

Letters Home –The Hon. Capt. William Finland YMCA Canadian Expeditionary Force

The Hon. Capt. William Finland served with the YMCA during the First World War and was attached to the 16th Battalion....something like a Temporary Chaplain if you like. After the war, he became a minister with the United Church and served in both Toronto and Niagara Falls (Rev. Dr. William Finland).

His letters here, some written from Sandling Camp, some written from The Field, Rectory Lane, Saltwood, are transcribed below.

Exhibition Park YMCA

Monday (Mar./Apr.1915)

My dear Mother :

Got your card yesterday morning, and I was very glad to hear from you. We were beginning to wonder if you had forgotten to go home, but our minds were set at ease when Sadie told us that Lizzie had received her dress alright. Sadie came out to the grounds on Thursday afternoon and took in the sights. Then I went up to the girls' room with her and Jemima came with us downtown and we had a big dinner at one of the fashionable restaurants. I think it was rather a new experience for Sadie, the music, singing, French names on the menu cards and finger bowls. She felt very prim at first, but it was not long before she forgot herself and was really enjoying the meal, company and everything. Well, Sadie is a good girl anyway.

Things are rather quiet around the camp. The warm weather makes it so that the men go out into the city more when off duty, so that we do not see quite so much of them. On Sat about 1000 of them went to Hamilton on the boat and had a big time. Last night I had service in the mumps hospital. There are only about 14 in at present but they are nearly all better and we had a very interesting service. Two of the boys were Varsity men, one of them, Harold Swan, whose father was at one time Methodist minister at Auburn. He is a splendid fellow.

Yesterday morning I went to church with Mary & Jemima, and then we had dinner together. Mary Mck and Miss Whalley came over to their room in the afternoon. Milton Tyndal also dropped in and a couple more of Mary's girl friends so that there was quite a room full. I felt like pulling the couch out, but I didn't like to. And that old rocking chair-----I declare I would put it in the fireplace. The girls are getting anxious about their exams which begin tomorrow. Milton Tyndal finishes at the same day as they do. He is going home for the summer. He is doing very well at the College and deserves great deal of credit.

We have received no definite word about when we will move but things look as tho' we will go before long. Some expect to go this week, but we may not. The men are getting very anxious to go.

I suppose seeding will soon be starting. We have had some fine days but it is cooler today. Rained quite a lot yesterday. The school birds will be away again. Mary got a school at Raven which is about 7 or 8 miles from Caroline. So she knows some of the people and will feel quite at home.

Now I must close and go to dinner. There is a man waiting on me. Write soon.

Very lovingly,

Will

"Ex" Y.M.C.A. Apr 27 (1915)

Dear Father :

Just got your letter a few minutes ago and was glad to get it and to hear that things are going so well. I hardly know what has happened that you have two matched teams. Are you starting some sort of Model Farm? I don't know

what happened to the horse down here that you took such an interest in. I go down to those stables quite frequently now and get a horse to ride. It is good to have a "stand in" with some of the officers and men.

We are having it very warm here these days. On Sun. we had quite a thunderstorm and rain. The grass, leaves and flowers are coming along at a great rate.

Last Sat afternoon I had quite a surprise. John Fingland of Brampton rang me up about noon and we spent the afternoon till 5pm together. I think he made a special trip in to see me and we had a great time. He is 73 years of age, hale and hearty and weighs a little over 200. His son, Lochie I think his name is, was with him, 35 years old and also weighs over 200. They are a fine looking pair. The son is a traveller for boots & shoes out of the city. The old gentleman reminds me quite a lot of Uncle Harry. He is a great talker and full of fun, enjoys a joke about as well as Uncle Harry. He is quite a Presbyterian and apparently a great church man. But he is a Tory. He belongs to the Enterprise people, in fact it is his two nephews who live there. But if you have written him he will likely have replied by this time giving you all the family tree. I think he was born in this country. He is very much interested in the family name. I asked him to take a run up to Huron and see you, and I think he will. He had a boot and shoe business in Brampton but has retired. He has this one son and a daughter, Josie, I think her name is. So you had better get the greys and the creans polished up for him for I think he will land in on you. And I know you will enjoy having him. I am still in Toronto and expect to be here for a week yet anyway. Expect this afternoon to march out with "my" Battalion to Long Branch and perhaps spend the night there. I say "my" because I am now definitely attached to the 20th Batt'n. It consists of about 1100 men and officers and I think they are a pretty decent lot. I like the old Colonel Allan fine.

Saw the girls on Sun. They are fine. Mary has got along well with her exams.

Sorry to hear of Tomm Riddel's accident. That was a horrible thing in this morning's paper at Cal Varcoe's.

Canadians at front getting it pretty hard. I knew a couple of the officers.

Good Bye,

Will

West Sandling, Shorncliffe

20 Batt., July 22, 1915

Dear Father:

Your letter reached me the day before yesterday, and you may rest assured that it was mighty welcome. Canadian mail is always received with gusto in the camp, arriving about twice a week. When it is known that the mail has come in from Canada, and the bugle is sounded announcing the fact, the battalion mail carrier is nearly mobbed, and is severely sworn at by those whose wives and sweet hearts have let pass the opportunity to drop into R.L. Borden's little red box that "scrap of paper" which means more to many of us soldiers here than the "scrap" which Belgium set such a value upon. I don't know how we shall exist if it should ever happen that our line of communication should be cut off.

I suppose you watch the papers pretty closely to glean any news regarding the Second Canadian Division, expecting any day that we have been transported to the Continent. We are still at the Shorncliffe Camp, and according to rumor, Kitchener has said that we will be here till after Sept 1st, and then proceed to the front for a winter campaign. Most of the men are quite content to stay here, for they know that when they reach the front life is very uncertain, and this state of mind is fostered by the reports of the wounded who have returned to the hospitals here, sometimes by train loads. They say "Stay in England just as long as you can, live as long as possible". I only know of one of those who wants to return to the trenches when he is able; they have had their fill. One sees some rather pitiful sights among the different hospitals around here, men with all sorts of bandages, or without an arm or leg or eye; but quite happy, congratulating themselves that they escaped so luckily. The 1st contingent Canadians have made a great name for themselves and the land of the maple, with the result that the man wearing the Canadian buttons and badges is in favor everywhere. It is interesting to see how many of the best homes are being converted into hospitals; at one near here there are at present 800 Canadians, and tents and huts are being erected to accommodate 1200 more. The permanent nature of these and all military structures leads me to believe that in the

opinion of the authorities the war will be a long, hard one. People here take the war a great deal more seriously than those in Canada.

I suppose that around home in the peaceful and prosperous county of Huron there are very few indications that the greatest war in history is on. It is different here where no matter which way you turn, you are brought face to face with facts that make one realize we are very near the storm centre. Soldiers are seen at every turn, between 20 and 30 thousand Canadian troops being encamped in the country around here. They are in the field and along the highways, on foot, on horseback, on bicycles, in motor cars. Dispatch riders on motorcycles with a blue and white band on the arm and wearing their goggles, with the right of way over all traffic go tearing along the roads at a tremendous speed, turning the numerous curves of an English road at a pace which makes one hold the breath. The army ambulance with its large red cross painted on the side and top, fly from camp to hospital and back again. Huge motor trucks rumble along bearing their great loads of baled hay, tons of meat, hundreds of loaves of bread, etc. From 5.20 am till 10 pm every little while is heard the bugle call, or the music of a brass band, or the skirl of the bagpipes--locally known as the "snake charmers". Some days we can hear the distant booming of large cannon, while nearer at hand is the sharp crack of rifles or the patter of machine guns as practice is carried out at the ranges. Through the country, red flags flutter in the wind indicating that those particular fields are "out of bounds" for soldiers or military tactics. These and the grain fields are the only places where the troops, troop of the soldier's heavy boot is not heard. Fortunately most of the country around here is under grass, and the thousands of sheep are growing accustomed to the sight of the men in the grass-colored uniforms crossing their ancient pastureage, running a few yards then falling flat upon the ground or creeping along under cover of the hedges or the brow of a hill, disappearing at last in the cover of a thick green woods. On one of the high hills near here are the ramparts of a very old stronghold, claims to be a fortified position held by Julius Caesar 50 years before Christ. At the foot of this hill about 3000 of our men are encamped. What strange sights and warlike operations that old hill has looked upon in all the intervening centuries, for being the nearest point to the continent and within sight of the white cliffs of Calais, many of the invaders who landed upon English soil and the expeditions of warlike kings with their warrior knights going forth to do battle in France, Spain or the Netherlands, passed this way. One wonders if twenty centuries from now it will still be looking upon scenes of bloodshed and sorrow.

We live here in more or less danger of an air raid by Zeppelins. By day we trust to our airships and aeroplanes that fly about like great bumble bees to protect us, but they do not move over at night owing to the fact that any aircraft seen after dark is to be fired upon. At night we trust to darkness. Our windows in camp are all covered with thick heavy blinds to prevent the light from shining through. In private homes and in the towns, all blinds must be closed under penalty of a fine. Similarly, the blinds in motorbusses and railway coaches are kept down. The streets are all in darkness except for a faint blue light at dangerous corners. Everywhere are evidences of war. Trenches are constructed on various hills, while socks filled with straw are suspended for bayonet practice. As we look out over the English channel we can see the English ships busy with their usual tasks of fishing or carrying merchandise, with here and there a destroyer rushing about on the eternal vigilance day and night for German mines and submarines. We occasionally hear of some being taken but the reports are never published. In fact we have reason to believe that a great deal of war news does not pass the censor. We are all mighty glad that the Welsh coal strike has ended for it threatened to be a very serious thing. Last Sat. two of Canada's most notable men paid us a visit, R.L. Borden and "Sam" Hughes. There were about 20,000 at the review. It was a fine sight to see so many men gathered together; Canada's physically best. It looked good to see the great forest of rifles, and when they "fixed bayonets" the flash of the polished steel in the bright sunlight was such as would strike terror into a foe and inspire a friend with confidence.

The training is becoming pretty stiff. The other day our brigade (about 4000men) marched to Ashford and back, a total distance of about twenty miles, in full marching order -- ie. carrying about 35 pounds. The day was a little warm and a good many men had to fall out by the way. Next day, there were about 280 men on the sick list with sore feet. Such a march also weeds out the "booze artists". Under the strenuous training and strict discipline one often hears the remark "Oh, why did I leave my happy home?" or that proverbial expression, with bitter sarcasm, "Your King and country need you".

There are several ex-pupils of Goderich Collegiate Institute scattered through the camps around here.

We are having a sort of a reunion and dinner on Sat evening of this week.

Life on the whole is enjoyable so far. Only we all wish the war were over or even the end in sight.

Sandling, July 11 '15

Dear Flora:--

It has been a long time since I have heard from you, but I suppose you are able to say that it is a long time since you heard from me. Now that you and Frank are at home I will be able to combine the letters I write into family.

Tomorrow will be 12th of July. Ask Alice if she remembers the time she and I---somebody else---went to Blyth.

Have had a very good day today. We had church parade at 8.30am in the open air. For the sermon we lay down on the grass forming a bank of soldiers on three sides of the preacher. After that service we had a communion service, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist all together, taken by a Methodist chaplain. After dinner I was very much surprised when one of the men I knew best at Varsity, Tom Gordon of Owen Sound, walked in on me. We had a great chat. He has just arrived. This makes a lot of Varsity men here now. About 4.30pm one of them and I went to a home about a mile from here, the Barlow estate, where they have the most beautiful lawns and gardens, and are very anxious to do all they can for Canadian soldiers. I wish you could see the armful of the finest flowers I brought home to my room--not a bouquet but literally an armful. We got there just in time for tea. Then I went to church with some of them, the Anglican Church and very high at that. After church, we had supper, then some music and then came home. They seem to be pretty wealthy, but are exceptionally fine people.

On Sat afternoon we had a Brigade Sports Day. (There are about 4400 men in a brigade.) I had the nerve to run in the Officers' 100 yds. I won one heat but lost out in the finals so I got no prize. There are some splendid athletes in the Brigade.

Last week went very quickly. I got an agreeable surprise on Tues to learn that Bill MacQueen had arrived in a camp about six miles from here, and I immediately went over to see him. (You know who he is, the fellow from Brucefield who went to New York with me and came back to Toronto with me). On Thurs. we went out on field tactics with the battalion and spent the night in the open. It rained a lot in the afternoon and evening, about the first rain since we got here, and it wasn't extra nice sleeping out. But I had my blankets and sleeping bag which is quite waterproof so that I was quite comfortable sleeping on the ground under the trees in spite of the rain. My sleeping outfit ought to be good for I paid \$25.00 for it. I like to go out with men in this way. Expect to spend two nights out this week.

Later :--

It is night again. Have had rather a busy day. Took a walk over to Dibgate Camp about three miles east of here. It is a very pleasant walk through the fields, through a deep ravine with fern as thick I could hardly get thru it, and some places high as my shoulders--brake they call it here. I am sure Mother would like to see it. And then to hear the skylark singing and see it soaring--it's a bonnie bird--(bonnie, a word quite often heard here). The aeroplanes were very busy today, I saw about a dozen, and a dirigible. I am sending you a snap of the latter. The airships go to a great height, and travel very fast, but make a loud hum which can be heard a great distance. They look very much like the insect we call the "Darning Needle". One today took a dip almost straight downward, and it certainly made a quick high dive, rather thrilling to watch it.

I am having quite a proposition on my hands here in trying to fit up a large room in the same building as the "wet canteen", ie. one in which beer is sold. There is so much red tape to be gone through--one man refers you on to another, etc. But I think we can make the grade yet in spite of difficulties. It will perhaps give the men somewhere else to go besides to the bar. I wish I had only a little more money for fitting, such as good magazines, some good books, (I already have about 100 of these but they are second rate ones), a few good pictures, and decorations, some games, writing material, pens, etc. A limited supply of these I can secure from the Y.M.C.A. funds, but they are limited. I have been wondering if the Auburn Church would like to do something of a very practical and patriotic nature in this way. Any surplus funds I have in this way I can use to excellent advantage both now and later on in hospital work. One of our "Y" men here has a man in his hometown, Hamilton, who supplies him with about \$80.00 a

month to be used whatever way is thought for the good of the cause. I could use some money to good advantage too, in such ways as helping a fellow out with a postage stamp or two, handing him a magazine or book, especially if he is in the hospital, buying a few chocolate bars--things that always help to get the good will of the men upon which to a large degree depends the success of my work. Some of them, short of money too before payday, come around, and if I am able to lend a shilling or two it gives me a leverage on the man. So you see there are a good many ways in which I could use the money all of which would bring grist to my mill, the cause which I represent. In some such ways as this, those at home can strengthen the hands of those at the front. We expect to be here for perhaps a month yet, perhaps longer. The men are not as anxious to leave here as they were to get away from Toronto, and I have a good many of them saying that they would like to be back in Toronto. But it looks as tho' a great many of them will never see that city again.

I am getting an extra sole put on my boots. They are nearly new but these roads are so hard and we have so much walking to do. Am also getting them well hobnailed with an iron circle around the heel. I have a big notion to get a wheel as it would help me in my work a great deal and save train fares which count up for that is the way we get to the hospital.

Now I must close and get to bed. Hope all are well and happy at home. I am feeling fine and enjoying the work.

Goodbye.

Lovingly,

Will

Feb 16 1916

"The Canadian Scottish."

16th Battalion,

B.E.F. France.

Dear Mother :

Middle of Feb! What kind of weather are you having in Huron? I suppose it will be cold and blustery. Today it is blowing a gale--was raining too but has stopped that. I guess our big tent will be blown down at our other place where we expect to return in a few days, about six miles from here. It is 90 feet long and 30 feet wide and almost 12 feet high and so offers quite a surface to the wind. I have left a good man in charge of it but of course he can't beat the elements. There is one thing though and that is that it isn't very cold. Haven't yet seen any snow and a little ice one night--wouldn't mind if it were a little colder. However I am weathering the winter fine, feel fit as a fiddle, with my old time appetite and lots of good grub. Also am liking my work more and more all the time. I am getting a little acquainted here now and these are a fine bunch of men, the best I have yet struck. I count myself mighty lucky to get attached to the 16th Battalion.

