

LETTERS
OF
Private James Blackwood
DIED OF WOUNDS IN FRANCE
DECEMBER 2nd, 1916.

AGED 20.

2

3

PREFATORY NOTE BY MR. PURVES,
C. of E. Grammar School, North Sydney.

The following letters, now printed as a remembrance for his friends, have been chosen from a number written by James Blackwood, beginning with his departure from Sydney early in January, 1916, with the 12th Reinforcements of the 2nd Battalion, continuing through the voyage to Egypt, camp life at Cairo and Heliopolis, his first period of service in France, his hospital and convalescent leave in England and Scotland, and his final return to the fighting line in November of the same year. He was born on July 6, 1896, and after some time in Miss McCredie's school at Glebe Point he entered the Sydney Church of England Grammar School in 1907, leaving at the end of 1914, as Senior Prefect and Brian Pockley Memorial Prizeman. He won the medals for Latin both in the Junior and Senior public examinations, and gave every promise of a brilliant University career. He rowed for the school at the G.P.S. Regatta, and represented it in the mile race at the Combined G.P.S. Sports. His ideal of loyalty was to give the school his best in work and sport, and in his daily walks and ways. He entered the Sydney University in March, 1915, only to go into camp in the following September. From the time of his embarkation these letters tell his story until just three weeks before he fell in action on December 2, 1916. The last letter here printed has an inner meaning for us, who know that he entered into the great Peace with the same "steady hope and trust" with which he meant to enter his second year of warfare, and he has indeed had "the infinite pleasure of seeing with his own eyes the land of his Fathers." As the visitor enters the main school gates he notices on the wall an inscription on white marble recording that the Science Laboratories are a memorial to James Blackwood "sometime Senior Prefect of the school, a soldier of the Empire who fell in the Great War," and afterwards inside the Chapel he will find a bronze tablet ending with the words "Christi fidelis Miles et Famulus usque ad Vitæ Exitum."

Troopship A7,

off Gabo Island (about 2 p.m.),

January 8th, 1916.

Dear Mother and Father,—

You may take the Gabo Island part as hearsay if you like. Anyhow, people say so. It certainly seems reasonable enough, as we are near a low island, scrubby and rocky, in direct contrast with the general contour of the coast. Near it lies a long, low, sandy spit, which is probably Cape Howe. We passed Green Cape and Eden about 12.30 p.m.

Up to the present the weather has been most equable and pleasant. To see a sick person has been quite a rarity, and it should still continue being a rarity if the wind and waves are so extremely nice tempered. After I left you on Thursday evening I returned to the Dog Pavilion, where we soon had another muster roll-call. For a wonder, after this, there was absolute quietness till the next muster roll-call at about 3.45 a.m. Consequently we had the chance, and very thankfully took it, of having a good sound four hours' sleep or whereabouts. A little after five o'clock the procession started for the wharf, with Colonel Jobson leading in front, on horseback. Many of the boys were accompanied by their friends and relatives, male, and of course, female, "at five o'clock in the morning." As I told you, the chap in front of me, like the Pirate King, had a girl on each arm. They were decidedly cheerful, but thank goodness I had nobody. These people do prolong the agony, don't they? At the gate, just by chance, I saw Phil Dixon, who was Corporal of the Guard (that is, the Showground Guard). I called out to him and he waved back. The march down through Paddington and Darlinghurst was in every way a triumph to our men; in fact, the whole was a most successful embarkation. The behaviour was quite unexceptionable in every case. Neither was the march a straggling rabble of men in khaki, mixed up with civilians in a huddled and disgruntled mass. There was order and the line was maintained, even when a fellow had, as I said before, a "tabby cat" upon each arm. As we entered the wharves policemen were stationed, and the relatives and camp followers spontaneously disengaged. At this point I saw Gertie, and again she thrust something into my hand—this time a little flag

with the company colours. Before we embarked I scribbled four short notes—to Herk, McBurney, Auntie and you. I am glad yours was the tidiest of the batch. These, with a fifth, written to Mr. Walmsley, I handed, stamped, to Lieut. Molesworth at different periods while we were waiting on the wharf, and later when we had embarked. Now, I am sorry I didn't write also to Boyd, who could have given my address to Edgar Johnson and Edwards. On embarkation we immediately settled down into our quarters, where the troops sang "For he's a jolly good fellow" very loudly and lustily in honour of Colonel Jobson. He seemed greatly moved, and was rather husky as he started the mob on to "Auld Lang Syne." I sang it clasping hands with a red-haired, fiery-cheeked Scot, Sandy Black by name, who sits at this table (we have mess tables, mind; my number is G7). Things on this march and embarkation were as comfortable as could be hoped, considering the abominable moist heat of the morning. The little bag round my compass was simply dripping. Oh Lord! what heat! When the gangways were raised the populace were allowed to swarm alongside the steamer. Such crowds and crowds of women! Such waving of flags and desperate enthusiasm and excitement! I did not see anyone at all whom I knew, but it was just as well. Gertie must have been in a state of physical and mental collapse. The gamut of excitement people can pass through in such a circumstance as this is enormous—in some cases. We sheered off at, I suppose, 8 a.m. Then, in mid-stream, breakfast was served. Space is very limited in our quarters—300 men all squeezed into a space about as big as the ground floor of our house. I sit by Black, and Blackburn is my vis-a-vis—we ought to be named the "All Blacks." Next to me there is a chap from Muswellbrook called George Gill. He is a very decent chap. Of Hookie and Alec Clark I see very little; they are in a sergeant's quarters, a good deal for'ard, while we are in the stern. Cyril Lynch I see occasionally, and up to now he seems A1. But, to get back to the departure. While we lay in the harbour it was discovered that our mob were providing a guard. As soon as I was paid 30/- I was on this. At different places on the ship's side I had a very good view of all Sydney's landmarks. Launches were occasionally passing round with people to see the boys. I should have liked to have seen someone I knew, but there was not much to be gained. Stobo's mother was talking to him off another steamer. All the crowded Manly steamers carried wavers of handkerchiefs, as you will probably have seen for your-

self. You must have waved, too. During the afternoon it grew duller, and I still stared round at the familiar sky-line. St. Mary's was like a sweet and well-remembered old friend, so to speak, and I also took stock of new and strange faces and round protuberances on top of the new "Daily Telegraph" offices and other tall buildings, but recently erected. On the northern shore the school tower was a very distinct and familiar landmark. About 5 o'clock a military captain on the hurricane deck told me "Will be off soon." I didn't quite grasp it, for I had expected we might remain till the Saturday morning and we would get the Saturday papers. (Please post some Saturday papers to my Egypt address; I don't think the postage is expensive and I'm awfully fond of them—they must be about the best in the world.) So, we were off, as I said. The great inert mass of the "Medic" moved in its slumber like a giant uneasy with the mosquitoes (mixed! but you understand). We ran along very gently—just a very easy, quiet motion. The little launches pursued the big liner in a body, and it was while I was watching the frantically excited people on board them that I suddenly looked back up towards the school tower—the mark of my second home, when all is said and done—and discovered, with a sharp twinge of regret, that it was already hidden by Bradley's Head. I ran forward on the deck a few paces but it was no use! Many times I looked back—it was no use!

Meanwhile some of the launches were painful to watch, with the weeping women. They were few, but one poor creature caught my notice as she stood on the bow of a launch in abject despair. A man held her by the waist as she stretched one hand towards the steamer, and whoever it was on board, almost as if she was straining to grasp the hand of the departing friend. In other cases young girls collapsed on the shoulders of older and stronger companions. It was all pretty depressing, although there were outbursts of wild enthusiasm both on our steamer and the launches. Soon enough we had caught on the "Captain Cook"—most appropriate name, isn't it?—and were out at the Heads. My thoughts and eyes turned Manlywards at the last. The water was quite mild, though there was a light wind. Landwards, we say the Lighthouse, the Gap and the tall cliffs from our perspective, not so steep now. Tea was served and then I spent some time kneeling on a table and looking out of a port-hole. The little strips of beach stood out clearly enough—Bondi, and then familiar Coogee, while the light was good enough

to notice the tall pine trees in the latter place. It did not take long to pass by Maroubra, Long Bay, and finally distinguish the headlands of Botany, Banks and Solander, named after the scientists or naturalists (which?) in Cook's "Endeavour." Round the next Cape the long white stretch of Cronulla loomed out in the distance, and reminded me instantly and painfully of Herk and the long happy days we have all spent there. Further along the coast, past Port Hacking, we could see the misty outline of higher land in the direction of Illawarra. But the land had no longer such a personal interest for me, so I went below. Here the men were hooking up their hammocks. I got hold of one and took it up on the aft deck, where George Gill and Cyril were also judging it expedient to station themselves. About 8.30 I made along for the guard room, where I slept very peacefully until 3.30 a.m., when the Corporal, who ought really to have awakened me before (he was asleep late himself), roused us to go on guard. The light was just beginning to break—a great mass of cloud lay on the eastern horizon; it was clear overhead, while towards the west, where I knew lay Sunny New South Wales, there was merely open sea. This was disappointing. After being on guard for two hours or so I went back for another quiet snooze, which, however, did not last long. About two or three hours after sunrise we began to see the land again. It was mountainous; a pale, gray haze dimly revealed the great, long, glorious ranges stretching along for miles and miles on the horizon. Beneath would be the low lines of lesser hills, and on the line of the azure deep, clean little stretches of white sandy beach, very homely and pleasant to see. So all day we have been bowling very quietly and gently along. Green Cape people pointed out to me—a long, low head with white lighthouse and a little red-topped house. That must have been about Eden, where Boyd lives. As I told you at the beginning, we passed Gabo about 2 o'clock, and must now be off the Victorian coast. I have just now been up on deck for a minute. The coast is still quite close, the scenery has as its main charm the beauty of endless continuity. These great stretches of level heights, now and then curving up to some stately and beautiful crest, are really very attractive.

(An interval here for tea.)

There is very little more which seems to me worth telling. The food is fair to moderate, with nothing to complain about beyond the fact, which is known about all ships' food, namely, that certain things

have less taste and certain others more than they ought. Butter is a ration.

This letter will be censored, and I guarantee the man who does it will have a fair run for his money. I will now give certain facts about the ship and the men which, if they are erased or blotted you can let me know about in your first letter to me. This letter, needless to say, will be eagerly awaited by me. Adelaide will be the first place of call; I very much doubt if we will be allowed to go ashore; anyway one can always hope.

The number of troops on the "Medic" at present is about 900. Water arrangements are restricted. I felt very dirty going about unwashed and unshaven the greater part of Friday and Saturday. It was rather my own fault, though, even if on guard. Everyone seems quite happy and contented on board.

Please try and get people to write to me—people, as I said before, who are really interested, if possible. But certainly, I can't get too many letters. In time to come it will be what we soldiers will live on—that prospect of letters from Australia. The conveniences for keeping luggage on board are almost negligible; I already feel I have a whole heap too much.

Here I will close on the fervent hope that you are all well and enjoying Narrabeen. Remember me to the McCredies, the Brodziaks, and all the other folks you meet. At present I am quite well and contented. So long! Amen!

JIM.

P.S.—To-morrow I will try and write to Auntie.

Colombo,
Ceylon,

On board ship,

January 30, 1916.

Dear Mother and Father,—

You will no doubt be rather disgusted by the dirty, incoherent, and execrably written epistles I have been trying to get away to you yesterday. One letter I sent to Auntie was a model of untidiness. Still, I always have a feeling of exultation if I manage to get a letter away to Australia, even if it is under the most uncertain conditions. Yesterday, for instance, while I was on guard in the early morning, I had a spasm of energy and wrote a desperate, short letter on a diary leaf. This I entrusted to an A.M.C. man who was going ashore (though I had no envelope) along with your address, and a penny for a stamp. At that time we did not know we would get off, so it was a spasm of desperation. When I discovered we were to go off, I wrote the ineffectual note above mentioned to Auntie. The next episode in my correspondence occurred in Colombo when we got to the barracks. (I will tell you afterwards how we got there.) Here we discovered a native selling view books and postcards. I bought some of the latter, but he was very tight on stamps, having few. But "hope springs eternal in the human breast," and I managed to get three red 6 cent. (1d.) stamps. These I put on two cards—one to you and one to Mary—and the letter to Auntie. So there are my actual Colombo letters—few enough, for I had quite a number of post cards bought.

On Friday evening, January 28, about six o'clock, we sighted the light on Point de Galles, the southernmost cape of Ceylon. We must have cast anchor in the harbour here about midnight or possibly a little later. As I told you there did not seem to be much chance of going off, but nearly everybody took the precaution of getting ready—I followed suit. Then it was announced that the first and second platoons were to go off that afternoon, and the third and fourth on the next day. So at 2 o'clock I went off with No. 1 platoon and saw my first conscious sight of the East. From the harbour the skyline had not seemed very Oriental in spite of the palms and one or two towers

which hinted at the minaret in shape. But when we got ashore (in a flotilla of flat barges) the East was there at our very feet. The fact that here was a new atmosphere impressed itself on me by a peculiar sight. It was a white man running after some delinquent native and belabouring him with a stick, and when he stopped, a native overseer took on the job. Honestly, I was disgusted. I thought that by some strange freak of nature I had landed in slave-ridden America of seventy years ago, and at the same time I recollect that this Ceylon was a British colony, where there were no slaves. Afterwards, when we were walking through the streets—straight up by the tramline, past the G.O.H., round by the Post Office and Government House(?), and then near a beach—the crowd of sponging, thieving natives kept jostling near our ranks with their wares. They certainly had to be kept at a distance, but I did not expect to see a policeman, just a native himself, walloping the little nippers with another huge stick!

I suppose you will smile at my sentiments, and I suppose the people in administration know what they are about, but I did not like it.

Colombo struck me as both charming and repulsive, enchanting and horrible! Everyone is either high class or low class, it seems to me. The high class ride round in rickshaws, carriages, or motors, while the low class cringe or frolic in the dirt or else try to do you in bargaining for worthless trifles. Yet what a kaleidoscopic scene meets the eye! All the different coloured skirts on the men, the neat little oxen in the equally quaint and neat little carts; the smart Indian troops in blue uniform and flat forage caps or else in all the dignity of khaki and a towering turban; the black, hovering crows, Eastern crows, which remind one of the Bible and Aesop; these and a thousand other sights held and entranced me as nothing I have yet seen on the voyage. Even the English buildings—banks, Government offices, European shops and one thing and another—seemed to partake of the pretentious grandeur and ostentation of the East. And even then I had a vague idea it might be all sorts of stage scenery, and if you poked it with a stick would give way and show a rent. In the streets, inhabited more by the natives, I was amused by the sight of the barber squatting on the ground and bending over the customer with his razor, while the latter meekly offered his head. We did not see many women—at least I don't think we saw many, for such a number of the skirted gentlemen would have been ladies in my mind if they

had not happened to wear a neat moustache. The "coiffure" on many of these was quite like that of some women I have seen with a bun at the back, though there was the extra adornment in their case of a semi-circular comb. Their capacity for resisting the sun surprised me, as it was rare to see one with a protective umbrella, and then it was generally an old man. The number of Europeans I saw was small. Honestly, it was quite refreshing to see one or two of the English women with complexions as yet unsubdued by the climate. But their male relatives generally struck me as chalky and sick looking. However, the whole atmosphere of the place was enough to make Hookey remark that he would not mind living here if he had a good position. When we had walked round the streets we were taken into the Barracks, where we got a drink at the canteen. There was lemonade and local ale, so I had lemonade. Here, too, we bought fruit, and I made the "faux pas" I mentioned to you on the post card, in connection with the yellow fruit. (They were young cocoanut, I believe.) However, we got little bananas and small pineapples, which were very acceptable.

In connection with my post card and business here, I forgot to say that I entrusted the letters I wrote to a little English boy, who was decently dressed and wore a small helmet. It is neck or nothing in all this sort of posting, but I think he was pretty reliable. At any rate an awful lot of the men gave them to him. George Gill, at my request, made the error, for which I felt in part responsible, of giving a little native urchin 6d. to buy stamps! A fat lot of stamps we saw, you may imagine! It is when this sort of thing happens that I have a sneaking idea the policemen are a right institution. I would not have suggested it to George Gill had we not been in the ranks and I desperately desired to send as many post cards as possible. In the end, as I told you, I only sent two—one to you and one to Mary. Appear the other children if they complain of my negligence, but I am even now trying to get two cards sent off the ship for them by a Malay harbour policeman, who says he will call back for them about 5 o'clock (you must understand I am writing this on Sunday afternoon). (He has come and taken three cards of mine and three of George Gill's—George gives him a bob.) This Malay man reminds me of the fact that there must be a great variety of caste differences here also (as in India, I mean). There will be Cingalese and the different Hindu classes. Buddhists and Mohammedans, as well as Malays and men from the Straits Settlements. On the way back to the wharf, where

we embarked again in our flotilla, I saw Queen Victoria's statue in Government House(?) grounds. I cannot tell whether there is a deliberate design in this monument to impress the native imagination especially or not, but anyway, it is the most impressive statue of the Queen I have ever seen. She sits there on a throne of white marble in resplendent flowing robes of the same material, while the head is surmounted with the gorgeous Imperial Crown she must have worn in her role of Empress of India.

Our voyage back to the steamer was bumpy. I sat in the bottom of our flat tub and the motion very nearly made me sick for some inexplicable reason. Perhaps it was just a general reaction after all the fruit and stuff I had imbibed during the afternoon.

You might have thought I would have had enough of it with yesterday's trip in the hot afternoon sunlight, but not a bit of it. This morning numbers three and four platoons were scheduled to go ashore, but a good many chaps determined to make an attempt at getting off who had been yesterday. Needless to say, your son was among them. Some were fortunate enough to slip through; some were unfortunate enough to be stopped at the gangway. I was in the first class, and very pleased, too! The same flotilla business happened as yesterday, but our time ashore was curtailed and not very satisfactory. They took us now through the native quarters, and in some places the stench was horrible. The natives ran along side us—some with papers, others with little miserable bunches of sugar bananas, demanding 3d. for the things. One beggar sold one bottle of soda water to us for six coppers, and then wanted us to give the bottle back to him. Just to spite the swindler I stuck to the thing and threw it into the water when we came back. The native streets to me were very squalid; no one seemed to be prosperous. The dirt of the place was at times disgusting and fowls stalked about here and there at random. Deformity, when you see it, is very real and revolting, though I have only seen one bad case, a child, up at the Barracks.

Some of our men are absolutely senseless in their treatment of the native hawkers and others they meet. To my mind there is not so much harm done when they button on to odd pieces of fruit, Kitchener fashion, but one chap this morning even had the audacity to seize a fowl out of a man's basket. The fellow, who was carrying other things as well, ran after the soldier, who then threw the bird, with its legs tied, some distance along the road on the other side of

the column. There was no scene, as I for the moment feared, and I fancy the men got the bird; but it shows foolhardiness, and such things should be discouraged. (I hear a man saying Colombo is too European. "Phew"! and I've been talking about the Orient.)

We were taken back to the boat fairly soon afterwards and most of the boys did not seem pleased, as we had not been allowed to stop anywhere for a drink or anything. Such is life! But I had been off two days and I was quite satisfied.

I saw Gertie's nephew at the Barracks. He is a corporal—I did not know. This is a great port, is it not? Oh! the shipping! This morning we saw a French liner, the "Athos" (reminiscent of Dumas Pere) just outside. She came in soon afterwards and, following her, a transport going out to Australia. This was the "Anchises" or, rather, A68. Boats seem to be here of every nationality under the sun—British, French, Dutch, American, Norwegian, Japanese—and hundreds of smaller craft, some of which struck me as resembling Chinese junks in shape. The different boats the natives run in amuse me with their long, circular sweeps or their longer poles. Then in utter contrast to these you will see smart and dapper motor boats.

The usual crowds have been swarming over the boat since we arrived. Small boys are shameless in demanding alms with offhand salaams, and older men give one or two small coins for a piece of silver worth often about three times their currency. There have been the fortune tellers—Hookey, Cyril and George Gill had them. To George they told the ages of his father and mother quite accurately. The men are sensible enough to keep the dark gentlemen carefully out of our quarters or things would be sure to disappear with extraordinary quickness.

Of the things the men bought or picked up, none impressed me remarkably. This poor silk type of scarf in raw cerise or blue tint does not please me. One boy got this sort of thing in black, but most of the stuff displayed in the streets must be pretty worthless. Trumpery jewellery was bought, and in one or two cases miniature elephants. The only thing I saw after my heart at all was a rug with a rather fine red ground. However, the colour was rather raw and inclined to crimson-lake, whereas I prefer the more lurid brick reds or scarlets. Of course, I had no opportunities of seeing any of the stalls. If I had, no doubt they might have cheated me. You want to be

wise as serpents and harmless (to all appearances) as doves, in these Eastern places, I can see!

The port is beautiful here at night, but it is more the lights of the big shipping. No ferries ply about as in Port Jackson.

No doubt you are unconsciously bored now by my garrulity. You will have seen this for yourself, I suppose, but still, I have felt like writing, and this is not a letter but a bulletin. So if I may be permitted to put it neatly and biblically, "Freely ye have received, freely give." I hunger for news of you all. Remember my former injunctions in this respect. Perhaps I will have letters awaiting me in Egypt, where I will post this. At least, I hope I may succeed in keeping it so long as that, for a letter not suddenly posted may often get lost pretty easily. How are you all? Remember me to the Macreadys and all the folks! We have seen little cable news here. Montenegro is a catastrophe.

I will write next in Egypt.

JIM.

Near Suez,

February 12th, 1916.

Dear Mother,—

Since the letter I wrote you via censor, the ship has been steadily pursuing its course, and now, five weeks after leaving Weolloomooloo, we have reached our destination. Yesterday afternoon, coming up the Gulf, I wrote a letter so very depressing and doleful that I thought better, tore it up in little fragments, and cast it upon the waters! This was foolish in a way, for I was having a tentative shot at describing the scenery, and now I will have to try again; but what is the good of letting loose any odd stock of low spirits I may have on you? None whatever! Besides, no one has a right to expect sympathy for a complaint sprung from pure moodiness and sloth. The root of the matter, if you are curious, was the rotten lack of resource, initiative and industry I have so far displayed in the army at the mature age of 19. What a confounded drone I must be!

Well, I suppose those fragments on the waters of the Gulf of Suez might as well not have fluttered there, but you're not to worry, as my former agony letters from school in the latter half of 1914 must have been pure poison to receive. "The sun will shine, although the sky's a grey one, etc."

Sunday evening last we perceived a light, and were told it shone on Perim. This, if my geography be correct, is practically the entrance to the Red Sea, the Babelmandeb or Gate of Tears. On the African side some other travelled one announced the appearance of Cape Gardafui. The next objects we saw were a number of very weather-beaten, desolate and arid islands, dubbed immediately the twelve Apostles. On "Matthew" there was a lighthouse, one of the most God-forsaken places you can possibly imagine, i.e., the island; it was steep, rugged, seemed in places brick colour, in places lava black, and the "tout ensemble" made it a perfectly ideal "abomination of desolation."

These islands occurred about Wednesday, and yesterday (Friday, and George's birthday) we got into the Gulf of Suez. Here was Asia on our starboard and Africa on our port sides, and the two continents seemed almost to frown at one another, equally lofty and precipitous. On the Asiatic side the colour spectacle at once entranced and amazed me. Here were hues and tints, which, had I seen painted, would have called forth my incredulity. In the foreground was the fair, calm sea, intensely blue; in the lower parts of the mainland lay vast drifts of sand, sloping up from the water, till they ceased in the deep fissures of the everlasting hills; while the sky formed a background which, under the influence of the haze-pink mountains, and in contrast with them, showed a pale green satin! It was all very marvellous to me, though I know you will have seen it three times before; and the serrated sky-line was still another surprise. Some people said Sinai could be seen at one point, but it was not pointed out to yours truly, who thought the wonderful medley of rose-pink, blue and satin green more Alpine than Asiatic. At night we retired pretty early. In a determined effort to get away from the rather riotous mob downstairs I roosted with some others to a rooftop away stern. Here, on the flat, I laid a double bed with Cyril, and in spite of clothes, cardigan coat, overall and four blankets, with balaclavas in both cases, neither myself nor bedmates were very warm. Oh, I can see it being very cold in camp here! Another reason for going up there was to get a decent sleep and husband our strength for the morrow, which is now the to-day. But it is 3.10 in the afternoon, and I don't believe we will be ashore till Monday. About five to one this morning Cyril woke me as we steamed through scarlet buoy-lights into this port. It was all very still and cold, with the different harbour lights and the silent sheen of a setting moon casting a pretty glamour on the water. The place where we have cast anchor is near the steep, red, African hills, whence to the west a grand sweep of chrome-coloured sand leads down to the town of Suez. There are several transports here besides us, and the Orient "Osterley," which left Sydney January 15th, is expected to arrive very soon with 300 Liverpool men—Kingel expected to be amongst them.

Port Said,

Egypt, Feb. 14th, 1916.

