

# Letters and Memorials

OF

Captain WILLIAM A. DOUGLAS,

6th Battalion The Royal Scots.



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OF

Captain WILLIAM A. DOUGLAS

6th Battalion The Royal Scots

With Preface

BY THE

Rev. JAMES BLACK

Broughton Place U.F. Church, Edinburgh

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## P R E F A C E.

WILLIAM ANDERSON DOUGLAS will remain with many of us "a green memory." I can picture him now as if I had seen him yesterday—a fact which in itself is a tribute to his personality. I recall his strong, well-built figure, his handsome face with its fine jaw, and the level, direct, fearless glance of his eye. He always gave one the impression of strength and cleanness, physical and moral. One guessed, by the very look of him, that he walked in straight ways. That poise of the head—slightly thrown back, and giving a steady look to the whole face—was thoroughly characteristic. His speech added tone to the picture, for it had a slight note of deliberateness, as though he were saying precisely what he was thinking. Altogether, I remember few men who gave me such an impression of honesty and candour. Lest I should give the impression that he was "over-serious," I should like to say that his laugh is what I remember best; yet even it was in keeping with the rest of him, frank, hearty, and clear. To

me, he was one of the particular men whose loss makes me feel the price we have paid for victory.

He was "a bird from a fine nest," and I fancy he would have been the first to admit what he owed to his parents. In these days when we speak so much about the heredity of evil, it is worth paying tribute to the heredity of good. Still, origins alone do not explain a man like WILLIE DOUGLAS, for his personality was the reflection of his own robust character and his fine soul. I thank God for the memory of him, for the friendship I enjoyed, and for the work he was beginning to do in our Congregation. Those who miss him most will have great comfort in the memory of what he was. First and last, he was a man.

JAMES BLACK.

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## NOTE.

Thanks are due to Mr. R. Cochrane for his kind assistance in seeing the volume through the Press.

# Letters and Memorials

OF

Captain WILLIAM A. DOUGLAS.

[Unless where otherwise indicated, the letters  
are to his mother.]

ON the British Declaration of War against Germany on 4th August 1914, the 6th (Territorial) Battalion The Royal Scots, in which Captain W. A. DOUGLAS was an Officer, mobilised on 5th August and proceeded to its War Station, Inchkeith, in the Firth of Forth.

The introductory letters were written by Captain DOUGLAS from Inchkeith, Peebles, and Selkirk, followed by those on board troopship, and from Egypt and France, where, on the Western Front, he made the Supreme Sacrifice.







INCHKEITH

LETTERS FROM INCHKEITH, SELKIRK, AND  
PEEBLES.

**Inchkeith**, 6/8/14.

I went up to headquarters about 2.30 yesterday, and we came over here yesterday afternoon, the last of us arriving about 3 a.m. I was on duty all night, but expect to get some sleep to-night.

There is not much news ; haven't seen any papers yet. Remember me to all at the Haven. Must close to get this away.

**Inchkeith**, 6/8/14.

DEAR ROBERT,—We had the usual struggle last night before we got landed ; the last lot came about 3 a.m. I was on duty in the trenches all night. There was a good deal of heavy gun-fire about 4 a.m., but nothing has happened here

so far. It is difficult to realise that it's something different from Camp.

You might see if I left my knife and fork anywhere; look in my pocket and send them over as they aren't here. You might also send some notepaper and envelopes, and I will let you know later if there is anything else. You will likely know more than we do about the War. I haven't heard anything definite. Must stop as markers has sounded. WILLIE.

**Inchkeith, 15/8/14.**

I got back safely to "St. Helena" (Inchkeith), and found all right. I am off duty to-day, and there is not much to do here during the day. Horace Brown and I are now in the same tent, but have not yet got our camp equipment, so we are just sleeping on the ground. It is all right so long as it's dry, but it is sometimes very cold during the night. However, I have plenty of warm clothes and don't feel it. You might write and let me know what's going on and how everybody is keeping. You might also send on any letters or anything of interest.

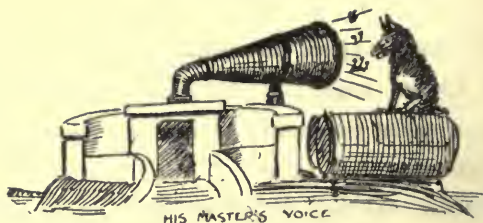
We don't expect any attack here for a long time as we have confidence in our Fleet, but we are quite prepared, as nothing can be left to chance.

We saw the big Hospital Ship passing here yesterday. It was very big, and looked splendid in the sun.

**Inchkeith, 21/8/14.**

Many thanks for your letter and the towels which I received all right. There is nothing new here and we are all rather "fed up" already. There is some word of us being transferred to Leith at the end of the month, but nothing definite. My day off is next Tuesday. H. B. was off yesterday and stayed all night. It is very misty this morning and the sentries are out as at night, as the conditions are similar to darkness.

It will be a long time before things are settled down again even after Peace is declared, but it is far better to settle Germany once for all. It is quite evident they have been preparing for this for years, but we all have absolute faith in our Navy.



The Inchkeith Fog-horn and Donkey.

The fog-horn here is making a fearful noise, and all the boats round about are adding their little bit. You would think someone had some of them by the ear, the squeals they make.

You might write and tell me all that's going on.

**Inchkeith, 27/8/14.**

I got back here all right as probably Robert has told you, and everything is going on as usual.

There is a private yacht here just now belonging to Mr. Brock, a managing director in Denny's, the Shipbuilders. He has placed it at the disposal of the Admiralty, and is on it himself. He showed H. B. and me over it to-day. It is a beauty.

We have three Companies away to Leith Fort to undergo special training to serve anywhere they may be required.

Nearly all the Officers with whom I was specially friendly are away, and if we are sending another Company, I think I will go. Of course they won't be sent away for several months, and probably won't go at all. When they do go they will likely do garrison duty for some regular Battalion. You might let me know what you think about it.

**Inchkeith**, 6/9/14.

Just a few lines to say that I have got your letter to-day when I returned from Edinburgh. I went home last night as I was sent to Edinburgh on a Board of Officers appointed to examine the clothing of the men. We could not finish in one day, so I stayed at home. R. and M. were both well.

Many thanks for the honey, &c. You might also thank M. for the socks. They are rather large for me, but I will give them to somebody who will appreciate them.

It's a great pity that the *Pathfinder* has been blown up. It used to be often up here, and lay in Leith Docks for a long time.

The sailors are fine fellows, the Officers

especially, a very happy-go-lucky lot and always ready to go anywhere at a moment's notice.

We have Dr. Ewing here to-day. Dr. Burns is at Kinghorn. Dr. Ewing gave us a very fine sermon, very stirring, and attended to very carefully by us all. Mr. Black is home I believe. R. and M. were going to the Communion to-day.

**Inchkeith, 10/9/14.**

I was very pleased to get Margaret's letter. Tell her the little "boat" is not a German "boat." If it was, it wouldn't be there long enough for me to sketch it.

A German trawler with mines on board was sunk between Kirkcaldy and here on Sunday night (at least that's the story here).

There certainly was a boat, there then, and we had our big guns laid on it. Two shots were fired at it from one of the destroyers, but as it was dark we could not tell exactly what was going on. We are all very well and cheery. I was on duty all last night, but everything was very quiet. It was a lovely moonlight night and quite warm.

We have a German helmet in the Mess to-night. I don't know where it came from, but it's here! We are all anxious to know its history.

**Inchkeith, 15/9/14.**

Many thanks for your letter. I have been across to the Mainland to-day paying some men who are on duty at Leith Docks, but I hadn't time to go home. Everything seems very quiet here to-night, but we had a wind last night, the like of which I have never experienced before, and don't want to again. A whole lot of kit bags, boxes, &c., were blown into the sea.



The Inchkeith Lighthouse.



It was dark when it began to blow hard, and as all the tents were likely to go overboard we had to strike the Camp, aided by motor head lamps. Sometimes we had to go on our hands and knees. The Lighthouse is now out. It was started on 14th September 1804, and never was out at night till 7th September 1914—110 years all but a week. We are all well and cheery.

**Inchkeith, 20/9/14.**

MY DEAR ROBERT,—Many thanks for all the things you have sent: they will be very useful. Dr. Burns is across to-day, and we are going to have Church Parade. We are busy constructing block-houses, and, of course, man the trenches at night. It was very misty and wet last night, but cleared away. We saw the fire at Burnt-island; I was wondering if Minnie and you were there. We had the supports and reserves out twice one night, and never know what is going to happen.

I may be across some day, but you might get a pair of gum boots from Thornton, and have them at George Street. There is not much



news to give you as most of our news comes from Edinburgh.

Love to all.

WILLIE.

**Inchkeith, 9/11/14.**

I got here all right on Saturday, and the parcel came yesterday. Many thanks for the sweets! Dr. Ewing was here yesterday, and we had a service at night. It's a weird service held in the light of storm lamps in a wooden hut. He is going to hold a Communion Service on the last Sunday of this month. I would like to have heard Mr. Black yesterday. It was a good text. I told Dr. Ewing what his text was, and he said Mr. Black was always pretty straight!

There is nothing new here, but the news in the papers this morning seems pretty good. The Russians are evidently going strong now. It is very windy to-day, but the rain has stopped which makes a difference.

**Inchkeith, 3/12/14.**

MY DEAR MINNIE,—Many thanks for your letter. It is very kind of the Broughton Place

ladies to offer clothing for the men here. Shirts and under-flannels would be most useful. I have about 100 men in my Company, so could do with quite a number if there are sufficient to spare.

It has been a fearful night of wind and rain. The Y.M.C.A. were erecting a wooden hut here. It was nearly finished, but it is all to pieces this morning. A piece of the roof, about thirty feet square, landed on the roof of our Mess-room, about 200 yards away. Our roof is badly damaged and the rain is pouring in. The windows are all broken.

We are all in good health and spirits. Best love to all.

WILLIE.

**Inchkeith, 8/12/14.**

I was very pleased to get your letter to-day. My cold is nearly all right now, and we have fitted to the S.E. end of the Island. Jardine and I are in together, and Adams is going to come later. I expect to be home on Thursday for the day, so will give you *all the news* then. (It's mighty little there is to give!) The wind

never stops here for more than a few hours at a time, and that only about once a month I think.

I got a parcel from the ladies of Broughton Place and a letter from the Rev. James Black. It contained a woolly cap, a MUFFLER, and chocolate, so was very useful.

**Inchkeith, 13/12/14.**

This has been another quiet day, and nothing much happening here, although, no doubt, a lot is going on in Belgium.

We had a fine sermon from Dr. Ewing who is on the Island to-night. I was across at Leith this morning paying some men. How did the Service get on at Broughton Place? Major Whitton, Atkinson, and some others said they had seen you. I stayed to lunch and came back with the next boat.

**Inchkeith,**

CHRISTMAS DAY, 1914.

I was very pleased to get your letter to-day and also the box of shortbread and biscuits from Robert; please thank him for them. It is very dull to-day as far as the weather goes, but

we are all very cheery. The men had a special Christmas Dinner and no work, and the Officers are going to have a Dinner to-night. I believe I have to reply to the toast of the ladies. Some of the Subalterns arranged a present for all the Officers this morning. Each was something specially suited for the recipient. For instance, M'Intosh, who is Transport Officer, got a wee horse and cart. Major Watson, who supervises the Canteen, got a child's box of stores, &c. I am going to get a list of them. The wording on each was very funny.

On Christmas Eve a small party of the best singers in the Battalion visited all the sentry posts about 12 midnight, and sang carols, accompanied by a Japanese fiddle. They sang "Come, all ye faithful," &c., finishing up with "Rule, Britannia." It was very nice to hear them in the distance. It was a perfectly calm night, and they were all good singers.

I have got quite a lot of cards and presents, among the unexpected being a big box of cigarettes from Mrs. Kennedy. What War will do!!!

**Inchkeith, 2/1/15.**

I got your letter and card, and was pleased to get all the news. (You seem to be as hard up for news as we are!) We have had a quiet New Year. Capt. J. Lindsay dined with us on New Year's night, and went to the Concert with us afterwards. He was telling me Greta had got a fine New Year present! I am enclosing a diary case which the Officers have given to each man here. It is very neat, isn't it? You might give it to Robert.

The Misses — showed their originality by sending a pair of mits! I have enough mits to wear all over me, every day in the year! Misses T. sent a box of chocolate which is always acceptable. So I have been well supplied.

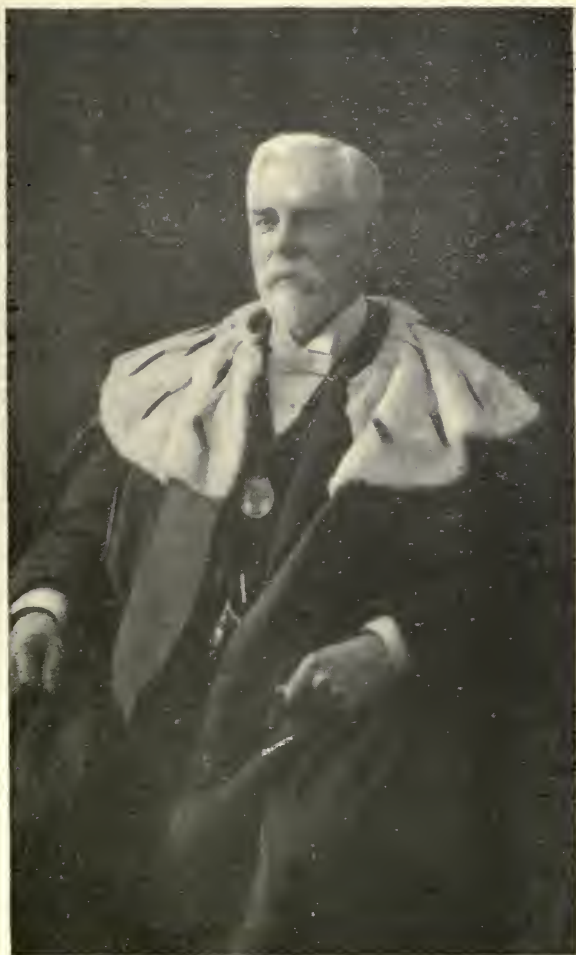
There is nothing new here, so I will close. I expect to be home on Wednesday for the day, and may have some news by then. It is an awful pity about that battleship being sunk. They are gradually being reduced.

**County Hotel,  
Selkirk, 13/3/15.**

I expect you will have got my post-card by

this time saying we arrived safely here, and a place more removed from the scene of War it would be difficult to find.

Yesterday was a perfect day as regards weather, and there was a beautiful sunset. We arrived about 12 o'clock, and "A" and "B" Companies marched up to our headquarters, a large hall in the centre of the town. From there we marched to our separate billets, my Company being distributed in the Drill Hall, Masonic Hall, Episcopal Church Hall, and, I think, the U.F. Church Hall. After being distributed, the men had to get their kit bags which came on the transport, and then they got their dinner—tinned beef and bread. The Officers are billeted in the County Hotel. I got some lunch about 4 p.m., and I was ready for it after an early breakfast. We had dinner at 7 p.m., and went early to bed as I was up at 5 a.m. I managed to pay the Company last night so there was no discontent among the men. Only one man didn't get his kit, but he said he could easily manage without it. They had all to sleep on the floor last night, but we



THE LATE BAILIE R. A. DOUGLAS,  
FATHER OF CAPTAIN W. A. DOUGLAS.





are getting the palliasses filled with straw to-day. It is a fine morning again, and I think we will have quite a good time here. Thirty of my men who are billeted a good long way off didn't come for dinner, and I found they had all had dinner and tea from the people round about. They are all very kind. We are very comfortable ; of course I've a new idea of what comfort is nowadays. There are 600 men away from Selkirk to the War, so I think they are quite glad to have us here. It is bound to make a difference to the shop-keepers.

There is not much news to give you ; we are having a slack time till the men get settled down.

Send on any letters and news, as we are about as far from the madding crowd as on Inchkeith. I had a letter from one of the Officers of the 2/6th headed " Devil's Isle."

**County Hotel,**

**Selkirk, 20/3/15.**

Some of us were down at the Provost's (Allan) to dinner on Thursday, and met Mr. Pollock, Town Clerk ; the Sheriff of the County,

and some more of the "heid yins." They have a lovely house, and we had a fine dinner. Bailie Roberts has also asked us. The people are all very kind both to us and the men.

We are all sunburnt notwithstanding "some" snow which we have had. It is 10 feet deep in places, and our route march yesterday looked more like Napoleon's retreat from Moscow than anything else.

Our new Officers haven't come yet. I have just heard that I am detailed for a Court Martial at Peebles on Monday. We are fairly into military life. I could have been home this week-end, but am waiting till next Saturday instead. We must have a certain number here, and have all our orders in case of invasion.

**County Hotel,**  
**Selkirk, 3/4/15.**

Many thanks for your letter. Glad to hear you had a good run home. It was a lovely night, and it's a very comfortable car.

We had a fine march on Thursday; left here 10.30 a.m. and went over the hills to Melrose,

halted at the water-side and ate our sandwich, then marched through Galashiels and back here, arriving about 5.30 p.m. It was about 18 miles, and wasn't bad with full kit. Only two fell out, one whose feet were blistered took the train home from Galashiels, and another was sick. Two out of about 900 shows we're fairly fit.

We had a slack day yesterday (Good Friday), and a number of the Manchester men got home for the week-end. We had a good concert at night. Provost Allan in the chair.

I am going to Strensall, near York, on Monday week for five days only.

Is Robert away to the 2/6th yet? I see Col. S. D. Elliot gazetted.

**Selkirk, 18/4/15.**

We arrived back here after a very enjoyable day. Please thank Mr. and Misses B. very much for their kindness.

We had rather an interesting experience coming home. As the lights weren't very good we decided to go back through Hawick as it is a better road. Probably you heard that the last

zeppelin which was here was guided by the head-lights of a motor-car which was driven by two spies clothed as British Officers. The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders stationed at Hawick had instructions, unknown to us, to stop all cars after 6.30 p.m. and take all particulars, and on no account were Officers in cars to be allowed out of Hawick!

You can imagine we had some explaining to do, but we managed to get on after being stopped about three quarters of an hour about one mile out of Hawick. Bally and I enjoyed it. It's the first sign I've seen since coming here that we are at War!

This has been a lovely day, and we have all been to Church.

When are you going to St. Leonards? I might come over and see you, but I'll need to arrange to get through. You wouldn't have been allowed into Edinburgh now as you did when Eben drove you out here.

Edinburgh is all dark now, and the Military are getting strict. Quite right too.

14 Ovington Street,  
Chelsea,  
London, 2/5/15.

Many thanks for your letter and kind wishes ; I will keep you to your promise when I come back. I am getting on here all right. The "digs" are very comfortable, and the landlady is a good cook. It has been very warm since ever I came, but to-day is cooler and very pleasant. We had yesterday afternoon off, and I spent the day with Handyside. He sits along from us in the Church, and is at the Class. He is Lieutenant in the H.L.I. We went to Westminster where his brother-in-law is a Canon. We were all over the Abbey, at least we were in all the places where the public aren't allowed. He took us up on to the roof, and along inside the roof at the very top. There was a service going on, and we could see the people about 150 feet below, and it was fine to hear the singing. After tea we went to the finest Picture House in London in Regent Street, and were at the theatre after dinner, so as I've said already, "We're having a fine War." The theatre was packed with Officers, many of them home wounded.

I met Mr. Plenderleith one night and we went and had dinner together and a walk round. He was asking for you. Are you coming up for a day or two? It's very nice here just now. The only thing is, I'm away every day from 8.30 a.m. till 5.30 p.m., except on Saturday when we finish at mid-day. I've just got one room, and was asking the landlady if she could give you a bedroom, but she is full up just now. However, you could easily stay in a Hotel, or I could get other rooms. Let me know soon if you are coming. Princes Gate, where Sir R. Laidlaw stays, is quite near here.

There are search-lights going here at night searching for zeppelins, and the street lights are all shaded. It's difficult to realise we are only about 40 miles from where they are fighting. That's what the Navy means! You might write and let me know where you are billeted!

**Hay Lodge Camp,**  
**Peebles, 5/7/15.**

I arrived here this morning after a pleasant journey. We were in good time. The Camp is in a very nice place, quite near the Tweed.

## ON ACTIVE SERVICE.

**H.M. Troopship "Ceramic,"**

AT SEA, 10/9/15.

I hope you got the letter which I posted at Devonport as it will likely be some time before you get this. We had a long though pleasant train journey, about twenty-two hours. You would hear about the change of C.O. Our new C.O. is a very fine man, strict disciplinarian, and looks a soldier.

I will never forget leaving port. It was about seven o'clock, and we were just finishing dinner. (Menu enclosed, from which you will see we are practising economy.) It was a beautiful calm night, and large crowds had gathered at various points. There was the usual cheering and singing, and the ship's sirens sounded "Hip! hip! hip! hooray!" The boat is very, very steady. You can hardly feel any movement at all. We had a bit of a heave crossing the Bay of Biscay. Some of us had to miss a meal or two, but I have gone through the menu successfully so far. The food is very good, and we are having a most pleasant voyage.



You would have enjoyed the sunset we saw on Tuesday night. I never saw anything to equal it. The colours in the sea and sky were just like what you see in Turner's water-colour paintings. The water at the ship's side was almost black and went through every shade of green to a very light sea green at the horizon, above which there was a band of rich purple, on which rested red, orange, and gold clouds. The sun went very quickly through this background, and it was dark in less time than it takes to tell. We passed Gibraltar in the night, so I did not see it, and consequently am spared the description, and so is everyone who may read this letter. I haven't seen land for nearly a week now, and we have no post or newspapers to worry us. We have fire drill and physical exercises to keep us fit. It's warm enough just now, so I don't know what it must be like on land. Everything has to be iced on board, but we have every comfort. It is just like a hotel inside. The men all sleep in hammocks, and are very comfortable and well fed.

We have seen quite a number of ships, but no



enemy ones, and we feel now just exactly what the British Navy is. Some places we have an escort, and at others we "plough our lonely furrow." We go with lights out, and it's like a "phantom ship." There was a good deal of wild-fire last night, and the sky is always very starry and blue.

I often wonder how you are getting on, and what all my "pals" are doing. Enclosed is a "White Star" for you, and a ribbon for Margaret. Did Miss M'Dougall tell you Sir Thomas Hunter was at the station? He said he wished he was coming! How are Uncle Stuart and Uncle Willie? I hope they are improving. How are grandma and Bella? Are you going out to Melrose for a bit? I think you should, or else get grandma and Bella to come in. There is nothing more to tell you. We have seen the coast of Africa. It is very mountainous, but it is so far off we can't see it particularly. I will write again when I have a chance, and may add to this letter later. Give me all the latest when you write.

11/9/15.

This morning has been cloudy and wet, with thunder and lightning. Saw the Island of Pantellaria. It is very mountainous, but we couldn't see any detail for the mist. Expect to get this posted to-day. It is bright and sunny now.

**H.M. Troopship "Ceramic,"**

AT SEA, 13/9/15.

We expect to reach Alexandria to-morrow, and although I'm sorry the voyage is so near an end, in a way I'll be quite glad to see dry land again. It has been a most enjoyable sail, and has not seemed long. The ship has been as steady as a rock, the food is excellent, and the weather is past a joke altogether. If the Kaiser wants a place in the sun he could get it here. What I look for is a place out of the sun. I am sitting on the upper deck in the shade of the bridge. The sky and sea are blue like the posters I've often seen at railway stations, and never expected to see anywhere else. On Saturday afternoon we came in sight of the Island of Gozo, which is quite near Malta, and

later on we came to Malta itself, and saw the town of Valetta, a wonderful sight in the last rays of the sun. The harbour and town just looked like something you see in a dream. Everything looked very clean and tidy, and the buildings terraced from the harbour right up it seemed to the sky. We did not know whether we were going to stop or not, and when a patrol boat came alongside and told us to go into harbour we were not down-hearted, as we had been almost a week at sea.

When we got into harbour a crowd of small boys in small boats swarmed round us wanting silver to dive for. You should have seen them diving and swimming, and fighting with each other below the water, and they never missed a sixpence even. They were as much at home in the water as on land, even more so I think. After dinner Officers and Warrant Officers were allowed ashore, and I don't think any of us neglected the opportunity. It was now dark, at least it was meant to be, but the sky was brilliantly lit up by sheet lightning, and the town and harbour were like Fairyland—lights

everywhere, and boats called " Dhysais " floating all round. These are just like gondolas, and in one of them we went ashore. We now saw for the first time the size of our ship; 18,000 tons looks " some " ship from a small boat alongside. Bally and I were together, and on reaching the shore, which was terraced in broad steps, we were pestered to hire a cab and do the sights, but instead we speculated a halfpenny each on a lift which took us up to the main street up the face of a cliff. We then crossed gardens of palms, &c., and had a view of the town and harbour from a kind of balcony. The lightning was incessant, and brighter than I have ever seen at home. We then called on Saccone & Speed and saw Mr. Edwards, the Manager, who is a friend of Bally's father. He was delighted to see us, and gave us a lot of information and 500 cigarettes each. It came on rain while we were there, so we waited till it was fair. It was not long, but it made no mistake about it when it rained. Edwards said it was a very rare occurrence, and this was the first year for seven years that he had seen rain in September. He thought it

might be due to the heavy artillery. We met Jardine and some more of the boys, and proceeded to buy some lace. It was great fun. The man named his price, you then offered him something about half his figure, and he offered to toss you. Some of them tossed and lost, but I adopted the tactics of wearing down the enemy, and eventually got some lace, which I will send on when I get the chance, but I don't want it to go astray. It looks rather nice, but my education in the lace line has been neglected. Did you get the last post-card I sent? I could not put much on it. When I got up in the morning Malta was in the distance, and I was sorry that we hadn't a chance of seeing it in daylight. It was very warm there, even after dark, so must be about unbearable in the sun.

We heard Last Post sounded by the garrison guard, and saw any number of British soldiers going about. There is not much else to write about. One day is very much like another on board ship. We have had a fine rest and get as much fresh air as we can. How are you getting on, and how is everybody? Write as

soon as you can and give me all the news. I will write when I get a chance, but letters take a long time to go to Scotland from here.

14/9/15.

