

**Diary of Charles Oliver Fairbank:**  
**Including his Experiences Overseas During WWI**

Apr. 22, 1916 – Dec. 31, 1916

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## **Introduction**

Major Charles Oliver Fairbank (Dr.) was a member of the **70<sup>th</sup> Battalion** of the Canadian Corps during World War One. The 70<sup>th</sup> started training in Oct. 1915, received its colours Mar. 17, 1916 at London, ON and prepared to go overseas. The battalion was often referred to as the ‘millionaire battalion’ due to the notoriety of some of its officers, notably Lieutenant Colonel Robert Irwin Towers, a prominent Sarnia attorney; Major C.O. Fairbank, Petrolia oil man; and Major William Butler, a former Pittsburgh accountant. Captain Malcolm Mackenzie, nephew of former Prime Minister Alexander Mackenzie and son of Charles Mackenzie (Mackenzie Milne), of Sarnia, was quartermaster and Captain Harold S. Gray of the Huron & Erie Loan Co. (London) was adjutant.

The men of the 70<sup>th</sup> Battalion sailed from Halifax on Apr. 26, 1916 on the S.S. Lapland. Upon arrival in England the battalion camped at Shorncliffe near Folkstone. At Shorncliffe the men were kept busy with military drills and training. Unhappily for the battalion’s recruiting officers, the 70<sup>th</sup> was broken up, and the men were drafted in waves to reinforce other battalions that had suffered heavy losses. C.O.F. was called to join the **18<sup>th</sup> Battalion** (4<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, Canadian Corps) on July 5. Clara joined C.O.F. in England (several other officers’ wives were there too) and they had some time together for sightseeing before he was called to the front on Aug. 1.

From this point until his arrival back in England, C.O.F. refers in his diary to people related to the 18<sup>th</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup> rather than the 70<sup>th</sup>. For example, prior to leaving for France the colonel he refers to is most likely Lieutenant Colonel R.I. Towers (Bob), who was commanding officer of the 70<sup>th</sup>. Following his arrival in France, the colonel C.O.F. refers to is likely Henry Linton Milligan who commanded the ‘fighting 18<sup>th</sup>’. I believe it is Colonel Milligan whose wife passes away in Sept. 1916 and who goes on leave in October.

After receiving ‘the call’ C.O.F. is posted to the Ypres Salient area in France/Belgium. Initially he is in command of 14 platoon of D company. He is on the verge of taking his platoon into the frontline trenches when he is recalled to dugouts near Veerstraat, to a staff position where he is in charge of reserve billets and [overseeing the cleanliness and order of the trenches]. C.O.F. remains in this position until he marches out with D Company en-route to the Somme.

On the way to the Somme battlefields the men stop in Steenvoorde on Aug. 24 and this is when the series of photographs of officers with helmets and gas masks are taken. On Aug. 30 at Tourneheim the men exchange their Ross rifles for Lee-Enfields that are supposed to be more effective during trench warfare. Travelling on to Albert C.O.F. stood beneath the iconic ‘Golden Madonna,’ a statue of the Virgin and child atop a church steeple that was left atilt and dangling precariously following German bombardment. In preparation for the oncoming offensive C.O.F. observes the army’s ‘caterpillars’ (tanks) which were to be used for the first time. During the Sept. 15, 1916 offensive (Battle at Courcellette), C.O.F. was ordered to act as adjutant and remained behind the lines. In the following weeks, while battles were taking place around Thiepval and along the Ancre, C.O.F. was in charge of arranging billets for the frequently moving army in the transport lines west of Albert and was thus spared from the most violent fighting although shelling was commonplace. Throughout this experience C.O.F. was a keen observer and commentator. He often referred to the war as the ‘Crusade for Humanity.’

C.O.F. had turned down a staff position in London, ON to travel overseas with the 70<sup>th</sup> battalion. While in England and France he was always hoping for a suitable position to open up. Unknown to him, certain men (General Carson, Major General Sam Hughes) back home and in England were working to get C.O.F. back from the frontlines. It is unclear from the diary whether his preference was to stay in France (although no longer with the 70<sup>th</sup>) and serve, on the front lines or otherwise, or to return to Canada. He was likely torn between a willingness to serve and responsibilities and affection for his family back home. After going overseas and seeing some action, he seems to have been willing to let others determine his destiny. While in France he received several letters asking what he wished to do and indicating that a position might open up for him back home. On Oct. 8 C.O.F. received orders to take up a post in Canada. He left France, returned for a brief stay in England, and then headed home.

In England his time was divided between London and Folkstone. He was reacquainted with many of the people he had been socializing with before going to France. He developed an idea for some type of protection

device for the fighting men that he was trying to promote but it is not explained in any detail. He returned to Halifax on H.M.T. Olympic. The Olympic was the sister ship of Titanic and Britannic. The only one of the three still afloat in 1916, she was very large and luxurious. She frequently sailed between Halifax and Europe during World War One and her commander Bertram Hayes was later knighted for his heroics. Their departure from Liverpool was delayed because of the threat from German submarines. The Battle of Dover Straits was taking place in which at least three British ships were sunk or badly damaged.

C.O.F. returned to Ontario safe and sound. Before going home he visited with Sir Wilfred and Lady Laurier in Ottawa and met with Major General Sam Hughes (within days of Hughes' forced resignation as Minister of Militia and Defence). C.O.F. was treated to a reception in Petrolia on the day of his return and then allowed to return to his family and regular life.

## **Transcription Notes**

- uncertainty indicated by square brackets [xxxx]
- misspellings have been maintained
- periods and commas appear inconsistently in diary and have been added to facilitate reading
- items in [blue square brackets] provide correct spellings or added information not available in diary
- ship names are underlined and in green
- items in red are transcribed from diary but seem to have been added at a later time
- capital letters appear as in the diary except in cases where small and capital letters look similar and in these cases standard rules of capitalization were applied

## **Diary Entries**

**Saturday, April 22, 1916**

En Route on Train

**Sunday, April 23, 1916 (Easter)**

On Train

**Monday, April 24, 1916**

Arrived AM Halifax

Ship [Lapland](#) got in at 3 PM. We embarked with 79<sup>th</sup> at 5 & draft of first field ambulance charge of Capt. White (Winnipeg) naval man under Lieut. Cunningham on board from Bermuda

**Tuesday, April 25, 1916**

In port all day

**Wednesday, April 26, 1916**

Sailed from Canada

Left Wednesday at 4 PM convoyed by [Carnarvon](#) & accompanied by [Empress of Britain](#) & [Metagama](#)  
Cold & quite breeze blowing

**Thursday, April 27, 1916**

At Sea

**Friday, April 28, 1916**

At Sea

**Saturday, April 29, 1916**

At Sea

**Sunday, April 30, 1916**

At Sea

**Monday, May 1, 1916**

At Sea

**Tuesday, May 2, 1916**

At Sea

In danger zone

Lights out at night

**Wednesday, May 3, 1916**

At 6 PM the four destroyers hove in sight & joined us the nos. 70<sup>th</sup> – 74 – 60 & – 85

The men slept on decks & up stairs tonight in danger zone

Lights out

**Thursday, May 4, 1916**

The destroyers escorted us all day, towards morning sighted land, Ireland, went around north end, saw Scotland coast passed [Giants Causeway](#), passed west & south of Isle of Man. Approached Liverpool towards night. [Pilot](#) came aboard, passed up river at night.

Anchored for night.

**Postcard of T.S. Lapland**

*May 4 – 1916  
All Well.  
Love to all.  
Charley*

*Mrs. C.O. Fairbank  
Petrolea,  
Ont.  
Canada*

**Postcard of T.S. Lapland**

*May 4 – 1916  
All Well.  
Dad*

*Charles O. Fairbank  
Petrolea,  
Ont.  
Canada*

**Friday, May 5, 1916**

Liverpool

Left boat in morning for Shorncliffe via London. Had fine trip. Country looked fine. Arrived about 7. Commenced to rain as we started from Station. Marched to Camp tents were pitched. Ate my supper sitting on a trunk outside my tent. Slept on Rubber sheets & blankets on ground overcoat for pillow

**Saturday, May 6, 1916**

Had good sleep was warm. Saw three aereoplanes over our camp in AM  
We are appointed duty Batt<sup>n</sup> for next week. Down to Metropole in evening  
Bob, Mack & I got mattresses & pillows in evening, took them up in a Taxie, no bed steads or cots

**Sunday, May 7, 1916**

Saw areoplane across channel towards French coast

**Monday, May 8, 1916 – no entry –**

**Tuesday, May 9, 1916**

Staid around camp all day attending to various things  
Cabled Clara & sent letters. 4 days have passed since our arrival  
Rained & drissled all day

**Wednesday, May 10, 1916**

Ground in front of tents very muddy, men making cinder paths. Carrying on with Bayonet fighting, signalling & physical exercise  
Musketry instruction. Called & met officers  
Saw first Battle plane fly over camp. The Brigadier Col. Smart called. Went down with Bob & Mack, called at their apartments  
Camp muddy  
Rather chilly

**Thursday, May 11, 1916**

Had good sleep after breakfast saw my first dirigible flying over hills to north. The ground is drying up fast  
Brigadier Col. Smart inspected the Batt<sup>n</sup> 10 AM. Marched past. Batt<sup>n</sup> drill by Col. [Snell] fire scatter & reform  
[Co. Drill D Co.] Capt. [Nelles] extended order  
Saw dirigible [and] 2 areoplanes

letter from May  
chilly cloudy

**Friday, May 12, 1916**

Milder today

Colonel showed me orders for Zeppelin attacks & also [Gave] first real war orders. [Will] kept in safe keeping.

Colonel Mac & I dined together. Took Turkish bath

~~part sunny part~~ cloudy Dried up. Warmer. Rained on way home

**Saturday, May 13, 1916**

Rainy & drizzly all day, much mud again. Sat down in tent to read some orders too cold stopped.

Walked down town PM with [Jno. Peat], went to Metropole, took him & Humphries to dinner. Clerk and waiter strike, we were served by housemaids. Came home wet & chilly tent not inviting but was warm from walk.

Cabled Clara

**Sunday, May 14, 1916**

Dr. Stephens left me in charge today. Marched to church 9 AM at [Digbie heights] about a mile – service outdoors – Band led us. Drying up, sun came out occasionally. I hear an areoplane (I am sitting in my tent) I got out, it is coming directly over my tent I put my opera glasses on, it's a large battle plane. It soon vanishes, the third I have seen today. 2:30. Another plane went over, saw another later 5 today

Supper at Bob & Mack's

Cloudy moderate but chilly

**Newspaper Clipping Included [Feb 20]**

*Cunard Liner Sunk*

*Alaunia Lost After Landing of Passengers*

*The Cunard liner Alaunia was sunk yesterday morning. Fortunately all the passengers, numbering between 300 and 400, had previously landed.*

*The Alaunia carried a crew of about 250, and the majority of these have been reported as saved. At a late hour last evening it was stated that about half a dozen members of the crew were still unaccounted for, but it was hoped that they might possibly be in a rescue boat and not yet landed. Many of the crew reached London last night.*

*The Alaunia, which was built at Greenock in 1913, had a gross tonnage of 13,405.*

**Monday, May 15, 1916**

Paraded in full marching order for inspection up at headquarters. Marched up, formed in MASS. General STEELE Commander of Garrison inspected men in ranks first, marched past in columns of companies. The General spoke to us & complimented us, said had fine body of men presented very creditable appearance. Said we would be a RESERVE BATTN. Every officer would have at least 14 days at front & see all there was. Told Colonel we had a good band. Saw areoplane. Theatre even. with Dr. Stephens – Wrote Clara –

Warmer moderate. Some sun

Am messing officer

**Letter to Clara Fairbank, Petrolia, Ont. on stationary from Hôtel Métropole, Folkestone**

May 15<sup>th</sup> 1916

*My dear Wife*

*We were inspected today by General Steele, the Officer in Command of garrison, he is over General McDougall who commands the Division. The officer in command of our Brigade (no. 1) is Col. Smart. We made a good showing on our inspection, the General complimented us, also told the Colonel we had a good band. Have had considerable rain & considerable mud but the sun came out today & it felt awfully good. I am now sleeping*

*on a mattrass on a rubber sheet on the ground & it's fine. I sleep warm in dressing gown & [yazer] blanket. We will probably be a reserve Battn. here for some time, officers taking various courses. It is only a nice walk to Folkstone which is a fashionable summer resort but probably will not be any mad rush here this season. Saw five areoplanes overhead yesterday. Mrs. Towers & McKenzie are here. There is no reason why you should not come over when you feel like it & conditions with baby etc. permit. The trip does not amount to anything. You would probably sail from New York. We will know more definitely soon what's the fixed conditions of things. You can cable at any time you feel like it*

*To 70<sup>th</sup> Battn.  
1<sup>st</sup> Training Brigade,  
Shorncliffe,  
England*

*Fred Gorman, who is sitting by, has just walked over to me & said "Funny thing your wife worrying about you & you never looked better in your life. Put that in your letter." Yes, I am out in the open air & am not looking glum, that would not be playing the game; but like many others, I am away from all I hold dear, but the cause is a great one.*

*Saw Murray McQueen today, he looks well & feels all right. Roy is O.K. Lots of love & Kisses for wife, baby & boys.*

*Charley*

### **Tuesday, May 16, 1916**

Went to eye hospital with Mac he had cyst cut out of his eye Dr. [McKue] of Montreal.

Saw two dirigibles & 2 aereoplanes AM.

I am messaging officer

After dinner Mack & I took taxie down town & brought Mrs. Towers & [McKenzie] & children up to camp.

Colonel holding court of inquiry on men run in for [drunks] & money taken from them.

Received cable from Clara

Warmer. Sunny AM

### **Wednesday, May 17, 1916**

Men working on Musketry. Band went up to headquarters & played with massed bands

Can hear booming of big guns all AM

It was chilly today & I felt uncomfortable

Col. Smart came down in PM & found things O.K. Down town Mack & Col. in even.

Cloudy til 10 then sun came out feels chilly.

### **Thursday, May 18, 1916**

Camp all day

Read up operation orders for 70<sup>th</sup> air raids & attack

After dinner Col., Mack & I went down town. I went to Metropole, wrote letters to Clara & May.

Sent postal cards Charley, Henry, Bob, Mizpah. Called Colonel. We went to restaurant then home.

Lovely Sunny day pleasant

### **Letter to Clara Fairbank, Petrolia, Ont. on stationary from Hôtel Métropole, Folkestone**

*May 18<sup>th</sup> 1916*

*My dear Wife*

*Your two letters received today. I gave Cecil his. It was fine to get your letters. Well, some fine day your P.O.M. will come back & put his arms around you & "what God has joined together no one will put asunder." For a time our course is clear.*

*Today was fine, sunny & warm, the best yet. We see the areoplanes daily overhead & the English dirigibles also in sight. Heard the booming of guns all yesterday morning.*



*Lieut. Kennedy went up in an areoplane today. The Camp has now dried up and is fine.*

*I had [Jas.] Peat to dinner with me a couple of nights ago. The address you give of Flo is quite near where Frank Reed is living. Have met Mrs. Reed but not Frank yet. Tell Mrs. Carling boys are O.K. & give her my love.*

*There is no reason why you should not come over soon & bring all the family you want to. You would probably sail from New York & the trip does not amount to anything. You know how much I would love to see you.*

*Much love & Kisses to all.*

*Charley*

### **Postcard of Folkestone: The Leas**

*Folkstone, May 18 – 1916*

*Dear Boy.*

*The picture shows the promenade looking over channel to French Coast which you can see & often hear booming from.*

*Charles Oliver Fairbank*

*Petrolea,*

*Ont.,*

*Canada*

*Dad*

### **Friday, May 19, 1916**

Men carrying on Musketry, Bayonet fighting & physical drill

Examined lines. Got midnight passes for band

Got inoculated 3 PM for Typhoid ([Para] Typhoid) After dinner walked to town with Mack & Bob, went to Metropole, later to Colonel's, felt miserable after inoculation. Walked home

~~inoculated~~ [La Grippe] before at little before Xmas was sick at Xmas dinner

Sunny & Pleasant. Lovely day. Inoculated at time of Col. [Lessard's] visit

### **Saturday, May 20, 1916**

About 3 AM heard Capt. Humphries call in to Adjutant Gray that had received orders to "Prepare for Air Raid" I told him to call Colonel (I was under effects of inoculation) Heard Colonel say to sound bugle. I called out to hold on & got up & told Colonel the orders were to turn out Guard & picket etc. Colonel said I better get in out of cold. Heard later the Zeppy had been over & returned by Dover. Pro McKenzie called. Staid in bed til noon. Carling, Fisher, [Granger], McCormick all feeling inoculation

Warm, sunny, pleasant

### **Sunday, May 21, 1916**

About over effect of inoculation. Did not go to church. 200 men commenced Musketry at Hythe butts. In PM rode to Earls court, called on Flo [McPhedron] – not in – Walked on Leas [cliffs above beach] alone. Heard guns booming across channel.

Tea at Colonels, went to Metropole had Grey, Garvey & Beresford to Dinner

Had air Raid Warning 9:30 last night. Wrote & cabled Clara

Beautiful Sunny Warm day – no [vest]

### **Letter to Clara Fairbank, Petrolia, Ont. on stationary from Hôtel Métropole, Folkestone**

*May 21<sup>st</sup> 1916*

*My Dear Wife*

*I cabled you tonight just to say "All's Well."*

*I was inoculated again Friday PM and it took hold pretty strong as it did with all the officers who took it but I am all right today, Sunday.*

*I called on Flo this PM, she was out. I went to Metropole & had Gray, Garvey & Beresford to dinner, wish you was with us. I walked along the Leas, a fashionable promenade overlooking the Channel, the day was warm and beautiful. I could hear the booming of big guns across the Channel as I sat alone on a bench. As I turned, I saw a nurse wheeling a rosy faced baby along, it looked at me & smiled. Well, I suppose Old Dad's eyes watered a little. The nurse wheeled the smiling cherub on, it did not know I would have loved to have taken it in my arms & cuddled it for my Bobbie. And the nurse did not know that the fellow sitting on the bench had a far more beautiful baby 4 thousand miles away. "The ships passed in the night" and Dad again listened to the distant boom. It is 24 miles across from Folkstone to the French Coast and 30 miles only to Bolongne [Boulogne-sur-mer] & 5 hours to Paris. For the past two nights we have had warnings of air raids. They are, of course, general warnings. Look at your paper reports of 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>, nothing serious has happened, we have got the air & underseas crafts by the throat.*

*Carling told me you had been down to see his mother, that is good, no doubt you will come over before long & join me.*

*Much love to yourself & boys & Mizpah.*

*Loving husband,  
Charley*

*The 70<sup>th</sup> Battalion are still a unit.*

### **Monday, May 22, 1916**

Moderate & sultry

Inspected messing times

Read operation orders. 200 men went to Hythe Butts

Band to Brigade

Note from Flo [McPhedron]

Moderate. Cloudy & little sprinkle PM

### **Tuesday, May 23, 1916**

Camp all day

In evening called on Flo Davidson. We [were] to Col. Mc[Ewen's] met Col. Clark in charge of Moore Hospital Sunny Pleasant

### **Wednesday, May 24, 1916**

Had sports day. I was on our committee, went up to Brigade AM our team won baseball. Went up in PM. Called to [Epileptic] case

In evening went to town Dr. Stevenson went to moving picture

Cable from Clara "All Well. May I come alone"

Rained little in AM. Cleared in PM. Cloudy

### **Thursday, May 25, 1916**

In PM McKenzie & I visited 23<sup>rd</sup> camp, we are to move there Saturday. Went to headquarters & got word from Brigadier that 23<sup>rd</sup> should not move tents. Capt. Walker drove us up to 23<sup>rd</sup> & back.

Went to town with Mac & Colonel. I took them & Mrs. [Towers] & McKenzie to Kent Arms [Sandgate] dined.

Drove up to new Camp lines

Johnson McAdams had been [thrown]. Wired Clara. "Certainly. Come along via New York. Wire booking"

Rained some AM. ~~Sunny Pleasant~~ Cleared & sunny. Rain

### **Friday, May 26, 1916**

We are ordered to move to Dibgate camp. 23<sup>rd</sup> are leaving.

McKenzie & I went up to look over ground AM of 23<sup>rd</sup>, said was going to remove some canvas, we went to headquarters & they said no come back with us & ordered no removal ~~after~~ Had Col., Mack & [wives] to dinner at Kent Arms. Col., Mack & I went to Turkish bath at 11 staid all night

Sunny Pleasant

**Saturday, May 27, 1916**

Dressed in Turkish baths took Taxie & Colonel, Mack & I went to camp.

Preparing to move. At one o'clock transports came & loaded up. Mack & I went up to new camp on first one.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> were moving out & was some confusion but we were soon all in.

After supper I took walk over to old camp & back & retired.

Sunny Pleasant

**Sunday, May 28, 1916**

Went over to old camp at 9 AM to [return] Major Thompson & [gave] over camp with McKenzie.

The 58<sup>th</sup> arrived & [returned] our guard & we [returned].

In PM Colonel, Mack & I walked to town & with Mrs. Towers & Mrs. McK. took bus to Dover, left there at 6.

[W.L.] McKenzie was at our camp with Pro in AM

Went to Metropole & had dinner with [W.L. McKenzie]

Dirigibles overhead near Dover sunken boat [beached].

Sunny Pleasant

**Monday, May 29, 1916**

~~After~~ Went over to headquarters at 9:30 with Adjutant Grey to explain Band exchange. Then at 10 took charge of firing party of 200 for Hythe range, did the "attack" with 15 rounds commencing at 400 yds. [give] exposures of targets.

Arrived back at 4:30 hot & tired, up-hill climb feet better after bath.

To town with Mack, went to Metropole. Wrote to Clara & May

Cabled Clara "When leaving"

Called Colonel & he & Mack came too.

Sunny Warm

**Letter to Clara Fairbank, Petrolia, Ont. on stationary from Hôtel Métropole, Folkestone**

Monday 29 May, 1916

My dear Wife,

*I received your cable saying "May I come alone," to which I replied, "Certainly. Come along via New York. Wire booking," meaning, let me know when starting. What boats and [where], Port of arrival. So far as the children are concerned, they would be all right at home & under good care & supervision, of course you would demur most at leaving Bobbie, his is so young, but he is now weaned & the travel might be a trial for him, though I think he would be all right. Your Mother Judgement will be best. He would be under splendid care and conditions at home.*

*I called & saw Flo, she looked well & took me to call on Col. Clark, a Dr. in charge of Moore Hospital [Moore Barracks Hospital].*

*We have changed our camp, moved about a mile. Splendid location. I went over to the old camp yesterday & together with McKenzie gave it over to a new battalion.*

*Yesterday the Colonel, Mack & I went to Dover (look it up on map), getting pretty close to field of action but one really does not realize it. Could see the chalk cliffs on the other side plainly like the Islands across from Santa Barbara, only 21 miles across. Saw many interesting things. We will see them together later. [Mrs.] McKenzie & Major (Pro) McKenzie called on me yesterday & I dined with him & his sister Mary last night. Saw Colonel Frank Reed yesterday & wife. I dine with them Friday night.*

*Today I have had charge of a firing squad of 200 at the ranges, had to march some distance to & from and I was hot & tired on return but feet fine after a rub down. The ranges are important ones & the practise was the "Attack," an important series of course. I do not expect to attack anything more vicious than a tenderloin beef*

*steak for the Germans have learned of the arrival of the 70<sup>th</sup> and know that the game is up and are fast preparing for the retreat & surrender as some postals cards I will send you will prove.*

*Now, my dear girl, it is unnecessary to tell you I would love to see you & take you in my arms, you know that. You will soon enough come over & see your P.O.M. who is simply doing a little bit in a great big humanity campain but grains of sand make a mountain. And when it's all over, we will both feel that courage & manliness still has a resting place in our souls. Lots of love & Kisses to Wife, baby & boys & all.*

*Your loving husband, Charley*

### **Tuesday, May 30, 1916**

Colonel went to ranges. Camp all day. Mack & I took taxie to town & went to Sandgate Kent Arms & Col. & Mrs. Towers & Mrs. McK. had dinner.

