

DARLING MADGE

Letters

1914-19



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1914–19



Published by the narrative press

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Madge in the
photo referred to
in Eddie's letter
of 4 January 1917

Preface

On 2 August 1914, two days before the declaration of what would become known as the Great War, George Edward Smith – Eddie – wrote to Margaret Higgins – Madge – setting out his proposal of marriage. Although we have no record of her response, history confirms that she accepted: the two eventually married and many years later became my grandfather and grandmother.

Within a week of his proposal, motivated by a strong sense patriotism and adventure, Eddie had volunteered at Gibraltar Barracks in Leeds for active service to become 72432 Sapper Smith GE of the Royal Engineers doing squad and rifle drill.

At that time Eddie knew only his native Yorkshire. He could not have known that he had embarked on a dangerous ordeal that would last almost five years, much of it spent in the Middle East and in particular the region he would have known as the Holy Land.

Before the War Eddie and Madge had both worked as telegraphists at Harrogate Post Office. Once enlisted, it was this technical skill that led Eddie, along with many fellow Post Office employees, to be recruited as a Sapper in the Northern Signals Unit of the Royal Engineers. With so many of the men away, the running of the Post Office fell to the women, like Madge, who were left at home.

Throughout his years of service Eddie and Madge maintained a devoted correspondence, writing to each other at least once a week. Apart from rare, short periods of leave before he left England in April 1915, letters were to be the couple's only means of communication until Eddie returned in March 1919. This book is a transcript of the letters from Eddie to Madge. Sadly, those from Madge to Eddie were lost along the trail of his journey.

The letters provide an intimate portrait of the life of a private soldier, his interests and attitudes, as well as his perceptions of the people and places he encountered during the War. They record the intense pleasure Eddie derived from receiving Madge's letters, his only link to his fiancée in a pre-digital world where even telephones were rare. Eddie's letters also allude to sufferings borne with remarkable stoic fortitude but, above all, they are testament to the constancy of his love and devotion to Madge.

My father inherited the letters in 1965 when Eddie died. When I was growing up the sack containing the neatly tied bundles of letters was stored in the lofts of our various houses – a familiar feature alongside the suitcases, old toys, military uniforms and other things of occasional use. My father would not open the letters, considering them to be an intimate dialogue between his parents that he respected as being private between them. It has fallen to the next generation to untie the bundled letters and to read the words written one hundred years ago in Grandfather Eddie's neat, disciplined hand.

In addition to maintaining a continuous flow of correspondence Eddie kept a daily diary of his army service. A transcript of this diary, *Smith at War*, was published in 2014 and provides an overview of his adventures during the Great War. This companion volume of letters provides deeper insight into the character and mind of the man as he shares his thoughts and feelings with his future wife, Darling Madge.

Steven Smith 2016

A map of Eddie's wartime journey



- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Harrogate | 11 Kantara – 21 July 1916 |
| 2 Leeds – 11 August 1914 | 12 El Arish – 20 February 1917 |
| 3 Biggleswade – 27 August 1914 | 13 Rafa – 16 March 1917 |
| 4 Avonmouth – 14 April 1915 | 14 Gaza – 25 March 1917 |
| 5 Valletta – 24 April 1915 | 15 Damascus – 1 November 1918 |
| 6 Alexandria – 27 April 1915 | 16 Homs – 8 November 1918 |
| 7 Cape Helles, Gallipoli Peninsula – 19 June 1915 | 17 Port Said – 9 March 1919 |
| 8 Mudros Bay, Lemnos – 1 December 1915 | 18 Taranto – 19 March 1919 |
| 9 Ismailia – 11 January 1916 | 19 Southampton – 25 March 1919 |
| 10 Cairo – 7 March 1916 | |

Some notes on the text

Readers with a good knowledge of the geography through which Eddie travels may not recognise many of the place names he uses. His spelling of place names was generally based on either his phonetic transcription into English of names he had heard spoken, or his attempt to give an English translation of names he had only seen written in Arabic script. In most instances we have used his spellings, only introducing changes for the sake of consistency.

There are occasional interruptions to the flow of correspondence. It is most likely that these gaps are due to the loss of mail ships through enemy action, or the general chaos of war, often mentioned in the letters.

Sometimes Eddie uses words not found in modern dictionaries – these are either regional in origin, contemporary slang words or part of a private vocabulary used by Eddie and Madge. Occasionally the reader will encounter terms that, although in common usage at the time, are now considered offensive or racist. As this is a historic record we have not omitted these and hope that the overall attitudes expressed in the vast majority of the text will allow readers to form a balanced view of Eddie's true character and attitude.

The illustrations are a combination of images from postcards that form part of the correspondence with Madge and photographs taken by Eddie, or sometimes his friends and colleagues, which he sent home in letters and which were later compiled into albums.

The production of this book has required the diligent efforts of a number of collaborators. Firstly, having received the jumbled sack of papers there was a process of collating, filing and scanning each letter. The letters were then sent to my niece, Lilka Szersynska Thompson, via email – a process that would have amazed and delighted my Grandfather Eddie had he been alive to see the direction in which telegraph technology would develop. Lilka patiently transcribed all the letters. The letters were then passed for copy editing to Ellie Duffy who deciphered obscure abbreviations and also added some explanatory notes. Finally Katya Duffy designed and compiled the book for printing.

26 Albert St,

Harrogate. 2 Aug 1914.

My Dearest Madge,

Have just been having a busy time at the Office. We are open all day on account of the European crisis. Things are looking very grave and the latest news is that Germany has declared war against Russia and France, and the latter country are invoking the aid of Engd. Both Germany and France are mobilizing, and dozens of waiters were withdrawing by telegraph from the Lanybank yesterday and leaving the country. One can imagine what a stampede there will be at Dover, Newhaven &c.

I did not know I had any patriotic feeling, but now I believe I would enlist if they ask for men. However we will wait and see. I should not like to enlist and break my service in any way. The Post Office have already stopped a leave at the places on the Coast & at V.M.R.L.

9

1914

26 ALBERT ST, HARROGATE

2 AUGUST

My Dearest Madge,

Have just been having a busy time at the office. We are open all day on account of the European crisis. Things are looking very grave and the latest news is that Germany has declared war against Russia and France, and the latter countries are invoking the aid of England*. Both Germany and France are mobilizing, and dozens of waiters were withdrawing by telegraph from the savings bank yesterday and leaving the country. One can imagine what a stampede there will be at Dover, Newhaven etc. I did not know I had any patriotic feeling, but now I believe I would enlist if they ask for men. However we will wait and see. I should not like to enlist and break my service in any way. The Post Office have already stopped all leave at the places on the coast and at York, Manchester and Leeds.

I hear from Jackie that they require a lot of telegraphists at the Coast Stations so I am applying tonight for a job. I hope you will forgive me for not consulting you on the matter, but no doubt I should not stand a chance if I delayed. The work is of a temporary nature and carries a subsistence allowance of 4/- per day. I don't think my leave will be deferred, at least I am hoping it won't.

With reference to yours, of course I wasn't giving up hope. I think you have gone to a lot of trouble seeing what a distance you are from the post. I cannot help smiling at the 'don't know anything and can't do anything' tale. I have never contested it because it appears so humorous to me. If it be true, well I wish I knew nothing and couldn't do anything. If I may say so, I think you are very much accomplished in useful things and those are the ones which count and give happiness to others. In other words I might put it that a hungry person would rather eat a decent meal than hear a verse of poetry or listen to some music. Am so pleased you are getting about a little. Shall expect to see you looking quite well on the 8th.

Regarding the paragraph in your letter about carrying it about in my pocket etc. I will consider the matter, but really I can't carry out the instructions. I haven't had time to make any notes on Wigtownshire but hope to do something next week. I am rather in a fix just now. I want to ask you something but don't quite know whether it would be fair to ask you in a letter. Anyway you can always tell me if I am out of order. I will really give notice in this letter and then ask you when I see you by yourself. You see, before a member asks a question in Parliament it is usual for him to give notice. To put the question as short as possible it is this: I have been wondering for the past few weeks whether my term of probation is about finished and whether I stand any chance of being appointed? The appointment I refer to is that of being your 'law laddie' for keeps, and it is what I desire more than anything else on earth. I hardly dare say so, because it seems weakness on my part, but I feel as tho' I cannot live without you. It's your fault II..IIx My term of probation does not appear a very satisfactory one from my point of view. I have tried to make you happy and perhaps only succeeded in a feeble way. While I have done nothing wrong I don't think I have done anything good or anything to show that I love you. What a pity! I could mention several other drawbacks on my part, i.e. I'm second born, I'm younger than I should be, I don't earn a living wage as yet, and it may be some little time before I do, I don't possess as much money as I might do. Also I am bad tempered, mean etc. All these things make it appear that I have nothing to offer but love and hopes that I may become a better specimen of humanity in the future. I might just say one thing in my favour and that is as long as I know you I have a big desire to be good. Charles Garvice** represents the young man who is always sinning as an admirable character, he is wrong tho'. Further, I believe I can appreciate you and it would always be a pleasure to try to make you happy. I can't spare time to tell you any more as am on duty shortly, but I would like you to think the matter over dearest at your leisure and then you will perhaps be in a better position to make me very happy or otherwise when I see you II..II I certainly would not wish you to be in a hurry. II..II Kindly forgive me if you would rather I hadn't given notice. I send my best love and kindest thoughts. KR to all.

Yours devotedly, Eddie

R2. Have been reading thro' the above and hardly like to send it, but the crux of the position is that I should very much like to buy you a ring.

** Germany declared war on the Russian Empire on 1 August 2014 and on France on 3 August 2014.*

*** Charles Garvice (1850–1920) was a prolific British author of romantic novels. He was 'the most successful novelist in England', according to Arnold Bennett in 1910, and had sold over 7 million books worldwide by 1914.*

1914

4 AUGUST

Dearest Madge,

Thought I would drop you a line before going to work. Am working 9 pm to 7 am on telegraphs for the crisis. We are open all night upstairs. There is not much doing so am finishing the opals. We have been exceptionally busy during the daytime, I worked 10 hours on Sunday and the same on the Bank Holiday. Am wondering if you get the latest news at Glenluce. There has been a naval battle in the Baltic. Our Navy is not at full strength and the Army is mobilising. Some of our soldiers are now in France. All territorial camps are disbanded. There is not the slightest doubt but that England will be drawn in*. Do you happen to know the name of your brother's ship? I suppose he will be taking part somewhere in the North Sea. Harrogate is going to be empty of visitors. The grocer's shops are all closed except one today. Food etc. will shortly be at famine prices. The Government are going to control the railways and the food supplies. We shall have to wait a few days before I can be sure of coming to see you. I do hope I can dearest, but one's own affairs seem to sink into oblivion at times like these. Perhaps you will say what you think about it when you write. I hear gold is going to be very scarce. We have stopped changing fivers at the office. Some £1 notes will be issued shortly. We have also stopped paying SB warrants.

Best love and kind thoughts, Eddie

Shall be thinking of you when I see the sunrise at SRB tomorrow.

** At 11 pm on Tuesday 4 August 1914 Britain's ultimatum to Germany expired. A few minutes later Britain declared war on Germany*

6 AUGUST

My Dearest Madge,

Am writing before I go to rest this morning and very much regret to say that holidays are stopped, that is no further leave will be allowed for the present, those on leave finishing their holidays. To say I am disappointed hardly expresses my feelings dearest, and I know you will be disappointed. On thinking the matter over I find there is no way out and the best thing is to accept the decision as cheerfully as poss. Disappointments are a kind of training ground in unselfishness. My hols are postponed for the good of the country and it is only a small sacrifice when compared with the sacrifice of those who go to war and don't return. Perhaps you will tell them at home how sorry I am that I can't get away. I wish I could say something to you Madge that would recompense you for the disappointment. The only happy thought I can conjure up is that I love you and experience a big happiness when I know that I have your love.

I can't thank you enough for you letter dearest. Thanks for consent to go to

the coast. I wish I could have seen you nursing. I really believe you don't know how to hold a baby. We can discuss the other matter when we meet again, which I hope will be soon. I would just like to assure of one point tho', and it is that my happiness is always assured, so long as I can make you happy. I wish I could do something to show that I love you. The days of chivalry are over tho'. There are other ways of doing so tho', and I hope I shall be able to spot them.

I have heard unofficially that the Postmaster has refused to spare any men for the Coast Stations. I shall know definitely on Saturday tho'. I believe my last letter intimated that I should like to enlist. Well, failing the Coast Station I should like to do so. It is a pity, but after thinking the matter over very carefully I can't persuade myself from the desire. Of course I could join for a year and maybe less. After receiving your letter this morning I find it rather a difficult task to ask your permission. Will you please think it over and say what you think. It is rather a paradox to say that I love you one minute and the next minute to be asking if I may go away. I wish I could explain that my desire to do my share has no bearing on my love for you. Anyway, if you say emphatically 'no' I will drop the idea quite cheerfully, but I want to join. Mrs Cameron who has been staying here sends her kind regards and all at home send love. I send all my best love.

Yours for ever, Eddie
KR to all

9 AUGUST

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks very much for yours received this morning. I have taken your advice and attended church. The sermon took the form of a resumé of the War and was very interesting. I am on duty at 9 pm tonight until 7 am Monday. I hear we are giving a continuous service throughout the week so shall be working the same hours. Harrogate is fairly quiet; a hospital is being founded under the auspices of Grande Duchess Georges of Russia*. We have handed in all our gold and are using pound notes and Postal Orders as currency. There is no poundage charged on POs now and anyone who sticks to gold is, in an indirect way, assisting the enemy. Food prices are coming down a little I am pleased to say. I too wondered all along what I had done to earn a week's holiday with you. I am disappointed but am almost cheerfully resigned to that which cannot be avoided. I was in the office at 9 am and mentioned that I had time to pack up and catch the noon train if I had permission. I would have come just as I was.

With regard to the Army etc., the paper came down asking if I could be spared for a Coast Station and Mr Nutt replied that no officers could be spared from Harrogate. I have not yet been officially informed but I think Nutt has not been a 'sport' in this matter because he gave me to understand that he would do his best. I fully understand your feelings about my joining the Army dearest, I

also understand how hard it must be for those who anxiously wait at home. At the same time I feel I should be lacking in manliness and should always reproach myself if I stood back at a time like this. I thank you and admire you very much dearest for leaving the matter to my conscience. Of course I have discussed the matter at home and the Mater is willing for me to go. At present I very much doubt whether I shall be released from Harrogate. The Post Office Secretary and Army authorities are quarrelling about men. So far I have put in a paper asking for permission to join the Army. I have also been to see the Recruiting Officer, who knows nothing. They really are asking people to sign on for four years or until the War ceases. I do not wish to be bound for so long but will get full particulars before I take any steps. Failing my enlisting I shall join the local rifle association. I do wish to do my share tho'. FR has joined the regulars for four years. (Latest news: I hear Liege is taken by the Germans.)

I sympathise with you all in anxiety for Arthur. Up to the present I think you can take it for granted there has been no engagement in the North Sea. It was denied in the House. I will endeavour to watch the news, but the papers seem so unreliable. I don't know if you take *The Daily Mail*, but I will send you a *Daily Mail* War Map** for use at home then you can see where the engagements are. I am so sorry that the weather has been so indifferent with you, but no doubt you will be appreciating your stay at home. I begin to think that the early months of the year are best as regards weather.

Now please don't make a mistake that I should enjoy Mrs Cameron's company equally as well as coming to Scotland. She wears a person out, and I find an hour's talk is sufficient for me. While I am quite aware that comparisons are odious, I don't think she is as nice as our Aunties. It is a wise move on your part to reverse on Friday, the trains may be running badly. Thanks for kind wishes for Sunday, I am thinking about you, so shall be as happy as poss in your absence. I am getting on fairly well with the songs, but to speak the truth my mind is not on them II..IIx I have got quite a collection.

If I study my personal wishes I should like to say how very pleased I shall be to see you back. Hitherto I used to feel that I could be independent of anyone else and be happy and contented, but the few months' friendship with you has made me feel incomplete by myself. I always experience a big happiness when I am with you, I know that I don't gush about it at the time but all the same I appreciate your company. I have missed you very much this holiday, and it may seem a wonder to you why I have never missed you before in years gone by. I think that I would hardly have dared to aspire to be in such a position. I know I have admired you for years, and I am sure a man would be devoid of judgement if he didn't admire you. I hope and pray every day that I shall be able to make you perfectly happy. Well I must ring off – I think I've had 6 minutes. Give my kind regards to all at home. I hope they will soon be free from any anxiety. I will let you know my movements as soon as I know anything definite. I will not do anything rash or take any steps without full consideration and I won't leave before you return. While I don't mind going foreign, still I want to be assured that my office position would be waiting for me on return. Kindly excuse errors

1914

in this letter. I wish I could write you one which would really express all I think. Please accept all my love.

Yours IW, Eddie

** The Grand Duchess George of Russia was stranded in Harrogate with her invalid daughter when hostilities broke out. A week later she announced the founding of an 18-bed hospital, Tewit Well – the first of five hospitals for injured servicemen that she funded in Harrogate during the War.*

*** The Daily Mail War Map compared the war strength of the opposing powers. It was sold by the newspaper for 2 shillings.*

10 AUGUST

My Dearest Madge,

Thought I would drop you a line tonight as I am being mobilised. I was really hoping that I should be here when you returned but it doesn't point that way. I applied to Royal Engineers at Leeds to know if they had any vacancies and a telegram came today instructing me to report at the Barracks as early as poss. I replied that I couldn't report until I received permission from the Department and that I had asked permission on the 7th inst. The Commanding Officer has now wired the Postmaster calling upon him to allow me every facility to join. I am keen on joining and of course shall be delighted to answer the call. I am sorry tho' to leave you dearest (that's if I do go), but I am only joining a territorial unit and shall soon be back. If I do go up I will make every attempt to get over on Sunday. I do so want to see you. I hope you will kindly forgive me if I have been in a hurry in joining but one has to take an opportunity when it occurs. The *Daily Mail* map will not be on sale until tomorrow. I will send you one. I send all my very best love for you and I feel a bit nervous as to whether I am causing you any anxiety. I am sure you will be gifted with a large amount of trust and faith and it is comforting if you can believe, like I do, that whatever happens it is to serve some useful purpose, and to try and accept it cheerfully. KR to all.

All best love and kindest thoughts, Eddie.

1914

CABLE SECTION
NORTHERN SIGNALLING 6
ROYAL ENGINEERS
GIBRALTAR BARRACKS
LEEDS
11 AUGUST

Dearest Madge,

I have signed on today and we are expecting orders for Bedford, I think, shortly. I would very much like to see you before I go away if possible but will let you know if I can get over. KR to all.

Love, Eddie

NO DATE

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks so much for yours. I have just received instructions that we are to get full civil pay while in training, so that is very nice. I am getting on fine but owing to the rush have not yet received full uniform. The life is very rough but we have about 30 PO chaps here and they are all grand pals from all over England. It is every man for himself, especially at mealtimes. The meals are taken on the floor. We sleep between blankets with boots and jacket as pillow. The sleeping accommodation in Drill Hall is very noisy and rough. However I 'kip in' – that is sleep in – a kind of butler's pantry upstairs. The life is no worse than I expected, it is a pity to see some of the PO boys so homesick. I will do my very best to get over on Friday and also Sunday. You can rest assured I am picking my pals and having a jolly good time. All best love,

Eddie

Note: In 1914 the Post Office employed over 250,000 people and had a revenue of £32 million. It was the biggest economic enterprise in Britain and the largest single employer of labour in the world.

NO DATE

My Dearest Girl,

Thanks for yours received this morning. Am sorry I have not been able to get out to buy some notepaper so perhaps you will excuse this foolscap. I am doing my best about Sunday but there is little chance. If I do happen to get off I will come over to see you. We are not yet in uniform owing to there not being plenty

in stock. It is rather inconvenient for us having no kit bag in which to lock up our belongings, but I ain't grumbling about it – I didn't expect a Metropole Hotel when I listed. The life is exceedingly rough but I am quite able to look after myself. I welcome the rough life if it will make a real man of me. I have enlisted as a Territorial for four years and of course shall do a fortnight's training each year after the War finishes. I hope when I return perhaps you will feel a little proud of me for willingly offering to do my little bit for King and Country. I have asked a lot in joining. I mean I have relinquished my chance of having any more happy times with you for months and months. I haven't gushed in the past but I realised that the few hours spent with you were the happiest I had known. I realise it even more now! I hope I am not presuming dearest when I venture to hope that you will be waiting for me when I return from the Army. It may be a lot to ask but of course it is your fault. If you were not the best girl in the world I should not be so eager! I feel that your love is the biggest prize anybody could obtain. About myself, I shall wait for you until I return. It will be one of my greatest pleasures to remain true to you, dearest. While the boys are decent, and we go about enjoying ourselves, still I have a will strong enough not to be led where I don't want to go.

I will try and give you a slight idea of my work. By the way I am now an operator but have only seen an instrument once since I came. The instruments are fitted on carriages like artillery guns. We ? an instrument at the Headquarters tent then the carriages leave with some troops and one of the men who sits on a seat plays out the wire. The carriage is so ? fitted that we sit there and speak back to the base tent while on the move. An earth return is made thro' the carriage wheels. There is an ordinary key but the sounder is a buzzer. We can also speak over a phone.

Barrack life is very, very rough. The only bugle call I know is 'cookhouse door'. We get up at 5am, get washed and go on parade (that is line up) at 6am. It takes about an hour before the officers have finished playing rounds, then cookhouse door goes. I am in a mess of 16 men. Breakfast is brought by some of the 16 men – a kind of bucket of tea, a large dripping tin of bacon or ham, and four loaves. We cut large slices of bread, place some bacon between and eat it sitting down on our sacks or anywhere in the drill hall. It can only be likened to feeding pigs but it is here and as the solid food is of good quality and as we are hungry there is no time to be fastidious. The man who delays or hesitates loses his meal – I may be slow but I always get there at mealtimes. All the meals are similar, we go out about 7 pm, get a steak and chips, perhaps go to a music hall and return about 10 pm in order to 'mark time' on some blankets. I have lost my butler's pantry and am now sleeping in a passage under stairs. The bed consists of two blankets on the floor and one to keep out the cold. The pillow is usually made of boots and co. We generally work during the day, going on parade or watering the horses or making an 'od up'. Anyway, I am enjoying myself all right and we are looking forward to a good time at Bedford.

Sending all best love, Eddie

1914

Give KR to Aunties and say how sorry I am that I couldn't see them before being mobilised.

17 AUGUST

My Dearest Madge,

I have been trying my best to get over but have failed. We are only out tonight from 7.45 to 10 pm. We were not out until late last night. I am so sorry dearest, but it can't be helped. I would do a week in the guardroom if I could only get to see you. As far as we know we leave for Bedford tomorrow, but letters addressed to Leeds will find us until I give you a new address. I am feeling quite fit and the change of life will suit me. The life has many compensations and I am having a good time. If we do not leave on Tue I will pop over if we can get permission. I hope you are quite well after your holiday. Kindly excuse card cos we cannot write letters. I've been doing some hard graft all today. I was sorry not let you know I was coming over on Sat. I only had a short time at home. All best love darling.

Yours, Eddie

21 AUGUST

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for yours this morning, also for *Record*. I cannot say for JR and HWL but the other boys would like theirs cancelling, as we have hardly time to read them. We should be glad if we may have copies with our camp notes in tho'. I was thinking if you are still taking *Record*, you could tie me one of yours to a letter occasionally when you have finished with it. I am very pleased with the nice book you have bought me dearest and shall look forward to reading it on return. I don't think you could have found anything to please me more, not even a pipe. You see I am very interested in anything connected with your homeland. I'm not feeling homesick dearest, because I carry a very happy thought with me. I feel that for once I have acted in a manly way and also that nobody has such a dear girl waiting at home as I have. I would like to come back to you, a man – I mean the kind of man anyone could rely on. I may get over to see you next week so kindly let me know your duty. I've been 'Mess Orderly' today. The meals have been a treat, altho' I say it myself.

All love and kind thoughts for you dearest, Eddie.
I think the pleasure at seeing each other was mutual.

1914

NORTHERN SIGNALS CABLE SECTION

ROYAL ENGINEERS

BIGGLESWADE

27 AUGUST

Arrived safely at Biggleswade at 8.15 pm after pleasant journey. We had ample room in train in saloons. We have been forming fours and marking time in the streets for two hours. Now we have arrived at a large mansion, which seems to have been unoccupied for some years and smells very musty. Thirteen of us are sleeping in a room about the size of your back room. We are quite cheerful and jolly, and I feel quite happy and contented, that is as far as I can be when I am such a long distance from you. At present we are all singing. Soup and bread and cheese has just been served and if I might use an Army expression it was 'DE'. By the way this mansion has been condemned because of the drains, and we are to be billeted for sleeping purposes in private homes tomorrow. I would have preferred canvas, but of course to sleep in bed will be a luxury. Well dearest I am writing this before going to bed. Shall only take boots and puttees off as we only have one blanket per man. I will post this in the morning. I hope you are getting on OK dearest, it really seems ages since Tuesday when I saw you. I shall now have to look forward to seeing you again as soon as poss. Kindly excuse mistakes as the chaps are singing etc. KR to Aunties. All dearest love.

Yours for always, Eddie

MANSION OF ACHING HEARTS

26 OCTOBER

My Dearest Madge,

I am on guard at the above so hope to be able to write you a letter. Thanks very much for *Record* yesterday and letter this morning. We have a nice guard today, chiefly composed of operators so hope to have a nice time. It is nice to find a few men who will act towards each other in a friendly manner, and think of others as well as themselves. You see, the greater part of the mob are all for self and never have any idea of doing a kind action. I am afraid you would not live in this Corps dearest, there are so many men who never appreciate kindness or consideration. I used to think my pal Blackburn was a little harsh but one finds it absolutely necessary.

I guess you would've had a rough passage on Sunday duty, being such a wet day. We did go to church in the morning but afterwards had to remove the loose lines and from the old lines we shifted about a ton of mud. It was hard work and many of our PO colleagues would have been amused if they had seen us. The field is practically a puddle trench and I don't know what we shall do if the River Lud overflows its banks. If it comes to swimming I shall be OK. We are going on manoeuvres this week but am not sure when. I wish you could

accompany us on these trips dearest. They seem to satisfy one's thirst for change and travel. The country is practically at its best, and the trees and bushes display all the colours ranging from green to bright red. Everybody is kind to us and I sometimes think we don't deserve it. It is heartbreaking to read of the hard times the soldiers are experiencing at the front. I wish we had the chance to do our little bit. Service at the front will be exceedingly hard, but every man feels that he would like to be there. We keep hearing reports that we are going shortly, but somehow we do not get definite news. Personally I think we shall go out before Xmas. If we are staying here I would like to do some reading or studying in the evenings, but up to now I have not found any spare time.

Am pleased that my cards cheered you up dearest, and when we pitch our tent I'd like to send you a card and let you know where we are. I always feel that I would like you to experience our pleasures, but of course the hardships would not do for you. I am so sorry to hear of Mr Polland's and Miss Ball's loss. I think I will write to Bob and perhaps you will convey my kindest sympathy to Miss Ball. Thanks for your love letter this morning dearest. I am glad my letters give you happiness, dearest, and I can only repeat that your letters seem to be my greatest pleasure. Your love is my greatest possession, dearest. I wish I could convey to you how much I love you darling, and how pleased I feel that you can place your trust in me. Perhaps seeing the soldiers at your counter will give you a slight idea of what our boys are like. They seem absolutely wild until the money is finished, and it is regrettable that their conduct frequently reflects on others as well as themselves.

I hardly know what to say about the dates dearest, am sorry that I have not been able to think of any. I would like you to decide about the date and trust in whichever you prefer dearest. I hardly like to say which day it was I first learned to care for you dearest. It is years ago, and you did not know and I think that I succeeded in keeping my thoughts in another direction. I felt it was my duty to do so. However fate or something else has decided differently. I have a certain consolation in knowing that I only gave Elsie her freedom when she asked for it, and would have carried on against my own inclination rather than take an unfair step.

Am pleased you have news of Davie, he is such a long way from here or I should try to see him. Of course he will be going foreign after some training. Your boys are seeing some life. One of the Scottish Horse boys told me that Alec McNaughton has received a Lance Corporal stripe. I should say he is worth it. I think my fountain pen is going fine, don't you? Am going on now for two hours so must leave you now dearest. Please let me know how you are and give my KR to Aunties and Mrs Benson. All my love and kisses for you dearest.

Yours always, Eddie

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29 OCTOBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks so much for yours received this morning. We are not on manoeuvres this week, our section has to remain in camp. I hope to be able to drop a line tonight. We have been working very hard and therefore do not seem to have had a lot of spare time. I received your card and letter both together this morning.

I cannot accept the side of the question taken by her 'Ladyship'. People may have doubts at times, but am pleased to say that they never visit me. In fact the best girl I have ever known will always remain the best girl to me. Thanks so much for writing me such a lovely letter when you are on OT. Your letters keep me quite happy and they help to overcome all my difficulties. You are doing good work for the cause, dearest, when you keep one soldier boy in good spirits. I send all my love and kind thoughts to you dearest.

Your boy, Eddie

29 OCTOBER

My Darling Madge,

Am just making an effort to answer your dear letter before retiring. I had any amount of news to tell you but seem to have forgotten it, owing to my landlord who has been telling me about his work. He talks for hours without ceasing. We are the only section left in camp while the others have gone on manoeuvres. The weather is very wet so I think we are favoured. I am sorry to say that Matt Williamson is on sick leave. He and another lodge at a barber's shop, and the shop has been placed out of bounds, so it looks as tho' he had some infectious disease. You see we are forbidden to visit there as long as the place is out of bounds.

We are receiving a thorough training in musketry. The drills we go thro' are cruel. We are required to hold a rifle at the firing position for four minutes. I manage to get thro' fairly well and the drill will do us good, no doubt. It keeps coming to me that we are being trained in order to kill men. It's very sad to think that such is the case. It is said that a cable section is going to be made up for foreign service and if so I fancy that I may stand a chance. Of course it is only a rumour at present, and may not be true.

I do not think Lyon was selected. He happened to be in the section chosen for foreign service. In fact they do not seem to have recognised his abilities from a technical point of view up to the present. Yes that date will be OK dearest, it will be a date I can remember. I am sure you have done nothing to rob Elsie. I feel kindly towards her and hope she will attain happiness, and I am pleased you can express the same feelings. I'm sorry you are on overtime because I think 8 hours is quite enough, especially for a little girl. I wish I could come and help

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you. Perhaps I shall be able to work for you sometime dearest (weather permitting). I am sure that would be the happiest time of my life. Am beginning to wonder if a second leave is being granted. Nearly all have had a turn by now. I am not homesick but would like to see you dearest. Perhaps I'm greedy, but I think it is all your fault for being the dearest girl in the world. Perhaps you will kindly excuse more as I am yawning. It is nice to have a comfy bed when in the Army; and I would like to take mine on foreign service if we go. Please give my kind regards to Aunties and accept all my love.

Yours ever, Eddie. X GN

C/O MRS TAYLOR
STANFORD
NR BIGGLESWADE
1 DECEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for your two letters and *Venture*. I intended writing you last night but was on guard and had no writing materials with me. It was a nice guard, there was a warm southwesterly gale blowing so I did not experience the usual cold. I can wear my helmet on guard at Stanford, as the duty only deals with looking after about 30 horses. The Sergeant came home screwed last night and would persist in showing me how to challenge anyone when on guard. He was also in a bad way after dinner yesterday; he commenced to drill us and gave the order for us to double (that is run) and we were doubling round the field for half an hour. It was cruel after a heavy dinner but we managed to stick it. I shall get quite thin if the dose is repeated frequently. I finish my term of office on the mess committee today as we commence getting meals at the billets tomorrow. It has been a thankless office as our chaps are born grumblers, and every meal seemed to end up in a riot. I am still signwriting for the Army and after a few hours' indoors work I feel that I want to be outside again. I had chance to go into the Adjutant's writing office some weeks back but I declined with blanks. Reid is in there and now seems to be one of the chief men on what is called the Headquarters Staff. You will be pleased to hear he has got a stripe and is now a Lance Corporal. Of course he is getting on in years and the indoor work is better for him. He has no liking for washing carts or grooming horses.

Re your letter dearest I do hope that you have not postponed your visit to Stalybridge owing to me asserting my authority II..IIx Blackburn is still at Bedford and I think Colbert is there. The Colonel likes to keep men there when they become accustomed to the work. I am going to ask Sergeant Major if I may have a turn there. I would like the experience. They do not work in Bedford Office tho', the telegraphs are at an Army office in Bushmead Ave. The article on Kipling is very nice. One of our men lent me *Barrack Room Ballads* a few weeks since and I have quite enjoyed reading the poems in Army language. I can fully

appreciate them now that I am a soldier. I think the finest poem is 'Gunga Din', it is about a Hindu water carrier. The writer in the *Venture* gives an extract from one I like very much. It is where the young man chooses between Maggie and 'smoking'. I like the poem but I am not in sympathy with Maggie or the young man. She is very foolish and he has no real love for Maggie or he would not say that 'a million surplus Maggies are willing to bear the yoke, a woman is only a woman, but a good cigar's a smoke'. I am sure that there is no person in the world could give me the happiness that my Maggie does, and so if you forbid me to smoke I haven't a million to fall back on. So much for Kipling.

I went to Southill Church on Sunday morning. The service was very nice. I have met the parson a few times and he is very nice too. The new boots are OK thanks and I have had my others soled etc. at the Army's expense. The conditions of transfer to the Regulars are that we retain our pay and rank. It has come to light since writing you that we shall receive full civil pay. I am reluctant to make money on the job and I hope the Mater will accept some of my money when it comes off. Now that I am fully equipped with everything I can send some of my Army pay home, then the Mater can take some money and save some for me. I want to save a little if poss because at the present I have more love than money II..IIx About leave – I think passes will be resumed next week-end, and altho' I want to see you very much dearest, I would rather get off at Xmas. If I push for a pass now I may be barred at Xmas. I do not think they will send us away without giving us some leave.

The early parade was for a march to Biggleswade to hear the orders regarding transfer. I still have some nice pals here, young Sid Kemp from Huntingdon spends a lot of time at my billet. He is painting Xmas cards now. He is a jolly little fellow and we call him 'Stump' because of his build. By the way my nickname is Fritz because of the toothbrush on my upper lip. I am very much disgusted that I should be given a German name.

Well dearest I am still enjoying Army life. My biggest hardship is that I cannot see you once a week for a few mins. I should be very grateful. It is like a line in one of the songs we sing; 'I want some love that's true'. I realise it is the same for you tho', and I am always thinking how I can contribute to your happiness. I wish I could do more than I do. I hope I should come back more fitted to make you happy dearest. I shall certainly have a different outlook on life. I see so much gambling, drinking etc. even in our section that I feel I would rather be a muff than ever go in with the majority. It is poss tho' to be a decent chap without entering into these things.

I hope you won't be tired with reading all this dearest. The time spent in writing to you is the happiest time of my Army life. Am just going for a short constitutional now. I hope you are keeping well and will go back to work thoroughly refreshed and ready for Xmas pressure. KR to Aunties. All my love for you.

Yours always, Eddie

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6 DECEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Am having a night at home, just dropped a line to RWP and to the Mater so now it is your turn. I leave the best until the last. In reply to yours I have not commenced learning French but will do so if there are any classes at BGH. I am quite surprised that all the married men are desirous of joining. I think they owe a big duty to home and should stifle their thirst for adventure, the country is not so hard-up for telegraphists and 'Kitch'* asks for single men. The money is big no doubt but I would not like to think that I had joined for monetary reasons. In fact I hardly expected any civil pay when I enlisted. Of course I would not like to reverse the order that I should have more money than love dearest, but at the same time I do not admire the man who kneels down and solemnly declares that he is endowing the young lady with all his worldly possessions and his assets are nil. I have not discussed money matters with you dearest, in fact one hardly thinks of such things in connection with love. I am a 'washout' as regards saving, but will have to turn over a new leaf. It is the man's place to save and at the present time I am saving without any effort. I have to report that Frankie has received a stripe. He has done a lot of office work for them and is worth it. Am sorry to hear of Holbert. I saw him last night. Some of the young men think it is manly to go the pace. it is a silly game tho'. I do not like to be acting as a kind of parson to these chaps, but I will do my best if opportunity occurs.

I am rather anxious dearest to hear how you are. The Mater says you are far from well. I wish I could come and look after you. The thought that you fancied I should be going into the thick of it if I transferred to the Regulars. The only difference I know will be that I have a different nameplate on my shoulder. I do want to do my share at the front. I feel caged up here when I hear what a rough time they are having out there. I have received presents from you and from the Mater for my comfort and I feel that I do not deserve them until I've done my share. I am living in the lap of luxury, free from all danger while my fellow countrymen are in the thick of it. In fact I am a 'washout'. I hope you are not worrying about anything dearest. I wish I could come and make you happy. There is one thing which worried me a few weeks back and to be honest I ought to tell you. Miss EH must have obtained my address from someone at General Office. She wrote asking me to correspond with her in a friendly way. It is a thing I anticipated. I wrote back and declined very firmly as kindly as I could. I had no desire to do so dearest and further I want my love for you to be genuine. I hope you don't mind me mentioning the matter. A hundred such letters would not alter my devotion for you dearest. I hear we go back on Thursday and Blackie joins us tomorrow. I hope you are feeling a little better dearest. Please let me know. All best love.

Yours, Eddie

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* Lord Kitchener was appointed Secretary of State for War at the onset of the First World War, with responsibility for recruiting Britain's volunteer army. He was famously depicted on recruitment posters pointing at the viewer alongside the slogan 'Your Country Need You'.

9 DECEMBER

My Dearest Madge,

Suppose you will be wondering if I have had any success regarding leave. I am very sorry to say that there was nothing doing. The officer said he had instructions not to sign any passes but he would see how things stood in a week's time. I shall ask again tomorrow.

We are just jogging along as usual and our new men are settling down. There is no news on our applications to the posts offered for vibrator telegraphists. I called in at our orderly room at Biggleswade and Sgt. Reid told me that 54 men had volunteered for the posts and the Adjutant wired that only 11 applications had been received. Seems that we are washouts! It is most disheartening but I suppose we must accept our fate without grouching. We are getting some wet weather and if it is the same with you I suppose you will have to stay in. I would give almost anything if I could get a 48-hour leave just to come and see you dearest. I have done my very best but I realise that I am only a unit in the Army.

I find that country life is very passable on the whole. The people here are of the best and one would hardly hope to find such fine characters amongst poor people. I have lots of friends and their chief concern at the billet is that I shall never write when I leave. They are quite emphatic that I should bring you down here someday when the War is over. That may be quite a long time tho'. I would like you to see Bedfordshire sometime altho' I'm afraid the scenery would not compete with Galloway. By the way, I have been reading *The Bride of Lammermoor* ever since coming to Stanford. It is a very nice book but I am a slow reader.

They tell me JWS is progressing at Gillingham. We shall see him with a bar on his arm soon no doubt. I hope he enjoys the life as much as I do. I hope you are gaining strength day by day. Do try to hang on until I come over tho' II..IIx Give my KR to Aunties and all best love to you dearest.

Yours always, Washout

Card sent to
Madge from
shooting training
in Cambridge



1914

PICKEREL INN, CAMBRIDGE

15 DECEMBER

My Dearest Madge,

Thought I would write you a letter from Cambridge before going out for a look round. I have not received a letter from you since I got the one accompanied by the *Telegraph* journal, but it is my fault for travelling about so much. I have asked them to redirect any letters from Stanford so I may get one in the morning. Army life does not seem the same tho' dearest if I have not had a letter from you.

Well, I am quite enjoying this visit. The kip is OK, it is quite a respectable inn and the people are very nice. We are all billeted in boozers because it is easier to secure accommodation for a few days at places where they cater for travellers. We have a large commercial room to ourselves. Blackburn, Found and Lassiman are here with me. They are always playing pontoon and fortunes are won and lost in a night. I do not find interest in cards but we don't quarrel about it because I can always find some reading. Cambridge is a beautiful place, the special feature being the magnificent buildings. I am sure they are equal to the buildings on the continent. The shops are very nice also, especially the bookshops. One could spend a very pleasant fortnight looking at Cambridge and hunting after history, but we seem to have no inclination to go sightseeing after dark. We may go round the museum tomorrow.

Our hours are very good – parade 8.30 am, and finish shooting about 3 pm. The range is very bleak and damp and it has rained all day. We had to suspend shooting for an hour today owing to very heavy rain. We only got off 15 rounds. There are 60 more rounds to fire so we shall be very busy for the next two days. I am beginning to have confidence in my peashooter. My shooting is not of the best, but I hope to be somewhere above the middle of the scoring list. Some of the fellows hardly even hit the target. I was one of the few who made a decent score at 600 yds. There is a large hospital here for wounded soldiers and we often see them when passing. It brings home to one the foolishness of war, but of course theirs not to reason why at this time. There are three Surveyors Office men here (Williamson, Watson and Barrow). They seem to be enjoying themselves all right. Matt is a fairly good shot, the other two are not firing.

We may be here until Friday or Saturday if all keeps well and the weather keeps bad. I am sorry to say that we have not yet received a promise of any Xmas leave. I am going to make application as soon as we go back. I would like to see you dearest if it were only for a few hours. It would be nice to be one's own boss for a couple of days, and feel like a civilian again. I am not fed up you know, but it would be a pleasant change. I hope you are keeping well dearest and that you are not working too hard. I guess you will be getting the foreign parcels at the office now. Mine is a soft job compared with PO work. I send all my best love to you dearest – more than I can express in words. KR to all.

Yours, Eddie

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STANFORD

19 DECEMBER

My Darling Madge,

I have received a letter from Aunt Maggie this morning and she tells me that you are going on as nicely as can be expected. I cannot express how thankful I am dearest. I have been in a state of suspense since first hearing of your illness and I hardly knew if I would be permitted to write to you. They say you can now do some reading so perhaps you will be able to read this note. I do not wish to refer to your illness dearest because I know you will be patient and brave. I wish I could help to bear the pain for you dearest, up to the present I seem to have lived a life free from physical pain so I cannot fully realise what it is like. I hope to be able to come over in a few days dearest, but of course would prefer to come when you are out of hospital. The leave has commenced as far as I can ascertain the favourites will stand the first chance, but I will try and get in the last batch which may be the Monday following Xmas day. By that time you may be at home on the road to recovery and I could perhaps be with you for a few hours instead of a few minutes at the infirmary. I do hope that you are beginning to feel yourself again and that you have made up your mind to have a long rest. I am almost tempted to try for some early leave but you may be able to give me some idea of the duration of your stay. I wish I could see you on Sunday.

I had a pleasant time at GB. I went a little 'dis' on the last day's shooting, think it was because I had a sleepless night. However I shall be about No 7 on the scoring list of our section. My score was 197 and the highest score was 230.

Edgar and I may be going over to Biggleswade tonight. We have nothing to go for but it will be a change. I have to close now as Kemp is posting this at B7 for me. We have no post at Stanford after 11.25 am to connect with night mails. I send all my love and kind thoughts dearest. You have also my prayers for a speedy recovery.

Yours for ever, Eddie

20 DECEMBER

My Dearest Madge,

Am just dropping you a line hoping you are on the improve. I have not yet heard about leave but will let you know as soon as I do. It has been a lovely day and it looks as tho' we shall have a frosty Xmas. I was at BGH on Saturday but we found it a weary tramp. Edgar and I spent some time with Carter. He sends his kind regards. I am sending you a little book to read, hope you have not read it before. When you read it please do not think I am trying to convert you, or that you need converting like old Scrooge. They only had two of these books in the shop – one was Omar Khayyam and this was the other. I am longing to

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hear news of you darling, but I do not want you to write until you are strong enough. Our aunt will be able to let me know how you are getting along. I am longing to see you but a few days' patience and I shall be with you. I seem to have been away a long time but you have always been in my thoughts night and day. I send all my love dearest and will write again soon. GW darling (It's Sunday midnight).

Yours, Eddie

21 DECEMBER

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks for yours received this morning. Your first card has been to Stanford and it was addressed quite plainly. I am writing tonight because you may have something to read now. My leave is not yet out so I cannot say when I shall be over. I am going to postpone it as late as poss. in the hope of seeing you at home dearest. I am quite sure tho' that I would not be shy if I had to visit you dearest. I should feel quite indifferent to the other people if you were there. I have written to Aunties tonight and I must write to Mr Barwell sometime. I owe him one. I suppose you are fancying yourself under active service conditions when you say hospital life is like Army life. Do you have lights out at 8 pm? This is Army life – 7 am cold, raw, damp and dark. Scene: stable. Up comes infuriated sgt., kicks off with a volley of oaths: the coats off, waistcoats off, braces down and get on with the grooming. Many a time I would like to smash him but it would not pay in the Army. We learn to take it in good part. I am not yet tired of the life and it has its pleasant side.

I hope to be able to drop you a line on Tuesday and let you know when I am coming. I do so want to see you dearest. I hope I can make you happy dearest. I shall have heaps to tell you. I really mean it this time.

Excuse more tonight – I have to repair a sofa at our house. GH my love. All best love and hope for your speedy recovery and mind you take good care of yourself – 'Little ships must keep the shore'. Eddie

Dearest, Have just heard my leave is on 27 December. Do you think there will be a chance of you being at home if I change four days later, that is the 31st? I will change when I hear from you.

Love, Eddie

22 DECEMBER

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks so much for yours received this morning. I am so glad you are so cheerful, it is just what I would anticipate in my ideal girl. I am afraid the cause

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of my sleepless night was the news about you dearest. It was so sudden. I am so pleased that you can make friends amongst the staff. Of course I can quite understand that they will take to you.

Well my leave is settled at last and I have to commence on 27 Dec because the officer will not entertain any changes. You must touch your boss to let me see you every day while I am over. We shall have to make the best of it, altho' it will not be so nice as seeing you at home dearest. I have been shopping tonight, and am sorry to say that there is no choice in this district. I have been trying to find you an Xmas present and in the end I have ordered two books for you from the publishers and I hope they will arrive by Xmas. I hope you are still improving. I send all my best love and kind thoughts.

Your boy, Eddie

Note about Madge's illness (if there are clues in her letters)

31 DECEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks so much for your letters. I have two to answer. I am so sorry to hear you have disappointments in the hospital. I hope you will not be disappointed when your turn comes to go home. I think it is a good plan to be prepared for disappointment, but really do not think there is any need in your case, you are sure to be home in a few days. With regard to my leave, I am still patiently waiting and I find it is no use worrying or getting excited about leave being stopped or recommended. It was stopped yesterday and starts again tomorrow. Thanks for your enquiry, but I am not any worse for the cake. It was a treat. Am so sorry you could not partake of any Xmas fare. Somehow you seem to be able to take all these things in a philosophical way. I know there are very few people who would not grouse or grumble. I am not writing at midnight tonight dearest, its only 6.45 pm. I don't know if you feel in form for reading but if you do I would like you to read 'Evangeline' if it is in the Longfellow they sent you.

The PO are delaying our letters. I have heard of dozens of cases of delay this Xmas. Of course your hospital talk does not bore me dearest. Your letters always give me happiness, I am only sorry that I cannot help you in any way to cheer you up. I quite agree about the leave dearest, it will be nicer to see you at home. I want to come and tell you I love you and could not very well do so at the infirmary I suppose Davie will be going out early in January with the Canadians. Give him my KR and say I will perhaps meet him in Berlin. I know it is wrong of me, but I turn green with envy every time I hear of anyone going out. Patience is a virtue etc!

Well dearest this is the last letter I shall write this year. I cannot let old father time play another card without saying that 1914 on the whole has been a happy year for me, and I hope it has for you. I hope I shall be able to make you as happy as you have made me – in the future. 1915 will soon be upon us, and we

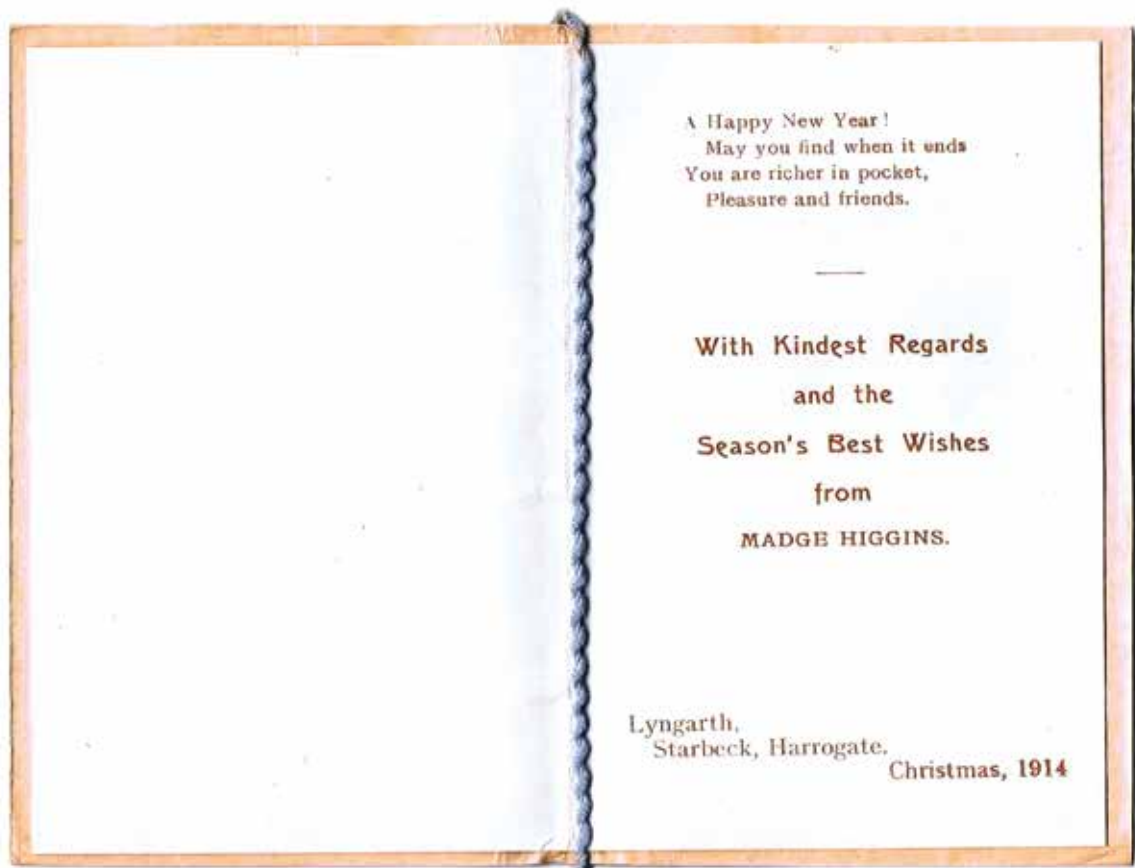
1914

can hardly say how things will finish up, but we can enter it with plenty of faith. Personally I think the War will be over before 1915 closes. I send all my love for the New Year dearest. Give my best wishes to Aunties. I have not thought of any good resolutions yet. I know there are plenty of faults in my life which need rectifying, but they need careful thought. I know you will not need to make any resolutions dearest, because if you alter one bit you won't be as nice as you are now. That's a fact. Shall be thinking of you when the New Year comes in, and will send you a wireless – hope it arrives.

Yours for ever, Eddie x These are very dear now.



A Christmas card
from Madge, 1914



Sapper Geo EdSmith

72342 Royal Engineers

N B Section

Army Signals

British Mediterranean Expeditionary Force

24 June 1915

My Det Madge.

Have got settled down to work now so thought I wd drop you a line. I am away from the Section working in a Signal Office. I have been wkg at a few places but hope to settle down now for a few wks. Edgar and another very nice chap are out with me. We are not quite 2 miles from the firing line and plenty of shells (chiefly shrapnel) come our way. We dodge these as far as possible by running to our dugouts.

We

1915

STANFORD
12 JANUARY

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks for yours received this morning. I am so pleased to hear that you are going home shortly. I shall try for some leave. You see owing to being chosen in this Foreign Section I only had two days at Xmas while many of those staying at home had four days. The Sgt. won't talk common sense about it, so when we really get to know who is going out I shall go to Mac. I am sorry to say that the Foreign Section has been recast. MacLaren was going to command the section, but it has now been handed over to Lieut. Mawson, so Mac has taken out the senior operators and we are going with Mac in six weeks' time. Mac gave me the assurance personally that I should go out with him. It is a disappointment but practically the whole of the telegraphists originally chosen are having to wait. Such are the trials of Army life, but I will still keep believing. I am sorry to hear your nurse is on sick leave, my friend Edgar is in bed with a very bad cold, but I am glad to say he is improving. I hope Alec will soon be OK.

Life here is still uneventful. I do not turn out many nights. You see, it takes over an hour to clean up, shave and clean rifle. It pays one to keep off CB. I believe you are trying to read my thoughts when you say it is the tip across which attracts me. To speak the truth tho' I do not regret my experience so far in the Army and I feel satisfied that I'm doing my best to be patriotic. Will you let me know when you return home, dear, and then I can alter the slate. Talking about being patriotic reminds me of the recruiting poster that says 'If you love a girl, isn't she worth fighting for'. It's what I am doing dearest. Well, I expect the mail cart will be here in two minutes so must close. Hope you are feeling a lot better. All best love for you dearest.

