were enclosing the order but it wasn't in the letter. Did you forget to put it in? The letter was unopened.

This is Sunday evening and we have just finished a combination dinner and supper, ate in our rooms and had three guests in. We are going out to hear Rev. John McNeil at the Sandgate Y.M. tonight. He is over here in Khaki, and is supposed to be one of Toronto's leading orators. It is the Baptist John McNeil.

Well we are getting well along on this work.- wrote one more exam.- ammunition - yesterday forenoon and I think I got it O.K. We have all been successful so far and there are only about three more important ones to write; that will run us up to Xmas. At Xmas I do not know where we shall go but probably there'll be something to turn up at the psychological moment. Meanwhile we shall plug away at this work and get our dozen-dozen friends, relatives and countrymen remembered in some way.

I have been out to hear McNeil and he was very good tonight. Was assisted by Capt. Peginault, a Y.M.C.A. man - and he was a very enthusiastic leader of the singing part of it. McNeill's theme was based entirely on the fact that those at home felt more anxiety for the moral safety of their boys over here rather than for their physical well being & he built upon that ground. His speech was rather full of anecdotes, but they were for the most part instructive as well as interesting. So he was good. Also heard him last Sunday morning in the Folkestone Baptist church.

One stunt they tried tonight was passing cards around for the men to sign promising to be good in the usual way, and they were to put the name and address of their nearest of kin whether it be father, mother, wife or sweetheart, any one whom they tho't would be glad to know of their moral victory. I was on the point of signing one and thus let them write you people a letter exhaling the spiritum grandissimum that I was located over in the war zone and was still "pointing in the right direction". However I didn't sign as I thought maybe that I hadn't dropped so very far below the level of my mission field days in your estimation.*

* Bert spent the summer of 1913 in a mission field in N.W. Saskatchewan (near Marsden), and the summer of 1914 at a mission field at Collins Bay (north shore of Georgia Bay). Don spent the summers of 1912 and 13 at missions fields in B.C. - Elko and Midway (near the U.S. border).

Yes we got Rose's letter and the money, but she shouldn't have sent it. We are getting along very nicely. Of course with the money I'm sending home each month it leaves me short since we are paying for rooms and eating largely down here, but a couple of calls on my account at home (which calls I have already sent forth) should see me through; and then with a couple of stars up!! in a month or so the increase of pay will be sufficient to keep the wolf from the door, - that wolf of army grub and English cooking.**

By the way, the English women are beginning to get it pounded into their noodles that they really can't cook. France has England skinned a mile in the eating line. I tell you England will have to come down and off from the high and mighty and self satisfied opinion that they have of being the Lords of creation. As always they will have to be moved by some outside force to make any change for the betterment of the people. I do not know where they would be if they had not Scotchmen at the head of their business. If they would leave their government to Scotchmen and maybe Welshmen. Oh there is a vastly different atmosphere in Scotland. Every man has the same feeling who has visited both countries, and I can't tell you how glad I am that it is Scotch blood in my veins rather than English. And that blood ran faster I believe when I got close to the hills of Rothshire. There is something in ancestry and native land after all.

There is something radically wrong with a country where wealth can live next door to the deepest squalor and be satisfied, when a country preaches economy and restricts the use of necessities, at the same time allowing liquor and beer dives to flourish in times like these. I believe England is in for a shock to her pride and that before this war is over, as McIlquham one of the boys with us here, says, "she will have to eat humble pie". I told him today that if eating such pie would for them be tough, they should be able to stand it since the only kind of pie they have ever eaten in England has been as tough as old Harry! But they'll eat it and they'll digest it for they're stubborn enough for anything.

We got those photos of Norma O.K. while we were in Egypt, and I think we acknowledged the fact then; I think we lost a lot of mail both coming and going while we were there. They were fine and altho' the pictures are battered about a bit with travel and kit bag accommodation we still have them with us.

The snaps you enclosed are dandy, especially the ones of around Presque Isle. We enjoy them.

** Pay Scales in the Canadian Army - 1916/17
Daily Rate (including Field Allowance)

| | |
|------------------------|--------|
| Lieutenant - | \$2.60 |
| Sergeant - | 1.50 |
| Privates and Gunners - | 1.10 |

Jack's brother you say is here at Shorncliffe but it is next to impossible to find anyone when one doesn't know his unit or whether he has rank or not, there are so many units and so scattered about the country.

I hope everything goes well at Morse and I really think that Father's going to Lily would be better all around. I wish I could help financially.

Yes I hope that before another Xmas comes around that we shall be back in Canada, but I hae' ma' doots. We won't get to France until on in January or February and it will keep us hustling to pump enough 18 pounder shells over into old Fritz to satisfy him before fall; they didn't send us over soon enough! But seriously I think the war is a long way from being finished and there has to be a lot more organization along with the people's willingness. So far the Germans are winners. But it can't last.

We are having fine weather just now, - cold but fairly dry to what it was a week or so ago.

Everybody happy! and love to all.

Bert

I hope you all have the very best kind of Xmas, and only wish we could be with you. We shall send along some slight remembrance to take the place of us.

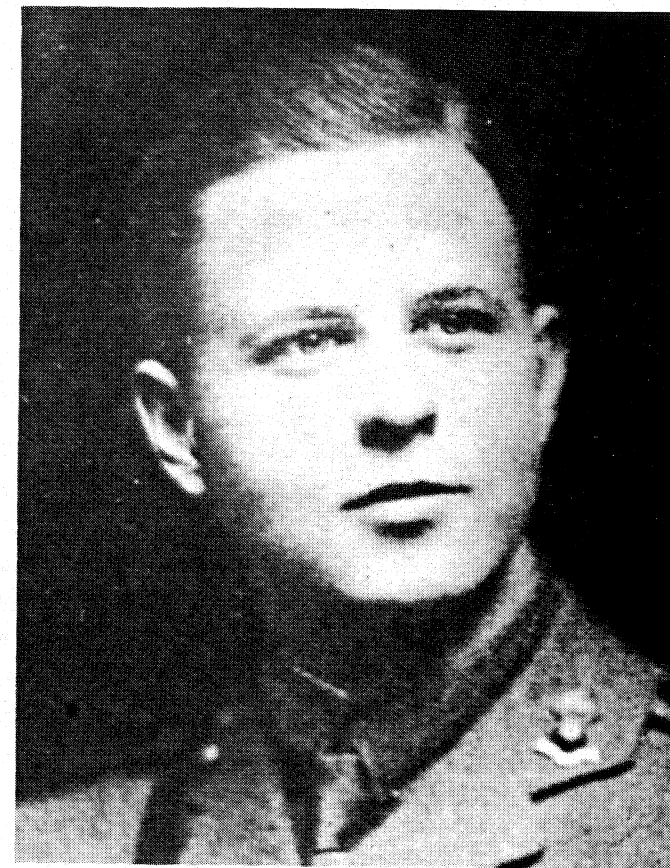
Canterbury Cottage
Castle Road
Sandgate 29.12.1916

Dear Lily & Dick

It is nearing the New Year of '17 and still the war goes on, and still we are beating about its outskirts. Perhaps 'tis well 'tis so. But our course here is about run and we may soon be back again in France, and I'll be glad to go. Remember this, that we are fine and having none of the hardships that you people appear to fancy for us. I have never put in so easy a time in my life before, and it will be the same even as we pass over the channel into the country where the fight is on in earnest. Our chances are good. I didn't answer your letter earlier for a couple of reasons. First I was waiting for the box you sent and also for the last couple of months we have been very busy on lectures and exams. Everyday during the week was taken up with lectures and our evenings we spent plugging for the exams which we wrote on Saturdays. But I'm glad to say that we have put them all safely behind us, creditably so, I should say, and now I can catch up in my correspondence which has been neglected sadly.

The box arrived in fine shape, and the last of it disappeared last night. The chicken could not have been better. It was grand!! A couple of the other boys got chicken from home, one was all blue moulded and the other was rotten. So you see your plan of packing was a complete success, altho' it must be a terrible lot of trouble to get it ready. But the boys appreciated the goodness of it all. As McIlquham said, as we were eating the choice morsels with eager and joyous avidity. "One can just barely imagine all the love that lies behind all that work, the love that prompts such sacrifice for the sake of giving us a cheer". Those may not have been his exact words, for he is a highly imaginative sort of fellow and quite poetic, but that was his idea at least. "Bill" Grassie said that it was a good thing there was someone left at home to do the real work and keep us fed. You should see us here of an evening, a bright fire in the grate and Mrs. Lilley bringing us in our tea and pork and beans etc. and the people in Canada have used us well; they kept us supplied very well indeed with boxes of good things and these vastly supplemented our evening meals, at this season of the year. You would rather envy us our lot, I'm thinking. It is true that the folk at home are putting up with far more than we are over here. You worry far more than you should and that is much worse than any amount of physical inconvenience. Don't do it on our account for we are quite happy; as a matter of fact I wouldn't be any other way for long! And when all this is over and we all get together again, we shall be the better for what we have come through.

You asked about sending more chicken over. Now of course it was great and so were the cake and home made preserves, but it seems such a trouble for you that we rather hate to have you bother. But when we get to France (which may be soon) we may not have the comforts we have here just now and then those things would be worth more than we can tell.



LIEUT. WILLIAM EDWARD GRASSIE.

"Wilhelm der Grosse," of athletic fame and genial smile, was born at Smithville some time in the early nineties. He received his non-professional education in the home Public School and the Welland Collegiate, and his professional training in the 1910-11 session of the Hamilton Normal School. After teaching for two years, he entered Queen's in the autumn of 1914 on the Arts-Agriculture course and joined the illustrious class of '18. He excelled as a student, and was perhaps the best intercollegiate soccer player of that day. In March, 1915, he responded to the call for overseas service and did admirable work with No. 5 Stationary Hospital in England, Egypt and France. In July, 1916, feeling that his services would be of more value in a combatant unit, he crossed the Channel to England to train for a commission in the Artillery. He returned to France in May, 1917, and has since been O.C. of No. 2, D.A.C. His unflinching courage, unfaltering tenacity, fertile good sense, never failing tact, and absolute unselfishness insure his success as an officer in France and later as a High School Master in Canada.

"Strong in Will and rich in Wisdom."

Photo courtesy Queen's University Archives, Tricolor Yearbook, 1918

Say, you said something about my asking to borrow some money, I do not remember of doing so, must have been joking, for I can get a draft from Winnipeg when I need it; I have \$20 per month going there and Jack is looking after it for me. Of course I'm always broke, or very badly bent, am never happy else, and would be broke if I were making \$50 a week.

Must tell you of our Xmas. There is a soldier's club in Folkestone called the Connaught Club and is run entirely by Canadian women. We probably told you of it before. I believe it is about the only place where Don can be filled to his entire satisfaction. Well, a number of us made arrangements with the fair proprietresses and they prepared for us a room (special) and gave us a real Canadian Xmas Dinner, - vegetable soup, turkey & cranberry sauce, creamed potatoes, corn, plum pudding, brown & white bread, tea & coffee, nuts and fruit. Did you beat that?

We were all from the O.T.C. and arranged a bit of a toast list. Don was toastmaster. I replied in behalf of "Queens" to a toast to "the Universities"; the reply was couched cosily in one dozen terse words. I forget now what they were, but I believe they were: We had representatives from Toronto, Queens, McGill an American college, I forget its name, from a N.B. Collegiate and one from Trinity College, Dublin. After singing some songs and delivering some college yells which delighted the eavesdropping natives, we all wined our hilarious way to a roller skating rink, in order to make our Xmas as nearly as possible like one might be in Canada. So some of us rolled away the afternoon (my first skate for 2 years) and in the evening we five came home to our cozy "dugout" and Mrs. Lilley had another Xmas dinner (with dandy roast beef as the staple article) ready for us. Thus did we put in a fair Xmas and my stomach suffered not at all. I'm beginning to think that I have some control. Shall soon be able to leave home.

We have a pretty fair bunch here at Canterbury Cottage. "Bill" Grassie is always the inimitable "Bill", always happy, and happiest when facing up to a good, square meal, - vies with Don in this - believes in coming into violent contact with no man. He is of agricultural extraction with a blacksmithing father chipped in, and he makes no strong pretensions toward "china tea refinement" - a man after my own heart, - a man who can't sing at all and knows it and thus never sings. He was an Arts Freshmen when we left Queens, and is jovial, fat, hungry, sleepy and can settle down in any environment and be perfectly happy. We played full-back together back at old Queens, and Bill was a worthy co-partner - quick as a flash and fleet as a deer. I hope we get another chance to chase the pigskin on a Canadian Campus. Such is Bill Grassie of Smithville, Ont.

Then comes Maxwell McIlquham from the crossroads farm, McDonald's Corners, near Lanark, Perth County, & he wishes he were back following a plow and feeding the calves. Don't try to pronounce his name; you can't. You might play it on the piano. He says it's scotch. We say it's Indian or Scandinavian and we call him Quillam for short, all the others make use of his regimental number - 801. (mine, by the way is 804 - Don's 803). You see we got into the war game early.



JAMES MAXWELL McILQUHAM.

"Mac" first inhaled the ozone on the "Cross-Roads Farm" near Lanark, Ont. With added years came increased wisdom and in the fall of 1913 it was no unsophisticated youth that joined the Freshman Year at Queen's.

With better acquaintance "Mac" was found to be a man of few words but sound principles.

He looked on this world war with his customary matter-of-factness and decided that it was his duty to don the khaki, and enlisted with the Queen's Stationary Hospital. Even here he was not content and later in England secured his Lieutenant's commission in the Canadian artillery with which he is now serving.

"Niggard of question; but, of our demands, most free in his reply."

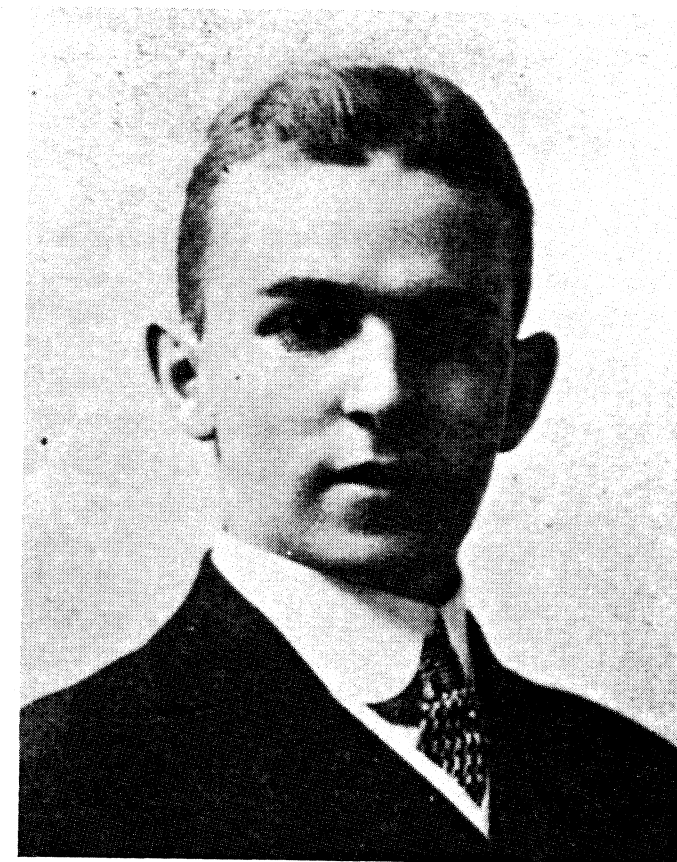
Photo courtesy Queen's University Archives, Tricolor Yearbook, 1917

But to carry on with "Quillam". He is a tall, rather handsome, dark, thin raw-boned sort of fellow with wavy hair and long legs, which when he sits and crosses, points his toe at right angles to the way he is looking. We tell him (I can tell you people this, as you are married, and I'm of age) that he is split more than 2/3 of the way up, his legs seem so long & seem to lop over each other like strings when he sits. We also tell him he can't sing which he refuses to believe and is consequently singing most of his time when he isn't quoting poetry or making up verse or propounding such unanswerable questions as "Does war justify truth?" or "What will be the net results of this war?". On account of these last characteristics he was dubbed by one of the nurses of old No. 7 General, "the mad poet". It sticks. He and Don and I sometimes try some trios in the evening as we sit about our fireplace before the lamp is lit. It is then we have to get him carefully started else he will be singing soprano away down in the guttural depths of the bass clef.

Mac was no doubt brought up in a scotch home of spartan mien and will never go wrong. He is a man of moods, one day up in the clouds warbling like a skylark and the next plunged into hades, with "curses not loud, but deep" on the folly of the world. Having legs, it stands to reason that we have an interesting time together.

Last of all we must include "Jimmy" - James Odell of Ottawa. He and Quillam belonged to Arts '17, Queens. Jimmy is a short, stout, little fellow, with fair hair and blue eyes, plus a girlish face. He it was who had the greatest of difficulty in mounting his horse while we were on the "ride". Sometimes he had to be helped on when we mounted without saddles or stirrups, and even when on, experienced the greatest difficulty in keeping his precarious position astride the noble steed. His little, short, stubby legs weren't long enough to hang down past the horse's sides and so protruded straight outward at an angle of about 45 degrees especially if the horse had a thick body. At first Jimmy did well to stick on, and didn't bother about trying to guide his horse, and so he got into some very comical mixups and attitudes. I laughed till I nearly fell off, as well, sometimes. But altho' Jim had more to overcome than any of us, he would never give in, and won out in the end by going through a most quelling test at the end of a month's riding. That illustrates his character.

He is essentially a hard and fast business man of the "bookkeeper" type. Makes sure of the little things, and so we've made him our Quartermaster, as it were. He keeps our "books" and pays the landlady etc. etc. When he sings he carefully drones along on about low A flat and wouldn't leave that for anything. It's rather convenient, for no matter what the tune may be Jimmy knows it and can sing straight ahead with wonderful vivacity, whilst I can barely listen if the rest of the congregation is following the tune. Jimmy will come home from church some nights and talk over the hymns "so many of them were new" to him - but he sang them just the same. When he goes out he must needs stand before the glass and carefully place each hair in position and then at length place his hat upon them all, caressingly - and absolutely straight. Bill and I decided that he should have hat pins. In his speech he is just as careful and all his work is perfectly organized.



JAMES H. ODELL.

"Jim" as he is known to all the fellows was among the timid group of Freshies which wended their way to Kingston in the fall of 1913.

His first impression of "G. Y." must have had some effect, for he ably looked after the Year "Kush" in the Freshman session. His reputation as a gentleman and fusser grew with age, and more than one blushing maiden has experienced palpitation of the heart when those blue eyes and curly locks approached. But "Jim" also devoted his time to sports and studies as his brilliant record in sports and classes show.

His combined Arts-Medicine course was interrupted by the world war, and he enlisted with Queen's Hospital. From Cairo he went to England and is now a full-fledged Artillery Lieutenant.

Photo courtesy Queen's University Archives, Tricolor Yearbook, 1917

Would that I could imbibe some what of those virtues of Jimmy! But alas! I suppose I must beat it along this mortal coil, as carefree and boyish as the free winds of the aetherial Blue.

And Jimmy is just the compliment we need to round out our little company. He is a Methodist by training and is all method. So let him ride, say I. As for Don and me, you know us full well, and so you know the five of us here at Canterbury Cottage. We're happy as we can be under the circumstances, and Mrs. Lilley thinks she has five sons of gentlemen as roomers. She doesn't understand our Canadian Democracy, with its dislike of class, and so, I suppose, she fancies that even in Canada a man must be a bally lord before he can be a gentleman. Another thing which I think she fails to grasp in its entirety is the fact that we never come home drunk or even smelling of strong drink and the truth not in us. Lloyd George was right when he said that of the three enemies of England - Germany, Austria and Liquor - the Liquor business was her worst. I'm beginning to think that Britain needed some violent shock to save her from herself. I can't possibly think any more of an Englishman than I ever did. I'm sorry it has to be. Poor self satisfied England! You couldn't tell one anything, and he takes pains to have you realize his condescension when he lowers himself for the time being to talk to you. After Canadians and Yankees, give me a Scotchman. He at least is human.

Well, I must chop off for this time, hoping I haven't wearied you too much. If father is with you this letter will do for him too. I hope he is feeling quite well again, and also Lizzie. Also I hope that you all have had a dandy Xmas & will have a splendid New Year. We haven't shipped father's Xmas remembrance, but soon.

Best love to all.
Bert



Y.M.C.A.
Canterbury Cottage
Castle Road
Sandgate

Jan. 11, 1917

Dear Grace & Jack & all.

It is noon, and we have just had our dinner in the Y.M. and now that there is a bit of spare time before going back to work I shall try to start a letter. I haven't your last one with me so may finish this at the room tonight.

We got the dandy box and it was in fine shape, also the suits of underwear, and they too are just right. But I didn't want you people to buy them for me or I would never have asked you. Still, you've done it, and we've got them and they are the real "cheese", so thanks awfully for all the good things.

What pleases me most just now is the fact that very soon we'll be gazetted. We are finished with the course and last night filled out the necessary papers. Today noon we go before the M.O. and let him look us over. If we please his eye aplenty he will add his name to those certifying our physical fitness and all the rest of it. Gee, I have never been medically examined so much before as I have since I joined the army, but I believe I've mostly always felt more physically fit when back in civil life.

We'll soon now be getting away for six days kit leave and, while in London Don and I will likely try to get to Aberdeen and see some of the people there. The last time we were in Scotland and were stopping at Inverness we met a girl there from the far north, I forget the name of the place. The girl's name is Mary Morrison, a very Highland lass of no mean deportment. I just shipped her a letter thanking her for a cake she sent us for Xmas. You see she is a domestic science teacher, holding forth in Edinburgh and the cake was a dandy big one, also it was well made and we who have been living among the English for so long, thanked God for the Scotch whilst we ate of it. Miss Morrison is one of the two girls who showed us about Inverness in a car. I believe I told you of that trip we had. Have I told you yet how we spent our Xmas? The morning was most enjoyable; we lay in until nearly 10 o'clock then we had a good breakfast in our dugout. At noon we had a real Canadian Xmas dinner at the Connaught Club.

