

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallage Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Descartes Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Schopenhauer Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Raabe Gibbon Tschechow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Nestroy Marie de France Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Nietzsche Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntz
von Ossietzky Marx vom Stein Lawrence Irving
May Petalozzi Platon Pückler Michelangelo Knigge Kock Kafka
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Letters from France

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Imprint

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LETTERS FROM FRANCE.

11th Suffolks,

B.E.F., Monday, January 10th, 1916.

My darling Mother,—

This will probably be a long letter; I hope you will not get bored with it. Please keep this letter and any that follow it, so that at the end of the war I may perhaps achieve fame as the author of "Drivelings of a young Officer at the Front." As I have not got used to the routine out here I will describe all the last few days as they strike me, because probably, when I have been out here a little, everything will become such a matter of course that it will be difficult to give you any idea of what our life is like unless I begin with a good chapter one.

Chapter I.

"The young soldier's last day in England."

The last day or two was rather a rush. Thursday we frantically packed valises and vainly attempted to reduce them to something near the regulation 35lbs. At first one put in a wardrobe fit for Darius going to conquer Greece, which, when put on the scale, gaily passed its maximum of 55 pounds. Then out came slacks, shoes, scarves, all sorts of things. The weighing was then repeated and further reductions embarked upon, the final result being about 45 lbs. However, we packed them up tight and they all passed all right. Friday was an awful day spent in full marching field service order, inspections, and rumours of absurd Divisional and Brigade operations, which were to take place at night, although we were to rise at 4 a.m. to march to the station. However, the operations were only for Company Commanders, and so we were saved.

In the afternoon we bought all the things we thought we had forgotten. As everything was packed up a group of half-a-dozen of us assembled round the anti-room fire to attempt to obtain a little sleep. I had a chair and a great coat to go over me. The others slept on the floor with table clothes and such like things. We kept a huge fire burning all night, and, unfortunately, instead of going to sleep one could not help looking into its red depths and seeing the pictures of men and[4] horses you always see in fires. Personally, I did not sleep at all, only rested and dozed. At 3-0 a.m. a man came in and announced in a stentorian voice, "The Corporal of the Guards' compliments to Captain Seddon, and it is 3 o'clock." Appreciation of the fact from Captain Seddon, who had been sleeping, in unprintable language which finally resolved itself in a complaint that he had not been introduced to the Corporal of the Guard and he failed to see why he should bear him a grudge.

At 3-30 we got up,
4-0 a hasty breakfast,
4-45 I began to go to the lines to fall in,
4-46 I came back for my glasses,
4-48 I return for my identity disc,

4-50 I return again for my day's rations,
5-0 I fall in a quarter of an hour late.

At 5-15 we march off in the dark saying good-bye to those that remain behind, and realising that at last our many months of training are over, and we are soldiers at last, proud of the fact and beginning to be proud of ourselves as we march down to the station. I was very much struck by the great send-off given us by the women of the cottages we passed who, despite the fact that they had seen thousands march out, all turned out at that early hour, and from their doorsteps wished us a very sincere and affecting God speed. At 7-0 we reach the station and the train, uncertain from what port we sail, to what port we shall go, and almost in entire ignorance of our destination, even the C.O. knows nothing and our staff less.

But in three or four hours we reach our port of embarkation and go straight from train to boat, and are soon out in the Channel. Before we sail all the men put on lifebelts, in accordance with orders, much to the amusement of two or three blasé Canadian Officers returning to the Front, who, however, are soon unable to take any further interest in our proceedings, and seem from their earnest studies of the sea to be trying indelibly to impress upon their brains a distinct remembrance not of the ship but of the Channel itself. As soon as we started we all went in to the cabin and lunched, I, attempting to fill myself so full that the pitching of the ship in a choppy sea shall not affect me. It was all of no avail. I paid three shillings for my lunch, and discovered afterwards that I had not bought it, only hired it for a short while. I [5]was greatly relieved when the voyage was over and we backed into our port of debarkation.