Yours for ever, Eddie

1915

28 JANUARY

Dearest Madge,

Thanks for yours received this morning. Your letter also had a note on the back from Eddie Murray informing me of Mr Nutts' promotion. I have also seen the account in the Harrogate paper. Am sorry he is going and have written to congratulate him tonight. Thanks for your enquiring, I am quite fit again so there will be no need to bring the bath chair. I am pleased you enjoyed your trip in the open air. You seem to be having quite a lot of visitors. The news I receive from home today is that Jackie is now at Chatham in the Royal Engineers. I must apologise for the misunderstanding re NJP. I am glad Arthur and Davie are still well. I hardly thought there was anyone who had had less leave than I. I have done my best to get some more but there is nothing doing as long as we remain in the Biggleswade area. We are promised some leave from Aldershot tho'.

Oh dear, I can hardly write tonight – there are six people all talking at once. Col. Fausset was quite satisfied with our cable laying and said we were fully trained and need do no more practising in England. He said that we should be moved from Stanford very soon. I have been digging and carrying gravel in a wheelbarrow this morning. Manual work is very hard but I like it. I shall be able to build a house when I return. It would be a delightful task to build one's own dovecote. It would take too long tho'. I hope I shall be able to see you in less than a fortnight dearest. If rumours come true I shall be home shortly. Am pleased you are still improving and hope it will continue. Give my KR to Aunties. Am sure I cannot write a successful letter while these people are talking. I send all best love dearest.

Yours always, Eddie

30 JANUARY

My Dearest Madge,

Am just sending you a photo of the Foreign Section group. I am afraid it is all ending in smoke, the Officer told me this morning that he would not put any faith in it until he got on the boat. There is also a photo of a friend, which you can keep with the others. He is a Cornishman. I have not thought fit to be taken on a horse yet. Up to Thursday night I fancied I could ride but on Friday and Saturday I had a turn in the school and had a very rough time. It is the stiffest job I have had yet. On Friday we rode bareback and had to trot, gallop and jump over a pole. One of my pals received a nasty bump. I did well yesterday but today we had saddles without stirrups and riding was more difficult. We had to charge for a quarter of a mile at top speed, in addition to the ordinary trotting and jumping. It is fine fun but jolly hard work for one not

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used to riding. The Sgt. has a whip and if we stick on fairly well he tries to bring us off by frightening the horse. I've had no falls yet but I dare not brag, because the boss says I make a poor show.

Our section has been enlarged and we now have 63 men and 43 horses. It will be hard work to find a job soon. We are getting very nice weather here. I hope it is the same with you and you are getting out a little. I went for a constitutional by myself this afternoon, and could very well have wheeled the bathchair. I would love to show you this district, dearest. We have laid cable over all the roads nearly and know the district quite well. It is quite unfortunate for you, dearest, having a young man who never or very seldom comes to see you. It is a hardship to me to be away from you. Pals are very nice but their company cannot be compared with yours. I would sacrifice quite a lot if I could be with you for one Sunday. It is stupid of the to tie a chap up so. I suppose there are worse things at the front.

I hope you have a nice day on Sunday. I guess JWS will be getting used to Army life now. I like it and never regret joining, apart from it being one's duty to join. How are the enemies getting on and is there any news of your other soldier boys? I send all my best love dearest.

Yours always, Eddie

2 FEBRUARY

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks for yours and *Record*. I am pleased to hear that you are taking life easy for once. Am afraid we have warmer weather in Bedfordshire because we very seldom get snow. I've not been in the circus since Saturday so my progress as regards horsemanship is at a standstill. I want to learn, but should be speaking an untruth if I said I was yearning to go in the circus. It is laughable etc but one has such a jolly rough time. Of course I do get an occasional ride when we are cable laying and I hope to improve in that way without getting any limbs broken. I am almost giving up hope of leaving Stanford. The foreign detachment has gone and I am still here. They have sent the newest operators out and five of us who are senior in service are kept behind. I suppose it is for another section which is going out shortly. We have got about 30 new horses and the same number of men. I have given up hope now and am not going to worry any more about it. The detachment has only moved as far as Biggleswade and MacLaren says they are going to train at Aldershot and that we shall be out first. I would rather have gone with them tho' cos a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. I asked the Sgt. for a pass today and can get no sense out of him so shall have to see the Officer tomorrow. The Sgt. says I can only have a pass from 2 pm Saturday to 6 am Monday. It is hardly worth going home for those few hours. However I shall get to know definitely tomorrow cos I am sick of piffing about.

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Our section seems quite changed with all the new men but we shall get settled down very soon I suppose. I have another nice photo to send you but will send it next time – you will have quite a collection soon. It is a very rough night here and blowing great guns. Am glad I am not on guard. I did my turn on Sunday night. I send all my best love dearest. I hope to let you know if there is any leave next time I write. KR to Aunties.

Yours always, Eddie

5 FEBRUARY

My Dearest Madge,

Thought I would write you a letter while I am on guard, that is while I am off duty and waiting in the guardroom. I think you are as eager as I am for leave. Today I approached the Sgt. and he told me that, owing to several men having overstayed their leave, E Section leave was stopped. I asked to see the Officer but he said it was no good me doing so. Nobody is on leave at present but the fact is that a chap stands a better chance of leave if he pays for Sgt.'s beer. I don't believe in doing so, in fact it isn't fair. Tonight I have put an application to see the Officer and I shall tell him the tale. I will report later what the outcome is.

The foreign detachment are still at Biggleswade and they are having a weary time. I would like to have gone with them tho'. A friend named Bill Haithwaite (Leeds Telegraphers) has gone and I should like to have been with him. He is next but one to me on the last group I sent. I will send you his photo to keep. I do not know if I am nearer going out. On Tuesday orders came down that 24 qualified vibrator telegraphists were required for transfer to Aldershot and from thence overseas at an early date – it may mean Egypt or France. I applied along with two Corporals and if preference is given to Cable Co. men I stand a good change. I may hear in the course of a few days. It is one of my chief ambitions to go out, but I hardly dare hope after so many disappointments. You will perhaps think I am very eager to taste the trials and hardships of war, but I think you would be the same if you were a boy.

Now dearest, I am sure your thoughts and feelings interest me. I like to bow to your better judgment in most things but there is one circumstance where I use my own judgment. It is like this, you are so modest about everything connected with yourself, and do not know your own true value. I am sure you must have some very nice thoughts. I would not like to complain if you did not tell me your thoughts dearest, I don't feel that I am really fitted to ever make a complaint about you. Can the moon complain about the sun for not shining? I am afraid I do not tell you my thoughts. It is very seldom I get the chance to be alone and write you a nice letter. It is one of the inconveniences of a soldier's life. A soldier does not have many thoughts and the regularity of the life tends to make him work like a machine. My thoughts, I find, are nearly the same each day.

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5.30 am: Must get out of bed altho' it's jolly hard times getting up so early.
6 am: Must find some work to do. I generally please myself, if it is warm I test the instruments and if cold do some manual work.

7 am: See a glorious sunrise and feel compensated for getting up early.

8.15 am. Go for a ride on the wagons and feel it is grand to be a soldier. When I am enjoying myself I always wish that you could be sharing the same pleasures dearest.

Am afraid a diary of my thoughts would be rather wearying, but the whole life here is a mixture of pleasures and hardships. The few hardships can be easily dismissed tho' because we can say they are the sacrifice one makes in answering the call of duty. There is a happiness and pleasure in doing one's duty or trying to do so. My thoughts regarding my comrades in arms are very mixed. I find there are some very fine fellows in the world and I find pleasure in meeting them. There are also some whom I don't admire.

I also have quite a lot of thoughts about you dearest. I have never met anyone I admire or love as much as I do you, and I also think it is jolly hard luck that I cannot get to see you. If the Army don't give me a pass soon, I shall consider them a 'washout'. You must be making fine progress when you are contemplating going to church. Edgar has gone to Henlow Grange a few miles from here to recuperate I shall perhaps walk over on Saturday if I am off duty. There is a pontoon school here tonight so we shall have gambling going on until about 1 am. I would rather give my money to missionaries than lose it in gambling. The boys have got paid today and some of them will have lost the whole of their money before many hours are gone. I think I shall have to preach a sermon. Well, GW dearest.

Yours for ever, Eddie

13 FEBRUARY

My Dearest Madge,

I am writing for Sunday because I'm unable to come over. My application for leave this weekend was unsuccessful. I am sorry, but that is poor consolation. One could easily think hard things about the Army, but the best way is to accept things cheerfully. I would have given almost anything if I could have got some leave for your sake alone dearest. All section officers and sgts. are not as inconsiderate as mine. You would be quite indignant if you knew what a lot of sarcasm I have had to take from Sgt. Adams because I applied for leave. We treat him as a joke but his manner is never encouraging.

Edgar came back on Friday, he did not look very well. They have put him on guard tonight. We have had a very wet, cold morning and was glad to finish at 2 pm today. I have been doing the mechanics' work this morning, I took all the wheels off the wagons and greased them. I have charge of a cable wagon and Col. Godfrey Faussett said the man who had charge of the wagon should treat it

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as his child. I am afraid it is impossible to have much love for a cable wagon. Of course I spend quite a lot of time keeping it in good order. Lieut. Mawson said I should have had a stripe months ago, but he also says that he has no weight in the section. He is leaving us in about a week's time.

Am sorry you do not agree with all my sentiments dearest. If a chap knows that a girl has a lot of common sense he would be foolish to ignore her advice. Don't apologise dearest about the leave, one gets so used to disappointments in the Army you know. I am sorry to hear that Davie and his friends are going to be pushed out. We are very fortunate in having a comfortable bed to sleep in. I have written to Jackie but not heard from him yet. I hope he likes it. Am sending you a photo of a friend (Bill Haithwaite, Leeds Telegraphers) who has gone to Biggleswade. I'm afraid the photographer would not take me on a gee-gee. It would be an insult to the horse. I hope you have a happy Sunday, dearest, I shall be thinking about you. Give my KR to Aunts. All best love dearest.

Yours always, Eddie. X

17 FEBRUARY

My Darling Madge,

Am not on guard tonight after all, so am able to write at home. You are quite right not to address me as a washout because there are some more rumours abroad and if they develop in the right way I am going to realise one of my ambitions. I have a lot of faith, and nearly always build up on a good rumour. I will not say I have been expecting a letter from you, but I have been looking forward to receiving one. Your letters are a great pleasure to me, but I do not wish you to 'fash' yourself if you are busy or unwell. I am sure it has been very good of you to write like you have done while you have been poorly. Don't know how I made mistake and put 'Dec' instead of 'Feb'. Hope you will forgive me. Now, dearest, I have no regrets about not being a writing clerk. All operators get stripes in the Headquarter Section, but Cable men only get them if a vacancy occurs. Only one operator has been promoted in my section since last August and he has not been transferred to a home service mob because of some rule that has recently come out that men working as operators cannot hold stripes in a foreign detachment. I suppose an operator would stand more chance if he were an experienced rider and could do the linemen's duties. I can honestly say that I would sooner go out as a sapper than stay at home as a corporal.

I am quite surprised that Bessie has spared Geo. He has no intention of joining when I met him last August. Mr Nutt must be leaving the office unswept. He has sent me a very nice letter thanking me for all the hard work I have done towards the improvement of the office. II..IIx I have not finished reading my book yet, in fact I am doing a little Army Telegraphy. I wish I had your technical knowledge, it would be very useful here. You are quite right about Edgar, he is the best of the lot, in fact he is my best pal.

1915

I suppose I must tell you the latest news about sailing away. A full section was picked on Sunday and on Tuesday we were inspected by Major Manifold. He was satisfied with our exhibition of cable laying and has passed us out for the front. I have got a working number to do on the wagon. It is the latest instruction that an operator must do No.5 duty. It consists of swinging the hammer and climbing trees etc. while cable laying, then taking a turn at the instrument when we arrive at destination. It is a fine job when compared with operating on the wagon or in a base tent. We may be going to Biggleswade in a few days to wait orders. I wonder if we are really going. Anyway it won't be for many weeks because the Army don't work in a hurry. I hope you won't be bored with all my news. I do wish I could get over to see you and then I could tell you of all my experiences. I wish I could come and tell you how much I love you dearest. I don't think there is a unit of love, neither miles, tons, gallons or volts seem to apply. My letters are not very endearing or not very interesting dearest but the feeling is there that I love you; it would be nice if a fellow could prove his love as in the olden time, by deeds of bravery etc.

Are you still making use of the bathchair? I hope the doctor will find an improvement when he calls again. Please accept all my best love. KR to Aunties. You did not say how they were.

Always yours, Eddie

20 FEBRUARY

My Dearest Madge,

Thought I would drop you a line for Sunday. Edgar and I are working in a telegraph office at Biggleswade for two or three days, and we are billeted here. We laid the cable on Thursday and are now staffing the wire in eight-hour shifts. It is a very nice change and we have a lot of time to spare. We have had a very busy time tho'. What with guards etc. I was working from 6 am Thursday until 5 pm Friday without sleep, but I hope to make up for it this afternoon. If you send me a letter to Stanford it will be sent over here. I seem to have met nearly all the Harrogate boys this morning. They all seem well.

I am sending you a Royal Engineers button for a tie pin. It must be cleaned every morning with metal polish. It's Sunday tomorrow dearest and I've not been able to get any leave yet. I long to be with you more on Sundays, think it must be because of the happy Sundays we have had. I wish the War would finish II..IIx It is dinner time now so must go. I don't care very much for new kip but it isn't for long. There is a very nice son tho', he reminds me of Adam Bede. I send all best love. Hoping you will have a happy Sunday. Don't forget to let me know how you are dearest.

Yours always, Eddie

1915

NO DATE

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks for yours received yesterday, and also for *Records*. I am so pleased to hear that you are going away for a change and I think St Annes will be nicer than BK. I hope you will come back quite strong. Am afraid you will have to eat some pudding to pull your weight up. I could lift you with one arm now. That is if I were at SRB. I would love to see you but there is no leave at present owing to a big move which is taking place in the Corps. I have just watched a section move off to the front and a Divisional Cable Detachment goes off to Aldershot today. I would have given anything to be able to answer the roll call. It is most disappointing. MacLaren says however that we shall be out in a month's time. I hope so. Cable work is nice but it's the Cinderella of the Corps – no stripes, no leave, nothing but hard work. I am having a nice time at BGH tho', working 1–6 pm only with no parades or guards. It is like heaven compared with the hard work at Stanford. I finished at 6 am Saturday till 1 pm Monday. Edgar and I had the linemens' horses out for about 3 hours on Sunday morning. I can fly like the wind on a horse now. If I come to St Annes will hire a donkey and just show you how I can ride. Our billet is turning out very well. I have met hundreds of old friends at Big. I will let you know if there is any indication of us going away. We need a lot of stores so it can't come off just yet. I hope you have a real happy time at St Annes dearest. I send all best love for you.

Yours for ever, Eddie

27 FEBRUARY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours received just before I left Big. We received orders about 1.30 pm to leave and left at 2.15 pm on foot for Stanford. I was quite ready to come back. Both Edgar and I were on guard last night so we are feeling tired today. I am so glad you are going for a change and no doubt you will have arrived by now. Mind you have a nice holiday dearest. I wish I could be with you just for a few hours. Am sorry it is post time and I must close now in order to get it delivered in the morning. I hope you have a happy Sunday dearest. I will write you a longer letter tomorrow. GW. All love.

Yours always, Eddie

1915

3 MARCH

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks very much for yours. Am sorry my last letter did not arrive for Sunday. You are such a long way from here now and our mail service is not very good. I intended writing by tonight's post but we did not finish work until 6.30 pm and that was too late. I received the reading matter, thanks for same, I got the picture postcard also. I would just love a peep at the sea but there is nothing doing with regard to leave. The only privilege I would wish is to be able to see you dearest, otherwise I feel that I am a soldier out on business, but even a strict sense of duty does not overcome the feelings of love.

Since Sunday we have been working very hard. On Monday journeyed to Biggleswade and laid 12 miles of wire from Headquarters to Telegraph Office of the 13th Army, the speed was 4 miles per hour. We then returned putting the wire on poles and trees all the way. This precaution is necessary at the front in order to avoid induction, earth faults, and damage to the line by bodies of troops passing on the road. In putting the wire up I was climbing the telegraph 'H' poles during a heavy snowstorm. After finishing the outdoor work I was operating from 6 'til 11 pm. I slept at 10 Cemetery St that night. We reeled the wire up today. Two of us had to clean 3 ½ miles on foot. I was equipped with climbing irons and long crook stick. I returned to Stanford on a horse and we finished work about 6.30 pm. You will quite understand that one's isn't a job for a cuff and collar man. I like the work tho' and feel that it is grand to be a workman. One's is the most grimy work in the Corps but all the boys are sports and we enjoy ourselves. I had a young fellow acting as lineman for me on Monday and he is a very clever technical man. In the headquarter office a young sgt. was asking him if he would know what to do if asked to diswire. My lineman didn't show his hand and gave evasive answers to several elementary questions. He then told the sgt. that he would perhaps be able to manage the job as he no doubt had as many certificates as anyone in the Corps. This is the kind of thing one meets with as there is nothing to show what a man's qualifications are.

I have an awful memory for dates dearest and was quite surprised to learn that it is a year since I first wrote to you. I do remember tho' how timid I felt about writing to you dearest. I felt it was the case of a cat looking at a King – I should say, at a Queen. Someone once told me that the man who won your love was a very lucky man. I felt that and much more. My chief aim is that I shall always prove myself worthy of your love. I have plenty of confidence that I shall be able to do so because I have set my stall out. One is apt to look back at the end of a year and think. I wonder what you think dearest. I think you are better for knowing if that could be possible. I also think it is jolly hard times we are not able to see each other altho' it is unavoidable. Well, I must close now darling. It is suppertime. I send all best love. KR to Aunties.

Yours always, Eddie

1915

10 CEMETERY ST, BIGGLESWADE

7 MARCH

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks for yours received this morning. Have just been to church. Edgar and I heard that there was to be a two-hour route march so we fell out and came home. We are going to Stanford this afternoon to tea. There was quite a lot of weeping and wailing when we left at an hour's notice, I was sorry to leave and would rather have finished training there. However, we are not here for pleasure. The position we occupy now is this: our section has finished cable laying and is waiting for orders. Col. Bowman Manifold D.S.O is taking out a Headquarter Section, an Air Line Section and our Cable Section. We are all passed and ready to go. The stores are not yet indented, so really I have no hope of us moving for a month or six weeks. You see I still have a little faith. Our destination is said to be the East. I hope it is and that we work back to France. How long do you expect to be at St Anne's dearest? If I get any leave should I come to St Anne's via Harrogate?

You will be able to drill me when I see you. I must be getting used to Army life because I seem quite free and never feel that I am carrying out orders that are not to my liking. It is a case of knowing one's work and doing it. We are having an easy time at Biggleswade, but this won't last long. The drivers and mounted men come down today and we may then have to attend early parades. I did hear something about Jackie getting some leave. The Salvation Army is outside and with a noisy gramophone inside, am afraid I can't concentrate my thoughts. Excuse more at present. KR to Aunties.

All best love, Eddie

9 MARCH 1915

My Dearest Madge,

We have got duly installed at Big. I think it is for Spring and Summer. I am thinking of taking a farm. Our horses are in sheds at the old field and we walk along planks in the mud in order to reach them. We are now parading at 6 am and we were let off at noon today with instructions to parade at 4 pm for cable laying all night. Don't you think we get plenty of variety? It is a grand life and there is only one regret – we haven't got out yet. About leave dearest, I would love to come and see you but we have been told that we shall all get two days shortly so perhaps it would be well for me to wait a while. Am pleased to hear you are feeling fit after your stay at St Annes. Your weight is ok. I weighted 12 stone 4 with my overcoat on. It is just your luck to talk to a married soldier II.. II It is quite remarkable what a lot are married. It shows a big sacrifice on their own part and on the wife's part. They should let the unmarried men go first.

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At my billet there are three able-bodied sons and not one has enlisted. They are even frightened they may be called up. It is pure selfishness. Well, dearest, if you don't mind me saying so I should like to ask you to take things very steadily if you do go back to the office on Monday. I wish I could help you. NJP told me today that Robinson had been reduced. It is a pity because it would have been better if he had never been promoted.

I am learning to play billiards at the Liberal Club. It is a fine game but needs a lot of practice. Am just going to do some telegraphy for a short while before going on duty. Give KR to Aunties and all love to you dearest. Have replied to yours right away because I cannot say when another opportunity may occur. All best love.

Yours always, Eddie

SAPPER G. E. SMITH

NB SECTION

NSS7C

ROYAL ENGINEERS

BIGGLESWADE

18 MARCH

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for yours, we seem to have been working night and day lately so I have not had time to reply sooner. I hope you get this for Sunday. I am also anticipating that I shall be with you the following Sunday. One can never be sure of anything in the Army but I think I shall be able to get a pass. I am hoping for your sake as well as my own that the doctor will give you a little longer. The work must fall very heavy owing to our absence, and you will have a very busy summer no doubt. I don't think you always take things easy, dearest, in fact you are very energetic. You have given me quite a lot of office news. Is AJK in for the postmastership? Whitehead seems to be having a lively time. He was jolly lucky to get out so soon. It makes one envious. I suppose our day will come after a while but we are being called upon to exercise quite a lot of patience.

Sleep has been very scarce this week – on Tuesday we worked 6 am to 12.30 pm then 4 pm 'til 4.30 am laying and reeling up cable all night. We then went home 'til 10 am and finished at 5 pm. I got a guard that night and did not get to bed. On Friday we laid some cable and Col. Manifold and Col. Godfrey Faussett watched us at work. Faussett said that out of five signal units he had visited we were the smartest cable section. It is a fact that our men, horses and harness are of the best. He said we should be going to the front shortly – it is the same old tale tho', we hear it at every inspection. We haven't lost the Sgt. yet, MacLaren wants to get him out to the front with us, but the authorities won't hear of it. His training has been effective and I am pleased to have been in the section. It has been a hard school tho'.

1915

I have been in the riding school this morning and felt quite at home. He says he is going to make good riders of us all. He was very decent with us and told us that if we kept a leg at each side we should be all right. The weather here is quite warm. Wouldn't you like to take the rest cure at Biggleswade dearest? I send all best love hoping you have a nice Sunday. KR to Aunties and any enquiring friends.

Yours ever, Eddie

NO 72342 ROYAL ENGINEERS

NB SECTION

BIGGLESWADE

22 MARCH

My Darling Madge,

We arrived safely at 3 am this morning, so we went to bed until 5.30. I think all the boys are tired out. I tried to sleep in the train but it was too crowded and I took badly to the carriage window for a pillow, especially after the nice cushion I had a few hours previously. We were given a treat this morning in the way of riding school for two hours. We did feel tired and the horses were very fresh. My big horse 'Jack' has been misbehaving himself while I've been away. He kicked a boy full in the face. I think the chap is going on all right tho'. Well dearest, I cannot explain how sorry I was to leave you. The time was too short altogether. I just had time to get a glimpse at you and then had to leave. I'm not fed up with the Army you know, but after being with you for a few hours I felt that the Army had no attraction for me. It may be a long time before I see you again as the Major has given it out that we are going up the Mediterranean. I shall be looking forward to the day when I shall see you again. I feel as tho' I carry your love with me dearest, and it is your love that inspires me to live my own life. I must close now as I have to clean buttons etc. and am very, very tired. All best love.

Yours always, Eddie x

Hope you did not walk too far yesterday.

26 MARCH

Dearest,

Thanks for yours which arrived this morning, it must have been delayed. I'm on guard tonight so cannot write a letter. I don't think I ever told you that writing letters was a trouble, it is a pleasure writing to you dearest. I am working in Quartermaster's Store for a few days getting the equipment ready. I hope you are looking after yourself this cold weather, I've got a kind of shivering ague with

1915

working in the damp field but it will go away when we get warmer weather. All love.

Yours always, Eddie

27 MARCH

My Dearest Madge,

Will try and answer yours today. I seem to have been so busy this week at the stores, and have finished work tired out. I am so pleased that I contributed to your happiness during the two days' leave. You see it is like this, I am always in doubt as to whether I can make you happy, I mean whether I have enough about me to make people happy. I am sorry that our trip may be a very long one and I am beginning to realise that we are going. There are tons of stores for us and everything is new. It is nice to satisfy one's wishes and I have longed to go to the War. I haven't longed to leave you tho' dearest. It is because I want to be a man that I want to go out. I can trust myself to keep true to you dearest all the time, and I am pleased you have never tried to persuade me from going. I hardly like to look on the job as one of pleasure but ours will be a fine trip and we shall be compensated for our waiting.

There is quite a lot of kit that we have to purchase ourselves so Edgar and I have been out on business this afternoon. We have decided in favour of bachelor's buttons rather than the ones that require sewing on. I was on guard last night at a public house stable yard and was nearly frozen to death, in fact I haven't known it so cold this winter.

I am so pleased to hear you are walking all right. I do wish I had chance to ask if you could come to Harrogate tomorrow. I am a little in doubt what NB does mean. I think it means Northern B. We shall be the second section to leave since we joined the Regulars and therefore have letter B. We have received a few tons of equipment this morning but there is still more to come. I was working this afternoon and shall be working tomorrow amongst the stores. I do not mind now that we have a goal. I hope you have a happy Sunday dearest. KR to Aunties.

Yours for always, Eddie

31 MARCH

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks very much for yours, I am glad to have your assurance that I can make you happy. It is also very nice to know that you will be waiting for my return. I fancy we may be away about a year if we go to Egypt or the East. That is a very long time, but I should be thinking of you every day, and it would soon pass. I

1915

do not feel excited about going away but perhaps I shall do when we get on the boat. Our stores are nearly complete now and we have been served out with new equipment, rifles with new barrels, new boots, and new clothing where required. We have to take kit bags with us so it looks as tho' we are in for a long trip. Of course I do not really mind where we go to, I should like to see some fighting in France if possible.

You will be surprised to see another Royal Engineers brooch. I would like you to pension off the one I sent before and appoint the enclosed in its place. I thought you would like this one and it will wear fairly well, and won't need Brasso.

I am full up with work for a few days, all our wagons require lettering, and the work has fallen to me. I am trying to make a good job of them. Do you know Mr Allinson of Dragon Parade he has been appointed by the church to write to me? I dropped him a line last night. It will be a pity dearest if our letters are read by the censor, but if that is the case I shall always tell you as much as I dare. I have everything to pack tonight ready to move off at a minute's notice. I shall be ready. Am pleased you have got a fortnight. Hope you will soon be quite strong. KR to Aunties. All best love to you dearest.

Yours always, Eddie

3 APRIL

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks very much for yours. I was on stables at 4.15 pm today and found it waiting for me. I really sent you the second brooch because I did not think much to the quality of the first, you see it was the only kind they had at the time. I don't see why I should not be able to write once a week when we move away. I fancy we shall be waiting somewhere in the Mediterranean for a time, and I do not see any prospects of smelling powder on this trip. Our letters for some time to come will be censored by MacLaren (our section officer). Watson went out over a month since. Perhaps you remember me telling you I saw the section move off. It is perhaps a secret but I know they are standing by at Malta so you can tell Miss Watson. I saw a letter from one of the fellows. He gave me several very cute indications of where they were, he even mentioned that the time was two hours different from that of England, and also gave a sketch of a native boatman. In this letter the chap said that the harbour was full of battle-ships, submarines etc. This was all blotted out but we could read it.

Thanks for *Record*, I still like to read them but I do not go into them so thoroughly as I used to when at home. I have made a mistake about my correspondent. The letter was signed 'I All' and I took it for Allinson but it appears it is I Allen, Gladys Allen's father.

They appear to be introducing female labour into the writing rooms. 'The little man' has wanted a typist for quite a long time. It is very wet here today so

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I haven't been able to finish my painting. The Army seem to be like mothers to us. We have been supplied with new boots, cap comforter (it is a kind of hood for sleeping in), body belt (one that has to be wound round several times) and I have been fortunate enough to get a watch. There are six supplied to each section for telegraphists. They are English levers worth 45/-. I was on guard last night and had a nice time sitting over a big fire. Of course we had to gather a pile of wood and steal some coal from the blacksmith. I hope you have a nice day on Sunday dearest, I would give anything to be with you. We leave here on Thursday and sail on the 10 April. Am sorry I am not able to sit down and write you a nice letter because there are always a lot of people in the room. I will write you some nice letters from the ship. Give my KR to Aunties. All best love to you dearest.

Yours always, Eddie X

6 APRIL

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks very much for yours. I thought I would drop you a line tonight and write a longer letter tomorrow. They say we are leaving Thursday or Friday. We have quite a lot of kit to send home, and it takes all our spare time up. Tonight we are having a section farewell dinner commencing at 6.30 pm. I may be able to send you some photos of our section as we have posed about four times today. I have been detailed to assist in signwriting about 15 transport motors, which stand in the market square. I'm having a nice time amongst the paint. I send all best love dearest and will write you a longer letter before we go. I am very eager to go but don't like leaving you, but I am really going to fight for you this time. II..IIx It has been very cold here today. I hope you are looking after yourself.

All best love. Yours always, Eddie x

9 APRIL

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks very much for your lovely letter. I am pleased you contemplate going back to work but I hope you won't find the work too heavy. Perhaps your friend Emma does not like soldiers. We generally have a wet time when boating. We go out for fun and our clothes won't spoil. Am afraid on this trip I stand a poor chance of returning in a kilt but will do my best. The idea about facing the Germans unarmed is very bold. Somehow I do not think it would have worked but one never knows. Personally I do not believe in war but I think we are doing the best possible and I think if we wish to protect our homes we must fight.

About censored letters dearest, do you think it is dishonest of me to let you

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know where I am? Because I can soon arrange to do so. It would have to be by a prearranged code. I am not bored with your letter dearest and I am sorry that I may have to destroy your letters when on active service. Up to the present I have stored them at home, you see your letters give me so much pleasure that I do not wish to destroy them.

After all, we are not going until Sunday. The motor wagons left this morning. There were 21. I will send you a few postcards of our section, also of the motors leaving. We have all had our hair cut. I will send you a postcard to show how the hair is cut with a pair of horse clippers. We are all as bald as eggs now. I hope you will still love me, but have my doubts when you see this postcard. I shall be able to write again before we leave dearest. Do you know that this trip of ours is considered the plum of the signal jobs. In fact our officer says it is the most important job that has been yet. Thank Aunties for kind wishes. I send all best love.

Yours always, Eddie

12 APRIL

My Dearest Madge,

Monday night and we are still here. Our departure has been postponed 'til Wed. Isn't it disappointing? Our farewell party came off all right. Speeches were made etc. and very nice things were said about everybody. I am packed up and ready to start at 5 mins' notice. The Headquarter and Air Line Sections have moved to Avonmouth and will be waiting for us there. We do not carry much kit. We are not even allowed a change of clothing, but we carry a change in the kit bags, which we may be able to get to at the other end. All the rest is carried in pockets and in the haversack. My belongings consist of a holdall containing shaving tackle, knife, fork, spoon, and a housewife. We also carry materials for cleaning buttons. I am also taking 8 oz of tobacco, a sleeping helmet, gloves, handkerchiefs, socks, soap, towel, and bachelor's buttons. I have got a flash lamp and a small writing tablet. I think that is all we carry. Of course there is our usual stuff known as 'clobber' consisting of mess tin, water bottle, haversack, rifle, oil bottle, puttees, bandolier and greatcoat. You might think a greatcoat is to keep us warm, but you would be mistaken. It is provided so that we can roll it up 'in banderole' and carry it over our shoulder. I am trying to be patient about our departure but it is a bit wearying. Edgar says I am growing into a pessimist, if I venture a remark that we may be forgotten and left behind.

I do hope you have got on all right at the office today. It must seem a bit different when you have been away so long. Take things easy a little and do not take so much work on. I am sure you are worth fighting for dearest. I don't like to go away for such a long time but I can leave knowing that you will be there when I return. It seems a very small thing for anybody to be true, and one can only realise or value it if they have experienced the opposite. I am confident that

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no one is leaving such a dear girl behind. I shall always keep happy knowing that you are waiting for me at home. I suppose you will know that Norman got married on Sunday. He missed going to the front thro' it but he is going with our section and will join headquarters later. I have had him painting all day. The painting dept is very busy at present. I will write later if we do move off. We are sure to go soon. Give my KR to Aunties. All best love for you dearest.

Yours always, Eddie

SAPPER GEO E SMITH
72342 ROYAL ENGINEERS
NB SECTION (MH2)
BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCES
MEDITERRANEAN
APRIL

My Dearest Madge,

Have arrived at Avonmouth and am sending you word as we may be marched away to the ship. If we do stay here of course will let you know how we go on. The above address is the best I can give at present. I shall write to you dearest as soon as there is an opportunity. I am quite happy and pleased that my turn has come and of course am looking forward to the trip. I send all very best love and shall be thinking of you often every day. I do hope we can write fairly often. I won't say goodbye because somehow you will always be with me.

Yours always, Eddie

Have written this before leaving Biggleswade. We have taken our kit bags to the train. Thanks for yours received this morning.
Eddie x

15 APRIL

My Dearest Madge,

Arrived on the boat and just waiting for breakfast. We left at 3.30 pm yesterday and arrived here at about 9 pm and we were working hard all the time up to midnight. We have had nothing to eat since 11.30 am yesterday. We are on a lovely boat – the *SS Nile* of Hong Kong. It is a passenger boat of about 5,000 tons and will accommodate about 2,700 troops. You will wonder how we all manage to sleep – well in every room and corner hammocks are slung. I enjoyed my sleep very much. There is ample room for one but not for two. The sleeping accommodation somewhat resembles the Black Hole of Calcutta. The boat is manned by little Chinamen. I will try and get a civilian to post this, we are in prison now II..IIx Our horses and 10 drivers have gone on the *Esmeralda*. I

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think we sail tomorrow night. You can guess I am quite pleased now that I have got my wish and am on the way to active service. I hope you are keeping well at work dearest. I send all best love darling.

Yours for ever, Eddie x

21 APRIL

My Dearest Madge,

We are just nearing Gibraltar so am expecting an opportunity of posting letters. I keep wondering how you are getting on at the office but I can't hope for a letter until we arrive at our destination. I keep longing for you to be here, I don't exactly mean on this ship but I would like you to experience the pleasures of a voyage. This morning we are rushing along about 19 miles per hour, the sea is deep blue and as flat as a lake. There is a warm breeze and the sun is sparkling on the water. From leaving the Channel up to this morning we have experienced a choppy sea and our boat has done a lot of rolling. However apart from feeling a little queer on the first day, the rolling has not had any effect on me. Now I don't care if the ship loops the loop. We have about 2,000 men on board altho' it is hard to form an estimate. Our work consists of learning semaphore and taking turns at guard and mess orderly. All day the decks are covered with men, sleeping, reading and playing cards. We wear any kind of dress to suit ourselves. You would think we were on a pleasure cruise to see us all. There are quite a lot of Scotchmen on board. I have just been to see some porpoises. There are dozens of them jumping up and down in the water. Everything on board is so novel. When we wake up in the morning we have to rush if we want a wash as the water supply is limited. The food is now quite plentiful and we get a good variety. So far, I think this is the best holiday I have ever had. Norman has been sick but I think Frankie and Colbert are OK. I am due on parade shortly for signalling so must close now. I send all best love to you dearest and KR to Aunties. I will write whenever there is an opportunity. I miss your letters very much but perhaps I shall get one in a week or a fortnight. Let me know how you are won't you dearest.

Yours always, Eddie

We are getting summer weather now.

23 APRIL

My Dearest Madge,

I am Mess Orderly today so can get a few minutes alone to write to you. We are nearing Malta and will probably arrive there tomorrow morning. Unfortunately I've fallen a victim to seasickness. It is very disappointing after I have managed

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a week in good health. The Mediterranean is a big surprise to me. It is more choppy than the Bay of Biscay, and it is also windy and cold. When we had smooth weather I was hoping that some day I should be able to take you on voyage. After yesterday and today I am not sure if you would like sailing. Our room, which is under the fo'c's'le, seems to lurch forward and at the same time it gives a roll from side to side. It's a very unpleasant sensation is seasickness but in a few days' time I shall be laughing about it. This is the first little hardship of our active service trip, and I'm not going to start grumbling so soon.

On Wed 21st we sighted our first land. I think it was the coast of Portugal. After dinner we saw Gibraltar and as we sailed thro' we could see the coast of Morocco. The land on both sides presented a very rugged appearance. The rock was about 1,000 ft high and is connected to the mainland by a low-lying strip. We were not near enough to see any guns. Since passing thro' the Straits we have had a rough time.

I have just had dinner dearest and am feeling quite well, I think the sea is more calm. Perhaps you will be wondering if active service is up to my expectations seeing that I was so eager to go – well, up to the present I am quite pleased with the experience. I hope I shall come back with a wider view of things. Soldiering is a kind of art where one needs to accept all inconveniences with a good grace, making the best of them. I shall be glad to receive a letter from you dearest. Your letters are what I miss the most. I hope I have not written anything that will be erased. This letter may not be censored. I send all best love dearest and think of you every day. Hope you are quite well. KR to all.

Yours always, Eddie

5 MAY

My Dearest Madge,

Was so pleased to receive your letter on arrival at Dardanelles. I am going to get a sailor friend to post this one somewhere. I got a porter to post that letter at Avonmouth Docks. Thanks very much for notebook. I hope you will pick up all right at the office. It is a poor convalescent home tho'. Am pleased to hear of Miss Green's promotion. Nearly all the original staff seem to be moving. You might keep the *Telegraph Journals* for me if it is no trouble. Thanks dearest but at present I seem to have all I require and all I can carry. In fact I do not seem to have forgotten anything that is necessary. Stores will begin to run out in time so I will send you word if I require anything. I can buy matches and soap on the boat and I invested in 1 lb of tobacco at Malta for 1/- . I can buy it at 1/6 lb on board.

Well, I suppose you would like to hear about the War. We had a short stay at Alexandria and I spent two evenings looking round. Everything was highly interesting, and there were thousands of troops there. I sent you a bundle of postcards to give you an idea of what the place and people are like. We sailed

to Lemnos and stayed in the bay at night (we embarked on the *Esmeraldas* at Alexandria). We set sail about 4.30 am yesterday and arrived right into the entrance of the Dardanelles before noon. I cannot hope to describe the scene adequately, but we had hilly barren land on both sides and there were over 100 ships (transports and men of war). Some of our troops are camped on the European side near the beach. I am not like ECW, I can honestly say that I can see shells fired while I am writing. We are right in the War but only as spectators. I am eager to land but we have to wait on board until signal troops are required. Yesterday we were situated about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from a destroyer, which was shelling the land. We could see the cloud of dust and smoke as they dropped about 10 miles away. I think they are smashing forts. The funny part about it is that we cannot really see anything worth firing at. The land seems to be covered with scrub. The enemy do not seem to reply. No doubt we are out of their range. I should think there were thousands of shells fired yesterday. Last night it was a picture to see the sky lit up with flashes. This morning the enemy have been shelling our aeroplanes. It is the finest sight I have ever seen and you can bet I am pleased to be here after such a long wait. I have got a nice job on this boat. The 2nd Steward who looks after all stores and the dry canteen has too much work on so I am assisting him. We do not work very hard and I have something to occupy my time. We have done quite a lot of work today. One of the advantages of my work is that I get saloon food. We get all kinds of dainties, which seem very nice to a soldier. The firing ceased about noon today and a lot of the battleships have steamed to a point behind us at the entrance to the Dardanelles. They look very aggressive. I begin to think that we may stay here a few days until the land is cleared of the enemy. The Australians effected a landing about a week ago and got a severe handling by the enemy. Thousands of wounded came into Alexandria. I will try and write you a little each day and then seal the letter when we leave the boat. I think I can get it posted privately. I know you won't give any information to the papers II..IIx I made friends with a few Arabs in Egypt and tried to learn a little of the language. A postman who worked for the Eastern Telegraph Co. wrote me some Arabic on a postcard, which I sent home. His name was Mohammed Bassiany and he was born at Bombay.

I miss your letters dearest but it is nice to get one, I wish I could tell you everything as we go along but this may be my last detailed letter.

6 MAY: It has come on fairly cold today and the sea is rough. The firing is still going on and we do not seem to make a lot of headway on land. I am having the loan of a map tonight so shall try and find our exact position.

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6 MAY

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks very much for yours, which I received a few days ago. I had not despaired of getting one, but I had missed your letters so much. We live on hope on this trip. I suppose you would like to know all about the War. At last after such a long wait I am on the spot, but only as a spectator. We are in the *Esmeraldas* anchored off the coast – we are like Moses viewing the Promised Land. In this case the Promised Land looks very barren but I think everybody is eager to smell powder. The men of war are here shelling the countryside. We see a flash then hear a bang, then we see a cloud of dust, perhaps on the top of a mountain. The peculiar part about the affair is that nobody shells us. We are perhaps out of range. The shelling has continued all thro' the daytime and sometime extends into the night. This has continued for days. We see many of the latest inventions of war. Aeroplanes and balloons for observations, wireless signalling and signalling by means of flags and lights. We can read the Morse light and flag signalling a little and can manage slow semaphore. This is a fine boat and we are having a good time. We are not roughing it yet. Up to the present the whole affair is beyond my expectations, and I had never looked forward to seeing such an interesting exhibition as the last few days have afforded. The whole trip has been highly interesting, and I have conversed with men from all parts of the world.

Thanks for kind offer to send me any requirements. I seem to have plenty of stores at present and baccho is cheap (1/- or 1/6 lb). I would like to know how the War is progressing so I would be glad of a paper about once a fortnight. The letter that was delayed was posted for me by a porter. I thought we might not have another chance. I am just going on deck to watch the lights and listen to the guns. They seem to spit when anything vexes them. I hope you are keeping well at the office dearest. Give my KR to Aunties and any enquiring friends. I think of you every day dearest and send all best love.

Yours always, Eddie

I am in the pink thanks and enjoying the life thanks.

18 MAY

My Dearest,

I haven't written a little every day because there has been very little to tell. On 8 May I witnessed a bombardment – perhaps one of the biggest in history. Our ships were endeavouring to clear the enemy from a hill on Gallipoli Peninsula. They fired thousands of shells in the morning but the climax was reached between 5 and 7 pm when over a 100 shells were fired in a minute. At the same time field batteries and machine guns were fired from the English position on

land. We had sailed further up the previous day so had a view of the battle. The hill occupied by the Turks was one smoking inferno, and the guns roared like thunder for hours. Still the Turks replied and held their position. I believe we only advanced 300 yds as a result of the bombardment. I hear since that the Turks have got a big gun and are doing heavy damage on our camp, which is at the extreme point of Gallipoli Peninsula. On the 10 May we sailed at 2 am for Lemnos (washouts again). However, we have spent a pleasant week in very peaceful surroundings. I got ashore once in a rowing boat and assisted to bury a horse. The hills were covered with barley and there were plenty of English flowers. I am sending you one that is a kind of everlasting flower. We were not allowed to go to the village. I have been swimming every day. I swam round our ship one day and in the evening got up a party of five and we swam to a ship called *BIG* on which one of our Air Line Sections was quartered. It was half a mile away and it did seem a long distance when we were in the water, and there was a peculiar feeling of being dependent on one's own skill when we were in the middle of the sea. I saw Langley of Harrogate and a few other friends.

On 16 May we got orders for Alexandria with a caution to beware of submarines. We are nearly there now and may sight land any minute. The sea is wonderfully blue and somewhat resembles turquoise ink. I am sorry we are taking a backward step but I think the Dardanelles is proving a hard nut to crack. I do not look forward with pleasure to a long stay in Alexandria with its heat, flies, sand and evil smells. I shall try for the job of cook if we stay any time. Can you give me any hints dearest?

I am proud of the honesty of English people when I see the tradesmen of Egypt. I suppose one would get accustomed to their ways in time. A peculiar fact I noticed at Alex is that the men are more picturesque than the women both in clothing and looks. Of course there may be some good-looking females but it must be the ones who cover their faces. I have slept on the boat deck the last three nights. It is a concrete deck situated above the ordinary deck amidships. It is fine to be rocked to sleep with the stars swaying overhead. We make ourselves very comfy using our tunic for a pillow, a blanket underneath to make it feel like a feather bed and a blanket and groundsheet over the top.

I shall probably be able to post this letter in Alex myself altho' I had intended giving it to one of the ship's crew. I am afraid our letters from England are tied up somewhere as the last I got from the Mater was posted on 19 April. I am looking forward to receiving one from you dearest when we get ashore. I can hardly explain how much I have missed you since I've been a soldier and how much more since I have not been able to get letters from you. Every beautiful thing I see I would like you to share in it, but I also long for you because your presence is true happiness to me. Men are good pals but all the men in the world could not make me as happy as you do dearest. I count myself fortunate every day knowing that I have the best girl I have ever seen for my very own. I may be away a long time dearest but I shall bring back all my love for you. Our love will help me to go thro' the Army without taking part in vices and follies. We are still sailing in a high circular plate of the sea. They say we shall not see

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land until 7 or 8 pm. I will let you know where we are going as soon as I can get ashore. I bought some postcards of Athens from a Greek trader so will try and post them from Alex. *Au revoir* for present darling.

Yours with love, Eddie

ALEXANDRIA

28 MAY

My Darling Madge,

I got a friend to post a letter to you a few days ago and unfortunately he put it in without a stamp. I hope you will forgive me. It was a long letter giving you a full account of our wandering. The PO may suspect it for a soldier's letter and then it would be stopped. Well dearest I am back in the lazy country again and am quite enjoying the life. I can stand the heat quite well, and I don't mind the lizards, flies, beetles and ants. We are much nearer the sea than we were at Chatby and I am getting a beautiful swim every day. The water is quite warm. We are in tents on a sand waste called Kleopatra, it is about half a mile from Mustapha Pasha where Watson lives. He is working in an office so gets plenty of time off. I spent an hour with him last night. We finish about 7 pm and have to be in at 10 pm, but we are hoping to finish about 5 pm when we get settled down.

If you do not receive my previous letter I thought I would tell you that we have had a week at the Dardanelles and seen quite a lot of the fighting, which took the form of a bombardment of the Peninsula of Gallipoli by our warships. I have seen hundreds of shells fired to the minute, and during the week we were there, many thousands of shells have been fired. From what I can gather there has been a big mistake in the Dardanelles tactics. The coast was shelled from the sea and there were not enough land troops ready at hand to carry on the work. I fancy the troops on transports were thought to be in an unsafe position so we were all brought back to Lemnos and Alexandria. We may be here some weeks as I hear that taking the Dardanelles is going to be a very difficult task owing to the mistakes made at first.

Living is very dear in Alexandria, and our money does not last very long. We can buy all kinds of things from men who come round the camp. The oranges are fine and much better than those we get in England. There are also sweet lemons, apricots, tomatoes, cucumbers etc. Being on active service we are not allowed much liberty but it is very nice to get out for an hour or two in the evenings. We can dress almost as we like. The main thing is to see that we don't get burnt with the sun. The sun is so strong as to burn the skin off completely. I have worn your sleeping helmet all the time we were at sea and I still wear it with a handkerchief as neck-shade. Our pith helmets are rather heavy.

I am keeping a diary still and it will take you a week to read it if we keep wandering about.

1915

JR and NJP are in my tent. They are both well. I do wish we could find out where our letters are. I have only received one letter from you dearest. I didn't think I could exist so long without one. It was a hardship to have to leave you and now it is worse not to hear from you. I shall have to put in a Form 58 for some delayed letters. I send all my very best love dearest and KR to Aunties. I will let you know where we get to if possible. Please let me know how you are dearest.

Yours always, Eddie x

30 MAY

We are now in dock at Alex and cannot get ashore. Am getting this posted.
Love, Eddie

18 JUNE

My Dearest Madge,

We have half an hour to write some letters so you will perhaps excuse short note. I haven't heard from you for some time now but it is no doubt due to our section being split up. I am anxious to know how you are so if you haven't told me will you please do so in future letters. I hope the mountain air will set you up. I wish you could have a taste of our life, I mean the sailing part of it. We are on a splendid trip at present. I am still well and happy. There is nothing much to report and I cannot write quite such full letters as I have been doing lately. I shall be glad of a weekly newspaper occasionally. Do you know where Arthur and Davie are and how they are getting on? I send you all my love dearest. I am thinking about you every day. Give my KR to all at home, hope Ma is better.
Yours for ever, Eddie

24 JUNE

My Dearest Madge,

Have got settled down to work now so thought I would drop you a line. I am away from the section, working in a Signal Office. I have been working at a few places but hope to settle down now for a few weeks. Edgar and another very nice chap are out with me. We are not quite 2 miles from the firing line and plenty of shells (chiefly shrapnel) come our way. We dodge these as far as possible by running to our dugouts. We make these places ourselves and if we stay for any length of time we can make things very comfy. It is hard work digging and tunnelling but I suppose it is 'dig or die'. We are all very happy and contented and the food at our present place is very good. Colbert has been here for a short while but I relieved him. We get very warm weather and no rain. On the whole

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life is quite decent and we quite enjoy cooking for ourselves. We get tobacco and rum or lime juice issued each week.

I have not received any of your letters for some time but am expecting there will be a mail up any day. You know I am anxious to hear how you are getting on. There are no houses at all where we are, but all the same the countryside is very pretty. I will let you know how I am from time to time. I haven't yet heard how your brothers are. I hope they are having a good time. I hope all are well at home. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

4 JULY

My Dearest Madge,

I am just sitting out in the garden so thought I would write you a letter seeing it is Sunday afternoon. It is a real Sunday afternoon and things are quite peaceful in our camp. There is an occasional crack from a battery on our right and a few puffs of shrapnel in the air. These things do not destroy our peace of mind tho'. The battery is firing towards the Turks and the shrapnel is aimed at one of our aeroplanes but fortunately it usually bursts a mile from its object.

I intended spending the afternoon writing to you but someone came along to take me to the firing line and I have now returned. I did not get right up so did not get a spot at the Turks. Now I am sitting in the cool of the evening and can hear the strains of bagpipes coming from a neighbouring camp. My trip this afternoon was full of interest but perhaps I should not be allowed to tell you all I have seen. I got a few trophies and things that would prove interesting but I hardly know how I shall be able to carry these things about. I have two fine shells and two caps or time fuses but the fuses do not fit these particular shells. I hope to get them fitted up and if at all possible will bring them home. They are no mean weight tho'. Where I was this afternoon I could have got any quantity of shells.

Thanks very much for your letter dated 11 June and the *Bulletins*. It seems ages since I wrote that letter at Alex – no doubt you have received a good many more by now. Am glad my letters give you pleasure dearest, it gives me pleasure to write to you. Thanks for the hint about the British. Am afraid I have already fallen into the trap of which you speak but an Australian put me right and I shall bear it in mind. If I do exist without your letters dearest, it is hope that I live on. When we don't get a mail for some time, existing without letters is a case of necessity. You enquire about Norman and JR. Norman will be working at Headquarters on the point of the Peninsula I think, and JR is in Alex. Edgar is with me of course. I wrote a letter to Aunties a few days ago so they will soon know that I occupy a little dugout in the East. Am glad you are enjoying country life, it is good to be able to enjoy simple pleasures. One of the chief joys of this life is that we do not seem dependent of anyone for our existence. The food is supplied of course but otherwise we cook our food, build our homes and do

Wireless Messages.

The Admiralty announces that the enemy claims to have sunk submarine E. 7 (Lieut. Commander A. Cechrane) in the Dardanelles and to have taken 3 officers and 25 men prisoners. As no news of this submarine has been received since the 4th September, it must be presumed that the report is correct.

The Russian successes in Galicia are making their effect felt all along the line.

Lord Kitchener made a speech yesterday in which he referred to the recruiting question. The War Minister's remarks have led many to believe that we are on the verge of conscription, but there is a strong body of opinion, which believes that this interpretation is incorrect. Other important points of the speech were Lord Kitchener's reference to the French line as almost impregnable. He eulogised our new divisions as worthy of the best traditions of the Army, referred to the Italians as occupying positions of first rate strategic importance, and dismissed Germany's achievements against Russia, as a strategic failure with nothing more than barren territory and evacuated fortresses as tangible results. Regarding the advance into Russia he added that the Germans appeared to have almost shot their bolt.

Rinella Press, 17th.

Mr. Asquith announced that a despatch from the Dardanelles will be published shortly. The negotiations between the Anglo-French Commission and American financiers progress satisfactorily in spite of attempts by pro-Germans to hamper them. The loan will possibly be divided into 4 series of 5% bonds payable in dollars. It is understood that the Commission has assured the representatives of American cotton growers that cotton as well as other trade with France and Great Britain will be cared for. A supplementary vote of 250 millions was announced in the House of Commons to-day. Mr. Asquith explained certain abnormal items for financing the necessary operations, the particulars of which it would not be in the public interest to disclose. The average daily expenditure was over three and a half millions sterling. The future weekly average will exceed 35 millions. The total expenditure of the financial year hitherto is 510 millions. Advances of 20 millions to Foreign Governments and 28 millions to the Dominions had been made. Since the outbreak of war not far short of three million men had enlisted in the Army and Navy. Mr. Asquith concluded by paying a tribute to the gallantry of Russia saying:—"It is a war of mechanics, organisation and endurance. Victory will incline to that side which can arm itself best and most steadily. That is what we want to do." (Great cheering.)

Field-Marshal Sir John French reports considerable artillery activity on both sides particularly North-east of Armentieres and in the neighbourhood of Ypres. Three hostile aeroplanes (were brought down?), two of which were hit by our anti-aircraft guns. During the week there have been altogether 21 flights over the German lines, and in every case the Germans were driven to the ground.

Rome.

On the 16th the Italians captured new positions at Mount Valpiana and Mount Fossernica, North-east of Trento.

