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Salisbury Plain

Shing Camp

Nov 5th 1916

Mr Watson

Dear Friend

I thought I would drop you a line to let you know how things are over here, well we had a good spin on our voyage, called at Albany for two days, took on coal and stores, had a good look round, hired a Motor bar and went out into the country, saw nothing to compare with New Zealand. The Town is rather a pretty place, but not very big, our next port of call was Durban, this was the prettiest town of the lot, we stopped here two days, and had a real good time, the ladies here treated us like fighting cocks, all the work there is done by Black labour, Kaffirs and Indians, even Black Police, the mode of travelling there is by Rickshaws, drawn by bullocks, with their heads decorated with horns, and others gear, it was great fun to us riding in them, they can get up a lot of pace, they only last at that work about five years then their heart is gone, the authorities placed the trams at our disposal free, which was very kind of them, all we had to do was to hop on one any where, jump off and on to another one. We also hired a Motor bar and went for a 25 miles ride. It cost us £1 for four of us 5/ each, it is the only place I have saw yet I would like to live in; our next port of call was

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Cape Town, a town of mixed breeds of every Nationality under the sun and full of vice, there is a lot of Pro Germans in it, it is a garrisoned town under the British Military Authorities, they are afraid of a rising any day with the blacks and Pro Germans, it is not anything near as pretty a town as Durban. Fruit was very cheap especially oranges the Ladies here were also very kind they had everything all ready for us when we landed in the eatable line, and also provided a splendid entertainment for us in the evening, our next port was a French place called Dakar it was here that we had our 3ⁱⁿ gun put on for use against submarines this place we was not allowed to land for reasons I will tell you another time it was here that Charlie Scannell from Glydale fell down the hold and broke his leg, we left him behind in the French hospital, the Black Boys there are great Divers and swimmers they came round our boats diving for pennies and they can keep in the water all day without going ashore for a spell, all the exercise we got there, was that we used to lower our boats and with an officer / go for a rowe out side the harbour, the Athenic came in one day when we were out rowing, we rowed all round her and had a yarn to the passengers she had some wounded on also, This was the ^{second} place we got an Escort the Ophir she was the boat that brought the Duke and Duchess out to New Zealand, a few years ago, they have mounted guns on her for an escort for troops, we also had the H. M. S. Kent a part of the

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way everything went well till we got into the Bhamell, and then we met two I. Submarines, and had a very narrow squeak of being sunk, they evidently did not see us in time, because a boat laden with coal bound for Italy crossed our front about a mile away, the next thing we saw was a big explosion go up from her, sending the water right up above her masts, that was the first we knew they were about, and that cost them their lives, our escort a destroyer left us at about 30 miles an hour surrounded, and took them by surprise, and after about 20 minutes sank the both of them, our boat kept going round and round in a circle, while the Destroyer was away from her in case there was another about, nothing more happened and we reached Plymouth about 5 o'clock. Disembarked straight away for this camp, the journey taking us $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours by train after a lot of lost time we arrived here at 4 o'clock in the morning in pouring rain, the train being packed Donald and I and Mothers had to ride in the Guards van, and since arriving here, it has not stopped raining, it makes no difference here you drill and shoot in all weathers, our shooting scores have just come in the hut, and all the local boys have passed as first class shots, considered pretty good on account of the weather we were shooting in, we also have been shooting with Gas Helmets on, you think you are

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going to be smothered when you first put them on, they are soaked with some chemical that counteracts on the gas, and are proof against the strongest gas the Germans have used yet, one man tested them by staying in them for 8 hours in gas ten times stronger than the Germans have used yet you are allowed 8 seconds to get them on, and fasten your coat up, failure to do it quickly might cost you your life, as half a minute in gas will kill a man stone dead, we are also learning to throw Bombs they are very destructive for their size being only as big as a cricket ball, only oval shape they are timed with a 5 seconds exposure and quite harmless while held in the hand, as long as you keep the spring down, and when exploded they scatter 150 yards all round, so you can see they would do a lot of damage, we are camped within 14 miles of an Aerodrome and it is nothing to see 14 or 15 flying machines over your heads all day long, they settle in the paddocks and rise again just like birds, this ground we dwell on is very historic, there are great big mounds of earth and under them are buried people hundreds of years ago, so we are told they are kept sacred nobody being allowed on them, and quite close to us are ancient buildings at a place called Amesbury some of them are built 1800 years ago and quite good yet, you will wonder why I am sending so much

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information, the reason is because there is
no censor on anything you write from here,
but when we get to France it will start again,
we are leaving in two or three days time, we
belong to the W. Z. R. Brigade now I forgot to
mention we had two days leave in London, I won't
bother you with anything about it now, Pierce
they went up to Birmingham to see Sam his brother
he was wounded but is getting on all right now, I
heard Jimmy Wilson was wounded and close to London
but did not hear it in time to go and see him, I have
not heard anything of Tom or Alf or Harold Black,
or Les Purvis heard Alec Black had got a commission
good luck to him he deserves it, have not heard
of Billy Richards or Isaac Bonner but might hear
more when we get over there, all the Local boys
are in good form and looking forward to doing
their bit when the time comes, Baptian Sullivan the
Minister from Yarnam is here he was preaching to us
this morning and he was telling us that there was
1100 New Zealanders not far from here with that disease
you all know about, guarded by sentries with Ball
Amunition we lost a few of our Chaps too, I think I will
have to ring off now, with best wishes to you all
for a happy Christmas From Your Old Friend
my 40 21870
J McTague