Saw flashes & reports towards Dover at 11 when came in. Montgomery sick with boil. Letter from Clara says Lapland reported sunk. 4 Drillers for [Persia here Wilson, McDermid]

Cloudy & sprinkled some AM

### **Wednesday, May 31, 1916**

Colonel went to headquarters for Staff exam. Adjutant sick so asked me to act. Major Butler ~~away~~ going away on leave so I am left in Command.

200 men at butts, 90 at recruit class, many at bombing class

Balance Physical Training & Bayonet fighting

Our Chaplain, Capt. Taylor reported (Why not Norwood)

Bus to town with Col. & Mac. I walked around Folkstone & came back early (10)

Cloudy & Sunny [alternating] moderate

### **Thursday, June 1, 1916**

attended court martial AM & PM

went to town called & got Mrs. McPhedron & went to [Grand]. Col. & Mrs. Towers Capt. & Mrs. McKenzie are [driving] with me tonight.

Had dance til 11:30 after cable from Clara, she sails on 17<sup>th</sup> & [Mrs.] Carling

Sunny Pleasant

Sunny Pleasant

### **Friday, June 2, 1916**

Attended District court martial AM also in PM

After dinner I walked down to ocean & back over hills through golf grounds to camp. Colonel came in about 11 chatted little then retired.

Sunny Pleasant

### **Saturday, June 3, 1916**

Attended District court martial AM

Papers this AM told of Battle in NORTH SEA on afternoon of Wednesday May 31<sup>st</sup> – 3 days ago – 6 British Battle cruisers sunk.

Sunny but chilly AM.

### **Sunday, June 4, 1916**

DRAFT

about 11 AM word came to prepare 200 men immediately for front. Got [Webb] equipment from 12<sup>th</sup>, sharpened bayonets, fixed rifles. Worked all day. At 5:30 Brigadier came over & asked why not ready by 6 (Great Scott!) Colonel told him would be by 7, he said parade at 6:30, which did – Had parade at 10 in darkness, told men might move at night. Col. & I retired 2:30.

Called off dinner at [rest.]

Pleasant

### **Monday, June 5, 1916**

Men waiting for orders to move. Parade ordered for 2. O'Brien musketry man came over & took lunch talked freely. In PM Col. Preswick called & discussed with Colonel re. men for draft (81 not completed musketry) Called up Brigadier & said N<sup>o</sup>, at 5 Col. called to headquarters & told to [take these men off draft] we put 30 other men on Total 149 to be ready by nine PM. McKenzie belligerent.  
Sprinkled on & off all day

### **Tuesday, June 6, 1916**

Left DRAFT – 149

The Draft (149 men) paraded (33 from A Co.) at 8:30 got rations & marched off headed by Band. I watched them go down & up the hill in [distance] (How many will come back?) Our first draft for the front.  
In afternoon ~~letter~~ letter came to Col. saying 37<sup>th</sup> would join us & would be attached for Discipline & Rations. The 37 Col. came over met him.  
Cloudy, sprinkled on & off chilly

### **Wednesday, June 7, 1916**

The 37<sup>th</sup> coming in today. Their Colonel came over had nice talk with Colonel & myself on adjusting things. It's a miserable piece of business. Autocratic authority bad in some hands.  
Letter from Clara, John & Sue  
Showery & Sunny

### **Thursday, June 8, 1916**

Today feeling mad all over about our treatment, it is an outrage Colonel & Mack much disturbed. [Stores] ordered turned over etc. We don't know where we're at. At 5 Colonel, Mack & I went to town. Went to Masonic Hall, talked things over, Col. decided to see Col. Birrett so drove to HYTHE, he had long talk. Had lunch at 11 at restaurant. Found cable on return "If you receive offer position here before I arrive accept"  
I advised Col. to fight

### **Friday, June 9, 1916**

Breakfast at [7]

Sunny in AM pleasant. Formed up on parade at Major [of] 37 in command

We are in a position of not knowing just where we are at. Regarding orderly Room – [Stores] – Band & things in general

Colonel went up & saw Brigadier about it. 90<sup>th</sup> & 95 came in last night. Col., Mack & I took Turkish bath. 200 men went to ranges just as it began to rain

### **Saturday, June 10, 1916**

Awake 5 took taxi. camp at 6. Learned that 90<sup>th</sup> who just arrived is to be broken up. 2 companies to 12<sup>th</sup> two to Brigade School & Col. attached to 12th.

At 11 Colonel told me just received word that Smart Had recommended that we be disbanded.

Received cable 1:30 PM from Clara saying be prepared to return ~~if get offer~~. Colonel worked on letter to reply to Smart.

At night Col., Mack & I staid up late revising letter & military law

### **Sunday, June 11, 1916**

In camp all day. Worked getting letter & papers ready & revised to Col. [Marson] out

In evening walked to town called at Colonel's came back together.

Wrote May.

### **Monday, June 12, 1916**

At Camp rainy & uncomfortable at 1:30 attended Gas Lecture put on helmet & entered gas room (chlorine 1/1000). If helmet leaks [serious]  
Brigade orders attaching 37<sup>th</sup> to us. Colonel received reply to his letter of yesterday asking for case to go to General. Walked down to [Shereton] Camp at 9 back across country at 10, muddy & wet  
Cabled Clara saying Cable received

### **Tuesday, June 13, 1916**

Up 6:30  
Rainy & miserable  
Colonel replying to Col. Smart's reply to his letter asking for case to go to higher authority.  
Colonel received Appendix A containing [charges] he had omitted to send before

### **Wednesday, June 14, 1916**

At camp all day  
Col. & adjutant to headquarters discussing procedure  
Col. Bick talked with us re. march to Dover  
At 11 PM Capt. Barker of 37<sup>th</sup> & I took walk took dog & [lamb]  
Cloudy, chilly, drying up

### **Thursday, June 15, 1916**

Up at 7  
Around camp all day  
Auditor came up & looked into accts.  
Not much to do as men at School & Ranges  
Asked to give names of 4 more lieutenants for front this makes 14. Walked to [Sandy] at even.  
Cloudy AM, cleared in PM, chilly

### **Friday, June 16, 1916**

Orders to supply 150 reinforcements, also for 4 more officers (This makes 10). Capt. Charles about 11 AM asked Col. Towers if he wanted to go to the Officers Course with an opportunity of going to front, he quickly decided, & recommended Himself & myself.  
So we go Monday next.  
Got the draft ready.  
Brigadier Smart highly complimented them  
Bright & pleasant

### **Saturday, June 17, 1916**

Draft remained in readiness, orders came in at night they would move tomorrow AM. Garvey & [LeSueur] will accompany them. Nine of our officers left for front today Wilson, McCormick, [Nelles], Coultis, Mills dead, [Scullond], Raymond, Matthews dead, Bartlett  
Cloudy, Moderate

### **Sunday, June 18, 1916**

At 8 AM our 150 Reinforcements for the 58 in France left. This makes 300. AM troupes marched out for Dover movement.  
Total ranks left 614  
After dinner walked to Seabrook [stage] to Colonel  
Cabled Clara "[Expected could] leaving 17<sup>th</sup> why not"  
Cloudy AM Sunny PM Pleasant

**Monday, June 19, 1916**

1<sup>st</sup> day Napier

Went up to Canadian training school with Colonel in AM. Lectures 10 til 12, camp to lunch. Lectures 2 to 5 Squad drill 5 to 6. Captains & majors together [sabletons] alone. 2 Colonels fell out. Col. Bick spoke of Genl. McDougall speaking to Col. of 95, he was in South Africa & McD was adjutant.

Col. Mack & I dined at Kent Arms walked, home

Sunny Pleasant

**Tuesday, June 20, 1916**

2<sup>nd</sup> day Napier

Up at 6. Cup coffee 6:30 walked Napier, squad drill 7 to 8. Breakfast. Riding 9 to 10. Riding master said I could ride O.K. & need not ride any more. Lectures 10:30 to 12:30. Camp to lunch. Lectures 2 to 5. Squad drill 5 to 6. [Dog] & Mack in car drove to Colonel's, had dinner, walked home by 11:30. Shaved.

No reply from Clara guess [elusioned]

Misty AM. Pleasant PM

asking for more men [sabletons]

**Wednesday, June 21, 1916**

3<sup>rd</sup> day Napier

Drill 7 to 8 & 9:15 to 10:15. Lecture 10:30 to 12:30. Lectures to to 5. Drill 5 to 6

Studied evening. Called out front squad to give detail 3<sup>rd</sup> Dft. 41 warned for Dft. 3<sup>rd</sup> Dft. 341

This increased by  $\frac{37}{378}$

Cloudy

**Thursday, June 22, 1916**

4<sup>th</sup> day Napier

Drill 7 to 8. Lectures 10:30 to 12:30.

At 2 went out with entrenching tool & we dug ourselves in lying down, it was hot.

Lot of drill 5 to 6. Many of school warned for front, six more of our officers, Meek, McArthur, Grant, C. Carling, Garvey, [LeSeur]

(Major Bouchard of Meek [pants] complaint leaving)

Warm Sunny Pleasant

**Friday, June 23, 1916**

5<sup>th</sup> day Napier Barracks

Left 6:30 in auto

Drill 7 to 8 & 8:15 to 9:15. Lectures 10:30 to 12:30. Lectures 2 to 4. Drill 4 to 6.

The trench work yesterday left me little sore but did not blister hands. Am all right today.

My recuperation is good, stomach fine, sleep well, no nerves

Pleasant, slight sprinkle

**Saturday, June 24, 1916**

Drill 7 to 8. Examinations 9 to 12:30. Topography. Military Law. Organization & Admin. Tactics, Engineering Orders say Majors go into field O class. Letter from Col. Smith re. Brigade Major

Took Flo to theatre evening, walked home

Pleasant & sunny

**Sunday, June 25, 1916**

Staid around camp all day. I am tired from the strenuous week (up at 6 AM & last drill 5 to 6)

The day is lovely (Recvd. letter from Clara telling me of Brigade Major recommendation for me) things seem coming my way. I refused a fine position on staff in London. I inspected our dft. 78 with Major Butler at 3 they look fine they go 43 to [24<sup>th</sup>], 26 to 19, 10 to 26, /78  
Letter from R.D. Noble  
Sunny lovely

**Monday, June 26, 1916**

Holiday for me today. Motored to Grand for Room for Clara. Rode back with the Col. Gunn of 24<sup>th</sup> just back from front. Says Canadians had many casualties [18000] in salient should attack in small groups not [extended] order. Had open fighting.  
Cloudy

**Tuesday, June 27, 1916**

At Field Officers Camp til 4 PM  
Clara & Mrs. Carling arrived 6 PM

**Wednesday, June 28, 1916**

At Officers Field Camp

**Thursday, June 29, 1916**

At Officers Field Camp

**Friday, June 30, 1916**

At Officers Field Camp

**Saturday, July 1, 1916**

At Officers Field Camp in AM

**Sunday, July 2, 1916**

At Metropole

**Monday, July 3, 1916**

Field Officers Camp  
Moved to 34 [East Ave.]

**Tuesday, July 4, 1916**

At Field Officers Course  
It has been very instructive & valuable. I have worked hard & it was worth the while

**Wednesday, July 5, 1916**

**The Call**

Attending Field Officers Course in AM when Col. [Primizyl] came out and called us together & said sorry to break up our class but our course was finished, orders had come for most of us to go to front he called out names & mines was among them. I was to go to 18<sup>th</sup>. We would report to school then to our Batt<sup>n</sup>. Went to 70<sup>th</sup> & there orders awaiting all our majors to go except Mowbray. Went to town Clara head learned.

**Thursday, July 6, 1916**

Clara feeling miserable this AM, all upset at thoughts of my going. Never saw her in such a state. I was much alarmed.  
Got word our Batt<sup>n</sup> to move to 39<sup>th</sup> at W. Sandling



The final blow to the magnificent old 70<sup>th</sup> after 11 months of work. Do those who have not raised & organized a Batt<sup>n</sup> realize what it means? ... NO!

### **Friday, July 7, 1916**

Clara had good sleep feeling better.

Went to camp in rain, ready to move to Sandling at 4 PM word came no move.

Colonel & Mrs. Towers, Clara & I dined at Grand.

Clara saw Dr. McEwen & [Mr. Anglin]

Rained

### **Saturday, July 8, 1916**

Folkstone

Colonel & I went out to west Sandling to 39<sup>th</sup> reported to Col. Preston.

Went to Folkstone had lunch, to boat saw [Murmish], [W. Carling] & Beresford off. Clara & Mrs. Carling down also

70<sup>th</sup> ready for orders to move to Sandling

Everything in mixed condition

Sunny pleasant

### **Sunday, July 9, 1916**

at 11 o'clock Mrs. Towers, Clara & I took taxi to Sandling camp. Met Col. [Alman], Major Douglas, Major Mackenzie & 70<sup>th</sup> officers. Colonel Towers came back with us. Met Major [Murray] (Brigade Major). Saw Hughes son in law.

In PM Clara, Mrs. Carling & I walked on [iron]

No word yet of our going – JUST WAITING –

Sunny Lovely day

### **Monday, July 10, 1916**

Taxi to Sandling had lunch. Came back with Bob & Mack. Had tea with [Mrs.] Reed & Clara. In evening Clara & I called on Col. Reed, went & called up [McPharlane] said would not go til Saturday.

Another day of Waiting.

Fine day

### **Tuesday, July 11, 1916**

London

Roy took me to Sandling.

Told Col. I would not go til Saturday, he gave me 3 days leave. I took 1:20 train to London with Clara & Mrs.

Carling. Went to Hotel Savoy. Met [Jno.] Peat, Mr. [Tully] & young Capt. [Mercer]. Took Mrs. Carling to Palace.

Wire from Colonel.

Sunny Pleasant

### **Wednesday, July 12, 1916**

London

Shopped

Mrs. Carling lunched with us.

In evening went to theatre Clara & I

Fine day

### **Thursday, July 13, 1916**

London

[Cawal] & I & Clara visited ~~S~~ Westminster Abbey.

The [Cowell] & I attended Session of Parliament heard Asquith speak, also Churchill, McKenna, Carson & others. Many members present. [Jno.] Peat & [Cowell] for dinner. In evening Jno. Peat & I saw [Burg] Boys & Clara & [Cowell] another play.  
Telegraphed Col. Towers

### **Friday, July 14, 1916**

London

Armstrong came over in AM had talk with him. He called on Genl. Carson & came back & told me General Carson would cable for my recall if I said so. Armstrong lunched with us. I telegraphed Colonel. At 7 Clara & I dined with Joe [Armstrong] at Windsor with Senator Ross & [Boer] representative. At 7:30 Joe took Col. & I to see Genl. Carson.

Clara, Joe & I attended razzle dazzle at Drury Lane

### **Saturday, July 15, 1916**

Clara & I shopped in AM, took 4 PM train. Col. & Mrs. Towers also. In evening Flo, Clara & I called at Dr. McEwens.

Our London trip was most enjoyable. Clara & I enjoyed it.

Pleasant

### **Sunday, July 16, 1916**

Went out to camp with Col. Towers & McKenzie at 10, drove back in about an hour, had lunch. Flo McPhedron, Clara & I took walk in rain, had supper.

No word about France.

Cloudy Rained

### **Monday, July 17, 1916**

Took 9:30 train to Sandling. Had lunch. Attended bombing school (for those warned for overseas)

Various hand grenades & [rifle] grenades described & showed to us. Made a jam tin grenade myself & fired it.

Saw [burst throwers] & catapult & Stokes bomb

Cloudy all day

### **Tuesday, July 18, 1916 – no entry –**

### **Wednesday, July 19, 1916**

Motored to Canterbury visited Cathedral then drove to Margate & back to Folkstone

### **Thursday, July 20, 1916**

In Command. Col. & Butler away.

### **Friday, July 21, 1916**

In Command. Col. & Towers away. Bombing lecture. Stokes gun

### **Saturday, July 22, 1916**

C.O.F. in command, Col. & Butler away. Camp AM

### **Sunday, July 23, 1916**

In Command

Took noon bus to Dover, Clara, Flo, [Cowell] & I, lunch at Grand. Motored to Dover Castle. Got to top of tower where aerial observer was, back by 6

Cloudy

**Monday, July 24, 1916**

Col. Towers telegraphed for extension of leave. Brigade meeting re. [bands] I represented 70<sup>th</sup>. Think can save 70<sup>th</sup>.

Took 6:18 train in. [Cowell] & Flo in

Cloudy

**Tuesday, July 25, 1916**

Camp AM.

Called to see Col. Preston & adjutant & he told me bands had been called together. Went to band room & found them there. My work had results.

Went to theatre "A little bit of fluff". Clara Flo, [Cowell] & I

Cloudy

**Wednesday, July 26, 1916**

Camp AM.

Came back on 1:20 train moved, to 19 Clifton Crescent overlooking the Leas

Clara, Flo & [Cowell] walked to Royal Kent & had tea. Went through Sandgate Castle on ocean front.

Sunny & Pleasant

**Thursday, July 27, 1916**

Camp til 4 PM

~~Called~~ Major Butler & [Cowell] to dinner. Called Col. McEwen after.

Telegraphed Greenizen.

Sunny Pleasant

**Friday, July 28, 1916**

London

Camp AM.

Took 1:35 train for London, Clara, Flo & I. Col. McEwen with us. Arrived London 4 went to Langham Hotel.

Dinner at Trucadero with [Cowell]. Theatre "Empire"

Sunny Pleasant

**Saturday, July 29, 1916**

London

Clara shopping AM. Lunch Clara & I with Armstrong at Windsor, met Senator & [Sir \_\_\_] from New Zealand.

Drove to Hyde Park, had tea. Dalys Theatre even. Armstrong, Flo, Clara & I "Were all in it" – very fine" Lunch at Cecil.

Visited German Submarine mine layer

Sunny Pleasant

Pozieres taken

**Sunday, July 30, 1916**

London – Folkstone

Drove to St. Paul's & to Park with Armstrong & Flo & Clara

Took 10 o'clock train to Folkstone, had lunch. Taxi to camp, back for dinner walked on Leas

Zeppelin raid last night

Sunny Pleasant

**Monday, July 31, 1916**

Folkstone

Armstrong left on 8:30 train.

Camp til 4 PM. No word about our order to front.  
Major Genl. Hughes has arrives in England.  
Walk on Leas with Clara & Flo in evening.  
Sunny Warm Pleasant

### **Tuesday, August 1, 1916**

#### **The Call to Front**

Took 9:30 train for camp as usual, had no warning of immediate call. Met Humphreys at train, he said he had received wire of our order to front & I to tell officers. At Camp Colonel confirmed "call". I went over to Brigade headquarters with him & Green confirmed & said my name was on list to go to 18, that the Batt<sup>n</sup> in France had confirmed, & all OK, we were attached for absorption. Took 1:20 train to town. Met Clara ([Cowell] had told brave girl). Flo, Clara, [Cowell] & I dined, [drank] safe return. Called Col. McEwen evening, [met Smyrlie] Lawson.

### **Wednesday, August 2, 1916**

Folkstone & Southampton

Good night's rest no nerves. Telegram from Armstrong. All packed up. Kissed dear Clara good bye ("Men must work (duty calls) & women must weep" etc. dear sweetheart "Dad" hopes he may come back. The "call" of the great crusade for humanity took him away for a time. If he comes back & if it is God's will, she will, read Burns' "soldier's return" to him & thank Almighty GOD.

Left Shorncliffe at 11. Arrived Southampton 4 PM. Fell in 300 officers, names called off. Boarded boat 4:30.

Went to restaurant supper. Boat started at 8. Slept on bench on deck til 12 looking at north star in front was cold so went down below & slept on bench til 4:30 AM. A great sight men & officers in all kinds of places & positions sleeping.

### **Thursday, August 3, 1916**

#### **FRANCE**

Havre

Awakened 4:30. Got up, breakfast at 6. Landed HAVRE 7 AM. All fell in on ~~dock~~ wharf & names called off of 300 officers, 160 for front, rest to instruction camps. My name for front to 18<sup>th</sup>. Reported at rest camp was told to report at 12 & 4. Went town & back reported at 12, to town again reported at 4, to town & back at 9. Went to train got baggage & rations & entrained, left at 11. Slept on seat of compartment. Feeling all right.

Postal to Clara

[Wired] Clara

Wrote Clara & Colonel

### **Friday, August 4, 1916**

Rouen

Arrived Rouen 9:30 AM. Reported. Got leave til 7 PM. Visited Cathedrals a canon of Westminster Abbey showed us around. Visited Law Courts. Rode on streetcar it [collided] with truck. Visited spot Joan of Arc burned.

Visited Bridge on movable overhead track.

Entrained at 8 PM for Hazelbuck. Slept on seat.

Cards to Clara.

Sunny Pleasant

### **Saturday, August 5, 1916**

Brigade Reserve Camp D (Alberta)

Passed St. Omer 10:30 AM. Washed in [Ry] water tank. Arrived Hazebruck 11:45. Reported.

Entrained for Poperinge at 1 PM.

Saw first observation balloon 2 PM nearing Ypres salient lines.

Arrived about 3. Picked out kit. Took transport to camp. Brigade, out on march. Reported & got located Major Barker of 76 & I in Room. Saw Areoplanes being fired on. Artillery very active, can hear guns near by & see shells burst, at night flares constantly going up & cannons flashing. All OK.

### **Sunday, August 6, 1916**

Brigade Camp

Had good night's rest feeling first class no nerves. Breakfast 8:30. Church parade 10 AM. Capt. Peacock (of 33<sup>rd</sup>) [preached] – Sign of the Cross – [coverslip] used [we] use it now on front of tunic buttons ☩ of tunic. I had charge of no. 14 platoon D Co., dismissed Co. Lovely Sunny day, not much [firing] on front.

Men building road. Walked toward firing line towards [Rum Hill] in PM with Capt. [Gander]. Saw shells bursting. Saw several of our air planes being fired at some had 200 shots not hit. 4 of our observation balloons work Ypres Salient.

At 8 PM an areoplane made a raid across & dropped incendiary bombs, the band was playing, wonderful sight.

### **Monday, August 7, 1916**

Camp ALB ERTA

Parade 7:30. Physical drill for men til 8. Breakfast at 8. Parade at 9:30 men in full kit inspection [by] O.K. Then bayonet drill til 12.

In PM ball game between officers of 18<sup>th</sup> and 20 & 21 we [beat]. Met Harry Smith he comes to 18<sup>th</sup> today.

Cloudy, Moderate

A quiet day on front.

I am feeling fine. No Nerves. Wrote Clara.

### **Letter to Clara Fairbank**

*Somewhere in France*

*Aug. 7<sup>th</sup> 1916*

*My dear Wife*

*After considerable travelling, arrived at destination Saturday & got located in Camp. Slept in clothes during travel. Arrived in first class shape. Am nicely located & have been very cordially received.*

*We are near scenes of great activity.*

*Attended church [parade] Sunday while the guns boomed in the distance. The observation balloons can be seen. The air crafts are active, FRITZ does not care to cross our lines. We appear to have the mastery of the air. Last night before it was dark our planes made a raid across & the display was wonderful, they dropped incendiary bombs from several planes & as they came down, smoking & flashing, the sight was wonderful. The German air guns got busy & you could see the shells bursting all around them but none were hit.*

*At night they send up flares to observe the trenches & ward off night attacks, [these] balls of fire & parachutes go up & give a vivid light all around. The guns fire & the flashes are seen, also the exploding shells. Our men have been active in raiding & Fritz don't like it. I cannot tell you many things I would like to for obvious reasons – But all is well.*

*Have been out on parade this morning. Of course everything looks like active service.*

*I do not know what my final disposition may be. I am simply attached to a Company & parade with them. The work is very practicable & interesting. Our guns seem to have the preponderance, this is fine.*

*We will move in a certain rotation. Now my dear girl, be of good cheer & don't worry – all is well & we both are taking our little part in this great crusade for humanity's sake. Remember you are my only girl & we have to fight together though space separates us. You many think it best to return when Mr. Armstrong does, there is no reason why you should not if you feel you would like to get back to the kiddies. I know you will be very lonely in Folkstone.*

*I will be all right and you could come over later if you wanted to.*

*You know where to address me.*

*Much love & Kisses for my dear wife and the Kiddies also.*

Charley

Met Harry Smith (our Rugby boy), he is a Lieutenant & joins our Battn. today. He is in my Company so is Sgt. [Bullen] of Petrolea. There are lots of Petrolea boys near here so I will be well looked after. This will be fine & make you feel better.