In the Plezzo zone they took positions on Mount Javoreck, taking 500 prisoners.

Paris.

A French communique states that the Russian War Minister is satisfied with the improvement in the provision of munitions of war. The enormous increase in the output has been fully maintained in the last fortnight.

THE EASTERN FRONT.

Wireless messages received during the week from all sources show that the German offensive is still being pressed in the North. On the other hand a vigorous Russian offensive in Galicia has achieved important successes. The

Operations in the North:—Petrograd, 14th September.—The enemy attacking West and South-west of Dvinsk succeeded in cutting the railway between Dvinsk and Wilna near the station of Novo Sventziany. As a result of the enemy's pressure between this station and Wilna the Russians are retiring. The enemy, greatly reinforced is attacking East of Skidel. (Skidel is about 20 miles East of Grodno).

Petrograd, September 17th.

South-east of Dvinsk the Russians repulsed repeated German attacks. North-east of Wilna the enemy succeeded in crossing the Wilna river. In the direction of Pinsk the Russians are retiring.

Operations in the South:—London, Sept. 12th.—A Petrograd communique issued last night states that General Ivanoff's earlier victory at Tarnopol has been repeated. The Tsar's troops broke down the German resistance capturing more than 2,000 men and several quickfiring guns.

Paris, September 17th.

Fierce fighting continues on the Eastern front resulting in further successes for the Russians. Prisoners have been taken amounting to 4,078. A Petrograd communique says the Russians captured two villages and many prisoners and drove the enemy back Westwards. South-west of Tarnopol the Russians are vigorously attacking and have captured a village and driven the enemy headlong across the Strypa, inflicting great losses. There was a fierce battle all day on the West of Trembowla on the Strypa. In the evening the Russians broke the wire entanglements and hurled the enemy from their trenches with the bayonet, captured a village close by, and crossed the river closely pursuing the enemy. This engagement resulted in the capture of 500 more prisoners.

THE WESTERN FRONT.

Throughout the past week, artillery duels have continued along the Western front, attaining great intensity in certain localities. Numerous air raids into hostile territory have been carried out by the French airmen. The following extracts are of interest:—

Paris, September 12th.

North of Arras there was incessant bomb and grenade fighting. Fresh attempts by the enemy against our positions at Sapigny completely failed. We successfully bombarded with heavy shells the enemy's aircraft hangars at Biseville.

Paris, September 14th.

A squadron of 19 airmen flew over the town of Trèves on which about 100 bombs were dropped. The railway station and the Imperial German Bank were clearly hit. The same squadron after returning to our lines and descending, on the same afternoon dropped 58 bombs on the station of Bommery-Barroncourt, while other airmen flying low bombarded the stations at Donneschingen on the Danube and at Morlach. Our bombs were seen to hit their targets.

Paris, September 17th.

There has been incessant grenade fighting in the region of Arras. Fierce artillery fighting around Reye and in the Champagne. The enemy attempted to attack in the Argonne, but was completely repulsed. The French guns in Lorraine proved their superiority against the German positions and concentrations of troops. The Germans attempting to debouch were enveloped in a curtain of fire by our guns and infantry. German airmen threw bombs on Compiègne, our airmen replied by attacking hangars at Bruyelle with heavy bombs.

Paris, September 19th.

East of St. Mihiel a German captive balloon was brought down. In front of St. Mihiel our artillery destroyed the main bridge, a bridge of boats and three foot bridges.

BRITISH CASUALTIES.

London, September 16th.

Mr Tennant stated in the House of Commons, that the total British casualties for the first year of war were: officers killed 4,965; wounded 9,973

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all the other jobs that are usually done for us in civilian life. Am so sorry Alex is in hospital. He is having bad luck. I suppose his turn may come tho'. I forgot to tell you in my last letter that I am with the Royal Naval Division. On the Army scheme there appears to be a Headquarters, then some distance away there is a Corps Headquarters, branching from which are the various divisions. I am working at the Signal Office of a division. I think the divisions are divided into brigades. Each of these offices are a step nearer the firing line. Colbert was over here last night. He is at Corps Headquarters and altho' it is further back than our place they get plenty of shells. Two men were unfortunately killed there yesterday. From what I can see shells are liable to come anywhere on Gallipoli. This morning a battery sent a lot into our camp. They seemed to come five or six together with intervals of about a minute. We go downstairs of course. Unfortunately three men were killed in an adjacent plot. Tonight Asiatic Annie dropped some nasty ones on the French camp near us. When they shell us we take every necessary precaution and trust to luck. Since last writing we have had to vacate our old dugout owing to the ground being required by the Signal Service. Yesterday I was working from 9 am 'til 7 pm making a new home. Edgar helped in the morning and John in the afternoon and our place was ready for sleeping in at night. We have made it very safe and I have not seen a better one in this camp made of scrap materials. It is about 7x5 ft and 3'6" deep. The portion under which our heads lie at night is roofed with strong beams and piles of sand bags. The sides, which are liable to shell fire, are piled with sand bags and over the other part of the place there is a small tent. We have boxes in which to keep our belongings. On the whole it is a very fine place. I wish you could see it. Frequently we have to eject centipedes and beetles but they do not seem to interfere with us at night times.

*The Peninsula Press,
a daily newsletter for
English speaking troops
stationed around the
Gallipoli Peninsula*

There is a sheet of newspaper published here each day called the *Peninsula Press*. I am able to see it each day but cannot get hold of a copy for keeps. Roads out here bear such familiar names as Oxford St, Piccadilly etc. Today I saw Sauchiehall St. I don't seem to have any more news at present dearest. I will write weekly if possible as long as I stay here. Please let me know how you are in your letters. I am quite well and happy and can stick the life OK. Give my KR to all at home. All love for you dearest. I will be home as soon as poss.

Yours for ever, Eddie

9 JULY

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks for your two letters of 17 and 22 June, which I received two days ago. Thanks also for paper. I also received two letters from home and two papers from Aunties. Well, it is a treat to get a mail and I can assure you that I wish the postman came every day. I am pleased that you are having a nice time and that you feel the benefit of the mountain air. It is a pity that someone is still

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bothering about us, but if you are not disturbed in any way I am quite sure that the matter does not bother me, and the photo would stand looking at. I should think that Roberts would be the last of the recruits from Harrogate unless Bogey comes forward and there is no reason why he should not, seeing that soldiers are so urgently required. There is no need for you to think that your letters are uninteresting to me, I quite understand that things will not be very exciting in Glencuce. I seem to get all the Harrogate news as the *Harrogate Herald* is sent to me by the Editor – I have sent a letter of thanks so it may appear in print, seeing that he has not many correspondents from the Dardanelles.

I cannot think that the scenery in this district resembles that of Scotland in any way because it is so dusty and dreary but it may have been very pretty in the first instance. There are a few traces of civilisation, for instance there are some grapes growing outside our dugout and if we stay here long enough we shall be gathering in the harvest. Things have become quite commonplace here and I am quite used to the life. I am in no way tired of the job yet, I am sorry to say that the climate does not suit Edgar but he may be able to carry on without going to hospital as the work is not heavy at this office. We get shelled occasionally but a few minutes shelling does not spoil our happiness and we soon forget about it. We see quite a lot of notices to the effect that the Turks are tired out and there is no doubt that they must feel a bit fed up with the job as they never make any headway and even when they do attack we seem to chip a bit off them. I have not done much travelling lately but I had a journey to a point near the firing line one morning this week.

The household arrangements at the dugout are going on very nicely and we are getting quite expert at cooking. We had some very nice boiled ham for tea, but we do not eat much meat out here. I haven't any more news this time as things have been so quiet, of course I am looking forward to the time when we shall be coming home and the job may be over in a few months' time. I hope all are well at home and I would not mind if it was possible for me to pay the belated visit, but we have not to think of pleasure at these times, so the newspapers say. I send all my best love dearest and will write a longer letter when there is any news about.

Yours for ever, Eddie

16 JULY

My Own Dearest,

Thanks very much for your two letters, which I have received. One posted 18 May arrived last Sunday so I suppose that is the missing one, the other posted 24 June arrived yesterday. By the time letters are taking I suppose you will know that I am on real active service by now. We have been here nearly four weeks now and seem to feel more at home every day. Of course we can add to our comforts if we stay in one place sometime. It is like starting a home without

any furniture. We keep getting bits of furniture and household effects together. Edgar and I are quite contented altho' I tell him off for sleeping so long. If he once gets down there is no telling when he will get up. We feel quite independent when we contemplate that we live in the house we have built, eat food that we cook, smoke cigs that we make etc. We are having some coffee tonight, which came from the Frenchmen in exchange for jam. I grind it from the beans by pounding it between two Turkish shell cases. I also make porridge of powdered biscuits. If we had an oven I should be attempting some of the more advanced cooking such as jam tarts, but it is hardly worthwhile building one when we may move any day. Unfortunately, John Cahill was taken feverish and had to go to hospital. I visited him the first day and found him going on nicely, but on paying a visit the following day he had been moved. The chaps told me he was going on all right tho', so I suppose they wanted the room.

In your earlier letter you are enquiring if I suffered from seasickness between Malta and Alex. Am pleased to say I didn't. I only had *mal de mer* for a few hours after leaving Gibraltar. Am sorry you are getting my letters out of turn but better late than never. There is no fear of me coming back a linguist (I think that is the word). I can't learn any French from these chaps because they speak so quickly. Perhaps they would be a help to anyone who had a good reading and writing knowledge of their lingo. I have not heard much about us returning home lately. The job is turning out a long one, so I am going to be as happy and as contented as possible and not let myself feel homesick. The free, simple life appeals to me all the time, and as long as you don't get tired of waiting dearest, I shan't worry. I think waiting at home is more dreary than being here. You might keep wondering if we are in danger, while we know you are safe (bar zeppelins). Of course everybody here runs a little risk but we telegraphists (altho' we are filling the most useful position possible) are not paying the price of the poor boys in the trenches. It does not seem fair to them but I suppose an Army is composed of many parts. I feel quite sure I can settle to civilian life after all the travelling. Don't you think I look forward to the peace and comfort of a little home dearest? Of course, if I ever get to the wilds of Glenluce I may start building a dugout in the back meadow by force of habit. Am sorry to say the Armenian chap never gave me the Jerusalem lamp he promised. Am pleased Ma is a little better and that you are picking up. It would be a good idea if you made a list of the subjects that have to be put on the table for discussion. They seem to fly away from me. I don't like to say what I would have done had I been in Alex's place. We will wait and see dearest, I don't want to condemn his actions when I don't know all the circs. Am sorry to say I have not been to a church service since leaving the boat. I believe the Church of England held a service, also the Catholics. Am sorry I do not know any Gaelic. You will have to excuse me if I bring a hookah home. The difficulty is that I can see so many fine things in Egypt I should like but I hardly know what to buy for you, that is if we call there on return. What would you like. Do you fancy bracelets for the ankles?

We have had a fine swim this afternoon. There were quite a lot of French and Senegalese in the water. These Senegalese are attached to the French. I asked one

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if he would swim across the Dardanelles to Asia with me but he declined with a grin. Asiatic Annie is stationed just across. I don't know how many guns there are there but they put a few shells in our camps from time to time. During the last few days there has been a lot of fighting and the Scotchmen have been in it. They have made a good advance. Looking at the job seriously it is a terrible affair and one cannot help but feel for both British and Turks who are in the scraping. We have seen a few hundred prisoners brought down. It was not a sight to be joyful about. The poor fellows looked so worn out and were ragged and covered with blood. Our fellows are kind to them and they are well treated. They can retain all their personal belongings unless they possess any documents etc.

17 JULY 1915: Edgar and I have been on a long walk today and we have seen quite a lot of interesting things. We have been where I have long wished to go, but I will tell you about it afterwards. Last night we had a visit from one of the boys who was on brigade cable work during the attack and we heard what a dreadful affair it was. It seems silly that we should fight like this because nobody can enjoy it. It is a pity things can't be settled without killing each other. Anyway perhaps things will be straightened out someday. I am not changing my ideas about war, I have always thought the same, but such thoughts do not stop anyone from wanting to do their bit.

Well dearest, I think you have got all the news this time. Will you tell Aunties I received the papers and thank them. I would drop them a line but am waiting for envelopes from home. Am just going to write up the daily log and turn in. Edgar is on all night so I am by myself. I sleep very soundly. One night this week quite a number of shells came over and a tank dropped two bombs but I did not hear a sound. I got a nice brass time fuse today. It is inscribed with Turkish figures. It was very hot so I presume it had just fallen. Shall bring it home if poss. I send all best love to you darling and KR to all. Let me know how you are getting on. Three shells just dropped very near our camp. It is unusual for night time. Well GW dearest.

Yours always, Eddie x

24 JULY

Darling Madge,

Thanks for yours of 29 June and enclosure, I received a bundle of papers at same time and another bundle arrived last night so I am well off for reading matter. You need not worry about the choice because they arrive fairly early and give us a good idea how the outside world is wagging. You appear to have received my last missive from Alex so perhaps your next will be in reply to mine from the Dardanelles. I am afraid ECW is given to colouring, and doubt if they see much in France. Our Divisional Section in France are seeing very little of the War and as far as I know Whitehead is in Army Troops and will be a good way back. I

could not help smiling at one of the boys in France who had found a shell nose. I could collect him a sackful within a mile of here. I have already sent a Turkish shell home and if it arrives will send some more. I have a few specimens but may have to abandon them if we move. Our friends the enemy are putting a few shells over just now. They seem to have got a nasty habit of dodging them here and there. A few have just burst in front of us and perhaps they will send one beyond. Of course when they play this game we are generally on the alert. There is not much to worry about because it is a big place and it is a thousand to one that a shell would drop where we happen to be.

Am pleased to hear that Miss Green likes the new job. One could hardly get weary travelling about. I am also very pleased to hear you are feeling much better, altho' I do not want to hear of you rushing back to work until you are quite fit. Thanks for prospectus regarding War Loan, I am glad you are being patriotic and having a deal. I am interested of course but after thinking the matter over I am of opinion it might prove unprofitable to me. I shall require my money after the War and lots of people will be realising on War Loans, which may cause them to fall (I mean the War Loans – not the people) II..II That is only an opinion but as you know it is possible to lose on government stock. Of course it is possible to get them repaid at par in 30 years' time. I think my fortune, which may be about £100 by now, is invested in the PO and in the CWS at 4 1/10%. Don't you think it had better stop there? We have just had a shell about 200 yds in front of us, so I got downstairs, a second one came about a minute after and burst 20 yds away. I think they were stray shots tho' as things are now quiet. This is the life Alex is longing for II..IIx I was very eager to come out and I can't say I have ever felt disappointed. They have just sent over about a dozen more, some are falling near and some going to our rear. Our aeroplane is up and will be finding their battery out if they don't cease fire. I am glad the walks round your way are quiet. The walks here are interesting but not quiet. I was up at a redoubt the other day and could see the enemy's position thro' loop-holes. When shells went over to our rear they made an awful buzzing noise, not a bit like the whistle of a shell when it has travelled a mile or two. Rifle bullets made a high-pitched squeak as they passed over. My destination lay about ¼ of an hour's walk beyond redoubt, but there was nothing to see and I dare say it would have been a foolish thing to look over the parapet.

We have ceased to cook our own food. John is away and I found the job a bit one-sided. I was doing nearly all the work. However, I have made a fireplace near the dugout and we can just cook extras. It is made out of a large tin box and has a chimney at the back. The whole is neatly cemented round. The earth here sets like cement. Last night we had porridge made of powdered biscuits, and also some coffee. Tonight we shall only have coffee. I have a fancy to make an oven, but at present I cannot see how pastry can be made of powdered biscuits without using baking powder. Would health salts do instead of baking powder do you think? Could you give me an idea of the ingredients for pastry? It has been wash day today so you see I generally have some work to do. I wash once a week and have a bath everyday. Up to the present I have been able to

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keep free from animal specimens and I hope to continue to do so. There are many crummy men about – in some cases it is their own fault and in others they have not had chance to keep clean.

I have heard no news about coming home and I do not see how we shall get away for a few months yet. Many new troops have come out, quite a lot of them are Kitchener's Army. I see by Harrogate paper that several Harrogate men are here with 9th West Yorks in the 11th Division. There are very many times I would like to see you dearest if it was only for a few minutes. I enjoy this life but there is a hardship in being away from those we love. Perhaps it is a test of our love, but I am sure that time would make no difference. Let us hope that the time to come will be all the happier for this parting. Excuse my crude attempt at being sentimental. I usually think more than I can express. Are you a thought reader? Give my KR to all at home, also to Aunties. All best love.

Yours always, Eddie

29 JULY

My Darling Madge,

Edgar and I have got marching orders so I thought I would drop you a line as may not have a chance during next few days. The Signal Co. whose work we have been doing has now arrived so we shall most probably be going back on the beach where Norman is. We are very sorry to leave this camp and also the gear we have got together in the dug out. However we hope to establish a happy home somewhere. I am leaving quite a lot of shells behind but have sent two home so perhaps they will arrive safely. I have a decent shrapnel nose marked with Turkish figures which I'm going to carry. I am having to leave the shell which fits it. I hope you are still on the improve dearest. I think about you every day and am longing for the time when I shall be with you again. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

6 AUGUST

My Dearest Madge,

Have three of yours to answer and am using my last envelope so other correspondents must wait. I think I have a supply on the way from home. I wanted to write to Aunties and thank them for papers but perhaps you can thank them for me and I will write later. We find reading matter very acceptable and we are quite interested in the Dardanelles position and what is thought about it at home. I like the *GW Weekly*, also *John Bull*. I have to thank you very much for pipe and tobacco, which arrived today. The pipe is what a Yankee friend of mine here would call 'some pipe'. Tobacco rations have not been regular lately so the

supply is very acceptable. If you could manage it without difficulty, I should be glad if you could send me some tobacco – say about 2 oz a fortnight and it would save me from going about like a dog without a tail when there is no issue from the Army. I had to exchange some milk for tobacco last week. Edgar and I are now settled down in a nice little dugout at Headquarters where Norman works. He is sitting next to me now and reading my Harrogate paper. The camp is on the top of a hill and overlooks the deep blue sea. We are continually climbing up and down a very steep incline like KB Castle hill but the paths are more steep and composed of slipping sand and stones. Water can only be obtained for drinking purposes so we do our washing in the sea. The clothes come very clean and do not require much rubbing. We are able to get a good swim every day. Our daily swim is to an upturned boat at 300 yds from the shore. Of course shells come here and beyond us into the sea. Last Sunday they dropped one in our Signal Office and it came thro' sandbags, corrugated iron and wooden beams. Sadly to relate six men were killed. Young Elliott with whom I was friendly in the early Biggleswade days was one of the unfortunate ones. We all feel the affair very much, and cannot look upon it as the fortunes of war when it happens to our own. I am glad to say that the office is now in a more secure place and it will be impossible for such a knockout blow to be given again. We have to carry on ourselves and not get the wind-up. A chap soon deteriorates in health if he starts being frightened. This new office faces the sea and there is a swarm of battleships etc. round us laughing away at the Turks. Two of these very near to us are letting us know of their presence. When they fire we are nearly lifted from our seats and the walls shake as if they are falling in. I cannot quite explain what it feels like dodging a shell, I have had them within 15, 20 and 30 yds several times, and I am generally thankful when I can jump up intact. Yes, I have been within a few miles of Krithia but from a strategic point of view the town is of no importance. I have seen it shelled to hell about three times. The *GW Herald* says the fall of Krithia is imminent. I should say there is nothing left to fall. It is the Hill of Achi Baba we want. Am afraid Milly is taking you under her wing. You perhaps remember reading a letter from Cpl. Jayne Ruwin (the one which mentioned Colbert) Jayne is Secretary of Association at JS. He has been our pal for five weeks so you have been reading about the camp in which I was stationed. I cannot really say about our homecoming. By what I can see things are going to move somewhat out here and when the marrows are open we may return. You have had rather a rough time securing a pipe. I will perhaps bring you a real hookah from Egypt on the return trip. No doubt I shall have to smoke it for you as well. I saw quite plenty of the sickening sights at the last attack and the longer I stay here the more admiration I shall have for those who do actual fighting, also for the medics who attend the wounded.

We do not find the ants that infest our homes necessarily loathsome. They are clean little insects and carry away crumbs and any other food they can find. They do not attack us at all.

The trip on active service has seemed a very long one to me and it is about a year since I thought of being a soldier, I have seen enough in the past year to last

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a lifetime. However I am not absolutely fed up yet and am highly pleased with all I have seen and experienced. One hardly dares express personal wishes when everybody has to sacrifice something, but I shall be glad when I get back to you dearest. In the meantime I am enjoying the life on the whole.

Perhaps the censor hadn't patience to read my long letter or it may have been mutilated. Am glad you are progressing favourably and hope you will soon be able to tire me on the tramp. Give my KR to all at home. I keep wondering if you have a lake suitable for swimming at Craigenreoch amongst other attractions. I send all best love and will be home as soon as possible dearest

Yours for age, Eddie

SOMEWHERE IN TURKEY

15 AUGUST

My Darling Madge,

Am just having an afternoon 'siesta' in a kind of summer house, so thought I would write to you. It is a peaceful Sunday afternoon and if it wasn't for the guns booming in the distance one would fancy we were here for pleasure. I received yours of 23 July together with one from Auntie Maggie yesterday. Am pleased my letters are interesting to you, but am afraid we do not have much of interest to report from this camp. The daily round is 8 hours' work, a swim, meals and the performance of a few household duties such as carrying water, washing up, cooking etc. Am wondering if it is wise of me to let you know that I can cook and wash up II..IIx I did the major portion of that digging you refer to because I was off duty all day and the other two were not. I don't know how I should feel if I had the chance to shoot a Turk. I dare say we are assisting indirectly in killing them but I have no great ambition to participate in the actual shooting. It seems a cruel business, but no doubt one can do quite a lot if roused. I can't say that I tell you all the rosy side of our life. I truly enjoy the job and altho' there are a few hardships there is nothing that a man can't put up with. There are two courses open, one is to be happy and keep smiling, the other is to get the 'wind up', go about preaching 'all is lost' and be miserable. If one is a philosopher he will choose the former. The worst of the job is that it is wearying, but so are most jobs. Am sorry to hear that the 'Bully Sergeant' has got wounded, and at home too. I am inclined to agree with the Sgt.'s sister's first sentiments. Aren't you? Am sorry cycling is a washout, why not try a gee-gee? I had a ride yesterday and think by my successful performance that I could manage that bronco of yours. I have had a touch of dysentery and felt very weak for a few days but am feeling OK now. You will be glad to hear that Frankie arrived here two days ago and we settled him in a nice dugout. We were going to see a friend last night and encountered some heavy shelling, however by bobbing down now and again we got away all right. I think I shall still be able to 'read' you even if you have started speaking Gaelic. We have a wee bit of

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crack with the Scotchmen here occasionally. Anyway if I can't read you perhaps we can get someone to transmit.

There isn't much War news. We hope that the hill will be taken before the monsoons come. I don't know how we shall get on if it rains for days. I shall have to thatch our roof and make a hammock. Major Tomkins has come out here, perhaps you will remember him being at Harrogate. He was the chap who took part in the expedition to Tibet. He recognised me and we were soon talking about old times when I used to work the tubes.

Well, dearest I think I've told you all the news, I am looking forward to orders for coming home. We have heard nothing lately. You see we can all stick the job but it would be heavenly to be home again with those we love. I have always longed for some adventures but such a life as this gives one a true idea of home. We shall always feel more grateful for the things done for us because we know what it feels like to manage this job on our own. I send all best love dearest and it has been quite a pleasant Sunday afternoon for me. I have done all the talking for a change II..IIx KR to all at home.

Yours ever, Eddie

P.S. We do not get the bonus, and of course are not anxious for it seeing we get civil pay etc. I have carved the new pipe and made it quite picturesque.

Eddie sends news
via a Field Service
Postcard, August
1915



My Darling Madge,

Have just received yours of 29 July also some papers from Aunties. Well, letters are always welcome and it does seem a long time between mail days. I believe I should begin to feel lonely and fed up if I hadn't your letters to look forward to dearest. You will see I have got an uncensored envelope and I think we shall get one each week. Tonight I am on counter and it has only reached 1 am so I shall be able to write quite a lot before 6 am. The office is a kind of stone building built by the Army, there are places for doors and windows but as such things are luxuries and impossible to obtain the place has the appearance of a half-finished house. Outside there is a ledge or path, then a very steep cliff of sand and stones which ends at the sea. I can look out across the Gulf of Saros to Imbros Island. Such are our conditions. Perhaps about 3 am I shall wake one of the chaps and have a kip down for a short while.

I thought you would be surprised to receive a typed letter, someone said that girls don't appreciate typed letters. I will perhaps send you a *Peninsula Press* when I find a spare copy. It contains the latest official news and is issued by Royal Engineers Printing Section. I hope I shall have pleasure of seeing your photo enlargement sometime, but of course am more anxious to see you dearest. I do not think when this trip is over I shall have any wish for dugout life, so you need not expect me digging myself in, in the back yard, or even taking a plank to bed to sleep on. Chaps who have been thro' it before say that it is some time before a soldier can be comfy in bed after sleeping on the floor for a time. Cooking is often a worry when done outside in the wind and dust, and then food is not easy to get. We buy a few things and have often to wait 2 or 3 hours in a line before getting served, some things we exchange and some we swipe. Anyway it pays for one's trouble, does the cooking. It will be almost impossible to live on the food we get, without any extras. I don't think anyone has been silly enough to try it. Speaking about cooking we had a fine supper last night. In the afternoon I caught a fish weighing about 1½ lbs. Edgar boned it and made two fillets. We had the fish fried and then followed up with tomato soup and *café au lait*. It may seem peculiar to you for us to swank about an ordinary meal but you see we seem to long for things we can't get. I would walk 4 miles for a nice tea of bread and butter. We caught a crab today but it was rather small so we did not like to risk eating it. The claws were very nice. II..IIx After all these domestic troubles and trials you can guess we shall appreciate and know the value of all that is done for us at home. Am pleased to hear your Ma is a little better and that you are able to assist. If you were only here, there would be no need for you to make jam. I would exchange you any amount for coffee or rice II..IIx It is turnip jam altho' labelled 'plum and apple', 'gooseberry' etc. I saw Bob's photo in the *Record*. Norman is over on an island, it is quite a safe place. He has been quite brave while here tho' and had no wish to go. There are plenty of brave chaps here but there are hundreds who would do almost anything to be

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out of it. These cowards are very pitiful objects.

I had a nice walk this week, went thro' Seddul Bahr village and along the coast to the farthest observation post. We could see the Turks' position about a mile away. A lot of the journey was in a deep trench called a communication trench. Everywhere around there was the litter of the battlefield. I got a nice cooking pan and a French bayonet as souvenirs. In places where batteries were concealed, the ground was one mass of shell holes and there were many unexploded Turkish shells about. The walk was very interesting. I am afraid that the two shells I sent home will never arrive. We have been told that the Customs are stopping them. I would really like to have a shell as a memento but they are too heavy to carry. I shall try to bring a few bayonets home but have not got a Turkish one yet. Hope all this news has not bored you dearest. If the contents had not been confined to private and family matters I could have given you plenty of very interesting information.

Got tired so did not finish letter. Had a nice Sunday today, but of course Sundays are like ordinary days. We have made supper, it is trifle (the custard which is made of eggs and condensed milk is poured over jam and bread). We shall partake of the meal about 9.30 pm. Well, dearest I believe I've been too shy to tell you how much I love you in my censored letters. I have plenty of time to think about these things here, and I believe absence makes the heart grow fonder. I look forward to the time dearest when we shall have a little dugout of our own. I am sure it is one of the things I most wish for. It would be my one happiness, trying to make you happy dearest. Getting a home together must entail quite a lot of work, seeing that a dugout is not equipped without some trouble. However such things can be put on the table for discussion later. II..IIx

Well, our candle is going to snuff out and there is quite an audience on our step trying to talk logic. I hope you are feeling stronger dearest, give my KR to all at home and Mr and Mrs Benson. Have had a nice swim this afternoon but only caught one shrimp so there is no fish for supper. Asiatic Annie has just been shelling the French Beach but did not reach us. I send all best love dearest.

Yours always, Eddie

29 AUGUST

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 4 and 9 Aug. They arrived on 26 and 27th. I also received the papers. The writing pad will be very useful. I think the Mater had forgotten to send me what I asked for so you have just saved the situation. I also received some papers from Aunties and a letter from Mr Allen. Gladys Allen and Miss Cargill enclosed a note so I dropped them a note when replying to Mr Allen. It is rather a fag having such a list of correspondents. Mr Allen writes on behalf of the Church and Mr Barwell drops a line now and again.

Well, it has come round to Sunday again and we are still hanging on. The weather is becoming cooler at nights and the sea is fairly rough. The fighting is exceedingly quiet and there is hardly anything of interest going off. Am pleased to hear you got my letters in good time, yours take a little longer to reach here but they are worth waiting for dearest. I believe you want me to tell you of all our trials when you say you can't fully realise what an awful time we have. Up to now I have been quite satisfied with the life and as you know I've seen many interesting places and had interesting experiences. I've nothing to grumble at personally. There is one thing I was very desirous of finding out and that was if I should be frightened when put to the test. I know now II..IIx The whole job has been worthwhile, apart from any patriotic motives. Now I could tell you the drawbacks of the life if you like. One is the weariness of being in a dreary camp and never seeing a sign of civilization other than the Army. This weariness can be overcome by looking after one's own comforts and trying to make the life as homely as possible. One of the other disadvantages is the effect of the climate on one's health and spirit. There are a few boys in this office just now and to look into their eyes is like looking into wells of congealed woe. They feel fed up and daren't eat, can hardly crawl about and are troubled with internal pains. Everybody seems to get a touch of this at times. I have had a rough fortnight of it but now I feel quite OK and am not going to be seedy any more II..IIx I did a big washing in the sea this morning. Am sorry I made the unkind remark about cooking, the error is regretted. I knew Riley of JK, he was in our Corps when I enlisted. He was a confirmed growler and because of his efforts to make others dissatisfied he was discharged. However he re-enlisted and came out here with the Western on dangerous work. His nerves gave way a few weeks ago and he is now being sent home I think.

I am pleased you are feeling stronger but I should not think of going back to work until you feel strong enough. I wanted to tell you about the GW Heralds. There is some fine reading in them but the chap who writes on Army matters should really be out here and he would change his mind on many things. I would like to tell him so but we are not allowed to communicate with the press on Army matters. I am an ardent advocate of conscription or something like that but there are not many men of ours in sympathy with me.

Thanks very much for your hints about cooking. Now if you had lived on Army biscuits any length of time you would not advise us to eat biscuits if anything else could be got. We now get a small ration of flour weekly so if we stay here another week and have no orders to move I shall build an oven. We can make very nice pancakes and boiled puddings on the fire. I shall certainly try some pastry if we get an oven. Murray and AFK are getting on fast. I do not seem to have much interest in the office at present and I haven't much interest in Army promotions. We are a kind of 'details' section here and we get lent out. I don't suppose anyone would take any interest in us with a view to giving us any promotion. But I can be happy without it and should never fall into the correct style of running after superiors. Am sorry Alex is not yet out. You see the Cavalry have always considered themselves a cut above Infantry and as Cavalry

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is almost a washout there does not appear to be much chance. It is very good of you to offer to send anything to me. I hardly like asking for luxuries when you are economising at home owing to the War. Some chocolate or some sweets that would not stick together would be a treat for us, but I think anything would have to be sent in a tin or wooden box. But please do not put yourself to any unnecessary trouble if you haven't any suitable shops near home. I am sorry that I have to keep asking the Mater not to send things. She keeps packing articles of clothing off and as I am clothed by the Army I cannot carry two lots. My present kit is enough to strangle anyone II..IIx I wish I could just take you for a nice walk in the moonlight on the sea front. The Army have made a fine drive. There is no news of home yet dearest but I keep hoping. KR to all at home and all best love to you.

Yours ever, Eddie

6 SEPTEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 17 Aug received today. The mail was late this week. Yes thanks we are quite settled down at Cape Helles but we have heard a rumour that all the Northern will go over to winter on an island which is in view of this camp. I was exceedingly sorry to hear about Lionel, and his Ma was so upset when we went to the front. I always look upon an Infantry Commission as a death trap. The horrors of war come home to us when people we know are struck down. Am so pleased to hear that Alex is getting a move and no doubt he will be set up. If he is coming here he will require plenty of warm clothing and if he would like some sound advice I should recommend him to bring some quinine tablets and a bottle of Dr Collis Browne's Chlorodyne. This is a very tricky climate and unless a chap really makes a study of his health and diet he is out for a very miserable and rough time. Now my friend Edgar is always ailing, I think it is chiefly owing to the fact that he will drink water. He has no energy to do any work when off duty and is practically a misery to himself and everybody else. For a long time I seem to have been running the establishment but I do not like to grumble when the chap is seedy.

I have heard that our Signal Co. is coming home in Oct. We hear such a lot of news of various kinds that one hardly knows what to believe. I am of opinion that there may be another attack shortly and the result of it will depend whether we winter here or get home. However I am going to look forward to being with you at Xmas dearest. You see as soon as the rough weather sets in here things may be at a standstill.

I can stick the job OK and I really feel quite young and cheerful. I am as fit as anyone I know out here and since I have given up drinking water I can eat huge quantities of food. Of course the hot weather made us all very thin and I had to pull my belt up about four holes but I hope to be able to let it out

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again now that I am taking in fuel for winter. For dinner at 6 pm I had meat and potatoes (that is supplied), some tinned herrings which JR gave me, a cup of cocoa and an apple pudding which I made. You see I am on nights and need a little nourishment. I often wonder what you think of our life here. It is a real kind of cowboy open-air existence. We wear just what we please. My dress consists of boots, socks, boy scouts pants and a khaki shirt. I should take to a kilt very well after this dress.

I hear they are doing big things at the office. Gladys says they have broken the record on telegraphs. I am sorry you are in a difficulty owing to having two homes. I do hope you will be feeling quite well soon dearest. I wish you felt as energetic as I do now. I am always thinking about you dearest, and of course longing for the day when we shall get orders for home. It is like standing between love and duty but I know you would like me to be able to give my services as long as they are required. The boys say that my wife-to-be will have a rough time seeing that I am such a nut on cooking. I am afraid our effort here would not always be fit to place on a table for the people at home.

I have just made a fine bed. It is a kind of stretcher made of poles and laced with cable. I can now sleep six inches off the ground and be free from damp. It is a pity I'm on nights this week and can't use it. I send KR to all. Very best love to you darling.

Yours, Eddie

13 SEPTEMBER

My Dearest Madge,

Have not received a letter from you by the mail this weekend but I think the mails are somewhat out of order. I'm on 1.15 to 9 pm this week and it is not a bad turn. We had a very rough time last week on nights owing to the cold. Well I have practically no definite news about our movements. We may be home by Xmas or we may have to winter in this part of the globe. Today has come in quite warm and apart from the cold nights we have not experienced severe weather. Anyway, if we have to stay here we shall be able to make ourselves comfortable in some way or other. I think I shall have to send for some books and do some reading. For many days we have been quite free from shelling but there were a few this morning and a nose landed in our camp altho' the shell burst a mile away. I am still enjoying the life and spending a lot of spare time cooking and eating. The daily swim cannot be carried out owing to the cold, but we manage to get a dip about three times a week. I hope to be able to send you a photo of our home shortly. The Military Landing Officer thought it was a very good dugout and took a snap. He promised to give us one if they came out all right.

The Mater tells me she has had some honey from your apiary. Did you get stung when gathering in the harvest or did you adopt the method of drugging

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the bees with tobacco smoke? Beekeeping must be very interesting work, we keep ants and also have a mouse.

You will begin to think we, or the British are never going to force the Dardanelles. It seems a long job and we are beginning to wonder how much longer the affair will last. However the next few weeks may show a change. We get most of the official news regarding the operations in France and Russia. I am sorry to say that our section officer has gone on sick leave and left the peninsula. Am wondering if you have returned to Lyngarth yet. I hope you are feeling fit after your stay at home. Could you tire me out yet II..IIx You must excuse my lack of news dearest. I am not yet crying for home but I would give worlds just to be with you for a few hours. Give my KR to all at home and to Aunties. All best love.

Yours always, Eddie

22 SEPTEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Am so sorry that I did not get a letter off to you last weekend. We were very busy and I had not time to write at the office. I intended writing on Monday but somehow I went long off colour and since then I've not had energy to walk or do anything. I haven't been able to eat owing to the weak state of my insides. However I've been trying some boiled milk and I think I shall work round all right. I believe you have caught me in a very pessimistic mood – it is enough to make anyone downhearted being poorly in Gallipoli. I have no wish to go to hospital so am doing the best I can.

Thanks very much for your parcel of tobacco. It is a treat to get a change from the Army stuff, and pipe smoking is more enjoyable this cool weather. As far as I can tell Alex's regiment has not arrived here yet. Have they a new name? Our camp is at Cape Helles near Lancashire Landing and we should know if they arrived for work this side of the hill. He may be hanging about at Mudros. He is in for a dog's life if they are coming here as infantry. You say you will be pleased to send some more tobacco. You might not send any for a few weeks until I ask as I have nearly a pound in stock. I received Auntie's parcel on Monday and of course was very pleased with contents. All the things were very useful and the Kiosk Coffee is a treat. I will write and thank them some time this week. I've acknowledged it with a Field Service Card.

You will be surprised to hear that Edgar has left me. He went sick last week and the doctor said he was suffering from jaundice. He was sent to Mudros Hospital. I was sorry to lose him after we have been together so long but he will do better in hospital. Our partnership has not proved a decided success during the past two months. I have had practically all the work to do and really a chap has all his work on looking after himself. I had another offer of a partner a few days ago but declined, in fact have decided to remain single if possible (only out

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here tho' II..II).

I am pleased you are feeling fairly strong dearest. You have been an invalid quite a long time now. You hardly ever murmur about being on the sick list and here I am feeling fed up because I've had two days. I will write sometime again this week and will try and be a bit more cheerful. You hope I will soon be coming home, so do I dearest. It is about six months since I left England. I can look round and see that there are very few men left who were here when I arrived. They are either sick or in more peaceful surroundings on one of the islands. The climate here is so bad that I wouldn't bring my worst enemy out of spite II..IIx However the job won't be on for ever. I've just a little sewing to do then will make some bread and milk for supper, then to sleep. KR to all. Very best love to you dearest.

Yours always, Eddie

26 SEPTEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for your letter dated 1 Sep and the papers which arrived two days ago. Well, I am spending part of Sunday afternoon writing to you. It has just taken me 2 ½ hours to clear up the dugout thoroughly and afterwards clean up myself. I am feeling much more brisk and hope to be quite fit in a few days. You ask why I did not go to hospital last time – well it is up to a soldier to keep in the ranks as long as poss. and as soon as he goes into hospital he is a burden to the Army, also a soldier has to give up or leave everything behind him except his razor and co and in fact he loses all his kit – I do not wish to be deprived of many things I have collected together, not unless it is absolutely necessary.

Am afraid you did not understand me when I referred to the Bully Sergeant's sister. The sergeant in question was the 2M Sergeant who lives next to Lyngarth. You said his sister had made the statement that she did not believe in a soldier getting married prior to going on active service. However, you said she had married her soldier boy before he went to the Front. I said I agreed with her first sentiments.

I gave your regards to Tomkins. He says I have to thank you for the *Record* which you send to me. I had left a copy in the office after reading it and he had seen your name on it. I am sorry for the chap out here who hasn't been undressed for 3 months. He will find it a tough job when he does want to get undressed. If the statement is true it is undoubtedly the chap's own fault as all troops have had the opportunity to go bathing occasionally. Am pleased you have seen an airship – was it the one that dropped bombs on the Lake District? I saw an airship up this afternoon, it is the first I have seen in flight. I don't know if I told you that Watson is operating in a signal office on a ship which is anchored in Mudros Bay at Lemnos. It is considered a nice job from a comfort point of view. I may be able to tell you something about our movements in a

1915

few days' time. I think we shall go across to Imbros which is an island in view of Cape Helles and we may have to winter there. I is the General's headquarters and things will not be so free and easy as they are here – that is from a discipline point of view. If called upon to stay here the winter, of course we shall try and stick it but our health is somewhat reduced owing to the hot summer. Even now the weather is exceedingly cold. Honestly I would like to be home for Xmas. Nobody at home can imagine what it is like here. One's stomach is never in good order and we never see a trace of civilization other than that of the Army. One day a chap feels well, another day he can hardly crawl about and when he is dependent on himself for comforts he has a hard time. I feel quite fit and have made up my mind not to be seedy any more. Perhaps I shall be disappointed.

Just now dearest I feel I would give years of my life to be able to sit down to a plain tea in an English home. I would give almost anything to be able to see you for a few minutes dearest. I wish I could come and explain to you how much I love you and how I put you before everybody else in my thoughts, what an age it seems since I saw you. I begin to wonder if we are going to stay here for a few years like the men stayed in S. Africa.

Sorry did not finish this on Sunday so am concluding it this afternoon. Just had a very nice dinner of Bully Beef stew (supplied) and tomato soup and apple pudding which two of us made and shared. I am sorry to say they have knocked our fresh meat off the menu and we could enjoy it now that the cold weather has started. I think we are almost certain to make this move on Wed so we shall have a busy time. I shall have to abandon quite a lot of useful luggage owing to the weight. Am enclosing you a Gallipoli newspaper as promised. It is printed by the REs. I hope you are still on the improve as regards health dearest.

We have a C of E service on a Sunday night now. I did not finish tea in time to attend the parade but was able to hear the sermon. It was absolute bosh. The parson extolled us to spend out time better and asked us if we should like our parents to know where we spent our Saturday nights II..II He also said that if he asked us what kind of a life we lived we should most likely answer 'I aint' worse nor nobody else'. It is most disappointing that a man should be allowed to preach such drivel just at a time when we would like to hear something a little inspiring. However, such is life in the Army. Please give my KR to all. I have written to Aunties. All love for you dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie

2 OCTOBER

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 9 and 15 Sep received today. I am just sending a note to say that I may not be able to write to you for a few days as I am having to leave this district as anticipated. Am somewhat sorry to leave this little dugout but then partings are always painful. We shall have a little trip on a

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[*illegible*] and perhaps arrive about 6 pm. Then we may have to walk a few miles. I have quite a lot of kit but will manage it somehow. Excuse – more at present. KR to Aunties. Tons of best love.

Yours always, Eddie

5 OCTOBER

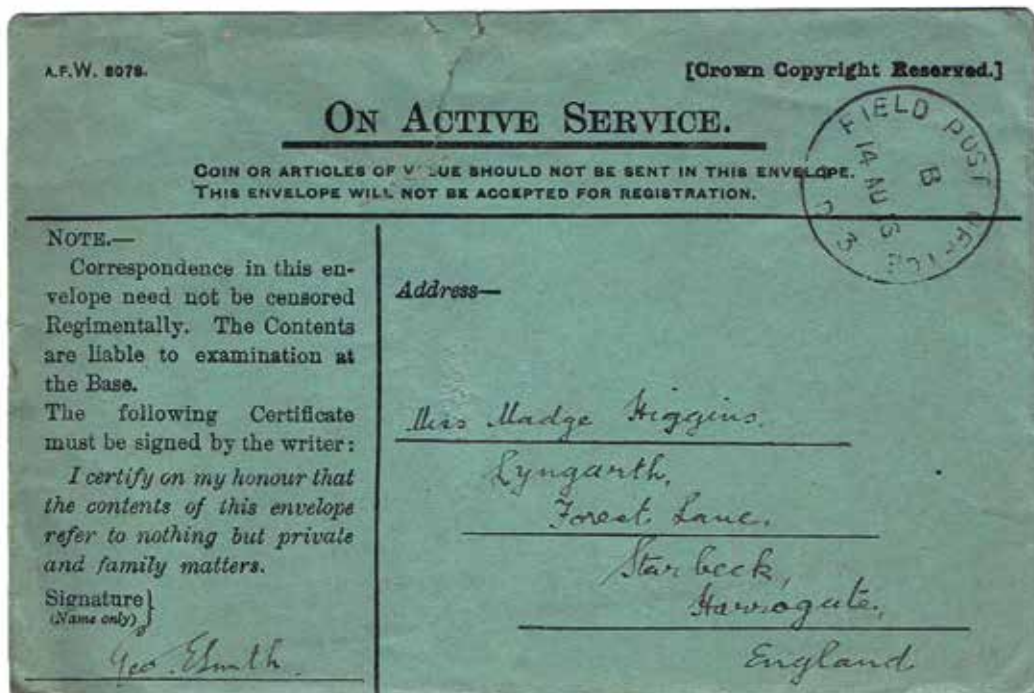
My Darling Madge,

Am just going to try and write you a letter before darkness sets in, which is usually about 7 pm. Well six of us arrived quite safely and we are all operators out of NB Section. We managed to get in a tent to ourselves and feel quite happy. We have come to a new Royal Engineers Camp and it is in the making so we are doing navvies' work. All day long we use the pick, shovel, barrow and we are thoroughly enjoying the manual labour. The exercise is doing us good and we all have huge appetites. The weather is holding out fine. The work is not exactly easy but nobody speeds us up. The whole island seems to be of volcanic origin and it is worse than digging cinder. In fact we are going thro' rock in places with the hammer and iron jumper. I am most eager to tell you about the beautiful place we have come to dearest. The island may be about 30 or 40 miles across altho' I have no means of ascertaining. We are in view of Cape Helles but 2 miles from the sea. We live in a kind of fairy valley open to the sea on the East and on the West blocked by rocky and rugged mountains. We face a crag similar to Birk Crag but the huge rocks which are dotted about the sides are very rugged. There is plenty of green about and some of the bushes are very peculiar. I have seen real acorns growing on holly bushes. This island belongs to the Greeks and of course we see a few of them about. There is a cluster of about 10 houses situated about 300 yds from camp. We go to this village to draw water. We are not supposed to speak to the people. I bought some cheese from them. It was made of goat's milk. There is a village situated about 5 miles away named Panygea. We should like to see round but nobody is allowed to go unless they have a special pass from the Camp Commandant. This is one of the inconveniences of the Army. A draft of our men came over last night. There was a mailbag for NB Section and they lost it. We are making enquiries and hope it will turn up. Have received a letter from Edgar. It took 12 days to travel about 150 miles. Thanks very much for Everyman, I did enjoy it.

Am pleased to hear you have returned to SRB. In reply to your query, John is in England and ready for return on Active Service. I think it will be France. Norman is on this island but he is operating at GHQ so I have not seen him yet. There is a place here called the YMCOs. We can get a cup of cocoa and a bun. The cup consists of a dirty condensed milk tin and the place is run by dirty Greeks. It is no cop at all. There is a good canteen about a mile away and we may be able to get off for some things in a few days' time.

Thanks for advice about Phosphorine. I do not usually take medicines at

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A green envelope or 'green un'

home but I know they are good and I am taking a course. I think they are invaluable now that winter is coming on. I am so sorry you did not receive a letter from me. I have not missed writing weekly but I believe the green envelopes* are delayed one week so that no information gets out too soon. I keep longing to have you here to enjoy all this fine scenery dearest. I shall be happy in this camp as long as the weather is kind. I send KR to all dearest and very best love to you. I have got a very nice curio for us. It is an ashtray made of copper from the roof of the lighthouse at the entrance to the Dardanelles. It is suitably inscribed. Am sorry the light is gone so I must close.

Yours always, Eddie

* *Green envelopes or 'green uns' were introduced in March 1915 to allow soldiers to self-certify private letters. Eddie would have been allocated one per month.*

10 OCTOBER

My Dearest Madge,

The mail has not arrived yet this week, but thought I would drop you a line. Have had another move to General Headquarters Signal Office and am operating there. I do not like the work as well as the digging which we got at the last camp. The place where I am now anchored for Sunday afternoon is about

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2 miles along the beach from GHQ. I shall be able to listen to a naval band and afterwards partake of tea in the canteen. I think it will be an enjoyable afternoon. Of course there may be a little scrapping for refreshments and the menu is limited to cocoa, fried eggs and plain buns but one gets quite used to these things and does not regard them as inconveniences. The band has just commenced and they are pumping out some fine music. I don't know if it is art but it reminds me of home.

This island is a very busy place but everything is belonging to the Army. We see a few Greek children occasionally but almost everybody else is working for our firm. There are Greeks, Arabs and Turkish prisoners which form working parties and they seem to have plenty of work.

I heard indirectly about Alex the other day. His unit arrived at Suvla shortly after the landing was made there and I am told he is with them. He is fortunate to get on the peninsula because there are thousands who will never set foot on the enemy's country. I have not been to Suvla, you see it is many miles higher up than Achi Baba and our forces were not joined up with the Australians and the Suvla troops. Well, my present camp is the worst I have ever struck. There are flies and sand in large quantities and the food and cooking are not to be compared to the other camps I have been in. However, it may not be for long. We have not heard any news about coming home yet, but I fancy we may hear something definite in a few weeks' time. Please give my KR to Aunties. I will write when mail arrives. All best love for you.

Yours always, Eddie

15 OCTOBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks so much for your letters and papers of 22 Sep. Am afraid it is taking longer for the letters to get out now. However we always look forward to mail day and feel quite happy when we get the letters. Your letters come very regularly dearest and it is nice to be able to count on one from you by each mail. I don't quite remember whether I told the Mater I had been off colour, anyway I'm feeling just well now. It is very kind of you to offer to send anything out. It is such a problem to know what to get sent out. Now, I have quite a lot of things that require cooking, and cooking is almost impossible here. In fact it would be like trying to cook near Wilford and Howard's on a windy day. You see I asked for these things many weeks ago when cooking was practicable. Thanks for sending parcel. You can rely on it that I will make good use of the contents. Am so sorry that I can't send a list of things that I require in view of the difficulty above mentioned but I should be glad if you would continue sending me a small quantity of tobacco (not more than 2 oz a fortnight). I like Smith's or Waverley and they are both a decided change from Army tobacco. You might please tell me the price of Smith's and Waverley now, since the tax has been put on.

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We have got a canteen about 2 miles away and I bought a few groceries yesterday. The prices are reasonable. Butter in sealed tin 2/3 a lb. Biscuits 3d a ¼ lb. BLOATER paste 1½d a tin. At times they also stock milk, tinned fruits, sardines, sausages etc. Of course we have to line up and sometimes wait 2 hours before we are served. I am not any more pleased with this camp. The food is awful and very badly cooked. In fact I am almost feeding myself. I can't lodge a complaint being a visitor here, and the other chaps are afraid to do so. Many of them have not been on the Peninsula and live in terror of being sent there. I find that Imbros is a Turkish Island but peopled by Greeks, so I am still in the enemy's country.

I shall be very pleased to hear the anti-conscription views. I suppose they are fighting it out in England at present. Alex is doing infantry work at Suvla. I do hope he won't have to go in a charge but I know he will turn up trumps if called upon. Well, dearest your letter has not tired me. In fact I should not be tired if you sent one every day II..IIx I found a tortoise here the other day and he now lives in our tent. He is becoming quite tame. Well, dearest I am always thinking about the happy time when I shall be able to come back to you. Every night is a day nearer the end of the War. I am just going for a short walk over the sandhills. Wish you could accompany me. Give my KR to Aunties and accept all best love yourself.

Yours always, Eddie

20 OCTOBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 29 Sep, which arrived two days ago. I am feeling a bit tired of life on this island owing to my wandering life. First I lived at new Royal Engineers Camp then old GHQ Camp, then new GHQ and at present am at the new RE Camp. Now I've just received orders to go back to new GHQ. A Sgt. is trying to put me in GHQ Office permanently and I have no wish to leave my own section, neither have I any wish to be amongst fellows who are so frightened of the Peninsula. Besides, my kit which includes three blankets, two groundsheets and three haversacks, is not easily removed. I shall try and get out of the engagement. I believe these things come to try us.

I received two bundles of papers. Thanks very much. *New Days* seems to be very nice. The editor seems to have some good ideals. I shall try and follow his arguments. I see by HG Herald that Col. Maude who wrote an article in *New Days*, has been speaking at the Kursaal. Well, regarding your query, I don't think we shall be home by Oct II..II The *Daily News* you sent me suggests that the War will last 'til end of next year. Col. Maude says it won't be over by next Xmas. I shall make good use of the contents of your parcel when it arrives. I've had a good look round at the canteen here and find it is almost possible to buy anything we require in the grocery line, so perhaps it would be better if you did

1915

not send any more eatables. You see they stand a chance of getting lost or getting broken on the way and they cost you more than things cost me here (after you have paid postage). Furthermore I cannot do any cooking here. I would like a copying ink pencil sending.

Am pleased to hear you are feeling stronger dearest. Hope you will soon feel quite yourself. I find the papers you send quite sufficient and together with the *Harrogate Herald* I seem to have plenty of reading. You will know by now that Sir Ian has returned to England. He has been a good Commander in Chief and altho' he has not accomplished the big task, he seems to have had the worst of the job. He seems to have had regard for men's lives in all the attacks and has been much thought of by the troops. I have seen him.

We often see Ashmead-Bartlett out here, he lives in a cottage on the outskirts of our camp. I am feeling fairly fit at present but have just had a touch of dysentery when living at old GHQ. I cured myself without going to the doctor. I find the chaps do not get much treatment when they go sick. Chaps are not taken into hospital unless they are helpless. However we just hang on with our teeth when we are poorly and think that every night is a step nearer the completion of the War. I have hope that General Monro will get to work soon and take the Hill.

I am always thinking of you dearest. Of the happy times we have had together and the happy times to come. I know it will be worth waiting for. KR to Aunties. All best love for you.