Ours has been the good fortune to come through the Canal, as you will see from the above. Yesterday morning, just as the chaplain was in the middle of his service, we began to move from our anchorage and, passing by three men-o'-war, the "Minerva," "Jupiter" and "Glory," entered the Suez. The sun was hot, but there was a beautiful cool breeze, and o' nights this beautiful cool breeze emphasises its nature to such an extent that it becomes positively frigid. All the way along were marks of preparation against attack. Still, it seems to me that unless the Turco-Germans could muster a huge force the Anglo-Indian-Egyptians would have much the better end of the stick. The Canal banks, with judicious cutting, tunnelling and entrenchment, appear very strong and safe fortifications. You will remember, I suppose, the little "gures"—"Gure du Devoissoi," "Gure de Toussoum," "Gure de Kabret," etc.—which, in conjunction with an odd warship or monitor bearing the tricolour, recall the fact that our French allies possess a certain say in the Canal. (By the way, the front entrances of these "gures" possess little rounded barricades of sandbags.) Another tie with France; in fact the "raison d'être" of the whole canal work, caught my notice in a book of French postcards Hookey bought, giving, among views of Port Said, two views of the statue of Ferdinand de Lesseps.

After passing a small lake we came to a place where Scotch soldiers were bathing "au naturel" in the waters. Some of them made a dash for "breeks" or "trews," inquiring anxiously whether we had any "leddies" aboard. Further on we came to Australians, whom we questioned anxiously and often as to where the 2nd Battalion or 1st Australian Infantry Brigade were stationed, but got little satisfaction for our pains. (I forgot to say that all along the bank signallers would appear and semaphore various questions which, in spite of orders to the contrary, our men answered whiles and added a batch of questions with interest. One man on a housetop near Suez made with his flags "R.U.A.I.F.?" Of course he got no reply, being too far off; then he sent "Good luck" and stopped.)

There were rumours that the 1st Infantry Brigade was still in England, but that its reinforcements were at Tel-el-Kebir. Still, we would have been taken off at Ismailia, perhaps, if the latter place should have been our destination. Now we are bound apparently for Alexandria, where I conjecture we will disembark and travel thence to some camp near Cairo. The England idea is too nebulous, though of course our "Pommy" comrades work it for all it's worth. Anyway we will be in the Mediterranean for about nine miles going to Alexandria. Last evening I sat up on one of the washhouse roofs with some of the fellows, and we watched the sandy banks of the land till the cold drove us down. All the way along there were considerable camps. We would be accosted now and then by a kindly English burr, tell our identity, and learn the men who hailed us were Lancashire, Yorkshire or Manchester men. To-day we lie out in the stream at Port Said. It is a full and cramped harbour to my mind. Four Red Cross ships, the "Gloucester Castle," "Dover Castle," "Ebani" and "Nevasa" are lying near us, and this morning a pinnace passed carrying eight Red Cross women and only one (!) khaki-clad officer. They were very neat, with sober, decent nursery attire, yet rather smart withal in brown gloves. "Who wouldn't be wounded?" cried someone. Native vendors are forbidden alongside; we are not to talk to them, and if they attach ropes to the side are to cut them, yet they are getting much (supposed) Egyptian cast on them, such as "Impshee" (get out), etc., etc.

Aerodrome Camp,

near Cairo, Egypt,

February 17th, 1916.

Here ends our first Egyptian itinerary! It has been quite varied, and we have had the good fortune to see the three Egyptian ports, i.e., Suez, Port Said and Alexandria. On Tuesday morning last we moved out of Port Said. We had coaled all day, and there had been the usual trafficking with the natives over the side, though all such had been officially forbidden. I bought Turkish delight and postcards. Of the latter I got two ashore at Port Said (one to George, one to

McBurney). Maybe they will go quicker, but I doubt it. The tawdry nature of the embroidered cloth was very evident. There were crude representations of a kangaroo (?) and emu facing one another; alas the device! The kangaroo might have been anything from a spavined horse to an iguana!

All the time before leaving Port Said there was a vague idea we might, after all, go on to England, but about 6.30 p.m. on Tuesday we steamed past a great six funnelled French warboat (singing the Marseillaise as a compliment) and made for the S.W., in which direction we knew lay Alexandria. This harbour we reached about 9.30 in the morning, but did not berth for some time. Many hospital (Red Cross) ships were lying in behind the long breakwaters of stone and concrete which constitute actually the harbour. During the afternoon we were amused by the comedy of Egyptian life, mainly consisting here of the beggars—the eternal beggars of the East. One old negress was as good as a moving picture. She begged, dodged around the boxes piled on the land, and at the same time adroitly balanced an infant on her shoulders. All seemed to argue with the Egyptian policemen as with an equal.

About 12 midnight on Wednesday we got into a train and arrived at Zeitoun Station about 6.30. The night passed not so badly, however, and there was a smart cold march to the camp.

Cairo,

February 28th, 1916.

Dear Mother and Father,—

I have just become suddenly aware of the fact that a mail for Australia closes to-morrow, and so I hasten to make some amends for my laziness in omitting to write sooner. The fact of the matter is that we are leading a very strenuous life, not as you might expect of soldiering, but of sightseeing. The Kasr-el-Nil Barracks is the most comfortable and lazy home I have ever had during my military life, and I don't expect anything like it again for a long while to come. We are not on the Cairo town Pickets (Motto: Hope for the best, prepare for the worst). Like the rest of our half company we do a guard business instead at the barracks, and every second day, with leave from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., manage to do a little sight-seeing in Cairo and the neighbourhood.

On Thursday last, with George Gill and the Queenslander I have mentioned to you before, Vance, I went to the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities. It is, of course, a world-famous collection; and in our hour and a half there we had a vast stream of the history, lore, customs and architecture of this wonderful and very ancient country, distilled into our eager ears from a guide, Ghattas George. He is a most plausible creature, but all good guides are that, and I did not grudge him the 15 piastres he charged—it was worth it! Incidentally, we taught him a new English word, "augury."

The carvings on the different "sarcophagi" are wonderful in the way they gave an idea of the owner's personality, and at the same time show the different things considered necessary for the spirit to carry on its journey into the afterworld. Ghattas George first explained to us one of a princess. It represents the lady herself in no less than four different attitudes, having her hair combed, taking her ease while the attendants fanned from behind; then, as well, there were carvings of joints of meat, jars of honey, a cow to provide milk, and other paraphernalia for the spirit's delectation. In connection with the dead and burial a new fact was conveyed to me about the scarab beetle. An image of this was always placed on the body above the seat of the heart, which had been removed prior to embalming, and in whose place it was necessary to provide a substitute. The substitute

was the scarab, symbol to the ancient Egyptians of immaculate conception—no one quite knew how the scarab came into existence; it was supposed to have come on its own volition.

At the far end of the entrance gallery we came across two huge colossi, representing King Ahenotaep (I think you spell him Ahennotepu and pronounce him A-hen-o-tah-ep) and his queen, Tia, with a little daughter on either side of the pair and one in the middle. This monarch (for whose unpronounceable name don't blame me) had an interesting history, duly detailed to us by the guide George. As a young man he went on a hunting expedition to Mesopotamia, where he met and married the princess Tia. Now the Egyptians, up to this time, had been worshippers of the different animal deities. They worshipped the bull, the cat, the crocodile and other animals; they even worshipped the Nile, the great stream upon which all the life of Egypt depends. But the Mesopotamians were sun worshippers, and the Queen's son afterwards instituted this as the national religion of the Egyptians the obelisk, monuments to the sun. By the way, with Queen Tia came her father and mother, for we saw their mummy cases afterwards upstairs, and they had about five or six cases apiece.

But the two most interesting things to me upstairs were the mummies (I mean the actual bodies) of two Pharaohs, and the room where Royal jewels and insignia, which have been found and preserved, are now beautifully laid out under glass cases. The mummies were Sety I. and his son, the immortal Ramases II. By the way, the features of Sety are absolutely like a finely cut bronze statue, and have earned for him a reputation for being the finest preserved mummy yet discovered. The features, too, are very pleasing, and have a fine, calm and majesty all their own.

By Ramases I cannot say I was similarly attracted. Perhaps the fact that he lived to close on one hundred may have something to do with the case, but the face struck me as abominably and inherently hard and cruel. Yet he was the greatest of these early monarchs, a very great warrior and strategist. Of his private life the guide remarked, with innocent but deep wickedness, that Ramases had 110 sons and 51 daughters. Not one of us three winked an

eyelid, but George must needs add, with disarming candour, "He was what you Australians call a 'doer'!" Of course we laughed.

In the Royal insignia room there were some wonderful and beautiful plaques, worn like the Jewish "wum and thummum" on the breast of the monarch. Some were richly wonderful in the fine work with which incidents were depicted in lapis lazuli and other more precious stones. Did you know that the matted hair of the Egyptians was only a wig put on for the purposes of worship? The head was shaven pretty clean under these for purposes of health. This fact was quite new to me.

In the Museum we met a few soldiers, like ourselves, bent on tourist work, but also some **modern** Egyptians. There were one or two of the upper class women, in company with one of their men. These ladies wore black costumes, often very elegant, in quite the modern style, but with a head dress rather like a Royal or a French widow. The front veil (the yashmak, is it not?) is quite white and practically transparent. Most of the lower class women wear black veils, and also the disfiguring attachment in front of their nose. Why should men be so very jealous about the adored one's beauty as to forbid even her nose being seen by the outside world? Why should all but him be debarred the pleasure of seeing a pretty nose? Perhaps it is only the women with ugly noses that wear this affair; but anyway, Mrs. Grundy and foolish convention are probably the greatest culprits. Many women you see without the disfiguring adjunct, and there are many pretty women in Cairo, but none so fine as the nurses and sisters of the Red Cross.

On Saturday morning we went out to the Pyramids. Our path lay just over the Kastr-el-Nil Bridge, beside our barracks, to the Island of Gheureh (about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles long and one across), and thence by another bridge to Egypt beyond the river. (By the way, did you know that in the ancient funeral the boat ceremony signified the passing of the soul from east to west, and its purification in the waters of the sacred Nile?) On the other side we hopped on a tram to Ghizeh, whence we caught another to the Pyramids. We obtained a guide, who was old, reverend and demanded 15 piastres for his fee. In the end I was rather sorry we gave him only 13 piastres, because he was not so bad, but we were very riled with camel drivers who insisted on being paid five piastres (a little over a shilling) for a

dreadfully short camel ride. The old guide took us to the Tomb of Numbers, leading us beneath the great Pyramid of Cheops. This place contained carvings and inscriptions to perpetuate the wealth and possessions of, I think, Cheops himself, or else it was one of his builders. Thence we went to the Sphinx (the natives call it the Sphinkis, and try to sell you rough little representations of it in granite—eschew them all), and, strange to say, I have the vaguest impression of this monument. It was originally an idol for worship, a kind of composite God, combining with the strength of an animal's body the intellect and mental vigour and perfection of man; and this blend, so George had told me at the museum, with the discreet mixture of flatterer and charlatan, is admirably typified in the modern Englishman!

The nose of the Sphinx was blown off by Bonaparate while he was in Egypt, to inspire a superstitious awe into the Egyptians. That's what they say, but I think Napoleon was jealous of this mysterious Sphinx and felt his nose was put out of joint by it, so determined to put its nose out of joint instead. Certainly Napoleon and the Sphinx do appear to have affinity! But the idol is nothing like as big as you expect it to be, and to me was really disappointing. The Temple of the Sphinx, into which you enter beneath the idol, charmed me far more effectually. It was beautiful with its great granite pillars and its huge blocks of granite in the wall, some of them as large in dimension as 66 ft. x 5 ft. x 3 ft. In one part there was an aperture in the wall placed for an image in such a manner that the very first rays of the morning sun would strike it.

From the Sphinx up to the Great Pyramid we had the camel ride I mentioned to you. Then we got another guide for the inside of the Great Pyramid. He was really the most satisfactory and comfortable and reasonable guide I have yet had in Egypt; but you can get on in many places without a guide where you go with a guide when you're a greenhorn. This was the most interesting part of the visit to me, the crawl into the Pyramid and up a great slanting gallery to the burial chamber, where the stone sarcophagus of Cheops still rests unto this day! All the rest of him and his outer coffins and his mummy wrappings and himself are they not gathered up and reverently placed in the British Museum at South Kensington, London? This chamber of the King is $225\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the earth, and thus exactly half way up inside. The guide, for a consideration, also

puts a flashlight of magnesium on to the walls at certain places. In this room there were the same immense blocks of granite which I described to you before.

Below the King's was the Queen's room, with an arched roof entirely built of six huge stones with three on each side. There is a place in this Pyramid where the tomb of Cheops' five daughters is to be found, but you have to reach it by means of rope. Vance thinks of having a try at it.

After dinner we—Vance and I—went up to the top of the Great Pyramid—451 feet in all its dimensions, took some 30 years to build, with 30,000 builders, and was erected something like 3,700 B.C. It was a good climb, but I was glad I did it. Here were we on the top of the greatest wonder of the Ancient World of Egypt, and beneath us the alternate squares in every shade of green and chocolate revealed to us the greatest wonder of the Modern World in Egypt—that of irrigation!

I am fearfully pressed for time now and must stop. But to-day I went with Vance on a shopping tour. We spent a whole hour and five minutes choosing things, and I ended up with some 340 piastres' worth of things, which we have just registered and which should go by this (to-morrow's) mail or next mail. So be prepared. I do hope these things reach you safe. There are two silk shawls—which I thought rather nice—one for you and one for Auntie, and a silk Maltese lace collar each for Mary and Betty. I am very little judge of stuffs and that, but I think these things are fairly nice. I hope you will think the same.

Good-bye, my dear; I hope you and father have weathered February safe, likewise all the kiddies. I am too late to write to Auntie this mail, but will write next. Got a parcel—a book—to-day from Billy Burke.

Your son,
JIM.

Kasr-el-Nil Barracks,
Cairo, Egypt,

February 29th, 1916.

Dear Auntie,—

This is Leap Year Day, as you will see, and I am writing to you here in the recreation room at about 8.15 p.m. My heart is overflowing with thankfulness for what I have received to-day. Fancy it! Eight letters from New South Wales. There were you and mother, Charlton and McBurney, George and Mary, Miss McCredie and Edgar Johnson. Oh! what a glorious time I have had with it all.

And now at night, after having done the Zoological Gardens at Ghizeh in the afternoon, I feel I have a great debt to you; a very great debt indeed. Last evening, at the Esbekiah Gardens, I finished a very hurried but still fairly voluminous note to mother, and now I feel I ought to try and make some recompense, no matter how poor, for all your goodness.

Never before in my life have I been in a place which is so literally crammed with the most interesting and varied material about which to write as this great and amazing and wonderful Egypt. I can speak to you about a hundred things, all new and marvellous to me—the ever changing life of the streets and cafes, the astonishing and most cosmopolitan blend of innumerable nations, tongues and peoples to be found in Cairo; and the glories of the ancient world to be found in such a storehouse as the Egyptian Museum of Antiquities, and such a tangible example as the great Pyramids of Cheops.

To mother I gave a fairly adequate description of all I could remember in the museum, and I got on to the Pyramids, but was very pressed for time. Now that I have it I am still very doubtful if I could give a description worthy of the colossal monument, of its great slanting gallery, its awesome King's burial vault 225 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet above the earth, and the whole tremendous pull it takes on your imagination.

We did the interior of the Pyramid very well in the morning, and after dinner Vance and I decided to climb the 451 feet or so to the top. Of course you know the actual peak has been taken off, and there is a square piece on top of a respectable size, with absolutely innumerable names and initials carved thereon. One is Edward, 1881,

the late King. The whole Pyramid must have presented an extraordinary appearance of brilliance and grandeur in its original covering of alabaster. However, all the alabaster was removed by a Sultan of some description, and employed in constructing the Mosque of Mohammed Ali up in the Citadel, which is near the high stone ridge to the N.E. of Cairo, and forms practically one of the boundaries of the city. I should like to see this place, as they say it is wonderful. However, you have to get a special permit.

But to return to the Great Pyramid. George Gill is inclined to be a giddy subject so he remained below while Vance and I did the passage to the top in about 20 minutes. You go up one of the corners and just follow the beaten track—quite simple!

Really it was the strangest possible sensation to see the midget forms of camels, donkeys, guides and soldiers when you looked back. However, it was much better and safer to look up to the top. On our arrival there we took a decent spell, and Vance did a bit of carving. He is very good with his hands, and in about 20 minutes had somehow after this fashion and fairly deep in the soft stone. Afterwards I did a bit of a scrawl underneath, "2nd Batt." (2 BATT.), and that was the end. So if ever you go to the Pyramid and get anyone to go up to the top for you ask them to look for J.B. under J.V. and 2nd Batt., for it's your nephew!

I don't know if I have told you about Vance. I know I had told mother, possibly without mentioning his name. He is a Queensland boy from Maryborough, who enlisted before he was 18, in his native State, without his parent's consent. They ordered for his withdrawal, so he came to Sydney and enlisted there under an assumed name. I knew him first in our company at Holdsworth, and this "Bennett" told me his story. He is just a little over 18 now, and a very fine chap. I forgot to say that he is now under his own name, and went home on final leave to Maryborough to his people.

A very funny thing occurred in Vance and me meeting another Queenslander, just at the foot of the Pyramid, namely, Kingel. With Kingel was an old Shore boy, Jeff. Walker, of the times of Cairns Anderson there. George Gill, Vance and I then went back to Cairo, and reached the city about 5 o'clock, going straight for tea to the Y.M.C.A. place in the Esbekiah Gardens.

Now, I meant to tell you all about the great expanse we saw from the top of the Pyramid; the wonderful fertility of the plain, due to this new system of irrigation, which covers the earth with a check-work carpet of rich chocolate soil and verdant growth; the views of Cairo and the Pyramids of Sakkarah in the distance; the 'birds'-eye view, or panorama, should I say, of the Mena Camp, now used, I think, only for Artillery and Light Horse; but I will go straight on to tell you about the Esbekiah Gardens. They are a public gardens, just in the middle of Cairo, and as far as I have seen, no natives go inside them. European foreigners may, but I think not the 'Gypsies. Here is a further enclosure, inside of which **only men in uniform** are allowed to pass, and the popularity of the place speaks for itself when I tell you there are soldiers **always** inside it. There are writing-tables (it is good to write here, for letters go through to Australia uncensored in Egypt), there is a skating rink, a stage for open-air entertainments, and also a kind of restaurant, open-air, too. This latter is run by the N.Z.V.S., the New Zealand Voluntary Sisters, an organisation which was brought here, set up, and financed entirely by its own people, I understand. A most admirable business it is, with prices well within every soldier's means. You get a cup of tea, coffee, or cocoa for half-a-piastre (about 1½d.), a sandwich, and at lunch-time pudding for one piastre each article (about 2½d.), and an enormous variety of good, wholesome cakes and pastry at half-a-piastre apiece. Naturally, when I go out with Vance and Gill we go here a great deal, and it has struck me that if there were women in Sydney as indefatigable and courageous as these New Zealand Sisters, they might start some such arrangement in one of our city parks, **only for soldiers**, and keep a certain percentage at least out of mischief and the pubs. In this restaurant arrangement, I forgot to say that you get your own things at the counter, and carry it to one of the little tables for yourself, thus doing away with the expense and trouble of having, French, Italian, or possibly native waiters. By the way, if you saw some of the things natives sell in the streets you would never want to have one of them prepare food for you. I saw, myself, some of these New Zealand ladies **making** the sandwiches on the premises, so it is really very "homey" and very nice to see the faces of your "ain folk." Is it not an admirable institution? And how is it that it takes New Zealanders to do a thing thoroughly? In the Gallipoli fighting, they say the men from New Zealand were a finer set of fighters than those of our Continent; perhaps the sterner climate and the less-enervated mixture

of the old country blood in New Zealand has something to do with it. But N.Z. is far enough from Egypt, isn't it so?

On Sunday evening I went to the Presbyterian Church, near the Abu-el-Ala Railway Crossing, on the way to the Boulac Bridge. It was a Scotch "meenister," and service began at 6 p.m. I slipped out of Barracks about 5.20, and found the little church quite by accident. One novelty to me was prayers for King George, the Sultan of this land, not Turkey, and (!!!) President Wilson. Ugh! I gave a very decisive mental dissent. It was a very full congregation, with khaki almost predominant, and we sang Kipling's Recessional Hymn. You know:—

"God of our fathers, who didst give
Dominion over palm and pine"

and "Lest we forget, lest we forget." I misquote, but you try and get hold of the piece and read it. I knew it before; it might be in the "Children's Encyclopaedia." Certainly, the words are both great and poetic, while the spirit behind them is admirable.

After kirk I took one or two wrong turns, and was soon totally lost. I admit I felt pretty shaky on it, "bushed" here in Cairo, amid dark streets. However, wherever I should go I determined to "swank" it in the middle of the street, though I had no set plan in my mind. Quite soon I met two Scotch soldiers, who told me the nearest way to the Kasr-el-Nil Barracks, and when I did get there, what should I do but go out again with Alec Clark in a gharry. People take these cabs an awful lot here, but it costs five piastres a time, which is a little over a shilling, so I do not intend to do any such travelling.

Cairo is built in the French fashion, with little squares, and innumerable small streets off them, like the spokes of a wheel. Hence, you cannot go down a main street, like George or Pitt or Castlereagh, in a tram; you take a gharry, or Shank's pony. But the tramway just around the city is amazingly cheap.

March 1st.—I had to stop this scrawl about 9.30 last evening, and to-night I have read it over again. It is very rough, but I would rather receive such notes myself than merely formal and fluent vapourings.

To return to the tramway system. Every soldier travels at half-fare in the cars, and it is possible here to have quite a fair ride for

two millunes (2d.). The electric railway, which is the speediest form of conveyance between Cairo and Heliopolis, only costs half-a-piastre second-class for soldiers, and one piastre first-class. For I must explain that this is anything but a democratic country, like N.S.W. There are two classes in the trams, while in first-class cars separate compartments are arranged for ladies. In some ways it is advantageous to travel first-class, if only to avoid the possible contamination of sitting near these very dirty Arabs and Egyptians. They are a dirty mob, and if you saw the filth of some of the villages, you would be positively disgusted.

The French element in the population is very pronounced here in Cairo. If ever in doubt about getting to a certain place, I find it always best to accost a Frenchman, in preference to even a 'Gypie' policeman. The French practically all speak excellent English, and if pushed, I could manage to make myself understood in their lingo, though it would be difficult to comprehend them in return. These French are fearfully spick and span—all the men neat and spotless and so smart; the women, especially the young ones, like walking and embodied fashion-plates. Each one seems to try to make the most of himself or herself; children are generally as perfectly got-up and tricked out as you can possibly imagine; even the stout and middle-aged seem to be quite as trim as is in human power. But you can have all these French ladies, some of whom, I suppose, are nice and some nasty, for even the plainest of Red Cross nurses! Some of these nurses are just lovely, with complexions sometimes as high as the red fringe on their capes. I have not seen Hookey's friends again, since the first night, but hope to do so yet. Twice have I been to the Abassia Infectious Diseases Hospital, but on both occasions Sister Lowe, who is matron, was out. I left a rather vague note on my last visit, but will go again. I know you will say I ought to go, though I never knew her very well. This Abassia place is quite close to Heliopolis, so I went up to the Aerodrome Camp P.O., first, to get a small parcel—a book from Billy Burke—before Vance and I took the tram down there on our last visit.

Both you and McBurney mention the N. M. or N. C. Cuthbert ill in hospital at Heliopolis; but Mac. said that in next day's paper he was reported "returned to duty." It is really surprising the number of people you bump up against quite accidentally. In the tram, going out to the Pyramids, I met a University Eng. II. fellow, Dick Howard,

who had rowed when I did that little bit of rowing down in your bay last year. Stobo I have seen sometimes—once at Aerodrome, and twice in one day at Cairo, first at the Esbekiah Gardens and then at the Post Office. This was when Vance and I were registering our two parcels. By the way, his cost seven piastres for registration and mine 12. I do hope Mother gets hers, and will feel wild if somebody snaps up those silk goods.

It was a peculiar business our buying these. We went into a fixed prices shop, near the Gardens, and I, personally, did not intend to buy a penny's worth. The first things they showed us were kimonos of Indian silk, with very tame silk embroideries, done here in Egypt. I was not charmed at all, neither was Vance. Then we went over and began to inspect their stock of shawls and scarfs. They were lovely, and, I thought, pretty reasonable. Perhaps I have been very foolish in buying these two shawls—one for mother, and one for you—because you have so many woollen articles. Anyway, I think the shawls were cheaper than you could possibly get them in Sydney. To me, these great, big, fine shawls were very desirable; I do hope you will like them; and I hope and trust more especially you will get them. With the shawls I bought two small silk Maltese lace collars—the larger for Mary, and the smaller for Miss Betty. The collars struck me as being rather nice also; but I don't know how your feminine instincts and mother's will receive them. Favourably, I trust; and again I hope you get them. They did them up for us into the tightest little parcels of quite small "book," which bounced, however, like india-rubber balls with the fine silk inside whenever you pressed them. I forgot to say, Vance bought a beautiful and very fine, white, net silk scarf, a small shawl (like mine, on a smaller scale), and a very pretty, little silk handkerchief. The shop people put sealing-wax on all the knots in the string, etc., and about eight o'clock at night we took and got the articles registered. But the peculiar and, I am forced to admit, unbusinesslike part of the transaction lay in the fact that we made no declarations of value, paid down our cash, and only received a small voucher in return. Well, there they are despatched, last Monday, February 28th, and I do hope you get them. I fancy I wrote the address just Beecroft, New South Wales; but I hope, with all my muddle-headedness, you will get them. The parcel is addressed to Mother, and contains all collars and shawls.

