

29th. Battery, 8th. F. A. Bde.,
Camp 16, Larkhill,
24.11.16.

Dear Dad.,

Things are pretty quiet here so thought of putting in my time by dropping you a few lines in time for the mail going out on the 30th. inst. . This is in the Army's time and it looks a lot better if the major comes in for me to be typing away, than if I had my writing pad out on the table, for that is just the sort of thing he likes to harp on.

I think that I told you that I had had a great row with him some few weeks ago about my getting a stripe, but he has got some idea into his noodle that he won't have any stripes in the office now and that is the start and end of it, and to argue or try and convince him of the responsibility and extra work that falls on me is only a waste of breath. All I can do now is to work the job to my best advantage (which I am doing with a vengeance) and wait till an opportunity comes to even things out a little,

George's promotion is going through orders tonight, as being confirmed, which*that he is an N.C.O. for all time unless reduced through the medium of a Court Martial, so he is settled at last. *means

When in H.Q.'s. at London I ran into Will. Hardwick. He had been sent over from France the afternoon previous to the ~~XXXX~~ commencement of the "Big Push", and put into an Officer's Training School up in Scotland somewhere, and was then just going on ten day's leave previous to going into camp down this way somewhere and then off to France again with a draft of men, so we have written to him asking him to try and get over to see us.

Last night I wrote to Mrs. Belfield, at Bristol telling her that I understood that I was her second cousin, and wanted to come up and see them all. Bristol is only 12 miles away from Bath, and some of our chaps have gone there after parade has finished on a Saturday and returned the same night so it ought to be an easy, as well as a cheap matter to go to Bristol for the week-end. We go half fare on all the trains when on leave here, and to right up to Glasgow (480 miles from here) it only costs us 34/1d, so you can see that the fares are pretty cheap, although some of the trains on the lines down this way are awful.

Conscription has failed hopelessly at home much to our surprise. I see in the Anzac Bulletin that we have sent to us every week, that the first lot of men who were called up for training have been discharged again. It must have shook ~~them~~ things up a little when they were suddenly called into camp. The coal strike appears to be pretty serious also but by the time this reaches you it will, no doubt, be settled; just as well it was not in the winter.

England must be pretty comfortably off for coal for we are not restricted in any way as to the amount we are to use in our fires. There is a big coal yard that always has about 10 ton in it and it is open to anyone in the Brigade to take what they want, and as fast as we use it it is replenished from the railway by "Tommy" wagon teams drawn by mules.

The 3rd. Divisional Ammunition Column (attached to the 3rd. Divisional Artillery moved off to France this morning, and they are using almost all mules for their transport. They are not bad workers, but are rotten to have to handle after horses.

When the mail arrived that had left Melbourne on the 26th. of September, it brought nothing for me, and only a letter from Alice for George, so we can only presume that you missed the mail for the first time in four months, but from what ~~we~~ we can find out, the following mail went down with the "Arabia", so that has, no doubt, our letters for the two mails aboard so now we will not get anything for a deuce of a time.

We have hardly got over our trip to Scotland yet, and the people we met up there have sent us a very pressing invitation to come up for Christmas, but somehow or other I don't think that we will have Christmas dinner in England or Scotland either for that matter.

The snow that we had last week-end was a ^usource of great fun to us fellows who had never seen anything of the kind before. Needless to say I took several photoes and am on pins and needles to see the result when they return from development. I used to do my own work but now the water is so cold and so chalky that I send them into Salisbury to be done.

We had rain every day for a month, and then with a few days of sun the ground had dried up beautifully, when it started to snow; as long as it snowed*but it was when it stopped and started to thaw was when the fun started, and in a day the place was as bad as it had ever been, and now, with a few odd showers each day this ~~was~~ week it ^{is} just about the same. * it was alright,

The other day I got a letter from Len. Sullivan saying that he had arrived in England last Tuesday week, and was in camp at Parkhouse, on the Plains, but of course did not know how close to him I really was. We are only about 8 miles away from there, so I wrote to him saying that I would come over and see him next Sunday if the weather is fine and I can get a Horse, or the Battery bike. He had only been in England for about a week when he wrote and said that he had been frozen to death, but he struck some of the coldest days that we have had in the four months of our stay here.

