

No 3. Aust: C. C. S.

Belgium

August 3<sup>rd</sup>

My dearest Aunt & Mabel.

My heart is just breaking since the news reached me that our dear brave soldier boy has paid the price.

You will know the news long before this reaches you, for I have sent to England to arrange for a cable to get thro' to you at once, goodness knows how long it will be before you hear officially, for there have been many casualties this past week. — I felt I must send it to Dad for him to break the news to you, for I can just understand what it is going to mean to you, you poor darlings

You have no idea how I feel away over here, since I've lost both Jack & Norman & Stew Mc Gowan whom I loved like a brother, it is almost more than I can bear when I think, I just have to work on & forget my personal sorrows.

I am finding it terribly hard to concentrate my thoughts sufficiently to write to you to-night, for I have not

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Mr Pleasant  
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recovered from the shock the news gave me, but I feel I must not lose any time writing to you, for you have to wait so long for news.

Sgt. Beathwaite called here to see me last night, I had written to him telling him I was right up near him, & the letter arrived at the battery two days after he was wounded. So Sgt. B. opened it to get my address, for he had written to me, but didn't know where to address it, & he brought both letters to me. He told me poor horn was wounded just after they had advanced with the guns at 7.30 a.m. on Sunday July 31<sup>st</sup>, & the dear boy only lived a few hours, for he died at 3 p.m. a shell burst killing several & wounding others, poor old horn was very severely wounded, he was given an injection of morphia to deaden all the pain, but the shock would cause unconsciousness & he was carried to the 96<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance Dressing station, & was unconscious when he arrived there, & remained like that till he died. It is my one comfort to know he did not feel his sufferings, & you must try & be thankful for that also, seeing he lingered

for a few hours, & not conscious of any pain is something to know, when one sees as much of it as I do, it is the greatest relief to my mind, altho' one longs for a last word or message I would sooner a thousand times do without it than know the precious words were spoken in pain.

The hardest part for me is to think he could have called to see me himself last night, had he been living, for they came out of the line that evening & were only camped 2 miles away but I have his grave quite near me Aunt dear, & I am going to have it done up, the boys are erecting a cross. Sgt-B. told me, then I will have an official photograph taken of it for you, that can be done by writing to England I believe, however I am making every enquiry, & everything possible I can do for you all, that I know you would like done for you dear one so far from home, I will do, I asked the Padre here, if he would go over & make all enquiries for me at the Field Amb: that horse was taken to, & get all his personal belongings, but they could not tell him very much, as the poor dear was never conscious at all there, but they gave a list of the things that he had on him, but they

Had been sent on to the Base, so I've written there to-night for them, & I want to know if you would like me to chance sending them to you, or would you like me to hold them for awhile, I know how you would value everything & would not like to lose them, so I will wait until you can write & tell me, it is of no use cabling, for I never got the one Mother sent, unless you could cable thro' the Red Cross, you could enquire if you would like to do so. I will give you a list of the things Norman had on him at the time, but of course I have not got them yet, I am only hoping I will claim them in time, I am only two days behind.

I will tell you exactly what I can have done to mark the spot which holds our loved one, & when we get the photo taken, you will see for yourself, & if you want anything more done, I will send you instructions how you can have it fixed up, but just yet I cannot give you many details, for I haven't had time to find out all yet. I am going across to the grave, the Chaplain is taking me ~~to-morrow~~ the first opportunity, at present the weather is atrocious, raining every day & mud it is awful, & they want me

to wait until the headstone is up, which will take a couple of days, but I am just aching to see the spot, & put some flowers there, if dear old Tom only could know I was here with him: - The day he died I was sent here & arrived at 9-30 that night - (Sunday July 31<sup>st</sup>)

just about 4 1/2 hrs after he passed away. but of course I did not know anything of it until Aug. 2<sup>nd</sup> when I was called & only two miles away, but we were all

sent further back for the Germans were shelling a village not far away, & the shells were whizzing over our heads, we did not return until the following Tuesday Aug 2<sup>nd</sup>

I cannot tell you just where I am in Belgium, but we are right up where the noises never cease, & the gun fire is terrific.

Tom is buried at a place called "Diekebusch" near Ypres. & his burial record is Sheet 28 - H 24 - C. 2. 4

Plot 1

Row A

Grave 19

I really don't know what the Sheet 28 means or H 24. C. 2. 4.

but you had better copy it all out for reference at any time, it probably is something to do with the military, I will find out, & tell you later, the graves are well cared for, & kept very nicely

I do hope this letter reaches you alright, I will write & tell you everything as I hear myself, & please dear ones tell them at home if I don't write to them also, they will know it is because I can't manage it, & your letters will do for home as well, for the work in a casualty clearing station just near the line is very different to a Base hosp. & we have to nurse most of our cases on stretchers on the floor, so imagine how our backs feel at the end of a long day. I do not think I can tell you any more to-night, my brain won't work any longer & I'm too tired for anything, I never slept one wink all last night, I feel worn out with sorrow at our loss, & for you poor dears get home, but do try & be a soldier's brave mother dear Aunt, it is hard I know & my heart aches for you, but we have to bear these sorrows, I have met many cases where a poor mother has lost every son & as many as five & six of one family, & you have two left to you yet, dear Aunt. & now I really must conclude words are poor comfort I know, the boys of the battery will all be writing to you also I suppose, my fondest love & deepest sympathy to one & all. From your affectionate niece May. Love

P.S. There is one thing I forgot to mention, I sent home a parcel of warm clothes & put a tin of peaches & cream in it, I asked Sgt. Brauth if he knew it arrived, & he said they peaches & cream was the last feed dear old home had, for the parcel only arrived the evening before. You know I rec. a p.c from Jack written May 29<sup>th</sup> he did not say much, but said he was well. I am not telling him that we have lost Army, the poor old boy would feel it too much I am afraid. for they were so fond of our mother.