There were cigar-cases in the shop—of steel, I think, with metal

inlaid work in ancient Egyptian designs—one of which I should have liked to get for Father, but the “feloosh,” the sovereigns, piastres, or “disasters,” as the fellows call them, were wanting. The articles were £4, or 400 piastres, each. Really, the 100 piastres is a bit more than a pound English. They give you 97 piastres for it, and the shopman discounted accordingly on my Bank of England £5 note. Oh! it was really a great and wonderful purchasing—we were in the shop about one hour and a quarter! Yet Vance and I were as pleased as Punch, however.

I have bought nothing for Father or Master George as yet. I am rather uncertain about both, and uncertain, especially, about what to get. Also, the shekels flow away with snow-like fluidity. But tell them all not on **any** account to cable money, or listen to any cable for this commodity from me. I will get 50 piastres pay each ten days, and when my bolt is shot, will just go “cannily.”

Of all the things I have tasted here, what amazed me most was strawberries and cream in a French restaurant at 3 piastres. For the strawberries, I suppose we had to thank the Nile Irrigation. But the compound mixture in which the red berries were set must have been entirely French, I think. It was composed of whipped cream, white of egg along with icing sugar, and made a light and very rich froth. I am sure I will not be satisfied with strawberries any other way for the future, though I believe it was the stiff setting and not the fruit which pleased the palate. Forgive me this very childish (but natural) delight for rich delicacies.

Oranges are fairly cheap here—you can always get three fair ones for a piastre. Last night Vance bought some beautiful, immense ones at $\frac{1}{2}$ piastre each. They were really luscious.

In the barracks we are better fed than I have ever found it before in the military. There is an issue of a peculiar sort of butter (labelled pure Australian, but I hae ma doots); the jams are excellent; we have even had strawberry and fig, and mother will tell you how I love jam. In the stews there is a peculiar kind of native coarse turnip type which I can't cotton to. Still, we have boiled eggs quite frequently for breakfast, and on one occasion some very good fried fish. Of course, a barracks kitchen is an established affair. Here, I believe, one man cooks for about 1,500! Perhaps this shows my heart may be lower than you think; but, anyway, it is quite candid, and you may be interested. If in doubt, blame the enticements of strawberries

and cream which brought up this discussion at the commencement! Of course, we did not come out here on a tourist trip and soon will return to the hard tasks and training up at aerodrome, perhaps not without a sigh.

Cairo is a place of absorbing interest, but we came for the war, which appears as black as ever, though we get practically no news. Yesterday I saw about the sinking of the "Maloja," another terrible thing.

Do you know I read the news of the deaths of George Titheradge and George Musgrave in the "Bulletin," January 27, which I bought for 4½ pisastres (1 bob) (I had to buy it just before going with Vance to the silk shop). It is strange that these two well-known theatrical men should die in the one week. Both little George and you have mentioned it. Titheradge was a fine man, I think, but Musgrave's death must mark the end of a rather peculiar passage. I only remember seeing the latter once in the audience on the Sydney first night of the "Tales of Hoffman." George also told me of Rob Forsyth's death. This is an awful tragedy; it must be terrible for his poor mother. She was always such a placid-looking woman and simply gloried in her strong and healthy family. So they were; and then this unexpected catastrophe breaks upon a chap just on the dawn of a splendid manhood. The ways of God are unsearchable, but we believe they are right.

The first death of a man in our Company came to my ears this night. His name was Robert Dowle, and I have just looked in the little autograph book which Gertie gave me and re-read his name, number and address, which he inserted. The poor fellow was next to me at dinner on the day we were in Perth. I liked him very well, though was never intimate. On the day of our arrival at Alexandria, I found him up on the poop deck wrapped up in an overcoat and very miserable, hot and cold by turns. I gave him aconite out of my sachet for the feverishness, and the same day he lay for a little time in the ship's hospital, already dismantled, whence he was taken ashore on a stretcher to some land hospital in Alexandria. I was very nearly speaking to him as he was being carried away, but he was still lying very miserable with his hat over his eyes, and I did not like to stop the men carrying the stretcher. Naturally, I thought he would soon be well and back with us. But now we hear of his death, and I don't believe one of the Company was at the funeral. This is a sad case;

but he always had an unhealthy appearance, in spite of a strong, physical frame, and they say he was refused 7 times before the final acceptance. I think consumption must have been the trouble, with a bad cold or influenza intervening on the lungs. He came from Gleniffer, Bellinger River, N.S.W. Still, this is, so far, our only death, and I think the record a very good one.

I am becoming gloomy, though death should be no more a sad affair to speak about than birth. Our grief is sometimes at the root selfish in the passionate sorrow over the loss of a dear companion, friend or relative, because such a deep and pure pleasure has been suddenly plucked out of our life. But in all great and true friendship, when this vague selfishness is transformed into a deep and divine love, there come cases where he who remains suffers far more than he who goes. It is then we have such a well-nigh intolerable heart-burst as that of David over Absalom, or of Tennyson over Arthur Hallam. And I think the greater the soul and the finer the intellect, the more terrible and corroding the sorrow. Finally, it is most reassuring and comforting to think that every truly balanced mind, such as the mind of a Tennyson, must rise gloriously, rise from the black grief and regain that hopeful, courageous and sane optimism, which is indispensable to all the highest human life! With St. Paul then we may triumphantly cry, "Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh grave, where is thy victory?"

Thank you so much, once more, for your letters. You and mother give me the exact blend of news, advice and comfort, which makes it both such a hilarious and sober treat to receive the epistles from abroad. George and Mary sent me nice frank little notes this week, too. I can just see all you would be doing at Narrabeen.

I could write for ever on Egypt, but must stop now. This letter has taken me two nights, and I think goes close to one of Camby's. I sincerely trust I am more legible than her, though I could not be more interesting. I hope grandfather is keeping well; I also hope father got through February without being quite worn away to nothing—it is a very trying month for all who work hard and continuously in any walk of life. How are you yourself, and how do you get time to write me all you do? I hope you are well; I hope you get the shawl; and I hope you will like it. You may say it is for February 23.

Your nephew,

JIM.

Kasr-el-Nil Barracks,
Cairo,

March 5, 1916.

Dear Father and Mother,—

I take this opportunity of writing to you, to-day being Sunday. As we expect to go back up to aerodrome again to-morrow and leisure there is sure to be scanty, I will possibly not have another decent chance for some time, and so feel there is nothing safer than making good use of the present. This morning I went to the Presbyterian Church at the Abu-el-Ala Level Crossing for Service at 10.45. The minister was suddenly taken faint in the middle of the service and had to be carried out; but an army chaplain in the congregation almost immediately took his place. It is the first time that I have ever been present at such an occurrence, and the whole thing was rather disturbing when the minister's wife came on the scene as well, out of her place in the choir. At least I surmised it must have been some relative, for would any other woman be likely to make for the pulpit with such precipitancy!

I have honestly had a great fortnight here at Kasr-el-Nil, and incidentally a cursory glimpse of some of the Cairo scenes worth noticing. I say a cursory glimpse advisedly, for I could go again with renewed and redoubled interest to all the places I have yet visited. These comprise the Musee Egyptienne (the French is unnecessary, and you may put it down to skite), the Zoological Gardens at Ghimzeh, the Citadel and Mosque of Mohammed Ali, the Mosques of Sultan Hassan and El Rifai, and the Pyramids (two visits). So you see, if I am transported somewhere down in the desert to-morrow, to Tel-el-Kebir or Ishmalia, I shall still have seen a respectable slice of Egypt, though I confess again, very cursorily. On Tuesday afternoon of this week, in company with Vance, Gill and Rose, I was at the Zoo. This is an excellent institution and just the place you would take the kiddies for a picnic, if you had them here. As a collection of African animals, I could venture it is unsurpassed, and our poor Moore Park affair slinks very abjectly into the background. What amazed and delighted me specially was the beautiful display of giraffes here. This type of animal I did not remember having seen before; it is grotesque, fascinating and tremendously tall. There are the spots of the leopard, the

peculiar head of the camel and a gaunt hugeness all the animals own. Evidently, the giraffes flourish best in this climate. The gardens are splendidly laid out, some of the paths being quite clever and attractive mosaic patterns, built of small, round, smooth stones, yellow, black and white in colour. In one part is a huge grotto construction which is also clever and ingenious in the extreme, although personally, I care little for this type of thing. Just near this are two of the boats in which the Turks tried to cross over in the Canal Attack of 1915. Of the many birds, some beautiful, some merely neat and attractive and some ugly but interesting; the white peacock charmed me specially. It was really a lovely specimen in its dignified purity, and seemed to have quite a personality of its own, too. The lions are merely medium, and there are a few belated kangaroos, presented by earlier contingents; but the hippopotamus is a fine specimen. We looked at him quite close for a little while as he swam round in the water enclosure.

On the whole you want to take more than one afternoon, even when you walk round this place, and it has none of the historic interest attaching to so many of the other sights.

Thursday was rather a miserable day, speaking from the weather point of view, but with the same company as before, I was up at the Citadel. You reach it quite easily and quickly with the tram; but when you come to the English military guard, it is necessary to have "Citadel" written on your leave pass, or else you are liable to have a prompt repulse. Now, the sight of the Citadel enclosure is the exquisite Mosque of Mohammed Ali, and I should have been bitterly disappointed not to have seen it after coming all the way up. (Mind! you are quite a fair height up here, though there is little actual climbing by foot, the tram taking you up a good way. One of the party, Rose, had seen the Mosque before, and as we must have looked respectable, the guards kindly and jovially allowed us to pass, after advising us to inscribe "Citadel" on our passes, which we did all in the same hand. At the entrance to the courtyard of the Mosque, we had to don the huge slippers over our boots, without which you would not be allowed to enter. Of course there was the ubiquitous and inevitable guide!—though he was really very good, or is it only because of our ignorance of Egypt and things Egyptian that we think these guides good? The courtyard itself would be quite beautiful if only they gave a bit of a wash to the marble; and the round ablutionary fountain takes one's fancy, though why they painted little tawdry pictures up under the

round kiosk-like, stony canopy, I can't think! Here we saw one or two native visitors washing their hands and feet prior to entering the building. Not far from them the guide pointed out a small, round, covered marble affair, sticking up from the pavement. This is a very deep well and you could hear the vibration when one of us shouted through a small aperture. Nearby was the place where the priest officiates at the ceremony of the sacrifice of Isaac, and I imagine there was also the chain on which the lamb is hung. I am not quite sure of this, but I know when we went down into the ancient Mosque of the Sultan Hassan, there were more of these chains—and their number seemed to be legion! Before leaving the courtyard, I must not forget to tell you that there are two elaborately grilled windows out of which we looked. From the one facing south, you get a splendid panorama of the city. We could see the barracks of Kasr-el-Nil and the Egyptian Museum next to it, while nearer was another mosque courtyard, very broad, and reputed by the guide to be the second mosque of Cairo. From the other, which faces west, on clear days you can get a view out to the Pyramids; for from this Mohammed Ali mosque you can see all in Cairo and the neighbourhood, and as a reverse fact, the M.A. mosque is the object up to which you turn your eyes from Cairo and the neighbourhood. The mosque is not ancient by any means. It was only commenced a little more than 100 years ago. The builder was Mohammed Ali, first Khedive of Egypt, who, by 1811, had managed to wrest the land out of the grip of the Mamelouks. I am extremely uncertain as to who or what were the Mamelouks; there are two ideas in my brain about them: first, they were a series of slave kings, who, for a certain time, held supremacy in Egypt; second, they were a royal bodyguard, who made or unmade the monarchs at will. Possibly the latter is the more correct version—indeed, I am inclined to think so, for the Mamelouks received an unmerciful drubbing at the hands of Napoleon in the battle of the Pyramids, and their grand finale was consummated in a treacherous and diplomatic manner by Mohammed Ali. At least the guide told us (and I have no reason to doubt his word) that the unfortunate Mamelouks were invited to a banquet by Mohammed Ali, and from the banquet not one departed alive. Some day I mean to try and go to the tombs of these soldiers of fortune, as I imagine them to have been. The inside of the mosque (please keep in mind all the time that the exterior is very beautiful and striking at practically any distance with the very thin, turn, tapering minarets and the ample dome between) is quite beyond my powers of description,

but I will try and give you some small idea of its dignity and magnificence. Oh, my mother, the carpets would make you positively tremble with a jealousy for possessing them, though they would possibly be hard to drag out and beat. But still, I think you would, like me, covet your neighbour's goods in quite an active and sincere manner. They are of the loveliest and most brilliant scarlet, these carpets, and in the centre pieces is worked a most elaborate design, known as and supposed to be actual reproductions of the seal of Solomon. Thirty-four years ago they were made, and you would think they had been put down on to the matting, which keeps them off the floor, only yesterday. Talking about carpets, I saw a small boy in a side street only yesterday, painting in faded colours with a brush. This must be only a makeshift, I would imagine! But I will now leave carpets and interior for a moment and detail to you briefly some more facts concerning the building. Began in 1811, it was finished by 1844, and here in a screened-off portion near the door lies Mohammed Ali under an elaborate catafalque. At least we caught a glimpse, through the traceries of arabesques in the screen, of the catafalque and the sacred carpet over the top and it seemed quite a respectable burying place. The mosque is supposed to be a reproduction of St. Sophia, and, according to the guide, actually holds second place to it alone among all the mosques of the world. But I ha'e ma doots; what about Mecca and Medina and such other Abraham shrine cities? A Greek designed the edifices, and, of course, there is a pifly yarn which declares that Mohammed Ali put out the eyes of this Joseph (name I have forgotten, the guide could not spell it), but here again I ha'e ma doots! The number of hanging lamps in the interior quite amazes a newcomer. You scarcely need to be told that these lamps are only lit 5 times in a year. There is in this mosque a sort of tripartite arrangement, i.e., the edifice has, without separations, three parts. First, there is a sort of gallery (like the choir in the Glebe Church) overhanging the entrance, with frontal pieces of much carved wood, and behind this I believe certain Mohammedan ladies are allowed at certain festivals. The middle and largest part of the building has a fair height, and in the four corners of the circular roof are Arabic inscriptions, giving the names, and, I should imagine, also the titles of the four men who conquered Egypt for the Arab Mohammed, i.e., Omar, Ali, Osmar and Abu-bakr. This conquest took place in 576 A.D. The two main items of interest in the centre portion are the steps up to the high priest's (or equivalent) seat, and a very elaborate glass candelabra, presented by King Louis Philippe of

France, who was also the donator of the Arab clock right on the outside overhanging the sort of rampart. This must have been a bit of diplomatic pallyness when the French were trying to get the foothold on Egypt, which they still hold to a considerable extent, even in the present. The high priest's stairs have a very elaborate facade (like the middle cedar portion of our own stairs in "Maraba") and about this the guide remarked it was Mohammed Ali's only mistake. He had employed in the construction the cedar of Lebanon, but with the characteristic Eastern love of gaudy colouring and garish splendour, used gilt and green paint and other bright articles over the revered wood. The result, of course, is more than a shade meretricious and theatrical. In the end part of the building, the roof is not quite so high, but two huge, round Arabic inscriptions tell us (via the guide) that there is "No god but God, and Mohammed is His Prophet." Here, too, is a circular niche in the wall, where the officiating priest stands facing the east and incidentally the wall, with a place for the Sultan at his feet. Right overhead is a huge gilt rising sun, much in the style of our badge, and a similar one stands right at the opposite and western end of the mosque. I forgot to say also that high up in the middle dome, rich coloured glass panes cast a subdued light down on to the magnificent and never-to-be-forgotten scarlet carpets.

After this, in spite of the gusty weather and consequent dust, we had a hurried tour round the English barracks. They are old and interesting; one outside staircase up the yellow wall looked like the place where the general is taken as being in the picture of "Gordon's Last Stand"—but still only barracks. A New Zealand fellow, who had done the mosque, shouted drinks for us in a queer little canteen, and then we moved on. This New Zealand fellow, who told us he was Private Valentine, of the Otago Mounted Rifles, is one of the finest specimens I have seen back from the firing line. He was twice on the Peninsula (people say Peninsula out here a whole sight more than on Gallipoli!), first of all for 72 hours, and then wounded; secondly, for about 4 months and right up to the Evacuation. He admitted that this latter event could not be described as anything but thrilling; still, there was none of the noisy blusterer, who is so absolutely sickening to listen to, the man who has been in Lone Pine, or says he has been, etc., when we cold-footed ——s were back in Australia. Certainly some of these have been in the Peninsula and done their part bravely, but what awful taste! Our New Zealand

friend was very quiet, so young, yet without a trace of the rotten swaggering and braggadocio of some soldiers, and in every way seemed to me a very perfect knight, a Bayard, and a fine gentleman, "sans peur et sans reproche." He had since been down near Serapaeum on the other side of the Canal, where excavations are going on, and had come up to Cairo to draw a decent bit of "screw." I enjoyed him very much—just the self-reliant young man who can depend on himself without vaunting the fact.

After the Citadel, some of which was erected by Richard Coeur-de-Lion's rival, Saladin, in 1170 A.D., we went down to what we thought was the blue mosque. The guides disputed between themselves about taking us when we said blue mosque, so we were finally induced to follow one to a mosque, which had some blue mosaics in its very high ceiling, but was really the modern mosque of El-Rifai. It was not the real Blue or Khairbik Mosque.

Sightseeing is exhausting, as you may imagine. I had expended so much attention on the wonders of Mohammed Ali's erection, that I had not anything like as much interest either in the comparatively modern El-Rifai or the ancient and noteworthy Sultan Hassan. In the first, however, there was a beautiful, dim, religious light, a delightfully cool atmosphere, and the most soothing and restful green carpets. The guide told us a number of things which simply glided in one of my ears and out of the other. I was more pleased with Sultan Hassan, though it is rather dilapidated and has suffered ravages at the hands of different war bands in the strange country of Egypt. The courtyard is, I believe, the subject of one of the pictures in the water-colour section at the southern end of the Sydney Art Gallery. It has the usual round washing contraption, but nothing like so elaborate as that of the Citadel Mosque. The "Isaac" chains are in two huge apertures, one at each side of this courtyard. At the far and northern end of the same courtyard is, what I believe the guide told us was the place of worship, the fane. The four pigeon-holed pieces of masonry, which fill the corners of the moderately low ceiling, are very old. At least, three are very old, and I think the guide said the fourth was restored by Kitchener. Here was the tomb of some person (you see how vague I am getting) and looking through the window we saw the holes made by French cannon balls in the Napoleonic campaign, and one of these had actually remained stuck there, being now as brown as the surrounding stonework. The guide would have dearly

loved us to pay a bob each and climb up the minaret for a good view of Cairo and a sight of the thousands of names, Australian Generals, Colonels, Majors, Captains, Lieutenants, Sergeants, Corporals, and Privates, etc., to be found there. "If you see not so many thousand names, you call me one damn liar and no pay one piastre." Ahem! yes, but we are getting more accustomed to the natives; I for one felt tired with all our trotting, and we had to be back at the barracks for guard at 4. I really believe the fellow was surprised that we did not end the haggling with some agreement, and thus provide a substantial bucksheesh for the keeper of the mosque and himself. For I am now quite sure or practically sure that the guide and the man at the front of the mosque split the difference between them of the spare cash they extort. I would just love to pop off my boots, carry them in my hands, and walk into the mosque or pyramid as the case may be (remembering to bring a candle or two for the interior of a pyramid) and leave these rascally old nincompoops and so styled guides out in the cold. For though they have a fair English accent, they do not know really much about these wonderful places. For instance, yesterday afternoon, when we did the interior of the smallest pyramid (Mim-ka-Re) (this was our second visit to the Pyramids) we paid five piastres (a little more than a shilling) for the three of us, Vance, Gill and myself, and while two guides haggled outside over a five piastre bit, a little nipper of a kid took us down the shaft, chanted an uncertain note of his own with many anxious and explanatory "Do you sees" and finally wanted to nip us for another 5 piastres to have our fortunes told down there in the Queen's tomb! Ugh! it disgusts you absolutely. We had had our fortunes told, a string of abject rubbish, earlier in the afternoon, and refused the lad with curses. You do get fed up with some of these Egyptians! By the way, the third Pyramid is only 250 feet high, though it would be wonderful if seen without the other two, Cleops and Shifum or Che-ren. You can enter it without taking your boots off, and it is quite interesting with its king's burial room, and another slanting portion, leading down to Her Majesty's department and the cubicles of mesdemoiselles, the daughters. Before this Pyramid, Vance and I had spent quite a fair time in the bowels of the second, that of Che-ren or Chifun. It has still the smooth hewn stones around its top as it was originally, but all the remainder of it and the other two are quite stripped of their smooth outside covering of alabaster or granite, as the case might be. I am afraid you could not do the entry into the second Pyramid. You

go down the usual shaft, but then you crawl two or three yards along on the flat of your stomach. This is quite essential, and I marvel at the guides or the Government not fixing things up more neatly. To tell the truth, I felt nervous after we got to the other side of the barrier, but Vance was going on, and I was determined to go too. George Gill was not having any. After all, we got rather dirty, but I subsequently enjoyed the passage. The rest is pretty easy, with one or two big leaps. We saw the room of the king with a sarcophagus similar to that of Cleops, then the queen's room, and seeing another passage, the intrepid Vance made for it also. Needs must I go. We crawled under things, prowled on up the passage along with our two guides, who only carried two little candles, and finally arrived, covered with dirt and perspiration, at the end of this blind alley. The guides had assured us it was so, but I was glad Vance had been so pushing. A pile of stones and debris was all that marked the failure of an American's brilliant venture to find some other tomb down this passage. This chap, who was called Kavinton or some such name, spent a fortune on this job and finished by ruining himself. He employed men down in the middle of the Pyramids at 100 piastres a day for some time, but they never came to anything. What a sad and rueful end to a brilliant and imaginatively conceived hazard. Some man and the Government finally bought half shares in his claim on the place, and now have it jointly between themselves. But nothing is done. Is there a mummy at the other side? I wonder. Another glimpse at the Sphinx gave me a better impression of the gentleman. He certainly has the look of inimitable Destiny, staring away into the east and striving to decipher what is to be!

On this expedition, I lost one of the Valentine hankys. It was the first to go and must have slipped out of my belt or sleeve; I was very sorry, for they are most comfy to the nose, and I had used two of them alternatively for quite a long time. We came back in time for going on guard at 5 o'clock. Our intention had been to climb Cheops as well, but it was found to be impossible.

I have written a long letter to auntie, which she ought to receive this mail. I hope you get by this mail, or have got by last, the parcel of silks, all due particulars of which you should hear from auntie; it was registered. I have also posted the autograph book Gertie gave me. It was just put in two large envelopes with a string round it, the address put on, and thrust into the box at Eskebiah Gardens.

Unfortunately, the string had cut a little into the outside envelope, and there may be a further consequent rip. I hope you get this book, for I got a great number of the company's names, a job which required more tact, patience and energy than I bargained for. I do hope you get it, however, in spite of my slip-shoddiness and off-handedness. I can hear father saying what an ass I am, not being more careful about things. Please thank him for the "Sunday Times" of January 23, and auntie for the "Herald," January 22. I am enjoying them both immensely and simply swill them down as a thirsty man swills cooling waters.

Oh! what a gorgeous mail I have had this week—you, auntie, Miss McCredie, George, Mary, McBurney, Charlton and Edgar Johnson. Since I have arrived, I have got two missives and a parcel, and a book from Billy Burke. I must write back to all these; you have no idea how much I enjoy the mail.

This has been a very happy fortnight; now I suppose we will go back to good hard work up at aerodrome. It is as well, for you need a good deal to run round Cairo sights, though travelling is dirt cheap.

I send my best regards to you all, and I only wish I could send you a scarlet carpet with King Solomon's seal on it for our hall rug as well. Remember me to all the dear friends, especially those who you think are taking "a real and intelligent interest," etc., etc. Induce father to take you and himself for a good rest somewhere this winter. You both need it. Tell the kiddies I was awfully pleased with their letters and will try and send some pretty cards I have bought of different views.

My love and dutiful respects to you both—for ever and ever, world without end. Amen! Quite a long letter, Eh!

JIM.

Aerodrome Camp,
Heliopolis,

8 p.m., March 13, 1916.

Dear Father and Mother,—

I am on the very tip top toe of delight at receiving your letters this evening. My mail on this occasion comprises twelve different epistles—9 letters and 3 post cards—but I have only opened and read those which I know to be "family," i.e., yours and auntie's.

It is a little over a week since I wrote that long fourteen pager on that last Sunday evening down at the Kasr-el-Nil Barracks, and now I feel I must write straight off as I fancy a mail leaves on the 15th. If this be so, I hope to get what I write this evening posted some time to-morrow evening down at the Esbekiah Gardens Y.M.C.A. And all I write, and hope you receive, is with the proviso that the persistent rumours as to stoppage of letters from Egypt may be false.