### Tuesday, August 8, 1916

Moved to La Clytte

Parade 7:30. Breakfast 8:15. Parade 9. About 9:30 marched with D Co. to [Bombing School] had just arrived about 5 minutes the Co. still formed up. Heard an explosion saw a group of men 70 yds. away. Went over. Lieut. W.O. Brown, lay with big wound in abdomen, bowels protruding & face all mangled **dead** & men lying all around wounded, a No. 1 Mark III Bomb exploded in his hand. 14 others were hit, went back to camp & order came for me & 3 others for Court of Inquiry, we went to school & took evidence. The Batt<sup>n</sup> moved La Clytte at 5:30 1 mile nearer line to relieve no. 25 Batt<sup>n</sup>. I was in command to D Co. leading. Had gas alarm about 11 but it was too far off.

### Wednesday, August 9, 1916

La Clytte

Paraded 7:30. At 9 we prepared for completing [men's] kit will be inspected by Brigade & Divisional Commander at 2 PM. Took inventory of kits. I command 14 platoon & H. Smith 15 platoon.

From 2 til 5 inspected by Genl. Turner & Brig. Genl. Rennie.

There was an aircraft bomber [ordnest] over our [heads] & [our] band playing, also guns on front firing. Last night we heard gas alarm sounding, some casualties from gas on our right. We also [heard] seven bombardment. We go to trenches in 5 days (on 14<sup>th</sup>). Our batt<sup>n</sup> moves to Somme in 3 weeks.

I feel fine no nerves. Letters from Clara.

### Newspaper Clipping Included – Aug. 10

*In the Ypres salient, between Bellewaarde Lake and the Yser Canal, the enemy bombarded our trenches heavily last night from 10 p.m. to 12 midnight, and discharged gas on a broad front.*

*The gas had little effect, and some partial attacks made by the enemy were not able to enter our lines.*

Referred to in my diary, 9<sup>th</sup>

### Letter to Clara Fairbank

In France  
Aug. 9<sup>th</sup>

My dear Wife

I received your two letters mailed on 5<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> this evening, also Maggie's letter. It is 8 o'clock and I am sitting in my tent. Major Barker of 76 tents with me.

We have had inspection by the Divisional & Brigade commander, it took all afternoon, we were in full marching order. What do you think, Harry Smith (our Rugby boy) joined us a couple days ago. I am in Command on no. 14 Platoon & he is of no. 15. He is a fine looking boy, is Lieutenant now.

You see, by being attached in this way, I become familiar with the genuine bed rock working of the Battn. on active service.

While we were being inspected this afternoon air crafts were being fired at in plain view. The guns were firing & our band was playing a strange medley. Yesterday I saw an occurrence which happened not far from where I was standing. It was accidental and caused casualties. I was the only Doctor there and gave assistance. It was a test for my nerves, my familiarity with surgery no doubt helped me in that way. I will tell you some time what happened. I was made President of a board of inquiry on it.

Our Battn. moved to a new camp yesterday, not very far from old one.

Colonel Lamb is in another division not far from ours. I saw an order yesterday, he gets a D.S.O. I am glad.

*Your letters ...*

*Aug. 10<sup>th</sup>. I did not get this letter off yesterday, we were kept busy all afternoon.*

*Could hear quite a vigorous bombardment this morning.*

*An officer dropped into my tent, a friend of Col. Lamb's said he had met me in London, also you, it was dusky in tent and I could not place him. The days go on pretty much the same, various duties & drills, don't do much in PM. Usually I sleep very well, the booming of guns & rattle of machine guns in the night does not disturb me atal.*

*Your arrangement for my things & letters is first class. You will decide whether to go with Canadian representatives or with Flo.*

*I suppose my leggins & shoes came, if so, have them stored with the rest of my things. I have not received my identification disc. If it has not been returned, call on the place we got it & send me their name.*

*It might have gone to Camp. Col. Towers would know.*

*My dear old girl, you know how much I would like to be with you & all the rest that I might say in that direction, words are tame to express one's feelings – but I do not need to tell you, for you know, as I do.*

*Lots of love,  
Charley*

*The adjutant has just come in with proceedings of the court I refer to & says headquarters says is was very clear & satisfactory & that they concur in our finding.*

*C.O. Fairbank*

#### **Thursday, August 10, 1916**

La Clytte

Cloudy & rained little at noon. A & B Co. had little [route] march.

My Co. D examined kits, adjusted them all uniform, also tested gas helmets & threw out any not right. Furnished all with Iron Rations.

Some artillery activity in AM. Feeling little seedy today bowels a little gripy [fed] light. All right by night.

Firing at aircrafts towards evening.

Letter to Clara. Major Milligan came over to our tent in evening and had nice talk with me & [Barker] it was quite satisfactory we will carry on

he said many young officers in Batt<sup>n</sup>

#### **Friday, August 11, 1916**

La Clytte

Paraded 7:30. Paraded 9.

Had bombers selected 9 from my platoon. Marched out C & D Co. Marched to Reninghelst then around triangle via Heksken back to Reninghelst & back to camp took 3 hours . 10 minutes rest after each hour walk, men in full marching order, sunny & dusty. I did not feel the walk atal not tired or footsore (about 5 ½ miles)

Bombardment heard about 6. Three 70<sup>th</sup> men came to my platoon today others [round] to other platoons.

Everything O.K.

Band always plays [in PM]

Saw football game 18<sup>th</sup> Devons

Pleasant.

#### **Letter to Clara Fairbank**

*In France  
Aug. 11<sup>th</sup> 1916*

*My dear Wife*

*Another day & it is bright and sunny. Had a march out this morning, men in full marching order. I walked and enjoyed the exercise, march for an hour & rest 10 minutes, out about 3 hours. It was little warm & of course dusty. I did not notice the march atal, not a bit tired or footsore, had a good appetite for lunch.*

*Some of our boys came into my platoon yesterday.*

*Last night our Commanding Officer came over to my tent & talked matters over with me & Barber was very frank, we discussed the general situation, as we were personally affected he said we would receive due consideration and he would gladly help us in any way & to come to him & talk matters over at any time, it was very satisfactory.*

*I said I was very pleased to come to his Battn. We would go ahead & learn the new conditions in the field.*

*I am first rate, do not worry about your old man.*

*Lots of love,  
Charley*

*C.O. Fairbank*

### **Saturday, August 12, 1916**

La Clytte

Parade 7:30

Men paid 9. Bombers went for route march. Practised others in bayonet fighting with full marching kit on also in putting on gas masks with full kits on.

At Lunch O.C. told us we would move to TRENCHES on Monday PM or evening NEXT C & D Co. in Trenches & A & B in support (I am in D Co.). This AM our field artillery practised barage fire on 150 yds. front. Capt. of D Co. saw it. O.C. said every man should have thrown live bomb. Packing up in PM will store part. Transport only takes 35 pounds. Big 6" guns nearby fired 20 round about 5: 30. Wrote Clara.

Got my steel helmet today.

### **Memo to Clara Fairbank, 19 Clifton Crescent, Folkestone**

*12<sup>th</sup> August 1916.*

*The following telegram has been received from the White Star Line Steamship Co. "Baltic Wednesday. Will give Officer's wife "good room minimum rate £22."*

*For your information, please.*

*[P.W. Decew]*

*Lieut.,*

*Asst. Embarkation Officer, for  
Director of Recruiting & Organization,  
Folkestone.*

### **Letter to Clara Fairbank**

*In France*

*Aug. 12<sup>th</sup>, Saturday, 1916*

*My dear Wife*

*I am writing in the dusk in my tent, night is just closing in.*

*I will be Orderly Officer tomorrow, Sunday. We will have lots of drill next week & I will be kept busy.*

*I go to sleep nightly to sound of gunfire & rattle of machine gun. I sleep well. I could write a much more newsy letter but it might not pass censor & I want to be on the safe side for I know you look for my letters.*

*Getting too dark.*

*Good night my dear,  
Your loving Charley*

*C.O. Fairbank*

### **Sunday, August 13, 1916**

La Clytte

Orderly officer today.



At 9:30 took new old guard & inspected [Huts], Kitchens, Latrines, Canteen, [Hose lines]. It is cool & pleasant. Gas alert alarm last night about 11. Took guard & sentries. Inspected rations, beef forequarter  
The day has passed quietly but little firing, observation balloons up (aero). At noon O.C. informed us we would go to trenches Tuesday instead of tomorrow. Took Guard & Sentries at 10:30. Wrote John & Clara.

### Letter to Clara Fairbank

*Somewhere in Belgium  
Aug. 13<sup>th</sup> 1916, Sunday*

*My dear Wife*

*I have been Orderly Officer today. The duties are not arduous, it consists In taking over the guard, visiting the sentry. The air craft guns have just commenced to shoot. I can hear the "ping" up in the air, it means that some aereoplanes are venturing too near the lines. I step out of my tent and can see the little clouds of smoke high in the air that indicates where a shell has burst.*

*I got my steel helmet yesterday. This, of course, is part of our regular equipment.*

*I enclose Humphries note which I found I had brought over with me. You can take charge of it. It probably will not be cashed until after the war?*

*I must try and get over and see Col. Lamb soon. I wrote John & the boys, including Bobby, yesterday. I hope you get my letters regularly.*

*When moving in the field our allowance for transport is 35 lbs. so you see, with the sleeping bed & blanket, there is not a tremendous Kit, besides this, which the transport carry for us, we can carry our pack & haversack, also canteen & rain coat & Glasses (field), Revolver & ammunition & Gas Masks, Carry such small articles & underwear as immediately require in pack & haversack. This letter may reach you before you leave.*

*A safe return to you & a sincere wish that the kind fates may decree that I may join you before long to spend the balance of our days in peace & happiness & I believe they will. We have tried to do our little bit in the great cause of humanity. The greatest burden has fallen on you & you have stood back of me bravely through very trying times for a woman with young children & a little darling baby. We will continue on. With the growing powers of the allies & their successes it would appear the war cannot go on very much longer. I am all right and getting along first rate. Take back heaps of love & kisses to the boys & Keep heaps for yourself.*

*Your loving husband,*

*Charley*

*C.O. Fairbank*

### Monday, August 14, 1916

La Clytte

#### Baptism of FIRE

Parade 7:00. Parade 9. Took platoon & instructed in Gas Alert with packs on. Capt. read Divisional instructions about cause of casualties (gas) on 8<sup>th</sup>

Bayonet drill packs on.

Inspected kits.

After lunch started for trenches with Capt. [Laughlan], H. Smith & 2 other officers. I expect to go in tomorrow. Had not advanced very far (we are now in Brigade Reserve) til commenced to see shell holes, pretty soon some of our batteries opened up, as we passed on [more], some very near us until rapid fire was going on. Could hear the shells whistling over our heads. Then the Hun shells could be seen bursting. We reached the communication trench & soon saw it had been under bombardment, pieces of shells, splinters & marks fresh, the front trench was reached & we learned that Major Moore of 19<sup>th</sup> had just been killed also Lieut. [Horne] of 99 & Major [Bisco] of 76 (who was one of 4 in our compartment on our trip from Havre here dangerously wounded).

On a little farther our trench was being bombarded, you could the rum jars way up in [din] come down & burst behind trench, a private as I past said move on one is coming. Then I started to move & slipped down but it went over. I kept my eyes open but they soon stopped coming. We went to these trenches we take over tomorrow night from 19<sup>th</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup>. C & D Companies take front trench D Co. (my Co.) will be on the left of our section No. 13

platoon on the right of D Co. sector & 14 platoon, my platoon on its left. We left the front trench at 5:17 & arrived in Camp at 7:05. I was tired. Had steel helmet on also had rain coat, gas masks & revolver & 40 rounds ammunition. Well I am all right. Lt. [Morris] near me got little dings in helmet. (Sprinkled little at noon). King Edward & [Prince] witnessed this from [windmill] hill nearby, Genl. Sam Hughes also.

### Letter to Clara Fairbank

*Somewhere in Belgium  
Aug. 14 – 1916*

*Dear Clara,*

*Your two letters received today, they were fine to receive. Just after my return from a wonderful experience which some day I will tell you.*

*You will sail on the Baltic & I hope have a good trip.*

*You should have a picture of your man in a steel helmet or a gas mask on. I am sure you would admire them.*

*It is too bad I can tell you so little, things sound tame in a letter anyway. Well, your man has had his baptism of fire & all is well. There are lots of places for shells to drop without hitting anybody.*

*It rained a little today, it laid the dust. This candlelight is poor.*

*Good night love. Kiss the boys.*

*Charley*

*C.O. Fairbank*

### Tuesday, August 15, 1916

La Clytte & Moved to front Veerstraat Road [dugouts]

We are now in Bgde. Reserve. Inspected men's Kits in A.M. Well old boy the kind fates are looking after you. I was booked to take my platoon into front trenches tonight (where we inspected yesterday & were baptised by fire yesterday & 2 officers killed & one wounded) At noon Major Jones told me I would be on the staff in charge of headquarters reserve billets & dugouts. Left Camp about 6 with 2 officers got to headquarters at 7 & went over the dugouts & lines to see they were clean. Looked into the billeting for officers. I got in a dugout with Raymond my [batman] got my sleeping bag and made bed on rubber sheet on ground. Before dark the Germans opened up artillery fire, could hear the shells ~~bursting~~ passing over our heads & [saw them] bursting at the cross roads (the road I had come by). The 46<sup>th</sup> were moving in & 4 of their men were hit. The bed on floor was hard & lumpy but I slept. Rifles & machine guns cracking near by all night.

### Wednesday, August 16, 1916

Headquarters Supports Road

Called 8:15. Have breakfast late because many out late, went around billets with Maj. Jones & examined every building & dugout & drew a rough sketch & marked billeting capacity of each. Maj. Jones showed me position on map of our lines etc. Lunch at 2. In AM Huns firing shells some lighting not far away – Our observation balloons in [rear] up. In PM Major Jones & I walked towards our trenches, past ruins of [Veerstaat], Fort Morrow, Fort Captain, Major Cops, Fort Toronto, [Veerstaat] subsidiary trench. We entered Poppy communication trench & advanced towards front line had to pass open country where could see Hun elevated lines. An artillery exchange was on a little to our right. We advanced to about 800 yds. of our front line, the Hun trenches are here about 200 yds. from ours. Looking over the parapet could see both lines & watch our shells burst on Hun lines. Returned through fields, sometimes in view of Hun lines, our guns firing not far on our left. It was a wonderful trip. Got back about 5:30.

Our Areoplanes out in PM. Some Huns up back of their line & our guns opened on them. Now 10:30. Our machine guns popping away across road. [Batman] made bed [scuffling] & chicken wire. Fine day. Had supper with Major, bed 1 AM.

## Letter to Clara Fairbank

Somewhere in Belgium  
Aug. 16<sup>th</sup> 1916

My dear Wife

*I have slept in a sleeping bag on the ground in a dug out, it is quite comfortable. You would be delighted if you knew how well I am taken care of by the Commanding officer. Am now attached to the staff and have been looking after the allotment of billets for you know we sometimes move.*

*You certainly would have seen something if you had followed my movements for, a while back, they were more extensive than billeting. I have seen much, very much. I accompanied Major Jones on a very important mission the other day. Will tell you about it later.*

*We have much activity and see many things, it is all like a fairy tale but a very stern one. One wonders at their calm & placid condition. The movement of troops by night, the shadowy forms of men and horses and bombers, ammunition supplies, Rations, all in a mixed jumbled up mass but each one with its specially assigned place & duty all working out to an end. And then some of the more vigorous acts of war. You would of indeed have an interesting moving picture had you been able to stand by and observe.*

*I was up very early this morning on a mission. I met Eddie Mills of London, one of the gunners I sent to South Africa in 1900 & he afterwards commanded the [the] Battery – The world seems small.*

*You see, I do not give much detail. I try & be more than careful in anything I write so that no possible exception can be taken as to giving information.*

*I am fine & we feel we have good things in store for us.*

*Lots of love & kisses for Wife & boys.*

Charley

C.O. Fairbank

### Thursday, August 17, 1916

At front Veerstraat

Up at 5 AM. Walked to front trenches with Major Jones. Went through our line, we [hold] about 1100 yds. a wonderful sight, men with packs on & helmets (steel), rifles with bayonets fixed. Machine guns, bomb throwers, grenades, periscopes – looked through it at German trenches, men lying down sleeping with tired faces, some eating breakfast. Snipers with telescopes, one was just looking at the top of a Hun head & presently took a shot at him, one of our men killed last night by a stray bullet shot through head. A 46 man had been badly wounded in a dug out, one of our own grenades ([mills]) I think, had exploded, a frying pan all shot up had partially [screened] him. The Huns shot half a dozen heavy shells over our heads to lines behind. A Hun plane overhead was bombarded. Back at 9 – quite a trip. Visited all the dug outs & took record of men in them (about 50 dugouts. In evening Major Col. Dawson R.M.C. came in, command 46 got billet for his officer. Rained little at 3. Wrote Clara. Major Jones [Batman] sick, he asked me to see him.

### Friday, August 18, 1916

At front Veerstraat

Raymond who has been in charge of repairing trenches came in about 4 AM with an officer of 46, he had no sleeping bag, laid down in his trench coat on a rubber sheet on floor between us & went to sleep. After breakfast I told him to go & take my bed & have a sleep. Today I have been busy Drawing a scale plan of our camp showing location of dug outs & capacity of each, also inspected lines & told officer of 46 to [clean] lines before leaving us. Men packed in new dugout last night like sardines. Col. Dawson of R.M.C. here.

Last night quiet, a man of 46 had ricochet bullet graze forehead in trenches. Rained some today. Two platoons of 44 came in tonight. Major Milligan went to see Maj. Genl. Hughes this PM (he received word today is Colonel) working on camp plan at 10:30 when message came that I am to report at La Clytte tomorrow at 9 AM to take stage to visit training school, 3 other officers going. This PM our planes right overhead being fired at, pieces of Hun aircraft shells falling in our camp.

Letter from Mrs. Towers & wireless to Clara on [Baltic](#)

### **Saturday, August 19, 1916**

Verstraat Front and Army Corps School

Called 6:30. Breakfast 7:30, started for La Clyte at 8. It was raining took orderly to show way. Raining. Took bus to Army Corps School. Examine Trenches – bayonet fighting – How to build bomb proof & small tunnels with corrugated iron and Entanglements and [anchor] wire – wire twister, took bus to Reninghelst had lunch. Walked back to headquarters arrived 4. Coming back could see hun shells bursting to front & one side. Huns threw some rum jars on our trenches this pm & got 5 of 44<sup>th</sup> men killed, blew all to pieces. We sent back some 60 pdrs. One 44<sup>th</sup> man shot through head last night killed (through helmet) smoking cigarette. A helmet saved one of our men today, piece of case of rum jar cut hole through it. Our areoplanes above my head being fired on by Hun shells bursting overhead heard one dead one “dub” into ground beyond me. D Co. Coming out trenches tonight. A Co. going in 12 midnight. Just billeted 2 of 44<sup>th</sup> officers & 15 M.G. men. Nelson, [Rayward], [Gwyn] & [McClinton] in tonight [some Busses all] arrived. Time to go to bed old top. Feel fine.

### **Sunday, August 20, 1916**

Verstraat Front

It is now 12 midnight. Capt. [Lochron], Nelson, Gwyn & [Rayward] & Maj. \_\_\_\_ Work of 46 have just left my dugout (the latter 2 gone to repair trenches). [Lochron] been telling of St. Eloi

The day has been quiet, little artillery fire & some firing at planes.

It was a [minnimortar] struck our parade last night & killed 5 of 44. Col. says 18<sup>th</sup> booked to put on little affair tomorrow night.

It has rained a little today. I worked little on on scale sketch of dugouts and capacity & finished it. The moon & stars are shining down on the strange sight. Machine guns cracking, occassional artillery flares going up (last night Hun used search lights. Some more of 44<sup>th</sup> came in tonight for (boom a cannon goes) instruction in trenches. Clara is in mid ocean & my boys are peacefully sleeping. God bless them & my Sister May away off. If they could see me now by the candlelight alone in my dug out. I am going to turn in (boom goes a gun). I feel O.K. Good night. Saw an unexploded Hun [5.9] lying by road today. met Albert [Little] of Bothwell he said he worked for [me]

### **Monday, August 21, 1916**

Verstraat Front

In Camp in AM went around lines.

About 3 walked to front trenches with Major Jones [Parsons] Intelligence officer of Staff Divisional Staff. Walked to far end of trench we heard the Hun was shelling, presently they commenced to come over our heads not far from parapet & burst about 100 yds. back. I went to end of our lines & then we returned [it made] one feel like hugging the parapet. They had sent over one rum jar today. Our artillery was returning the fire, we came back a part of the way in the open. Going into the trenches I met Charley McKittrick who is in the line with the 50<sup>th</sup>. About 9 o'clock had gas alarm, but must have been far away.

Colonel had letter from Humphries re: Murray McQueen, asked me about him, said he would ask for him.

[Lachlan], Elliott, Dr. [Carr], Nelson, Sykes, McClinton, Col. Milligan, Maj. Jones, [Rayward], Gwyn & 3 officers of 44<sup>th</sup> here in my dug out last night til 12. This morning the Huns are shelling Ridgewood on our left, the [miners] dug outs are there & the Belgian battery behind, they are feeling for them, at 3 o'clock I saw ambulances moving out, learned that 4 of the men in Ridgewood had been hit. I could see the shells bursting there this AM about 800 yds. from my dug out.

### **Letter to Clara Fairbank**

*Somewhere in Belgium  
Aug. 16<sup>th</sup> 1916*

*My dear Wife*

*You sail today. God speed to you. Yesterday we*

Aug. 21<sup>st</sup>

*I got the above commenced but did not finish. Much water has run past the mill since then. I sent you a wireless two days ago to reach you on the Baltic but it came back last night, they could not get it through, a Miss Leitch was on board, she was a friend of our adjutant. I met Charley McKittrick yesterday, it was in a strange place to meet. I visited a certain place yesterday with Major Jones & Major Parsons of Divisional Staff. Enough time has now elapsed so I can say that I know what it is to hear Hun shells to whiz overhead & burst not far beyond.*

*I am very fortunate in being placed where I am on the Staff & receiving the nicest treatment.*

*Yesterday The Colonel (he is Colonel now) said Humphries had written him about Murray McQueen. I told him & he is going to ask for him as an officer. I am fine.*

*Lots of love & Kisses.*

Charley

C.O. Fairbank

### **Tuesday, August 22, 1916**

Verstraat near Reninghelst

Front, Camp J (Kenora Camp)

Huns bombarding Ridgewood, went out & watched shells bursting 600 yds. away, wounded 6 men of [miners].

Firing at areoplanes by Huns. Our Artillery firing a good deal of artillery today.

Inspected whole lines & camp & had 44<sup>th</sup> sign "Sanitary & Clean". We leave tonight for trip to St. Omer & then the Somme – I marched out with D Co. with pack on my back at 9:30 the balance, A & B Co. came out from trenches later & 44<sup>th</sup> take over M & N Trenches. It was a strange march. We turned our backs on the YPRES Salient & looked back at the trench flares, the flash & boom of guns & rattle of machine guns & plodded through the dark, mouth organ and singing, road & lane & walkway.

Arrived in Camp J (Kenora) and went into tent with 5 other officers [Lochlon], Cook, Ross, Nelson, [Rayward].

~~Colonel told QM to put my pack on transport, said would give me a [horse] if had one~~ Letter from Clara & Flo. Wrote Clara.

### **Wednesday, August 23, 1916**

Camp J.

In AM all men & officers took bath at Reninghelst. I lunched there with Nelson & [McCan]. Met Sgt. Osborne, told me Lieut. Matthews killed. Met some 70<sup>th</sup> boys just joined 18<sup>th</sup>.

Capt. Cooper of Supply Corp. called.

D Co. paraded for inspection 8 o'clock.

Cut kit down.

Emery (QM) has called at [home] with Florence Smith on [US].