We are now lying in the harbour of Alexandria. It is a large harbour, and the town and surrounding country look very dry. The "Rhymers Glen" would be quite a useful place here. You could get more than one shilling admission easily! The voyage from Malta has been uneventful, only we have lost no time! This ship can go when the Captain thinks fit!

Abassia, 17/9/15.

We are now camped here, which is about four miles out of Cairo. We left Malta on Sunday morning, and arrived at Alexandria on Tuesday about mid-day. We did not disembark till Wednesday and travelled here by train, which took about six hours. The country is very flat and watered by means of ditches which are part of the Nile irrigation scheme. The natives occupy their time "resting" as far as I can see, and never hurry themselves or worry except

to get bakshish or sell you something. At every station we heard, "Lemonade! ver good! ver cold! two piastres!" A piastre is about  $2\frac{1}{2}$ d., and goes about as far as our penny at home. There are fields of cotton growing, and dates on the palm trees, but where we are camped there is hardly any green. Everything is barren, and the sand is everywhere. The bottom of the tent is sand, and from 8 a.m. till 4 p.m. you can hardly move for heat. We can't parade during the day, and all our work is either done before 8 a.m. or after 5 p.m. Bally, Jardine, and I are in one tent, and are very comfortable and cheery. In fact, the flies keep us cheerier than there is any need for! and the crickets make a noise at night just like birds in the morning at home. We sleep very soundly nevertheless, and are up before 5 a.m. It is very cool and pleasant in the evenings after the sun goes down. There is hardly any twilight, and similarly the dawn is very short. I wish you could see all the sights we have seen. Sometimes I wonder if it is a dream. The natives are very quaint, and go about in all



sorts of coloured garbs, and always out for money. They find "Scottie" a pretty difficult individual to deal with, and some of us are fairly representative of Scottish character! We have had some good laughs, and all kinds of unusual situations are always turning up. Our C.O. is very strict, and we are a different Battalion already. I was sorry for our old C.O. that morning we left. He must have felt very sore about not coming with us.

I wish I could hear something of what's going on at home. It seems such a long time since I heard anything. How are you keeping? We are all in the best of health. The sea voyage braced us all up. It was really splendid. I haven't been into Cairo yet, so can't tell you anything about it. I believe this is their Sunday here, and all the shops are shut. It should be Friday as far as I know, but everything is topsyturvy in this country, and we aren't surprised at anything.

There's one thing about the heat here, it is very dry, and we don't feel it so much as the moist heat we get sometimes on Tweedside. Of





WILLIAM A. DOUGLAS, 5 YEARS OF AGE.



course it is autumn just now ; in the summer it is sometimes 127° in the shade—"some" heat ! The water supply is very good and plentiful, only through the day you can hardly get it cold. I don't know how long we are going to be here, but don't worry about me. I'll make the most of things wherever we are. I'll try and get some post-cards of Cairo to let you see what the place is like.

*Abassia, 26/9/15.*

You say you would like to get a "peep" at us ! I wish you could have got a peep at us yesterday when we heard there was a mail from home. Three weeks away, and never a cheep of home, and you begin to wonder what's going on. I was glad to get your letters of the 6th and 10th, and to hear you were well. I hope Uncle Stuart and Uncle Willie are much better by this time. You hope we are having good weather ! Good weather ! The sun rises every morning, shines all day, and sets at night with the most "glaring" regularity ! There are about two showers in the year, sometimes three,

but never more ; so that as a topic of conversation here the weather *non est*. The sky is bright blue all day long, and clouds are rarely seen except in the early morning.

Our reveille is at 4.30 every morning, and we have a long lie on Sunday mornings till 6. This is Sunday, and about this time you will be getting breakfast, although we had our Church Parade nearly four hours ago. I think your time is about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours behind ours. Your loving son has been at the top of the Great Pyramid! a place he never expected to be in his wildest dreams! Seven of us set out yesterday afternoon under a guide who guaranteed to show us everything worth seeing, take us there and bring us back for the modest sum of six shillings each. We went by motor to Mena, a village near the Pyramids, and about eleven miles from here; and thereafter on camels. To describe the place is impossible in a letter. You need to see it to appreciate it. It is 450 feet high, and 750 feet square at the base, built of solid blocks of stone, the total being estimated at 2,613,000 square yards. There will likely be

a good description of it in *Harmsworth* if you care to look it up. There is a magnificent view from the summit across the desert, one way; and Cairo, the Nile, and most green and fertile country, the other. If it weren't for the Nile the country would be of no use at all. This is the season of the flood, and the country round the Nile is watered by a gigantic system of canals. The irrigation scheme was conceived by Napoleon I believe, but he was unable to complete it. In fact it is not complete yet.

Our Padre this morning preached from Ezekiel xlvi. 9: "Everything shall live whither the river cometh." It was a very appropriate text, and he was an excellent preacher—a Canadian who came here a few weeks ago. It is little wonder that the natives here worship the Nile and the sun, as they are both very potent and visible forces.

I am glad to say Bally is up and has been out, and all the rest of us nearly right again. I haven't been off so far yet, but——touch wood! I am quite used to the climate now.

When we came back from the Pyramids we

went to the Turf Club (of which we are all members) and had a good dinner. It is the only place I've struck which has any feeling of home about it. Although the waiters are all black, there is a sort of sombre, substantial feeling in the place, which is entirely different from the East, and reminds one very slightly of a British Club. There is a native band practising "Tipperary" just now. It is a good long way off, but makes me wish never to hear "Tipperary" again. It's the most awful noise you can imagine, but they are very enthusiastic and have any amount of wind, as they go on for about four hours at a stretch, and are never really happy unless there is another band within range playing another tune! "Noise, and plenty of it!" seems to be their motto.

I sent Robert a riding switch made of rhino hide. You might tell him I hope he gets it all right. There are some fine shops or bazaars in Cairo, and one could easily spend a lot of (piastres) money. The taxi-cabs in Cairo are just like private cars, open and about the size of Eben's. There is no speed limit as far as I can

see, and the principal streets are straight and wide, but the native quarters are narrow and dirty.

**Abassia, 3/10/15.**

This is Sunday forenoon, and as we have nothing but Church Parade at 7.15 a.m., I am taking the chance of writing. I think I told you in the last letter about our visit to the Pyramids. This country is so full of places of interest that I could spend all my time (and incidentally all my money) in sight-seeing. We were fortunate enough to see the procession of the Holy Carpet on its way to Mecca. It starts from Cairo, and the day is a fête day here once a year. We saw the Egyptian army who were out that day, and tremendous crowds in all the colours of the East. The extremes of wealth and poverty, which are very far apart here, were both represented. I don't think I ever saw such a large and motley crowd. I enclose one or two photos which do not do justice to the scene. Sir Thomas Hunter said when I was coming away that we were going to a most interesting land. He was right! I am seeing something

of the magnificence of the East of which I have heard so much.

Yesterday four of us, under the guidance of Ibrahim, visited the Citadel—some of the mosques of which there are some hundreds in Cairo—and Egyptian Bazaar. The Mosque of Mohammed Ali is the most magnificent. It has a huge dome, and the pillars and walls as well as the courtyard are made of alabaster. There is a beautiful carpet covering all the floor, and it holds 2000 people inside, which gives you some idea of the size. There are some other photos enclosed—one of another mosque we saw, Emir Kijmas el Ishaki. The side of the pulpit is sandal-wood inlaid with ivory, and in the photo you can see the carving and inlaid work, but a lot of the effect is lost in not having the colours.

Major Milligan met Miss Brown, a Selkirk lady, who took a great interest in the entertainments for the men, while we were there. She is now a nurse in the Citadel Hospital, so the world is a small place after all. I was sorry I didn't see her, but hope to see her soon. The native



bazaar was very interesting, as we saw the things being made—carpets, metal work, &c. Jardine has his eye on a carpet, 6 feet by 3 (about). The price is £500, and it is a beauty. He knows someone at home who wants one.

I bought one or two things (list attached), which I hope you get all right. I want to give some of them away, but keep the spider shawl for yourself. In fact, keep them all till I come home. I was very pleased to get your letter of the 13th, also *Punch* and the *Scotsman*. Remember me to all the people you say are asking for me. There are no letters for the Battalion in the last mail, and all we know is they have got lost somewhere. It's comforting, isn't it? Be sure and give me all the news when you write, even the smallest details are interesting. Bally is still in hospital, but is getting better. Enclosed are the photos we got taken at the Pyramids, and some stamps which you might keep for me. How is everybody? Tell Robert to write and tell me about Strensall and the 2/6th. We have all more or less been "no weel," but nothing serious amongst

the Officers, and there are any number of doctors, hospitals, and nurses here, so there's nothing to worry about even if we are. What arrangement is come to about Broughton Place? We had the Canadian Padre this morning. His text was, "Now Timothy was a good soldier," and it was a good sermon. Remember me to Minnie and Margaret, and let me know how you are all getting on.

**Abassia, 11/10/15.**

To-day I got seven letters and *Punch*, but I'm not going to tell you who they are all from! However, there is one from Miss Anderson enclosing a copy of Omar Khayyam's "Rubaiyat" which came as a surprise. Only a night or two ago some of us had a discussion about this, and we tried to recall certain lines. It's booked by quite a number for a "read" already. I think I'll charge one piastre for three nights! I got one from Robert (not a piastre, a letter!), which I will answer in course, but really there isn't much to write home about. The weather's barred for one thing. It hasn't been a shower

here for seven months. If this country could get rain, it would grow anything, even the things you get in the penny seed packets I think. The soil is very fertile. I know this, as I've been down about 7 feet digging, and we have some plants growing round our Mess which grow about—oh! I don't know how much. You can almost see them growing. They are watered in the morning and at night. The Nile is in flood just now and spreading itself all over the place. "Where the river is, there is life," to quote our Canadian Padre's text again. He preached a good sermon yesterday, but he says we don't sing well. You've no idea how you have to shout to make any impression here. Your voice doesn't carry at all in the desert, and I think some of the men had their hearts in their mouths when we began a psalm!

Four of us rode about ten miles across the desert on camels, and saw Sakkara Pyramids and Tombs. These tombs are about 4000 years old, and the carving and colours are just like about a month old. They were dug out about seventy years ago. There are twenty-four

tombs in the Serapeum, each containing a granite coffin in which was buried the Sacred Bull. Each one measures about 13 feet by 8 feet, excluding the two slabs which form the top and the bottom. Each one is made in one piece, and is quite square and beautifully polished to this day. When they discovered this place about seventy years ago, they said, "We'll take one of these coffins to the Museum in Paris," but when they started, they changed their minds and decided it would be better to take it to the Egyptian Museum. However, they changed their minds again, and we had to squeeze past it to get in. Yet, 4000 years ago they made twenty-four of these and brought them 500 miles or more.

One day we saw the reputed place where Moses was found in the bulrushes, and also the place where Joseph and Mary hid the infant Christ. It is below the native Christian Church in old Cairo. Every corner of this country is full of interest. Ibrahim, the guide, says I must come back when the War is over and bring my mother. He is a great card! and has asked me

to come to his brother's wedding which is going to come off in about a fortnight. He is going to make merry evidently from all he tells us. Major Milligan is always asking for you. Mrs. M. had been writing to say she had been seeing you often and was glad of the company. Miss Ballantyne's friend, Henderson, is in hospital now along with Bally, who is not out yet. They are both getting on, though slowly. We had a very good open-air concert one night. One of our men sang a song entitled "Till the Sands of the Desert grow Cold." They haven't been cold since we came, at any rate. A corporal of the Regiment sang "Egypt." Minnie used to sing it. We had some good laughs, and are very cheery. Hope you are keeping cheery too. Often Milligan and I say, "I wonder what they are doing at home, it will be two hours earlier there." Give me every scrap of news when you write. We always know that a mail has arrived when we hear a cheer in the men's lines. It's different from being away for a week-end, you know, but they are wonderfully cheery and sticking it well, and we often hear very humorous

things from them about the place and the people. The fact that one piastre, which is equivalent to  $2\frac{1}{2}$ d., goes about as far as a penny at home, does not amuse them much, and there are some sore arguments over the prices of cigarettes, &c. It takes a good native to "do" a Scotsman, however. You might speak to some of the members of the committees for sending tobacco. It is very dear here, and the men would be quite willing to pay the duty free price if it were sent from home. There is a heavy duty here, and it is not allowed to be grown in the country. They have to pay more for the same cigarettes than they do at home, and I know tobacco and cigarettes can be sent to the troops duty free.

Abassia, 13/10/15.

MY DEAR ROBERT,—Your sample letter received ; if you knew how we look forward to the mail you would have filled both sides of the paper. The post is slightly mixed, and when you receive a letter dated 22nd four days after you've answered one dated 27th, it's rather

difficult to keep your correspondence up to date, especially when you get them about three weeks after they've been written. How did you enjoy Strensall? What are the 2/6th doing? You might let me know what's going on. This is the most awful place for rumours. Peebles was nothing. "We are moving to —— on Friday," or "Making up a Brigade to go to ——!" This Balkan business may mean us going anywhere, but we've nothing definite yet, and we are doing Garrison here meantime. I would like to tell you about the other regiments here, but had better not. We have quite a lot of spare time, and no doubt mother will have told you about the places we've seen. I've written her about them. It's a most interesting country.

Cairo is a fine town in some ways. It is big (population about one million) and some good shops. Did you get the switch I sent? You come across all kinds of people—the most cosmopolitan crowd I've ever seen. The Camp is about four miles out, and an electric railway runs from Heliopolis which is about twenty minutes' walk from here. It's a fine place where



all the city snobs stay. The picture houses are outside, or rather they aren't houses. There's a big screen in the middle of the street, and you can stand and see the show, or sit on the hotel verandah and smoke and drink iced lemon squash which is the great drink here. Everything here is quite different to home; some things would give you fits! The policemen, for instance, chase the "wallahs" about with sticks, and they don't care a rap for them. All boys are "wallahs" or "wallads," and they all want bakshish, but we just wag our sticks and say, "Impshi" (buzz off)!

The ground is very fertile, and the only thing required is water. Where the ground is irrigated the crops are very rich, but it hasn't been rain for seven months, so things are a bit dry. The Nile is rising just now and overflowing its banks, caused by the snow melting on the mountains near the source in the summer. It rises for about two months and then is normal for the rest of the year. The irrigation scheme is very vast, and is being increased every year. There is a Government Department and Minister of



Irrigation! Of course without the Nile the country would be useless.

We are all fairly fit now, but the heat and change of food made most of us "no weel." Bally is still in hospital, but expects to get out soon. He has had a pretty bad time. The sand and the flies and the sun are really the limit. You simply can't move during the day, but it's chilly at nights now, which is a sign that winter is approaching. A beetle has just crossed my path, about 2 inches by 1 inch. We have any number of crickets and a few snakes. (Rae has just finished one brute's career.) We saw quite a number of lizards that day in the desert, but they run whenever you appear.

I will let you know when we move if I get a chance. Remember me to any old pals if they are asking.

WILLIE.

Abassia, 17/10/15.

Your letters this week do not contain any questions, which is unusual. Even the fail-me-never about the weather is "reported absent." I like questions, however, as they are always a

start for my reply, and news is turning rather scarce. We hear very little about the War. I mean generally, of course. Our interest is all concentrated in our own little sphere. How many more countries are coming in? As nearly every nationality is represented in this country, it's difficult knowing whether the people you meet are on "oor side" or not. It is very interesting meeting the various types of people here. Most of them have an awful lot to say for themselves; but it's rather difficult to follow them, especially when you don't know which language they're talking for a start. You have to be able to talk about three languages at once to keep your end up in an argument. The attached design is not a copy of some of the ancient inscriptions, but the signature (including the date) of a gentleman who did his bit by repairing boots for my Company. I had to give him a cheque, but as I don't speak "Shorthand," made the most of it by writing Mohamed Morsy Hossain, which is the nearest I could get to it. The Company Quarter-Master Sergeant, when he saw it, asked him if he was the man who



REV. JAMES BLACK AND WILLIAM  
A. DOUGLAS AT CAMP, 1913.



ON THE WAY TO SAKKARA.



SPHINX AND PYRAMID OF CHEOPS.



wrote the labels for packets of tea! The regimental tailor's name is Most Afa, and so are the clothes he makes! At least, the pair of trousers he made for me are! They are thin, however, which is the chief thing one wants in clothes for this country. It is getting cold at nights now, and the days are more bearable. It's difficult to realise that this is the middle of October. I'm sitting in my shirt sleeves, and even writing letters is hot work. Writing letters reminds me of the Padre's sermon this morning. He fairly rubbed it in to those who didn't write home regularly. I didn't take it to heart, although I must admit I don't write every mail. I'll do so if you like, but I think once a week is as often as there's anything to write home about at present. The text was very striking, and he made an excellent sermon from it. It was in Luke: "Son, behold thy mother!" Can you imagine the Battalion drawn up in a square on the sand in the middle of Egypt for a Church Service? Naturally, our thoughts were mostly of home, and I am sure you can hardly imagine our feelings when we heard the text.

Nothing extraordinary has happened since I wrote last. I think I told you of our visit to Sakkara. Sakkara is the most interesting place I've been to, I think. (The Quarter-Master here interrupts with the interesting piece of news that there are dear knows how many rifles short in the O.C. Companies' returns.) Peace once more reigns in our midst, and I've forgotten all the fine things I was going to say about Sakkara, but to think of these marvellous places built thousands of years ago, makes even the War a small affair. We marched through Heliopolis the other day, and the band, which still bursts forth into full song occasionally, played "Jock o' Hazeldean," and "My Love is like a Red, Red Rose." More than my love had the red, red rose touch about them by the time we got back! I had my horse, but didn't use it, and felt quite fit. We have quite a lot of work to do now-a-days, but have managed without using Sundays so far.

It was fortunate for May Bell to meet in with people going to Punta Arenas (I don't know if that's the right spelling, but I'm sure it's

nearer than yours). Of course, it was at Hawick station it happened, and Hawick's always there or there about. I was delighted to get a letter from Isabella Tait, and also a box of cigarettes. How is Aunt Mary? I hope that she is improving. You might let me know also how my two invalid uncles are getting on. Melrose will be fine just now. Remember me to grandma and Bella, and tell Bella one thing I miss here is the Melrose tea-party, I don't think!

Did I tell you that a little Swiss man came to Camp and made our caricatures? I gave him the address, and told him to send it to you. We have had an addition to the attractions of our Camp—a flight of locusts. Hundreds of them passed across the Camp to-day. They are just like big shrimps with aeroplane mountings, and are very evasive when you try and catch them. I watched the C.O. and the senior Major trying it for quite a long time without success. Some time later the senior Major came with one in his hand and delivered a lecture on "locusts and how to catch them." You have to get into a shadow and wait till a



locust which has lost its way comes there too, and then you catch it. I didn't quite follow, but I suppose it's all right if the senior Major says so.

Ibrahim, the guide, gave me two strings of mummy beads to send to my mother. He is quite certain they are genuine, 3000 years old, and in fact, everything that mummy beads should be. You might write and thank him for them when you get them; Ibrahim El Shar, Dragoman, Box 542, P.O. Cairo, is his address. He is more useful than ornamental, as you will see from the enclosed photos. You might let me know if the photos arrive safely, as I want to send the films home.

**Abassia, 24/10/15.**

The Turks, I hear, are going to attack Egypt and do all sorts of terrible things (authority, *Weekly Scotsman*). I'll tell you all about it when it comes off. In the meantime, we "also serve who only stand and wait," and as a matter of fact we do as little standing as possible. We are now proficient in the art of "reclining" in



any available shade, and when in Egypt we do as the Egyptians do. I see *Punch* says that in Egypt the heat is so terrible that hens have to be fed on ice cream to keep them from laying hard-boiled eggs! I now know what has made the chickens we sometimes get, so hardy!

This has been a fairly busy week as far as work is concerned, and consequently quieter from the tourist point of view. I haven't made any special excursions—first, because as I said, we have been fairly busy, and secondly, the Paymaster, like his brethren at home, belies his name! The sights I have seen this past week have been limited to the more or less free, gratis, and for nothing variety, which, however, would be quite expensive luxuries at home. A walk through some of the streets in Cairo is an education in itself. English, French, Italian, Syrian, Greek, and Arabian rub shoulders with the rest of the world, and if you happen to get into an argument, you need to know about six languages, and be able to speak at least three at once to keep your tail up. It doesn't take much to raise an argument, either. One can

create pandemonium out of nothing without much trouble. One day four of us were sitting in an Arabiyah, which sounds important, but is nothing more exciting than a two-horse victoria (Early Victorian at that!), while a black gentleman was busy pointing out to us the beauties of picture post-cards which he had for sale, and was exhorting us to buy. Before he finished his story, however, the Arabiyah moved forward, and his post-cards were somewhat marred by falling and being stood on, &c. He commenced to argue with our guide, and in about three minutes the crowd had assumed alarming proportions. The picture post-card man and our guide had each other by the throat; a native policeman was throwing his weight about in the middle of the show, and nobody paying the slightest attention to him. Everybody was arguing and shouting, and gradually the whole entertainment moved up the street, with the exception of us, who had now been transferred from the central figures to the position of onlookers. At this point Grahamslaw got out and took a photo, which unfortunately did

not come out. I found out afterwards that the argument was really a side issue. The post-card man had informed the crowd that the Englishman had offered to pay for the post-cards, but the guide wouldn't let him, which is the office of a guide, and the reason he gets bakshish. This roused the ire of the assembled throng, and the guide had fewer supporters than his talkative friend. They eventually got the matter settled about two days after. It's a long story about nothing, but was so amusing I had to tell it.

Imagine the pavement of Princes Street, at least, those sections of it in front of, say, Mackie's, Macvitties', &c., liberally furnished with small round tables and chairs, on which are seated groups of three or four rather stout gentlemen drinking coffee and smoking big pipes. All are apparently well satisfied with themselves, and the legal users of the pavement seem quite content to go out on the road to get past this crowd of the "World's Workers." Chief-Constable Ross would have a fit if this went<sup>ed</sup> on in Edinburgh; but here you've to get off the pavement every little while, and get round this crowd.

Heliopolis is not far from here. The usual method of reaching it is by donkey. It's really a suburb of Cairo, and is inhabited by the élite of the city. The Doc. and I were across on Tuesday night, and sat on the verandah of the Heliopolis House Hotel, had ices and watched the "pictures." The refreshment can be had at moderate expense, and the pictures without any expense at all. Consequently there is always a large and appreciative audience gathered outside the verandah on the pavement. The screen is placed in the middle of the street, and the pictures are very clear, notwithstanding the fact that everything is lit up round about, and a bright moon above. When it's moonlight here, it is really moonlight, and you don't need to look up "Murray's Diary" about it. You can see for miles by the light of the moon, and it seems to shine for three weeks out of four.

Milligan and I were in Cairo last night, and as this is Christmas time here, it was very gay. How long Christmas lasts I don't know. It began last Wednesday, and evidently takes as long to get over as our turkey did. Poor

turkey! We miss it! It used to play about the Camp. The people here are great for making a noise, and since Wednesday have fired innumerable salutes on old guns at all sorts of odd moments; 4 a.m. seems a favourite time, and one evening when the Doc. had been telling how in France the heavy gunfire reduced the blood pressure, we all thought ours must be reduced, but couldn't find any appreciable difference. The sky was brilliantly lit up during the performance.

I think I told you the locusts had mobilised. One day they looked like black snow, they were in clouds. Close at hand, they look like shrimps, and are from two to three inches long, and fitted up with the latest biplane wings. They are all away again, but we still have the flies and the mosquitoes. The latter are "beggars to bite," and are causing the standard of the Battalion's language to become somewhat lower.

There is really very little news to give you. One or two photos enclosed, which explain themselves. Bally has left the "pleasant places" of the Anglo-American, and returned to the

sandy desert. He is much better. Henderson, too, is back, and the rest of us able to sit up and take a little nourishment! Notwithstanding *Punch's* advice "to conjugate the verb 'to save' in every mood and tense," I bought two bangles for Margaret and Lucy. Tell M. to give one to L. I've sent them both to her. I'm sending you two little brooches representing the "Scarab" or sacred beetle. You might give one to Minnie. They are rather neat, and are gold inlaid on steel, which is Egyptian work they say, but a good deal of the "Egyptian" work is made in Birmingham, particularly the "ancient" kind. The little vase is used by the ladies. The little yellow packet contains black powder from Mecca, which is filled into the vase and transferred by means of the brass pin to the eyelashes, by which means they hope to make themselves very charming. Some of them are very nice looking, but the whole lot aren't worth one really bonnie Scotch face (pass this round my lady friends!) which by the way reminds me, it's nonsense getting these letters typed. It will be plenty time for this when I can write

and tell you how the 6th R.S. finished the Great War. There is a very humorous book, "The Light Side of Egypt," price, I think, ten shillings, which I'm going to get when I come back. It describes the country very well.

When Milligan and I were in Cairo last night, we saw two glengarries mounted on unknown heads, so we investigated, and found one was Lieutenant Robb (R.S.F.), and the other Lieutenant Stewart (K.O.S.B.). The latter is a farmer near Bowden, and we have a number of friends in common. He also knew M.'s brother-in-law. It's funny how you bump into people, even here. He knew "Sandy" Watson well, and had been with him in Gallipoli for a long time. He was great in his praises of Watson and his work there. Write again soon, and tell me *all* that's going on.

Some of us are going to a small Scotch Church in Cairo to-night. We had a good sermon this morning from the Canadian Padre—"My sword is bathed in Heaven." Remember me to any of my friends you see.



25/10/15.

It was a real old-fashioned Scotch service. The singing was good. The minister, Mr. Gillan, was in Edinburgh about a fortnight ago. He shook hands with us all at the door as we went in. His wife was there too. Sort of "Day at Home" touch about it! We all wrote our names in a book for that purpose. We met a man from Peterhead. No mistake about his accent! There would be about 400 there, I think. It was quite full, mostly nurses and soldiers.

Abassia, 31/10/15.

The mail is not diminishing as far as I'm concerned, for which I'm thankful. Eleven letters, five papers, and one account wasn't a bad haul on Friday. I am enclosing the account which you might pay for me, along with one I got some time ago. Get the money from Mr. Oliver. It was for repairing my fishing rod! Fishing rod!!

"Gie me a bonnie Border burn that canna rin without a turn."

A week-end at Gateshaw would go high just now.