Yours always, Eddie

30 OCTOBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for your letter and papers of 6th, which arrived two days ago. Am so sorry that you have not received a letter from me, it may be my fault or it may be the fault of the post. I have been unsettled during past few weeks owing to moving about and it is not always possible to write on the same day each week. I have written weekly tho' as far as possible. Our letters are arriving late owing to the heavy seas and the last two parcels I received were each about 40 days on the trip. Yours has not arrived yet. Thanks for all the news about the Harrogate boys. It appears that all the boys are getting a chance to see the War.

Am sorry that the papers have not given much Dardanelles news lately. There has been nuffin doing, in fact I think there has been some trouble about Suvla which has caused the British to rest a while. Generally speaking we are in about the same position as when I came out here. We have heard about Salonica and of course it was rumoured that we should be going there, but we have heard nothing official yet. Am sorry to say there are no domestic affairs at this place. I live at GHQ where General Monro and his staff are stationed, and an attempt is made to keep the place on Aldershot Barrack rules. Am quite well at present thanks and am jogging along OK. Sometimes feeling a little fed up and at others

feeling that I can stick the life for a long time. Am sorry I could not accompany you on your walk round Wetherby Lane. You can't imagine what a treat it would be to me just to be with you for a while dearest. There is beautiful scenery here which at times I appreciate, but to speak the truth, England on a foggy wet day would appeal to me just now. Am sorry dearest that we have no news of going home yet. Am reluctantly looking forward to a Christmas on this island. I shall be able to get a bird also some almonds and raisins in order to make it seem real.

After all my trouble to keep out of Headquarters I had to come to this camp. My friends are at what is called the new RE Camp. Their work consists of digging a few holes and general navvying with the pick and shovel. That kind of work keeps one fit. However I am settled down now. We live in Eastern Pattern tents which have a double roof and it is possible to stand up in any part of the habitation. They are quite roomy being about 20 x 25 ft in area, and they are supposed to withstand any weather which the 'East' can manufacture. I have made a nice bed, which is a decided comfort. The timber for its construction was very difficult to obtain at this place, but one can collect quite a lot on dark nights. One of the inconveniences of this camp is the morning inspection. All our kit is placed outside the tent in a certain order and things are set out as tho' we were playing at shops.

The weather has been cold and wet but a few days ago it changed for the better and we have had warm winds. Edgar has returned looking quite well. He is at the new RE Camp. Reinforcements have arrived to make our company up in strength, so I am to a great extent working with recruits II..II Very few of them are eager to visit the scene of operations.

I guess you wonder dearest whether I want to come home just to see you or because I am homesick. Really it is for both reasons. I look forward to coming back to you dearest more than I could explain. It is a peculiar fact but if it wasn't for you dearest I should forget there were any women in the world. We never see any out in Turkey.

I must close now as it is 6 am and there will be some hustle in this office shortly. I've had 3 hours' sleep during the night. At Naval Division I used to sleep all night, but this is GHQ. We can't even smoke on the job. Please give my KR to Aunties and the people at home also to Alex via Milly II..II All best love for you dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie

Posted on 31st. Green envelopes have not been issued lately so I had to procure this one from a friend who has a pile.

1915

1 NOVEMBER

My Dearest Madge,

Am just dropping you a note to thank you for the parcels, which arrived safely today. You have really sent me so many things that will be luxuries to me that I don't know how to thank you enough. I shall certainly have to go steady and govern my appetite or I shall be like a schoolboy let loose in a tuck shop. Everything was in good condition and the little cheese was a beauty – altho' it looked very ripe outside, the inside was fine. The chocs, toffee and tobacco are very fine. I may not be able to make use of the tea tablets just at present but of course I may be able to do some cooking occasionally. You will be surprised to hear that I have had another move and am back at the new RE Camp where most of my section live. I have been sent down here and am to learn the Blaine system of wireless telegraphy. I hope it comes off all right, it will be something new to learn. For the time being I am one of a digging party. Excuse, more at present, candle nearly finished. KR to all. Best love to you dearest.

Yours, Eddie

7 NOVEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 13 Oct which arrived a few days ago. You have given me quite a lot of questions to answer. It is rather peculiar but if I am off colour I might mention the fact and by the time you hear about it I'm feeling in the pink. Just at present I feel quite contented with my lot, seeing we are at War, and I feel quite fit and can eat like a farmer. We often say that the first 7 years of war are the worst. Well, we must have a good time coming on because I have nothing to grumble at just now. The NB operators are all together in this tent. We are a very merry party. There are JRS and Edgar, A Smith, W Found, H Morris and myself. We have two others in but they don't count. I smile when you say Edgar would get better with proper treatment. The proper treatment was a rest from work but at the same time he was almost starved and spent 30/- in a fortnight on food. Nearly all the sick grumble about the life in hospital. I haven't been there yet and don't intend if it can be avoided. Am glad you call to see the Mater. Am afraid she will be feeling the cold weather. Am so pleased you are feeling OK dearest. Of course I don't want you to be rushing back to work but it is not nice for you to feel weak or ailing.

I am following your advice and take the phospherine regularly. It is very good of you dearest to send me a cake. It must be quite an expense to have a soldier at the Front (or the back of the Front where I am). A man could live on the Army food which is good but he would get fed up with the sameness of things and ther are times when one longs for a change in food. These things

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you send out are really luxuries and help us to carry on. My diary is not full yet. I got a very thick one at Alex and it is lasting well. Am pleased to hear of the promotion. Alex has done well, so has your bro. Last week I had a few days' working with the gang and then I was put in the wireless for instruction. There is a lot to learn but I have already had a few turns at operating and could read a few code messages. It will be very interesting work and I am not sorry to leave GHQ Signal Office.

At present the canteen is out of stores but the Army food is fairly good. Last week we had cabbage for dinner instead of boiled onions, which have been on the menu for many weeks. Today as an extra we had a suet pudding. We have been off duty today with the exception of a parade at 9.30am. We went for a swim this morning and enjoyed it very much. This afternoon was spent in doing the week's washing and writing letters.

The War seems to become more complicated and no doubt you people at home wonder when it is going to end. I spend a lot of my time reading the papers you send and try to sift the sugar from the sand. Many of the experts have a poor idea of what War is and write a lot of piffle but some of them have a good grasp of the situation. I do not think the War will be over much before next summer. It is a pity but we must make the best of it. Have just seen some photos of our camp and members of our tent. If at all poss. I will get some for you. Excuse more at present. All best love.

Yours always, Eddie. KR to all.

13 NOVEMBER

My Dearest Madge,

Am now a wireless operator. The duty consists of sitting in a small hut built of mud and stones situated on a hill a few hundred yds from camp. I have to listen and take down a few messages, which are flying about in space. Nobody ever sends any to us, neither do we send any to other stations. This is a Marconi Pack set and we have another station on the Polsen system. I shall have to take duty there in the course of a few days. For the present we seem to be in the experimental stage. I am entering into the theory of wireless as far as circs will permit, and the practical side is not very difficult, the chief feature being the timing of inductance coils and condensers to receive the messages of various strengths. I am sure you would find wireless highly interesting seeing that you are an enthusiastic student of technical telegraphy. The theory is fine, but I shall be more fitted to explain it to you after I've had a few months at the work.

I'm on my own from 8 pm to midnight so thought it was a good chance to write a decent letter. Somehow I do not seem to have a lot of interesting news, and my letters are all the capital 'I'. Things which on leaving England were novelties to me now appear quite ordinary, and hardly worth commenting on. Perhaps it is because I am a bit weary of foreign travel. The Greeks we meet here

are not very interesting and altho' they are working for the British Army, and in many cases making their fortunes, they do not seem friendly towards us. I have got as far as good morning and day and night with them. The language is difficult to pick up, especially when we are not allowed to go near any villages. This island is really a weary place and I shall not be sorry if I get a call to the Peninsula. We have talked quite a lot about coming home but I've come to the conclusion that men do not come home from here unless they are invalided home. To come home wounded or broken in health is a sorry thing for any man so I am just settling down to the idea of remaining here till the British Army get a move on. I am feeling in the pink and thanks to Phospherine II..II can eat more than my ration at times.

I suppose you know that Lord Kitchener is coming to the East. We are hoping he will make things move. By the way, I have had another move and now live in a tent with a few wireless chaps. I have made some new friends. We have a very nice chap from Plymouth named Mosley and there are two Scotties, one named Finlayter from Glasgow and Carlisle Sorting Carriage, and one named Crockett from Castle Douglas. The latter works at Dumfries and I have to be sure and call to see him if I go North. Of course old friends are best, but there are so many decent chaps on this trip that one need never be afraid of going amongst strangers.

Thanks very much for yours of 20 Oct, also for bundle of reading matter. I have been handicapped lately as regards reading owing to the scarcity of candles, but the canteen hope to have a supply in the course of a few days. The reading is a great pleasure to me and I manage to get thro' it all, despite the fact that ours is a busy life. I am afraid the mails from here to England are not keeping good time. I have written every weekend or as near as possible to the weekend. You people at home have no need whatever to worry about us. It is like this, you will many a time be thinking we are roughing it when we are having a feather-bed existence. To get at the truth of the matter you must first regard the soldier as a selfish individual. Wherever he goes he always makes the best of things and extracts the maximum amount of comfort out of his condition. He spends quite a lot of time in making himself comfortable. Of course he does not make himself comfortable at the expense of his mates, and the selfishness to which I refer does not exist between man and man. We get into the way of looking on our tents or dugouts as our homes. I am sorry to say that the infantry have a rough time and are frequently on the move. They pay a bigger price than we do, but even their life is liveable and the majority manage to jog along. I only wish it was possible for you to bring my Xmas dinner dearest, or that there was some chance of me being home for the occasion. The married men often tell me it is a hardship to be away from wife and children, they seem to forget that unmarried men are, in many cases, separated from those they love. It is a hardship to me dearest because I have left you behind, and you are the best girl I have ever known or ever will know.

Thanks for all the office news. Poor Harrogate is being squeezed to the last man for recruits. Oh, there is Bogey left I think. This life would make a man of

1915

him. I hope you will have an interesting time with the Dardanelles Warrior. He may give you some idea of what the life out here is like. Perhaps Milly can let Alex know I am at Imbros. He may get here sometime. If ever I do get to Suvla or Anzac I shall make a point of finding him out. I am glad you are feeling fairly well. Am sure you are not suitable for a writing duty. You don't know how to tell people off like I do. I hope you will like the work.

It is nearly midnight so I must close. Shall soon be asleep, at present I am roughing it. My bed is on the ground and I only have two ground sheets, one greatcoat and three heavy blankets, also an air pillow. Who wouldn't be on active service? Please give my KR to Aunties and all at home. Very best love to you dearest.

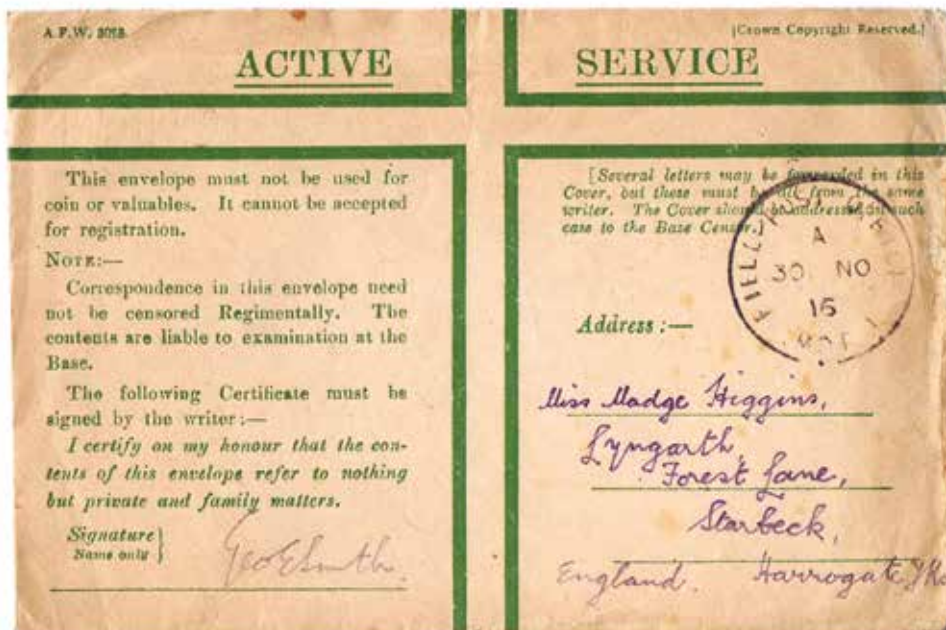
Yours, Eddie

19 NOVEMBER

My Darling Madge,

A shortage of green paper as the War progressed led to green uns being printed in green ink on buff envelopes

Please excuse paper. I have forgotten to bring my writing pad up to the little mud hut. There has been no mail in for over a week now and it is said that mails dated 21 Oct (parcels) and 27 Oct (letters) have gone down with a boat, between Alex and Mudros. We are always getting rumours of this kind tho', so I am hoping for the best. Letters are what we seem to look forward to more than



anything else. You seem so much nearer dearest when I get your letters regularly. Many a time when I read yours I am seized with a desire to walk back to England. An hour's walk and talk with you dearest would be heavenly. I am able to overcome all the little hardships of our life, but this big hardship has no solution, only that of waiting of course. I quite understand that the hardship is not on my side alone, but it is a hardship to me if I cannot be with you and make you happy dearest. War is a silly game. I have been reading *Sir Nigel* by Conan Doyle, and by what I can gather wars of the 14th Century were just as foolish as the present-day wars. Those were the days of chivalry when the knights went forward to do deeds of honour for the sake of their ladies at home. They used to make their quarrels in those days in order that there would be some fighting. Nowadays we should only be too pleased if the fighting was finished. Especially when the work is so hum-drum.

20 NOVEMBER: Had to put my letter away because some work came along. What a 'washout' the wireless is. A ship called me, so as I was alone I started the motor and gave 'G'. Then I had to stop motor and put the phones on and take the message. I managed that OK but as I had a long reply to send and it is not possible for one man to run a motor and send a message at the same time I sent for a motorman. I offered my message to the ship and he gave 'G', but when my man wanted to start the motor some of it came loose owing to it being out of adjustment. We sent for an expert who stated the thing would have to be taken to pieces. In the end the message was taken to the telegraph office and sent to the ship by Camp signalling. This pantomime was acted in a hut about 6 ft square. the foregoing sketch will give you an idea of what wireless is like. I like the work on the whole. The only drawback is the duties. We work 4 on and 8 off. Our sleep is disturbed every night and it is impossible to sleep during the day in a tent where seven men live. We are in bell tents now. Your tea tablets and cocoa rations are coming in useful now. When on night duty I manage to make a hot drink on a homemade stove. It is a tin box about 6 ins square, half filled with sand. The 'fuel' used is petrol. Our little hut looks like the Black Hole of Calcutta while the stove is lit. I have been able to do some very solid reading this week while on duty and have really enjoyed *Everyman* and *New Days*. Next week I am working at the Poulsen Station and expect to be much busier. We intercept news from Portsmouth, Paris, Malta, Constantinople etc, and there is nearly always something doing.

Our canteen opened with a few stores during the week and I was able to get beef dripping, margarine, salmon, sardines, and pineapple so I hope to save a few luxuries for Xmas. The weather is exceedingly cold and we have to wrap up well at nights. When a breeze is blowing a great strain is put on the tents. A few nights ago the wind was awful and it rained as if someone was playing a fire hose on the tent. I am feeling quite well and contented with my conditions, and on looking round I have reason to be thankful for good health. Many of the Northern men have left us – either sick, wounded or killed and I should estimate that half of our men are reinforcements and new drafts. The chief

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ailments are jaundice and dysentery.

I know you wish me to state my requirements, or let you know if I want anything. Have got plenty of food and medicine, but would like another pipe – the one you sent me is doing fine, but owing to the amount of work it has done, needs a rest, and if I did happen to break it I have no second line of defence. Could you get me a similar one, fairly long, price about 1/- or 1/6. An ordinary straight bore without any patent apparatus inside would be most suitable. I hope you are keeping well and that the office work is not too hard for you, if you have commenced. Give my KR to Aunties, I will drop them a line shortly. News is so scarce tho'. I send all best love to you dearest.

Yours for ever, Eddie

26 NOVEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Have at last got a mail. Yours of 3 Nov came to hand day before yesterday. Thanks very much for papers which arrived same time. Am just dropping you a short note today as I am very busy packing up ready to move away tomorrow. Our Cable Section is going to Lemnos and I have been recalled from the wireless. We may be staying there all winter or it may be a step towards the Balkans. I hope you are able to manage the work after you made a start on the 12th. There is no talk of us coming home yet. I shall not be sorry to get a change from here because the cold has played havoc with my constitution. The Army have failed to supply us with cardigans up to now and there is no winter under-clothing available. The cold wind has searched me to the marrow and left me weak. However, I hope to blossom up with a change of air. I believe cold is worse than heat. Perhaps you will please tell the Mater where I have moved to as this is my only green env. I will write as soon as we get settled down. We may be near a village. The chief are Mudros and Kastro. I do hope it is a little warmer than this camp. I do hope you are feeling better. Please excuse more this time. All best love dearest. KR to all.

Yours ever, Eddie

28 NOVEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Last time I wrote you a few days ago I was weak and weary, I have been able to blossom up a little tho' and am feeling much better. Owing to the bad weather we have been unable to make our move to Mudros. The winter is now upon us and already about half a dozen vessels have been washed ashore here. At last I can honestly say we are roughing it. In fact roughing is not the word for it. I do not

wish to detail all our trials, but we are undergoing all the trials that rain, snow, wind and cold can bring. We are making the best we can of it but I am afraid many will return home walking with two sticks.

Am sending you two photos I promised, I will send two to the Mater next week. The names of the chaps are: Found, Blackburn, JRS, Morris, GES, A Smith. I am wearing a cap which belongs to a Senegalese.

You are quite right our time is two hours sooner than yours. Am sorry that Garside did not tell you much about his experiences. His regiment was in at the landing and he will have had a rough time. I hope he will soon be well. I hope you will keep well wrapped up during the cold weather and take care of yourself generally. It will soon be Xmas and you will be having a busy time. I haven't had much work to do during the past few days but a chap has all his work on looking after himself during this weather. I made a stove this morning from an oil drum. We are burning charcoal, and it is a great comfort. I am not sure if we can get a supply of fuel but we shall do our best. Mails from here may be very irregular owing to the bad weather so you must not worry dearest if no letters arrive for a few weeks. I send all best love to you dearest and kindest regards to all.

Yours always, Eddie
Leaving this morning

6 DECEMBER

My Dearest Madge,

Have at last arrived at our destination so am dropping you a line. We are rather removed from the beaten track so our letters may be irregular. I have received your bundle of papers dated 8 Nov, thanks very much for the same. Well dearest I have had a very pleasant week travelling the Near East. Of course we get a lot of work carrying stores and kit, and many a time it is impossible to get a wash or shave, but the change of scene is a treat.

I went on a trawler from Imbros to Mudros Bay and stayed a day on *HM Transport Aragon* which is anchored in the Bay. After much trouble and delay I got off the *Aragon* and landed at Mudros East. We were camped near the village but it was out of bounds. I managed to borrow a permit and have a look round. It seemed nice to be amongst civilisation once more.

Today I travelled by wagon to Castro. The journey is about 18 miles and the road runs thro' the mountains to the other side of the island. The road skirted round the mountains and at times we were only a few feet from destruction. We did the journey without mishap but just as we turned into camp the wagon went over. Two of us were thrown on to the mules in front but no one was hurt. Castro is going to be the GHQ for the Dardanelles and Salonica. Our first job will be fixing telephones up in the town. I have had a look round tonight and am very pleased with the place. Everything is very interesting. The place will boast of about 5,000 inhabitants (Greeks and Turks) and as far as I can gather

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is a seaside health resort. There are some decent shops but things are frightfully dear. I went into a café tonight and sat down amongst some of the fiercest cut-throat looking gents it has ever been my lot to see. I hope to have a look round by day light tomorrow. I haven't been able to get any views of this place yet but may do so later. You have no idea dearest how nice it is to see a village or town. I do hope the place won't be put out of bounds.

I hope you will have a merry Xmas dearest. I have been looking forward to Xmas with you but there is no chance unless I come home on two sticks. I send only best love and hope you are well. KR to Aunties.

Yours always, Eddie

Hope you got the photos I sent last week

10 DECEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 10 Nov, which arrived yesterday. The writing pad has just come in handy. I am sorry my letters have arrived all at once, but better late than never. Am afraid I shall not be able to get you a photo of the Helles dugout. The MLO. promised one but he seemed to disappear from the Cape and probably forgot about it. I hope you receive the two I sent from Imbros. Am pleased you have seen a view of Lancashire Landing. It gives you a little idea of what the Army have done to make the place habitable. I still think there will be thousands who are not fortunate enough to see or set foot on the Peninsula. Practically most of the time I was on, the place was overcrowded with men and any more men brought on only made targets for Turkish shelling. Alexandria was also full of troops. On one attack by the 52nd Division it was found that very little progress was made owing to the congestion of the troops. We were short of land guns and shells for a long while but that seemed to be remedied as we were leaving.

Am glad you are back to the office and hope you will be strong enough to cope. Am pleased your brother has had some leave. His must be a very weary job. Many people do prefer working in GHQ Signal Office, but I like open-air work if poss. And further a lot of the GHQ men seem very narrow minded and are quite different to our boys.

Well I suppose you would like to hear a little about Castro dearest. It is to be the GHQ for Dardanelles and Salonica. We are fixing up a lot of telephone lines amongst the houses. The staff will be arriving in a few weeks. We are fortunate to get here before any restrictions are put on the place. There are a few small cafés here but we haven't enough money to indulge in a good dinner. We hope to do so in the course of a few days. We are getting very good food in camp. We hope to have a very good Xmas if we are in this place. The weather is exceedingly mild. I find the Greeks are even worse than the Arabs for robbing us. However we treat them in their own coin wherever possible. I am learning

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a few Greek words and can count up to 10. There is no hope of our return for some time, in fact I suppose we shall have to wait until the Germans are tired out. It is so mild here that I can hardly think it is Dec. There is a garden close by where oranges are growing on the trees.

I shall be thinking about you at Xmas dearest. I wish I could come and help you at the office. John Bull says the War will soon be over. I hope he is correct as we are fairly tired of the job. I will drop a line to Aunties as soon as I get time. I have not heard from McNaughton yet but may be doing so shortly. We expect to get a parcel mail in on Sat, but they are very late and much overdue. I send all best love and kind thoughts dearest.

Yours always, Eddie

23 DECEMBER

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 24 Nov which arrived a few days ago. I am afraid all the boys are leaving Harrogate. You will be having a rough time at the office just now. I would not mind being there to help. The boys in France are really lucky to get leave. We could do with a respite but it has been a real treat to have a couple of weeks near a small town. The big hardship is that we are all stony broke and Xmas upon us. It is six weeks since we had any pay. Am sorry Alec is wounded and hope he will soon be better. You will be surprised to hear that I may be able to call on him if things turn out as we expect. I cannot really say what is the truth about green envelopes. We have received no intimation about their abolishment. Several English papers have stated that 'green uns' are being stopped. I hope the ones I have sent won't be interrupted as I sent the photos in one letter.

The reading matter which you send is still very acceptable. We don't go to bed early nowadays. We can get a comfortable read in the evening. Most of us are fitted out with oil lamps – in fact it is nearly like being at home but not quite. We have no chairs so have to eat, sleep and read in bed. Well, Xmas will be upon us very shortly and we were intending having a real fine time. However, we may be travelling in the course of a few days, so we expect to be busy packing up instead of preparing a jolly good dinner. I have been working at the Director of Works' Office during the past few days. It was a painting job so it was quite like the old opal days. I often wish you could be here and see some of this fine scenery, also have a peep at the Greeks at home. All types of foreigners are interesting but after a time such people as we have here begin to pall on a Britisher. They are not satisfied with a reasonable profit when trading and they are all out to get 'backsheesh' (gifts) from us. Like the Arabs they are a set of 'twisters'. I am getting on fine with the language and have added a few words to my vocabulary today. I don't know what to think about the War. The plot seems to thicken and our chances of getting home seem to be more remote.

1915

I am enjoying Army life as much as when I first joined but of course I would like to be home again. I am always thinking about you dearest and hoping the War will soon be over. I seem to have been in the East about 4 years. Hope you are keeping well. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

A 1915 letter
stamped 'passed
by sensor'





Church Army Recreation Hut

ON ACTIVE SERVICE
WITH THE MEDITERRANEAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

29. Nov 1916

My Darling Madge.

I have not yet recd a mail but am writing a few lines because I am away from Hdqrs and cannot say when the letters will be sent up. At last I have got an ideal job. Somewhere abt 12 miles from my old camp there is a colonial detail camp in which there is a small signal Office. Frankie, myself and two other boys are running the office. We seem absolutely on our own and have nobody to worry us. No doubt the office will increase as time goes on but we shall not mind that. The camp has a few advantages such as shower baths, good swimming, a dry lantern &c. We have a fireplace and primus stove which enables us to do extra cooking for ourselves. I have made a bed so it is nearly like being at 'home'. I shall not grumble if I keep this job for the duration. Frankie says it is too good to last.

We meet a lot of Australians, New Zealanders and Indians. Up to now I th I like the N.Z. boys the best. It is very interesting to hear abt their country. In fact to hear abt a place from
one

1916

1 JANUARY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for parcel of biscuits, which arrived yesterday. I have been thinking so much about you this Xmas time and owing to being on the move have not been able to write as much as I should wish, and also there has been the doubt about the 'green uns'. I have told you all about my travels as far as Kastro but in case the letter is destroyed I will give you a short resumé.

We left Imbros on 1 Dec on a trawler and arrived in Mudros Bay. We slept on the transport ship *Aragon*, the one on which Watson was stationed. (By the way, he has been invalided home with dysentery.) We got ashore the next day and on each occasion we had to move the stores in the dark. It was no easy work carrying big boxes along the iron decks and down the gangways. We camped outside Mudros town but the place was out of bounds. I managed to get a look round but was not favourably impressed. In a few days' time we trekked by road to Kastro, which is at the opposite side of Lemnos Island 25 km away from Mudros. It was a very fine journey owing to the wild and mountainous scenery and it was very exciting owing to the steep hills. We were at Kastro 5–27 Dec. Our work consisted of fitting the town up with telephone lines for the general staff. We had a fine time and in the course of our work mixed with Turks and Greeks. The last few days I got a job in the Director of Works Office. I had to paint the signs for the residences of the various Staff Officers. Each big man has a title such as 'DAS.' (Director Army Signals), and he is known by those letters. I also had orders in the shop to paint the signs for motorists etc but I never got the work finished because news came on 21 Dec that all work had to be pulled down as the General's Headquarters was not to be at Kastro. It was a pity because thousands of pounds have been spent in building and compensation to people whose property was taken over. A Greek's wage ranges from 2/6 to 6/8 a day and as there were several hundred of them employed for a few weeks you can guess there was some money wasted. We moved back to Mudros and spent Xmas day there. We had a very nice day. I received a parcel from

home on the 24th and our 'Daily News' plum pudding was fine. There was no accommodation to cook the two turkeys and one hen we brought with us, so we allotted them a tent and continued to feed them. On the 26th we embarked on the transport *Asconia* of the Blue Funnel Line. We had 1,600 Australians and New Zealanders with us, and we enjoyed their company very much. They are swankers and braggarts but there is not an unmanly chap amongst them. They had not been aboard a few minutes before they commenced gambling at games of chance. Men were losing or winning as much as £50 after an hour's play. They are a reckless set. The food on board was a treat. In fact, it is the best boat I have been on. They cooked our poultry for us and we had a fine dinner one evening. As we came into the Mediterranean we were instructed to wear lifebelts all day as submarines were feared. I almost believe that wearing a lifebelt was a worse punishment than being torpedoed. The voyage was most enjoyable and I slept out on deck – it was fine to look up at the stars and watch them swaying overhead as we steamed along. We disembarked at Alexandria on 30 Dec and made our way to the Cleopatra Camp. Things are very much changed in camp but the city seems just the same. The weather is just temperate and I was able to have a dip in the briny on the last day of 1915. Three pals and myself watched the old year out in very congenial company. I had found out where the Scottish Horse were camped and we called on Alec about 10 pm. We saw his brother also. He is looking in the pink and his wound is quite better except for a little stiffness in the arm. We stayed with the boys till 2.30 am and, to use one of their expressions, it was a great night. Their camp is named Sidi Bishr and is a few miles further out than ours. They are under orders and expect to leave for Ismailia or somewhere in two days' time. I think GHQ may be fixed at Cairo and we may move there in a few days. We have been hard-hit during our travels owing to our state of pecuniary embarrassment. I drew 30 piastres on 12 Nov and have not been able to get a cent since. I have no craving for any strenuous enjoyment in the city but one needs a little money in a place like this. However, the travelling has been very enjoyable even tho' money is finished. We are now back amongst our section horses and cable wagons. I am working in the cookhouse for a few days. It is an experience as we cook for about 400 men. I was not obliged to take the job on but did so because I like to learn new work.

I think you have got all the news dearest. I do keep wishing that you could be here to see Alexandria at its best. How much longer is the War going to last? You are getting the worst of the bargain. While I am having all these fine experiences you are waiting at home. You have all my love dearest and, altho' I have travelled 'some', you are still my ideal girl. I long to be back with you every day. It isn't a homesick feeling. There is one consolation that every day brings us nearer the end of the War. I hope we shall get some letters shortly as have not had any for about 10 days. Please give my KR to Aunties and accept all my love for yourself.

Yours ever, Eddie

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9 JANUARY

My Darling Madge,

Am just dropping you a note prior to our moving to Cairo (Abbassia Barracks). We are working long hours at present but I am enjoying my stay here very much. I have bags of news to tell you but will do so later as it is practically tea time. Perhaps you have heard of the sinking of the *Persia* out here. Some of your letters to us have gone down and we have received no letters for over a fortnight. The weather is just superb here and the rain has left us. I do keep wishing you could be here to see the place, nobody can understand what there is to see here – unless they pay a visit.

I thought you would like a souvenir of Alex before we left so have enclosed a packet for you in an insured parcel addressed to the Mater. I hope you won't mind about me not sending it direct, you see I had to rush the job to get it posted before we left and the article cannot be sent by letter post. The box is a Turkish tobacco box and opens by pressing the ends and lifting the lid. I do hope you are keeping well dearest and am longing for a letter from you. I will write you a budget as soon as we get settled down. All very best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

72342 SAPPER GEO E SMITH
NB CABLE SECTION
GHQ SIGNAL CO
ROYAL ENGINEERS
BRITISH MEDITERRANEAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE
EGYPT
13 JANUARY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 22 Dec. I am just dropping you a note to let you know our whereabouts. We are at present on the banks of the Suez Canal about 3 miles beyond Ismailia. We are on the desert and so far I like it very much. There will no doubt be a strict censorship from here so I may not be able to send any private letters – green ones are already stopped. Alec is somewhere up here but I've not been able to locate him yet. Preparations are being made to resist any attack on Egypt. Somehow I am looking forward to being amongst it again. I hope you are keeping well dearest, was pleased you had a telegraph duty at Xmas. I am cooking again, it is rather a trying job but I do not mind a bit of work. I feel younger every day and quite enjoy myself amongst the Arabs. Every day I keep wishing that you can come to Egypt sometime in the future. This job is a picnic and altho' there is plenty of work we are only working our passages on one of the finest trips anyone could wish for. I promised you a long letter

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dearest, will write it tomorrow night. Tonight I have chance to visit Ismailia and, as there may not be another chance, I am taking it. KR to Aunties. All best love to you darling.

Yours ever, Eddie

15 JANUARY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 26 Dec. I am sorry to say that I think one of yours has gone down. Thanks also for tobacco. Well dearest, am pleased you have got Xmas over without much overtime etc. I would smile to see Kettlewell in the smart uniform of the RFC. Thanks for all the news about the boys. Am pleased they are all getting on OK. By what I can hear about the strict discipline in England a chap would be better off at the front. Am so sorry to hear about Miss Long. I was under the impression she got married a short while ago but perhaps it was someone else. I will drop AJK a line shortly. Am presuming that he includes all the boys and a letter would be welcome. Am enclosing you a photo of the office. It is a poor one but the chap would persist in taking it in a bad light. I shall not be able to get another one so thought I would send this. I took a dispatch over to the WG Camp the other day and one of the boys snapped me. You will see I am merry and bright.

Well dearest, I am sorry to say we have got orders to leave our snug little office. We have made a fine comfortable home and have got some fine friends. It is jolly hard lines. I shall get tired of getting homes together. However when we make our little home the Army will have no say over us and we shall be able to enjoy it. Our move has been caused thro' the arrival of a new draft, which is taking over the Canal District. We are all recalled to our sections and when up to strength will get orders to move somewhere else. I don't know where it will be. Some say Blighty but I haven't faith in that rumour. I will let you know as soon as I can.

Old Eddie Barnes has come out with this draft. He is at Kantara. I went down to see him last night. It was like old times. He says I look well and am like an Arab. I may be a bit sunburnt but still I am fresh looking and not muddy about the face. Eddie has come out with a lot of tryers and has been put on as a superintendent right away so he will be a sgt. soon. He seems to like KJA but he is seeing it at a cool season.

I am so sorry to leave all the colonial friends. However I have got several addresses of boys who want us to drop them a line. A NZ sgt. is carving me a pipe with Maori designs. It will be a nice souvenir. I have enjoyed the stay here and even when we have to go I feel it is better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all. Well dearest, I must close now as I want to be ready when they send for me. They told us to go yesterday but I cannot carry my kit and am waiting for a wagon. I have a big pile of books, which I don't want to lose just

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yet. Hope you are keeping well dearest. All very best love to you. KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

16 JANUARY

My Darling Madge,

I have quite a lot of letters to thank you for. During the past week I think three bundles of papers and two letters also some 'Three Nuns' have arrived. Thanks very much for all of these. The tobacco has come in fine, I was smoking some twist purchased from a canteen across the Suez. Unfortunately there is no tobacco ration here like there was at the Dardanelles. I am having a struggle with the reading matter but hope to wade thro' it in time. Two of us are cooking for the section of 32 men and our working day runs from 6.30 am until 5 pm so we have not much spare time. Today there was a small sheep for dinner. We have not been able to build an oven yet and all the cooking is done in dioxies so the dinner consisted of boiled mutton and boiled vegetables. I have now finished with sightseeing for a few days and will be able to dispose of a little correspondence in the evenings. In yours of 1 Dec I am pleased to hear you are getting on nicely at the office and that all the postmen are coming to the front in such a splendid manner. I have received the Harrogate paper with their photos in today. Am pleased that I didn't call you anything worse than a 'dear'. You are the dearest (not most expensive) girl I have ever known, and I cannot fully express what a happiness it is to know I have the best girl in the world at home. Am afraid you would not have the pleasure of seeing me doing the week's washing while we are at Ismailia. There are plenty of Arabs who will take the clothes one day and bring them back in the morning quite clean. The chap who took my washing wanted a piastre for each garment so I had to tell him off in Arabic until he came down in price. I find there are some pretty sayings in this language – one I have learnt is '*fil mish mish*', it means 'when the peaches are ripe'. We promise to give the Arabs backsheesh when the peaches are ripe. You refer to the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac, well I think the whole peninsula has been evacuated without any loss of life. It is a pity we have had to leave the place, but I suppose the experts know best.

Am pleased your brothers are going on all right, as regards MacNaughton I have not seen him since New Year's Eve but as far as I know they are at Ismailia. Am sorry nobody writes to Bennett from the Office. At present he is in hospital and I was sorry he was not with his section when we met them at Mudros. His address is 'EE Cable Section BMEF' if anybody wants it.

Now I would like to tell you about this spot. Ismailia, which is 3 miles from camp, is a fine modern town of about 30,000 inhabitants. I should say it has sprung up with the canal. The streets are wide and there are plenty of shady avenues. The shops are good and we can purchase almost anything. I spent a very interesting evening looking round. I found the native quarter very interesting,

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especially one long street which was a kind of bazaar. I have sent you a packet of picture postcards just to give you an idea of the place. As regards the opposite direction we are camped near one of the lakes which forms part of the canal, but the canal or cut is about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile away. Alf Smith and I went across the Suez by ferry the other night and after passing thro' the camps had a walk into the desert along a road which is being built. We went out about 3 miles and quite enjoyed the walk in the moonlight. There was nothing to see but sand. On our return some of the infantry came out to meet us, they probably thought we were Turks. They told us that the district was a bit unhealthy. We were also halted as we came back past the trenches. We see plenty of camels here. They are funny animals and have the appearance of a learned professor looking over his spectacles. Their nostrils close as soon as any dust begins to blow and, as you know, they can get a drink of water from a reservoir they have inside. They kneel down to be loaded. I hope to have a ride on one before long. I hope you won't be bored with all this news, it is a pity you can't be here to see the sights. I am always thinking about you dearest and of the weary time you must be having at the office. Please give my KR to Aunties. I send all my best love to you dearest.

Yours always, Eddie

EGYPT

25 JANUARY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 29 Dec also for parcel which arrived a few days ago. Grub is very scarce here so you can guess that the contents of the parcel are consumed by now. The almonds and rasins were very nice and when I tell you that our grub consists of dog biscuits, bacon, stew, jam and cheese you will understand that we enjoyed all the contents. I have even made use of the parcel wrapper – it makes a nice bag in which to keep mug, plate and co. As regards phosphorine tables, I seem to have quite a large stock of those at present, and the weather is so decent and I am so fit that I do not need them. They will be very useful when the hot weather comes along, but we may be home before then.

Have just been looking back on the past few weeks and find I have spent £2/16 since 6 Jan. It has gone on extra food, suppers at Alex, restaurant and in visits to pictures. I do not seem to have been splashing at all and yet the money has gone. Now I am '*ma fish feluce*' (there is not money). It is rather a decent experience to be stony and live on Army rations, and it does not detract from my happiness in the least. You see, I need take no thought of what I shall eat, drink or put on because I'm in the Army. This Ismalia campaign is a very poor place for rations but it is possible to buy almost anything. During the past week I have spent my evenings at home writing letters, so many people needed thanking for parcels and co. A few days ago I was fortunate enough to have a

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ride on a camel. Do you know that the camel kneels down in order that he can be loaded or mounted, and one has to hold tight when the camel rises. Some camels are very ferocious and will kill a man if he doesn't know how to handle them. Yesterday I had a 10 mile ride on the desert with a pair of horses. We had some fine canters and the desert is just the place for a good ride. Today I am a painter. I cannot say what tomorrow will bring forth.

Thanks for all the office news. The office will soon be run by the fairer sex. Today has been our coldest day in Egypt. It is nearly cold enough for snow. I was out on horse picket last night and was quite surprised at the cold. Now we have plenty of warm clothing and can defy the cold weather. I can't say when we are coming home dearest. There are plenty of rumours about us leaving next month but I cannot see how troops will be relieved from here before the job is finished. Of course we shall all be pleased when the War is over. I send all best love to you dearest and KR to Aunties.

Yours always, Eddie

31 JANUARY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for letters and papers, which have arrived during the past week. One dated 9 Dec arrived on 25 Jan, one dated 13Jan arrived on 29 Jan. One accompanied by tobacco came today together with the bundle of papers. I suppose my letters to you are arriving at all times, but if they do not come to hand quite regularly you can rest assured that I write once a week, usually at the weekend. The papers you have sent are a very interesting lot – I shall enjoy reading Sir Ian's report regarding Suvla, and I see there is quite a lot of news about the evacuation of Gallipoli. Thanks for the tobacco – we have no ration in Egypt and it comes in very handy. Of course I can buy tobacco in the town but sometimes money is scarce. I was very pleased to find a letter amongst the 'Three Nuns', because your letters are very dear to me. The longer I stay out here the more fully I shall realise that nobody has a girl like mine dearest. I was reading the other day that there are just two kinds of women now, those who matter and those who don't: the women whose pluck and helpfulness and sympathy inspire men to great deeds, and those whose futility and limitations and utter helplessness spoil one's faith in womenkind. Well dearest you are just my ideal of the girl who does matter, and I fully appreciate all you do to cheer me on. I sometimes think the War is more with you than with us, and you must feel at times you are impotent to take any active part. However there is no doubt the women of England are doing great work and when the day of victory comes they will have every claim to a big share of the honours. I sometimes look forward to that happy day dearest. I have no desire to be amongst any demonstrations because I feel there are thousands who have given so much more than I have given, but I should look forward to a peaceful return home – coming as a Red Letter day.

You will be surprised to hear we have had another move. We are now a little nearer Ismailia on the edge of the desert and near a fine grove of palm trees. I cannot see any reason for the move because we have to walk the horses a distance of 2 miles back to the old camp in order to get water. However, this is a pleasant camp. The ways of the Army are beyond understanding. I have seen hundreds of men being instructed in obsolete work such as flag wagging and bugling. One cannot understand men being wasted like this. It is owing to such methods as these that we are being pushed back in all theatres of the War. But once in the Army – theirs not to reason why, theirs is but to do and die.

I had not heard that Bennett was in Alex or I could have looked him up. No doubt he will get home with enteric. When I passed thro' the Aragon I heard about Watson going sick but he asked me not to mention it in my letters in case the wife should get to know and have an anxious time. Am pleased to hear you are getting on OK at the office. You are getting all the important jobs. You ask if we get any of the books posted for the troops. I do not wish to grumble about the job but we get practically nothing in the gift line. No doubt in England we are debited with all kinds of gifts such as tobacco, comforts, clothing etc but they do not reach us. Also, if you would like to hear a Tommy's grumble, they have stopped a lot of our rations including milk, bread, tobacco, bacon and jam. We get a good dinner, breakfast is tea and biscuits and tea is tea, biscuits and cheese. We have to buy a lot of groceries in order to live decently. Last time I wrote I had no money but now I have plenty. I drew £2 the other day. Hope you don't think I am miserable because I am telling you all our cares and troubles. It is usual for soldiers to grumble. I am as happy as anyone could be and I do not overwork myself unless it is absolutely essential. We shall have a heavy day tomorrow, putting some wire on poles across the desert. Today we have been experimenting with camels to see how much they can carry. We shall probably get camels instead of horses. I am on picket tonight so shall be walking about the desert 10 pm to 12 and 4 to 6 am. What a game it is. I hope you are still keeping well. Please give my KR to Aunties. I will drop them a line as soon as possible. All best love to you dearest.

Yours always, Eddie

6 FEBRUARY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 19 Jan also Three Nuns which came to hand this week. I am just enjoying a Sunday afternoon off duty but there is a lot of noise in the tent and I find it difficult to write when people are talking. Thanks very much for all the reading matter. I enjoy a bit of nice reading like *Everyman* very much. I spent most evenings reading – you see we get plenty of exercise during the day. Am pleased to say I have drawn some money and our rations are improving wonderfully, and the tobacco ration has commenced again. Am

getting somewhat mixed up about the parcels you have sent. I received the iced cake you sent, and a few days ago received a parcel you had addressed containing a tin of tongue, chocolate, almonds, raisins, phospherine etc. Is this the one Aunties sent? I always acknowledge parcels when they arrive, so if you do not get any word about things you have sent it is probably the fault of the post. I hope you have a nice time when you get on the writing duty. I can't give you any advice about the work because I do not remember much about it. I think Goodwill's advice to Harold Hall was to drink plenty of beer but of course I don't agree with him.

There is a fairly strong rumour abroad that we shall be coming home in about 6 months' time. I do not think this Ismailia campaign will go much beyond May. I have read everything I can about it and find that newspaper experts know very little. The Germans have threatened to attack Egypt, but what I can't understand is that they have told us their intentions. I should have thought they would have tried to surprise Egypt. It may be that they will never come here and that their threat has been issued so that we shall have a lot of idle troops here. It is quite a matter of indifference to me whether we ever get under shot and shell again. The life in the danger zone has many attractions and sometimes I long to be amongst it again. I seem to be able to be contented and happy anywhere. During the past week I have had quite a variety of work. I was joinering for a few days and we had one fine day building a line across the desert. I get plenty of horse riding at present. Our watering place is 2 miles from camp and we have to take the horses over the desert. It is fine for us but rather hard for the horses.

I do not often tell you much about this place because everything is quite commonplace. The desert is composed of sand similar to the sand at the seaside. It is not perfectly flat as one might imagine, and the air is also very bracing but it will no doubt become very hot and dry during the next few months. We have got two new men from England. One of them hails from Broughty Ferry and he is a very fine chap. I think he will like our section. Am afraid this is a poor letter but it is awkward to write letters while there is a noise in the tent, and it is too windy to go outside.

I am not sorry the Compulsion Bill is going thro'. After all it is not right that men should be allowed to stay at home. Many people think we are losing some of our ancient rights, but the War is too serious a thing to be run on sentimental lines. I think that every citizen owes his service to the state at this time. I send all best love dearest. I am always thinking of you and longing for the time when we shall be together once more. Give my KR to Aunties.

Yours always, Eddie

My Darling Madge,

It is Sunday once again so I am dropping you a few lines. We have had no letter mail up during the week, but we are hoping there will be a bag for us tomorrow. I wish you could just see my little home. All the boys are out having a kick at the football so I thought it was a good chance to write to you. I had about an hour at football this morning and seeing I am getting an old man did not fancy a game tonight. I was telling you about our tent, I have just lit the lamp and things look quite homely. The floor is composed of golden sand, and all the kits are arranged round the curtain of the tent. Each man has the right to about a yard of space, which gradually decreases towards the centre. There are also boxes in which we keep bread, jam, cheese etc. The tent is run as a kind of family household. Everybody eats as much as he can. It is a much better system than each man having his own rations of cheese, bread etc to look after. We have had a fine day today as regards food. At breakfast we supplemented the bacon with fried eggs and tomatoes and at dinner time I made two large Yorkshire puddings, (area about one square yard). At tea time we enjoyed your pork pies and cooked ham, which arrived during the week. However, that is enough about feeding.

Am sorry to say that the boys have come in and we are having a heated argument about toffee. The boys are really a fine lot and it is one of the pleasures of the life to have these pals. Wit and humour is the order of the day and at times we finish a discussion by fighting things out.

Thanks very much for the parcel. It is very good of you to think about such things as toothpaste, shaving soap etc. I began to wonder what you knew about shaving soap. Anyway I think it is an item which should go on the grocery bill, along with tobacco and a few other things which men use. I wish I could take you round the camp on a tour of inspection just to show you how the men spend their evening. We should perhaps come to the first tent and hear a chap relating his experiences on the Peninsula to an open-mouthed audience. An occupant of no. 2 tent would be playing a cornet accompanied by a concertina. The men of no. 3 tent would be singing ragtime, then we should perhaps come to a tent where beer was the chief item, and we could look forward to the men becoming very noisy as the night progresses. Our tent is a very quiet one. We run a small casino. I do not play cards myself because I do not find much interest in Solo, Budge etc and I do not agree with gambling, but all the same there is a lot of science about cards and it is a nice pastime to anyone who is fond of playing. I am able to fill in my time with reading and I have a struggle to get thro' the papers you send me. I come across good books and at present I have several on hand. I like to read anything solid, and out here I get even more chance than when at home. Besides reading I get plenty of other work such as sharpening razors and repairing watches. I was billeted with a watch repairer at Biggleswade and with keeping my eyes open I can put a watch right if it

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happens to be overwound or requires cleaning. A bicycle pump is used in the cleaning process. II..IIx

Find I have succeeded in writing two pages about myself. Hope you will forgive me. I would like to write about you dearest and only you, but I always feel that compliments are very cheap and I would rather show you that I love you than tell you so. As far as I can learn from several books that have passed thro' my hands lately, people – or I might say married people – usually suffer a rude awakening when they each realise that the other is only an ordinary person. Somehow I cannot accept this theory, in fact I think the happiness should increase as time goes on. I suppose it depends on the people themselves. I hope you are still getting on OK at the office. I send kindest regards to Aunties. I will drop you another note if we get a mail. All best love darling.

Yours always, Eddie

24 FEBRUARY

My Dearest Madge,

I wrote you last weekend but had not received a letter from you. Yours of 3 Feb came to hand yesterday so I am just dropping you a note. Am sorry to say the pipe has not yet come but there is hope yet as the mails are not coming up very regularly. However, if it does not come to hand I shall be able to purchase one here. The one you sent some time ago happened an accident but I shall try and get it mended as it has a sentimental value II..IIx About the cake not to hand – I received the iced cake quite safely and I wondered if that was the one you refer to? You keep telling me about the boys from France getting leave, and I begin to wonder whether our turn is coming on. Chaps keep bringing rumours of our homecoming but they never materialise. Our caps will go up in the air when the orders do come. Am afraid I have given you a wrong impression about the reading matter you send. I enjoy it all and altho' I said it was a struggle to get thro' it, I meant it was a pleasant struggle.

We have heard quite a lot about the Zeppelin raid. It seems to have been a terrible affair, and you must all feel as if you can do nothing to stop the beastly business. I do hope they do not come your way. You must dig yourselves in. I could build you a fine dugout in the back yard if I were there. Am sorry that Davie is having a turn in hospital. Hope he will soon be OK. I have just been supplied with a new uniform and a lot of kit. Try as I will, I cannot keep my luggage within bounds. Perhaps the best way will be to charter an Arab with a handcart when we have to move. I hope you are keeping well dearest. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

1916

6 MARCH

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 17 Feb. I am taking an afternoon off today, and it is almost too hot to write letters. The best way to survive this weather is to lie down and keep still. Fortunately I am in a position to do so. Thanks for sending the biscuits, they will come in very nicely when they arrive. I cannot help smiling at your remark that you are sorry we are getting a lot of biscuits. Those days have changed and we are living very well. I am cooking for the section again and we are able to make a few extras for ourselves. One of our men has built some fine ovens and we can turn out some good meals. One of our men took a photo of the ovens this morning while I was looking at the meat. If it comes out OK I will try and get one for you, just to give you an idea of our surroundings. Several of our chaps have bought cameras so we are frequently getting snapped. I have considered the question of buying one, but as it would be so much more kit to carry and the hobby is very expensive out here I have decided not to trouble about it. I am pleased you like the writing duty, and hope you will be able to keep the work down. I like cooking much better than doing a writing duty, but perhaps when the War is over I shall settle down to office work again. I wish you could just witness an amusing scene being enacted here. A few Arabs are digging a pipe track. The foreman sings a few words of a kind of chant and they all answer keeping time to the tune with their shovels. I can't make out what they are singing about. There is something very mysterious about the Arab. I would like to really learn something about Egypt and its people. Many a time I long to have a trip across the silent desert even tho' it would be attended with hardship. My chance may come before we leave.

I have just received a 4 d rise so now my pay is 2/10 per day. Of course we are not out for money but the Army and PO combined pay us a good wage. I have asked the Mater to have some of my civil pay because JW is getting married I hear and will probably be wanting all his money. I guess living at home will be very expensive just now, and I do not like the idea of them having a struggle at home while I am living on the fat of the land out here. The Arab men have just finished their work, and I have had a chat with them. We gradually veered round to the question of backsheesh so I gave them some bread and cheese, which was surplus. They were as pleased as schoolboys. We have just had an issue of slouch hats. They are just the thing for this country. The pith helmets were too heavy. They also suit our conceit. II..II Chaps are walking about as if they were cowboys or Mexican greasers. At last we have got passes for Cairo and I go tomorrow. We shall have a very hurried view of the Sphinx etc, but it is nice to be able to see these wonders of Egypt. Cairo is about 3½ hours' railway journey from here. I will write and tell you all about the trip next time I write. Well, I must go and get tea ready. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love.

Yours for ever, Eddie

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15 MARCH

My Darling Madge,

It is thought there may not be an outward mail for some time, after the one leaving tomorrow, so I am just letting you know in case no letters come to hand. I am sorry to say our inward mail due last Sat has not yet arrived. I have been able to get you a photo of the Sphinx; altho' I am afraid the group in the foreground has somewhat spoilt the picture. The names of the chaps are, left to right: H Morris (BKB), Moses (Cairo), Tom Ewing (Broughty Ferry) and yours truly. They have sent me a large photo so I will send it to you as soon as I can get it packed. I hope you are keeping well dearest. I wish you could just be a soldier for a few weeks and have a turn at our fine open-air life. I have started swimming again. We have our daily dip in Lake Timsah, one of the lakes which form part of the Suez Canal. This daily swim is one of the advantages of being a cook. The other chaps haven't time to go down. However, some of them are learning to ride camels and I am unable to participate in that experience. But *mallish* I shall soon learn to perch on a camel if necessary. Am longing for a letter from you dearest. Hope we are lucky tomorrow.

All my love. Yours always, Eddie

20 MARCH

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 23 Feb and the tobacco. Am sorry to say that the outstanding parcels have not come to hand. They must have been torpedoed. Am pleased to hear that Bennett and Watson are getting on all right. With going home they have really missed the decent weather. Sickness is very rare at present. Was Watson invalidated with dysentery? I hope Davie will soon be well. Perhaps the English weather does not suit him. I sent you a view of the Sphinx and am posting a larger one separately. Hope you will like them. The weather here is just ideal at present and the clear moonlight nights far surpass those of England. I wish you could have a look round here. It is quite safe and there are no tanbes or zeppelins. I hope they will do something to stop the raids in England. The Germans seem to be coming over thick and heavy. We have no news about coming home so we shall just have to hang on. It is about a year yesterday since we had final leave. The past year has been so eventful that the time has seemed like 5 years.