There we had to fall in about half a mile from the landing place, and Staff Colonels and Captains completely lost their heads trying to get us to form up without telling us where to do so, or in what formation. We did not know what we were to expect or what we should do for the night. I expected to sleep on the ground and to eat cold bully-beef—the remains of the rations we were carrying. It had been impressed upon us by all the officers whom we had seen, who had returned from the Front, that directly we arrived abroad all comfort was gone, and that troops were rushed about here and there undergoing frightful privations and fatigues, but not a bit of

it. We marched up about two miles to a rest camp, and arrived very tired to find a beautiful dinner ready for us. Tents (two officers to a tent), beds, spring mattresses, and as many blankets as we wanted. There we received all sorts of orders and supplies. A day's ration, another gas helmet (we already had one each), war rations (an emergency ration), &c. The next day (Sunday) we marched down to the station to entrain, marching off at 7-45. This was the only hard day we have had so far. We had a tiring march to the station, carrying equipment weighing about 60lbs.—an awful weight—we then waited at the station, and a train came in with our transport on it, who had come over separately by a different route, and spent four or five hours in the train, and finally detrained at a very pretty village, where we could distinctly hear the booming of the guns. There we waited for some time before marching off, and were greeted with the sound of loud cheers from a neighbouring field where the Artists were playing the H.A.C. at rugger and were cheering their own sides. Then we set out, led by a French guide, and marched about ten miles to reach our present abode. The thing that struck me on the way was the flatness of the country, and the roads, which were the typical roads one always sees in the illustrated papers: long, straight and slightly raised, with avenues of poplars along them all. The march was awful. The weight in my pack almost dragged my shoulders off, and the men felt it terribly. Finally, we arrived in the market place of the village near which we are, and fell out on the grass immediately, only too glad to get our packs off and rest, while the billeting officer led the Company Commanders round and showed them where they were to be billeted.

[6]After an hour or so they returned and we marched off to our billets. We are billeted in a sort of irregular ring round the village, with Battalion Headquarters in a small chateau. We are in farms. Most farms take anything from 50 to 100 men, and all the farms are similar. There is a central square with a sort of depression in the centre, which is covered with dirty straw and filthy water; all the rubbish is thrown into it, and pigs, hens, and cows, wander at will all over it. I asked the doctor this morning if it was not very unhealthy, but he said that fortunately such places became septic filters. I think he said they breed all sorts of bacteria and they have a squabble among themselves, and by fighting against each other

keep things all right. If the Austrian and German bacteria would only do the same it would save a lot of trouble. Round the cesspits are barns and pig-houses, &c. A lot of barns. Instead of stacking hay and straw as we do they seem to put it in barns. The men sleep in the barns; they snuggle down into the straw and enjoy themselves thoroughly. They are just like kittens and quite as happy, playing round and hiding themselves in the straw. We set out for our billets, and were halted when we came to our farms. I was in the rear when word was passed down that I was needed in front, and I went up and found a small farm on the left and a big one on the right. I was told my platoon would be in the little one and the rest of the company in the big one, so I was sent in to tackle the owner, who did not know a word of English, and to settle my men. I did my best, my French is just good enough to make myself understood at a pinch, and I am getting on. The farmer showed me round and I put the men into two barns. Then I asked him "Avez-vous de l'eau a boire?" and he replied "Mais oui." Then he showed me a pump. We then drew some water to make tea in the company's travelling cooker. The Quartermaster-Sergeant asked me to come and listen to it. About ten yards off my nose told me where it was; it was filthy, so we had to try elsewhere.

The first night I slept very comfortably in an attic in the chateau with Battalion Headquarters. Monsieur and his son and the old cook, whose husband is a prisoner in Germany, still live in part of the house, the other empty rooms we have, the Colonel having a toppling furnished room. Then we picniced quite happily the first night, breakfasting off coffee and bully beef at about 10-0 the next morning. The next day we spent in settling in and organising things. We are about 24 [7]miles from the firing line and sometimes hear the big guns and see plenty of aeroplanes. Two Taubes flew over yesterday, were shelled in the air, and chased away by our aeroplanes.