Today was to have been our Battalion Sports Day but it rained so that they have been postponed. I put quite a bit of work in this too. Friday our Brigade Sports. I am giving the moving pictures about every night at a different billet.

Have some great times. At all the places the men put up a program besides. Sometimes this is very funny.

Sometimes the officers buy the men a barrel of beer and then they get especially funny. Last Sun night this was the case and the program ran from 7.30 to 11 pm in a barn. This may seem rather rough to you especially on Sunday. But I ask you not to judge these things too harshly. We live in a different world here, an abnormal one. The water is bad, life is hard and monotonous, and I don't blame a man for drinking a little of this light French beer. One of the officers with whom I am billeted is a great whiskey artist but he is one of the most decent men I have met for a long time.

This sort of life seems to draw men very close together. A lot of roughness and toughness appears on the outside but they have made the great sacrifice and are ready to make the greatest of which the Master paid "Greater love hath no more than this that a man lay down his life for his friends"; and it seems to thee God won't hold much against them for their faults and failings--I know I wouldn't if I were God, and He is a whole lot better than I am. So when I hear their swearing and filthy language I am disposed to be very lenient in my judgement of them.

I have given you a rough sketch of the farm buildings where we are staying at present. They are all built more or less on this plan. They are very industrious people and their land is very productive. I wish you could see their fine

horses.

Now must close.

Love to all. Hope everybody is well and happy as I am.

Much love,

Will

Feb. 22, 1916.

Dear Mother :

Snow today! The first I have seen in France. Pretty nearly enough to make the ground white. But it may be gone in the morning. It made one think of Canada and many were the remarks passed to that effect. It has been moving day, too. We are now back at our old billets and location after a three week holiday or "rest" as it was called, though the men were worked harder than in the trenches, drilling, etc., and there is quite a discussion as to where the "rest" came in. But it was a change from the male-like life in the dug-outs amongst the rats. Fortunate being I am that I have a comfortable spot in a French house behind the line. Here I am tonight in the spot where I first landed in France--or rather Belgium. It is much more comfortable here, and I don't have to dress with the French women of the house hovering around. I think I have lost all my spirit of modesty now--back to Nature; and the principle life I guess. Every second or third morning a barrel of beer was carried in before I got up. Partly my own fault for I never got up till between 8 and 9. But I hardly ever got to bed till nearly midnight, often later. I ran a moving picture show practically every night, Sunday included; each night is a different place. It was very interesting work and the men seemed to enjoy it so much. It was good too, the way they would take hold and put a program, too. We would set up our machine (about the size of a sewing machine without the frame) in the barn putting it on a small table, or a large box, once on a piano, etc., with the sheet hanging on the wall. Then I would run off two or three reels while the men lay around and smoked, and passed witty remarks when the pictures were funny. At some of the places the officers supplied beer and the men were quite happy and talkative. Then they would sing songs, mostly sentimental.

Sometimes they were pretty rough but I have got now so that it takes a lot to shock me. Then we put on some more pictures then some more singing, etc. Then there was always a vote of thanks given for me or three hearty cheers. I was always well repaid to see how the men enjoyed themselves. Then I would have a two or three mile walk past half a dozen sentries, who always called out, "Halt, who goes there?". A couple of nights ago, on my way home I heard a Zeppelin passing over, and one night I heard bombs dropping on a town a few miles away. Last Sunday, while on church parade we heard a German aeroplane up amongst the clouds. Then a couple of ours went up after it. The clouds partly dispersed and it was very interesting to see them chasing each other among the clouds, like playing hide and seek. Part of the time we could hear their machine guns going. But the Huns got away. We see a good many of their aeroplanes, and of course a large number of our own. We shoot at them and the Germans at ours but I never saw a hit yet. They fly so high.

Well, Mother, I noticed what you say about Frank enlisting. I hardly know what to say. When I think of you and the rest of the family I think it is rather tough to see 3 of your 4 sons away to the war. But when I think of the great cause and the principles at stake, I am mighty proud of my two young brothers. When I told one of the other officers here what had happened at home he said, "Your Mother ought to be a proud woman." Then he quoted a couple of lines, "I could not love thee so much
Loved I not honour more."

I thought it was very appropriate.

So I don't think you need to worry about us. I don't know of anything prouder or more noble to do at the present moment. No one can ever speak of your boys as shirkers or slackers. It looks to me for better that we should be engaged in this great struggle for righteousness than leading lives that might be questionable or shameful. Then you would have just cause for worry and anxiety. I think the action of Frank and Murray shows a larger mind a keen interest in the things really worthwhile. So many Canadians measure things in terms of dollars and cents but when one gets a vision of the great principles of humanity that for transcend these it seems to me he has something of the

mind of the Master. It is a direct application of His own words, "Greater love hath no more than this, that a man be willing to risk his life for his friends". So I think, my dear Mother, you have good reason to rejoice and be glad; eventhough that rejoicing is tinged with a little sadness.

It would have been fine if they were together in the same battalion. In fact I think that could be arranged yet for it is a rule in the army that a man can always claim his brother so that they may be together. And if the time should ever come -- I hardly think it will for I hope the war will be over then -- that they come over to this country, I would be glad to ask for them for this battalion so that we can all be together.

Saw Benson Case and Roswell Rutherford yesterday; had supper with them.

Now I must close. I am enjoying my work more and more all the time, in fact I think I never enjoyed any work quite as well. Feeling tip-top, in fact, getting fat. If ever you feel like sending along another cake it would be very acceptable.

Love to all.

Your loving son,

Will

16 th Battalion

The Canadian Scottish

B.E.F.

Dear Folks at Home:

I have very little to write about this time as there has been scarcely anything new or interesting lately. You see life here acquires a sort of sameness that in many ways is very good, but not for news. We expect to move from this part of the line in a few days, we spend a few days in the rest billets where we were a few weeks ago then take up positions in the line north of here some little distance. This Battalion has been in this part for about seven months and are glad of a change, in spite of the fact that the new area is said to be not quite so good as this. Of course at present we are in a splendid part of the line.

Spring is coming, in fact, is almost here. The farmers are busy on the land. It is interesting to watch them with their beautiful big horses, but they move very slowly. The land must be very fertile and there is no waste. The people, where we are billeted at present, have a gasoline engine which they grind grain, churn, separate milk, etc. So you see they are pretty to date in some things.

It is surprising, too, to see how near they stay to the danger zone. They don't seem to realize the danger or else they have nowhere to go. Of course, I suppose these are their ancestral homes and they hate to give them up. Of course, the Germans do not seem to fire on them so much as they do on towns and villages for in the latter, they suspect troops and guns are placed. We are in sight of two villages into which they drop shells almost everyday. they are indeed "deserted villages".

Leave has started again. I will be due for mine in about three weeks, but I don't know whether I can get away that soon or not. I am looking forward to that trip to Scotland. Also to seeing the people in England who were so good to me.

I had a letter from Murray a few days ago. He seems to be fine. We were over two weeks here without getting any Canadian mail.

Suppose Mother will be home again. Hope that you had a good time in Galt.

Am feeling fine. Still getting fatter.

Lovingly yours,

Will.

Belgium, Apr. 12, 1916.

My dear Mother :

I want to write you a letter today. It is raining, April shower. It sounds so plainly on the roof of our tent. Another officer, Capt Tait, is sitting beside me keeping the fire going. Yesterday, it was raining too. But for two weeks before that we had lovely weather. We generally like fine weather under ordinary circumstances, but it means more

fighting and more shells, since cloudy weather is not good for aeroplane and balloon observation. So we hardly know whether to wish for fine days or bad ones.

I was glad to get your long letter telling of your trip to Galt. You had a good long time to get around them all. It is good to see old faces and old scenes. Did Mrs. Archer do any laughing? It will be spring in Hullett now too, and everything will look fresh and green.

Things are growing a little more active here. We have moved to a new part of the line where there is more doing. Some days the artillery is very active. I stood and watched a German attack on our trenches from about ten miles away. It was awful to see the dirt, etc, flying up into the air and the shrapnel breaking above. At times in certain parts of the battle front, the smoke and dirt were so thick that it looked like a cloud or mist. The noise was tremendous. We moved along and in about five minutes shrapnel burst over where we had been standing. The 27th, 29th, and 31st battalions received that storm of shells that lasted about an hour. They had taken some German trenches and about 100 prisoners and this was the Hun coming back. I saw about sixty prisoners in a bunch one day. They were well dressed and looked well fed. Some of them were mere boys, but in all respects compared favorably with Kitchener's Army over here. One of them, a sergeant, could speak English, and Capt Best had a chat with him. He had come from Boston, had fought 18 months and considered he had done his duty for his country. He had no regrets that he was a prisoner, and was glad to get off with his life. Most of the bunch seemed quite glad of their situation.

The noise of the big guns around our camp is sometimes very great. They are hidden away behind hedges, in dugouts, etc, not visible to the enemy aeroplanes. One never knows when they will start up, day or night, but we get used to the sound so that we frequently sleep through a night bombardment and never hear it.

At present, the 16th Battalion is back for an 8 day rest in a nice French town about 5 miles from here. I go in occasionally and there saw a real girl, nicely dressed, so different from the ordinary Belgian type. I almost stopped and stared at her.

We have quite a large Y.M.C.A. plant here. There is a hut about 30x100 and a tent 30x90. In the tent is the canteen ie. groceries and hot coffee or tea. The hut is used for reading, Writing, games (indoor) and concerts or entertainment in the evenings. It is generally well filled as we have about 2000 men around it with no where else to go to. We have a brass band that comes there and plays in the evenings, also a fife and drum band. Quite frequently we put on our moving pictures. Sunday evenings we have a sing song service with a short religious address. In this way, we try to have something for the men every night. On the night when the battalion comes out of the trenches, which has to be done after dark, we keep the canteen open till 2 or 3 am so that the men, tired out, can get a bite to eat and a hot drink. We have a staff of 5 or 6 men. We turn over a little over 1000 francs a day ie. \$200. Our big problem is to get supplies.

I am liking the work very well. Am feeling splendid, never felt more fit in fact. I have also taken charge of a small brouch place not very far behind the line. It can only be operated at night as it is in view of the enemy. There we have a coffee stand for hot drinks and a bite to eat, with a couple of men in charge who go there at dusk and leave before daylight. It is in the cellar of a ruined house.

All this keeps me pretty busy as you may suppose. Capt Tait, another "Y" officer is staying with me for a little till things open up. I think I will take my leave now that he is here to look after this job. I am getting anxious to see good old England again. Mrs Barlow writes saying they are anxiously waiting for me to come to my "English home". I am also looking forward to my trip to Scotland. Those people are very good to me sending me a parcel every little while. I may go on leave in about a week.

Goodbye for this time.

With much love,

Will

May 2, 1916

My dear Mother:--

A beautiful Spring day in the beginning of May makes one think of old Huron County where the birds will be singing, the grain and grass growing, flowers blooming, blossoms and bees. It would be good to be there. But of course the

sun shines here, the grass and grain grow, the skylark sings beautifully. Wild flowers seem very scarce, perhaps because all the ground is under cultivation. See some nice gardens and garden plants. Saw a magnificent bank of forget-me-knots the other day in the yard of a magnificent building now in ruins. A big shell hole was right beside the bank of blooming flowers.

In your last letter you asked some questions that I wouldn't be allowed to answer. But I can. You ask if the farmers have left. Well those close to the trenches have left, ie. there are none for a couple or three miles back, but it is a marvel how close some of them stay with shells going beyond them. They take awful chances. Of course they are making big money out of the soldiers selling hot coffee, eggs, homemade French beer, etc. Sometimes they get it-- one of the houses near here was struck one morning and one girl was killed, another wounded. Most of the able bodied and young men are gone and women and girls do much of the farm work, saw a couple of them spreading manure yesterday.

Are there any people in towns and villages? That depends on how close they are to the German line. Those within range of the German guns are pretty well battered to pieces, for they make a good place to put soldiers and hide big guns. The other day I was through what was once quite a large city, probably the size of Guelph. We watched to see if we could one undamaged house but we saw not one. The place is completely deserted by civilians. A few hundred soldiers are there, living in cellars and fortified houses. Some big guns are likely hidden there too. The Germans must have put thousands and thousands of shells there--they have shelled it for over a year now. Close to us here is a village where there are still some civilians and the place has been shelled quite a bit. It is marvellous how long they stick.

You ask how far I am from the trenches. Of course we move around a good deal. At present about 3 miles distant is the location of our hut and tent. We have a branch about a mile from the line, but it can be seen by the enemy in day time so we keep away from it then and carry on the selling of hot drinks and provisions only at night. My work doesn't take me into the trenches.

Socks:-- Send all you can get your hands on and I can either use them myself or find some who are very glad to receive them.

I have made a great number of friends both amongst the officers and men. There is something in this life that seems to draw us close together. Last night I had supper with 20th Battalion, my old unit. It was good to see them. Lt. "Ted" Doheny, the fellow with whom I roomed at Sandling was killed (29-4-16) of days ago.

I am liking my work well and think I am doing a piece of work that means much to the men. I have six men working for me at present, one is from South Africa, one a French Canadian, two are R. Catholics. All of them are fine fellows. Four are suffering from nerves and shell shock. One man goes into town, about five miles everyday for supplies. Today we turned over 1500 francs (\$300) worth of goods to the men. We had a brass band concert in our hut in the afternoon and moving pictures at night.

I am expecting to get into the kilt any time now that the warm weather has come.

Also expect to go on leave in a few days--am looking forward to it, too. Leave and the war is about all we talk about out here.

Now I must close.

Am feeling splendid.

Lovingly, your son,

Will

May 12, 1916

My dear Mother :--

Your letter of Apr 18 reached here about May 8; that was making pretty fair time. Sometimes mail is longer than that in coming from Canada but that is about the usual time. Of course we are always glad when the Canadian mail comes in which is about every 4 days or once a week.

I was sorry to hear that you have had such a long attack of the grippe. It must have got a real hold of you. I hope that

you are feeling better now, and that the warm Spring weather will bring you back your usual good health. I think I can sympathize with you as I am having a touch of it myself just now. Haven't been able to do much for several days but lie around, so I came back to sort of a rest place behind the line, an hour's run by rail. They kept me in bed there a couple of days but I am up again.

You will likely have Murray at home now. Keep him there as long and as often as you can. It looks as though this war is going to last at least a year longer and he need to worry to get over here. What did you say Frank is studying for, a sergeant or lieutenant? I hope it is the latter as there is a world of difference in the life out here. If my advice counted for anything I would advise Murray to do the same thing even supposing it takes him six months longer to get over here.

So you have decided to leave the old farm. I suppose it is but natural that Colin should want to get married, it is the way of the world. I am sorry that you weren't able to make a deal with Jack Robertson. That would have left you amongst your old friends and neighbors. Or if you had gone to Auburn--but to Landesboro. But I shouldn't say that for you can make yourselves comfortable in Landesboro. But for any sake don't go and buy or live in one of the many tumble down houses that characterize that tumble-down place. You deserve and can fill the best house in the place. And get it! Take all the enjoyment you can out of the rest of your days, and one of the things that will contribute most to your happiness will be a nice home, one where there can be lots of grass and garden and flowers--that's what I, too, want to see when I go home after this bleak, devastating war. Don't let Dad side-track you into some barren spot, get one nearly like Heaven as possible or make it so. Get a Ford, if you feel like, or keep a good horse and buggy.

Now I must close. Best love to all. Write often letting me know how things go. Keep well, and cheerful.

