

My dear Everybody

As my last two long epistles have taken so long in the writing I think I had better start this one now so as to be in good time, so hear goes.

Very many thanks, Agnes, for your fine little writing pad, which you see I am using, and the plentiful supply of envelopes which should last me quite a long time. This little packet arrived yesterday in excellent condition.

Well, Agnes how are the bells getting on? Really I can see no reason why they should not ring all right again, if you have done everything to them that I suggested in my last letter bu one.

Very sorry that you both have colds, Mother and Father, but hope they are right better by now. Really you must take a little more care of yourselves this wretched weather.

Talking about the weather reminds to tell you that, although it cleared up a bit here round Easter, it is now very bad again and has been raining and snowing on and off for the last two days.

The Nutolate Crispits, Father, are made by Mapletons, who, I believe, specialize in nut foods. They cost a penny each and are very crisp and nutty tasting, so if you can succeed in finding one of Mapletons shops, I should very much like some more and can very strongly recommend you all to try some yourselves, as I feel sure you will like them.

Fancy poor old Leonard striking that seam of clay on his ground, Father. As you wisely remark it will no doubt make him perspire remarkably freely. You had not previously told me about the diggers at Raynes Park, but the part about the interest they appear to take in passing trains struck me as familiar even as I read it. I suppose it is because we have so often remarked upon the interest that real gardeners, like "Lord Roseberry" for instance, appear to take in passers by, as they lean upon their spades or better still a comfortable fence.

What a busy day you must have had the other Sunday at Metcalfes, Agnes! Of course Biddy is quite welcome to looking at any of my Sundays when she comes to pay you all a visit, as I feel sure she will be very careful of them. Fancy Sybil wanting a drop of stout. That reminds me of little Fred Hotchkiss who used to drink his mothers beer.

Mr Bell certainly seems rather tired in his letter in the parish magazine, but it wont be long now before he will be home again, and he will certainly have the satisfaction of knowing he has done his fair share. Meanwhile Mr Hoste, from your account of his ceaseless and tireless energy, Susie, must be the very best man possible to take the vicars place at Epsom.

It must have seemed funny having no Easter decorations at church, but after all it would have been funnier still if you had them at a time like the present when everyone is being told to economise.

Thanks very much for offering to make some more of those fine macaroons which K sent me Susie. Needless to say I shall be delighted to receive them, as they are very fine indeed. I can scarcely credit Fanny leaving the house opposite the Nelson. Where does she reside now by the way? How is Harry Lee getting on and what has the medical board had to say? It will be a shame if he is called up again dont you think?

I should like to see your bald-headed sparrow, Agnes. Perhaps Tom knows him rather intimately.

"There was a young lady named Aggo.

Who fed a poor little sparrow.

As he was thin in his thatcho,

She tried him to catcho,

In order to give him some Tatcho".

The title of this little ditty is "The Bald-headed Sparrow from Epsom".

Well, Father, how is the garden getting on? I suppose you are going in for potatoes more than ever this year and I suppose you will stick to our old friends, Myatts Ashleaf Kidneys, for the first crop. What are you thinking of having for the first kind? With Ks and Hales valuable assistance, you are no doubt making rapid progress with the planting, that is of course weather permitting. The ditch should now be just beginning to look nice with bulbs and other things coming along, so should get to work on it at the first opportunity, Susie, so as to make it look its very best. How is the little Damson tree, which last year we moved down the garden, looking this year. I remember last year it looked rather ragged and seemed rather loose about the roots and that you wanted to cut it down, Father, but hope you have not done so yet, as in time it should grow into a very fine tree. I should like to see the little Vernon at work on his allotment with Hale.

It is very kind of Mrs Haynes to offer to board Peter II at her home during his Easter vacation. As you remark, Agnes, if he stayed at our house Peter I might bite his legs, or it is quite probable the affair might be vice versa, for by his photos Peter II must be a very different dog now to the poor little puppy I brought home in a fish bag on August 29th 1914. Do you remember the fine walk we had that Saturday, Father and K, when we started on shellbacks famous walk from Dorking to Leith Hill, via the town fields Dorking-which you didnt think much of Father-,the Dorking allotments, leaving the Nour-a name which the worthy tar likes to roll round his tongue-on the left, past the back of a house and past a bit of a waterfall-these last two features I am sure you will remember, Father-through the Rookery grounds, with a lovely view up the valley of the Tillingbourne, thence to Friday street-the wonderful sheet of water which failed to impress you, Father, and where I believe we paused to partake a little liquid refreshment in the shape of ginger beer-and

so on through the woods and pine trees until we suddenly emerged on the summit of Leith hill, thence, after gazing around us at the wonderful view at our feet, we descended to the road and made for Holmwood through the fields. At the little chaps suggestion we kept to the fields a little to long, and instead of striking Holmwood as we anticipated, struck the road about 4 miles from the Horsham side of it. Nil desperandum-but you did not say this on that occasion- and so we started back along the road to Holmwood.

On the way we asked one or two old countrymen whether they new anyone named Tidy about those parts, and they, if you remember, replied that they did, and that he lived about 2 miles beyond Holmwood station, or words to that effect. Steadily we tramped along the hot dusty road until at last we reached the station. Here however we discovered there would be no train for a very considerable time, so decided to catch the bus to Dorking and there catch the Epsom train. We therefore resumed our way towards Dorking, but before long were picked up by the bus and had a fine 3d ride (for which you paid Father) into the town of chickens. As however it seemed a pity to go home without the little dog, and as there was some time to wait for a train, the little chap volunteered to return to Tidys by bus and fetch him after all, hoping to catch the same train as you and K, Father. This however was not to be, for when he got back to Tidys, the man had not turned up with the little dog. When the little chap finally got Peter II, after crossing Holmwood Common about three times and missing the man every time, he found it was too late to catch the early train and as the next one from Dorking was at 8.45.pm. he stayed to tea at Tidys and then walked back to Dorking with Peter II wriggling in a fish bag. As he had quietened down somewhat by the time I reached the station I smuggled him aboard the train free and reached home quite safely about 9.15.pm. in time for a glorious late dinner. What a splendid day that was and how we enjoyed that walk! For the rest of the evening the rabbit little dog amused us all by holding his own against Titus and Peter, and slipping about on the oil cloth.