It is much cooler just now, of course. Chill November begins to-morrow. It was only 86° in the shade yesterday! Still a trifle warmer than summer at home, but quite bearable and quite cool after sunset. The nights are very fine. The moon and stars shine brightly from a cloudless blue sky, which appears quite blue even after dark. The air seems much fresher than too, but there is always a peculiar "frowsty" smell hanging about, which might be more politely termed, "The atmosphere of the East." We sampled this yesterday in the native village of Embabeh. It was there in the "extra strong double distilled" quality, and Bally and the Doc. were just as glad as myself to get out of it. We had quite an interesting walk, however. The streets, or rather the spaces between the houses, are narrow, and the people sit about on their doorsteps or any old place out of the sun. Some of the women were spinning nets, as the village is on the Nile. Men were patching up boats, some selling fish; but the majority were at their usual task—"resting"! By the time we got to the Market we were all on the look-

out for the shortest road out, and evidently we looked it, for three men who spoke English a little, directed us through a field of growing Indian corn, and so back to the electric car terminus.

The electric cars are up-to-date. A fine electric railway runs between Cairo and Heliopolis, and out to the Pyramids on the other side. The Ancient is continually bumping against the Modern here. In fact "extremes meet," and not only meet but shake hands and plod unconcernedly along together. You see a woman carrying an earthenware pitcher of water on her head dodging a powerful Daimler motor, or an electric car stopped to allow a camel time to collect its four legs together and remove its unwieldy form off the lines. East is East and West is West, and you can get them jumbled up with North and South in Cairo.

The Sultan is coming to Cairo to-morrow, and we have to be careful and do the right thing when we meet him under various circumstances. For instance, if I have the Company out and meet him, I halt, face inwards, fix

bayonets, slope arms, present arms, by which time I've no doubt he will be well past and miss our little performance. However, if I meet him I will tell you all about it. Major M. is supplying the Guard of Honour to welcome him when he arrives. We have been telling him he will be made a Member of the Order of something or other if he doesn't get a Knighthood! There is no word of us moving from here yet, and I suppose a good number of troops are required in this district in case anything should happen. We occasionally show ourselves off to give the natives a treat, and at the same time keep them in remembrance of the fact that they had better not say too much!

One night two Australian Officers blew into our Mess, and made themselves at home (it's a way Colonials have!). They were very cheery, and one of them knew "Glenosmond," Australia, quite well. "Glen Cavers," however, was beyond him. You know I've been half expecting to meet Uncle Bob one of these days. I wouldn't be surprised a bit. Have you had any word of him lately? I had a very pawky letter from

Corporal Tait of the 26th Divisional Cavalry. He was very cheery, and described the "comforts" of his billets in France. The chief attraction was the convenience of everything being so near the floor! We are going down to the St. Andrew Church of Scotland to-night again. Rev. Mr. Gillan is no orator, but the singing is good and the kirk is nice and cool, being built of stone and fitted up with electric light and fans. The Padre gave us a good sermon to-day again. He is a very good speaker, and 7.15 a.m. is a time when you can listen without feeling sleepy!

Bally is now back, and as he is acting "Garrison Adjutant" temporarily, he will not be overworked. His duties are not very arduous. He goes to his office every morning, and throws his weight about for three hours or so, after which he does pretty much as he pleases. It is a fine job for him until he is more fit. The photos I've taken are not very good this week, but Bally has supplied the blank with some fine ones which I enclose along with some taken by Paterson. I'm glad to hear the various invalids



BAND OF EGYPTIAN CAVALRY IN THE PROCESSION.



VERA GOOD ! VERA CHEAP !



PART OF THE PROCESSION.



are progressing. I had a letter from Bella and was glad to hear grandma is well. You should go out to Melrose for a bit if they don't come in. The 2/6th are evidently enjoying Selkirk. I had a letter from Robert, and am glad to hear he is now a "gilded Major." We will all be Generals and Field Marshals before this War's finished! There are no signs of a finish out here. Have you any at home? If so, you might let me know all about them.

The sweets you sent off haven't arrived yet. The parcels are few and far between, but I see in the papers steps are being taken by somebody or other to have this put right. Have you got the shawls and things yet? Use any of them you want. You needn't keep them till I come home. I won't wear them!

Abassia, 7/11/15.

I was rather busy last week and didn't manage to get to the wedding. The Sergeant-Major was there, and gave me a description of it. From what he told me, I gather there was a big marquee in which the assembled multitude did



eat, drink, and were merry. This marquee was lined inside with Egyptian tent work, of which I sent you one or two pieces (by the by you might let me know when you get them), and lit up by means of large and ornamental candelabra. The wedding guests sat at small tables and were each provided with a supply of spoons, forks, &c. Each course was served in a bowl common to all, and you used your spoon or fork according to the class of stuff you had to deal with. There was a native dancing girl, a conjurer, and one or two other variety turns! In fact, from the Sergeant-Major's graphic description it seems to have been more like the Haugh at Hawick Common Riding than a wedding; but you must remember East is East—and that's "nuff said"!

His Highness the Sultan arrived this week, and we were detailed to provide the Guard of Honour. Major Milligan was in command and had two Subs and 100 men. The band also were there to discourse sweet music and play the Sultan's National Anthem, which sounds more like a Hymn of Hate than anything else.



They cleaned themselves for days, and on Monday got their ears well back, and set off. They found, however, a similar crush to themselves, with a Major in command; but native troops who said they had been specially detailed by the Sultan for this duty. Major M. informed the other Major that he also had been specially detailed, and that the British Army took precedence over the Egyptian Army, and that The Royal Scots were the First Foot and the Right of the Line! The native Major went away to get a Ruling from one of the "heid yins"! and when he came back he respectfully clicked his heels, saluted, and said, "You will be the Guard, your band will play; but please will you let our band hold up the instruments to their mouths? but they will not blow!" So it was done, and so was H.H. the Sultan deceived on his arrival in Cairo.

The Earl of Lucan is our Brigadier, and Sir John Maxwell, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.V.O., D.S.O., the G.O.C. They are both very excellent men. The latter takes a great interest in the men, and has spoken to me once or twice when we have

happened to meet. He is very free to speak to, and there is a "great gulf fixed" between these two and some of the "heid yins" we were under at home! Rumour is evidently as rife as ever at home. However, we aren't away to Salonika, nor are we away to Suez. I will let you know when we move if I can, but there is no word of a move just now.

I am beginning to realise that Egypt is a place well worth hanging on to, which fact the British Government have realised for some time back. If the Nile could only be spread over the desert it would be a land of infinite possibilities as far as produce is concerned. In our Camp, which appears a barren waste, some enterprising individuals have planted Indian corn, &c., which are watered every morning and night. They are growing in a way I've only seen described in seed catalogues, and every part of the country seems to be the same. Of course, the irrigation scheme is increasing every year under the Government Department for that purpose, but this has been a lean year in this as in most other things on account of the War.

It is reasonably cool now, especially at night ; but as yet we have not seen rain. It is unlikely to be any now until next June or July, so you can arrange picnics, &c., without worrying what sort of a day it will be. It is now the 7th of November, and I'm sitting writing in shirt sleeves and shorts, and don't feel the cold very much! When I remember some of the wet, windy, and cold Sundays I've experienced at home in November, I can hardly believe this is the same planet; but from what I hear, November at home is very much what it used to be. When I get back you'll have to put up with an awful lot beginning with, "When I was in Egypt." However, it may be some time till then. The War drags on and seems to be getting farther away from a finish than ever. The news, however, is not so bad as usual. In fact, it might almost be called good. The enemies aren't having all their own way in Servia, and in France I hear progress is being made.

The papers you sent came in to-day. Many thanks for them. Bally and I went for a drive

this afternoon and saw the tombs of khaliffs. I will tell you about them some other time.

Abassia, 13/11/15.

MY DEAR ROBERT,—Your letters of 27th and 29th October came to hand yesterday, and I was glad to hear from you. You seem to be having pretty much the same time as we had last March in Selkirk. It's a fine place for training. I could never see why we were shifted to Peebles. It was said to be for the Brigade Training which never came off. We are having some experience of what real Brigadiers are! The Earl of Lucan is ours, and Sir John Maxwell is G.O.C. The latter has spoken to me more than once; in fact he is always affable and generally knocking about. Kitchener is not far from here at present, so things may probably become more interesting shortly. The C.O. is very strict but awfully decent, and he has a way of talking to the "heid yins" which seems to keep the Battalion on the right lines. Of course he is a Regular and knows the wires and also where the pushes are!

The rumours seem to be going the rounds about us just now, but there is no word of us shifting from here meantime. Of course, moves don't take long to hatch in this warm climate. Ibrahim, the guide, was telling me that near his village there were 80,000 troops. "In four hours they were gone, and in another four there were no tents, no horses, no anything ; all gone !" As this happened some time ago the censor needn't worry about the information, and in any case I'm not quite sure of the figures.

I haven't had very much time for writing, and as I write mother pretty fully it's no use duplicating it. I expect you will see my letters.

You will be thankful you are rid of Pay and Mess Books. What it is to be a "gilded Major !" I've had some of mine sent out here, and when it takes about a month to get an answer about anything things become somewhat involved. We have to pay the men in piastres here, and keep the accounts in English money. This always keeps us from wearying as there are  $97\frac{1}{2}$  piastres in the £1. Nice handy sum to work with !

I think I said it was cooler here, quite right it *was*, but on Friday we had a south wind with all its pleasant attributes of heat, flies, mosquitoes, and universal bad temper. The arrival of the mail at night, however, somewhat soothed us, and to-day most of us are normal. It hasn't been any rain since we came, and from what I hear unlikely to be any for some months. There's not much chill about November in these parts! The sun isn't quite so strong, but it's daylight before 6, and from 12 noon till about 4 everybody is irritable and not inclined for any exertion.

I saw the Argyll you speak of, it's a beauty. There are any number of cars in Cairo, but there aren't any decent roads outside the town. The taxis have big open touring bodies as they have practically no climbing to do. The speed limit I think is thirty, but nobody pays any attention to it.

You can see motors, camels, donkeys, electric cars, trains all going along the streets, and the people are the most cosmopolitan crowd you could imagine.

The cigarettes and photos haven't come yet, but when they do I will have them dished out. It will be some job, however, as the men are scattered throughout the Battalion, and we have a detachment now in Cyprus. It's a pity the switch got broken, but I'm glad you've got it put right and like it. I would send you some cigarettes, but they are as dear here as at home, in fact more so. The growing of tobacco is prohibited, and there is a large import duty. They are all these "frowsty" Egyptian kind and you can hardly get a real "gasper." Any old stuff seems suitable for "export only," as the labels say!

We have no Officers in hospital now, and our sick are gradually decreasing. One or two men have been sent home, one having gone off his chump. It may be a case of the "daft laddie," but I don't think so.

WILLIE.

**British Expeditionary Force,  
Mediterranean, 22/11/15.**

I sent you a post-card from Cairo last night as I thought it might be some time before I



had an opportunity of writing. Yesterday was, to start with, just the usual Sunday we've been accustomed to since coming to Cairo, but about 11.30 a.m. we were informed that our train was at 6.15 p.m., which meant being ready about 4. Since mobilisation I've seen some things done without much delay, but yesterday's move might be termed "swift." We had about ten minutes to spare at the station when I sent away your post-card.

It so happened that a number of us intended being at Church about the time of our departure. Mr. and Mrs. Gillan held a Reception on Saturday afternoon in the Continental Hotel, to which a number of us were invited, in consequence, I think, of having signed the Visitors' Book! It was very enjoyable, due in a large measure to an excellent tea handed round by young ladies of the Congregation! We promised to go to the Evening Service on Sunday "in force," but instead we found ourselves in an express train of the Egyptian State Railway.

About 3.30 a.m. we were amusing ourselves about two miles out of Alexandria, doing our



best to make ourselves comfortable in tents on sand. Our furniture and household goods not having come to hand, I managed with my Burberry which did for bed and blankets—my pocket and pillow coming in very useful. About 5 o'clock I went and had a look round and found my valise in the wake of a motor transport, and then I was in luxury once more. Had an excellent sleep till about 7.30, when I was rudely awakened by an electric car passing within a few yards of my front door.

We all enjoyed our breakfast made on our Company field cookers, which are a great success, and after breakfast a route march to the shores of the Mediterranean filled in the time till lunch! Now, where are we going? I'm not exactly sure, but I'm pretty certain it isn't the Dardanelles, and it isn't Salonika, and it isn't Suez. We're going to have a little show of our own, which is a habit of the 1/6th Royal Scots! I can't tell you anything definite, but as I said in my post-card, "Don't worry about us." We'll take good care of ourselves. You may not hear from me as regularly as you have done,

but that needn't worry you either. I don't know what like the postal arrangements are where we are going.

We are all very fit and cheery, and really think we would miss "sand" if we hadn't it. We are also getting hardened to tinned meat and biscuits and all the other little enjoyments of campaigning. I am sorry to hear that Sir Robert Laidlaw is dead. The Merchiston Park people have had more than their share of sorrow lately. I didn't know until I read in your letter that Uncle Stuart was away at the funeral.

Aunt Bella wrote giving me all the Melrose news, and one or two letters from various parts have made me pretty well up-to-date. The box of chocolate and the box from Minnie came safely, and are being put to a good use. The tobacco hasn't come yet, but we always live in hope and expectancy. The flies here are even more impertinent than those at Cairo. They would snatch the very bite from your mouth if they got the chance, and are the most undisciplined lot of flies we've come across yet.

There is not much to answer in your letter.

Tell Eben I got the September *Blackwood* all right, and am sure I wrote and thanked him.

The thing the three of us are photographed in is called an Arabiyeh (pronounced Ara-be-ya), commonly known as a cab or a victoria! Isabel will be able to explain all these things, as I'm sure anyone who has seen Egypt will not soon forget about it. There is nothing much I require, but I'll let you know as soon as I do.

**Mersa Matruh, 2/12/15.**

We have arrived safely at the above address after a somewhat adventurous voyage, and I am just sending a line away to let you know we are safe and well. I'll tell you about our adventures when I get time.

You have always been asking what to send, but you needn't worry any longer. Tinned eatables of any kind will be acceptable—chocolate, oxo cubes, &c. Small parcels and plenty of them have more chance of arriving.

The Back of Beyond isn't in it with this place. It is beyond that again, somewhere between Alexandria and Gibraltar on the north coast of

Africa. The climate is excellent if the company is somewhat scarce and poor in quality. We're quite cheery and well, so cheero!

c/o Caracol Attarine,  
Alexandria, Egypt, 3/12/15.

Our caravan has rested, after a rather adventurous voyage, on the northern shores of Africa, and before going into any details, let me first say we are all well and cheery, and in comparative safety meantime.

I think I gave you a description of our flight from Cairo, which was rather tragic, considering we had just made the acquaintance of some of the members of St. Andrew's Church. However, the move was so sudden that we found ourselves camped near Alexandria before we knew what had happened.

On Friday, "D" Company and Machine Gun Section got orders to move, and the Armada left port about 6 p.m. It consisted of three first-class battle trawlers, one of which being marked "G.N. 30" gave away its native heath as Granton, and rejoiced in the friendly name of "Comrade."

It was not till Sunday, however, that "B" Company embarked, Nos. 7 and 8 Platoons having a trawler each, with their own Platoon Officer on board; the other two platoons with my humble self being put on an Egyptian coastguard boat called "Noor-il-Bahr," which being translated means "Light of the Sea." It certainly was light enough as subsequent events proved. The Staff—that is, the C.O., the Doctor, the Quartermaster, and Acting Adjutant—were also aboard this lugger, and we crossed the bar about sunset, after a rather hard day's work loading ammunition, bully beef, biscuits, and the other luxuries we take with us on a picnic of this sort. I got your letter of 12th November just as we were leaving, and after having some tea, I lay down in the cabin and hoped we would be at our destination in the morning. It was estimated to take about thirteen hours at the outside, so we should be there about 7 a.m. We went with all lights out, of course, and no noise of any kind was permitted. In the morning I went on deck and found the boat rolling and rocking considerably. The Com-

mander said a very heavy sea was running, and he was only making from one to ten knots per hour instead of ten to twelve, which was the ship's usual. We were still sixty-five miles from our destination, and he said we would have to seek shelter or return to Alexandria. All our Officers were now sick with the exception of myself (this is not said in any boastful spirit, because I was pretty seedy before we finished). The majority of the men were sick too, and the lower deck was awash with about four inches of water.

The seas were now breaking almost continuously over the bows and filling up the fore-hold, so the Commander said we would have to remove our ammunition from the fore-hold and take it "aft." I got the men together who weren't helplessly sick, and after getting uncalled for baths and sundry bumps, we got it "aft," and I am not going to do any more "afting" of boxes of ammunition on a stormy day if I can help it. We tried all day to get into the Gulf of Kanais for shelter, but one knot per hour is rather slow work, and the continual rolling broke loose the



NEAR THE TOMBS OF THE KHALIFS.



A NATIVE 28TH OF MAY.



GOING TO CAIRO.





fresh water tanks in the hold and made a "shandy" of our drinking water and the Mediterranean which we had shipped. There were six of these tanks, each holding three tons of water, all bumping about in the hold, and not doing it quietly by any means. It's a wonder they did not damage the ship's hold.

About 9 p.m. we got into fairly calm water and anchored, and I think most of us rested a bit during the night. In the morning we found ourselves in a bay quite near a rough sandy coast, the sea being a beautiful green and still very troubled. We had forty-eight hours rations on board, which I now had issued on the famine scale, and the engineer condensed some water for drinking. The C.O. now took things in hand and interviewed the Commander of the ship. I must put in a note here that the ship's Officers and crew were composed of the Egyptian Navy, which I think accounts for all our troubles. If they had been British, things would have been different, but Gypies should stay on land. They don't know how to sail ships.

The Commander said he might have to stay

here for one, two, perhaps three days, which was rather comforting when we thought of our forty-eight hours rations and condensed seawater, and the C.O. decided to land in small boats if possible, and march the remaining thirty-seven miles. However, the sea was too rough to allow of this, and we carried on all day baling the holds. This had to be done with buckets, as the steam pump had broken down, and the hand pump looked like making the job last for the duration of the War.

When we got the water down to about three feet we set to, to fix the tanks, each member of the crew having his own ideas about how it should be done, and nobody making any definite attempt at getting it done. A young Maltese engineer had, I thought, the most practical scheme, and we got started. It was pretty hot work down in the hold, which was full of steam, but after about four hours we got them fast enough to last the rest of the voyage.

Just as we were finishing, word came down from the bridge that a searchlight was seen on the horizon, so I reported to the C.O. and we

went on to the bridge. Our ship was fitted with a searchlight and two guns, but we would probably stand a poor chance against any hostile craft. The question was, was it hostile or one of our own? We thought probably the latter, as late in the afternoon we had got a message ashore, which was to go to Matruh by camel, and thence by wire to Alexandria, and there was just a chance that this message had got through. It was no use taking any risks, however, so we sat tight and watched. The searchlight came nearer, until we reckoned it was from three to four miles off. The C.O. ordered the Commander to run his ship ashore if we were attacked, and so we waited. About 10.30 the searchlight went away N.W., and we saw no more of it. We are now pretty certain it was an enemy submarine, as none of the Allies' ships are in this quarter.

We weighed anchor about 1 a.m., or rather left it where it was, as the steam winch had broken down, and I had a good sleep till about 7 a.m., when we came within sight of Mersa Matruh, our destination. About 9.30 we came

into a beautiful natural harbour, and found the rest of the Armada. They had a pretty rough voyage, of course, but they had British sailors on board, so hadn't any of the moments of excitement we were honoured with.

Wednesday was a busy day unloading and "pulling ourselves together," and we went to bed about 8 a.m.—Bally, Grahamslaw, and I sharing a tent. About 10.30 we were awakened by firing, and weren't long in getting outside and turning out the inlying piquet. There was no more disturbance, and the Brigade sent a message that it was only some of our outposts firing on enemy patrols. Nothing of interest has happened since. The Senussi are, or say they are, quite friendly, and they are the strongest tribe in these parts. The others, I expect, will keep at a safe distance from us. There is a beautiful lagoon quite near us, in which I've had two excellent bathes. The food, of course, is plain but good. Bully beef and biscuits don't allow of much variety, but we've had one or two delicacies, and are thriving. The water we obtain from wells, of which there

are a number. They are all slightly brackish, but the medical staff are always making improvements, and now we are having quite a good time.

This is a story of mere facts. I have made no attempt at colour. You might let Robert read it, as I haven't time to write to him just now; also let Eben see it, and tell him I'll write whenever I can. Your letter of 9th November came to-day, and also the book. Many thanks for them.

I'm glad you like the Egyptian tent work. It's very quaint, isn't it? The weather in Auld Reekie seems to be as usual. To-day is warm and sunny here. We are going about in shirt sleeves, and didn't feel the sea cold when bathing. However, if I'd my choice I know which I'd put up with!

Grahamslaw has just drawn my attention to the fact that this letter will arrive about Christmas! I hope you'll have as good a time as possible. Don't worry about me. We know how to look after ourselves pretty well by now. It must be wearisome for you all at home.

There is always something to interest us here, but I hope you'll keep "merry and bright." Remember me to all my friends. I'm sorry I haven't the time to write to all I'd like to. Isabel says she is going to have a long chin-wag when I come home. I can see a good many chin-wags ahead, and we have some good chin-wags here in the evenings. You should see a group picnicking on the floor of a tent round a candle, and all the chin-wagging, and one of these chin-waggers is your loving son, Willie.

**Western Frontier Force,**

**B.M.E.F. Egypt, 7/12/15.**

MY DEAR ROBERT,—No doubt you have seen my letter to mother describing our voyage to this benighted spot, so need not repeat it. At times, however, I thought it was all up, especially when we lay watching that searchlight gradually creeping up. The ship's Officers and crew were the most helpless lot I've come across, the Captain was about off his chump, and told me all about his wife and children in Alexandria. I'm glad I wasn't sick as I was able to help at

the fixing of the tanks, &c. However, "we're all here," as the song says, and the plans for the future are "wropt in mystery."

The map of this place is simple, just a line separating sea from wilderness, so all our map-reading is as nought so far. I expect we will move along and retake the places we have been pushed out of towards the west, but this is surmise on my part. However our Force is increasing — R.N.A.S. aeroplanes, armoured motor cars, &c.—and I expect we will sit tight till we are all ready. The Arabs have all "skived off," and we have taken one or two prisoners.

Our work is similar to what we did on Inchkeith—outposts, boat fatigues, &c. It is a different place, however, in December; shirt sleeves, bathing, and a splendid climate. Everything is a bit rough of course, bully beef and biscuits, lying on the sand, and cold at night. You know the sort of life.

And what are the 2/6th doing now? I wish you would write and tell me all that's going on. I gave out as many of the post-cards as I could and had to leave the others at Alexandria. The



cigarettes haven't come yet, but we have got an army issue of tobacco.

This place is rock and sand as far as you can see, and I've no doubt a good deal further! An Italian ship was torpedoed off the coast last night, and I believe the crew have been landed here. It's not the sort of place I would come to from Saturday to Monday, but we might be a good deal worse. Ford cars are "the" thing here, they are so light they can go anywhere. The Rolls-Royce are too heavy and sink a bit, and there's only one road, and it is only a bit that's harder and firmer than the rest.

Do you know what I got here? A memo. from H. asking me to return my Duplicate Observations for November 1914, *et seq.*, and also to explain a balance in August! The last word! I told the R. P. that we were taking part in a War that was on, or words to that effect. The ways of the British Army are passing strange. Now mind and write, and give me all the news; I haven't seen a paper later than about a month old, so am a bit behind. We may be into Berlin for all I know.—WILLIE.



**Western Frontier Force,  
B.M.E.F., Egypt, 10/12/15.**

We have now been in our present quarters for over a week, and have been busy all the time unloading bully beef, biscuits, and all the thousand and one other things which keep an army in good health and spirits. After being on duty at the beach yesterday, you can guess how glad I was to find a mail waiting when I returned to Camp, and three letters from you in it—16th, 18th, and 20th November.

I have had one parcel—a Selkirk bannock! but as the post-mark was Selkirk I don't think it's the one you advise, so I have it to look forward to. This one arrived just as five of us were having tea, and the change in our countenances was only equalled by the change in the Selkirk bannock!

The mail has evidently been "saving up" for a while, as I had a good mixed bag again. Eben's letter was a bit of a surprise. He is now Private Flint of 15th Royal Scots. It's going to be a queer mix up before this War's finished,

but the more men we get, the sooner the victory will be ours. I wish you could see our "happy little home." I never knew until now how little kit one can do with. I've seen one go away with more for a week-end at home, but we're really quite comfortable and very cheery. Yesterday, when I was down at the beach, I brought up a loaf of white bread which I got on one of the ships, and which by this time is a luxury with us. The Company Mess hailed this addition with delight, and quoted Omar Khayyam, "Here with a loaf of bread . . . and wilderness is paradise enow." Although our kit is reduced to a minimum, Bally has managed to bring his tin whistle. We have advised him on one or two occasions to go out into the wilderness and charm anything he can find with it, but the others have been just as uncomplimentary about my rendering of "Teribus," so we're all quits.

There is a beautiful natural harbour and sandy beach just behind our Camp, and when time and the "high heid yins" permit, we've had some excellent bathes. The water is very

buoyant, and I am able to swim a bit already, an accomplishment I often wanted to acquire. The country is wilderness all around. There is hardly anything green, except ourselves, to be seen, but there has been a big change since we arrived. (The change is on the place, not on us.) The climate is delightful, warmer than summer at home during the day, but cold at night. It is difficult to realise that Christmas is so near, but from what you say, you are evidently having the usual wintry weather in Edinburgh.

How are the 2/6th getting on? I would like to hear from Robert. You say some of them are coming here, but they haven't arrived yet. Our plans for the future are "wropt in mystery." Even a Senior Captain is kept in blissful ignorance! Don't worry if you don't hear from me for some time, as the mails are bound to be irregular. I will write whenever I have the chance, but there's no pillar at the corner of our street, so as I said before, don't worry if I appear careless with my correspondence.

I read in the *Telegraph* to-day a German

report of the sinking of an Egyptian cruiser about November 6th. It is still "merry and bright." In fact, some of us came here on it a few weeks after it had been sunk! So don't believe all you read in the papers. That's one worry we are spared here—reading every edition of the *Dispatch* and *News* that comes out. News is well matured by the time it reaches us!

