

2nd R. Dub. Fus.

4th Div.

Brit. Exped. Force

9th Dec. 1914

My dear Tom,

I was delighted to get your letter.

It took five days to come, as I suppose mine did to go home. Sometimes accidentally a letter will go sooner. It was very funny to have officers showing "Irish Life" under my nose, and men showing me the "Independent". They have just come out for their couple of days rest, and I am riding around their billets. I stayed last night at a farm-house, the most perfect I have seen. I had a perfect little sacristy to myself, next to a little oratory, where I said Mass. My orderly made me comfortable on some straw, plus my flea-bag. I went asleep half-way through my K'sany, and never heard a thing until eight o'clock. Three

new officers turned up to-day - one of them holding some big job in South Africa, and home on a year's leave. He had a lot of bother getting out. He is quite a fine fellow too. The weather is rather damp just now, roads overflowing, fields knee deep, but still it isn't as bleak, in a way, as you might expect. Every place is alive with soldiers, naturally, and the people go about their work as usual in the fields - until a shell drops in the next ones. But they are quite cheerful about it, and don't seem to mind an awful lot. You should have seen me taking a jump this evening. Had to get into a field to let big transport waggon pass on a narrow road. My horse pulled it through all right, with me still on top of him. Which reminds me, I lost a khaki silk handkerchief this evening when riding, and silk handkerchiefs are awfully good for colds. Will you ask Liss to send me out a couple (about 2/6 each) I had a pencilled note from Mamie, which

I think, is sent on.

I am glad the mater took things cheerfully. If she were out here, and saw any good to be done, she'd want to be here too. There isn't anybody worth his salt that isn't dying to get out, if he could. Of course, for ordinary officers there is danger, but someone has got to do it, and decent fellows of all ranks want to be the men to do it. As you say the papers are amusing to one who is out here; well, not even amusing - they seem to miss all the good humour, and hearty good cheer that difficult situations knock out of a man. Not a man passes but has a salute or a word for one - a salute if a private, a "good day, padre" if an officer. "Padre" is our customary title from officers here - the "padre" is the priest. It hath a smack of cosmopolitanism. One of our officers, by the way, is a Maltese Baron, another a South African Commissioner, another has civil and military certificates as an aviator. They and most of the others have been all over the world.

Well, I can't wait now. My horse is already
saddled, and I am off to dinner with the
head quarters, about five miles away. I got some
wine for them yesterday, as I happened to be in a
place where we had billeted and dined before. It is
only once a week, or even less than that, that we can
get a big dinner all together. I bought five bottles
of good Bordeaux, and put them in my haversack.
I needn't tell you I didn't ride home at a canter.
Little things like this come out of the mess funds.

Well I must skedaddle now, as it is almost
six p.m. I know the roads about here better than
I do the roads around Shinerue.

Pooler certainly splashed my photo about. Write
often, will you? I like a letter to turn up. I read
some of the "Windsor Times" to-day. He down
brought it back with him from leave. The officers
get ten days' leave in rotation. Well so long,
Best love to Mabel & Bob, Iris and the whole
lot. Tell Annie I haven't had time to scribble yet,
but shall in about two days. Best love. Ned.
Don't forget Envelopes &c