When we are leaving for France we intend to leave all our photography materials at Mrs. Seymour Darlington's in London, and I am going to put a decent tunic and pair of breeches in a parcel so that any time we get leave from there I will be able to run down to her place, change into the decent things and be spick and span in a few minutes. If we ever have the good luck to get our eleven days leave, I am going to travel from beginning to end, so if I don't see England, Scotland, and Ireland, I'll consider myself a big mug. These Darlingtons are fine people, but no doubt, George has told you all about them. They are relatives of Ada. Grant's.

We are anxiously looking forward to getting our photoes from Scotland when they arrive, as they are due in a few days now.

I could not see anything much that I thought would suit you when getting those books and things that I sent to the others, from Glasgow, but thought that you would like that one of Lawson Wood's so hope that you got it alright. It was very funny when I bought those things. It was on the Monday morning, and altho' we had been there since the Saturday morning it had not been very costly as we had not been going to any big theatres etc. (as we usually do in London). When I started off from here on the Thursday I did not have extra much in my pocket but found that on Monday morning I still had something like nineteen shillings, so decided to get a few things to send home, but by the time I had got something or other alround my account was up to 16/6d. so decided that it was time for me to pull out. It was only then that I remembered that I had not paid my board for the three days (half a guinea) so had to get Henry to fix up for me till I got back here and got my fortnight's pay. I thought those books and things bound in tartan rather natty.

When I sent on the album of photoes to mother I took care to register so that ought to get there alright at any rate. If they don't happen along you might let me know as I still hold the receipt.

Sometime when I am financial I must send you a 10/- note from here as curio. They are printed on very flimsy paper; they must be destroying and printing an awful lot for they always seem pretty new.

I will enclose in this the note that I pinched out of the lunch basket that we had coming down in the "Flying ~~Sax~~ Scotsman", also a message sent to us by our divisional commander, Major-General Monash.

I have in my wallet some more views to be added to the set in the album. When I get the Gaslight prints of the Snow pictures I will sent them all on to you together and get you to get an album to hold say 48 for me and put them in the order as I will number them from 97 onward, and send a catalogue to agree with the prints, and then each time I get more I can number them from the last ones I sent and send a fresh catalogue for them and so on; Get-me?

Thanks for sending on those photoes that Mr Germann took, they are a bit of alright.

Larkhill is very different now to what it was at the beginning of the week. In that time two brigades of Infantry (5,000 men in each) have disappeared during the nights, and I expect that by the end of next week, the other Brigade and the odd Units, such as Pioneers, Field Ambulances etc. will be all away leaving us here on our lonesome altogether for a month or five weeks, when we too hope to be shifted.

This morning George got a letter from Jack McLean. He was well but said that it was pretty rotten out there with mud up to ones thighs. He has been out of it for a while as his leg is not strong enough to stand the charges etc. When Joe wrote the other day he said that where he was it was well up above your knees so I think that we are very fortunate being in the Artillery.

There*quite a lot of fellows from Malvern in the 29th Battery here, including two fellows and an officer that I want to school with, so I have plenty of chance to talk about things that have occurred over your side. *are.

I have heard that some fellows have just arrived from Maribyrnong and are in camp at Fovant, seven miles on the other side of Salisbury so must try and find out if Ted. is over there with them.

I am not much of a typist as yet but am coming on fairly well considering that I had had very little practice before getting pulled into this stunt.

We have all been issued with "Tommy" breeches but they are pretty awful things. They are not badly made but are made to fit the average Englishman which is not the same fitting as the average Australian, and the result that altho' they come up around our necks it is the job of a lifetime to get them up over the calf of your leg. They are not provided with the lacing like our "breks" otherwise they would be tiptop.

Friday evening.

The otherday a chap who had been away as batman to one of our Officers was carted off with the mumps, and the whole of our hut, should, therefore, have been isolated, but the "Medico"-as the doctor is often called in the Army- only decided to isolate the man next to him otherwise I would be doing 21 days isolation at present. The next day this chap who was to be isolated was carted off himself, but I don't think that it was mumps. This morning a man from another hut reported sick and it was found that he too had them so things are not too pleasant just now.