Letter from Towers, Greenizen

Fine day

at night Col. told QM to put my pack on transport, said would give me horse if had one

### **Thursday, August 24, 1916**

Marching

STEAVPORDE In billets

Awakened at 3 got up dressed, shaved, packed kit. Started on march at 6 AM. The whole brigade is moving. I carried Revolver, Binoculars, Water bottle, Gas mask, & Haversack with small articles in & Rain Coat rolled. Had short intervals of rest. Arrived at [Steaveporde] at 10:20 AM. A 9 mile march, not many had fallen out (Maj. Jones horse fell in ditch on way no harm). Went into billets in a barn, lots of straw to lay on. We are right by road where all troops go by, the Princess Pats went by. It is a strange sight. Had lunch at farm house, scrambled eggs, fried potatoes, bread & butter, enjoyed it. Stood the march fine yesterday. In PM went to town Barnes & I had photo together & later [Lochlan], Barnes, Nelson, ~~Cook~~, Cook & Ross & I had pictures with helmets on & masks on. ~~Called at headquarters.~~ Slept in barn, straw on floor & sleeping bag, 7 officers & 200 men in the barn. Had good night, warm, dry & comfortable, am writing in bay of barn.

Mailed 2 handkerchiefs to Clara.

**Friday, August 25, 1916**

In billets, Steenvoorde, France

Up at 9, staid around camp for while. Walked to headquarters, got woman to sew up barbed wire tear in my coat, she was making lace by hand, bought little piece for Clara, had her put initials on it. Col. [Lamb's] office here, he was not in.

Lunch at farm house. Co. paraded for inspection at 2. I took 16 platoon. We will move early tomorrow morning, AM in bay of barn, sleeping bags on straw on floor. Can still see our observation balloons in the distance

**Letter to Clara Fairbank**

*Somewhere in France*

*Aug. 25<sup>th</sup> 1916*

*My dear Wife,*

*I am at the present time of writing resting on my sleeping bag which is laid out in the bay of a barn, the cushion of straw underneath is very clean & comfortable and the old sow outside is very happy with her large family, for she has come back with her [tanks] full of good things & the family is signifying its appreciation in their meliforous & musical way, they no doubt are happy, this is good in these stormy days. I had just finished this when one of the men ~~has~~, one of our batmen, announced that their rations were hung up on side of barn & the hogs got at them & ate them, even some pork & beans, some handkerchief they has were chewed up. This explains why their music was so particularly cheerful this evening – they no doubt recognised the flavor of the remains of their ancestors & were singing to cheer them up while they were at the banquet.*

*Dusk is coming on but a candle is being lighted & placed in a big tin can for safety but it is really too dark to write. I stood a little route march yesterday, we marched about 9 miles in 4 hours. I did not mind it, you know I am usually a good deal on my feet.*

*It is now Aug. 30<sup>th</sup> and a great deal has occurred since then, which I can tell you about later. Yesterday we learned of Roumania's joining us – fine. I consider it the greatest importance geographically & otherwise – the fates are rapidly closing in on their strangle hold of the Hun.*

*I am well – stand marches, rain – mud, etc. very well, recouperate well & quickly, all of which is well. Am talking French a good deal, now can say Ma-dam. I enclose some photos which we had taken by a village Artist, they speak for themselves.*

*The air ~~of the~~ is breathed in through the cloth gas mask which is chemically treated and exhaled out through the mouth piece you see sticking out in front, it has a valve in it prevents air coming in so all air is filtered & it gives complete protection, only one has to be on the alert. The steel helmet protects against shell fragments, one of our men's life saved not long ago by it, one day an officer close to me had his dented by small fragments. Yours & boys photos are in sight, it would be fine to see the real ones. Much love & kisses for all.*

*Your loving husband*

*Charley*

*C.O. Fairbank*

**Saturday, August 26, 1916**

Steenvoorde, Rubrouck, [Bamburg]

Left London 1 In Belg. & France 24 days

Called at 4 o'clock for march, paraded at 6 in full marching order moved off at 7.

Left outskirts of town 7:30. Marched on stone road occassional showers. I had rain coat, men wet, rest occassionally on wet roadside, men cheerful. Climed hill at [Cassier] 9:30. Marched on midst showers. At 12:30 march into field, piled arms, men had dinner, sun & wind dried clothes. Started again at 2, got to Billets at 3 at farm house, had dinner, finished 4. Had supper at 8 walked down road got some fiz had supper at 8. Am well [rested] out and march was a long one yesterday in rain 12 to 14 miles at a stretch. We all slept in a room of us the

floor was [tiled] placed our sleeping bags down & slept well. A great sight to see an army on the move the real thing, & to march with the men & see what they go through.  
I am rested out & feel O.K.

### **Sunday, August 27, 1916**

[Bamburg & MILLAIN]

Up at 7 shaved as we do every morning, breakfast at 8, saw artillery passing, took over an hour to pass. We are 9 kilometres from Cassel & 2 kilometres from [Roubrouck].

Started at 10:15 marched a little & stopped in field (Cassell is 2<sup>nd</sup> army headquarters Genl. [Plumer]). We are now leaving 2<sup>nd</sup> Army & going into 5<sup>th</sup> Army. Started again on march at 11:15. Rested at 12. Started 12:07. Rest at 1. Started 1:10. At Billets at MILLAIN at 1:30. The band cheered us up on the march. Sometimes I was pretty warm but a cool breeze came along & cooled me off. I really should not be marching but this experience is worth the while. I know how the TOMMY feels. The officers have room in a house, the men in the barn D Co. & M.G. We are about 16 miles from the coast. Had lunch. Eggs, bread & butter, Malaga wine & coffee at a little inn.

### **Monday, August 28, 1916**

Millain & Tourneheim

Had good night's rest, slept with [Lochron] in feather bed. Called 4 AM. Breakfast 5:30. March at 6:30 to Millain. Started 6:50. Rested 7:30, it was raining, had waterproof laid on stack of oats. Started 7:45. Arrived WATTEN at 8, rested started 8:15 crossed canal 8:20 held up 10 minutes at [Ry]. Crossed [Ry] at 8:40. Rested 8:55. Started 9:08 passed village 9:25 ESTAMINET 9:45. Rested 10, moved 10:15. Hamlet 10:30. Rested 10:35. Start 10:44. Rest 11 (12 Kilo from St. Omer & 27.5 from Calais (17 ¼ miles)  
Started 11:10. Passed Brigadier 11:20. NORDASQUE 11:30 angled to left. Rest at TURNEHEIM 12 start 12:00. At billets 12:15.

I was allotted a room by myself. A long march & I stood it well, an occasional shower & then sun, fine country, grain in stacks, quaint village, lunch at restaurant, bathed, dinner 7:30, little social time

### **Tuesday, August 29, 1916**

TOURNEHEIM

Formed up 7:30. Started for training area 8:15. Rested 8:55. Arrived 9:45. Men drilled, officers command practise. It rained during march up many hills very tiring. The men's grouchy remarks very amusing. Referring to Brigade.

Dinner at farm house. It rained, started back 2. Arrived 3:35. Mud & rain, rested in woods sitting down leaning on tree. Evening got music going & danced. Colonel came in & called ROUMANIA joins us. Drank her health in fiz.

### **Wednesday, August 30, 1916**

TOURNEHEIM

Breakfast 7:30. Raining. Went to men in billets told them to strip their Ross rifles & have them ready for changing. About 10 AM Co. marched to market square and exchanged Ross Rifle for LEE ENFIELD & went back to billets. It rained so could not march out. I copied fighting notes from front, took little walk in rain. Dinner 7:30. Went to room early & wrote assault notes

Wrote Clara, sent 5 photos. Letter from Stanley Mason's sister

### **Thursday, August 31, 1916**

TOURNEHEIM

At 8:15 started for training area the day is fine & roads good. Rested 8:50 again at 9:30. Arrived 10. Bayonet drill and loading exercise, at 12 lunched on one bread sandwich. In PM practised ATTACK, 2 waves & reserve. Then rapid loading & [fire] control.

Started back 4:20. I rode [Lochlan's] horse for mile (my first ride since at front, fine for a field officer one year on service (18 years ago C.O.F. a Major) Rested 5. Left wood 5:14. Top hill 5:35. Back 6.

Received letter from Joan M. Chambers with photo of Clara in it, met on "[Philadelphia](#)". Had dinner 7:30 went to room at 10 & wrote.

### Friday, September 1, 1916

#### TOURNEHEIM

Up at 7. Paraded at 8, went to field, practised loading & firing Lee Enfield also explaining about Rifle. At 1 o'clock marched [two] miles to range had each man fire 5 rounds to get grouping of rifles. Then officers fired 10 of [11s]. Ross bet me he could beat me. I took him on, the Colonel, one of the firers. I beat them all (the first time I ever fired a Lee made 3 bulls & 2 quite close all well grouped fired left shoulder. Came back to field practised attack. I claimed advance made under artillery barage one of the officers claimed no. I was correct. Been nice day. Two of D Co. officers have been sick. I am well, the kind fates are taking care of me. ~~A letter from Miss Chambers with photo of Clara on boat~~ sent note to Miss Chambers & sent her letter & photo to Clara.

### Letter to Clara Fairbank

*In France  
Sept. 1<sup>st</sup> 1916*

*My dear Wife,*

*Great Scott, how the time flies. One is kept so busy I suppose is the reason.*

*I enclose a little sample of lace I saw a French woman making in the house headquarters was located. I had a barbed wire tear in my coat & she mended it for me so I bought her handiwork, she was using 32 separate threads on little spindles making it.*

*Well, I have seen & gone through varying experiences & enough time has now elapsed to mention some of them without giving undue information. Have been in trenches under shell fire - & trench mortar fire. Have watched bombardment of Hun trenches, seen aereoplanes surrounded by bursting shells & keep going on. Witnessed the destructive effects of bombs & helped to aid the casualties.*

*Slept on the ground in dugout & listened to the booming of Artillery & rattle of machine guns.*

*Marched in the rain & slept on straw in a barn and on a tile floor. Marched in the rain & mud & ate three square meals a day & slept well. And many more things that some day I will related to you in detail.*

*My little identification disc arrived today, the last one you ordered, a little chain around neck, very fine.*

*I have marched a good many miles while here and stand up well under it, my feet give no trouble whatever. Now my dear girl, your old boy is all right so do not worry. Just look forward hopefully to the time when the kind fates will send him back to you & the dear boys and I hope it may not be very long. Some of the postcards I sent might be interesting for the Topic to peruse. I had one of the men cut my hair the other day & he said "I attended the meeting of the Middlesex County Council when you explained your publicity work to them. I was an Advertiser reporter at the time. I wrote short stories."*

*Douglas & Stone of Petrolia are in the Battn.*

*The Quarter Master Emery says he called at our place with Florence Smith.*

*Geo. Kirby who used to be in Marthaville is with US. Harry Smith is getting on nicely. I cannot write a very interesting letter as I feel cramped by being cautious in writing. I know it is best for the cause. I am only one of thousands writing & it must all be guarded.*

*Good night. Love & Kisses to all.*

*Charley*

*C.O. Fairbank*

### Saturday, September 2, 1916

#### TOURNEHEIM

Paraded to go to training area at 8.

Started 8:15. Top hill 8:35. 8:46 Rest at wood. Start 8:58. Rest 9:30. Start 9:42. Arrived 10:01. Total 146 less 25 Rest = 121 stiff walk, pretty warm.



Practised attack on trench advance under artillery barrage. Lunch at 12. Drill til 4:15. Marched back, was very warm, soaked, changed underclothing, had sponge off, felt fine.  
Meeting of all officers at 7:30. We move for Somme Monday AM  
Cable from Clara. ~~Sent~~ Letter from Maggie Gleeson.

### Letter to Clara Fairbank

*In France  
Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup> 1916*

*My dear Clara,*

*I received your Cable today. Glad to learn of safe arrival. Received identification disc from McEwans. I never expected to some day be wearing a necklace but so be it.*

*Sometime ago we put Battn. through firing practise, the officers also tried their skill. One said to me, "I'll bet I can beat you." I replied, "I'll take you on," after men had finished we lined up, ten of us, & fired five rounds, on examination of targets, the "old boy" had the best target of all, three bulls and 2 quite close to bull, all of them grouped close together. This was the first time I ever fired from this rifle, did not know just how it was sighted, so you see, my eye is clear and nerve steady. Douglas from Petrolea was standing near me & heard Ross, the officer, challenge me so when I went to fire he said, "I am betting on you Doc," after firing he eagerly inquired & smiled. I am in fine physical training, sometimes the march soaks me through and the water drips down my face but I get no headache from it & after a sponge feel fine. If I could take down the remarks of the men verbatim it would form a very interesting volume.*

*Received letter today from Maggie Gleeson, give her my love.*

*Lots of love for All.*

*Charley*

*C.O. Fairbank*

### Sunday, September 3, 1916

TOURNEHEIM, Left London 1, In France 32 day

Paraded 8. Marched 3 miles up & down hill to training area, went through trench attack. Had lunch. At 12:30 had Divine service, all sat down on grass sung 2 old hymns. The parson preached short 5 minute sermon "If ye love me keep my commandments" religion based on this. Said would hold communion now for officers & men, he put on his gown, got out the bread & wine & we had the service kneeling on the ground before him, about 16 of our officers & 30 men. It was very impressive. Marched back. at 3:30. Co. formed up & marched up canal & all had a bath, the water was cold but felt fine after.

Received letter from Flo & Col. Towers.

Farewell dinner. Fiz – Emery then Major Jones came in Little [dance]

### Monday, September 4, 1916

TOORNEHEIM & CRAMONT

Started on march 8:55. Arrived [Ry] Aix-le-eh [Audruck] [Audruicq], 10:50 it was cool & cloudy. Entrained.

Left at 1, passed through Calais & Boulogne. Arrived ABBEVILLE about 9, detrained, it was raining. Started our march at 10 in rain & dark had rain coat, revolver, Haversack, water bottle & prismatic.

Marched behind machine gun section. It was a strange sight, dim figures, could not see footing, went by sound & occassional glimpses of forms.

Could hear distant cannon 25 miles away, rested occassionally, too wet to sit down, would lean on ammunition cart & rest head on arm. Marched on & on, weary & sleepy, could have lain down by roadside & slept. At 2 AM reached billets at Cramont, a farm house. D Co. men on straw, 4 officers in one house. Barnes & Nelson in one bed, C.O.F. in small single bed. [Lochlou] in room by himself. It looked good. A moving picture of today's trip would be [fine], marching out of village, D Co. leading, C.O.F. in rear & band immediately behind him, got full benefit, it certainly cheers the weary soldier. We marched about 7 ½ miles last night.

## Tuesday, September 5, 1916

### CRAMONT

Had good night's rest laid in til about 11. Breakfast, little walk with Barnes – bought goose – (Ross has just come in & says the 1<sup>st</sup> Division went over Hun entrenchments yesterday & Guillemont taken) Lunch at 3.

We move tomorrow AM. AM moving out strength yesterday was 952 men & 38 officers. Total 990. We go to Halloy near Doulens (not far from Thiepval)

x Arras

x [Doulens]      x [Halloy]                      x Bapaume

x albert x Cramont                      x Thiepval

x Amiens                      x Peronne

Had fine goose dinner & red wine. I carved for 10 officers.

## Wednesday, September 6, 1916

### CRAMONT – On March BONNEVILLE –

Started at 8 went short distance & halted for half hour, finally started for front at [q] 9:45. Hamlet LONGVILLERS at 9:50. Halt (just passed 19<sup>th</sup> on road). Started 10:08 at 10:25 reached BEAUMETZ. 10:47 rested started 10:56, getting nearer front can hear the big guns plainly, a very heavy fire going on, at 11:14 reached BERNAVILLE, at 11:53 rested for lunch. I am now sitting on ground leaning against stack of wheat, have finished my bread & jam & cheese & sardines and am listening to the booming of the big guns, an intense bombardment been going on all morning, firing constantly & very rapidly. Started 1:15. Rest 1:46 to 1:58. At 2:50, 8 planes came overhead, at 2:40 MONTRELET. 2:47 rest. Started 2:57. Capt. [Lochlan] gave me his horse to ride, arrived at billets at BONNEVILLE 3:20. Ross, Cook, Richardson & I in small dirty room. Slept on sleeping bag on floor, slept well. Cox snorted & ground teeth. Did not have supper til 9. Going to firing line.

## Thursday, September 7, 1916

### BONNEVILLE & March HERISSART

Good nights rest feel fine up at 8, breakfast on bacon, bread & jam & tea, tasted good.

We journey towards firing line today towards ALBERT. Start 10:35. At 11:45 saw shooting at areoplanes. 12 stopped in field for lunch, leaned up against stack wheat & ate. Started 1:15. Arrived ~~BONNEVILLE~~ ~~HERISSART~~ HERISSART after 4 went into billets (Marched 10 miles) rode last [with] head of Co. [Lochlon], Barnes, Nelson & C.O.F. in room in house, put sleeping bag on mattress on floor all retired early.

## Friday, September 8, 1916

### BONNEVILLE ~~HERISSART~~ Marched VANDECOURT

Started 8 AM. Short march today. At Contay passed the Corp. commander Genl. Bing. Arrived at VADENCOURT at 10:00 AM & went into canvas huts in woods, ground floor [balman] cut boughs & laid bed on them.

Can hear intense bombardment about 10 miles away (we are due west of ALBERT) our Co. commanders have gone to front to look to look over lines. We will soon move up & relieve 1<sup>st</sup> division. So very important events are pending for 18<sup>th</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup>. I do not know what part I may have to play in the great Humanity Crusade that is in the hands of a higher power, our cause is just & right and will prevail. I think of my wife & kiddies & sister & the artillery bombardment is plainly heard in its intensity, like the rattle of musketry it is so rapid. Wrote Clara, cards to boys, May with photo. Walked down to village mile away WARLOYBOULLON with Q.M. Emery, came back had dinner with him & Hodgins, went to bed 10, the boughs under my sleeping bag feel rough, the officers are sewing on their Division Brigade & Batt<sup>n</sup> colours.

○ round & greeny

□ navy blue

The officers came back from front, report severe bombardment

## Letter to Clara Fairbank

In France  
Friday 8<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1916

My dear Wife.

Events have been such that it has been difficult to write of late. We have been very busy & I have had much exercise, in fact, I have become quite a pedestrian and have a good pair of feet. Some time ago you read of the King witnessing a certain bombardment, well, some of the shells he saw were flying over my head & some of the Hun trench mortar shells he could hear explode were likewise doing the same but this was some time ago & is now common knowledge. I am very well and strong, seem to be able to stand a great deal & recuperate rapidly. You know that I am in 18<sup>th</sup> Battn., 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade & 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. My exact location you do not know & I cannot tell but you will learn from Common report probably before this. Important events seem to be pending. I am the oldest man in the Battn. and the only R.M.C. first graduate in France, over 40 years ago as a youth I entered the services as a cadet, 1876, & graduated June 1880. Came to England (Woolwich) later & returned to Canada early in 1881. Took Command of London 6<sup>th</sup> Field Battery in 1888. Recruited for Boer War in 1900.

You know what my ideals have been for years. Peace & conservation of human life, not war & destruction of life. But events beyond my control have launched this Campaign & you & I have felt impelled to throw in our little aid in the great Crusade for the right & humanity. All this world misery caused by the ambition of the Hun military clique with an Emperor of unbalanced mind at the head. The pity of it. Well, my dear girl, I hope the kind fates will bring your old boy back to you. I think they will, in the mean time, we will "Carry On" with a stout heart. Much love to you & the boys & many kisses.

Your loving husband,  
Charley

C.O. Fairbank

### Saturday, September 9, 1916

VADENCOURT Marched ~~BOUZINCOURT~~ near ALBERT

Up 6:30. Had 2 cold fried eggs, bread & jam & tea. Paraded at 8. At 9 marched off band playing, the long string of divisional artillery has just passed. At 9:20 passed Warloy Baillon. Very active scenes are presenting themselves, the crowded road, Hun prisoners working on road, red cross [wagons]. At 10:15 reached [Camp] for ammunition etc. horses in [galore] all arms crowded along, a real war scene, three commands in distance. Camp after camp was passed. At 10:46 passed SENLIS. An officer called out to me said Maj. Butler wounded. Men of 70<sup>th</sup> called out to me on road. Saw [Eadin] Jackson & other men, Duncan & Bolton called to see me also Sgt. Fisher & Corpl. Duffield. A wonderful scene behind the hills, the reserves are located lots of troops, we are nearing ALBERT. At 11:20 passed Bouzincourt and at 12 arrived in camp near ALBERT. We will bivouac here, as far as eye can see are troops. As I write howitzers near by are firing almost over our head towards Thiepval, an intense bombardment is on. Major Pro McKenzie called, he is in 3<sup>rd</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup> they have just come out of front, 300 casualties, only one officer killed, sniped. Well we are getting nearer & near trenches the 3<sup>rd</sup> Div. is now in. We follow. The church tower of Madonna steeple bent over seen near by. Towards evening walked through ALBERT & stood beneath the bent over Madonna holding babe high in air, no glass in windows all broke

### Sunday, September 10, 1916

Bivouac near ALBERT

Cloudy today at 10 church parade Rev. Peacock preached from text "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's & unto God the things that are God's" during this this artillery fire was going on. Then we had Holy Communion, about 36 officers & over 100 privates. The guns still booming. Talked with a artillery officer, Murray, he explained attack, took me down to Col. Butler of Imperial Artillery, had tea & nice talk – towards evening the Hun sent some shells over our back lines. After we went to bed he shelled again, they sounded pretty near – went to sleep after while

### Letter to Clara Fairbank

In France  
Sept. 10<sup>th</sup> 1916

My dear Wife

Your letter of 24<sup>th</sup> written on boat reached me today. Adjutant Baxter told me today his best girl shared your state room with you. Well, my dear girl, I can't write a very long letter, much has happened & important events are pending, the newspapers will tell you about it before you hear from me. If you could have been with me you would have been much interested, a fairy tale. I met Major Porter today. I am at present sleeping in quarters you would smile to see, 9 other officers with me. I am sitting on the ground & a band of artillery is playing music on their guns. The papers no doubt have informed you where we are. The scene of soldiers attending divine service & officers & men taking holy communion (myself among them) & the sound of fierce artillery going on is strange indeed.

Since being in France I have stood under the golden Madonna [in Albert, France] holding a child & placed on top of the spire of a certain cathedral, you have seen pictured, it is now bent over by shell fire but still stands, clinging to the babe and evidently does not intend it shall fall. I am well and standing the racket well.

Have slept & bivouacked in many strange places, dined under varying conditions and can eat sawdust and digest it if necessary but we fare very well. It is very interesting when shells fall near your location. I have heard our bands playing when shells were falling not far away. You can realise how capacious our apartments are when 10 officers occupy a space 16 feet by 16. Yet this is very comfortable as our sleeping bags lay side by side. One becomes accustomed to the incessant shell fire and after a time pays little attention to it. Saw Major Butler yesterday, also Cowan, they are in our Division. Got a letter yesterday from Col. Towers, he enclosed your cable to him. Saw Col. Gun yesterday.

### Monday, September 11, 1916

Bivouac near Albert

Had good night's rest, some of our officers in bivouac got up at 4:30 to go & look over trenches we are to take over in few days. Paraded at 9, inspected arms, physical drill, bayonet drill, Co. drill til 11:30. Saw 18 of our observation balloons up at once. A Hun balloon in distance. The Hun fired a few shells towards our camp. In AM walked to east 600 yds. where he dropped 10 shells last night near artillery. The officers report Germans left material in quickly evacuated trenches, saw dead Huns there. These trenches we will take over for our advance start. Lieut. Moncrieff called over, just came back from 8 days in front lines. Major Butler called over, also Wilfred Carling (in 26<sup>th</sup>). Some shells came overhead at 4 PM from Tiepval, six landed on main road to Albert to SW of us. It sprinkled a little. Wrote Clara. Our men of Co. told of our coming offensive by Col. [Lochlon], attended moving pictures, our own & German shells flying over us.

### Field Service Postcard to Clara Fairbank, fill-in-the-blank format

Mrs. C.O. Fairbank  
Petrolea, Ont.  
Canada

I am quite well.  
I have received your letter dated \_\_\_\_\_, telegram \_\_\_\_\_  
Letter follows at first opportunity.

C.O. Fairbank  
Sept. 11 – 1916

### Tuesday, September 12, 1916

Bivouac near Albert

Drill in AM. I was called out by adjutant to take command while two court martials were ([promulgated]), being made one a N.C.O.

At 2 o'clock while talking with Major Butler, the orderly handed me a letter, it was from Genl. Carson stating the minister Sir Sam had written him a note asking him to expedite my return to Canada but I had been ordered overseas as reinforcement to 18<sup>th</sup>, he now wanted to know my wishes in the matter.