6.5.17 Tut, tut!! Really this letter has taken much too long, so I must buck up or you will never get it. I think as I have plenty of paper, I will write on one side of the sheet only in future, so here goes.

By the way you might send me one or two nice pencils out please, including a copying ink and an HB. Dont be afraid to give 3d or 4d each for them, as it will be worth while getting good ones while you are about it.

Thanks very much indeed for the notebook refil, K, which is exactly the same as the old one, and therefore fits excellently. Also for the new kind of bulls-eyes, which are delicious.

Glad to hear about Charlie Weeks being at Harrogate. He is certainly very lucky in staying so long in England.

How is the silk trade getting on, K? Have you heard from the people Mr Chard & Selfridges referred you to, yet? Am afraid if you are going to go in for silk producing much, you will have to devote all your time to it, & then I suppose it would be hardly profitable

enough. Still, as Father says, nil desperandum.

Have you seen anything of Mr Baldwin lately Father? Please remember me to him if you do happen to see him. Have not come across any dates out here yet, with the exception of a half franc, which I picked up in the mud & am keeping for luck. Am also keeping a 1916 1 franc piece in mint condition as an example of the present day French currency.

I think the clippers were exceedingly cheap at 3/9, as they are proving themselves invaluable out here. Still I hardly fancy I should like a job at Freddys after the war, as that would be a bit too much of a good thing, especially in the hot weather. Nevertheless I shall always be delighted to trim your locks up at any time, Father, & might even go so far as to clip Woodys for him the next time he comes to the Derby.

Have not met the Vicar or Major Hogan out here yet, but have at last come across someone I know, namely a chap from Lloyds, who is now in the R.G.A., & what is more is in the 42nd H.A.G

So the two Peters had a fight when they met each other. I hope they have both recovered by now from the injuries they inflicted on each other. If only Bingo & his mistress had been there too, things would have been more exciting still. All the same it is a good thing they did not meet indoors. Glad to hear Peter II got on so well with Tom, K. He must certainly be very different from Peter I, & how wise of Tom to tell the difference.

What a shame Dick could not take him to see old Ben, who would no doubt have been delighted to see him. I should like to see him carrying your glove down the town, K. and to have heard all that the leather goddess said when she called Bingo to her. I hope he enjoyed his visit to Boxhill with you & Miss S. He was quite near his native parts, so should have done. What has Miss Ruscoe decided to do about Peter II, K? Has Chillons dog been in lateley? Glad to hear Peter I is keeping himself fit by hare chasing & has left the ban boy alone.

Here is a list of letters etc. recieved since I wrote my last short note.

<u>Date sent</u>	<u>By whom</u>	<u>Date recieved</u>
18.4.17	Parcel from home	25.4.17
18.4.17	Pocket book refill, Punch, L.O.& P mag from K	25.4.17
List of letters etc. cont.		
<u>Date sent</u>	<u>By whom</u>	<u>Date recieved</u>
20.4.17	Letter from K	26.4.17
23.4.17	Mail (Father&S)	28.4.17
23.4.17	Letter from K	"
24.4.17	Public opinion from K	30.4.17
28.4.17	Letter from K	4.5.17
25.4.17	Punch, L.O.&Pmag from K	"
30.4.17	Mail(Father,D,S&K)	5.5.17
2.5.17	London Opinion &Pmag fmK	8.5.17

For all of which very many thanks, especially for the third parcel which was quite as good as if not better than the first two. The macaroons were grand, Susie, as were also the plumheavies &

queencakes. As I have said before the bullseyes were very fine K. Now I think about it I dont think I thanked you all properly for the other two parcels. Please thank Aunt Sue for tin of Humbugs & other things from her, the next time you are writing to Dovercourt, Agnes, & give her my love. Thanks very much for that milk chocolate K. Also for tin of pineapple chunks, which were delicious, Mother, & the very welcome note enclosed from you in parcel. Ditto the sardines & tin of assorted biscuits, etc.etc.etc.. There were so many things & they were all so very nice that it is useless to go into any further details. Once again, thank you all very much indeed!

Glad to hear the ditch is going on so nicely now, Susie. The lilies should look very well along the fence. I trust you will keep the hop under strict supevision during my absence. The garden must be looking fine now that the fine weather has at last arrived, Father, and now that you have nearly finished the planting. So poor little Hale could not give you a hand after all, but I hope he is better by now. It is rather a good idea of yours about trying the marrows in the pond this year, Father, & I should think they ought to do very well, especially if they run all over the top garden towards the shed. I suppose you have put the last crop of peas & scarlet runners in by now. Pleased to hear the rhubarb is looking so well this year, I suppose Ricketts extra special has had something to do with it.

Yes, Father, I did know a chap at Farnborough named Hicks, only he was in the Wireless Section like myself, & came from Ipswich I believe. He came out here about a month before I did. Thanks for news about Davidge & Reginald Hubert.

Have not seen anything of Mr Glover or Griff out here yet K. by the way what regiment is Griff in?

Very sorry to here that poor little Anty had lost his mother, & that Miss Dunham was very ill. I hope she is going on all right now though.

Yes, Susie, I read about Mr Ounton being presented with Mrs Northeys beautiful inkstand. What a splendid present! Thanks very much for offering to get me some souvenir post cards of the Red Cross donkey, which I should like very much indeed. Will try & keep that part of the Herald about the Red Cross sale, & also the Red Cross catalogue, Agnes, when it comes, but when is it coming? If this letter reaches you before you send it, perhaps it would be just as well to keep it till I come home, for although I will do my best to keep it, it might get lost, & I should not like that to happen. If however you have already sent it, I shall-after looking at it of course- send it home again with the Heralds if possible. In future please avoid sending anything that you want kept, as there is always a chance of it being lost when we move, when of course we take wth us only what is absolutely necessary. In the case of something in the Herald which is interesting & you would like to keep, surely you could by two Heralds, keep one, & send one to me.