We are nearly all writing letters and are all stumped for news. Tom (the Scotsman) suggests that we should all give a description of each man in the tent. He says I am a fat man with short breeks and bony knees. Surely I am qualified to wear kilts. I will write a longer letter when we get some news. I hope the writing duty is to your liking. Are you doing the duty which deals with complaints,

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delayed letters and co? Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love.

Yours always, Eddie

27 MARCH

My Darling Madge,

I have quite a large mail to thank you for – letter of 2 Mar, letter and tobacco of 8 Mar and parcel of 6 Mar. Your letters are a treat dearest and the parcel was a pleasant surprise because I was not expecting one. All the contents were intact and will be consumed in due course. I could not keep the cake until the 11 Apr so we had it tonight. You are really an expert at making a cake dearest and it is something to be proud of. A lot of chaps from various parts of your island look upon cooking as a very difficult art. The cockneys do not appear to do any home cooking.

Today I have sent you a few views of Cairo, given to me by Alf Smith (my fellow cook). All photos have to be censored so they have gone in another letter. Our address has been altered slightly. It is now 'Egyptian Expeditionary Force', instead of BMEF, perhaps you will kindly alter the slate. I forgot to mention that I received two bundles of papers. Thanks for same, they will be well read. I was pleased to see the typed address. I am glad you have written to Bennett. No doubt he had a hot time at Anzac, he may be able to give you his opinion of the Australians. I should like to know what he thinks of them. I am quite interested in the office, dearest, because you are there and I am always feeling sorry that you have to perform the dreary, dull work while I live an almost ideal life. I must say that I find that swinging an axe or digging is finer work than wielding a pen. At nights tho' I enjoy reading and studying a little.

Am pleased to hear Arthur is quite well, no doubt he likes his job. I shan't worry about the playing and singing dearest. I always feel perfectly happy when I am with you and I would almost give anything just to see you for a few hours. You can rest assured we are looking after Tom the Scotsman well and we all get on well together. We have some rough Glasgow corner boys in one section. My word they are a lot. I frequently ask them to get somebody to transmit because I can't read them. Am glad you don't admire the life in some of our tents. It is pleasing to know that we can each live our own lives. The Army and the East are both places where we see and hear things that are revolting. No one would believe that modern civilization would allow things to go on as they do here. However, these sights we see and things we hear need not affect our own lives. Am glad you like to know what I think about you dearest. My chief pleasure is looking (pen gone dry) forward to the time when I shall be back with you. I feel that I can appreciate you more than anyone else can, and feel sure that I can make you truly happy.

I have read about Hull's Victoria Cross in the Harrogate paper and am very pleased that the medal has been given to a Harrogate man. I remember

him quite well. I am deeply sorry to hear of your brother's great loss. There is nothing to compensate for such a loss, and friends feel that they are unable to give much consolation. It is a pity that people have to suffer so much. I have read about the Zeppelin raid and am beginning to think we are safer than you. I am not satisfied with my present share in the War and would like to be doing a little more active work than eating the lotus leaves of idleness in Egypt. But it can't be helped. With regard to a magazine you sent me, I wonder if you read that article 'A Lineman's experience in Gallipoli'. It was a complete case of what we call 'telling the tale'. The chap did not arrive until July and the worst was over then. He explains that when they forced a landing it was equally as severe as the original landing and then follows up with the statement that they had no casualties. He also speaks about advancing towards Achi Baba. His mob neither forced a landing nor made any advance on the Cape. They were put into the Helles trenches for a few weeks prior to the Suvla operations so that they would have some idea of the work. To me it seems very unfair that a chap should be allowed to make money out of such an article as that. But *mallish*, there will no doubt be more Germans and Turks killed in England after the War than were ever killed on the battlefields.

I have been thinking that you would like a little account of a trip round Ismailia. I will just tell you a few of things you would see if it were possible for you to be here. At 5 pm we should shout 'tea-up NB' and after we had finished our meal would leave the camp while it was still light. We should go thro' the spinney of palm trees along the banks of a moat. If we were fortunate we might see a kingfisher doing some fishing on his own in the moat. We should pass the Commander-in-Chief's house and notice the beautiful gardens. The masses of brilliant red creepers are fine. We should soon be in Rue Negrelli (the main street) and would probably be surrounded by some Greek children crying out for pennies, of course it does not do to encourage them so we pass on, noticing the Greek houses. Many of the people will be sitting in the streets, and goats and hens will be running about the houses. We pass along and come to a few shops, mostly kept by Greeks. We look in one and have a chat with a young boy who speaks English, French, Greek and Arabic. If we desire a lesson in French we can call in at the Picture Palace. Here the wording of the pictures is given in French and we cannot understand what the pictures are about unless we make some effort to translate the reading. We come out more or less pleased with the show and continue up Rue Negrelli thro' a residential quarter for about half a mile, and then find ourselves amongst the shops. Our first call is on an Arab street trader who sells jewellery and carved knick-knacks from Jerusalem. We should have a few words with him, not in Arabic but strange to say in broad Scotch. He will tell us he is Harry Lander from Auchterarder, Auchtermuchty and Milngavie. He will introduce us to his friend (Mr McPherson), another Arab. He has learnt to speak Scotch somewhere and it is a fine trade advertisement for him. We pass along and find ourselves in the native bazaar. Here we see Arabs varying in colour from white to jet black. No two are dressed alike. Nearly all wear a flowing robe and some wear the fez – but the headgear is a

matter of personal taste. We shall see scarves, handkerchiefs, cap comforters, puttees and all kinds of things twisted round their heads in an artistic way. Many of the chaps look very fierce but bless them they are as quiet as lambs. We shall see dozens of barrow stalls, piled with eatables for the Arabs. Many of the men we see possess only one eye and some are blind. We might buy some oranges at one of the stalls. It would take about 10 minutes to barter with the salesman in bad Arabic and English. We should pass a few public houses or cafés and see the Arabs smoking and drinking. It is a sight never forgotten. I have a few acquaintances in the bazaar. The first call would be at a tailor's shop. The man is a Syrian and pleased to learn a little English. He would show us his new sewing machines, which he has been able to purchase owing to good trade. He would also show us a nest in the ceiling of his shop that a pair of swallows have built. He explains that one bird is a lady and the other a gentleman. We would next call on the man who sells Turks caps. He would show us all his apparatus for pressing fezzes. The next call is on a man who keeps a general store shop. He is a typical Arab merchant and has the cunningest eyes I have ever seen. If we wished to buy anything here we should need to barter for about half an hour. The next place to peep is an Arab café. We should see inside about 40 or 50 Arabs, drinking, smoking and playing cards. They would all be talking to each other and would pay little attention to us in the doorway. On a platform we should see the musician. He is blind and plays a violin. He scrapes out a most mournful dirge and sings in an imbecile manner. We finish our trip here and retrace our steps homeward.

I cannot say you would enjoy the trip very much but it would be interesting, and you would feel thankful you were not a Gyppo. I suppose you will have heard that the Prince of Wales is here. We frequently see him. He is very ordinary looking. Well it is nearly bedtime so I am going to get down and have a read before lights out. I send you all best love and KR to Aunties. GW dearest

Yours always, Eddie

3 APRIL

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for your letter of 15 Mar, which was accompanied by the writing pads. I shall try and use them all up dearest, but at present I have about 10 pads. The people of Leeds keep sending them to us. Lately they have sent us quite a pile of backsheesh, which includes, Vaseline, trench powder, chocolate, Yorkshire relish etc.. I am glad to say that the second mentioned item has not been required for the past few months, but there once was a time when various specimens of insect life would insist on residing in our clothing. Perhaps the idea makes you shudder, it had the same effect on us. However I am glad to say the insects have *'imshied'*.

We have heard several times that we were moving to France, but the rumour

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The photo of Eddie cooking at a field oven



has not materialised. We should welcome it because it would probably mean a few days at home. Another company of signals seem to have got the move to France. Stanley Mitchell has been attached to 'Lines of Communication' and is at Cairo now.

Am pleased you are enjoying the writing work. Have you to work overtime for nothing like we used to occasionally? It is remarkable what a number of men have got home from the Dardanelles. We are quite old-stagers in the East now, and it is seldom we meet troops that have been out a year. Khaki drill clothing has been issued to us, so perhaps we are going to remain here for some time. I have just been working at the Director of Works place for a few days. They were rather busy in the signwriting dept. It was a nice change from cooking.

Am enclosing you two photos. The postcard is a party of our section building a line over the desert. It is lunchtime. You can perhaps make out the tea dixie, bully beef, biscuits and cheese in the foreground. I am somewhere in the right rear, endeavouring to bite a biscuit. I don't think you know any of the other men. How do you like the desert scenery? The small photo was snapped while I was looking at the meat in the ovens. Perhaps you are not struck with the appearance of the ovens, but they turn out some fine meat. You will perhaps notice a round creosote tin to the right of the picture – well the ovens are made of these tins. The fire is seen just to left of the erection and the hot air flue passes under the ovens, back along the top, along the back and up the chimney. I hope you wont think me conceited for being so much before the camera. When one is snapped there is an excuse. We have some amusing times when in quest of photos. My pal Alf Smith has been trying for some time to get a decent picture of an Arab woman but the ladies are too elusive. We got a fine snap of a blind beggar yesterday. Of course one has a chance when the chap is blind. He was very pleased when I gave him id for backsheesh. We were going for a swim today and Alf got out his camera to take a near view of a camel's head. The camel was kneeling so it was a good chance. The driver of the beast thought he

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could barter for backsheesh and stood in front of the camel, I had to threaten the driver in my best Arabic and almost bowl him over before he would stand back. When we had finished he asked for backsheesh but we did not comply. It is the same old tale: 'English plenty'.

I am longing for the day when I shall be back with you dearest. You see even this life falls short of the ideal when you are not here. Please give KR to Aunties. All love for you dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie

10 APRIL

My Darling Madge,

We have received no mail this week so I haven't one of yours to answer. However, there is a mail due in tomorrow or the next day. I have sent you a few photos recently. I hope they arrive safely. Am going to send you a specimen of Egyptian needlework – you will no doubt be struck by the beauty of the work, (I don't think). The subject is Queen Cleopatra. There is some very fine Indian work in some of the shops. Perhaps you will have seen similar things in the Eastern shops at Harrogate. There are some very nice velvet tablecloths, heavily worked with gold thread, also various kinds of brass candlesticks. I would like to buy some of these things if they would be of any use. Perhaps you will say. I have had a rest from cooking for the past few days. Have been writing some numbers on our motorcycles. These painting jobs are OK as I work my own hours and am my own boss. I generally go to work in a motor.

It is almost a year since we left England's shores. It has been an interesting and eventful year and I am only sorry that you have not been able to share some of our happy experiences. You have contributed to my happiness more than I can express dearest. Altho' we have not been thro' the mill like some men or had a quarter of their hardships, there have been times when we have had to rough it, and you have no idea how helpful it is when there is someone at home who cares.

The question keeps presenting itself, 'when are we going home?' I believe it was stated in Parliament that it was impracticable to give the Dardanelles troops any leave as it would upset their health going to a colder climate, and it was stated that we were resting in Egypt. In a sense we are resting from shot and shell but there is plenty of work to be done. Each day two of us prepare meals for 38 men. There isn't much rest for us, and I think the men on the horse lines work harder than we do. I would sooner be on active work than resting, if this is a rest. If we get much more of this free, open-air life we shall take badly to the quiet civilian life when we do return. Even now I look upon a collar and tie as a kind of nightmare looming in the distance. Perhaps we shall be able to overcome these little difficulties when the time arrives. At present it seems impossible to forecast the conclusion of the War. We were going to smash Germany last spring but somehow it did not work out as expected. If some of these minor campaigns

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are cleared up we may be able to do something.

I haven't much news this time. Everything is at a standstill. I can tell you some old news tho' and that is that I love you better than anyone on earth dearest, and choose how long we stay here I shall love you even as tho' I could see you every day. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love to you dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie x

16 APRIL

My Dear Madge,

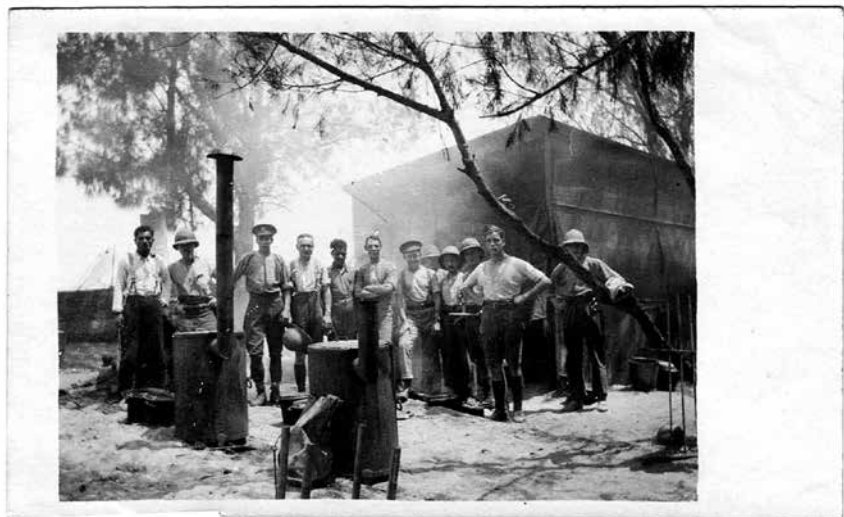
I am sending you seven views which I hope you will like. They are unnamed but I shall be able to tell you what they are when I come home. When? The one of the cookhouse gives a fairly good idea of where we work. You will notice two of our 'Gyppo' friends in the group. I am No 2 from the left. Hope you are keeping well. Will write all news later.

Love, Eddie

17 APRIL

My Darling Madge,

I have to acknowledge yours of 22 and 29 March, also some papers and some tobacco, which arrived during the week. They we all very welcome. I received a letter from the Aunties, for which you can thank them and I will write later. Am



The cookhouse.
Eddie is second
from left

sorry I called the Sphinx an old man. I believe the Sphinx is supposed to be a human head with a lion's body. Perhaps reference to a French dictionary would tell us whether it is masculine or feminine. I am going to purchase a small French dictionary as soon as I can persuade the man at our bookstall to send for one. They are sold for 7 piastres (1/6) out here.

You mention about troops leaving here for France. We are *verboten* to write about the movement of troops. We haven't moved. II..IIx No doubt you will have received the photo of our ovens by now. Yesterday I sent you seven views of this part of the world, including one of the cookhouse. Am pleased that GAH is getting on OK and likes his work. Thanks for birthday wishes. I believe I have taken a year off instead of adding one because I feel much younger than I did a year ago. I received your parcel OK and have acknowledged it previously. Am glad you are keeping the work down in the writing room. It must be 'some' writing room, 'sure', now. Please do not take that expression as sarcasm, I mean it. You say you will be glad to see me back to relieve you. They might not give me a writing job when I return. I was reading the other day of rather an effective way of dealing with the lady who has taken over a man's work, *après la guerre* Am pleased you like the photo of the Sphinx. You shall certainly have your photo taken on a camel when you come here. That will be when I make a lot of money. I could make money out here but I do not agree with the methods which would have to be employed. I've seen chaps make £30 in a night, but a rightminded person would hardly like to touch the money with a pair of tongs. I refer to gambling games, which are so popular here. Even if one did agree with gambling, there is no fair sport about them because the banker always wins.

Am sorry you are having cold weather. I think heat is better than cold. Speaking of weather we are being treated to a '*khamseen*'. The *khamseen* is a wind, sometimes bringing rain and sometimes sand. We have had a dose of both. It lasts for 50 days. *Khamseen* is the Arabic word for '50' and I suppose that is why it is so called. I have made a bed and am quite comfortable now. My first night was rather uncomfortable tho'. A chap came home drunk and poured some beer over me. I did not like to punish him because he was too silly to help himself. I see the last of Ian Hamilton's despatch was in one of the papers you sent. Do you happen to know if the despatches are published in book form? I wonder if you could send me a book in the French language so that I can try to translate it. I am studying *Hugo's* and I think it would help me if I had something to translate. Collins or Nelson publish classics at 1/- each I think. I find it is nearly 'lights out' (10.15 pm) so I shall have to conclude. We have to go to bed when we are told in the Army. It is perhaps as well or I should stay up all night reading occasionally. I send all very best love dearest and am longing to see you. I do not expect we shall be here much longer but hardly dare hope we shall get to Blighty. I send all best love dearest.

Yours always, Eddie

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23 APRIL

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 6 April which arrived on the 18th. Thanks for all the news about the boys. Your family are doing quite a lot towards the War. I hope Davie will soon be well again. If I speak the truth I am not sorry to be absent from the wedding of Jackie and Agnes. Somehow I can't bring myself to enjoy social functions, even tho' I am in sympathy with them. Perhaps that is why I enjoy active (or inactive) service so much. I hope the happy couple will be truly happy if they have taken the important step. Speaking of weddings, I believe I told you that I had seen the decorations for an Arab wedding. Last night I was in Arab Town and came across Hassan Achmed. We saw the same decorations at a different place – on enquiry Hassan informed me that it was 'one man finish' (*wahed ragil khallas*). So it appears they use the same stock in trade for both funerals and weddings.

I am sorry Watson is not picking up as well as can be expected. The East was never kind to him. Some of our boys are going into the desert for five days to lay a line. I am not going because I am cooking. The trip will be interesting but the heat will be very trying and will take the spice out of the trip. Tomorrow the Arabs celebrate a feast known as '*Sham el-Nessim*'. It is a fantasia or feast of the melon. Alf and I will go up to see the sights, and I will tell you about it later. I have a real pal in Alf Smith of Malton. He and I are cooking. He is a splendid chap for doing his 'wack' at work. We both have interests in common and are filled with a desire to see all the interesting things in Egypt. I am sure that as long as we are together we shall not rust out. We live a strenuous life. I keep improving my Arabic a little but am not as far advanced as I should like to be. I have numerous books, but I find that conversation with the natives is essential in order to learn the pronunciation. I am sending you a small book to give you some idea of Arabic. Very few words in English are derived from Arabic. At present I can only remember two – one is '*shorbab*' (a drink) from which we derive 'sherbert' and another is '*ahmar*' (red) from which we derive 'Alhambra'. I am really sending you the book because it is got up by a native and is amusing. The way Tommy Atkins is expected to fall in love is rather funny and the climax is reached when he tries to purchase a kiss for half a farthing. The blind beggar on the last page has rather a rough passage. I hope you are still enjoying your work dearest. We have no news of home yet. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love for you dearest.

Yours always, Eddie

30 APRIL

My Darling Madge,

The flies have gone to bed and we have just lit the lamp so I can settle down comfortably and write you a few pages. Unfortunately for the flies, many of them have been evicted because they were getting too numerous. We are obliged to 'imshie' the flies every night because they wake about 4 am and wake us up whether we want calling or not. Thanks very much for yours of 13 April, also two lots of papers came to hand during the week. I received the parcel from Aunties a few days ago. The cake was *quois ketteer*. It is perhaps bad form to go into ecstasies about something to eat, but we (in our tent) did enjoy it.

I promised to tell you about the fantasia this week. We went down to town several days in the hope of seeing something, and as there was nothing new to be seen we thought we had been duped. An Arab would tell us it was tomorrow and then if we asked another chap on the next day he would tell us tomorrow also. However, we went to Arab town on 24 April in the afternoon and saw some signs of the fantasia. The children were very gaily dressed and were enjoying trips up the canal on barges, also rides on carts. It was very much like the Whitsuntide at home. My friend got some fine photos of the youngsters. The name of the feast is '*Sham el-Nessim*', which means The Day of Cool Breezes.

About a dozen of our boys are working about 15 miles away with the camels, and they may be there for some time. It is also possible that we may follow. I am eager to see a few new places but where they are there is nothing but sand. It would be a pity to leave all this luxury for a rough life in mid-desert, but of course I shan't grumble if we have to go. Our officer Lt. MacLaren has been made a captain and, as a cable section will not carry a captain, he may be leaving us. I don't suppose a change will make much difference to us. I have heard that all our officers are getting leave for the purpose of going home. We should stand a chance if they get leave. Of course, I'm only a man and there is a big difference between officers and men.

Thanks for telling me that the green envelopes are censored. I had an idea they were liable to examination. I heard about the wedding a few days ago. I hope to be able to send them something nice if we get paid shortly. I have plenty of money on my book but can only draw about once a month. Haven't had time to read *The Master Book* yet but hope to do so tonight, I enjoy the *British Weekly* very much, especially Claudius Clear's page.

You need not worry because you are not satisfied with letters you write for me. Old news to you is often new to me, and perhaps you are forgetting the fact that anything coming from you has a special charm to me. I am never satisfied with the letters I write to you dearest. Neither the writing, the grammar, nor the subject matter are satisfactory. However we will call it quits if we both feel the same way about the letters we write and the ones we receive. If my letters convey to you that I love you dearest, I shall feel contented because all the rest doesn't matter.

I am still cooking, but am doing a lot of signwriting in my spare time. The

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other morning I swam the Suez Canal with a cable, which had to be submerged. It is only a short swim and I enjoyed it. I think you have got all the news now. Please give my KR to Aunties. All very best love to you.

Yours always, Eddie

10 MAY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for yours of 19 April, which came to hand a few days ago accompanied with tobacco. The papers were also very acceptable. *The Venture* is turning out a fine magazine. It is a pity my letters to you are not turning up regularly. Perhaps they will eventually arrive in bundles. If this one arrives late you must blame me. I usually write on Sunday and it is now Wednesday. Mails have been expected for the past few days and I have been waiting to get them all in before writing. Thanks for your enquiry; I am standing the heat fairly well. I had one bad day last week. The sun must have caught me. I was feverish and had stabbing pains in the head. Fortunately I was able to stay in bed and I felt OK the next day. This climate is very treacherous but it would be all right if we were living under civilian conditions in houses.

Am glad you were able to get a little holiday at Easter. As you remark, one day is just like another in the Army. 'The more we work, the more we may, It makes no difference to our pay.' At our camp it seems to be the rule to pile a lot of work on, on Sundays when the men could do with a little rest. About every three days the camp officials get the wind-up because a General is going to visit us. We have been caused a deal of trouble over this mythical General. Perhaps some day he will ride past in a motor.

I am sorry the Mater had to go to London in order to see Jack. It is a pity he could not have stretched a point under the circumstances and spent a day at home. However it can't be helped now. By what I can gather, War weddings seem to be a craze just now. What a game it is, this playing at soldiers. It seems almost necessary to have a War wedding in order to draw people's attention to the fact that we are trying to do our bit. It is a pity Eddie Barnes has been taken for a 'Germhun'. I must say he looks like one. Am glad Harrogate has got a gun. What is the approximate size of the bore? Are you going to shoot at the Zeps with it?

I have ascertained about the leave being given to troops in Egypt. It is granted to NCOs and Officers in cases of any family troubles at home. The pass is given free but food has to be paid for by the passenger while afloat. It does not apply to me. There is very little news to tell this week. Nothing happens nowadays. I am still studying French in the evenings. It is a difficult language but I think it can be mastered by learning a little every day. Do you know whether *Hugo's French Journal* is still published? If it is still running I should be very glad if you could send me it instead of John Bull.

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Our boys who are stationed a few miles up the desert have not returned yet. I do not think they are working. I am not going to ask to go because there is nothing to see and I am quite contented here. I am quite ready for a trip to England and would give anything to be able to see you dearest. I have to be content with sending my love. Some day the War will be over and then we are sure to get home. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love to you dearest.

Yours always, Eddie

15 MAY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for yours of 25 April. Am pleased to hear that the photos have arrived. I did not participate in the fighting you have been reading about. Some of our boys are up there now but there is nothing doing. The War is teaching us many things. It is hardly conceivable that the public would tolerate such restricted hours of business at the PO. Thanks, dearest, I had a happy Easter – in fact I am always happy. Speaking of the river at Knaresborough, at present I could just enjoy a swim there. I would stay in for hours until I felt really cool. I never want to be warm again. I am afraid you would not be able to stand the heat. As I look out of the tent everything is dazzled with the sun, which beats down almost vertically from above. The wind comes in hot blasts as if from a furnace. We are afraid to stay out much in the sunshine for fear of being melted away. A friend of mine has been struck blind while working on the desert. I hope they will be able to make him all right at the hospital. Another man in our Company has had a touch of the sun and he has been unconscious for two days. I do not know what we shall do if it becomes much warmer. I think I shall go and live in the Lake.

Am pleased to say we have got the worst over today, and the sun is on the downward path. After tea we shall have a dip in the Lake and then refresh ourselves with an ice-cooled drink of lemon squash. Talking about drinking, it is almost impossible to quench one's thirst here. If we start drinking water in the morning, we are thirsty all day and generally consume gallons before the day is over. Our drinking water is almost boiling but we cool it in one of the Egyptian earthenware jars. I have very little news to relate dearest, so you must excuse short letter. I am progressing quite favourably with French but it is no easy task.

I see the papers are full of the Irish riots. It has taken the public's mind off the fall of Kut. It is about time the War was finished. I wonder if this advance in Spring is going to fizzle out. I suppose we shall all come back quite ready to enjoy some English weather. Fog, rain, snow and frost seem to have a charm about them. Sometimes we see English scenes at the pictures. It is quite refreshing to see pictures of grass fields and meadows. You will think I am homesick with writing so much about home. Perhaps I am. Nobody would wish to stay in this furnace. It is nearly tea time, so I shall have to go and get the tea made. I don't think you would enjoy having tea in our cookhouse but if you will pay us a visit we could

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have a nice picnic in the palm spinney. Am enclosing you a small paper, which is published by the Rifle Brigade. They are the old National Reserve men who came out here. Perhaps the article about the Greek Easter will interest you. You will notice that one of the adverts refers to our spinney. The money is ours and the goose, which is as tame and as affectionate as a dog, belongs to our motor drivers. I send all best love darling and am longing for the time when we shall meet again. KR to Aunties.

Yours always, Eddie

22 MAY

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks very much for the letter, papers and tobacco, which have come to hand this week. They are all very acceptable. Am glad to learn that Queen Cleopatra has arrived. I really sent it because it was so grotesque. Some of the more expensive specimens are more neatly executed, but even they cannot be regarded as works of art. Am pleased your brother has had a leave and is looking well. I have not had the pleasure of meeting any Canadian troops and was not aware that they made free use of Americanisms. The Australians also have words of their own, and I think they eclipse either the Yankees or Canadians for slang. However, there is always something fine about these fellows who have had the pluck to strike out on their own.

I am very pleased the Zeppelins did not drop you any of their presents. It is a pity we have no means of putting a stop to these visits. You would be much safer out here. The Irish riots seem to have caused some trouble. It is a pity that it has occurred at this time, when so many Irishmen are fighting for King and country. It is hoped that the affair will not cast any reflection on loyal Irishmen.

You must have quite a collection of photos of the East by now. If they give you a little idea of what the place is like, I shall be glad. At present the place is looking very fine. Many of the large trees are laden with blossoms of scarlet, purple or heliotrope. The colours are very vivid and if they were portrayed on a picture you would think the artist had overdone it. I am enclosing another photo of a gardener at work. Alf and I made friends with the old man and with the help of our Arabic we obtained a good feed of apricots. He was delighted when we took his photo. We are going to call again. The boy on the left had just come out of prison. He had been surreptitiously supplying soldiers with whiskey. Imprisonment of the natives is no holiday, it includes a good lashing with a heavy whip. I would not care to be a Gyppo.

Am afraid I shall not rush for a writing job when I return. Have been reading about a new job that has sprung up in England. The work consists of smoking cigars in greenhouses in order to kill insects. That would really be 'some' job 'sure'.

We have had a spell of very hot weather but now it is fairly cool. What we

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consider fairly cool would no doubt be considered unbearably hot at home. On the whole I prefer the weather out here. There is practically no damp or rain and one is never afraid of being cold. Green envelopes are getting very scarce; we have only had one issued in six weeks. I think someone is 'caning' them before they reach us. I think I have exhausted my stock of news, dearest. It is so quiet here that everybody is complaining that there is nothing to write about. I shall be glad when we get orders to 'imshie' to England, but there does not appear to be much chance at present. I send all best love dearest. KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

Am also enclosing a photo of blind beggar but it does not do him justice.

29 MAY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for your letter dated 11 May. I've just been for a swim and on return found your parcel had arrived. The cake looks fine and we hope to sample it for supper. It is really not to our credit, but you know we soldiers think more about our meals than anything else. As long as we are getting well fed, the rest is a ring of roses. I received the papers and Kipling's *Plain Tales of the Hills*. I can make quite a lot of the French out but am not far enough advanced to read the book intelligently. I wrote to Smith's Bookstall, Cairo, for a French dictionary about a month ago. They have neither sent the dictionary nor returned the money. When I get the dictionary I hope to tackle Kipling's book in earnest. It will be good practice.

Am pleased you like the views which arrived. Yes, I have lost Edgar; he is up the desert. I lost him previously tho'. He seemed very anxious for promotion and became what we call a 'sergeant's shadow'. You have perhaps read that it is often impossible for a man to retain his pals when he becomes an NCO. This obtains in many cases. However, we are all happy, and altho' I live in a section which is full of petty strife, I am friends with them all as far as I know. By the way, I did not wish for Sir Ian's despatches out here, but should like to have them for when I return, so that in the years to come I can fight a few battles over again II..IIx Do not be afraid that I shall overwhelm you with foreign languages when I return dearest. It is more a reading knowledge of French that I am trying to acquire. There is no opportunity for us to mix with French-speaking people out here. You certainly cause me a few longings when you tell me of the boys coming home on leave. It is no use crying for the moon tho'. I would give a lot to be able to see you, dearest, but I like to stay here if I am useful. It is pleasing to know that the Daylight Saving Bill is in operation. The War is teaching us a lot of things but it is a pity that we, as a Nation, cannot see the common sense of such a measure without having a War. Many people are using the War as a means to further their pet schemes. It will cause a lot of bother after the room has been swept up.

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Our section suffered a loss today. The chap who bought Jacko (the monkey) has claimed him. The fellow has been thro' hospital and was not returned to our section. The boys are almost heartbroken because Jacko has been a real pet. A Harrogate chap called Lowrey called to see us the other day. He is in the RAMC and was for ten months a prisoner in Germany. It was nice to see someone from Harrogate.

We are doing very well with the cooking at present and we never hear a grumble from the men. There is a decent flour ration so we turn up Yorkshire puddings, jam tarts, custards etc. Altho' I have never heard of Army cooks taking the trouble to bake, we find pleasure in giving the lads a good time. When it is Bully Beef day, which occurs once a week, we make rissoles which have very little resemblance to the original bully. I will keep wandering back to the food question, perhaps you will forgive me seeing it is such an important matter.

I should just like to say a few words about the Anzac Day, which has been celebrated in England. There is certainly some bad feeling between the Australians and English Tommies, and this feeling is accentuated by this fêting of the Australians. Personally I do not mind them getting the credit of landing at Anzac, but it is very unkind to the 29th Division (Lancashire men) to say nothing about them, and give them no share in the celebrations. The 29th made the big landing at Helles. They met with far more opposition than the Australians, and it was owing to the glorious work of the 29th that the Anzacs were able to land. We all admire the courage of Australia, but they have such a big opinion of themselves. They are not superior to our men and if they are brave there should be no need to shout it from the house tops.

I am always sorry dearest that you are not able to participate in this fine life we are living at present. You can have no idea of the pleasures of living almost on the fruits of one's own labours. Someday I will try and get a photo of the interior of our tent and give you some idea of our home. Don't be surprised if I want to build a house when I return. I suppose it would be considered '*infra dig*'. I wonder how much longer the War will last. I am always looking forward to the day when I shall be back with you, dearest. Blighty would not have the same charm if you were not there. I love you more and more every day, and my chief hope is that I shall be able to make you truly happy, even happier than you are now. I send all best love dearest. KR to Aunties.

Yours always, Eddie

12 JUNE

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 24 May. Have been to the pictures tonight and as it is 9.30 pm shall have to finish this tomorrow. The beer canteen has just been turned out in our camp and things seem quite lively. The band has just marched past our tent. The instruments in use are a mouth organ, a pair of bones and a

tin can used as a drum. Some chaps have peculiar way of amusing themselves. I am sorry to say that we did not celebrate Empire Day. However, as long as we are a united Empire there is little to fear. Am sorry my letters are not coming to hand very regularly. *C'est la guerre*. I think you must have had a heatwave the same time as us. I do not think you would mind Egypt even in the summer time if you were living under civilian conditions. The residents keep in the shade during the heat of the day, and after sundown they enjoy the cool evenings on the verandah. There are so many ways of making oneself comfy that nobody need fear the climate. One good point is that it hardly ever rains here. Am sorry it is five mins to 'Lights out' so I must get my bed ready. GW dearest, will finish this tomorrow.

13 June 1916. Here we are again. I have just been up to the canal and had the pleasure of swimming across. It is not a big swim tho'. I am glad you like the 'appointments' duty. We shall have to keep quiet about writing duties now that you know the truth II..IIx I have felt the same as you about the censorship, but what I mind most is having my letters scrutinised by people who know me. Green envelopes are not issued regularly and I have to do a lot of 'scrounging' in order to get one each week. I think you can rest assured that your letters to me are not likely to be opened en route. None of them have been censored up to now. I don't quite understand what you mean by 'some kind of communion' so perhaps you will explain. I would like to tell you all my thoughts dearest, but thoughts and impressions seem to come and go, and most unfortunately they often go when I am letter writing. It comes so easy for me to write about myself, and altho' I try to avoid this, the capital 'I' will creep in. I would like to write about you dearest but I would perhaps say many things which would be mistaken for flattery. I can just mention one thing about you, dearest, which you do not know: 'you do not realise how perfect you are.' I am sure I am the happiest chap out here and it is because you are my very own girl. I try to live every day so that I shall be worthy of you and I often wonder if I am growing rough with this life. However, we must wait and see.

Did I tell you that I have had to add another section to the library? It is a pity that all the books will have to go west when we move. At present I am reading *Shirley* by Charlotte Brontë. I do not care a lot for women writers but Charlotte is very fine. We have got *Vanity Fair* by Thackeray. I shall follow on with that altho' I have read it before.

Tonight I have heard a fairly strong rumour that we are going to France. We have to treat these rumours with indifference because there are so many flying about, but I am placing just a grain of faith in it. At last we are getting some leave. It takes the form of seven days at a rest camp in Alexandria. We are to be free from all duties except keeping the tent clean. Some of the men are refusing the leave because they think we are entitled to a trip to England. Personally I think the Army are treating us well, and I am not going to try and spite them by refusing the holiday. I am getting on very nicely with photography, and am pleased at the prospect of having a few views of the East, so that I can give you some idea of our travels. I have had a big printing day and will fix them

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tomorrow. I keep an album here but I shall be able to send you a few interesting prints. I have been able to borrow a film of Edgar's and my dugout on the cape. It does not look up to much and will not make a very good photo, but I will send you one whether good or bad. It is a very old film so I have not much hope.

I am walking into French and will soon be able to read fairly well. Some classes may be starting shortly so you can guess Alf and I will attend. Tomorrow night we have an appointment with a Maltese gentleman who wants to teach French in return for tuition in English. We may come to terms with this chap. Things are going on fairly well in the cookhouse. We are getting quite expert in the art of making pastry, and everybody is highly satisfied with the food. I think you have got all the news at present dearest. Please give my kind regards to Aunties. If we do go to France I shall be over to fill the empty chair in the garden. It sounds too good to be true. All best love to you dearest.

Yours always, Eddie

20 JUNE

My Darling Madge,

An hour ago I was a cook but now I am a telegraphist in a little office at the railway station. The job seems OK, my work will run out at 8 hours a day and the work consists of about 30 messages daily. The duties are rather funny – three of us run the show and take turn at the following duties: 8 am to 1 pm; 1 pm to 6 pm; 6 pm to 9.30 pm; 9.30 pm to 8 am. I am very pleased to get the change as the cooking was becoming very heavy. Last week I was really lucky, two of your letters came to hand dated 31 May and 7 June. Thanks very much for same, also for the tobacco which accompanied one of them. This is 'some' railway station, perhaps half the size of Harrogate. There are plenty of Gyppos about and while they are talking to each other I can pick up quite a lot of their conversation. The Arabs are big conversationalist and always find something to talk about.

I am pleased to say we are all enduring the heat fairly well. The nights have been much warmer lately and we have difficulty in getting to sleep. It is not safe to use less than one blanket owing to the damp and it is not wise to sleep outside for the same reason. I shall be on duty here tonight from 9.30 pm to 8 am so I shall kip down with one eye open.

I am sorry to hear Maggie is leaving, no doubt she will be guessing and calculating before long. Bessie and George have started quite early with the cottage in the country. One usually looks forward to that on returning. You keep telling me about the boys getting leave from France. They are lucky. Our leave to Alex will perhaps spoil any chance of leaving home for some time to come. What a pity. I am not homesick but would like to see you dearest. I do not forget that you must be having a fairly weary time in England while our existence is a kind of holiday. You have been the best girl in the world to me while I have been away and you have helped to keep me happy. We can both look forward to the

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time when I shall return. Some people are suffering great hardship thro' not being able to get leave. One of my friends lost his mother while he was on the Peninsula and last week his wife died. He tried to get leave during her illness but it was not granted.

I am sorry the large photo of the Sphinx is not yet to hand. It must be lost. I am getting on fairly well with French. It is becoming very difficult. At last I have found a teacher who is going to take Alf and I. He is a young French boy of about 15 years of age. He knows five languages and has a splendid knowledge of grammar. I think we shall get on very well with him. I shall be very glad of *Hugo's* when it arrives.

We were all very sorry to hear of the losses in the North Sea. Even tho' it is a victory, our losses are heavy. Lord Kitchener is a man we could not very well spare. When I told you about the green envelopes I meant we had only had one issued in six weeks. I had to scrounge for the others. 'Scrounge' is an Army word which means 'beg, borrow or steal'. The one I am using today is an issue so you need have no fear of receiving stolen property II..IIx We had some good sports here a few days ago. The Mysore Lancers gave a fine exhibition of musical and trick riding. The sports were followed by an open-air concert which finished about 11 pm.

I am sorry to say that my friend Alf has had a big misfortune. His pay book is missing, and it contained £7/10/- in notes. It has either been stolen or he has lost it. He had drawn rather a lot so that he could send some stuff home but now it is lost. He is taking it very well but the loss is enough to make anyone feel downhearted. I keep taking a few more photos. I tried one of the interior of our tent. It has come out fine so you will get one shortly. I gave it an exposure of half a minute and the result is splendid. I must close now as it is nearly dinner time. All best love to you dearest. KR to Aunties.

Always yours, Eddie

Our boys are back from the desert.

26 JUNE

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for the papers received last week – they are coming in very handy now that I have got an office job. I did not receive any letters at all last week so am expecting quite a lot by the next mail. There is very little going off in this part of the world. I don't think we shall move unless Egypt is put on a garrison footing. Some troops passed thro' our station two days ago and as they were not allowed to leave the train I was supplying them with water. There were many Harrogate chaps amongst them, but I had not time to find them out. I wish I could have accompanied them. I should have had a better chance of seeing you in the near future.

I keep having quite a lot of callers at the office. We generally manage to carry

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on some conversation, either in English or Arabic. I have just been asking two telegraph messengers if they will let me take their photo. They are coming round in a minute. They want a photo of me for a souvenir. One of them assures me that my face would make a picture too brilliant. These chaps are most amusing. They have learnt English at school and speak in a very refined way. They understand grammar very well.

I shall be going on my holidays next Thursday. Will you come over to Egypt, then I can show you round Alex and we can have a very happy week? I hope you will like the enclosed photo of our tent. My bed is on the right and Alf's on the left. You will be able to see the water jar, lamp and plant on the cupboard and there is a hookah pipe in front of the bookcase. You will see we are quite comfortable. I send all best love to you dearest. Hope you are keeping well. Please give KR to Aunties.

Yours for ever, Eddie x

3 JULY

My Dearest Madge,

I have quite a lot to thank you for this week. Letter and tobacco dated 14 June also parcel containing cake and all the good things. Thanks very much for the things, which will be consumed in due course. Am sorry you are not receiving my letters quite regularly. Am afraid there is very little of interest to write about so I have to pack my letters with all kinds of things, which may not be interesting to you. I guess you will have to spend some time studying the code now that you are fairly on your own. There is a rule for everything, if it can only be found.

Am pleased you gave MP a nice send off. She is really fortunate to be going to a new country. All the people at home would do well to travel a bit and soak in a few new ideas (of course present company excepted II..II). The education authorities would do well to get a glimpse of the foreigner. They would surely see that our system of education is out of date. I wish I could address a few words to the people who turned me out of school with a very indifferent knowledge of grammar, and without the knowledge of at least one foreign language. It is not nice to feel that we as a nation are behind the times. Perhaps we shall wake up after the War.

Am pleased to hear that Arthur is quite safe. He will no doubt have seen some of the fight. We shall perhaps be able to find out when the despatches are published. I remember quite well when you tired me out. I wonder when the happy days will come again. Am making fair progress with French, but it is difficult. The boy who is our tutor is doing very well. I like him better than an older teacher because he seems more patient. I have left my work at the station and am now painting motorcars for a living. I like daubing but out here it is not possible to get decent brushes. I wonder if you could send me a couple

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of pencils (brushes) for signwriting. I do not think you would be able to buy them yourself but perhaps your uncle could get them if it would not be too much trouble. I do not like to worry you about things like this, but it is just the difference between working in comfort and otherwise.

The fast of Ramadan commenced with the new moon. The Mohammedans had a kind of procession, which went out in search of the moon a few days ago. I don't know if they found the new moon but they made enough noise to frighten him away. However, the fast has commenced and during the period between sunrise and sunset the Moslems neither eat, drink nor smoke. It must be a great hardship to go without water all day. At sunset a gun is fired and the people are then allowed to eat and drink. They eat and drink until about 3 am and then carry on with the fasting. What a game it is.

I am enclosing you a photo of a Sudanese beauty. I was up in the native quarter in a car and she came to us for backsheesh. Don't you think she is pretty? Our leave to Alex has been postponed until next Thursday. A lot of people think we are coming home, but rumours are so numerous. I am looking forward to the day when we get orders. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love to you dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie

10 JULY

My Dearest Madge,

Thought I would drop you a few lines from the holiday camp. We are having a splendid time. The camp is situated about 7 miles out of town and accommodates several thousand men. There is enough in the camp to keep one occupied. We have lounges, reading and writing rooms, all kinds of refreshment places, which boast of string bands and pianos. There is fine bathing here and the sea is much cooler than Lake Timsah. The weather is absolutely fine and we are filling in all the time between 2 pm and 11 pm. Up to the present we have visited the native bazaar, Jardin Nouzha, Pompey's Pillar, and two lots of catacombs. In the evenings we generally go to a music hall.

I have taken a few views in Alex but unfortunately the winding gear of my camera has gone wrong so I have had to take it to the doctors. I shall be able to send you some views when we print, but I shall never be really satisfied until you have seen Egypt for yourself. Do you think you would like to reside here? I have just been presented with a green envelope. This is 'some' camp. I have almost forgotten that I'm in the Army. There is not much news to tell. Alex seems just the same except that a lot of places are out of bounds to soldiers. There are quite a lot of soldiers of the 'nut' type here, and it seems to be the aim of many to get a Base job. Tonight we are going to Cleopatra to see one of our section men who did not come to Helles with us because he was on the sick list. He was detached from the section and is now a sgt. He is a nice lad and I know

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he would rather have gone with us and seen something.

It is very seldom that we see any troops who have been out as long as us. We are enjoying this holiday but we would rather have come home for a few days. I send all my best love for you dearest. Altho' I can't come to see you, I am thinking of you every day. Hope you are keeping well.

Yours always, Eddie

16 JULY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 28 June, which was waiting for me on return from Alex. Am sorry I forgot to say I had bought a camera. I did not intend having one but I saw this going for about 10/- and as it is small enough to go in one's vest pocket and did not mean a big addition to my luggage, I invested. Its scope is limited, but Egypt is an ideal country for photography, and it is easy to turn out decent pictures.

I think the rumour about us going to France has died down. I should like to see France before the end, but do not fancy dugout life in winter out there. I not quite sure about getting a job here after the War. I like the place very much but if I speak of staying here a day longer than is necessary the chaps think I am '*magnoon*'. Of course one would only consider coming out here for a good increase in pay, and as far as I can see there are plenty of foreigners out here who know few languages and are willing to work for a moderate wage. I am going to make some enquiries about employment out here.

Thanks for all the news. Frank Colbert was in hospital for a gathered finger. He is quite all right now. At present I think he is selling beer in the canteen. I have not seen Norman lately. He is up at GHQ operating.

I am just recovering from the effects of our strenuous holiday. Alf, Edgar and I went about together and Alf is such a beggar for seeing everything. He makes a toil of pleasure and enjoys it. He is just the same with reading and I

guess there are very few fellows of his age who know so much about books. Talking about the holiday – we used to rise about 8 am and then spend the forenoon in swimming, reading and resting. About 1 pm we would leave camp for Alex. We had a mile to walk and then another mile to ride on a donkey, then a tram ride of about 8 miles. From about 2 pm till midnight we should be seeing the sights. There is very little of historic interest in Alex but somehow the whole place is interesting. We paid a visit to Pompey's

The holiday camp
at Alexandria



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pillar and two sets of catacombs. The pillar, which is 80 feet high, is made of a solid piece of granite. The catacombs are just as one would expect. I took a photo inside one of them. One of the daily features of our holiday was a visit to the Restaurant Françoise. Here we got a five-course dinner, some French wine (made of log wood chips) and a French lesson from the waiter all for 8 piastres (1/8). The dining tables are on the footpath in the open air and it is possible to eat one's dinner from tables set in the middle of the road. The open-air system is very pleasant, but one is troubled with hundreds of street hawkers. There are scores of bootblacks and men selling walking sticks, belts, purses, beads, silks, watches, jewellery, shirts, trousers, postcards, cigarettes, oysters, eggs, lottery tickets and many other things too numerous to mention. Conjurers and acrobats are also willing to give exhibitions in the streets. The scenes are enough to bewilder anyone. I hope sometime you will have the opportunity of seeing Egypt.

At present I am working on the lines amongst the horses, but as soon as I get some paint I have 17 motors to paint. By the way, while I was in Alex I met a friend who was looking after a recreation room. He had plenty of green envelopes so I got a packet of 50 from him. I hope to have enough to last me during my stay in Egypt. It is very hot at present and I shall be glad when the heat is finished. I hope you are keeping well dearest. You must be having a weary time with all the hard work. I hope we shall soon be back to help you. I send all best love dearest. Please give my KR to Aunties.

Yours always, Eddie

23 JULY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 11 July, which arrived this morning. You will understand that your letters make me happy when I tell you that I always commence to sing when I get a letter from you. It is fine to get letters on Sunday – altho' it is the same as any other day out here, there is something which seems to tell us it is Sunday. We have just finished tea, and I am free until 6 am tomorrow, when I shall hear somebody shouting 'markers'. That is the signal to go on parade. We have had marmalade and bread for tea. Jam is not supplied now. After so much marmalade I shall not want to see any more as long as I live. If you would like to try a course of marmalade I will send you a case of 50 tins and when you have eaten it you would probably feel the same as I do now II.. IIx It is rather a pity that we are not allowed to exchange any of our rations with the shopkeepers. There are cases of marmalade nobody wants and altho' it is our own we are not allowed to give it away or sell it. Butter is what we fancy most but it will not keep owing to the heat. So much for the food.

Am glad you like our tent. We are not crowded as you suppose. There are only six beds, two bookcases and one table in our tent. My ideal is to build my

own habitation tho', and if it were permitted I could build a fine hut of wood and rush matting. There is no need for stone houses out here.

You have asked me rather a staggering question about Missionary work. I am sorry to say that the men of the Army do not, as a whole, set any example to the natives which it would be worth their while to follow. In the eyes of the native an average soldier is a man with nothing very clean and noble about him. It is annoying when a native thinks he can entertain you with lewd talk. Many of our men encourage them. Now if our men represent a Christian nation, what have they that would be worth the while of a Mussulman to copy? Civilization and commerce can be taught without touching religions. All the religions such as the Mohammedan, Buddhist, Hindu etc embrace good doctrines, and in many cases they contain legends thought by many Christians to belong to our Bible alone. I am afraid I am still in favour of people keeping their own religion as long as it does not impose cruelties on its followers. Perhaps what I have said will lead you to think that I do not believe the Christian religion to be the true religion. I believe that a good Mussulman or Buddhist stands a chance of getting to Heaven. I hope, dearest, that you will not think unkindly of me for departing a little from the teaching we receive in Sunday school. A man must think, if he wishes to live decently. I have thought and read a lot about religion while on the trip and have arrived at a somewhat cloudy conclusion with regard to the Christian faith. One must either accept everything with the simple faith of a kind of old lady or live in some doubt, believing there is a God somewhere, and mould one's actions on a code of morals. I have wanted to tell you what my thoughts were for some time. Please do not be hard with me. I could name a few books I have read regarding religion that would put any thinking person into a state of chaos.

I am sorry you could not have the pleasure of seeing Alexandria. It would have been a perfect holiday if you had been there to enjoy some of the pleasures. I am glad old Bogey has received the call. It will perhaps make a man of him. I am making steady progress with French thanks. The verbs are very difficult and take a lot of memorising. I am longing to see you dearest and was equally sorry that we did not get leave to Blighty. I might tell you that I have no big yearning for England, it is more for those who are there.

I have already spoilt seven pages and have quite a lot to tell yet, because it has been an eventful week. At the early part of the week I had three horses all to myself. In fact I was a driver. I had to ride them a mile over the desert three times a day for water. One evening I took my best horse 7 miles into the desert for a ride. A canter over the desert is fine. One morning I had to go over the desert with three Arabs, two camels and a cable cart. We are training the camels to pull the cart. I took a photo of the carriage, which I will send later. Altho' there seemed nothing novel about the experience to me, it would certainly have been interesting to a stranger. One of the Arabs gave me a few songs in Arabic. The singing is a kind of wailing but one gets to like it. The camel driver uses peculiar expressions to the animals, such as '*itla* (go), *itla* (go), *dogree* (straight on)', then when he gets vexed with them he swears in a mild manner and calls

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them '*eb nel kelb*', which means 'son of a dog'.

I had one very fine afternoon. I had to take a sack of camel harness to Hill No [omitted] – about 35 miles away and deliver it to some Australians. The first 30 miles was by train then I had to cross the canal and make my own arrangements. I carried it to a spot where the light railway commenced but there were no trains for 7 hours so I decided to see if anything else would turn up. A wagon came along and he took me a mile into the desert and as he turned off I had to wait again. All the transport was going the wrong way unfortunately. In the end I got a Hindu to carry the sack on his camel. It was very good of him and when I offered him a rupee he would not take it. That is typical of the Hindus, they are good fellows. Australia lent me a horse to ride back to the station on after giving me a good tea. I saw a lot of Scottish horseboys, also the Marquis of Tullibardine. The desert was a dreary waste of dirty sand, in many places covered with scrub. There are plenty of salt lakes and marshes, which seem to make it look more dreary. I wish I could have stayed up there a while because there is going to be some fun.

I am enclosing you a few photos of the Alex trip. There are some more to follow but I have not had time to print them yet. I hope you are keeping well dearest. Two of our boys have gone home today for family reasons. We gave them a good send off. They will perhaps be home in a fortnight's time, so England is not so far away. I send all my best love dearest, hoping I have not bored you with all my news. Please give KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie x

31 JULY

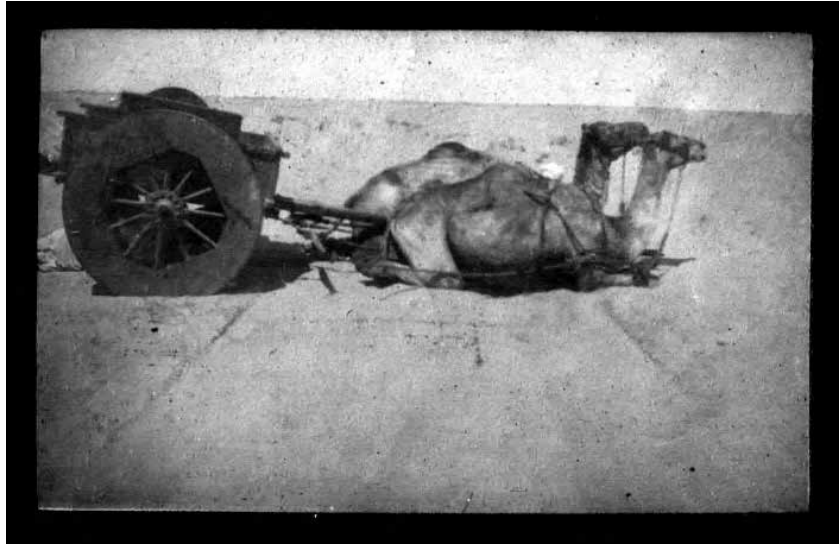
My Darling Madge,

Have been waiting for the mail for the past few days because I like a letter to answer. It always seems a pity to write a letter and receive one from the addressee the following day so I am protecting myself by dropping a note. There is sure to be a mail tomorrow and then I will write you all the news.

I have had a busy week and could do with about 4 hours more time each day. Of course a lot of my work consists of reading and trying to scrape a little knowledge together. It is a pity to see a lot of the chaps here who cannot find anything to pass their spare time away. I suppose you will be having a very busy time at present dearest. I hope you won't overwork yourself for patriotic or any other reasons. It is a pity we cannot be helping you rather than idling out here. I use the term 'idling' in a sense that we are not doing much useful Army work. I shall be coming to see you one of these fine days and if I find you are working too hard there will be a row. I don't exactly know if 'row' is a noun. To see it written reminds me of rowing on the Nidd with you dearest. Am sending you some photos. The small ones are *mushquois* (not good). My camera was out of order. The large ones were taken by an officer and will give you an idea of our

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Camel-drawn
cable cart



cable cart with camels. Hope you will like them. I send all best love dearest and will tell you all the important news when the mail arrives.

