

East, Sandling Camp, Kent, England.
April, 20, 1916.

Dear Two:-

Well here goes for a real letter.

We left Montreal at seven oclock in the morning on March 29 after working all night through to get our records in proper shape, and packed. Diant have time for breakfast even. The day was fine, the sun shining, and thousands of people lined the streets and at the station I had all my friends stand at a particular spot so I could see them all as the train pulled slowly by. I was on the step and could shake hands with a few of them as passing, and received some more gifts. The Gillies bunch showed up kingly with boxes of cooked turkey, cake, raw tomatoes, cucumbers, grape fruit, oranges apples, lemons, candy, etc. etc. I had enough for a dozen people for a week. In fact I had to leave two big packages of fruit cake, etc. behind on my desk, as I had no room to pack it and could carry any more. I was then carrying over a hundred pounds on my back, besides three boxes which I had sent as freight, and my hand bag as baggage. It takes about twenty minutes to get out of Montreal counting the different stations, and along the line the opeople from the factories and nearby houses were all standing out to wave us good by and cheer us up. Lots were crying. One old lady handed me a big flag, which I certainly did fly, and did cheer and say good bye to some hundred people. When I would see a poor old mother crying, I would holler to her "dont cry mother, we are coming back" but God only knows which ones are coming. Gee it was sad, but we could afford to cry. It would only make the ones left behind feel worse. I think it is harder on those left behind than it is on those leaving, because we have to much to do and think about, that we are too busy to get lonesome. I felt very happy ~~kikk~~ and hollered and sang with the bunch like a two year old, till just losing sight of Montreal. I was still on the platform of our car and looked out and saw Mount Royal, and said to myself "when will I ever see it again!" It was then that I felt blue for a minute, and almost cried, but said again "what's the use of tears" God's will every time is out trust, so be of good cheer, and went back into the car with the bunch and we sang and talked all day. My staff that work for me were with me in the same car. We had colonist sleepers. We had a dining car and were served with fine meals. In the afternoon they stopped the train and made us all get out and run round for half an hour for exercise. We were some tired after having no sleep for two days, and went to bed early. Next day was also fine, and by then we were in New Brunswick, and reached Moncton at four in the afternoon, and marched around the town, where we were met by the band, and given a great cheer. I was sorry I had got word to you people so you could have come over and seen us there for an hour. We saw the German prison at Amherst. We arrived at Halifax at seven oclock on Friday morning March 31. We just stepped off the train, and on board shpp. Moved out into the harbor that afternoon and left next afternoon. One of the boys received an invitation for us to go for a motor trip and have dinner, but we could not accept. They sent a big box of fruit. Well we soon lost sight of land, and were well on our way, the lights for the first two nights on the decks full blast. The officers and sergeants travelled first class and it was some first class. It was the first time that this boat was used for troops. She had been painted grey for the occasion to avoid being seen by the Germans. She was too big to dock at St. John, that is why we had to sail from Halifax. The dining room was swell, and the full course meals were grand. Well I never have better service, and I always eat at the swell hotels when I travel. Ice cream every day, turkey, chicken, duck and lamb, beef, mutton, every kind of vegetable, fresh fish. We all did eat. The same waiters as always were on the boat served. The tables were set with the same classy dishes and linen