Very lovingly, your son Will

June 6, 1916

My dear Mother :

When I got home last night, or rather this morning from a long tromp, your letter was lying on the table waiting for me; and I was glad to get it too. I was anxious to hear how you are, am sorry that you having such an attack of that grippe. I got over my little trouble in 10 days and am feeling fine again. When the warm weather comes you will soon pick up again. Just take things easy for the summer and get back to your old self again--that is what I want to see you again. Now that you are getting away from the strenuous work of the farm you will be able to rejuvenate (that's a big word but it expresses well what I want to say). You say in your letter that you expect to go to Landesboro. Get a good house, one with a nice garden, get Dad to keep a nice horse and buggy or a Ford--and live. Don't put off all your enjoyment to a future world, get as much as you can out of life in this--that's what God wants us to do, it seems to me. Then your home will be a centre for cheerfulness--one of the greatest things in the world. You have denied yourself a great deal in your married life. I can see things a little differently now than I used to be able to do. You have worked hard, very hard, you have raised a big family that perhaps wasn't the easiest in the world. You have given over many pleasures for them and they didn't know it--some, if not all, of us see it now. You have given us a home and a home training that has been ideal. You made no parade of your love for us but we felt its touch on every side--the "still small voice" kind. You have placed before us high ideals of life--and now I think you are getting part of your reward in that three of your boys are ready to "leave father and mother, houses and lands for Christ's sake and the Kingdom of God". You should be the proudest woman in Hullett that your sons place first the interests of country, honor and liberty, and are willing to risk their lives for it--I take it that this is exactly what the Master did. You didn't realize that you occupy in that respect a situation like that of the Virgin Mary--well, to us you do. Just now "the sword is being pierced through your spirit" (Just as it was said of Her) but I think that in spite of that you are happier than if your three soldiers had been shirkers instead. So through this war, which I hope will soon be over, you will be happy, and after it is over you will be happier still, and we shall try to do more than we have done in the past to add to that happiness.

I am sorry in some ways that you are leaving the old home. But it looks best under the circumstances. It is quite natural that Colin should want to get married--that is the way things go in this world. He will be likely a happier man-

-I suppose that is the meaning of marriage and married life. And from my slight acquaintance with her I think he is getting a good wife. It will seem rather funny to go back to the old farm and not find you there, but it's not the house that makes the home and home will be wherever you are.

Things are getting pretty lively here now. There has been a big Hun attack and there have been considerable losses; I have lost many of my friends both killed and wounded. But our Canadian men, though they lost some ground in the first attack are holding now and hope to retake lost ground soon. There is sort of feeling that this may be the beginning of the end and that peace may soon be accomplished.

Now I must close. Don't worry about me. I am in a safe position. Get well soon.

Love to all the family and especially to you, my dear Mother.

Will

June 11, 1916

Dear Mother : --

How are you feeling now? I hope that you are back to your old robust health. You ought to be having some good warm weather now, and you will be able to get around outside more, see the chickens, chase them out of the garden, etc. The garden and country ought to be looking pretty fine now. I wish you could see this country and its wealth of production. It is exceptionally fertile. Of course for a couple of miles or more back from the line it is deserted and fields are running wild. It seems a shame to see the good houses and fine farm buildings a mass of ruins as the result of shell fire. The farmer is still close by our hut here, a couple of hundred yards. They stick as long as they can. The Canadian soldiers haven't much use for the average Belgian. They are rather a low down set of people. They charge exorbitant prices for eggs and such like. In fact, they will be rich for the rest of their lives when this war is over.

I am feeling splendid now. Things are going well with our Y.M.C.A. I have now a splendid staff of about eight men. Most of them are suffering from shell shock and similar ailments that unfit them for the trenches, but they can do this work alright. Just at present the 16th Battalion is camped about 3 miles from here and I am going over there now. They expect to move soon into the line and they leave with me money, letters to post and register, names of friends to write to if anything happens to them, etc, etc.

If you can steer any socks this way I can rid of them to good advantage. I have lost most of my clothes, sent them to be washed and the sheenies have given it to someone else or are keeping it saying, "No compre English" (ie. don't understand English). It was an exceptionally big washing, in fact I haven't a change of shirts, etc, but everything was getting pretty well worn so maybe I can get some new stuff now. Saw several of the 20 th Battalion men yesterday. I was tickled to see them and they to see me.

Now I must close and get away on the wheel. Don't be anxious if you don't hear from me for a few days or regularly. Love and best wishes to all.

(Met a grandson of Croll's yesterday.)

Faithfully yours,

Will

June 24, 1916

My dear Mother:--

Wonder where you are this morning and what you are doing? I suppose you have moved to your new home in Landesboro and are busing fixing it up. I hope that you are feeling better by this time. You have had a long spell of sickness, at least quite a long attack for you. But I am hoping that the warm summer weather will see you back in your usual good form. I guess from what you said in your last letter that Jemima may be with you yet. I am rather anxiously looking forward to your next letter to get the account of the wedding. I received their wedding invitation a week ago. Rather strange that I received Colin's and Geo. Oliver's on the same mail. I was to have been best man at Geo's wedding; we were such chums at College. And then I had come to know his prospective wife so well, too; as she was the bosom friend of Miss McDiarmind, in fact it was through them that I first met her. Well Geo. has a fine

wife, one of the choicest, noblest women that I ever met, a graduate of Varsity. She waited for Geo. all through his years of sickness and apparent defeat until she waited longer than the proverbial seven years. By this time I guess they will be settled in their new home in Elrose, Sask., somewhere close to Rosetown. A good many of my old classmates at College are now married. Expect that Abbie Swanson may be amongst the next, and he has a very fine girl picked out, too. He is preaching for a call now, and a mighty good pastor he will make, too. He may not be a great preacher but he has a great big heart and I think that is the greatest thing.

How this reminiscing (good word, that) takes me back to a different world from this. I am recalled to myself by a band going past playing to a company of men who trudge wearily along in the rain under their heavy packs. We have seen some big things in the last month. There have been about 1400 casualties amongst the Canadians. In my battalion there were over 250. Of course many of these are but slightly wounded and will soon come back. But it is hard to think of the many who will never return, of the hundreds that sleep their last sleep rolled up in their blankets. You see the Germans put on a terrible fierce cannonade that practically obliterated the Canadian front line held by the 3rd Division. Then they attacked and broke through. British reinforcements were rushed up to support the Canadians in their attempt to take back the lost ground. A few battalions of the 1st Division, who have been tried in many battles were detailed to make the charge. Amongst these were 15th and 16th; two Battalions of the brigade to which I am attached, and amongst whom I had made a lot of friends. I shall never forget the night they went in to make the charge. It was Sunday, I had spent the day amongst the men getting them to write a letter or card to loved ones, for I knew--and they knew that for many it would be their last message on Earth. Many of them gave me the addresses of friends to whom to write "if anything happened", as they put it. Many left their money and little valuables with me. Since then it has been my sad task to send many of these to friends in Canada and the old country. It is hard to write to friends and tell them of the death in battle of relatives. So many write back and ask for particulars, and often the particulars are too horrible to give. I lost some of the best friends that I had amongst the officers. One man, a sergeant, came to me on Sat. and asked me if I could get a priest for him and a few other Roman Catholics for they wanted to make their confessions before going into the battle. I jumped on my bicycle and after a couple of unsuccessful attempts located one and he came. You should have seen how thankful that man was, and as he passed where I was standing when the battalion marched in to make the charge; his face was lit up with a peace and a courage that feared not any foe, not even the last enemy, Death. He received a very serious wound in the shoulder, but was sent out to the hospital still living and I am trusting that he may pull through. One thing we have learned out here is how paltry are the differences that separate us in religion. They simply don't count. I feel that after the war I shall be able to worship with Catholics in their churches almost as well as with Presbyterians in theirs, the particular denomination to which I have belonged all my life; and God bless every influence that lends to break down the petty barriers that separate denominations. I wish that those religious strife makers were out here facing the highly perfected guns and the un-nerving snipers of a relentless foe that we sometimes fear is going to beat us. When you are standing under the deadly fire of the German foe and you know not what a few minutes may bring forth you thank Heaven for the comrades about you and it doesn't matter a hoot whether they are Protestant, Catholics, or Jew. And maybe it doesn't make any difference to the Almighty either. Away with such narrowness! We can't afford to waste our energies over these things when there are still strongholds of evil to be broken down. It is nice summer weather here now. The farmers are cutting their hay. The crops look splendid. It is such a fine farming country.

We hear rumours that the war will be over before many months. Some of the German prisoners the Canadians took the other day say so too, but Germany will have beaten the Allies. They say there is little danger from scarcity of food in Germany and I am inclined to believe them. They were well fed and well clothed. Many of the ones the 16th took were mere boys and they did splendid job of carrying out our wounded. One of the 13th Battalion men was charging a German with his bayonet and when he got close he recognized the man who used to work at the bench next to him in Montreal. They both dropped their rifles and shook hands and then he brought the man in a prisoner. Now I must close. Remember me to all inquiring friends. I find so little time to write. And yet I see so much more that I would like to do.

Love to you, To Father and to all; Joy and content in the new home, a nice place.

Your loving son,

Will

Belgium, June 25, '16

My dear Mother:--

I started to write you a long letter yesterday but it grew so long that I thought I might patch it up and make it a little more presentable. Then I think I will send it to Jemima and have her make several copies and send them to people I ought to write to and can't find the time except for a card. I feel as tho' I could pretty nearly write a book on the subject now; in fact on various subjects. We have had some very exciting times lately and I have had many close friends killed and wounded. But fortunately things have quietened down here again. I wish the whole thing were over and ended. The weather is fine now and the country looks beautiful. Crops are splendid. I have a bicycle now for myself and can get a horse to ride when I want it. Things are going well in Y.M.C.A. line now.

I hope that you are feeling better now. I remember the house. I am feeling fine now, but have not got away on my leave yet.

Love to all.

Will

July 6, 1916

Dear Mother:--

I wonder how you are enjoying life in your new home. You will be established there now, and have torn down this partition and put it up there, and changed your mind several times. Of course that was always your privilege and Dad always gave in--and of course he always will. I hope that you are feeling well again, and no doubt you do feel better now that the Strawberry Festival of 1st of July is over at Landesboro. Was it as big affair this year as ever? I had a strawberry feed one night I was invited out to supper. They were good too. But perhaps since you are having a cold backward spring the berries will be later. There seems to be very little fruit grown by the people in this country. Land seems too scarce and expensive for such luxuries.

I am feeling splendid now. I haven't been weighed for a long time but imagine I go about 160 pounds. This climate seems to agree with me pretty well. The weather is cool, in fact I don't believe it ever gets real hot. At nights it grows quite cool. There is a great deal of rain, and I suppose that partly accounts for the wonderful growth. The fields of grain are a sight to see now. Hop fields are very thick with the vines trained up wires about 15 to 20 feet from the ground.

The war in our area has been quiet this last two weeks. All the attention seems to be south of here. Of course we put on some little "shows" (as they are called) to try and fool the Germans. Our battalions are pretty well up to strength again, filled up by drafts from England.

I have not been able to get my leave yet as all leave is now cancelled but I am first on the list to go when it starts up again. I would like to get away now too for a few days.

Will Ross of whom you have heard me speaking has arrived here as Y.M.C.A. Sec. I was glad to see him and we have spent some pleasant hours together since then.

I had quite a chat today with a man named Robinson in 10th Battalion who used to live with Bob Miller of Summerhill. He was a Home boy that Miller adopted and kept for a time, and is now doing well. I had a letter yesterday announcing the marriage of Nelson and Lizzie. Also had a letter from Adelaide and a large parcel of socks from Kirkwall.

Will Proudfoot, son of MPP, is here

now as officer in 15th Battalion. I see quite a bit of him.

Now I must close--there is so little news here. We are all hoping that the war may soon end now.

Love to all.

Will

PS Your cake arrived the day after Jem's both in excellent condition. Mighty glad to get them. Gave the sox to Harry Rosenberg, one of the men who works for me.

July 18, 1916

Dear Father:--

Your two letters to ----- the one representing the old expression of "words without actions", in that it mentioned a draft without containing it ; the other with the draft. I was glad to get it and have written Robt Snell thanking them for it. I don't know what some of them will think when I told them I had bought with it some cigarettes along with other things. Tobacco in one form or another, cigarettes chiefly, seems to be the soldiers' best friend. Since coming out here I have rather changed my attitude towards smoking---this is a great place to change one's opinions. That is one thing you will notice I think when the soldiers return to Canada. When the men are under a great nervous strain they seem to find satisfaction in a smoke.

I was glad to get your account of "our" new home in Landesboro. You seem to like it pretty well---except that trap door, I had a good laugh when I read that. I can see now why you never liked to bed the pigs in the pig pen with the straw that was above them but carried it from the shed. O, the good old days---I wouldn't mind if I were back bedding the pigs again!

And you have taken the front seat for the family pew. How will you work in your usual Sunday morning snooze now? Your life in Landesboro will be a new experience. I hope that you can put a little new life into that spot which sadly needs some stimulant. Especially around the church is something needed. The worst with a small place like that is that you are apt to get a second or third rate minister. If that is what you have now it needs some one to jack him up. One way to do that is to discuss his sermons. You know you don't have to take all a preacher says from the pulpit as being the oracle of God for some of the most damnable rot ever palmed off on unsuspecting public comes from the pulpit. I wish more people would think over that and discuss things with their preacher. When a minister knows that there are some in his congregation who are going to pull him up on his statements he will put more study, zeal and energy into his sermons. That is one thing you can do for Landedboro. I had a long talk last night with Thurlow Fraser (Capt & Chaplain) Presby'n minister from Owen Sound. We settled the problems of Knox College, the Assembly and the Church at large. It is his opinion that the Assembly with its appointments is being run largely by a set of self-righteous men who are more or less dead heads, but smooth talkers with the result that wire pullers get places of importance and our church is suffering as a result. Here I am discussing all this sitting here within sound of the guns and the bagpipes, both of which are at it. Things at the Canad'n front have been comparatively quiet this last month. Of course there are casualties every day but they are small compared with the push down south of us. Almost every day I see the names of one or more in the lists whom I know. We are held more or less in suspense by being told that there may be doings here before long, too. But we are living in hopes that the 1st Division, to which I now belong, will go back for a rest. It is really coming to them now that other divisions are coming over. It is a source of great joy to us to see the success to the south. We have various speculations about eating Xmas dinner at home, etc, etc.

I have moved half of my plant to a new camp about 2 1/2 miles from where I was before farther back from the line, with the result that now I have three places to look after. The new place is about a couple of miles from a town of about 20,000 that is being shelled a good deal lately. Many of the people have fled from it. About five miles from here is another and larger town with not a single civilian living in it, all battered to pieces, with soldiers living in the cellars and strongholds. One of our other Secretaries has a Y.M.C.A. there in a cellar.

Am feeling splendid, never better. Lots of sport, lots to eat and drink, lots of good friends, lots of work---what else can one ask for?

Love to all,

Will

16th Battalion

Aug 6, 1916

My dear Mother: ---

It is Sunday night and I want to write you a few lines before going to bed. I wonder what kind of day you have had at Landesboro. I guess it will have been pretty warm. It has been a very fine day here. We have had the very best of

weather now for a few weeks, fine all the time, not a bit of rain. For a few days it was a little warm but not hot, we don't seem to have any weather here hot like that in Huron, and the nights are always cool. Last night, I slept with two blankets over me, a tarpaulin and my winter overcoat. The farmers are just beginning to cut their grain. My! How I would like to have you see their magnificent crops! They are wonderful. My canvas sleeping tent 8 x 15 stands so that the grain touches it, oats that come about to my shoulders. When they are ripe I am going to send a few heads home to Dad.