**Western Frontier Force,  
B.M.E.F., Egypt, 14/12/15.**

No doubt you have heard that the Battalion has been in action. "A" and "B" Companies formed the General Reserve, so that I was not in the show at all. "C" Company, under Major Milligan, evidently bore the brunt, as the Major himself was wounded, so was Lieut. Jardine and Lieut. N. Henderson. Fourteen of the rank and file have been wounded, and unfortunately three have been killed. The remainder are all in Camp now, and are well and cheery, and the wounded Officers are all away to Alexandria on a comfortable hospital ship. Some of my men

were attached to "D" Company to bring them up to strength, and two of them are wounded.

It's no use going into details of the fight yet: firstly, because I wasn't there, and secondly, since the Battalion only came back this afternoon, there is no authentic account of it yet. We are expecting a mail in to-morrow, and I will write when this comes in.

**Western Frontier Force,  
B.M.E.F., Egypt, 18/12/15.**

Your letters of 29th November and 1st December came to hand about two days ago, and that of 3rd December to-day. I was very glad to get them and hear all the news. I am glad you like the brooches and things. There are a lot of things I'd like to buy in Cairo, but there's only one thing that prevents that—the usual!

How is Robert? I hope he is better again. You might thank him for the cigarettes which arrived safely. I left the list of men they were for in Alexandria, but Hunstan, who is in my Company, knew them all. They were very

thankful for them, and told me to thank Robert and tell him they wish they had stayed in the 2/6th!

The Asiatic body cords have come all right, but are not needed so far. I'm afraid they won't frighten beetles about an inch and a half long! Grandma's socks came to-day. They are excellent. Please thank her very much for them. I also got a pair from the ladies of Broughton Place. Eben was saying I never acknowledged the parcels you sent, but I have done so so far. I've told you every one I've got, but a great many go astray and take a long time to come. One of our Officers got a letter this week posted to him in France last January! so I'm not so bad so far.

Gold Flake, commonly known as "Gaspers," are in popular demand here, the kind that Robert sent. There were some left over of his lot. You will notice the tense "were." Only a few remain now. All the wounded are progressing favourably as far as I know. The Officers are at Alexandria, so they will have every attention. The rest of us are well

and cheery. "B" Company Officers mess together and have some great times. We are a cheery lot—Bally, Brown, Grahamslaw, Chalmers, Lornie, and myself. Our table consists of two boxes, the lower one forming a cupboard of sorts. Round this we sit on empty bully beef boxes, and when possible have our meals together.

The other morning we had just started breakfast when we were all ordered to "fall in," when we marched out and did a good day's work "digging," putting up barbed wire, &c. About 3 p.m. the field cooker came along like a fire engine and dished out "tripe." Now, there are worse things than tripe when it's 3 p.m., and you haven't had any breakfast. It took some chewing, but that's neither here nor there now-a-days. The tripe, I may say, was a capture from the enemy, not as such, but in the form of live stock, so that for a few days we have been living on the fat of the land, or rather the fat of the sheep. It's a pleasant change from bully beef and biscuits. Bully beef, whether plain, stewed, fried, or made



*à la* Knox, is just bully beef when finished, and biscuit is biscuit all the world over. Our bakers are now able to make the bread rise. In fact it keeps on rising after it's dished out. We left a loaf that morning I spoke of, and by the time we returned it had risen quite an appreciable amount. The bread we got at first was very "compactly built together," and would never have risen to the end of time. We get good jam and cheese, and occasionally dried fruit, so that on the whole we are very well off. Alfred Flint sent me a very useful parcel which arrived the other day, and usually one of us has something "luxurious" to add to the menu.

Hodgson and I have had a game of chess since we came here, and unless otherwise ordered, are going to have another to-night. He lives next door! and has a small set concealed somewhere in his kit. I haven't much time for reading, but have had a look at the papers you sent, and *Punch* is always welcome. The little book you sent is very good, and I often have a look at it. You've no idea how





SPOT WHERE MOSES WAS FOUND IN THE BULRUSHES. IBRAHIM  
LOOKING AT THE EXACT SPOT.



A GROUP AT A NATIVE VILLAGE NEAR CAIRO.



ANOTHER VIEW OF THE SAME VILLAGE. LIEUT. CUNNINGHAM,  
ROYAL MUNSTER FUSILIERS, ON DONKEY.



quickly the time passes. We have a lot to do which makes all the difference, but I'm sure you must weary at home; we'll have some fine "chin-wags," as Isabel speaks about, when I get home.

You might tell Agnes I got her cheery letter to-day, and I will answer when I get time, but I think I'll need to send some of the printed post-cards made for those who aren't of a literary turn of mind, or who haven't much time at their disposal. You know the thing, just score out what you don't want to say.

How are things going on at George Street? You might tell them all I was asking for them, and often think about them here. I had a very nice letter from Mrs. Davis of the St. Andrew Hotel. You might call there and see her. She was very kind to us when we were there. She will be very pleased to see you, I'm sure. Mrs. Milligan and Lucy had been up one day. It is much cooler here now, but more like July than December. Bobbie Tait was saying in his letter he had gone from January to June in two days. It took us longer, but we got

a bit further than June! I think Cairo will be very pleasant now, but I wouldn't object to Edinburgh with its wind and sleet. Did I use to grouse about it and my food? That's one thing I will be cured of when I come home.

At present I can only view things from a very limited individual standpoint, so it's no use starting to describe what we are doing, and most of the personal little details are contained in this letter, which Robert will likely see, so I won't write him just now. The latest news that we have here is that French has resigned. Is this true? We are all wondering how the War is getting on! As far as our little bit is concerned everything is satisfactory.

**Western Frontier Force,  
B.M.E.F., Egypt.**

There are some bright moments even in the life out here, and I can assure you the appearance of a brown paper parcel with the once familiar label printed in red letters, "Macvitties, Guest & Co.," and addressed to W.A.D., is not one of the dullest. Such a parcel arrived

yesterday, containing a Selkirk bannock, chocolate, and the "thirst quenchers" from Miss Anderson. The Selkirk bannock has not been touched yet, but we have "touched" the other items to some tune. The contents have stood the voyage well, all except the thirst quenchers. We are not sure whether they started as solid and became somewhat soft, or began life in a liquid form and got hardened on account of the long journey. They arrived however, which is the main thing, and are excellent. As it is so near Christmas, the bannock will probably be kept till then. We intend to do ourselves well that day, and some of the other members of our small but select Mess have mysterious boxes hidden in their kits, which are going to be produced then. Christmas Day in the Workhouse won't be a patch on Christmas Day in the Sahara!

I saw a very strange thing this morning. Rain! It rained for about ten minutes, just the ordinary, familiar, old-fashioned, wet rain that used to be so common in Edinburgh, Selkirk, Peebles, and other places we have visited since

mobilisation. This place would be an ideal holiday resort if there were any houses, golf courses, hotels, and a promenade. There is a lovely silver beach, plenty sunshine, fresh air, and excellent bathing. It is warmer just now than mid-summer at home, and with the addition of the one or two items above mentioned would be a very pleasant place indeed.

In the meantime, however, there isn't much of the peaceful pleasantness about it. Hard work is the order of the day and of the night too. I've just finished 36 hours of outpost duty, and am enjoying a short rest. I was telling Bally I was much more careful than he was. I always cleaned my boots before getting into my valise, whereas he got in and a considerable amount of desert with him. He just said, "What does it matter?" and I feel inclined to agree with him. I pulled out a handkerchief which has not been used so far, the other day. It was nicely perfumed! Do you remember doing this carefully before I left? It reminded me of the days when I used to brush my teeth, comb my hair, sit on a chair at a table, and eat my food like

other respectable citizens. I will need a course of deportment when I come back, I'm afraid!

I had a letter from Major Milligan, telling me that all three of them are progressing favourably in Hospital, Alexandria, and wanting all the news. Well, this is the last place to apply to for news, except for that which concerns ourselves. We are out-of-date altogether with news of the outside world. You might tell me how the War's getting on when next you write. Our little corner is getting on all right, but why we are fighting the people here is beyond me. I've reason now, of course, when they have wounded Milligan and Jardine, and they have even attempted to hit me, but they are nothing great in the shooting line, and it's a game that two can play. However, don't worry about me. I studied carefully the chapter on "taking cover," and they want to be pretty slick to get any of us on the hop now.

Our benign Government are now issuing us with a ration of tobacco. I think they want to make us non-smokers. It's the best cure I've struck so far. There is also a canteen established

somewhere about, where one can buy tinned fruit, cigarettes, &c., when they have any to sell, which is not often. The boat is always expected in about two days after you send for anything!

Our pay and allowances are credited to our account in Cox & Co.'s Bank, London, on the first of each month, so that "shopping" here is an unknown pastime. All told, Active Service isn't all it's cracked up to be, but I wouldn't miss this experience for anything.

Sergeant Walker (Minnie knows about him) was telling me this is very similar to South Africa, and not at all like France. He has seen service in both France and the Boer War, and is a very useful man to have in my Company. The men grouse about the food and grouse about the work, but on the whole are very cheery and willing. They are fit, which is always a good sign. None of us will regret, however, when the time comes for us to go home. It may be soon or it may be a while yet, but it's always coming nearer.



**Western Frontier Force,  
B.M.E.F., Egypt, 29/12/15.**

MY DEAR ROBERT,—I was delighted to get your letter of 12th December enclosing the photo, which is very good. I see the switch is well to the fore! It's refreshing to see a decent uniform with Sam Browne, &c. We are like a lot of tramps here already, but it doesn't matter. The Adjutant was suggesting having a Board on Lornie's tunic the other day, but we are all pretty much alike.

There's no "Trench Warfare" touch about this. Advanced Guards, Flank Guards, Convoys, Outposts, Bivouacs, Standing Camps, Skirmishing, Company in Attack, Battalion in Attack—these things are always with us. Just like the old camp life, but on desert, and with real enemy and real bullets. They have machine guns, field guns, and umpteen different pattern rifles, and ammunition from '45 Martini Henry to our own Mark VI., including Turkish and Egyptian clips, and any quantity of German stuff. The Germans are quite evidently at the

bottom of all the trouble, and seem to have worked up the business pretty well. "C" and "D" Companies are the only two who have been right in it so far, but of course we have all had our "fill" of outposts, convoys, and many other things you read about in F. S. Regs.

We have been sniped at once or twice at night. One night I was writing in my tent when we got a burst of rapid about our ears—a bullet going through the tent next door to mine. It appears a party had crept up and occupied a ridge just outside our outpost line. We soon drove them off and they did no damage. These little things are quite exciting while they last, and there is plenty variety one way and another, but it is a desolate country. The casualties in the various armies here must be mounting up so that there will likely be something in the papers about it sooner or later. You might mark anything you see and send it out. We really don't know much about the general situation (I mean myself personally), and as for news of France or Servia we are hopelessly out of date.

What sort of Christmas had you? I was pulled out of my valise about 3 a.m., paraded at 4, marched out a bit, and took up another outpost position. From where I was I watched a battle going on. With my glasses I could see both sides, and could see the effects of rifle, machine gun, and artillery fire. Slept beneath the stars at night till the rain came on, and then slept beneath the rain. Nice quiet way to spend Christmas Day, wasn't it? I'm told it rains here about once a year. It certainly rained on Christmas Night 1915.

I hear that Lord Derby's scheme has roped in a lot of recruits. How are they going on at 89? It's a good job we didn't know what was before us on 5th August 1914! When and where this business is going to end is beyond wondering about now! I wouldn't mind a few days leave just now to get myself and my kit cleaned, a hot bath, and a decent dinner! Gee! Bully beef and army biscuits No. 4 are rather monotonous after a bit. We get issued with rum now and tobacco, the latter being about the best thing to make one a non-smoker I've ever

struck! However, cheer oh! we might be "waur" a long way, but if you've any intention of coming here, my advice is—Don't!

Remember me to all the boys. Keep as much of this letter to yourself as you think fit; it's no use worrying people unnecessarily, especially mother.

With best wishes for 1916, and hoping to see you sometime before the year's out.

WILLIE.

**Western Frontier Force,  
B.M.E.F., Egypt, 1/1/16.**

This is the first day of another year, and still no signs of the War coming to a finish, although as far as our little bit is concerned, everything is going well. It hasn't been a bit like Christmas and New Year here. In the first place the weather is more like September at home during one of the fine spells we sometimes had. It is warm and sunny during the day, but gets very cold in the night. It is agreeing with us however, and we are all fit. Secondly, there isn't much of the "peace and

good will" feeling about, but we are having a quiet time just now owing to the enemy getting a good deal more than they bargained for lately

On Christmas morning I was called early by my Orderly Sergeant, at 3 a.m., and didn't get back to bed till 10 p.m. the following night. We hadn't any fighting to do, but it was mostly tiring work. Through my field glasses I could see the enemy getting well "biffed" which was a source of some satisfaction at any rate. The time passes fairly quickly, and old year's night was on us before we knew where we were.

I was on duty at a slight distance from the main body, and so missed what appears to have been a very pleasant evening. Towards midnight the Hon. Neil Primrose and company—five in all—paid a visit to our Officers' lines, their approach being heralded by the strains of a mouth organ. They found everything quiet, and were disappointed that The Royal Scots were not holding "Hogmanay." However, we are all light sleepers now-a-days, and the New Year was brought in to the sound of bagpipes, "Auld Lang Syne," and other things

decidedly "Scotch." He is here with his regiment, and camped not far from us.

To-day has been practically a holiday, the occasion being greatly enhanced by the arrival of a "parcel mail." We have been looking forward to this for some time, as our last supply of luxuries was on its last legs. However, to-day has put things right. The other members of "B" Company received parcels, so that we are in the lap of luxury meantime. Thank you very much for your parcel. We would be "fed up" or rather the reverse if these things hadn't come. Bally, Brown, Chalmers, Lornie, and myself mess together, and we pride ourselves on having the cheeriest and best catered for Mess in the Battalion. This is due in a large measure to the kindness of friends at home.

What sort of Christmas and New Year have you had? It would be quiet, I expect, but cheer oh! next Christmas will be another story, I trust!

You might thank Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy for their good wishes, and wish them good health and prosperity in the coming year from me.

I haven't time to write just now, but will try and do so later. Your letters of 10th and 12th December came safely to hand, and I was glad to get all the news. Bally is often telling me I am a most annoying character beginning a story and not finishing, but I think I must take this from you! How did you enjoy "Said the Fisherman"? I think quite an interesting book would be, "Said The Sixth Royal Scots," on the same subject—"Egypt." We've said a few things about it since we came.

**Western Frontier Force,**

**B.M.E.F., Egypt, 6/1/16.**

There isn't much to write home about this week, except perhaps the weather, and I had better not write all we think and say about it here. It doesn't rain often here, but when it does there's no mistake about it! For nearly a week it has been bitterly cold, a strong west wind, and rain, which I don't think Scotland can beat even at its best. We were short of water when we came, but now the wells are

all full, and the water standing in some places about two feet deep. Our Camp at present is on high ground, so we are fairly dry, but last night Bally and I had to get out about 1.30 a.m., and persuade our tent that we weren't moving just then. It's not the sort of thing I'd do for pleasure. A tent is a most unwieldy affair after dark, when it's pouring rain and the wind blowing in from the sea. However, it's a good lesson not to pitch a tent as well as build a house on sand, but as there's no other place to pitch it, the lesson is rather wasted! To-night is calm again, and we are all well fixed up, or rather fixed down, which is more important!

There has been very little doing this last week on account of the rain and wind, and in some ways I've been reminded of this time last year on Inchkeith. We didn't think then that a year hence we would be in darkest Africa, or at least in a part sufficiently dark for my taste. We make the most of things though. It's funny what you can get into a kit which is limited to bare necessities, but I'm thankful



some of us had the foresight to put these unnecessary things in, as they are so necessary !

We are all thriving. Bully beef and biscuit, with an occasional tin of jam between, seems to agree with us. This is our usual fare, but we are now getting other things as well. It's a funny thing that the Government discourages smoking and drinking in the Army. Periodically they send little tracts round on the subject, saying how bad it is for the troops, and Officers must do all in their power to discourage it, and then they hand out rum and tobacco. It's just one of their little ways, but one we don't object to in this instance. On Tuesday, Bally and I both received parcels, one each, both apparently from the same kind friend, but who she or he may be we hadn't the faintest notion. The parcels contained an excellent assortment of sweets from "Fuller's, Princes Street," posted at Hope Street Post Office, but no indication of who sent them. I don't think I've mentioned my trusty henchman, Knox, for some time. He is blessed with the most abounding good nature I've seen in

anybody. No matter what the weather is like he is always cheery, and the more depressing the circumstances, the cheerier he seems to become. He appears in the morning with a smile on his face, a pipe in his teeth, and imparts the glad news that "the breakfast will be ready in a minute, sir!" This minute is occupied in getting up and dressing, a much simpler process than it is at home, consisting as it does of crawling out of my valise and literally "getting up." Active Service has its good points!

And now, what about yourself? I hope you are still in the best of health and spirits. I would like to get some letters just to know what is going on. Be sure and give me all the news when you write. You might ask Mr. Stewart to post me a battery for my "Orilux" lamp. Tell him it is exceedingly useful, and the battery I came away with over four months ago is "still going strong."

SUNDAY, 9/1/16.

I didn't get this finished last night, as Bally and I had to make our own supper. To-day



THE "BARBER AND DOCTOR OF  
HEALTH" AT THE VILLAGE.



NATIVE GIRL CARRYING HER  
USUAL LOAD.



TWO NATIVE LADIES AT MOSQUE EL MAHMUDIYA.



is warm and fine, and I don't go on duty till 5 p.m. We are all sitting about discussing the affairs of State, village Parliament style. The mail, however, is still one of the main topics of conversation. I know absolutely nothing of what is going on at home. Tell me about everything when you write. Bally and I have an oil lamp rigged up. The chimney is the neck of a water carafe we found, and the remainder consists of tobacco tins and biscuit box. It gives a good light, notwithstanding Grahamslaw's remark that it reminds him of one of Heath Robinson's pictures!

**Western Frontier Force,  
B.M.E.F., Egypt, 13/1/16.**

You sympathise with us "amidst all the heat." Which heat? I'm sitting with all my available clothes on, and the heat isn't worrying me much. There are worse climates than Scotland I've found. It is bitterly cold at night here just now, but I'm sure not so bad as France or Salonika.

Yes, the body cords came all right. I'm sure I thanked you for them before, but will do so

again as I've had occasion to wear them. It's rather a "creepy" subject, so I won't say any more about it, except that the latest report is, "No enemy in sight."

Brown and I spoke about Paul's voyage, and when we got a chance we looked it up. Verses 28 and 29 appealed to us particularly. That night in the Gulf of Kanais we sounded, cast anchor, and *wished for the day*. The Mediterranean hasn't changed much since then, and neither has human nature. There is very little new to write about. We made the acquaintance of two New Zealand Officers, and had a great time together. Major Kay sent me the enclosed note a few days later, and as I want to keep it, I'm sending it home. The Colonials have a fine breezy manner which is most enjoyable. They had some great tales about their wanderings since August 1914, and we were able to compare notes. It is getting late, so this will need to be a continued letter, and here endeth the first chapter.

14/1/16.

It has been dry to-day, but cold. I rode to

Matruh this morning and got some money for the men. It is intended to start a dry canteen—a useless institution without money—but now we are ready for it as soon as it starts. Our horses still look on camels as rank outsiders, and although they see them nearly every day, they always appear surprised and annoyed when a camel crosses their path. I got my horse pretty well used to them at Cairo, but it went lame at Alexandria, and I had to leave it there and get a new one. This latter is of the milk-cart or bread-van variety, and somebody was rude enough to suggest that it wouldn't start until it heard a door slam! Fresh air and exercise have made a difference on her though, and even she cocks her ears and gets quite lively at the sight of a camel.

The rain has made quite a difference to the desert. Little patches of green are showing here and there. Little bulbous plants like tulips, or probably more like crocuses, are coming up; and I even saw what is apparently grass, but I've almost forgotten what grass is like. There are wells quite near our Camp, with four or

five rather old and seedy looking palm-trees to mark the place. I expect this is the sort of thing travellers are so thankful to see, but I will leave this oasis without any deep regret.

Before the War, a party of excavators came every winter to Matruh, and spent their time digging up some Roman remains somewhere in the vicinity. There is a very old mosque a mile or two along the coast, but I haven't examined it closely. It is very white and clean looking from a distance! It has every chance here though. The spot would be "El Dorado" to the Smoke Abatement Society before we came. There are one or two houses round about, or rather, there were, but the Artillery required practice, and we required firewood, so before we were both satisfied, the houses gradually disappeared off the sky-line.

Have you ever tried tinned kippered herring? If you haven't, don't! We had a tin the other night, but have been very disagreeable to each other ever since. The papers, I see, are giving accounts of this place and what's going on. The accounts are news to us. Eben sent me an extract



from the *Scotsman* in which it said the British Forces were defeated, and were fleeing eastward. It came from Constantinople, and is probably for German consumption. We haven't done much fleeing so far, and don't intend to do any.

It is said that a paper was found on one of our enemy's chief Officers who was captured, or found in his kit somewhere; at any rate, this paper was from the Kaiser to the effect that Great Britain was defeated, and all that Senussi had to do was to march into Cairo and take possession of Egypt. I haven't seen this paper myself, so cannot vouch for its truth, but it's like the Kaiser's unbounded cheek and lies. However, Mr. Senussi knows better by this time. Don't believe all you see in the papers.

There's always something interesting about a parcel mail. There's a fascination about a parcel addressed to you. It is difficult to describe. Its size, its shape, who it is from, what is in it—these things pass rapidly through your mind as you are trying to find a knife to open it, and there's a real pleasure in getting inside it. The same sort of feeling I used to

have when I wakened on Christmas morning after hanging up my stocking.

There's one thing about the mail, if there are any accounts for me, that mail arrives safely somehow. I'm returning two, which you might pay for me.

Well, there really isn't much to tell you this week. We are just "carrying on." A Padre drifted into our Camp last Sunday night and held a service. He was very free and easy, and referred to the Senussi as "our friends the enemy." Before the War he was a missionary to the same sort of people, so he told us, and I heard someone remark, "No wonder they're fighting us now." He said, "Now which hymn will we sing?" Great argument between the supporters of No. 10 and No. 15. Finally, No. 10 was agreed on, although one man still agitated for No. 15—"Fight the good Fight." It was one of the simplest services I've ever been at, but was none the less real on that account. I've heard better singing, but I'm sure never more sincere.

**Western Frontier Force,  
B.M.E.F., Egypt, 28/1/16.**

I was very glad to get your letter of New Year's Day, and to hear all the news. How is Robert? You say it's wonderful how news travels, but it's much more wonderful how it gets altered as it moves on. By the time the "voyage story" came back here I could hardly recognise it. I think the extra bits had been supplied by Captain Kettle! Did I thank you for the two parcels which arrived all right? They are worth a second thanks, at any rate. You say you saw all the old faces in B. P., and then mention two who would be a bit surprised if they knew they were included in the old face brigade! There must be a big change, as you say, but I don't agree with you that all is nothing to mine. I've had another look at mine in the mirror, and with the exception of my upper lip there's not so much difference. Since last I wrote I've experienced some more of the delights of Active Service! On Saturday last, "A" and "B" Companies were ordered out on a Column to

go Senussi hunting. We left about 2 p.m. and marched west by south for 20 miles. The Column consisted of all arms, that is—cavalry, infantry, artillery with transport, ambulances, armoured cars, aeroplanes, &c., and as the New Zealanders say, we went along “quick and lively.” The Column took over four hours to pass a given point, so you can get some idea of its length from that.

About 10 p.m. we bivouacked at Bir Shola (Bir means well), putting out outposts, &c., as we are in enemy country. No fires were permitted, and as “B” Company Officers’ blankets didn’t arrive in the transport, and the night was cold and wet, we hadn’t just a picnic. The men got their blankets though, and slept soundly to judge by the snoring which went on all round. We moved off at 6.30 next morning, and as Orders were a bit late in coming, had to do so without breakfast. Most of us got a biscuit which we ate on the march, and you’ve no idea how good a biscuit is under certain circumstances. The Senussi Camp was reckoned to be about eight miles off, and here the grand

Senussi himself was quartered. I will try and tell you all about him some day. About 9.30 we heard the artillery in action, and not long after the Sikhs and New Zealanders who were ahead of us got in amongst it. We were kept in brigade reserve until 12.15, when we were ordered to support the cavalry on our right flank which was being pushed in. During the halt, I had time to examine the country round about. It was level as far as the eye could see all round, except for a small rise in front, where the stiffest fighting was apparently going on. We were on what is called "Stoney Plateau," a level stretch of wilderness about 350 feet above sea level. This plateau is sandy and covered with small stones and bushes of camel scrub. In some places an attempt has been made at cultivation, but in the usual half-hearted Gypjie way. It's about the most desolate spot you could imagine. The method in which we advanced will not interest you. My Company formed the firing line, and "A" Company with the machine guns was in support. We advanced in the way I was taught

at Chelsea, and the men did splendidly. From Column we went into line of platoons and then line of sections, eventually getting into one extended line. Shortly after we passed the cavalry we came under rifle and machine gun fire, and had to advance with caution and by rushes. The enemy's fire was high, but sufficiently low to make us keep our heads down. When their machine gun was going we had just to lie down and pretend we weren't there.

We advanced in this way till 2.30 p.m., by which time the enemy had retired and we had advanced about a mile and a-half. Our machine guns came up on our right and made things very unpleasant for the enemy. A message now came along from the General that The Royal Scots were not to advance any farther until the attack had developed on the left, but to hold the ground we had taken. We had now time to see what had happened to us. No casualties in "B" Company! which I could hardly believe considering the fire we were under, but "A" Company behind us had one killed, and five wounded. A very small casualty

list compared with the other regiments who were in the main attack. They pushed the enemy right back and burned their Camp. The grand Senussi himself made off bright and early with a small escort. Their Force was estimated at from 4000 to 5000 to start with, but is now considerably less. It was now considered that two platoons could hold our position, and two of "B" Company were left under Bally and Brown, the other two along with "A" Company being withdrawn. One machine gun was left. "A" Company was sent to assist at the Camp bonfire, and I was again in reserve with two platoons. It was now beginning to turn dark, and I was beginning to turn hungry, a feeling which all of us were now experiencing, so gradually as the noise subsided, we closed up round the field ambulance and formed a perimeter camp. The transport had got into difficulties during the day, and was stuck about two miles away, so we had to eat our emergency rations which are always carried, and only used as a last resource. There's a very neat little tin of tea and oxo in this, but we had no water,



and so had to content ourselves with biscuit, and any odds and ends we had brought.