It gives one an idea of the loss of money, when Lusitania and those other steamers went down. Our boat was more valuable than these boats, and bigger. Can you imagine me travelling in a double state-room, all by myself, which ordinarily would have cost me over a hundred dollars for just the trip across. It did seem strange to be on the ocean, out of sight of land. There were three steamers altogether, each loaded to full capacity with soldiers, the Empress of Brittain, the Baltic, and the Adriatic, and each a mile apart, and escorted by the battleship Carnarvon. We were in the middle. It did make the blood feel good to see the battleship keeping in close touch with us always and sailing around like a watch-dog, keeping an eye for a German torpedo boat, which could blow us up in a minute. After the second night there were no decks lighted at nights, and no smoking, for fear the enemy would see us. The windows had to be covered at night to shut out every ray of light, and men on guard all night watching against any lights being shown. The weather was glorious, the moon shining. We sat out till nine each night. We were not allowed to sing after dark, either, on deck; but below the pianos were going, and general excitement. 9.30 everybody went to bed, as we had to get up at 5.30. Each day the clock is put ahead an hour, so as to bring us in time with London when we arrived. That actually meant getting up at 4.30. Most of the privates were in second class, but some had to go in third class and even down into the steerage. There was a friend of mine in the steerage, so I used to smuggle him into my room at nights and let him have one of my berths, and I would bring fruit from the table, so as to give him, as they were not served with much delicacies. But nevertheless the soldiers were served mighty fine meals, good and substantial. There were about 2500 on our boat. We had a priest, and had mass on Sundays. We were nine days on the water. After the first three days we were told that we were getting into the danger zone, and must wear our life belts all the time, even at table. Then we ~~xxxx~~ had life boat drill. Each man was shown the boat he was to run to in case of accident, but ordered to not create a panic or else he would have to be shot down. I was allotted to the same boat as the Colonel and Capt. Morgan, together with 44 other people. Our boat was to be the last boat to leave the ship. So we would have been real heroes to stand there while the others boats were being launched, and the ship sinking every second and perhaps take a sudden plunge down and take us all down with her. Yet we dare not make a move to run and jump into another boat for fear of being shot down. We were well drilled each day for an hour. It was understood that if an accident occurred, the ship would give five quick blasts of the whistle. Then it meant run for your lives. Well some lived for a few days in dread of being blown up by the enemy. I said let her go. I'm not going to lose any sleep worrying. Trust to God. I slept like a top. We didn't have any rough seas at all, and I was sick a minute. It was a great relief when within 500 miles of Ireland we were met by the English escort coming out to meet us, four torpedo destroyers. It was a sight to see us all marching along then, defying the Germans to attack us. We saw a couple steamers going to New York, Sam Hughes was on one, and wired across to us best wishes. As soon as any boat is seen on the horizon, off would go a couple of our destroyers to see if it was the enemy. It was like when a dog sights another on the street. And when they learned that it was O.K. back they would come to us, and march along like a hen guarding its nest. Gee one does feel real chesty, and makes you feel like a soldier and want to fight. Well Saturday just as I had finished dinner at about six thirty and walked out on deck, somebody said have you seen Ireland yet. Well I thought they were joking. I rushed around to the other side, and there it was, within say ten miles. Then we passed over the spot where the Lusitania was blown up. Sunday we were busy in the office getting ready to land. Week days we had to take an hour's exercise in the mornings. We saw England (Wales) at about ten oclock Sunday morning. We arrived in Liverpool at one oclock the same afternoon. Thousands were there to see us. The ferry boats were packed and sailing around us. There were nearly ten thousand of us in the three ships to land. It was eight oclock that night when we marched off aboard trains and left for camp,

where we arrived next morning at six oclock. Well the little trains here are funny. You get in from the side into little compartments that hold eight people. The doors are then locked and the blinds kept down for fear of any light being seen by the enemy aeroplanes. Well there you are shut up in that little cage, and the train tearing along at a tremendous rate. They go much faster here than we do. We passed through London in the early hours of the morning, but we didnt know it. No chance for sleeping that night, just sit up straight and get a few nods. Well we arrived at camp, and it was a relief, for we were then mighty hungry, and a few other reasons. On those damn trains there are no lavatories or chance to get a drink. They were good enough to stop at midnight at a station where we were all served with hot coffee and had a run round for ten minutes.

Well I have got you as far as the camp. So I will ring off for tonight and finish tomorrow. Its now eleven oclock and I have got to get up at five thirty, and go to Mass at seven. Oh yes, Father Lockary is chaplain here. He called on me the day after I was here. Our chaplain was talking with him and my name was mentioned. So he looked me up. Our chaplain is Church of England from St. John. Rev. John J. McCaskill. We have no priest with us. We only have 127 catholics. Father Lockary has full charged of this brigade, which includes probably about ten thousand soldiers, but there were only about 150 catholics out of that number turned out for the catholic mass last Sunday. He has invited me over to call any time.

Good night for now. God bless you all.

Well this is a week old now, so I will send this much & the rest later.

Have been to London since starting this.

Good bye

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