Canadian women cooked it and a number of us on the course made previous arrangements for a private room, so we arranged an impromptu toast list, sung songs & gave a few of the old College yells, as we were all University men & had representatives from six different Colleges including one from Dublin. Our dinner consisted chiefly of vegetable soup, turkey, cranberry sauce, creamed potatoes, corn, plum pudding fruit, nuts etc. etc. In the afternoon we roller skated and in the evening ate another dinner back in our room which Mrs. Lilley, our landlady had

ready for us. So you see we had a good day. Then we received all kinds of boxes from Canada and other places. These were scattered about before & after Xmas and really our Xmas feasting lasted about a month more or less.

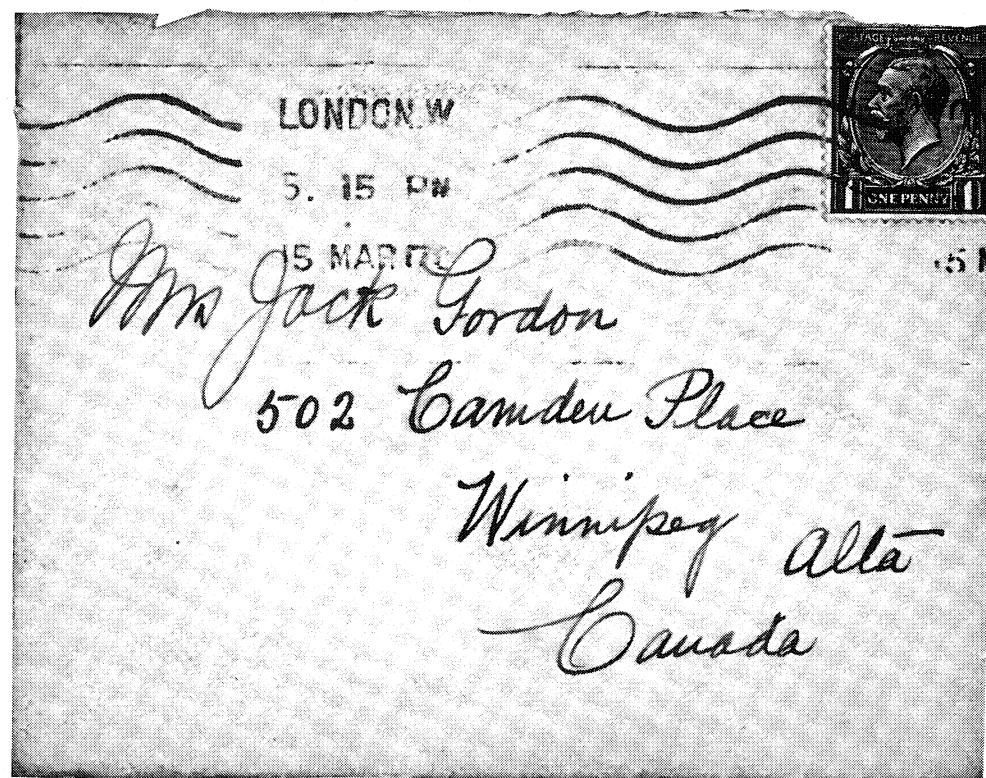
Say, what kind of an order did you enclose in that letter! was it a P.O.O., & where was it payable? I might find out if such an order has been cashed at its destination. But the letter hadn't been opened before I got it, I believe. The pictures were O.K.

Our weather just now is wet and cold; I often long for some of Canada's dry 40 below and the crunch of real snow under my feet instead of perpetual mud. Still we're happy in our little dugout. The photo arrived safely and it is fine of the children and Jack, but Grace looks unwell. Still you all appear happy and I suppose that's the chief matter.

I wish I had some of the Superior herring you spoke of. We get some of "Sam Hughes fish" once in a long while but it is coarse stuff.

I hope you have all had a dandy Xmas and are having a splendid New Year.

Sincerely
Bert



Envelope from Mrs. Drader's letter to Mrs. Gordon (Grace)

"The Ryelands"
C. H. Lane, Muswell Hill,
New Southgate, London, N. March 15, 1917

My dear Mrs. Gordon

You will no doubt be surprised to have a letter from a stranger in London. However I am not a Londoner but a Canadian & therefore have had the great pleasure of entertaining your dear brother Don with his friends, the boys who were in Egypt & France with him, one of them being Mr. Frank B. Walsh, son of my late brother in law of Oxbow. What a fine lot of boys. I told Don I'd write you. He has been here several times, first came with Pte. Bert Martin of Ft. Wm. That was last Sep. on a Sunday. He has been up several times lately on his leave and it has been a great pleasure to us to know him & the other boys. The entertaining has not been all on our side as Don & Mr. Walsh have taken my only daughter Alice & me out several times.

Now we fear they will soon be called on to "line up" again as they are placed - Reserve Brigade at Shorncliffe. I suppose they will now be "first out". They all look splendidly in their new uniforms. You would be proud of your brother in his.

We have a son not 20 until end of next month who has commanded a "tank" & for first days work Sept. 15th took the Military Cross. He was training men in England about 4 mos then went over to France end of Aug. He is now very busy but am glad he is not in a tank now. He is Commanding a Section of "tanks". If you have the great war film in your City one day & you see it, you will see my son who has a black cat as a mascot. He took it from England & brought it back at Xmas & we now have it, a great treasure, having been in all of Harry's movements.

Excuse my telling you all this. I thought you would like to know how fine and straight your dear brother is & how he misses the home folk. This is why I write you. He is a brother you may well be proud of. May God bless him & all our dear ones & mercifully preserve their dear lives. In great haste & with very kind regards I am yours sincerely

Cora B. Drader (Mrs. H. F.)

During Don's unsettled state you could send letters in my care if you wish. Several of our people at home have done so.

4 Fermoy Cottage
Castle Road
Sandgate 30.3.1917

Dear John

I was up to Glass on my leave and spent four days at your home. To say that I enjoyed that time is putting it mildly. It was the best four days I've had since leaving Canada, even taking into consideration the fact that all that time a blizzard was hard at work blocking all roads, the result being that I stuck pretty close to the house while there and had to walk back to Huntley through snow drifts galore.

But it was great getting into a home once more with a taste of civil and civilized life. I don't know what Mr. & Mrs. Gordon (Sr.) will think of the sample of the MacKenzie tribe; we probably could have sent a better representative, but I liked being it just the same. I'm going again!

Mr. Gordon told me to tell you that he was as good a Scotchman as ever and that he was still a real Gordon, for he has a goodly crop of hair on his head yet. He was wondering how your head was standing the strain. You should be good natured and jolly, for both your father & mother are chuck full of real humour, and we did our share of laughing, especially over the whist games in the evenings.

Edith was home, and we had plenty of music. She plays well, and we went over a good many of the old Presbyterian hymns and psalms which I haven't heard for two years. On Sunday we braved the storm and walked to church; there were about a dozen only out, but the preacher preached, Miss McGregor brought music out of the pipe organ and we few did our best to fill the church. I stayed over night in Aberdeen on my way back and looked up the other two girls - Jeannie and Mary aren't they? - So I've seen you all except your two brothers.

Now, I'm leaving for France very soon I expect, and I would like if you would do one more thing for me. I haven't kept very close account but the pay office has given me a statement of my money matters. They have sent home for me \$367.00, which runs up till the end of this month - March. There should be about \$200.00 for me there yet, if I haven't forgotten some things. Well, what I'd like first is this - send a draft for (\$117.50) one hundred and seventeen dollars and fifty cents to -

Mrs. W. G. Bruce,
428 Brock St. Kingston, Ont.

If there is any left send as much as you can up to \$50. to father; it may come handy to him. I hope I'm right in what should be there for me. I want to get my debts all paid if I can. No more will be sent home after this month, as the money now is paid

into a bank in London for me. I'm going to try and save \$50 a month to pay off my College debts.

Then, if there is any left there after you've sent father some you can pay my life Insurance when it is due in August again. You can let me know just how I stand, if you will, and then I can arrange the rest from here.

Love to all
Bert

CAFE CENTRAL RESTAURANT
CARLO MAESTRANI
ESTABLISHED 23 YEARS
March 1917
TELEPHONE No. 22 FINEST WINES LIQUEURS
SANDGATE ROAD,
TWO DOORS FROM NATIONAL PROVINCIAL BANK, FOLKESTONE.

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Here it is | |
| Bread and Butter | 4 |
| Soups | |
| Fish | |
| Game | |
| Poultry | 36 |
| Entrée | |
| Joint | |
| Grill | |
| Ham or Bacon | |
| Vegetable | 1 |
| Sweets | |
| Pastry | 2 |
| Eggs | |
| Sundries | |
| Cheese | 2 |
| Salad | |
| Dessert | |
| Coffee, Chocolate, or Tea | 8 |
| Ices | |
| Mineral Waters | |
| Wines | |
| Spirits | |
| Beers | |
| Foreign Cigars | |
| 2 18 | 9/9 |



Bert in his room at 4 Fermoy Cottage,
Sandgate (March, 1917)

- "my room and I"

Otterpool, May 19th, 1917

Dear Lily

I have a few minutes to spare so I'll start a letter. It is ten minutes to nine, (a.m.) and at nine I'm going to the Butts with a party to shoot. We have Capt. Richardson over us; he is the crack rifle shot of Canada and has won the Bisley competition in England two different years. We shall be at the Butts all day.

Didn't get this on very far, and have not had another chance at it until now. This is Sunday and a fine one it is too. I have just eaten a breakfast of porridge, milk, sugar, egg, bread, margarine, cocoa and strawberry jam and am waiting to go on church parade if there is one. At eleven o'clock I'm going to beat it to Folkestone (8 miles) as I have an "invite" out to lunch and tea. In the afternoon the daughter fair and I are going riding - we were out once before and I enjoyed it - the first time I ever went riding horseback with a lady. I never thought very much of the English but these people aren't bad, as a matter of fact I never saw very much prettier girls than this girl I'm going riding with and her twin sister. Well, enough of that, - I hope we have a good time.

You'll notice that I've again changed my address, or rather my place of abode as my mail address will be now Ross Barracks, Shorncliffe, Kent, until I get to a battery in France. About thirty-five of us who are all finished up with the course were sent out here to Otterpool - I believe I mentioned it in my last letter, - but I'm here now and it's a regular little Siberia and we are like a bunch of convicts. Still things are a bit better now. We all stuck together and the've found out we can't be driven. A crazy crank, Major Eakins is O.C. out here and he is an understudy of Major J. Reid Hyde who is adjunct of the Brigade of Reserve Artillery around here. Hyde is one of the most miserable animals I ever saw. He should never be let loose where there are men concerned, and yet he is butting in all the time with his old womanish ideas. Always talks about things that are wrong never about what is right. Has a face like the back yard of a second hand Jew shop in spring time and with utterly no expression except one that suggests that he is sore at himself for being alive. Eakins has his same dirty attitude toward men - never commends - always knocks, wouldn't say a word to a parade if he couldn't criticize adversely. He tried to treat us like a bunch of criminals. Said we could have one pass a week, where we knew that an officer doesn't need a pass after the day's work is done. I only missed one night I didn't go to Folkestone and the others are about the same and they can do nothing! If I lick anyone when I get back to civil life and am of equal rank again it will be Eakins and Hyde if there will be anything left of them when I get there. It's a terror how some devils get into places of authority.

Well this hasn't sounded very cheerful, has it? but I'm in fine fettle because they're not sticking it into us as they would like.

We should be getting to France very soon now and the sooner the better. Don is still attached to a Battery at Ross Barracks and will likely be there for a considerable

time yet. There is apparently an abundance of officers and so they are moving over to France very slowly.

I hope all is going fine. I've instructed the Pay Office to assign \$30 a month home and Rose can use it so long as she leaves enough to pay my Insurance and Interest. Jack will arrange. I can't send much more while here in England but hope to increase it when I get to France.

Best of Love to all
Bert

Canadian National Council
Young Men's Christian Associations

No. 5 Stat. Hospital
England
Shorncliffe, June 8, 1917

Dear Aimee & Grace & All

Just a note this time. We are busy now as we are in charge of a temporary hospital. Shall likely be here until July at least. Our camps, which are tents, are beautifully situated on the brow of a grassy hill overlooking a typical English valley with its neat little farms and quaint farm houses. On an opposite hill are camped the Queens Engineers, a Manitoba Hospital bunch and several other regiments. The rows of bell-shaped tents look good. Just south of us at the end of the valley a half mile distant is the English Channel.



Last week a number of us got leave and spent 4 days in London. We sure used the time we were there and saw all we could and some more. Buckingham Palace & changing the King's guards, Zoological gardens, Tate Gallery (Art) etc. etc. Was at the first debate, of the first session of the first coalition parliament in the house of commons in 56 years. Saw Hampton Court, Westminster Abbey, St. Pauls, and Westminster New Cathedral (R.C.). On Sunday heard Rev. R. J. Campbell and Rev. Dr. Hugh Black-great! Should have had much more time, but if I ever go back I shall know the ropes. Wanted to see the slums but didn't get time. Saw Queen Mary, Princess Mary and Prince Henry in Kew gardens.

Well, we are all well here and hope everything is right there. Would like awfully well to get back to College next winter but am afraid anyway I wouldn't have the money - same old story! I have almost decided to enter Medicine when I go back. What about going to Toba?

Well love to all
Bert

Otterpool Camp
June 23, 1917

Dear Rose

I do hope you are quite well again and able to get about. It has been pretty hard with you people at home; there is apparently more suffering there than here. I'm sure that our friends at home in many cases have more to put up with than we.

I have just finished a letter to Christie and Rob, they write such newsy letters, I like to get them so much, and to be kept in touch with things at Port Arthur. I'm going to make this letter do for Grace and Aimee and you if you don't mind. It will save a lot of writing the same thing. I've just written Lily a week or so ago, so that will do for a time. Letter writing is such work for me.

Probably you'll be glad to know that Don and I are still in England with no word of going across to France, altho' we've been ready since New Years. I'm almost past the point of hoping to go, for one does really get sick of being buffeted about a Reserve with "things" over you who couldn't make good in France where men have to be handled but who have sufficient pull to hold down soft jobs here in England. I with about 35 other officers were sent out here to Otterpool Camp about 8 miles or 9 from Folkestone, supposedly to take a special course in Musketry, Physical Training and Revolver practise, but really we were "surplus stock" at the school and weren't as yet needed in France and room had to be made for new blood coming in on the O.T.C. We've taken our musketry and are now rated as first class shots, have done a bit of revolver shooting and are still dabbling a bit at P.T. The last week we have been drilling new men over from Canada. The artillery foot drill is different from Infantry and it was in Infantry I took O.T.C. at Queens.

However Artillery I believe is much simpler and this is good practice in command. After being a man for two years in the army you can imagine how severe I will be on the men who happen to be under me. The other day it fell to me to take a battery for a route march. The day was quite hot so it just took me seven minutes to lead them to an "out-of-bounds" race track where the grass was green and long, the trees were many and shady and the camp with those over me were out of sight. One hour later we marched briskly back into camp, the men in perfect step, heads up, chins in, just as tho' they hadn't toiled along a dusty road in a broiling sun for a weary hour. I shall always try to keep my men as fresh as that and shall get more out of them when I want it than if I tried to be military and worked their heads off in useless, monotonous drill. Officers who have never been in the ranks can't understand the men's really sane viewpoint of such stuff. These men drill like clock work and yet are kept steadily at it until they get so fed up they would sooner go through hell and die than stick it, and yet they are forced. If I had my way I'd give them about a half hour's sharp snappy drill morning and afternoon and then let them play games for the exercise they need, if they can't be at some useful work like



Rose

agriculture where conditions are congenial. If all these parade grounds were ploughed and growing food it would be vastly better for England and for our men.

I'll never make a soldier except in two points. Napoleon once said that a soldier's success depends upon his ability to sleep and eat. In those respects I'm a marvelous success. This morning I got up in time for an 8 o'clock breakfast, started to read, went to sleep, was wakened to play bridge, had dinner, tried again to read, fell asleep once more and slept till five o'clock and suppertime. Ate supper and then started to answer a few of my many letters owing. Have managed to stay awake through Christie's and thus far in yours, but don't swear to finish this tonight. It's half past 9 now. I'm the only officer of our bunch left in camp this evening. You see it is Saturday and most of the boys have gone to Folkestone or some other week-end place of refuge. I'm staying at home for two vital reasons, namely - First and sharply, I'm broke, bust, and bewildered, as I explained to Christie, and second and obtusely, I'm orderly officer for today and according to K.R. & O, I have to stick to the Camp area from Reveille to reveille. I'm writing this in my tent, on my knee, on my bed and undisturbed.

I got a note from Don last night, telling me that Mary McLeod was at Moore Barracks Hospital and that I'd better come in someday so that we could go somewhere. Mary must be quite well again and going to be left in England for a time since she has been attached to Moore Barracks Hospital. It is just a couple of hundred yards from Ross Barracks where Don is attached to a Battery. He is away today with their baseball team playing at Herne Bay on the East coast of England. I believe that Pilgrim (Queens '13) and I have been applied for by the O.C. of the Battery Don is with. "Pil" is out here with us but I don't know whether or no we'll be taken in; rather hope we are if we don't go to France for it will give us something definite to do which is better than merely living from day to day.

Our camp is near a big aerodrome and the air is full of machines every day. We see some marvelous work by the airmen some days. When that air raid visited Folkestone this was one of the points of attack, but nothing was hit altho' they dropped a dozen bombs pretty close to the Aerodrome.

From my tent door I can look down a slope, across a wide valley - like flat, north to the Kentish Downs. It is grand at this time of year, - hills, dales, clothed in greenest green, trees, fields, hedges, orchards, farmhouses, winding roads, all in planless confusion of landscape. England is beautiful at this time of year.

I'm sending home \$30 a month which you can use so long as my Life Insurance is paid and the interest on some of the money I owe, which should take about \$60 a year. When I get to France I hope to send more home. Jack is looking after it for me and I've told him what to do. Wish I could help you more, but if I get back to Canada it's money I'm going to go after and let professions go to the mischief. The old myth of spending 9 out of 10 years in preparation is exploded. One's whole life is preparation and there's an end!

Don't worry about our not getting plenty to eat. We're all O.K. and in fine health. Our chances of seeing Canada again are a big 99 percent. Yes, I know you are thinking of us, and in a way that is splendid to feel, but you are apt to worry instead of think , when there is no need. Don't do it.

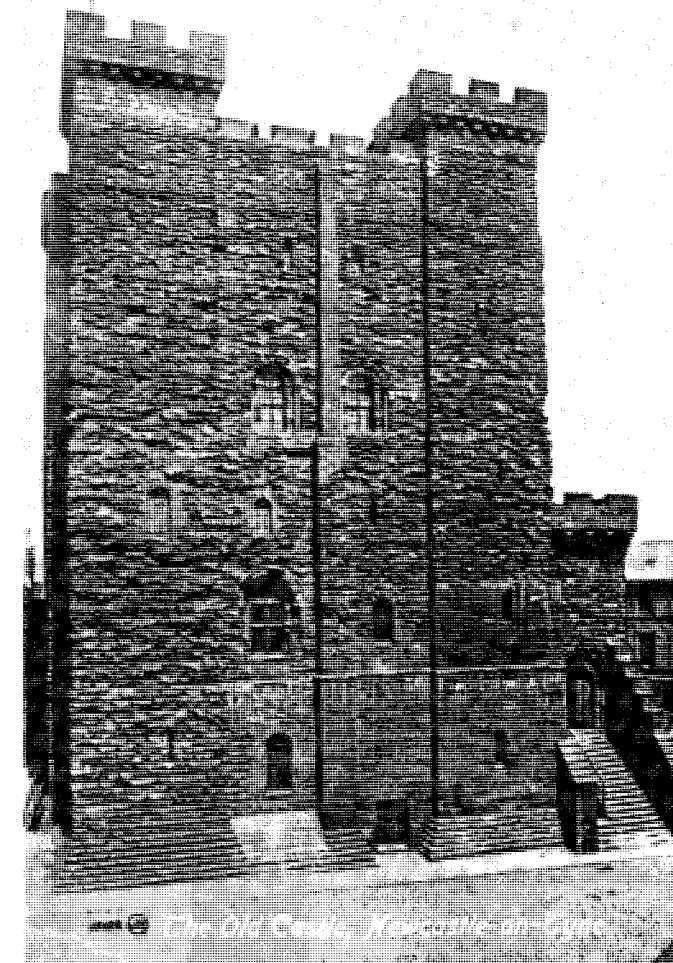
Best of love
Bert



Lily and Rose, with Lillian Pease
(before the war)

POSTCARD - THE OLD CASTLE, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE

June 27, 1917



This will have to do for a letter. Your letter came along a few days ago. We are very busy now in a temporary hospital at Risboro Heights - Tent hospital. Our strength is being raised to 500 beds and I understand in a couple of weeks we go to France, - none too soon! Last week Don and I were chosen along with 8 others to escort 100 patients under military quarantine to Newcastle-on-Tyne. It was a good trip altho' going we were shut up all day in the cars with the patients. We passed thro' London, Peterborough, Chatham, York and Durham. The length of Eng. in 12 hours including about 3 hours of stops. A good trip especially the coming back. We are well here. I hope you are able to stand your work. You have more to stand than we have but everybody happy as possible.

Lovingly.

Bert

Risboro, July 17th, 1917

Dear Rose & All,

I must try to scratch off a note to you as I'm leaving for France in the morning. Am enclosing some Films that can be put with the others I sent over before.