It was arranged that we would collect most of our company together, and officers sleep together, so I came down to this farm. We have three-quarters of the Company here, my platoon in the farm I told you about, and the others in the big farm. The officers, the Company Commander and three subalterns have a room in the house, with big windows opening out into the yard of the big farm.

The room is on the second storey. We have a large bed with a feather mattress, two of us have the mattress on the floor, and very comfortable it is. We censored our men's letters and so to bed.

In the afternoon we went to the village and purchased eggs, candles, bread, &c., and I scrambled the eggs for dinner and made chocolate, in addition to our bully beef, which was stewed in the company's cooker and made a very good stew. We then censored our men's letters and went to bed.

The letters seem most meagre affairs. All they said was that they were writing to send their addresses. They were much as follows:—

My darling so and so,—

Hoping this finds you well as it leaves me well. I am writing to send you my address. (Then follows an address hopelessly wrong, and most of which I had to censor). We travel first-class here—in bullock carts. (The men were put in vans in the train—you have probably seen pictures of them labelled: Hommes 40, Chevals 8. I would rather be one of the chevals myself; we had second-class carriages—the officers). Please send me some fags. The people here don't speak English. I can't put as many crosses in as I would like as the officers have to read them.

Much love, &c.

This is not an actual letter, but a similar one to them all.

Interruption. A knock came in "Monsieur il y a un soldat qui vous demande" "Merci madame est-il dehas" "O oui Monsieur," Merci Madame. I go and see. B Company Officers' valises have gone astray, &c.

When we were finally in bed and almost asleep comes loud knocking. Brown puts his head out of the window. "For the love of Heaven, come and show us our billets." B and D Companies have just arrived a day later than us and their guide [8] is deficient in common sense. We are quite old soldiers now and past such excitement; we could billet ourselves in China if necessary. However, Brown goes to help. To-day we rose early and breakfasted at 10-0 off bacon and eggs (fried by me), bread and jam. We have a compa-

ny orderly officer, and it is my turn to-day, so I had to get up and put trousers, coat and boots over my pyjamas and to mount a guard at 8 a.m. and to dress properly afterwards. We have cold baths out of a hand basin and shave. One is very particular about shaving and all small details. The men have to be kept as smart as possible, and it is laid down that shaving is most important. If left to themselves they soon grow long beards, long hair and dirty clothes. All the morning we spent in cleaning up. We swept out the yard. They hardly know themselves now. The farm has never been so clean before. We built an incinerator to burn all our rubbish; we organised a Company Store, a cobbler's shop, and we have a qualified cobbler to do all our repairs. We organised our rations, and collected remains to make stews for the men. Constructed scrapers for boots outside each barn to keep them clean. At about 12-0 a.m. the doctor and C.O. came round with me and inspected our billets and praised them as the cleanest and best organised in the Battalion.

This afternoon ammunition drill, &c., to smarten the men up. At 4-30 I mounted our guard. Each lot of billets has its own guard; and we mount them with all the pomp and ceremony a guard should have, so that our guard mounting is really as impressive as that at Buckingham Palace, and it keeps the men smart. Tea time, visitors from other companies; afterwards the others go shopping. I am cook and mess president of our little lot, and I give them a house-keeping list of what to purchase. Then having nothing else to do I sit down and write the largest and most drivelling letter I have ever written in my life, I call it No. 35. The next ought to be No. 135. Please tell me if it is too long. If it bores you, censor it and pass it on. I hope it does not; tell me if it does. Now:—

Cigarettes. Please give someone an order to send me 150 cigarettes a week. I will send you a cheque for them any time. They may be either Matinee, Abdulla No. 5 or No. 4. Sullivan, Savoy, Nestor, Pera, or any similar brand. They might send vain attempts, but please get them to send them regularly then and I will send a cheque. Letters will be very welcome. Please give my love to all, and thank May again for her [9]cigarette case, it is awfully useful and much admired. Please ask her to excuse a letter. Give Amy my love and thank her for her letter I received a little time ago. Also, if you could let Auntie Effie see this bit, or tell her I will try and write,