As I expected, and told you, we left the barracks on Monday, March 6, after, in many ways, the most delightfully easy fortnight I am likely to spend in Egypt or, for that matter, in military service. Really, with Vance and Gill, I had a splendid run round Cairo, and, as I have said in some other letters, I should be quite satisfied to be moved away anywhere to-morrow, for I feel we have been very fortunate indeed. On the Monday morning, I went up for a last look at the view from the barracks roof. It is very fine, and I will always remember it, for there I caught my first glimpse of the Pyramids. (Since then I have discovered that you can see the Pyramids quite plainly up here, both at the aerodrome and in the little town of Heliopolis.) On the same Monday afternoon, about 3 o'clock, we moved off from these strange old barracks and did the long march up through Cairo and Abassia to the camp. It was pretty hard on some of us, and, strange to say, I felt worse coming back, after being in Cairo a fortnight, than I did going down, when we were just practically off the ship. But in a couple of days we settled down fairly well to the hard training up here. We drill out on a great waste expanse of desert, stretching out sou'-east, and it is wonderful to see the waves of heat, quivering and dancing over the ground, for all the world like real water. As a matter of fact, the weather here is still most pleasant,

with warm, bright, sunny days, and nights, which are really very cold—excuse the Irishism—towards morning. I had my hair cut soon after coming back from Kasr-el-Nil, and have a bit of a cold as a result, but I hope to shake it off soon. One afternoon this week, I wrote a fair note, on nothing in particular, to auntie. On Thursday evening two of the officers connected to our Company gave it out as fact that 92 of us would move down next day to Tel-el-Kebir to reinforce the 2nd Battalion. Anyway, we were to hold ourselves in readiness. Now, I knew my number was on the list; practically as soon as parade was dismissed at 4.30 on the Thursday afternoon, I decided to buzz off into Cairo and write a note to father, telling him this important news, which I expected would very soon be consummated. Alack and alas, not a thing has happened; it is now Monday, and there seems a great likelihood we may not move till we go off all together next Monday, i.e., a week hence. You never know what's going to happen in the military. I told father then to address my letters merely 2nd Battalion, but I feel this was foolish of me, and I advise you to continue giving the reinforcement and its number. By the way, I notice father's blue envelope does not bear my regimental number 3698. It is really most advisable to keep this on in case of possible confusion with any other man of the same name as mine. Pardon! Pardon! It was on, but partially obliterated by post marks. On Friday evening, when I felt there was still the acute possibility of a violent and sudden removal to some other part of this great and strange land of Egypt, I determined to make a bold dash for the Abbassia Infectious Hospital. You get there quite simply in the Heliopolis-Cairo electric tram, and the journey to the hospital only takes about ten minutes. On the way down, I had quite a small French conversation with a Gypie gentleman. He was most polite, and I understood him quite the best of anyone I have tackled in this manner. At Abbassia, I managed to get a pass to the nurses' quarters, and at last met the matron of the place, Miss Lowe. She was up to her eyes in clerical work, so I sat on the little brick, round arched verandah (quite Australian) till she finished. Then we had a great little yarn together. I don't know Miss Lowe very well yet, but what an energetic personality she possesses! I can well imagine how invaluable she must be as an organiser and indefatigable worker in any sphere of activity. The stories she told me of Lemnos, where her unit remained from July, 1915, to the end of January, 1916, reminded me of the difficulties met by Antarctic explorers in our southern frozen wastes. There were cold, raging winds and blizzards,

and Miss Lowe told me that one London illustrated magazine published a picture showing two nurses, bending in despair over their tent, which had been blown down! They always wore the heaviest of clothing, and were so muffled up, that Miss Lowe said I would scarcely recognise a photo of herself in working garb. She was asking specially for grandfather, and in every way I had a "homey" talk with her, which did my heart (and, I hope, hers) an enormous amount of good. Our yarn was not very long that evening, for I had to leave a bit before 9 o'clock to get back into camp; but, among other things, she told me that you can obtain twice as hard and thorough work from Australian as from English nurses. (I know, in the army, we Australians don't mix too well with the Pommie.)

On Saturday, afternoon hours being free, Vance and I determined to have a last glorious fling of the disasters (what we call, colloquially, the native coin, the piastres) in Cairo. It was a depressingly dull afternoon in the city when we arrived there, and both Vance and I did not feel too enthusiastic, but we perked up afterwards, got the Citadel tram at the Ataba-el-Khadra, and went up towards the part of Cairo where we knew the Tombs of the Mamelouks were situated. The Citadel tram only took us so far, so we had to wait for one to the Iman-el-Chafei, which, I fancy, means the Dead City. On getting off the tram here, we were besieged with urchins and would-be guides, who were fearfully anxious to take us to "Mamelouk." I got a vague idea of the way from a Franco-Egyptian, and with a fixed determination to avoid guides and "bucksheesh" natives, Vance and I set off. It is rather a hard place to find, this little mosque, but we managed to get there. If you follow the tracks of the gharry wheels, you can't really go very wrong. At the door the admission fee and slippers were just one piastre for each of us, which is the cheapest I have as yet managed at any sight. Inside the mosque there are a number of rooms leading in one from another, not very remarkable rooms, but with nice carpets in them. (The carpets are quite modern; bazaar carpets.) It is so like some fine showroom of carved woodwork or such like, that Vance and I quite forgot the respect to the dead and did not remove our hats till quite near the end of the session. This place is called the "Tombs of the Mamelouks," but you see their tombs only through the grating. From a guide with a large party, I gleaned the information that these were ministers of State, who, from being useful, had become outrageously powerful for their own ends, and been finally assassinated

with treachery by Mohammed Ali. However, the finest tombs are those of the Khedivial-house, tombs of dead Khedives and mothers of Khedives, etc. The most splendid catafalque is that of Ibrahim Pasha, whose equestrian statue is in Cairo Opera Square. It is of very richly-carved cedar of Lebanon and about 7 feet high. It is, honestly, very difficult to keep in your mind the idea that here you are among the dead, the dead who have been respected and loved, or feared and hated by Egyptians of the last century.

(I must stop for this evening; all this I have written in about one hour and a quarter, so please excuse the execrable scribbling. Maybe I shall not be able to get this note to the Esbekiah to-morrow evening; better get it away thoroughly and decently!)

March 14. I am writing about 12 o'clock and may not be able to snatch very much time, but I am striving to utilize every spare minute in order to get away a respectable mail at an early date. It seems there is a mail leaving March 15, and, of course, my own people come first. Just a few minutes ago, I ran through the remaining 9 of last evening's mail. There were 3 notes from Mr. McBurney—one, a letter postcard, very late, and letters or letter cards from Mr. Grindrod, Miss Pines, Billy Burke, Teddy Edwards, and a letter each from Fay and Mrs. Brodziak.

After our Mamelouks trip, Vance and I went into Cairo, where I indited a note to auntie, telling her of developments up to date. We did not dine at the Esbekiah as usual, but at the Restaurant de Nil; the dish we took was bacon and eggs, beautifully done, and it appears to me served in the dish in which they are cooked. With this I had the most excellent coffee I have yet tasted in Egypt. Vance had bought something in the silk line to send home, so I thought it was up to me to send something back to Sydney for father and George, thus fixing up, as it were, the birthdays of our family for this year. It was difficult to choose anything for George. They showed me very nice little silk pyjamas, but I could not go this extent; besides, the size was a puzzle to me. Instead, I bought what seemed to me a fairly good silk square—either a very large handkerchief or small scarf—for father. In George's case I settled on a scarf with a red, green, orange and white design upon it. Now, there was a slight hole in the middle, the material was a mixture of silk and camel's hair, and I was very dubious, but I thought the colours were quite pretty. I

immediately took and registered the parcel, which, I hope and trust, you will get! You write of parcels for me. I thank you all extremely. In the clothes line, the only thing I can advise you to send me would be a flannel shirt or two—I have lost both of mine with my usual carelessness about personal belongings.

On Sunday afternoon I lay down, read a little of Simple Contes des Collines, a French translation of Kipling's "Plain Tales from the Hills" (this I bought for something to read down at Tel-el-Kebir); and after a bath, proceeded to walk down to Heliopolis. My errand here was to visit Hookey, who was in the Palace Hospital for a short period. You will be sorry to hear this, but I think his influenza will soon be over. It had been developing all last week, and after a few persistent sick parades, the doctor saw he had better lay up, as on Saturday his temperature had mounted to 103 deg.! Cyril told me he had been taken in when I came back from Cairo on Saturday evening. On Sunday morning, Scotty, who came over in the "Suevic," and has been here some time, hopped up to our Company, as he expected to go out with Hookey, Cyril and the two nurses, Hookey's friends. (By the way the nurses, Sister Perkins and Nurse Perkins, are now out of Ghezireh and up here in Heliopolis, so Hookey is not without friends to take a personal interest in him.) I was glad to see Scotty, as I had not met him here before. He went down and interviewed Hookey, but had left when I arrived down at the Palace Hospital about 4.15 p.m., and found only Cyril with the patient. Hookey was much better, though, when the nurse took his temperature—it was still just a shade over 100 deg. In spite of his cheerful assurances, he is not yet out, as he expected, to-day (Tuesday). I stayed and talked to him till about 6.30; he is a great chap and the time passed quickly. At 6.30 I moved down the hospital corridors, out the fine front entrance door, and walked down to the Abbassia Infectious Hospital.

I forgot to tell you Miss Lowe had invited me for dinner this evening at 7. There was only one other guest beside me, a private also, I think, who sat at one of the other tables. I was an awful "gawk" in behaviour, as it was months since I had sat at a meal with so many ladies—quite strange! Miss Lowe, however, was very patient, and stuck by me most loyally, introducing me to all the Sisters, etc. She told us she had been buying carpets in Cairo. It is evidently a practical impossibility not to be "done" a bit on the transaction, but Miss Lowe

and the nurse, who had accompanied her, seemed quite satisfied with their purchase. After dinner we sat out on the arched verandah till two guests arrived, a Captain and a Lieut.-Colonel. I was introduced all round by Miss Lowe in the nicest manner, but felt it was time to take my leave, especially as it was getting quite close on to 9, and you must be in up at the camp by 9.30. Miss Lowe is great, and if I stay till next Sunday, I will take advantage of her invitation and go down again. If we move, I will send her a little note announcing the fact.

Yesterday was just a day of our usual work, and to-day most of the Company is on fatigue, so there is really very little more to tell you. The night I did the, as I thought, last Cairo dash with Cyril, we met Len Robson. He seemed Al and receives letters quite often from the Lyons and also Harry Ludowici. There is very little, however, he could tell me of people I know. Does father have any business friend named Henley? I think Len said one of his sons was out here, and thought we knew one another, but I don't. L.R. is situated up here in Heliopolis, and would be happier if he were in some sphere of activity nearer one of the fronts. There is a good likelihood, he thinks, that they may move soon. Our O.C. has left us, to join the Divisional Ammunition Column. Hookey has given a final adverse decision on this man's character, though I do not mention names, speaks quite impersonally, and ask you not to discuss the matter at all. Lieut. Knox, who also left with us, is in charge for the present.

I have not done anything yet about finding Miss Pine's sister, and I may not have much time, but possibly, will write. Thank her all the same and remember me most kindly to Miss Pine and Maggie Jarvis. You mention Mrs. Heron—I hope she is well and happy. Poor Mrs. Dobbie—it's the inevitable, and although you will know her feelings and sympathise better than I, it may be all the better in the end for both Jack and her. Remember me to the Macreadys and all the other friends. I hope Elma Perdriau succeeds in "Twelfth Night." Cyril Ritchard should be a very clever actor; I don't think he will be spoiled by his clique. Give my love to the three children. I see mostly dusky nigger children now or else very neat and artificial French ones. Thank Auntie especially for all she sends and writes; I am very fortunate.

Yours,

JIM.

Somewhere on the W. Front,

April 23, 1916.

Dear Father and Mother,—

There is not so much I will suppose I can write to you here. The further you get on the less there seems to be able to tell. I wish I could write you letters not directly on the war events, yet graphic and interesting, like those we all read of poor Rob Crawford.

Early in the last week, we left the billets where I wrote you last, and went for one day and one night to another strange little upstairs barn. Part of the road was fearfully muddy and resembled clay-coloured ice-cream going liquid; however, this is very infrequent in the roads, thank goodness! This one-day stay in the other farm, I will remember chiefly by two things—the presence of the first French sheep I have seen close at hand and a most strange old kitchen, which the family used as an "estaminet." The kitchen would be very nice to have painted by some good artist with dusks and shadows and a queer old woman always sitting in the fireplace. After this place, we moved up late one evening into the trenches. It was raining when we passed through the little town and we had a fearfully slushy walk in the dark, before taking over the watches. That first night I was put in one "pozzy" with a corporal and two other men. Two of these were old Gallipoli men, so we had experience at hand. Next day, however, I was moved down to the other end of our company's lines. We have a real card of a section commander, an old battalion man named Banks, who is awfully interesting on the Peninsula topics. He told me that Mr. Fornachon took a bottle of poison with him at the Landing in case of capture—and I don't think this is "kid"! Our first few days here—this is the fourth—have been very quiet, but very wet and miserable part of the time. You fire only at night when there are continuous rocket flashlight flares cast up from both sides. The wet gets rather on your nerves and my feet have not been dry till to-day, when I put whale oil, which was issued to us, on them. Early this afternoon I felt very feverish and shivery, so got the sergeant to parade me. I saw not the doctor, but Captain Vernon. He advised me to lie down in the dugout, which is, fortunately, very dry, and if I got worse, to come back and get paraded to the doctor. With a sleep I felt improved, but I think I will go on sick parade to-morrow morning and get some sort of medicine. Otherwise I am all right.

It pleases me to get the Scotch letters of Aunt Anne and Margaret, but I have only made one reply. In her last, Aunt Anne asks for a long letter and announces the death of Mamie Fletcher. The old lady has been a great deal to Aunt Anne, I think. John Crawford will be married, too, by now; it was to have taken place on Tuesday last.

April 24, 1916. I am writing a bit more on Easter Monday, as I understand we will get the issue of green envelopes to-day. In connection with my large letters, I intend to ask them for some news of you all, as I am far from relishing this continual silence. Yet there are so many lads in the same position as me, who have not got Australian letters for a fair time; but in the manner I have mentioned, I hope to make the Scotch letters serve a double purpose. By the way, Aunt Anne says she has written several letters, which I do not appear to have received.

We do our own cooking in a little bucket here, and the rations are well up to the mark, as we get fresh steak, bacon, jam, cheese, bread, occasionally tinned milk, and, of course, tea and sugar. In the last line we make a better brew than the dixey-made variety we used to get from the cooks when in billets. Still, it is difficult to get firewood and other fuel, and I am a diffy at billy boiling, as I generally make the thing collapse, with disastrous results to the fire.

The main diversion for us here is to watch the movements of aeroplanes above, both our own and enemy craft. The little machines are marvellously cheeky and move about with wonderful unconcern, even when under the fiercest and best-directed artillery fire. What intrepid and iron-nerved men they must be, these pilots of the air! How is Sunny Moir getting on? Remember me to the Jarvises when you do the Ryde-Drummoyn trip, and tell the old lady I have worn her little mitts quite often now and find them very comfortable. If your wrists and ankles are warm, you are pretty good, you know! There are two Scotchmen in my lot at present; the older, a really fine wee chap, none o' your sour, gloomy Scots, but as merry and open-hearted as the day is long. His name is Harry Gault. The younger, John Chrystal, is the son of a well-to-do Glasgow baker, as far as I can make out. He had only been in Australia fifteen months and was for a year, before he enlisted, second manager at Gartrell's. It is strange the folk you run across, isn't it?

Just two days before leaving our second billet, I went out for a Sunday evening walk up to a village about a mile and a half distant.

On the way I met Gertie's nephew, Al. Clark, who has been attached to the third battalion. Strangely enough, as I was talking to him, I saw four officers strolling away from us down the road, and immediately, from the back view of one, recognised an old "Shore" master. It was Captain Harris.

This very Easter Monday, while getting some water for dinner, I stumbled across Ralph Irons, who is, of course, in the Engineers. I think I told you that the Major of these first brigade Engineers was an old "Shore" man, Dyer, whom I can remember quite well. He did great service, however, on Gallipoli, and has the D.S.O., I think. You never know who you may meet next. In fact, I never pass a body of artillery or transport waggons, or another lot of men, without eagerly scanning their faces to see who I know. Yesterday we had a splendid, fine, sunny day, and to-day it is fine, though dull. The main thing to be thankful for is the fact that it is not raining. Do not let the "Ellangowan" folk think they are absent from my mind, though I do not write a separate note this week. Auntie will be reading this one instead. How are you all? I hope, well and happy. I, myself, was on sick parade to-day and the doctor has given me some good, strong medicine. In a day or two I will be all right, as I think that my little turn of yesterday was due to the cold and wet of the preceding days as much as to anything. Perhaps soon I will get news of you from some quarters. With love to the children, Auntie and Grandfather, the Macreadys and all my friends.

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

Farmhouse (2nd Billet),
Somewhere in Northern France,

April 16, 1916.

Dear Father and Mother,—

There is not so much news to tell you in this letter as there has been in its predecessors, one advantage of which is the fact that I will not be so liable to infringe the restrictions necessarily imposed on account of the Censorship. Early last week we left our billets at the home of my old friends, the Mays, and came on a stiff route march to these new quarters in a larger barn than the last. I have promised to write to old M. Joseph and his wife, nee Marie Jourdain, in French, and I shall be indeed an ungrateful cur if I forget the kindness and hospitality I have received at their hands. Had there been children or others in the family, I scarcely think they would have relished the foreigner around their "poele"; but, as it was, I think they quite liked to have me, and I enjoyed them immensely. They understood English not at all, and I felt strange if, when they were present with any of our people, I had to speak and explain to both sides in the two languages; but there were some great yarns at nights, when I tried to draw them out on such subjects as the third Napoleon and the war of 1870. The old gentleman was a soldier in '68 and saw the magnificence of the second Empire at Versailles and other places. Strange to say, they were not inconvenienced by the Franco-Prussian affair; they saw no Germans in 1914, and, I think it reasonable to hope that they will end their days in peace, though they hear the guns booming on the long Front. The little plot of land is their own, which means something. As a souvenir, I gave the old lady one of my handkerchiefs (your ones) with the rising sun in the corner. Our name was on it, too, but to them I shall always be "Jacques." With our sudden moves and the constant crowding of new impressions, I have even now but a vague remembrance of Madame's wrinkled features, but her deep, strong voice rings in my ears, as she would call me "Jacques, Jacques" (and I would always obediently reply, "Oui, madame!"). The morning we left, about five o'clock, the old lady gave me one of their curious

cups (without a handle) full of coffee and rum. If ever they entertained me it was generally "cafl au lait," as I did not take the "vin" or the "Cognac." Tea they seemed to take but little, if at all. That morning we left, their pig was to be killed over at the village, half to be the butchers and half their's. The usual bread-making was in full swing (price per loaf 21 sous for 5 lbs.). (Oh! how often I explained this to Australian purchasers; also the quotation for fresh eggs, at first 4 sous and later 3 sous each), so we were not sentimental in our farewells. But I must try and write, and, if spared, I should like to go and see them again, for they were a little bit of home in a strange land. Ah! those brisk, comfy evenings by the warm, round "poele," gone beyond recall!

On Wednesday last I received a very agreeable bolt from the blue in a little spirited note from Cousin Margaret Crawford, dated 7/4/'16. She seems a cheerful soul, and it was as good to me as a pay day, especially as I had received no letters from anywhere for over a month. That was in the morning. The same evening, there was one from Aunt Anne, in Edinburgh, dated 21/3/'16, when Mamie Fletcher had been sick. You can't imagine how cheered I was by the letters I received. Both deplored the dreadful war, and Aunt Anne most kindly asked to be informed of anything at all I lacked; so I have yet another Lady Bountiful. However, both these letters hoped I was far from the front and expected I was still in Egypt. Aunt Anne had even given my address to Robert Fulton, who was in Egypt, and Nurse Jeannie Fletcher, who might be there soon. This is rather a mess, but of course with the best intentions. Still, I am sincerely glad to have received both these notes, and have already written back to this merry Margaret, who drives the motor. One of these days I have fond dreams of a great bundle of Australian letters coming along my way, but I suppose they are all still far enough off, what with change of unit and change of country. We are still in this fairly flat country, which has, among other things, the effect of increasing the significance of the church towers and spires. There is a certain charm in the grey, far-stretching landscapes; and the people are more than half Flemish. The great big ploughing horses, too, remind me of the story of Henry VIII. calling the stout German 4th wife, Anne of Cleve, no

better than a "Flanders mare," which did not show much of the cavalier spirit, did it?

The other afternoon, when walking on a trip of curiosity to a neighbouring town (or rather, when walking back), I met an old Shore boy, Irving Ormiston, who is a Lance-Corporal in the 3rd Battalion. You must remember his sister and cousin, who were the Simpson's guests when we were down at Thirroul six years ago. His lieutenant is another Shore boy, Tyson by name, whom I remember quite well. I was rather disappointed at this town in not being able to see inside the church. The front door was shut, but, going round the back, we saw an old lady enter by a key and leave the door ajar. I thought she might be the cleaner, and, after some hesitation, we entered through a room in which were the censors for the service, an elaborate ecclesiastical robe and some other church vessels. On opening the door slightly to enter the main building, however, I was struck dumb on finding the aforesaid female engaged in prayer, and, of course, we beat a hasty retreat. But I was disappointed all the same. Instead, we repaired to the house of some Belgians, who entertained us with coffee at the cheapest rate I have had the beverage—Id per cup. Of course it was merely "en encré." Forgive me these nothings, but I have really little news.

This April weather is as full of vagaries as I have always heard it to be. In the last few days we have had days with all kinds of changes. Within an hour or two the sky will pile up a regular Valkyrie's ride of black clouds, there will be a sharp rush of rain, often mixed with icy sleet, and next moment there will be repentance for the black looks and angry tears when a watery smile of reconciliation lights up the heavens. And then the whole process over again, da capo.

One gets quite used to aeroplanes here, as they buzz overhead repeatedly. At our last place a German machine was forced to come down, and both machine and occupant were taken by the English Tommies. Our lieutenant has been ill this week with gastric influenza, but yesterday Noel told me he is alright. This week, i.e., in a couple of days, we are going into the trenches. The cold will be a trouble I should think, as well as the enemy, but I am hoping for the best in everything.

This afternoon (it is now about 3.15) I will try and send cards to the children and a short note to Auntie in the same green envelope that I send yours. Possibly view p. cards may not pass the censor, however. But green envelopes are not censored in the battalion. I hope you will excuse me sending Mr. Purves' note and also Fay's. With Auntie's envelope, too, I sent a note to McBurney. I forgot the address—"Burnleigh," Carabella Street, Kirribilli Point—like the idiot I am. Yesterday I wrote to Frank Braddon, but I am putting it just in an ordinary envelope to be censored. How are you all? Have you decent help? I feel rather far off with no letters, but I know right well they are coming all right. In the trenches I may be restricted to the field service cards.

Your loving son,

JIM.

Graylingwell War Hospital,
Chichester,

July 30th, 1916.

Dear Mother and Father,—

At last I have an opportunity of writing you an entirely uncensored letter (or at least so I hope), and trust I shall use the occasion to the fullest advantage. Ever since leaving Egypt there has always been a vague restraint on my mind in writing to you when I remembered that even green envelopes are liable to be opened and read at the base. (In fact, just before I left we were made to understand that the issue of green envelopes had been discontinued owing to the indiscreet mention by one of the men in the company of certain guns and explosives which were being used at the time.) Interiorly, too, I felt hampered by the fact that those letters, censored in the company, would pass through the hands of our friend, the lieutenant, and though I have had much kindness and consideration from him the position was a decidedly embarrassing one. However, here in merry England, where we stamp and post our correspondence in the ordinary way, and there is absolutely no surveillance, I will endeavour to give you a fairly adequate account of my experiences in the past three or four months.

My period of whirling round Cairo must have come to an end about March 17th, on which day the first 87 men were taken as a quota from the reinforcement company for the 2nd Battalion. The night before leaving I ran down and said "good-bye" to Miss Lowe at Abbassia. Next morning we made a very early start and finally left Zeitoun for our journey in open trucks about 8 o'clock. Our destination we knew to be Serapaeum, an important point on the Canal defences, where was a pontoon bridge linking up the northern and southern shores, and whence emanated a number of the garrisons required for the different Canal posts and the lines of trenches further back, which were to bear the first brunt of possible Turkish attacks from Palestine and Asia Minor. I will pass over the journey through the fertile Nile Delta past Tel-el-Kebir and Ishmailia, beautiful and interesting though it was, and finally land you with us at the dead end of the line, which we reached a little after midday in the full blaze of an Egyptian sun, which was beginning to lose some of its mild spring warmth in the keener sting of approaching summer.

A great number of Australian troops were camped here at Serapaeum, on the other side of the crossing, where the Canal runs up between high banks, a vivid blue riband coiling through the yellow sand with refreshing clumps of shady trees on the nearer shore. So in the afternoon we were all, so to speak, dumped down at the front door of the 2nd Battalion; our officer, Knox, did not wait, being in charge and having to deliver the other quotas. Among the 87 (or rather the remains of the 87, for a score or more had been taken when they asked for volunteers to form a new working battalion of Pioneers), there were a number I knew. However, there was a good deal of separating up when we were put into the different companies, and finally I found myself left with my friend, George Gill of Muswellbrook, Vic. Browne, and an English fellow named Clarke, all of us drafted, by a strange freak of chance, into No. 9 Platoon, C Company! It was on that Saturday afternoon, in the course of tent conversation, that I gathered the extraordinary intelligence of my being in Niven Cuthbert's platoon and Mr. Vernon's company. Very soon I saw them both, and that evening Vernon, who had just attained his captaincy, summoned me to his tent and explained that, though the platoon was at practically full strength, should I like to be with an officer who was a personal friend (as he thought you would certainly wish), he would be very glad to have me in the platoon and the company! And so I was taken into No. 9 Platoon, for which blessing I don't know whether I am sufficiently grateful to Captain Vernon.