I received your last letter the other day and this will do as an answer. This afternoon, Don, Mac. Omand (our Chaplain) and I are taking Mary McLeod and a couple other nurses up the Hythe Canal on a little picnic. They have to be back at 7 o'clock this evening as they are on night duty, so we shall have to leave as early as possible this afternoon, and then when we come back there is a league game of indoor baseball in which I have to play, then after that I must beat it around town to say good bye to all my best girls and then get packed up. The packing will take about ten or fifteen minutes for I can throw all I have into my sleeping bag and roll it up. I've learned enough to travel light.

I am going to be with the 4th Div. D. A. C. for a time at least and later may go to the Trench Mortars as that is what I volunteered for.

I was out at Otterpool for seven weeks and the latter part of that time we enjoyed very much as there was very little to do and it was a nice quiet country place to do it in. We came back to Risboro two weeks ago yesterday and for one week were on Horse Mastership. I enjoyed that as we did quite a bit of riding and took some good long rides out into the country. Last week I did nothing at all, as we were warned for draft. On Sunday after church parade Don, Pilgrim (Queen's), another officer and I got good saddle horses from one of the Batteries and went for a ride out over the hills towards Dover. In the afternoon several of us went up the Canal and had tea in Lympne Castle grounds. So you see we are not having too rotten a time, are we?

I should like very much to see the children again, they must be interesting. That Birthday party which Norma celebrated must have been good.

Dandy weather over here just now. Outside my tent the birds are singing their little throats out. I am lying on my bed on the floor of the tent, so you must pardon this scrawl.

I hope you are feeling fine again, what ever you do, don't hurt yourself, and don't feel badly about using the money that is going home. It isn't very much, but it may help a bit, and that is all that matters.

Love to all, I shall write from France and let you know my right address - meanwhile "Ross Barracks, Shorncliffe, Kent" will be forwarded to me.

Bert

France, Aug 20, 1917

Dear Lily and Dick

Am a bit slow in replying to your last letter, but have been busy shunting about this country since coming across again.

Came over about the middle of last month and went straight up the line to the unit I'm still attached to the 4th Canadian Divisional Ammunition Column, so my address is "4th C.D.A.C. France". I really came over for the Trench Mortars but three of us out of the bunch are still left with the D.A.C. and I'm content to stay there. It's all horse work and I like that.

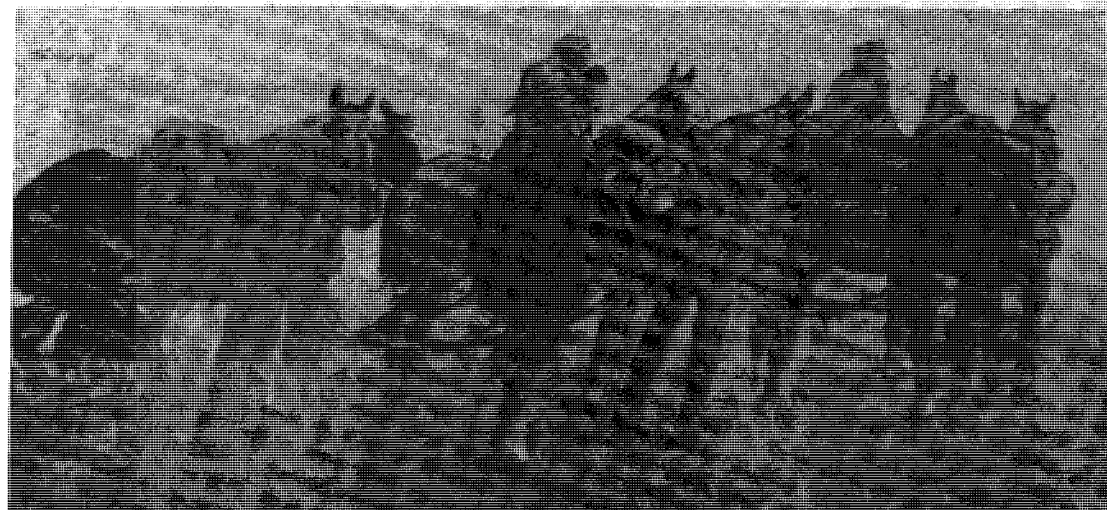
Our column is camped by a big wood (and altho' I censor this letter myself, I can't mention any names, as there's one chance in a hundred that it may be opened at the Base) about seven miles back of the front line, where the Canadians are now and still doing great work; there are none over here better than our boys and that's putting it very mildly.

Well I was of course attached to a section of the Column and gradually got a line on the work to be done. In our section we have about 307 animals, mostly mules, and they are of course all out in the open. We had 19 days (consecutive) of rain the first of this month, so you can imagine what horse lines would get like, and it was just as bad as you can imagine. Mules are the most aggravating animals you ever saw and ours are no exception. As our Sgt. Major said the other day, he "would rather walk down the front line of trenches than the back line of mules". One day during the wet spell one of our drivers was grooming his "mokes" (as they call them) and had one polished up nicely. Almost as quickly as he started on the other the cleaned one lay down and rolled in the muck. Now this man was a very quiet one and had a keen, Scotch sense of humor. His father was a preacher back in Canada, yet he got back behind the team and for about 10 straight minutes consigned that mule to the hottest and most disagreeable conditions the English language (as she is spoke in the army) could portray. Another man near by finally broke in with "why all the excitement Mac?-if those animals were good enough for Christ they're good enough for you!"

Back came the reply - "That's alright, but Christ had the 12 apostles to groom for him."

Our fellows are always "grousing" but there is nearly always a certain amount of humor in it, and they are always there with the goods when the pinch comes.

I had a few trips up to batteries with ammunition etc. One can pretty well judge the times to move fast and which roads to take so that generally speaking there is no need of taking chances. For instance about a couple of weeks ago I took sixteen wagons (six animals to a wagon) up to a battery and of course had to go up at night. At one point we were held up for over two hours while most of that time rain poured down. Fritzie was shelling the road ahead of us. Leaving our teams back a bit, I



There lay the Driver's brother with 'is 'ead between 'is 'eels. (R.K.)



Gunnery
(courtesy of Canadian Artillery Museum, CFB Shilo, Manitoba)

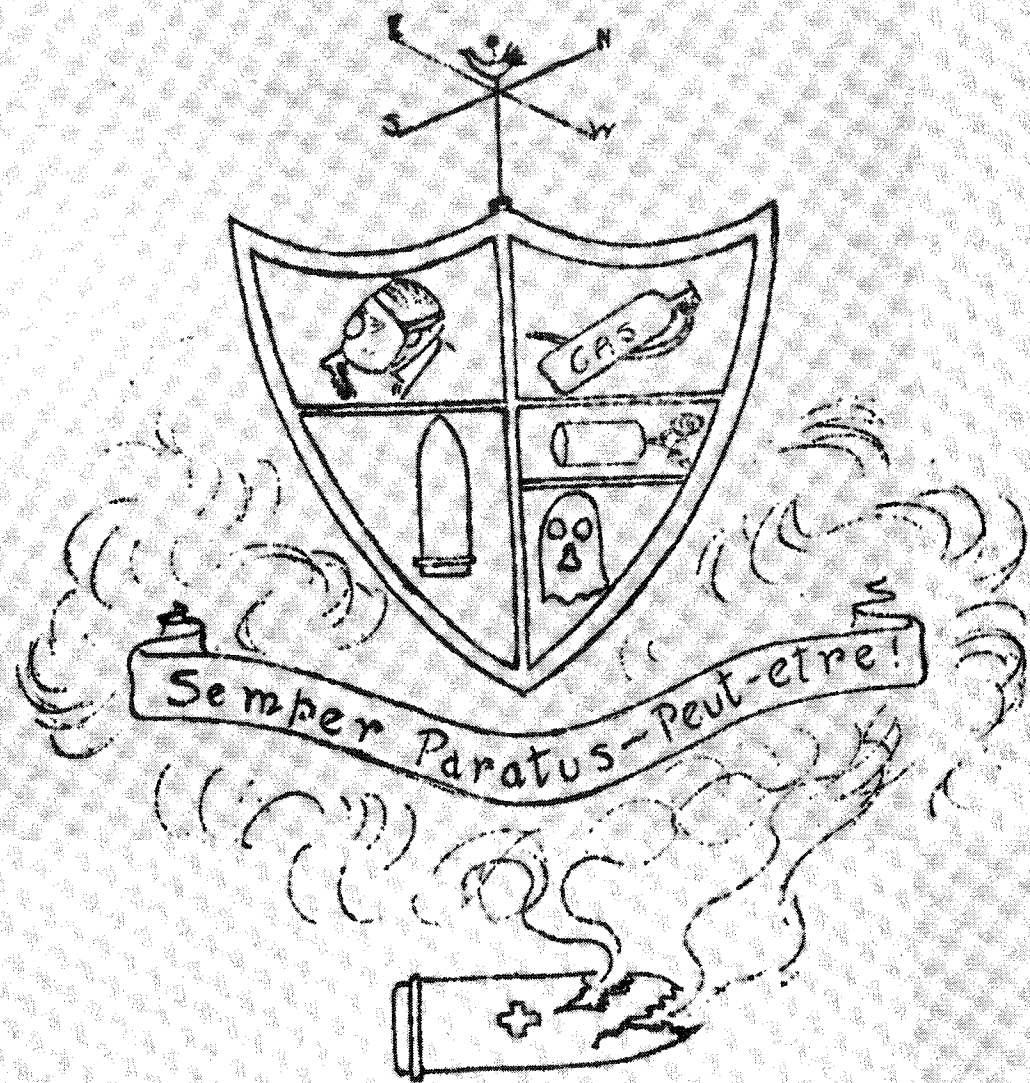
rode up to see what was doing and was informed that if I went through it would be at my own risk. I noticed that the Boche was "sweeping" the road; he would start down near where I was and sweep away from me along the road to a village we had to go through. But the shells were all falling at approximately the same range. So during a lull in the fire, brought up the teams and trotted past the area, took the first turn going our direction and thus beat out the next sweep by getting inside the range, and from then on we weren't bothered.

Pretty soon our own guns opened up and old Fritzie crawled out of sight. Our artillery have certainly got it over theirs now. But the noise was wild and we had our own time where we got off the main road to go into the battery position. Our mules got stuck in mud holes and shell holes until it would have disgusted a saint, and they refused to do more. Our teams of horse always came to the rescue and pulled out the half buried wagons. I could love horses. When they hear a shell burst near them they cringe up to you just as tho' they were asking your protection. But they're always ready to make an honest try when stuck while a mule will quit dead especially in muddy ground. It's disgusting in a spot that is in the habit of being shelled.



Sadie Mae - Bert's colt at Bruce Mines before the War

That night where we were unloading, but just back a few yards, a big six inch howitzer battery was pouring forth its vials of wrath over our heads into the midnight and I hope into some Hieney abodes. As each gun vomited out its mouthful the air waves from the percussion would slap you on the face like the flat of a paddle, and all the other guns of various sizes added their quota of barks and spits and woofs to the general uproar until you could not hear a person shouting in your ear. Then as we unloaded and unwound our way back homeward through the winding valleys we were gradually shut off from the hellish uproar until finally the silence of the transition seemed audible in its intensity. Suddenly the moon's last quarter (sad) appeared over the scraggy hill tops flooding the little vale with purple light and weird shadows, for the night had cleared and its stars were out. Once one



- Dinner -

Canadian Corps Gas School.

Saturday. France Sept 8th 1917

- Dinner -

Canadian Corps Gas School

Saturday

France

Sept. 8th, 1917

— Menu —

Oeufs à la Parisienne

Consomme

File de Sole

Quelquechose

Poulet rôti à la Crème

Saucisse à la Cambridge

Paté de Pomme à la Crème

Archois à la Fuseau

Fromage

Noisettes - Fruits

Café

France, 10/9/1917

Dear People

Have received only one letter from Canada since coming to France and that was today from Vancouver, one that I wasn't particular about. Should soon be getting mail from Canada now for I did write letters home before leaving England.

We were at the Base in France for ten days and had a very enjoyable time. No. 7 Can. Gen. Hosp. was near & we renewed old acquaintances among the men, nurses & officers. Then there was a splendid sand beach with the best of sea bathing which was sure good. There were about a dozen officers in our draft. Jim Odell & I were the last two from Canterbury Cottage (our last winter's home) to leave England.

We met Bert at Railhead & remained the night with him before coming on to our present home the 4th Can. D.A.C. He was in charge of all remounts unloaded at that point. It was a good job while it lasted - very little to do, a good mess & a good place to live. He came back yesterday & went on up to the battery today.

When we arrived here we were attached to sections of the D.A.C. for rations & duty until we were posted to batteries. About six of our old Ross Barracks crowd are here. We arrived on a Saturday about two weeks ago & on the following Monday morning just two weeks ago today I received orders (at about 6 A.M.) to report to the Can. Corps Gas School - its map location was stated - at 8:45 same morning.

Well I put in a week on the gas course, took the exams & inside of a week was appointed the A.G.O. of the 4th Division. That means the Artillery Gas Officer. I'm a D.A.G.O. or I should say a "Dago", D standing for Divisional.

I didn't much like the idea at first but as gas is becoming a more & more important field in warfare and as the area to be covered is a whole division instead of one battery you can see that I've rather an interesting job and one where there will be a broad experience to be gained. All gas defensive measures come under my jurisdiction in the artillery of this Division. I have gas N.C.O's in each Brigade of Artillery who report to me daily such things as I may not put in a letter. The more I consider the proposition the more I believe I was fortunate in stepping into this job. I'm attached to the D.A.C for headquarters & rations so my address will continue to be 4th Can. D.A.C., B.E.F., France.

My duties will take me to the batteries and the Trench Mortars so I shall be in touch with all the boys.

We have a very good mess & the wheeler fixed me up with a good bed so what more could you want. Most of the fellows have their folding camp beds which they brought with them. Dick Day who was away to a school for about ten days came back today & is with me in the tent.

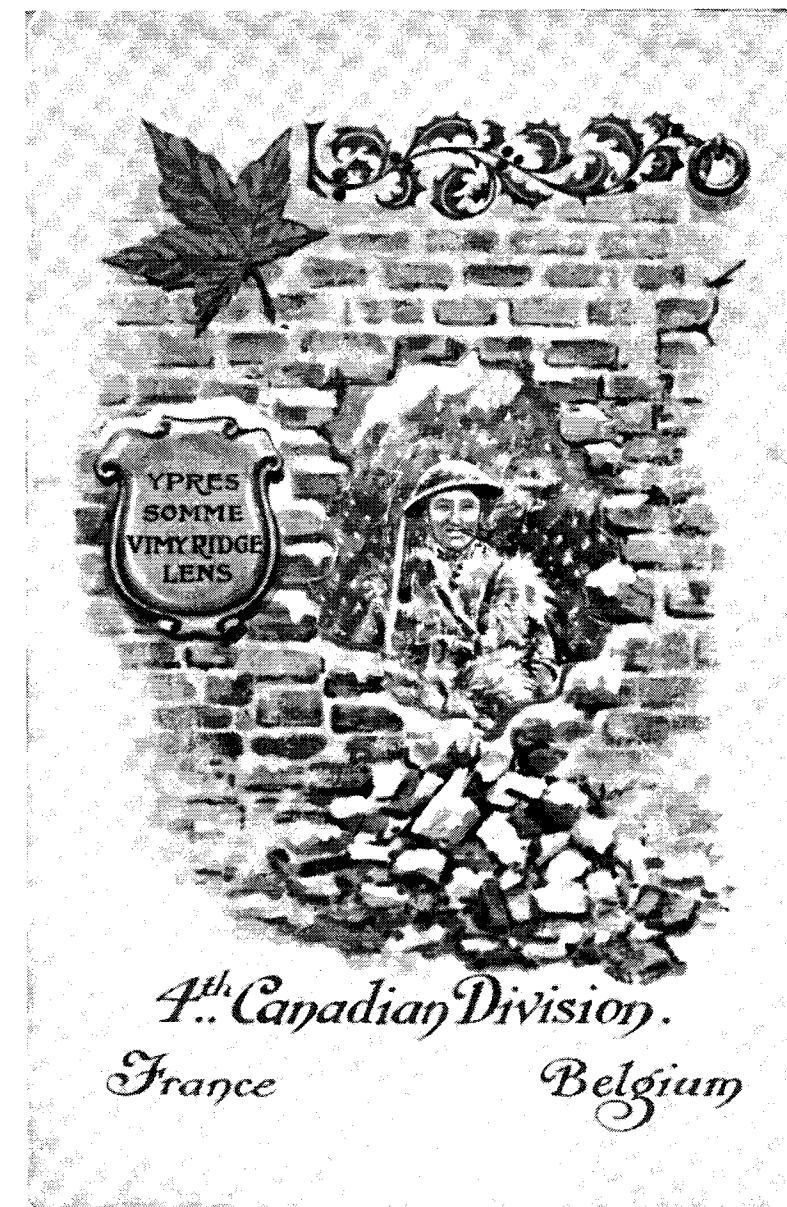
The weather is just like an Indian Summer at home would be - has been bright, dry & warm for more than a week, would like to see the good weather continue for a

month. The wet spell will seem long enough. The farmers work in the fields, that is the women & boys (there are only old crippled men) right up well to the forward positions, do not seem to mind the shelling at all.

Now I must close - In the best of health here, hope all are there.

Love to all
Don

Intended to address this to Aimee but have lost her address but this will do for all. Bert had a letter from Mrs. Gordon lately.



France 25/10/1917

Dear Rose.-

Your great long letter* came along tonight & was very, very welcome. Also one from Jessie, I had just written her two nights ago telling her I had received the box she sent.

The box & sox from your part of the country came along O.K. and the sox are not too heavy; just right.

Bert was over & helped to eat up what was eatable. At present he is camped within three hundred yards of us, so we see quite a bit of one another.

My work keeps me out quite a bit of the day, around at the different artillery units of our division. They are in about as good shape for gas defence as it is possible to have them under the circumstances.

Now Rose under present conditions I can't hope to compete with you in letter writing if you forward this last long one as a sample. You must surely be having a delightful time out at Mrs. Denoon's. Would certainly like to meet her, as really women like her are worth meeting. It may seem peculiar but the women whom I have met since leaving Canada, who were really worth meeting were married women over middle age.

Of course there were exceptions, my little French friend being one of the finest girls I have ever met, & as you say there are some nice Red Cross nurses.

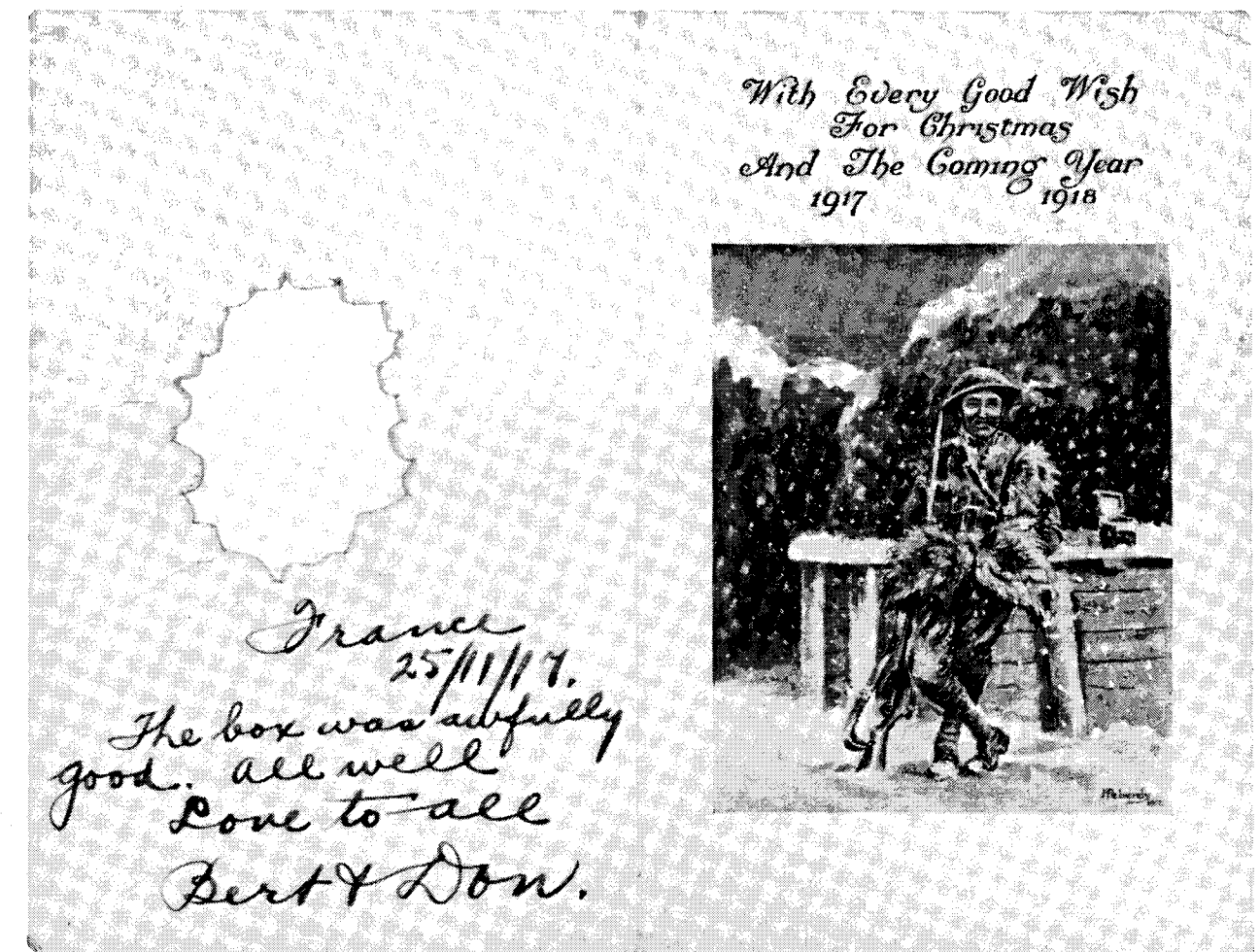
Yes, before I forget, keep those addresses of the Western people I gave you. Speaking of women, Mrs. Drader of London, Eng, is a great little mother, to all the boys, is a Canadian & keeps open house for Canadians. Of course she has a nice daughter, quite musical who is very much like a Canadian girl & therefore that much more loveable. Mrs. Drader deposited some papers for me in her bank when I came to France. She has Grace's address. Mrs. Blackett of Croydon near London is really English, a fine old lady whom I met on board train on my way down from Scotland last Summer. I owe her letters from last April or May for which I'm quite ashamed as she opened her home to me even though a perfect stranger & without credentials a private soldier. It's a wonder I have any friends left at all.