Yours always, Eddie

3 AUGUST

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 17 July. I sent you a small letter a few days ago enclosing a few photos but I did not write fully because I had not received yours. I hope by now you have received my letter about the Alex holiday. Am pleased that H Hall likes the Army. It will do him good. Is Bogey poorly or has he got what we call cold feet?

Well, dearest, I usually do my best to write you a nice letter but tonight I have heard some exciting news and cannot think of anything very interesting to tell you. I like to think that I can maintain a calm and not be disturbed by rumours, but you must forgive me this time. After being on the edge of the desert all this time it is very probable we are going to pastures new. Nuff sed. That is all I can say at present.

Nearly every time I write I find that I am on a new job. During the past week I have been working in the QMs stores. FRS was acting QM and I was the assistant. Life in there was very nice and I lived in luxury. Now I have come out to help with our own stores. A few days ago I visited one of the officials of the Egyptian State Telegraphs to ask him if there was any chance of employment in the Egyptian State. We had a long chat and he did not give a very rosy account of life out here or the chances of employment for white men. It appears that the telegraphs are under the control of an Army man. There are a few Army men

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employed but there are only three civilian Englishmen in the telegraphs. Mr Louch (the one I am speaking about) is one of them. He says that the boss is a man who believes in Egypt for the Egyptians, and he does not care to employ Europeans. Mr Louch said that he finds that Egypt is a poor place for the family and altho' he gets a good salary he spends all his spare cash on his holidays to England. He is thinking of trying to get his job back in the English PO after the War. He has not exactly frightened me with this gloomy news about Egypt: if it is not exactly a decent place to live in, it is worth a visit. I think you have got all the news this time dearest. I send all my very best love, and hope I will have something interesting to tell you next time. Please give my KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

8 AUGUST

My Darling Madge,

The move which I told you about last week did not come off but I got lent out along with four pals and am now in a busy little signal office many miles up the desert and not far from the fighting. You will no doubt have seen in the papers that a few thousand Turks have been bagged up here. I have seen most of them when they were being sent down. There are five of us on this trip and for the past three days we have had a most interesting time. On Sunday we went the whole length of the Army railway and back again. Last night we had a moonlight ride. We ride in open goods trucks and as there is no cold or rain it is almost better than having a carriage. Altogether we have covered about 120 miles of desert, so now I have some idea of what it is like.

I am delighted to be on active service once more, it is like old times. I am sorry to say that there is very little chance of any mail coming this way for the next few weeks so I shall have to exist in the hopes of getting a bundle from you all at once. I shall be thinking about you all the time dearest, altho' I may not be able to answer your letters. I will write as often as possible and give you all the news. When there is any fighting we shall be very busy so you must excuse me if I do not write long letters. There is nothing but sand and scrub here. It would need GK Chesterton to write anything interesting about such dreary objects. I am enclosing you some portraits which I have done with my camera. I did aim at having a white background and making the photo vanish away at the bottom. I did not succeed in making it vanish – the wall is an addition of my own which is introduced when printing the photo. I send all best love to you dearest. Am just going to kip down as it is 3 am and I have just got relieved.

Yours always, Eddie

13 AUGUST

My Dearest Madge,

We have not received a mail up here yet, and there is not much prospect of one so I cannot answer any of yours. However, your letters will come to hand sometime and I have a lot to look forward to. It is Sunday today and as a treat we have had some outdoor work, which consisted of loading telegraph poles on camels. Of course we had a few rides.

I suppose by now you will have heard of the Battle of Romani. I think it was on the 4th. We came up here on the 5th in time to sweep up the room. There were a few minor engagements after our arrival but we did not see anything. If I say that life 50 miles in the desert is very decent you will perhaps think I am romancing. But I have been in worse places than this. There is no feeling of isolation from the outer world. We live in a big basin or hollow, which is bounded by sand hills and covers an area of about 10 square miles. There are so many troops here that it is like living in a large town. The railway passes our door. I have often wondered why the Army attach such importance to a single line of railway, but now I am able to realise what a useful thing it is. All our food and drinking water is brought here and the Army never fails us. I am allowed 2 pints of drinking water per day also 3 pints of tea. The food is very good but there is not much chance of getting any extras. However, that is no hardship. As regards washing water we are not allowed any but we manage one good wash a day somehow. We can generally draw some from an Egyptian drinking well or beg some from an engine driver, failing that we can patronise a desert well of brackish water. The latter is not very good and after washing one feels very sticky. Alec McNaughton is up in the district but I have not dropped across him altho' I have seen plenty of his mob.

Camels are playing a great part in this campaign, they do all the carrying to places without a railway. Thousands of them pass thro' our camp every day. We employ a lot of Egyptian labour. The weather is a little cooler at nights and we can sleep more comfortably. The flies are back again I am sorry to say.

We do not get any newspapers up here but we get a daily telegram of War news at the office. Things seem to be going well on all fronts. I do not see how the War is going to be concluded under another 12 months. I am really here under false pretences. I did not expect to leave you for three years dearest. No doubt the waiting is harder for you than for me. You are living the same life without any change while I am seeing some of the world. I can truly say that the experience has been fine but like the song says 'I want to go back'. I have often heard people say 'If I had plenty of money I would travel'. Ninety-nine out of a 100 of those people would tire of it in a month. There is pleasure in travel but there is comfort in pitching a tent, getting a few dishes, pans and articles of furniture together and resting a while. I like getting furniture together but on this job there is the regret of having to leave it all when we strike camp. I am always looking forward to the day when you and I will pitch a permanent tent, with the prospect of settling down and enjoying it.

I hope you are keeping well, dearest, and not working too hard. I am always

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thinking of you and looking forward to the happy day when you will meet me coming home. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

20 AUGUST

My Darling Madge,

We have been quite fortunate during the past week. A man was sent up with out letters etc. I received two letters, some tobacco and two bundles of papers from you. Thanks very much for same. A mail generally makes us all merry and bright, but a mail in the desert is an occasion for general rejoicing. With regard to mails we are placed in rather an unfortunate position. Ours are delivered to our section and we have to rely on them being sent up by our Sgt. Other men who are working up here with their sections receive their mails regularly thro' the Field PO. We may not get any more mails for some time now so you will understand that they are waiting for us at the old camp. Circumstances I cannot mention have arisen that will cause us to be detained here perhaps longer than we anticipated. However, we are having a fairly nice time and don't think we shall grow weary as long as we have something to read. Harold Morris (one of our party) called to see his brother on our way up here, and Billie Morris presented us with a small library.

I have come across a few old friends out here. Two boys with whom I worked in the Naval Division are out here. They were only lent out to the Naval Division. One of them tells me that most of the Naval operators managed to get invalided home and they have had a fine time. As far as I can see we have been in the East longer than any other troops and still there are no hopes of leave. I do not like to grumble, but almost everybody seems to get home but us.

We are having a nice easy time at our office. The duties are unlike PO duties but they work very well. We work 8 am to 1 pm, then 9 pm to 8 am next day, then 5.30 pm to 9 pm, third day 1 pm to 5.30 pm. Night duty comes every third night and we are able to sleep for 5 hours of the time. We are allowed to smoke, read or write in the office. We are able to have a dip in the sea, which is about 6 kilometres from here. Sometimes we walk and sometimes take the train. This is rather a bad place for getting much exercise. There is nothing to see and it is a foolish practice to take a walk in the heat of the day, and it is too dark at nights. One cannot walk far on the heavy sand either. We usually have a stroll up the railway line just before sunset and that has to suffice.

Thanks very much for the pencil brushes. They are just the thing, and if I get any more signwriting they will be very useful. I have often tried to get these brushes in Harrogate but the painter seemed as if they did not like to sell them. No doubt you have persuaded them with your bright smile. I am pleased you were able to hear Dr Morgan. There is always pleasure to be derived from listening to people who are in earnest. Perhaps it is wrong to regard preaching

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in that light, as the object of a preacher is to give spiritual guidance rather than an intellectual feast. Anyhow I should've liked to have been present. All my preaching has to come from books and papers when we are in 'the field'. You don't often preach to me in your letters, dearest, neither does the Mater, so to a certain extent I am free from criticism.

I am pleased MP has arrived safely. She is going to mix with 'some' Nation – 'sure'. I have read quite a lot about America lately and if it is all true, the country is in a hopeless political muddle. I am pleased you will be getting your holidays soon. Perhaps you will be enjoying them by the time this arrives. You must get a complete change and rest from the office work. I hope you have a good time, dearest, and am sorry I cannot be with you. I could bore you many hours each day with tales of the East. I am of the opinion that civilians will be bored to death after the War with yarns from the front, and it will be best for the soldiers to refuse to talk shop. I remember Mounser quite well. He used to write poetry very decently and he struck me as being one of those chaps who could see the beauties in life. Perhaps he will write something about the sand when he gets out here. After having eaten it, smoked it and been covered with it day after day, he should get some inspiration and wish to express his feelings about the sands of the desert. Writing poetry is a peculiar thing. Have you ever felt that you could write poetry if you only set your stall out? I feel like that altho' I have never tried the experiment. People wouldn't appreciate it II.. IIX Well I have told you all the news up to the present. I send all my best love dearest. My thoughts are always with you. You help to keep me happy in my journeys and I always have the pleasure of looking forward to the day when I shall be back with you. Please give my KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

26 AUGUST

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 8 Aug which came to hand a few days ago. Thanks also for the papers, they are very acceptable out here. I am sorry to say that we had to leave our small office owing to our work dropping off and we are now hanging about at a signal camp waiting for orders to rejoin our own camp. We are not doing much work so there is plenty of time for reading etc. We may be waiting here a few weeks and this is rather unfortunate because we are with a very regimental kind of mob. I'd fill several sheets concerning the drawbacks of this place but as we are a merry party we do not let the little things trouble us. However, I cannot find anything very interesting to write about. To give you an idea of what this place is like I would ask you to try and imagine the dreariest stretch of countryside you have ever seen, devoid of vegetation. The sand is dirty and full of dust. Dust blows about and covers everything. There are plenty of camps dotted about and a decent bit of traffic on the road. The whole scene has

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a worn-out dirty appearance. It is impossible to find anything of interest here. However, altho' there is nothing to write about we are fairly happy and have a decent time.

I am pleased you have got a few weeks' leave and are having a nice time. I wish I could have been with you. I think I have given up the idea of residing in Egypt after the War. In a previous letter I told you all about it. Thanks for the paper with the account of our fight. I am sorry I was up too late and saw nothing of it. I have been all round the district of the battle and there is very little to see. We are never fortunate enough to get in the thick of anything and I should say there are plenty of men who see too much of the firing line.

You are quite wrong dearest in supposing I get tired of your letters. I look forward to them every mail and I am not nearly so happy if I don't get a letter. As regards wanting to come home, I don't feel I want to come home as long as there is some duty to be done here, but otherwise I should not want to stay another minute. Even if this trip was all joy riding I should not want to be having such a good time without you to share it. I like to look on the bright side of Army life and on the whole I have a happy time. The chaps who are always grumbling about Army conditions do not have a very pleasant time.

I am glad you call in to see the Mater occasionally. I wish I could drop in and cheer her up a little. I believe I can understand your feelings about the soldiers. It will be like being adrift in the sea with not a drop of water to drink. II..IIx I wish I could come to see you for just a few hours dearest. It would be heavenly. At present there does not appear to be any chance of leave, in fact there is less chance than ever there was before. We cannot get back to our own camp owing to a General Order so there is little chance of getting any other leave. I send all my dearest love to you. Please give KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

2 SEPTEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 14 Aug, also for tobacco which arrived a few days later. I arrived home yesterday and have put the house in order and done all the washing etc. You will perhaps smile when I call this place home, but it is the most homely place we have got and we sometimes speak of it as home. The trip up the front has been very interesting. I did not get as far as Katia where Alec was, but the desert is much the same all over. These names are usually given to a district or clump of palms. There are no villages or towns. In times of peace the Bedouins usually live at the oases. They make a shelter of palm leaves, and seem to live a peaceful life tending small herds of goats. It is surprising how they manage to eke out a living. Their food will no doubt consist of goat's milk and dates. Most of the nomads have been rounded up by us, as they have been known to assist the enemy. I saw a very aged couple who were brought in. The

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man was said to be 90 and his wife over 100. They were both very infirm. It seemed a pity that they had been disturbed in their last days. We did not see any fighting – in fact the Turks were on the retreat when we arrived and there were only a few detached parties of them in the district.

Your long letter did not tire me at all dearest, in fact I was very pleased with it. I was also very pleased you took my letter so kindly. Perhaps it is my fault that there has not been enough communion in our letters. Many a time I have omitted to give my views on certain subject because I think many of my opinions formed on active service must seem harsh to you. It is possible they will be modified on my return. I have often noticed that when I have formed an opinion on something you have been able to show me some new side to the subject, which has put a new light on the matter. I value your views on life very much so you will understand that all my views are subject to modification where reason is against them.

I believe that the Roman Catholics do not allow their followers to read books written against their faith. To me it seems a pity that a religion cannot logically withstand all criticism. The difficulty really lies here. Some men can almost prove that black is white. To the ordinary person their reasoning is quite in order but common sense tells us there is a flaw somewhere, but it can only be detected by anyone well versed in logic. If it is possible to prove that black is white, it is also possible to prove that a religion is wrong, while it may be right all the time. Altho' this is a dangerous pitfall, I feel I would rather know both sides of the question while I am in doubt. It is possible to meet the type of person who is anti-everything. He will be a pro-Boer, an agnostic, a conscientious objector etc. I hope you won't think I am one of those.

I do not wish to attempt to answer all the questions you have raised but I will think deeply about them. It is not my wish to be on the opposite side. There is one little point tho' I do not agree with. I previously mentioned that our soldiers were the product of a Christian nation and that they were not a very good advert for us. You say they are civilized but not as a whole Christianized. Then afterwards you compare the position of a native woman out here with the place of women in England. Because the woman of Egypt does not hold the same place as the woman in England you put it down to religion. Why not put it down to an imperfect state of civilization as in the case of the soldiers?

You have mentioned the Atonement and that is just one of the places where I stick. The idea of God sending down his son in the form of man is not peculiar to the Christian faith. The same thing has happened in other religions older than Christianity. I am not stating this as an argument for the wrong side but to show you my difficulty; when such things have been written by thinking men who have enquired into religion for their own personal welfare, it is hard to know what to believe. I think that is all I have to say about religion this time – I am reading a book by Matthew Arnold called *Literature and Dogma*. I may have some different views when I've finished it.

Regarding my reasons for wishing to remain here, I am afraid that they were washed out after my interview with Mr Louch. I have got to like the climate

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very much and many of my first impressions have been modified. I was under the impression that these hot countries would pay for a man's colour and that it would be possible to get something much better than the 'bread for life' at the PO. However, I was under a wrong impression. Did you get my letter in which I told you about seeing Mr Louch of the Egyptian State Telegraphers? My whole thoughts were prospective and it would have rested more with you than me if there had been any jobs vacant. I do not consider that more money brings more happiness. One must have a certain amount in order to live, but beyond that a contented mind is a good thing. I have been absolutely without money for about a fortnight and I am not unhappy.

Fancy it being too hot in Blighty. I should have had the advantage of you, while you were feeling uncomfortably hot I should have been able to shiver in a greatcoat. II..IIx I do not know about being able to teach you any French. The aim of learning a language should be to be able to speak it, and I have very few hopes unless we fall in with some Frenchmen. It is Sunday tomorrow. I shall be wishing I could be with you dearest. I send all my best love and kind thoughts. Please give my KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

11 SEPTEMBER

My Darling Madge,

We have received a mail today, so we are all happy. Thanks very much for letter enclosed in tobacco (28 Aug) also for papers. I forget whether I mentioned the fact in my last letter, but I am a cook once again. The work is a bit heavy but I like the outdoor life and it is a pleasure to be my own boss. Perhaps you may wonder why I don't try for something better. As far as I can see there is nothing to try for in a section like ours with a fixed establishment, therefore one job is as good as another. In your penultimate letter you asked if I had received your letter where you informed me about the censor taking out a page of one of my letters. I could not recall what I had written in the page, I am sorry to say. In my letter to you where I had some good news and could not tell you about it, I referred to a new Company we were forming for the purpose of going into the Holy Land. The Company was formed all right but the instructions were cancelled, so we are still here. While we were up at Romani the cholera broke out amongst our troops. The Turks brought it with them and no doubt some of the prisoners transmitted it to our men. The Medical staff dealt with the plague in a very efficient manner and stamped it out. Many thousands of troops were placed in quarantine until all danger had passed. We were under quarantine for about a fortnight. I am mentioning this because there have been some articles in the paper and you may be wondering how we are situated.

My time is fully occupied at present. I have quite a lot of photos to print also a lot of reading to get thro', and I am struggling amongst French irregular

verbs. It is best to be busy out here. The chaps who cannot find any way of filling in their spare time are usually unhappy. I am sorry you do not find much time for reading dearest. I regard it as my chief happiness out here, and I seem very fortunate in being able to get hold of some of the books which appeal to me. I believe I could spend all my time reading if I had no work to do. To read a book into which the author has put some of his personality is almost as good as having the author for a pal. I prefer the type of book that does not have a definite yarn running thro' it, because after all, fiction is mostly untrue to life. I have enjoyed re-reading two of Oliver Wendell Holmes's books recently. Holmes must have been a fine fellow, and one would hardly like to think he wrote his books for the purpose of making money. It is a real pleasure to partake of the things these authors put before us, and we have the satisfaction of knowing that the field of literature is almost unlimited.

I believe in my last letter I mentioned that I was '*ma fish feluce*'. We have been paid since then, so I am not on the rocks now. On looking round the town I find there are many new shops and it would be easy to spend £20 in one of the Indian bazaars. It is a pity that nearly all the fine works of art come from India and that Egypt does not produce anything very fine. I shall be sending you two small articles in the course of a few days. Lot 1 is a small earthen Jerusalem lamp, which has come out of some of the excavations. It is not pretty but it looks Egyptian. Lot 2 is a Sudanese drinking cup.

I am enclosing a picture postcard of two Arab beauties. It gives a very good idea of the veiled woman. I am also enclosing a photo of some of the Turkish prisoners who were taken in the recent operations. You will notice that they have no standard dress and are not very well put on. I have been reading the news from France and there is no doubt the Allies are doing very well. We may hope for a movement before winter. There is a lot of talk about men getting leave from here but I have not come across any cases where men have been given a trip home except if it was compassionate leave.

I did not exactly snap that photo of myself. I did not care for the pedestal II.. Ix I am pleased you are having a trip home and hope you will get a good rest. Sometime I shall be able to have a trip with you, but I have been disappointed so many times. I would just like you to have a walk thro' our spinney in the moonlight. The moon is so fine that it is possible to read a newspaper. The feathery palms look fine and their shadows make a beautiful carpet on the ground. However, you will have to see all these beautiful things when we have a holiday here.

It is almost 'Lights Out' so I shall have to conclude. How would you like to have to do exactly as you were told? When the order is given it has to be complied with immediately. Fancy telling a man when to go to bed. I have to sleep with a net over my face owing to the mosquitos. They are very numerous at present. We just hear a musical 'ping' and then we know that the insect has settled and is raising a bump somewhere. I send all my very best love, and am longing to be back with you once more. Please give my KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 4 Sep from Glenluce. How I would love to be with you for a few days, just to make you really happy. As you say, the years have gone very quickly and there is pleasure in looking forward. In the early days of the War I never thought that it would last so long and that is why I remarked that I am here on false pretences. Anyhow, I am not sorry that I joined in the early days. I have done my best to get it over. II..IIx Unfortunately I have spent most of my time out of the active zone, but that is not my fault. We who enlisted in the early days are to be rewarded by a Good Conduct Stripe which is an inverted stripe worn on the left sleeve. It carries 1d per day. Somebody also brought a rumour that volunteers are to receive a bounty. We are going to grow rich all at once. A friend of mine of the 21st Lancers has left here today for England. I asked if he wanted a batman but he would not take me with him.

I don't agree when you say you are not poetical. Probably you have not the gift of making verse but you can see the beauty in things, therefore you must be poetical. I have often heard people speak of some of the old cathedrals as being 'poetry in stone', so poetry must be akin to beauty. I have to take your remarks about yourself with some reserve. You never advertise your good qualities to me dearest. If you were in the Army we should call you a 'dark horse'. I had the pleasure of seeing a dark horse the other day. He was trying to play 'We won't go home till morning' with one finger on the piano. Somebody got fed up and told him to let somebody who could play have a try, whereupon he opened out and shuffled the dominoes in fine style. It must be fine to be really clever. I have a friend who is in charge of our motor transport and he is one of the best all round men I have met on the trip. He seems to excel in everything. I have seen him on many jobs and he does them all well. He is a king at motor work, and he can also build houses. He speaks French and plays the piano and violin. I am always dropping across him and find he has been accomplishing something new. I begin to wonder if there is anything he doesn't know. I keep getting to know people who interest me very much. At present I am working with a long-service Scotsman who goes by the name of 'Spud Murphy'. He has a fine view of life and is well read. His library at home, he says, contains 2,500 books. I like Spud chiefly for the yarns he can tell about India. They are interesting and far-fetched, but I would put down his exaggeration to faulty memory.

I begin to lose my faith in the Arabs. We have a couple who work for us and they are treated very well. Their work is easy and we give them enough food to feed themselves and their pals. I have seen some of the Labour Corps be driven with whips so these chaps should be pleased to work for us. This morning one of them was caught stealing some *murabba* (jam). I was very disappointed because I would not have believed it of him. He came to me to get him out of the scrape and I saved him from getting the five lashes he dreaded so much. It seems as if it is no use treating them kindly.

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We have got a piano in the canteen and they have some very nice concerts in the evenings. I have not been in because it is rather a boozy meeting and I do not like wasting my time. Leave to Alex rest camp is being granted again. The Army must wish us to spend all our money. I am going to wait a while and try for a trip to the Luxor district where most of the ancient buildings and monuments are to be seen. As regards leave to England I am of opinion that something will be done in the course of a few months. The position is becoming strained and our men do not enjoy good health. I had hoped to be able to send you a few photos but I cannot get time to print them during the day. We seem to be doing well on all fronts. It is very sad to think of the lives that are being given because of man's foolishness. We are supposed to be civilized and yet we act worse than savages. There must be something wrong somewhere. I haven't written to the Aunties lately because I have had no news. Egypt has become commonplace to me and owing to that it is impossible for me to write much about it. One has to be a stranger to a place in order to see the interesting points.

Am afraid I have written a very rambling letter, but you must forgive me. I am really tired of writing letters. I want your companionship dearest. To be with you would seem sufficient if I had no friends. If you would only come out here I have had a nice little house offered. It is made of wood and rush matting and only needs carrying to a suitable spot. We could live on dates etc like the Bedouins. Will you come? I hope you have enjoyed your holiday and have returned with rosy cheeks. I send all my best love dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie

27 SEPTEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 11 Sep. I am sorry you did not see our Mac when he called, but then never mind. We usually see plenty of him. Why should he come home and not me? I am thinking of applying for leave but cannot find any excuse other than I have been out long enough. If a few of us keep asking for a holiday no doubt it will be granted in time. It could be granted quite easily because we are not doing any telegraph work.

I wish I could have been with you on the moonlight night dearest. I should have been perfectly happy without the beautiful scenery. The time and place do not count but the one who is there, as the 'ragtime' puts it. It is nice to have trusty pals out here and I enjoy their company, but I am always longing for a little talk with you dearest. I would not mind being absent if I was on active service but this waiting game is very tiring while many other men are amongst the fighting. Am pleased your brother is fairly well after his illness. Hospitals do not appeal to me and I hope I shall be able to dodge them. Alec is doing well. He is just the chap for a Commission and I hope he accepts. The Mater tells me

that JW is applying for Commission. These Commissions seem to be the order of the day. You will think I am not progressing like the others. It cannot be helped. I would love to lay DCMs, Stripes etc at your feet, but I am a mediocre type of soldier and do not distinguish myself in any way. You can rest assured that I always do my duty. I am only above the average in one thing and that is my love for you. I love you much more than would be considered an average love dearest, and I hope that you will be happy with all my love.

Speaking of decorations, several men in our Corps have received Serbian medals. We are pleased that the Serbs have remembered us, but you know we have had nothing to do with the Serbs. Then again they are issued broadcast. Our Sgt. has got one and he has not been in an active sphere or ever seen any fighting. We are pleased he has got it but wonder why.

The weather here is ideal just now. It is quite sharp at 6 am. I have planted some palm trees at the portals of our tent and I think they will take root all right. We have also got a dog who has made himself quite at home. I am training him to understand Arabic so he will be quite a unique animal by and by. I will send you a photo of the tent and the dog as soon as I can get a snap. My camera is being repaired just now. Things are very quiet here and there is no news. I received a letter from Aunties a few days ago. I will reply shortly.

The offensive in France is doing very well. I am sorry that Romania is not doing very well and hope we shall not leave them in the cart. I have had a lot of visitors tonight and have not been able to write a nice letter owing to the interruption. I send all very best love dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie

3 OCTOBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for yours of 19 Sep, which arrived yesterday. I also received a parcel from Aunties and wrote them last night. Am pleased you have got back OK and hope your holiday has been a nice change. I think it would be OK if you and Milly came out to find Alec and I because you must be thinking the desert has claimed us. I am sure Alec could do with a leave because their job is a very weary one, and his mob have not been well treated. It was only fair that they should have been issued with horses when they went on the desert. A large number of their men are acting as officer's grooms in various parts of Egypt.

Do you think there is any chance of me getting some work in your office? Ask the boys if there is any chance of an exchange. Today I have practically no news dearest. Life is just one day like the other, and Egypt does not seem to present anything new. The seasons would hardly be noticed if it was not for the heat being reduced considerably. We had a few old friends with us on Sunday night. They belong to the Northerns but have always worked apart from GHQ. We put them up for the night when they were on their way to the holiday

camp. One of their boys is a fine comedian so I went into the canteen concert. It is the first time I have attended a camp concert and I think it will be the last. 75% of the men were drunk so you can perhaps form some idea what it was like. I cannot understand why men drink so much beer. Of course most of them say they will be teetotal after the War, but it will not be easy to break off the habit. It would be better if we were on the move and out of the range of beer. Please don't take this as a temperance lecture. I am not an advocate of total abstinence. I like to see a man use his common sense and willpower with regard to beer rather than be bound down by pledges.

My dog is progressing favourably and has settled down. As soon as I shout '*ta' ala hena*' (come here) he understands and comes running towards me. There are about four dogs in camp and the Sgt. Major was going to have some of them shot because they are getting numerous. In fact they were going to shoot mine but I put my foot down and I do not intend to let him go as long as anyone else is allowed to keep a dog. It is very cold tonight. I am having to wear a cardigan jacket, and need two blankets when I go to kip. I don't know if you remember sending me a pipe from Scotland. I am sorry to say it has given out at last. It broke some months ago and I got a chap to fix a new mount on it, but now it has collapsed completely. I did want to be able to bring it home as a souvenir as it had a sentimental value because of the giver. However, you can rest assured it has done good service. Speaking about smoking reminds me of the Arabic way of expressing the bad habit. They speak of it as 'drinking smoke' (*ishrabdokham*). You may not recognise the verb '*ishrab*', but we make use of it in our own language. The root is '*shereb*' (he drinks) and that is derived from the noun '*Shorbah*' (a drink). Hence our word 'sherbet'. Languages are very interesting when we find that they all borrow words from each other. French takes a lot of memorising just now because I am on with the verbs. I have not a very good memory but am of opinion that I shall be able to read French some day. Failing that I think we two will be able to rub along with Scotch or English. They are both correct. II..II I have heard some very heated arguments about dialects. Everybody thinks his own accent is correct. I do not like to enter into these arguments. Perhaps you read Claudius Clear's article about Scotland and England? He seemed so frightened of giving offence to either side that he qualifies all his remarks that it might be otherwise. The article was not as good as it might have been.

Well dearest, I have written eight pages about nothing and hope you are not bored. I am longing for the time when I shall be back with you. I send all my best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for your letter and tobacco received today. You are some typist. Do you type by the eight-finger method? Well we got Mac back two days ago. He told Frankie that he had called at the PO and told them how we were getting on. He also said that the PO arrangements were upside down and the services very poor. You never told me that II..IIx *Pourquoi?*

Don't worry because your previous letter was short. It would have been worse if you had not had time to catch the mail. I might have cried. I know I am lucky to have time to read. Unfortunately I have not as much time as I should like. There are some jobs here where the chaps have practically no work and plenty of spare time. However I am fairly satisfied. I don't think that we waste our time when sleeping. I always sleep from 10 pm to 6 am but that is sufficient and I do not get down during the day like many of the boys. I often wish that 'lights out' was an hour later. Eleven o'clock is early enough to go to bed. Am glad to hear your sailor boy has got a leave. I am probably going to visit a battleship next Saturday. I hope Jack will have a safe passage to India. I have a lot of friends who have served there and of course would like to have a trip. Perhaps it is wrong of me to think of sightseeing, but they won't let me fight. It seems as tho' the glorious experience of going over the parapet will never be mine. I am one of the men with a safe job.

I should like to see the chap who is like me. You must not fall in love with him II..II I have just finished reading *Lorna Doone*, which is a fine tale of the West Country. The hero has a very rough time before he finally marries Lorna. Most books seem to finish up with somebody getting married and having happy ever afterwards. I think that it gives the impression that the events of married life are not interesting. However, books are nothing go by.

My little dog has just come in to see me. He wants to lick this letter and appears very interested in the art of writing. At present there is a festival being held in Egypt. It is to celebrate the completion of the pilgrim's journey to Mecca. Every good Musselman is expected to make the journey once in his lifetime. The chief feature of the fantasia is a large circus in the native quarter. I got a late pass on Saturday to see the circus. In every way it was like a circus at home. The entertainment comprised acrobatic feats such as tumbling, jumping, trapeze work etc. There was a performing pony and a donkey. The clown was very good and was always making funny jokes. We couldn't always read him because he spoke so fast but occasionally we got a Gyppo to transmit. *Wahed bint* gave us an exhibition of dancing. She was the most ugly and repulsive creature I have ever clapped eyes on. The pity of it was that she appeared to be under the impression that she was graceful. Perhaps she can't help it.

I think you have got all the news at present dearest. It is appalling to hear of all the casualties in France. It is a pity that it is necessary to sacrifice these lives. We can never fully repay the men who get broken in the War. It isn't right that

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things should be so. I send all my best love dearest. I tell you this every time, but I mean it dearest. Someday I shall be able to come and tell you. I hope you are keeping well. Please give my KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

16 OCTOBER

My Darling Madge,

Am just sitting in my garden to write you a few lines. It is too dark in the tent and I do not like to light up until necessary. Pedro the poodle is watching me. He is very faithful and altho' it is difficult to keep a dog to oneself when there are so many men about he follows me everywhere. There was an order on the notice board that no dogs are to be kept in camp. They were shooting all dogs so I sent ours to the station office. However he was missing one morning and turned up at camp. He must have had a struggle to find the camp because it took him 10 hours to travel 2 miles. He will have to take his chance now.

I have left the cookhouse and am now on the lines amongst the horses. It is a nice change. I was on picket last night and quite enjoyed the midnight watch in the desert. The evenings are not still and quiet; there is generally a gentle breeze blowing and the small insects of the grasshopper type keep up a continual whistle. There is a very heavy dew from 2 am onwards. There has been a kind of revision in our camp. The Major inspected and found things running to seed. The screw has been put on and CC (confined to camp) is being dished out liberally. However the reign of terror will slacken off in a few days. The same thing has happened before. Our hours of duty have been increased and are now 6 to 7.30 am, 9 am to 1 pm and 2 pm to 5 pm. You may not think these are long but they are long for a hot country. Even the natives on Army work do not toil between 10.30 am and 3 pm owing to the heat.

I was surprised to hear that Norman had got a pass for Blighty. He was in our camp on the day of departure and did not ask for me so I could not send any message. Somebody told me his wife had dropped a 6-inch shell on her toes. I hope she will be all right. Two other chaps from our Company went by the same boat. I am enclosing you a cutting from *Today*. I think the lady expresses your thoughts on the matter. Am sorry you did not get a letter to answer but perhaps it will come later with backsheesh. Am pleased to hear that Geo Tilly has done so well. We cannot tell who the brave ones are until they are put to the test. Do you not pity those who have never had a chance? Harrogate PO has done very well to send 87. I don't think you can accuse me of saying that the girls cannot do men's work. I think the PO is a 'tarts' job. II..IIx

I have heard from several sources that the Zeps have been over. Am glad they did not leave any shells with you. They do not give anyone a sporting chance. However, I can see you tackle the business in a sensible way. I have heard about people in England going to bed with their clothes on. It is as bad as a lot of our

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chaps who used to get up in the middle of the night and hide behind the cliffs.

You wish to know if I am in want of anything. If you could get me a *Daily News War Map* I should be pleased. I am enclosing a cutting referring to same. About the magazines you occasionally send. Somehow I do not care for them. It is perhaps bad taste not to like them but you must put it down as one of my idiosyncrasies. Am sorry I have not sent the parcel yet. In fact when I was going to pack it I did not think the things were worth sending. I am in the course of printing some Romani photos but I get so little time off during the day that it takes me a long time to print a few. They will come some time. I am sorry to say that my camera has broken again in the winding gear and altho' it went to the Ensignette depot at Cairo they could not supply the fitting. I am thinking of going in for a Vest Pocket Kodak when I have saved up a little more. The shopkeeper who sent the camera away for repairs had rather a peculiar system of business. When he took a camera for repairs he charged a small commission above the trade cost and he also charged 1 piastre each time the customer swore at him, which often happened when the camera did not turn up for several weeks. I am not saying whether my bill would have been a big one II..IIx

I do hope the War does not last 20 years. I shall have to go and fight if things are so bad. Sometimes I have thought that we should see some active work once again but I begin to despair. It is very annoying to think that a native could do my job quite well. The Signal Service is a cul-de-sac. I send all my best love dearest. I am always thinking of you. Please give KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

23 OCTOBER

My Darling Madge,

Just received the mail today, thanks very much for letter and papers. I have read *Prosperity thro'*. The paper appears to be the organ of the Thrift Society. The Society seems to be a good thing especially the 7½ %, which would be a little better than what one gets on consols [*consolidated loans*]. But when fighting one has no time to think of investing money and besides if dealing in piastres there is never any to invest.

I am so sorry you have had so much trouble with the staff and their work. It is a pity people are so careless. I often wonder if there is any reward for extra work caused by other people's carelessness. On these occasions one is apt to get bad tempered, but I don't think you would be dearest. Am pleased you have got a rise, living must be very dear just now. Do you think you can dispose of the tanner without assistance? After all, our bounty did not materialize neither did the 1d per day for the G6 Stripes. We were granted the stripes in the Company Orders but up to the present the stripes have not been issued. These stripes are issued so that we shall not be mistaken for conscripts. The whole thing is bunkum. To a certain extent I do not agree with the bars for wounds. It reminds

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me too much of a beggar parading his sores in the street. I cannot think that a manly fellow who has done his bit would wish to advertise the fact that he has been wounded. I am pleased to hear that Carter is getting on OK. I had a letter from Topham who trained with me. He is in France and having a fairly rough time. Billy Found (the chap with the Turks cap in the Imbros photo) who was invalided home last Dec is now a sgt. in France.

We were to have an inspection of men, horses and wagons last Saturday but it has been postponed until tomorrow. We have been cleaning up today. I used to resent all this kind of thing, but it is no use worrying. I am convinced that bright buckles on harness will never win the War, but the Major thinks otherwise. Our drivers and horses have lived in idleness for 18 months. They could well be spared for the trenches and their places filled by niggers. I could go into the trenches myself as I am very seldom required for telegraph work. It is a peculiar business.

We had a football match a few days ago. I was playing but really I am getting too old and fat for the job. I like the exercise but I never have that big desire to be always kicking a ball about like some chaps have. On the whole I lead a very happy life. About 6 pm each evening I settle down to some reading or studying and I feel supremely happy and contented. I have plenty of tobacco to smoke and books of all kinds to read so I can shut out the Army from my mind and endeavour to store up a little knowledge each day. Someday I shall be a philologist. Somehow in trying to make the best of my spare time I have found pleasure. Of course, I do not say I am living the life I should choose if there was no War and if I could select for myself. However I am writing quite a lot about capital 'T'. My chief happiness is in looking forward to the time when I shall be back with you dearest. I know you are having a hard time at present with all your hard work and it will be the happiest time of my life when I can work for you. At present I feel helpless because I can only tell you I love you. But some day I shall be able to show my love. I am sorry to say that my doggie has had to be shot owing to the Army order. It is a pity because he and I were very fond of each other. I think you have got all the news this time dearest. All very best love to you. KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

25 OCTOBER

My Darling Madge,

Am enclosing a few photos. I have not given you the names of the places because the censor might not like it. I hope you are keeping well. Have been painting with the brushes you sent. They are fine. I send all very best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for yours of 15 Oct. Am sorry I could not feel very elated about our Captain going home. It was mean of me. If as you say there are men in France who have not been home for 18 months, then we have nothing to grouse about, because we are not having a rough time out here by any means.

Regarding the other subject I should just like to explain a few things. It does seem peculiar why everybody gets on and I don't. My luck, as far as any promotion is concerned, is 'out'. When I enlisted I was under the impression that genuine work would be rewarded and I have always tried to perform my work well. Now I find it has only been a delusion. I was put into a cable section and have had no opportunity to leave it. In fact the OC would not let me leave because he would get a buzzer pioneer (a learner) in my place. There has been no alteration as regards the telegraphists since we came out. Blackie received an unpaid stripe to come out on active service and he still carries it unpaid. He is senior to me and as the establishment is fixed there can be no advance for anyone until somebody moves. If I stay here 10 years there is very little chance of any change. Perhaps you will understand me now, when I say it can't be helped. Today I had an interview with the OC of Headquarter Section and asked if I could be transferred. He told me that OC Signals would not allow anyone to transfer but if I wanted to do telegraph work they would borrow me from my section when they were busy. I am just telling you this so that you will see it is not thro' indifference on my part that I remain here. However there are hundreds of cases like mine so I have no cause to grumble. I have been reading about a University Lecturer who was an MA and who had a very rough time as an orderly in the RAMC. He was treated in a shameful way until he was discharged as medically unfit. You will see by this case that the man must have been worth something and he never got a chance. I can be quite happy and say like the Arabs 'never mind'. I am doing my best to improve my mind in my spare time so that I shall not have wasted all my time. I hope you won't be bored with all these explanations but I just wanted to show that I have tried and whether I am a 'washout' or a victim of circumstances, it is not altogether my fault.

Am pleased to hear that Bogey is going on OK. If he has passed skilled he should received $\frac{1}{4}$ d engineering pay. We were given that on enlisting and I got the other 4 d, which classes me 'superior'. However men do not always get paid what they deserve. A Cable Co chap in our section can work nearly every kind of telegraph instrument and he is also a syphon recorder man. He is on the 1/- rate and classed as 'proficient'. Am sorry you could not get to church owing to the rain. I do not look forward to English weather with pleasure. Mud and rain will be a poor exchange for our weather. Thanks for the tobacco, I was not without a smoke fortunately. The 'Three Nuns' arrived in fine condition and is much nicer than any to be got here. Am sorry the dog was shot before I had

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time to get a photo of him. I have just been having the garden done up. The sand is always encroaching so I got an Arab who makes paths out of mud to put a raised border round it. He has made a decent job of it. I hope you are quite happy dearest and that the work is not too heavy. We shall be back sometime to give you a rest. Am afraid there is no fresh news here. We do not even get Zeps over. You have not written too much for me to read in your letter. Also, about the other matter, I do not in the least resent any criticism or advice because at times my foresight is not of the best. It was owing to your letter that I asked for a transfer but so far there is no hope. I send all my best love dearest and please give my KR to Aunties. If I have written too much about myself, please forgive me.

Yours for ever, Eddie

8 NOVEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 23 Oct, which came up last night. Am pleased to hear that Bogey and HH are going on OK. No doubt Harold will be destined for Mesopotamia. It is a rough place by all accounts. I was very sorry to hear about Miss Newman's father. It must have been a big blow to them. The girls will feel that they have nobody to rely on now. Eddie Barnes has written to the effect that he is on draft for Egypt so I am looking forward to a peep at him. It is always nice to meet people from home because they can give us an idea how things stand. The people who write to us never tell us about the hardships they have to put up with owing to the War. (This refers to you also dearest.) Owing to my ignorance of the conditions at home I am afraid of saying things which would be considered unpatriotic etc. There is just one thing which saves our bacon: because we are fighting we are considered a privileged class. I hope this consideration people show us will not cause us to look for preferential treatment on our return. *Après la guerre*, when we have settled down to civilian conditions, no man will have occasion to pat himself on the back because he has done his bit. Some do more than others, but generally speaking everyone has done his or her bit to bring the War to a successful issue. I don't know why I am talking about the finish of the War when the end is not yet in sight, but I like to think of the time when we shall be back with those we love. To a certain extent people appeal to me more than places and if you were not in England I could do 10 years here and not be unhappy. I feel that happiness comes from within and that each person can make himself or herself happy. That is to say sufficiently happy to jog along. More happiness is gained with companionship and love and for complete happiness it is necessary to share one's thoughts and life with another. I believe it is our duty to be happy altho' it is not our duty to run after pleasure. Most forms of pleasure only serve the purpose of driving away ennui. With regard to leave I find there are some chaps out here who have been longer

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than us. I met some yesterday. They came out with the 42nd Division in Sep 1914. I am having a decent time at KTA. My work consists of laying cables in conjunction with an airline party. It is fairly strenuous work but there is holiday every other day. Waiting for the airline to catch up. There are two fine huts here, one Church Army and the other YMCA. There was a fine concert last night at the YM. One comedian caused me to work overtime with my laughing apparatus. My work here will perhaps finish in a fortnight and I may get a trip further up if I ask for one. It would be nice to get back to the old place for Xmas tho' because we are having some turkeys. *The Daily News* and *The Daily Telegraph* are collecting for puddings this year I see. If you know any people who want to help the soldiers at Xmas just advise them to assist the pudding fund. We all appreciate it and they make sure of us getting it on Xmas day.

I think you have all the news at present dearest. I hope you are keeping well and not working too hard on Xmas arrangements. KR to Aunties. All best love to you dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie

13 NOVEMBER

My Darling Madge,

The weekend mail is not up yet but I am writing a few lines because I am going up the desert tomorrow. We may be up there a week and there will be no chance of getting any letters I am sorry to say. We shall have to bivouac at nights and do our own cooking. That so, it will be like a holiday. I don't anticipate any adventures though because I have been over the ground previously and it is a dreary sandy waste. The monotony is only broken by a few salt lakes and marshes.

We are having a fairly decent time at our present place. Some days we work very hard and other days there is nothing to do. I can always fill in my spare time with reading etc. There is no civilian population here and everything is taken over by the Army. The Church Army and YMCA provide us with recreational huts so we are not altogether isolated.

Am sorry to hear that a mail boat has been sunk and the mails are lost. I think all the people were saved. I have written you every weekend so if there is a letter missing you will know it has found a watery grave. We do not get much War news here but perhaps it is because there is very little to report. Things will settle down for another winter and we shall have to look forward to the spring offensive. The War will soon have had as long a reign as the S. African War. In the early days I was under the impression that we could bring it to a close much sooner. Some of the experts say it will last 2 years longer. I guess we shall all be fed up with it by that time. It would be nice if we knew when it was going to finish and were able to look forward to the day. Am sorry I have nothing interesting to write about today dearest but you would forgive me if you could only see this place.

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I hope you are keeping well and not working too hard. I think about you every day dearest and am longing for the time when I shall be back with you. I send all my very best love to you. Please give my KR to Aunties. I will write again when I have an opportunity.

Yours ever, Eddie

16 NOVEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 30 Oct. I am sure you must get tired of the office work at times. I am sure tho' you could not do my job, so I cannot exchange with you. At present my work consists of laying out cable and reeling a copper wire across the desert. The cable cart, as it goes over the dunes and clumps of scrub, rocks about like a ship in a storm, the wheels throw up a constant stream of sand and dust which is blinding. In addition the wire has to be wound on and reeled off the drum. Sometimes we go through marshes which need to be navigated carefully or our chariot would be swallowed up. I like the open-air life tho' and the days pass quickly. We are 17 km up the line now and there is nothing to see but a few trains which pass occasionally. It is very pleasing to know that we are doing some of the work we were trained for and perhaps helping on the War. My conscience is never satisfied when we are playing the waiting game. I am still able to carry a few books with me for leisure hours.

Thanks very much for the French. I could read it quite easily. My studies have left me in the position that I can read better than I can write so I cannot say if you have made any mistakes. I shall do my best to get over to see you before 1918. Of course I am not nervous about the boy who is like me dearest. Am pleased to hear that Wm. is getting on ok. About Alec, I think he will now be at Salonica. No doubt he has had a busy time lately. Their work was not actually disbanded. I think they threw in their lot with a Lowland mounted division who were working like themselves as infantry, and the two together were named Dismounted Division. I have heard the whole tale about their troubles and as far as my memory serves me that is how things stand.

I am sorry you are having some wet weather. It must be awful in the trenches in France just now. There is nothing more heartbreaking than rain and cold. The weather here is ideal, today it was nice and cloudy. I don't know how long we shall be up here but I enjoy the Gypsy life very much. We shall soon have Xmas with us. I intend to send you something from Egypt, but now that I am up the desert you must not think I have forgotten you if it does not arrive by Xmas. I have saved up plenty of money to buy all I want but shall have to wait until I can get down to town to draw my money and do some shopping. I find it hard work trying to write with so many chaps in the tent talking and singing. Sometime when I can get a little time on my own I will try and write you a decent letter. I would like all my letters to make you happy dearest. I

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always think that people in books seem to able to show their love better than it is possible to do in real life. I think it must be a trick in the novelist's trade. However, altho' I cannot adequately express my love dearest you must take it for granted that if I could explain how much I love you I would do so. Please excuse more at present. All my best love to you dearest. Please give my KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

29 NOVEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Have not yet received a mail but am writing a few lines because I am away from Headquarters and cannot say when the letters will be sent up. At last I have got an ideal job. Somewhere about 12 miles from my old camp there is a colonial detail camp in which there is a small signal office. Frankie, myself and two other boys are running the office. We seem absolutely on our own and have nobody to worry us. No doubt the office will increase as time goes on but we shall not mind that. The camp has a few advantages such as shower baths, good swimming, a dry canteen etc. We have a fireplace and primus stove, which enables us to do extra cooking for ourselves. I have made a bed so it is nearly like being at 'home'. I shall not grumble if I keep this job for the duration. Frankie says it is too good to last.

We meet a lot of Australians, New Zealanders and Hindus. Up to now I think I like the NZ boys the best. It is very interesting to hear about their country. In fact to hear about a place from one who has lived there is the next best thing to seeing it. The most interesting thing about NZ is the way the natives have fallen in with the white man and how they are able to be equals of the white man in every way. I have never liked the idea of looking down on a man because of his colour, but this seems to be the correct thing in Egypt, India and South Africa.

I hope you are keeping well dearest and not finding the work too hard. Am longing to get a mail because it is not nice to have to wait for your letters. I will reply to yours as soon as the mail comes in. Things are very quiet here so I have not much news. Please give my KR to Aunties. All my best love to you dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie

5 DECEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks so much for yours of 13 Nov, also for the papers. The mail came in nearly a week late this time so I was getting very anxious for news. Am pleased you received the photos OK. I will snap some more as soon as I can draw some

money. Where I live at present is not exactly a place of beauty. It is a dirty kind of desert with only a few trees, which are very dusty and dirty. We get a fine sunset each evening. If an artist had to paint a sunset like we get here most people would think he had overdone it. You see very red skies at home but the sunsets are not mixed with fine blues like they are here. Am sorry to hear that Norman is not looking very well. I have often wondered how the English climate will affect us after our stay in Egypt. I hope Norman has a nice time.

Am not doing much painting at present. I had the chance of some work at Kantara but this job was preferable. Morton, Foster and Goodwill seem to be suffering from cold feet, however they will not feel very easy in their own minds about staying at home. I think they are missing a lot. Altho' we have sacrificed our liberty in joining the Army we are travelling round a bit of the world and that is worth something. Talking about sacrificing our liberty, how would you care for a learner at 6/- a week to be put in charge over you in the office? Frankie and I are in that position. An unpaid L/Cpl is in charge here. He can do 10 words per min, has seen no active service and is rated at 1/8 against one 2/10. We have to put up with all kinds of things like this because we are soldiers. It is no use worrying about such trifles tho'. I humbly apologise if I called you a 'tart' dearest. It is not a nice word, almost as bad as the Arabic word '*bint*' meaning 'girl'. I suppose Bessie is coming to dig you all out. Ah well, Geo White is getting a rest if you aren't. Thanks for sending parcel. I shall make good use of it. I don't think there is any chance of me getting any leave for some time to come. At present there are no hardships and I am in the pink. Of course, I want to come and see you all and shall be glad when the time comes. I am certainly not looking thin and downhearted like Norman.

I had a trip to Port Said on Sunday. It is very like Alex but much smaller. There is a statue of de Lesseps at the entrance to the canal. The shops are very fine, also expensive. It is possible to get a good dinner for 3/- but one can't get a good tea for love nor money. I enjoyed the half day spent there but all the places seem alike and one is a replica of the other.

I have not been able to send any Xmas cards dearest so you will have to accept my best wishes for Xmas and the New Year herewith. I hope you have an easy time at the office. Am sorry I did not pass any remarks about the article in *Today*. I thought it spoke for itself. I should say there is only one way of knowing if these 'How to be happily married' theories are correct, and that is by practical experience. I have had plenty of experience of putting in my time with other people in tents. I find some chaps are very bad to get on with but others add a lot to one's happiness. I suppose it is the same with married people if there is no real love between them. However I don't think we need worry about these things. I know you will always make me happy dearest and I shall make you happy. I send all my very best love dearest. Please give my KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

My Darling Madge,

Have just got a little spare time so thought I would reply to yours of 21 Nov, which arrived yesterday. My writing looks shaky but that is because I have just had a heated argument with some flies. They had become so troublesome that I decided that either they or I should go out of the tent. I persuaded most of them to leave by swishing them out with a towel. A few have remained inside and they are doing their utmost to worry me. If they do not leave me alone I shall try and suffocate them by burning brown paper. Of course that may also suffocate me. This is a bad camp for flies. I think they are so numerous because of the roads, which are made of stable sweepings. I am cooking today. At present I am boiling bacon for tomorrow's breakfast. When we came here the Australians were cooking for us, but one of our chaps is very pugnacious and he quarrelled with the mob who were cooking. The result was that a colonial Major came round and said we should have to cook our own damned grub. I did not mind cooking for myself but did not like being told off like that. When I told him so he said he appreciated the fact that the bother was caused by one man and it was hard lines for the other three. However, we are getting on OK and having some good food.

I have not much news for you dearest. I get on very nicely with the people here and have made a few friends. I enjoy listening to the chaps who have had the pluck to travel round the world in order to try their luck. There are many chaps here who have been roamers. One chap who has 26,000 acres wants to put me on to a sheep-farming job in New Zealand. I had to visit the Mysore Lancers in order to mend their phone. They made me stay and have a Hindu meal. It was all cooked in the tent on a Primus stove. The menu consisted of tea, chapattis with some hot curry, then some fish and chapattis. It was a fine meal and altogether an interesting experience. I have to converse with them in Arabic because my Hindustani is very limited. Of course, the Hindus are quite a different type to the Arabs. In fact they are very well behaved clean fellows.

Thanks very much dearest for the parcel, which arrived last night. It came up at 11 pm and I had to open it before going to bed. All the things arrived in fine condition. The cake and cheese will be stored until Xmas. The cake is a beauty. The pipe arrived at an opportune moment. One of the chaps trod on my pipe and broke it yesterday. I told him it did not matter but still I should have been lost without a pipe. I wonder why you chose a pipe with a heel. [*Drawing of pipe.*] I like that kind best. Do you know what the heel is for? Well dearest you can rest assured you have made one soldier happy this Xmas. All the things have an extra value because they are from you.

I have just heard that Tomkins has died in Mesopotamia. He was a season assistant at Harrogate and I met him on the cape. We have also heard that Frankie's brother (Fred) has been smashed up. We are anxiously awaiting particulars and hoping it will not be very serious. We feel the War more keenly when

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any of our own get hurt. Thanks very much for the map, which arrived safely. It is a bit disappointing to find the Somme district is only a very small portion of the line. However General Brusilov is very hopeful. Perhaps by the time you get this you will be looking back on the Xmas pressure. I hope you have not had it too hard, and that it does not take you long to clear up. Maggie's calculating machine must be OK. Am glad she is getting on so well. Please give my KR to Aunties. All very best love to you darling.