My first acquaintances in No. 9 were naturally enough my first tent mates. These were Jock Nicol, a Scotchman and Lance-Corporal in charge; Harry Galt, a brother Scot, small in stature but positively radiating cheeriness and good humour (since then, alas! gone west); Bill Crossman, the long, lank Yorkshireman, and his friend, a Chatswood man, Bobbie Burns; yet another Scotchman, old Dad Winton (aged 59!), and a fellow a little older than me called Davidson.

It was Davidson whom I was mostly thrown in contact with at the beginning; that is to say, when the battalion moved, to everyone's relief, from sandy, waterless Serapaeum on its way to France. The exodus took place on the Tuesday evening after my arrival, and Wednesday afternoon saw us all embarked and sailing out of the crowded Alexandra Harbour. I should have said that my three reinforcement friends were left at Serapaeum, and have since learnt that they were drafted into "B" Company of the 13th Batt.

But to return to our voyage on the Cunard liner "Ivernia" and my fellow-traveller, Davidson. The voyage was uneventful, but characterised by extreme tightness of rations. In connection with Jack Davidson I may say that he came from Bulli, where his father, a Scotchman, was a successful grocer and storekeeper. Jack had been in the shop since leaving school, which probably accounted for the very shrewd, commercial wrinkles at the corners of his eyes, even at the youthful age of 21. Somehow we were never drawn much together, though I would be very far from blaming Jack, because he was naturally selfish. So very many of us are that. About a month after this voyage Jack was our first casualty in the trenches. When he came back, cured of his slight wound in the head, he got a job as messenger at battalion headquarters, a post which he held till he was again unlucky enough to receive a bad wound from a German shell down at Fleurbaix. From what I could gather it seemed he would lose the use of a hand, so in all probability poor Jack will be sent back to Australia.

But in recounting Davidson's career I have got far enough away from the "Ivernia," which brought us in due course to Marseilles on Tuesday, March 28th. The same evening we were disembarked and were entrained, leaving about 9.30 o'clock on a richly interesting and picturesque railway journey through Sunny France. It was a glorious experience for us all, and the two whole days of travelling (Wednesday and Thursday) passed with lightning-like rapidity. In the hilly parts of Central France we were just late enough to see the last traces of snow upon the wooded summits. On the Thursday evening we received a very cordial reception from the crowd on the railway station at Amiens. Amiens is fairly well north, though it belongs to the department of the Somme; and so, about 4 o'clock next morning we found ourselves at our journey's end, the little station of Ebbingham, in the Department du Nord. It is, I suppose, little more than a mile from here to the village of Renescure, the charming, wistful, old-world place where first we were billeted. I shall never forget that coming to Renescure in the raw, foggy cold of the late March morning. We all wore our overcoats, with packs and equipment, and tramping along the white road between the fields and tall, gaunt, leafless trees, I wondered whether we were going to move straight up into the trenches! Absurd! of course, but I was only very new to things then.

We halted at a corner in Renescure, from which one can see

the church tower, which showed the time approaching 7. After getting some rations it was discovered that we should have to march back the way we came, and I remember carrying a tin of army biscuits with Davidson as we thought food might be scarce. However, we did not march back far, and after seeing one unsuitable billet Mr. Cuthbert led us down to our little home at the Mais, where we were all to be, as old M. Mai incessantly put it, "tres tranquilles" for the space of some odd ten days.

My first serious conversation in French was when Cuthbert got me along to see the old gentleman about where we should construct our sanitary conveniences on his ground. Rather awkward, wasn't it, for both of us? As you have observed in a letter to me, there is a vast difference between learning to read or write French and using it in the vernacular. But at Shore I was singularly fortunate in having had a long course of Mr. Wilshire's classes, which he conducted on the practical (and admirable) arrangement of using French exclusively himself and compelling his pupils to follow suit. Hence I found myself moderately well equipped, and, soon gaining confidence, had some most enjoyable "cracks" with the old folks. Well, I have told you all about them before; they will always remain a cherished memory in my life; but our lotus-eating days at Renescure were not so very long, and have now drifted away into an atmosphere of kindly French folk, green spring meadows dotted with spotless white and yellow marguerites, over which linger with a delicate aroma the revivifying fumes of hot "cafe au rhum!"

We left on the Monday morning (April 10th), and, strangely enough, a girl in an "estaminet" the evening before told us our rumoured destination—the village of Meris, near Bailleul. She was right. This first long route march which we did in France was not very well calculated to uphold the prestige of the First Brigade. There were the four battalions moving up (the first to the fourth inclusive), and though we had our blankets carried it was a pretty stiff and exhaustive affair. Moreover, in our case, whoever regulated the halts, made an egregious blunder in racing us without a break for the first five miles, which landed us practically in Hazebrouck. If only the business had been conducted more gradually, if only he (whoever it was) had not raced us into a towering sweat straight away, the march might have been a more creditable one. As it was at one place between Hazebrouck, a fair size town which you will see on the map,

and Strazeele, a village en route, the column was so disorderly that General Walker, standing beside his staff motor car, exhorted the men to "keep their fours." Men kept falling out, however, all bent on seeking refreshment and rest in the nearest "estaminet." Naturally we were all reprimanded afterwards for these rascals, and had several practice route marches so that this disgraceful "debacle" should not occur again. Our Merris billet—really it was about equidistant from the little villages of Merris and Outersteene and the town of Meteren, which stands on a rise and is connected by a long, sloping, cobbled avenue of a road with the larger town of Bailleul—was not quite so comfortable as the Renescure one which we had quitted, and I never got to know the people at the farm house. Still, we were not so very uncomfortable here in the curious, rainy, cloudy, capricious April weather. Niven was ill most of the stay, which was just over one week's duration. Probably it was the change of climate, for he had been off colour towards the end of our Renescure period, and he seemed to me not too well on the march. However, he recovered from his attack of influenza in time to take our first parade wearing the steel helmets, without the vestige of a smile on his face. Many of us were helpless with mirth at our comical appearance; Sladen had to leave the ranks purple in the face, but Niven was unmoved. I do hope he wanted to laugh; anyway he might have smiled without appreciable lack of dignity.

Besides steel helmets we had previously at Ebbinghem been initiated in the wearing of the gas respirators, and actually passed through a trench containing the noxious stuff. Thus equipped we were now ready for the trenches. On Tuesday, the 18th, the battalion moved up through Outersteene—packs without blankets if I remember right. Our road took us up through Doulieu, where I was afterwards to spend almost a month in the divisional rest camp. We had started about noon, and as the march was not much more than seven miles, reached our next farmhouse billet about 3 or 3.30 p.m. The nearest directing post, which system is most accurate and helpful in France, had Estaires on the top as indicating the district, but we were a considerable distance from this town and were actually a good deal nearer Sailly-sur-la-Lys, the tower of whose ruined church was now clearly visible. Like its sister church of Doulieu, I believe the church of Sailly was purposely burnt by the Germans while they were being driven back. The strongly-built tower, however, a square erection of brick and stone, evidently suffered from the English artillery, as it was an all too convenient

position, as a French lad informed me, for "espions." Through Sailly-sur-la-Lys the battalion moved late next evening. In a barn near our one-night billet the packs were left, and only sufficient was carried in the haversack on our back for immediate toilet needs in the trenches. Dull weather accompanied our departure, and just on dark it began to rain, though not very heavily. There are two ways from Sailly to Fleurbaix, to the right of which village we did our first trench period. One road leads up almost due east, turning off nor-east some distance along; the other takes one through the village of Bae St. Maur, after which one must take turnings in an easterly direction. That night we took the former road, and when we got into artillery range marched in single file. It was curious to have one's first introduction to the brilliant white flares, which are night after night the accompaniment of all trench operations. Just think of it now! this long, long line of soaring flares from Nieuport on the Belgian coast away down to near Mulhausen, isn't it? Boche and Frenchman, Hun and Englishman in a gigantic deadlock—a ragged, bloodstained rent, right into the heart of Europe!

Our first experience of trench warfare here in Fleurbaix was mild in the extreme. The part had been held before us by a "bantam" regiment of English "Tommies," as game as you please, but not intended by the powers that be to disturb the comparative tranquility of their post. Hence Allemand and English strafed one another nightly with rifle and machine gun fire, but there was a kind of understanding that the one should not seriously harm the other unless provoked by his opponent's pugnacity. The Australians made things livelier. Still we had a very good time there, with splendid weather after our first three wet days, and good and abundant rations. Though circumstances were so favourable I was not well at the commencement, and my feet began to be troublesome. On being relieved after 14 days we did a quiet week in reserve billets, and then another week, when we supplied different parties for the necessary firing line fatigues. These night fatigues were unfortunately continued later on when we moved right back to billets in Sailly, though it was a fairish walk to and from Fleurbaix without the work. However, there was comparative comfort in being back there at Sailly with a little Y.M.C.A. handy and other advantages, including div. baths. At the end of May we were taken the long march I mentioned to you for the purpose of musketry. The place we went to was a little village called Steenbeeque, on the other side

of Hazebrouck, and our route took us through the considerable towns of Estaires and Merville. My feet blistered badly on the way there, as I wore a pair of "Tommy" boots and cobbles are hard marching.

The disagreeable septic piece on the side of my right foot kept me away practically the whole of June in the rest camp at Douleu. During this time the battalion was again in the trenches, on the other side of Fleurbaix, which is known as the Bois Grenier. Fleurbaix, by the way, is just about five miles below Armentieres if you look up the place in any map of the British front.

In the rest camp I was very sorry to hear of the deaths of two friends of my first trench experiences, Chrystal and Harry Galt, both Scotchmen singularly enough.

It was Saturday, July 1st, when I went back to the company, which I found billeted at a little convent building right in Fleurbaix. They had been having a rough time, and I saw myself where a shell had broken in the wall of one of the upstairs rooms. During the Saturday afternoon I got my parcels, and that night we moved down into the reserve trenches. We were not in a bad little place, and expected to stay about a week; but our surmises were falsified when some other Australian battalion relieved us on the Monday night. Our move took us back right to the other side of Sailly and the Lys, the division being near the billet and the Divisional Bomb School. Here we stayed till the following Sunday, while everyone wondered what was going to be our next place. Rumours floated around that we were to have a period of rest, which means active training back in some village away from the line. When the move actually came about on the Sunday it was back to our old haunts of Merris and Outersteene. But here we stayed less than 48 hours, leaving late next evening to march for Bailleul and a railway journey—where? Everyone immediately answered the Somme, and so it was; but not straight there, of course. The station where we detrained was called Fienvillers-Candas, and it lies in the district of Amiens, which seems to me, metaphorically speaking, the core of the Somme district. A march of eight miles or so brought us to the first halt, an idyllic little village known as Domart-en-Ponthieu. But the battalion had not come to taste the rural delights of this ideal valley home, and next day landed the column up in the town of Vignacourt. Here I saw again my good friend Vance, and contrived to post you a green envelope letter which will, if received, have been my only missive for the mid July mail. Roy

Wunsch was good enough to present me with a green envelope as the articles are scarce.

At Vignacourt the inhabitants were most inordinately and unreasonably uncivil. The old man growled and fumed quite openly at the billet because of our presence. I was not at all sorry when three or four mischievous spirits in the platoon caught and killed the few rabbits which the people kept in hutches. The scurrying scamper of the bunny hunt was killingly funny, as it was accompanied by squealing from the victims and vigorous whacking from the pursuers. It surprised me that this escapade was not discovered next day before we left, but in all justice to Australian behaviour I must insist that this is quite the only incident I have seen or heard of during all our stay in France. The next place after Vignacourt was Allonneville, which was reached after a long march round through Flesselles, Bertangles and Coisy. We had made a big detour by this time, which had brought us round seven kilos. or so to the east of Amiens, and the following Sunday saw us marching through a number of villages, the names of which I forget except the last three—Contay, Vadencourt, and our destination, Warloy-Baillon. Sunday, Monday and Tuesday the battalion remained at W.B. The whole of the First Brigade was here, and during the stay I saw Alec. Clark and Cyril. On the Wednesday afternoon the two chaplains held services as if we were going into something serious. This was the actual day that the battalion moved, July 19th.

I was fortunate enough to go up in the advance party with my corporal, a splendid fellow named Wallin. The advance party was conveyed by two or three old London 'buses part of the way that the main body had to march. It was not half bad being whisked along the road on the upstairs seats, stooping every now and then to avoid the branches of the trees on either side. En route I noticed with interest another 'bus, which had been transformed into a travelling aviary for carrier pigeons. These birds were evidently in practical use.

Between Hedeauville and Bouzincourt, too, we passed very close underneath one of our observation balloons, of which there was a great number in this part during the July moves. I had never noticed one of these so close before; it was attached by strong guy ropes to the ground, from which it must have been distant by about six or seven hundred feet, and the balloon itself struck me as being a great deal bigger than I had beforehand judged the type to be.

After Bouzincourt we marched down the road to the town of Albert, which had been quite near the line before the British successes, but is now five miles away from the front trenches. Its previous proximity to the line was eloquently testified to by the pathetic ruin of its once splendid basilica. This church was distinguished by a beautiful gilded statue of the Virgin and Child, directly surmounting the pinnacle of the tower. Now, owing to the German bombardments, this statue has fallen from the perpendicular to a position forming an acute angle something less than 90° with the line of the ruined tower. It seems quite a miracle that the image should have been arrested in its descent, so that the woman, with the child held high aloft, seems to have been permanently frozen in the act of diving down to the street. Rumour has it that the superstitious inhabitants believe peace will ensue when the Virgin falls to the ground.

On that Wednesday evening we marched straight through to the south-east corner of Albert, over a railway line, and then branched up in a more northerly direction. Passing through a small stretch of wooded ground containing a few ruined walls and houses I was amused by the greetings of two very English chaplains to our little columns. They were engaged in sorting out packets of cigarettes when we came by. Says No. 1: "Hullo! the Anzacs, isn't this splendid?" Then, amid their mutual delight and amazement, No. 2 added jokingly: "You know we give you twenty-four hours to do it." Jolly fellows, these, all the same, and whatever the "it" was they had no doubt the renowned Anzacs would be well up to the mark.

After that we got into ground which had been recently the scene of pretty warm work. Here, at last, I saw what a real battle-ground was like. In the trenches before, somehow or other, the beautiful stretches of green fields and trees behind the line had clothed with a fair garment, as it were, the hideous and repulsive scars of war. But in this part the ground was pitted all over the place with shell holes, and in many spots a little wooden cross marked the last resting place of the fallen.

Soon we came down to where some of our artillery was working with a deafening and incessant din. It was curious to stand in front of the guns to see the men place the belching steel mouth in position to observe the flash, the loud report and then to note how mouth and frame recoiled like some great vicious monster snake after striking its prey.

At the dump we all sat down and waited by the different waggons, water carts, etc. I saw a few wounded being taken down, but not many. In the interval of rest Charlie Wallin and I dined on oatmeal biscuit and cheese, for it was not till very nearly dark that we got our guides, men of the Northumberland Fusiliers, who were to direct us up to our position. It is not properly dark in this part of the world just now till ten o'clock or after, so we moved up in the gathering dusk. I thought it quite the most extraordinary part of the front I had seen. Sometimes we were in communication trenches, and sometimes it seemed to me mere trackless waste perforated with shell holes. Fortunately the German artillery did not "strafe" us on the way up. In the first trenches we reached the officer did not seem to know where we had to go. They told us what English regiment was to be on our left, but they were not quite sure whether there was to be one on our right. So we sat down, rather weary and ill-humoured, in a trench which had been quite recently taken, and contained very deep German dugouts. Some of these we were afterwards informed, on quite creditable authority, had been fitted up for the Hun officers with remarkable lavishness and comfort. The end of the journey was reached soon after this in a series of trenches, which were being held by the Durham Light Infantry just opposite the village of Pozieres. From the conversation of an English officer, who spoke in a monstrously affected tone quite belying his real simplicity and genuineness of character, I soon discovered the fact that we had been brought there to take Pozieres. The officer was most obliging and informative about the whole position, explaining where lay the different captured villages of which we had heard so much—Contalmaison, La Boisselle, Ovillers la Boisselle, and the rest. He added that the Durhams had been in the district a good spell, but for which they would probably have had to go over against Pozieres. (Some had actually attacked but suffered heavy losses before this.) Our men took over from them about 1 o'clock in the morning, and as it had been a very considerable march from Warloy-Baillon everyone was pretty well exhausted. Later on that Thursday morning our platoon sergeant, Brew by name, was badly hit in the arm with a piece of shrapnel, and went away. It was not too pleasant after all having the enemy's shrapnel pumping round you. But our position was a million times preferable to that of the Germans, who must have passed through a veritable hell on earth over there in the ruins behind the ragged line of shell-tattered trees which constituted the remains of the village.

The British artillery superiority was quite unquestionable. It was terrible to see the heavy explosives strike the earth and cast up a kind of dense geyser of black earth and clods of dirt. The geyser would rise to about 20 or 30 feet in the air, and then subside again. And it was not only two or three shells like this; our pleasant foe would be regaled with a whole feast of the stuff. My word! Fritzie had some cruel.

We could look out over the parapet of our trenches and observe all this entirely without fear of rifle or machine gun fire. The Germans were not sniping but reserving their strength in this department for when an advance should be made.

On the Friday it was rumoured that we should surely hop the parapet that night. I felt rotten about it all day; but at night the word was passed along that there was "nothing doing." Instead, it took place the next night, or rather early on the Sunday morning, and, strangely enough, I was not half so worried or ill at ease. One seems to be much more settled when one knows decisively what is to happen. We hopped the parapet about 12.30 a.m., creeping on our stomachs and lying down whenever the Germans sent up their brilliant flares. Meanwhile the British artillery was pouring a positively awe-inspiring bombardment upon the tree trunks and ruins of Pozieres. The continued vivid flashes of red and yellow flame made both trees and ruins very clear, and altogether it was a remarkable sight! (Incidentally, the air was rendered so acrid and tainted with dust and explosives that as we came up I thought for a moment we had all been gassed.) I was terrified by the row, and felt little splinters of stuff striking my legs as I crawled, but inflicting no damage. Soon, however, everyone got up and ran forward—or rather the movement became a diagonal affair in the direction of the right. What with the flares and the vivid artillery glare you could easily see the long ranks of men in battle order, carrying their bayonets at the high port and plodding steadily forward. It is not possible to "double" very fast under battle order with two bandoliers as well, not to speak of little etceteras, such as a steel helmet, two gas respirators, and two Mill's hand grenades, one in each pocket. (By the way I was deadly afraid the pins might work out of these and cause them to explode on me in transit.) But the distance was not far to our objectives, and everyone was soon across, waiting for our artillery to lift its shell curtain and enable them to seize the German trenches. Somehow or other at this point

Wallin and I got entirely lost, and wandered around for several hours amid scattered mobs in much the same bamboozled condition as ourselves. At one place an officer came up who seemed rather uncertain of the lie of the land as well. I recognised him as the elder of two brothers a'Beckett, who had been at Shore, and we shook hands there and then. However, hopping round after Wallin I soon lost sight of him. Wallin kept saying to me that we must stick with the crowd. He evidently thought it would be better if any Germans tried to take us prisoners, but I feared that machine guns might be trained on our scattered crews with deadly effect. No one would agree to follow some leader and move back together until we should find where our different battalions were digging in. Wallin, who is a fine big fellow, very cool, collected and practical, could not get more than one or two together. At last, about 20 past 3 we got into a trench and began digging with a lot of others. It was now practically daylight, and I was very thankful to be anywhere safe at all, as I had been growing worse and worse tempered all the time of our wandering about. A half an hour later we learned something of the whereabouts of our battalion, and reluctantly following Wallin I ducked and doubled along. We stumbled on most of our platoon just at the edge of the wood. Of course there had been a few casualties, but none killed they knew of, and it was great to be back with our own. I was tired out; Wallin sat down, dozing off as soon as we had recounted our experiences, and soon, after a very little digging, I lay down in a big shell crater behind the trench and slept the sleep of the dead. Our section sergeant who was in charge, and a few of the others, were already stretched out before me. The Sunday was amazingly quiet, but we had to move further along at night, which the Germans made a horror for us by shelling. Warner, my friend, and I could not sleep or even attempt to after an explosive brought a clogging inundation of earth round about us. We dragged ourselves to our feet, though considerably unnerved by the shock.

Next day we moved up a communication trench, taking advantage of some odd German rations on the way as we were getting pretty low in this department. It was curious enough to taste the black, sour bread, the biscuits and bully beef in round tins left behind them by the enemy. One of our fellows was swanking it terribly, too, in a beautiful japanned Prussian helmet with the eagle on the front in gilt! All day we had to endure the German bombardment, for our

own artillery was moving its position and could afford us no protection. Warner was hit in the back with shrapnel about mid-day. I was wondering what the night would be like—everyone had been enduring the trials of the day with most good-humoured patience—when I was hit in the left fore-arm about 5 o'clock. The piece lodged and the blood began to flow, so I was hastily bandaged up by a very splendid chap, a captain of the 4th Battalion, who gave me a tot of rum and despatched me for the dressing station. I bolted for dear life, and on the way was told by Duncan, a 'Varsity man, that Cyril had been killed. My God! What a shock! As yet I have not seen the actual casualty list of it, and will refrain from writing to his people till doing so. But, mother, you might go to her!

After the first, several more dressing stations saw me far into the night, but next morning I was an occupant of the Red Cross train, travelling to Rouen. With me were the section sergeant, McDougall, who received a slight neck wound just after me, and two fellows, Bill Myring and Merv O'Connor. Merv had been buried in debris just about the same place as Mac and I were hit. I was more than sorry to hear that one of the officers, who had been so good, had not been dug out when Merv left. He himself was pitiful to see, bent and doubled like an old man. I thought his spine must be badly injured, but he was not sent over here to Blighty as I learnt from Myring, who was, and is now, in the same ward as me.

At Rouen the doctors put me under the anaesthetic and removed the shrap. on the Wednesday morning. They were so nice—Australian doctors, nurses and orderlies of the 1st A.G.H. I could have kicked myself, however, for missing John Crawford. His motor depot was quite close, and I might have seen him though only in Rouen about 36 hours altogether. Still, it was useless to fret when I was safely aboard the hospital ship "Aberdonian," which left the Quay-side about noon on the Thursday.

An uneventful voyage to begin with on the lovely upper stretches of the Seine brought us off the Isle of Wight about 9 o'clock next morning. Southampton and a hospital train followed, bringing us here to Chichester about 3 o'clock. I was so disappointed at it not being London that I stupidly left the tiny cloth bag which had been given to me at Rouen and contained my sole belongings—a lone German souvenir buckle and a clasp knife—up on the carriage rack. Still,

I believe we are best down here in beautiful healthy West Sussex. The weather is fine and sunny, which simply suits us Australians to a T.

I have received letters to-day (August 2nd) from Aunt Anne and Mrs. Mailer. What a horrible shame it seems that Jim Crawford should not have been spared, but there is an appointed Guide of Life, and surely with all these heroic sacrifices we shall in time win a chastened and solemn victory. Only it seems too terrible for Uncle John and Aunt Tootie, specially when they had given of their hearts' blood before. The Mailers are going to come and see me, which is awfully good of them! As yet I have not heard from Mr. Bidmead, whom I must write to again, as I am very low in cash. It seems too heartless of me to mention my Arundel outing after our people's sorrow, so I shall make it the subject of a letter to someone else.

How are you all? I only hope you have been as mercifully preserved and sheltered as me. For the present, "good-bye," and I would waft you a scent of the pure, hay-laden English breeze! On the table near me are lovely sweet peas, maroon and flesh pink. If you were only here!

I am,

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

Ward C2 (Queen's Section),
Graylingwell War Hospital,

August 6th, 1916.

Dear Mother,—

Mr. Bidmead came down yesterday afternoon by the 3.52 train here. I only got his letter announcing the intended visit about two o'clock, and prepared to go and meet him on the spot. I was to know him by a brown suit and red sweet peas in his button-hole. The dodge was entirely successful, and as soon as the train pulled up I darted over to the benevolent-looking old gentleman and knew him for my friend. We walked slowly up the streets of the old city—I persist in calling it town, but it is, of course, a city—had tea and boiled eggs in a wee shop, as Mr. B. had only had a very light luncheon, and then proceeded up to the Market Cross, turning off there for the cathedral. This, the first English cathedral I have seen, is a lovely specimen of its kind even to my inexperienced eyes, and Mr. Bidmead seemed to be as pleased and delighted as was I, for Chichester and its cathedral was new to him, too. We did not make the mistake of some tourists and rush feverishly into all the side chapels, but contented ourselves with a leisurely inspection of the nave (isn't it the main body?) up to the place where a beautiful carved screen of rich old woodwork, marked by the steps leading up to it, the part where I supposed choristers and readers and ministers would pass to their places.

It was only a brief inspection, but I hope to again, and as many times as I can get out. The hospital is fine, but I would like to feel there was less restriction on our movements. Letters come nearly every day from the Largs folk, Mr. Bidmead or Mr. Mailer. Aunt Anne sent the local paper yesterday with the announcement of Jim Crawford's death in it. I am to post this on to you. Aunt Tootie sent me a nice wee note saying what a terrible blow they had felt it—she spoke as if Jim had been her own boy, as certainly he must have been by the ties of her care and upbringing. They are all very

eager for me to get up there for a good long holiday. Well, I have hopes, but it will not be very long.