I must have slept for about two hours along with some others under a tarpaulin, when I wakened about 12.30, feeling dirty, damp, and disagreeable. The weather was again cold and very wet. I went for a short walk, and eventually struck a small fire, round which a mixed crowd were squatting. I met Henderson, who had a few tea tablets, so we started a water hunt and managed half a mess tin full, with which we made tea about 3 a.m. It was a long dreary night. Motor ambulances were continually coming and going, but as soon as daylight came we got on the move home. "B" Company formed the advance guard, and we reached Bir Shola in the afternoon, after an uneventful march. There are a number of minor incidents that will come back to me in time. The General's car, up to the axles in wet sand, being pulled by six horses, with the Australian driver sitting on the bonnet, added a humorous touch to the proceedings, and many other incidents produced remarks from



the men funnier than ever I've read in *Punch*. There were pathetic sights too, any number. Men lying drinking the rain water which had collected in the cart ruts, told the tale of thirst. Men walking on their bare feet with boots hung over their shoulders, showed that the marching had been heavy, and the long line of ambulance waggons told their own story. At Bir Shola we again bivouacked, and although the night was again cold and wet, we had food, water, and blankets, and a good night's rest.

At 8 a.m. next morning we began the remaining twenty miles back to Matruh, and this time we formed the rear guard. There wasn't much excitement about this. We were all a bit "fed up" having been out since Saturday with little food, if anything less rest, but plenty hard work. The men were cheery and sang most of the way home. The General watched us march past as we came into Matruh, and complimented us on our marching, and also on our advance. You can understand we were thankful to get once more into the comparative comfort of Camp. We expected a mail would

have arrived, but were disappointed. In fact, the letter mail has not arrived yet, though a few parcels have come, among which I am glad to see tobacco and cigarettes. Many thanks for this, which has come at a very opportune time. Captain Gascoyne of the New Zealanders paid us a visit last night, and we compared notes. He tried to find us twice in the "Bivie" as he calls it, but was unsuccessful. He is a very cheery individual and excellent company. He is known as Fluxite, bearing a very striking resemblance to the gentleman whose picture appears in the Fluxite advertisements. I hope he will come to Edinburgh some time as he has promised. We met first on outpost duty, and have had some rough times together since then. He always tries to drift into "B" Company Officers' Mess if anywhere near, and we are always glad to see him. To-day is sunny and warm, just like a good day in summer at home, but we may have rain and cold right on to the end of February. I am sending by this mail a *Review* we started in Cairo before we left, but which has newly

reached us. I haven't had time to read it. Probably you won't understand a lot of it, as it refers to things inside the Battalion. Give me all the news when you write. Get yourself something with the enclosed cheque, which is only of use here to light a fire with, but is of more use at home.

P.S.—If I go on in this reckless way, writing only on one side and leaving half sheets, you will need to send another writing tablet soon. You might put, say, three pairs of medium socks in the next parcel you send. If we have many more seventy-mile touches in a week-end, the socks won't last long.

**Western Frontier Force,**

**B.M.E.F., Egypt, 3/2/16.**

His Majesty's Post Office Authorities have been doing good work these last few days. I have received your welcome letters of 10th and 17th January, any number of papers, and two very useful parcels. Many thanks, and may I add, best wishes for the future!

I am glad you are back at Melrose again. It will be, or should be, good weather there soon. Melrose is fine in the spring.

Your advice about being careful of the Arabs as they are "not to be trusted," is very sound. I've seen one or two of these fickle gentry since coming here, and "not to be trusted" is an excellent description of them. There isn't much going on to write home about just now. The weather is still uncertain, but getting warmer. The only time it is really cold is about 3 a.m. During the day it is as warm as summer at home.

Sir John Maxwell, General Officer Commanding in Egypt, was here the other day and inspected the troops. The Royal Scots being the First of Foot and Right of the Line, provided the Guard of Honour on his arrival. Two months knocking about on the desert doesn't improve one's clothes and personal appearance, but we fixed bayonets, sloped arms, presented arms, and did other nice things to the best of our ability, whereat he caused the following to be put in Orders:—



W. A. D., "THE GREAT WHITE CHIEF!"



ON THE NILE.



OUR FIRST CAMP AFTER WE LANDED AT MERSA MATRUH.



"MESSAGE TO TROOPS.

"G.O.C. Force in Egypt is glad to have had this opportunity to inspect the troops of the Western Frontier Force. He is glad to know that the health of the troops is so good notwithstanding all the hard work and fighting they have done, and to see that the men are ready for anything that is in front of them. He wishes to impress upon the troops that heavy demands may be made on them, and that it is important that there should be no relaxation on training or efforts until the campaign is brought to a conclusion."

The next interesting and exciting thing that has happened is the capture of a "chameleon." The Doctor has it in a box in his tent, and in dull moments we go in and watch it changing its skin. It has the power of making its appearance harmonise with its surroundings. On anything dark green it darkens down, but lightens up when put on light green. The Adjutant the other morning suggested trying it on a bit of tartan, but as we didn't want it to die of heart failure, we didn't risk it!

One of my Sergeants is going home, and left here yesterday. I sent one or two photos with him, which he is going to hand in to Minnie at George Street. I had only time to scribble on the back what they were, and hadn't time to

write. This letter has been interrupted several times, and it is now 5/2/16 instead of 3/2/16 as stated at the beginning.

Last night one of our picquets heard someone tampering with the barbed wire in front of their post, and opened fire. We are quite accustomed now-a-days to alarms of one kind or another, and I didn't even hear the firing. In the morning the enemy was found to be one of our own mules which had strayed from the fold, and was now lying dead outside the barbed wire—a warning to anyone who is inclined to tamper with our barbed wire during the hours of darkness. It is very dark at night just now. “Black as Egypt's night” is the proper expression! but in a few nights the moon will be up again, when night is almost as light as day. You were saying you looked up the encyclopædia about “scarabs.” They strut about here quite the thing, and look on us as intruders. They are sometimes about an inch and a-half long, and black. They are very interesting to watch, and push stones and things about with their hind legs. They aren't so interesting, though, when



you find one in your sleeping bag, but they don't bite like some other friends here, and are more easily caught!

I hear this is the birthplace of Cleopatra. In fact, the exact spot, about two miles from here, has been pointed out. She is the young lady that Rameses fell in love with, but as she refused to marry him, he buried her, and built a fairly substantial column on top, which is now on the Embankment, London. There's another one that I saw in old Heliopolis, but perhaps "it" has been specially put up for tourists. There is not any doubt, however, that the country round about here is of great historical interest, and I must see if there are any books on the subject. There are Roman baths and foundations of Roman buildings round about. I think I told you that excavations were carried on here in peace time, but at the present time the building occupied by the excavators is tenanted by Stirling and his merry men. Did I ever tell you that Stirling is now Brigade Signalling Officer, and is attached to the Brigade Staff? He is on familiar terms with the Brigadier, the

Earl of Lucan. This Force is very strong in Earls and Honourables, the latest addition being the Duke of Westminster. I think they must come here for the good of their health! The Hon. Neil Primrose was explaining a magnificent scheme to the Adjutant the other day about making this a resort. He had the race-course and other important features all planned, but I don't think I'll trouble it much once I get away.

Bally has just come back from a detached post where he has been for a week. It is an ideal spot from a health point of view, and is known as "The Pinnacles." He is looking well, and is making uncomplimentary remarks about what he calls the "pale faces." It's only a relative term, of course.

**Western Frontier Force,  
B.M.E.F., Egypt, 8/2/16.**

MY DEAR MINNIE,—It is a good long time since I wrote to you, but mother gets a pretty full account of our doings, and no doubt you hear all the news. You will have heard that

“B” Company has been in the “fechtin’” and have been lucky so far. The mirage made ranging as difficult for the enemy as for us. I wish I could do a mirage on the King’s stage, my fortune would be sure! At one time I saw a lake surrounded by trees which were reflected in the water, but by the time I had finished admiring it, it changed gradually into a dry stone dyke which in turn assumed the more familiar aspect of desert and camel scrub. Now all this going on in the middle of a battle is a bit of a worry, but it’s just a little way this country has. I compared my observations with those of other Officers both in the 6th and other Regiments, and find that I wasn’t “blind” as might be supposed. It’s the first mirage I’ve seen, and, as usually happens, turned up when I had something else on!

At the present time “B” Company has a nice little bit of hillside all to itself behind the part of the outpost line we are responsible for, and, with the exception of an occasional visit from a Staff Officer who may be nosing round, we are unmolested.

At the present moment Bally is showing Knox how to make rissoles, and we expect to get the full effect of their joint effort in an hour or so. Knox must have heard me saying I was fed up with sleeping on the desert as he has made what he calls a bed—two bully beef boxes, a waterproof sheet, some string, and the door of a local villa. Some bed! but as Knox says, “Better than the desert anyway!”

The Post Office has got tired of holding up letters I think, and this last week there has been a perfect tornado of correspondence. I'm glad Robert is sending the *Weekly Scotsman* and *Dispatch*. Even although they are about three weeks old, there's a familiar feel about them, and I always look to see what's on at the Lyceum.

One of my Sergeants burst into my tent on Sunday afternoon with the news that the “Kaiser was deid!” but I've had no confirmation, and as that Sergeant wanted a pass to visit the Post Office (?) about two miles from here, I'm beginning to think it was just his way of introducing the subject.

Sometimes we get "fed up absolutely," but the spasm passes and we just carry on. Of course, when there's anything doing our direction, there's no game or sport just quite so exciting. The knowledge that someone is trying to hit you keeps you "bright and lively," as the New Zealanders say.

They are a "bright and lively" crowd themselves, and we've had some of the cheeriest times with Captain Gascoyne. I wish you could meet him. He has never been in Scotland and wants to. I've never been in New Zealand, and after his descriptions I want to, so we're quits.

If I had a more able pen, or rather indelible pencil to be more correct, there are some scenes and incidents here which are worthy of record. The sound of the pipes out here is quite different somehow to their sound at home. There's a far-away, familiar, homely sound about them which warms the cockles of your heart. In such a hard matter-of-fact book as the "Field Service Manual," under the heading of War Establishments, appears the following:—"Battalions

which have an authorised peace establishment of pipers will have one Sergeant Piper and five pipers." Whoever is responsible for that is an unrecorded hero, and I'm sure a Scotsman! Good luck to him whoever he may be.

Lieut. Brown met his cousin here, the last he knew of him he was in South Africa. One of our own men who was wounded was picked up by an Australian ambulance man who happened to be his brother, and neither of them knew the other was anywhere near, far less fighting in the same battle.

These, and many other incidents, collected and written up by an able pen, would make an interesting volume, and if an attractive cover were added, might make a good selling line! It's just as well to give my mind a business turn or two just in case the War should finish.

Give my love to Margaret, and tell her I'm wondering how Tony is getting on.

One of my Sergeants who is going home has an envelope addressed to you. I hadn't time to write, but it contains some photos.

WILLIE.

Western Frontier Force,  
B.M.E.F., Egypt, 11/2/16.

It was a pity you had such a stormy day at St. Leonards. The cutting from the *Scotsman* was quite interesting, though incorrect in a number of details. As I've said before, don't believe all you read in the papers. Tell grandma we are doing our best to "gliff" the Arabs, and they've had one or two "gey gliffs" already.

You don't need to keep Senussi's picture till I come home. I've seen enough of him already! You might send it out here though, and I'll see if it is a good one or not. There's very little to write about this week. There hasn't been any "fechtin'," as nobody will take us on. Camel transport is our fetish at the moment. We are learning how to load and unload them, the gentle art of making them sit down and come within reach, and all their little ways. My Coy. Q.M.S. has just finished experimenting with a load outside my tent, and to judge from the language, he, as well as the camel, has got the



“hump.” Camels are awful things to get on with. They are so big and unwieldy, and seem to be all over the place. They use their necks to turn round their heads and look at you with an expression of utter boredom. You can just imagine one saying to himself, “They think they know all about it, but I’ve forgotten more than they ever knew.”

The new draft arrived here merry and bright and bubbling over with enthusiasm, and thirsting for something to do. The first day one of the Officers remarked on the heat. Heat! this is February, and he thinks it’s hot! He won’t be so keen in a month or two. In his desire for some outlet for his knowledge and enthusiasm, he reported to the Adjutant that he had brought with him two expert farriers, and, that their talents might not be wasted, what could they do, and when could they start? The Adjutant’s first question was, “Can they shoe camels?” and the enthusiastic Sub. felt very much as the chameleon did when he got in among the Hunting Stuart tartan! “B” Company Officers are together again, and with the aid



of parcels from home and our usual camaraderie, we are having a very enjoyable time. We have been doing ourselves well lately, and our Mess almost justified the address on one of Bally's letters. It was "1/6th Royal Hotel."

We are having a very quiet time just now, and no news of what's going to be; and, strange to say, no rumours. If we live much longer at this strenuous pace, our expression will become like the camel's! The first question in the morning is, "Is there a boat in? Has it a mail?" I'm glad to hear you are so optimistic about the finish of the War. *Punch* was rather good on that point. The Tommies who had joined for the duration of the War were envying those who had only signed on for seven years! but I prefer your view.

It is getting warmer here, and mosquitoes and locusts have put in an appearance. The Company had a bathe to-day in the Mediterranean, so you can imagine what sort of February we are having.

**Western Frontier Force,  
B.M.E.F., Egypt.**

MY DEAR ROBERT,—When I wrote you last we were under Orders to go out in a Column, but I didn't say anything, as I wanted to tell you about it later. We moved out at 2 p.m. on Saturday afternoon, "A" and "B" Companies and Headquarters going with the Column, and "C" and "D" Companies remaining with the stuff. It was a long Column, and included the Sikhs, New Zealanders, South Africans, Middlesex, and ourselves; along with cavalry, artillery, R.N.A.S., armoured cars, divisional transport—a long way the biggest Column I've ever been in. We had a fairly heavy march on Saturday afternoon, reaching Bir Shola about 10 at night, having done about twenty miles. We bivouacked there for the night, with all the joys of outposts, &c. It was beastly cold and some rain, and "B" Company Officers' blankets didn't turn up; the men all got theirs which were carried in transport.

We marched off from there at 6.30 a.m. on

Sunday morning, and owing to some mistake in the time did so without any breakfast. We were in brigade reserve, and when we had gone about eight miles we heard the artillery in action in front and slightly on our flank. Some time later we heard rifle and machine gun fire, and here we were halted and had time to survey the landscape. It was perfectly flat for miles all round, except a small knoll in front, behind which we thought the Senussi Camp was. The desert was covered with small bushes of camel scrub, and there were some slight signs of cultivation. I noticed the cavalry retiring and re-forming on our right, and drew Brown's attention to the fact, but he said they had done that before, and couldn't understand it.

At 12.15 we were ordered to support the cavalry on our right who were getting pushed back. "B" Company formed the firing line, and "A" Company were supports. We advanced a bit in column of fours, then on the left formed line of platoons in fours at fifty paces interval, and advanced in this formation for about 100 yards, then lines of sections in *single* file (much

better than file), from which we extended into an extended line. We came up to the cavalry who were extended, and they informed us they had been having a "Hell of a time." A bit further on we came under rifle fire and lay down. The Officers had a look round with glasses, but we couldn't spot anything except a few figures about 2000 yards off, so we pushed on. This had to be done with caution and by rushes, as the rifle fire was pretty steady, but going over our heads.

A machine gun then swept along our line, and we had to sit tight for that. The bullets are just over our heads, and swept backwards and forwards three or four times at a burst. A machine gun playing on you makes you keep your head down and pretend you aren't there.

A message came along the line to watch our right flank, and a little later Lornie came up there with his machine gun and opened fire. The enemy began to retire, and we helped them on with rifle and machine gun fire, and were then able to advance again.

When we had advanced about a mile and

a-half in this way, the General sent his compliments and a message that The Royal Scots were not to advance any further until the attack had developed on the left, and here we hung on till about 2.30 with nothing more than an occasional shot coming our way. Lornie, however, continued to play himself on the right and got some of the enemy retiring. I could see them through my glasses carrying away their wounded. At 2.30 it was considered that two platoons could hold this ground, and I left Bally and Brown with five and six, and one machine gun was also left. The rest of us retired and re-formed. "A" Company were sent to support the Sikhs, but didn't have anything to do except assist at the burning of Senussi's Camp, and my remaining platoons were again in reserve.

At dark we were all drawn in and formed a perimeter camp round the field ambulance. "B" Company had no casualties, but "A" Company, who were behind us, had one killed and five wounded. We were extraordinarily lucky, and I think our small casualties were due

to a mirage which made ranging very difficult. The enemy seemed to be over-estimating all the time. The Company advanced in splendid order without the slightest hesitation, which also helped to save us.

Outposts again that night, and as the transport had stuck, there were no blankets and no rations, but the worst feature of all was no water. I don't know the total casualties, but there were about 300 all over, I think; and the R.A.M.C. had a busy night. Senussi's Camp was burnt though, and his Forces scattered to the four winds, so that cheered us up a bit. It was colder than ever, and heavy rain during the night; but dawn came at last, and we set out for Camp, "B" Company forming the advance guard as far as Bir Shola, where we again bivouacked and rear guard from there to Camp. It was very heavy going, the transports cut up the track pretty badly, and the rain didn't improve things. We all managed to stick it, however, and eventually reached Camp about 6 p.m. last night (Tuesday), having marched between sixty and seventy miles since Saturday



THIS GENTLEMAN INSISTED ON HAVING  
HIS PHOTO TAKEN. WHY, I DON'T KNOW!



MOSQUE OF SULTAN BARKUK, IN  
THE TOMBS OF THE KHALIFS.



CAPTAIN W. A. DOUGLAS.





afternoon under trying conditions, with a day's fighting thrown in. I hear the official report is somewhat as follows:—"A counter attack on our convoy was successfully repulsed by The Royal Scots," but am not sure as I haven't seen it, and I don't believe anything now-a-days until I see it, so don't let any of this information get about.

I now know a little of what Active Service means—hard marching, little or no food, if anything a smaller supply of rest, continual strain, and general discomfort. We never had our clothes off, of course, and I only had my boots off once to change my socks; but on the whole I'm glad of the experience, and I have now absolute confidence in my Company. The Officers were—Bally, Brown, Chalmers, and Wallace, attached with a platoon from "D" Company.

We expected a mail would have arrived during the time we were out, but the weather has been so stormy, we were disappointed. It should be here some day soon.

I would like to have written a proper de-

scription of the fight, putting in all the little incidents, but I'm pretty tired just now ; however, I'll tell you all about it some day. I got one or two photos which I hope will come out. Such things as men lying on their faces drinking the water out of the cart ruts ; the General's car being pulled by six horses ; and numerous other small things will long remain in my memory. Ford cars were here, there, and everywhere. One carried a wireless, others carried water and wounded. They are so light they can go anywhere, but the armoured Rolls-Royce were a humbug, they were so heavy, they were continually sticking and had to be man handled.

Well ! we're back in Camp and in comparative comfort. We've had an issue of rum and cigarettes. The General complimented us on the way we marched back into Camp ; he was watching the Column marching in. It took three and a-half hours to pass, so you can get some idea of its length. We were rear guard, and did not lose any distance.

How's the War getting on ? The War with Germany I mean. Any word of it at all ? I

would like to see some letters or papers now, and don't mind how soon it finishes, and I expect the Kaiser's friend Mr. Senussi is feeling the same way. There's been a lot of rain since we burnt his tents, and I don't think he has any ordnance to indent on.

Our Quartermaster lost his pony in the operations, and I heard somebody suggesting he should fill up a P. 1954 and get one "on payment." I saw him on a mule, however, which I expect would be a "free issue."—WILLIE.

**Western Frontier Force,  
B.M.E.F., Egypt, 18/2/16.**

The "joint stock" cigarettes arrived, but somewhat the "waur" of the journey. They would be much better in a stronger box. They were in good condition for smoking, but Grahamslaw described their shape as "useful for smoking round corners." The next box may be all right, however. This has been a very quiet week. Each Battalion has in turn been struck off all duties, and has had a week's training. This has been "our week," and we have

had a twelve to fifteen miles route march every day, so that we are all feeling very fit just now. We are moving further on shortly, so don't be surprised if you don't hear from me for a while, as it takes a few days to get the G.P.O. into working order after a move. I will write whenever I get the chance, but there aren't pillar-boxes at every corner of the desert, and the hours of lifting are a bit irregular!

Last Sunday, the Doctor and I rode to Matruh and examined the remains of a Roman building there. Some say it was the Roman Consulate, and others that it was Cleopatra's country house. We saw it at any rate, and a lot of it is now used in building fortifications. It had evidently been lined with white marble, and I picked up a number of pieces about one inch thick and beautifully polished. We don't need to go so far for Roman remains though, as we have dug up an excellent example of a Roman bath about fifty yards from my tent. The whole country round here seems to be full of antiquarian interest, and if we only had time, I've no doubt many interesting things could be

unearthed. The New Zealanders have parted from us, but we hope to meet again. I am enclosing some photos taken by Captain Gascoyne, and to use one of his phrases, I hope the censor won't "put the acid on them."

I was pleased to get Robert's interesting letters of 19th and 29th January, and will write him also. "Some" writing to look forward to! I doubt we'll need to have an "armistice" to allow correspondence being brought up-to-date.

**Western Frontier Force,**

**B.M.E.F., Egypt, 25/2/16.**

The last time I wrote you was on Friday, 18th, exactly a week ago, and since then we have had a more or less strenuous time. All Saturday was spent in making preparations for our trek. All spare kit was left at the coast-guard station, Matruh, and just at the last moment the parcel mail arrived. Five for me! I would have been overcome with joy at any other time, but five parcels don't improve matters when you are stowing away spare kit. We

managed somehow to get all the eatables away with us, and they have come in very handy.

Reveille was at 4.30 a.m. on Sunday, and at 6.30 we had all our tents struck, and the camels loaded with blankets and greatcoats, the tents being left at the Base. It was a beautiful moonlight morning, and the scene is one of the strangest I've witnessed. It takes a lot of camels to carry the transport of a Battalion, and each Company loaded their own amid much "girring," which is the only word in the camel language I know. If you "girr" long enough at a camel, it folds up and comes down within reach. After it is loaded, a few more "girrs" puts it once more on its feet.

We eventually moved off and the Column concentrated outside Matruh, where we were inspected by General Peyton, who is our new General, and apparently a man of energy. He is a C.B. and a lot of other things, and began his career as a private. General Wallace, who was in command before, resigned owing to ill-health. About 8.30 we started and marched against a storm of fine sand and wind for about

twelve miles, when we halted and bivouacked for the remainder of the day, and removed the desert which had collected on our clothes and faces. This was fully an eighth of an inch thick on our faces, and we were glad to get rid of this extra weight. Tuesday was much the same as Monday, and Wednesday very like both. We did from twelve to fifteen miles each day, but the dust was at its worst on Monday.

The country through which we passed is monotonous—sand, camel scrub, stones, and more sand, nearly all the way. There are some patches of green here and there in valleys, and some attempts at cultivation have been made. The land is deserted at present, and although we passed a number of native villages no one was playing on the village green! At Bir Abdih where we bivouacked one night, the Adjutant, the Doctor, and myself explored a wadi or ravine, which was a most remarkable place. It looks as if a huge knife had cut into the edge of the plateau to a depth of four or five hundred feet. About two-thirds up one side a ledge has been left for walking along, and



this leads up to two deep and most unget-at-able wells. The water was cool and made excellent tea. In that wadi I saw fossil sea-shells embedded in the rock; small flowers of various colours; but the chief feature, at least that which "impressed" me most, was the number of mosquitoes! We were bitten that night from head to foot, and the Doctor was uncomplimentary enough to say I looked like a "middle-aged toper." My face is again normal, and there are very few mosquitoes where we are now.

On Wednesday afternoon we reached our present bivouac, which is on the seashore near the village of Uirjeila, one of the most delightful places I've been to in this country. It is warm and dry, and sleeping outside is no hardship. We are all very fit, and have appetites never dreamt of by those who fixed the Government scale of rations!

**Western Frontier Force,**

**B.M.E.F., Egypt, 28/2/16.**

You will probably know long before this arrives that the Senussi have got another "push."



The South African Brigade have given them a good hit, and two of their principal leaders who are Turks, are captured (one I believe is killed). Half our Battalion is on ahead of us somewhere, but we have not got any further than this advanced base which is some distance behind the fighting, but within sound of the guns. During the last two days the wounded have been brought back here and put on board the hospital ship which is lying off the coast. It was difficult work getting them aboard, as they had all to be taken in small boats. The coast is rocky, and one of the small boats was smashed on a reef and had to be pulled ashore and abandoned. I think by this time they are all safely aboard.

We have just heard by wireless of the Russian success against the Turks, and this, together with the recent success of the W.F.F., may influence this campaign considerably. I hear we did more damage on the 23rd January than we at first thought, and probably Mr. Senussi is now thinking he has bitten off more than he can chew! It is rumoured to-night that we

have got Sidi Barani, but you will probably know about it by the time this letter has got to Alexandria. General Peyton is a man of energy, and none of us mind a little extra work if we can get through with the business before the weather gets too hot.

Bally, Lornie, and I are occupying a model house built of sandbags, the remains of a wreck which was found on the shore, and roofed with a piece of canvas (Senussi tartan). It is very comfortable when the wind is from the west, but if from the east it is slightly draughty! The front wall doesn't meet the roof by about three feet, and we keep an open house for want of a door. Rae and Brown have just been in to supper and an argument on the "sub-conscious mind," and altogether we are much cheerier than you might imagine. A South African Officer had tea with us yesterday and gave us an excellent brief summary of the British Government's way of conducting a campaign, which I will repeat. It may amuse Robert.

First, a Lance-Corporal and three men are

sent out and get captured. Then a Corporal and six men are sent and get killed. A platoon under an Officer is then sent out and nothing more is heard for three months. After that an army of 20,000 is mobilised and proceed to train! You will notice the finish is all right, but a lot of time and energy are wasted to start with. We think, however, and hope that the final stage is approaching, not only in our little War but in the big show also.