Today, I had a visit from Major Birks, the chief "Y" officer overseas. He is from Montreal, one of a firm of jewellers, and I think they are rated as millionaires. But he is a very fine soul, one of the choicest, so humble and unassuming, and yet so keen and alert. He and Capt Baton had dinner with me, then we got into their car and went to my other establishment at Dickelbusch Huts. He expressed himself as quite pleased with the work that I am doing. He is making a shake up amongst some of our men. One of them came to me this evening and wants me to interview the Major on his behalf.

Tonight I had quite a pleasant surprise when four Knox College boys dropped in on me. They have just come over here with a battery. It was good to see them and I think they were glad to see me. They just found out where I was last night and came along today. The night before last, Capt Carrie of Goderich stayed with me---we were at Collegiate together. He is in "Y" here too. The night before Will Ross stayed with me, so you see I am not alone out here. In fact, Mother, I don't think there is a more fortunate beggar in the whole Canadian army than myself. I have practically a free hand to do or go where I please. And I now have so many friends out here that no matter where I go I meet someone I know. This is one of the things that makes life so happy out here. And what is more, we seem to value and appreciate friendship here much more than in civil life. Just a couple of hours ago, a man came to me to talk over a situation and see what I thought. He had heard that the allowance of the Patriotic Fund to his wife had been stopped because his wife was supposed to be living with another man. She claims he is her brother. They are hotel people and the case looks a little suspicious to me, but I promised to write the Patriotic Fund. I have recently received many letters inquiring about sons, brothers, etc, who have been killed or are missing. Some of them are very pitiful and hard to answer. But this may lead you to believe that I am living a rather despondent life. Not so. In fact I don't think I have ever been so bright and cheerful in my life before. Of course it is part of my business to be so, but it is genuine, not forced. We can't afford to let our minds dwell on the sordid side of things, so we hear of one friend being killed and wounded but go on with our sports, concerts, etc, just the same. We have to, or where would we be? This is wartime, and we must do the thing that makes for efficiency. So we have our baseball, sports, etc on Sunday as well as on other days. This may sound strange to you but don't judge too harshly.

We had a very fine service in our hut tonight. The Speaker was Thurlow Fraser (Capt) late of Owen Sound. He makes an excellent Chaplain and is well liked by the boys. I had dinner with Ralph Connor on Friday. He is doing a splendid piece of work out here as Chaplain. I see quite a bit of him and am getting to know him well.

Did I tell you that I am now wearing the kilt? I feel like a regular Scottie now for sure. It felt funny at first with the bare legs and I got my knees sunburnt. It is fine and cool on a hot day and is not so cold as I expected when the weather is cold. They say I look fine in Highland costume. It is quite an expensive outfit to get all the Officers' trimmings, but of course we don't wear all these on active service.

It is just seven months ago today that I landed in France. In some ways it seems a long time, but in other ways very short. A great many things have happened since then. But now the weeks just seem to fly past. I am living in hopes that before another seven months have gone by the whole thing will soon be over. In many ways we are gaining the advantage over the Hun. When I came to France the German aeroplanes were a sort of menace and ours a sort of joke, but now the tables have turned. A couple of days ago it looked good to stand and watch a fleet of at least 25 big British battle planes sailing over the British lines. I suppose they were on a bombing expedition or to make observations or both. Then, too, our guns are far more plentiful, more effective and larger. We are getting a greater number of troops all the time.

I am kept pretty busy all the time. You see I have the three places to look after, one as a headquarters, one about 2 1/2 miles from there and the other about 6 1/2 miles. Headquarters (ie. my headquarters) consists of a hut 30 x 90, a tent 10 x 20, a cookhouse, and a canvas hut 7 x 15. In the latter, I have my bed and sort of office, also keep some of the athletic stuff. It is a very comfortable spot. In the tent, the boys sleep and we store junk there as well. The big

hut is half seated and there are about a dozen collapsible tables for writing, reading and eating. On the platform is a piano. In this hall we have our concerts, sing songs and Sunday services. In one corner of the hut is the canteen where we carry a line of stock that meets the needs of the soldiers with such things as canned fruit and vegetables and meat and milk, also chocolate, cigarettes, tobacco, pipes, cigars, towels, brushes, polishes, shoe laces, writing pads, pencils; also lemonade when it is hot weather, tea when cold, tooth brushes, soaps, etc. In this hut we from 1000 to 1600 francs worth of business a day (that is \$200 to \$325). I have a staff of 5 men at present.

At the place 2 1/2 miles from here we have a tent 30 x 70 with a similar canteen, no piano but a small moving picture outfit. There are 4 men there. The place 6 1/2 miles away is a ruined house. It is in full view of the enemy by day being 2 or 3 miles from his trenches, so that we have to keep away from there by day. One day a shell was put through it but of course no one was there then. It is open only for night, when practically all the moving of men and supplies is done under cover of darkness. It is just a small place manned by two boys. Its chief function is to give tired, hungry, wet & cold passers-by a cup of hot tea and a bite to eat. A small stock of stuff is also carried there but as the place is frequently looted in daytime when there is no one there to look after it, the stock is kept small. I have now a staff of good boys so that I have them largely to themselves while I put in my time with the battalion running sports, concerts or talking with the men. They come to me with all sorts of requests. It is hard to get money orders, postal notes, etc cashed here so I give them the French money for theirs at the current rate of exchange and send them to my bank account in Bank of Montreal, London, Eng. So many people write wanting the particulars of friends who have been killed but it sometimes takes a long time getting this, but I know how much it means to relatives. With all this on hand, I have very little time to myself. My time seems to be spent in doing a multitude of little things that do not make a spectacular show but things that I think are worthwhile and things that mean something to the contentment, cheerfulness and efficiency of the men.

I am enjoying my work very much. I am feeling fine--- the boys from Toronto whom I saw last night told me how fat and well I look. I hope that you are well again and enjoying life in your new quarters.

Kindest regards to all

Your affectionate son

Will.

PS Coke and socks arrived O.K.

Many thanks.

This is a piece of Belgian lace. I bought for you in a town right here that is shelled quite frequently by the Germans. It is all hand work and the woman said it took her six weeks to do it. This part of Belgium is famous for its lace. I like to watch the old women working away at it.

This cost me 30 francs (\$ 6.00). I send it with my love to you as a birthday gift---a little early perhaps but it ought to reach you in time.

Many happy returns.

Will

Aug 17, 1916

Dear Mother:---

I wish you could see the spot where we are in now. It reminds me a great deal of Ontario and home. We have left the firing line behind and made a three day march away from it towards the coast and in fact we can now smell the sea air. One would hardly know that a war is on back here, everything is so quiet. There seem to have been very few soldiers in this part and we are quite a curiosity with the people. We are now in France and the French people are much superior to the Belgians. I wish I could talk the language as they are very kind. Our men are billeted in the farm buildings and are quite happy. We have a 20 foot by 90 tent here and are "doing business in the same old way". We got our ground about 12 noon and had the tent up and ready for business at 4 that afternoon and have received some compliments on "getting on the job" so quickly. We did a good bit of work, but of course we stepped around pretty lively. I had almost six men with me. We got a couple of motor trucks to bring us from the other place. It took us about four hours to come over---a beautiful trip. The country is lovely now. Harvest is ripe and the fields look

wonderful. I wish you could see the good crops; they are a splendid sight.

Last night we had a splendid lecture in our hut by a Professor from Cambridge. He held the boys' attention for an hour and a half. Tonight we had a good concert given by the boys---called "Amateur Night". Prizes were given out for the best numbers. Tomorrow night, a group of the boys are going to put on a darkey show. Tomorrow I open another tent about 2 1/2 miles from here. Also am busy arranging games--so you see I am kept on the hop. I have hardly time to read my mail. So the time seems to go very fast.

Did I tell you that I am wearing the kilt now? I am liking it fine, better than I expected to. I am liking my work very well and think I am doing something worthwhile. I have good loyal boys working with me and that helps so much. How are you keeping? I hope that you are all better again. My health couldn't be better. How are things going on the farm? I hope that Colin has a good crop and makes it go well. Are either of the boys home for the harvest?

The war situation looks better these days, and I hope that it continues so.

Love and kind regards to all,

Will

France. Aug 26 '16

These are heads of grain that I gathered yesterday from a field of French grain. The wheat was in the stook, but the barley and oats were still standing and not quite ripe yet.

Perhaps you may like to try out the seed. I don't know whether the wheat is fall or spring variety.

Will

I.O.D.E.-Hospital for Officers-1 Hyde Park Place-London. W.

Sept. 15 (1916)

My dear Mother : --

Here I am in good old England once again---and it never looked quite so good as it does at this time. After the desolation and waste of Belgium and France it is refreshing to see the green fields, the beautiful trees and comfortable homes of good old England. What an effect a little contrast seems to produce. And after listening to the Yiddish spoken by the Belgians and French, it sounds good to hear your mother tongue once again. They sent me on from a hospital in France to a hospital here---the above. I would have been all fixed up and rested up in four or five days more in France but they needed the room for others coming in so they shipped several of us over here. The trip took from 1 am to 7 pm that night; long waits for the boat and train. The result was that I was completely tired out and have had to spend two or three days more in bed. I am feeling good today again and the Dr says I am to get up tomorrow. This is a beautiful spot with accommodations for about 35. The very best of care and attention. The situation is lovely. One ward overlooks out over Hyde Park and we must be somewhere near the King's Palace. We are practically all, if not all, Canadian here. The man in the next bed is a Toronto University man, and we used to play Rugby on opposing teams. He is away out this evening dressed in my clothes from top to bottom, ---everything except socks. There are four of us in this ward. One is an American and he keeps the ball rolling, so witty! I have had four or five of the Y.M.C.A. men up to see me. It was good to see them too. Oh yes, and one of the orderlies at this hospital is Mrs Brown's son, Keturak's brother. It was quite a surprise to us both to meet here. He is a good man on the job. When I get able to go around I am going to look Murray up---he may come in here on Sunday. I sent a letter to him today with \$ 10.00 for that purpose. Then I will go to Shorncliffe for a few days, to Barlows chiefly, then to Scotland for a few days before back to France.

Now don't worry about me, for I am perfectly happy and content. I hope you are lighthearted and enjoying your good health. I hope that you are enjoying life in Landesboro.

Love to all,

Affectionately your son

Will

Oct. 11. 1916.

Dear Father : ---

My trip to Scotland is over and one of the finest ten days I ever spent has ended. I shall never forget it. The whole thing exceeded my expectations and I don't wonder that Scotchmen love their braes and moors.

I went from London on Sat. It took practically all day, 400 miles, a lovely trip. I fell in with a New Zealand officer and we stayed together in the hotel at Edinburgh. On Sunday we went out to Forth Bridge, a wonderful structure.

Monday I went to Glasgow. Thence to look up Rev E.D. Fingland. Found a very hearty welcome there. They have a house on the bank of the Clyde, a stone's throw from the water. They were exceptionally kind to me. Mrs Fingland is a gem---they are all that (I mean all the Mrs Finglands). They have one daughter but 20 years old. One day they went with me to Loch Lomand, another to Ayr and Burn's locality, and another to Sauguhar to look up relics of the Fingland tree, but found none of them there. They are all gone. But there some at Thornhill about 12 miles from Sauguhar. It is supposed they all came from Thornhill at first. I went to see another Fingland, John, a plasterer and slater in Glasgow whose parents came from Sauguhar. he has made out the enclosed chart showing as far back as he can go. He is quite interested in the family tree. Jas Fingland the first, was a ferryman at Thornhill, so the story runs. One night, 1773 I think, he was taking a boatload of people across the flooded Nith. When in mid-stream old Nick suddenly appeared and swamped the boat, and none of the occupants were ever seen again. It might be just as well not to go back any further or we might find that some of them suddenly disappeared after the meeting of the Assizes. Of the 4th generation, the brothers, John and Samuel, are living in Glasgow, both quite old. John was never married. Samuel's sons are or were in Vancouver. I think one of these, Walter, married a Miss Fingland of the Thornhill branch and Ruth Fingland was their daughter. Of the rest of the IV the generation, Thornhill branch, I could get no information.

This seems clear that all The Finglands came originally from Thornhill, Sauguhar district in Drumfrieshire.

Rev Fingland feels quite sure that the name is originally a place name, ie. the people took their name from the place. We looked up a good map and found four individual places named Fingland---Fingland Hill, Fingland Burn, and Fingland Farm, etc. all in Dumfries. Curiously while at Sauguhar, I was directed to a Mr Wightman of "Maines Farm". They have owned that farm for generations and he more frequently goes by the name of Maines than by Wightman. (By the way he is a distant relative of Tom Mc Millon, and Tom or his brother has been there buying horses. Beyond 1775 or thereabouts it seems impossible to go. The only practical way of tracing family history beyond that period is through the family crest or coat of arms. The Finglands seem to have no coat of arms. The name seems to be originally Celtic and Mrs Fingland thinks it means "The White Glen". This seems feasible because the place name is usually associated with a hill or valley or burn.

The plasterer's father was for a long time Lord Provost of Sauguhar, a "Royal Borough" with a population of about 800. It is a very old place and has a monument marking the spot where something transpired relating to the Covenanters. The river Nith flows past the village through a beautiful valley. The scenery and hills around it are very beautiful. The land around that territory is practically owned by the Lord of Beauclough. The "Fingland Farm" is about two miles north of Sauguhar in the hills, a sheep farm, and Fingland Burn flows through it.

Samuel Fingland is the one who toured Canada a few years ago with that Scotch Bowling team. He is connected with Glasgow University, an expert photographer. He takes pictures of medical work, operations, etc. I did not see him. The plasterer, ie. John of V, whose family is given in detail, has two sons at the war. A son of his bro., Wm., who is dead, is also a soldier in Egypt.

I also heard of another family of Finglands in Dumfrieshire at Kilmarnock, some distance from Sauguhar. On this family were seven sons all over six feet. They with their father made a tug-o-war team who challenged the whole countryside. The plasterer visited a wounded Fingland in Glasgow hospital and found him a son of a chief of police of Birmingham. I think he had gone there from Kilmarnock.

Rev. Fingland of Greenock has an only bro in Liverpool, a doctor. They were both born in Liverpool. He doesn't think that this chart is quite correct or at least is incomplete. He is not very keen in looking up the rest of the clan. I think he has been rather disappointed in some of them.

There is another story of a Miss Fingland who married a man named Halliday (I think) and they went out and lived in Hamilton, Ont. I could not make much of this however.

This all the information I got. I was not able to get a line on any fortune waiting heirs.

We spent a day out at Loch Lamond. It far exceeded my expectations. We sailed up it about 20 miles. The hills around it are wonderful.

The town of Ayr where Burns was born and brought up is a lovely spot, also "bonnie Doon"---it is indeed a bonnie spot. Also saw the old church where Burns spent the night and saw the Deil.

I am back to London again for a day. Expect to go to Bramshalt today to see Murray. Then to Shorncliffe. I am feeling fine again, having quite recovered from my holiday.

Perhaps you could send this to Uncle Will or make a copy. I wonder where the Brampton Fingland comes in. Have you seen him yet?

Hope all are well at home.

Your loving son,

Will

c/o Y.M.C.A. 82 Victoria St.,

London SW Eng. Oct 24.

My dear Mother : ---

Your letter of Aug 19 reached me a couple of days ago. I received that day a bundle of 35 letters that dated back to Aug 15. They had been collecting somewhere in France since I left the 16th Battalion. I thought there must be mail for me somewhere, and then that deluge came upon me. Two or three mentioned parcels but where are the parcels? Goodness only knows! In your letter you spoke of having sent a parcel---well, I haven't seen it yet. Of course it may turn up yet, but I "hae ma doots". Of course if I don't get the good of it somebody else will so that things are not wasted or lost. A few days ago I received a wrapper with a gov't paper attached saying the parcel has come undone and lost, but if I would write them and state what was in it they would try to find it. But I think it was only a parcel of papers from Frank Yeigh of Toronto, so I didn't bother. An awful lot of parcels get broken. The journey is so long and they are so roughly handled. I think the best way is to sew things up in a bag of good cloth.