Monday, 7/8/16. Mr. Mailer and Peggy came down yesterday and arrived up here about 12 o'clock. Myring could not go out to dinner but I did. We went to an hotel called the "Dolphin," with its entrance through a little archway into a cobbled yard. Upstairs there was some fine old furniture, china, candlesticks and other articles of "virtu" dear to the hearts of Auntie and yourself. After dinner we got a taxi, drove to Graylingwell, and there picked up Billy Myring. The drive we took was down to a nice little resort on the Channel called Bognor. It was just a whisk through, but we caught an impression of the fine promenade, the clean, white beach, the pier and the gentle blue waters of the Channel—oh! so quiet compared with our surging Pacific swell. Still, I am told, the Channel can be as disagreeable as most stretches of sea water when the weather is bad. Just now the latter is halcyon.

At Chichester again we had a stroll round the cathedral, where we sat down in the back seats through a sweet though interminable anthem, finishing up again at the "Dolphin" for tea. After tea we sat and chatted in the smoking room as the weather is warm; our guests had had a lot of walking, and Billy Myring finds perambulation difficult on account of his back. According to Mr. Mailer "Kilburn" is a very full house at this time, as Miss Millar, poor Jim's fiancee, and young Mrs. John are there in addition to all the other members of the family. Hence it would not be an unfavourable time for Aunt Anne and Aunt Tootie to take a holiday. You know the latter has hinted in letters that some of them will try and come to see me, though I have very carefully refrained from all semblance of **asking** either Aunt Anne or Aunt Tootie to come. Honestly, I think it would really be best if they **did not**; but no matter!

In the matter of hospitality I am getting into a "rattled" condition (as Tembarom would say), but possess a very clear inner consciousness that to preserve my independence and offend no one it would be infinitely preferable to stay at neither the Mailer's nor Mr. Bidmead's. You will probably perceive father's psychology working under this, though I certainly do intend, if possible, to stay a week at "Kilburn" and consider myself justified. This all rests on whether I get furlough or not, but I should be decidedly disappointed if I had to go back

to France without it. By a letter this morning, which I have read since the last sentence, Aunt Anne asks me to come straight to Scotland and half speaks as if she might come back with me to London for a few days. This would be a good scheme, I fancy, as evidently she and Aunt Tootie realise I am not in any condition to justify their coming down on my account.

The Mailers left last evening by the 6.13 train for Victoria Station. Really he was awfully good to me, and I felt positively embarrassed by his kindness. I must try and repay them, if possible, in London. Peggy is slight and very fair, reminding me in some respects of Viv Vallentine, though rather taller. She has a much more delightful Scotch accent than her father. They had photos of the son Jack, who is in training somewhere on the east coast, a fine, big chap in kilts, though his eyesight has kept him in this country so far. Peggy said he only passed the eye test by learning up the letter board and repeating it! Bluff, eh?

On Saturday morning I received an almighty influx of mail—three large envelopes, making a total aggregate of 28 letters. A lot of these had been sent back to the base when I was in hospital last June, so I wrote to the authorities on arrival here, and was more than pleased and thankful to receive such a rich and abundant harvest. Nineteen were friends, but nine were home, i.e., yours, father's, auntie's and the children's. (By the way, please speak to Betty diplomatically and tell her she ought to be able to write a little better at the age of nine, much though I am delighted to receive her present hieroglyphics.) There were three from Mac, two from Mr. Walmsley, two from Edgar Johnson, two from Margaret Crawford, a p.c. from Keith and a letter from Aunt Susan, and one each from Mills, who has enlisted (I am glad) in spite of two appendicitis attacks, though he has since been ill; Helen, Geo. Gill, Billy Burke, Mrs. Grinrod, Aunt Anne and Mr. Bidmead. All, of course, old letters, but good to receive.

Do you know a chap named Littler from Tasmania who was a boarder at the house just when I went there—we arrived together—has received the Military Cross—the first Shore man to gain this distinction I should think? He was a second lieutenant in the 1st Battalion, and I saw him on board the "Invernia." This is fine, isn't it? I suppose you will have this news by cable.

I am so glad you got the parcel with the shawls and collars. You see I had not known for certain about their safe arrival till now. It pleased me mightily to think of you and Auntie airing them on the balcony and reading the letters and cards. For the present I will write no more, but hope to add a little to-morrow. My friend Myring has been marked for convalescent home by the doctor, though it seems absurd when he can only hobble round with difficulty. Mr. Mailer will be writing you by this mail I think.

Tuesday, August 8th. Yesterday afternoon I received further papers from Aunt Anne, which I will send you all together. In one there is a photo of Jim. By the same mail was a most beautiful post-card from the Rouen 1st A.G.H. orderly, Augstein by name. He was an awfully nice fellow, and we talked intimately on a number of subjects, among them Rupert Brooke, the poet, who was also a naval lieutenant and died at Lemnos in the Dardanelles fighting. You remember me reading some extracts of his in a December "Bulletin" Red Page. Well, by arrangement and promise I was to write Augstein on my arrival here, which I did, sending him a picture of the Grayling-well Chapel. This is his return, a copy of an exquisite picture housed in the Rouen Museum. Augstein wishes we might do the place together, which, of course, can never be, but I am sending you his beautiful card to put up on your mantelpiece, and if things are hard and wearisome for you to look at it and feel happier and softer from the lovely tranquility and charming innocence of this patient Griseldis.

Yesterday afternoon some ladies of the Australian branch of the British Red Cross came down here and issued out some small kit to us. The Australian Government can't afford to let the hospital issue us with the kit which British Tommies receive, as they have to pay the Imperial Government for the articles; but I suppose they can splash money away wholesale in Australia on contracts quite unnecessary, but entered upon to keep the all-devouring workingman employed. Ugh! So these ladies came, and I was glad I had not yet bought a razor, shaving brush and hair brush, with which they issued us. They also gave a good writing pad and envelopes, which will come in handy as I have oceans and oceans of correspondence one way and another. Let me tell you a secret! Just now, when I write an account of an outing or so forth, which seems satisfactory, I will duplicate or only change it slightly for another correspondent. This is rather lazy but practical in a way, for it is very wearisome searching round for another

phrase when you are either not ingenious enough to invent one or else the phrase itself cannot well be rendered clearer or more striking.

My wounds are healing at a lightning pace; they are closing in now more beautifully and healthier each morning. Within a week or so I suppose I will be gone. I am sure I will not be much happier in England, though we feel it being confined. Australians hate restrictions! This afternoon I hope to get out for a walk, but I shall post this letter before leaving so that it will be sure to catch the London mail of August 10th. These next two mails are P. and O.—no Orient steamer leaves for round the Cape till September 22nd. Phew! Mr. Bidmead, when down here, pointed out to me some cedars of Lebanon growing at the back here. I commented on their peculiar shape and he informed me that they would have to be brought from Palestine, and would probably be very old as their growth is very slow. I will close down now in great thankfulness at having obtained all your splendid letters. I do hope you, father and the kiddies are all well and happy. Mr. Bidmead seemed to think that father's expedient for cables would not have been countenanced. It struck me as most ingenious all the same.

JIM.

Sunday.

Graylingwell War Hospital,
Chichester,

August 13th, 1916.

Dear Mother,—

I have read over the letters, which arrived a week ago yesterday, several times—I mean the home ones, of course. Like the curious system of the Thibetan praying wheels, it is an unending pleasure to read through the nine again and again in a revolving order, shuffling the top one again to its bottom position as soon as it has been read. However, my last run over them this morning has made me feel that I should like something fresh, so perhaps I may write again to the base at Horseferry Road, Westminster.

My letter to you for the August 10th mail I closed down on the preceding day, Wednesday last. By the same mail the children should receive cards from me. I have sent a letter to Auntie, also, and a view of this place, taken from the recreation field, to Grandfather. By this mail I shall try and send one of these to George, as my card to you of the front entrance does not give anything like an adequate idea of the size and extent of the place. I am mad on sending cards, etc., to folk just now, and have certainly reeled off a good deal of correspondence—of a sort! But you can buy such pretty cards of the cathedral and other odd places about here that I can't resist the temptation of buying more and more.

The large folk write pretty continuously, and I had a letter also from Jenny, who is staying at Ayr for a short seaside holiday. Mr. Mailer and Mr. Bidmead have both written once this week, while on Friday morning I was surprised to receive a letter from Peg Fulton. Her brother is still in Egypt, and now is second in command of his brigade transport—I am not quite sure what transport actually, but I think it is brigade. This will be an anxious time for them, with fighting now east of the Canal, but I hope Robert is all right. Mr. Bidmead mentioned the cable inquiring about my progress, to which he replied suitably. It is amusing (pardon me, but it is) to think that you should be so concerned about my "Blighty" wound, surely one of the most comparatively painless man ever had. The incisions in the forearm have healed wonderfully, and my nurse, at least the

staff nurse who does the dressings, looks upon it more and more approvingly each morning. "It's really looking very nice, isn't it?" she'll say, and we beam mutual congratulations over the healthy red meat. (Hope I'm not disgusting you, but you see I've changed my mind, I should say opinion, now, and she is not now mentally "Katharina".) On Friday morning I was distressed to lose my platoon friend, Billy Myring, who departed for a convalescent camp at Epsom with a number of other Australian patients. The doctor marked him out rather summarily, it seemed to me, for no very accountable reason. Of course, in his case, it was a sort of fracture of the internal tissues rather than anything which required actual dressing attention. But they don't appear to like keeping the Australian patients longer than's necessary. This morning a letter arrived from Billy, and Epsom does not seem to have struck him badly, considering. He is a very nice-looking boy, mother, of three and twenty, not a lady killer, but everyone likes him. Our Channel Islands nurse, Bill and I got on very well together—now, worse luck, the companionship is broken.

Good heavens! D'you know Aunt Anne is coming here to see me on Tuesday, arriving in London Monday night? I was flabbergasted on receiving her telegram, but I am looking forward now in very pleased eagerness and anxious expectancy. It was on September 20th that we parted on David Jones' corner in Sydney. I am sure neither of us in the wildest dreams thought we should meet again in Chichester, England.

19/8/16. Aunt Anne's visit has been the main thing this week, of course, and I hope she enjoyed it as much as I did having her. She arrived up to see me at the hospital shortly after mid-day on Tuesday, put up at the "Dolphin," the premier pub of this locality, till Thursday, and departed that evening by the 5.14 p.m. train for Victoria Station. Of course, having her staying in Chichester I managed to get out on quite abundant leave—four and a half hours on Tuesday, seven on Wednesday and six on Thursday—so we managed to do quite a little bit of sightseeing together. Bognor claimed our attention on the first afternoon. The Channel, contrary to its conduct on my previous visit with the Mailers, was quite boisterous, and spray was dashing up and wetting the pavement of the promenade. A. A. and I had a real heart-to-heart talk, sitting in a little grassed enclosure, which had some shelter from the wind. We returned for tea in

Chichester about 3.45, very fortunately escaping a shower of rain which came on while we were in the taxi. After tea I saw her home to the "Dolphin," and then back to Graylingwell by six o'clock. Next morning A. A. came up to the hospital early, and I introduced her to our sister, an awfully nice woman, as I have probably told you before. I managed to get leave from 11 a.m., so we walked down to the city and about noon motored over the 12 odd miles to Arundel. Of course we wanted to see the castle, but nearly suffered grievous disappointment when, after an excellent luncheon at the Norfolk Hotel, we made for the lower entrance to Arundel and found that the visiting days were Monday and Thursday, while here were we on Wednesday! But we knocked, and the side gate was opened to us by a "canty auld wife," who very nicely announced that she could not allow us in but we might obtain entrance at the top gate. After negotiating the steep main street we knocked at the door beside the carriage gates, and were confronted by the august person of the keeper, Mr. Bauldry, who possessed that mature, fresh and mellow air of ten thousand times refined service and retainership, characterising the real old splendid type of henchman to the aristocracy. He informed us rather stiffly at first that we could not inspect the castle, and even about viewing the grounds he seemed distinctly dubious. On sizing us up, as it were, he returned, or I should say retired, from the door and apparently held conference with one inside. Then we were admitted, while the old boy facetiously warned us that there were a few sheep about and we might refrain from carrying them away! After going round by the carriage entrance and taking a peep in the castle yard we went up to an old green, used of yore for tilting, but now for tennis, and were presently joined by Mrs. Bauldry, a regular old gentle-woman, with whom her husband had probably conferred before our admission. Mrs. B. proved a veritable mine of information, though whenever her memory failed she always pleaded that her husband had it all at his finger tips. The first thing of interest she pointed out was a window in a very old portion just above the old drawbridge. This was the window through which the Empress Maude, Henry I's daughter, was reputed to have climbed out and escaped from Stephen's soldiers in the snow. The distance from the ground did not look too much for a resolute man to accomplish, but Maude must have been a very capable woman! You remember her son was our Henry II.

Leaving the castle which, by the way, is said to be the finest in South-Western England barring Windsor, we were shown up to the church where the Dukes of Norfolk rest in the vault below. The church is really formed by the Fitzalan and lady chapels, the buildings laying side by side and being joined for entrance to the further one by an aperture in the wall. Needless to explain, the lady chapel takes its title from a statue of the Virgin above the altar, around which the pavement is ornamented with beautiful glazed tiles of ebony and cream. Of interest are the old Misereres or carvings underneath the pew seats, which slip up like theatre seats to enable the monks to kneel for the prayers. I must confess the Misereres puzzle me, but evidently the worshippers leant back and obtained some support, as the carved piece of the Misericord sticks out from the uplifted seat. The seats have a curious interest to antiquarians, as the carvings are often secular in the extreme. Between the chapels beside the archway is a small peephole, evidently a relic of times of persecution (!! I mean persecution), and a most curious monument over the tomb of an unfortunate ancestor who died a prisoner in France. The monument has two shelves, as it were, one slab about three feet above the pavement, the other directly beneath it and almost on the flags. Both contain effigies of the same man. On top he is represented in full armour (the sword and scabbard, alas! are gone, hacked off by the Cromwellian soldiery, who did no end of similar havoc) with a diminutive replica of his faithful steed at the feet; but underneath we behold the poor devil a corpse, with sunken cheeks, grinning teeth, protruding ribs, and all the grim regalia attendant upon death! He lies buried exactly between the chapels, so that he may enjoy prayers from both for the repose of his soul. Curious idea, isn't it?

The founder of the Fitzalan chapel has properly enough pride of place among the tombs in that building, and lies clad in full robes and coronet with his lady wife, a Portuguese princess, at his right hand. She, by the way, wears the peculiar lampshade headdress which characterised the early years of the Lancastrian period, and at the feet of the effigy a pathetic interest attaches to the pair of little lap dogs. A striking sight in this building is the east window, with its fine, modern, stained glasses in memory of the present duke's first wife. There is an appropriate allegorical sense in the vast array of figures, among which appear the lady herself, while in the lowest parts of the window are some persons depicted in the flames of

purgatory—evidently there are purifying flames in purgatory as well as avenging fires in the other place.

Under a little stone arcade to the left of the altar we saw the memorial inscriptions of two Fitzalans, one of whom had married the sister of Elizabeth Woodville, Edward IV's queen. In a little part, off the Fitzalan chapel, is the tomb of the Duke's father, consigned to a new portion, as it would only clash with the antique monuments of the chapel itself. The effigy is very fine, however, and the woodwork fittings beautiful; while in a niche stands an image of St. Katharine, on whose day the man's death took place.

Mrs. B. was very careful to point out to us that mass was never celebrated at an altar till there was the mark of the cross engraved upon it. These crosses, often so tiny as to be scarcely distinguished, were carefully watched for by Aunt Anne and me in our walk round Chichester Cathedral next afternoon.

Before leaving Arundel, however, we looked at some of the beautiful brasses, inlaid above the tombs in the flagstones. Only a few of these brasses survive, as numbers were dragged out by the Puritan soldiers.

After seeing the little convalescent hospital just near the Chapels, Mrs. B. let us out the big front carriage gates, and we both expressed our indebtedness for all we had received, thinking ourselves very lucky to have seen Arundel at all, though the family were not in residence at the time. We went back to Chichester by train. On Thursday I got away from the hospital at 12 sharp and, after lunch, Aunt Anne and I made for the Cathedral. We were joined in our showing round with explanations from the sacristan by an interesting pair, a man and wife, who lived in Herefordshire, but were staying at Littlehampton, and doing the sights on bicycle. It was quaint, I can tell you, to see them later with the wee wife perched on a little seat over the back wheel of the machine, while the husband rode. He was a schoolmaster, A. A. thought, with features, which at first struck me as plain, but which, with time, earned your attention and even admiration. Both he and the "missus" were well up in art and literature and had seen a great many places of interest in London, the Fen country, and many other places. Among other things he told me, he could not appreciate Turner's pictures—they only seemed to him pictures **in the making!** (I always admire people, who judge even

masterpieces for themselves, and will not accept the stereotyped eulogies of others as final.)

On this Sussex country he advised me to read Hilaire Belloc's "Hills and the Sea," which is the passionate expression and description of a native, for H. B. was born near here in a little place called Slindon. In connection with this very beautiful place or Down country, too, Kipling's "Puck of Pooks Hill" holds much to interest and approve.

It is impossible for me to tell you all about the cathedral; there is such an appalling deal to be seen in it. The small Lady chapel, of course dedicated to the Virgin and embellished by modern though exquisite stained glasses, depicting scenes from her life, is a gem, however, and impossible to forget. You enter it through two old gates of beautifully delicate iron screen work. In other places, too, there are some lovely wrought iron screens unlike the gates of modern execution, but of antique design, so fine, however, as to make you imagine a peerless square of perfect lace had been flung between you and the stonework. The choir seats are noteworthy for possessing some good Misereres, but, as I said before, I am no judge of the things, nor am I of the different styles of architecture, Norman and so forth, of which the cathedral presents such a rich variety of different types. But I **did** like what my guide book calls the "coloured stones in the tympana of the triforium double arches." There is a grand, entirely satisfying sweep in these solemn, broad, Norman arches which gets down to one's very soul! The strange sculptures, reputed Saxon, though it is evidently a moot point, which depict the arrival of Christ and the Disciples at the house of Mary and Martha, and the subsequent and companion "Raising of Lazarus" were to A. A. and me killingly funny. I am going to send postcards of these two (D.V.) to Auntie, and you will then see for yourself what they are like. Really in the second sculpture the poor sisters look almost as miserable and forlorn as if Lazarus were being lowered into the tomb instead of being hoisted out of it. As I keep saying, there is such a terrible deal to be seen at this building that it would repay not one but six or seven visits, and even then you would always have something new to seize and interest your imagination. I have vague memories of two other lovely things—some stained glasses depicting scenes in the life of Mary Magdalene, and some modern paintings in the ancient style and spirit out of which there sticks in my mind the kneeling figure of a knight, clad in red with a great white cross

taking up the full length and width of his tunic, and possessing that intensely pure and fervid facial expression which we mentally associate with such types as Sir Galahad.

Well, there I think must be the finish for the cathedral, not forgetting to mention that we saw in the little museum part a book bearing the signature of its possessor, the famous Thomas Cromwell, an important though not exactly admirable figure in Tudor history.

After a short but pleasant stroll round the old precincts, redolent of that quaint, sleepy charm which surrounds these cathedral towns as with a delicately fragrant aroma, I saw A. A. off by the 5.14 train for London.

She sends me a card this (Sunday) morning to say that she will be staying with the Mailers till next Wednesday or Thursday, and asks me to write there.

The quack marked me out yesterday as my wounds have healed—and very expeditiously, too! He has put down, "Recommend Convalescent Home," but a number of Australians are being sent straight to the depot at Perham Downs, Salisbury Plains, and I greatly fear such will be my fate. I should have very much liked to have got with Billy Myring at Epsom and seen a little of London in my convalescent period, as he is doing. But let there be no repining. I have had a very good time so far, and sincerely trust I shall see Scotland, Largs and Lauderdale. (A. A. has proposed the latter trip.) I will break off for the moment as somebody wishes to use the pen.

21/8/16. On going down to see the Major this morning another Australian and I were both marked A.C.D., which means Australian Convalescent Depot. So we will be sent, to begin with, to this Perham Downs place. It won't be so bad, however, seeing fresh country like this, and I trust we shall obtain furlough as soon as possible. This afternoon a new convoy arrived, and we have now seven new patients in our room. The place will never seem quite the same to me with all these newcomers. Poor fellows; they are appreciating their delightful, new, scrupulously clean home. I helped to bathe one of them on their arrival. Walking cases can, of course, go to the bathroom themselves, but the others are sponged in bed. I suppose I shall leave here on Wednesday or Thursday, but will close up this long scrawl for postage before my departure. Meanwhile, I have written to Mr.

Bidmead with a request for £5—"siller" is just as well to have if I am going to be travelling in the near future.

I wonder how you are all getting on; no more letters have arrived from the base so I am very much in the dark about everything. It has been a splendid, quiet three weeks, and I am feeling quite fit and well. The arm is to have massage till I leave.

22/8/16. I only know this morning that you will have had the Fiji trip. What a good thing, and I hope you've had a heavenly time in these beautiful South Sea Islands. The news came—(1) a card from Aunt Anne, who was at Mailer's when a letter arrived from you! (2) a letter from Bidmead, enclosing "siller," and a letter from Auntie, which was worth ten times the "siller" to my mind.

Well, mother, "Good-bye" for the present, and I use the expression, as I must have told you Mr. Walmsley writes me, in its deeper sense of "God be wi' you." Curious how we forget the real meanings of words and expressions, and how these become glossed over and partially obliterated.

How are the children and father? I have written to Auntie, thanking her for her letter, and am sending cards of Chichester by this mail to George, Betty and Mary.

I am, your loving son,

JIM BLACKWOOD.

Saturday, 1/9/16.

"Laudale,"

Strontian,

West Highlands.

N.B.

Dear Mother,—

It was rather extraordinary, but immediately after my last letter to you I left the Graylingwell Hospital. Your letter was posted on the Tuesday evening, and not long after breakfast on the Wednesday morning the staff nurse came along with a slip of paper, which announced that we were to draw our kit, receive pay and leave before 1.30 p.m. the same day, all of which was rather disturbing and certainly surprising. However, we did go, seven of us, and we were told our destination was to be the Australian Convalescent Depot at Perham Down, Salisbury Plain. It was odd, seven of us just on our own, with no non-com. in company to be even virtually responsible for our actions. The train journey was to be via Fratton and Andover, but unfortunately we got carried on past Fratton and rolled into the next station along the line, which happened to be Portsmouth. Trust Australians instinctively to make for the towns! There was nothing for us to do at Portsmouth but wait for the next train in the direction whither we were bound, which was to leave at 5 o'clock, so we had really a good long stretch of time on our hands. Somebody suddenly remembered that Nelson's historic "Victory" lay in Portsmouth Harbour, and of course it was straightway suggested we should pay a visit. An old salt with a "W. W. Jacobs" exterior agreed to row us out and back at the rate of 9d. per head, and we were soon over the smooth grey waters by the side of the famous ship. It was a very hurried run over we had, owing to the slight miscalculation of the time when our train left, for we felt it might be rather unsafe for us to make any other egregious errors about train travelling—for that day at any rate. Still we saw the place where Nelson fell, and in the consummate heroism of the man one is bound to forget and forgive his absurd folly of dressing so that he was one of the most outstanding figures on the deck, and refusing his friends' advice to cover his magnificence with a cloak. Near this spot now lies the boat which conveyed the body up the Thames from Sheerness—the obsequies evidently being conducted with marked pomp and ceremony and the

boat having a canopy over the body. A naval man, distinguished by two naval medals and a wheeze, at once cardiac and asthmatic, gave us his guide speeches at a rate which sorely tried his breath; but in spite of this we were shown all the main parts of interest. Down in the dim cockpit lingered much of the mystery of the past when we looked by the murky light of the lantern on the spot, now embellished with laurel leaves, where the great admiral was conveyed and died with all his friends around him. The idea of the times was that the cockpit, being beneath the water-line, should be a safe resting place for the wounded, since the canon balls only took decisive effect by making holes in the ship above the water-line. Just near this spot, where Nelson breathed his last, stands the table where the surgeon did amputations, and in the barbarous manner of the age then dipped the stump into warm pitch to stop the subsequent bleeding. How horrible it is when you think of it!

After our 15-minute stunt, which was American rather than Australian, our old "salt" rowed us back to the land, and we arrived at the station to find that there was still an hour to spare. It was occupied in having some tea and then walking round the municipal gardens where, among other things of interest, stands a little monument, after the style of a pagoda, which houses a real old Chinese bell. This was a spoil at the time of the taking of the Taku Fort, in the Pekin Legation fighting of 1900. Its inscription is translated into an English tag of verse, under the rather grandiose heading, "Perpetual Felicity Achieved." The words I only wish were true in our case:—"Come pleasant weather and gentle rain, the Empire happy, at peace again!"

During the afternoon in Portsmouth I met a wounded lance-corporal of the 1st Battalion whom I had known at Holdsworthy, and who was rather friendly with Stobo. The lance-corporal himself had a wound in the right arm, which he thought might secure his return to Australia, but he did not know anything of Stobo beyond that he had been gassed, which was certainly news to me!