A lot of wreckage has been washed ashore not far from here, from the *Persia*, and also a lot of sheets of rubber from another boat. This latter has come in very handy for roofing dug-outs, &c., a purpose the shippers probably never thought it would be put to. I am enclosing one or two photos taken by Bally which are very good.

**Western Frontier Force,  
B.M.E.F., Egypt, 3/3/16.**

MY DEAR ROBERT,—Many thanks for the photo which is very good, and also for the second draft of cigarettes. The boxes these come in are not strong enough for the handling

they get, and this second lot are almost in the same condition as the first, "very useful for smoking round corners," as Grahamslaw says.

There's not anything in your letters that require answering. You should send the "grouzers" out here, especially the one you mention, a week's trek would remove any superfluous fat and "grouse" at the same time.

We've been in more than one brigade since we left home and under various Brigade Staffs. At the present moment we are attached to the South African Brigade, which finished German South West Africa before coming here. Tim Lukin, the Brigadier, is a hustler, and so is the new G.O.C., General Peyton. In consequence I'm writing this from our advanced base, formerly a Senussi centre; the most of the Brigade are in Sidi Barani, about half-way from Matruh to Sollum, which latter is the extreme frontier of Egypt, and for some time has been occupied by Senussi, and no doubt will soon be occupied by we, us, & Co.

The Battalion wasn't actually in the last scrap, although about thirty shells landed in the Camp

where half the Battalion was bivouacking. One landed among the South Africans who were issuing rations at the time, and did some damage. It was some fight, and, although the casualties on our side were fairly heavy, the Senussi have had a good shake up. Their G.O.C., a Turk, was killed, and their O.C. Column captured, so they will have some promotions to publish.

We got our telephone here connected up with Mr. Senussi, and our interpreter successfully talked the lingo to them. They didn't know at their end, so you can understand we had some amusement.

The Battalion on the trek beats anything I've seen in the way of travelling circuses. We sometimes have about 1000 camels in our wake. Camel transport is the thing for this country. Kitchener said that long ago, and I quite agree with him ; I've been out with wheeled transport, and when we wanted a meal and blankets the nearest transport was about three miles behind us. The camels can pad the hoof no matter what the country is like. The only drawback

as far as I'm concerned is that they make my horse complete the circus touch to the whole proceedings.

The mosquitoes and insect life up this way are having the time of their lives just now ; at Bir Abdih, where we bivouacked one night, we were about eaten up.

A lot of wreckage from the *Persia* has been washed ashore here, and also a cargo of pure rubber. This is packed in 180 lb. cases of which there are any number lying about. Each case should be worth anything from £20 to £30, if it were anywhere else but here. We are using it for roofing dug-outs, &c., but beyond that it is useless to us. With a kit which has been twice reduced you can't very easily shove in a cwt. or two of rubber !

The extreme heat in summer has fused the sand on the rocks into a kind of glass which gives the rocks a fine polish. I've no doubt a geologist could write books about this bit of coast. I don't expect many Europeans have been here before, and I don't intend to come back when the business on hand is settled.

Rule is in hospital, Matruh, with dysentery ; M'Donald is merry and bright, and all the rest of us able to take more nourishment than our friends the A.S.C. can supply. Remember me to Atki and all the others I know.—WILLIE.

**Western Frontier Force,  
B.M.E.F., Egypt, 10/3/16.**

This is just a line as we are still on the trek and letter writing is rather a difficult business. It will soon be too hot for trekking, and when my caravan once more comes to rest I'll write you all particulars.

I was very glad to get your letters of 16th February, enclosing *Life and Work*.

I am writing this from Sidi Barani, one of the towns Senussi took at the beginning of this show, and we are going further on shortly. The sirocco winds have started, and at times we can hardly see two yards ahead for blowing sand. It's not just the sort of place I'd come to for a holiday. We have been in the open night and day for three weeks now, and are fit for anything.



I've a whole bunch of letters unanswered, so if you meet anyone complaining of my negligence in that respect, just tell them there's a War on just now, but I'll write when I get the chance.

**Western Frontier Force,  
B.M.E.F., Egypt, 17/3/16.**

It is exactly a week since last I wrote, and I'm writing from the same place, but in the interval have trekked about ninety miles over very desolate country. We expected a scrap at Angerin, a spot about twelve miles inland and very hot, but Senussi was apparently "too proud to fight," and escaped over the borders into Tripoli. Our Force was able to march into Sollum without resistance, so that we now occupy all the country which we had to evacuate in December. The future is as usual "wropt in mystery," and in the meantime we are occupying what was once Egyptian Coast Guard Barracks, but had its appearance slightly altered by shells from our Fleet.

The room I had first was rather too draughty, having a nice big shell hole through the wall





“ B ” COMPANY OR “ THE IDLE RICH. ”



A STREET IN HELIOPOLIS.



MENA VILLAGE, THE NILE, AND SHADOW OF THE GREAT PYRAMID.  
*(Photo taken from the summit.)*



above the window, but I'm now in a room with Brown, Grahamslaw, and Lornie, and quite comfortable as places go. The whole place reminds me of pictures of the Cloth Hall of Ypres!

During our trek we just slept outside, and as the nights were fine with bright moonlight it was quite pleasant. There was usually a very heavy dew, and in the mornings our waterproof sheets had been "doing our bit," as the dew was lying in pools on them. The scarcity of water was a trouble, and Mr. Senussi didn't help matters by poisoning the wells he expected we would use on our advance. It is getting very warm again during the day. Marching is almost impossible in full kit, and the wells are beginning to dry up, so I expect things will quieten down and we may probably be shifted.

No mails have arrived since the 8th, and we are all wondering what is going on. We hear the Germans have made a big attack on Verdun which has failed. This may probably have a big effect on the duration of the War, if it is true. The Russians seem to be pushing on

again, so the War may be "mafeesh" sooner than we expect. We saw some extraordinary places on the trek. Bagbag is surrounded by high hills of pure white sand, making the place more like Switzerland than Egypt. There were some quite pretty flowers—yellow and red tulips and lavender coloured flowering scrub something like heather. The country is more fertile than round Matruh, but on the whole is uninteresting, being for the most part flat, sandy, and covered with scrub. At Angerin the whole country rises about 600 feet, forming a very steep and rugged escarpment.

**Western Frontier Force,  
B.M.E.F., Egypt, 2/4/16.**

MY DEAR ROBERT,—It is some time since I wrote you, but for the last six weeks we have been wandering in the wilderness, and I'm going to write to *John Bull* about the dearth of pillar-boxes in the north of Africa! No doubt you've seen the letters I've sent to mother if they have arrived, but they have been posted in queer places and may take some time to find their

way home. Grahamslaw got a Christmas Card yesterday which was posted at the beginning of December ; he says it will do all right for his birthday which is in July !

It is exactly six weeks to-day since we packed our goods and chattels on camels and set out on the great Senussi hunt which lasted until two days ago, when we returned to the now more or less civilised health resort called Mersa Matruh. We twice got letters on the trek, but there was "some" mail here for us when we came back. You might tell mother I got her letters and parcels all right, but will write to her soon.

You must have had quite a good time at the bombing course. It's a part of military training I don't know anything about, and haven't required so far. There was a bombing course of sorts started here a long time ago which Brown attended. I remember he nearly bombed me when I was on a Court Martial, and he was practising bombing in the back-yard. The aeroplanes have been doing quite a lot of bomb dropping much to Senussi's discomfort. Did you notice one of the pilots in the W.F.F. got

the Military Cross the other day?—Rowden is his name and he celebrated his nineteenth birthday just a few weeks ago. He is considered one of the most expert pilots, and to see him coming down makes you stand and hold on to yourself. Others do most graceful curves and endless circles, but Rowden believes in a straight line being the shortest distance between two points.

You can guess there were some *Weekly Scotsmans* and *Dispatches* waiting for me. I was glad to get them and have had a look through to see what's going on, but haven't had time to read them carefully yet. I notice a lot about the South African Brigade. We must have our own reporter for the next War; he could make quite a good yarn out of what we have done here.

I can only give a very brief outline of what we have done and seen during this six weeks touch, but anyone with an able "crayon à copier," as I see mine is called, could work up some quite good copy.

On Sunday, 20th February, we reveilled at

4.30, struck our Camp, returned it to ordnance, and set out with a light heart and if anything a lighter valise, and marched to the other side of Matruh, where the S.A. Brigade were concentrating, and to whom we were for the meantime attached. After being inspected by the G.O.C. General Peyton, we began our march, and marched till about 3.30 p.m. against wind and sand, when we reached Um Rakhum, the scene of the fight where Milligan and the others were wounded last December. We would all have made excellent snipers that night as the quarter-inch or so of sand and sweat made us exactly resemble our surroundings.

The next day was more pleasant and we soon got accustomed to the marching, which was usually from twelve to fifteen miles a day. It doesn't seem much, but marching on the desert is slightly different from the roads at home, and even in February during the day it's sometimes warmer than the hottest day at home. We usually had a good meal in the early morning, sometimes in the dark, and then a good meal in the evening, say, about 5 or 6—a

biscuit and a few dates keeping us going during the day.

Our next bivouac was Bir Abdih, and the next Uirjeila, where I remained for a time. Major Adams and half the Battalion going on first to Shamma, and the next day to Maktil. When in bivouac at the latter place, the Senussi started shelling them from about four miles away, starting their "hate" about 5 p.m. The Sixth were lucky and had no casualties, though some of the shells landed within fifty yards of them. The S.A., however, had a number of killed and wounded. Our guns replied, and darkness brought the proceedings to a close for the night, and the next day was the Battle of Agagi, which you no doubt have read all about, where the Dorset Yeomanry did great "deeds of derring-doe," and suffered very heavily. The Sixth were evidently well in the background, and in fact were not ordered forward till late in the day.

The Senussi retired away westward, but were not defeated; they still had their guns and material, but Gaafar Pasha, their O.C. Column,



a Turk, was a prisoner and wounded. Things quietened down again, and the S.A. occupied Barani while we held Uirjeila, an advanced base.

On Monday, 6th March, we moved up to Barani, a three days' stunt, and on the 10th, "A" and "B" Companies went forward with the S.A. Brigade, artillery, cavalry, &c., to complete the business and occupy Sollum. Our first halt was Bir Domma, where we had a very bad sand-storm, followed by rain; our next, Bagbag, one of the most wonderful places I've seen, and then we struck inland for about twelve miles to Bir el Angerin where we expected to have a big strafe, but Senussi was "too proud to fight," and "was ower the border and awa'" by the time we got there.

"A" Company went on to Sollum with the S.A. Brigade, "B" Company came back to Barani where we remained for a few days with the remainder of the Battalion, and then marched back to Matruh, where we arrived, as I said, two days ago, and now we have got orders to go to Sollum by sea. The ways of the Staff are

beyond our ken. We marched to within fifteen miles of Sollum, and then marched back, roughly 270 miles, and two days after we return, they send us up on boats, but as Omar says :—

“The ball no question makes of ayes and noes,  
But right or left, as strikes the player, goes.”

However, to finish the story, Senussi wasn't going to depart without our speeding the parting guest, and the Duke of Westminster pursued him with his armoured cars (Rolls-Royce) for about 130 miles and strafed him well. The prisoners from the Tara are relieved, nine machine guns, four field guns, any amount of ammunition, and prisoners were taken, and Senussi's Force burst up generally, for which the Duke of Westminster has got the D.S.O., and he well deserves it, being a sport and game for anything.

And now we are again wondering, What next? We are getting short rifles which looks like France; we are getting the Vicker's light gun, which looks like Salonika or Syria; we are getting new drill clothing which looks like

Garrison in Sollum for a month or two, which is the most likely thing I think.

Senussi's main army is still away south round about Siwa, and that has to be reckoned with yet, but fighting in the summer is out of the question in this climate. Even at Angerin, twelve miles inland, the heat was intense, and then it was only March.

In my wildest dreams of a War with Germany I never imagined myself chasing Senussi over the desert west of Egypt, but in the next War, I'm going to be in something with wheels on it!

WILLIE.

P.S.—I won't have time to write mother again just now, so you might give her all the news. I am keeping fit, and we are all cheery. Give my love to Minnie and Margaret, and remember me to all the boys.

Western Frontier Force,  
B.M.E.F., Egypt, 10/4/16.

After a few days in Sidi Barani, with little to do and a lot to grouse about, we started to trek along the coast to Matruh, a distance of about

ninety miles. One day was very much like another. Reveille was usually at 6 a.m., breakfast at 6.30; the camels were then loaded, and we moved off at 7.30. This trek took six days, so that our average day's march was about fifteen miles. It doesn't seem much, but in this climate and over the roads there are—or rather aren't—it is quite enough.

We had fine Senussi Sheiks with us, men of some importance in their own quiet way, and during the trek they were treated with all the respect due to their noble birth, but there was always a guard with fixed bayonets round them, and they amused themselves counting their beads and playing a sort of "odd man out" game, evidently to find out who was going to be the first to die. They were clothed in flowing robes of blue and white, and were mounted on Arab steeds with red saddles. You can imagine the Column then—Royal Scots, Senussi Sheiks, horses, camels, and a small following of Bedouin refugees. We could have raised some money for any War Fund if we could have included Princes Street in our tour!

We usually bivouacked in the early afternoon, had a bathe and a meal, and very soon to bed. I've seen "B" Company Officers into their valises shortly after 7 p.m. where we usually discussed the only visible subject, "the stars." The nights were very dark and the stars very bright, unequalled even by the sparkling wit of some of the members of "B" Company Mess.

The country was quite different from when we came up. It was now early summer, and the wadis were luxuriant with flowers. At Rakhum there is a valley about three miles long and half-a-mile broad. This was a mass of colour from end to end; the flowers grew in large patches. You could see acres of scarlet, acres of yellow, blue, lilac, green; and, with the sun shining from a cloudless blue sky, the sight was magnificent. This beauty soon passes, and even round the wells in the wadis everything turns brown and hard and dry. On Friday, 31st March, we reached Matruh, which we had left six weeks all but two days before, and here we expected to have time to rest and get ourselves more or less respectable again; but in two

days' time we were on the move again, this time by sea, and as I said before, we are now in sunny Sollum. This is the extreme west frontier of Egypt, picturesque in some ways, but rather much desert and sun for my taste. We are now in the luxury of tents though, but the blue Mediterranean rolls up to within fifty yards of my front door. The Bay of Sollum stretches out before us wide and deep and very blue. Behind are the Taref Mountains, rising to about 700 feet, bare and brown and rocky, and on the top are the outposts, for all this time we are in enemy country, and outposts, advanced guards, rear guards have been part of our daily life. We have had a quiet week here, and I've had time to digest both mentally and physically the letter and parcel mail which we got on our return to Matruh.

You would be interested in the lecture on Egypt. There's no doubt "it's a place we would all like to see," but seeing it every day for six months is another story, especially this out-of-the-way corner of it. However, we might be much worse. Edinburgh doesn't seem to be

a particularly bright place just now, and even at Gateshaw Aunt Maggie was telling me that the policeman had been round to make them "douse their glim." I hope the lights will be on and the cars running before we come home.

We are all fit and cheery, and often recall incidents at Peebles, Selkirk, Melrose, and the other places where our caravan has rested. Milligan and Jardine are still in Alexandria. I may see them soon, as the Officers here are getting seven days' leave. Leave home is at present beyond the dreams of the most optimistic, but even a day or two in Alexandria will be a change.

I think I told you about our Padre. He is a real good sort; broad-minded, a qualification very necessary for a job of this sort. He held a Communion Service last Sunday night, the first I've been at since leaving Scotland. His addresses are very simple, and everyone likes him. He is giving a series of addresses on the Parables, and took up "The Sower" last night. You will have seen, no doubt, of the "deeds of derring-doe" performed by the Duke of West-



minster. He has received the D.S.O., and Rowden, one of the Force pilots, the Military Cross. The latter is only nineteen, and is reckoned one of the most expert of "fliers." The following telegram came from Lord Kitchener to Headquarters:—

"Please convey to General Peyton and Officers and troops serving under him, my appreciation of the way in which the operations west of Alexandria have been carried out, ending in the successful occupation of Sollum. Great credit is due to all concerned. The final action of the armoured cars under the Duke of Westminster was well managed and boldly led, and I hope you will express to them my appreciation of their good services."

Other telegrams were received from His Excellency the High Commissioner, the Sirdar, &c., and duly published in Orders.

**Western Frontier Force,  
B.M.E.F., Egypt, 18/4/16.**

I have received three letters from you since last I wrote, and I was glad to get them and hear all the news. You must be having a long and severe winter from all accounts.

How did Margaret's birthday party come



off? There is nothing I can send her from here, but will get something in Alexandria "when" I get leave. At present, "B" Company is on a week's outpost duty on the heights beyond Sollum. I would describe the view from my tent, but at present there isn't any. The sirocco is blowing, and nothing can be seen but sand. The sirocco (proper local pronunciation, "shir ok") is a strong hot wind which picks any surplus desert and drives it into all the odd corners of your kit. It usually lasts for three days on end, during which time you see nothing but sand, feel nothing but sand, and eat little else but sand. This month should see the finish of siroccos for the year, and none of us will regret their departure.

Yesterday was a fine calm day, and I was able to take stock of my surroundings. The Headquarters of No. 2 Outpost Company, which at present is "B," is situated on the top of a spur of the Taref Mountains, roughly 700 feet above sea level. In a small hollow here we have our little Camp, and the sector of the defence we are responsible for is, roughly, a mile

and a-half long from the fort on the right, down to the sea on the left. Behind us, on a commanding position, is No. 8 Picquet, a small fortress built of stone and sandbags, and behind that again is the Stoney Plateau, stretching for miles and miles away into Tripoli. All round us, except the plateau mentioned, the ground slopes down into great rugged ravines, dry, stony, and sandy. This part of the world has apparently never been touched except by nature since the earth was formed. Arabs and Bedouins with their camels travelling backwards and forwards along the coast have worn tracks here and there up the steep slopes where the plateau sweeps round to the sea, but although no doubt thousands have passed along these paths during the countless years, they have barely marked the surface, and in many places the tracks can hardly be traced.

But one straight road, almost hidden when we arrived, but now partially unearthed, travels straight from top to bottom at a slight angle, and this knocks the "nature touch" on the head, for the Romans were here many years ago,



EGYPTIAN WOMAN CARRYING  
EARTHENWARE WATERPOT.



THE CAMELS THAT TOOK US TO  
SAKKARA.



MY LITTLE GREY HOME IN THE EAST



and their roads are famous even in that chill little country called Scotland. Bally, now known as the centurion, has been working at this road with his 100 men, making it suitable for the tender wheels of the Duke of Westminster's armoured cars. I hope to send you photos some day of this magnificent motor road!

Seven hundred feet below us is the Bay of Sollum, wide and blue and wet, and on the shore is Sollum, once a peaceful Arab village, now an armed Camp. From where we are the Camp appears in neat rows of little white dots, and the ships in the bay look like little toy boats. The limit was reached last night when the moon rose and shone across the bay. The shimmer on the water, the lights and shades, the rocks silhouetted against the dark blue sky, made the picture beyond a joke altogether. And to-day not a thing can be seen but sand. We have had a job keeping our tent on its own little ledge. The wind is very strong at times, but when it goes down (I mean the wind, not the tent) there is absolute quiet. It rises all of a sudden, and goes down like a door being shut.

Yesterday we were treated to a star turn in the mirage line. Trees, lakes, houses, tall chimneys, camels, all appeared ; and three of us examined them, some of us through field glasses. It's a creepy sensation at first when you realise you are being " had," but it's a way this country has, and you have just got to put up with it.

Knox is no longer my trusty batman, but serving his King and Country in the capacity of Lance-Corporal. He has wanted, suggested, asked for promotion for a while now, but always agreed when I said I needed him as my servant. He remarked to Bally when his name came through Orders, " I'm glad it came off his own bat this time." And now I'm in the care of one, Wrisberg by name, a very careful and attentive individual, who does a lot and says next to nothing.

**Western Frontier Force,**

**B.M.E.F., Egypt, 27/4/16.**

I have received your letter written on the day of the air raid, and am wearying for another to hear how you got on. From what I can hear

they must have been pretty near you. There is no word in the English language suitable for them. However, they will have all this to account for in time. I hope none of you are any the worse of the fright you must have got.

The last time I wrote was from the outpost line, and now we are in the "Happy Valley," about 100 yards from the shore. The supply of sunshine is unlimited, and I'm glad to say the ration of sand is considerably reduced.

The second draft arrived two days ago under Low and Jack, and we were quite glad to see somebody who could tell us what was going on in Scotland so recently as a month ago.

There is not much to write about. Senussi & Company are away into their own delightful desert, and personally I've no desire to follow them. We have now got a wooden Mess-hut with a real verandah, facing the sea. This was a present from the R.E., who put it up "slick." We made a little promenade in front of this with steps down to the sea for bathing. It is delightful sitting on the promenade on real seats after dinner, for now we dine at 7 p.m., at

which time we were often into bed when on the trek.

But all this is too delightful in the eyes of the gilded Staff, and they are threatening to shift us. In fact, it is more than a threat, and I believe we are leaving sunny Sollum shortly, and will probably land in a cooler country. Now, there's nothing to worry about, for it will be some considerable time before we can possibly be refitted—a very important point as far as we are concerned after our wanderings in the wilderness. We will need to learn all the things we have forgotten about trenches, as Mr. Senussi was a gentleman in this respect. Everything was above ground, and what's more, the "fechtin'" was confined to business hours!

This climate is going to be too warm for us in summer, and after all "wintering in Egypt" is the thing, and the "best people" would never dream of staying for the summer!

Just now we are living a life of idle ease: reading, bathing, sleeping, eating, and also resting, an acquired art of which a few months in Egypt soon establishes.



**Base, Alexandria, 6/5/16.**

Can you imagine having dinner in a first-class hotel at five minutes' invitation after living in the wilderness for six months? A first-class liner removed us from sunny Sollum two days ago and we are dumped here about eight miles out of Alexandria waiting orders. In the meantime, this being Sunday, we have had Church Parade, and I'm just sending this line to say my address will be 1/6th R.S., c/o G.P.O., until further orders.

I was glad to get your letters of 7th, 14th, and 19th April, also the tobacco and the shirts. Many thanks for them. I will give you all the news when I write.

**ON BOARD H.M. Transport "Saxonia,"**

**AT SEA, 12/5/16.**

Our stay in Alexandria was so short, and we had so much to do, that I could only write a short note, which probably will not arrive before this. The rumours which I referred to in a previous letter gradually assumed a more definite shape, and on Thursday, 4th May, we

were relieved by another regiment, and said farewell to sunny Sollum.

It was rather a drastic change being picked up off the desert, after living there for over six months, and being dumped into the glitter and luxury of a first-class liner. For a while we were lost among white tablecloths, table napkins, and all the useless things we used to consider necessities, but it didn't take long for us to settle down, and I heard one of the Subs. drawing the steward's attention to the serious omission that he had only two knives instead of three at dinner. Changed times from those when five of us had to eat a meal with nothing but one fork among us. All the cutlery, china, hangings, &c., on board this ship were stamped "Vorwaerts," but I don't suppose the original owners reckoned that on 4th May 1916, the "Forward" touch would apply to The 6th Royal Scots. It was a very comfortable boat, and we made full use of the electric fans and other luxuries which the forethought of our enemies had provided.

Arrived at Alexandria, we disembarked right

away and got a free "hurl" on the electric cars to a Rest Camp about eight miles out of the city. Why this is called a Rest Camp beats me, unless it's for the purpose of deceiving the enemy; the only rest we got was between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m., our spare time being occupied with re-fitting — new clothes, new hats (khaki Balmoral of a chic pattern), new rifles, new ammunition, new everything. No wonder the War is costing five millions a day, or whatever it is costing.

We expected a few days at least in this Camp, but evidently the Sixth have become famous, and we are in urgent demand somewhere, for on Monday, 8th May, we embarked on the Cunard liner *Saxonia*, on which we are still undergoing the horrors of War. The horrors commence at 6.30 a.m., when the steward brings a morning cup of tea and tells us anything of interest; we then dress leisurely and breakfast at 8, lunch at 1, tea at 4, and dine at 7. The only thing resembling work is Ship's Inspection at 10.15 a.m., and that only means that you loaf at a certain specified place instead of choosing

your own ground. It is very much like life on the *Ceramic* as it was on September 1915. At first the heat at night was oppressive with every port-hole shut, but now we are in a cooler climate and could stand a lot of this!

We are not alone on board, but the list of passengers will have to remain untold till I see you. There are, of course, a number of Brass Hats on board, and we have also the pleasure of the company of a few stray lords. Egypt has been a happy hunting ground for them in the winter, but like us they consider it isn't the thing to spend the summer there!

On the voyage we have passed islands and apparently continents, but nobody knows where or what they are, except the Captain of the ship, and he belongs to the "silent navy." He is sailing under sealed orders and may land us in Walla-Walloo for aught we know.

It was reported the other night that the ship was rolling half a degree, but even this held no terrors for us and no one was sick. I'm sitting in the saloon writing this letter, and it's almost impossible to distinguish it from the smoking-

room of say, the North British or the Caledonian Hotel. Table and easy chairs, electric light, and—yes, aspidistras! There's a plant on nearly every table, so you will agree it is well furnished!

We are living, of course, in a whirlwind of rumours, any number of questions are continually being asked without any prospect of an answer. The chief question is not which part are we going to, or will the War end this year, or are the Germans on their last legs; none of these, but are we going to get leave? I don't think any of us are sufficiently ill to get sick leave. I've broken one or two teeth in the great struggle (with army biscuits I mean), but there has always been a dentist attached to the Field Ambulance who immediately dashed all hopes of working this into a few days' leave by putting them all right in about the same time as it takes to make an appointment with a dentist at home. So we are on the look-out for some tender-heart in the ranks of the gilded Staff to whom we will tell the nine-months-away-from-home tale, with as tearful an ex-

pression as we can put on, and "if" we can find him, have my bed "aired," or I will sleep in the garden!

Jardine has rejoined us, but Milligan is remaining in Alexandria. It was with somewhat mixed feelings that I saw the last of Egypt. It has an attraction which must be experienced; it can't be properly described—the people, the colours, the place itself, and the whole atmosphere have a tremendous fascination, but when I feel this way, I turn the other side—six months of sand, and bully beef, and Senussi, and that squares the account.