Four bags containing 29 parcels arrived this afternoon and it gives me the job of my life to make sure that the fellows don't get hold of them without signing, as I have to send back the waybills properly filled and signed by the individuals to whom they are addressed. Needless to say I did not expect anything it.

George has just come in to sit by the fire and fix up his album before sending it home to Alice. I would have liked to have done mine in the same way but at the time when I sent it I was awfully busy handling our Christmas Mail, as they had put it in orders that the Christmas mail closed on the 3rd. November whereas the last mail did not close till the 16th. inst.

We were in hopes of being able to get a mail in time for the New Year but the next does not leave here till the 30th. inst so that is the end of any thoughts of that kind.

If we didn't have these braziers in the hut here I think we would all have been dead long ago. They are a great idea. At night there is always a few, who have nothing else to do, around the fire and it is marvellous how a fire makes men talk of things that they have done in years gone by. Just like we read of in books.

I was rather unlucky in not being able to get any photoes of Glasgow, for up there they are very frightened of spies and anyone seen with a camera will in all probability lose it at once, and quite possibly get "run in" yourself.

When in London last time I got a pair of rubber gloves like nurses and doctors use. The idea of having these is to wear them over an ordinary glove; when you wear an ordinary woollen or leather glove it gets wet and if the weather is cold enough it just simply freezes the gloves on your hands and before you can get them thawed out your fingers are gone to the pack. By wearing rubber gloves this is all saved as the rubber keeps the other dry.

I have come to a position now that I have to look around the room to see if anything will catch my eye that gives me an inspiration as to what to write about, so I think that the best thing I can do is to shut up and go to bed, and help the chap who sleeps next to me to make a hole in his two parcels that he got today.

Best love to mother and all the rest not forgetting yourself,

yours
Ern.

29th Bty 8th L.A.B.
H.I. Coy 16/12/16

Dear Mother

This will most likely be the last mail we shall write from here so must try and run through the accumulated letters that still remain unanswered.

I have waded through 18 pages of different letters from "Hoka" and as there are another 20 pages still I think I'll leave them go.

It's almost useless trying to "answer" letters, as a period of anything over three months elapses between the time of your posting until you can get a reply from us.

Our parcels have not yet come to light but I expect that they ~~are~~ are holding them all in London till Xmas.

Xmas day is Monday week so they ought to be along any day now.

Things have been frozen here for the last four days and nights and

it certainly looks as though they were going to remain so for the remainder of the year at any rate.

We ought to be shifting off to France in a week or ten days now so expect we will have our Xmas dinner on some such place as the Southampton wharf.

George had a note from Joe this morning. He was just coming over here on leave, and was boiling some water when a shell burst and splashed the boiling water over him, scalding him rather badly so he'll be in the hospital now for a few days, before he reaches here. Tes stiff there's no doubt about it.

George has gone off to Salisbury with Teddy Brown this afternoon to see those friends of George's.

I would have gone to Bath or somewhere else for the day but I may have to go to London on duty for a couple of days next week, and if I do will need all available cash, so decided to stay home.

When wiring home for Xmas I may get you to send on another £5/- I don't need it at present altho' I owe George a few pounds for photos. Everyone home from the front says that you cannot save anything out there as food is pretty scarce and you have to buy a lot in order to keep alive, and I want to leave £5/- odd if possible in George's a/c in London in case either of us get leave, as if we did not do this and came over any time for our 10 days we would ^{be} such a treat. No doubt you will think I'm spending a lot but somehow or other it all seems to go in necessities. Any time you send on money or have any other expenses on ^{ac} of me be sure to deduct it from my bank ^{ac} as you people have enough drains leading out of your purse's pocket.

Have just heard from your letters of the vests you are sending. They should be great, as they are a great protection against wind etc.

Our steel helmets, and anti gas helmets, and anti tear shell goggles are all in the G.W. Store so I must try and

get Bill Waldie to let me take some photos with them on.

I don't expect that you people know anything about these tear shells as I have never seen them mentioned in the papers. They are a shell very like a shrapnel shell, having only a very small bursting charge, the remainder being ^{filled} with some chemical which make your eyes run like rivers for hours afterwards. They are particularly used against artillery with the intention of confusing the gunlayers and are awfully effective. I don't know whether the Allies are using them or not, but that the Germans are, is quite certain as several batteries of our artillery have been rendered hors de combat for a day or so through the effects of this special sort of "Gas".