Dont think I am grumbling, for I dont mind keeping the things, it is only that I may, for lack of space be compelled to leave them behind, when we move, whenever that may be.

Thanks very much for rousing them up at Daniels about Punch, K, but please keep on with it Susie, or we shall hear nothing more of them for another three months.

Was delighted to get a letter in the mail from Tullius, Sal Epsomiac, Nauta Antiquus. He sounds very jolly & appears to have enjoyed to the full his ten days at home, which he thoroughly deserved, after the many gales he has weathered out on the deep. He seemed very pleased with the goaties I sent him. No doubt when the hot summer weather comes you will take the opportunity of paying him a visit afloat off Imminghams, Father & Mother.

Poor old Dan, the Dog Dealer seems very unlucky with his little Crouches. I wonder where they all vanish to. Did he succeed in finishing the kitchen clock case. If so what is it like & how does it look? Very nice I expect, as I these old shellbacks are very handy when both afloat & ashore. I expect he would put his friend Cotton through it, if he were going for his sea voyage on the mariners launch.

So Essex has left Mr Wilsons. I wonder whether Frank thinks of sending him to the City of London School.

You might include the following in the next parcel please:-

- (1) Tooth brush (nice & stiff)
- (2) Refill for pocket lamp
- (3) Tin of peppermints
- (4) Tube of toothpaste

(5) Some small hob nails (about 100) Those I put in my boots the last Sunday afternoon I was at home, have served their purpose excellently, & as the boots are very comfortable, I want to drive some more in before the soles are worn out, & this makes them last longer.

Dont think from this that I cant get a new pair of boots, it is only because the ones I have at present are so comfortable. It seems much easier to get new things out here than at Farnborough, & up to the present have had a new cap, new cardigan, new pair of brushes, new pair of putties, new pair of socks, & hope to get a new pair of braces before long.

What a pity it seems that Archie did not accept the post offered him in England, as it isnt as if he had not bee out here already, & to be in charge of a trench mortar battery cant be exactly a rest cure.

Glad to hear that my account at the post office & my little contribution towards the War Loan are getting on so regularly, & that the grand total is so rapidly approaching the £100.

I hope Tom is still going strong & that his appetite is still like mine. Has his face healed up any more since last I saw him?

For the last fortnight we have been having quite summerlike weather, & there has actually been dust on the French roads, & not a sign of any mud anywhere, but the day before yesterday we had a heavy thunderstorm, which seems to have unsettled the weather, for it has been raining nearly all today. Still we mustnt grumble after the fine weather weve been having lately, & some rain now will do the crops a

rare lot of good.

Pleased to hear from Dick that Bertie Cull is making munitions & that his brother is getting on so well at No.1.A.D.

Well I believe I have at last come to the end of my news, expect that am still in tent on the downs (not a dug-out as you appear to think K) & that am still keeping very fit & hope you are all doing likewise.

Needless to say will let you have another green envelope letter at the earliest opportunity, W.P. (work permitting), & meanwhile will keep up a regular stream of field post cards.

Very best love to you all,

John.

P.S. Have at last seen one of the redoubtable Tanks.

P.S.S. I hope you are all exercising the most scrupulous care in keeping the doors & windows properly fastened.

My Dear Everybody,

As usual am starting this long letter in good time, so that you will not have to wait an undue length of time for it, so here goes.

The little chap has at last arrived at the conclusion that he is too fond of collecting things, on active service at least, so the other day he had a fine bonfire of all the letters which he had received since landing in France, & which up till then he had carefully put aside after reading them. They however accumulated so rapidly & formed such a bulky parcel, that he had at last to admit to himself it was no longer advisable to keep these historic (at least they would have been about 1950) epistles, in which was related what the Moorcroft family thought and did in the Great War, and so they vanished in smoke.

I can imagine Susie, after reading this heaving a great sigh of relief, but why she should do so entirely passes my understanding, for her letters are always amongst the best, & her writing is all that could be desired.

Glad to hear the shellbacks commander & his wife are such nice people, Father. With a decent chap in command the worthy tar should certainly have a fine time ahead of him now that the fine weather has at last come. As you remark, Father, even Epsom air must have seemed mild & enervating to him after that of the North Sea, but all the same I don't suppose he minded the change much.

Yes, we have been having some fine weather out here also, & all the trees and plant life are coming along wonderfully. In fact we seem to have jumped right from the winter to the summer in one bound, & I must say it is a splendid change for the better.

The parcel, containing the plumheavies & cake, the receipt of which I believe I have already acknowledged, came to hand in excellent condition, & of course fully appreciated. The plumheavies as usual were very nice & the cake was fine. Thanks very much indeed!

Am not exactly surprised to hear that the Old Tar stick to the Morning Post when he came up on leave, as ever since he gave up on the Daily Graphic, which he thought used to depict too many people, who had done or were doing, or ought to do their respective bits, he has been very fond of it, & the mere trifle that the price has been doubled would certainly not stop him having it, & after all you can't blame him, for the wretched Daily Mail now costs a penny.

The clippers have had quite a field-day today, as I have had two "customers" & in turn have had a trim up myself, much to everyone's satisfaction, as the day is warm & long hair does not tend to have a cooling effect. They still clip excellently, in fact I think they improve as we become more expert.

*Of course this was written before I thought of my old vests.

Thanks very much for putting the ditch straight for me Father. You must have stuck to it to finish that & the front in one day, but then to a man whos motto is nil desperandum it is not an impossible feat, as you have indeed proved.