It seems as if I had just finished a story more interesting than any I've ever read before, and I'm just waiting to start another.

**B.E.F., France, 22/5/16.**

My last letter to you was written on board the *Saxonia*, but you would see from the one I sent Robert that we arrived safely, and from here I will continue the yarn.

The reason there was so much arguing about what to do with us when we arrived was, that

an infectious disease broke out on board, and after much argument the whole ship was put in quarantine. Our experiences are many and various, but this touch was the last word. The second day in port we disembarked and marched to our quarantine camp, a distance of about twelve miles. The first three or four miles was through crowded streets, and although it was early morning the inhabitants evidently believe in saving their daylight.

This march was slightly different to our silent marches through the desert. The people crowded and cheered *Les Ecossais*. We are not English, for we wear Balmoral bonnets of a khaki colour, and wear them at a rakish angle. At many parts of the road we were showered with roses and carnations which grow in great profusion here. The last word was said when Joe Hill's band started "La Marseillaise," and by the time we got through the town our new Balmorals were several sizes too small. Once out of the town, the marching was very tiring. The days of idle ease on board the boat, combined with the heat and the hard roads, made



us climb down, and on reaching our destination there was no necessity to indent for new hats.

This march was through the finest scenery I've ever seen. Of course, the great change from the endless sand may have made me think this, but we have been here a week now, and I don't think there can be any more delightful scenery in the world. The roads are shaded by trees on either side, every valley has a clear stream running through it, there are vine covered slopes and clusters of sweet smelling flowers. Everything is verdant. The birds sing all day in the trees, and here and there the red-tiled roof of an inn or cottage peeps through and relieves the green. Beyond all this are pine clad mountains, where the tinkle of the sheep bells can be heard. I would turn into a poet here, but King's Regulations forbid this, and will not allow me to grow my hair long.

At the present moment my hair resembles a one day's growth on my chin. We have done all sorts of things in quarantine. Hair cut short, washed in paraffin, clothes disinfected with steam, ironed, sprinkled with sulphur, every garment



examined by an Officer, and all because one man was "no weel." So far, no other case is reported. It's a wonderful institution, the Army. We're by no means ill to look at. A healthier looking mob could not be imagined. Plenty water, fresh meat, vegetables and fruit have made a difference even in a week, and having discarded sun helmets and retained the sun, most of our faces resemble a wintry sunset.

I've no idea how long we'll live in this land of peace and plenty, but it will be a few weeks I expect, and in this time we may be able to persuade some "high heid yin" that leave would be very acceptable. Whether he will agree or not is the question, but War or no War, we're going to have a try.

You ask me what you should send, and that's "some" question. Don't send a lot of anything at one time, as accommodation is limited. At present we Mess in a little French inn about five minutes' walk from Camp, and enjoy it immensely. We are sleeping in tents, Bally and I, as usual, sharing one. The papers come regularly, and I'm glad to see them.

Margaret will be pleased that she has got a real cousin. I'm keeping her birthday in mind, but have not been in a shop for about six months, and will not get into one until we are out of quarantine. Give Mr. and Mrs. Davidson my kindest regards and best wishes for Miss Davidson's future. Give my love to Minnie and Margaret. They will likely see this letter, which saves me writing another. I will answer Robert's letter when I get a chance, but we have a good day's work to put in, and haven't too much spare time.

**B.E.F., France, 4/6/16.**

Since last I wrote, your letters of 22nd, 27th, 29th, and 31st May have arrived, the last coming only this afternoon. I was very glad to get them, and also [the parcel which you sent from J. Wood's. The sweets and the rotary egg also arrived safely and in good condition, but I'm afraid the latter would not have stood a voyage to Egypt.

It is a great change getting letters in three days instead of three weeks as formerly, and, as

Bally points out, even the ink has a different colour. We are still in the same Camp, and when I say "in it" I mean "in it." The only time we are allowed out is for a route march, but in a few days we should be certified fit to live, move, and have our being even outside the sacred borders of this Camp. If not, I'm sure we will be certified "insane." We used to think a Camp where we had nothing to do but sleep and eat and look wise, would be ideal, but we've changed our minds about that. Too much hard work is better than this, and gives us less time to grouse, an exercise to which the most of our spare time seems to be devoted. You remember how we groused at home. My letters from Egypt would tell you how we groused there, and here we are still at it.

There is nothing definite about leave yet, but I'm keeping an eye open for it in case the chance passes unnoticed. I hope the Navy will have a boat left to carry me across. The results of the last North Sea fight are by no means comforting, but there's probably more behind it that will make amends.

Was Lord Doune's brother on the *Invincible*? I notice Lord Doune has got the Military Cross. My congratulations the next time you are writing to Mrs. Read.

We had Church Parade this morning, just on the borders of the Camp. Behind the Padre over the hedge was a sloping garden, luxuriant with flowers and cherry trees. Everything round here is so different from Egypt that it seems impossible that the two places are in the same world.

We occasionally have a cold snap here and a shower of rain, both of which have something familiar about them, but Egypt now seems like a very interesting book which I have read and put away.

B.E.F., France, 15/6/16.

MY DEAR ROBERT,—In the first place, Are you away from the 6th Reserve? Sergeant Walker told me last night that you were away to the Sherwood Foresters, and I'm just waiting for a letter either from mother or you. There was no word of it in your last letter.



CAPTAIN W. A. DOUGLAS AND IBRAHIM ON BOARD THE "FELUCCA."  
ON RHODES ISLAND.



CAPTAIN W. A. DOUGLAS.



Since last I wrote we have come considerably nearer home, and if the good and kind Staff would only allow me I could be home inside twelve hours. There is nothing official about leave yet, and at present we are in the midst of big changes. Out of "B" Company, four Officers and more than half of my men have gone to join up with the Fifth. There appears to be some re-arranging going on.

The train journey was a bit tedious, sixty hours in a train at a stretch is just about enough. The first part of the journey was through some of the finest scenery I've ever seen, miles and miles of vineyards and luxuriant crops, but as we came northward the country became more like our own, and here we have rain and cold wind, mud and all the disagreeable things that we haven't had for a long time, but thank goodness, we haven't sand and heat and flies.

We marched into the village from where I'm writing about midnight. It was cold, wet, and very dark, but the men's billets were pointed out by muffled figures who tramped about the mud and carried lanterns. These were men of

another regiment billeted near here, and had been detailed for the good work.

Getting our own billets was great fun. There wasn't much to laugh about, but the tears were running down my cheeks by the time we had finished.

The first house we went to we drew a blank ; in the next the good man had seven children, all in bed, and his sleeping accommodation was rather limited. The last I saw of two of my Subs. that night, they were getting instructions about where to go from Madame, who was directing operations sitting up in bed. Finally, four of us drifted into a very comfortable billet—two nice double-bedded rooms, and pink geraniums on the window-sill, but we had to leave this El Dorado in the morning as we were in the wrong area. We were all sorry as we had a great fancy for the pink geraniums !

I am now in the house of the village school-master ; he can't speak any English, and I don't know whether he can understand my limited French or not, because he is deaf.

If it's true you are away, I may meet you out



here. The Doc. has just heard that his brother is billeted about ten miles from here, and is going off to try and find him. He hasn't seen him for about two years. Cheero!—WILLIE.

**B.E.F., France, 21/6/16.**

We are apparently going to tour France as thoroughly as we did Egypt; since last I wrote we have come a little nearer home, but so far I can say nothing definite about leave.

I was glad to get your letter of 13th, and also one from Minnie. Robert would be surprised at his sudden shift. I had a letter from him from Dublin, and he was quite cheery about the change, I think. Many thanks for the parcel which arrived safely; the socks are a good fit and a good thickness.

There is very little news I can give you; sitting in a railway train isn't much to write about, especially when you can't say where you are coming from, or going to. The regulations about letter-writing are so strict, and the threatened penalties so terrifying, that I think

I'll give up writing altogether, and confine myself to the printed post-cards of the "quite well" variety.

At the present moment I'm in the most comfortable and safe place I've been in since the War began ; in fact, I don't fancy coming home on leave to such a dangerous place as Edinburgh !

M. is a delightful place, I'm sure you would enjoy a holiday there, it is so sunny and warm without the discomforts of Egypt. I spent one evening in town with Bally, Stirling, Brown, and Grahamslaw ; after an excellent dinner we set out under Stirling's guidance to go to the theatre. He assured me I would enjoy it as there was a good conjuror and an illusionist (my taste according to S.) ! When the curtain rose, however, we found ourselves in the midst of French opera of a high class order. Now, English opera is bad enough to follow, but French is a bit worse ; however, we managed to follow the story and spent an enjoyable evening, our first night out for many moons.

The weather is still cold, especially to us,

but it is dry now and sunny, and we have adopted the daylight saving touch here also. I've lost a valuable hour's sleep so far, but hope to get it back sometime in October.

**B.E.F., France, 22/6/16.**

MY DEAR ROBERT,—I was glad to get your letter of 17th, as I've been wondering where you were off to. It's rather difficult knowing where this transferring, splitting up, attaching business is going to end, but you have evidently made a good move this time.

Are you likely to come to France, or is there enough to do in Ireland? The Sherwood Foresters took part in the Dublin fighting, didn't they? Are the Officers a decent lot? They must be, as you seem to have settled down very quickly.

Since I wrote you last, we have moved a little nearer home, but my chances of leave are in inverse proportion, as far as I can see. I was quite sorry to leave the little village where I spent quite a comfortable time with the village schoolmaster, notwithstanding that he couldn't

speak a word of English, and was deaf and cross-eyed. We fed at a little estaminet where some people were living who had to leave their own homes when the Huns occupied the country. They were quite a cheery lot, and even there were within sound of the guns, but this didn't seem to worry them at all.

And now we are back here, the principal reason being, so far as I can see, just because we're here. Our reputation as tourists must have preceded us, and the authorities are going to try our capabilities. We've been right across France now, and must either go back or get home on leave.

The regulations about letter-writing are very strict, and as I don't particularly want to be shot at dawn, I won't say anything about what's going on.

Last night an Officer drifted into the Mess here, which, by the way, is very comfortable and used by anybody who happens to be on the spot. This Officer produced a pack of cards and did some of the finest tricks I've ever seen. He has probably held spell-bound large audiences at

home in peace time, but he certainly had an appreciative one last night.

It's remarkable the people of all kinds one bumps into on a job like this. On board the *Saxonia*, for instance, my cabin was B42, and B43 contained two real live lords—Lord Howard de Walden and Lord Vivian. They were both Majors, and just knocked about as such. Pears, of soap fame, was also on board, and last night it's a conjuror, and no one knows what may turn up to-night.

A number of letters have been torn up lately, and awful threats published, telling the horrible fate of anyone giving away any information whatever, so here's good luck to the "Robin Hoods"! WILLIE.

**B.E.F., France, 27/6/16.**

Many thanks for your letters of 19th and 22nd June, also for the box containing, among other things, the paper on which I'm now writing. The cake will be attacked at tea to-night!

The weather here reminds me of summer at home!—plenty rain and bracing, to say the

least of it, but it's worth it to have green trees and fields.

Bally and I are still together, the sole remaining joys of "B" Company Officers' Mess. The last to leave was Lornie who is in hospital with appendicitis.

Nothing definite about leave yet, but I will send you a wire in good time. It's hardly worth while writing a letter as there is so little news; a post-card would have done the turn, one of the "I am quite well" variety.

I had a letter from one of my Subs. who is now with the Fifth, and at present at a School of Instruction in France. There were two postscripts to his letter—one from G. Fraser Dobie, the other from Jack Wilkie who married Madge Henderson. They were both at the School, and sent me their "cheero's."

**B.E.F., France, 1/7/16.**

Many thanks for your letter of 29th June, and for the *Punch* which arrived to-day. You probably know that all leave from France is stopped meantime. This Order came out two

days after our leave had been sanctioned, so it is another example of the best laid schemes having the "acid put on them."

When I went into the Mess the other day for lunch, I sat down next a new-comer, Handyside, who sits along from us in Church, or rather, used to sit there. You remember I met his brother at Chelsea. This is his first appearance in France, and we were quite glad to meet each other. Sandy Watson is still in Egypt, and was quite well the last I heard of him.

You might ask Mr. Oliver to arrange for my name being recommended for the Inst. of Elect. Engineers. As far as I remember, I go up automatically and have to pay an increased subscription. The old firm (Bally and myself) is going to be dissolved, much to our regret, but the order has come from General Headquarters. Bally is going to be attached to the 9th, and I go to the 17th (Rosebery's Bantam Battalion). This is not on account of my shadow growing any less, and the Battalion will probably be surprised when they see their new Bantam!

There is no other news to send just now.



Address my letters as formerly, and I'll send you a note when I go to the 17th. If I haven't time to write I'll send a field service post-card, so you will know to put on the new address after that.

It may not be very long before leave is renewed, and I'll stand a good chance of getting away early. The other Officers have all been posted to other Battalions, but all in The Royal Scots.

I was sorry to hear Lord Doune had been wounded, and hoped to see him out here. Did his brother come through the naval fight all right? I read that his ship was sunk.

**B.E.F., France, 3/7/16.**

MY DEAR ROBERT,—It's a good thing there are some humorists left in the world these dull days. After a long and arduous search, we found a good and kind Brass Hat, who, when we mentioned leave, said, "Leave! yes, by all means, give me a return of names and a list of stations, so that I can make out the Travelling Warrants."

This we did, and "strong in faith and patience,"



waited for two days, when we were informed that all leave was now cancelled. He might have improved the joke by sending us a list of the stations he had got!

We have an excellent stock of "grouses" just now, the principal one being that the Battalion is being used for reinforcements. I am posted to the 17th R.S., and will shortly have to set out and look for it. We are all (up to and including Captains) posted to R.S. Battalions; Jardine and Young to the 2nd, and in consequence they look down on Kitchener chaps like myself, and Terriers are quite beneath their notice! We have been together now for sixteen months and hope all to meet again, which occasion will be "some" re-union.

You seem to be going strong in the athletic world. Take my tip and stay there as long as you can. France isn't all that it's cracked up to be.

No doubt you hear more about the War, and the Push, and these other small things than we do, but we can't be much out of date as I see your letter is dated 30th June, and I got it on

2nd July. The Russians are carrying on the good work on the other side, and Italy is also doing good business.

I met Handyside (whò "occupews the pie" along from us) the other day. He has put aside peaceful occupations, such as teaching Logic, and has come out here to look for trouble. He won't have much difficulty, as there is more trouble than Logic in these parts.

Apparently the only way to get leave is to get a "cushy one." Two of our Officers have been invalided home. The climate is pretty trying after Egypt, but most of us are getting used to it by now.

Do you know any Officers in the 17th (Rosebery Bantams)? I am going by myself, and don't know any of them.

It's a beautiful thought, but you have not taken long to "kennel up." WILLIE.

**B.E.F., France, 4/7/16.**

Just a line to let you know I'm now going to report to the 17th R.S. so address my letters there after this.

The weather is a good deal warmer, and we are feeling very fit and cheery. I can't give you any news just now, we get all ours from the papers which you will see yourself. You will see that Germany is beginning to get it in the neck, and with pressure all round shouldn't be long in knuckling under.

B.E.F., France, 7/7/16.

I haven't had any letters now for a few days, the reason being that although I've left the "tourists," I'm continuing "touring" on my own, and to give the postal authorities their due it will take them a bit to trace my whereabouts at present, even with their magnificent arrangements.

After a night's train journey I joined up with the 17th, and found them just starting a move which I had the pleasure of participating in, marching from 8 p.m. till 3 a.m. Most of the train journey appeared to be shunting, my part being shunting from the seat of the carriage on to the floor, and *vice versa*. The trains shunt here in a very thorough business-like way,

making sure that the passengers are made thoroughly aware of what's going on!

On my second day with the Battalion an order came for an Officer to be detailed as Town Major at a certain place, and I was sent, so here I am! There is a good deal of work, but it's a fairly safe job, so don't worry on that account. I've no idea how long I'm going to be on it, but I'll write again soon.

It is very wet to-day but much warmer, and as I'm billeted in a château, I've the pleasure of seeing the rain without getting too much of it.

I hadn't time to get acquainted with the Officers, but will likely rejoin them again; Scougal's son, who lives in Wester Coates Avenue, is a Captain, and they seem a very decent mob. I'm quite resigned to this knocking about nowadays, and always remember the lines from Omar Khayyam:—

“The ball no question makes of ayes and noes,  
But right or left, as strikes the player, goes,  
And He that tossed thee down into the field,  
He knows about it all, He knows, He knows.”

I used to make the Padre laugh by quoting

the first line on all occasions when changes were ordered, but when I saw him last he was also quite resigned, and had come to the conclusion that this was the only way to look at things.

I will write to Robert and Eben when I've time, and there are a number of letters I ought to answer, and will do so in time.

**B.E.F., France, 8/7/16.**

MY DEAR ROBERT,—No letters have reached me for a few days now, the reason being I think that my movements of late have baffled even the P.O. authorities. When I left the remains of the old Battalion, I got into a train (which I was O.C. of by the way), and spent the next thirteen hours travelling; at least about five were spent travelling, and the remainder shunting. This shunting went on during the night, and the part the passengers played was shunting off the seat on to the floor, and *vice versa*. They make no mistake about their shunting here, and everybody is made well aware of it.

Arriving at a certain station which I don't know

the name of, and couldn't tell you if I did, the unseen hand of fate produced a Mess cart, into which I got, and was driven miles and miles and miles over hills and along lanes until I was dumped outside the O.R. of the new Battalion which was in billets, and there I met Scougal, and of course, the C.O. and other leading lights.

The Battalion was just preparing for a move, so I participated in the benefits, and marched that night from 8 p.m. till 3 a.m. next morning.

Now, it so happened that the C.O. was asked next day to detail an Officer to be a Town Major, and casting his eagle eye round spotted me, a young and innocent Captain, and I was sent forthwith.

The duties are neither hard nor dangerous so far, but dimmed annoying, something akin to estimating, so that may convey something to you. I've no idea how long I've to be here, but in my declining years when asked what I did in the Great War, Daddy? I can say I was a Town Major, and signed my name with a rubber stamp!

I suppose you know all the latest news about

the War and the Great Push and these other things that are happening. You won't know, however, that I'm staying in a château, from which I look out upon the weather which is rotten, and as it says on A.F.A. 2042, "I am quite well," and "I have received no letter from you," or anyone else "lately."

What's going on with you? Are you coming out here? Let me know all the latest when you write.

WILLIE.

**B.E.F., France, 14/7/16.**

No letters have reached me for some time now, due to the fact that meantime I'm not with the Battalion, and all my letters will be going there. They will likely all come in a bunch when they can manage to forward them.

You will see from the papers that there is a good deal of "pushing" going on just now, but as I'm a bit behind the line, I haven't seen much of it. A Town Major's job is reckoned to be a "cushy" one, but there is a lot of worrying work to do, and I don't mind how soon I'm relieved. I've learnt by this time to do just



what I'm ordered, and not to ask for trouble. If you ask for anything and get it, and afterwards find you don't like it, you can only grouse at yourself; but if you do as you are ordered, you can grouse to your heart's content, the point of the joke being that in neither case does anybody pay any attention!

**B.E.F., France, 15/7/16.**

MY DEAR ROBERT,—I've been in some queer places and had same queer jobs since this blooming old War started, but I'm lost now! I haven't seen a kent face for a long time, and haven't had any letters for more than a week. I think I told you I was a Town Major, and it's not a job to long for, but seeing I was ordered into it I'll have to wait till I'm ordered out.

Troops come here and I arrange their billets, the Officers as a rule never being satisfied, the degree of dissatisfaction being inversely proportional to their rank. Generals as a rule can "kennel up" in any old place, but not so the young and aristocratic Sub. They're difficult people



to deal with (politely that is!), and then there's the Mayor—I can usually get on with him, and Madame of the château and her daughter, who can speak English about as well as I can speak French! I'm beginning to wonder what the people did here in the piping times of Peace when there wasn't a T.M. to grouse to about everything. I don't know how they filled in their spare time at all.

I suppose I'm helping on the good work, but so far I haven't slain any Bosches, or done any "deeds of derring doe."

We are quite near the line, and at night the flash of the guns is incessant. You will see from the papers that a bit of pushing is going on just now, and the Huns are getting a bit more than they bargained for. They're going to get a lot more yet, and I hope they get it soon.

There used to be a thing called "leave," at least I've heard it spoken about. Have you any where you are? It's apparently a lost art out here. I think I must be the Jonah, for as soon as I make my appearance all leave is

immediately cancelled, suspended, stopped indefinitely, or whatever they do with it.

However, there's an improvement on the weather—that's always something—and each day is a day nearer Peace, whenever that may come, and altogether there's no reason whatever to be down-hearted, so cheero!

Remember me to any you meet whom I used to know, and let me know what's going on.

WILLIE.

**B.E.F., France, 16/7/16.**

There is nothing new to tell you since last I wrote, but as I will probably be rejoining the Battalion soon, I may not have the chance of writing for a few days. I will do so as soon as I can though, and hope to get your letters also.

The weather isn't anything to write home about—dirty, damp, and disagreeable this afternoon—and I could do with a day or two in sunny Sollum for a change.

You will see from the papers that we are continuing to advance, and although not so

rapidly as the French on our right, still it's in the right direction. The Huns are beginning to change their tune now, and instead of stories of their all-conquering army, we hear about the defence of their "Fatherland." They have a stiff lesson to learn yet though, and when they have got that they'll keep pretty quiet for a long time to come.

Dr. Webster wasn't far out, when in August 1914 he said we would waken up in two years, and from all accounts the Huns are a good deal more "fed up" than we are about the War, so that it may not be so long before they knuckle under.

Are you still in Melrose? I'm absolutely out of home news just now, and often wonder what's going on, and how you are all keeping. Have you any news of any of the 6th Officers—Bally, Milligan, and the others? I haven't seen or heard of any of them for about a fortnight.

17/7/16.

After writing yesterday, Grahamslaw and Rule, two of the old 6th, came in ; they are about

five miles away, and walked over on the chance of finding me. They had five miles back to walk after they left me about 10 o'clock, and it was a pouring wet night. You can understand how glad I was to see them, and hear all their news.

**B.E.F., France, 21/7/16.**

After much wandering I have eventually rejoined the Battalion and find most of my letters have been forwarded, but yours of 14th was here and two parcels, one from Hawick and one from M'Vitties'. I was glad to get some news of home, and the parcels were also acceptable.

The last two days have been very fine, and to-day is sunny and warm. The larks are singing quite light-heartedly, and don't seem to mind the fearful din which goes on night and day.

There are quite a number of friends in the Battalion, at least friends of friends, and they are quite a cheery mob. Scougal, who stays quite near us, is an [Officer; another knows Charlie Brown, our foreman tinsmith, and so on.

It's extraordinary that no matter where you

go you meet someone who either knows about you, or knows someone you know.

There is not very much news to give you, and the post is going soon, so cheero!

**B.E.F., France, 22/7/16.**

MY DEAR ROBERT,—In the words of A.F.A. 2042, "I have received no letter from you for a long time," due to the fact, no doubt, that my movements of late, in addition to deceiving the enemy, have also deceived the P.O.

After leaving the spot where I was a gay and giddy Town Major, my experiences were somewhat varied before I reached the Battalion, but eventually I got there, and the good work is going on.

25/7/16.

This letter was interrupted by orders to move, and to-day is the first chance I've had of continuing, and in the meantime yours of 17/7/16 has arrived. I was very glad to get it and hear all the news. You seem to be going strong in courses of instruction just now, and before you

are finished you should be a living F.S. Pocket Book.

Don't be in any hurry to come out here. It isn't all that it's cracked up to be, and as a Staff Officer remarked to me the other day, "I'm fed up with this War already." The reason of his being fed so soon being that he came out here in August 1914. It was quite interesting to hear you had met one of the "Tara" crew. You didn't ask him if he was quite satisfied? and that the account would be sent in due course! I wouldn't mind going back to Egypt, it was a picnic to this, although we thought the fate of nations hung on what we did there.

You've no conception of the row the artillery makes, and it is without cessation; at times the ground absolutely rocks, and for miles the whole place is "chewed up"—houses, woods, villages, towns—nothing will stand up against it. I'm glad I'm seeing it, in a way, but the whole thing is "hellish," there's no other word for it.

Things aren't dull by any means, but a few days as dull as possible would suit me fine just now, but I probably wouldn't be able to sleep

without the roar of the guns. When I heard them first at close quarters I thought sleep would be impossible, but there's nothing on earth in civil life that would keep me waken now.

I am once again a full-blown Company Commander with a horse and all the other joys and worries a C.C. has. The Company Officers are all very decent, and we are pulling pretty well. There's any amount to tell you, but it will have to wait till I see you, as it would take too long to write all that happens in the daily round, the common task, and even if I did so the censor would probably strafe it.

Tell mother three or four of her letters have just come, and I will answer them soon. At present I'm watching my servant making what he calls a bivouac. It was very cold sleeping in the open at first, but am quite accustomed to it now. It is five days since I had my boots off, but that's neither here nor there. To-day I had a change and a shave, and am feeling very clean and tidy. I mightn't pass muster in Princes Street; my tunic and trousers are



beginning to show, or rather continuing to show more openly that they should be scrapped, but for the last few days I haven't had my pack, and the luxury of a valise was undreamt of.

The whole system of how to run an Army looks very simple on paper, but there's usually something that puts the acid on system and schemes.

You might send me out a decent "seven-penny" now and again. We sometimes have time to read, and if I can't carry them I can throw them away, another sevenpence a month won't increase the War bill much. I see it is up to £6,000,000 a day. It's not surprising when you've seen things out here.

Hope Minnie and you had a good time in London. Tell me about it when you write.

WILLIE.

B.E.F., France, 26/7/16.

It must be fine at St. Leonards just now. I could do with a day or two fine. A corner of the hay shed would suit me, and would be luxury to our present surroundings. We are at



present further back than we have been for the last few days, and only get an occasional shell. We have been well into the big push, and you will read plenty about it in the papers just now. I'm glad I'm seeing it, in a way, but the whole thing is "hellish." There's no other word for it.