I showed the letter to Butler, in PM went out & did attack manoeuvre. Our 6" guns were firing nearby. After drill Morris & I walked through Albert & went under leaning Madonna & child again, went & saw our new Caterpillar armored cars 20 ft. long, weigh 30 tons, have two 6" guns in turrets & 4 machine guns, some have only [M.G.] they will use them in our offensive.

### **Wednesday, September 13, 1916**

Bivouac near ALBERT

Paraded at 9, a little drill, when it commenced to drizzle [broke] off, went to tent. I understand the operation orders are out for our offensive. I do not know what my orders may be, the artillery fire has been light yesterday & today. The calm between the before the storm. I had just written this, our Chaplain Rev. Peacock, from Windsor, was sitting beside me & a Hun shell dropped not far away, we went out and saw them falling 2 or 300 yds. away.

They started moving the horses, more shells came [feeling] out, they were [feeling] forward to left, the men & horses coming on at trot, some loose, they continued coming. I moved to left & [then] to near the shells falling forward, came back & went & looked at shell hole & picked up some pieces. Went to tent & shells came again (12 noon) closer troops [& horses] moved again. I moved to left & then back so shells could go over. I saw a dixie go up in air a kitchen 100 yds. off struck. The men stuck to horses fine & led them off.

A body of men [massed] in front of my tent. I told officer to scatter them, [now] the sensation of shell fire peculiar, you are trying figure out where next one will hit, you realize the possibility of their coming your way. You can hear them coming before they strike, the shell emits black smoke. It is now 1 o'clock, no shelling since 12. The 19<sup>th</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup> are holding our line now. The officers back this [morning] from trenches report considerable shelling & that the 19<sup>th</sup> are about fed up on it. The Carling boys called to see me yesterday. Saw Beresford. In PM practised attack, played out by band.

It is really impossible to realize the magnitude of coming events. I understand I am to act as adjutant while [Baxter] up in line. This is the C.O.'s orders. The operation orders out tonight, time is short. In evening walked back with Ross [where] could observe artillery flashes & flares plainly. Came back to tent, it commenced to rain & rain came down in centre of tent. Ross & I held it, a squall came & nearly blew canvas down. The artillery is booming away tonight, it is cool. Had to get up in cold & go out to open latrine. It was beautiful clear night & three bright stars in NW with very bright planet at bottom looked beautiful. What a scene for these great Gods creation to look down on HELL LET LOOSE. Heard band outside playing [Nearing] my God to [thee] last night. I walked down last night & looked at shell holes of this AM, there were 12 [spaced] along, 2 or 3 in a row, space between rows about 50 yds. apart, the last row had 6 shells not far apart.

Various comments & discussions regarding the coming action.

Wrote Clara –

### **Letter to Clara Fairbank**

*France, Sept. 13-1916*

*My dear Wife*

*Your letter of Aug. 26<sup>th</sup> received describing the baby's recognition of his mother, it must have delighted your heart. Also received letter from Alex you sent with John's fine report in it. I have met Major Butler, the 2 Carling boys. Grant – Meek – Mennish. Met Major Ross, one of the R.M.C. rugby boys we won championship from & you entertained. The band has just commenced playing & if I could tell you the surrounding scene you would think it a fairy tale. Met Beresford also. Met many Petrolea & 70<sup>th</sup> boys. Douglas & Stone are with us. I have received a communication from General Carson which would gladden your heart but will not go into details. I have seen strange sights today which some day I hope to tell you about some day.*

*There appears to be good news from all fronts, no doubt the pressure is getting strong on the Hun & he would be glad of peace – they surrender more gladly now, they don't like our intense artillery fire. It would indeed be fine if the campaign did not go through another winter. I have not written the dear boys as much as I would like but if you saw the conditions under which we work you would not be astonished at it, tell them Dad loves them much & thinks about them a great deal & would like to take them in his arms. No doubt you will be able to learn something about us as time goes on through the newspapers. The strict censure is wise & proper but very inconvenient for the transmission of news you would like to hear. The shades are falling & the band has just struck up "The sunshine of your smile." The song Carling sang at minstrels & brings back all the memories & visions of the night at our house.*

*Good night dear heart (another band in distance is playing the good old hymn "nearer my God to thee").  
Lots of love & kisses for Wife & boys & Mizpah.*

Charley

*Remember me to Nurse, Jennie, May & Conboy. Tell Jennie I would give \$10<sup>xx</sup> for one of her pies.*

### **Thursday, September 14, 1916**

Bivouac & ALBERT

Paraded 9 AM, went over & practised attack, a duplicate of what's coming off. General Turner the Brigade Commander took our Co. & gave us a nice talk. Told us about new caterpillars. The great offensive, Russia, Italy, France, England. Said don't trust the Boeche "A dead Boeche is the best one." Look out for the bombs he leaves behind in trenches, may have a string on them. It is sunny & clear but cool. The Huns shelled our camp in PM. I stood & watched them dropping not far from our [horse] lines to west of where he shelled yesterday, he was evidently shelling blindly (though I had seen & Hun balloon up) because in our position 400 or 500 yds. away was full of horses troops, he covered at distance of about 300 yds. He was also shelling Albert on the other side of us later, so our position was between two shell fires, it is interesting to watch them drop. We had our last rehearsal of attack in PM, got our order to move into position tonight for attack. Some will remain behind & go down to ALBERT for billets. Major Jones in charge & Colonel told me he had appointed me adjutant in case Baxter put out, got our things all packed up at 4 & waited for move order (The Brigade not been down to see us). C.O. went over places & barage time table (takes 43 minutes) every 100 yds. lift. Shook hands with [Lochron], McCue & Barnes, wished them good luck (all killed), at 8:30 all marched towards ALBERT. Jones, C.O.F. Barber, Dunnett, [Gander], Williams, Parsons, Nelson, Ross, [Raymond], [Cook] went in a building on one of main streets between station & church. Sleeping bags on floor. An 8" howitzer not far away is blazing away [jarrying] the building. Before we came down our artillery at 6:30 PM started to blaze away we knew what it meant, preparing the way for MORNING ATTACK. In PM an aeroplane came over us & circled around & dropt a message to one of the 21<sup>st</sup> officers, done it very prettily. It was an interesting sight watching the glare of our guns firing. But what of the morrow? How many will come back? I am not going up because C.O. has detailed me to remain back as adjutant, to go up if Baxter knocked out. The kind fates.

### **Friday, September 15, 1916**

#### **ALBERT BATTLE**

This morning our Batt<sup>n</sup> is attacking, have 80 yds. frontage (3 companies). The British will be on their left, their objective is 1200 yds. in direction between Martinpuich & Courcellette ~~Couleront~~, they will move in 4 waves, some of 19<sup>th</sup> behind, 1<sup>st</sup> wave (to clean up). Our artillery will open their barage about 6:30 AM & raise & comb forward 100 yds. at a time.

Before I got up I heard a shell explode not far away, learned a little later it was the 19<sup>th</sup> orderly room about 75 yds. down street struck by Hun shell, exploded in middle of building, the paymaster lost a leg, the whole inside much wrecked, others in there covered up by debris. Many rumors coming in, we have evidently suffered severely. We were to take over the trenches from 19<sup>th</sup> (Some of A Co. were also in) & start our attack from there. The Hun had forestalled us & came over about 3 AM & was in possession, so first task of our men was to clear them out, this was barely done when our artillery barage commenced & our men advanced under it, sweeping up the front. The Hun opened with machine guns & big high explosives. The caterpillars worked fine. Only two of our officers (Richardson & \_\_\_\_\_) gained objectives). Barnes, [Loghrin] Capt., Capt. McKugh, Morris, [Wilhard], [Mand]

Killed, many wounded (Harry Smith). The ambulances commenced to come in. I went to dressing station not far from church of hanging Madonna men lying on stretchers outside waiting turn. Binding them up inside, some severely, some minor.

Truly terrible war scenes, went up to PM where had about 100 HUN prisoners, got whistle from one (an officer just saying the [pioneers] as carriers & band as stretcher bearers did fine). I am sitting out in the open field where we bivouacked night of 15<sup>th</sup> it is now Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>. I am sitting on a [box] of rum put in my charge for men returning from trenches. Every day they do some shelling of ALBERT not far from our region. In PM went up to old camp, were using moving picture tent for dressing station, they were minor wound,s 1000 cases had gone through. Saw one of our planes land near by, bullet through tank, made fine landing, plugged hole & went up again.

Some of our men straggled in, said had been told to come back, getting more definite information of our losses. Lunched with Major Jones. The wonderful [scenes] of the day can't describe. Hun prisoners come in. Mounted men escorting them. Ambulances, men, horses, ammunition, hurry & bustle, but all seemingly going on very quietly & methodically & no confusion. The wounded splendidly handled. At night went down to dressing station, said 500 severe cases had gone through there. So this day of one of the world's greatest offensives is closing in & I am in ALBERT of Hanging Madonna fame, it is shell rocked & desolate outside of the multitude of soldiers. ~~Retired~~ about 10 Major Jones came in to me & told me to warn all officers to be ready to move at minutes notice (we thought probably our Batt<sup>n</sup> was advancing). I warned & packed & laid down on top of pack with clothes & overcoat on. In couple of hours Major came in & said our men had been ordered by C.O. to come out as best they could (incorrect information). I got up & went out to see if I could help any way. Went back to bed. Well what a flood of thoughts. Home, Clara & boys & the fates have willed that I was not sent to firing line, not in my hands, simply doing as C. Officer ordered, a soldier's duty. Holding a letter in my pocket from General Carson received Sept. 12 practically giving me opening to return to Canada. I held reply back knowing what was coming off & waiting for orders that's all.

The officers are sitting around me as I write on our bivouac. What remains of our batt<sup>n</sup> [scort] remains nearby, one of the officers with a fine golden ornamented Hun helmet on. The 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade have come out also badly cut up, but gained objective. They consist of Princess Pats, RCR [[Royal Canadian Regiment](#)], 49 & 42, they are beside our bivouac the Band of RCR playing, at dressing stations the Band was playing outside. [Fine] "[Nurse hath] charm"

In afternoon Major Jones sent me up to Bgde. headquarters to say we had 150 men available if necessary ([59]) [Dft.] from 70<sup>th</sup>

### **Saturday, September 16, 1916**

#### **ALBERT DAY AFTER**

Our boys are still up in the line (I am still sitting at our bivouac on rum case). Waiting today for orders, we do not know what may happen, reports of heavy losses but the commanding objective gained is very valuable.

Walked up to Army Service Camp with Emery [one fine bunch] of officers. When got back orders had come in for our move to Bivouac on outskirts of Albert, leave at 7:30, packed up.

Major Jones told me to take charge & take men up to allotted bivouac, select position & arrange for our Batt<sup>n</sup> coming out of firing line.

Marched the men up about 175 [my new men] it was dark, had a [guide] to direct, arrived not far from Divisional headquarters, there were trenches & lots of shell holes, selected location & men laid down on rubber sheets & overcoats (The pipe band of RCR playing 70 yds. away) the kitchens arrived with a hot meal ready for returning men, 300 overcoats [came] up, officers sleeping bags. Emery sent up case of rum for [cook] Co. (2 jugs each case) & gave me a reserve case.

Major Jones came up after a while & word came down the Batt<sup>n</sup> (an officer has just remarked how the Hell we went over is the wonder, we were to go over in 5 waves I went over in 1, Richardson said I had 15 men) ~~came & Major Jones~~ Maj. Jones said Batt<sup>n</sup> would not come down tonight but would remain at Bgde. headquarters & go into dugouts. (THIS WAS INCORRECT INFORMATION) we damped our fires & Major Jones went down to Albert leaving me in charge.

We started to turn in, I had some lemons. I got some hot water & sugar & made a little rum punch, which Ross [Raymond] & I enjoyed.

Presently word came Batt<sup>n</sup> coming in, they arrived C.O. & all officers, the officers went down to Albert to take billets, none arranged, but soon returned, no billets [then their boys came up] the men had a hot meal & some rum & felt better, it was chilly but we crept into our sleeping bags with stars & heavens above, heavy dew not very comfortable (RCR band [now] playing). I took off tunic & shoes, put on overcoat & sleeping cap – guns firing. This is the NIGHT AFTER the big ATTACK –

### **Sunday, September 17, 1916**

Received 2<sup>nd</sup> letter from Genl. Carson

The day after! I counted 17 officers sleeping bags in morning Col. Milligan, Jones, Baxter, Dr. Carr, McIntosh, Fairbank, Elliott, Nelson, Gander, [Raymond], [eryseal], Ross, Lloyd, Parsons, [Lang], Richardson, [Allon], McClinton, [Cook] etc.

Many vacant places, 7 killed, 7 wounded, 1 missing of officers & about 50 [apo] of men who went in.

One of the other brigades who had been in camp and bivouacked beside us they were the 7<sup>th</sup> Bgde. III Div. they were the R.C.R. + Princess Pats + 49 & 42<sup>nd</sup> Highlanders, all considerably cut up like ourselves.

One of the men told me Col. Towers' brother badly wounded, testicles blown off. (had died) I went in the morning to where Colonel [Milligan] was resting on his sleeping bag & asked him if he would like a cup of tea, he was reading a telegram & did not speak. I could see he was much affected. I walked away. Col. Jones told me O.C. has just received cable his wife was dead (surgical operation). I brought back some hot tea for Colonel & gave him a taste of brandy out of my little flask.

The Batt<sup>n</sup> marched through Albert back to our old bivouac overlooking Albert. I fixed up our tarpaulin & prepared to bivouac for night. This was the same spot we slept in a few nights ago, jesting & thinking of the coming battle (10 of us). Now four are missing. Capt. [Lochron], Morris, Barnes killed, Smith wounded.

Night came on, the flashes of artillery reflecting on the sky. The Colonel came to me & asked if I had anything to make him sleep, said had not slept, felt afraid to go to bed, said strain had been heavy. I said I did not care to give him morphine, asked him if he had some scotch, he said a bottle would not affect him. I told him I would fix him up a warm scotch that would be good. I had a lemon, got some boiling water & sugar & he put a good [hoon] in it after getting into bed. I told the adjutant not to have him disturbed, he had a good night's rest. Got to bed, it commenced to rain a little. I feared being drowned out but we were not. It was pitiable when roll called before we left our bivouac this morning to hear the blank responses & the men in ranks responding wounded! Dead! etc.

Such is War – Humanity gone mad

### **Monday, September 18, 1916**

Overlooking ALBERT

VADENCOURT wood

It was wet, we had our breakfast brought over to us (Ross, Cook, Fairbank, Richardson, Nelson, [Rayward]) it was raining.

Orders came for our move to Vadencourt. Just as we were ready to move it was raining. The adjutant came & told me to go forward & arrange the billets then I was to meet Major Brooks at Vadencourt church, was given a horse, the groom said he was a little afraid of [motors], it was a rotten wet day, the old nag did not want to go & the road was full of motors. I passed through Bouzincourt, Senlis, Warloy & reported to church, nobody seemed to know anything, [after time] met Maj. Brooks & he told me allotments. I found interpreter & we went up in the rain, wet to the skin. We allotted the huts & checked on them, presently Batt<sup>n</sup> arrived & we directed them to their places. I got a

fire going, many gathered around, we commenced to get dried out, the Colonel & Major came in, Douglas (Petrolia) got some water on. I had some rum in water bottle. The M.O. had some scotch. We had some cold [tongue], tea, bread & jam. I ate heartily, was hungry.

The adjutant came in & gave me orders to go on to LA VICOIGNE in morning, report there at 8 AM, leave here at 6:30. Staid up til 12 drying out. We are in huts covered with canvas & lay sleeping bags on ground. I certainly had a rotten & miserable ride but now dried out & feel fine, am not tired or sore & feel OK, have considerable



endurance evidently. Caught no cold, no tinge of rheumatism. This camp in the woods we came through & staid at on our way in.

~~Had good night's rest, my [balman] wakened me at 6:30 light a little fire, it was raining. I am in for another rotten ride. I tied a sand bag around my neck & put rubber sheet over waterproof [berberry] & started. Capt. Emery with me, we passed through Vadencourt, Herissart, Val de Maison, Talmas & on to LAVICOGNE. Passed Major Brooks on way.~~

### **Tuesday, September 19, 1916**

#### VADENCOURT & LAVICOGNE

Had good night's rest my [batman] wakened me 6:30, lighted a fire, it was raining. I am in for another rotten ride. Douglas came in and brought some tea. I had cold [tongue], bread & jam. I tied a sand bag around my neck & put rubber sheet over waterproof & mounted. Capt. Emery Q.M. came with me, we travelled through Vadencourt, Harissart, Val-de-Maison, Talmas & on to LAVICOGNE, tied our horses & went with billeting sgt. & located our billets. Officers in chateau & men in large stables, 690 men & 26 officers. Went into a house. I got bottle of champagne & we drank it with our hosts. Our Batt<sup>n</sup> arrived about 1, allotted places. In PM Ross & I visited aredromes, met Major \_\_\_ & saw many planes go up, they go to the battle front we just left at Somme. I started & answered May, Genl. Carsons' 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> letters to me saying the minister had told him to expedite my return to Canada. I spoke to Ross about it. In evening our adjutant, Baxter, showed me a letter from Herb Smith re. his getting 2<sup>nd</sup> in command. I referred to my letter from Genl. Well we are getting [vested] out. In evening a suspected spy brought in the interpreter & sent him out with [soldiers] to get details.

### **Wednesday, September 20, 1916**

#### LAVICOGNE in Chateau

Had good night's rest. Muster parade at 9. It rained last night, the parade ground (barnyard square) a mass of mud. Wrote a letter in reply to General Carsons' letter. In PM saw the Colonel & laid the General's two letters before him, he said the proper thing to do is to accept the offer. Said I would not offer you a Co. command, not proper place for you. Said I have had an inquiry from Corps. about you. What would you like to do. I told him if I got a suitable position I would stay. I had been very well treated, had learned much, & realized that I had been treated with great consideration. I showed him the reply I had written & he said Major Fairbank I quite concur in it. The Colonel has gone through a lot of hard work & is much cut up over wife's death. Said to me "I am all in" "have lost all interest in the war." Yes, I said. I understand. Made a nice grate fire & [we] all sat around. Move order came in at 11 AM. I go.

### **Letter to Clara Fairbank**

*France  
Sept. 20-1916*

*My dear Wife*

*I enclose some clippings which will be of particular interest to you. All papers you have dealing with this advance better be preserved. I am fine & will write again at more length.*

*Beresford is wounded (not seriously). Col. Towers' brother seriously wounded. Harry Smith wounded (not seriously).*

*Days of wonderful doings.*

*Loving husband,  
Charley*

### **Letter to Clara Fairbank**

*In France  
Wednesday, Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>*

*My dear Wife*

*You have noticed I have not written much of late. The papers will have told you of our movements which will explain the reason why. Wonderful things, my lady, your old boy has been in the midst of, and come through safe and sound. The kind fates. Much sadness surrounding many not responding at muster call. Comrades of yesterday I do not see today, but results achieved in the great cause magnificent and some day we will sit down before a cosy fire & talk about it. I have ridden drenched to the skin, feet sopping, dried out before a smoky fire, rested well & started out again in early morning in rain but exercise on horse kept you warm & O.K.*

*I am fine – eat and sleep well and am really holding up fine. Have seen Butler, Carling boys, Beresford (learn he is wounded), Mennish, Nelles, Raymond, Meek, Chief Wilson (wishes to be remembered). Harry Smith is wounded, gone to England, not seriously, tell his mother & Hazel Barrett. Tell them he did fine. The tale of our Battn. is a wonderful story. I was reserve adjutant. The movement was one of the most important in Campaign. Tell Col. Smith I am O.K. & that it's a pity he has not been with me, he was quite correct in wanting to come here & see actual conditions in field, it would have been of the greatest value. My ideas, advanced ideas you have heard me express, have been confirmed by actual close hand knowledge. Baxter told me you & his girl had a day in New York.*

*Lots of love & kisses to all,  
Your O.M.,  
Charley  
over*

*I have seen the so called "Tanks" (Armored Cars) you read about - Wonderful*

#### **Thursday, September 21, 1916**

##### LAVICOGNE & BERTEAUCOURT

Called 6, left about 7 with 4 Co.QMs & B<sup>n</sup>B.M.s & and interpreter, rode through 1. Talmas 2. NAHOURS 3. Wargnies 4. Canaples 5. Halloy 6. Pernois 7. Haveranas to – BERTEAUCOURT – Arrived 7:50. Q.M. Emery arrived. Saw Maj. Brook he gave us our allotment, very scant details. Went to work with Emery & Q.M. Sgt. Interpreter & worked hard til got all allotted at 12. Soon the Batt<sup>n</sup> arrived & steered to billets, had good meal prepared. This is the first Canadian troops here & they seem to want to do all they can. In PM went to Brigade to inquire about water. General Rennie walked out with me & said I have a position on machine gun section of Brigade, my Paymaster Quartermaster & Transport Officer, you would have a horse & be more independent, or [town Major] somewhere. I told him latter would not suit me. I had refused a good staff position to come with men I recruited. He told me to speak to Colonel about the other, when I got back the Colonel told me he wanted to speak to me & he showed me the letter from General Rennie asking me if he thought I would like the machine gun position. The Colonel said he did not think it would suit me. Said I better stay where I was & carry on, he would rather have me stay with him. I was doing good work in billeting pending the return to Canada [aded] from Genl. Carson.

I told him that I would have been pleased to have gone up to front with men on 15<sup>th</sup>, he said he purposely did not send for more officers that day as it only jeopardized them with nothing gained under the circumstances.

#### **Friday, September 22, 1916**

##### BERTEAUCOURT

Paraded at 9 by Cos. & inspected & gave some directions. Took walk with Ross, told him of my talk with General. Batt<sup>n</sup> resting today. I took a walk when returned found the Colonel had given the Batt<sup>n</sup> a nice talk & announced Richardson commander to A & [Lang] Paymaster.

In evening called on Emery, the Colonel there he told me he had seen the Brigadier, he did not think the position suitable for me & that was doing good work where I was at present time.

Wrote letter to Clara. Received letter from Clara & one from nurse with Bobbie's photo. Dear me my sweet baby is a big husky boy, my baby has developed & I suppose will not know his Dad. Showed picture to Colonel in even. it affected him. Move orders in. Return to LAVICOGNE in AM

#### **Letter to Clara Fairbank**

In France  
22 Sept. 1916

My Dear Wife

Received your letter of Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup> today.

Yesterday our "General" (of Brigade) asked me if I would like a position on Brigade machine gun unit, it would give me certain independence & chance to learn more about this branch but I don't think I want it. Also mention position of Town Major, a soft position (Clara Porter's husband is one). Neither appealed to me, he also wrote [the] Colonel about it. It was very nice of him. Well, there are other things pending which, if they materialize, will gladden your heart. I have learned & seen much of the real thing since being here and hope to make use of them for the cause.

The papers have told you much of the important works the Battn. has participated in, it is now common knowledge & when I tell you the story, you will be proud & thankful.

I have had considerable experience in billeting the men under various conditions. I am very well my lady & will try and keep so.

Lots of love,

Charley

### Saturday, September 23, 1916

BERTEAUCOURT & LAVICOGNE

Called 6:30, shaved. Started at 8:45 with Batt<sup>n</sup>. QM Emery & I went on in advance, returned same way as came Berteaucourt, Pernois, Halloy, Canaples, Wargnies, Havernas, LAVICOGNE to same old billets, officers in chateau. Fine day, sun shining. In PM walked up to areodrome with Major Jones & Ross, saw planes come in, they said been active in AM lost 2 planes, (got 2 Huns yesterday). Said Mokay [Mouquet] farm lost. Met \_\_\_\_\_ of London (rugby boy). Said Princess Pats coming in tomorrow.

An R.C.R. officer said they had been "over" & not successful (west of where we went in). Machine guns cut them up, their artillery N.G. fired over.

In evening got orders to move to Vadencourt tomorrow. C.O.F. & party to report to Major Staff Capt. at church Vadencourt at 10 AM. Rcvd. letter from Cowall (British are holding 90 miles of line). Our areoplanes many types of engines, the Hun less. Got some wood & coal & built fire in fireplace. The chaplain & all enjoyed it. [Rayward] away for course.