Of course now that Murray is over here you had better send most of the parcels to him. As far as eatables are concerned I live just as well or even better than I did in Canada---that is what it means by being an officer. Murray's case is different and eatables are always welcome to men in the ranks. Of course, I make good use of them too by inviting in a few friends and having a little feed or "party" and we have some good times. Much the same applies to sox, etc. Of course I am in a splendid position to dispose of these while in France and I only wish that I had hundreds of pairs. I am sorry that Tom Riddle's cigars went astray as they would be mighty welcome. I rather like them myself. Of course you won't be surprised if all your boys came back smokers. Everyone does it in the army and I don't see that we are any worse for it. In fact a little smoke is often a great comfort. I smoke myself but not much, practically only the pipe. I am watching closely and I don't see that is doing me any harm. I think a far larger percentage of the men in this country smoke than in Canada---and the women too.----but I don't like the look of that, do you?

I am quite well again. At the end of my month's sick leave (Oct 18) I had to report to the Medical Board. They examined and questionned me and said that I was quite well again, saying also that I had made a remarkably quick and thorough recovery from Trench Fever. It seems that though it is not a very bad thing in itself, it often leaves a person weak for a time. But I am feeling fine again. That ten days in Scotland did me a world of good. The Rev. Fingland family was so good to me. Mrs F. especially was a regular mother. Mr F. is a rather sarcastic man----I think that is a Fingland failing----perhaps the Fingland besetting sin. I do not know yet how much longer I will be in Eng., perhaps a month, and perhaps I may not return to France, I am waiting my orders. Of course I think I would rather go to France as there is really more to do there and you feel that your work is really more worthwhile there. And in the "Y" work in France there is so little danger that it is scarcely worth considering.

I was rather surprised yesterday to get a letter from Albert Swanston. He has just arrived in Eng from Canada; in the Y.M.C.A. also. I am hoping to see him this week. He will do good work in the "Y". Another Knox man just over from Canada in the "Y" is Geo. Easton. The man who worked with me in France, Mark Glanville, has just got his commission as Lieut and came back from France to Eng. I dug him out of his battalion after he had spent a year in

the trenches. He is one of the choicest souls I ever met, a South African who was at College in the States when war broke out and went over to Canada and joined up in Montreal. I think I will try to take him to Canada after the war. But he has a little girl in South Africa who, I fear, will hold him. But in this war game one makes so many friends, and that of the genuine sort. The whole thing seems to bring out the brotherly spirit in men. War is a great evil but it has compensations, and I believe those of us who go back to Canada will be the better of our experience here. Since coming back from Scotland I have spent most of my time at the Barlow home, The Field, Saltwood. They are exceptionally kind to me and they and I look upon this as my "English Home". They have no sons to send to the war and are very much interested in it so look upon me as their rep. The two daughters work in a hospital here. They have an immense garden and their gardener has gone to war so they give me lots of work in the garden. I hope you are well. Did you get the little token from Ayr, Scotland?

Much love,
Will

The Field, Saltwood,
Hythe, Kent, Eng. Oct 27 (1916)

Dear Mother : ---

Just a line this morning. Enclosed is a little bit of wire from a Zeppelin that fell near London. I think it was the Zeps that Murray saw falling in flames when he was in London. It is quite a small thing but has some interest. The Red Cross are selling these little bits of wire for a shilling to secure funds for their work.

I am feeling fine now. They keep me busy here mending and fixing things around the house and working in the garden. I have spent two or three days trimming rose bushes. They have so many of these and they grow so viciously. But they are beautiful. There are still some flowers on them.

Abbie Swanston is sitting beside me here. He came down from London yesterday and spent the night with me. He came over from Canada a week ago on the Olympic in 5 days. He looks splendid. He is with the Y.M.C.A. and is going to be located at West Sandling.

I have not heard from Murray for a while but one of our boys saw him in London a few days ago.

The weather here is not cold yet but pretty wet.

I hope that you are well and happy. You don't need to worry about any of us, for we are quite happy. I received the sox alright---many thanks, they are a lovely pair and I will get the good of them.

Lovingly yours,
Wil

14 Cornhill St. London EC
Nov 1, '16

My dear Mother :

Your letter just to hand of Oct 11, and I must tell you about seeing Murray. Last Sat I went to Bromshott and hunted him up. We spent the evening together---I stayed at a hotel a couple of miles from camp, took him over there and had supper together and chatted the evening. Then he had to go back. Next forenoon, I went to the camp and met him at noon---Sunday, while walking to the camp who should I run into but Donald McLean, son of Ian McLean, late of Blythe. We were at Model and Varsity together. He has his wife with him here and he asked me and Murray to have supper with them. So we spent a part of the afternoon with Capt Best, his wife & family who have a house near the camp. You met him in Toronto. He and I have worked together a lot and he has been very good to me. They are from Hamilton. Then we went to Don McLean's house. They are a happy couple. She is the daughter of the mouse at Quebec (?), a great talker and full of life. She hit Murray about right and gave him a cordial invitation to go to their house any time---which I think Murray will accept. Then we went back to camp and spent the evening in a "Y" hut. So

we had a very pleasant day together. Murray looks well, indeed, and has a comfortable, real comfortable camp, with some good companions. I think he likes it pretty well. The camp is in a lovely part of the country, beautiful in fact. He told me about John Finland of Winnipeg who is with 107 th Battalion at Witley Camp, about seven miles from Bramshalt. So on Mon I went to look him up and found him in quarantine. A case of diphtheria had been discovered in his hut but he was quite well and looks fine. He came outside and we chatted a while.

I am sending Father a letter that I received today from Mr Finland, the plasterer, who made out the family tree I sent. It will explain itself. Who this John Finland is I don't know. Father or Uncle Will had better write direct. Where does Mr Finland of Brampton come in?

You ask for the name of a Y.M.C.A. man to whom you can have sox, etc sent. I would like to suggest the name of Capt W.A. Ross, (address) Y.M.C.A., H2. Canadian Corps B.E.F. France and I will explain to him. I think your idea is a good one. There will be a big need for those things again this winter.

I am feeling fine again, real well. I have been doing some work here in England for the Y.M.C.A. They have been getting several new "Y" officers lately and are taking over more camps.

I had a letter from Aunt Lizzie, a very nice one too. It is good of her to think of somebody besides her own boys on the border of Mexico---perhaps you might write them or her or both, as they both left a wife behind.

Glad Father is feeling better again and that you are well. Keep happy. Your boys are well and safe---and doing their duty---I know you are a proud Mother. God bless you.

Your loving son,
Will.

Southampton, Nov. 9, '16

My dear Mother : ---

You will perhaps be a little surprised to hear that I am on my way to France again and have got this for my journey, going from here to Havre. It is a boat trip of about six or eight hours. We have started for there a couple of times but the weather was very rough and we had to turn back. It is rather a small boat and rolls badly. A great many of the men and officers were very sick. I could hear them vomiting all around my cabin but I managed to keep my supper alright, thanks perhaps to the old days on the Walkerburn mill dam. Anyhow I have never yet been seasick. In fact I enjoy a trip on a boat when it is rocking some. This is a nice town and we have quite a good time on shore during the day. There is another "Y" man on board, a good head, and we are the only two Canadians. But one soon makes friends, especially on a trip like this. This is the first time to France for some of them and they think it a great hardship, but I venture to say that before they have spent many months in France they will think lovingly of the little boat.

I saw Murray for a weekend at Bramshalt. He was quite well and looks splendid. I think he will be there for some time. It is a very comfortable camp, and he seems quite content.

I had the chance to stay in England for the winter and work here but I chose to go to France, for our work there is more worthwhile. And of course our work is quite safe there. It may not be quite so comfortable there as in Eng. but what is that in this game. I enjoy the work very much, and think we are doing something that is really worthwhile.

Will write soon,
Your loving son
Will

France, Nov. 10. '16.

Dear Father : ---

Here I am in France again. We arrived in port yesterday morning after rather an interesting passage. It took us just a week to get across the Channel during which we made four attempts to get over the water from Southampton, an eight hour trip. Our boat was not very large and was very much crowded with troops. These troop ships cross only at night and we spent three nights rolling around on the Channel, landing in the morning where we started from the night before. It was very interesting in many ways. The sea was very rough and the boat rolled fearfully and a great number of the men were sick. I managed to stick it alright in spite of the suggestiveness of the sound and stink of

men vomiting all around. There was only one other Canadian, another "Y" man, a fine travelling companion. And I soon made friends with others---a trip like that draws men together. Some of them were terrible grovellers and I imagine they will have a few rough rides yet ahead of them before the war is over. It does me good to see some men have to rough it a little. In that respect this war is a good thing for many men, especially some of these English people who have been accustomed to be waited upon hand and foot.

I have two days travelling ahead of me yet, at least it will take that long because travelling is very slow here in France. The Canadians are in a very quiet part of the line at present, and things look good for a fine piece of winter's work. I am feeling fine and will be glad to get back to work again after a two months' holiday. I haven't had any mail for some time but expect to get a lot when I get back to my battalion.

I hope you and the others are feeling well, and keeping happy. Don't worry about your boys---they are quite happy.

Your loving son,

Will

16 th Battalion

Canadians

B.E.F. France

Nov 21, 1916

Dear Father: --

How are you feeling today? In two or three of the last letters from home they speak of you as being not very well. I fear that you are not sticking by your old friend, Epson enough. Or I think I have a better cure to recommend---a month in England and Scotland. A trip thru the Highlands and the land of Burns is a restorative to any man---I know it fixed me up. I am feeling like a fighting cock once more---good way to feel. I have been back here now for a week. At present I am located in a little French village about the size of Landesboro, tho' Landesboro would be a heaven to live in compared with this. The houses and barns are strung along the main road and about 1000 men and officers are billeted in the houses and barns---you find men sleeping in strange spots, and eating too. In civil life we would have died directly if we had to do it. These French people are not very clean and sometimes there are very pungent odors. But a liberal supply of lime is kept sprinkled about and helps keep things wholesome.

9. pm. I wish you could see me now. Have just come up to my billet, a room in the upstairs of a French house. I am sitting beside a little coal oil stove on which I have just made a cup of lovely cocoa from that parcel sent from home. While it is cooling down to the drinkable degree, I am having a little smoke of the T & B tobacco that was in the same parcel. Am writing this on the side of a box across my knee, an improvised. Over the window I have hung a bed quilt to keep the light from shining out, tho' they are not nearly so particular about lights here at the firing line as at Eng and Scotland. For a bed I have my sleeping bag and blankets on some straw. there was a mattress on the straw but it looked lousy---"crumbly" is the technical term---so I threw it aside. For mural decorations I have my overcoat, raincoat, kit bag, revolver, tam-o-shanter, glengarry cap and kilt. I wore the kilt up till a few days ago, when it got so cold that I fell back into the depraved custom of wearing breeches. On the home made table is my medicine kit, a few books, a letter I just received from Rona Fingland, etc. So you see I am quite well fixed up---in fact I am very, very lucky. In the corner are a half dozen Xmas boxes from Smithe Hill ladies waiting for Xmas to be given to lonely soldiers. It has been pay day, and outside in the street I can hear a half dozen drunk soldiers---there goes a battle crash! I am having my meals with a group of three other officers, one is a Herridge of Ottawa---I think a son of the late Moderator of Assembly. This leads me to speak of a communion service that we had last night---Sun---in our tent. Rev Thurlow Fraser of Owen Sound was the chaplain. About 25 men gathered around the brazier. Some had their greatcoats on, some their leather jerkins, some were covered with mud from head to foot, just back from the trenches, some were young while one or two were bald headed. They represented many denominations and creeds. On their faces was a serious mass, The seriousness of men who had just passed thru the Valley of the Shadow of Death in the Somme where most of their comrades had been killed or wounded. I performed the function of elder and distributed the bread and wine. It was a very simple service, and rather unconventional and unceremonious but somehow it went home, and we feel the better for it. Capt Fraser has a happy faculty of adapting himself and touching the hearts of the men.

We are arranging for a concert tomorrow night, and moving pictures the next night. Our tent is not very comfortable on cold nights but we try to make the best of it. During service on Sun morning about half the seats collapsed. It is hard to get fuel and oil for heating and lighting. Supplies seem to be getting shorter.

Now I must close. I am feeling fine and am content, glad to be here. It will soon be Xmas. I trust that you at home will make the best of the season---it will be busy and a cheerful time for me in our work and I trust that will be the spirit at home.

Your Loving son,
Will

16 th Battalion,
Canadians,
B.E.F., France
Dec 5, 1916

My dear Mother : ---

Your letter of Nov 8 reached me today and I was glad to get it---am always glad to hear from home. Just yesterday I was thinking that it was quite a while since I had heard from you. Your letter was delayed, taking almost a month. I am delighted to hear that you received the ring alright and that you like it. I thought you would. It was the nicest one I could see in Ayr and there was quite a choice. Did I tell you how much I paid for it ---3 Pounds. Of course there were more expensive ones as diamonds but this one appeared to me as very beautiful. I think those opal stones are lovely. You should have seen how Mrs Fingland of Greenock admired it---and especially her mother, a dear old soul of about 80. I think she took a fancy to me. She is almost too frail to walk about alone and is a little hard of hearing, but a great reader. I used to sit and talk to her, or rather listen to her. Rona helped me pick the ring. The "granny" wrote me a lovely letter a few days ago. You say you are a little shy about writing these "fine" people---well you don't need to be a bit, for they are just ordinary people and in fact I don't think they are quite as "fine" as you are. Mrs F. wrote you while I was there---I thought it was very good of her.

You say in your letter that it makes life pleasant to have such friends as I have made in Eng. Indeed it does! That is the great thing that I live for. And I have made a great many since I joined the army. I have had the opportunity to do a good turn to hundreds, yes, thousands of men. I try never to let a chance pass by. A little incident happened recently that was very gratifying to me. One of the boys who had worked for me last spring went up to one of the other Y.M.C.A. Captains and asked him if he knew Capt. Fingland. On receiving the reply "Yes", he went on, "He is the whitest man I ever worked for". I tell you this because it means a good deal to me. I try to play the game straight through with everybody, and I don't mind telling you that my boys are very loyal to me. When I came back here to France, they even threatened to desert the Capt. they were with to get back to me.

When you wrote your letter you didn't know that I was in France but you will know by this time. I think Frank landed in Eng. about the same day as I left. I would like to have seen him very much. I guess you speak true when you say that there are a good many heavy hearts in Huron. It will be a Xmas and New Year of less cheer than before but I imagine it will be a more unselfish season than it has been for a long time. Many will know the joy of sacrifice in a way they never did before. Their vision widened, their sympathies quickened, their faith purified, they will more approach the standard of the Christ. It is a hard war, but it is to be hoped that out of it all a world of good may come. And what if the price must be the sacrifice of a few lives? It was ever thus---every great good has had to be purchased by the sacrifice of human lives.

Do you remember the parcel you sent containing towels, soap, cocoa, tobacco, etc. Well it reached me at last O.K. And what a fine and useful assortment---quite an ideal parcel. Each night before going to bed, I make a cup of that cocoa---very fine! I have a little coal oil stove to make it on. The stove makes my room quite comfortable. It is quite a job of getting fuel, you see it is all dished out, wood, coal, coal oil, gasoline, food, etc and we only get our share. But I fare pretty well, better than the most. I am in a little French village about the size of Auburn. There are about two thousand soldiers billeted in it besides the inhabitants. I am trying to run something every night in our concert tent. It takes a great deal of work to carry out a full program like that. Last night I gave a lecture on "King George V". I have

some good helpers in the canteen. Had dinner today with a unit of men attached to an observation balloon---expect to take the moving pictures to them tomorrow night. We are beginning to prepare for our Xmas season. That will be an extra busy time.

I am glad to hear that you have organized a Red Cross in Landesboro. That will do good, both for the war and for Landesboro.