As regards wants, if you can call them by such a name, you might enclose another cake of Wrights Coal Tar in the next parcel, please. Peppermints I believe I mentioned in my last epistle, so doubtless some are already on their way, but another box would not do any harm, as they keep excellently. *Nothing in the old clo line just at present thanks as the squadron keeps our wants in that direction excellently supplied. In the next parcel however, you might also enclose my little tube of dental silk, which I think you will find in my top right hand drawer, or else in one of the little drawers of the dressing table.

Of pecuniary aid I am in no need at present, but thanks very much for asking all the same.

Glad to hear the top garden is looking so well, Susie, & that there is such a good show for fruit on all the Damson trees, & currant & gooseberry bushes, but especially pleased to hear about my little damson tree which is evidently now well rooted. Which of the large two gooseberry bushes is dead? The one nearer the house or the one nearer the top shed? Thanks very much for giving Father a hand with the ditch, Susie, & for planting the garden buttercups in it. I dont wonder at Father doing away with the other little damson tree, for it has been an eyesore for a long time past. The La France should certainly get on better now you have moved it out of the shade of the apple and chestnut trees.

Peter II has certainly found a splendid home at Ruscoes & the rabbitty little dog should certainly get fatter now he has gone to live with his great aunts the "Bears".

Was very glad to get a letter from you at last, Agnes. Really you must be more regular in future, for I feel sure you could always find time for a letter, even if it is only a short one, once a week in spite of your manifold parochial activities, & you can always rest assured that they will be fully appreciated by the little chap.

Was not surprised to hear that Aunt Sue, Dick & K were all so loath to depart, for Farmhurst, & Farmhurst in the spring especially takes a lot of beating.

I hope you and cousin Elizabeth, Agnes, enjoyed the meeting for Missions to Seamen, which would have been worth attending if only to see Sir John Jellicoe.

Glad to hear your costume is such a success, Agnes & hope the shoes are equally so, especially after the increase in price. Of course leather is leather nowadays, so if they are comfortable & wear well, they are certainly worth the extra.

So the mothers have been more appreciative of their tea lately, and have started a war savings scheme, have they? How much have they saved up to date, do you know?

No you did not tell me about Mr Hosk,s nephew before. Rather lucky don,t you think?

You are all a little bit late with the spring cleaning this year arn,t you? Still I suppose the bad weather has had something to do with that & after all now that the shed is done, you wont be long. Pleased to hear you are thinking of doing the bank shortly Agnes. There is no sign of a wasps nest I suppose this year?

Am so sorry to hear about Miss Dunham & no doubt you do all miss her very much.

You will no doubt be pleased to hear I have at last written to Dr Chilton & the Admiral, so that is a good thing done. Must certainly drop uncle Wilson a line shortly too, Susie, as you suggest.

Thanks very much, K, for the three Gosses, I am looking forward to seeing them very much indeed, as I have certainly not got them. Yes I have got one of Cambridge, thanks & its a good job too, or I should have you spending your money on me, in fact as it is am afraid you have spent too much already. Really you must be more careful of it please. Glad you liked the cathedral & had such a fine climb up the tower. What kind of view did you get from the top? Many thanks for yet another present, i.e. the post cards.

I notice it is recorded in the Epsom Herald, that Mr Wog has again been re-elected chairman of the Epsom Council. From this it would appear he must be a far better councillor than a plumber or he would long ago have come off the council, as quickly as his paint does from window frames etc. No doubt his hands & the way he uses them to explain & emphasise his points-which he doubtless is pleased to think he does in a very statesmanlike manner-have had a great deal to do with his success as the greatest of local leading lights.

Well, K, with all this talk of educational reorganisation & improvement in the financial outlook of the teaching profession as a whole, I should think a highly gifted B.A., like yourself, ought to stand a good chance of securing a really satisfactory post after the war; & if it is near home, so much the better.

23.5.17 Another move this time taking two days, though if we had been pressed for time we might have done it in one. As it was however we took our time & so thoroughly enjoyed ourselves as the weather could not have been better.

We travelled by motor lorry & pulled up about 4 p.m. on the first day just outside a nice little country village. Here we pitched our tents on a nice green under some trees. Some of us had omelettes & coffee for supper, which was really excellent, at a neighbouring house. The old dame was a nice old thing & the charge very moderate. Hence to the tents & a good nights rest. Up at 6a.m. next morning & after striking tents, packed them and our blankets & waterproof sheets aboard the lorries once more. We then made a hearty breakfast of some more of those excellent omelettes & coffee.

As we did not start till after 9.a.m I had time to go to a farm close at hand & have my water bottle, which already contained a "wee drappee" of rum, filled up with lovely fresh milk, straight from the cow, that is at least just after it had been strained. This mixture as you can doubtless imagine, proved a very refreshing & staying drink throughout the day which turned out to be very warm and dusty. Well we reached our destination about 5pm. and soon got things fixed up & now are nicely straight & settled down once again, after our very enjoyable journey through the fine country.

Although we hear so much of "fair France"- & it certainly is a fine country now that the spring or rather summer and fine weather have properly set in- I cannot see that it is one little bit better than England, in fact give me good old England any day especially that part of it round Epsom, Dorking & Guilford.

Where we are of course I must not say, except of course that we are still in a tent amidst very pleasant surroundings. I think however I can safely say, without giving away any fact of military importance, that we are nearer home than we were, but with that terribly interesting & enlightening fact am afraid you must rest content.

Owing to the move letters etc. were slightly delayed, but am very glad to say that today (23rd May), I have received the mail dated 14.5.17 & that lovely parcel sent on the 12th, instant, containing sardines, gingerbread, toffee, chocolate, acid drops & bulls eyes under the guise of butter scotch. Thanks very much indeed.

Glad to hear Peter has been behaving himself so well lately & has been keeping the hares so busy. Am afraid however he stands no chance of ever catching them, but all the same if he seems only half as fast as a hare it will keep him fit. How he has grown & improved since that photo-for which by the way many thanks- was taken. There he is only a little puppy, & the little chap certainly appears somewhat thinner than he does now.