I should be very pleased. I am very happy, as you may gather, and it is the first real holiday I have had for 14 months. We have a theory out here similar to Miss — — to wit, that there is no war. We have come to the conclusion that the whole thing is engineered by Heath Robinson, Horatio Bottomley and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Heath Robinson because he thinks humour is decadent, Horatio Bottomley to advertise "John Bull," and the Archbishop to cause a religious revival. How it is worked is as follows:—Heath Robinson bought a chateau in Flanders and a Crimean war gun. Then Churchill and the Kaiser came into the show. They bring troops up to within 20 miles of Heath Robinson, who fires off his gun every half hour. The troops are quite happy; if anyone grumbles they are sent up to the trenches, where George Graves and Sarah Bernhardt let off crackers. The battalion snipers are put in the opposite trench and told to snipe the trench opposite them. Occasionally they hit a man, and then there is a casualty list, and some General gets sent home in disgrace. Gallipoli is another chateau near here.

If you came out in pith helmets the corporation sand cart spreads sand in front of you, and you are supposed to be in Egypt. To accomplish The Great Practical Joke, Troops are trained to exercise their imagination. They begin by being soldiers in blue, and imaginary uniforms. Then they do arm drill and imagine they have rifles. Then they do Brigade operations and have an imaginary enemy, get killed by imaginary shells, shoot with imaginary rifles, fire imaginary cartridges out of imaginary guns. In the end there is Heath Robinson and his gun. I can't venture to read this letter over, and I am afraid no one else will. But my imagination is now so good that I can almost imagine my little Mother doing so, if no one else has the courage to do so.

Well the others have returned and common sense is returning, so I must shut up.

Good night, little Mother, and much love to all,

From your loving Son,

ALEC.

P.S.—I shall soon be home on leave as a lunatic.

11th Suffolks,[10]

B.E.F., Wednesday, January 12th.

My darling Mother,—

I am beginning letter No. 2, so that, although you will not get it for a few days, I may add to it occasionally and despatch it to you when it reaches a decent length, and before it reaches the colossal and iniquitous verbosity of my former screed—a monologue on the Great European War.

I finished letter 35 last night. To-day we again spent in improving our billets. The sailor is always known as the handy man, but I doubt if he would have a look in even with amateur Tommies like ourselves. We made scrapers for each barn door out of nothing, mats to scrape our boots on out of straw, roadways over muddy places out of brushwood and tins, &c., and incinerators out of mud. We could easily make bricks without straw.

The G.O.C. inspected our billets this morning and complimented our arrangements, and seemed highly pleased with them. The men are extremely smart at present; the easy time and change of circumstances seems to have returned to them all the original keenness we had rather lost during our rather boring time during the last few months.

We had our first shot fired in anger yesterday. A Taube flew over a mile or two up and a long distance away, and a sentry, to show his appreciation of its attentions, loosed off his rifle, much to his own surprise and his neighbours.

To-night I invented a new dish—an omelette made of scrambled eggs and minced bully beef. It was very good. To-day we route marched, and inspected gas helmets and ammunition this afternoon. To-night we are making a savoury—it is still in the making. Its ingredients are:—Cheese, butter, eggs, mustard, pepper, and a

little brandy to act as vinegar. It is a recipe of our own and I hope it turns out well.

To-night is a time of great excitement. A post has arrived—a letter from you written last Thursday to Sutton Veney and from Father and one from Win. Your parcel has not arrived yet. I did not get a tin box, as we are not in Egypt. I have no new uniform.

I am keeping the knife, fork and spoon. I am enclosing a 10s. note to pay for it and the knife (slight pause). The savoury was good. (P.S.—Later, note not enclosed.) Please [11]tell Father he is very generous, but I have plenty money, as Miss Jennie would say. I think I must be awfully extravagant. I spend a lot of money, but I always seem to have plenty. I generally buy good things and few.

Can you send me a pound tin of solidified methylated spirits for "Tommy's Cooker." (No substitutes.) Cost 1s. Yesterday I took a fatigue party of 30 men over to a large town near here—(I wish I could give you its name)—to unload stores for the division. We marched there, and the men loaded and unloaded, while their officer betook himself up to the town and purchased tinned fruit, potted meat, &c., and executed all sorts of odd commissions for various people.