### Sunday, September 24, 1916

LAVICOGNE & Vadencourt

Called 6:30. Started with Emery & interpreter at 8 (the Batt<sup>n</sup> just formed up). We went on ahead to meet Maj. Brook at Vadencourt church at 10 AM. Had nice ride though foggy. Arrived VAD 9:40. Met Maj. Brook. Said we would take same billets in huts in wood.

He said no room in town for Colonel. I said try Contay, told him it was very desirable he had a room, he said he would go & see.

We had travelled from LaVicogne via Talmas, [Val-de-Mor], Herissart, Contay to Vadencourt

I went to tents to see all right. Arranged for fire, kindling, etc. Also to take small tents if could not get room for Colonel. Went back with interpreter to look for Col. room. Met Emery & he said we could get it O.K. soon Batt<sup>n</sup> came along went up with them, had bought 2 doz. eggs for 6 Francs & some cakes. Batt<sup>n</sup> got here 12:30 (Ross has just said to an officer "your walking days nearly over kid, you will soon ride in a [seed too], some one outside has just been pounding on side of tent, the Padre (Peacock) calls out, you big jackass stop that" Elliott replies, if you talk to me like that I'll come in & beat you up, this is the kind of repartee heard, good natured. The Colonel has just been in sitting before the fire. Asked me if I had a clinical thermometer. I had one in my pocket, felt his pulse, it was 100, took temp, it was 99, he has a cold.

The order came in for move to Brickyard in morning & to hold ourselves in readiness for quick move into lines. The Co. commanders & Jones went up to look over the ground. 6:30, Jones just came back. Has been reported that Albert has been severely shelled since we left. I noticed the Colonel gulping up gas & asked him if his

stomach bothered him, he said yes, that was his trouble, how did I know, I told him I had noticed him gulping gas, he said he was afraid to go out to dine, afraid would vomit, wanted to sit near window.

I am sitting before perforated tin at end of hut with open space in hut roof above for smoke, sitting on a box, it would make a great picture, the comforts of a soldier, would give a good deal for a bath, have got hives from overheating on march. Sometimes itches much. The comforts of WAR? Night is coming on. It would be fine to look in home tonight. Clara, baby, & boys, fancy them seeing me step in the door.

The Padre has just come in & asked if we're going to cook potatoes, he put pot on. The cook just brought in ration of rum.

### **Monday, September 25, 1916**

Vadencourt & Brickyard

Left Vadencourt 8 AM, asked Hodgins about horse he said "he wanted it for his corporal" On the march the Colonel sent orders back I was to go forward & meet Major Brook at Brickyard. I got horse & went on alone passed through Vadencourt, Warloy, took short cut across by mud road to main road to Albert, landed at brickyard near Albert, same old camp near Albert, [placed] horse in safe place on other side of road, they had shelled old place. We pitched our tarpaulin in same spot, a shell hole 22 yds. away showed that the Hun had dropped one there since we left last Monday 18<sup>th</sup>. About 3 PM got orders to move at 6:30 to [Terra Valley] near Division Hdqtrs. & to take fighting kits only. I suggested to Colonel men take overcoats, he concurred, ~~was~~ it was well they did, was cold & damp from dew as it was. I put mine in pack & took rubber sheet. When we arrived at Brickyard the same old howitzers in Albert were blazing away & after a while the ones near by went at it, new shell holes just up north showed the Hun had been feeling out. Saw two hun planes high up & our guns firing at them. Left camp 6:20 & arrived 7:20, moved over near trenches in case of shelling, brought up our field kitchens. Told to lay down if wanted to but be ready at minutes notice to move. Laid down for little. I put handkerchief round neck, also towel, wrapped cardigan around waist, put rubber sheet over shoulders & sleeping hat on. Could not lay long, got cold. The scene of men & officer's forms on grass, the dimmed lights of camp, the flares & flash of guns. Ross & I walked up [Ry] with Ross, we heard the [hiss] of bombs from areoplane & Ross ducked. Heard Cook nearby groaning. I spoke to him, saw he was sick, took his pulse, found near 100, took temp. was 101 ½, sent for doctor, he sent him to hospital. (Before leaving camp this PM he had given me the address of his mother & sweetheart to send word in case anything happened to him.

### **Tuesday, September 26, 1916**

Bivouac & Transport lines TARA Valley near Albert

~~Had good rest. Emery left on leave last night.~~ I laid down & walked alternately to keep rested & warm, at times took mouthfull of brandy, went down to kitchens ate little hard tack, about 4 some warm breakfast was ready, fried bacon & dry bread & tea, it filled vacuum, the night wore on, a heavy fall of dew made things damp a wonderful night's experience.

At 5 AM Sept. 26 Batt<sup>n</sup> ordered to move to ~~Bivouac~~ support lines at chalk pits, was all ready with my pack on when Nelson called out for Major Fairbank, said the Colonel wanted me. I went to him, he said no need of my going up they might get in a row & might not & for me to go back to transport lines. I walked back alone with pack on through the shell ruined Albert, the dawn was just breaking, men on the road, wagons, transports & the lone Major with waterproof on, a water bottle full of brandy, a revolver, pack on back, & worn & tired, some of the romance of war reached the transport lines about 6. I found Emery, [Lang], Hodgins, Barber & Chisholm there, laid down on straw beside [Lang], pulled blanket over me & went to sleep, laid down til noon, felt pretty tired, skipped lunch, about noon I could hear severe bombardment. There was one of our planes being dismantled near by. I went over & looked it over. It had been hit by Huns the [ovserver] had been shot through head & killed, the pilot had safely landed.

The inside of [car] where observer was, was besmeared with blood, up high was spurted over as if a large blood vessel had been cut, walked over to YMCA in PM to read paper.

In evening learned wounded were coming in. Walked to dressing station, several [marquees], they were filled with wounded. Some Hun prisoners near by, some wounded.

The first Division had been heavily engaged. All objectives taken, many casualties. The wounds seemed mostly machine gun & rifle. All sorts. Head, body, arms, legs, some lay dead, being sewed up in blankets, one I saw die on table. This is WAR, all HELL let loose, woe to the Lunatic [men] & the Hun beasts responsible, they sit back in their dug outs & drive the poor fellows on to slaughter & to be slaughtered, the mourning loved ones at home. I left the scene & wandered back in the dark to my tent & sleeping bag on the straw & slept in great luxury & comfort in camp [arisrn] to many brave ones bearing the brunt. In PM I stripped off behind a straw stack & had a bath, it was fine. I have been itching from hives, the heating & sweating of marches, but I am well & strong.

### Wednesday, September 27, 1916

Near Albert transport lines

Had good night's rest. Emery left last night for 10 days leave in London, staid around camp all day willing to rest. In PM it commenced to rain, tent poles broke & tent came down on me – soon was fixed – Have heard an intense artillery bombardment all day in direction of Tiepval & Courcellette. Feeling fine today rested out. I [feed] with Hodgins, Interpreter & Barber. Towards night word comes in that we have taken Tiepval. Wrote Clara. Wrote McKeown ([Mrs.] to wire Clara O.K. Card to John

At night I look across to the lights of red cross dressing station, wounded are coming in. There is hard fighting & our troops are winning. We have word of 2 zepellins brought down near London – good – the murderers – Jimmy Bell came over & paid us a visit. It has been rather a dreary day, some wet and chilly.

Our men are still at the 'Chalk pits'

### Letter to Clara Fairbank

France  
Sept. 27<sup>th</sup> 1916

My dear Wife,

*Your old boy is still O.K. though since I last wrote have witnessed scenes of much activity. I think I wrote you that our Brigadier has offered me certain positions which would appear inviting, had written the Colonel about them. I talked the matter over with Colonel together with other important correspondence I had received & he said he would rather I continue with him for present. I am very contented, treated fine & have had the finest chance to see great activities. I camped again on a spot I had left a few days before & found a new big shell hole about 20 yds. from my location.*

*I have marched & ridden & bivouacked. Gone in advance of Battn. & selected bivouacs. Bivouacked with the Battn. in the open, only a rubber sheet on the grass, seen the muffled forms laying around, officers & men, & watched the flash of bombardment & the flares (night lights), seen the crash of bursting shells, heard the cizz of dropt bombs at night from areoplanes, watched the wounded come in in motors to dressing station, watched the German prisoners come in, some wounded, seen men die on the dressing table. Seen areoplanes that have had to land with wounded observers. Marched with a pack on my back, taken a bath in the open by a straw stack as a screen. Just at present I am sitting in a little tent on my sleeping bag which is resting on straw (a luxury). I was tired last night. I had bivouacked the night before on a rubber sheet & at 5 o'clock AM got up & walked alone some distance before resting. Am all rested now. Important things are going on. You will read of various successes. The other night, while in bivouac, I noticed one of the officers nearby moaning & I spoke to him, saw he was sick. I took his pulse & saw had fever, took temperature, found 101 ½, sent for Dr. & he sent him to hospital, we were awaiting important events at the time.*

*The younger Sharkey boy called to see me, said his brother had been wounded (slightly), he was O.K. himself. The younger Reed boy also called, tell his mother.*

*The officer I referred to above had given me the address of his mother & sweetheart not long ago in case of certain eventualities, as others have. Harry Smith getting on nicely. I find that our Quartermaster Emery is married to Mona [Mait], you know, the girl in Windsor, you & Maud [Green] know her. I can't remember other name, the officer in tent knew it so I put in, he is young & jolly & good company, he has just gone to London on leave. It has just started to rain, we close the tent flap & listen to the boom of intense artillery bombardment.*

*It is 160 days since I left London, Canada. Have been 56 days in France. It's a long time, isn't it? 13 months since I joined the old Battn. Well, some day it will finish. When I get home I am going to get in a warm bath & soak for a week, then go to bed & stay a month, then do nothing but you & I & the boys have a good time. Lots of love & kisses for yourself & boys.*

Charley

C.O. Fairbank

### **Thursday, September 28, 1916**

Near Albert transport lines

Had good night's rest. Walked over to old lines in AM. A bombardment has been going on all morning, at front. As I look down on Albert I see Hun shells bursting on other side. The Hun is evidently feeling for batteries there but he is blind – our planes see that he gets no observation. In PM I went down to [home] lines. Hodgins had not returned from going up to front. I found the Q.M. Sgt. & another N.C.O. with him, we came up to his tent with him, he seems to like me & I would take care of him. I told Laing to attend to "carrying on". The Sgt. would go up tonight with rations at 6:30. (I know General Hodgins, his father.) About 5 o'clock I walked up to heights overlooking direction of Thiepval, went past old French trenches & barbed wire. I noticed where a Hun shell had struck edge of parapet & realized how easily one could be buried. [diagram included]

Walked on, saw baby partridge. Continued til overlooked the valley & heights beyond filled with trenches now occupied by British. What a panorama. Way beyond, 5 or 6 miles, is Thiepval & Courcellette & Martinpuich. What a bloody drama has & is being enacted there. Our guns opened up. I could see the flashes & feel the jar from both sides & front, a mile each way & more big & little, a big 15" I think to left made the earth tremble. The scream of the shells then the flash & burst in the distance, what an inferno where they land. The great attack is going on there & we are advancing. The papers of yesterday say that Combles is ours, Peronne & Thiepval soon must fall, many prisoners & stores etc. I got back to camp at 6:30 & had supper alone. Lang over at Jimmy Bell's. The new officer [L.A. Russell] from 30<sup>th</sup> (his home is Brockville). The adjutant sent down word to send up all officers & other rank's reinforcements at once & so he goes up tonight, our boys may go in the line tonight. It is now 7:30 PM & commencing to rain a little, a bad night for trenches. The old guns are rumbling in the distance & occasionally ours near by me bang away. I have got thoroughly accustomed to the row.

### **Friday, September 29, 1916**

Near Albert

A great deal of artillery bombardment going on last night, all night long one continuous roar. I have hives from getting heated on marches & from lack fruit & fresh vegetables & between this & the firing I did not sleep much but was rested all right. There is heavy fighting going on. Thiepval & Combles are ours & we are consolidating & advancing. Cool today, cloudy, not good for observation & generally rather miserable. In afternoon I walked up to top of hill near observation [tree] & watched the artillery fire on my right & left & front across the Ancre.

Bouzinourt & Martinsart on left, Albert to near & right, the river Ancre & Aveluy in front. Looking towards THIEPVAL which is receiving the concentrated fire can see shells bursting – a wonderful panorama – the slope of the hill beyond cut up with trenches & communications. A big 15" gun firing from Bois d'Aveluy (wood) on left makes hill tremble. Our men are moving up nearer the front.

Letter from Clara with Council resolution

### **Letter to Clara Fairbank**

France

*My dear Wife,*

*Yours of 10<sup>th</sup> & 14 Sept. received. The Council's resolution was very nice. I am writing under difficulties, it is a wet day & the candle light not very good. Yesterday Major Brook from Brigade was asking for an officer to do some work. I offered, he said no, you are marked for Commandant of an area, he said he was so informed, that's all I know. But this is true, that the good fates are looking after yours truly & taking good care of me all around while great things are being done. I sent you the same photo Mr. Ross sent Fraser and some others taken*

in a town by a local photographer, they should have reached you & would be of special interest as there is history attached to two out of the six in the pictures viz. Barnes & [Lochran].

Your clipping of Colonel's wife sad. I knew of it. The wire came to him in the morning as we lay in the open after night's bivouac & very important events had transpired. I knew he was tired & went to ask him if he would have a cup of tea. He was reading at the time a message & did not look up & answer me. I saw he was too much affected. The cable was telling him the news of his wife & at the very hour of his Battn. having accomplished great things. The pity of it all. Has not seen her for 17 months – WAR –

There was 10 of us bivouacked at a spot some time ago, we went to the same spot a short time after, six of us were there, the other 4 were not. Harry Smith was one of them but he is getting along fine. The kind fates did not subject your old boy to the dangers that's all. The platoon & Company commanders & men take the brunt of things.

As I am billed for other duties do not worry, it has been so willed & we can be thankful. I have seen wonderful things of late. We are up to the Hun & past him in shell fire & have got complete Mastery of the air, we have eyes, he is blind. This means so much to Artillery fire. The "Boche" would like Peace now, but read Lloyd George's pronouncement out it.

The Rain is pattering, a cosy fire place would look good but I am fine & O.K.

Heaps of love & kisses to wife & boys.

Tell May I am O.K.

Husband

C.O. Fairbank

### Saturday, September 30, 1916

In tent near Albert

Heavy artillery fire last night, most of night, booming away. Cold wind but clearer sky, observation better. The papers tell of the taking of Thiepval, Combles, great rejoicing, one of the greatest since MONS.

Thiepval, a great stronghold. Allan came in & slept in our tent, he is going to interview flying corps., says revolver very fine in clearing trenches, said his men would throw away Ross & take Lee, [more] handy, showed me on map where Morris & [Lachlan] fell, heard Morris ask Colonel "Havent I been a good soldier" (mortally wounded in abdomen). Said Gwyn (commanding C) had come in, fell in trench & sprained ankle, [Gander] took command.

At 12 o'clock quite an artillery bombardment opened up.

In PM the interpreter went for ride on horseback, we intended going to Pozieres but went through Albert & way on through camps of the greatest activity, went through La Boisselle, totally destroyed, trenches blown to pieces, trees

cut down by shell fire, a village on other side of valley totally wrecked. Horses, lorries, Red Cross with wounded. Infantry marching, pipe band, railroad engine puffing, [huts], shells, tents. Valley full of activity, coming & going, guns banging away, notice at cross roads says "don't loiter, this spot frequently shelled." What a scene, a seething mass of jumble & motion, such is War. We were going towards Contalmaison over region recently taken from Hun, we retraced our steps & returned through shell rocked ALBERT, passed the hanging Golden Madonna with babe. There she will stand til the war is over, holding her babe aloft, a striking & [crying] protest & appeal to high heaven to [drive] the HUN back & back, so that he can reach & destroy no more helpless women & babes & we are doing it NOW, he is being pummelled & pounded back after months of incessant toil & sacrifice by the instruments he sought to Conquer & dominate, the world, we had caught up & passed him with artillery & munitions & blinded his observation of the fire by our air supremacy giving us control of observation thereby increasing the efficiency of our fire. [AM] camp that shelled today [near] Albert. The Hun is out of Thiepval. Word comes in tonight that our line's holding fine. The Hun made three successive counter attacks on Thiepval. All drawn back, a massed attack, also an extended order attack, all met same fate. In evening after dark The interpreter & I walked up to observation hill, passed shell holes, trenches, & barbed wire. I navigated fine, some scout eh! The scene was wonderful. The camp lights in Valley of Ancre. The guns flashing & shells firing and bursting over in direction of Thiepval the flares, & above the stars of high heaven looking down on the ghastly

scenes of WAR – Great God what does it all mean us poor mortals do not know ... but “all’s well. God is in heaven” & Our men are fighting a great humanity crusade.

### **Sunday, October 1, 1916**

Near Albert in tent

Good night’s rest, not so much bombardment last night. Sunny & warmer. Went out behind straw stack, spread my rubber sheet down & with my rubber wash basin made a bath room, stripped off and had a good sponge off, very fine. Hodgins went up with supplies last night, after going certain distance load is transferred to pack mules & taken forward. The Colonel headquarters is a mile in front of Courcelette, a good deal of shelling going on. In afternoon the Interpreter and I took a horseback

~~Had a good night’s rest, not so much bombardment last~~ We had in mind going to Pozieres.

At noon Major Brook came up to my tent. Hodgins was there, he said all the mules had to be brought together & divided, he wanted an officer badly, had we one. Lang said no. I said I might do the work. Major Brook says no, you are down for “Commandant of an area” I heard it at the Corps., so that settled it. The interpreter and I started on our ride about 2 PM (we set our watches back 1 hour today). We went through Albert on the Pozieres road. Much traffic is passing. As we neared La Boisselle we decided to turn to right on Contalmaison road. We had passed our guns on the right firing over our head. The horses hesitated some but went on. The traffic very heavy, on the side of road to right a collection of 3” ammunition had evidently been set afire & all blown up, the empty shell cases blackened [& holed] ground & [caseless] projectiles told the story, many hundreds of them. The artillery was firing briskly. Trenches all blown to pieces, shell holes, a mass of confused rubbish & destruction telling of intense bombardment, the Hun had been driven out. To the left was the earth pile of a crater, a mine had been exploded. We had only turned on road a short way when the Hun shells began to burst on our left & were feeling our way. All excitement. Men running to dug outs.

The road was narrow & congested, we pressed on & turned to right on road to get away from fire. What a mass of destruction, the remains occupied by our troops. Our guns massed in the open, 8” howitzers blazing away. We passed a 12” just getting ready to fire. We looked down the muzzle, could see rifling & quickly passed. This is a war scene such as I shall never probably see its equal again. The [remains] of Hell fire let loose.

We went on through the labyrinth of trenches, men, guns, horses. The guns & shells had no cover, they had quickly advanced getting ready to push Hun on towards Bapaume. We concluded we could follow road & cut across to Becourt & back by the road we were on yesterday to Albert, passed sign “no thoroughfare except on duty”. Continued through wood passed dressing station & down to valley & [Ry]. While we were passing through our artillery fire zone saw one of our 8” shells pass high overhead. Could see it so clear & plain, started from our left & went right over us to our right, it was wonderful. The interpreter also saw it. We continued on & after time got on Albert road of yesterday. On this side of hill also all activity. Tremendous traffic, guns firing, new big ones coming up, in 2 parts, barrel hauled by our caterpillar tractor & [Breech] by another. Passed thousands of boxes of empty shell boxes telling of recent bombardment before THIEPVAL capture.

Just now moved forward back to Albert & camp. Thankful for being missed by Hun shell & glad to have witnessed the wonderful war scene. I had thought of going up to front with Hodgins’ transport tonight but had shells enough for one day. Well I did not, for Hodgins mules & [huush]] severely shelled.

In evening walked over to Y.M.C.A., a concert was on, one man sang finely a song of Mizpah’s, another played cello solo, another violin. When I returned were singing “Abide with me, fast falls the evening tide, The darkness deepens” truly for many, our men “go over” the line tonight – What will the morning tell?

### **Monday, October 2, 1916**

Near Albert in tent

It is 9:30 PM. I am sitting in my tent on a pile of straw my sleeping bag is resting on, three candles are giving me light. The day has been rainy, damp & rotten. I have walked & jumped up & down in my tent to keep warm. This AM rumors came in our boys had “gone over” last night & suffered casualties, how many don’t know. Hodgins had a Hell of a time getting rations in with mules, was shelled. We were preparing for our men to come in tonight, going to give them hot meal & rum & try & get good billets in Albert but word came down about four that they would not be relieved. Sent Interpreter up for case of Scotch, sent 2 bottles up to C.O. Hodgins has gone up



tonight with rations etc. Received mail package from Miss McEwen, cake, chicken & Saratoga chips. Barber, Lang, Interpreter & I had some, good.

Last night was the greatest for nights, we have drawn them back. The flares & guns of Tiepval are no more for the Hun. As I write an occasional gun booms out, then a machine gun, then a roll of musketry & so it goes, a calm waiting for our massed artillery to open up again, then destruction. BEAUPOMME & PERONNE will soon be ours, the SOMME Offensive has been a success & the BOCHE has been slowly but surely driven back by our & French brave boys. Our men in the trenches tonight must be worn & tired, exhausted from the strain of days & nights endeavor – too bad – Clara's letter of yesterday told of our Petrolia Council's resolution of praise for me. How little I have done in comparison to Tommies in trenches, the cause is great. Her letter of today says the people of London are proud of me, that's nice. Allan has just come in, says has been accepted by flying corps. Well, our camp nor Albert shelled today & the Hun night flares are gone, evidence of his falling back – good – go farther back you VILLAIN.

The good fates have looked after me & kept me fairly free from danger for which I thank to Good Lord. BING goes a gun, good NIGHT.

### **Tuesday, October 3, 1916**

Near Albert

Letter from McHattie with council resolution.

Milder this AM but drizzly, it stopped. It is more comfortable as is warmer, bad when cold & damp. Our boys still holding the line, there is a gap to their left unheld. Hodgins got in at 3 AM wet & besmeared with mud from head to foot – tired – Says Jones got a bullet in rear & has gone to hospital. Our guns fired some last night nearby & the Hun sent few shells over. I understand 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Bgdes. (ours) cut down pretty low in men ([our] about 1400 – a [trale] – We must press on & get Peronne & Bapaume, at 5 o'clock we had dinner, a banquet in tent sitting on boxes on straw, mud & wet outside. Maj. Barber, Lang, Hodgins, the Interpreter & I, on the chicken, Saratoga chips & cake Miss McKeown sent me. The interpreter got out a [Menu] Illustrated we ate heartily.

Our men will come out tonight & go to Sausage Valley (Oct. 4 a man has just come up & saying we had about 90 casualties this time. Major Jones a bullet in back, some killed). Was muddy & roads [heavy]. They will have dug outs, have sent up kitchens & run

### **Wednesday, October 4, 1916**

Near Albert

Colonel Hodgins sent for his C.O. sleeping bag during night. I heard the Hun shelling Albert last night, counted 20 shells, could hear them hissing & then explode plainly.

A man has just come in and says we were not relieved til 9 AM by 58 (some mistake). Had 90 casualties A \_\_ B 40 C 20 D 3 (2 wounded 1 killed) MG-12 Capt. McIntosh, slight carrying on, Jones in back, says B got caught in barage, went over Monday night, 400 yds. advance. Kitchen went up, also rum.

Wrote Clara, Miss McKeown. Cards, Clara, Smith, McR.

All men came out to Sausage Valley this AM

They say 22 badly cut up, hesitated & got into barage, left gap on left. The sun is coming out – good – Major Brooks inquiring for socks for men this AM. Muddy. Shell fire occasionally, all O.K. Bang goes a big gun, someone is practising bagpipes, fine. A reinforcement of 60 from 93 (Peterborough) came to us yesterday. Heard S. [Cowen] killed ([Coultes] of 24<sup>th</sup> told me). Some shells thrown into Albert again this AM, several houses knocked down not far from Div. H.Q. (It was hit before & 4 casualties). It is cloudy but our planes are out, but little artillery activity. Said our men could have gone farther without our barage, it only drew the Hun barage. Well, I look out on the scene before me, transport lines & Albert beyond. The Madonna still hangs. The chimneys are still up. Cloudy & dusky, Albert nearly due East, Thiepval north. Muddy – I intend to go up to Sausage Valley tonight with Hodgins & see if can do anything for C. Officer. Got word they ~~might~~ [not] come into [near] Albert. In evening walked out in mud to road, across old camp grounds towards where could see flashes of guns. Do not hear the roar now as did. They are farther away now. What mud & muck. The [horse] lines [in] mess of mud.