Well the mud is quite deep & sticky, almost pulls your boots off everytime you lift your feet. And yet the weather has been holding wonderfully well for this time of year. All the old crowd that lived at Canterbury Cottage last winter are well at time of writing, all in this area. Would like to have that same bunch together again in peace times.

* typical of Rose and Lily.

So you would like to be back among the Indian boys & girls. Well I can't blame you as that appears to be very useful work. But who knows, Rose, you may be serving a very useful purpose right where you are visiting among friends, where you know you are welcome. Simply because you are enjoying your visit need not necessarily mean that the time isn't well spent. Believe me I'd be content to spend some time among real friends in a quiet place. Now I must close.

Best love to all.
Don



France, 14/1/1918

My Dear Eva.

Your card came to me while I was up the line with the guns, and living in the proverbial dugout. The card is about the prettiest I've seen yet. You've surely a really artistic taste.

Well, all winter we've been pretty busy, and while in the line there is a certain excitement, conscious or otherwise, that causes one to be under a strain more or less, with the result that on coming down to H.Q. for the "days out", the reaction has a queer effect on me. I become so lazy that I hate to move away from the fire and haven't enough ambition to write letters even. And so there are many who have to wait a long while for an epistle from me.

Our H.Qrts., are in a very lovely spot this winter, at the foot of a long range of hills that face south. Around the camp runs an old moat and at one side of this is an old half ruined limestone tower, which might well have been the drawbridge tower of the castle that once stood on this spot. All around the town is a mass of ruins, from the earlier stages of the war.

I had to spend Xmas day and week in the line, but had a good Xmas dinner out here on New Year's day. Since then I've put some more days with the guns and yesterday rode about 15 kilometers for a good hot bath. It was a good one.

Now, Eva, I hope you are, all of you, well, and that everything goes right happily this year. Don is on leave to Scotland, but should be back tomorrow or the next day. All well.

Very best love to everybody there.

Bert



Arts '17 Men with Queen's first Hospital Corps, Cairo, Egypt
Jimmy Odell is at top right corner. In February 1918, Lt. J. Odell transferred from the 13th
Battery, C.F.A. to the Royal Air Force.

- courtesy of Queen's University Archives, Tricolor Yearbook, 1917

France 8/4/1918

Dear Rose, Lily & Dick,-

Your letter, Rose, arrived safely this evening & was as always, very welcome. And, despite the food situation in Canada you wrote quite a cheery letter. All the gossip from the Owen Sound Sun was very interesting but those names you mentioned of boys & girls being married, while I seem to have heard those names somewhere or sometime in the dim, distant past, yet the recollection is very hazy.

Poor old Kemble, well what's the odds so long as they're happy. Spent a little time with Bert last evening, he isn't far from me, in the same Division so I see him quite often. He is in the best of health as I also am. Have a lot of travelling to do & I do it on foot so I'm always in good hard condition.

We have been very busy all winter, in fact I don't remember of ever having been busier and I was very glad of it; one doesn't have so much time for fruitless thought. Had a letter from Jessie the other day & she seems to be very much interested in her work & talks very enthusiastically about Church doings.* Out here I never know when Sunday comes around. A week ago (Easter Sunday) I was up around the gun positions all forenoon when someone exclaimed that the day was Easter. Well I decided right there that I couldn't let the day go by without having the customary egg feed, so I beat it out to the back country & found part of a village with the odd store doing business. I bought 8 or 9 eggs, some potatoes, 1/4 lb. of butter and took them to a French woman's house & got her to cook them up for me. French fried potatoes, an omelette made with about 9 eggs went a long way to satisfy my egg hunger. And those French women can make an omelette. They are wonderful people, think so much of their homes, won't leave their homes even when in ruins & the Bosche still shelling the place.

Yes I was in Scotland in January on Leave. Spent about a day in Edinburgh.....

...remainder of Don's letter is missing

* Jessie was deaconess at the Presbyterian Church in Trenton, Nova Scotia at the time.

Note: Bert officially joined the 13th Battery, Canadian Field Artillery on April 15th, 1918. (See diary of the Battery, page 190). The 13th Battery was part of the 4th Division of the Canadian Corps.



Don in France (at left in lower picture) (June/18)

France 19/5/1918

Dear Eva -

Please do not be alarmed at receiving a communication from your uncle. He doesn't often do it however much he would like to. This morning however (Sunday) I'm going to write a letter or two and, as I have a photo to send you, one of the letters goes to you.

These photos were "sat for" about four days ago - you will see by the pinched expression of my face and the extreme thinness of my body what terrible ravages this awful war has made on me. No doubt you read the usual stuff that the war correspondents write, such as Beach Thomas, Phillip Gibbs, Hamilton Fyfe, etc., I could never figure out just what purpose they were supposed to serve in writing as they do. We have some good laughs over their rantings, but apart from the accounts of the "horrible war" cheering up those who are out here by its absolute silliness, the only thing it does is to cause worry to those at home who are always ready to believe the most absurd things. Certainly there are some difficult situations to pass through and some of the better British troops did have a hard time in the big offensive, but it was because others wouldn't stand & take a little of the hot time that those who did fight got it as hard as they did. I have seen & talked with different officers who were in it and that is the only conclusion I could come to. There seems to have been a lot of foot racing. If the people at home knew just how beautiful France is especially when the sun shines and how well we live they wouldn't write such letters as we sometimes get.

Well, enough of the war - there always will be a war as long as there are letters to write.

Today the weather is wonderful, the sun shines & the birds sing just as they should. Everything in the way of flowers & vegetation is in full bloom. The green of the grass & tree leaves are a much richer & deeper green than what we have in Canada.

Bert is also, like myself in a very sick condition, but manages to enjoy his three or four good meals a day & ride a horse occasionally.

All the other boys we knew out here are well.

Hope you are having a good time in the "peg" & getting on well with your studies.* If I stay in the army "aprez la guerre" I may need a steno.

Now I must close, with best wishes & love to all.

Always Don

* Eva took a business course in Winnipeg in 1918. She then returned to Morse to take a position in the Bank of Commerce.

France, 28.6.1918

Dear Rose.

It is your turn for a letter. I just have a pile of about twenty in front of me to be answered, and I hardly see where I'm going to get time. By the way you have apparently not got my proper address yet. It is "13th Battery, C.F.A. France".

Just now it is noon and I'm writing this in my tent (or our tent). There are four others in with me. Our tent is pitched in the back yard of a French farm house and all around is very pretty, a valley full of trees, shrubery, grass and some little streams pretty well choked up with watercress. This morning after parade I spent some time with my servant building a table out of an old box and fixing up a place to hang up some clothes. Am writing on the table now and sitting on the edge of my bed - made of some scantling and wire netting.

The French people about here are fine, they think the Canadians are about it - and they are right.

The other day I had the experience of taking my first trip up in a flying machine. It was a Bristol Scout and very fast. The sensation when "doing stunts" was quite queer and made me a bit sea-sick. While in that condition, any inclination which I may have had to join the Air Force, was rudely dispelled, but now that the sea sick feeling has worn off there is a certain fascination calling me to fly again.

I haven't seen Don for some little time but he was fine last I saw of him. We are having such lovely weather, and the crops are going to be splendid; as a result, the farmers are in good humor. And now as to promises and etc. You don't need to fear about my rushing headlong into things unforeseen. Probabilities are all thought of, and as to this girl in C'wood being too perfect to mingle with my "common place sisters" you need not worry about that either. It is she who is nervous about meeting you. Such is the fear of criticism. But remember that all these things I tell you are between us. We understand all the possibilities of this war and hitherto all "promises" could rather be called "hopes".

And now I must go, all is fine here and you look well after yourself.

Lovingly Bert

France, 15.7.1918

My Dear Lily

What were the "congratulations" for? Anyway your letter arrived a couple of nights ago while I was up at O.P. Got three that night and one of them was from one who perhaps may have been the cause of your sending such greetings. Life is rosy still, and being out "on rest" is to my mind a misnomer. I would much rather be in the line - if it is a quiet front or if we have Fritzie eating out of our hands, which usually is the case now in front of the Canadians. We don't hate ourselves at all do we?

But it is rather good sport at O.P. (Observing Post) when one has an opportunity of turning one's guns on a party of Boche just to see them scatter for their holes like scared rabbits, and perchance leaving some of their numbers to fertilize France. Great sport! and I wish it were over! And what is more, I see no reason why it will not end next summer. Then, oh ye return trip! Canada will be like Heaven and is the nearest approach to that condition, from our point of view, nearer than any other land on earth - even granting there may be some dirty politics there. Let there be politics but let not Eastern habits nor customs infest the land! I hope I'll be able to step into some good thing the moment I land, be it money, mastery or the arms of a maid; one or all.

I'm trying right now to get a line on a big ranching proposition and if the government will "come across" I'll get some old country capital interested and dive into the game with mind heart and - well maybe - wife. I rather live in the past for the future and it makes this sordid, unnatural present take on a more hopeful color. "Caesar was ambitious" and Steve Brodie took a chance. Both died! But I shall raise cattle and feed the world!

No, Grace hasn't told me of their coming hope. They are doing well. Let us suggest that it be a boy in these strenuous times, for we must prosecute the war to a successful conclusion. Seriously I hope Grace will be in best of health.



Bert and friend (Miss Sykes) before the war. Bert left his canoe with her during the war.

You spoke of writing to Miss Sykes. Well that's up to you, I don't mind if you want to, only remember that we're not married not even engaged - what ever that means - but may be one day, if I go back, there is a probability that such may happen, for I think there is no other girl quite naturally perfect within human limits. And it appears that she has a feeling that I'm half decent, where ever she gets the idea. Yet, after all, some good may come out of Gomorrah (?). Anyway I believe that I'm some judge of girls and I should be, having been raised among so many girls - my sisters.

Last I saw of Don he was fine, but I don't know just where he is now. All happy!

Best love.

Bert

THE NEEPAWA PRESS FILES

town shortly to take up residence in Winnipeg, has instructed B. W. Bolton to dispose of her dwelling house on Vivian street.

Rev. F. B. Stacey and family are now settled in the Methodist parsonage. Mrs. Stacey will be "at home" the first and second Wednesdays.

40 Years Ago—1918

Still another Neepawa boy has won the Military Medal in France, S. Perry Hamilton, of the Canadian Artillery. He is the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. W. M. Hamilton, of Edmonton, formerly of Neepawa.

Wm. Swinburn has purchased the Fieldhouse residence from Mrs. Gerald Simpson.

A pretty wedding took place Aug. 21 at the home of Thos. Jackson, Orange Ridge, when his daughter, Eva, was united in marriage to Arthur Birch. Rev. J. J. Cowan officiated. Attendants were Miss Jessie Birch and George Jackson. Mr. and Mrs. Birch will take up their residence in the Birnie district.

Miss Lottie Hodgkinson has left

for Rosburn to take charge of a school.

News has come from the military authorities, of the wounding of Roy Buchan and Theodore Gowing.

Corporal N. F. Adams of the first depot battalion, Winnipeg, is spending his farewell leave with his parents, Conductor and Mrs. Jack Adams.

Notification came to Mr. Donald McKenzie, who is the guest of his daughter, Mrs. R. S. Horne, that his son, Lieut. R. J. McKenzie, of the Canadian Artillery had been admitted to the military hospital at Rouen, France, suffering from gunshot wounds. Before enlistment, Lieut McKenzie was a resident of Port Arthur.

CANADIAN PACIFIC R'Y. CO'S TELEGRAPH

TELEGRAM
CABLE CONNECTIONS TO ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD

No. 1 WN C 30 NL MD. Ottawa, Ont. Aug. 31, 1918

Donald MacKenzie Neepawa.

17804 sincerely regret inform you Lieut. Robt. James MacKenzie artillery officially reported seriously ill two British Red Cross Hospital Rouen August 27 gunshot wounds multiple.

Director of Records
2453K Sept. 1st

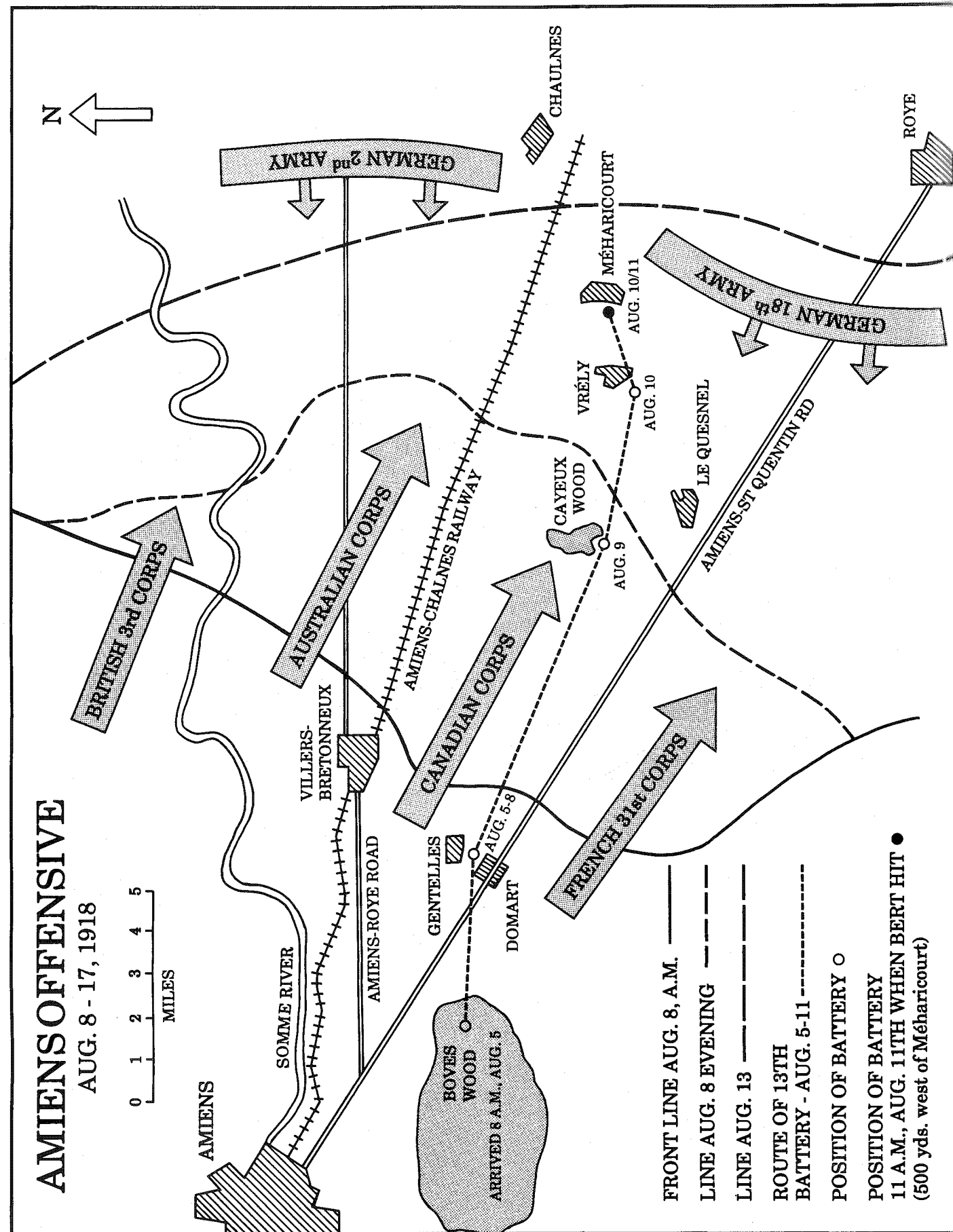


THE AMIENS OFFENSIVE - Aug. 8-17, 1918
(Bert was hit on the 4th day of the Amiens offensive)

The Battle of Amiens was a key turning point in the war, not just physically, but more importantly by far, psychologically. After the terrible inconclusive battles of attrition on the western front up to the summer of 1918, with millions slaughtered and relatively little advance either way, the Amiens offensive broke the stalemate of brute force against brute force — it marked the beginning of the end of the war. It was one of the most successful Allied offences of the war; finally the Germans were cracking.

In the west from the start of the war, the main factors were trenches, barbed wire, machine guns, artillery and mud - the majority of all casualties were probably caused by artillery fire, and by drowning in mud. While the British and French had borne the brunt of the war and casualties on the Allied side, the Canadian Corps had developed a unique reputation as a matchless attack force, rivalled on the western front only by the Australian Corps. Ypres in Flanders in 1915 had laid the foundation for the Canadian Corps' great reputation as a strike force, and the terrible battles in 1916 and 1917 - the Somme, Vimy Ridge, Hill 70, Passchendaele - had served to reinforce this reputation as outstanding storm troops, openly acknowledged by both the Germans and the Allies. The enemy's refusal to attack Canadian-held Vimy Ridge was a telling tribute to that overall reputation. The Germans came to look upon the presence of the Canadians in the front lines as the omen of an impending attack. "Whenever the Germans found the Canadian Corps coming into the line, they prepared for the worst", said British Prime Minister David Lloyd George. After the Somme (1916), the Canadians' record was one of unbroken victory in attack — they never lost ground and they never lost a gun.

The Amiens offensive was undertaken by the British Fourth Army and the French First Army. General Haig, the Commander of the British Forces, had decided to deal with the threat to the strategic railway center of Amiens and strike the German lines to the east. The spearhead of the attack was the Canadian Corps and the Australian Corps - the two most formidable units in Haig's command - a concentration of unmatched striking power. The Canadian Corps was of very high quality and relatively fresh - they had not been involved in any of the heavy fighting of 1918. The Corps was composed of about 100,000 men, organized into the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Divisions plus Corps troops, and was led by General (Sir) Arthur Currie. He stoutly resisted all attempts to break up the Corps and distribute it among the various British units - he felt that his troops would function best if they stayed together and fought as a unit. He was also determined to avoid the terrible pattern of many battles earlier in the war; instead he would "pay the price of victory in shells and not in the lives of men." By the summer of 1918, the Canadian Artillery had emerged as the best on the Western Front. Explained McNaughton, "Canadians took naturally to gunnery, and in the course of the war they developed extraordinary skill, efficiency and dependability." Bert was part of the 13th Field Battery of the 4th Division. Don was Gas Inspector for the 4th Divisional Artillery. The reputation of the Canadian and Australian forces as storm troops created certain logistic problems - i.e., the need to keep their presence in the front lines a secret from the Germans until the actual attack. In July the Canadian Corps was holding the line



some 40 miles to the north of Amiens. During this period, it was reorganized, reinforced and intensively trained for its spearhead role. Not until the first week of August, was the Corps moved south to Amiens by train, truck and on foot - all with the greatest secrecy. At the same time, to create some deception, a few Canadian troops were moved rather obviously to the north. The bulk of the Corps moved into Boves Wood, a 2 by 3 kilometre area S.E. of Amiens (see map). The 13th Battery (Bert's Battery) arrived in the Wood at 6:00 A.M. on Aug. 5th after a series of night marches - hidden and incommunicado by day. 20,000 horses were also hidden in this relatively small Wood, as well as increased numbers of guns and tanks. From this Wood, the Corps came carefully into the front line in the darkness on the very eve of the attack. The 13th Battery manhandled its guns into forward positions in the wood between Domart and Gentelles within 1500 yds. of the enemy's front lines - silently waiting for "zero" hour. The rumbling of the tanks (maximum speed - 4 1/2 miles an hour) was masked by aircraft flying overhead.

The Canadian Corps was deployed on a 5 mile front between the Amiens-Chaulnes railway line on the left, and the Amiens-Roye road on the right - (see map). The Australian Corps (5 Divisions) was to the left of the Canadians, between the railway line and the Somme River. Between them, they would deliver the main blow. The 3rd Corps of the British 4th Army guarded the Australian left flank north of the Somme, and the 31st Corps of the French 1st Army guarded the Canadian right flank, south of the Amiens-Roye Road. Facing them were the 2nd and 18th German Armies, but somewhat under-strength - they had a total of 14 Divisions with 9 in reserve.

A heavy pre-dawn mist covered the fields east of Amiens on August 8th. At 4:20 A.M. the attack commenced with the simultaneous blast of over 2000 guns (almost "solid sound"), the tanks lumbered into action, and the infantry swept forward. Aircraft were used for artillery observation and reconnaissance. The work of the artillery was outstanding - the opening barrage exceeded in firepower that of the German massed artillery in their initial assault in Belgium in August, 1914, and was very accurate. General McNaughton's heavy artillery took out many of the enemy's guns, and the field batteries had to move several times during the day, leapfrogging to keep up their close support of the machine gunners and the infantry. By the end of the day the Canadians had pushed the German line back 8 miles - almost unheard of. The Australians had advanced 7 miles, the French 5 miles on the right flank after a slow start, and the British 2 miles on the Australians' left. All shared in the excitement and thrill of finally moving forward — mile after mile — a new experience after years of frustration and deadlock. Bert in his letters speaks of the exhilaration of that push, even though it was only 3 days for him. Surprise had been close to perfect; in fact the Germans thought the Canadians were in Belgium. Seven German divisions had been shattered that first day by the Canadians, thousands of prisoners taken, and hundreds of guns and machine guns captured. The tanks had been very useful, but were extremely vulnerable; the majority were out of action at the end of the day.

