

France

24-10-18.

Dear Mother & Gret

I have not received a letter from you for some little time, but as we had the advance of a Canadian Mail in today, probably tomorrow will bring a letter, the reason why I am writing is to tell you of the wonderful happenings which we are experiencing at present.

As you have no doubt read in the papers we are moving through the country evacuated by the enemy, and were it not for the vile weather, we would be having a very pleasant time, as it is I would not have missed this trip for quite a lot, as nothing can describe the joy of the inhabitants on being delivered from the Germans, the most of them had not seen British troops for four years.

Of course all the civilians we are meeting are either very old or very young, the active men and women having been sent back to the rear, probably to do war work and any kind of pressed work, some cases I heard of in which some Frenchmen had been hidden by their women for nearly four years when the enemy first overran the country, with the hope that one day the allied armies would return and free them.

Another queer thing was every house seemed

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to have had a French flag hidden away, which they immediately brought out as soon as our troops started to come through, in some towns they were so beflogged as to give one an impression of early war days in England, I suppose you are wondering how the German is leaving the country, well as far as I have seen up to the present he is behaving quite decent, of course most of the bridges and cross roads have been blown up, mines & machinery in factories destroyed while the railroads are also out of business, but with one exception the towns and villages are untouched, though a lot of the contents of the best houses have been looted.

In the one exception the town had almost every window smashed, I could almost imagine as I marched through, Germans picking up stones and throwing them at the windows as they passed by, some towns were unscathed, the people having little to complain of, the main trouble being food of which very little has been available for some time, I would like to say something in praise of the American Relief people, for without the food which they caused to be sent to civilian prisoners in Northern France, they surely must have starved, a strange thing but one of the first things which we noticed was that the children were wearing smocks made out of Canadian flour sacks, which on inquiry we

found had been part of the supplies forwarded by the American Relief Fund.

The weather had been very bad lately, it has rained steadily every day for three days, the roads are none too good, so it is a common sight to see lorries in the ditch, but the redeeming feature of the whole thing is the good billets we are having, just at present we are staying in a lovely house, the civilians in this post having all gone away as an odd shell lands now and again, so we are making ourselves very comfortable, have a great spring bed to sleep in, some of the boys have some beautiful rooms Louis XIV furniture, the room we share and clean up in has rosewood furniture, three huge mirrors one of them a Cheval, while the bed, it is one of the best I have ever seen, as you know the people over here specialise in beds in this country.

The officers quarters and the Orderly Room are swell places, everything having been left at a moments notice, they have all the cutlery and china at their disposal, the cook use the kitchens in fact everybody is so comfortable that all of us will be sorry to leave, the best time we have had in this war, for the fighting is not hard mostly patrol work, while the shelling is very scattered and ineffective, in fact compared to what we are used to, practically nil.

I have not had any more news of Bert lately but I guess he is getting along alright, and I expect to hear from him any day. I have not received a letter from Ted for some time now, I guess he has very little to write about anyway. I know myself what a hum-drum day to day life his is or has been, one that has caused so many men to get maimed in Scotland.

Well I think this is all I have to say at present, will write again as soon as I hear from you, so with love to Gret

I Remain Your Loving Son

Harry