[handwritten poem inserted here]

## Letter to Clara Fairbank

In France  
4 Oct. 1916

My dear Wife.

Two months yesterday since I landed in France. Have seen much since then and have come through O.K. surrounded at times by some danger but nothing compared to many others.

The British Canadians etc. have done much. Our air supremacy is supreme. I have seen 20 to 30 of our observation balloons up at once & our planes all over & not one of theirs. The EYES of the army, particularly valuable to observe artillery fire & direct it & give range & objects to fire at, without it the fire is BLIND & wasteful & I have seen striking examples of Hun artillery blindness. Gertrude McKeown sent me a package, a plump chicken, Saratoga chips & fruit cake so last night we had a grand banquet. Major Barber, Major Fairbank, Major Laing (~~Transport~~ Paymaster officer), Capt. Hodgins (Transport officer), son of Genl. Hodgins, & the French interpreter (a Frenchman). We sat on boxes in a tent on straw. The Frenchman had made out a menu which I enclose – he appears not only to be an artist but to have some knowledge of anatomy. I think he is married. Well, we enjoyed the meal, surrounded by mud & wet & -other things – I wrote Gertrude & thanked her, told her to wire you weekly. I can drop a line to England, you see, when I can't wire. Sometimes there is great activity & we are busy. I am O.K. I received a registered letter from McHattie yesterday with copy of resolution & an extension of leave from Council.

Lots of Love, Charley

C.O. Fairbank

France  
4<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1916

My dear Wife

I enclose some clippings which tell of the Allies important successes. It is very good news indeed & paves the way for greater ones for geographical reasons.

It has been raining on and off for a couple of days and open air life is not as comfortable as it might be, but I keep dry & warm. Well, the papers at home are telling you of things I can't relate. I have heard that Stewart Cowan was killed, don't mention til papers confirm. The Colonel (Towers') brother was wounded & died. I am O.K.

Lots of love,  
Charley

## Thursday, October 5, 1916

Near Albert

They tell us our men will come down to [Tara] Valley & we will take motor [teesses] to Berteaucourt. The sun came out some & wind dried things up considerably. Rev. Peacock called in & had breakfast & related his experience of burying dead & being shelled, was at dressing station also. Word came down Colonel was going on leave. I intended going up with Hodgins but they said Col. would come down. In evening after dark the Colonel & Dr. Carr came in, had no supper, a warm meal was prepared for them & they ate heartily in Laing & my tent. We then let them lay down on our sleeping bags & went out. Lang in Hodgins tent & I staid outside against hay stack, it was drizzling & wanted to keep warm, after a time I went in Hodgins tent & laid down on straw. After a time Lieut. [McCrimmon], salvage officer, came up & he & Lang went to our tent. The Col. was sorting out his things & distributing them. Hodgins, Carr, Laing, [McCrimmon] & I were there. The Colonel is going on leave but I am satisfied he will not return. He is "all in". He told me so at the chateau before we came down here for last front line Hell experience. (In talking matters over with him then re. officers of Genl. Rennie to me. He said he would rather I remain with him for present, said alright). [McCrimmon] got considerable Scotch. We chatted til 2 o'clock when Col. was to take mess cart & leave for station. He had thrown out a lot of maps he did not want. I asked him if I might have some, he said yes, the whole lot. We walked down

in the mud to where mess cart was. The stars had come out. The Colonel & his little dog “Blighty” & small kit packed got in & we all grasped hands with him & bade good bye.

Thus the DRAMA closes. Exits the C.O., 23 months since joined up, 17 since left Canada & bade his wife good bye. She is dead. He returns with hard earned honors but a heavy heart from this Hell of inhumanity & slaughter. The game will go on, others will fall in & die or be wounded or return broken in health. We move of ~~today to~~ ~~some~~ [or] tomorrow somewhere. Batt<sup>n</sup> still in Sausage Valley. Wrote Clara. Sent numerous whiz bangs.

Letters from Clara & Myrta

After Col. went we went back to tent. Lang & Dr. slept on his bed & beside it [McCrimmon] in sweet oblivion beside mine. I crept on top of my bag with canvas cover over me. Kept on clothes & tunic & overcoat. It was truly a [motly] crowd but I slept some, tent darned uncomfortable – WAR –

The men will come down tomorrow & we will move to WARLOY

**Thus ended the 2<sup>nd</sup> ATTACK.**

## Letter to Clara Fairbank

France  
Oct. 5<sup>th</sup> 1916

*My dear Wife*

*I enclose some clippings that will be of interest to you.*

*Today it is better, the sun is out and a breeze is drying up things. It was pretty muddy. I walked around a bit last night, or rather, floundered in the mud. Well, I suppose it is time for some mud & rain now. The summer has gone and it will not be long til snow flies at home. Have not seen a paper for a couple of days. I never get the Topic, is it sent?*

*I am well. Love & kisses to wife & boys.*

Charley

C.O. Fairbank

## Friday, October 6, 1916

Near Albert WARLOY

It was drying up some, wind blowing, sun out some. Prepared to move. Major Morrison came up. He is in command 18<sup>th</sup>, [now that Milligan is gone] said uncomfortable position but Genl. ordered, said had some intimation 6 weeks ago. At 1 we moved off 700 strong, 23 officers. I walked. After I had gone a ways Lloyd offered me his horse. I declined, turned it over to Elliott. Shortly after adjutant called me forward & said to go on to WARLOY & arrange billets. I got horse, a hell of a plug, rough & slow & [poked] along, after a time passed Genl. Rennie, called his attention to my “slow” charger. I was mad as blazes, road crowded, reached WARLOY, met Maj. Brook, he said Sgts. had detail, went to town, Major then hunted for sgts. Came back with [tarps], finished billeting. Batt<sup>n</sup> arrived. Whole Bgde. here – 18 – 19 – 20 – 21 – got some sherry & champagne. Four of us in house.

~~It was drying up & some wind blowing. Prepared to meet Major Morrison. Came up. He is in command, said uncomfortable position but Genl. had so ordered. said had some intimation 6 weeks ago.~~

~~At one we started to move off, about 700 strong – 23 officers.~~

~~I to walk, after gone away Lloyd offered me horse. I declined, turned over to Elliott. Shortly after, adjutant sent for me told me to go on to WARLOY about billets~~

Ross (ulcerated teeth), Nelson, [Rayward], C.O.F. and Douglas cooking. Had good dinner as all was hungry. The darned old nag had shaken the liver out of me but incidentally given an appetite.

We had shaken off the dust of “Hell Hole” for a time & would sleep in a BED tonight. McIntosh acts as 2<sup>nd</sup> in command. The Brigade would make a fair Batt<sup>n</sup>.

## Saturday, October 7, 1916

WARLOY & LaVicogne

Had good night's rest. Took sponge off in room. At 10:30 started for Val de Maison. The horse better today, passed through Vadencourt, Contay, Herissart, Val-de-Maison, reported to Major Brook, he told us to go to chateau at LaVicogne. I went on through Talmas, got to LaVicogne at 1:30. After time Interpreter came & we arranged billets, then went & had lunch at house, went back & after much talk succeeded in obtaining old [tap] room for officers. Got room, had men clean it out. About 6 the Batt<sup>n</sup> arrived. Had fire in fireplace & room looked cheery. Hodgins told me he would arrange horse any time if I would let him know beforehand. Allotted Peacock's horse to me.

At 9:30 came orders for move to Bonneville tomorrow. Meet Major Brook at church 8 AM, will have [cad] at 5:30. It's a change to get away from sound of guns. Ross left behind ulcerated teeth. Took Hodgins to bed

### **Sunday, October 8, 1916**

LaVicogne & Bonneville

Called 6 by Douglas. Left at 7. After gone a little piece started to rain, dismounted & got waterproof on. The Interpreter on [wheel]. It was disagreeable.

Landed in Bonneville at 8, went to town, Major Col. [Dennison] he told us our Area. We started out no plan, no nos. of capacity. We had to go to each house & inquire & allot. Muddy, dirty, raining, rotten, well we finally got allotments as Batt<sup>n</sup> arrived. The adjutant is not here, went sick this AM. Col. gone, Jones wounded, Baxter sick, Ross sick, Brooks with carbuncle, etc. Q.M. on leave, [B<sup>n</sup> Q.M.S.] sick. Nelson, [Rayward] & I in old man's house. 1 bed, gave it to Nelson. [Rayward] & I on sleeping bags on floor. I had my feet wet & was some cold & damp, took off boots, changed socks. Started to have supper about 7:30, was about finished when a runner came in with

a message for me to report at orderly room as soon as possible. I put on my boots & toddled out through mud. I was surmising that the Major might want me to act as 2<sup>nd</sup> in command or adjutant. I arrived & had the communication that I was to proceed to London for return to Canada to fill a post there, my transportation attached. Though I knew from the General's letter short time ago some action might be taken I thought it might be shelved & did not really know what was going to happen. Well, truly the Good God is looking after me, it seems at every step. I have had the best of luck, seen much & am safe & well. Have been at trenches at YPRES & then at Somme during great advance & now we the Batt<sup>n</sup> are now moving back to inactivity. I am ordered home. Went down to station, saw about trains. Saw Hodgins to send my kit to train, said he would (but being in bad condition Laing said he would look after it). They both fell down in the AM & 15 minutes before train time I had to go & order the transport & got on train. Said good bye to Maj. Morrison, McIntosh, Elliott, Hodgins, Allan. The others gone to bed.

Thus endeth my 67<sup>th</sup> days in FRANCE. A great experience. I leave for [Bolougne] 8:15 AM tomorrow (9<sup>th</sup> Oct.)

### **Monday, October 9, 1916**

Bonneville & [Bolongne]

Called 5:30 by Douglas, got us shaved. I packed. Hodgins failed to send mess cart. I was mad. I hustled & got off. Bade [Grace], Nelson, [Rayward], Douglas good bye. Took train at Montreley a short ways from here, to Longpre, there luckily an officer took me to [R.T.O.] & he fixed up my transportation to [Bolougne]. Went to Abbeville, took fast express about 2. Had lunch on train. Arrived [Bolougne] about 3:30 went to Louvre Hotel. Found location of transport at officer boat, will leave 10:30. I will call in AM at 9:30. Walked around a little. Came in, had dinner. Took walk, went to room. HAD A BATH, straightened up things a little, wrote up diary & retired. The day has been rather pleasant. I am well & happy. A surprise for Clara when gets my cable. Fates decree that I see her & boys again for which I am duly thankful.

Good night.

### **Tuesday, October 10, 1916**

BOLOGNE & FOLKSTONE

Called 7, had good night's rest. At 9:30 went to Embarkation officer and had ticket examined. All O.K. Got on board then got off to see Porter put my baggage on (sleeping bag & knapsack & helmet) boat started 10:30, heavy wind blowing but boat did not roll much. A torpedo boat escorted us, was not sick. Arrived Folkstone 12:30.

Went to Metropole, took room with BATH (think of that). Took taxi & went up to Brigade, reported to Col. Ashton (Brigadier) asked for leave which he willingly granted. (Before coming to him I reported to O.C. Canadian Training division & he posted me to 39<sup>th</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup>) Saw General McDougall there, he asked me if I had seen DAVIS) I reported to adjutant of 39<sup>th</sup>, he had me put in order & given 6 days leave. I went to Director of Recruiting & Organization & they told me they would find out time of sailing & let me know tomorrow. Back to Hotel, had dinner. Frank Perkins came in. Wired Clara – Well I'm back. Safe & Sound Thank God.

### **Wednesday, October 11, 1916**

FOLKSTONE

Slept til 10 when call at door came & told me the time. I ordered coffee & rolls and had the luxury of breakfast in bed. After time got up. Smart called & gave me Col. [Towers?] address. I went over to 17 Clifton Gardens & found Mrs. Towers & McKenzie. After which Col. came. We went over to D of R & O and he told me a transport would probably not leave for 10 days, gave me my papers of direction to report at Quebec where I would receive my instructions as to my Canadian post and gave me my transportation ticket to Liverpool. Said would notify me by wire date of sailing. Went down town with Colonel & came back to hotel. Invited to dine with Col. 7:30 tonight.

The Col. told me when order came for me to go to France he had asked the Brigadier to retain me & Beresford. And when at last found my name on list was surprised. I did not know of this. Col. Ashton & wife was at Colonel's dinner.

### **Thursday, October 12, 1916**

FOLKSTONE

Had breakfast in bed. At 11:30 took taxi up to West Sandling.

Lunched with Colonel & Mack. Fred Gorman there in civilians, [Cowell] also. Met Mercer & Perkins. Came down at 4 with [Cowell]. Met Mowbray who came to see me at 7:30. Col. & Mack & wives, [Cowell] & Mowbray dined with me at Metropole. Met Thompson there. Coolish & cloudy, feels dreary & God forsaken. Everybody thinking of home. To room 11 o'clock.

### **Friday, October 13, 1916**

FOLKSTONE

Had breakfast in room did not take any lunch, took taxi & made inquiries re. my surplus kit in France, difficult to get information, came back to Metropole. Wrote [D.A.A.G.] Canadian Training Div. about kit. Perkins, [Cowell] came & dined with me, also some young officers going to France. Met Mulholland. Wire came to meet Maj. Whitmore Liverpool, 12 noon Liverpool. Wired [D.A.A.G.] Time too short. Cloudy, dreary day

### **Saturday, October 14, 1916**

FOLKSTONE

Breakfast in room at 10. Called at Col. McKewon at 11, not in, walked down town, bought books, gloves, neckties, came back. McKeown girls called, walked home with them, gave me Clara's telegram. No message from A Genl., wired again. Dined at Col. McEwens, Mowbray there. Home to Hotel, met Kennedy, no wire from A.G. or [Cowell]. Dark, windy

### **Sunday, October 15, 1916**

FOLKSTONE

Awakened 11

Walked over to Colonel's. Mrs. T. told me of Mrs. McKenzie's lump (operation necessary) back to Hotel to see about [Value]. Saw D of R & O & said need not go Monday. Frank Perkins dined with me. Got trunk at Col. McKewons, bade good bye. Called Colonel, arranged to go to London in AM, back to Hotel, packed. [Roy] called PM.

### **Monday, October 16, 1916**

FOLKSTONE & London

Took 8:30 train for London, went to Savoy. Col. & I saw Adj. Genl. Reed, he said I could go when wanted to. Col. did not come back so I lunched alone. Walked out in PM, took no dinner, not hungry. Went to Vaudeville, back to Hotel. It's no fun alone.

### **Tuesday, October 17, 1916**

London

Troubled a good deal with Hives itching during night. Colonel called in. I walked out a little. Col. & I took lunch at The [Cheddar] Cheese. Col. Moore, Col. Towers, Col. Courtney & I took dinner at – THE RONDEVOUS – Came back to Col. Moore's room. Then back to Savoy to bed.

In AM called to see Col. Reed, spoke of my PROTECTION for men IDEA

### **Wednesday, October 18, 1916**

London

Col. called in before going to board at 10. I walked out for little, looked at some SHIELDS. At 1 went to Cecil, met Col. & Col. Courtney M.D., he took us to sportsmen club for lunch, came back to Cecil, met Harry Smith (wounded) took him over to Savoy, had nice chat. John Peat called. I took him to dinner at PRISCADIS. Came back to room. Col. came in about 11 & staid til 2:30.

Took Bishop [5 atris] for hives & ate grape fruit in AM

### **Thursday, October 19, 1916**

London

~~Colonel called in before going to Board at 10. Walked out & bought few things. At 1 went to Cecil, met Col. & Col. Courtney M.D., he took us to sportsmen club for lunch.~~

Lunched at Savoy alone. Had Col. Towers, Col. Reed, Col. Moore & Mrs. Reed to dinner at Cecil, took them to theatre [Dalys]. Happy day. Moore & Col. came to my room & staid til after 1.

hives better

### **Friday, October 20, 1916**

London

Col. called in at 9.

Lunched at Automobile Club with Col. Courtney, Col. Towers, Col. Reed, Col. Moore, Col. Ashton.

Col. left for Folkstone. Col. Lamb & R.D. Noble called. Took tea at with Col. & Mrs. Lamb. Came back to Savoy. Dined alone & watched the men & women dining in luxury. What consepction has the majority of these parasites of the boy's in the trenches. Went to room, pondered on my PROTECTION of the men idea. Cabled Clara, wired [W.S. McR.] & Col. Preston.

met [Murmish] & Bartlett

### **Saturday, October 21, 1916**

London

Col. Lamb came over at noon & took me to see Genl. Leckie. I explained my Shield ide,a talked with Col. May, said they would inquire of war office. Skipped lunch.

Harry Smith called. I took him to hospital & called on Beresford, he said he had been looking & looking for me. Smith came back with me. John Peat called & I took them to Old Cheddar Cheese to dinner, back to hotel & chatted.

Telegram from McEwen

hives nearly gone

### **Sunday, October 22, 1916**

London

Did not wake til 11:30, read in room, lunched Savoy. Took walk. Called up D'oye Noble. Took walk, met [Murmish], went to Cecil to see if wire there. Came to room, not hungry so skipped dinner, staid in room & wrote & read til retired. Learned from [Murmish] leaving for Liverpool tomorrow. I had not received notice.

Wrote Col. McEwen.

### **Monday, October 23, 1916**

London to Liverpool

Went to Maj. W\_\_\_\_\_ said could not arrange for me to sail on next boat. I went to Col. Reed, he told him to arrange. Went to pay office, got last pay record.

Called up Genl. Leckie & Col. May, said would send protection information to Canada. Called up R.D. Noble, he came down to lunch. Took taxi 1:45 to Euston Sta., left 2:35, arrived Liverpool 6:30 to [Adelphi] Hotel got Boat Card for transport, dined, went to Shakespeare theatre, heard "Lucky Jim sing. To room. Well really old boy you are going to see wife & kiddies again. Thank GOD. wired Towers, wired Clara

Many of the things I have gone through seem a dream.

### **Tuesday, October 24, 1916**

Liverpool & on board His Majesty's Troop Ship OLYMPIC

Called 7:45. Took walk around Liverpool. Bought [chemico fibre] – SHIELD – Major Whitmore, transport officer, said I would be officer commanding troops on board & would get my SECRET instructions. Took taxi at 2, went to Gladstone dock, went aboard – OLYMPIC – a 23 Knot boat, 50 000 tons, 882 ft. long, Capt. G.H.

Jenkins Assistant Embarkation Staff officer gave me secret instructions and code & key word.

I have fine State Room, B deck no. 55 with 2 beds & bath.

I looked over ship, dined at 6 at Captain's table (Capt. not down) Major Whitmore introduced me to Major F. Whitmore (his brother), Conducting Officer & assistants Capt. [Hambury] & Lieut. Hastings. I will room 42 with them, they will consult with me if necessary, he introduced me to \_\_\_\_\_ who will introduce me to Captain. No order to move, still in dock.

### **Wednesday, October 25, 1916**

On Board H.M.S. Olympic

Laid in dock all day. Nothing doing, read in room & walked on deck. In evening went to Major Whitmore's room, he is the conducting officer. We talked matters over & looked over his standing orders. Went to my room & to bed.

No orders to move, probably some submarines reported & we are waiting.

### **Thursday, October 26, 1916**

On Board Olympic lying out in river

Breakfast 8:30, about 9 moved out of dock towards mouth of river & staid there. At lunch Captain down. I had taken my seat below a few seats. Captain said I was to sit at his right being Officer Commanding Troops. Captain of ship is Commander Bertram Hayes. Roll call of men on deck about 10 AM. Took walk on deck.

In PM read & Dinner at 7. I sat at Captain's right. He is very nice indeed.

Says that Bridge, Whist bores him (so say I)

A little concert got up for all on board at 8:30, music & recitations & stories.

Went to Club Room after for time. [Murmish] there. This afternoon when I stepped off before dinner I found 3 Belgian lice on my silk undershirt. These are the first I have found on me at any time.

My Hives or trench itch is getting better, troubles me a little at night, the rash is still out on my body some.

Well no orders to move yet.

### **Friday, October 27, 1916**

on board H.M.T. Olympic

The morning broke with a gale blowing & the ship still lying in river. Rumor has it that a ship the [Rowanmore](#) 10 300 tons of Johnson line has been sunk outside yesterday so we are not moving. Read, walked on deck, etc. & put in day, windy met J.S. [Burk] of 8<sup>th</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup> taken prisoner at YPRES & escaped to Holland, he comes from Port Arthur & knows [Sam] Lowery very well. Roumania blows up Danube bridge. France takes 5000 prisoners at Verdun.

### **Saturday, October 28, 1916**

on board H.M.T.

Still lying in mouth of river, quite a wind blowing. This morning's paper reports a Hun raid of 10 torpedo boats. They near Davis sunk the empty transport the [Queen](#) of 1676 tons, 22 knots. The destroyer [Flirt](#), 380 tons & [Nubian](#) 1062 tons [breached]. [[Battle of Dover Strait](#)]  
Two German destroyers sunk. This occurred last Thursday night. Talked with woman from Winnipeg, a widow, has lost her only 2 sons in War. DAMN the HUN.

### **Sunday, October 29, 1916**

on board H.M.T.

Still lying in mouth of river. At noon near high tide got aground, it looked as if we might get stuck, a large no. of tugs gathered around & pulled on us & we got clear. We have two, 12 ton, anchors & 1 of 15 tons. Used some sulphur ointment to allay skin irritation.

### **Monday, October 30, 1916**

on board H.M.T.

Laid in river all day. Consulted with Capt. Thompson about life boats, he referred me to Sgt. May & Q.M. Just as I was ready to go to dinner I was handed a sealed code message. I did not go to dinner but tried to decipher it, would not respond to directions & could not make it out, went to Commandant, he had brought it over & did not think it very important. Said no Marconi (against orders), said might send someone over in tug if thought important enough. I went to room & worked long time trying to decipher. I could not, it is evidently wrongly coded or a dumny. Had some sandwiches brought in & doped my skin with sulphur ointment, it is doing good.

### **Tuesday, October 31, 1916**

on Board [Olympic](#)

#### **STARTED**

We started out about 2 AM and got up towards north of [Island] & turned back & circled around in channel evidently waiting for things to be clear. Towards afternoon passed out of channel to sea, a destroyer escorted us & we zigzagged, a strong breeze blowing. Called officers together & had standing orders read & asked their cooperation. Talked over detail of boats with Sgt. May & Q.M. of boats by instructions from Capt. Thompson.

### **Wednesday, November 1, 1916**

on board [Olympic](#)

Nothing eventful, some pitch to boat, hard wind. Captain down to lunch & dinner. The boats (24) were put up on boat deck, consider out of danger zone. At night in danger zone were run with no lights. Captain told me said was danger of bumping into something but was Admiralty orders. Run 517 miles, noon to noon. Dosed with Sulphur ointment.

### **Thursday, November 2, 1916**

on board [Olympic](#)

Had breakfast in bed, got up at 12, took warm salt bath. My itch nearly disappeared. Captain down to lunch. The boat made 507 mile from noon yesterday til noon today. Reported 5 Americans killed on ship sunk in region of Ireland. Walk on deck. Cold a little snowfall today, a head wind but not rough.



### Friday, November 3, 1916

On board Olympic

Up for breakfast about 10 AM. Captain Thompson came to my room & handed me a message of 234 words to code. Wanted it before 6 PM. At 10:30 a party of six of us went down to Engine & boiler room. Wonderful two [triple] expansion engines & one turbine (125 miles of blades in it) 3 shafts, 2 of 28" & one of 25. This is the twin ship of Titanic, the Olympic is 46 000 tons. The boilers burn 800 tons a day. There was a fire in electrical part of ship, burned out the [works] to electric clocks, did \$2000 pounds damage, there was no alarm, we did not know of it til afterwards. Before this some woman in a state room with alcohol lamp set fire to curtains. I worked all afternoon on code message & took it to Captain at 5:30, it was transmitted later. He told me he used my code because they would be less likely (The Hun) to pick it up than if they used their own Admiralty Code. It gave notice of the time of our arrival in Halifax & other orders. After dinner Commander Hays came to my room & I showed him shell fragments & map, also Hun hat, belt & whistle, also bullet proof jacket & gave him a photo of our officers with gas helmets on.