Give my kind regards to Mrs Stalker, to Mr & Mrs Leddes. Hope Colin is keeping better. Met a man tonight that I used to know at Mirror Landing. A couple of days ago, I met one from Mannville. Billeted in the same house here is one from Goderich, McKay, by name. Small world after all, isn't it?

Now I must close this long letter and get to bed as it is midnight.

Love to all, with best wishes for the coming year and the hope and prayer that the next Xmas will see us all home to spend with you.

Lovingly yours,

Will.

P.S. Send to above address. Your last letter was opened by the censor.

France, Jan 20, 1917

Dear Father :

Your long and newsy letter of Jan 4 reached me today being handed to me by the cook, a man by the name of Barr. One day the rest of the officers of our mess were away and I thought I was making a good fellow of myself by saying to Barr that he and his assistant could have a holiday. They both got drunk and they took to fighting and Barr had a terrible face for several days. But he is a good friend of mine.

Well I was glad when Barr handed me your letter. You and Mother will be very much alone, and the house will be quiet---very different from what it used to be with 8 of us bickering around. You speak about zero and sleighing. That sounds funny. It snowed here a couple of days ago, enough for sleighing for about a day. Tonight it has frozen enough to freeze the water in our ascetelyene generator with the result that we have no light tonight in the hut. We have had very little real cold weather so far and it has been raining a little for this country. I have a little cold but outside of that am feeling fine. I have had a splendid billet for about a month now and was very sorry to leave it yesterday. These French people can be very kind and hospitable. Of course it is a little difficult to talk to them but one soon picks up their jibberish. I was amused at our interpreter yesterday. He is a Frenchman and said, "These people speak a very bad French, sometimes I can hardly understand them". The village where I had a large tent was a mass of ruins having been blown to pieces by an explosion of munitions caused by dropping a lighted cigarette. Some of the houses have been repaired but most are still in ruins. The 16 th Battalion was billeted there and I put up a tent for canteen, reading, writing, concerts, etc. It blew down Xmas morning. Then we chose a sheltered location and put up two of them in the form of a T or rather an L so that the two opened into each other, each was 20 X 50. During the day it was used for military lectures and in the evening for recreation, and we had something there practically every night, concerts , moving pictures, boxing, wrestling, lectures, religious services, band concerts, Xmas dinner, etc. I had two other places in two other villages, each a mile away, but the program at these was not quite so strenuous. So you can see that I was kept pretty busy.

I suppose you will know by this time that Murray has got a nice "blighty"---that is the way such things are spoken of here. I had a letter from him saying what had happened. I guess he had a close shave but he is one of the luckiest men in France. Any man who gets a wound that is not fatal is very fortunate, in fact he has to thank the Lord for his life. It is rather rough for him not to have any experience in the trenches, but he is better off where he is and I for one am glad that he is where he is. Life for the soldier is pretty rough at the front but once a man gets into hospital, he enters a different world altogether. So you won't be anxious about Murray, for he will be better off now than any time since he joined the army. Thousands of men in France would give all they possess to get what Murray has. He will be in England now, and will be there for some months.

I have moved again to a new area. Have a splendid billet along with another "Y" officer, but he may have to move soon. Have a good hut, too, a hundred yards from it is a camp for German prisoners. There are about 400 Huns

there. They are used to build and repair roads, huts, etc. Seems funny to see them working with guards standing over them with fixed bayonets. The Canadians of 2nd Division did a splendid piece of work in taking German trenches and prisoners.

I had a funny experience the other evening in one of the tents. I had received two big bundles of socks from Mrs Leckie Kirkwall. The men were sitting around writing, reading, playing games, etc. when I asked if anyone cared to have a pair of socks. You should have seen those men immediately fall in line, and in two minutes I hadn't a sock left from Kirkwall. I hope the people at home don't grow weary of knitting. Mrs A. Johnston of Smith's Hill sent me half a dozen parcels of Xmas things to be distributed and I held them till after Xmas goods were all here, then sought out men who hadn't received any. You should have seen their smiles. One was a little French Canadian who could scarcely speak Eng., another was an old lumberjack from Ontario, another a fellow who was nearly shot for desertion, etc. I fared pretty well myself for parcels. Got a fine one from I.O.O.F., one from Bloor St. Pres Church in Toronto, one from Fingland Greenock (now Paisley), one from Barlows. Did you mind that box of cigars Tom Riddel sent? They were mighty good. Gave them nearly all away at a meeting of Masons we had one night in our Y.M.C.A. canteen. There were about 25 present, officers and men, and we had a very interesting time. On such occasions, and in such circumstances as that, one is glad to be a Mason. I will write Tom, in fact have intended doing so for a long time. Souvenirs are not easily picked up, and there are orders against sending out most of them. But I will get something through for him and will send something home to you also.

I suppose you are kept pretty busy with council matters and looking over the farm once in a while. It is now a little over two years since I saw it and there will be several changes.

I am glad you are keeping up the Odd-fellow payments. If anything should happen to me it will be to your advantage and I will straighten up with you when I return. I heard from Mary a short time ago and she seems quite happy. Had a letter from Frank quite recently and he seems to be enjoying life in England.

Now I must close. Love to all.

Yours,
Will

France,

Feb 24, 1917

My dear Mother : ---

A few days ago I received your letter in which you were very anxious about Murray. Perhaps before I received your letter you would get mine that I wrote you directly I heard he had been wounded, so you will be quite at ease now. I had a letter from him yesterday saying that he is feeling fine. Still at Orpington. I think he has rather fallen in love with one of the nurses there, a cousin of Will Ross, you have heard me speak of him. He wrote her telling her about Murray and she went and made herself known to him. He says she is one of the best liked nurses in the hospital. So he is not friendless. And of course in this game one gets the faculty of making friends, and he is good at that. He said that he had a couple of letters from Scotland, the Finglands, asking him to go there when he got out of hospital, and he said he thought he would go. I wrote him last night saying to let me know in time and I would send him some money. I have been sending some to him (and to Frank) frequently but in his letter yesterday, he told me to send no more till he wrote for it. I had a letter yesterday from Mrs Barlow saying that she would like Murray to go there when out of hospital. The people of the old country are very good to wounded.

I put practically all my money in a British War Loan the other day, about 300 pounds in all. I do not spend a great deal here in France and might as well loan it to the government to help beat the Hun. Besides it yields more interest that way. It looks as though the war is going to be decided largely by which side can hold out the longest financially. Things are going very well out here, in fact better than they ever did before with the Y.M.C.A. One senior "Y" officer in France, Capt Wallace, is now away in England getting married. It is rather amusing. Major Birks, the senior "Y" officer for Eng and France is an old bachelor, a very fine man, a millionaire from Montreal, and he is quite opposed to the "Y" men getting married before the end of the war. Several would like to get married and the situation is rather amusing and a constant topic of conversation at present. The major has just left here for England. He and I have had some great chats---he is greatly interested in the future of the Church and we have long talks about

changes in policy, church union, linking up church and Y.M.C.A., etc. He is a very well informed man. I have a very good billet at present. I sleep with three other officers. Our territories are close together and we meet at the central area. I have a bicycle and the road is good. The other two are good companions and we generally have guests, at present three, one C.S. Oke is a chaplain who has just come over; he and I were in the same class at Toronto, and I am glad to see him.

A couple of days ago, I ran across two of the boys I knew at Gowganda, the two fire rangers who took me on a two week trip with them---I wrote and told you all about it at the time. Tonight I am getting a chicken and we going to spend a little time together. One is a sergeant and the other a corporal. Wish you could be here too. We are getting a French lady at one of my two places to work for us. She is a very fine woman and takes a great interest in the four boys I have there, doing all their cooking. She is a regular mother to them---they call her mother and her husband they call father. They are refugees who were shelled out of their home in a little town now quite near the line. I have some great chats with them. How I wish I had studied a little French & German instead of so much Hebrew and Greek! I have two places at present, one a tent 20 X 30 and the other a hall that accommodates about 300 men. A canteen in each and a program in the hall every night with cinema in the tent almost every night. A week's program is something as follows:

Mon: Band Concert.

Tues: Magic lantern or moving pictures.

Wed: Lecture or address.

Thurs: Letter writing night and discussion group.

Fri: Concert with or without band.

Sat: Boxing and other athletics.

Sun: Church services---two or three, with or without band. Of course this varies but we try to have something every night and the place is generally jammed, often men going away because they can't get inside the door. This is all back of the line about four miles but still within range of the Hun guns. It is very interesting this sort of work, though it takes a lot of time and a little worry. It is a great training for one to make him adaptable on the platform. It keeps me going to get new and good jokes. And you should see how the men enjoy an evening's program after their tour in the trenches. It is such an absolute break and relaxation.

I have got going an interesting discussion group; a large number of whom are college graduates and students. Our subject last time was "The Problems of the Returning Soldier", and the discussion reminded one of the House of Commons.

I am feeling the very best. I hope you are all the same. How is Alice getting along? It will soon be Spring again and you will be busy in your new garden.

Love to all,

Will

France

Feb 28, 1917

Dear Father: ---

We received a Canadian mail today, the first we have had here for several days. Amongst the half dozen I received was yours of Feb 6 written shortly after you had heard from Murray. I know you would be pretty anxious till you heard from him. He got off very lucky, in fact many men out here would gladly take what he got and thank the Lord for it. -----

-----battalion was going to make an attack. They have a whole camp of these people--prisoners, that they use to make roads, etc. Murray seems quite happy in his present location. He will be well looked after in the hospital. One enters quite a different world as soon as he comes under the nurses, and no words can speak highly enough of their

contribution in this war. The Red Cross has done wonderful work.

Later :--- I didn't get the letter finished and will make another attempt. There are so many interruptions in this work that we scarcely know a few minutes ahead what is going to break in on your program or who is going to drop around. But that is one of the joys of the work. We are moving today to a new area about ten miles away. I am rather sorry to leave this part as we were having good results. I don't know what the new spot is like yet but it looks like living in tents again. O, well, it is almost spring again. Farmers have been busy sowing their grain, though the ground is frozen up again, and a flurry of snow today. This is a very good section of country with rich farming land on the surface and coal beds below. The mines employ from 500 to 1000 and quite a town has grown up around each. Each mine turns out about 800 tons a day. It seems too bad to see the boys and girls work at these. They also employ some German prisoners for this job. By the way, did you get the 16th Battalion badge I sent. It is the work of a German prisoner in the camp close by the hut where I was a short time ago. It is carved out of a piece of chalk stone and I am quite proud of it. Keep it for me till I come. I wonder if Alice got a letter from a Sergeant thanking her for a pair of sox. He had a charge of some prisoners.

What do you think of the group? It is the boys of my staff, one is not present, being sick at the time. Five of them are physically unfit for trench work. The one at my righthand is a Scotch fellow who worked in the asylum at Hamilton. They are a good group of boys, and we get along fine. The one standing at righthand side of picture is a fine singer and piano player.

I will have to leave my comfortable billet, too. It has been the best in France. Had a real bed part of the time. Three of us "Y" officers billeted together and we generally had some visiting officers for the night. We have some great talks around the fire, the open grate in the evening, and some might arguments.

Today I ran into a couple of old Knox College boys, Dunbar and Ballantyne. I think the latter was in Colin's class.

Hughie Kay is close around here somewhere. Will Ross spent the night with me last evening.

Did I tell you that one senior officer in France is now in England getting married? I don't know whether it is going to be a mania amongst Y.M.C.A. men or not.

Now I must close and get my few articles gathered for the move. I am feeling in the very best of health and hope that Providence is favoring all at home in the same way. Love to all.

Your loving son,

Will

"In the Field"

Apr. 13.

My dear Mother : ---

A few lines to let you know that things are going well and I am feeling in the best of health. This is a great game to keep one in good condition, lots of exercise, fresh air and good wholesome grub. The winter will soon be past and after that the Spring. We had about 4 inches of snow the other night, but of course it all went next day, leaving a lot of mud. I have a big pair of rubber boots for splashing around in it. We had a good clean spot picked out here a couple of weeks ago but so many men, horses, and wagons tramping through have worked up the mud. Fortunately the inside of our two tents keeps fairly dry though the big one leaks a little.

I got your letter a few days ago containing one from Mary. I fear I have not written her very faithfully, but I seem to have so little time to write. I try to write

you regularly and one letter to Toronto about every week and outside of that my writing to friends is very spasmodic. Of course, I have a lot of business and Y.M.C.A. writing to do and my time is so much taken up that it is 11 and 12 every night before I get to bed---but of course I don't get up till 8 or 9 am. Like Billy Weber---"I shist shump out of bet and shump on to de table".

Before this reaches you the reports of the great Canadian battle will have reached you. It is the greatest thing the Canadians have been in yet---wonderful! Of course there have been heavy losses but it was a great victory, and every widow or mother of a man who fell should feel proud and happy the rest of days her days that her loved one was willing to give his life in the interest in liberty and democracy---the very thing Christ did. We knew it was coming and we knew the preparations. The artillery work was beyond comprehension. It started sharp at 5:30 in the

morning and must have been a perfect hell while it lasted, that is for the Germans. I had a letter from Murray yesterday and glad that neither he nor Frank were in it. The next day after the first attack one of my boys and I packed up as many cigarettes, matches and spearmint gum as we could carry and went up to my battalion. They had suffered heavily and were tired and worn. We passed over the battlefield to their new position in what was two days before, German territory. Many of their dead and some of their wounded were still lying in the field that was plowed by shells. I wish you could have seen the look of appreciation on the faces of both men & officers. It was sufficient reward for having walked several miles carrying a heavy load.

I have seen several Huron boys in the last few days, Fred Crawford, a Brummel boy and a Snell boy, also several of my old boys at Westfield. The prisoners camp is right beside my tents and hundreds of Germans have passed through it. There is a strong possibility that I may return to England soon.

Received the parcel O.K. Arrived at a very opportune time. Give my thanks to Ian Riddle and the others.

Don't worry,

Your loving son,

Will

I haven't had any word from Frank for a few days. Received a big parcel of socks from Jean McKnight and one from Mrs Leckie the other day. We have been having a lot of rain and they came at just the right time.

It will be Spring in Hullett now and you will be glad to see it. You will be glad to hear the birds and have the chance to work in the garden.

I almost forgot to tell you that I have a saddle pony now, a little beauty to ride, and a mule. Had our mule stolen but got another. My teamster got roaring drunk the other day but is a good man for his job.

Love to Father and all

In the Field

Apr 23, 1917

Dear Father : ---

How would you like a change of seed potatoes for your garden? These I picked up a few days ago from an old woman in market in a little French town here that is shelled a good deal by the Hun.

The one marked "Hun", ie. the one with many eyes, I picked up on the battlefield of Vimy just after the battle in a shell hole between Fritz's 2nd and 3rd line trenches. They had been thrown away there apparently in a hurry. Try it out if you like. It likely came from Germany.

I am feeling in the very best of health now and the work is going along well. I expect to be transferred back to England soon for work there. I have been considerably over a year in France now I am one of the oldest Y.M.C.A. men here. A year is the allotted time now.

A great battle is raging this morning, the worst I have yet heard, but on our right.

Hope you are well and keeping yourself and Mother cheerful. That's the song we so often sing, "Keep the Home Fires Burning".

Your loving son,

Will

May 3, 1917

My dear Mother :

Your letter of Apr 2 reached me last night being just exactly a month on the way. We had no Canadian mail for about two weeks than it came in a bunch. Had a letter from Mary in the same mail. She seems to be well and quite happy in her work in B.C. I can wish her nothing better than that she is as happy in her's as I am in mine. I am quite at home in my labor. Things have been going very well with me of late and I now have grown quite into the swing of my labor. And it means a great deal to be happy in one's work. Here I am tonight sitting in a 20 X 50 tent writing at a desk made out of a packing box writing in the light of a candle. The three boys are working fixing up the shelves for the morning with pork and beans, canned fruit, cigarettes, writing material, etc. The big guns are rumbling away and have been at it constantly for 24 hours. A great battle is raging and thousands upon thousands of shells have been going and coming. Of course we are a little too far back for them to come near our tents, either the one here or the

other one that I have a couple of miles from here. A good many wounded have gone past today and quite a number of German prisoners. Many of these are mighty thankful to be taken prisoner and I don't blame them either. I am sleeping these nights with Will Ross who lives in a tent not far from here. He was about the first fellow I met when I went to Toronto University and we have been close friends ever since. He is a prince and is doing very fine work out here.

