

Aug 4th / 1915

My dear mother

Just received your letter and one from Guy supposed he was at home by this time, so directed my last letter to him. He was pleased to get yours. Anyway, I had not received any letters for long time. I am writing this in my little dug-out, it is 6 ft long by 4 ft wide and about 3 ft high covered over with planks and sand bags so when a shrapnel shell burst we are quite well protected, this time we are in support, a trench about 100 yards behind our firing line. In case of an attack we are handy to go right up and help, we all thought there was trouble in the air ~~about~~ last night an awful uproar of rifle fire on our left and the sky all lighted up with German rockets, we got all ready to rush up and help our ^{own} boys in case of necessity but it died down in 15 minutes it seemed an hour, my heart was more than putting in the ticks from the excitement but when it comes to a pinch and have to go up front and do my bit, I seem to forget everything until it is all over.

was on a fatigue party last night alone,
 carrying stakes and barbed wire, and took
 my turn at sentry 12 till 2 am and today
 carried some more wire and helped make
 wire entanglements to put in front of trench
 so to bother them coming across when they do.
 took my turn at sentry today 2 Pm till 4 Pm
 cleaned my rifle and bayonet, oiled my
 shoes, got a jug of water, and went over
 my shirt like hunting so you know
 what I have done today so far, they are
 firing at an aeroplane out here just now
 that's an old story now too, a big German
 guns goes off about every five minutes
 shakes the whole ground, don't worry
 me any for it is not coming my way
 away off to the left, the fellow that is
 in this dug out with me claims to be an
 american, but I think he is a German.
 he can talk German to beat the band, &
 I have one of these English French German
 books, I soft soaped him a little he talked
 a lot, and showed me a map he had
 drawn, don't know if it amounts to anything
 or not.

What shall I say now? can't think of anything only minor things that happen here, you might say I have been away from civilization almost seven months in strange lands, and all I knew is what is going on about me, my old temper is coming back on me again, knocking about with roughs and every class of men for a year, you have to be ready to stand up for yourself at all times for if you back down the least bit the whole bunch will see you are a little afraid and wag the life out of you, and there are times when we all get sick and tired of each others company.

I and the rest have owned up to it, and there is always one or two that get on your nerves the moment you first put your eyes on them, there are fine fellows, gentlemen and all classes are represented in an army.

It has been worse since we got a couple of new drafts of men to take the place of our killed and wounded. I used to feel proud marching along, every one in step, arms swinging with the old bunch, everybody knew each other.

and knew that everyone could be
pretty well depended upon, but the
most of them are gone. Oh yes, there has
been a few cases of fever one fellow just
came from the doctor in the trench his
temp^{er} is away up, but I believe they take
some kind of stuff so to get out of the
trenches, "Did well!" not a thing to say and
wrote a whole page, does that kind of
stuff interest you? "They are still after the
airship, the big gun has stopped and one
of those machine guns that shoot about
650 shots per minute has started, sounds
just like a big woodpecker would sound
on a hollow tree, "big woodpecker" big tree I
mean" that has stopped now, you ought
to see our water closets only they are
called latrines in the army, when
in trenches you balance yourself on
a pole, when out they dig narrow
holes in the ground, at first I had
an awful time I was either tipping
forward or backward all the time
couldn't seem to keep balanced but

I am an expert at it now. We are expecting 400 men to make us stronger and perhaps will not have to come into the trenches anymore for I think it will need the three of us on cook kitchen, wouldn't that great, would not be in any danger at all worth speaking of, I am not building air castles then I won't be disappointed. You cannot hear a sound, you would never think a war was on just now. Oh yes! got two parcels from Gladie yesterday 2 tins of sardines, 4 plugs tobacco, and a box of chocolates all jammed up, they was good just the same, it was all gone before I got the cover fairly off. Gladie's someone said and it went down the line like greased lightning.

I told her to send thin stockings and she sent thick chocolates, probably coming later, but these should have been a letter with them anyway.

× Two or three shells are going out high up, can hear them whistle.
Don't know where they are from or going.