Yours always, Eddie

20 DECEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 27 Nov. I am late in replying but I have been on sick list for two days. Owing to having to get out of kip to take some messages during the night I caught a severe cold. However I have had a day in bed and am feeling almost better now. I did not want to go to hospital altho' many of the boys say it will be OK there this Xmas. I don't think we shall be back in the old camp to participate in the turkeys and I have my doubts about plum pudding. The *Daily News* gift is issued as a ration. We do not draw food from our Army, but from the colonials. Anyway, I shall try and scrounge some plum pudding from somewhere. The L/Cpl who was in charge here has been withdrawn. He was suffering very much from swelled head and we just put up with him as well as we could. However he had some difficulty with a Cpl who was building some wires here and when he reported the matter our chap was withdrawn. Frankie and I are managing the job now. It will do us all right. We shall have a 16-line telephone board fixed up by Xmas. We have got a nice hut built so it is 'some' office.

I was down at Ismailia the other day and I sent you some souvenirs from Egypt. To enable me to take out an insurance policy I had to send them all in one parcel, so have addressed them to the Mater and asked her to hand over the goods. There is a scent bottle for you and some serviette rings for Aunties. They are in gunmetal with gold beaten in. I hope you won't scold me for not sending something useful but I did not feel safe in buying lace and silk articles. If you care for any Maltese lace I could get you some if you would give me some idea of what to buy. I got a disappointment this morning. Our Mac came to see us and brought us a bag of mails. When we opened them they were all for another section. He promised to send the proper ones up tonight. These Australians make me smile. A chap has just offered to give us a horse. If I can see any chance of getting grub for it I shall accept. He would be OK to bring home as a souvenir. Well dearest, you have got all the news at present. I send all my very best love. I wish I could come and see you especially when someone told me how nice you looked. Have written to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

My Darling Madge,

Have at last got a quiet moment and am able to do a little writing. I do not care to write to you when there are a lot of people chattering etc. Well, we have got Xmas over very nicely. Frankie and I stayed here, but a party of our boys who were working on the wires went down to Ismailia. They had a fine Xmas but most of them had too much to drink. It seems a pity that intoxicants should be associated with Xmas, but it is so in the Army.

Our *Daily News* pudding came to hand safely and we had a nice piece of sirloin for dinner. The colonials treated us well as regards Xmas gifts. We got billy cans full of presents, also Xmas gift parcels from Queensland. Also about nine tinned plum puddings, which we shall eat at our leisure. I was just complaining that I do not get much time to myself. My home reminds me of one of these houses where friends are always calling. It is very nice to have friends to see you but sometimes one would prefer to be alone and do a little reading or writing. But I must not grumble about the boys here. They like to drop in for a chat and are worth listening to. I am beginning to know quite a lot about Australia and NZ. I am essentially interested in the men who have gone out and made their way in the colony. When they do win thro' they come out very fine fellows. Many of the boys out here have been born in the colonies. For the last few days I have had a very pressing invite from a Scotsman to go over and shoot some ducks at the Camel Camp, but it is impossible to get hold of a sports gun. Our Mac has one but I do not think he would lend us it. Frankie frequently goes fishing but never catches anything. I had a try this morning without any luck. I had luck but of the wrong kind. The hook caught in a rock about 10 yards out and as I did not want to break his line I had to swim for it. It was a cold morning and there was a nasty east wind and I had no towel. I think I am cured of the fishing habit now.

It has just commenced to rain. That is quite a change for us. Our hut is fairly watertight on the roof but is very draughty at the sides. At night I have my bed near the sender and telephone and I just reach out and give em 'G'. It is too cold to get up. The boys are quite pleased with the country beyond El Arish. I suppose it is cultivated in places. I would like to see El Arish but there is no chance at present. I hope the Xmas arrangements have panned out all right. You will perhaps have got everything cleared up by now. I hope you are happy dearest. I am always thinking about you and looking forward to the day when I shall be back. You help to keep me happy and contented while I am here. I seem to carry a secret happiness when I know that I have got you. Out here experience has taught me that you can never understand a man unless you have lived in a tent with him. It makes me wonder sometimes if you can understand me thro' the medium of letter writing. You can't even see me smiling unless I come to see you. I hope you understand this tho' – that I try to improve myself in every way so that I shall be able to make you supremely happy after the War.

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As regards you – I cannot see you but I can always picture you in my mind. It is not a matter of passive indifference with me dearest and because I am not able to express all I feel you must never imagine that I am content to be away from you. To be able to write a love letter is a kind of gift similar to the gift of Charles Garvice who can draw tears from the eyes of many of the girls who read his books. I am not gifted that way so you must just accept all the love without the demonstration on paper. *Savez?* Please give my KR to Aunties. All very best love to you dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie



Eddie and his tent mates in 1916. Eddie is front left next to his brother Alf

31st July 1917.

My Darling Madge,

I have got back to work again after a delightful holiday, so will answer your two letters which arrived a week ago. Have just got back fm a nice ride. One of our boys has got a linesmans job at a battery. I went with him to bring the horse back. There seemed to be very little going off up there but it was a nice ride. Thanks for all the news also information abt the sundial. I am very busy at present but
may

The Leeds Flag Days' Committee.

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PALESTINE

4 JANUARY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 17 and 31 Dec. I was beginning to think they had stopped our mails. You have no idea how letters cheer us up. I have received word from Alf who has got one month at temporary base. They have not made a very good job of his shoulder. There is a big lump of bone sticking up. He has got some of my films printed in Alex and I am sending you a few snaps. I am sorry to say that these of Beersheba got damp going down and are almost spoilt but they will give you some idea of the place.

We seem to be settled down here now without any hope of a move. The whole of Headquarters is up and we are bound round with bags of red tape. I am tired of operating under these conditions. Troops have been cleared out of the towns so there is not much chance of a peep at Jerusalem. Most of the towns are very insanitary and they find it best to keep troops out for health reasons. I have found a place where I can get some souvenirs of Palestine but don't like to risk sending a parcel off until the posts are in working order. However, I have drawn plenty of money and will send you something as soon as possible.

We seem unlucky for leave. You keep saying you hope it will be my turn soon. I would like to pop over to see you but it is hardly any use longing for the unattainable. If it goes on much longer I shall be getting fed up. Am glad to hear you have got Xmas over all right. It must be a big strain with so many tryers about. Just now our wires are full of learners and they will be worse when the 13th Battalion men come up. Am sorry there are no views of any girls in Palestine. The ones who would be worth snapping are usually shy, and my camera is too small for portraits.

We have bags of canteens about here now. I generally buy a little butter @ 2/5– lb. Otherwise I do not trouble them much. They have stopped the sale of brown bread but I know an old lady who will sell me some on biscuit days. We speak in German. I do not know much of the lingo except the figures and a few

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phrases. What I have seen of it, it would be a nice language to learn and give plenty of exercise to one's memory – but then it would not be patriotic.

By the way when your photo arrived I did not say anything about your coat – you might have thought that I was admiring the coat more than you II..II However it looks very nice and I shall certainly borrow it when I come back to cold Blighty.

I have been down to Ramleh this morning and invested in a pair of slippers. They are made in the native quarter. They are shaped like a canoe and made of red leather. The natives seem very clever at the various trades. I often watch the tinsmiths who do very fine soldering. I thought I could solder but find I am a novice when I watch these men. There is an old man whose acquaintance I have made and he has a real old fashioned Egyptian lock on his door. I have read about them but not seen one before. It is a kind of wooden bolt which goes in a slot and when it is pushed home some pegs drop down and lock it. To open it a wooden key is used which pushes the pegs up. I shall have to make one of these locks for our back gate.

I have got hold of a few books lately. One called *Saïd The Fisherman** was very interesting because it describes the life of a man who lived in these parts. He made a journey from somewhere on the coast to Damascus. The author has a fine knowledge of the Arabs. At present I am reading one by Tolstoi. He must have been a very kindly old chap. I am sure there would be no wars if everybody was like Tolstoi.

I guess you must be getting weary of the War. It is a silly game and I do hope it won't occur again. This should cure the whole world. I have had enough of adventure to last a long while and am looking forward to the time when I can be a man again and get into some civvy clothes. It is demoralising to have one's life ordered by someone else and never to feel that you are responsible for your own life. I hope you are keeping well dearest. I send all very best love and kind thoughts. Please give KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

**Saïd The Fisherman* by *Marmaduke William Pickthall* was first published in August 1915

5 JANUARY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for yours of 11 Dec. Am sorry you have missed a letter of mine. Am afraid I shall miss one of yours because there is no mail up and a PO chap told me a boat had gone down. I have not been able to write quite regularly during the past few weeks but have written once a week. Am pleased you have been to the soldier's club to assist. Many of the boys are away from home for their first time and of course it helps them to keep smiling if someone takes an interest in

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them. Poor old Bogey has got a call at last then. Old Todd Sloane seems to have been in training a long time. I hope you have had a nice Xmas and New Year dearest. I had as nice a time as I could wish for on Active Service. On New Year's Eve we had a social evening in our hut. There were 22 present. Alf came up from Ismailia and there were friends from Kantara, NZ and Australia.

I was down at Ismailia yesterday afternoon and I found Edgar poorly in bed. The cold weather has got on his chest. He is able to rest and will soon be OK I hope. The weather has been bad lately. Generally rain and wind. Frankie and I have spent a lot of time making the hut weatherproof. I have put a window in. The window is made of glass bottles fitted in a frame. It is really a fine office now and of course as I said before will do me all right.

I am reading a fine book called *Lavengro* by Borrow. I do not claim to be a philologist (that is a man who studies the formation of language etc) but I am interested in languages. Well, the writer of this book seems to have wandered all over the world after language. He even bothered with the Gypsy language and Irish. It is really surprising how interesting some men are. It must be nice to know one foreign language well but it is interesting to know a little of many languages, it really takes the conceit out of a person to be amongst people and not understand a word of what they are saying. I went into a barber's shop yesterday. I know the barber slightly, he is a native of Cyprus. This chap speaks about six languages and in addition he has a fine appearance and would grace a palace – yet he is a barber.

I received a nice pocket wallet from the church. It is very good of them to remember us. There was quite a lot I wanted to tell you but the phone and

A postcard
from Ismailia



1917

sounder keep calling and make me lose the thread. Am sending you two photo. Regarding the feluccas, you will notice they carry a very heavy swinging mast. I do not think these things would last long in the North Sea. I have not been able to recommence photography yet. Shall start again when I get a little money in hand. Christmas is rather an expensive time when you have a house of your own. I hope you are keeping well dearest. Am longing to see you, but there seems to be no leave for the physically fit just yet. Please give my KR to Aunties. All very best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

10 JANUARY

My Darling Madge,

Have received no letter this week so there isn't one to answer. Letters posted between 18 and 23 Dec are lost, so if you have told me anything important you will have to tell me again.

I don't know what kind of weather you are having but we are getting plenty of rain. Fortunately our hut is very snug. I have got a negative of the hut and will print you some photos as soon as I can get materials from Ismailia. I like you to know what my home is like. The conditions under which we live at present are almost as good as civilian conditions. We are able to keep our clothes quite clean, and we also keep the tent and office clean. Perhaps we go about *en deshabille* but everybody does that here so we are quite in the fashion. We usually do our own washing and I have got so used to it that I don't see why everybody shouldn't wash for themselves.

There is an orderly from one of the Camel Depots waiting at our office all day. He has a mangy old camel with him. I get plenty of rides on the animal. At the best camels are funny brutes, but this one takes the bun. He grunts and growls all the time. He even turns around to snarl at me while I am on his back. You cannot pet them. Their whole life seems to be one of discontent. They are always trying to bite and as their mouths are full of poison it is not wise to give them much chance.

I called to see my Hindu friend this morning. He is going to Cairo on leave. I had a meal of mutton, rice and seasoning, then some rice pudding containing almonds, raisins and I think some scent. They are good cooks but their food is not our style. Well dearest, I am hoping the War will be over soon and I shall be back once more. Surely it cannot last more than another year. I think of you every day dearest and look forward to the happy days to come. I hope you are keeping well. Please give my KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

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29 JANUARY

My Darling Madge,

Have been rewarded for my wait. Two of yours (2 and 9 Jan) have come to hand. I am still in the old camp – still neutral, still doing no work. However, these days of lotus eating will cease sometime and I shall not be sorry to get up the desert. If we do not leave before Saturday I may take a trip to Cairo. My friend Alf wants a few more photos and as there are many places I have not seen I thought we would have a trip. I shall have to do the trip on the cheap, but as I want to see the places and am not out for the gay life of the city I think 80/- should see me through. I believe I could even go on the tramp for the pleasure of seeing places. Thanks for good wishes for the New Year. If it does not bring forth anything worse for me than the last two years of war I shall have nothing to grumble about. I do not forget about the boys who are roughing it and would have felt more satisfied if I could have taken a bigger share of the risks. But when the Army labels a chap 'neutral' what can he do.

I was not in the El Arish stunt but I may get up there after a while – after the place has been tidied up and there is no danger. Thousands of chaps would welcome a safe billet like mine, I mean those who have had enough. They could have my job with pleasure and I would go out and be a man, just for once. Truly, it is a funny Army.

No, I am not thinking of going out sheep farming. I could pick up a living out there but would not expect to make a huge success of a job I don't understand. The PO will have to do me. I cannot think where WWB has got to. I have not seen him in Nat Gould's mob, which arrived here some weeks ago. Am pleased to hear that H Hall is OK. Please thank Maggie and Miss Green for good wishes.

Yes, we had our watchnight service but it was a kind of singsong party as I told you before. They all enjoyed themselves. Apart from all the good things we had to eat we had something to drink. It was not a party where they all got drunk tho'. I have often wondered what your views are with regard to the drink question. I am not teetotal myself and don't remember having signed the pledge. However, I am temperate and do not drink for the sake of drinking. I do not get drunk. In fact I very seldom have any intoxicants. Somehow I prefer to be more broadminded than the teetotal crank. It would not be any hardship for me to be a total abstainer. I have often wondered if my views clash with yours on the subject. I hope not. You have not had the opportunity of seeing me for many, many months and of course cannot understand exactly how I conduct myself. Still, I should not be happy if I were doing things I did not wish you to know about.

Am pleased to hear of Geo. Tilly's decoration. He seems to have had a rough time. You have been rushing with the Christmas work. I am glad you have got it finished with. I never thought there was any cause to make such a mysterious secret of the work like you-know-who-I-mean used to. I shall have to ask AJK to reserve me a 9 to 4 job in his office if his job matures. Am quite well now

thanks. The easy life had made me soft. A little roughing it would do me good.

In my researches the other day I was able to find out the origin of the word 'tart'. You know it is a word you detest. The word is a slang contraction of the word 'sweetheart'. Perhaps you will forgive me for having used it, seeing that it is formed from such a nice word. It is low to talk slang, but I do not think it is low to be interested in its formation. Fifty or more years ago the pickpockets of England had a 'thieves slang' – a kind of talk an outsider would not understand. One day when I come home I will lend you a book of the finest poetry I have ever read. It is in slang. (I do not refer to Kipling). You will like it. Do you know dearest I seem to find so much interest in life that I am always wanting you to see what I see and feel what I feel. Many of the interesting discoveries I make would perhaps not appeal to everybody, therefore someday I may be a big bore to you. We shall have to see when I get back. Perhaps I shall be quite happy to be with you, and won't need to do any talking. I may be too shy. In fact last week I walked into a rest tent for a cup of cocoa. There was a girl from Australia serving. Somehow I felt I did not like to ask her for what I wanted. I don't think I have spoken to an English woman since coming out. But, *maalish, nous ver-rons*. Well dearest I shall have to close now. It is a very windy day here so I am not going out. I have a lot of reading to do. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love for you.

Yours ever, Eddie

7 FEBRUARY

My Darling Madge,

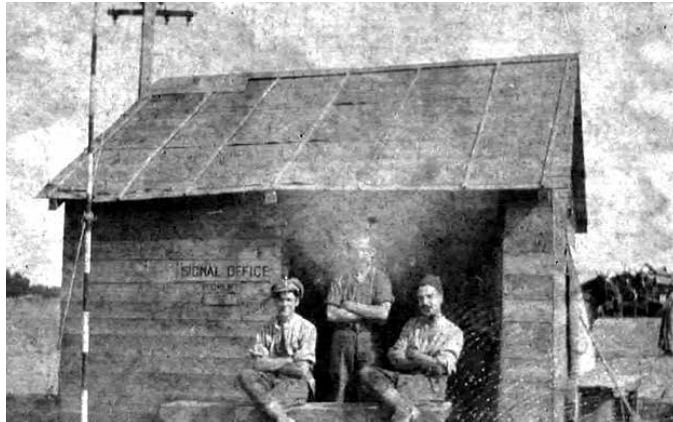
Thanks for bundle of papers received yesterday. There are no letters to hand yet, I am sorry to say. Am enclosing you two photos of the office but the chap who printed them has evidently been drunk. We are still at the old office and having a nice time. We are looking forward to a bit of desert tho'. It does not seem likely that we shall get a trip home so it is no use looking forward to that just yet. But the War may not last many months longer and then we shall rush for home. I am not fed up with Egypt but I long to see you very much dearest. It is perhaps selfish to think of our own happiness at this time and for that reason I do not wish to put personal happiness before duty.

Fortunately I have a little news this week about Cairo, and as soon as I can do some printing I shall have some photos for you. It was a delightful holiday and my only regret was that you could not be there dearest. I hope some day when we are rich you will be able to have a look round Egypt but I dare not estimate what a tour would cost. A soldier could easily spend £5 a day.

Well, regarding our trip, I stayed the previous night with Alf at Ismailia then we arose at 4.30 and left by 6.00 train. Our company was playing semi-final of Egyptian cup. They won 3–2 but it was not owing to our support because we considered a pass to Cairo too valuable to waste on football. Our first call was

1917

A signal office



at the Anzac Hostel to book beds. It is a fine hotel for soldiers and is run by the YMCA I think. The prices are reasonable and the meals are suitable for white men. We felt we had a home during our few hours in Cairo. I only had 30/- to see me right thro' so it was necessary to dispense with those luxuries called guides. There were thousands of them enquiring at every turn how they could help us. Looking back on the trip I should say we have been pestered by about 2,000 guides. It needs a very strong will to refrain from employing them. I have known chaps declare that they would not employ a guide and when they return they say 'Oh we had to take one to the pyramids - it was only 5/- each and he was such a decent chap.' Most of the guides are having a lean time just now because there are no civilian tourists. Most were choked off by means of saying '*mush owze haggar*' (don't want anything) but several of them could only be persuaded by more severe measures. There was one persistent fellow who followed us half way up Cheops' pyramid. He would not go down until I offered to push him down. We were asked about 5,000 times if we wanted our boots cleaning, then again we had about 50,000 walking sticks offered to us and many other articles such as food and clothing.

Our first trip was by gharry to the Muski Bazaar where one sees all the native craftsmen at work on jewellery and brass goods. There is a lot of faking and I do not consider the Arab a first class craftsman like the Hindu. For instance, precious stones are not dug up from the earth. They are made of coloured glass (generally medicine bottles), which is polished on a revolving wheel. Some very primitive lathes were turning out some fine woodwork. The lathe-operator uses his feet as well as his hands to make the machine work. The scent bazaar was very fine but these beautiful perfumes seemed out of place down the dirty narrow streets. We next visited the Sultan Hassan mosque. There is a canon ball, embedded in the wall, which was fired by Napoleon. The interior is very fine and has some beautiful metal doors inlaid with gold and silver. We climbed to the top of the minaret. It was a stiff climb but we were fully repaid by the view. Cairo lay at our feet. It appeared to be one mass of flat-topped buildings dotted



Eddie's visit
to Cairo

1917

with a few mosques. I hope to send you some snaps. Another mosque close by noted for its fine carpets was closed. We had a peep inside through the railings. We had a walk through the Citadel, which is a kind of castle. The building shows up better at a distance. In the evening we went to a picture show and had a walk round the town.

Next day we were up at 7.00 and after making ourselves presentable we set out with the intention of seeing the pyramids, zoo and Hellouan. We passed over the Kasr el Nil bridge which is noted for its four bronze lions. After waiting a while for a car to the pyramids we decided to see the zoo first. It was a bigger place than I expected. The gardens were very fine and so were the animals, amongst which were crocodiles, hippopotami, lions, giraffes, kangaroos, zebras, ostriches, monkeys, rhinoceros etc. They were all worth writing home about. The rhinoceros, which as you are aware is a pachydermatous quadruped, was very tame and answered to the name of Kitty. It was a pity we could not stay longer. However we went by tram to the pyramids. We were troubled by thousands of guides and camel men. We dodged round the Sphinx and took a few photos, then down to the temple of the Sphinx which is very fine with its columns and pavements of alabaster. After that we went to Cheops' Pyramid. We climbed to the top by ourselves. The guides' hearts were nearly broken. It is 450 ft high and the top is about 20 ft square. There were half a dozen on the top ready to tell our fortunes or make us a cup of tea. We partook of tea. We took some snaps of the Dead City and Mena village. We also took each others' photos as a proof that we had made the ascent. II..IIx (You know Mark Twain used to climb mountains by proxy.) I was very careful in descending because there was the big drop staring me in the face and it would have been a big triumph for the guides if I had fallen. We went back to town and the Bulac Station for Hellouan, but we had just missed the train so decided on a tram ride to Old Cairo. Here we saw an ancient mosque and the identical spot on the Nile where Moses was found in the bulrushes. There were no bulrushes so I had my doubts. We had just time to get back to town, have dinner and catch the train.

I hope you have not been bored with this lengthy account but I like to tell you all my troubles dearest. Please don't think I am hard on the guides. You cannot judge until you have seen them. It has taken me about four hours to write this. Frankie is at Ismailia and I am on my own in the office. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love to you dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie

13 FEBRUARY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 15 and 23 Jan, also some newspapers. Thanks, I am quite recovered from my cold. They do not hang about very long here. The weather is ideal at present. Plenty of sunshine and spicy breeze. I can hardly

realise you are having slush and snow. No doubt snow does look OK but my word it must be cold. Now that the weather is so decent I am not at all home-sick on account of this climate or the sand. One of our chaps who has just returned from England was saying that if we had no real reason for going home we would be as well off in Egypt as there was no enjoyment in the trip. I cannot altogether agree with him. Surely a man does not go home for his own pleasure alone. His people ought to derive pleasure from his visit. Many of our chaps will be disappointed with home because they are forming a picture of England in their minds as if it possessed all the beauties of the world. At the same time, they do not try to appreciate Egypt. Everything is '*mushquois*' (not-good) here. I suppose they will think of the advantages of Egypt when it is too late. Please do not think I am running Blighty down. I am more of opinion that it is necessary to know something about other countries in order to appreciate one's own.

These boys from France seem to get leave easy enough, but I know most of them work harder than we do. You are asking when our turn will come. Well, in the course of a few weeks after the exit of some troops, our Company will have been here longer than any 'Tommy' troops. For that reason they may give us a turn during the coming summer. I also heard that Capt. McLaren has been mentioned again. I was not on the field of action or anywhere near it – neither was he. II..IIx Have received the arithmetic book safely thanks. I think I might do a little steady study without being any worse. II..II I am so bally thick that I can only learn anything by the constant dropping of the water system.

Am so sorry to hear that Alec has been wounded again. Milly will be able to give you some tips about soldiering now that Alec has been amongst it again. I hope he will be able to get home. They would be delighted to see his big smile. I hope I did not give you to understand that I read books written by Charles Garvice. He is my pet aversion. Am sorry I do not know what 'pock pudding' means. Is it English or Scotch? That reminds me that sometime I shall have to learn Gaelic. It can't be more difficult than Arabic. At present I do not worry much about Arabic, but manage to keep learning a few words when travelling round. I could not pass a test because I have learnt the colloquial Arabic or dialect which the poor people speak, but I can generally make myself understood. Two days ago in Ismailia one of our boys was having his fortune told and I had to act as interpreter. The woman who told the fortune seemed to be a kind of Gypsy. She came into a café and asked if she could tell our fortunes. One chap gave her a piastre and she told him quite a lot for the money. He was going home in two months, his officer would give him £5 backsheesh, he had two girls at home, and in 7 days he would receive a letter from home with good news. She spoke in Arabic the whole of the time and there was only one clause I could not make out. This type of woman, of which there are plenty, has a gold locket (about the size of a penny) fixed thro' one of her nostrils. I once took a photo of a woman with a locket on her nose but it did not turn out well. I may be able to secure one later.

The parcel I sent should have arrived by now but I will give it a little longer. I can claim the value if it is lost between Port Said and England. Am enclosing

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you a few photos of Cairo I printed yesterday. They will give you some idea of the place. Did I tell you that I have had a telescope given? I have got it in working order and it is a fine instrument. I shall bring it home if possible. It is not powerful enough to see England tho'. Please give my KR to Aunties and accept all best love yourself dearest. The War will be finished in 3 months.

Yours ever, Eddie

20 FEBRUARY

My Darling Madge,

Am rather late in writing this week but we have been very, very busy so you must excuse me. The last inward mail did not bring me any letters so I haven't one to answer. Well, we have arrived at last where I anticipated. I am quite happy and it's so homely because there is a Scottie playing some bagpipes. He generally plays from 6 pm 'til 9 pm. Some of us wish he would give it a rest.

We got the *imshie* from our little office with only an hour's notice. In order to catch a train at 6 am it was necessary to rise at 3. There were four of our wagons and three belonging to somebody else, also tons of kit to be loaded. The journey of 155 km was very fine altho' the scenery is much the same throughout and consists of sand and scrub.

The place where we are was in the hands of the Turks not very long ago. All about our camp there are many old trenches. Apart from the trenches we do not see many traces of the enemy. We are camped practically on the beach in a small palm hut. Two of the apostles once preached here. There is also a small building on a hill said to be the tomb of King Nebuchadnezzar. There are two villages nearby but I have not been able to visit them yet. I think I can safely say this is one of the finest places we have visited. Altho' we see practically nothing but the Army, the place is naturally beautiful and if there were only a few hotels would make a fine health resort. The well water is fairly good, and this is remarkable because the wells are only 100 yds from the sea.

Our people are supplying the natives with food and employing the men. I had a conversation with one of them this afternoon and he told me quite a lot about the Turkish occupation. I am sure a lot of the men are Turks because of their fresh complexions, but it does not matter much any way. We have been working very hard and have not much spare time at present. Of course we are always grumbling – it does seem foolish that they should still groom horses so many hours a day and keep harness like silver. Of course I do not kill myself on unnecessary work. My luck is out. I made a bed last night, today the General has issued an order that no beds will be allowed in tents. I shall have to go on the wet again. We seem to have got on some ground which is always wet. But it is no use grumbling. We are getting very good food. Fresh meat and new bread comes up every day.

I am enclosing you a few photos, and will tell you what they are when I

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write again. They are printed by the gas light process, but the chap had a tent to himself and had plenty of room to do this kind of work. I think they were better than the brown prints. I hope you are keeping well dearest. Every body seems to talk as if the War will not last very long. Is there the same opinion at home? I am longing for the day when I shall see you dearest. They say one can get used to everything. I should never get used to being away from you dearest, and I am always happy because I can look forward to being with you again. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love to you dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie

26 FEBRUARY

My Darling Madge,

Have quite a heap of things to acknowledge this time – one parcel, two letters (30 Jan and 6 Feb) and two lots of papers. Thanks very much for all of them. The parcel was just the thing in this wilderness. We had chicken for lunch today along with plum pudding. I think I told you nearly all about the place in last letter. Am sorry to say it does not suit my constitution. I have a heavy cold and cannot get rid of it. But we men are a bit impatient when off colour. We have all been roped into the Signal Office. The job suits me ok. We have to work 12 hours a day for the present, but we get a little sleep on the night duty. It is better than being with the section in one respect – we know when we are free and can go looking at the sights. I have visited the town, also a small village. The houses are flat-topped and built with yellow clay. Each house has a yard surrounded by a high wall in which animals are kept. There are all kinds of stock ranging from hens to camels. A lot of the people are fair-skinned but sunburnt. I should think they are Turks. There were a few shops, which were very poorly stocked. As soon as Frankie and I arrived in the town we had a dozen children round us asking for backsheesh – even matches. I had a bit of a chat with some of the shopkeepers. A lot of the natives were trying to sell Turkish money – at a profit of course. I did not invest. One chap offered me a German pfennig. I suppose he would have got it from the Germans who have been here with the Turks. I got a family heirloom from one of the bints for you. It is a brass ring to be worn around the ankle. I will send it if I get the chance.

I was very sorry dearest to have forgotten the date of your birthday. I had a note of it but did not remember where I had made the note. Now I find it is in my dictionary. I hope you will forgive me for being so forgetful. Am pleased you like the Indian ware but that was really intended for Xmas. I had got some very fine photos of the hut but prior to coming away I printed them and tried to gloss them. They looked fine but now they have gone blotchy and spoiled. I cannot print any up here, we cannot get water.

I often wonder if we shall be writing letters much longer dearest. It is a weary wait. But it is nice to look forward. In fact it is that which keeps me

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going. We get Reuters Press at the office. Today we learn that the anchor is weighted, there has been a big advance in France. I hope it is the beginning of the end. Your typing is ok. I know a fellow in this camp who got a DCM for typing. Well, dearest, I find I have just time to make some cocoa before going on so must leave you. I am on 9 pm to 8 am. Thanks once again for the parcel. You know I appreciate all your kind thoughts for me altho' I do not say a lot. Nobody could make me happier than you do but then there is nobody like you. Hope you are not having too rough a time with rationing scheme. We have ample food and very good. In fact we could feed one or two extra in our tent. KR to Aunties. Very best love to you.

Yours ever, Eddie

5 MARCH 3 AM

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 13 Feb and papers. It is my turn on watch so thought I would spend my time profitably. There is another mail from Egypt to England lost. I think it is about the 13 Feb and that would be about the time I sent a few Cairo photos. You will let me know if they don't arrive, then I can print some more. Am pleased you were able to snap up a little of the skating. It was a pity Auntie should go and hurt herself. I hope she will soon be better. But I see you try to look on the bright side of it.

It seems years since I was at church. We are as busy on Sunday as any other day and many a time do not know what day it is. We haven't a Chaplain attending to our mob and it is a matter of looking round for him if you wish to attend a service. Ours is an impossible section in many ways. If we only carried on in the Colonial way it would be the finest job in Egypt. I don't want you to think I am indifferent to religion – in fact I try to get all the help I can from reading. Thanks for the compliment about my work. If I have got such a good name I shall have to live up to it. Am pleased Alec is going on all right. Everybody says Malta is worth a visit. The wounded and sick see quite a lot of places not in the general trip. However, we have seen Malta from the harbour when we came out. No troops were allowed ashore, but the officers went. I may get a look round when we return. I received a letter from AJK. He is pleased I dropped him a line. I hope you enjoyed your holiday dearest. It is like an impossibility for me to have a holiday with you, but with a little faith it will come about sometime.

I have been reading *The First Hundred Thousand* by Ian Hay. It gives a fine idea of the forming of the new army. Ian Hay was an officer but he seems to understand the men. He is the type of man that one would like to follow. It is a pity there are not many more like him. I seem to have got the dumps tonight. Everything vanishes as soon as I think of it and if it doesn't vanish – well I begin to look on the black side. It may be the heavy responsibility weighing me down. The GOC and the whole of his staff are relying on me at present. I am the only

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one awake. This War is a big game but I notice there are not many people taking part in it who stay up all night. I must be unlucky.

Well dearest we have a very fine sea here and I spend quite a lot of time down on the beach. There is no tide but plenty of waves. It is a moody kind of a sea and changes very quickly. Anyway it would suit all right if I could only find a ship. I have made the acquaintance of two little boys from the town. Their names are Machmud and Achmed and they come round for any *mongeria* (food) we have to spare. I am able to talk to them, and I like children – providing they are not cheeky. The boys are brothers and said they had a sister three years old. I told them to bring the lady round to camp. She came yesterday and we were introduced. Her name is Manseer. She is quite a little lady in appearance. Her dress consists of a long skirt touching the ground and a handkerchief on the head, to say nothing of several strings of beads. She was very pleased with some jam I gave her. It is a peculiar fact but these people do not seem surprised at our inventions like trains, motors, aeroplanes etc. They take everything as it comes.

I hear we to come off the operating work to build a 20-mile line to some village with a lot of Ks and Zs in its name. Perhaps there may be a little more to see further out. There won't be any fighting because there is hardly a Turk for 50 miles round. Dawn will soon be here. I can hear a rooster crowing now. I will try and write a fuller letter next time. I send all kind thoughts and best love to you dearest. KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

18 MARCH

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for papers which came to hand, there were no letters but we can hardly hope for those luxuries after a move. I had to leave my job in the Signal Office and come with the section – now I am cooking for want of a better job. The last place we camped at was a poor shop, nearly every day we had nasty sandstorms. Am pleased to say this place is quite the reverse. I made the last move of 15 km on foot. Altho' I have not walked much lately I managed it all right. Of course tramping over the desert is not as easy as walking on a road. You will be pleased to learn that we have finished with desert now. As we approached our present place the countryside began to look green and now we are amongst gentle sloping hills covered with grass or barley. The soil is fairly sandy but the place is like fairyland when compared with the desert.

Last night I walked into Palestine but of course did not go far enough to see anything of interest. I was desirous of visiting Asia, and if we do not go any further up I have added another Continent to my list of travels. A few miles up I am told is very fine and there are plenty of orange groves. We are able to purchase oranges here from the natives. The people speak some kind of Arabic and I can understand them fairly well. They seem to be Bedouins. Their clothing

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generally consists of the usual gown and a sheepskin jacket and a head-dress composed of a handkerchief bound round with camel-hair ropes.

I have had to build several shelters lately. The one I am in at present looks like a palmists tent at a fair. Its chief advantage is that we can stand up in it. I think I shall have to dismantle it tomorrow because the material used in its construction is required. Alf is not with me at present, he is working on a line which will be here shortly. It is Sunday today but we hardly know it because there is so much work. I lost my cooking mate yesterday. Somebody put a tin of dubbin on our fire and it exploded. He was badly burnt but I hope he will have got some ease in hospital. I think they have sent him to Port Said.

What do you think to Sir Douglas Haig's promise that the War will finish this year? I think it is very satisfactory. We shall be home for Christmas. We are fairly well off for rations here but now and again we get what are called iron rations. Water has to be brought up in fanatis and there is not much available for washing purposes. However, I have managed to do some washing today.

I hope you are keeping well dearest. I wish you could share my little bivouac. You have no idea what an ideal existence it is, especially when your partner or partners are nice people. You begin to know people when you live with them, and often you change your opinion with regard to them. This experience leads me to think that happy marriages must depend a great deal on ordinary friendship and common interests – altho' there are other things with regard to marriage. Any kind of a person might do for a friend, but there is a feeling that only one person would be all that was desired for a wife. Now, in Egypt a man never sees the face of his wife until after they are married. This must be very unsatisfactory, but of course he can say 'I divorce thee' and she has to leave and he loses the dowry money he paid. He can divorce his wife any time he wishes and he may have four wives at the same time. This is a funny way of going on according to our ideas but perhaps it seems all right to the Egyptians. I have had a book entitled *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* by EW Lane. (Everyman series). It is a fine work and I shall get one of my own when I come back.

At present I have not so much time for reading and practically no time for studying. I hope you are not too busy at the office. Please give my KR to Aunties. I hope the wrist is better by now. I send all best love to you dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie

30 MARCH

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for letters received up to 7 March. We have no post here but I may get somebody to take this down the line. We are in the scrap here and working almost day and night so I have only time for a note. It is hard work and we are what you would term roughing it, but I am happy and pleased we are getting on

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with things. We are frequently moving and carry very little with us. Of course we are short of everything but biscuits and bully are all right for me. I would be glad if you could send me some tobacco, preferably cake which requires cutting up. There is every appearance of a shortage right thro' Palestine. Just now I am without a smoke and as you know a pipe is a big comfort to me especially when conditions are not cushy. I see the PO Insurance Society has burst. Bang goes my 8d a week. II..II

Hope you are keeping well dearest. I am in the pink, and the only the only thing I suffer from is a big thirst. However I have a habit of making tea whenever I get the chance. It is the finest drink in existence. I often think how heavenly it must be to have a tap and as much water as required. I will write again as soon as possible but owing to our mobile condition there is no opportunity for posting. KR to Aunties. All very best love dearest. Will soon be home now.

Yours ever, Eddie

9 APRIL

My Darling Madge,

Have at last got a spare evening to answer all your welcome letters of 19 and 26 Feb and 6 and 19 March. Thanks also for various bundles of papers and the parcel. The parcel came at a very opportune time and the cake was very fine. The tobacco was very handy as we have missed several issues, but I think stores will come up regularly now. I have been travelling during the last few days but am now back with the section. For a few days I bivouacked in a peach and almond orchard. Unfortunately the fruit was not ripe. Today I have been working up near the front but both the Turks and us appear to be resting. I am sorry to say that our Army is spoiling the countryside. Where we had nice green fields we have dusty country and cannot move without raising clouds of dust. There are some interesting stone wells here, most likely built by the Romans. Then I have seen a castle, said to have been built by the Crusaders. I wish I could really get to know about these buildings. The natives are of a poor type and worse than Jews when selling oranges. Am sorry I cannot tell you all about this place, but you will probably have seen in the papers about the battle of Gaza. That is our stunt.

Thanks very much for paper containing Dardanelle enquiry – it was very interesting. I am always asking you peculiar things and you will think me a bit of a nuisance. This time I am desirous of finding out how to set up a sundial. If you happen to know or can get to know an easy method I should be glad. I know you are busy so please do not go to any trouble to find out. Am glad to hear your views on the drink question. Of course I do not think you are one of the cranks. Am pleased you liked the views of Cairo. I have not a camera at present but they were taken with Alf's. You see, as long as I provided the films it

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did not cost him anything extra to pass them thro' his camera. I have intended purchasing a camera for some time but when I knew of anyone going to Cairo it happened that I could not get any pay – so here I am in the Holy Land without one. We are doing so much work tho' that it would almost be impracticable to use one.

I do not see why the War should not be finished soon. My estimate is a bit out, I am sorry. However altho' I have been away much longer, my love for you has not diminished dearest, and you help to keep me happy thro' my little trials. I am always thinking of the happy day when I shall see you again. Sometimes I find myself singing a soldier's song – when I get my civvy clothes on, no more soldiering for me II..IIx If you keep on reducing the work at the office we shall be redundant staff on our return.

I get very little time for reading now and we are travelling with what we can carry. If we can only keep moving to new scenes, that will occupy us quite enough. We keep moving camp but only short distances. We have tomatoes and chillies growing in an adjacent field. The chillies are hot stuff. There are also plenty of vines about but no grapes yet. Today we had an issue of half an orange per man II..II Up at the front where the fields have not been spoilt there are dozens of varieties of wild flowers such as daisies, poppies etc. We are within walking distance of the sea and I manage a swim occasionally.

Am sure you must envy me this trip. Really I do wish you could share the pleasures of it dearest. I do not tell you of the troubles and trials, but plenty of chaps grumble about it and would like to be out of it. I know you must be having a dreary time, but it won't last for ever, and if my efforts will count I will see you have a happy time when this cruel War is over. I hope Aunty's arm is better. KR to both. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

15 APRIL

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 20 March. News is almost '*ma fish*' this week. I generally go out working all day putting lines up or down and return at night quite ready for bed. I have been swinging a 16lb hammer nearly all today. I suppose it is helping to win the War. I think things will go well here, so just watch our front. I cannot write a lot about the doings here. Johnny Turks sends over his aeroplanes about twice a day. Lately he has ventured to drop a few bombs, but the compliment has been returned overweight.

There have been a few shells over during the last few days but the damage has been very small. One of our party was hit with a small piece of bomb but it only caused a scratch and did not even tear his pants. We had a big joke about it but could not persuade him to report and get a gold stripe.

It is fine to read of the progress in France and Mesopotamia. The last batch of papers was very interesting. Our food is not very plentiful at present. I don't

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mean to say we don't get our rations, but there is a lack of interest in cooking them and we need a lot to eat with so much manual work. I have started a fire-place outside the bivvy and we are able to have cocoa for supper. There is a good issue of Fry's Cocoa. We are discussing what to have to eat. I think there is nothing better than marmalade. Well, perhaps you will excuse short letter this time as I am very tired. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love to you. Hope you are well.

Yours ever, Eddie

16 APRIL

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 22 March. I am very pleased to hear of your promotion. It is a nice reward after your hard work at the office. Am just writing you a little note tonight because we are very busy. We are happy also because by the time this is posted we shall have gone up there to be amongst it. Of course I cannot say if we shall get in the thick of the fight but we shall be near it. I may not be able to write for some time if the stunt is a long one. I send very best love.

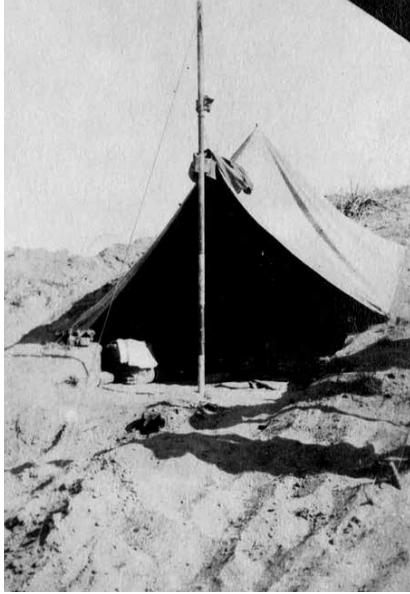
Yours ever, Eddie

22 APRIL

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 27 Mar and 3 Apr. I have just accomplished a great feat. It consisted of scaling a cliff, receiving a cup of cocoa for supper and descending in the dark without spilling a drop. I am not a cook now but last night I made cocoa for supper on condition that someone else would make it tonight. I think the supper habit is rather a good one especially when we have plenty of rations. There are three of us in this dugout. One of my pals is complaining that we must have dug into a place where something is buried. I had to quote Bairnsfather: 'If you know of a better hole, go to it.'* We are not dug in because of shell fire, you know. These dugouts had been made by someone else and I took one over in order to get some shade during the day.

We have been thro' the battle and were attached to a Division. Of course we were well up, but there was nothing to see from our place because the country is full of ravines and ranges of hills. We had to keep our wagons and horses in a gully. Our cable wagons look very much like guns. We got a few shells about the place and the hostile aircraft had a few trips round. I had a few shots at one which came very low. I was persuaded to cease fire when a couple of bullets zipped into the cliff at my side. They were from one of our machine guns also



Eddie's dugout

firing on the hostile. We did not hear any very good news the first day and to see the file of wounded coming down the boys seemed to be having a rough time. The second day we got orders to clear out and retired a short distance. I think Johnny Turk had five Divisions against our four and as he was holding his own our boys had to dig in. I don't know what kind of a report will be published but I think Johnny has had the advantage. Of course we were attacking and would naturally expect heavy casualties in this type of country. The poor infantry boys have had a rough time. We have our hardships but our share is very small when compared with theirs. In fact I would be more happy taking my chance up there. Before the battle I heard an infantry officer explaining the situation to his men. He said the Turks would probably fight a rearguard action and retire. If this has been a rearguard I should not like to see him attack. The tanks seem to be of little use here. I have seen them in motion and they are wonderful things.

I have had a long walk round this morning testing line. It is fine fertile country and there are many kinds of flowers we do not see at home. I have seen the wheat and tares growing together as mentioned in the Bible. Now that there is a pause in operations we have been able to get some good rations up. This is one of the good points of our Army. During the stunt we get iron rations, which include biscuits, bully and marmalade. We work so hard that we can eat anything at those times. Am sorry to say that Alf was listed to stay behind this time. I hope he will soon join us.

Am glad to hear all the office news. I wish GK had the chance to knock a little telegraphy into this big black boulder of ours. He is hopeless and has not enough knowledge to set up a wire between Starbeck and Harrogate. It is almost heartbreaking to be led by someone who does not understand the job and it has the effect of killing any interest we should like to show in our work. But then we are just soldiers and here to do as we are told. I was very pleased to hear of your promotion. I do hope you won't be too hard on us when we return II..IIx We have been bossed about quite enough in the Army. Thanks for news of Bogey and Harold Hall. We seem to be well represented in the far countries. In fact Harrogate might be like the Tower of Babel when we all return with our languages. I fancy Arabic is spoken in East Africa tho'. This travel is fine but I was only thinking the other day that when I get my civvy clothes on I shall be quite satisfied to pay my own fares and arrange my own trips. One of your wishes is granted: that our task in Egypt is finished. We have started on another task in Palestine, which has the appearance of being long and weary unless some more Divisions come up.

I hope you are keeping well during this cold weather dearest. Very often I am thinking of you especially when I have any happy experiences. My life is

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happy but I know all the time that I have not experienced the full happiness of life. Fuller happiness can only be gained by living to make someone else happy. Well, the boys are getting down to sleep so I shall follow. One of them wants to know if I shall have a smoke in bed before I go to sleep when I get home. It is quite a usual thing to do here but would seem a bit out of place at home. Please give my KR to Aunties. All very best love.

Yours, Eddie

**Bruce Bairnsfather was a prominent British cartoonist whose weekly 'Fragments from France' cartoons appeared in The Bystander magazine during the First World War.*

29 APRIL

My Darling Madge,

Have just finished another day's work so thought I would write a few lines. There is a lovely sunset and this is the best part of the day. The flies have gone to bed and the heat has vanished. In the distance I can hear a gang of Gyppos chanting one of their songs. The words are very easy and there is only one line, which is repeated until the singers are tired. It goes '*Yaha – beebi salamat*' and means 'My dear how are you'. It would appear that the niggers, like myself are thinking of someone at home. I am often thinking of you dearest but of course I do not join in the chant. Speaking of songs there is another one which appeals to me. It is '*kam layla, kam yoom*'. It means 'How many nights, how many days'. It makes me wonder how many nights and how many days we are going to remain out here. It will come to an end some day. Then I shall be back with you dearest and realise one of my happy dreams of life. I hope you will not be disappointed with me and I try to live so that I may grow better instead of the other way. I shall be much richer in experience of men and I have seen a few of the dreary places of the world, which will make me more thankful for home conditions. However, this is all about myself. I will just tell you about our doings. There is a lull at present and we are back at one of our old camps this side of the Wadi Gaza. During the stunt we worked like horses and got very little rest and no cooked food. It is all right for a few days and there is the satisfaction of doing something, but the pace is too swift to last. Several men went sick and a few still attend every day with septic sores and dysentery. Egypt was the land of sand and this is the land of dust. The dust is as fine as flour and blows about. This causes disease. I guess you are thinking while it is so cold and snowy in England – how nice it must be for the boys out there where the sun shines all day and it is warm. I will give you an experience of ours, which, if it occurs again, would make us willing to go to the Arctic regions. We set off for this camp. I noticed that the wind had commenced to blow from the south. The temperature rose to 103 degrees, the roads were a foot thick in dust and there were thousands of flies. I just had energy to put up a shelter when we arrived and then I settled

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down to swelter and be nearly eaten by flies. It was so hot that many camels dropped thro' the heat. This south wind lasted three days. We had to carry on with our work but I used to long for night. Since then we have had some dull days, which are a blessing. The man who wrote 'Whisper and I shall hear', has evidently never visited these parts or he would never have made use of the words 'Winds that blow from the south sighing so sweet and low.' I suppose we suffered because the heat came so suddenly. We have had 130 degrees in Ismailia last summer. I think 98 degrees is very high for Blighty and people begin to drop down in the streets when it reaches that figure.

Thanks very much for yours of 9 April. Am sorry I had got the dumps in one of my letters. Well I haven't got them now. It is best to look on the bright side. Now I have got everything that counts for comfort. I have done all my washing and had some decent grub. What more can a chap want? I wonder if you people at home would consider that our clothes were washed clean? They seem all right to us. I am sure we shall have interests in common after the War. I believe we are both very happy with simple pleasures and that embraces quite a lot of interests. I hope your new duties will not entail too much hard work, because even a boss can have a rough time. II..IIx (but not in the Army). I am sorry to say that I have witnessed a case of real cowardice on our stunt but there does not appear to be any penalty for it in our section. The man is still a full Corporal and never works. The DAS asked for some men to form the new divisions but our Major would not let anybody go. It seems a very selfish attitude to adopt. I hope you are keeping well dearest. Please give KR to Aunties. All best love to you.

Yours ever, Eddie

7 MAY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 17 April. I commenced to write you yesterday (Sunday) but a fleet of hostiles came out and we could not have any lights. We work hard all day, and night is our only chance of doing any correspondence. Well, we are at war once again because Johnny has decided to bomb us. He has sent over about six machines on two alternate nights and they have really done their best to put us *hors de combat*. The machines come down in turn, first dropping bombs then using the machine gun. Our anti-aircrafts 'paste' them with shrapnel but the shell cases and shrapnel fall amongst us. I have had two nights in the open and after the experience have decided to dig in. This afternoon I made a hole to go into in cases of emergency but I am not going to live underground unless we get under shell fire.

We are very busy reeling in lines. It is a dusty job. Yesterday I had a good view of Gaza. The Mosque has presumably come to grief in some way because it is no longer there. This district is too dusty for photography but I have purchased a camera in case we make a move to any of the towns. There was some

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very interesting information about this place in the *Daily News* you sent. I was down at Khan Yunis a few days ago and got a snap of the old castle. I believe all the canteens are going further back owing to the bombing. This will not trouble me personally because I think it is the duty of soldiers to try and exist on their rations, when food is so scarce at home. You will see our rations are nearly double what you are supposed to consume. We get each day: tea – 7/8 oz, bread – 1 lb, sugar – 4 oz, cheese – 2 oz, meat – 3/4 lb, bacon – 1/4 lb, milk – 8 men to a tin, veg – 1/2 lb, jam – 3 oz, tobacco – 2 oz, weekly cocoa as required. I think in view of the food shortage it is very unpatriotic to live on canteen food even if the money can be obtained.

Am sorry you have had to admonish the youngsters for dodging. I believe all Army men are dodgers. I have a great weakness for making tea on the slightest opportunity so perhaps you would have to give me a lecture if I was at the office. The fountain pen had just dried up. Am afraid I shall have to admonish you dearest if you suggest that I shall be bored with your letter. Your letters just suit me and if you were to develop some artificial literary style they would not be the same. I do not mean to suggest that your style is not literary, I am just not competent to judge. In fact I have often noticed you hide your light under a bushel, and for anything I know you may be able to write a book.

I am sorry to hear that Auntie's wrist is not mending more quickly. The wrist is a very troublesome part when out of order. Well, I think I must draw to a close because rumour says Johnny is coming over again and I don't like to leave a letter half finished. My friend Alf is working at Headquarters and I am living with Tom Ewing of Broughty Ferry. We get on very well together. I hope you are keeping well dearest and standing the cold all right. From our experience I should say it is better than heat. You can put on extra clothes when it is cold but when it is hot you can't reduce them below a certain level, even in the Army. I send all best love dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie

14 MAY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for papers received. It was only a small mail and I did not receive a letter. However I am hoping there will be another mail up soon. At present I am back with the Division. There is little fighting going on and my work consists of parades and renovating cable. The hours are long and it is more like soldiering, but the job suits all right and it is a change. Yesterday (Sunday) we had no duties so I sent back to the section to get a few things and have a swim. It was quite a change to be free for a whole day. We live in a deep ravine or wadi and have had to dig in a little in case of shell fire. We are a good way from the front line and I don't suppose anything will come our way. I have had quite a few homes lately and when I can get some photos developed I hope to show you some of

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them. I sent an application for transfer to Mac who is at Alex passing out some new Companies. He sent word back that we should not be allowed to leave our Company. I am going to see him when he returns. Tonight they are taking particulars of our civilian occupations for demobilization purposes. That is an assurance that the War will finish some day.

The Palestine Front is turning out a big thing. You will see by the map that the further we advance, the longer our right flank becomes. I think they will get more troops up before trying to move. Our dreams of Gaza, Beersheba and Jerusalem are not going to materialize as quickly as we expected. The days are becoming very hot and the flies are very troublesome.

I hope you are keeping well dearest and making progress on your new work. I am always thinking of you and wishing the War would finish and I could be back with you. I send all best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

KR to Aunites. Please excuse short letter because there is no news.

20 MAY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for two letters 23 April and 1 May, which came to hand yesterday. Thanks also for the tobacco, which is very nice. I am almost in the same boat as you with regard to finding matter for a letter. If I wished I could fill many pages on the subject of our troubles and trials, and it would give a little relief to my feelings, however, on second thoughts I think it would be more manly to say nothing. Am sorry must leave you until tonight. Have just got the chance to take a horse about 4 miles to try and get a wash. I shall come back more cheerful and weather permitting finish this letter.

21 May 1917. I did not arrive back until dark so had just time to make supper and go to bed. I had a nice swim but the sea was rough. Am afraid that the newspapers give you false impressions about the fighting here. The progress has not been rapid since the Turks commenced to oppose our advance. This place is to be used as a pivot, so we may be here all summer. Everybody is fed up and wants to see the job finished either one way or another. The spirit of the troops may be excellent, but it must be those who have got Base jobs.

Mails posted in England between 27 and 29 April have been lost at sea. I don't think you have written on the unlucky dates so I am fortunate. I hope your duty will be settled all right. It is a nice spirit to feel that you don't mind inconvenience during War period. As for the men grumbling about their hours, I am ashamed of them. If they were working as convicts in England there are thousands of men out here would change with them. If they could only have a little experience here they would be glad to go back home and keep quiet.

We do not see any airships here so I should have been interested in the one you saw. We see plenty of the aeroplanes and at times we have looked up

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at them, not from curiosity but from a personal safety point of view. Just now I can hear a gentle shrapnel-bursting in the sky. It sounds like Johnny having a shot at one of our machines. This occurs every day but I have never seen a machine brought down yet. Of course the anti-aircraft gun serves the useful purpose of making machines fly high.