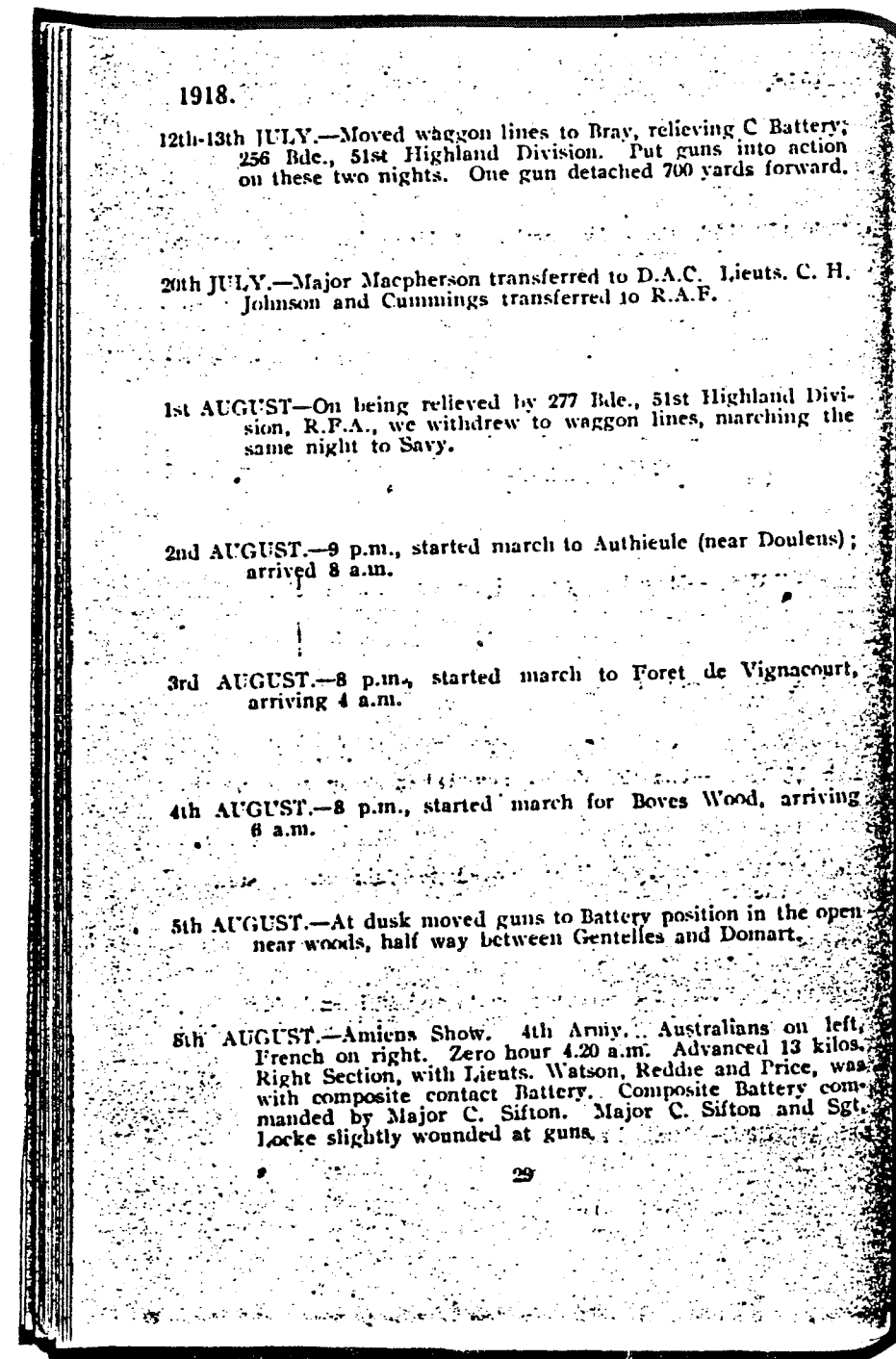
August 8th was a great day for the Canadian Corps and the Allied forces - a brilliant success. The effect on the German Army was devastating, not so much because of the

loss of men, matériel and territory, but psychologically - it undermined German morale. For the first time, entire units disintegrated. The official German Monograph summed up the day, "As the sun set on Aug. 8th on the battlefield, the greatest defeat which the German Army had suffered since the beginning of the war was an accomplished fact". General Ludendorff, the German Commander wrote: "August 8th was the black day of the German Army in the history of this war". His will to fight was broken, and he urged the German High Command to negotiate an immediate armistice.

The attack continued on Aug. 9th, 10th and 11th, but never approached the success of August 8th, as the Germans rushed in reinforcements, and the Allies were moving into the old trenches, wire and concrete of the 1916 battlefields. But by Aug. 11th, the writing was on the wall for the Germans; the Kaiser stated, "We have nearly reached the limits of our powers of resistance. The war must be ended". In this assessment, he was also well aware of the entrance into the war of the Americans - in ever-increasing numbers. The Amiens offensive cost the Canadian Corps nearly 12,000 casualties, but it changed the course of the war. Field Marshall Haig had tears in his eyes after the Amiens offensive when on August 11th he said to Generals Monash and Currie, "You do not know what the Australians and Canadians have done for the British army in these days."

However, the Germans did not collapse, and some of the heaviest fighting of the war took place between Aug. 26th and the Nov. 11th armistice. By the end of August, the Germans were forced to retire behind the Hindenburg Line - a series of very heavily fortified defensive areas (see map page 162). These were constructed in 1917 to replace the older trench system, and posed a formidable barrier to any potential eastward advance. The Canadian Corps was shifted from the Amiens front, north to Arras, to lead the attack to break the Hindenburg Line. The Corps drove east with a series of unbroken offensives - Canal du Nord, Drocourt-Queant Line, Cambrai, culminating in the final drive to Mons. The infantry, supported effectively by the artillery, carried the brunt of the fighting in the last "100 days" (actually only 96 days - Aug. 8th to Nov. 11th). There were heavy casualties in this period, as the Canadian Corps had become the "spearhead" of the British Army, but it was a spectacular achievement by what had emerged as the single most powerful formation of the western front. In those last "100 days" the Canadian Corps met and shattered 47 German Divisions or parts of Divisions; the Germans thought at least 12 Canadian Divisions were coming at them.

The Armistice on Nov. 11th was not popular with everyone. General McNaughton states, "Bloody fools! We have them on the run. That means we shall have to do it all over again in twenty-five years." He was correct, and when Canada went to war again in 1939, McNaughton was their Army commander.



Pages 29 and 30 (overleaf) of the Diary of the 13th Canadian Field Artillery. The 13th Field Battery was one of the few that published its own diary. The pages copied above describe the Battery's positions and moves from July 12th - August 26th, including the precise location where Bert was hit at 11 P.M. on August 11th - "500 yds. west of Méharicourt" - exactly 3 months to the day and hour from the Armistice. (see map, page 148 and page 162)

(Courtesy of the Friends of the Canadian War Museum, Ottawa)

1918.

9th AUGUST.—Spent near Cayeux Wood.

10th AUGUST.—Came into action at dawn, just S.W. of Vrely. Same afternoon moved position to 500 yards west of Mehari-court. Waggon lines beside guns heavily shelled. Dvr. Hogan killed. Waggon lines moved to Vrely. Gun position bombed and machine-gunned by Hun Airmen toward evening.

11th AUGUST.—Gun position heavily shelled. Lieut. C. H. Watson killed at guns; Lieut. R. J. McKenzie, Corpl. Thomas and Gnr. T. J. Miller wounded.

12th AUGUST.—Moved to new position 500 yards in rear.

15th AUGUST.—Lieut. G. R. L. Hill joined Battery.

20th AUGUST.—Dvr. F. Morley wounded in waggon lines.

22nd AUGUST.—Waggon lines moved to Caix on account of shelling.

23th AUGUST.—On being relieved by 34 and 35 French Div. Arty., 36th French Corps, moved during night to woods one mile N. of Ignacourt.

26th AUGUST.—Marched to Toutencourt.

NOTE: The 13th Battery is still active - the oldest militia unit in Western Canada. It was formed in 1871 as the "Winnipeg" Field Battery, and took 4 six-pounders into the Northwest Rebellion in 1885, including Batoche. The 13th served in World War II where it played its part to the full, no matter what the task, becoming known as the "Fearless 13th". It is currently based in Portage la Prairie, and is the senior Battery in the 26th Field Artillery Regiment.

NOTE: On page 194 of John Martinson's book "We Stand on Guard", (see Acknowledgements - page 4), there is a photo of Medical Officers at a Canadian Field Ambulance during the Amiens Offensive. While identification is absent, the soldier in the middle of the picture (facing the camera) bears a striking resemblance to Bert.

Sept 11th Received this last night. You can send it to my parents Winnipeg & let them know I am with my family.

Norman

After received this morning let issue read & send to

BRITISH RED CROSS
AND
ORDER OF ST. JOHN.

To

No. 2
RED CROSS HOSPITAL
Public Schools Wards,
A.P.O. 2, B.E.F.

18/8/18

Dear Norman

Suppose I should write some time, tho I hardly feel like it just now - you see my right hand is bandaged a bit, and some that awkward.

However will manage. I don't know whether or no you'd have heard that I've been a bit wounded as to both legs, at least right leg & left foot. Don't worry, & see that the others are not thinking things are bad - they are with bad, rather cheerful - I'll have both feet left, altho

He never saw, that he should
 be killed. Was his life
 finished here, and was
 mine not?
 Well, I came down
 this far in the usual way
 - ambulance and train.
 By the time this reaches
 you I shall probably be
 in England, and shall
 let you know from there
 anything further.
 Didn't manage to see
 Don, as I came straight
 out, but have written him.
 I wish you'd write the
 others for I don't feel
 in shape to do much; shall
 be on my back for some
 little time.
 All fine.
 Best love to all
 Bert

BRITISH RED CROSS
 and
 ORDER OF ST. JOHN



18/8/1918

No. 2 RED CROSS HOSPITAL
 PUBLIC SCHOOLS WARDS A.P.O. 2, B.E.F

Norman

Dear Norman

Suppose I should write some one, tho' I hardly feel like it just now - you see my
 right hand is bandaged a bit and somewhat awkward.

However we'll manage. I don't know whether or no you'll have heard that I've been
 a bit wounded as to both legs at least right leg & left foot. Don't worry, & see that
 the others are not thinking things are bad - they are not bad, rather cheerful - I'll
 have both feet left, altho' one may remain a little weak - and as soon as I can be
 moved, I shall go on over to England. Then I think it won't be long before I shall be
 in Canada. Just a week ago today, Sunday I got hit. Dinner was all ready, and, I
 can still see the juicy steaks waiting for us, steaks that I never tasted - hard luck! -
 when an S.O.S* came in and we had to get out on the guns. We hadn't been out
 long before the shell came right into the position. I don't know how big it was, but it
 must have been very fast for I didn't have time to dodge at all. I was sort of stunned
 and felt a blow as tho' someone had hit me on the legs with a baseball bat; then I
 heard myself give one howl and immediately heard someone else give exactly the
 same kind of yell, then I found myself crawling away, until Major Sifton** grabbed
 me and dragged me into the dugout. Two others had been slightly hit, but Watson,
 one of our officers, was killed outright. He was a splendid young fellow - a lawyer
 from Toronto and who had married just before coming over. I remember thinking
 how unfair everything was. Why should I who had no such ties as his at home, be
 the one out of that shot who was spared, and he who left a young wife, and son he
 never saw, that he should be killed? Was his life finished here, and was mine not?

Well, I came down this far in the usual way - ambulance and train. By the time this
 reaches you I shall probably be in England, and shall let you know from there
 anything further.

Didn't manage to see Don, as I came straight out, but have written him. I wish
 you'd write the others for I don't feel in shape to do much; shall be on my back for
 some little time.

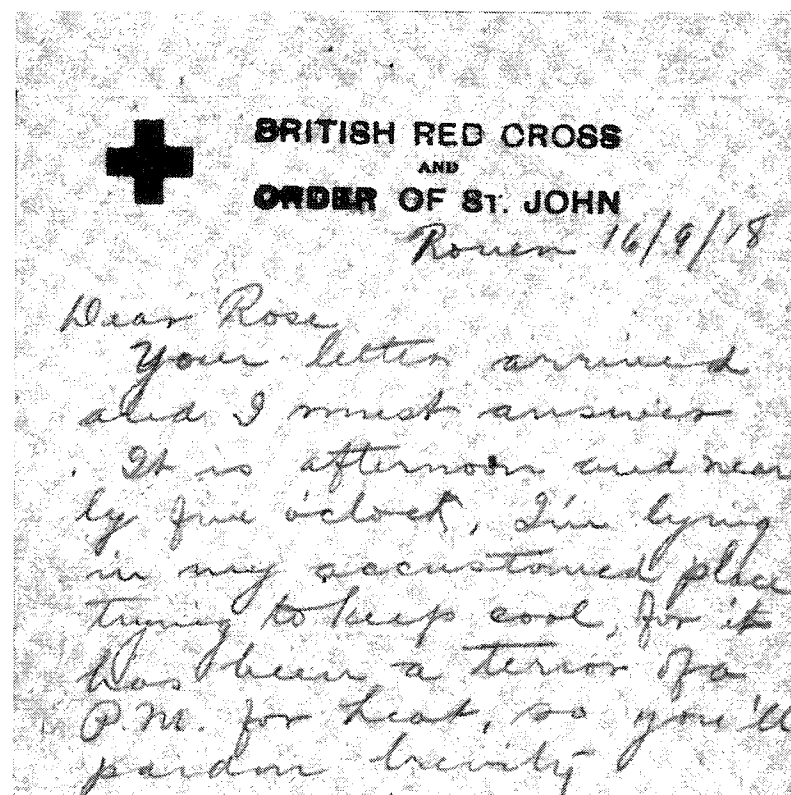
All fine.

Best love to all
 Bert

* The S.O.S. comes on field telephones, with instructions for shelling enemy batteries, etc.

** Officer Commanding, 13th Battery.

France 21/9/1918



BRITISH RED CROSS
AND
ORDER OF ST. JOHN

Rouen 16/9/1918

Dear Rose

Your letter arrived and I must answer.

It is afternoon and nearly five o'clock. I'm lying in my accustomed place trying to keep cool for it has been a terror of a P.M. for heat, so you'll pardon brevity.

No doubt you've already had word that I've been wounded. My right tibia is fairly well knit by this time & isn't bothering me very much.

My left foot they had to take off just above the ankle - so I'll look fine with a cork leg eh? But as soon as I get a new foot, I'll be as good as new myself. This is likely going to keep me here in Hosp. a couple of weeks yet and then I shall get to England - then to Canada. Just fancy Xmas at home!

Now everything is fine here. Don stopt off on his way to and from leave - just left a few days ago for his work.

Hope you enjoy and are able to stand the new job you're getting. Don't hurt yourself and don't worry over the money, so long as its there you know what I told you to do.

Very best love.
Bert

Dear Rose -

Was pleased to have your letter on returning from leave. It was interesting and fairly optimistic even when you discussed the political & social conditions of Canada. From that I would judge that you must have been in good humour the days you wrote. Probably you had just partaken of a good meal. However I think the people in Canada will pull through in spite of the bunglers at Ottawa. We have come through some rough handling of the people's interests in the past, so I guess we can do it again. When one looks over the history of our country we must believe that the majority of the people are a pretty fair sample of men & women. Otherwise it would have been no place for a white man. I think we can give the world points on political rottenness & inefficiency - yes, even give England points & that's going some when one considers Walpole, & some of the present small fry that infest the mother of parliaments.

So Norma would condescend to marry her Uncle Don who is a good soldier. That being a good soldier is a very doubtful compliment. It doesn't make me swell up with pride even a little bit.

You will have seen that the Yanks have given Fritz a taste of what they are going to do, in their trial operation. Well we are willing to give them all the chance in the world to distinguish themselves.

We have had our share of the dirty work and results show that the work has been well done when we are held as the leading storm troops of the British Army. As General Smuts calls us - the spear - head of the British Army. Of course our casualties are heavy at times, necessarily so, we pay for holding the premier place, but the casualties are not, I think, heavier than the occasions warrant.

Well Rose I have, only a few days ago, returned from leave, most of which I spent at the hospital with Bert.* He was feeling easier the day I left. They had amputated the left foot just a few days previously & of course he was just brightening up again after the operation. He should mend very rapidly now that the troublesome foot has been removed. When he gets to England he will be well looked after and then he will be for Canada.

The weather the last few days has been very unsettled. I suppose winter will be upon us before we know it.

* Bert was listed as "Seriously Ill" from August 28th to October 12th.

I should like to see a good hockey match but not this winter.

On my leave - my ticket was for Scotland - Inverness - I spent four days only in England. Just had time to deposit my souvenirs, from the last show, & see a few people. Saw Mary McLeod at Folkestone for a few minutes. She came down to the boat with me.

Now I must close.

Love to Lily, Rose, Father & Dick.

Always Don.

Rouen 1/10/1918

Dear Rose & Lily

It's hard writing on my back,* I mean while lying on my back, so I'm writing to you both together in reply to your separate letters.

Everything is going as nicely as possible and I should soon be in England. Of course you know that they amputated my left foot just above the ankle. My right tibia had a compound fracture but is healing up splendidly.

I tho't at first that I should get home to Canada shortly after getting to England but I understand now that they keep one there until fitted with an artificial foot. So that means my staying in England until next spring sometime. Gee I shall be glad to get back to Canada and eat something. I want tomato soup and beefsteak and strawberry ice cream sodas etc. etc. etc. - prepare!

My trouble is - what am I going to do in civil life - about all I can think of is to start a news stand.

Had a letter from Don last night and he is fine.

Well my arms are cold so I must stop and get them under cover. Any mail you send after getting this you might send in care of Mrs. S. H. Blackett, 26 Beech House Rd. Croydon, England.

Lovingly Bert.

(Rose added the following note before sending this letter on to other family members.) "Norman sent word that he had cable from Bert in England - so he has landed safely. Isn't it good to know this - we have so much to be grateful for the way the boys have been kept. Rose. This will be his address now"

* Bert was listed as "seriously ill", August 28th - October 12th

Rouen 5/10/1918

Dear Grace & All

Your letter or bundle of letters came last night and of course I was glad to get them, and the snaps. I think that tea party picture out in the back yard is too cute for anything. Christie's letter was grand too, and last night while reading them here on my back I was back in Canada again.

I had a letter from Don last night also and he is fine.

Well I'm improving slowly, and just as soon as my stump is healed I shall go to England, I don't expect now that I shall get away before the end of the month. Then I shall have to stay in England until fitted with an artificial foot, which means I shall be in Blighty until next spring likely. Then I shall come home and take some feeding up.



Grace with Norma and Jean in Winnipeg

It will be great to be home again and to see all my new nieces and get some Canadian grub, altho they use us very well here, but all they get to cook with is rations principally.

However all's O.K. and one day I'll be home.

Love to all.
Bert

Valona, Albania, Nov. 4, 1918

Dear Jack and Mrs. Gordon:-

Its a mighty long time since I last wrote to you. But believe me I certainly think of you very often, even if I don't get time to write.

Here I am having a little rest cure in an Italian hospital in this out of the way land.

Did you know I was wounded on Oct 22nd? Well I had the bad luck to get pipped while attacking an Austrian camp of troops, with bombs and machine gun fire. I was about 200 feet up, when I was hit. I tell you, Jack! I was a lucky boy to get back to our side of the lines. For to have a leg busted that close to the ground is no joke. Luckily I had a strap over the top of my other foot so was able to steer with the one leg.

I got back 30 miles to Durazzo where I knew there was a field hospital. Here I landed in a field close to the town. I was 100 miles from our own aerodrome when I was hit but I realized I could not make home on account of the amount of blood I was loosing. At Durazzo I was patched up and then sent down here by boat.

My leg is doing wonderfully well and I hope in a month to be hopping about again.

Accept my congratulations, I hear you have another daughter. Don't see why you can't make it a son for a change???

What have you got for a car now Jack? Write when you can. Best love to the children and yourselves.

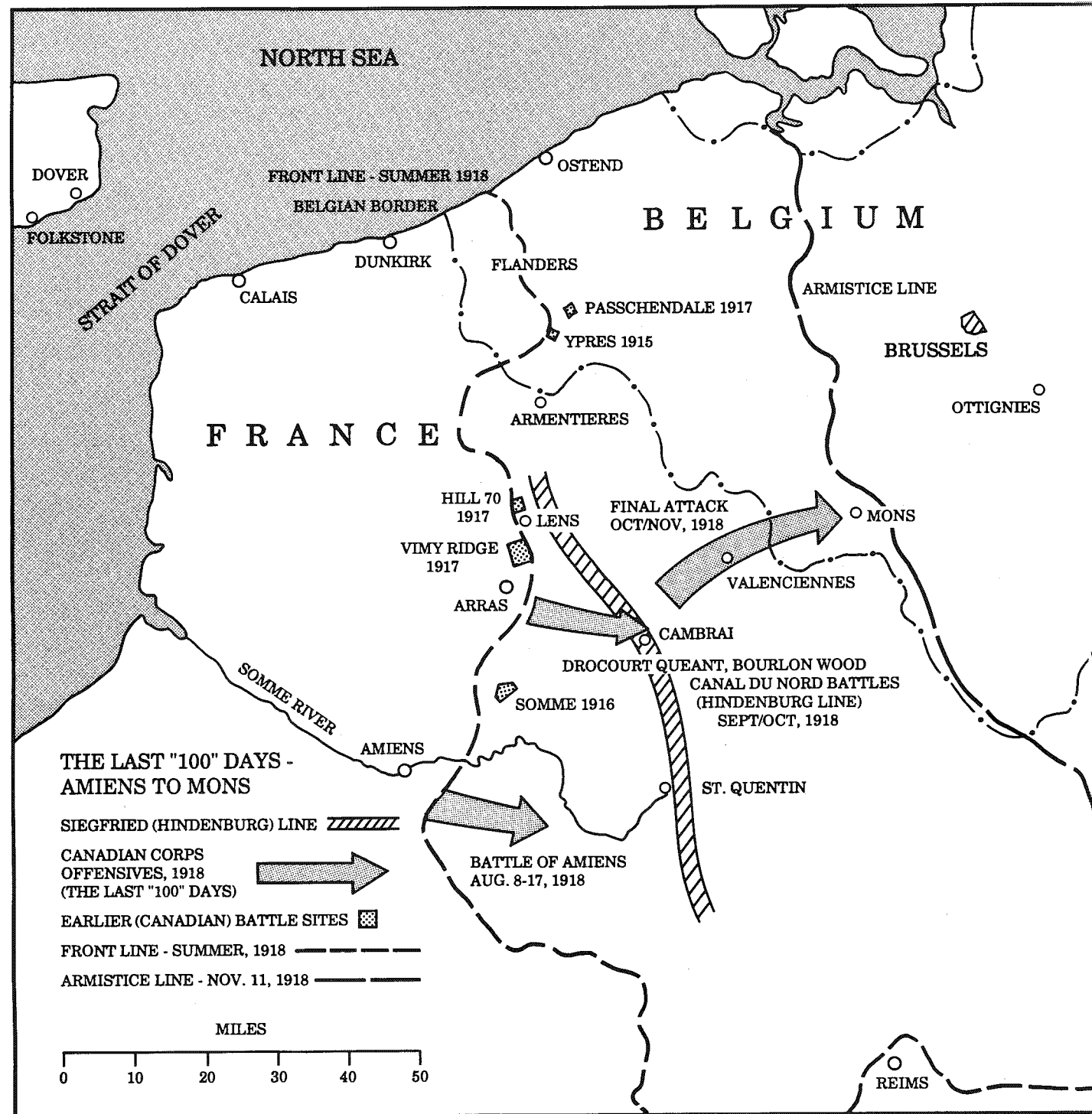
Ever your sincere friend

A. Bernice Shearer

Address: 66 Wing R.A.F.
c/o G.P.O. London

The Last "100 Days" - AMIENS to MONS

19, Belgrave Square
S.W. 1
22/11/1918



My Dear Lily & the others.