Another aeroplane overhead will take
 a peep and let you know if it is one
 of ours, one of the boys said some
 one the Germans was firing at last night
 ago, down the line three fellows are
 playing cards for cigarettes, another hole
 in the wall with a pair of feet sticking
 out, and a fellow left me 5 figs while
 I was gone, I can hear curses coming
 up the line, a little Welshman went
 about 1/2 mile and got a gallon jar of
 water, he stopped at the latrines and
 they stole the water on him and
 left the empty jar he just shook
 my bottle to see if it was full, he
 knew it should be empty for he asked
 me for a drink before he went, a
 little rifle fire on both sides has
 sprung up now "snipers & quack"
 "my mate is picking lice off his
 shirt now, a scotchman is singing
 in the next dugout, it is my chance
 Sammy Hewitt fired a fellow
 as ever breathed, ever since we

3
7
left Montreal we have been in same
hut, slept together most of the time, in
the same hut on Salisbury Plain Eng.
always planned to march side by
side and share the same dug out
but we got mixed this time some way,
anything extra always comes to me first
and I to him, we lay side by side
for hours, not a word spoken, and we
are both satisfied, we understand
each other, we discuss the war once
in awhile, he knows I don't like fighting
whose mouth is going all the time
and saying nothing and he don't like
them either. Our officer is left him to

It is getting dark now, will
have to wait until tomorrow, if God
is willing you can see by what
I have just written the little things
that happen all the time from minute
to minute, when it is growing dark ^{at night}
and coming light in the morning is
the two times you have to defend
all attacks and charges, ~~we~~ are

made at these times, daylight
comes here about 2.30 and to 3 ant.
Good night.

2X- 10 AM. Aug 5

Everything passed off quiet last no firing
to speak of, three fellows had a quarrel
about stealing each others ration of bread
last evening, this morning so far have done
our sentry duty of two hours, had breakfast
and cleaned the dug out up for the doctor
comes around and inspects them, if its
dirty you get cimed, so many extra
quarts or extra work, there is a party
behind us digging a trench or something
and the Germans have been firing shells
at them all the morning, they are going
over our heads but I duck everytime
just the same, always try and be on the
safe side, they sometimes go off before they
should, then you would catch it. I think
we are going out tonight if so will wait
this tomorrow the 6th you will get it the
19th if I am not mistaken.

~~Feel~~ Feel kind of doped this morning. in
 kind of muggy and sleeping with all your
 clothes on and shoes for 8 or 10 days you
 don't get much rest, there has been times when
 we did not have anything off at all for two
 and three weeks, wading in mud and filthy
 water, you can imagine what it smells like
 when they all take their shoes off, especially
 my own. ^X Would like to have one of the
 chickens you tell about in a pot boiling
 where I could get just a whiff of it once in a
 while. If I ever get out of this things will
 stop along some for couple of weeks after.
 Guy said in his other letter that Harry had
 gone to Calif and said the same thing in his
 last letter, wanted me to be sure and know
 it I guess. dear old bird I like to see his
 writing in ink, the moment I see it I can
 see him. They are still shelling behind us.
 Don't work your self to death over the
 chickens and other animals. it is now 11:30 am
 will tell you what happens rest of day in
 the morning ^{if God so willing} and send this along, will follow
 it up day after day so you will know just

at we all are doing, and how modern warfare is carried on, I suppose you notice I put in. If God is willing, it does not pay to plan ahead for a single second on this job, it only takes a fraction of a second to upset them and yourself. I have started to shower a little, I have started a letter to Classic cannot think of anything to say at all, only stuff that I know will make her temper fly, I told her for one thing, ^{that} you said the kids were looking fine.

I have stopped raining, did I say the Germans are only about 230 or 240 yards away lots of places their trench is much nearer and sometimes farther away, sometimes as close as 50, 75, 100, 150 yards and all distances, I can hit an army bulls eye at 100 yds 4 out of 5 times and they can shoot better than that, it is careful business even at 250 yds for they have guns with a telescope attachment. "6.30 P.M. getting packed up to move out, heavy bombardment on our left think there is a fight on

11 Aug 6th 9.30 Am

We came out last night left quite late, pitch dark, arrived here around midnight, had tea waiting for us, just woke up few minutes ago and had breakfast, shared and have got dressed for inspection by some big bug. He will probably say 'Well Boys you are looking fine, and pass along and that will end the performance, one shell burst just before we came out and some of the pieces fell in the trench near some boys but not near me, the only one we had sent over us for the day, quite a few bullets went by us on the way out but not near enough to amount to much, will start today cutting meat, bacon etc. and making tea for the boys. It is official now, that Martin has fallen, that will prolong the war just so much longer. Heard a rumor this morning that the 1st Division is going away back for a long rest and the 2nd Division is to take our place, they haven't been here at all, and we need the rest sure enough. Only hope this is true.

This is to happen this month, but you cannot believe a word they tell you, they are always telling us good news like that to brighten us up and make us more contented, we have been fooled too many times to believe all we hear.

also we all expect to get a 7 day pass to England for vacation, few at a time, I don't expect to get mine until next year some time, will take it when it comes anyway although do not know a soul in England, it will be a little rest and change, you only have 4 days over there it takes the rest to go and come, you can see Engⁿ from France in some places it is so very far across the channel.