I talked with [J.J. Burke] of Port Arthur who ~~attacked~~ escaped to Holland through the German lines. We made 532 miles today. The sea is calm & boat steady. Commander told me at dinner that my code message had been sent. Said did not confirm my message by sending an admiralty code.

### Saturday, November 4, 1916

Got up 8 – Parade 10. Went over men's quarters with ship's Sgt. May at 10:30 (all in 2<sup>nd</sup> class cabins). Passed a one funnel steamer at 10 AM. Commander told me at lunch that my code message must have been received all right or would of had a reply inquiring.

Said cold I sent more complicated than the admiralty code. Commander had a gunner show me 4.7 gun. Shell was 45 lbs. sighted to 9000 yds. Commander not down to dinner, we are nearing port & he is on duty. Had a little concert from 8:30. A few of us met in sitting room Lieut. [Creon] (ex South African surveyor) N.W. mounted police, [miner] at Ypres, Ex Sgt. Maj. etc. entertained us. Well this voyage has been quiet & pleasant. I have been in my stateroom a great deal reading & thinking of war conditions. My itch has subsided under the old specific [lard] & sulphur & my sleep is not disturbed as it has been by the intense itching. Hives, prickly heat & all that as I thought because fruit & [salve] & bathing seemed to alleviate but I am now convinced that the Major has simply had a touch of good old itch – this specialty of WAR is not confined to TOMMY – we are all subjected to [inroads] of the same vermin. Nearing Canadian shores again. The kind fates have guarded me & brought me back. God knows I was sincere in my desire for SERVICE in the GREAT CRUSADE for HUMANITY. What it's all for I do not know but GOD is still in heaven & all will be well. He moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform. I will return to my wife & kiddies. Many months ago I looked at them sleeping in their little beds & with a [ching] heart wondered if I would ever see them again, not an easy ordeal for one to go through. I feel fine and am in good condition. I have had the honor of being in command of the troops on this transport, one of the largest vessels afloat & entrusted with the key word of the code that was sent to Halifax announcing our arrival & even the Commander of the ship has not the keyword. My code message was sent last night.

### Sunday, November 5, 1916

on board H.M.T. HALIFAX harbor

Arrived in Halifax port 6 AM. 4 colliers laid aside with coal. Col. Lindsay, transport officer, came aboard. Civilians & those on leave disembarked from tender in AM. Duty officers & men for discharge remain aboard – WIRED CLARA – Showed Col. Lindsay the message I received at Liverpool, he knew nothing of it. Gave it to Commander Hayes to deliver back. Commander Hayes said they answered my code message by a naval code. Safe in a Canadian Harbor again. At 3 PM we moved up through narrow channel to Basin, only 3 ft. of tide at Halifax. Beautiful harbor.

Lovely Sunny day.

Will leave boat 8 AM tomorrow.

### Monday, November 6, 1916

## Olympic Halifax

Got up early, had breakfast. Tender came at 10, went to Halifax, reported, left CPR at 11. Car all day, at night there was a freight wreck ahead, delayed us 10 hours.

### **Tuesday, November 7, 1916**

Travelling

Had been delayed, did not arrive Quebec til 12 midnight. Staid on train til morning.

I was asleep & dreamed I reached out & felt a hand I knew it was mother's hand, then I could see her face & she put it down to mine & kissed me. I said will you visit May, no she said, it would only bother her now.

~~Wired Clara~~

I awakened. I felt that the spirit of mother whom I loved dearly had actually visited me, it was very real & I smiled & felt there might be more in these VISIONS (not dreams) than commonly supposed. I have had my dear brother Henry come to me the same.

I thought, has mother been near me in France.

"There are many things in heaven & earth not dreamed of in our philosophy Horatio"

### **Wednesday, November 8, 1916**

Quebec, Ottawa

Arrived Levis 6 AM, took Ferry to Chateau Frontenac, had breakfast. Took train for Montreal, arrived 6:30, went to Windsor Hotel. Left at 8:45 C.P.R. Arrived Ottawa 11. Chateau Laurier. Had hot bath.

U.S. election still in doubt, voted yesterday.

Wired Clara. Montreal tonight, Ottawa tomorrow.

### **Thursday, November 9, 1916**

Ottawa

Called on Genl. Hodgins in AM, he invited me to dinner tonight. Called at record office & found I was entitled to Long Service medal & in 3 months to "Decoration" Called Louise Booth up on phone.

At 4:30 called on Sir Wilfred Laurier & met Lady Laurier. Dined with Mrs. Hodgins, Col. Shannon there. Col. told me he had no notice of any appointment for me. Told Col. Shannon I was waiting over to see minister.

Telegram from Clara.

### **Friday, November 10, 1916**

Ottawa

Called over to Militia building, saw Col. Winters, he says Maj. General Hughes will not return til tomorrow, met Col. Shannon & told him I would remain, had a little talk about Sam's [Sam Hughes] conduct to him & others.

I made inquiries & found I could get long service medal & decoration for officer's long service also. Clara called me on phone & said they were preparing a great reception for me.

Wired Clara AM & PM

### **Saturday, November 11, 1916**

Ottawa

Called over to Militia department, found Lieut. General Hughes had returned, though very busy he saw me, he was dictating to two stenographers & his private secretary. He welcomed me & I told him I had returned for duty. I said I had wanted to lay before him two things particularly that had been forced on me in France, one was some protection to the men when "going over for attack," the other was the use of revolvers by men in cleaning up the trenches.

He asked me to write it out for him & asked me to lunch. I declined as I wanted to take train. I saw A.A. Palmer a R.M.C. man, he told me to report at London & tell them to carry out my orders for return, he would help in any way.

General Hughes was at the time of my interview probably writing his final letter to Premier Borden. Took 1:30 train for Toronto, arrived 9:30.

Clara came at 10 PM.

**Sunday, November 12, 1916**

Toronto

Did not get up til noon.

Alex & Sue [McQueen] came down and took lunch. Motor down in PM. Took 6:30 train for London. Arrived Tecumseh House 11 PM.

**Monday, November 13, 1916**

London & Home

Went up to headquarters, saw Colonel Shannon & he told me I could go home tomorrow until I was ordered to come.

Took 11 train.

Was met at station by large crowd & band also [Guysbond] & driven to Town Hall where addresses of welcome were given me by Chairman [Dales], Rev. Hill, Mayor Stirrett & Joe Armstrong M.P. I replied, went home to Clara & 4 boys, baby did not know me.

The kind fates have decreed my safe return.

**Tuesday, November 14, 1916**

Petrolia

Took walk in PM with Clara.

In evening Greenizen called & Mrs. Greenizen, we went to moving pictures.

Clara is sleeping better since my return.

Lieut. Genl. Sam Hughes Minister of Militias resignation asked for, announced today

**Wednesday, November 15, 1916**

John went back to Ridley today.

Mr. & Mrs. Simpson called in in evening

**Thursday, November 16, 1916**

Home in PM Clara & I walked down to Oil Springs road and back by blind line.

Maggie & Annie Gleeson called in in evening

Ground frozen, little snow, getting cool

**Friday, November 17, 1916**

~~Home~~ London & Home

Clara & I took morning train for London. Had some work done on teeth. Met Col. Milligan & Col. Smith.

Col. Milligan had dinner with us. Home 10:30. Went into London movies for a time.

**Saturday, November 18, 1916**

Home

Clara & I took little walk in PM.

**Sunday, November 19, 1916**

Home

John Carling here in PM, we motored to Kettle Point, Clara, Mizpah, Carling & I, fun day, got stuck in [shole], got back 7:30 after dark. Mr. & Mrs. Greenizen & Mr. & Mrs. Simpson to supper.

**Monday, November 20, 1916**

Walk in PM.

In evening went to movies. Mr. [Mellie] had me draw the no. in raffled [drawn work] for Soldiers Xmas presents before the audience & make short address.

Fine day, mild.

Carling left on morning train.

### **Tuesday, November 21, 1916**

Petrolia

A deputation of Lambton Liberals [Mr. Lochlon], O'Connor & McCallum to tender me the nomination for Dominion house parliament. Propose to call a convention. I thanked them & told them I would consider & let them know.

Took walk.

### **Wednesday, November 22, 1916**

Petrolia

Walk with Clara in PM

Mr. Jenkins & Miss Jenkins & Mr. Campbell called in in evening.

Mr. Calverts called re. option on oil property.

Fine day. Walk. Roads dry.

### **Thursday, November 23, 1916**

Petrolia

Read & walk in PM.

I do not feel very energetic. I guess the reaction from front is on, am content to be quiet & sit by the fire place.

Am getting back my equilibrium.

### **Friday, November 24, 1916**

Petrolia

Col. Smith & Mrs. Dr. Drake came in on 7 o'clock train.

I motored to Wyoming to attend Patriotic meeting for Red Cross. Armstrong & I spoke.

Joe returned in Auto with me & came in for time.

Cold north wind.

Ground frozen.

### **Saturday, November 25, 1916**

Petrolia

Took 12:05 train for London with Col. Smith & Mizpah. Arrived 1:40. Saw Football Match between 118 & 149<sup>th</sup> (Lambton). The latter won 10 to 1. They had the ball over 2 feet from 118<sup>th</sup> goal & Ben Thomas tried old centre back & lost, is because referee said did not [heel] out right – Rot. The same old thing I fought for [on] executive to cut out any ambiguities.

Home on 5:40 train.

Cool. Snow on fields. Some of my old football enthusiasm came back.

### **Sunday, November 26, 1916**

Petrolia

Mrs. Dr. Drake has staid in house all day, have a slight cold.

Mr. & Mrs. Stirrett & Geo. McMillan called in evening.

Moderate pleasant.

### **Monday, November 27, 1916**

Petrolia

Mrs. Dr. Drake left this AM.

Farmer from Moore called this AM to see if I would go out & speak for Red Cross in Moore Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>. I accepted. Meeting of directors of Wagon Co. in PM. Jenkins, Jackson, Egan, Fairbank, [Spate] present. Signed contract for 1917 at 15 [po.] advance.  
Have a cold  
Moderate fine day

**Tuesday, November 28, 1916**

Neuritis in side of neck & arm

**Wednesday, November 29, 1916**

In bed, neuritis in side of neck & arm

**Thursday, November 30, 1916**

In bed, neuritis in side of neck & arm

**Friday, December 1, 1916**

In bed

Neuritis in side of neck & arm

**Saturday, December 2, 1916**

Got out of bed & went to football match in PM, 149<sup>th</sup> & Sarnia. 149<sup>th</sup> won 11 to 1. [O.R.F.W.] intermediate champions.

Fine day, moderate.

**Sunday, December 3, 1916**

Up today, staid in house all day.

**Monday, December 4, 1916**

Talk with Greenizen re: [Starbuck] letter. Council meeting evening.

**Tuesday, December 5, 1916**

Armstrong to dinner.

In evening drove in auto to 6<sup>th</sup> line Moore Methodist Church for Patriotic address.

Armstrong with me.

Clara & I signed deed for southern lands near Memphis to Greenizen in trust.

**Wednesday, December 6, 1916**

In office in PM. Wrote letter to May.

Special Council meeting in even.

**Thursday, December 7, 1916 – no entry**

**Friday, December 8, 1916 – no entry**

**Saturday, December 9, 1916 – no entry**

**Sunday, December 10, 1916**

Attended Methodist Church evening service to pay a tribute to Petrolia boys who died in war. Sat on one side of pastor, Armstrong on the other. After the sermon I paid my tribute & then Armstrong. There was a fine turnout.

**Monday, December 11, 1916**

Hospital meeting in evening, graduation of nurses Pitkens, Englehart, [Mrs. Dr. McMurcher], then C.O.F. spoke, also fine attendance

**Tuesday, December 12, 1916**

Motored to Inwood to attend Red Cross meeting & speak.  
Armstrong there also.

**Wednesday, December 13, 1916**

Chicago  
Left for Chicago noon train. Arrived Annex evening had Japanese Room

**Thursday, December 14, 1916**

Chicago  
Ripley called  
Dorothy called  
[Pope] called  
Theatre at night, Clara & Dorothy

**Friday, December 15, 1916**

Chicago  
Lunch with Ripley  
[Pope] had dinner with us.  
Clara & Dorothy went to Grand Opera evening, Romeo & Juliet

**Saturday, December 16, 1916**

Chicago Home  
Took AM train home. Arrived Tunnel 11 PM. [Hardigan] met us with motor

**Sunday, December 17, 1916**

Mr. & Mrs. Egan here for Sunday supper.

**Monday, December 18, 1916 – no entry**

**Tuesday, December 19, 1916**

Petrolia  
At Oil Springs meeting in evening spoke for Red Cross & Patriotic. They gave me three cheers & a [tiger] when I rose to speak, [had full].  
Armstrong also spoke.  
Motored out & back.  
Sleighing.

**Wednesday, December 20, 1916**

Petrolia  
John arrived home today.  
Went out to Knox Church 8<sup>th</sup> line Moore to speak for patriotic, took Armstrong along. 3 miles [west] of Brigden side road.

**Thursday, December 21, 1916**

Clara went to London today.  
Council meeting evening re. [recruiting].  
I am appointed Chairman of Committee to [wait] on Post-Master regarding it.

**Friday, December 22, 1916**

Petrolia

Attended nomination accepted Reeveship nomination, declined Mayor, Edwards as usual [entrased] things but it went [fast].

Fine winters day

**Saturday, December 23, 1916**

Petrolia

John home

Clara returned noon

Charley, Henry & I had car drive us 3 miles east, got there after 11, going rabbit hunting, went to blind line & struck back through woods west. I stomped on brush heap, rabbit ran & I shot him before got far, to boy's delight. At one we sat down on log & had lunch. Went on again, raised no more game, [struck] side line & went north to 10<sup>th</sup>. Car met us at 4.

Qualified for Reeve.

**Sunday, December 24, 1916**

In house all day. Just felt like quietly resting.

Lovely winter day outside, ground white with snow & snow falling.

**Monday, December 25, 1916 – no entry**

**Tuesday, December 26, 1916**

Tried to get to Aberarder with Stirrett for Red Cross meeting. Sleety & only got 3 miles, had to turn back. Stirrett with me.

Went to [Kark's danse] Clara, Mizpah, Dorothy & Rob & Mr. Noble.

**Wednesday, December 27, 1916**

Sent May night letter, sorry could not be at wedding Jany. 1<sup>st</sup> as duties had prevented.

**Thursday, December 28, 1916 – no entry**

**Friday, December 29, 1916**

Arranged with Postmaster to cooperate in sending out National [Service] Cards. Miss Ford to keep records.

Attended special council meeting in evening to apply for [\$30,000] debenture issues to [meet] flooding liability.

Fine winter day

**Saturday, December 30, 1916**

Alex & Mrs. McQueen here.

Had ~~Mr. & Mrs. Simpson~~ Dorothy & Paul Turnbull & Geo. McMillan to dinner.

**Sunday, December 31, 1916**

Mr. & Mrs. McQueen here.

Mr. & Mrs. Simpson & Dorothy Bullen in to supper. Staid up & saw old year out.

Alex & I gave them one of our old [team] speeches.

The old year is gone with its scenes of carnage & desolation & misery.

May the new year bring Victory to the Allies that will assure peace for the future.

\*\* for list of military-related persons mentioned in the diary please see Excel document **COF WWI Diary - People**



## Timeline Summary

Apr. 24, 1916 – arrive Halifax  
Apr. 26, 1916 – leave Halifax on [Lapland](#)  
May 5, 1916 – arrive Liverpool, on to Shorncliffe via London  
May 27, 1916 – camp moves to Dibgate  
June 6, 1916 – 1<sup>st</sup> draft, 149 men from 70<sup>th</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup>, remaining men joined by 37<sup>th</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup> (COF is annoyed)  
June 8, 1916 – 90<sup>th</sup> & 95<sup>th</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup>s arrive  
June 10, 1916 – Brig. Col. Smart recommends 70<sup>th</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup> be disbanded  
June 18, 1916 – 2<sup>nd</sup> draft, 70<sup>th</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup> supplies 150 more men who join 58<sup>th</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup> (300 have left; 614 remain)  
June 19, 1916 – attends Canadian Training School @ Napier with Col. Towers  
June 25, 1916 – 3<sup>rd</sup> draft, from 70<sup>th</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup> 43 to 24<sup>th</sup>; 26 to 19<sup>th</sup>; 10 to 26<sup>th</sup>  
June 27, 1916 – Clara arrives  
June 27-July 5, 1916 – Field Officers Camp  
July 5, 1916 – COF called to join 18<sup>th</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup>  
July 6, 1916 – remaining men of 70<sup>th</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup> to join 39<sup>th</sup> at West Sandling  
July 11-30, 1916 – West Sandling & travelling with Clara  
July 14, 1916 – General Carson willing to recall COF  
Aug. 1, 1916 – call to front  
Aug. 2, 1916 – to Southampton & crossing English Channel  
Aug. 3, 1916 – France: LaHavre & train  
Aug. 4, 1916 – Rouen & train  
Aug. 5, 1916 – Hazelbruck, Poperinge (Ypres Salient lines), Brigade Reserve Camp D, Alberta  
Aug. 6, 1916 – in charge of no. 14 platoon, D company  
Aug. 8, 1916 – move to La Clytte (closer to front line), explosion at bomb school  
Aug. 14, 1916 – walk through trenches in advance of taking over (C & D companies to go to trenches)  
Aug. 15, 1916 – move to front in Veerstraat dugouts, move to staff position in charge of reserve billets, COF does not take platoon into trenches  
Aug. 19, 1916 – to Army Corps School, La Clytte & back  
Aug. 22, 1916 – march out with D company to Camp J, Kenora, enroute to St. Omer & the Somme  
Aug. 24, 1916 – march to Steenvoorde (4<sup>th</sup> Brigade), arrange billets  
Aug. 26, 1916 – march out from Steenvoorde, arrange billets  
Aug. 27, 1916 – to Millain, arrange billets  
Aug. 28, 1916 – Millain to Tourneheim, arrange billets  
Aug. 30, 1916 – exchange Ross rifles for Lee-Enfields  
Sept. 4, 1916 – Andruicq, train through Calais, Boulogne to Abbeville, march to Cramont  
6, 1916 – march to Bonneville, arrange billets  
Sept. 7, 1916 – Bonneville to Herissart  
Sept. 8, 1916 – to Vadencourt, 18<sup>th</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup> to move in & relieve 1<sup>st</sup> Division  
Sept. 9, 1916 – bivouac near Albert, see Golden Madonna  
Sept. 12, 1916 – COF receives 1<sup>st</sup> letter from General Carson (Sir Sam Hughes had wanted COF's return to Canada expedited)  
Sept. 13, 1916 – ordered to act as adjutant during coming offensive  
Sept. 15, 1916 – [Battle of Flers-Courcelette](#)  
Sept. 16, 1916 – set up camp again  
Sept. 17, 1916 – death of Col. Milligan's (18<sup>th</sup> C.O.) wife, return to old camp overlooking Albert, COF receives 2<sup>nd</sup> letter from General Carson  
Sept. 18, 1916 – to Vadencourt, arrange billets  
Sept. 19, 1916 – to LaVicogne, arrange billets  
Sept. 21, 1916 – to Berteaucourt, arrange billets

Sept. 22, 1916 – 18<sup>th</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup> resting  
Sept. 23, 1916 – to LaVicogne, arrange billets  
Sept. 24, 1916 – to Vadencourt, arrange billets  
Sept. 25, 1916 – to Brickyard near Albert & Tara Valley, arrange billets  
Sept. 26, 1916 – COF sent to transport lines near Albert, men ordered to support lines at Chalk Pits [[Thiepval](#)]  
Sept. 30, 1916 – travels in area, back to camp  
Oct. 1, 1916 – travels in area, back to camp  
Oct. 2, 1916 – previous night men ‘went over’, drove Germans back [[Ancre Heights](#)]  
Oct. 5, 1916 – Col. Milligan goes on leave, Milligan gives COF his maps, 2<sup>nd</sup> attack over  
Oct. 6, 1916 – to Warloy, arrange billets  
Oct. 7, 1916 – to LaVicogne, arrange billets  
Oct. 8, 1916 – to Bonneville, ordered to leave France  
Oct. 9, 1916 – Bonneville to Boulogne  
Oct. 10, 1916 – Boulogne to Folkstone, England  
Oct. 16, 1916 – Folkstone to London  
Oct. 23, 1916 – London to Liverpool  
Oct. 24, 1916 – Liverpool, board [Olympic](#)  
Oct. 26, 1916 – ship enters river & remains there  
[\[Oct. 26-27, 1916 – Battle of Dover Straits\]](#)  
Oct. 31, 1916 – ship leaves  
Nov. 5, 1916 – arrive Halifax  
Nov. 6, 1916 – Halifax & CPR  
Nov. 8, 1916 – Quebec, Montreal, Ottawa  
Nov. 9, 1916 – calls on Sir Wilfred & Lady Laurier  
Nov. 11, 1916 – Meets with Lieutenant General Sam Hughes, Ottawa to Toronto, reunited with Clara 10 PM  
Nov. 12, 1916 – Toronto to London  
Nov. 13, 1916 – London to Petrolia, reception at Town Hall, reunion with sons  
Nov. 17, 1916 – to London & back  
Nov. 25, 1916 – to London & back  
Dec. 13, 1916 – to Chicago with Clara  
Dec. 16, 1916 – to Petrolia with Clara

## Canadian Corps Notes

In WWI Canadians fought in four divisions, each composed of three brigades that in turn were composed of four battalions ([The Canadian Military Heritage Project](#)).

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division</b> (sailed from Canada Oct. 3, 1914)	1 <sup>st</sup> Brigade	1 <sup>st</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Western Ontario Batt <sup>n</sup> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Eastern Ontario Batt <sup>n</sup> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Toronto Regiment 4 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup>	
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Brigade	5 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Western Canadian Cavalry 7 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – 1 <sup>st</sup> British Columbia Regiment 8 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – The Black Devils/90 <sup>th</sup> Winnipeg Rifles 10 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – 10 <sup>th</sup> Canadians	
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Brigade	13 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Royal Highlanders of Canada 14 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Royal Montreal Regiment 15 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – 48 <sup>th</sup> Highlanders of Canada 16 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Canadian Scottish	
	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division</b> (formed 25 May, 1914, joined 1 <sup>st</sup> Division in France Sept. 1915, forming Canadian Corps)	4 <sup>th</sup> Brigade	<b>18<sup>th</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup> – Western Ontario Regiment</b> 19 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> 20 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – 1 <sup>st</sup> Central Ontario Regiment 21 <sup>st</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup>
		5 <sup>th</sup> Brigade	22 <sup>nd</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Canadiens Francais 24 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Victoria Rifles 25 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Nova Scotia 26 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – New Brunswick Batt <sup>n</sup>
		6 <sup>th</sup> Brigade	27 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – City of Winnipeg Regiment 28 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – North West Regiment 29 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Tobin's Tigers/Vancouver Regiment 31 <sup>st</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Alberta Regiment
	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division</b> (joined Canadian Corps June 1916)	7 <sup>th</sup> Brigade	Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry 42 <sup>nd</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Royal Highlanders of Canada 49 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Edmonton
		8 <sup>th</sup> Brigade	1 <sup>st</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles 2 <sup>nd</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles 4 <sup>th</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles 5 <sup>th</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles
		9 <sup>th</sup> Brigade	43 <sup>rd</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Cameron Highlanders 52 <sup>nd</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – New Ontario Regiment 58 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> 116 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Ontario County Infantry
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division</b> (joined Canadian Corps Oct. 1916)	10 <sup>th</sup> Brigade	44 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> 46 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – South Saskatchewan 47 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> 50 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Calgary Regiment	
	11 <sup>th</sup> Brigade	54 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Kootenay 75 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> 87 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Canadian Grenadier Guards 102 <sup>nd</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – North British Columbians	
	12 <sup>th</sup> Brigade	38 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Royal Ottawa 72 <sup>nd</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Seaforth Highlanders 78 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Winnipeg Grenadiers 85 <sup>th</sup> Batt <sup>n</sup> – Nova Scotia Highlanders	

**5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division** (authorized to form from Canadian units already in England, but broken up to reinforce Canadian Corps in the field)