Your letter of Oct. 30th reached me yesterday, and also another written Oct. 11th after travelling about France first.

Well, my Dears, the great war is over and the collapse was so sudden that it is hard to realize that the end has come. Just imagine if you can how fortunate our family have been, that both Don and I have come thro' safely! - he a bit more lucky than I, for he is still over there and has seen the most glorious part of it all.

For it has been glorious that steady push Eastward until by now the Canadian Corps must be nearing the Rhine. My one regret is that I'm not back with my Battery - the 13th, that has been unlucky only for the Hun!

You will not be able to appreciate the wonderful feeling of exhilaration from chasing the enemy after years of stationary fighting - the collapse - I had only three days of that push but it was enough to feel the glory of it all. But all the boys tell me that it was impossible to keep back the tears when they marched through the towns which they were liberating to the French, and that is my regret, that I didn't last long enough to experience this last. I suppose Don has already described his experience in that, as he has described it all to me.

Now I'm going to ask that this letter do you all, because if I write to all separately I have to hurry over events thus missing detail and probably making unsatisfactory reading for you. So if you will let it go the round only in the family remember, it will help me very much.

I had to remain in Rouen over two months before being in fit shape for the trip across to England, but at last one night about three o'clock I was put on a stretcher and bumped in an ambulance over the cobble stoned streets of Rouen to the station. Shortly after day break the train pulled out for L'Havre. I shall not forget that trip. For two months I had no glimpse of the outside except when carried the numerous occasions to the operating theatre, when I could look up and see the sky. On these return trips I saw not even the sky.

So when I was fortunate enough in the train to get a bunk with my head at a window, I hardly ever removed my eyes from the glorious outside except to eat my breakfast. What a country we passed through - hills and valleys and trees and canals in the garb of early autumn. I never in my life fully appreciated the out of doors until that morning. I was happy! I was going to England - a step toward home.

At noon we reached L'Havre, and were soon on the boat but did not sail until after dark. What an appetite I had, and it seemed as tho' we were being fed all the time. The meals were cooked and served so nicely too, by waiters in clean white coats -

the swinging beds were cozy and one could taste the freshness of the sea air. I was still happy. I could have enjoyed a week on that boat and in that gorgeous little cabin ward, with English, Irish, Scotch, Americans, and one Canadian - me -. We reached Plymouth early in the morning whilst I was still asleep.

At both L'Havre and Plymouth, while waiting to change, Red Cross people, girls and women brought around baskets of candy, gum etc. and passed them out. I think American ladies were the most abundant. Well in good time we were on our way to London and arrived at Victoria station about seven o'clock. There some officers came on the train to sort us out to the hospitals that had room for us. I knew of some private hospitals and when they tried to send me to the 3rd London General, I asked to be sent to Sister Agnes' King Edward VII Hosp. - said I was expected there! and I was surprised to hear the Major with the tags say. "Yes we can give you a bed there". Then, by the St. John Ambulance people we were handled like "Glass with care" into the ambulances waiting for us, fed coffee or tea, and then carefully driven down the wet pavement of London, glistening from the street lamps, to our hospital. A Col. & I were the only ones for Sister Agnes - just a small private hospital.

That night, after having settled in a ward between two Colonels (just three of us in the ward) they bro't me up a real meal! - clear soup, roast partridge with mashed potatoes, salad cauliflower with white sauce, pudding and milk. And so I fared at No. 9 Grovesnor Gardens. After a couple of weeks I was moved over here - an annex of No. 9, a private home given over by a millionairess. It has beds for 12 patients.

The attention is splendid in every way and I can appreciate my good fortune when the fellows who have been in the military hosp's come up to see me and describe their rations and great, plain wards. This room is a gorgeous affair, I can only describe it by saying it's palatial and the grub and attention are compatible with the room. The kitchen, sitting room, smoking room etc. are on the ground floor, we are on the second, the sisters are on the third and the servants on the fourth.

I'm the only Canadian here and go by the name of "Canada" and proud of it, be dad! I'm in right with the sisters too, and on Sunday they are taking me up to their quarters in my wheelchair to a little affair they have each Sunday after lunch - coffee and cigarettes and music. They tell me I'm the first patient the've honored with that privilege to come into their sanctum sanctorum - only the good looking house doctors are allowed. So you see how "Canada" is mixing with the English and how well they are looking after little me. Of course, my going on Sunday is not made public to the ward. Don't be shocked at the mention of cigarettes. All well bred ladies over here smoke them, and somehow or other they are still ladies.

Next evening

This afternoon the Can. Red Cross sent around a car for me, and three of us went for a drive. Col. Milward, Lt. Bell and I. The Col. has his left leg off quite close to the hip, while the little "Bell Boy" is wounded on one side of where he sits down - a bit awkward, poor chap, but both he and the Col. can get about on crutches. I had to be carried in and out of the car. We drove out by Kingston to Hampton Court and had tea at the King's Arms Inn, in front of a cozy fire place. I can't tell you how good it was to get outside and go whirling along at a good clip. I wore no cap all the way just to feel the wind blow through my hair. That's my first outing in over three months, and then everyone is so good to me, and I'm meeting so many dandy people. The Mrs. Blackett in whose care you sent my letter, is a dear, as motherly as can be, and she, as well as several other splendid people want me to go and stay with them just as soon as I can leave hosp.

I'm becoming reconciled to the better class English, no people could do more for me, or be more hospitable.

In a week more I shall be getting about on crutches I hope, and then I'm going down to another private hospital at a watering place, Eastbourne, Col. Milward's home town. He is a real English Gentleman and we are quite chummy. Rather strange, eh? that a mere subaltern could be pally with an Imperial Colonel. A lady from Eastbourne, Mrs. Simmons, called on me the other day and she too wants me to spend Xmas with them. She is young, has piles of money and is as pretty as a picture - sorry she's married, eh?

However neither their money nor their beauty, married or single could lure me from Canada and Canada's beauty - so have no fear.

So now you know that all's well here, and if you people are as happy as I am, to us the world is rosy.

What am I going to do when I go back! Everybody! Men are going to work for me.

I hope you are all well, and that you will pardon the egoism of this letter and scatter its pages amongst the family.

Heaps of love.
Bert

19,BELGRAVE SQUARE
S.W.1

27/11/1918

Dear Eva.

Have you handed in your ultimatum to your boss yet?

Yours was a great letter, and if you do not mind I shall send it on to Don. It did me heaps of good and I had many a good laugh when I was reading it. You surely have the faculty of endowing even the saddest of your own troubles with an under current of subtle humor. So, far from getting tired reading your letter, I've reread it several times in spots.

Now, little Girl, (you were when I saw you last) I'm not going to tell you about my trip etc. over from France for I sent a letter to Lily telling in detail all that dope and she is to send it around within the family, thus saving lazy me from writing several letters of the same stuff.

As you will probably know, I'm in a private hospital in London and am being spoiled with kindness. There are only 12 beds and I'm the only Canadian. I'm dubbed "Canada" by all the others patients and the sisters until I've almost forgotten how to answer to my real name. But I'm proud of "Canada".

We have four sisters looking after us and they live on a floor above ours. On Sundays after lunch they generally get together in their cozy sitting room for a little while and have coffee and music. Last Sunday they took me up in my wheel chair to celebrate with them and I was honored for they told me I was the only patient allowed into their sanctum sanctorum. Anyway I had a pleasant hour for they are splendid girls and the fire place made the room look and feel as cozy as could be. In the midst of our talk, the head sister said "Now 'Canada' when you go home you'll have to take an English girl back with you".

Now I, being surrounded by four sweet things, must needs reply in a diplomatic way, so I merely said with a sigh "I wish I were a Mormon", and then we talked of Utah & Salt Lake City.

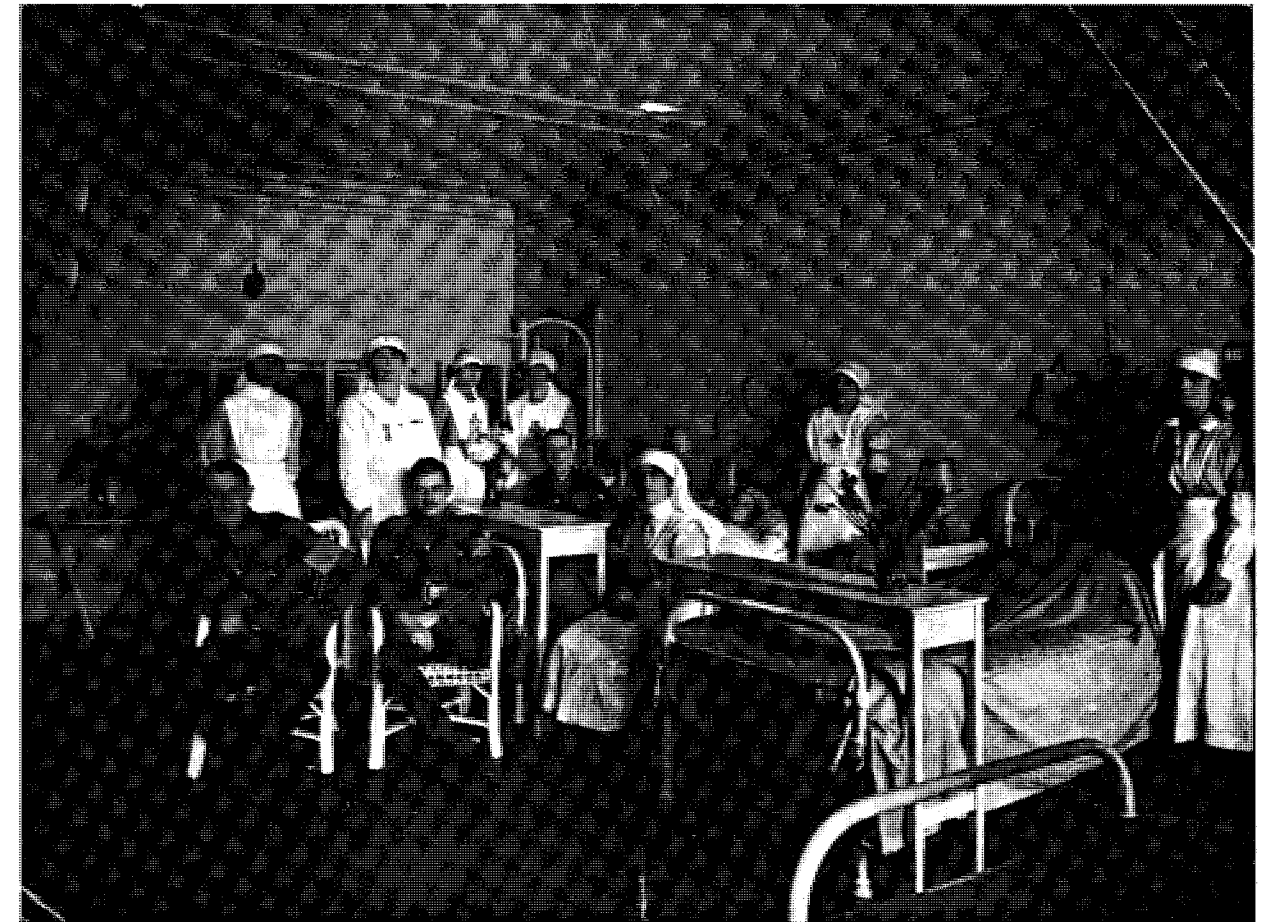
In a week or so I'll be about on crutches I hope, so you see I'm coming right along. Last Saturday the Canadian Red Cross sent a car around and took me out for a drive, of course I had to be lifted in & out of the car, but the ride was grand - my first one.

This hospital belongs to private people and is going to be given back to them on the 16th of Dec. I'm going to another private hosp. in Eastbourne until ready for furlough and my new foot.

I'm meeting many splendid people over here and have hordes of places to go for Xmas and to stay when I can leave hosp. So I'm being well looked after.

And now, Eva, look well after yourself and write when you feel like it. Best love to all the folk. I'm afraid I'll not be able to get out and get Xmas presents in time for Xmas, but I guess you'll all understand.

Lovingly
Bert



Hospital in London

DARELL HOSPITAL
58 & 59 QUEEN ANNE
STREET
W.1.

30.12. 1918

My Dear Grace.

Was glad to get your letter of Nov. 27. It just arrived. Hope you've had a good Xmas & shall have a splendid New Year. I sure would like to see you all & hear the youngsters make a noise.

May be I will in the very near future. My Surgeon, Sir Crisp English, gave me a thorough examination the other night and told me to start learning to walk on crutches. Said that there was a piece of dead bone on my tibia that was working its way out and this was keeping the wound open, but I wasn't to worry about it. I can't say that I was doing much worrying. I asked him about getting home right away, and he said he would find out about facilities for artificial limbs in Canada and, if as good as in England, would let me go, if it could be arranged. Said the best surgeons in the world were in Toronto. English is one of England's best. I'm not making a very startling job of my walking as my leg is terribly weak yet, and of course the muscles aren't all healed.

Had a good time here Xmas. In the P.M. I, with a couple of South African Scottish and a nurse to look after us, went to Albert Hall, where the "Beyond Seas Assc." gave a reception to the overseas officers. The Queen, Duke of Connaught and several others of the Royal Family were there. There was a good program of the variety type. Albert Hall has one of the largest pipe organs in the world and it pealed forth that P.M. It could drown out the Grenadier Guards Band which played as well. Little kiddies dressed to represent the colonies and the U.S.A. gave away presents. Queen gave Xmas cards. We came home early to our Xmas Dinner which was a success owing largely to the hard work of sisters, nurses and the chef. On Boxing day they gave us a movie show, with Charlie Chaplin as the main feature.

It gave me quite a shock to learn of Mrs. Gordon's death. Jean, Jack's sister, wrote me and I've written her. Sophie was the first to tell me. Last I heard of Don he was fine.- With love & Best wishes for 1919.

Bert

Ottignies,* Belgium 6/2/19

Dear Eva.-

Was very pleased indeed to receive your newsy letter a few days ago. It's the only message I've had from the home folks this year - and my address is just the same. In looking through some papers the other day I found an unfinished letter to Alec. One that I'd commenced after the Drocourt - Queant switch line fight & just before the Canal du Nord & Burlon Wood scrap.**

The whole trouble (at least some of it) with my correspondence is that my jobs since I came back to France in 1917 (Aug.) have always been specialist jobs and it has so happened I've struck jobs where there has been more or less to do & where one is never in the same place for very long at a time. I might just get started on a letter or something else, & some work miles away would need attending to. As in the case of Alec's letter, the unfinished work would be forgotten. However Alec will have his letter yet, if I have to clip one from "Dere Mable" & send to him. Or else I shall deliver the message in person - I hope sometime this summer coming. They are very slow about it but we may get home this year yet if that bunch of thugs at Ottawa wake up, also their henchmen in England.

Since the Armistice they have been using me as Educational Officer of the 4th Divisional Artillery. The work is going very nicely under the circumstances. It keeps me fairly busy.

You spoke of Alec taking the Banking Course. It is very good - that part that is done by Queens. We got some of it in our honour political economy the last year I was there. Prof. Swanson who did that branch of the work at Queens is now in Sask. University. Certainly if Alec is going to stay on at the bank he should be studying during his spare time; he may as well be at the top of his profession. Study will help him on the way. The average banker wastes more time at pink teas & around pool parlours than would give most men a University education.

A chap walked up to me the other day & asked me if my name was MacKenzie. I said yes. He said "I had a letter from Eva the other day". For a moment I didn't know who he was talking about - thought he had been reading "Uncle Tom's Cabin". Then he told me it was you. I was quite shocked. I didn't think you were old enough to write to the boys. However, when I come to think it over & read your letter you must be quite grown up. I guess I'm pretty old. Well anyway this chap turned out to be Clarence Richmond - he is with the Engineers of this division. I told him to look me up, but have not run across him since. He is quite a big fellow now. But that's not the fellow to whom, you said in your letter, you were writing. How many fellows do you write to Eva? You needn't answer that question. (You needn't let your mother read that part.)

* - about 20 miles S.E. of Brussels

** The Canadian Corps suffered some heavy casualties in these tough battles, in which they breached the formidable Hindenburg Line in Sept./Oct., 1918 - see map page 162.

My congratulations to you on finding a good position* at such a salary at home. If I was sure of as good wages when I return I'd be quite happy. Yours plans for the future look good & worthy of generous Eva. Here's hoping you get all you wish for & then some.

How goes the music? I have heard some very good music since coming to Belgium. The Belgians are all musical. We are about 18 miles from Brussels and their opera is going in full blast. Have heard two operas there in the last month, "The Daughter of the Regiment" and "La Boheme". All music of course & some wonderful singing. I'm very anxious to hear "Rigoletto" and "La Tosca" but am not sure that I can get up to town for them.

The last word I had from Bert he was doing well. I'm in fair shape although my tonsils are bothering me in this climate.

Now I must draw this to a close. I hope everybody is well. How is the Mayor of the town getting on?

Kindest regards to all the friends.

Love to all the family.
Don

If there are many mistakes in spelling dont mind them - I dont.

* at the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce.

DARELL HOSPITAL
58 & 59 QUEEN ANNE
STREET
W.1.

FEB. 15TH 1919

My Dear Eva.

I'm glad you like writing letters, for it is only then that one can do one's best, and that is why I'm not of much use at the job. I don't think I like writing very much - or else I'm lazy - probably a little of both.

However it was good to get yours, and I shall try to earn them as best I can by answering them, and by way of something "to boot", in order to make up for the difference in value, I shall send you a song now and then just as soon as I can get out again to choose them.

That may need a little explanation. I'm back in bed again. A week ago they found it very necessary to take a bit more off my stump in order to have more padding over the end of the bone - while they were at it, they removed a piece of khaki from the wound in my right leg. Everything is fine now and I should be up again by the beginning of the week. After that all should be clear sailing. I'm going to remain in England until I get my new foot, which means that I may be home in June or July. Then I shall hear you sing some of your songs.

I have some good duets in my case and maybe we shall try a stab at them too. What do you sing - is your voice a contralto or soprano? I should imagine the latter.

In my spare time - after I'm around again I intend doing a little vocal training. The other day I went to see a voice specialist - a Welshman - and shall let him at me.

It is splendid that you are in such a congenial job now; and you are getting a fair amount of money for a Bank to give at the start. The fact that women are coming more and more into the business world - especially in Canada - may offer some good opportunities in the near future. If you like that sort of thing, why not stay with it as long as you can; and in the mean time plug up the Banking systems of Canada, which are the best in the world. You can get a splendid training in that through Queens University extra-murally, and at little cost. Write "the Registrar", Queens Univ. Kingston, Ont. for information. I am telling you merely because I believe you have the ambition. I know you have the ability and that kind, little, Scotch accountant would help you.

It is rather curious that you and Alex should consider yourselves to be rivals - he - if he likes Banking - should supplement his practical work with the Theory also.

