

France
Sept. 10th. 1917.

My Dear Sister.

Received your very welcome letter yesterday and was very glad to know that you were all well. I also received the parcel some time ago and you may be sure the contents were very welcome. The tobacco came in handy as I was broke and without tobacco. I should have written at once and thanked you, but I was very busy at the time and kept putting it off. Then I was taken ill with trench-fever, and didn't leave my bed for about ten days. I am about over it now, though my legs still pain at times, especially during wet weather. It's just like rheumatism and many a sleepless night I had to put up with. I was in bed most of the time while we were on our Divisional Rest. I am indeed sorry our brother is having so much trouble with his eyes. He ought to see a specialist about them before he loses his sight. Julia told me about Jessie thinking of going to the hospital to nurse. It's a noble profession, but, I'm glad she's not taking it up. It's a thankless Job. Just like soldiering.

I have met quite a lot of Edmonton men since I came to France. We do such a lot of moving about, that we run across someone we know almost every day. I met Mr. Penny two weeks ago and spend a nice evening with him. You remember he used to live next to the Williamses. He is Quartermaster now and holds down the rank of Captain. I've met Frank Walker of Fort Sask. several times and he always stops to shake hands, and do you remember Harry Higgins, brother of Maria (Minosa)? I met him in England. He was a sergeant in the 128th Batt. I don't know if he is over here yet or not. I met Tom Longboat in England too. I hear that he has been killed since. Dave McCullough is over here too. I see him every once in a while. It sometimes seems as if Edmonton had moved over here and left all the women folk behind, one meets so many from home. Every once in a while some one would come up to me and say "do you remember the time you tried to (pinch) me for doing so and so?" or "do you remember the time you chased me on your motor cycle"? Many an hour we pass away talking of old times and wishing we were all back home again.

Well sis. in spite of the fact that we are used very decently by the French people, there's no use denying the fact that we are all aching and longing for our own beloved Canada. Of course there's work to be done yet and I spose will stay here till it is finished. A man has lots of time to think of his people and home out here, and one does get awfully lonesome at times. I know in my last trip to the front line, I dreamed of home, and about "all the mothers, sisters and sweethearts" I ever had.

Of course we have lots of fun too. It isn't all hardships and loneliness out here. Most of the boys turn (Fatalists). I don't know if I've got it spelled right, after a few months of fighting. They believe that everything is prearranged by the Divine Power, and if it one's time to die no matter what one does, one has to die. Their motto is "If my turn comes next, I can't do anything to avoid it, so "I should worry". They don't worry either. Of course there are lots who suffer from shell shock or nervous breakdown, and they can't fight against fear, but most of the boys have a keen sense of humor, and laugh at almost anything. I know of one in particular, a corporal, He is the life and wit of our party. A shell landed close to him one night and the concussion threw him on his head several yards away. The shock stunned him for a minute and when he came to, the first question he asked was "Is my head still on?" That sent the rest into a roar, and only a minute before they were all ready to beat if to the nearest dugout. Its the likes of him that make army life bearable, and the army is full of such as he. Then we have our

sport & games, concerts and picture shows where one may forget his troubles awhile. But best of all for cheering a soldiers heart is a letter from "Home". There's always a scramble when the mail is being given out. Yes, and there's hardly ever a vacant desk at the Y.M.C.A. writing room. Letter writing with us is sometimes very difficult. A soldier loses his pack and with it his writing material. Maybe his pack gets soaked with rain, spoiling his papers and the nearest Y.M.C.A. is in the next town. He puts his writing off till a better time which does not turn up before he goes to the front line. A week or two slips by before he is able to write a letter.

I am laying on the ground trying to finish this letter before dark. I hope I do for I don't know when I'll have another opportunity. I wish mother understood English and could read. I can't think of anything that would interest her, and she always complains that we write such short letters. Its the people who read our letters to her who are to blame. Don't tell her that I was sick when you write, sis. It won't hurt her not to know.

I had a tough day the day before yesterday. I don't know whether it was the gas that sickened me or the berries that I ate. Some of the gas that "Fritz" is using now does not affect one till about 24 hours after. I was taken ill while on the march with vomitting, and later, "saposowin" very severs. I wasn't able to hold down anything for two meals after. However I'm completely over it now, so there's nothing to worry about. Well sis, I don't know what else to tell you so I better close now. I'm enclosing a picture taken just after my attack of "shin-fever". I was rather shaky in the legs, as the boys got me out of bed to have it taken. It was taken while we were out on rest. The French people at whose barn we were billoted, used me very nice. They used to feed me on fresh eggs. If I didn't have a girl in Canada, I'd have certainly fallen in love with the oldest girl. She wasn't much on 'looks', but she sure was a good girl, and a worker.

Give my love to Grannie when you see her. Love to the children. Remember me to what few friends I've left. For yourself, good wishes, love and affection, from

Your brother
Alex.