It's extraordinary how cheery we can all keep, and have some great fun at times. The amusing or silver lining part always keeps uppermost, and after all it's the best and only way to look at things. Our Medical Officer is a broth of an Irishman, about as breezy a specimen as the Emerald Isle has produced I think.

The weather has been fine these last few days, which is a blessing, it makes such a difference. One night when we were on the march I was walking along the column at a halt, when I heard a familiar strain. I stopped to make sure, and just as I stopped, the sweet singer, who was lying on his back at the side of the road, reached the line, "Hawick was ever independent." I've no idea who he was and didn't stop as I had very little time. It's odd how many little incidents happen every day, reminding us of

home. There is a sort of general feeling that the War will be over soon, so cheero!

**B.E.F., France, 6/8/16.**

To-day we have had a Church Parade, the first we have been able to have for many weeks. We are now well behind the line, and can only hear the "heavies" faintly rumbling in the distance. As the Padre said in his address to-day, "We have faced death closer during the last few weeks than ever we have done before; we have seen the earth crimsoned with the blood of our own comrades."

For the present we are away from it, and I will try to describe our present surroundings.

First of all the country round about is rich in cultivation and densely wooded. The fields are full, and the crops are good; at least, I would think so from what I've learnt at Cavers Mains, Gateshaw, and other peace-time haunts.

In the midst of this is a little French village, with the customary church and spire, and close beside this church is a large stone gateway; inside is the usual village farm, but larger and

more prosperous than most ; the barns and farm buildings form a large rectangle, and in these at the present moment my Company are lying about in various attitudes of idle ease. In the centre of the courtyard is a small pond surrounded by trees, and as I write the sun is reflecting the trees and buildings in this, making the scene very picturesque.

The house occupies one side of the rectangle of buildings, and on the other side of the house is a large garden and orchard. The orchard is full of apples, and the garden is full of flowers, so everything is in order there, and pretty much as it should be.

As is usual in French houses, some rooms are the full width of the house ; there is one such in this house with two windows facing into the courtyard, and two into the garden. It is a comfortable room, the windows that get the sun being shaded by overhanging trees. There is a round table in the centre of the room, a side-board, a fire-place with the inevitable gilded French mirror behind the likewise inevitable gilded French clock, and candlesticks on the

mantelpiece. There is also a bed in this room, clean and soft, and with a spring mattress. The chief item of interest, however, in this room, is its present inhabitant, which is my humble self.

The reason I'm here is, of course, strict compliance with Orders, but being very hardy, I could stand lots of this! One other thing completes the pictures. Pink geraniums on the window-sill!

It matters not now that we are here how we came—a long, tiring march, a more tiring train journey in a first class truck which held eight horses or forty men according to the requirements, and then another march even more tiring than the first—these things are soon forgotten here, although they kept us amused from 9.30 a.m. till 12 midnight while they lasted.

Did I tell you I've a personal grudge against the Huns? One night, in the line, a piece of shell removed the bottom out of a tin in which my servant was making me some tea; I can stand a certain amount, but I wanted that tea, and hadn't any more water. The Kaiser would be pleased, no doubt, when he heard. I'm sure

the gunner would get the Iron Cross, and possibly the Kaiser's heart bled for me as it did for Louvain.

The most of my spare time just now is occupied in making applications for leave, all of which, so far, have been in vain. I have now informed the authorities that unless I get home at once the business of Scotland will come to a standstill, the people go into decline, and the whole country become plunged into desolation and ruin! That isn't exactly the wording, but reading between the lines these facts are evident. Likely enough they will go blindly on, risk the consequences, and inform me that "leave cannot be entertained at present." If they do, all I can say is, "Well, if you lose this blinkin' War, don't blame me!"

I heard that Bally had been wounded. Is that so? You might send me any news you can get of any of the 6th Officers, but don't send any rumours, we have enough of them to last for three years, or the duration of the War.

How are things going on at 89? Remember me to Mr. Oliver, Miss Cram, and any others

who may ask. I don't know who are left there now.

I was very pleased to get Robert's letter of 30th. Apparently he is as anxious to get to France as I am to get away. No matter where we are, we are never content. The papers seem quite cheery just now, and expect the War will finish soon. When, where, and how it will finish is almost as difficult a problem as when, where, and how I'm going to get leave.

**B.E.F., France, 12/8/16.**

One of the things I'm looking forward to when this War is over is, that I'll be able to stay more than three consecutive days in one place! We are again on the move, but are still behind the line, and as far as that's concerned we haven't any serious objections.

I was sorry to hear that Bally was wounded. Is it serious? You might send me any cutting from the papers about him. You would be sorry to hear about Chris. Flint. Have you written to Mrs. Flint? I am very sorry for them all; Eben wrote and told me that Mr.

Black had written to them. There is very little one can say in sympathy, but after all it is the most noble death one can die.

One of my Officers, Sowler by name, knows the Hon. James Stuart, and met him out here the other day. I wasn't with him or I would have spoken to him, but may get a chance again.

There is nothing much to tell you just now. The weather is fine, and getting just a bit too warm, but I can stand a good deal of heat after Egypt. It will be fine at Melrose just now, and I hope you have a pleasant time.

**B.E.F., France, 19/8/16.**

I was glad to get your letters of 8th, 10th, and 15th August, and to hear you are all well. Give grandma my very best wishes on her 90th birthday, and tell her I hope before her next one comes, the old Huns will be in their proper places. They are getting a good strafing at present, but we have been out of the line for a bit now, and are just as anxious for news as everyone else. If anyone comes up from the Base, the



first question we ask is, "What's the latest news?" Therefore I haven't much to tell you, and nothing particular has happened to us since last I wrote.

We had the C.O. (Captain Scougal) to dinner last night at our Company Mess. He is very cheery, and we had a good time and a good dinner at the same time. Our table was made of ammunition boxes covered with a waterproof sheet, and the chairs were the same except for the sheet. The dining-room was large and airy, being outside. It was pretty wet all day, but cleared up at night, so we sat a long time in the moonlight, talking and telling yarns, and in the distance we could see the constant flashing, and hear the rumble and crack of the guns.

The body cord (to change the subject rather suddenly) arrived all right. Agnes hoped I would have a "good bag" on the 12th, but as you had sent me a "brace" I needn't "grouse"! The braces also came, and both are now carried "on the person," as the Regulations have it.

Did you get my letter asking for a haggis? All parcels go into the Company Mess now,

same as we had in Egypt, and at present our chief aim is to have a haggis! You might also send a few sheets of notepaper and some envelopes; the French stuff is difficult to get, and not worth getting once you've got it. Cheero!

[Here are the last two entries in the diary of Captain William A. Douglas before the end.]

**Tuesday, 22/8/16.**

Edgar and I go on reconnaissance. B.M. does not recommend the front trench as a health resort, so we do not go into it. Move at night to south trench, Blair and I occupying a dug-out.

**Wednesday, 23/8/16.**

I am ordered not to advance any further, and to compensate am ordered up with working party. Have rather a bad time, and at it from 2.15 p.m. till about 6 a.m. Thursday. Interview with Major Minshull.



TRIBUTES.



## In Memoriam.

W. A. D.

THE shadows lengthen from the Island steeps,  
On either side the vessels come and go ;  
A golden mist about the Bridge still keeps  
The sunset's afterglow.

The gowans gleam athwart the twilight pale ;  
By Castle Douglas\* laps the mournful wave ;  
The sounding spits, the echoing shingles wail  
The unreturning brave.

O aching hearts bereaved ! be comforted ;  
This message flies across the North Sea foam :  
“ Fallen is the warrior, but he is not dead—  
The Captain has gone home.”

J. C. S.

\* On Inchkeith.

## TRIBUTES.

[SHORTLY after this last letter was written, Captain Douglas, whilst in charge of a night entrenching party on 24th August 1916, was struck by a shell on the left breast which killed him instantaneously. The night before he had been the means of quelling a panic amongst the men likewise engaged, and prevented what might have been a great mishap. The Brigadier asked him to take command again on the night on which he was struck, and owing to the heavy German shelling he was buried in the trench where he fell S.S.W. of Guillemont. As mentioned later, Lieutenant F. Duncan Stoney, R.E., was killed by the same shell, though he survived for a few hours. As noted in the letter from Mrs. Stoney, the work done there enabled our men to make the splendid advance achieved later.]

From *The Times* of 6/10/16.

CAPTAIN WILLIAM ANDERSON DOUGLAS, Royal Scots, son of Mrs. Douglas, Glenosmond, Wester Coates Avenue, Edinburgh, was killed 24th August 1916. The Brigadier-General writes:—"Your son died a noble and gallant death in the field of battle and with his men. He was at the time with a night entrenching party and engaged in supervising his men on a very important work in close proximity to the enemy. He had been specially chosen to command the party on account of the good work he had done, and the gallantry he had displayed on a previous occasion." The Officer Commanding the Battalion wrote:—"His determination and leadership inspired the men under his charge to complete successfully that difficult piece of work. We can ill afford to lose Officers such as he was. Captain Douglas was an electrical engineer, and a member of the firm of James Gray & Son, Ironmongers and Electrical Engineers, Edinburgh. He was 26 years old."



From *The Scotsman*.

CAPTAIN W. A. DOUGLAS, Royal Scots (killed), was the younger son of the late Bailie Robert A. Douglas, and of Mrs. Douglas, Glenosmond, 7 Wester Coates Avenue, Edinburgh. Captain Douglas, who was 26 years of age, was educated at George Watson's College, Edinburgh, and afterwards became an electrical engineer, and prior to the War he was a member of the firm of Messrs. James Gray & Son, Ironmongers, 87 George Street, Edinburgh, specialising in the electrical department. He was a member of the Territorial Force before the War, and he had been on Active Service abroad for over a year. Major R. E. Douglas, Sherwood Foresters, is his brother.

From Captain A. G. SCOUGAL, O.C. 17th Royal Scots.

B.E.F., 25/8/16.

DEAR MRS. DOUGLAS,—It is with the very greatest regret that I have to inform you of the death in action of your son, Captain W. A.

Douglas, 1/6th Royal Scots, attached to 17th Royal Scots. Captain Douglas was last night in charge of a large working party of 300 men who were engaged in digging some new trenches which were urgently required for some future operations. The task was not an easy one as the Germans opened a heavy shell fire on the spot where the work was going on. Captain Douglas was engaged in directing and supervising the work when he was struck by a shell and instantaneously killed. We are satisfied that he suffered no pain, and that he knew nothing at all about it.

Captain Douglas's death is a very great loss to this Battalion. Since he joined us on 4th July he proved a most welcome addition to our Officers, and has done splendid work in the Battalion. Since other Officers above me have become casualties, and I have been in command of the Battalion, Captain Douglas has been most loyal and helpful to me. He has given me every possible support and assistance, and I always knew that I only had to ask him to undertake any piece of work, and that it would be most

efficiently and conscientiously performed. I had come to have a very high regard for him, and his death is a very real loss to me personally, as well as a great misfortune to the Battalion. We can ill afford to lose Officers such as he was.

Captain Douglas had been specially selected by our Brigade Headquarters to carry out this trench-digging operation last night, and although he died in the performance of his duty, his determination and leadership inspired the men under his charge to complete successfully that difficult piece of work.

Words can do little to soften this hard blow for you, but it will be some consolation to you to know how respected Captain Douglas was in this Battalion. He had made himself very popular with Officers and men alike in the short time he had been with us, and I personally had come to regard him as a highly valued friend.

Please accept my deepest sympathy on my own behalf and on that of the Battalion, with you and yours in this sorrow.—Yours very truly,

(Signed) ALEC. G. SCOUGAL, Captain,  
O.C. 17th Royal Scots.

From Rev. W. PITCAIRN CRAIG, Chaplain.

**B.E.F.**, 25/8/16.

DEAR MRS. DOUGLAS,—I know that Captain Scougal, the C.O. of the 17th Royal Scots, has already written to you telling you the very sad news regarding your son, Captain W. A. Douglas. I trust that you have already received his letter, and that mine may not be the first intimation you have of the sorrow that has fallen upon you.

Last night (Thursday, 24th inst.) your son was sent in command of a working party, and while on this duty was hit by a German shell and killed practically instantaneously. It must, I think, be some little consolation to you in the midst of your grief, to know that he suffered no pain. On account of the intense shelling it was impossible to bring his body down for burial in a cemetery, and so he was buried where he fell—his grave being marked. As I know that you will be very anxious that the location of your son's last resting place should not be lost, I have gathered certain particulars which will serve to identify it at any future time, and these I shall

enclose upon a separate sheet of paper. Of course you understand that the spot is at present practically in the fighting line, and so nothing can at present be done in regard to putting up a proper memorial—but when, as we trust, we have made a further advance, then the opportunity of doing so will arise.

All your son's personal effects were removed before his burial, and taken in charge by the C.O. There was a small sum in cash which, by Army Regulations, has to be forwarded to the Command Paymaster for transmission to you; also a few letters which were of no importance, and which were in such a condition that we considered it better that they should be destroyed. Herewith I send you his diary, his bank-book, and his glasses which were in his pockets when he met his end. His other effects—valise, clothes, &c.—will in the usual course be sent to the authorities at the Base, and by them delivered to you.

And now, having given you these necessary particulars, may I express to you my most sincere and profound sorrow and sympathy with

you in the sore bereavement that has befallen you? Your son has not been long with us, but in that short time he had earned the esteem and affection of us all to a remarkable degree. He was a good man and a good soldier, and will be missed more than I can say by us all. On you the loss will, I fear, fall with crushing force. May the divine grace give you strength to endure, and may the comfort that can come alone from a Higher Power enable you to say, "His will be done." Your son fell nobly doing his duty, sacrificing life itself for the cause of his country and of the right, and we doubt not has passed to receive the great reward that awaits a "good soldier of Jesus Christ."—Believe me, with deepest sympathy, Yours very sincerely,

(Signed) W. PITCAIRN CRAIG, Chaplain.

25/8/16.

Captain W. A. Douglas (O.C. W. Company, 17th Royal Scots) who was killed on the night of 24th August 1916, whilst in command of a working party—was buried in the trench where he fell, about 1000 yards S.S.W. of Guillemont.

The exact spot is as follows :—A new trench immediately behind “ Lonely Trench,” the map-reference of which is : between A. 6b, and B. 1c, on the Montauban Trench Map. (1 in 20,000.)

(Signed) W. PITCAIRN CRAIG, C.F.,  
17th Royal Scots.

From Brigadier-General H. O'DONNELL,  
Commanding 106th Infantry Brigade.

27/8/16.

DEAR MRS. DOUGLAS,—I write to express to you my deep sympathy in your great loss.

It would be vain for me to attempt to assuage that sorrow which a mother's heart only can feel, but I may, I trust, give you some measure of consolation.

Your son died a noble and gallant death in the field of battle and with his men. He was at the time with a night entrenching party, and engaged in supervising his men on a very important work in close proximity to the enemy.

He had been specially chosen to command the party on account of the good work he had



done, and the gallantry he had displayed on a previous occasion.

It was a most unlucky shell which occasioned his death, for scarcely a man (out of 500 working) was hit.

I can only add that I mourn the loss of a good and promising Officer, and a very gallant soldier, in the death of your son.

Please excuse my writing this in pencil, but here in the field we have little facility for writing.—With deepest sympathy, I remain,  
Yours sincerely,

H. O'DONNELL, Brigadier-General,  
Commanding 106th Infantry Brigade,

From Colonel STUART DOUGLAS ELLIOT,  
D.L., V.D.

I wanted to let you know I had a young man introduced to me yesterday who was with Willie just a few yards away from him when the fatal shot fell. It killed one R.E. Officer and wounded another who was standing speaking to Willie at the time. It struck him on the left breast, killing him instantaneously. He confirmed all



that has been said about his popularity with both Officers and men. It seems they had been sent the previous night to do the same work. The Germans were shelling very heavily and a — Regiment which was holding the fighting trench had taken a panic and were retiring. When they got among Willie's men the panic began to seize them too, and they began to retire also. Willie took command of the whole, and ultimately got them to stand and led them back to the trenches before the Germans discovered that they had left. If he had not done so there might have been a very serious mishap to the British, and the Brigadier was very pleased when he heard about it, and I have no doubt it was this he referred to in his letter. By the time the men got into the trench it was almost daylight, and the trench digging had to be put off to the next night. The Brigadier asked that Willie should have command again, and he personally visited him just shortly before to see how they were getting on, and expressed his satisfaction with the work they were doing. Mr. Yeoman was not present at the burial, but he

knows the place and could point it out on the Trench Map. It was a grand thing he did, and it was a difficult thing as well. There were 500 men all scattered over the place in the dark.

From Rev. JAMES BLACK, Chaplain.

I have just heard from home of Willie's death in France, and my heart is full of sorrow for you in this great grief. Although my own Battalion has suffered great loss it is only when near friends like Willie are taken that I realise what the War is costing us. What a fine lad he was—a son, dear lady, in whom you might have all pride. I began my soldiering with him, and I remember that one of my first marches was beside him at the head of his platoon in the old days. God keep your heart strong in this sorrow. You have reason to have great memories of your boy, and I know how he loved and revered you his mother. He has died a great death, none nobler, dying as he lived, fighting for the best things. I have lost a friend in your noble son.

From Rev. JAMES JARDINE, Portobello.

I feel as though I had lost another brother in the death of your dear son Willie. May God give you strength to bear up under this terrible blow. Since Henry's death, a few weeks ago, I have not been so deeply affected as by Willie's death. As you know, he was one of Henry's best friends. When Henry was a private in the 6th, he often told us of the many kindnesses he had received from your son, and when they became brother Officers they were much together. One of our greatest regrets when the 6th was broken up was that Henry would be separated from Willie. They are not long separated, however; they have both met now in a fuller life and a higher service. I count it a great privilege to have known your son. He was a fine Christian gentleman, a good soldier, and also a good soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ. Death has no terror and no sting for a man like him, and our grief, though deep, can have no regrets. We who have known him must strive to live worthy of his memory and of the great

sacrifice he has made. May all divine consolations be yours.

From Bailie W. DUNLOP, Ex-Headmaster,  
Daniel Stewart's College.

As a former pupil of Stewart's College he gained in no ordinary degree the esteem and respect of his teachers and class-fellows as a most reliable, honourable, and gentlemanly lad, who could not fail to prove himself an able, efficient, and popular Officer. I shall always retain the most pleasant memory of him as a pupil of excellent character and most exemplary conduct, one for whom I always entertained the highest respect and esteem.

From JOHN ALISON, Esq., George Watson's  
College.

You may be sure that William's old school will ever cherish his memory and hold his name in high honour, as one who died in the service of King and Country. I do not know which to admire most, the sacrifice made by the young man who gives his life for the sake of others, for

right, freedom, and honour, or the sacrifice made by the mother who gives a beloved son for such a sacred cause. Both acts are divine, and I contemplate them with deep reverence.

From Rev. D.Y. CURRIE, West Manse, Peebles.

There are but two things to which we can look for comfort. One is to a life spent and laid down in a noble cause. The other is to the hope beyond this life, which is all that remains to us. Your son, we know what that means to a mother, has died for a cause, the nobility of which we have no doubt. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." He has shown that greater love, and is one of that great and increasing multitude who have saved the world from what would have been irretrievable ruin.

From Dr. A. D. WEBSTER.

It is difficult for me to write to you about dear Willie, the friend of so many days.

I know the subject must be too new to bear words with you, but you will allow me to just

say how deeply I mourn with you and with all who knew the young man. His life was perfect. The remembrance of his strong and bright nature, now translated to a better sphere, must strengthen us all.

From MRS. STONEY.

23 Arlington Road,  
Eastbourne, 10/10/16.

DEAR MADAM,—I have just seen the notice in *The Times* of your son's death on 24th August. It is of peculiar interest to me, as my only son, Lieut. F. Duncan Stoney, R.E., was killed at the same time, by the same shell, though he survived for a few hours. May I offer you my heartfelt sympathy as one mother to another? It is some consolation to know that both were bravely doing their duty, and that neither fell into German hands. I do not know what particulars you have received, but one feels every little detail is precious. I have heard that the exact spot is Guillemont, and their work there enabled our men to make the splendid advance they have since achieved. I also know

the exact location of my son's grave, and hope you too have this comfort. Probably it is in the same spot, a little cemetery, in a peaceful place, overlooking the Somme valley.

Forgive my writing, but the fact that our two brave sons met their death together draws me to you in a very special way, and I should like to pass on to you the lines sent to me by my son's schoolmaster. Surely our only consolation is that these splendid lives are *not* ended but begun.—Yours in deepest sympathy,

ELLEN W. STONEY.

“ Peace, peace ! He is not dead, he doth not sleep ;  
 He hath awakened from the dream of life.  
 'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep  
 With phantoms an unprofitable strife.”

From Colonel Sir GEORGE M'CRAE, D.S.O.

Just a word of sympathy with you in your sore trial. I know from personal experience what it means. But you have the great consolation, which will ever grow stronger, that your boy died for a right good noble cause, bravely, as all who knew him expected he



would do. I well remember how I used to admire him when he served with me in the 6th. Believe me, the great sacrifice will not be in vain.

From Major R. S. M'INTOSH.

Willie and I have been practically since he joined the Battalion closely connected with each other in all our Territorial work, and no one knows more than I do the loss you have sustained in his death. Willie was one of the very best, and we will always remember him as a good comrade, always happy and ready to do more than his fair share of whatever work was doing. His men will remember him, for I know how he was liked for his frank and easy way with them. No wonder they used to talk of him as the best Officer in the Battalion. They only gave him his rightful due when they said that.

From MRS. HORACE BROWN.

Willie was everyone's friend, and I just can't think what his loss will mean to his circle of friends, and you above all. I have admired the



way you have stood the anxiety and strain of the last year, and now that he has given his life to keep us safe, I pray God to help you to bear it. I am glad I have some letters, and many happy memories from the time he was a little curly-headed boy in a kilt. Horace, too, had many happy times with him. His death is a great grief to us all.

From the late Sir THOMAS HUNTER, LL.D.

John Foster said, "What a consolatory doctrine is that of a Special Providence." The call came to Willie to take up this duty in a great crisis, when not merely our country and all that made life desirable, but civilisation itself was menaced, and manfully he responded. There is nothing to regret in what he did; and there is consolation in the thought that he has proved worthy to be ranked with that great and heroic host who have been faithful unto death in the cause of God, and obtained the crown of life. "They have won their immortality, and they can die no more."

## From Lieutenant JOHN BLAIR.

I had the privilege of serving as second in command in a Company of the 17th Royal Scots, which Captain Douglas commanded, but was not out with him on the night of his death. On that night he had taken a large party forward beyond our front line to carry out an important piece of trenching work, but he had hardly got the work thoroughly going when he was killed by a German shell. His death was instantaneous. I need hardly say that Captain Douglas' death is a very great loss to the Battalion. He had created a great impression on all of us, both Officers and men, and in his Company, as all admired him and trusted implicitly in his leadership. Personally I feel I have lost a splendid friend. As his second in command I was very closely associated with him, and spent many days and nights under trying circumstances with him. He was always kindness itself to me, and keenly appreciative of my work under his command. His loss is to me a very grievous one.

From Major HORACE BROWN.

France, 6/9/16.

The sad news of dear Willie's heroic death reached me some days ago in a letter from Agnes.

I am afraid I can't find words to express to you my sincere sympathy in the great loss you have sustained.

During the early months of the War, Willie and I spent many a happy time together, and his death has been a great personal loss to me.

Since the news came he has been very little out of my thoughts, and these happy days have often come up before me. His love for you was well known, and it must be a great comfort to you to know that he never gave you any cause to worry, and that he took his place in the home when his father died, and so proved himself to be a dutiful son.

During our quiet moments while on Inchkeith I have seen Willie reading a chapter out of his Bible at night, and if anyone was prepared to die it was he, especially in these days when he was facing death daily, and I am sure his God would not be far from him.

His many friends in Edinburgh and elsewhere will grieve over his death.

He was beloved by his men in The Royal Scots, and in a letter home a Sergeant spoke of his Company Officer as one of the best in the Regiment, and one who gave them a good lead when advancing towards the enemy.

I can scarcely believe that I will see him no more, as during our stay together I became very attached to him, and loved him for his upright and strong character.

He had a bright future before him, and his life was one which should be an example to most of us.

I feel that I cannot express myself in writing, but all my sympathy goes out to you at this time. I trust that God will comfort you and heal your broken heart.

From Rev. Dr. EWING, M.C., Chaplain 4th  
Royal Scots, to Mrs. HORACE BROWN.

With a very heavy heart I have just read of your cousin, Willie Douglas's death.

I know how you and Horace valued him, and what a difference his going will make in your circle.

I liked him from the first day I met him, and he plays a large part in my memories of the never-to-be-forgotten days spent on Inchkeith.

He was such a fine, genial, open-hearted manly fellow.

Alas! how many of the comrades of that time have gone to return no more.

I do not know his people, but perhaps you will kindly pass on to them an expression of my deepest sympathy.

From Mr. E. P. FLINT.

I would I were such as he was in purity of mind and nobleness of character. He was jealous for the honour of his Regiment, and in his country's honour he gave his life. For you, and I trust for me, he will be a beacon burning ahead; surely we shall see and know him in the future. God grant it, and His mercy be upon you.

A Letter of Thanks to Captain Douglas for  
Hospitality.

From Captain W. M. KAY, New Zealand Rifle  
Brigade.

Mersa Matruh, 7/1/16.

DEAR DOUGLAS,—I'm sorry I was unable to obtain the candles I promised, but we have sent to Alexandria for a supply, and hope to have them shortly.

Meanwhile, please allow me to thank you, on behalf of my Officers and myself, for your kindly hospitality, as shown to us when we were on the Outpost Line. We certainly did not expect to fall among such friends and "Edinburgh Sports" when we were ordered there. Personally I look upon my association with the Officers of "B" Company, Royal Scots, as the pleasantest incident I've experienced since landing in Egypt. Good luck to you all, or "Kia Ora," as we say in New Zealand.

I'm returning per bearer a belt with pocket-knife attached, which I found among my belong-

ings when I returned to camp. I think it must belong to one of your Officers, and if you would return it to him I should be pleased.

I trust we may shortly be able to renew our pleasant acquaintanceship, and that if ever the opportunity arises you will not find the New Zealanders forgetful of your kind hospitality.

With kindest regards to all your Officers.—  
Fraternally,                    W. M. KAY, 1st N.Z.R.B.







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