Did I ever tell you about the trip from Engⁿ to France when we come over, I cannot describe it just as it was so here I felt well. We received orders on Salisbury Plains one night to pack and get ready for we was leaving Engⁿ, such rejoicing and noise by the boys they are rejoicing so much now." 80

New boots were issued to us day or two before and such boots, hurt your feet in every place just like iron. Well! they loaded everything conceivable on us so our pack must have weighed very near 80 or 90 lbs besides other things that we had use for, stood us in the Gash about two hours with this pack on, and when they thought we was about ready to faint, we started for the station only about 3 1/2 miles, we got there after awhile and got aboard the train, odd trains and odd engines but they go like the wind, we were packed like sardines, took my shoes off to ease my feet and about 4 yards of cloth we have to wrap around our legs from ankles to knees, it was part of our dress, went to sleep until we got there about daylight next morning, could not find this cloth and had lost my hat, was that sleepy and tired did not care much but I looked bad stockings half way up my leg, bare from top of stockings to above knees limping along we saw a nice large ship thought it was for us

but wasn't, we was put aboard a large
trans steamers, stayed on board and
not allowed off for two days, the
third night we pulled out, I always
wanted to be on a rough sea and
see some of the mountain high waves
I have heard and read about, it was in
the bay of Biscay, was not sea sick
at all, we was six days going the way
we went, the course was changed to fool
the German submarines, any other time
could have crossed in 2 hours, it
was rough the whole time, I held my
breath more than half the time crossing,
first the stern would be away down and the
water pour in over, the up the stern would
come and the bow would go away down
almost under the water, every time I
expected to see her keep right on going
down head first and along with that
she was rolling from side to side, you
would think she was going to keep right
on rolling until she went over, along
with all this first you was a great

hole, had to look up to see the top,
 next moment you was away up on top
 looking down into the hole, they told
 us that it was very bad at that time
 of year, I kept my eye on a life belt until
 you could almost see where it was worn
 by my watching it a close, the officials
 gave the ship up as lost and sent a lot
 of torpedo boats and cruisers out hunting
 for us, we pulled into a harbor and got
 tied up to some kind of a wharf, there
 was crowds of French people young and
 old to welcome us, threw oranges and
 every thing good to eat at us, but we were
 not allowed off the boat, when we did
 land ~~we went into the train~~ ^{got things}
 went into Fox cars 40 and 42 men in
 each car, rode 8 days and nights with
 only four stops of about 15 mins each,
 going a good clip all the time, when we
 got off the train, tired out, put on our
 packs and marched 25 miles mostly
 in the rain, some swearing, ^x you
 could hear me above the others

And the rest is history, since then
 we have been in Belgium then France
 then Belgium then France again but
 not yet in Germany. I said something
 about an inspection today I had to go
 it was by our General Alderson, General
 Sam Hughes. Minister of Militia of Canada.
 I can't remember what he said only that
 he was proud of us as fighting men and
 in Val Cartier Can he thought we was
 handsome and that we was just as
 handsome now (Some Bull) also that
 a lot of us had fallen and that there
 would be more of us fall (He appeared to
 be looking at me when he said that, and
 it didn't please me much) and that he
 wanted to tell the married men that
 their wives and children would be well
 cared for if they fell in battle as he
 had passed a Law or something giving
 very liberal pensions (very cheerful, don't you
 and that the single men with only
 sweethearts, that some other fellow
 would take care of them until he,
 returned and I wanted to tell him

a d- lot of the married ones too,
the old man's voice broke and I thought
he was going to cry, he turned away and
that ended it, a prince of some Indian
troops was there. Will tell you about
the trip across the Atlantic next time.

You can let Classic have this, for I
cannot think of hardly anything to
write, unless I copied this off and I
would be bumpbacked, received the same
OK and it is in my bible, it is now
3.30 P.M. will start again tomorrow, will
close with lots of love.

Orville

P.S.

when I get this started I will take
a long breath, it is so long.
you might send a little note book
this size, then I could carry it in my
pocket. Write Write
and write.
over

No 1

1. The first thing I noticed
 when I stepped out of the
 car was the smell of
 fresh air. It was a
 relief after being stuck
 in traffic for hours.
 The sun was shining
 brightly, and the birds
 were singing. I felt
 like I had been reborn.
 I took a deep breath
 and smiled. Life was
 good.