I think I told you, didn't I, that I am going back to England soon for work there. I think I am going to be located in a hospital convalescent camp somewhere I don't know the exact location. I think the work there ought to be good. Anyhow there won't be this ceaseless moving from one part of the country to another. It will be good to get back to a settled life once again. England ought to look pretty good too after a winter in France, it always does look so much better.

If this warm weather continues, I must get back into my kilt, but it is very difficult to wear a kilt and ride a horse. I think I told you that I have a horse and saddle now, a very nice pony and I do have some splendid rides. I am fond of the saddle. The roads are getting good for a bicycle now too and I am fond of that. But there is so much traffic on the road, men marching, wagons, autos, lorries, guns, ammunition and so on that it is sometimes hard to get along. It is no uncommon sight to see a string a mile long held up on the roadside.

It is a lovely day, so warm and bright. We had a fine game of baseball last night and watched an airfight overhead at the same time. An aeroplane was brought down quite close to our tent early this morning. The men got off alright. One came down a couple of days ago quite close to where I was and the men were all smashed to pieces. Pretty tough, but one gets used to such things.

I received the letter from the Edgeworths, the first I have had from them. Had one from Geo. Oliver a few days ago. He has a little son. Geo. has a church at Elrose, Sask near the Lapsleys.

The socks you sent are coming through alright. Give my thanks and thanks of the boys to the knitters for their work.

What attitude will the Dakota people now take to the war. Wish they could see a little of this front.

Must close. Hope you get the French and German potatoes. Sent some to Tom Riddle and Rod Young.

Give my love to all.

Trust you are cheerful and happy as we all are here.

Lovingly yours,

Will.

P.S. Tell Dad I got the draft O.K.

36 Coleman St. London E.C. 2

May 21

My dear Mother : ---

I have good news for you this time. Here I am back in England----and that for good. I think I told you in one of my recent letters that Y.M.C.A. is adopting a policy of sending new men to France to replace those who have been there a year. They want as many men as possible to get a while in France and they also feel that a man who has been in France will be able to do a better job in Eng because of his stay in France. Well I have been almost a year and a half in France---and I am here now. I didn't expect to get back to Eng quite so soon because of the red tape that has to be gone through. Three of us came back together. We rode practically all the way from the line to the port in a box car, but I had my blankets and had a good sleep getting into the port at 1 am. Then we got a bed and sailed across the Channel next afternoon, five or six boats escorted by destroyers. I arrived in London Sat night and next morning went to see Frank and spent the night there. He cooks fine, so fat. They have a beautiful camp and are very comfortable and I think have a very good time. Also saw Albert Swanston there. Now I am back in London and have secured two weeks holiday.

First I am going to Shorncliffe and Hythe for a few days then to Scotland. The weather here's beautiful now and the country looks wonderful. How I wish you could see the fields, flowers, hedges, trees, blossoms, etc. Scotland ought to look bonnie now, too. I am going to try and see more of it than what I did last fall. I have had some very fine letters from the Finglands there. They were awfully good to Murray when he was there. I like the old Grannie very much. I saw Murray on Sat, the day I left France. He was looking well and in good spirits. Things are pretty quiet on

the Canadian front again. The Cans have made a great name for themselves at Vimy Ridge. It was wonderful the way the attack was planned and worked out.

After my leave I am going to be stationed either at Witley Camp where Frank is or at a Hospital Camp near there where there are over 2000 Canadians---near Portsmouth. I am glad to get back to Eng again. A few minutes ago I ran into Gordon Gould. He and I are going to have supper and spend the evening together. He is joining the Flying Corps.

Goodbye this time. Love to all. You will be glad of the summer and your garden. Much love to you.
Will.

Y.M.C.A. Overseas Headquarters

36 Coleman St. London, E.C. 2.

June 20

Dear Folks At Home:---

Your letter with the enclosed epistles arrived a couple of days ago and it was good to get the family budget. It is always cheering to know that all is well at home and that every one is happy. And why shouldn't you be? It is that spirit of optimism that is helping the British Army to win the war. The unbounded good spirits of men at the front, even in the midst of danger is marvellous. And why shouldn't it be? What has one to fear? I ran across a good article in a magazine the other day that I am passing on to you. I think you will like it. Let me know if you do. I hope that I will have the opportunity to do a little more reading now that I am in London. I think I will like life here. I have met some nice people here and they are very fine, one man especially. He is getting me a ticket to a great Masonic function on Sunday. It promises to be a great affair, presided over by Duke of Connaught. It was a good move the time I joined that. It has meant a great deal to me in the army.

I am enclosing two or three things they may be of interest, one is my pass I used in France.

I had a letter from Murray yesterday. He is feeling fine. I think things are pretty quiet on the Canadian front now. I am sending him some tobacco and reading matter. I sent him some money a couple of weeks ago and he says not to send anymore for a while. He sees occasionally his old friend Ross Murray of St. Helens, a very fine fellow. I haven't seen or heard from Frank since Scotland, where he was having a very good time. I have written him to come up and spend the weekend with me. I am staying at present in a hotel, a very quiet and comfortable place but expect to change soon.

Last Sun at church I met an old friend of Knox College who has been in China 5 years. They are bringing a good many thousands of Chinese to France for labor and he is interpreter with them.

This is a great place for Flag Days. Almost every day is a Flag Day for something.

It will be nice in Huron now. Soon will be 1st of July---how about that Landesboro Strawberry Festival. We are getting strawberries here now, and such lovely ones. Potatoes only on Friday, one spoonful of sugar per meal, one slice of bread. Otherwise lots to eat, but oh the prices! But of course there is a war on.

Kind regards to all. You will have Mary home soon. Keep her there as long as you can.

Your loving son,

Will.

July 9

Dear Folks at Home: ---

Your letter of June 8 received a few days ago and was glad to get it and am forwarding it on to Frank. I have not seen him since our trip to Scotland, but may take a run down to Witley soon as he says they are giving very little leave. Things are going very well with me here in London and I am enjoying life here very much. It is such a delightful change from France, so good to hear good lectures, good sermons, etc. Have found Preby'n Church where I think the minister has the best message I ever heard. London is a great and wonderful city, more interesting the more I see of it. So many places to go, so much to see, and so many good and kind people. In the "Y.M." here one gets into touch with a great many homes. One of the lady helpers in the hut where I am located is a daughter of a famous Richard Cobden. I was at her home for dinner a couple of days ago---a very fine old lady. I have joined the Royal Colonial Institute where I am writing this, an institution for colonials. One of the interesting things is meeting the Australians,

N. Zealanders, etc. Some very fine people. One can learn so much from them.

You will have read about the air raids on London. They rather scare many of the people here, but after one has been in France, these seem a pretty poor show. We have only a few yards to go to safety in a cellar or the underground railway. So it is quite easy to get out of the way. Of course it comes hardest on old people and nervous women. But in a few minutes after the raiders are gone, business goes on as usual.

We are getting potatoes now. For quite a while we could get them only on Fridays. One missed them for a time but got quite used to it. The bread is limited too and so is the sugar, you can have enough for porridge or coffee but not for both. But we can always get plenty to eat, all the food has gone far up in price.

You will have Mary home now and I am glad of it. I hope she can see her way clear to stay at home for a good long time.

So you are likely to have a new elect'n in Canada. I wish I were home to have a share in it for I have taken a great deal more interest in politics since I left Canada than I ever did before. I sometimes wonder if I couldn't do my country greater service in politics than in the church. I think there is great scope in that direction.

I was out for supper tonight to the home of a Mr Campbell, a bachelor who takes a great interest in Colonials, quite a traveller. He gave me a beautiful piece of cloth to send to "my mother", a piece that he picked up in India. He is a very fine man and is doing a great deal for Colonial soldiers in London.

I am feeling splendid and am quite happy.

Hope you all can say the same.

Love to all. Will

Aug 30 (1917)

My dear Mother :

I am going to try and write you a few lines a bit under difficulties. I am on the train from Scotland to London, and have had something to eat and now that is gone I can use the table. I started at 10 this morning and will get to London 11.30 tonight, having gone about 4 hours out of the direct route.

Well, how did things go at the wedding yesterday? I thought a great deal of you all. It would have been good if we all could have been there to have made it a real happy event. No doubt it was that anyhow. I don't think you would let the absence of three boys spoil what ought to be the happiest day in the girls' life. What is more I don't think you let our being away spoil your happiness, do you? Of course it is hard to be very cheerful with two of them in France---or rather one, now that Murray is in Eng. But I see some people in this country, who, I think are taking the war too seriously. Their religion seems to compel them to grovel in sac'lg. cloth and ashes. They think the war has been brought on by the frivolity of the people. Now this I don't believe. And I don't think you do either. I can't picture you that way. It is now over three years since I saw you and it is your cheery bearing and hearty laugh that I recall most of all about you. I can shut my eyes any time I like and hear you laugh. It is the things that I shall always remember (heavy sea now!) most about you. It always seemed to brace one up, in fact it was infectious. One seemed to catch something of your cheery soul in it. And I should be very, very disappointed to think that it should have disappeared. I sincerely hope it hasn't for that is what I will look for when I return home. It is the spirit of cheerfulness that is keeping the British people to win the war. For that reason, the theatres still go strong---and I think they are doing a great deal of good in that they help to keep people cheerful. It does my soul good to see these Eng & Scotch mothers so bright and cheerful in spite of all they are facing. I spent last evening in a home in Edinburgh where that showed up so well. A Mrs Turnbull had lost her husband a little while ago. But she is so bright & so busy. She worked at the Y.M.C.A. where I was and we had come to know each other pretty well. It always did me good to see her so cheery. So I think it is better for people to be cheerful. And what is more, I think the Lord will be just as well pleased, in fact I think better so; for God likes to see his children happy or as happy as they can be. I like to think the Lord hates a "Killjoy" just as much as I do. So I know you would be happy at the wedding. I know you will write and tell all about it. I hope my little contribution got there in time. She is not going far away from home and ought to be able to get home just as often as she used to.

I am returning from a five week tour of Canadian Forestry camps in north Eng and south Scotland. It has been a splendid trip and I enjoyed it very much. I spent two or three days at each camp in the interests of our Khaki

University educational scheme and in each camp from 30 to 50 men asked for something.

I spent last Sun with the Finglands at Paisley. Rev F. is such a crank that I chose Sun to go there because I knew he would be away preaching. So he was. Hi wife is so nice and Mrs Peock, her mother, is one of the dearest old ladies I ever knew. And she has taken quite a liking for me---I listen to all her stories of bygone days. The daughter is a bit like her father and not very attractive. I spent a day and a couple of nights in Edinburgh looking up some old friends and didn't see them all either. I like Edin. & Edin. people very much. Took a couple of those who had been my staff to the theatre. It was a very good play too.

I heard from Frank not long ago, everything going well. He seems to be taking things quite cheerfully in France. And Murray seems to be getting along pretty well in his new hospital at Norwich. It is not a great distance from London and I will be able to go out to see him. He will be likely be in Eng. for some time.

I met a boy from Markdale a few days ago and he says one of Uncle Hugh's boys has recently come from Canada. I may see him before long. Also Alden Townsend. I wonder what became of John Fingland. He is a queer jigger. I saw a man a few days ago who knows father well, named Cook from Clinton. He used to pack apples with Coutelon. How are the crops at home? I have been noticing them along the line today. They are being cut now and are splendid. And such a great increase in the acreage too. I hope they are good at home. Will Ross and Abbie Swanston were both over from France on leave lately but I was on this trip, I did not see them. They are both doing good work in France.

Now I go back to London feeling greatly refreshed after this trip.

Did you get the dress goods I sent you?

(Can you make out this scrawl?)

Best of best love,

Will.

(over)

Did I tell you that I saw old Patterson a little while ago? He has come back from France to train for his commission.

The picture of health. W.

Mar 13 (1918)

The Angels Rest,

16a, John St.,

Adelphi,

London, WC 2

Dear Father :

Your letter received yesterday. Glad to hear that things are going along so well at home; for, though we may be quite a long piece away from you, we often wonder what is taking place back home. The hardest of the hard winter ought to be past by this time and seems to be a real "hum dinger". We here hardly know what that means for we had such a lovely mild season. Only a skiff of snow and it lasted only a couple of days. Also ice got barely thick enough to carry a person that lasted a few days. And we have had very little rain so that the winter has been quite pleasant, and enjoyable. I can quite appreciate how people feel the cold going from this climate to Canada.

I am liking my life and work in London very much. It is a wonderful city. I have come in contact with a great many people, chiefly soldiers of course. During Feb we had over 8000 in our little hut. That is quite a number of men to put on their way. Of this bunch we secured free theatre tickets for 267, 280 were linked up with homes for an afternoon, evening, or weekend, 643 were fixed up for sleeping accommodations, 979 put on the way to where they could get a meal, 338 men were absolutely "broke" and we helped them out with a meal or bed; about \$800 was left with us for safe keeping.

We are anxiously watching the erection of our new Canad'n Y.M.C.A. Hut----that will be a great asset to us. It will be a couple of months yet before completed---labor and material are both so scarce.

Heard from both Frank and Murray recently. They both are well. Saw Frank a short time ago---was down to Witley Camp. He looks the pink of perfection. Saw a man today from near Blyth, Radford by name.

I expect next week to go to Scotland for a month or so with Headquarters of Edinburgh to organize tours, etc. for our men while on leave.

We are quite happy in our little home, "The Angels Rest", five very congenial men. We have no trouble about our food, and the air raids bother us very little, nothing yet very close to us---and London is a very big place.

Thank whoever is due for that \$50.00. Such money serves a very good purpose here, chiefly for men who are broke and out of luck. Also thank Tom Riddell for those good cigars. They are splendid and we can't get that kind here.

Feeling splendid.

Best love to all,

Will

May 9, 1918

My dear Mother : ---

Enclosed is a copy of my monthly report that I sent to Headquarters that may be of interest to you showing you a bit of what I am trying to do in Edinburgh. I had a splendid trip to Inverness last week but I have written telling you all about it. But I tell everybody about it that I meet. How I wish you could have been there, and by the old Harry, if it weren't for the submarines, etc, I would have you over here too. I know you would revel in the scenery and the beauty---and such fine people. I often think of you when I am seeing anything fine and wish you could see it too. I have met a good many girls and women in very little travels this last ten years and some of them are exceptionally fine, but I haven't met anyone yet that quite comes up to you. And when I see anything especially fine, it is you that I wish were along to see it, too. Oh, well, I am very young yet and so are you, and we may have the chance to see some of the world's best yet together. Who can tell? At least I am looking forward to something of that nature, my dear mother.

I am staying here at the Old Waverly Hotel and there are some fine motherly ladies stay there too, and I catch myself wishing that you were one of them. I have not got a boarding house since coming here, not expecting to stay long. Besides, there is a splendid view from my room window. It costs one 5/6 per night for bed and breakfast and I get my dinner and supper out. In some ways I like a hotel and in some I don't. For one things you are free to come and go as you choose. I have enjoyed here in Edin the companionship of Major Moffit who was in the same Brigade as I was in France. He is a Chaplain and a very fine man. While up at Inverness I saw Capt (Rev) Earp who was with the 16th Battalion in France and he and I were great friends---one of the finest men I ever knew.

I had a note from Frank and one from Murray a few days ago. They are both well. Murray was going back to a school for some courses and expects to be out of the line for some little time. Fortunately the Canadians have not been mixed up in this recent fighting. Perhaps matters might be more in our favor if they had a little more to do with them for they are devils to fight.