On Monday we have to walk through a room wearing anti gas helmets in which the gas is thick enough to kill a man almost instantly with only one breath. It turns ~~and~~ gold or other metal, all colours and clothes

go all colours of the rainbow. In this room there is a mixture of 1 part of gas to 200 of air, and in actual practice you never get it more than $1/10000$ so you see there is not much to be feared from gas at the front as long as you are warned in time.

I wonder what the strength of Germany's latest peace proposals are?

Bye the bye all our fellows who come back on leave been perfectly confident that we will break through alright after the winter is over, and then "What ho. off back to Australia."

The latest mail we have had is Nov. 1st and as it arrived on Tuesday last we may have another one about the middle of this week.

Last week I sent a lot of books onto you and hope they arrived safely.

A Punch from Tilda came along this morning. It is only about the fourth I have had so if she has sent them every mail I have not got them, altho' all of Sylvia's Table Talks appear to turn up.

Any time you are sending any papers, the Bulletin is by far the most.

acceptable as they are so witty and go
the round of the whole what is more

I have several other letters I want
to answer this mail so will leave this
open in the hopes of getting some more
news before the mail closes

In case I should not have
opportunity to touch it again,

Best love for Dad, Flo, Linda + self
not forgetting all kind friends

Ever
your
bro

29th Bty 8th F.A. Bde
H. T. H. 22/12/16

Dear Old Flo

I wrote a short note to Mother by this mail, and did not expect that I would have time to write any more before the mail goes out on Xmas day.

This is Friday night and Monday is Xmas day, and as we are moving this day week at the latest if not Thursday, will have very little time for anything else except work in the next few days.

We have arranged for a real treat at Xmas. There are only 90 of us left in camp the other 60 odd men being on leave. We have bought up 60 lbs weight of turkey, 24 lbs of hams, fruit, puddings and all the other necessaries. The mail doesn't close till 6 P.M. Xmas night so I may drop you another line to let you know how it "went off" and also to enclose a menu.

We sent a cable the other day and

with a bit of luck you may receive it on Xmas day itself. We made no mention of leaving as we thought that most likely it would spoil your holidays.

Today all the Quarter Master's staff were away so they left the key of the store with me. During the afternoon I got hold of one of the steel helmets and a rifle and George and I took photos of one another in this rigout! Will send some on of course when I get them printed. The film has developed really well.

I am a very busy person these days, and have George in here with me doing odd jobs. I very rarely get to bed by "lights out" but absolutely refuse to get up anything but just before breakfast.

My parcel has not arrived yet but I expect that it'll come along about Sunday alright; also one from Sylvia.

Will-hess's sister wrote me saying that she was sending me one for Xmas so hope to get the three at once. Must drop her a line thanking her so will

leave this go for a few days.

Xmas afternoon. Have just had a glorious Xmas dinner and feel uncomfortably full for the first time since leaving Australia. It's wonderful how soon one becomes "bloated" after being on army rations for seven months.

The dinner was a great success. It was going to cost us 4/- per head but Major Churchus came to the rescue and said that he would stand the lot.

Must close now with heaps & heaps of love and kisses to all at home

Ever
your
Cyril

Larkhill.

12.30 P.M. Sat. 30/12/16

Dearest Mother

At last we are getting
a move on for France and leave this
morning (or it's after midgt. now) at
9 A.M., and ought to be in France
by Sunday morn all being well.

I have just knocked off work
as George and I have been very
busy packing up my office these
last two nights. He has just gone off
for a few hours sleep and we were
both working till this time last
night.

I have been promoted to a/Bav.
It does not carry pay but still it
gives me the command over the
other men which I have so badly
needed all along.

The 3rd Divisional Artillery
ought to make "some" name for
themselves as we have had five
month's training in England alone.

I have had mighty little time for writing at all lately so you must apologise to Hilda and my other correspondents for my neglect.

Today we have been issued with the following, steel helmet (weight 2 lbs), gas helmets in satchels ², leather waistcoat which reaches almost to one's knees.

Hi tear shell goggles, ration bag, 50 rounds .303 ammunition, and a tube of iodine. so whereas we had something to carry when we left Aust. we have doubly as much here and are tying clothes etc all over our bodies to get them to France.