From Portsmouth our journey lay up by Southampton West, and we finally reached our destination (Ludgershall Station) about 8 o'clock. In the convalescent depot I was delighted to meet Warner and my corporal, Wallin, who had been wounded on the day after me. All Thursday was spent here in arranging about our railway journey passes, etc., and in addition to these I managed to get Australian

"breeks" and tunic, though these were not in issue in the depot. Like several others I bought them off the reinforcement men, who were only too glad to get rid of the spare articles for a little ready money. Still, it is rather a shame that we should not have had them issued to us, for I would not buy tailor-made expensive things just for a fortnight's furlough. It is not worth it!

On Friday morning we started, in great excitement, for London, which we reached about 1 o'clock, standing bewildered for a moment as we came out of the Waterloo Station.

6/9/16. I must leave this letter in a very unfinished condition. You will see from the commencement that it was practically written during a most enjoyable though brief visit to the West Highlands with Aunt Anne. Really I have had positively no time for writing, what with the rush of seeing sights and meeting friends and relations, etc. You must just understand that I have been most kindly received both by our friends in London and the Scotch folks, both at Largs and Lauderdale. When I go back to Perham Down I must try and write you a bulletin of events, but it is scarcely possible at present. To-day we are going to Greenock for lunch with Aunt Mary, and I am to be shown "Denniston" and "Roseneath House" and a number of other places and people in your native town. One day last week we were over at "Pitcon," and had a fine time with the Fultons. Mr. Fulton is a fine man, and the whole family were very kind. Our photos have been taken about six times during the afternoon, which was rather a strain. Now, I believe they have not come out too well, but I hope they send you one of them. Aunt Anne received yesterday some photos of the Mailers and herself taken during her last London stay. One of them is awfully good—Aunt Anne and Bob Mailer leaning round just behind her head.

I am afraid that this is all I will manage for this mail, beyond maybe cards to Auntie and Mac. I have already sent cards to the children just when we were at Fort William. With this I will close, hoping you are all well.

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

Saturday.

Perham Downs,

Andover,

Hants.

September 9th, 1916.

Dear Mother,—

You would have every reason to be hurt by my very meagre epistle of last mail, but at the same time I think you will recognise the practical impossibility, or at least the extreme difficulty, of writing fully when I was in a chaotic state of travelling and seeing innumerable people and places. However, here at the depot, I trust I will have ample time to repair the omission caused by the hurry and bustle of the past fortnight. In the earlier letter I stopped my full account of occurrences just at our arrival in London, and from the Waterloo Station where, figuratively, I left you standing in my last, I see no reason why I should not lead you over the bridge to where we took up our lodging on the other side.

It was indeed an odd sentiment we felt at beholding so many of the things and places we had so often heard tell of from afar now suddenly and even roughly flung before our astonished gaze. The place we had first to find was the King George and Queen Mary Home at 82 Charing Cross Road. Mr. Mailer had previously given me at Chichester a map and guide to London, and, as only one of us, Warner, knew the place at all—and even he not very well, having lived mainly in Gravesend—the little book proved an enormous help. Indeed, after a short 'bus ride we arrived at our place quite accurately and speedily.

After dinner my two acquaintances from Graylingwell, Bond and Allison, and I arranged about our beds for that night. The club was really a most cheap and convenient institute, as you got a bed and private cubicle for 1/-, and could keep it for any number of succeeding nights by registering your claim before noon daily. Lady voluntary workers managed the restaurant, which provided quite excellent meals at the lowest possible figure, so the average soldier on furlough finds this a really splendid place to make headquarters if he has no friends. Allison and I were quite delighted with our stay, specially as the Charing Cross Road situation was so extremely handy

for any place we wished to visit. That same afternoon, Warner, the other two and I visited Horseferry Road. Beyond seeing what this London depot was like I did not gain any material advantage from the place in cash or clothes, so, after a short look at the immense casualties, which I soon gave up as hopeless—they were all higgledy-piggledy, in absolutely no alphabetical order—I made enquiries of a policeman as to the location of New Broad Street. The policemen are simply walking encyclopaedias of London direction, and if ever at a loss I never hesitated to hop up to a "bobby," who always managed to put me on the right track. New Broad Street I wanted to see specially, because there was the London office of the Commonwealth Bank, which place I intended visiting. As I have several times explained to you, this was the place where I arranged to have my allotment money paid, so it was with some anxiety and excitement that I approached the place. My Westminster peregrinations had, however, taken some time, and I only arrived when payments had ceased. However, I made the portentous enquiry of a lady attendant as to whether my pass-book was safely there. There are evidently some awful complications about books, and for a few dread minutes I wondered whether somehow or other I had not been done. However, the book, No. 113,345, was at last discovered, and I felt fit to kiss the good-looking young woman over the counter. But I don't think even lovers would kiss in the cold, commercial interior of a bank, and I merely passed out and enquired for St. Mary Axe, which lay, I knew from the guide book, just about this quarter of the city. When I arrived, Mr. Bidmead was out, but his second in command, a Mr. Page, received me most kindly and courteously. He proceeded to look up Scottish trains by the Midland Railway, and for the moment I settled on Sunday night for my departure. I was to visit Mr. Bidmead on the Sunday afternoon.

Down again into the London streets, now very wet and uncomfortably shelterless without an overcoat, but I felt quite a deal of exultation at having managed so many places successfully in the one afternoon. It was late, but still I resolved to have a go at reaching 43 Drury Lane and finding Mr. Mailer. Well, I did reach Drury Lane, but suffered the momentary disappointment of finding my friend was out. Still, he was only having tea at the nearest Lyon's Restaurant in Bow Lane, so I was told! Even this did not seem too promising, as I felt diffident of finding anyone in an entirely strange restaurant. But at last I

did get Mr. Mailer, who was amazed to see me, and communicated the astonishing news that Aunt Anne had not gone back, as I expected. Nay, more, he was actually to meet her and Jack, to take them for a 6 o'clock music-hall entertainment. It was fairly late, but Mr. Mailer and I got hold of Allison at the club and the three of us set off to meet the others. Mr. Mailer sent me ahead to surprise Aunt Anne, but I don't think she said or did anything as startling as he had hoped she might. Still, it was a fine surprise, and here was Jack, too, on four days' leave, so I had come up at a most opportune time. The Palladium was where we went—a house which gives its performance three times a day, an arrangement which must surely be pretty hard on the artists! It is quite a new and excellently built theatre, with no interruptive pillars and a clear view from practically all parts. The performers had the weird variety of the average vaudeville "melange." Nella Webb was on, rather better than when I saw her last year; there was a neat and clever girl of the Vesta Tilley male impersonator class; a contortionist, so supple as to be almost horrible, and an excellent musical turn by an octette of ladies and gentlemen in Georgian costume. But to my mind the bright and particular star of the evening was Little Tich. He gave three character sketches, the best of which were the first and last. It was a marvel to me how he got all he did out of the first, a tax collector monologue, as his props were merely a worn top hat, walking stick and an apologetic-looking handbag. But his alcoholic proboscis, in addition to the general impression of the odd, dwarfed figure, struck me as killingly funny. He finished his turn as a deplorable-looking old female, resembling a cross between a broken-down ballet dancer and a pantomime dame, with several meagre "ratty" pigtails, and, of course, a remarkable pair of black "breeks" beneath his voluminous skirts! (By the way, this reminded me of wee George on certain occasions.)

As the night was still comparatively young, Allison, Jack Mailer and I went to see the latter half of what its management pleased to call a revue—the most fearful trash you ever sat out in all your life! To me the curious thing about it was that the majority of the audience did not appear to consider it so awful after all. Some of the talent was quite respectable, the staging excellent and quite original, but the authors ought simply to have been boiled.

We parted from Jack in the strange twilight of the midnight streets, and for myself slept very light after the tremendous excitement of this tumultuous Friday. Next morning, immediately after breakfast, I was off to buy an Australian hat down in the Horseferry Road parts, and after fixing up for it and a new set of badges I got up again to the New Broad Street bank in time for the opening of business at 10 a.m. The place was simply crammed with soldiers, and as it is small, the lady attendants few and not over brisk, I took a deal of time drawing my money. It gave me some satisfaction to know, however, that I had £32/6/6 to my credit, and I proceeded to draw £15, of which I have used a little over half. Perhaps you may think me foolish to have drawn so much, but on reflection I considered that this was likely to be my one decent furlough for a good while, and I might as well try and make the best of it. So I drew the notes and put them safely away in my pocket book. From the bank I proceeded down to Drury Lane, where I got Allison and Mr. Mailer. Later Jack joined us, and with Mr. Mailer as cicerone we were taken round some of the main London sights. These included the Houses and Westminster Abbey—two places, of course, possessing supreme interest for me.

The pictures in the Houses were fine and rather made up for the fact that I did not secure time to visit any of the galleries. In the room where Royalty dresses before proceeding to the Lords there were several large canvases representing different episodes of the Round Table stories. Further on were two magnificent and colossal studies of Trafalgar and Waterloo, almost filling up the sides of a small lobby section. To my mind the Lords gave an impression of suitable pomp and dignity, but it was in no way so large a chamber as photographs had wrongly conveyed to my imagination. Again, the Commons, though sufficiently business-like and sober in appearance, had nothing very distinctive about its general atmosphere. Still, it was very gratifying to see these august and famous halls, and no one can say the ornate and elaborate architecture and sculpture, both outside and inside, does not do justice to these central homes of law and order in the British Empire. The Abbey is just now sandbagged in parts, presumably against the effects of possible Zepp. bombs. But it would be a fearful pity were it to be struck even slightly—certain parts could never be perfectly replaced, as can be well understood.

No. 10 Downing Street, which we saw next, has the most unassuming front possible on the Downing Street side, but broadens out to quite a respectable looking affair on the other side, which faces Whitehall. The Horse Guards at Whitehall are, I suppose, world famous, and you must, like your son, have marvelled at the combined stolid impassivity of both steed and mount.

After meeting Anne further up town, Allison and I had lunch with her at one of the well-known Lyon's Restaurants. We were to do a theatre in the afternoon, and as Saturday matinees are usually crammed the outlook for getting a seat was not too promising. In fact we could not get in at all at the two popular successes, "Razzle Dazzle" and the "Bing Boys." Turning away from the latter, Aunt Anne suggested Daly's Theatre, which also lay in the Leicester Square quarter. We got fairly decent seats in the pit, and though at first the performance struck me as decidedly dull, it improved and I enjoyed this only "straight" piece I saw in my furlough quite as much as any other thing. The comedians take things much more quietly and slowly than in Australian productions, where the humour is generally inclined to be broad and emphasised. After settling down to their pace I enjoyed them thoroughly, specially a very clever wee fellow, Lauri de Frece, who is, I imagine, now the husband of Fay Compton, widow of the late Mr. "Follies" Pellisier. The only man I knew was Frank Wilson, who had a middling sort of part with no singing. The play, called "A Happy Day," is a kind of imaginary kingdom story with a prince and princess, who meet, one believing the other an ordinary person, at a Bohemian "rendezvous." Of course the alliance officially desired but personally detested by both sides comes about by a final, mutual attachment and agreement. To me the finest artist among the ladies was the central figure of the Bohemian act, a girl named Josie Collins, who was perfection both in singing and acting and movement. The staging was particularly striking in her best song, when she was lifted up on a chair, beautifully decorated, and borne by the frequenters of the restaurant, while red, green and golden lights were flooded from different quarters on the darkened scene. Another ripe, elderly actress, Rosina Filippi, was strikingly humorous as the princess's guardian and friend. All through, one might say, the setting and "ensemble" were perfect. Another beautiful picture was that of the peasants, barbarically clad in vivid and various hues, presenting their wedding gifts of fruits and plants to the princess.

After tea, in another Lyon's Restaurant, where we met Peggy, there was an adjournment out to New Southgate. Old Mrs. Mailer received us most kindly, and is really wonderful for 74. The whole family have been the soul of goodness to me. I was amused to be shown all my photos from earliest years right up to the last May Moore ones. It was funny to see the old Talmas with me, seated on grandfather's and father's knees!

As this was to be my only visit to this home I stayed very late and was seen off, along with Allison and Mr. Mailer and Jack, about 11 o'clock. From Finsbury Park we caught the tube to the Leicester Square Station, which saw us quickly home. On conferring with Aunt Anne it had been found preferable to travel north on Monday morning rather than Sunday night.

Next morning (Sunday), immediately after breakfast, Allison and I caught a 'bus round to Victoria Station, whence we easily found our way in front of Buckingham Palace. We were rather doubtful at first about the drab-looking facade, but on enquiry discovered we were actually in front of George's residence. After taking a glance at the lovely and comparatively recent Victoria Memorial we made for St. Pauls, and arrived there about 11.15 a.m., when service had already started. It was astonishing, however, the number of people who walked around during proceedings with no marked irreverence, certainly, but still with a crying lack of order and seemliness. The building itself is somehow responsible for this phenomenon, I fancy, as it wears its 200 odd years of existence lightly, and though noble and beautiful, somehow fails to inspire true religious awe and devotion. The interior frescoes under the great dome, where we sat and listened to the sermon, were very beautiful, and struck me as possessing quite appropriate breadth and dignity. Strange to tell, the sermon was not of the only too usual doddering Anglican type, but simple, great and splendid. The preacher, a Mr. Cardew, whose church is St. George's, Paris, tersely urged us to cleanse the sins and errors from our own land as well as preventing the sins and errors of modern Germany from overrunning and contaminating Europe and the world. "Look for the mote in thine own eye" was his sentiment. On reaching the front portico after service we were met by grey streets, leaden skies and pelting rain. This to Allison and me, both relying foolishly on the treacherous London climate and overcoatless! There was nothing to do but make tracks for our home. This made me rather late in

arriving at West Croydon on my visit to Mr. Bidmead, and I might incidentally remark that I carried the worrying coat through quite clear weather in my walk from the station. They had anticipated me arriving at East Croydon Station from Charing Cross instead of from London Bridge to the other station as I actually did arrive. The only sufferer by my stupidity with regard to London trains was the son, Mr. Arthur, who waited some time in an unavailing attempt to meet me. After dinner the afternoon passed quite agreeably, and in the end I weakly consented to stay the evening and night. You will possibly be surprised at me doing this, and I suppose father, too. However, after consenting to the urgent invitation I just settled down and enjoyed the stay fine. Mrs. Bidmead, who is a fine-looking, white-haired English gentlewoman, showed me two cloisonne vases which father had brought her last time. She possesses, among other things, a lovely collection of old china.

In the evening I walked with Mr. Arthur and Miss Vera to see the two main Croydon sights, the Whitgift School and the old Alms-houses. The latter was the quaintest little place possible, right in the centre of the town, but preserving its little court yard and gentle precincts quite inviolate from the bustle which reigned out in the main street. The old ladies and gentlemen had the pathetic and faded look of old age closing its days in dependence on charity; but they did not seem unhappy. One old lady said she had boys "out there" (meaning France), and another hard old seed, waving his hand in farewell to us, urged me to "give 'em another" from him.

I might remark here that during this fortnight I became quite inured to all the accompaniments of constant change; and, far from feeling a strange room and strange bed, provided they were comfortable, never failed to have refreshing sleep after rather exhausting days. Here at Bidmead's, where I had not even intended to stay, I slept like a top till 6 a.m. when it was necessary for me to get up and bath. Breakfast followed at 7 for us two travellers, and at 7.40 Mr. Arthur and I caught the train for London, arriving at Charing Cross by 8.13 a.m. Here we parted, and I immediately hurried up to catch Allison at the club as he was travelling with us as far as Carlisle on his way to friends up in Dundee. Time was scarce, but we managed, with the aid of the ever convenient tube, to reach Euston Station before 9, and get along to St. Pancras for the Midland a few minutes after the hour. We got Mr. Mailer and Aunt Anne

safely, who had managed to keep us seats in the dining car, so at 9.30 a.m. we waved our farewells to Mr. M. and rolled gracefully out on our way to Bonny Scotland.

The journey was not a bit monotonous to me, and it was interesting to pass through the manufacturing centres, though the country, naturally enough, was always cleaner and more beautiful to see. One little place, Chesterfield, impressed itself on my memory, with its little church tower, all built to one side after the style (a little) of Pisa's Leaning Tower. After Carlisle we had afternoon tea passing through Gretna, now full of huts for munition work, and were soon at Dumfries. On the way from here to Glasgow Aunt Anne pointed me out "Moorpark" and "Sti-pends" at Cumnock. From Glasgow we caught a train about 7.20 p.m., arriving in Largs about 9 to receive a most affectionate welcome at the station from Uncle John and Margaret, who drives the car quite wonderfully. It was great to see them all I can tell you, in the lovely spot where stands "Kilburn," and whence you look out towards Bute, the Cumbraes and Arran. Coming along the coast it had been so clear that we could plainly see the jagged peaks of the lastnamed, and also far out to sea the lonely crags of Ailsa Craig. "Kilburn" was fairly full about the time of my arrival, for besides all the family there were Bentley McMillan, a boy about George Crawford's age, and also a chap a little older called Stephen Salton. The latter is a cousin somehow, and they were both helping along with George at getting in the corn. It must have been pretty hard work, for afterwards Uncle John got four soldiers down to help. These were peculiar specimens, we were told, but they only arrived after Aunt Anne and I left for the Highland trip.

In the long evening light Margaret took me a walk round the at present empty house of Brisbane. The last laird was a peculiar devil, whose physiognomy was compared by everyone I heard talk of him as very similar to that of Aunt Anne's wee Pekinese, Nero! The house bears the mark 1636 on a stone high up at one end, and just now I believe the legal heiress is trying to get the property disentailed and thus sold. On our way back we called in at "Railes," where Uncle John introduced me to my cousins' Uncle James and Aunt Mary Crawford. I never realised before what a large number of brothers Uncle John possesses.

Wednesday took us over a most delightful trip in the car to "Pitcon." There were Aunt Tootie, Aunt Anne, Jenny, Margaret and I.

Passing through Dalry I was shown "Hillend" and met the cousin of yours, Mrs. Blair, nee Mary Cochrane. (I trust I was as diplomatic and affable as possible to all my relations, near and distant, but honestly there were times when it was most confusing.) The "Pitcon" folks were awfully kind, and I thought Mr. Fulton a splendid, kindly old gentleman. His bookcase did me good to see, also! In the afternoon we were all photographed. Aunt Tootie looked an awful comic when she gallantly donned my hat and overcoat, but I regret to state she was not taken in this costume. There was an awful degree of care taken by Peg and Anne over these photos, but I believe, though as yet I have seen none, that they were focussed too close. However, I hope you will see the results. We went home after tea by train as Margaret and Aunt Anne had gone back with the car after dinner, the latter having to drive some wounded soldiers from Largs to an entertainment down at West Kilbride. Mr. and Mrs. Fulton wished to be remembered to you, which I promised, and also to write them an occasional note for the future. But my correspondence is already terribly voluminous and swells daily. Before leaving "Pitcon" I may say the roses were almost over in the garden, but they had some simply gorgeous blooms inside the house.

Thursday morning I did my packing for the Highland trip, which was not a very protracted operation, my luggage on arriving at Largs only having consisted of a shortbread box with a few toilet articles. Early in the afternoon we went down to Largs, taking our bags, a big one of Aunt Anne's and a small one lent me by Aunt Tootie, and paid a visit to the Cooks, where Aunt Mary Gatherer was down on a short visit. Mr. Cook struck me as being a fine old gentleman, and the party, comprising the aunts, Margaret and me stayed for afternoon tea, over which Aunt Mary presided as hostess. Our boat for Wemyss Bay was an hour late, but finally at 3.45 p.m. Aunt Anne and I got aboard among a thickly crowded mob of people returning from holiday at Millport. It was rather a miserable passage owing to rain and a few of the people being rather sick, though the weather did not strike me as over rough. The travelling up to Glasgow was abominably slow owing to this holiday business, so we did not get to our home for the night, the North British Hotel, until 7 o'clock. After a light dinner of excellent fish we caught a car and went out to see poor wee Sarah Wingate. What a splendid courageous specimen of woman-kind she is!

Next morning Aunt Anne astonished me by appearing fully dressed at 6.15 a.m. (!!). We were to have breakfast at 6.30 and I was only half way through operations at her advent. However, being so close to the station we got good seats with a wee observation part in front of one of the coaches entirely to ourselves for the space of the journey. The travelling was beautiful. Up the Gareloch, Loch Long, a glimpse of Loch Lomond, across the Moor of Ranoch, through Fort William with prospects of Ben Nevis and the entrance to the Caledonian Canal, surely two of the wonders of Scotland!

Finally we arrived at Glenfinnan just about 1, having previously dined off a lunch basket, brought in at Fort William. Walking down to the boat at the head of Loch Shield it poured very steadily and penetratively, and what with this inclement weather and a stiff breeze blowing up the loch, both Aunt Anne and I went down into the little cabin and snoozed the greater part of the journey. For this indifference to Scotland's beauties and historical associations we were sternly reprimanded when we reached our hosts.

The journey down to the loch kept us till about 4 o'clock, but we managed to motor over quite quickly from Aharacle to the shore of Loch Sunart, opposite "Laudale." Aunt Anne said she had never arrived in such stormy weather, and certainly it was a choppy sheet of water we had to cross, though with two sturdy Highland oarsmen I had no apprehensions. I forgot to say that on the other boat, the Loch Shiel steamer, I was astonished to hear the captain converse with the two A.B.s. in their native Gaelic.

Our "Laudale" party was great—just five and delightfully free and intimate. John Andrew is a great fellow; his wife, Cissy, is a quiet person, but awful nice; and Miss Dunnie is a great open-air woman.

On the Saturday afternoon we all went out fishing on the loch. It was fine sport over the water, now absolutely calm, and the final tally came up to nine. Mrs. John Andrew caught the largest, which weighed close on 5lb, and the rest of us all caught something. On one of the islands we hunted to find some of the lucky white heather, and came home in the evening to a late dinner of the most succulent chicken I have tasted for many months. I think the five of us must have gone through nearly the whole two fowls at one sitting. The "Laudale" evenings were great, too, when we sat around the fire and

talked and talked! The dogs were always there then, and here I may state that never have I seen people more attached to their dogs than in this land of Britain. One of the old dogs, Bunny, possessed a most curious temper, taking to me at the commencement quite well, but so uncertain that you never knew when his mood would change and the little beggar snap at you. Dunn's two dogs, Babba and Soulag, however, were lovely wee animals; Soulag, which means in Gaelic "Bright eyes," being an especially pretty little creature. It was most fascinating to see this little toy Skye, with characteristic long, silky black hair, and the twinkling eyes peeping through the dark fringe over the face, giving eloquent testimony of the justice of her name. At "Laudale" I had a bedroom up on the top floor, with a positively ravishing view over Loch Sunart and up to the grand high peak of Ben Recipool, and I mention this because somehow—it may have been the Highland air or maybe fatigue after so much excitement—I slept from 10 o'clock on the Saturday night till 9.25 a.m. Sunday. It did not matter as breakfast was not till 10, after which we went for a picnic up the hillside to a spot called the "Lochins," where we secure another supreme view of the district up to Strontian on one hand and way down to the ocean and the peak of Skye on the other. It was splendid! Again I distinguished myself by taking an afternoon nap, while John Andrew and Dunnie walked up further to see the Black Lochins. We arrived back at the house at 7 o'clock, and had each hot baths in the "Laudale" bathroom, which now has hot water laid on and a swagger, modern, warm towel-rail. At dinner the "piece de resistance" was beautiful Highland mutton. In the evening we sat before a fire, which was half peats and half wood, but I did not notice any appreciable difference in the odour of this mixture from that of an ordinary wood fire.

Next day we had to leave pretty sharp about 8 o'clock, and were accompanied up Loch Shiel by Dunny and Cissy, who were to see this time that we did not sleep. The trip was lovely and calm, and several soldiers travelled going back from furlough, Lovat Scouts, and I think the remainder were either Camerons or Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. At the head of the loch, Dunny and I went across and looked at the monuments erected to Prince Charlie's memory by the McDonalds, who have their home in the neighbouring Glen Allan (?). After puzzling out the Latin inscription laboriously and inaccurately we discovered it was repeated on other plates in English and Gaelic.

Dunny does not think the monument sufficiently rugged and expressive for its grand and poetic surroundings, and I noticed with amusement that the McDonald immodestly put his own name in quite as large letters as that of the Prince. But false shame is not a primitive Highland attribute!

At Glenfinnan we saw also a little chapel (R.C.) erected by the McDonalds, too, which stands on a beautiful spot with its door ever open to catch the lovely prospect over the loch. After dinner we parted from Dunny and Cissy on the wharf. Another Australian soldier was going down, but this time a native, McPherson by name, whose family had evidently been left fatherless early in its career, and received succour from my grandfather, Peter Gatherer! We should have had to have waited idly at Glenfinnan a good time before catching the train, and the Fletchers had enquired at the Stage House whether we might ride down on the 'bus. Neither Aunt Anne nor I were under the impression that this was a weekly grocer's motor wagon, but this was what it turned out to be. However the ride was not half bad, though both A.A. and I were part of the time quite helpless with drowsiness. We stopped at most of the places on the road and collected all the eggs of the country side. Folk peeped curiously out windows at my, to them, unfamiliar uniform, and one old body was kind enough to send out a small bunch of white heather for good luck. Another old person, this time a gentleman, seemed a little hurt because I had no Gaelic, in which to converse with him. However, I shook hands quite cordially with him and his daughter, who was postmistress of the little part. They were Camerons, and passing down in view of Lochiel, our grocer man told us tales of the famous Camerons. There was the great Lochiel himself, and another Sir John Cameron of Fassfern, who had kept a veritable horde of Frenchmen at bay with his company of Highlanders in Quatre Bras. The brave man was killed, but he has now a grave and monument in the churchyard of Corpach, further down on the way to Fort William. This churchyard also holds the burying place of one famous poetess, Mary McKellar, our monitor told me. But with the strange contrariety of fame, I had never before heard mention of this lady.