Very glad to hear that young Mead is quite safe after all, but what an exciting experience he must have had, before reaching Colombo.

I hope Aunt Lena & Uncle Dick had a nice time when they came down to see you, but there I am sure they did. Thanks very much for their kind wishes. Please ditto repeto from me to the other Dick, Father or when you write to Elsie, Agnes.

Glad to hear about the vicars promotion, I dont suppose he will have such a rough time as he appears to have been having, now that he is attached to a corps. I suppose you dont know which corps it is by any chance?

Talking of being attached reminds me to tell you that we are now attached to 42nd Squadron R.F.C., & to the 2nd Wing. This however will not alter my present address in the slightest degree, that is to say it is still 42nd H.A.G., R.G.A. etc.

Am afraid you will have to wait a bit for the tickling, Father, but all the same I quite appreciate the point about the latter being also the "head" man.

Please thank Aunt Sue for the lovely slab of chocolate the next time you are writing Agnes please.

Elsie is certainly very plucky carrying on with the hospital work in spite of her illness, but I hope to hear before long that she is much better. I suppose it could not be helped about the letter, Susie, so long as they enjoyed it, I suppose it was all right.

I hope the spring cleaning has come to a succesful conclusion by the time this letter arrives, & am rather glad to hear you are not having any papering done this year, as when you do I hope to be home to assist in choosing the papers & to see that old Gow does not make a botch of our room this time.

Well I had come to the end of my news & thought of concluding this epistle, when suddenly the mail arrived & this is what it contained for me:-

Date received	From whom	Date sent.
24.5.17	Letter from Dr Chilton	15.5.17
"	" " Mother	16.5.17
"	" " Admiral Inglefield	17.5.17
"	" " K	17.5.17
"	" " K	19.5.17
"	" " Dick	20.5.17
"	" " K	21.5.17
"	" " Dr Chilton	21.5.17
"	" " The Mail	21.5.17
"	" " Cassells Mag the Parish Mag., 2 London Opinions, 2 John Bulls, & 2 Epsom Heralds from home.	
"	" " from K	16.5.17
"	" " P.O. 18.5.17 from K	21.5.17

For all of which very many thanks.

So you see that your letters only take three days to reach me where I am now, & I expect mine will do the return journey with equal rapidity.

Am enclosing Dr Chilterns two letters in this envelope & will send the Admirals in my next, but this is what he says:-

Dear Mr Moorcroft,

I am much obliged for your interesting letter of the 10th May, & am glad that you are getting on so well in the Army.

I sincerely trust that you may come safely through all the

fighting, and that we may have the pleasure of seeing you back again at Lloyds before very long.

With best wishes,
Sincerely yours,
E F Inglefield

But of course the letter I was most glad to receive was from you, Mother, and needless to say was very glad to hear you were so pleased with my little present, & hope you have bought yourself something really nice with it by now.

I should have liked to have seen our Cape Cousin, but as you remark I may run across him out here, as, if I am anywhere near him, I ought not to have much difficulty in picking out such a tremendous chap. Am afraid you have got a little mixed K, unless an Australian cousin has turned up as well. In his letter the worthy sal Epsomial remarks:- "I wonder which bed he slept in Jackie, yours or mine", but I see from the mail he had yours Agnes, & even that I dont suppose was any too big. Am glad you have got his height marked up in the kitchen, Susie, so that we can see how much shorter I am than he is. I expect it will be about 3 inches as I dont think I have grown upwards since coming out here though my belt may certainly be a bit tighter. Am looking forward to the arrival of his photograph very much indeed. He must be a fine chap. What did the Bartlettos think of him. What an exciting time he must have had in East Africa! You might send me full details about him please if you have them, that is his regt., rank, number, etc, etc, & then I shall stan a little more chance of finding him. I expect young Peter thought it was I, thats why he was so good.

I should be very much obliged if you would send me out my two old thin vests in the next parcel please. On no account buy new ones as the old ones will do splendidly, & only send two, but there, I believe there are only two left. A box of large tintacks would also come in very useful.

I see you have started sending London Opinion from home, although K already sends it to me, so it is only being wasted.

Well I think I will close now, although there is plenty more to comment upon after all those letters, but will have to leave that till my next long one, which I will try & get on with at once, although we are still very busy.

Hoping you are all still in the very best of health, like myself.

Very best love to you all

John.

P.S. Many thanks, K, for Punch, London Opinion & P Mag sent 23.5.17, received today.

Finished and posted 26.5.17

My dear Everybody,

Whit Monday, and a really glorious day again. Truly the splendid weather at Whitsuntide has more than made up for the wretched weather at Easter. The garden must be looking fine with all the fruit trees & bushes in full bloom; & the K.Ks (I suppose you call them Kitcheners of Khartoum now) & other bulbs at their best. As Sycamore Secundus is paying his usual rolling attention to the carrots, you will no doubt have another excellent crop again this year. Be sure you thin them however very carefully. Perhaps you will be good enough to do this Susie, please. Thanks very much for the enclosed piece of sweet briar and forget-me-not, which still smell very sweet and nice. Am glad to hear you have moved the little chestnut tree into the corner by the shed, & that it and the roses are looking so well. It was hard luck about the violas advertised in the Graphic, but I don't think you'll find we can beat our friends in Farringdon Road for them, Father. Thanks for attending to the hop, Agnes. Please keep it well in hand throughout the summer. So we are going to have fine show of flags in the front garden this year at last-I am glad.

Tull is quite getting the shell-back touch in his letters. Did he tell you about the little affair at Bridlington the other day? In case he did not here it is in the mariners own words:-

"We put into Bridlington the other day and as I went for a stroll along the jetty, a very officious old man rushed up to me and said- in a very domineering voice- " What are these little boats for?" I gave him an oily smile- and said, just as though I was talking to a small boy. "Oh, a lot of funny things-to frighten the Germans" He went away disgusted- and I smiled more". And so did the little chap when he read about it, as I should imagine you all are doing now.