It's after 12.30 and I still have to sew a stripe on my overcoat so must "off".

Gota letter from you today from Metung; awfully pleased to hear you are away having a rest.

I think you can safely ^{look} forward to the end of the war about next June and I'm very glad that at least we three are going to have a little bit of a hit to help finish it off.

Well, Mother dear, I really must

close as I have to be up again at 4.45 AM. and may not get any sleep for the next three nights at all.

This is the last uncensored letter you'll get for a few weeks but even in an uncensored letter it's impossible to express in words one's feelings at a time like this. About ourselves all I can say is that, Henry George & I, and in fact everyone in the battery, recognize what we are going into, that it's dangerous, but ~~we are~~ ^{in God} trusting, and looking forward to, that glorious return to our home folk and loved ones, after a victorious peace for the allied arms, which it will have been our privilege to help to bring about.

Best love to Dad, (and tell him he's got to buck up), and lots of love & kisses to your dear self, Flo, & Linda, and for any friends who happen to be about.

Believe me,

Ever your loving & affect. son
Ern.

P.S. Remember me to Mr. Hermann and please thank him for all he has done for you in our absence.

France 24/4/17

Dear Dad

I have just been able to cadge a few sheets of decent paper from George, so will try and give you a page or so in reply to yours of 30/4/17. Thanks for the statement of my accounts. I'm not so very wealthy after all am I. There's no doubt about it things are in a glorious mess - politically - now at home, and the intervention of Japan's influence will only tend to increase it. It's a great pity we ever had to have anything to do with them as an ally. You must find it rotten alright when you are "the only man about the place". Even in the battery here I sometimes suffer the same way.

I am the best of friends with all, officers & N. C. O's & men, and yet of course still have about five or six "cobbers", and it is when all of these are absent, that one feels quite lonely. There are plenty of chaps that you could talk to but so few who have the same tastes and principles as yourself.

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Thanks for sending over that statement of how I stood with the bank. I have taken a run through and it appears to be correct.

I have just been made a temporary bombardier with effect from 10/6/17 so now my rates will be 9/- per day less 1/6 deferred. I intend to draw an extra 6/- per day to save up for a possible trip to Blighty so this will leave an allotment of 5/- - an extra 2/- on the old allotment.

I have told mother to please herself as to whether she increases her withdrawals from the bank or not. If she could do with an extra few shillings a week she had better take more out in the future, but if possible I would like the advantage of this extra couple of shillings in order to have something at my back after this stunt is cleared up. George is now a temp. corporal and Henry Brown is a temp. bombardier, so you can see that Lt. Hearn has carried out his promise made over twenty months ago that if we helped him at Broadmeadows & Mairymong that he would guarantee us all stripes later on. He's a fine chap, alright. George has already gone to the Wagon line to take over his job as corporal. He and I are great coppers now - we are always out about the camp.

Remember me to Mr Lyford next time you see him and you might ask him to remember me to any of the others who know me in at Torkby. Auntie May appears to go up and down; it's a wonder she's lasted as long as she has. That's not too bad about that £8.0.0 being added onto my life policy as a bonus. By the way, they have come on some stunt with wills over here. They wanted every man to make out a will or else tell them in whose hands he had left his will. I had forgotten that who my will was left with so I made out a will leaving everything to Mother, so thought that I'd let you know. These wills are going to be kept at A. I. F. Headquarters London in order to assist them to hand over the property in the case of anything happening, so you might get the address off master of the firm of solicitors who hold my will and ask them to destroy it as I have made out a ~~last~~ later one and that the old one is null & void. ^{got}Comprising

Have just ^{got} three more letters; another from Myrtle Holder, one from Lil Given and another from Cousin Annie.

Every night now Fritz puts over thousands of gas shells, evidently thinking that our attacks are not yet finished. They are favourite things to put a barrage with a mile or so in rear of the lines so that if any troops are going up to attack as they become very much disorganized.

I know for a fact that when the chaps of our division were going up during the night before the big attack on the Ridge, they were horribly disorganized through a lot of gas being about.

