

For God, For King & For Country.



Y·M·C·A

H.M.FORCES ON ACTIVE SERVICE

PATRON
Y.M.C.A. NATIONAL COUNCIL
H.M. THE KING

PATRON
MILITARY CAMP DEPT.
H.R.H. DUKE OF CONNAUGHT

Reply to *B.* Company 160 Bat. Regt.

Nov. 5th 1916

Stationed at *Witley Camp*
Godalming, Surrey Eng.
Miss Mabel Grant
Gainsley Ont.

Dear Friend;

Well here I am in old England. I think I promised to write to the school so I am going to write to you and you can pass the letter around. I suppose I must start at the beginning of our trip to give you any idea of our experiences. Of course you will have heard a great deal from letters written before.

We were exactly two weeks from when we left London till we reached our destination. We left London Saturday afternoon and on Sunday morning we were in Montreal. We left there after about an hour's stay. The trip that forenoon was interesting as we were travelling up the St. Lawrence Valley and saw many places

and conditions about which we had read in History & Geog. We saw Mount Royal at the back of Montreal and passed over The Victoria Jubilee Bridge across the St. Lawrence. The country from that on ^{prairie} was almost as nice as it is in England.

The buildings are small, of course it is all settled by French, and they all nearly all painted white. The farms are laid out in long narrow fields the result of the old eschate system. We enjoyed watching the country Sunday forenoon but on the afternoon we were in a rough country nearly all bush & swamp.

We stopped at a place called Drummondville to get off, have a little exercise and have a short Divine Service. The people there seemed to be all French and not a very good looking class. The Major doubled us up and down the road for awhile and then we formed up in a school yard for service. The next time we got off was at Campbellton I think ~~Tuesday~~ Monday & then again at Moncton Tues Monday night. The next morning we were in Halifax.

Tuesday forenoon we were taken to Y.M.C.A. for a bath the first ^{Bath} that ever did the like, and that swimming pool was a busy place that day if it ever was! Then Tuesday night or rather afternoon we went onboard the Metagama. I suppose from other letters you heard we had a long rough trip.

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From Wed. to Monday I was fine but Tuesday when it got rough I lost my breakfast and of course I had company and all kinds of it.

I stayed in my bunk then for two days and after that I was fine. The greatest objection on the boat was the food. If we were on land probably we could have made use of it but when a fellow doesn't feel up to the snark it is easy to turn against it.

~~Friday~~ ~~That day~~ morning we had a real rough gale the sailors said it was the worst they had seen for many a year. The dining room is a funny place on a rough sea. When the waiters are serving they carry out the beef on our individual plates. Well these waiters take a lazy man's load and carry about ten or dozen plates at once and they row them up their arm. I saw one fellow coming out loaded in that manner when a big swell come and away

went water, dishes and all on the floor. He slipped on some greasy soup on the floor. It is also funny when you are eating & a heavy swell comes unexpectedly and away goes soup, tea and everything to one end of the table and then on the next lip probably to the other end and some on the floor. We had only about half enough cups left at our table.

My bunk was below the kitchen and every heavy swell came it was a deafening din of dishes breaking and fellows yelling Ho & Wo when something started to move away from them.

We could see the lights on the south of Ireland Thursday night and Friday morning right the lights on the west of England. A pilot met our boat at the mouth of the harbor at Liverpool and Saturday morning we were right at the dock.

We left the boat about eight o'clock and entrained almost immediately. The trip from there to our camp was certainly a most enjoyable one. We had been given our lunch on the boat the night before for to do us on the train. They gave us each a loaf with some cheese and corn beef to go along, which did us from when we got our breakfast till lunch at camp. The loaf had two big gashes made in and a little butter stuck in there so that we had rather thick sandwiches.

I think everybody enjoyed the trip down tho'.

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England. I think it rather surprised us and filled us with wonderment. Most of us sat at the coach windows all day feasting on the scenery. The only way I could describe the country is to say it is one great park. The farms are small of course and are fixed up no. 1. Instead of fences they have hedges, around fields and along roads. The barns are very small, the hay being all stacked outside in neat stacks covered with thatch. The fields are small and the grass very green still of course it is no wonder because it rains every day. They seem to be hanging onto the old methods of farming. One place you see a farmer drawing his turnips with one horse on a dump cart, another place a farmer ploughing with the two & three horses hitched tandem style, and something I never saw or heard of a horse walking along a road drawing quite a large boat along a sort of canal going

To Town I suppose. The cities & towns seem to be laid out very systematically. The tenement houses are a marvel. In all the large places we could see long streets of houses, all same size, pattern and color (red brick) with not one inch between them, every back yard the same and apparently kept clean.

The railways are very different from ours. The coaches and engines are about half the size, in fact the freight cars look like large wagons going along. The passenger coaches are divided off into four or five apartments, no passage between and each part has two seats running right across the car capable of seating four each and there is a door on each side of the ~~car~~ apartment opening out of the side of the coach.

Everything here is run on a smaller scale than in Canada. A man with a good team & wagon would do as much in a day as a farmer here would in three or four.

Well we landed into Witney Camp about dark. The camp is about thirty miles South West of London, but it is not our permanent camping place as we are moving to Bramshott tomorrow.

It is a seven mile march and mostly up hill. They say when you get to the top of the hill on the way to B. that with a glass you can see Portsmouth.

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Our quarters are very comfortable at present. We are living in huts as they are termed but that is not a good name for them. They are frame buildings about 30' x 20' and accommodate about 30. We have a coal fire, ~~also~~ ^{and} lights and ~~for~~ blankets so that it feels comfort.

There are numerous Y.M.C.A. tea huts where we do our writing and where refreshments are sold. There are concerts through the week also in them and on Sundays they hold services morning and evening. The speakers last Sunday and today were eloquent chaplains who had been over to France. They ~~were~~ certainly appreciate and enjoy the services here and the work of the Y.M.C.A. I don't know how we could get along without them.

Our camp is dark at nights so the Japs will not know our location. I saw several flying machines on our way down which are of course

quite a novelty to us still.

It is the same old story about rain over here. It has rained every day since we came and today it has rained all day. Sometimes the sun comes out and you would think it was going to be fine but in probably an hour it is raining again. A person is never safe without a rain coat & umbrella.

Well I think I must close for this time, remember me to Eph. & Carl and all the rest. If you can find time to write I would enjoy getting a letter from that quarter occassionally. We got our first mail yesterday and it was certainly nice to get some news from Canada.

As ever
Russel M. Wagner.