Yes, it is a bit disgusting that so many Canadians are marrying over here, and I think I'm safe in saying that the big majority of them are mistakes. It is the English

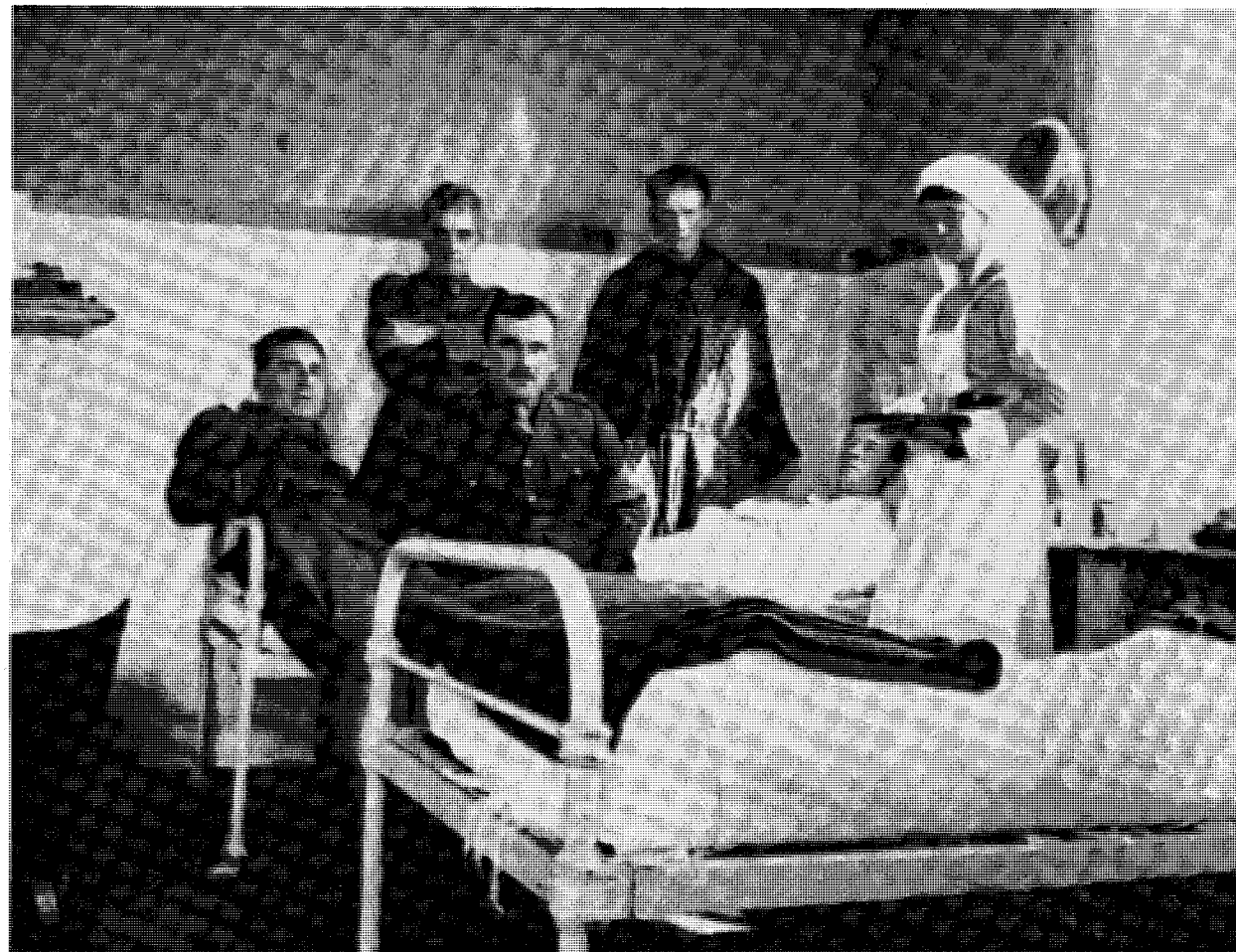
girl that I pity rather than our boys - they shall be very much disappointed with the rough life so many of them will be taken into. I have talked with a few girls who are expecting to marry Canadians and in most cases they know nothing of either the man they are to marry or the kind of life they are going to. All are quite anxious to know what the life is like in Canada - they imagine it to be free and happy in every way, and have very hazy ideas of the extent of the country and its varying conditions in its different parts. One girl, at the time of that big Halifax explosion was frightfully worried because she had a sister in Winnipeg.

Last word I had from Don, he was still in Belgium and was getting rid of a bad cold and tonsilitis. Was quite busy with the Khaki University work in the Division.

And now, best love to you all.

Bert.

P.S. It makes me feel awfully old to be called "uncle".



Bert in Hospital - at left

Prince of Wales Hosp.
Marylebone Road
London N.W.1
April 7th, 1919

Dear Grace, Jack & family.-

No doubt you will be thinking that I owe you a letter although I've written since I last heard from Winnipeg, that was a long time ago, it seems to me.

Before I forget - did you receive that letter of mine containing the "Coupons" re the Canadian War Loan. I sent one receipt for \$500.00 Bonds, am not sure if I sent some of the smaller installment receipt or not. Rather think I did not. They were to be deposited in the Royal Bank branch at Winnipeg. I could have sent them direct to the Bank but that required writing another letter. Hope those arrived safely. Am beginning to take an interest in life again so am thinking of those things.

I am almost myself again, in fact feeling quite fit again. Had a Harley St. specialist go over my insides the other day & he says everything; lungs, heart & stomach are all there doing business as usual. My throat still gives me a little trouble. That & the nerves will take a little longer to finally adjust to peace time warfare. I think probably the sooner I get home & out on to my 160 acres of Govt. rock or marsh (whatever it happens to be) the sooner I'll get back to 100% fit.*

Walked over to Bert's hospital yesterday (Sunday) afternoon, its about 10 minutes from here. He is feeling fine although his stump and leg mend very slowly. Went to church in the morning. Its a long while since I did that but Dr. Jowett was preaching & I thought he would bear listening to for a little.

We are expecting to see Sophy next Sunday. She wrote both Bert & I that she would be in London on Saturday. We are counting on having a Port Arthur day if we can get Bert Martin to join the party. Take in a show or something & have dinner. I believe Miss Ackret is in London although I have not yet seen her. Beatrice Kilbourn (Owen Sound) who is a Canadian Nursing Sister was in this hospital for a week. She is as big as ever & talks just as much. Mary McLeod and her husband left for a trip to Scotland some weeks ago & I haven't heard where they are now. May be in Canada.

* Don served in the Canadian Field Artillery as Lieutenant until the end of the war. He was appointed Gas Officer for the 4th Division Artillery in February, 1918, and after the Armistice in November, he became Educational Officer for the Division during the German withdrawal from Belgium. He took ill with "pharyngitis" in Feb. 1919, and was invalided sick to England. He spent March and part of April in London hospitals with what was termed "debility", later "neurasthenia" and "insomnia". These ailments were probably due to exposures to poison gas. A Harley Street physician advised him to go back to Canada and live in the wide open spaces and fresh air. He embarked from London for Canada on the S.S. Minnekahda on July 4th, 1919, and was officially discharged from the C.E.F. on July 19th.

Two weeks ago I commenced attending law lectures at Lincoln's Inn. They allowed me to do so while still in Hospital for treatment - the specialist told me it was the best thing I could do. The first day I attended five lectures and the next two days I didn't go out of the hospital at all. Then the fourth day I made a fresh start & took one lecture & have now increased to two. This week I shall take only one per day. Although they are very interesting & would be of great benefit should I go on to law, I can't stand a full day yet. This course closes about April 15th. Another course opens after Easter & runs up to July. I can go on those when I'm discharged from hospital, being granted pay & subsistence, but if Father is as low as Lily says I had better go home as soon as possible. Although even my soonest will not likely be before June, that would be only a month's difference. The work in the Courts here is interesting & instructive.

Spent last week end at Croydon at the Blacketts. Mrs. Blackett would like me to live there & visit the M.O. when necessary & although it would be more pleasant for me, it would be giving her a great deal of trouble, which she seems to like. I'm billed for 4 or 5 days there at Easter.

Now I must close.

Love to all.
Don

Heard from Rose yesterday & Jessie a week ago. The first letters from home since Xmas.

Earl Red X. Hoop,
Buxton, Darby.
13th 5th 19.

Dear Eva,

Your letter arrived today and I'm going to scribble off a note in reply and then send your love to Don. He is in London on a law course and expects to get home with the Division.

I came up here last Thursday and am sailing for Canada this coming Thursday. So you can see that I'm a bit busy getting ready for it. I have so many letters to answer that I'm going to make

Can. Red X Hosp.,
Buxton, Darbys
13th, 5th, 1919

Dear Eva

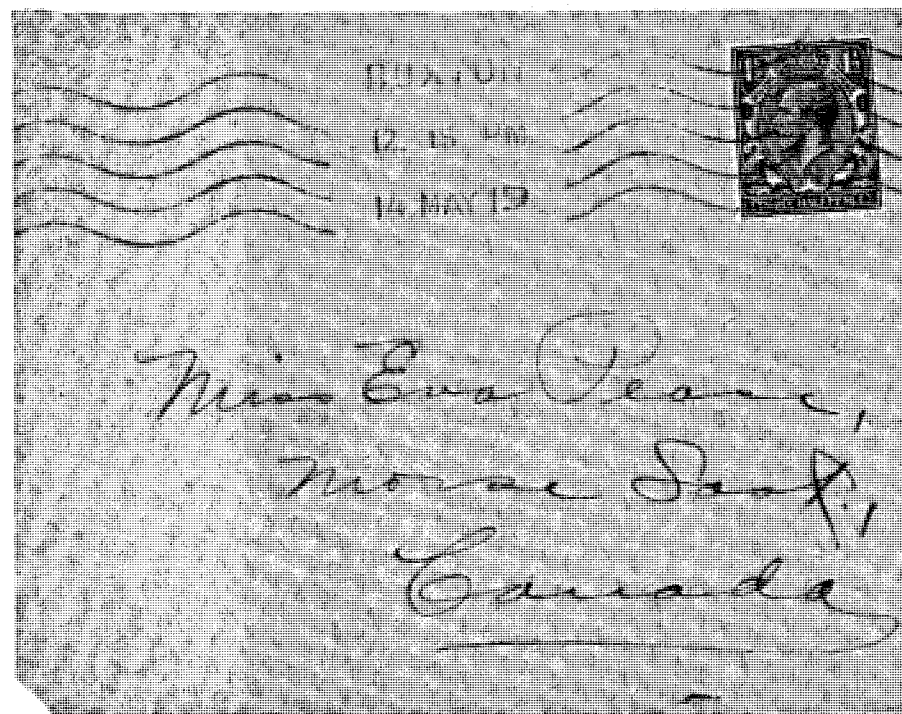
Your letter arrived today and I'm going to scribble off a note in reply and then send yours on to Don. He is in London on a Law course and expects to get home with the Division.

I came up here last Thursday and am sailing for Canada this coming Thursday. So you can see that I'm a bit busy getting ready for it - I have so many letters to answer that I'm going to make post cards answer them. I was given my medical board in London and they marked me for 6 months hospital in Canada - I'll likely go to Toronto.

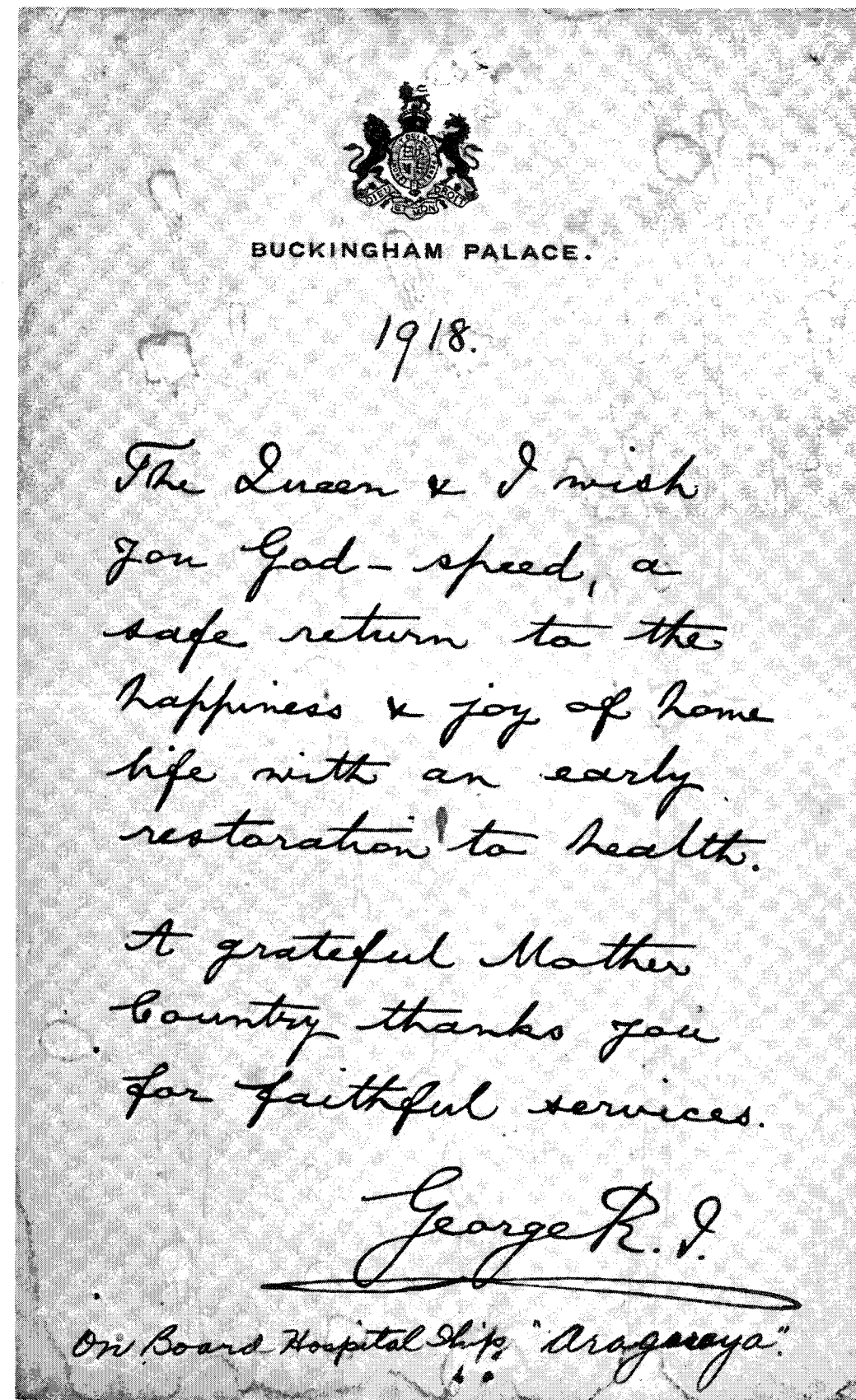
This is a very fine spot among the hilly part of England and it is beginning to look beautiful with summer dress.

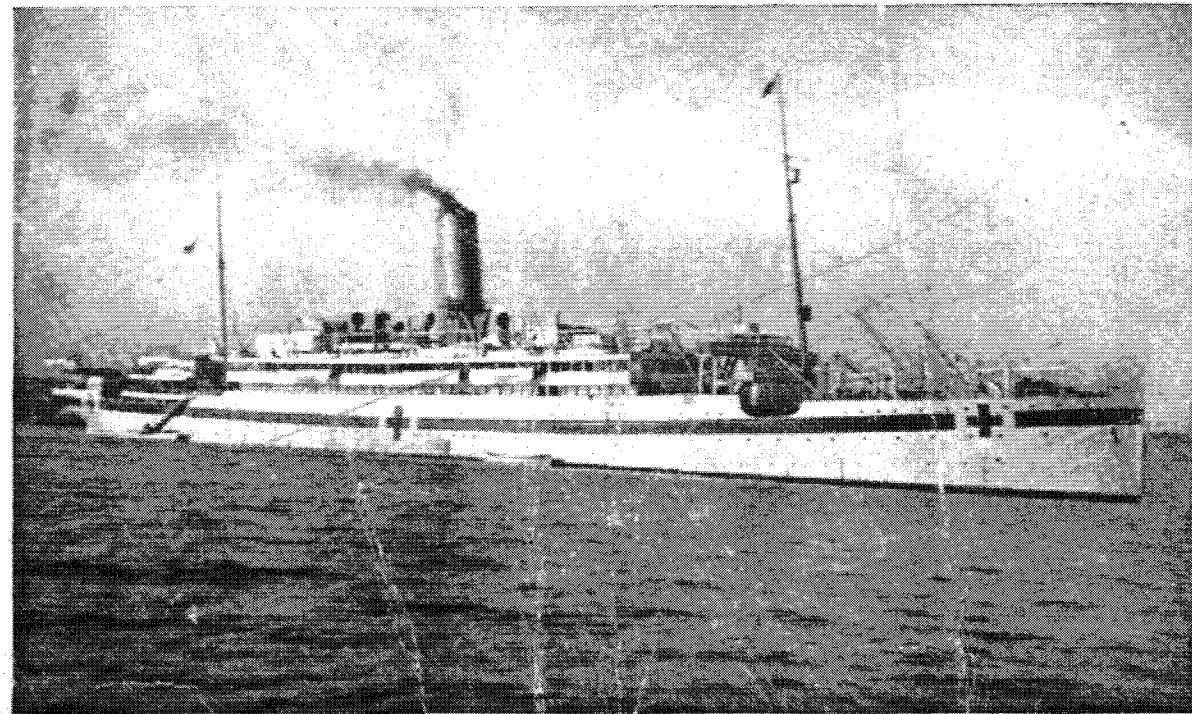
You must excuse the brevity of this but one of these days we'll be seeing each other. Meanwhile best luck and love to all.

Bert



Bert's last letter





H.M. Hospital Ship "ARAGUAYA"

G. A. Pratt, Southampton. Copyright

You tell us nurses
 In charming verses
 About your lovely lunch and dinner
 You wish to sit with us at table
 And that is us all over Mable
 'Twere better far to mix the saints with sinners

(verse on the back of the postcard quoting from a recruiting speech by a Padre)

Bert remained in hospitals in England until May, 1919; both legs gave him - and the doctors - considerable trouble. The left leg required repeated amputations, both in England and later in Canada, each one a little higher up the leg; they were able to save the knee. The right leg which had sustained a compound fracture of the tibia gave him trouble throughout his life. While in London he managed to take a few singing lessons. He had a fine voice of great range, probably inherited from his mother who was also a good singer. He finished the war as a Lieutenant in the Canadian Field Artillery, and sailed for Canada from Liverpool on H.M. Hospital Ship "Araguaya" on May 5th, 1919 - two months before Don.



1) Bert 2) Dr. Alvin Mathers 3) Aimee (Mathers)



Bert in Winnipeg in Winter of 1919-20; Aimee on the left

POSTSCRIPT – DON

After Don and Bert returned to Canada, they both settled on the Prairies; most of their family were already there. After his return to Canada and discharge in July, 1919, Don took his London doctor's advice and along with several other veterans went to spend the summer and fall as hired hands on farm(s) in Saskatchewan. He recalled working for a time with a bachelor farmer near Prince Albert. When they ate breakfast in the morning, they would just leave dishes and everything on the table, and when they came back in the evening after work the cats would have licked them clean, all ready for supper! That winter the group invested what money they had in livestock and farm equipment on a farm in Alberta, but were wiped out financially by an unusually severe winter. In March, 1921, he married Wilma Robertson whom he had known in Port Arthur before the war. Later that year he turned to teaching in rural Manitoba, commencing at Sand Hill School (near Beausejour) in 1921. In December, 1921, their only child, Donald, was born.



Wilma Robertson
London, Ontario, 1915



Wilma, Don and Donald, 1922

In 1922 the family moved to Winnipeg, where Don was principal of Deer Lodge School (at that time outside the city). Don regained his health during these years, although he was never entirely free from colitis. In 1924, he took advantage of the Soldiers' Land Settlement plan* and moved to a 1/2 section of farm land in the Rackham, Manitoba area. In 1925 he became the first teacher of the newly opened Rackham School, commuting the five miles on weekdays by horseback, buggy or sleigh, and doing the farmwork and chores before and after commuting. After a while he got a hired man.

* A soldier could apply for a free land grant after the war, as well as a loan to get started.

In 1927 Don moved to Winnipeg and took his Normal School training; he then took the Principalship of Teulon School. In 1931 he became the Principal of Neepawa Collegiate. He continued his keen interest in sports by coaching various school teams, and produced a number of outstanding track and field athletes, as well as coaching the Collegiate hockey team to the Provincial championship. The move to Neepawa also brought him and Bert back together again, since Bert was the Principal of nearby Franklin School - ten miles west of Neepawa. Together at Queen's, and during the bulk of the war, this Neepawa/Franklin arrangement was mutually satisfying for them both, and allowed many pleasant times together for the two families.



NEEPAWA COLLEGIATE HOCKEY TEAM, MANITOBA CHAMPIONS 1933

C Green M. Tomlin D. Pink F.D. MacKenzie, Coach H. Thomson M. McDougall
P.Cheetham G. Vivian J. Guinn W. Swinburn E.Tomlin W. Zaphe G. Robinson

In 1935 Don ran for Parliament and was elected to the House of Commons as Liberal member for the Neepawa constituency. He retained his seat in the 1940 election, but in 1945 he was defeated by the late Hon. John Bracken, Leader of the Federal Progressive Conservative Party, and former Premier of Manitoba. As a member, Don served his constituents and his country with his characteristic integrity. Following his service in Parliament he continued to live in Ottawa, and was appointed to the Department of Veterans' Affairs as Manitoba member on the parliamentary Committee. Late in life, he had a leg amputated - as had Bert many years before.

Don died in Ottawa, October 13th, 1970 at the age of 87. He is buried in Owen Sound.



Bert (left) and Don in Canada after the war. Donald, their father is standing; Aimee in front; Norman's son Allan and wife Anne are behind Jean Gordon.

POSTSCRIPT – BERT

Upon his arrival back in Canada in May, 1919, Bert was in hospital in Toronto until November. He was transferred briefly to Calgary and then sent to Manitoba Military Hospital in Winnipeg. There he was fitted with an artificial leg and discharged on June 4th, 1920. He was then 32 years old, and rejecting both theology and medicine, both of which would have required several more years of study (and perhaps significant physical demand on his legs), he took the 5 month Normal School course in Winnipeg, and at Christmas took the principalship of the new school at Myrtle, Manitoba. It was here he met Olga LaLier who was already teaching at the school, and on August 25th, 1921, they were married at her home in Pilot Mound.



Olga - with "shingle" cut hair and her first child, Bob



Olga, during the war. Bert kept this photo in his wallet all his married life; Olga never cared for the picture.