My successor for my work here in Edin arrived today. That leaves me free to return to London in a short time. I came up here for a month to do some prospecting work and now that is done, and I return to my old job in London. In some ways I will be sorry to return for I have come to like this place very much. Also the people. But in other ways, I shall be glad to return for I liked London and there is really more work to be done there as things stand at present. It will be good to get back to the old circle of friends and friendships, too.

How are things going at home? It will be spring now and things will be at their best. You will be busy in the garden, the flowers will be coming along, the birds singing, the hens laying. Seeding will be well advanced. How I hope you have a good season! Are you getting more used to Landesboro? I hope you like it better. It will be better in summer. Do you get out to the farm much? How is Colin getting along? Does he keep better health? And how is Berlina? How is Flora getting along? And Alice? Is she more content in the city than at home? How does Dad keep in health?

Much love to you & Dad.

Your loving son, Will.

17/6/18

My dear Mother :

Received your letter of May 19 a couple of days ago and was right glad to get it. Strange, but of all the letters I get from Canada I like to get yours best of all. Your hand writing is the most welcome. It is now over three years since I left Canada and many of the friendships have grown a bit away---but you are still the same, and I don't suppose

there is a day goes by but I think of you and wonder how you are getting along. It is summer again, middle of June. Things will be at their best in good old Huron. It won't be long till the Strawberry festivals will be in season. You will be quite handy for the Landesboro one. I hope they are a good crop this year. We had some here---they are a bit earlier in Eng.

In one of your letters you said that Rev's son is in London. Well, a funny thing happened. Last Sat a bunch of about 50 of us took a trip to visit the King's farm at Windsor, a short distance out of London. While walking about amongst the cattle, I was chatting with the boys and asking what part of Canada each came from. To my surprise one said from Landesboro. I said, "Well I'll be darned, what's your name, Abery? And sure it was. Isn't it funny how things turn out. And he said he had just heard from home and was coming to look me up. He seems to be quite a fine fellow. So here I am back in London after ten weeks spent in Scotland, ten very happy weeks. Edinburgh will always be a very pleasant memory. I liked the city and the people very much. And they certainly gave me a square deal and used me white. Now I am back in London this time with the Khaki University. This is a new venture for me and I am loaned to that institution by the Y.M.C.A. The pupils are the soldiers either in France or England. We are prepared to teach a man practically everything he may ask for from the beginning of public school up to University work. Some of our students can scarcely read or write. Most of them are asking for a course in agriculture or motor driving or business. There are three of us Major Weir, Lieut Brown & myself on the correspondence branch ie. we do most of our teaching by mail. (Maj Weir's home is Wingham, he taught Harlock school and his bro taught Auburn one time) At present we have about 600 students. For some of the subjects we do the teaching ourselves, for others we get those who know them. I am doing English, History, Latin, Psychology, etc. I think I will like the work very much. It is a new venture and the whole future is open. The idea is to help a man to do his job better when he returns to Canada. Dr Tory, the Pres of Alberta University Edmonton is at the head of the whole thing. He is a splendid man.

Had a letter from Frank a few days ago. Sent him a watch. Also heard from Murray. Both well, alas Alex. So you had Dr. Davidson. I used to think him very fine.

I am glad to get back to London and to the old friends here. They have all been so good to me. It was a treat to see Mr Campbell again.

I had dinner the other day with D.W. Paterson (Donald's D.). He had just returned from France to get his commission. He looks the picture of health. At present he is up in Scotland on leave. One of our Y.M.C.A. men, Lieut Crow, married a cousin of Mrs Lawrance, a cousin alas of Allie Lawrance.

We are getting plenty to eat here now---of course we never went hungry, tho' we couldn't get the large quantities of things as in civil life.

Am playing a bit of tennis to keep myself in good condition. Am feeling fine---my trip to Scotland did me good, as I was feeling a bit fogged before that.

Best love and kind wishes to you and Dad and the rest. Is Mary home now?

Your loving son,

Will.

P.S. Will send on the things for the others soon. W.

Oct 9 (1918)

Dear Mother & Father :

Oct 9! Bly the Fair Day! I wonder! It is just such weather as the fair day often is---rainy, heavy, dull & cold. We have had some very fine days lately but it has taken a turn today. Of course you will be having it colder, frost, etc.---that is something we will not likely see here till almost Xmas. Apple picking, (makes my mouth water), potato picking (saw some Hun prisoners doing this yesterday), silos, threshing, fall plowing, etc, etc.---see how my mind runs back to the farm. And there are a lot of worse places to be!

Well, I am getting better again. Have been up and out each aft for 4 or 5 days. Feel a bit weak & otherwise coming along O.K. I have had the very best of treatment in this hospital here and have nothing but highest praise for nurses, Dr & staff.

Murray & I went out to see Frank yesterday. Both are coming along well. Murray is going about, but his heart is a bit weak yet. He looks to be in the pink of health, and feels well. He says he is good for 6 or 8 months in Eng. I do not see

much possibility of his getting out of the army yet. He will likely get some job at the base camp in Eng. Frank looks fine too. The color and fullness is back to his face. He is still in bed with his arm tied to a chair. He says it gives him no pain, not even when they dress it. It has been kept out straight all the time yet, but they expect to bend it at the elbow some day soon. Then he will be able to get up as they can fasten it across his chest then. He said yesterday that he thinks it will get him back to Canada. The Dr. of course says very little---that is the way in the army--but the nurse told him it would come alright in the course of time. So the kid is in good spirits. It is mighty fortunate that they are both out of the show at present raging. My old chum, Capt Robinson of 20th Batt'n, has been killed. (2-9-18, M.C.)

How are things going with you two at home? You will find it a bit quiet after a busy summer. The three of us here were talking over your situation. It is our unanimous opinion that you had better spend on yourselves some---a good deal---of that money you have spent years in gathering together. The both of you have worked hard together to get it, and now we think the both of you should enjoy it together. You have earned a good deal of the good things for all the sacrifice you have gone through for your family. Now every one of us is doing for ourselves, you need worry no further about our finances. I take it that you had to start life without much financial backing---now let your offspring do the same. You have given us all the chance of a good education, a good start, and now it is "up to us". I am now 33 years old, and I think I have a right to an opinion and a right to express it. When you were 33 you thought so of yourself. Now, the three of us think you ought to spend more money on yourselves, more comforts for your home. Take some trips to see something of your own country or U.S.A.--- that is not money badly spent, but money invested. I look upon my travelling about as the best part of my education and the most enjoyable. Visit your friends and relations, and go also where you have none.

We also think you ought to get a car. It will be both useful and a source of enjoyment. I am willing to send you \$100 for this purpose.

You can do all these things without impairing your loyalty to Red Cross or the other just & worthy war causes.

Let us know what you think about this. I sent you \$100 for Xmas last year and that is the money which went astray.

However, I have the bank tracing it up & they will get it.

Your loving son,

Will.

P.S. I have some very urgent invitations to spend my convalescent leave with several families. I thank God for the good friends I have made in this country.

Nov 13 (1918)

My dear Folks at home :

Praise the Lord!

Rejoice and be glad! The war is over! What a happy occasion this is! Just to think---the war is over! How many happy people there are in the country and in the world. I wish you could see this old city. It goes absolutely wild. I never saw or expect to see such scenes of wild rejoicing again. The streets, the main ones and squares, simply packed and jammed with people so that motors, etc could scarcely move. And people climbed on them sticking like a swarm of bees, as many as 20 on a Ford car. Cheering, singing, dancing on the street, people dancing in rings, whistles, bells, anything to make a noise. Flags, buntings, etc. French soldiers, Italians, Serbs. Our soldiers & sailors absolutely cut loose---and yet everything was done without damage to persons or property. Saw dignified London policemen carried shoulder high. And when the King and Queen pass along the streets, the pandemonium is like nothing on earth. Wonderful! Wonderful! And there are tears too.

I am back to work again feeling pretty well. Murray is back at camp after a splendid leave. Saw Frank on Sun. He is coming along now but had a rather bad time with the hand. The Dr. thought once he would have to take it off. He looks better now and the Dr. is very pleased with that he has done. Just got word today that John Fingland has been killed.

I had a delightful two days at Southport at the Boothroyd home. They were exceedingly good to me and the little kids gave me the most hearty reception I have ever received.

Soon the boys ought to be coming home. Murray & Frank ought to go back amongst the first as they are not "A" class. It looks as tho' I will be here for some time yet on my work. But it will be best for you to get the other two home first.

There will be great rejoicing in Canada too. Oh! Happy land! Was there ever a time like this?

I am staying again at the Angel's Rest. It is very comfortable.

Now I must go and see the crowd again, thousands---I was going to say millions---gathered in the streets and singing. I wish you could see this old city. It is a wonderful spot. Oh well, you will see it yet. I want you to see Eng & Scot because I think a lot of these places. And I have met such kind and lovely people.

Goodbye for the present. Now rejoice and be glad!

Best love to all and best of best wishes for the "duration of peace".

Your loving son,

Will.

Jan 11. (1919)

My dear Mother :

I have just written a letter to Etta McDiarmid and now I want to write to you one too. In fact I generally write to the two of you together, and between the two of you, you get the bulk of my letters to Canada, and you get more than what she does. She is very good in writing to me. I have grown to like her very much, in fact I don't know of any one that I like better. I have met some very fine girls over here and come to know some of them real well, but there isn't one that surpasses her in my estimation. It is coming to look more and more as though we will cast in our lot together for the rest of our days, though there is nothing settled in that way as yet, and I do not think anything will be till I return to Canada. I have changed a good deal in the last four years, and she will not see quite the same Will Fingland that she said Goodbye to then. And if she sees that I do not measure up to what she expects---well she is as free as the wind that blows. Moreover my own future is very uncertain. I don't know what to do when I am free of the army. There is nothing at all definite in view yet, and I wouldn't like to ask a girl to share her lot with me till I have something definite in the way of a livelihood to offer. So the future is pretty much a blank. In some ways I would like to go into the ministry, in many ways not. The Y.M.C.A. work appeals to me in many respects, and I know I can get work with that organization. In many respects I would like to go into educational work of some kind and again, politics has grown upon me this last year or two. I would like to take a year or two at College yet, perhaps in this country or in the States. So I am at a loss to know what to do. However something will no doubt open up in the next few months.

I didn't get this letter finished when I started it so here goes for another attempt. This going about from camp to camp doesn't afford much opportunity for writing letters. I have to catch the chances when they come. You see, I am making another trip around the Forestry Corps units in northern Eng and southern Scotland. I am writing this at Jedburgh, just north of the Chariot Hills. I went to visit Jedburgh Abbey yesterday, one of the famous old abbeys of Scotland but now partly in ruins. It was a huge church where monks used to live, built in 1100. It was partly destroyed seven times by the hated Eng and you still hear the old prejudice against them. Today I am going to see Melrose Abbey about 20 miles from here---am going with the Major in command of this company in his car. Then I go to another camp for tonight. I am giving a lantern lecture every night, spending two nights in each camp. This is my third trip around these camps and I am getting to know them pretty well and find a hearty reception whenever I go. I expect to spend this coming weekend in Edinburgh. I am always glad to get there, as I like the place very much--I think I like it the best of any place I have ever been. I like the city and I like the people. I am helping this time also to call on the Finglands at Paisley. They sent me a very nice book for Xmas and the old Grannie wrote such a nice letter. While in Edin. this time I hope to attend a meeting of a Masonic Lodge, one known as the Royal Arch ie. a degree higher than Master Mason. The Lodges in Edin are very fine and give a person a very hearty reception. Masonry has meant a great deal to me during the war. I wonder how Dad is coming along with his. I am mighty glad that he got into it.

I wonder where Mary is now? Did she get away this time? If so she will likely be on the Pacific. It will be a great experience for her, and no doubt she will enjoy it because it is bringing her nearer the aim of her life. That has been

her ideal and she will not be perfectly happy till she reaches it.

How is Colin's health? Does he keep any better? And does he slave away the way he used to? Perhaps that was partly the cause of his trouble. I wonder if you will have Murray home by this time. How glad you will be to see him! And Frank ought to be coming home before long too. You will be mighty glad to see him. Poor kid, he has had quite a shake.

Later still.

We have just returned from a trip to Melrose Abbey---a splendid trip. It is a very interesting old spot. This is my second trip there---and I will go again the first chance I get.

I am feeling fine. Everybody tells me how well I am looking. Haven't felt better for years, that is I have never felt better.

A couple of hours ago I had Father's letter written on Jan 1st. Glad to hear that all are well.

Best of best love from,

Will.

Beaver Hut

Feb 2, 1919.

Dear Mother & Folks at Home :

A few lines tonight before I go to bed. I have just returned from another tour of the Forestry Corps units in north of Eng, south of Scotland, and found two letters from home waiting for me. The news of Murray's accident came as quite a surprise. I saw an account of the accident the day after it happened but little thought of associating it with him. It is too bad to think that he had to get knocked out when so near home after all he has come through. But it might have been a good deal worse and we are thankful that we all have come through this game with our lives. I had a letter from Frank a couple of days ago and expect to see him tomorrow. He is now in a Convalescent Hospital at Taplow, about 30 miles from London. He says that he is feeling pretty well again, but may have to have further treatment for his arm. He has had quite a long pull with that fin but it seems to be coming around. It has been a pretty painful thing. It is quite likely that you will have him at home before long. And he will be glad for I think he is a bit "fed up" with hospital life. Of course it is not all sunshine. You will be glad to have both him and Murray at home again, and Alex too. I am not sure yet when I shall return but I think I will be here for at least six months yet. They are keeping me pretty busy and I am enjoying my work, so I have no cause to worry. This educational work may come to an end soon, at least as far as my end of it is concerned, then the Y.M.C.A. is anxious to have me back with them in their work. They have been mighty good to me and I want to meet every obligation I possibly can in this way to them. In fact I sometimes think of following that work after the war.

I wonder where Mary will be now. She ought to be very near the Orient by this time, near the ambition of her life. I hope that she will be as happy in her work as she hopes to be. She has looked forward to it for a long time and now her ambition has been realized. You will miss her, but I don't think her going away will be as hard as the boys going to the war. You seem to have had quite a nice visit in Toronto, Mother. I wonder how you like that city. It is a pretty good spot to live. I had a letter from Flora, Alice & Jemima and they all seem quite happy in the city. I am glad they all received the Xmas goods. I thought they were pretty nice and they looked like a real useful present for a Canadian winter. We had a little snow in north of England---enough to whiten the ground, and a little frost, but scarcely enough to make ice.

I went to look up your distant relative, Mr Houston at New Cunnock, and got quite a hearty reception. You had not told me that he was a brother of John Houston of Auburn. He seems a very fine man. His farm is on the Afton River & Burns stayed there when he wrote "Flow Gently Sweet Afton". It was rather a strange coincidence but I happened to be there on Burns' Birthday. I had an epidemic for looking up relatives this time while in Scotland. I went to look up a Fingland family (John) in Glasgow where I had been once before. He has quite a family of grown up children. He told me of this Samuel Fingland. He is a photographer at the Glasgow University. I went to see him, an old man. He was sick & I missed him but saw his brother, a white-haired old man, and got quite a pressing invitation to visit them next time to Scotland. Also spent a day at the Paisley home. That Mr Fingland says he had a relative who married a

Halliday and lived in or near Hamilton, Ont, Canada. The other Mr. Fingland mentioned the above one from Sauguhat. I also called on the other Fingland relative (?), Sister Hinchey, who nursed me at Matlock Hospital, niece of the Finglands of Brampton, Ont., on my way through Matlock. She is a fine girl. So I had quite a time.

I am feeling fine---the very best, getting fat. Quite a lot of trouble here over strikes, etc, saw some of the strike in Glasgow.

Must close and get to bed. Best of best love to all.

Your loving,

Will.