I went and lunched at a French Cafe. I got a great shock, when I entered, the outside, as it seemed a common eating house, but then I went through the kitchen into another room, where there were two large tables round which were seated English and French officers mixed, and they brought us our food without one having to commit oneself too much in French. We did not know what we were eating, but it was very good. I had a Trinity Hall man on my right and a Caius man on my left, both of whom knew several friends of mine. One of them was a captain, and in his battalion was Kenneth Rudd, a great friend of mine at Jesus.

We returned in waggons, big motor transport waggons. We finished loading, and then I asked the A.S.C. officer which waggons to put my men on, and he told us the empty ones in front. There were about seven of them; they all go in a long train following each other, a few yards between each one and the next. However, when we were nearly settled the train moved off and left us behind, and I was then told that the empty waggons were going in quite another di-

rection. According I got only one waggon and pushed the thirty men into it and rode in front myself. We got stuck once or twice, and all had to help to pull it out, and also had to help another waggon which was stuck; the road was so narrow and muddy that we could not get it out, and so had to leave it for the breakdown gang.

At night we had a practice alarm and got all the men out with all their kit packed, and the officers with their valises packed up, all in 20 minutes. At 11-0 at night the men were all asleep, and it took them completely by surprise, but I am afraid some of the officers cheated and had most of their things [12]ready beforehand. My platoon was the quickest in the battalion—14 minutes, though they were rather hastily dressed and sleepy. To-day we route marched, and are now awaiting a battalion alarm, time unknown, where I know of at least one officer who has cheated again.

A new major, a regular, has just come to us—he is to command our company. Any food would always be acceptable, especially good solid cakes.

I am afraid this letter is almost as long and almost as boring as the last. I will close it to-morrow. Tell me if they are too long, and please tell everyone that the post is the real excitement of the day. Good-night, little Mother, sleep tight and go to bed early and don't get a headache. God bless you.

The new major is to be second in command of the Battalion, and Major Morton is coming back to us.

To-day being Sunday we had very little work to do, only inspection of men to see if they were clean and shaved, of rifles, ammunition, gas helmets, emergency rations, &c.

I must close now, as I must go to bed. I will try and write continuously, and send each letter off when it begins to get too bulky.

Good-night, Mother, and love to all.

From your loving Son,

ALEC.

11th Suffolks,[13]

B.E.F., Monday, January 17th, 1916.

My darling Mother,—

Chapter three now commences. It might be labelled "Reforms in the Household." Major Morton, as I told you in the last letter, has returned to our company. Before he returned we had one room for officers, in which we slept, washed from one small basin, cooked, ate, wrote and received our visitors. Now, we, Green, Parker and I sleep in one room and Major Morton in another, and we eat in the family kitchen, while two servants cook our food. To-day I arose with the lark, which had unfortunately not been warned of my intentions, and so failed to put in an appearance. Fuller, my servant, boiled me an egg and made me some tea, which I ate at 7-0 o'clock, and then set out to Divisional Headquarters to go on a one day's bombing course. We left Headquarters in two motor 'buses and sailed along quite happily, as peacefully as if we were in England, despite the fact that we were some 15 miles or so from the firing line. On the way there we saw one German aeroplane chased by four of our own, and I heard that they finally had a battle near here, though I do not know the result. We arrived there about 10 o'clock and spent the day bombing, throwing live grenades, &c. We saw all the English bombs that are in use. I knew most of what they told us before. They seemed a bit surprised at what we knew; most divisions coming out have not done nearly as much bombing—I have thrown about 20 live grenades myself already. Our lunch we took with us. I had eggs, potted meat and marmalade sandwiches I had made myself. We returned by 'bus, and had tea with D Company on the way home. The men have just had tobacco served out to them and are going to be paid to-day. It is very difficult to regulate their pay, as they are paid in francs, and the rate of exchange makes it difficult to pay them properly, especially as it changes from day to day.