They continued teaching at Myrtle, then Arrow River, and finally Bert took the principalship of Franklin School in 1925. Olga ceased teaching and they raised a family of four boys - Bob, Jack, Keith and Glen. In 1936 Bert was appointed Inspector of School for the Roblin area, transferring to Gladstone the next year. He remained there until his retirement in 1953. It was during those years that quite by chance, he found he had a piece of shrapnel embedded in his hand. The local doctor was demonstrating his new fluoroscope to him, and there it was, about a centimeter square, buried between two metacarpal bones. Obviously, the old wound had healed with the metal in place, leaving Bert completely unaware of it. From 1953 - 58, he returned to the "military" -- teaching academic work to the Apprentice Battery of the Canadian Artillery at C.F. B. Shilo.

Bert never lost his interest in the Church or in sport. He served as a member of the United Church Session at Gladstone, was for many years the Sunday School Superintendent, and sang in the Church and community choirs. He had an unusually wide vocal range, and would sing either base or tenor as soloist or choral member. One year he won first prize in the baritone solo competition at the Brandon Musical Festival, and was a great supporter of the Music and Arts Festival in Gladstone. Despite the problems with his legs, he loved to get out on the playground and with undiminished enthusiasm and determination, play soccer with his Franklin pupils - resulting in many an extended recess and noon-hour! As at Queen's, he involved himself thoroughly in the affairs of his community, wherever he was.

He died at Gladstone on March 26th, 1977 at the age of 89, and is buried there.

POSTSCRIPT - THE FAMILY

- Donald, the father, died in Winnipeg at Grace's home in 1921 - age 85.
- Lizzie died in Winnipeg in 1953 at the age of 85.
- Norman died in Creemore, Ontario in 1947 at the age of 76.
- Lily died in Winnipeg in 1968 at the age of 95.
- Rose died in Winnipeg in 1971 at the age of 98.
- Jessie died in Toronto in 1979 at the age of 101.
- Aimee died in Winnipeg in 1971 at the age of 90.
- Grace died in Winnipeg in 1978 at the age of 93.

POSTSCRIPT - "JIMMY" ODELL

Lt. James H. (Horace) Odell transferred in Feb. 1918 from the 13th Battery, C.F.A. (Bert's battery) to the Royal Flying Corps (Observer) in England. After the War, he graduated from Harvard Business School in 1921. In 1925 he married Mary Taylor, the eldest daughter of Queen's University Principal, Dr. R. Bruce Taylor. Jimmy lived and worked in the Boston area from 1921 onwards. He had two children.

All Jimmy's Canadian friends knew him as "Jimmy"; in the U.S., however, he was always "Jim". He died in Sept. 1990 at the age of 95.

(Contributed by son, Bruce, Ft. Myers, Florida)

POSTSCRIPT - J.H. McILQUHAM

Lt. James Maxwell McIlquham, C.F.A. was seriously wounded in action, and died in Nov. 1917, winning the Military Cross in the process. The citation - "Deed of Action" - reads as follows:

"Where the battery was heavily shelled while in action he went from gun to gun looking after the wounded, and finally took the place of a gun layer, and kept a gun in action till he was seriously wounded." MILITARY CROSS - L.G. 30482 dated 18.1.18.

(Contributed by Don MacKenzie, courtesy of Queen's University Archives)

POSTSCRIPT - BILL GRASSIE

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JULY ~~October~~ 11 1918
NOVEMBER 11, 1918
OCTOBER 11, 1918
News Received that
the Armistice comes
into effect at 11 (eleven)
o'clock to day.
All Hostilities cease
at the above hour.
An advanced section
of ours is on its way
by an expedition forward
through Mons.
We are about five
kilometres from MONS.

Lt. William Edward (Bill) Grassie continued with the field artillery until the end of the war, and was about 5 kilometres from MONS at the armistice on Nov. 11, 1918. He never returned to Queen's to finish his University. He married in 1927, and went to Illinois to work at a cosmetic, perfume and flavors company. In the early '30's he returned to Canada and set up his own agency in Port Credit for the American company. When World War II started, he was unable to import the ingredients he needed, and so switched to teaching air force pilots physics and math at Central Tech in Toronto - many had never completed high school. The long hours and stress of teaching these boys - plus his war-time experiences - took their toll and he died in 1947 at 51 years. Every Armistice Day upset Bill - all he could think about was the memories and all the injustices. He had two daughters - Jean, who never married, and Lois who had four children.

Last entry in Bill Grassie's diary

(Contributed by daughter, Lois Gowan of Grimsby, Ontario)

Note: The little group of Queen's men who transferred from the Hospital Unit to the Canadian Field Artillery - those who were left - certainly kept in touch after the War. In the late 1930's, those who could, met at Battersea, Ontario in the Rideau Lakes area, for a reunion. Don, who was by then a M.P. in Ottawa, was active in arranging this reunion.

THE CANADIANS AT WAR – AN ASSESSMENT

There have been various interpretations and analyses of the outstanding record of the Canadians serving overseas in World War I. The British historian Corelli Barnett called them "the most formidable troops in Haig's command". In reference to Canadian, Australian and New Zealand troops, another British historian, Crutwell, stated "These men in physical fitness and strength excelled all the troops of any of the European armies. In their ruthless self-confidence, their individual initiative, their impatience of form, ceremony and tradition, they bore upon themselves the unmistakable mark of the new nations". General Hindenburg gave a German perspective, "The English troops were of varying value. The elite consisted of men from the colonies - a fact which is undoubtedly to be attributed to the circumstances that the colonial population is mainly agrarian". He also ascribed the tough character of the Russian soldier to their life closer to nature than the more sophisticated and softer life of the urbanized western European.

The Canadian soldier tended to be down-to-earth, easy to get along with, but self reliant and independent they displayed individual initiative, and would find a way around a problem. They were strong, able to endure, and like the Australians, disliked the constraints of Army discipline. Under good leadership and training, they invariably delivered the goods. The Canadians (and Australians) were more reckless fighters than the British - not so regimented, and tended to take more chances and initiatives. The special qualities of the Canadians marked them as "storm troops" — especially adapted for offensive rather than defensive roles. The Australians also established a preeminence in tough aggressive fighting, whether in offence or defence. This boldness is reflected in the Australian casualty figures - 68% - the highest in the British forces.

General Currie had the greatest respect for, and faith in his Canadian troops – "they do not whimper, and they do not quit". They acquired a great reputation of always succeeding where others had failed. To quote General Currie: "In no battle did the Corps ever fail to take its objective, nor did it lose one inch of ground, once that ground was consolidated, and in the 51 months that it had been in the field the Canadian Corps has never lost a single gun. I think one cannot be accused of immodesty in claiming that the record is somewhat unique in the history of the world's campaigns."

The Corps under Currie's leadership evolved into a superb fighting machine because of its organization, cohesion, and new initiatives. It developed the first motorized machine gun brigade. Under General Andy McNaughton, its artillery led the Allies in effective techniques. All components of the Corps were balanced and integrated, with the effective support of the infantry the paramount consideration. All this generated tremendous team spirit, mutual trust and confidence among the Corps. Because the Australian and Canadian Corps remained homogeneous and intact - unlike the various British Corps and Divisions - they had the advantage of being able to develop that esprit de corps which made them greater than merely the sum of the parts. The men forged a love for their unit, and a pride in their Corps. It was no accident that General Monash, Commander of the Australian Corps, picked the Canadian Corps along with his own Corps to lead the Amiens attack.

In their officers, the Canadians were generally fortunate, and unfettered by tradition they were able to recruit officers from a much broader social base than the British. In Currie, they had an outstanding leader who cared deeply for his men, and did everything he could in planning, organization and massing materiel before committing the Corps to battle. Lloyd George, British Prime Minister during the War, felt that Currie and General Monash were far more outstanding than the British leaders. Both had come from civilian backgrounds. If he could have changed the command of the British forces, Lloyd George said he would make Currie Commander-in-Chief, and Monash Chief of Staff. Each man had the greatest respect and admiration for the other.

Although the British and French casualties were much heavier – they bore the brunt of the War – the cost to Canada was still immense, with over 200,000 casualties, including 66,600 dead. But her achievements established a new image for Canada in international affairs - she had proved herself as a nation, no longer a colony - ready and able to take her place alongside other nations in the free world. Now, 75 years later, and after once again distinguishing herself in a Second World War, Canada stands in the very highest esteem as a country in her own right, and whose soldiers' main focus is peace-keeping – anywhere in the world.

CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

W.W. 10-47.
R.A.P.

Certificate of Service

ISSUED TO OFFICERS AND NURSING SISTERS

This is to Certify that (Rank) Lieutenant

(Name in full) Robert James MacKENZIE.

Enlisted in Canadian Army Medical Corps, as No. 804 (Private)

CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, on the Thirtieth

day of March 1915 AND WAS APPOINTED to COMMISSIONED RANK

in Canadian Field Artillery.

CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE on the Twenty-Fifth day

of January 1917.

HE SERVED in CANADA, England, Salonica and France with the C.A.M.C.,

4th C.D.A.C., 4th Brigade C.F.A., and Canadian Artillery Regimental Depot,

and was STRUCK OFF THE STRENGTH on the Fourth day

of June 1920 by reason of General Demobilization

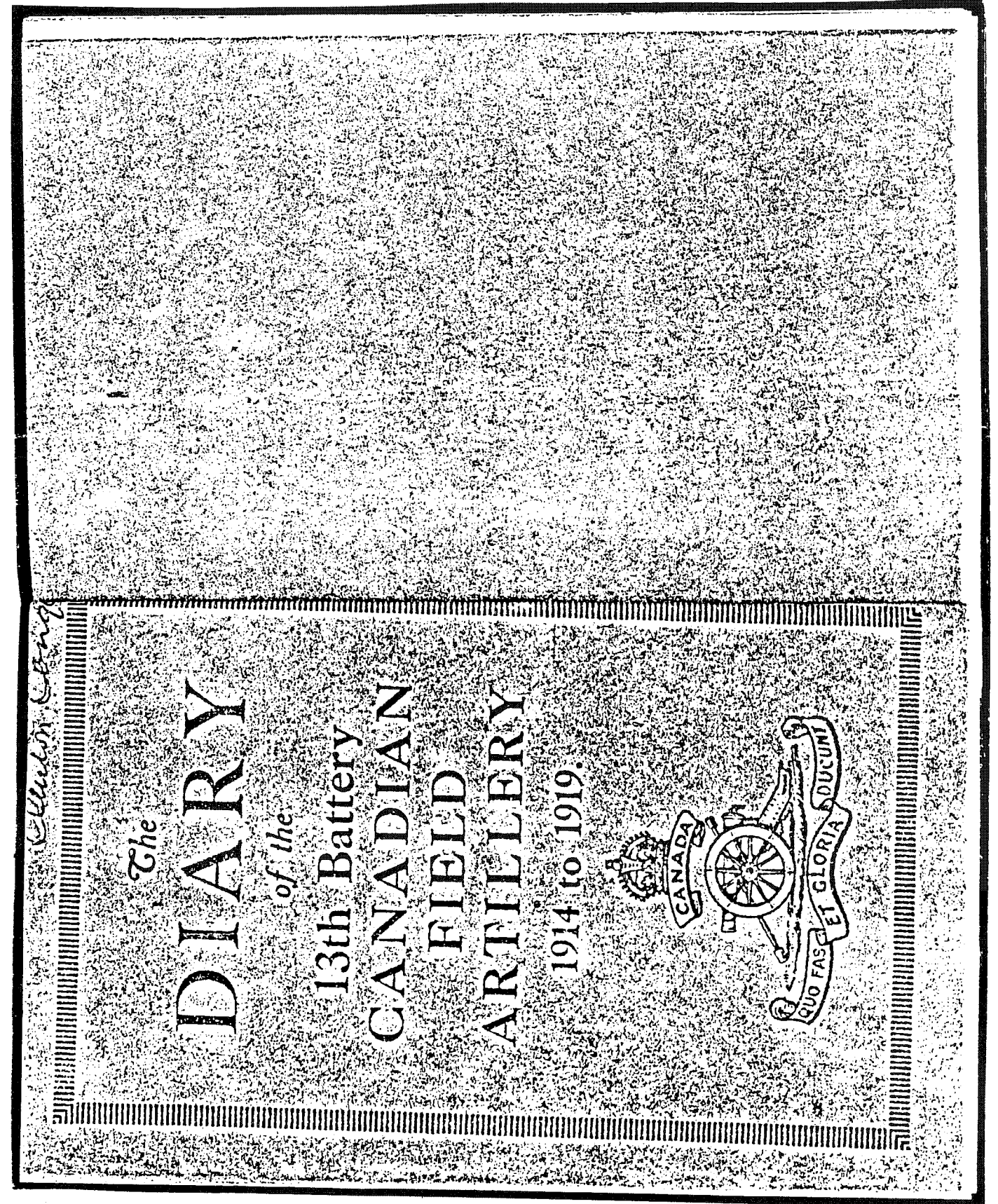
Dated at Ottawa, this First day

of September 1920

Wounded, 11-8-18.

W. C. L. Coleman Cant.
for Director of Personal Services.

M. F. W. 2618
10m-3-20
1772-50-1428



1918.

- 7th APRIL.—Moved into new gun position.
- 10th APRIL.—Forward Section shelled heavily. One gun out of action.
- 11th APRIL.—Moved Forward Section to new position, 500 yards south.
- 15th APRIL.—Lieut. R. J. McKenzie joined battery.
- 18th APRIL.—Lieut. Atkinson took one gun from Forward Section on a light railway train to Bailleul during the night, fired 250 rounds harassing fire, and returned before dawn next day without mishap.
- 20th April.—Major J. Macpherson and Lieut. C. H. Johnson joined the Battery.
- 23rd APRIL.—Lieut. Atkinson transferred to D.A.C. Adjutant.
- 30th APRIL.—Lieut. Doherty transferred to D.A.C.
- 3rd MAY.—Handed over guns to R.F.A. Battery of 18th Div. who relieved us. Personnel withdrawing to waggon line.

27

1918.

- 4th MAY.—Marched to Aeq.
- 6th MAY.—Marched to Amnieres. Intensive training in open warfare tactics.
- 22nd MAY.—Marched to Rocourt, continued training.
- 30th MAY.—Inspected by Brig.-Gen. King and Major-Gen Watson.
- 18th JUNE.—Div. Arty. Gymkana on hill near La Comte.
- 23rd JUNE.—Marched to Amnieres; fired two days on practice ranges testing new pattern range drums, calibration, and tank shooting.
- 26th JUNE.—Marched back to Rocourt.
- 1st JULY.—Corps sports at Tinques.
- 4th JULY.—Inspected at Tinques by Hon. J. A. Cahler.
- 9th JULY.—Inspected at Tinques by Lieut. Gen. A. W. Currie.
- 14th JULY.—Marched to waggon lines, Mt. St. Eloi.

28

1918.

- 12th-13th JULY.—Moved waggon lines to Bray, relieving C Battery, 256 Bde., 51st Highland Division. Put guns into action on these two nights. One gun detached 700 yards forward.
- 20th JULY.—Major Macpherson transferred to D.A.C. Lieuts. C. H. Johnson and Cummings transferred to R.A.F.
- 1st AUGUST.—On being relieved by 277 Bde., 51st Highland Division, R.F.A., we withdrew to waggon lines, marching the same night to Savy.
- 2nd AUGUST.—9 p.m., started march to Authieule (near Douleus); arrived 8 a.m.
- 3rd AUGUST.—8 p.m., started march to Forêt de Vignacourt, arriving 4 a.m.
- 4th AUGUST.—8 p.m., started march for Boves Wood, arriving 6 a.m.
- 5th AUGUST.—At dusk moved guns to Battery position in the open near woods, half way between Gentelles and Donart.
- 8th AUGUST.—Amiens Show. 4th Army. Australians on left, French on right. Zero hour 4.20 a.m. Advanced 13 kilos, Right Section, with Lieuts. Watson, Reddie and Price, was with composite contact Battery. Composite Battery commanded by Major C. Sifton. Major C. Sifton and Sgt. Locke slightly wounded at guns.

29

1918.

- 9th AUGUST.—Spent near Cayeux Wood.
- 10th AUGUST.—Came into action at dawn, just S.W. of Vrely. Same afternoon moved position to 500 yards west of Meharicourt. Waggon lines beside guns heavily shelled. Dvr. Hogan killed. Waggon lines moved to Vrely. Gun position bombed and machine-gunned by Hun Airmen toward evening.
- 11th AUGUST.—Gun position heavily shelled. Lieut. C. H. Watson killed at guns; Lieut. R. J. McKenzie, Corpl. Thomas and Gnr. T. J. Miller wounded.
- 12th AUGUST.—Moved to new position 500 yards in rear.
- 15th AUGUST.—Lieut. G. R. L. Hill joined Battery.
- 20th AUGUST.—Dvr. F. Morley wounded in waggon lines.
- 22nd AUGUST.—Waggon lines moved to Caix on account of shelling.
- 25th AUGUST.—On being relieved by 34 and 35 French Div. Arty. 86th French Corps, moved during night to woods one mile N. of Ignacourt.
- 26th AUGUST.—Marched to Toutencourt.

30

1919.

21st MARCH.—Guns, vehicles, harness, and all but personnel equipment turned into 4th Canadian Divisional Ordnance, Chateau at Yinclette. All but transport and Officers' horses turned in by this time.

15th APRIL.—Marched to Wavre, entrained (2 p.m.) for Le Havre. Good trip, good rations, heated box cars for all ranks.

17th APRIL.—Arrived Le Havre early in morning. Detained 6 a.m. Held up several days on account of English seamen strikes.

25th APRIL.—Sailed for England (Branthorpe Camp).

OFFICERS OF THE 13th BATTERY.

| Lieut.-Col. Rennie | Joined | Left | Remarks |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| Major G. I. Drew, D.S.O. | 16-11-14 to 5-2-15 | Change Command | |
| Major J. S. McPherson | 18-12-14 to 22-5-15 | Sick | |
| Major C. Sifton, D.S.O. | 20-4-18 to 20-7-18 | Trans. to 1st. D.A.C. | |
| Major G. H. Vansittart | 22-3-17 to 14-5-16 | Wounded 3 times | |
| Capt. Dixon, M.C., D.S.O. | 14-5-16 to 1-6-17 | Died of Wounds | |
| Capt. Dunlop | 16-11-14 to 18-12-15 | Now Major | |
| Capt. R. Kent, M.C. | 12-11-18 | Reposted | |
| Capt. T. H. O'Brien, M.C. | 6-7-18 | | |
| Capt. V. H. de B. Powell, M.C. | 12-10-15 to 9-16 | Wounded | |
| Capt. J. R. Ryan | 14-9-15 to 28-9-15 | | |
| Lieut. Wright | 16-11-14 to 18-12-15 | Reposted, now Capt. | |
| Lieut. T. H. Atkinson, M.C. | 2-6-16 to 4-17 | Now Captain - 4th | |
| Lieut. T. Atkins | 14-5-15 to 21-5-16 | Later died of "Flu" | |
| Lieut. A. Chaplin | 15-3-15 to 5-16 | Killed in Action | |
| Lieut. N. Curtis, M.C. | 6-10-17 to 20-7-18 | G. ss.d | |
| Lieut. A. R. Cumming | 4-8-17 to 30-4-18 | Transferred to R.A.F. | |
| Lieut. C. W. Doherty | 7-5-16 to 14-5-16 | Now Captain | |
| Lieut. A. A. Gillis | 14-5-16 to 21-5-16 | Wounded | |
| Lieut. Genelly | 16-11-14 to 18-12-15 | Reposted | |
| Lieut. Grey | 15-8-18 | | |
| Lieut. G. R. I. Hill, M.M. | 16-11-14 to 18-12-15 | Reposted | |
| Lieut. Hollands | 20-4-18 to 20-7-18 | Transferred to R.A.F. | |
| Lieut. C. F. Johnson | 21-9-18 to 19-11-18 | Transferred to Eng. | |
| Lieut. C. F. Kingsford | 18-12-14 to 15-3-15 | Now Captain | |
| Lieut. Kerr | 18-12-14 to 12-10-15 | Now Captain | |
| Lieut. F. R. Leather, M.C. | 27-3-17 to 10-12-17 | Appointed Adjt. | |
| Lieut. H. W. Larkin, M.C. | 17-3-16 to 4-6-16 | Wounded | |
| Lieut. R. J. McKenzie | 7-16 to 2-18 | Shell Shocked | |
| Lieut. Massey | 2-9-18 to 2-9-18 | Wounded | |
| Lieut. J. W. Price, M.C. | 21-9-18 to 21-9-18 | Promoted Capt. | |
| Lieut. F. R. F. Reddy | 4-8-17 to 11-8-18 | Killed in Action | |
| Lieut. L. A. Reid, M.C. | 7-2-16 to 20-3-16 | | |
| Lieut. J. R. Stubbs, M.C. | 4-2-18 to 21-3-18 | Transferred to R.A.F. | |
| Lieut. W. F. Simmons | 7-2-16 to 20-3-16 | | |
| Lieut. C. H. Watson | 4-2-18 to 21-3-18 | | |
| Lieut. S. H. Wilson, M.C. | 4-2-18 to 21-3-18 | | |
| Lieut. Wright | | | |
| Lieut. J. O'Dell | | | |

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Canada

Department of Veterans Affairs

Ministère des Affaires des anciens combattants

Please quote no. / Citer le no Lieut.

169 Pioneer Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 0H3

December 15, 1976

Mr. Robert J. MacKenzie
Box 66
Gladstone, Manitoba
ROJ OTO

Dear Mr. MacKenzie:

This letter is to certify

- 1) that you enlisted with Canadian Army in WW I on March 27, 1915.
- 2) that you served overseas from May 1915 until May 1919.
- 3) that you suffered a wound to both legs on August 11, 1918 which resulted in an amputation of the left leg.
- 4) that you were discharged from the Army on May 27, 1920 and you remained on Treatment Strength at the Manitoba Military Hospital (Deer Lodge) until August 22, 1920.

Yours truly,

R.P. Nordlinger
Entitlement Officer
for Senior Treatment Medical Officer

RPN/bp