So Charlie Dan,1 is in France, Susie. But what about my Punches? Are they at Punch,s place, or at Dan,1s or they at home now? If they are not at home, & if there seems no chance of getting them bound, you might ask Dan,1s for them back, please, before they lose them altogether. And please make sure that all the numbers are there too, as I should not like to lose any of them.

Very glad to hear you have recovered your fountain pens, K. It was very decent of the man to bring them back, but all the same I should not worry about 2/6 seeming too small a reward. I should say it was just about right. Sorry to hear that you had to pay 2d on my last long letter, but if you enjoy them as much as you say, & as much as I enjoy your short regular ones, I don,t suppose you minded much. Of course I don,t mind Public Opinion being a day or two late, especially as you have now got Griff's copy to read. Thanks for Griff,s regt etc Will certainly look out for him. Have read the article on Russia & think it very interesting and enlightening. Glad you enjoyed your visit to Cambridge so much. What was the round church like inside? What did the last piece of natural fin at Wicken look like, & what kind are the two shells you are bringing home for me?

I should be very much obliged if in the future you would send the Epsom Herald & John Bull once a week please, for as it is now by sending them one a fortnight, one week I get nothing & the next week I get a double dose, which is rather too much to read all at once.

Glad to hear the Vicar has been enjoying some well earned leave. I expect it does seem rather funny having him back at church again, after having become so accustomed to Mr Hoste & his ways.

Well Agnes are the bells ringing again yet? Am beginning to think you are leaving them till peace is declared, so that you can celebrate the event by joyful peals on the front, dining room, drawing room, bedroom, & oh yes the bathroom bells.

10.6.17 How the time flies! Have been tremendously busy just lately, so it has faster than ever, & there has been none to spare for this epistle. But doubtless you have guessed this for yourselves after reading of the great events of the last day or two. It seems almost though Lord Esher were right in his very optimistic prophecy.

Glad to hear that you have had such a delightful little holiday at Brighton, Maw & Paw. You must have had a fine time on the pier with the automatics by all accounts, Mother. I suppose you also got your money back on the "Try your Strength" machine, Father. Have you stayed with the old lady at 85 before? She certainly must be an interesting old dame if she calls Esther, aged 68, a good girl, & should think she might have some dates. Should like to have seen the equine cat, but all the same would rather have our good old carrot roller. That reminds me to say that I hope Toms appetite is still as good as ever. Is his face any better, Susie?

Was delighted to get Herberts photo. What a fine looking chap he is. He certainly has a very nice nose Susie, but then he looks nice altogether. I want to see him more than ever now I have seen his photo. I wonder what ever Fred could have been thinking about when he gave you that peculiar warning about being careful, Father.

Am afraid my French has not improved much, since coming out here, K, as we do not come in contact with the natives much & when we do we usually find that they know more about English than we do about French, that is at least the natives where we are now, & where we were at first there were practically none.

Unfortunately, Father, there are no weighing machines about these parts, so am afraid I cannot tell you about my weight, but all the same I should not think it had fallen off at all since leaving England, though I should be somewhat surprized to find it was over 16 stone.

Am fairly brown but I expect the shellback would make me look quite pale beside his brine-imbued tan.

That,s a good remark of the Irishmans Father, about "The longer you are away the shorter you have got to stop", & hits off the present situation to a nicety.

What a shame about the Poplars in Halls being cut right back again! Really I should remind old Barrack that the first three (or is

it four?) are ours, Father, & that he has no right to cut them about at his pleasure, unless of course he likes to buy them back from you. Am afraid the two remaining poplars in the front will require careful watching in the near future after what he said about knowing how to kill them, & should not be surprized if we were supplied with a quantity of free firewood about Christmas time.

So you've got a nice little brass bolt on the side gate now. I suppose you had to buy one, Father, though if you had looked in a box in the top shed you would have found one (there may be two), that I bought some time ago from the dear old Jew. Not that it matters of course, but I thought I would just mention it, as economy seems to be all the rage now. All you want now on the side gate is a nice little bell-electric of course-, which I will fix up at the first opportunity. I think, however Agnes, that I should have a shot at the other bells, if I were you, as it should not be much trouble to set them right again.

You were quite right in not polishing the coin cabinet, Agnes, as it has so many alterations and improvements to be made to it, that it is not worth the trouble of doing it now. When it is quite finished however, I shall have it thoroughly French-polished all over, when it should look splendid & be worth at least £20.- £20 will be cheap for it judging by the price of coin cabinets on the whole-when it is finished. Of course it will take along time & a lot of trouble, but it can and will be done, all being well on the conclusion of hostilities.

Thanks very much indeed for your very nice parcel, K. Am sorry to say that all the eggs were cracked, & two had suffered in freshness in consequence, but the other two were quite all right & went down very well for supper the night of their arrival. I don,t think however I should repeat the experiment, as we can sometimes buy eggs out here from the farms. The pencil is fine (am using it now) & the macaroons & chocolate as usual very nice. The chocolate cake and lemon cheese were a nice change indeed, and the fruit drops quite refreshing, as also the spearmint. I dont think I should trouble about lemonade or sherbert powders, as I believe water is the best thirst quencher, but thanks very much all the same.