It is not poisonous gas, but if it is at all thick it is necessary to wear the masks and this makes it very awkward for officers and N.C.O.s to give their orders, with the result that the casualties amongst them are particularly heavy. It's almost humorous for every

night our casualties as a result of it have been almost nil, and during the last couple of nights it has blown back to him over the heads of our own infantry. There

are two six inch howitzers firing just over our heads from about 45 yards away and so you can imagine how it stirs one up.

I have been up against all sorts of guns when they've been firing from 12" down to our little 18 pr. and, barring, the 60 pr., ours has the worst "bump" of them all, especially when in a properly constructed pit.

At present, although I'm in our dugout, it's my job to keep the candle alight when the six inches fire so think I'll turn it in for the night in the hope that I'll be able to get to sleep. In case I don't have a chance to do any more writing will run through all the letters from "Hoka" and see if anything wants answering. The chap who wrote to Flo, as having received a pair of her socks is in the Field Ambulance attached to our division, and I think that the driver that he spoke to must have been a chap out of the battery. I couldn't have been Egon, but I'll try and find out who it was. For a long time we've been trying to send you a cable but the "wily him" appears to have cut one of the company's cables and they'll only accept cables from men in hospital. However we are now sending over to Mr. Wright in Salisbury and asking them to send it for us. You seem to have been keeping much better but hope that you will have got up north before the winter comes on, and I think it would be a great idea if you could let the house and Mother + Flo go up

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for a rest also. They must need one badly enough. I cannot understand how it is I have never got any of Myrtle Holder's parcels; she's sent five ~~all~~ altogether now and I've never got a single one of them, although I've got all the others that haven't gone down. This idea of having a little ^{book} containing a record of all promises for donations is a great idea, as people are very lovely liable to forget. I hope that the affair turned out to be a success as a result of all the work they are putting into it. Anything that you can do to help the Y.M.C.A. is work well needed for the work they do is wonderful. Their work amongst the New Zealanders is especially noticeable. I'm glad Linda liked the handkerchief or satchel.

Well, I have waded through them all, and everything is too out of date to require mentioning, so will ring off as it's almost midnight.

Write often & long, as your style of letters are just "it" being the only male's amongst all the females who write to me.

Much love to all
affection yours Ern

France

10/9/17

Dear Dad

This, the first of the writing pads that I asked you to send, came along last night, so will not waste any time, but get to work right away.

I have been very backward with my mails lately, but have written several short letters in the last few days.

We started on a long trip, about three weeks ago, back almost as far as the coast, for a spell, but after being there for a few days only had to start off back on a three days trek, up here.

It is about ~~seven miles~~ north of where we went out from, and about twelve or ~~thirteen~~ north of the place where we first entered the line.

I expect you remember the letters we wrote saying that the war wasn't as bad as it was cracked up to be, as so forth. That was when we were in the "nursery";

as that particular bit of the front is called. Of course, that was in the winter when practically all parts of the line are quiet. As a matter of fact there is hardly a person left in now. We met a few of our old friends when we were "out", and they told us that all the civilians had left, owing to the town being continually shelled, and on a couple of occasions Fritz "gassed" it also.

It is quite a study, to watch the different way certain things are run on different parts of the front, and how conditions alter cases.

When we were in the "nursery" we had a beautiful position, and never thought of building a dugout as we never saw a shell within hundreds of yards of us. Nevertheless we were frightened (by orders) to move an inch if ever a "plane" was anywhere to be seen. We "understood" that if the Fritz observer happened to see one of us moving about at all that he would immediately blow over position to "the four winds". How different we understand now!

I don't expect that we have very much to learn now at this "game", and we consider ourselves "old" soldiers and quite intitled to a "fed up with war" feeling, but what about the poor devils - tho' few in number, - who came out

I came across a case the other day.

A "Tommy," he was, of one of the "Senior" batteries. They came out here before the end of 1914 and he has only been absent from the battery for two days when he was at a dressing station with an injured hand. No doubt he has had a couple of "Blighty" leaves, but has never been wounded, ^{or} in hospital, so you can easily imagine that a chap does get "fed up."

Previous to this "stunt," everything in the way of transport was carried out at night, with the natural result that observation was impossible. This was possible owing to things only being done on a small scale, and prevented the "wily Hun" from picking up much used tracks, battery positions, etc.