France Jan 18th
1917

Dear Effie,

Just a line to let you know how we are all getting on, I expect you thought I had forgotten you all, I wrote to your Dad when I was in England, so I thought I would write to you this time, well Effie I can't tell you much about this place, but I will do the best I can, at the present time everything is covered with snow, nothing to be seen but a white sheet, and it is still snowing, with no prospect of clearing that I can see, I think you must have the sun wired down over there, as we have hardly ever seen it since we came here, I think what Tom said about K. Y. is right I have not seen anything to compare with it yet, and I will chuck London in, and this half of France, I could not make out ~~which~~ all the carts had hoods on for a while, but I can see it now, if it isn't raining it is snowing. Our Brigade is lucky just now, as we are out of the trenches for our divisional rest and billeted behind the lines in an old Theatre, but it won't last long worse luck, as we will be going in again shortly, last time we were in, I was taken away and sent to a Trench Mortar Battery instruction school, for a course of training, which I have finished, and am waiting to be called up any time now, but we can't do much for the

③ department, which carries a certain amount of risk, like all other detective jobs, one thing we are pretty well fed which makes up for a lot, tell May we have got Jack Joiner for our cook, he used to be at Gordons Valley, I think she knows him, we have not dropped across Tom yet, if we only knew what he was in we could write to him, we came across Joe Mc Muliff, and all had of Photo taken am sending one by this mail, I hope you will like our hats, as they are in the fashion here, I just missed seeing Isaac Bonnor he came down to see us and found Geo. H. Pierce J. and D. Fraser but Fred and I happened to be out, I was disappointed as I would have liked to have seen him, he has a full Blown Sergeant now, Bob Campbell from Kingsdown came down with him, they were looking well, Jack Campbell from Kingsdown is in the same Brigade as us, and Jack Campbell from Zig Zag, we often see them, Bob Bowland is in the same Brigade only a different Batt, Fred has met him twice but I havent dropped across him yet, how are they all at home, give them my best respects, as I will have to ring off now, as it is near lights out, all the local boys are in good form, as you will see by their dials. I havent room to put my address in, but you could get it from home, they are very particular were we put it here

Yours Sincerely,
G. Mc Vayne

② Weather just yet, we fired 50 shells over to Finty with our gun the other day, to give him something to go on with, it is a very deadly gun, simple and quick to handle, so my word I have got the chance to give Finty, what Paddy gave the drum. You won't hear me complain about accommodation if I get back, these little dugouts we live in, are something like a big dog kennel, you would laugh if you could only see us, sitting in them looking out like a big dog, they are three feet high, four feet wide, and six feet long, so you can see we haven't got much room to kick our heels up, but they are not bad places to be in, when shells are flying over your head, of which there is quite a few, and not egg shells either, what sort of a Xmas did you have, you might have had a better dinner than us, but I'll bet we had the best display of fireworks, ones that were not so safe to be looking up at or you might get hurt. This No man's land, you hear all the talk about, is not much of a place to live in, I have been out in it a few times, and I always felt more at home, when I got back to our trenches again, it would do alright to plant trees in, as the holes are already dug, it is a place that is not much used in the day time, but used pretty regular at night, as a sort of investigation.

A.F.A. 2042.
114/Gen No./5248.

FIELD



POST CARD.

The address
only to be writ-
ten on this side.
If anything else
is added the
post card will
be destroyed.

Mrs P. Watson
Otipua
Ymaru
New Zealand

[Crown Copyright Reserved.]

NOTHING is to be written on this side except the date and signature of the sender. Sentences not required may be erased. If anything else is added the post card will be destroyed.

[Postage must be prepaid on any letter or post card addressed to the sender of this card.]

I am quite well.

~~*I have been admitted into hospital*~~

~~*{ sick } and am going on well.*~~

~~*{ wounded } and hope to be discharged soon.*~~

~~*I am being sent down to the base.*~~

I have received your { *letter dated March* _____
telegram „ _____
parcel „ _____

Letter follows at first opportunity.

~~*I have received no letter from you*~~

~~*{ lately*~~

~~*{ for a long time.*~~

Signature } *G Mc Yague*
only

Date *13/6/17*

P. S. have never heard any news of Tom yet

France Sept 7th
1917

Dear May,

Just a few lines to thank your mother for her kind gift of tobacco which I received yesterday. little things like that show us that we are not forgotten, in this land of sand bags, and shell holes. Well May since writing about a fortnight ago about the sad end of poor little Fred, I have just received word that poor Ain Grey has died of wounds on 14th August just two days before Fred, so the Parvora boys are getting their share of bad luck now. A little over a month ago it was the Lysaldale boys Charlie and Mick Scannel, and George Marshall; A few days ago before we went in the line last time, Pearce, Ain, Fred, Alf, Geo Flutton and I had a couple of evenings out to gether, little did we think then that some of us would not meet again, one gets hardened to this life and laugh and joke as if nothing could ever upset you, but when these things do

2)

happen to your best mate it casts a gloom
over everything, well I expect you hear
enough of this unpleasant news so I will try
and tell you something else, the weather
being much better now they have nearly got
the harvest in, and stacks are to be seen
every where even fairly close to the lines,
so if an odd shell hits them it will be
(finish) as the french say here, the only thing
I see them using in the farm line, that you
could call modern, is a potato digger,
in other things they are a long way behind
the times, I expect by the time you get
this you will be getting into your warm
weather and we will be starting on our
cold again, I hope it is not as bad as
the last but one thing we should be
better able to stand it, being more acclimatised
than the previous one, and by the look of
things I don't see any way of dodging it.
I will have to bring this to a close, so one more
thanking your mother for her Parcel, and
hoping it finds you all in the best of health, as it
leaves us at present I remain yours sincerely E. W. F.

On return service

Miss Mary Watson

Otipua Post Office

Yimaru

New Zealand