And now I must thank you very much mother, for all the lovely parcels which keep arriving so regularly. I notice you have ceased sending me cocoa, milk & things like that, which is an excellent idea as one really has no need for them this hot weather. Thanks very much Agnes for the box of U all NO mints, which were very nice. Many thanks also for box of curiously strong peppermints, which as usual are very nice, only nearly have run out again, so could do with another box, please. Likewise the toothpaste which goes very quickly. Eucryl is the name. The toothbrush is a little beauty; quite the best I have ever had. The pencils were just the kind I wanted as were also the hobnails, with which I have made an excellent job of my boots, & which should make them last at least three months longer than they otherwise would have done. Needless to say the box of assorted biscuits, the macaroons and toffee were as usual full appreciated & of course the refill for the lamp was just what I required. The next parcel contained, fine big cake, 3 plumheavies, 2 rice cakes, tin of

humbugs, pot of honey & box of tinctures, all of which were very nice indeed including the tinctures, which have come in very useful. The last parcel to arrive contained my two old vests, which serve their purpose excellently, 1 cake of Wrights Coal Tar Soap (thanks very much again, Agnes; it came at the right moment, as had just come to the end of my last cake), 1 tube of dental floss (very useful indeed). rice cakes, ginger biscuits, tin of pineapple chunks, toffee, acidulated drops & last but not least the redoubtable, long-looked-forward-to, and very-difficult-to-obtain Nutrolate Crispits. Thanks very much once more.

Glad to hear you all like the Crispits, & expect you would like them still more in the cold weather, when you don't get that slightly oily taste that you do in the very hot weather.

Have had a few thunderstorms out here, but they cannot have been half as bad as the ones you have been having at home lately. For one thing they don't seem to last anything like the time the English ones do.

So Charlie Dan, 1 is in the Flying Corps; which section do you know? And poor old Cook & the man from Halls are both in the Army. How is Cooper getting on with his exemptions? I hope he gets it.

Glad to hear that it is the gooseberry bush nearest the house which has died, for that one was all old wood, whereas the one nearest the shed is all new wood, & if I mistake not, is looking very well husky this year. Sorry to hear the onions have got the maggot this year but hope the pepper will have beneficial results. I should like to see the "little" snowball tree now; it must be a sight. So glad to hear of your secular success with the rose trees Father. I think if you had thought a little more about all that thinking and thought you would have thought that these thoughts would make me start thinking thoughts about thought thinking, don't you think so?

What do you think of the two new orders? I mean of course the Order of the British Empire, & the order of the Companions of Honour. If sending beautifully packed parcels to the little chap had anything to do with it, Mother, you certainly ought to be Dame Agnes, I'll write to the King about it, shall I?

Another excellent idea is the doing away with all the German titles & restricting the use of the titles Prince & Princess. Have you noticed in the recent photographs of King George, how very much more pleased he looks with himself? I suppose it is because he feels that now he has nothing whatever to do with Germany, so no wonder he looks relieved!

Am afraid I have not acknowledged the receipt of all the books sent me lately, so am enclosing a complete list of everything received during the last month or so. In future will acknowledge books and papers on field cards, by filling in date, on which they were sent, against space allotted to telegrams, so when you receive a field card from saying "I have received your telegram dated 19.6.17" you will know I have received the packet of books & papers sent by you on the 19th June 1917.

Thanks very much for "little Erbs" address, Father. Am afraid however am not quite clear as to what all the letters mean. I suppose

the first part is 2nd Reg South African Infantry, but what does I.B.D stand for?

Fancy Mr Rust taking cousin Elizabeth for Mrs M. I don,t wonder at her being amused. Well, what do you think of Mr Rust, & what by the way does C.M. mean? Sorry to hear Mr Hoste is leaving you so soon now, especially as Elsie is so struck with him, but there, you have certainly had him a nice long time.

Thanks very much for the little coal bucket Father . Am looking forward to seeing it immensely. How big is it?

Hope you enjoyed your brief visit home, K, & glad you found Peter II looking so well.

So Cooper has got two months extension & at the end of that time has to go. Hard luck! I suppose old milky is over 41 isnt he?

Sorry to say, K, I did not read the Scarlet Pimpernel story, as I unfortunatley left the Penny Mag, behind at the 42nd H.A.G.

I understand the mariner could not quite finish the the clock-case, but I expect it is so nearly finished you can tell me how it looks & what wood it is made of.

I expect you do enjoy the old shellbacks fish, quite a treat after some of Elphicks & fishy Marshalls. Glad to hear that Lambs tail so fully appreciates it.

You might send me a pair of pants out in the next parcel please. I have one summer pair out here already, so please send one pair only, & they may as well be the oldest pair. You might also enclose a tape measure, please. You will find one, I think in one of the little drawers of the dressing table.

Thanks very much for cuttings,K, which were very interesting, especially the one about the Eton boys dress, the origins of which I did not know before reading your cutting. I think it an excellent idea of yours, K, to underline the outstanding features in Public Opinion, which then I shall stand no chance of missing, though as a rule, that is when time permits, I read Public Opinion from cover to cover. Of course I read the article on open, or rather in this case closed, windows & expect you enjoyed it immensely.

So Major Hogan has been home on leave again, Father. Sorry you were unable to tell him where I was, but I suppose he didn,t tell you where he was, for if so pass the information along to me, please, & then I shall be able to judge as to wether I stand any chance of meeting him or not.

Am looking forward to seeing those three little Gosses,K, also the Indian god, which I understand has at last arrived. If you can spare the time, Susie, you might make a rough sketch of it, so that I can get a good idea of what size it is & what it is like.

Hope you enjoyed your little trip up town to see K off, Mother, but it was rather a pity you had to wait till aftrre noon for a train back. If I only known you were going & that you would have some time to spare, I would have asked you to call on the dear old Jew for me to see whether he had got any dates. I feel sure you would get on with the dear old chap, once you knew him, & he would have been only too delighted to let you go into the window to have a look round.

I should think by the time this letter arrives you would have had some rain, as we have had quite a lot over here lately, so there ought after all to be prospects of a good crop of raspberries. I hope the dry weather hasn't affected the damsons at all, for it is just about time we had a record year. If we do I suppose you will bottle as many as you can, Mother, & make jam of the rest. Poor old "fishy" Marshall & his beans, but he was a bit of a chump to put so much manure and stuff into the ground, especially with beans! I should like to see the roses in all their glory. They are better this year than they have ever been before aren't they? I hope Miss Llewellyn, whom I remember quite well, liked the ones you took her & that she is getting better now. The La France is usually rather late in blooming I believe.