Up here, things are just the reverse. Pack horses, ammunition wagons, water carts etc. all come right onto the position in the daytime, and it is only when a Fritz plane comes extremely low, that they think of "standing fast." The result is that the roads are always alive with traffic.

with the result that we seem to have him bluffed. He has plenty of targets, but seldom seems to fire on them. I fancy that the fact of the matter is that he has not too much ammunition, and only allows a certain amount of his "available" for use around the roads and our batteries. If we had ever attempted to bring a gun or wagon anywhere near a position, previously, every O. C., S. O., and Staff Officer in the district would have taken nineteen fits.

A few days ago the beginning of an "Ausie" mail came in, and so far I have got all the usual letters, together with a letter from home and one from Hawthorn that evidently missed the last mail. There was also two "Bulletins" which were especially welcome as reading material is very 'shy' just at present.

It was a pity your losing all the mail off the "Mongolia", as, if I remember rightly, we all sent away a big mail by that boat.

The canaries seem to be doing very well and seem to keep up their average as regards breeds.

The "Dares" appear to be a great crowd. Considering they're such friends of yours, you might give them my kind regards.

At present we are occupying a kind of a reservoir that has evidently been under some sort of a house or shop. It is a thing about 25 feet long and about 10 feet in diameter and the shell is about 16 inches thick with brick, which, being arched, makes it fairly strong. It has already successfully stopped three "whiz-bangs", so is not too bad.

I don't know exactly when our Paris leave is going to eventuate, but am afraid that we will not be able to get away for a few weeks now. At any rate that is what the Major told us the other day. However, we are hoping for the best.

I do not know of much more to talk about so will take a run through the letters that I have got from the others as see what is in them.

Everybody seems to have been up to their eyes in "Fek", and the chaps over here should be very thankful for the work that is being put in for their benefit. Around the country you find the result of their organization and "push".

When we moved up into the vicinity of — shortly after that place was taken by our boys, it was, of course, impossible to buy anything to supplement our rations (which at times badly need supplementing). The second day we were in position, however, we espied an old greyheaded man of anything over fifty wandering around the ridge. We could not make out for a long time what he was but he suddenly saw us and came over and asked us questions as to which tracks were used most by the working parties and the infantry when reliefs were taking place etc. We were rather shy of giving him such information, but suddenly we noticed the familiar "triangle" on his shoulder so understood. Sure enough he was a "Y.M." rep. looking around to see where he could dump down a little "Wanderer's rest".

We were talking for quite a time and discussing as to which was the best place for him to start, and finished up by showing him where he could get sandbags and other material from, so he decided to cart up 200 sandbags to begin with. A bale of 250 bags is a load that only a very strong man can carry for any distance but the old "buck" picked up his 200 bags like a "two year-old", and was quite offended when we offered to help him

up the hill with them. He had two of
the — Batt'n infantry chaps with him to
make a start with, and a couple of days
later a "Y.M." sign appeared outside the
remains of an old farm — which not
so long previously had been in the hands
of the Germans —, and inside one could
get a cup of limejuice in the daytime or
hot tea or coffee almost any time of the
night together with a biscuit. A few days
later, Aguettes, sauce and such other
little articles that keep ones "pecker" up a bit
were obtainable. This was kept going for
the whole of the time that we were on the
ridge, a matter of about eight weeks.

Of course it is impossible for them to
have one of their own representatives in
all such little places, so they get the
military authorities to detail off a couple
of men to run the place, whilst they
arrange to keep them in stock.

Tell Linda from me to try hard
for the scholarship that she's going for and
if she gets through to be sure and let
me know. It should be a good chance
as "Hassett's" is a very good college.

George, being a sergeant now, is up

on the position again, and is in "the pink".
 So mother has been down again with
 sciatica and gastritis. I often wonder how
 she manages to keep going as long as she
 does.

I have just heard that Eion's battery
 is up near us so must drop him a line
 and let him know where we are.

George and I got the shock of our life
 the other day when we got a letter from
 Joe saying that he was married. He had
 never even mentioned such a thing previous-
 ly.

Well, old man, our evening ~~staple~~ "strafe"
 is over so will shut this up and get it in
 for censoring before I forget.

Much love to mother, sisters and
 all others

As ever,

Your own
 Eion