After passing through Banavie and having a long and splendid view of distant Ben Nevis, we arrived in Fort William and had afternoon tea at the Station Hotel. Our journey back to Glasgow was

slow, but just as beautiful as before. Oh, what can compare with the fairy glimpse of golden sunshine you sometimes behold on a Highland mountainside, when it turns the spot to a golden cameo on the black bosom of the hill, and is all the more beautiful for the fair, thick, white mists that enmesh it round!

Going down from Glenfinnan to Fort William, we had been between Argyllshire, and isn't it Invernesshire? Now we beheld a beautiful harvest moon hanging over the blush of sunset and the fair green hills on the opposite Renfrewshire side of the old river!

In Glasgow we just walked into the North British again, and after a light meal, Aunt Anne went off to bed. I saw her up, but being not so tired and quite capable, went off myself to the second sitting of a Glasgow music hall, the Pavilion. It was quite a fair show, the main performer being Florrie Forde, who is now a huge woman to my mind, well over forty, with a great foghorn of a low voice, but a quite extraordinary popularity with the Glasgow folk. She had only to start her chorus, and the audience sang with the greatest complaisance in this direction I have met in any part of the world.

Next morning we did not breakfast till 9 o'clock, and then went out on a shopping expedition. Glasgow has quite decent shops for a small place, and in addition to seeing some of them, I met two ladies and saw some of the city monuments. These latter were in George's Square in front of our hotel, and I was glad to notice Walter Scott with pride of place, on a very tall pillar. Burns was here, too, and a rather absurd statue of Queen Victoria in her young days on horseback and with crown and sceptre!

One of the two ladies was a Voluntary Aid whom I met accidentally after inquiring for a place and then accompanied to the place of her labours, a canteen at the North British station. The other was an older woman, a Mrs. Arthur, who has a son in our 18th Battalion, which has the same colours as we, and as I was wearing, only in diamond shape. (This was why she spoke to me.) He had fought on Gallipoli, been wounded, in hospital in England and then up with her for a short time; and I felt really vexed for her present anxiety about his welfare out in France, and hoped he would come back all right.

We had lunch (A.A. and I) in a big emporium, where we also met accidentally Peg Fulton, who came along with us to get our

luggage and numerous parcels safely from the hotel to our 2.25 p.m. train for Largs. At the other end Margaret was meeting us, and it was really good to be back there with them again. On Wednesday, Margaret drove the Aunts, Uncle John and me up to Greenock for my outing there. It was a fearfully crowded day, and I would never have managed all the running round but for the car, which is at present not used so much as formerly owing to the petrol shortage.

First we went along to see "Deniston," empty and bearing apparent marks of its recent military occupation. It is surrounded by quite a huge array of camp huts, and the locality is, of course, not improved. The number of huts amazed me from the top of Denniston tower. The house itself reminded me terribly of the dead boys—pictures of Rob in kilts among the school shooting teams and a bookcase with old school books, were painful reminders of the two great losses Uncle John has suffered. He seems cheerful; but it is awful!

Our morning visits included Mrs. Andrew Crawford at Riverlea, the Millers at Towerlands, and I went down myself, stood in front of the Roseneath House and saluted it! Still, it is not as big as I imagined.

Before dinner at Aunt Mary's, I was whisked up to the Craigs Farm and had a few minutes' conversation with Miss Macaulay. Peter and Willie, the new cousins, were awfu' shy at my visit. According to their Aunts they occasionally show quite a fiery spirit, but it was not apparent on this occasion. Peter is a handsome, wee fellow, with very fair hair and a fine, healthy appearance.

By the way, Aunt Mary was most importunate about obtaining a photo. of me. I don't know what your decision will be on this point, but, for my part, let her have one if it's to spare. Of course, I wasn't carrying any around with me and regret to announce that I left the wee one of you and me in my haversack back in France. I do hope I get it again.

After dinner I was down at the office, and then Uncle John took Margaret and me to see the old Gatherer store, Highland Mary's grave, and finally Caird's Greenock yards, an amazing sight to me! It was wonderful to see how the great steel bars were pared and pierced with as much ease as if they had been cardboard. Afterwards we saw one of the new patrol boats on the stocks. It is very similar in

appearance to a submarine when finished, we were informed by our guide, a keen looking young fellow called Parker. He was deputed to look after us by a Mr. Dunlop, who evidently knew the Gatherer family.

Home again to "Kilburn" by the car through Inverkip, Skelmorlie, Wemyss Bay, etc.—a lovely little drive. Next day it was misty in the morning, and a friend of Jim's, Major Dewar Gibb by name, came down from Glasgow for lunch. In the afternoon I went away up behind the house with Peter and Mr. Elliott, who were both engaged in sorting out the sheep. It was the only outing I had alone with Peter. He pointed me out the Hill of State, from which five counties can be seen, and also the road over the Healey Brae in the direction of Dalry. A curious historical fact about the Battle of Largs he told me, was that to it was attributed the story of the Dane, leaping on the thistle, and with his cry, immortalising this prickly bush as the national emblem of Scotland. The Danes evidently came up in their boats round the nearer Cumbra.

After Peter had finished marking the sheep with red on the right side we came downhill together and picked up some fine mushrooms on the way.

Before leaving off the subject of "Kilburn" I should tell you a wee story of little Anne, who is now a tall, straight-limbed young person a little younger than Betty. She is an awfully busy outdoor person just now, and on my first visit to the byre, lo and behold young Miss Annie, solemnly seated on a three-legged stool, a huge bucket between her knees, and milking with much gusto an invisible cow! She is a comic!

I left "Kilburn" about 7 o'clock. Poor Aunt Tootie, most volatile of aunts and reminding me of you much more than Aunt Anne, seemed unduly cut up about the departure; but I am thankful everyone else was bright and cheery over this little wrench. Poor souls! They have often seen nearer relatives away than me, and must now be accustomed to bear it with fortitude. Uncle John insisted on buying me fruit for the journey, and saw Major Gibb and me away, along with Aunt Anne and Jenny. It had been a delightful holiday, and I was only too glad to have Major Gibb up to Glasgow, as in talking to him I had no time for the blues or grousing.

At Glasgow I had only about ten minutes to catch the 9.30 London train. My travelling companions from Kilmarnock to Carlisle were Newfoundland men, twenty-one of whom were going back for a short trip home; the lucky dogs! One of them was awfully nice to me, and gave me one of his badges and also a button, both bearing their emblem—a carabou head. I did the honours with my fruit, and they insisted on me taking a sip of the whisky bottle which was being passed round. My friend, whose name was Delaney, and also a Corporal Cofield, who was second in charge, drank scarcely at all, as they were bent on preserving their less sober brethren. It was a blessing someone was doing this, as the sergeant was the merriest dog of the lot, and two men in our carriage were almost helpless at Carlisle, where all changed on their way to Liverpool. Unhappily one kit bag was left under the seat, and I felt conscience stricken when I did no more than hand it over to one of the attendants. But puzzle my brains as I did I could see no way of getting it back to Liverpool easily, and my time in London on the Friday was very limited. Still, it seemed an awful pity for the poor beggar to lose his belongings! I might even, I think now, have scrawled the corporal's name or my friend's indelible on the outside of the bag; but the time is over, and it is now but a vague and useless regret. As it was I just stretched myself on the seat in the empty carriage and slept soundly till the train moved into St. Pancras at 8.15 a.m. My first move was to get to the home for breakfast, and here, after a wash and brush up, I found Allison again.

Before noon I took a hurried run up to Mr. Bidmead, with whom I had a short interview, and by whom I was introduced to his other daughter, Miss Hebe, who had been away from home on my visit. The old gentleman is evidently a good deal worried about new military arrangements, which threaten to rob Sparrow and Co. of old hands. It must be an awful trial on established men almost, but not quite, beyond military age, who are doing good work in necessary quarters, yet have to uproot all their old associations and start soldiering. Still, of course, the right sort should pull through.

Allison and I took Mr. Mailer out for luncheon, with himself as guardian for the party. We went to Gow's in the Strand, and fared very well. Afterwards Mr. Mailer saw us back to the home, where we got our belongings, via the Civil Service Stores, in which he insisted on buying us chocolates. It vexes me to think I have

done not a tithe of recompense to the Mailers for all their unfailing kindness to me; I only hope some day will bring me the opportunity to make some adequate return for all I have received.

Allison and I parted from Mr. Mailer on the Somerset House side of the Thames, and then caught the 2.10 train over at Waterloo Station. We were supposed to be in camp at 3 o'clock, but a couple of hours difference would not greatly matter. At Perham I discovered Warner and Corporal Wallin, so things will not be lonely. Ludgershall, the nearest village to the camp, engaged Warner's and my attention last night. You know there are certain waste spaces on the face of the earth, where military authority comes along and says: "Here let there be a camp"—and there is a camp. Well, the surrounding towns and villages are generally of the most stagnant kind. Ludgershall is no exception to this rule. It possesses a sad little relic of what must have been an interesting large market cross; and there is a fragment, just a wee fragment, of a castle, where a little boy told us the Empress Maude is supposed to have once slept. But the camp itself does not seem such a bad one, and I will soon quite settle down until sent back to the unit. Naturally, after the intense luxury and refinement of the past fortnight, it is something of an anti-climax, but I am still awfully glad to have had all these pleasures of sight and people seeing. My dear, I only wish you could have been with me to see them, too. It was good to read your letters to the aunts upon the Fiji trip, and the children will no doubt have written me some amusing wee letters on all the varied experiences of seeing a tropical island.

I greatly think that this has been an entirely selfish letter, but I can never tell you half how good both the London folks and the Scotch folks have been to me. It has been a splendid experience, and I feel I should be deeply thankful for my preservation through Pozieres and this wonderful fortnight over here in Britain. Please ask Auntie to forgive me if I manage nothing this mail, but I know she will get all this letter. Maybe she'll read it to grandfather, too—if he does not fall asleep before she gets a third of the way through it. All I can say is that it has tided over what might have been a rather wearisome and disillusioned little week-end, and I only hope that it may give you part of the pleasure in reading it that I had in writing it. The ties that bind an exile (1) to his home are doubly

knit when he writes long letters back, and I look forward to receiving some of your great epistles soon from the base. My address has been changed so often lately that things are in an awful muddle, and I (brainless idiot) have further complicated matters by sending my address to Mr. Bidmead and Aunt Anne as c/o the Y.M.C.A. instead of direct to the post-office at this place. However, I hope two post-cards despatched last night will have rectified that mistake.

I am,

Your loving son,

JIM BLACKWOOD.

P.S.—I will send this letter in two parts, and enclose in the latter half a few photos Peg Fulton gave me, sent them from Bob.

September 24th, 1916.

Dear Mother,—

There is a mail leaving London Thursday next, via Frisco, so of course I must send you along a few lines, though there is really next to nothing to tell. Still, I do not expect to enjoy much longer the pleasure of correspondence with you unedited, and so hasten to make full use of this advantage, which for almost two months now has been at my disposal.

The week has passed not so unpleasantly, the first four days being occupied with musketry practices and tests. It was a long course, but much more enjoyable and interesting than drill. I was rather poor, as usual, only finishing up with 74 points—a second-class shot—whereas 125 were necessary to achieve marksmanship. The most difficult thing we had to do was the rapid fire, getting off 15 shots in a minute. My belt jammed twice, and so I really made a mess of the thing. One rather interesting novelty was a good target, shaped exactly like a man sniping, which was raised for five seconds, in which time you had to "pot" him. I got three out of the five exposures on the beggar. To march to this range we walked each morning four miles or so, returning late in the afternoon. The route lay through a little place called Tidworth, on the other side of this Perham Down. It is rather a pretty little place with one or two fairy-tale houses under great green spreading trees, but the main

thing one notices is the huge area of military barracks. These were erected about 1905, and are cheerful-looking structures in red brick, redolent of military correctness, parade courts and similar surroundings of a soldier's life. Some War Office veteran, I suppose, was responsible for their names, which are all those of Indian towns famous in certain instances for their associations with the Great Mutiny. No, I believe I am wrong, but anyhow I was so piqued at not being able to remember them that I evolved an alphabetical process of mental retention. They are Alluval, Assaye, Phartpore, Candahar, Delhi, Jelalabad, Lucknow and Mooltan! Don't they open up vistas of the East before one?

The Scotch folk have been writing me well. I have had news from Margaret (with three photos, which I will enclose in this letter), Aunt Anne and Aunt Tootie, who also generously despatched a tin of Mackay's shortbread. Aunt Tootie does not like the Brisbane Street flat as yet. The inmates, who are herself, George and wee Anne, are evidently pining for the open air freedom of "Kilburn," and it is not in the least to be wondered at. It would be the same if you all had to move to some very pokey place in a Sydney suburb. Aunt Anne, Jenny and Peter are at "Kilburn," but it seems they will have all the family down for week-ends. I don't know why I am writing you so much about the Crawford movements, but if neither of the aunts are writing you very fully you may like to hear them.

During the week I found Staff-Sergeant Oscar Keyte, who is Mr. Walmsley's eldest step-son. He seems an awfully jolly fellow, and is her on the dental staff. Perhaps I may get the chance to have some of my teeth done here. I am sorry to hear about yours, my dear, but keep your own as long as possible—rest assured they are lovely. The sea hath its pearls, but I doubt whether they are whiter than your front row! And I'm not bantering, either. Every man worth his salt thinks his mother the most beautiful woman in the world for quite the longest and most impressionable part of his career. In the comparative dullness of camp, I have been simply sopping up fiction, and have read Hichen's "Imaginative Man," Crawford's "Soprano," and now am engaged with Locke's "Beloved Vagabond." Last night I put a South Downs guide book—Aunt Anne and I bought one each in Chichester, or she or I bought them for one another, somehow or other, what a tangle of grammar—and the little copy of an "Imaginative Man" together and posted them to you.

On the outside I wrote "books only" and "parcel post" affixing three penny stamps. I believe the ends should be open to show they are really books, but, if they want you to pay more than what I have already done, tell them to take the parcel to Jericho, as it's not worth more than 1/5. However, Hichen's book mentions so many places I have seen that I could not help feeling sentimental about it. The incidents all happen in Egypt—Ghezireh, the Pyramids, and many other places mentioned being quite familiar to me. It is an interesting study, but I do wish Hichens would be a little more explicit with his main characters at the "denouement." He plays a scurvy trick on "Bella Donna" for all her wickedness. It may be artistic, but it is not satisfactory at all to the reader. Among the military medals, awarded this week, I see the name of an Arts fellow of the same year as me. This is Wheen, whom I met after leaving the 'Varsity just about a year ago in Holdsworth Camp, where I found he took up signalling. At the University he wrote remarkable, tumultuous essays; now he has won this honour for conspicuous bravery in mending the communication wire four times under severe shell fire at Fleurbaix. This speaks for itself; I doubt whether he is more than 18 or 19.

D'you think Hughes will manage Conscription for Australia? I hae ma doots, and survey the Labour stand with apprehension. They're a despicable lot in the mass, aren't they? Even the pliable Holman seems to be in hot water over the affair! It seems there is to be army voting—but only for those over 21 years, so, of course, I am excluded. Still, though Australia has sent twice as many men in comparison to population averages as Britain and four times as many as Canada, though she is, as a young country, suffering severe loss in the numbers sacrificed, yet the most important thing for the hour for all time is to beat the Germans; and it has to be done, unpleasant and distinctly annoying and wearisome though it is. A mild form of conscription looks to be positively unavoidable to keep up the large number of reinforcements, urgently needed for the numerous Australian battalions. During the week, with my usual carelessness, I lost the last of Miss Valentine's hankies. It caused me some regret at the time, as I had had it with me at my last period of service, now over two months back. Well, it is impossible to keep even the best of hankies for ever, but there was a curious feeling in my mind about that one. I had one of yours and one of hers stuffed in each sleeve of my tunic. Yours got lost somehow. Hers must have been stuffed in my right sleeve, for, where I sat in the trench a piece came, and

meeting Miss V's hanky, just grazed my right arm. It was about 5 minutes later that the "Blighty" caught me with quite a vicious little smack on the left. Really, I write like a doddering old idiot; if I am spared to come back, I daresay I will be insufferable to get on with! How silly to write such a lot about a hanky, but you may understand my feelings.

By the way, how are the Eedy-Vallentine folks? I wrote Noel a card from Chichester, addressing it to the school. Sometimes I write a fugitive card to a chap in the hope I may reap the compound interest of a short letter! Rather selfish, but in my position I think forgiveable!

Well, I have just rambled away to nothing, and all I have written is the greatest drivvle; but you may be able to glean something from the thoughts which I have striven, but entirely failed, to express. My fondest love to you and father and the Wains! Maybe I'll write a line to Auntie; I have a p.c. I mean to send her, but if I am prevented, remember me to her and Grandpa. Good-bye!

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

Somewhere in France,
Sunday, November 12, 1916.

Dear Mother,—

Yesterday I was overjoyed to receive a little influx of redirected mail. There is nothing like this for raising the spirits and putting a healthy tone on life. I only hope my mail to you sometimes does even a quarter the good! Of course, in August and September, I tried to write you a good deal, but I can't do too much for you and Auntie. Let me just tell you all the letters I got, home ones first, of course. These were the ones from you and Auntie just at the end of June, with a nice wee epistle from Mary; then with a great jump I found one from Mr. Bidmead in a long blue envelope, containing the early September letters. It seems he had forwarded others on a date before October 16, but they must be still on their wanderings. Mr. Walmsley writes a most interesting two pages under the date of July 10, just after father's visit; there are two good notes from faithful Mac, a spontaneous creed from Fay Brodziak (late June at Narrabeen), a kindly humorous ramble from old Herk, and I think that's about all, excepting a "Kilburn" report from A.A. mid-Oct. You talk about mud in your June letter. Well, all we had before in that line was as nothing when compared with our last instalment. It was most atrocious, deep, slippery stuff, and possessed the art of covering and sticking on to absolutely everything. One night I got both feet caught in an extra squeedgy part and could not get the right free no matter how I tried. The men had to go on, but some belated stragglers in the rear about half an hour later dug my member out, by which time two others in front of me required similar assistance. Just now we are out of it in a little hill village, through which we passed in the middle of last July. It was here that the amusing incident of the rabbits took place; so it arouses memories at once, poignant and humorous. The curious little society of the natives is interesting as a quaint and tranquil scene in the endless comedy of human life. Our billet is the usual barn with an almost romantically high arched roof and timbers, which, in their bizarre twistings, would be an English artist's delight and an English carpenter's nightmare. Its owner is an old widower, aged 66 and an 1870 veteran. He and I have wee cracks together; and the other evening in his little kitchen parlour by the little globe of electric light (a strange modern convenience, eh!), M. Arthurs supped his frugal

bowl of cold milk and bread, while I read his copy of the "Matin" and later, a queer, ancient, French geography book. It was rather primitive in its information on Australia and the Southern Islands, but still, correct enough. My old host had very decided views about our aborigines having come down to possess the land from Malaysia.

Pay night occurring recently, there was the usual raid on stores and "estaminets." You know the only meal you can get as a rule is eggs and chips, but just now eggs are scarce and it took us some time to find a place where they could supply our wants. At last, however, we discovered a bright-faced madame, who proceeded to prepare the frying apparatus on her warm "poele." It seems she cooked close on 50 kilos of potatoes for the English troops quartered in the village last April. "Beaucoup de fatigue" was her remark.

So Miss Camper is to marry Arnott; yes, it seems a pity after her scholastic successes; but still, there are more glorious things for a beautiful and accomplished woman to win than a drab middle age of respectable school teacherdom. You will remember, I always thought tenderly of Naomi, with her fair hair and Grecian features. It is funny the ideals we form in youth, because I never knew her well, being shy and no lady follower; but Naomi comes to my mind fairly young as partner at a juvenile ball, then as a bright and attractive guest at the Massie's, so I hope Arnott is good to her. May they have the happiness of Eden in their apple garden and keep a strict lookout against all serpents. While on gardens, it is nice to hear you mention that of the Herons. Mrs. H. should be an awfully happy woman, you know, in that lovely spot. Your stocks will never grow so quickly as those of the more sheltered Beecroft gardens. Kindly remember, dear lady, you are up on a hill, and that your plants have not the same shelter from the brisk and drying westerlies as their brothers in less exalted places.

I am glad you and Auntie were at "Gipsy Love." There is a wild, sweet beauty in some of it, like the chant of a high-soaring bird in wind-driven heavens. It was good, too, to hear of your operatic outings at the Adelphi. Beautiful sounds and colours are a thrice blessed boon in these time of strain and anxiety. I would like to be near you some day for opera—it is always with a sigh that I see the newspaper announcements of Beecham's London shows at the Aldwych!

Well, that's jolly selfish of me, though, my dear, and we ought to be able to go along with the "daily round common task." When I'm feeling sick, as I am just now (because my right foot has gone against me again, and I'm getting the usual foments) I'm ashamed to think of all the benefits and advantages, for which I show so little, and to reflect on father and you turning out full 8 months in the 12 to start the day at 6 a.m. I should not have mentioned the foot to you, mother, but somehow, this Sunday evening, it's just as if you were lying on the library couch, and we were talking. It's not bad, my dear, and I confidently expect it to be well for our next active move. There is still nothing further about returning to the Second, but I keep hope, hoping. This afternoon I sowed up a little cardboard box with two hanky sachets, one for you and one for Auntie. It has been censored, and I hope it reaches you; they are not much worth, but it's the spirit; and look at all you're sending me. I was nearly going to buy a wee hanky for each, but, either I got stingy all of a sudden, or, else I couldn't imagine you using little squares of fierce scarlet, vigorous cigar brown, and disturbingly brilliant lavender, even though they possessed a little lace and embroidery. I hope you get these sachets.

This has been rather a good letter, fairly natural; I think I may flatter myself, but I must send it in a green envelope, sure! (Can't be did 15/11/'16.)

Your loving

JIM.

Somewhere in France,
Wednesday, November 15, 1916.

Dear Father,—

Your long and interesting letter of July 23 arrived yesterday in a batch of redirected mail, as well as one from Auntie about the same date. The weather is cold this morning, so I would ask you to excuse the irregular and shaky nature of my writing. Your advice on feet meets me again, unfortunately, in trouble with my right. It always goes on me if ever conditions prevent decent rest or airing; but I blame marching with a rather muddy pair of socks for the present condition. Now I am set up again with three decent pair, but it is very mortifying to have this sort of thing continually happening. In the slackness and indolence of present inactivity, I feel more than usually a failure and unworthy of all you have done for me. However, I am noting carefully what you say about "even a piece of clean, white paper," and hope to keep the feet all right when this break has cleaned and healed up. I don't suffer much with it, but you can quite understand my feelings. About boots, I wear the black English 9/40, which I got from Perham Downs. The left one is O.K., but the right is inclined to catch me in the heel. It is difficult for me to accommodate my feet as a rule in the army boots.

Yes, you would be glad to have mother and the children home from Fiji; I recall how empty the house used to appear when there were migrations to the Mountains, how early and quietly you and I would retire together. Insomnia must be a terribly hard misfortune to endure, especially as you were suffering at a time when fully engaged in the tedious brain-fag of stock-taking. Mr. Bidmead has been goodness itself, both when I was in London and now while I'm out here. It is only a few days, however, since I was able to forward him by present address and I can see from his letter, with mother's and Auntie's, early September ones, that I have temporarily missed the mid. and later August ones. Still, it has been very confusing to be shifted to an entirely different battalion, and I am sincerely thankful to have done so well as I have, getting 20 letters redirected from the bass and elsewhere during the past week.

Auntie and mother have been far too good in sending so many parcels, but I have not received any since the beginning of July. Of course, my movements have been erratic and I may yet receive the

parcels which have been made up with so much care and loving kindness. In letters, I flatter myself to be one of the most fortunate in the A.I.F. Just lately, several of the June and July ones, which I missed when away in England in August, have been safely forwarded and given me infinite pleasure. One of these was from Aunt Florrie, who wrote a very kind letter. It is disturbing to hear of her illness, and I trust that by now she is well restored to health and strength, as it must be a great worry to Uncle Jim.

I am writing now, as you will see from Auntie's letter, in the kitchen-parlour of my old French friend, who is poring silently over "Le Matin" by the fine, clear rays of the little electric globe. They are a good-hearted folk, and think more of me than I have any right, just because of my little smattering of the lingo.

Well, Father, I will close now. As I said to Auntie, I have good reason for the very great thankfulness in my preservation so far, and we must go forward into the coming year with the same steady hope and trust, in which you saw me set out on this year. If a man comes back in Providence from this he will be prouder of it than of anything else in his life, and feeble though my activities have been so far, I am considerably comforted from this reflection. Besides, I have been granted the infinite pleasure of seeing with mine own eyes the land of my fathers.

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

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