So Peter II is to continue his travels. I hope he will find the Cambridge air suit him as well as his native Surrey air appears to do.

Shall we have another cat, Mother? If so, please inform K & she will doubtless send home one of Topsy's kittens. After due consideration, I think, in order to keep it out of Peter I's way & so as not to make Tom jealous, we had better keep this one in the cockloft. We'll call him Tile because he will be so near the roof, like the cock that was called Robinson, because he crew so.

Am sorry to hear that the price of beer is going up as steadily as its quality is going down, Father. It is rather a pity that, in the absence of Tullius, numismaticus expertus- this I think you must admit beats your "So. Africanus Giganticus" in point of "Latin" at least-you cannot carry on the old crown trade, but am afraid they also have gone up in price. Still if you happen to be down Charing Cross way you might drop in & ask Uncle Baldwinus the lowest price of which he could do half a dozen, mentioning my name of course, as he used to let me have them at a specially reduced rate, namely six for a sovereign.

Give him my kind regards while you are there & that might further tend to reduce the price. You might also find out the exact market value of £2 pieces, for I rather expect they are still going up.

I hope you haven't had any more experiences of air raids, Father. Did the last one do much damage to the City. I suppose the old grasshopper is still on top of the Royal Exchange.

Thanks very much for your interesting epistle written at the canteen, Agnes, also for the now very regular weekly ones. Sorry to hear my little present arrived three days late. Apparently registered letters take longer to get home than the ordinary ones, for if this one had taken the usual time it would have reached you on the 16th inst. Still next time I shall know better. This is where Susie begins to smile, I expect. I think I should buy something with it at once, Agnes, but of course, if you can think of nothing to buy, put it in the War Loan.

It was very good of you to make Lloyds £1.15.3 up to £2.12s, Mother, but hardly the way to yourself a really nice present from me. What did you buy, & are you quite sure there is nothing else you

want? If so please see my banker.

I hope you've been keeping old Forster well in hand lately, Mother. Really he is getting too pompous & high handed, almost as bad as Cotton in fact, he also will be needing a sea voyage before long. Talking of "Epsoms" second-only-to-Gow, reminds me to ask whether any of you have ever seen that wight, Cotton, threading his way along Threadneedle St with some black financial project in his eye? Needless almost to say it is my opinion that your answer will be in the negative on most of these points. At the same time I should like to point out that though these things may not be real, they would doubtless give the wary "Thread" the needle if he caste his eye upon them.

Well, Agnes, what is the latest addition to the Lee family like? I trust both he and his mother are going on well.

Glad to hear good old Toms appetite remains so good & that his new-for is coming along so nicely. Is his face any better?

Well, K, I really don,t know which way I would like the silk wound, whether singly or in sixes, so am afraid must leave it to you to do it the way you think makes it look the best. How are you getting on with all your dear little pupils, especially the one with the voice like a girls and the bovine countenance?

One can scarcely credit Mrs Fenn thinking I was home again when she saw Father with the little chap from the Cape, can one? There is certainly a strong resemblance between him and your mother, Mother, as when I first saw his photo he struck me as quite familiar, & then when I read your letter, Susie, I realized it was Grandmother that he was so much like. I really think we must take a trip out to the Cape with him, Mother, after the war to see all the rest of the family.

So glad you have seen Uncle Wilson, Mother & that he is so delighted about our recent little success at Messines. Which reminds me to ask wether like Lloyd George, you heard the mine go up at 3.30 am on the morning of the 7th inst. If you did you were luckier than I was for although quite near to it (comparatively speaking of course) I did not hear a sound but slept peacefully while the biggest mine, that the world has ever heard of, was exploded. All of which proves conclusively, I think you will agree with me, that the little chap sleeps pretty soundly. The other chap from Lloyds was roused by it & thought for a moment there had been an earthquake, but perhaps his bed was a bit loose on its legs. Sorry to say I havent written to Uncle yet, but after what you told him Mother, I must buck up & get it done.

Many thanks for last lovely parcel (containing seed cake, plumheavies, milk chocolate (from Agnes), etc.ect. which as usual reached me quite safely & in excellent condition, thanks to the splendid way in which it was packed & the noble hand in which it was addressed.

Sorry to hear you did not win the £6 pig, or something as good K, but better luck next time. Will see what I can do in the Bullet Competition in John Bull, but am afraid it wont come to much.

Have read the vicars sermon in the Herald & think it rather good.

You might enclose a little bulb for my electric torch in the next parcel, please, as I have unfortunately broken the one I had.

And now I suppose you would all like to know how the 52nd H.A.G. compares with the 42nd. Well very well indeed! In the first place the food is quite as good, in fact I think it is a trifle better, as we get a little more variety & on very hot days have dinner at 8 p.m. instead of 12.30pm, having just a light lunch in the middle of the day. Then in place of a tent we now have an Armstrong Hut which, measuring 16ft. by 7ft., is very much roomier. Two fine beds, two chairs & a jolly little table make up the furniture. Then we have a telephone laid on by which, if need be, we can communicate with any point on the British front, so you see we are quite up-to-date & very comfortable. The paper boy calls every morning & brings a day-old Daily Express, for which he charges 2d but which is worth it under the circumstances I think. The prospect from the open door is charming in the extreme. It consists of a lot of rather ramshackle old farm buldings & sheds with a fine green field in front in which are a number of chickens & three dear little calves, which give us constant amusement with their youthful frolics.

Well, that I think is just about all, so will now close this very elongated epistle.

Hoping you are all, like me, still in the very best of health,

Best love,
John.

P.S. Am enclosing Easter card you sent me, as it will keep better at home than out here.

Finished and posted 28.6.17