I have just been conversing with Madame. I believe she thought I understood her, as I tried to look intelligent and to make suitable

remarks at proper intervals. Really, I only understood a little of it. To-day it is drizzling, and I must go and lecture my platoon on the use of gas helmets. I have just received May's letter (Tuesday, January 18th, to-day, I think). Please let me know when you receive mine so that [14]I can know how long they take to go. Some of the people are very difficult to understand, as they talk half Flemish and half French, at least many of the farmers do. We are about 24 miles from where Arthur was in the firing line, and the big train, where I went with a fatigue party, is the headquarters of my friend, the general, whom I was with in 1912. I can't tell you more than that. It will be an interesting little puzzle for you to solve. I will despatch this letter now. It is rumoured that we shall see Joffre in a few days or so, but it is probably not so.

It seems very funny out here. We have no need to put our blinds down at night, no trouble about lights on cars, while in London and Cambridge one lives in inky blackness. The socks are very welcome.

Much love, from your loving Son,

ALEC.

P.S.—My letters are getting short, because they are sent off at short intervals.

11th Suffolks,[15]

B.E.F., Wednesday, 19th.

My darling Mother,—

I have just received a very welcome letter from you. I append a list of things I want and would be very grateful for at times:—

1. Powdered milk.
2. Tea cubes.
3. One tablet coal tar soap (Wright's).

4. Mixed soups.

5. A warm pair of bedroom slippers.

I did not enclose a note in my last letter, as I have only French money. I will do so as soon as possible!

As a week has gone, I can tell you we crossed Folkestone to Boulogne and passed through Calais on the way here. I don't think I can tell you any more. Perhaps you can understand my reference in the last letter, if you cannot no one else can.

Could you not get Finlay's to send cigarettes out of bond to me. Try, at least, with a small quantity, and I will let you know if I receive them—it is so much cheaper. I must have cigarettes, and Seddon says his brother always received his all right.

The weather has been beautifully fine, if slightly cold, the last week or so. I do hope Father is getting better now, I was awfully sorry to hear he has been ill. Now that we live in more luxurious circumstances, Graves, Major Morton's servant, does our cooking. Foster came to dinner in order to play bridge afterwards, and we had a pleasant meal, consisting of soup, roast beef, and apple fritters, and had a rubber or two afterwards. To-day we have done a few parades and practised for the inspection. I told you about it in my last letter and it is coming off to-morrow (Thursday). We paid out this morning; we each have to pay our own platoons in francs and to sign lots of documents, and to get the men to sign is rather a job. We marched out to-day and the whole division was drawn up along the road two deep, and we had to wait two or three hours in a piercing wind, with squalls of rain and sleet, to be inspected. Then we were inspected by General Joffre and Sir Douglas Haigh, who went slowly past in a car, followed by 13 other cars. You must remember that [16]the division would stretch for 12 or 15 miles along the road. We returned a little time ago to our billets and have just had tea. Some of the French papers have a German official communique in them saying that the 34th Division has been badly cut up. Well, the 34th Division is ours, and we have not even seen a German yet, nor even come within miles of one, so they must have been very clever.

P.S.—I am starving for cigarettes, please get some sent out of bond. I am sorry to ask for so many things and to cause you trouble,

but I hope you don't mind. Please give my especial love to the Aunts and Aunt Polly and Francis if you get any opportunity, also Uncle Ted. There was rather an amusing paragraph in the Cambridge evening paper of January 14th about our departure. I think it is the "Cambridge Daily News." You might like to write for it. Watch the first letters of each sentence in my next letter on page 3. Yesterday I was unfortunately slightly unwell and stayed in bed in the morning and got up in the afternoon, and in the evening we had a brigade alarm and were out from 7 till 12. I had only had six biscuits and some milk, so I did not feel very strong.

To-day being Saturday we have done little, and we bicycled into the same huge town to make some purchases. Don't send me cigarettes unless I write again for them, as I find I can get them cheaper from the Officers' Canteen out here. I must close now as we move to-morrow a few miles nearer the firing line and billet again, but we shall still be rather safer than we were in England. Well, write again as soon as possible.

Much love to all, from your loving Son,

ALEC.