Well, I can't find any more news this time dearest. You perhaps think I am a bit despondent. I am fairly happy and cheerful considering the state of things and am not putting out the white flag just yet. It is surprising what we can get used to and I mean to settle down to it if other chaps can stick it. It is not good to always live on hope. Going on the lines that the present is bad, and that all troubles and trials will cease at some future date is not common sense. I like to get happiness from the present if at all possible. But I do think there is some consolation to be gained from looking forward. I like to look forward to the time when we shall have a home of our own. It must be a priceless possession which money cannot always buy. The beauty of the home is not dependent on the furniture and size of the mansion, it is more dependent on the type of people who call it home. I often wonder if I shall wish for Egypt again when those days come. There is not much fear. I hope you will excuse this scrawl but I am writing under difficulties. It is necessary to have a section to keep back the flies, which are trying to eat my face, and my hands are covered with bandages to keep the flies from a few cuts and scratches. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love to you dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie

28 MAY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 7 May. The mails are not doing very well just now and yours was the only letter I received. You seem to have been deluged with letters all at once. Somehow I am out of love with Palestine just now because it has assumed such a dusty aspect and while I would like you to see Egypt, I cannot say the same of this bit of Palestine which we hold. I was speaking to a chap who had been into Gaza on the last scrap but he could give me no impressions because they were pushed out so quickly. The infantry boys are very ready to tell us of their experiences. It is really admirable how they carry on through all their trials. One very big chap made me smile. They had captured a redoubt and were holding it against a counter attack. A Turk about 15 years old came rushing in. The chap said 'I had not heart to use the bayonet so I just boxed his ears and put him in a corner.' In my travels one night I came near one of our front lines but it was as quiet as a farm at this place and the Turks were about 2 miles away so there was nothing to see. I made a journey one night to have a look at Tel el Jemmi, a huge mound which stands straight out of a plain. It is said to have been made by the Crusaders. The top is in the form

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of a double cross – so I took some photos and hope to be able to send them by next mail.

I am now back with the section and have been able to do all my washing etc. While in the Division our bivouac caught fire and I have had a lot of kit damaged. Perhaps I shall get it replaced but if not I shan't worry. I don't know what caused the fire as we had been out working an hour and a half. I have had my fill of manual work while up there. We were erecting poles most of the time. I don't feel fit enough to use the pick and shovel during the coming summer and shall be glad if my transfer comes about. Two of our corporals have left during the last few days so Mac may do something for me. I don't think Kantara Barracks would suit you. It is enough to give anyone the dumps down there.

Thanks for the information about the sundial but it was not quite what I required. As far as I can make out the pointer slopes at an angle of 45 degrees from the ground and points in the direction of the geographical meridian which passes through the sundial. I do not know how to find the meridian because a compass does not point due N and S. Seeing that the axis of the earth is sloping the things needs to be set up correctly in order to give the same readings all the year round. However I shall have a try at making one if I have any spare time.

Am pleased you are having nice weather. It will be a change after all the snow and slush. We cannot use cycles here but we have Ford cars. I had a 4 mile trip in one yesterday over rough country. It is very exciting. Well I am just going to get supper ready so must leave you dearest. I hope you are well, I hope to have more news next time. KR to Aunties. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

3 JUNE

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for heavy mail, which contained tobacco and 3 weeks' papers. The letter is not yet to hand but will no doubt be up shortly. I saw on the newsletter that mails are to be sent to Egypt fortnightly. I hope that does not refer to Army mails. This is a funny place. Somebody is letting off a gun just now in the next field and it is midnight. Why can't they give it a rest? It is full moon but up to the present we have had no visits from hostiles. At last I have got a decent mob, which may last a few weeks. It is a small office staffed by nine men. We work in reliefs of three. All time off duty is my own and I can have a dip each day and do a little reading. Perhaps at the end of a few weeks I shall be fed up. Everybody gets fed up with everything. It is hard work combatting the heat and flies. My bivouac is flyproof but I cannot keep it cool. I have tried a double roof but that does not make much difference. Perhaps it is better to be melted away than worried to death by flies. There are worse climates than this. I have just been reading about life in some of the Pacific Islands. We are well off compared with people there.

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You have perhaps noticed a begging advert in the *British Weekly* asking for £50,000 to relieve the distress in Palestine. The sketch map shows Deir el Belah where I live. I don't know what the money is needed for. The people this side of our line are well enough off, and people at the other side cannot be reached owing to the Turks being there. When it has been found necessary to ration the people the Army has done so. A lot of the people round here are undoubtedly doing their best for the Turks and have to be watched. There must be plenty of people at home who are more deserving of assistance, but then we Britishers do some funny things. You will notice I didn't say Englishmen. I live with a Scotsman so have to be careful. I got rather busy last night so had to leave this until today. My word it is hot. You have no idea what it is like. I have to keep drying myself with a towel. Shortly I shall be in the sea, which is about a mile away. We have to bathe within 3 yds of the shore owing to dangerous currents. I shan't venture out much further because I have had a lesson: without paying attention I got fairly well out and when I wanted to return it was a real fight. In the end I had to land on some rocks and fortunately I managed this without being cut up. It is peculiar how a kind of instinct seems to help one on in cases where there is danger. Well dearest I haven't any more news. I can't make news when there is nothing doing. I send all very best love and kind thoughts. Hope you are well. KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

10 JUNE

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for yours of 14 May. I hear that a mail for Blighty has gone down so you might miss one of mine. Perhaps it won't matter so much because I have done a wee bit of growling about my conditions lately. One is apt to get dissatisfied at times, but it passes away. If I were only wiser I should keep the fact in view that we have both rough and smooth. It is very easy to forget that at times. Just now I am perfectly contented with my work. I am my own boss and all my spare time is my own. The only thing is that I might be switched off at moment. There is no security of tenure on a job in the Army. Perhaps it is selfish to look for suitable jobs but everybody does it. The glory and honour stunt fizzled out about 2 years ago.

Things are very quiet here. The Army is resting on its laurels. We hope to be here in about a month's time when the figs will be ripe. Speaking about figs reminds me of the expression 'under your own vine and fig tree.' A few of us were working amongst vines and fig trees a short while ago and we were all troubled with fleas for days. So this living under a fig tree cannot be so very fine after all. There is a decent fruit, which grows on tall trees near our camp, a half way between a fig and a pear. The name is 'gamiz'. Despite the peculiar name it tastes OK. There is a fruit called '*teen shoker*' which will be out soon.

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We call them prickly pears but the translation of the name is 'figs with forks'. The prickly pears grow on the cactus plants. I suppose you will have seen types of cactus. These here grow about 10ft high with leaves 1 to 1½ ft long. The leaves are thick and juicy and as time goes on they turn into branches. Both leaves and fruit have the appearance of having been stuck on. The cactus is the most grotesque type of vegetation I have seen.

My partner was called away a few days ago but Alf has returned from Headquarters so we are together again. We have reconstructed the home and made it into a little palace. It is dustproof, flyproof and cool. The size is about 6 by 12 ft. The doorway is covered with gauze and there are two gauze windows. The beds are on the two sides and the middle portion is a well about 1 ft 6 ins deep. We can walk about in the middle portion without covering the beds with dust. I made a bed this morning so now I am quite comfortable. I do wish you could see our little place.

Am sorry to say my photos are not yet to hand but they should be here soon. Am glad you were able to see Jack. I suppose everybody alters somewhat after being away. You seem to be losing all the men from the office. Well we know you can carry on. It is only right that all should have a try at this game. Even the older ones will be getting a chance soon. Am sorry to hear that Gussie is down again. He should try a trip to New Zealand. I suppose it is a fine climate for all kinds of consumptives. I wasn't aware that prisoners passed through Harrogate. They are well out of it as soon as we get them. A monotonous time is much better than being wounded or killed.

I have just been reading *Mr Britling Sees It Through* (HG Wells). It is a fine book and gives a good idea of the average Englishman's attitude towards the War. Wells considers that an Essex man is a real type of Englishman. Perhaps it is conceit but I think a Yorkshireman would have served the purpose better II..IIx

We seem to have no news. It is like living in the country. I am hoping to see in next papers that the submarine menace is well in hand. I do not like the idea of you being short of food because we always have plenty. Well, I must close now as we seem to be getting busy. I wish I could tell you we were coming home but there seems to be no hope for years. I am looking forward to those happy days. In the meantime I send all my love. Please give KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

17 JUNE

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 20 May. Thanks for your sympathies about the rough time etc. Well, just now I am in clover. That is to say Alf and I are. Having some idea that we should stay here a little while we have gone to some little trouble to improve our conditions. The latest addition to our *maison petite*

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is acetylene gas. Most of our spare time is spent in cooking for ourselves. It is perhaps very selfish to think about ourselves so much but it adds to our happiness. It isn't all selfishness exactly when you have a partner because you think for his comfort as well as your own. We made a journey to a place 4 miles away to purchase milk and margarine. With milk we can always make things. I know ever so many deserted orchards so we are able to have stewed fruit and cornflour. In addition we make all kinds of puddings. The cooking is done on a fire on the double pan system. This saves a lot of stirring. Of course I am not attempting to give you hints on cooking II..IIx

Well, I wish you could just hear the old song '*kam layla, kam yoom*', seeing that you wonder how many nights and days. I have been thinking that my luck has changed because I am so contented in this hotel. I only need someone to fill my pipe and light it for me then I should be completely at ease. Am pleased to hear your Blighty weather has improved. Our weather has stolen a march on us. The bivouac was cool but since the temperature has gone up and the sea breeze finished it is 'some' hot. We are treated to a kind of Turkish bath every day. Tea, which bucks us up more than anything, also causes us to perspire. But we can't have it every day. I do not know of a cold drink that is stimulating like tea. You know the Japanese drink iced tea, that should be very nice.

I enjoyed the article on reading by Sir Robertson Nicoll*. He is a fair critic and gives his opinions without hurting the writer's feelings, even when they are adverse opinions. One cannot help but be attracted by his kindly nature and knowledge. I have just been reading Jack London's *Valley of the Moon*. I hope to be able to introduce you to his books some day. He is a man, and a real manly one. I should call him both a woman's man and man's man. I feel ashamed of my poor attempt at being a man after reading Jack London. With regard to Yankeeisms – I find that most Australian slang words are of Yankee origin. I have often thought they try to emulate the Yankee.

Am sorry to say my little office closed down so I am now back with the section. Well, it is nearly lights out so I must close. I hope you are keeping well dearest. I am longing and waiting for the day when I shall see you. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

**Sir William Robertson Nicoll (1851–1923) was a Scottish Free Church minister, journalist, editor, and man of letters.*

1 JULY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for yours of 3 June. I can't think where I could be to be writing to you under trying circumstances. Fortunately I am not writing under trying circs. at present and it is no trouble under any circumstances dearest. Writing to you is

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the next best to being with you so it is a pleasure. I am sure you have not misled me with regard to yourself dearest, and I am not to let my expectations soar too high. Well, that depends. I am not expecting or looking forward to you bringing forth a lot of attainments, which you have hitherto kept in the background. I may have only known you intimately for three years but I have seen you before. It is quite easy to notice that people differ. Many times I see ideal men but I have only seen one ideal girl. If you are the same Madge I have always known, when I return I shall not be disappointed. In fact I know I shall be dazzled etc. Many a time I wonder about myself. I live amongst coarse surroundings, but I try to live my own life. I hope you will not be disappointed.

I have often told the boys we get better rations than the people at home. Our sugar is now 3 oz per day. That does not go very far. We could perhaps do better with it if we handled it ourselves. We now get frozen rabbits twice a week



Moonlight view of
the Nile at Luxor

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in place of beef. They are a fine issue. I really envy Eddie Chapman his trip to India. It must be a fine country and after all I have heard about it from my Mysore Lancer friends I should like to go. I have enjoyed what you have written dearest. That is certainly the better way of putting it.

I am not having a rough time. I own two horses at present named Daisy and Molly. I have to ride them to water (a mile) three times a day and look after them generally. They are good horses and the work is not heavy and the War is rolling on so I am quite happy. I get a fair amount of time for reading. A chap lent me a book on the writing of Arabic. It looks like a 10-year job so I don't think it will be any use attempting the written language.

Our Company's health is breaking up owing to our prolonged stay in the East. Nearly half are attending the doctor. As an outcome I think we shall get a holiday. It will be 7 days' leave from Kantara. Providing we pay our own fare and don't get locked up, we can go where we like in Egypt. I shall try for Luxor. Of course it is not settled yet and I am a fit man and will probably go last. Up to the present I have never had to report sick through ill health. It is something to be pleased about.

I received the parcel safely and enjoyed the contents. I will write to Aunties during the week. Well, I must go on picket now. Ten to midnight and 4 to 6 am. The nights are lovely. I can do 22.00 to 24.00 in my shirt sleeves. I hope you are keeping well dearest. All best love. KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

8 JULY 1917

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for heavy mail which includes letters for 11 and 18 June, tobacco and two bundles of papers. I shall be kept quite busy reading all the news. The newspapers give us some idea of how things are going, and we are very anxious to get the job finished. Old Claudius Clear is very good and I generally rush for him when the papers arrive. He seems to have such a fine grasp of life and says many kind things which endear one to him. Now, if I could only express similar kind thoughts to you I should be happy and satisfied. To be able to write things that please is often a trick of the trade, but there is no trick about Claudius – he gives away a little bit of his heart 'backsheesh'.

I am glad you are having fine weather. A bit of English scenery would please me under any weather conditions. You can always keep warm but it is impossible to keep cool. Why, in England you waste water! We would think we were in paradise if we had your brooks and rivers. I don't know if you remember a little flow of clear water which trickles into a horse trough on the roadside by the entrance to Mother Shipton's Cave. I often think about it especially when I am trying to quench my thirst with tepid water which is slightly brackish and tastes of chloride of lime.

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Thanks for voting paper. You did not advise me how to vote. I hope I have done right. Thanks for newspaper cutting. I know several chaps who were on the stunt. They say it was very interesting. Am glad you have received some of my letters at last. As far as I know Mac won't let me transfer because he would get a buzzer pioneer in my place. I asked for transfer to one of the new Divisions. I don't really mind having a rough time so much but hate being in a cul de sac. I hope I haven't shattered your faith in the troops, but honestly I work in a section where 50 per cent 'swing the lead'. They seem to prosper with it because they are usually resting in hospital while the few who remain do the work. There are genuine cases but the 'lead swingers' are easy to recognize. Our leave has commenced. The ailing ones have gone first, and we fit ones will go later if there isn't a stunt in the meantime. I think we can choose Alex, Cairo, Port Said or Ismalia. It will be a nice holiday. At present we are working hard. There are 11 of us to attend 38 horses. I have got three good ones and do not dislike the work.

I have just bought a very fine Arabic book. Am afraid it will take up a lot of my time because it is difficult to understand. It differs from the spoken language, which we have learnt off the natives. Am pleased that all the news is very cheerful. We shall be home before next June. What a long time – but we can only wait patiently. All very best love dearest. KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

31 JULY

My Darling Madge,

I have got back to work again after a delightful holiday, so will answer your two letters which arrived a week ago. Have just got back from a nice ride. One of our boys has got a linesman's job at a Battery. I went with him to bring the horse back. There seemed to be very little going off up there but it was a nice ride. Thanks for all the news, also information about the sundial. I am very busy at present but may attempt one later. I do hope the War is not going to last two more years. The worst of it is that civilians pull the strings. I am fairly well fed up and I realise that there are thousands who are having it worse than I am. For the sake of those who are suffering I wish it could finish. Am sorry to hear Kettlewell has been poorly. You know he has shown himself more a man than some of the others.

Well, I think you would like to hear about my holiday. It has been a delightful change, but it was heartbreaking to have to return to this after being almost a civilian for a week. All the time I have been wishing you could have been present to enjoy all the beautiful places. The photos will give you some idea of the temples, but you need to see them in order to understand what they are like. There is an Arab proverb that says 'He who drinks of the Nile will return.' I have drunk much, so some day I will return accompanied by you. II..IIx I have 86 photos for you and am sending them through the censor in three separate lots.

They have been printed for me by a man at Luxor who knows his work.

Well, to begin with we have travelled 1,300 miles on the train, i.e. 650 each way, so you can guess Luxor is a long way off. It is situated on the right bank of the Nile not far from Aswan. The whole district abounds in temples built about 3000 BC. Many have been brought to light but there are many more buried in the sand and money is not forthcoming for excavation work at present. The first part of our journey was to Kantara by Army Railway (220 km). This took from 5 pm to 7 am. We travel in goods trucks provided with a wooden awning. Perhaps you are not aware of the fact, but it is impossible to find a square foot in a goods truck that is not provided with a good hefty bolt. The bolts and jolting of the train were not conducive to sound sleep, but we managed somehow. At Kantara a motor conveyed us to the State Railway Station. We were able to get a good meal at the Australian Rest Hut, then we found an Army establishment where cold shower baths were provided. We were able to leave for Cairo at 9 am feeling quite fresh. Cairo was reached at 1.40 pm. We had a few hours to wait so took tram to Heliopolis. This suburb, which was built by a Belgian Company, boasts of some very fine buildings. You will receive some views. We set off to Luxor at 8 pm and slept from 10 pm to 4 am. At dawn we found ourselves in the fertile valley of the Nile. *Dhora* (a camel food) and cotton were the chief crops. The land is irrigated by Nile water and the farming is carried on in a very different way to the farming at home. The irrigation scheme of Egypt, which includes the Aswan dam and the barrages at Assuit and Cairo has raised the Nile about 6 ft in the low water season. Where one crop a year was grown formerly now two are grown quite easily and some farmers manage five. The water is raised to the land either by means of a *shadoof* or a *sakieh*. A *shadoof* is an ingenious arrangement and worked by balance like this

The *sakieh* has a revolving chain of water vessels and is usually worked by two oxen and a small boy. The farmers appear to be continually watering the land. We noticed an absence of Europeans at the railway stations, and the vendors of fruit etc were crying their wares in Arabic. We could purchase a helmet full of grapes for 1 piastre (2½d) and a large sweet melon for the same. I have eaten quite a lot of melons. As the nigger boy says 'I lub melons but dey makes your ears so wet.' We arrived in Luxor at 9 am. I think I will carry on with the yarn tomorrow as it is 10 pm. GW dearest.

1 AUGUST: Luxor is a big tourist centre but owing to the War they get no visitors at present. We were greeted by a mob of about 50 people. There were guides, donkey boys, cab drivers, hotel touts etc. After much trouble we shook them off and settled at Luxor Hotel. It was a fine place and we thoroughly enjoyed the hotel life. We had the hotel to ourselves. You can hardly realise what a pleasure it was to see water running out of a tap II..IIx

We settled up with a guide named Abdu Mohammed, and arranged for three days' sightseeing. We each paid him £2/10 and out of that he paid for everything. This appeared to be the best way because we knew what we were going to see and were relieved from giving backsheesh to anyone. Old Abdu gave us every

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satisfaction and stuck to his contract. Our first journey was to Luxor Temple on the right bank of the Nile. It has some very fine statues and huge columns. These temples took over 100 years to build, and from the ruins it is possible to form some idea of what they were like. Karnak Temple situated about an hour's drive from Luxor was our next place. Originally this temple covered 1,000 acres. There are two fine avenues of sphinxes. Unfortunately the sun was not in the right place for me to get a good photo, but the ones I am sending will give you some idea. Like Luxor Temple, Karnak is full of fine statues and carved pillars. Two of the gates are still standing. They are beautifully carved with pictures. We paid two long visits to the other side of the river. Here we visited about half a dozen temples and I began to get bewildered and forgot their names. The



Views from Eddie's trip to Luxor

Colossi of Memnon are two fine figures. You will notice on the photo someone is standing near one of the statues to give you an idea of the size. In some of the tombs we saw some fine paintings on the walls. Some of them were as fresh as though they had been done yesterday. In one tomb we had the pleasure of meeting a king who was over 3,000 years old. The mummy had been unwrapped and the old man looked fine. It was on this side of the Nile where we saw one of the seven wonders of the world. It is a statue of Ramesses the Great. It weighed 1,000 tons and was cut out of a solid block of granite. The Persians smashed the statue, but enough of it remains to form some idea of its size.

We had a long drive into the country to see a pottery factory and a pigeon farm. They were both interesting. One afternoon we went 11 miles up the Nile in a boat. I had a fine swim. The water was quite cool. It was up here where I drank Nile water. The boatman just dipped the kettle over the side of the boat to fill it. The tea was very fine, altho' this may be accounted for by the fact that we had cows milk in it. I had not tasted cows milk for over a year. We had two musicians on board – one played a kind of reed instrument which sounded like bagpipes and the other played a tomtom or drum. I had a try at the tomtom and got on fairly well. Luxor has a market day. It was very interesting to see all the fellaheen rolling in with produce etc for sale. They usually ride donkeys, and often two men ride on one donkey. I was able to have a talk with a few of the farmers. They seemed a decent lot and were not so eager for backsheesh. At one stall I saw some wild men who are called *Bishareen*. They wear long hair and wash in castor oil. They also use castor oil for cooking. Well, I think I have told you as much as I can remember about Luxor.

On the return journey we had two days at Cairo. One day we visited the Nile Barrage and gardens and another day we took train to Matrich, the place where Joseph and Mary rested when travelling in Egypt. We visited the Virgin's well and tree, also an obelisk. We had a look round an ostrich farm, which was interesting. It was a pity to see the birds deprived of their feathers though. At last our holiday came to an end and we had to come back up here. Now it is the daily round, the common task. Perhaps it will finish some day. I believe another ship has been lost at sea as we have received no mail since those written on 1 July. They appear to be getting the submarine menace in hand. I think we shall have another stunt in the course of a few weeks. It is silly staying in one place.

I hope my letter isn't too long. It would not look very long on larger paper. I forgot to mention that as the train in which we returned was sailing out of Kharga Junction, big Stanley Mitchell came and shook hands. He is a six footer now. I had not time to have a chat. He is stationed at Kharga Oasis which is reached by Army light railway 175 km from the Main Line. There are some nice slow jobs up the Nile. One of the Divisional brass bands is playing outside our camp. I will try shutting my eyes and pretending I am in the Valley Gardens. I hope you are keeping well dearest. I send all very best love. Please give KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

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13 AUGUST

My Darling Madge,

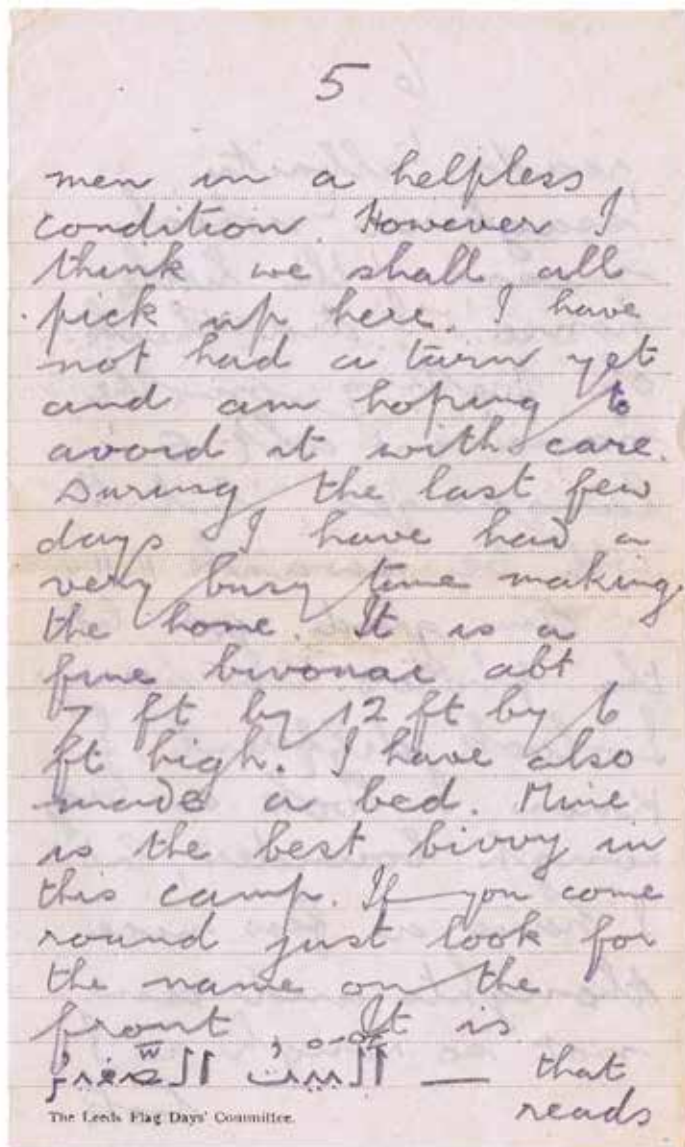
Thanks very much for yours of 16 and 22 July, also tobacco and papers which arrived today. Am sorry I could not get a letter off last week because we were so busy. I have sent you a full account of the trip to Luxor also three batches of photos. I hope they arrive safely. Well we have got a new job. As you know we came out as GHQ Signal Company; while we were at Ismailia the GHQ went to Cairo and we were made Eastforce Headquarters, and Lines of Communication did GHQ work. Now GHQ under General Allenby has come up the line and we are GHQ Signals once again. This has meant a move of about 6 miles down the line. We are on desert sand and it is fine after the filthy dust. We can see nothing but sandhills and the sea about 4 miles away. It is very bracing and we expect it will be more healthy. Today we have been reinforced with about 20 drivers and 10 miles. It will make the work lighter. The section has gone flop all at once. We have 16 men in hospital out of 30 so you can understand how hard we have had to work. I am the only operator who is fit. Alf did not come up until after we had moved – he landed here with fever and the next day was so bad that he had to go in dock. Harold Morris of BKB who is in our bivouac took fever the next day and he has been at boiling point. He has had a rough time but I am doctoring him and he is nearly better. Frankie has started with it this morning, but he is laying up to see if it will pass off. We have three more men in a helpless condition. However, I think we shall all pick up here. I have not had a turn yet and am hoping to avoid it with care. During the last few days I have had a very busy time making the home. It is a fine bivouac about 7 by 12 by 6 ft high. I have also made a bed. Mine is the best bivvy in this camp. If you come round just look for the name on the front. It is [*Arabic script*] – that reads ‘*albait alsaghir*’ which means ‘the little house.’ I did think of putting on the name in about five languages, but that would be swank II..IIx

Am glad you like the photos. Am sorry I look different. I know I look a big rough boulder, but I have a few nice thoughts and am not so rough as I look. The manual work may have made me a bit rugged but I am satisfied to have been amongst some of the fighting and rough life. When I see the neatly groomed dandies down at the Base I feel fairly contented with my lot and feel satisfied that I have tried to do my bit. No doubt you are on holidays now. I do hope you have a good time. It is a long time since I was going to Scotland with you dearest, but I have plenty of faith and keep believing. When I get those civvy clothes on we shall be able to do a lot of things. Some day I shall have to sing you this song about civvy clothes. I heard two new lines the other day which ran – ‘NCOs will all be navvies, Privates ride in motor cars’ etc etc.

I am really enjoying Claudius Clear’s articles on ‘A Five-Pound Library’. We shall have to invest in one. He made one statement to the effect that anyone who reads thro’ this library will become intellectually superior to the average person. I am getting all kinds of jobs lately. Have been cooking for a few days

and tomorrow I am a kind of backsheesh quartermaster. I set off at 4.30 am to draw rations and forage about 4 miles away over the sand. It is awfully cold at that time. I want a 9 to 5 job and then I shall be happy. Well it's about 10 pm so I must go to bed. I send all my best love and kind thoughts dearest. Please give my KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie



Arabic script from Eddie's letter of 13 August 1917

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19 AUGUST

My Darling Madge,

There has been no mail this week so I haven't one of yours to answer. It is Sunday afternoon so thought I had better drop you a line. The sun is shining brightly and the sand is drifting in at the door. Ours is a happy home. Am sorry to say that our home is not quite as bright as it might be. Harold Morris and Alf are back and owing to their state of health they are unable to look on the bright side of things. Poor Harold had six weeks in hospital and came out very weak – he took fever and they had him in dock for a day to get his temperature down. Now he can hardly crawl about and looks so wan and weary. I feel sorry that I can do so little to help him. Alf had three days in dock and now he is very weak. I tell him he has got water on the brain. Our drinking water is very bad, it tastes something like magnesia water. Alf can't get it down and he is always worrying about it. I was able to bring him four pints of good water this morning. This sandfly fever seems to leave them with all kinds of dislikes in the way of food. I am hoping the cooler weather will brighten them up a little.

I have got a fairly decent job at present. I have a horse of my own and have to buy in canteen stores for the section. In the morning I generally have a ride of about 8 miles over the sand hills, and in the afternoon I have to water the horse at a village about 3 miles away. In addition the horse requires grooming twice a day and there is the saddle to keep clean. It is just a nice easy day's work and I get a decent bit of exercise. Of course jobs like this don't last for ever, but it suits me for the present. There is a strong rumour about leave being granted to men who have been out two years. Something may come of it after the next stunt.

We have some Frenchmen doing guards on a village near by. I tried one with a bit of my best French and he did not show any signs of understanding me. I found out afterwards that most of the men are Algerians and speak Arabic. You can understand that I was disappointed at first. We are getting settled down here, but we have to move to another spot about 2 miles away. Alf is quite pleased because just now he would not mind moving into the Turkish lines if he could get good water. Personally I do not like the idea of building another house.

I wonder how you are bearing the pain. We never hear about your hardships. I know you are having to put up with a lot of things. A chap from Blichty tells me the bread is awful and is giving you all indigestion. I could supply you with plenty of bread of the white variety, but of course you are not here.

It is pleasant to look forward to the time when it will all be over. I am an optimist because I do think it will finish some time. It will be my chief delight to make you happy dearest. Many a time I wonder how much longer it is going to last and if I didn't get your letters it would seem as tho' I was here for good. I send all best love and kind thoughts dearest. Please give my KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

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27 AUGUST

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 29 July. Am pleased you have received some of mine. It is a pity I shall not be home in time for your holidays, but I may be getting a leave in the course of the next six months. They have been asking for particulars of men who have been out more than 18 months. It is supposed these particulars are required for leave purposes.

I thought it was peculiar that nobody had volunteered for work in France. Some friends of Alf's have gone on the job. There are plenty of restrictions and the girls have to be in at 5 pm II..IIx You ask how the job would suit you. Well, I am in the Army, and I know what it is to lose my liberty. If you asked my advice it would be identical with that of Punch's to those about to be married. But no doubt we boys are debited with having a good time and plenty of adventures. These good times and adventures are very weary at times. Perhaps patriotic motives should come before personal ones. If you are a skilled telegraphist and decide to do a bit for the Army, they will probably find you a job at washing floors and in the end you would find you had been more useful at home. It is an unwritten rule that nobody is employed on the work they enlisted for. II..IIx You can't fully appreciate what I tell you about the Army because it is impossible to understand what things are like unless you have experienced them. For instance, try and picture all the overseers in the PO with absolute authority to the extent that if anyone disobeyed an order they could be shot, or might get a few years' imprisonment. Then try and picture those same overseers giving out all their work to the rank and file and living a life of ease on the strength of their authority. No doubt you think the rank and file would kick against it, but you would find that quite a lot would wish to curry favour. Every day I see men grooming horses, cleaning saddlery, washing up, washing clothes etc etc for NCOs. These men get stripes for this kind of work. I am not exaggerating in the least. The PO is bad but the Army is worse. I am disappointed in the majority of men, but it is nice to know there are a few who play the game.

Well, we are going to move tomorrow. This house will have to come down and be erected somewhere else. I like the bivouacs because if you collect plenty of material they can be made very comfortable. It is peculiar to note, however, that the niggers working up here are provided with tents. For the next few days I shall be working like a Trojan to get the place built. It only takes about 10 minutes to pitch a tent, but a bivouac means about 10 hours' hard work. However, the War is nearer finishing every day. We shall only be moving a few miles to get out of a village area. My two friends have picked up in this camp and everybody seems in good health. I am still on the same job, which is buying canteen stores for the section. I have had a busy time because we have been paid. My horse is quite well but am afraid he does not get enough to eat because he tried to bite me this morning. I don't mind him biting with his lips in play but he tried to use his teeth. This name is *Showeesh* which means 'sergeant'. He is very

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frightened of camels and the last man who had him used to walk rather than take him amongst camels. I hope to cure him in time.

Well, I keep seeing a little War news and there are not many signs of an early finish. I do hope it isn't going to last for ever. I hope you are keeping well dearest and not finding the work too heavy during the season. I send all my best love. Please give KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

Would you mind giving this letter to Gladys? I have only one envelope.

2 SEPTEMBER

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 13 Aug, also for bundle of papers. Am pleased you have received the cards from Luxor and I hope the photos have arrived by this time. I do hope you had a good holiday at Craigenreoch. I guess the journey will have been fairly tedious but you will no doubt feel fully repaid on arrival. You keep talking about people getting leave – it is most annoying. There is some talk of leave for us but up to the present it is only talk. I am afraid the authorities are not treating us fairly. The officers have been home and we are supposed to last longer than them. Perhaps we shall get home when it finishes – if it does finish.

I am having a fairly good time in our new camp. I go riding all over the countryside – sometimes for half a day and occasionally for the whole day. I have a good horse and I like the rides. I have just been paying a visit to some Algerian soldiers with a view to improving my French. They speak both Arabic and French. I seem to do best with the Arabic while Alf, who has not confused himself with Arabic, does best with the French. Our pronunciation is very faulty and they have difficulty in understanding us. However, we manage to carry on a conversation one way or another, and the Algerians do not know English. We have made a fine bivouac in the new camp. Later on I hope to send you a photo. I am doing a little gardening but owing to the approaching wet season I cannot grow spuds or eatables. Besides, we have no security of tenure and it would be very annoying to leave a good crop of vegetables. We have a good canteen about two miles away and we are able to buy all kinds of things. We go in chiefly for milk and eggs. The eggs are of uncertain age but that is a mere trifle.

Mr Barwell has written me a letter while on holiday. He has been amongst troops and as far as I can gather he does not find the spirit of the troops excellent. It is only natural they should get weary of war. I am on picket tonight for two hours. It is a nice moonlit night and I shall be all right. Am sorry there is very little news this week. Everything is quiet about us. I hope you are keeping well dearest and not finding the work too heavy. Please give my KR to Aunties.

All love, yours ever. Eddie

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9 SEPTEMBER

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks very much for the letter accompanied by tobacco. It is Sunday today but as we work as usual we can hardly tell the difference. There has been a football match tonight so there is plenty of enthusiasm in camp. Our section has won 4–nil. The lads are discussing the game and a few of them are dressing their wounds. My Frenchmen have just been over to see me. They are going to another post in a few days' time so I shall miss my lessons. One of them who has been a *garçon de café* is very well educated. Some of them do not speak much French, but they understand the local Arabic fairly well.

I am still on the same job, seeing we are GHQ I have had –to bring my saddlery into line. My horse is getting quite proud with his polished harness. I am enclosing a photo taken at our dusty camp; from left to right you see Alf, Frankie, and Harold Morris. The surroundings look OK but it was an unhealthy camp. The snap gives you some idea of our dress during the day. Alf has gone up to the front for a few days on an operating job. It will be a change for him as he is feeling a bit fed up. Frankie has got a stripe with the section. He is doing the clerking. Frank Colbert has also got a stripe in his section. The Harrogate group will be in power before long. I hope you had a good holiday dearest. Perhaps you will be telling me about it in the next letter. I am in the pink and hope to feel quite fit as the cooler weather comes in. I hope you are keeping well dearest. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

16 SEPTEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 20 and 27 Aug. The mail has come in very well this week. I have also received a box of tobacco from Aunties. Am pleased you have received some of the Luxor photos. They are very nicely printed and give some idea of the temples. It is a pity the weather has not kept fine during your holiday. Why not have a trip out here where it is always fine? As you say I should enjoy a holiday at Glenluce. I can always find something to interest me and as far as I remember from the book on Galloway there are plenty of old places worth seeing. But as the song says 'the time and place do not count but the one who is there'. I should be completely happy with you dearest even if we were in the desert.

Am pleased to hear all the boys are well. Perhaps someday we shall have a meeting of the troops. We should almost be able to start an army on our own. You are quite right about Sollum – it is on the Western Front somewhere beyond the place where Stanley Mitchell is stationed. You don't say what rank

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the young man is. Now, if he happened to be an officer and I went hanging round I should probably get shot at dawn. I don't see why you should consider that the places you have visited are not worth describing. Perhaps it is because they are commonplace to you. However I shall be able to visit them with an unbiased mind. II..IIx

Am sorry to say my Algerian friends have left here. They are going home on leave 20% at a time. The one I know best is a fine-looking chap with black moustaches and beard. He looks fairly old but is only 27. He is going to send me a card from Algeria. I am gradually making friends all over the globe. If we ever start globe-trotting there will be plenty of people to look up.

Well, it is supertime and I don't know what to make. Tea and dry bread does not sound very nice. I am always hungry nowadays and we never seem to have any spare jam for suppers. It is even impossible to get marmalade. Owing to the cold weather our eating capacity has doubled. I think it will have to be bread and milk. I hope you have returned from holidays feeling quite well dearest. Have you painted your cheeks? Well I must close now because it is bedtime. All very best love dearest. KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

25 SEPTEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 2 Sep. Am so sorry I am two days late in replying, but this is owing to visitors coming to see us at night. When one has a lot of writing to do and bags of books to read, visitors might be termed a nuisance. I usually look upon talking as a reserve to be resorted to when one has absolutely nothing else to do. You know what it is like to be behindhand. Well, I am dreadfully in the rear with reading. Books keep coming in and many of them are too good to miss, and that is why I look upon visitors as waste time.

So you have returned from holidays. I hope you feel quite refreshed and ready to carry on until the boys come home. Yours must be a very weary job, but it won't last for ever. Someday the War will be over and we shall be back in dear old Blighty. That will be a glorious day. A chap was admiring our home last night and he said I was a specialist in building bivouacs. I told him I did not claim to be a specialist, but someday I did hope to build a bivouac over which the Army had no authority. That will be some bivouac dearest.

Things are very quiet here and apart from the noise of the guns we should hardly know there was a war on. Hostiles fly over occasionally but our anti-aircraft keep them well up. It looks fine to see the woolly puffs of smoke in the air, but of course the scrap iron drops somewhere. I often hear the noses coming down. One dropped about 200 yds from me the other day. It was quite near enough to be unpleasant. However, I was in charge of a wagon so had to appear brave and say 'Drive on boys'. Just now I have got a signwriting contract on. I

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have taken care of your brushes and they go fine. Well, I am going to worry you again. My garden crop of maize has come up so fine that I think it would be easy to grow something useful even tho' the cool weather is coming on. Do you think it would be possible to send me a small quantity of seeds – say of lettuce, radishes or mustard and cress. I just want some of the cheap kind because you know we have no security of tenure and if we had to leave before they were ready It would be wilful waste.

I guess I am stumped for news so you will have to put up with a short letter. There is nothing very exciting about sand and nothing but sand. I send all my very best love to you dearest. Please give my KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

30 SEPTEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for yours of 9 Sep, also for two lots of papers. Am sorry to hear you are not getting my letters regularly. I generally manage a letter to you each Sunday or Monday. Do you know, to a certain extent letter writing is becoming a problem. One hears all the boys saying there is not a thing to write about, and lately I seem to have caught the disease. My letters to you have not satisfied me at all and many a time I have been sorry to post such specimens. I have always wished that my letters to you should be full of interest and that they should convey a message of love. I should like them to be model letters because I like you to have of my very best. I also like you to feel assured that my love for you is the real article. Unfortunately, owing to lack of time for thinking things out, my letters have fallen short of the ideal.

This letter-writing problem is worth analysing. The main reason why two correspondents often feel they have not much to write about is frequently due to the fact that they have been apart for a long time. While their aims and ideals may be similar, the fact of them living thousands of miles apart causes them to have different interests. Different conditions of life also give them different interests. For instance, I could hardly expect you to feel a big interest in my horse, which you have never seen. You would not want to know if he bites or what colour he is and if he is a good ride etc. Now if I were to bring him round to Lyngarth you would be very interested. In fact you would want a ride because he is such a nice old fellow. Just the same with anything connected with your work – I should find a lot more interest in it if I were with you. It seems a pity when I am taking part in the largest war history has ever known, that I have little to write about. We are not supposed to write about the War, and if it were permissible I do not get a bird's eye view of the business. The little part I am called upon to play is not clothed with glory, and I do not consider my experiences such that I could give any true impressions about war.

No doubt you will have experienced some difficulty about letter writing and

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be in agreement with my remarks. It is nobody's fault and cannot be helped. At present I do not see any real remedy but perhaps one will turn up if I think very furiously about it. In the meantime I do not want you to think I am growing cool dearest, and it is because of this I have mentioned the matter. I want you always to remember you are my ideal girl, that even 20 years of life in this wilderness would not change my love for you and that I am longing to see you again. Well, I think I shall have to close this discussion because somebody has come in to talk.

I have been very busy today. Sunday seems to be our busiest day. I have been working from 6 am to 6 pm and only been in the bivouac for meals. It does not give one much time for thinking. Am afraid you will be postmistress soon if all your supervisors go away. I was not surprised to hear about Winnie Austin because I had already heard thro' Alf. She has done quite right to look after herself because the Department have not treated her too well. As far as I can make out we shall soon be on active work again. It will be a change. I hope you are keeping well dearest. KR to Aunties.

All best love. Yours ever, Eddie

14 OCTOBER

My Darling Madge,

Suppose I must write you a longer letter this week or you will be giving me a row (I mean the kind of 'row' which rhymes with 'now'). Last weekend I was trekking way back into Egypt on an errand of destruction. We were knocking down a big telegraph route. I enjoyed the trip very much and was not over-worked. In fact on the last day I tramped a distance of 4 miles over the sandhills to renew my acquaintance with the sea. The swimming was delightful and had I been my own boss I should have lingered on the beach for a few days. During my absence we have been reinforced up to strength. This time we have netted a few Scots. I have hope of being able to talk Scotch yet.

Thanks very much for yours of 16 Sep. Am pleased you have received all the photos. They will give you some idea of ancient Egypt. Unfortunately the leave rumour seems to have come to nothing. Our trips to Alex and Cairo are counted as leaves. However, when the job is finished I shall have a very long holiday. In fact I think if I am with you dearest it will be all holiday.

Well, I have just had to clear out of my bivouac and go into a tent. It may be an advantage when the rains come but at present it is like leaving home to go into digs. Our front seems very quiet and I think we have settled down for a while. However, as the Australians say 'it will do me, and I'm not flash.' Our mails are only coming up slowly. I am expecting one from you anytime. I hope you are not working too hard at the office. Am afraid our overseers are not very eager to become soldiers. Ah well, perhaps it is necessary to have a few stokers in Blighty. We give them that name because they are keeping the home fires

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burning. Well, it is about suppertime. The menu is coffee, jam and bread. Will you have some? One day last week my dinner consisted of dry bread and water. I was very hungry at the time and quite enjoyed the meal. I hope you are keeping well dearest. I shall be home as soon as we win. Please give KR to Aunties. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

31 OCTOBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for your three letters of 26 Sep, 1 and 8 Oct. They have been rolling in during the past few days. Thanks for all the news concerning the office and the War. I am hoping it will soon be over but of course nobody knows. Just as I am writing there is a battle on and we are near enough to hear the guns and see the shell-bursts. You will probably know all about it by the time this arrives. At present I am a mounted lineman at a Signal Office. We seem to get all kinds of jobs and they all help to pass the time on. Yesterday I had a 10-mile trip over the hills to an outpost. I made tea in a large Turkish building. Later on we are hoping to see a bit of civilized Palestine, but of course that depends.

We have been moving nearly every day. You see, we land in a place and select a spot then somebody tells us we are in the wrong place, we move – probably to find that there is no place for us in this huge desert. Yesterday we were instructed to bury all rubbish 5 ft deep, today another chap has come along and made us dig it up. He would like it burning. And this is how we carry on the War. Am sorry to say I have been very poorly during the past four days. Am feeling much better now so can smile about it. I suppose this roughing it has found me out at last. I wouldn't wish my worst enemy to be poorly in this barren desert. We may come to the milk and honey later on but I am not building on it. I hope you are keeping well dearest. Please excuse no more at present because we are fairly busy and there is a war on. Please give KR to Aunties. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

3 DECEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 29 Oct. Have been so busy and tired lately that Xmas has almost escaped my memory. However, if I am not too late, I will wish you a Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year. How I would love to be back with you, despite the shortage of food etc. But never mind, surely this is the last Xmas which will find us at war. I shall eat my Xmas dinner in Jerusalem and I shall have a good dinner if it costs £5 II..IIx

There is very little change since my last letter written a week ago. We are still working 12 hours a day. I have been a fortnight with only 1 pint of water per day for washing. We are forbidden to smoke in the office and our food is poor and scarce. The water and food difficulty are due to lack of organization in the Company I am with. The officers have plenty of everything and are not worrying about us. Of course that is what the Army is like all over so I'm not worrying about it. A friend kindly sent me a few canteen stores up the line – a pleasant surprise. I have overcome the water difficulty also. I took a trip over to a village and had a bath and did the fortnight's washing. I have also found a well. It is about 100 ft deep tho' and the water takes some hauling up.

Oranges are not six for 2½d. I think it is a very reasonable price. I have made a journey to the Jewish Colony mentioned in last letter [*this letter appears to have been lost*]. It boasts of about 100 houses (wood with tiled roofs). The people are white and many have very light hair. Nearly everybody sells brown bread. 5/1– buys a pound load. Most of the men dress in European costume and look like Italians or Greeks. However, the girls seem to dress quite nicely – they all wear hobble skirts. I wanted a photo to send you but when I asked two of them they seemed quite shy. They were doing farm work at the time and could hardly be expected to pose for a photo unless they were dressed for the occasion. Naturally I was interested in what language the people would speak. I went into a small shop and asked in French if the chap had any matches. He said 'nein' so I took that for the German 'no'. After that he spoke in French and I could read him quite well. Quite a lot of the people spoke French. This particular chap told me that three weeks ago Germans and Turks were making purchases in his shop. I found out that Yiddish, Arabic and Turkish were spoken also. This is quite remarkable seeing the place is miles from a big town.

Thanks very much for your observations on my remarks about letter writing. I believe you have misunderstood me on one point. I did not intend to convey the idea that you were not interested in my yarns, but more the idea that it is impossible for you to be highly interested when you don't see the place at all. Also, I did not intend to convey that I was growing cool. I haven't my letter here so cannot exactly see what I did write. I did not mean to say anything unkind, so if I have done so just treat it as a mistake. I would so like to hear Mr Barwell's sermons. Wells is a fine logical thinker and everybody would do well to study his books. Perhaps Mr Barwell is speaking against Wells on some points. He will be doing good in any case. It is a peculiar fact but if there were no discussion and argument about religion and everybody accepted it as 'sure dinkum', religion would cease to be a living force. I have come to a conclusion about religion: it is faith rather than logic, and one is on the wrong track if he wants absolute proof for everything. Some books are better left unread and while I admire Blatchford very much I would rather not have read his book called *God and My Neighbour*.* Am sorry to say in reply to your question, that I have practically no time for reading at present. That is the worst of these successful advances.

Well, I am not able to send any Xmas cards to anyone so you must please give my Xmas wishes to any enquiring friends. I hope you are well dearest and

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Xmas does not prove too heavy for you. Please give my kind wishes to Aunties.
All very best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

**Robert Blatchford was a socialist campaigner and prominent atheist and an opponent of eugenics. God and My Neighbour was published in 1903.*

15 DECEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 13 and 19 Nov, also for papers which come to hand from time to time. Well, I am still in the same place and am pleased to say work has slackened off and we are getting plenty to eat and drink. After some awful rains it is fine at last, so I am quite contented and happy. I spend my spare time seeing all I can. There are a few villages dotted round and they are worth seeing. I see plenty of signs of the Turks. I could get any amount of souvenirs but we cannot carry them. Perhaps this little document will interest you. It came out of Beersheba. You will notice how it has been signed by means of the '*Katim*' or small seal. I don't want you to have any sleepless nights trying to translate it tho'.

I suppose you have heard the news about Jerusalem. The Generalship has been fine. Both Gaza and Jerusalem fell almost automatically owing to flanking moves. The defences of Gaza were fine and the place was almost impregnable from frontal attack. The number of prisoners up to date, according to the news, is 12,036 of which 562 are officers. This is a good haul. Well, 'have I been in Jerusalem?' *Pas encore*. I am wanting to go very much and if things turn out as I expect I shall soon be within a few hours' walk of the Holy City. If there is any chance I shall be having a look round.

A chap has just brought me yours of 25 Nov. Thanks for same. Am afraid my letters are not reaching you very regularly. It is a pity but I write as often as possible. Just now I am out of green 'uns but shall try to raise some somewhere, somehow. We have just heard that there is a Signal Co. coming out to relieve us, but it may only be a yarn. Such tales are always cropping up. I guess Geo. White is lucky in going to Italy. It must be a country worth seeing. Excuse me looking at it from the tourist point of view. One is apt to do so, and it is the only way to keep cheerful. While still keeping in view the hardships and trials which some of our boys have to go thro', there is no harm in being interested in what one sees. Am sorry I could not share the holidays with you dearest. You will have to wait until I get those civvy clothes on. You hope it isn't too warm for us. Oh dear, if you knew how cold I have been and how it has rained. I have had to arrange all kinds of contrivances to keep myself warm at nights. Recently I annexed another blanket so I have three and a greatcoat. Of course it is colder on the ground than in a bed and when we are mobile it is useless making beds.

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Am pleased you have enjoyed your holiday. It has no doubt been a change from the daily round. I hope Xmas passes off OK and you have a nice time. I don't expect anything special here. But as long as I am feeling well and can eat the Army food I shall not grumble. It would be childish to expect festivities in the field. Have just one rather remarkable thing to tell you. One of our boys went into the Jewish Colony and was surprised to hear a girl playing on a harp 'If you were the only girl in the world.' As this is a modern song and the village has been in the hands of the Turks it is very mysterious. Well, I am on all night so must be getting ready. I send all best love and kind thoughts dearest, hoping to be with you soon. KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

23 DECEMBER

My Dearest Madge,

Just a few lines to wish you many happy returns of the 29th proxims. Perhaps I shall be in time, but one never knows. Am sorry to say I am not in a position to send you even a small gift as I live in the mountain wilds. I have a pocket full of notes but they are no good up here. Let us hope the War is over before another year comes round. Things are not looking too rosy for Xmas. I see no signs of festivity, but am living in hopes that a few extras will turn up. The heavy rain has messed up transport and for the past few days grub has been frightful. However, I am on an office job and not having a bad time. There has been a small issue of butter today. It is the first issue I have ever seen on active service so that looks hopeful. A friend of mine has gone with a wagon about 50 miles down the line to buy in for Xmas. Today I hear he has got stuck and does not expect to get back for a few days. In that case we may celebrate Xmas about the 27th. Up to the present we have heard nothing about mails. Despite all these dark clouds I have not given up hopes and even if Xmas is not as merry as we should wish, well, it won't always be so. I suppose your Xmas and New Year will be very quiet owing to the war. We are all tired of playing soldiers I think.

During the past few days I have moved a little nearer my destination. Another move will find me there. When I have visited the interesting places you can expect a longer letter. I hope the Xmas and New Year rushes have passed off OK, and that it has not been too rough for you. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

2nd Nov 1918.

My Darling Madge,
Just shaving the
time of my life and
am very busy but
thought I wd drop
you a note yedy. I
tasted fresh meat &
bread for the first
time since 19th Sept; so
you can tell we have
been away from the
base. At Tiberias I
had a lot of responsibility
in the office & worked
very hard. The boss
seemed to appreciate
this. He is keen on
motors & took me for
a few rides. When we
set

The Leeds Flag Days Committee.

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PALESTINE

9 JANUARY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for papers and tobacco, which have come to hand. Am sorry to say there is no letter during the past week. No doubt I shall be lucky and get two by next mail. There are no Xmas parcels up yet. It is a big pity because the contents may be spoiled. I can understand that you have gone to some trouble to purchase things for Xmas. You can rest assured that your efforts are appreciated. I have bags full of grumbles to tell you but I think they will keep until I find a dull wet day. Of course you know it rains here. You have never seen rain like it in Blighty. It was snowing at Jerusalem three days ago. For the present it is a fine balmy morning so I feel quite happy. We are moving tomorrow and will soon be settled down outside Ramleh. I have seen it from a hill and it seems a decent town. I do hope we can get into the place. Am afraid there is no chance of a peep at Jerusalem for the present.

We are suffering from a shortage of matches just like you at home. I have made a small oil lamp, which burns all day and of course saves matches. The natives are also cornering silver and it is impossible to get change for a note. This makes us save money II..IIx I have not heard from Alf lately but I think he is progressing favourably. The orders have just come for tomorrow's move. We have to be up very early and march a good way and then embark in some lorries. I do not like the idea of carrying my kit.

I am wondering if Lord Lansdowne's speech* is a forerunner of some peace proposals. I do not like the idea of Britain caving in but there is no doubt that she will have to climb down a little. I have heard that we shall have peace by April. It is hoped so for the sake of those who are bearing the brunt of the struggle. We stand very little chance of leave now that the shipping question is so acute. I send all best love to you dearest, hoping you are keeping well. KR to Aunties.

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Yours Ever, Eddie

**in November 1917 the Daily Telegraph had published a letter from former Foreign Secretary, Lord Lansdowne, calling for a negotiated peace with Germany. For this Lansdowne was widely denounced both in the UK and the US.*

27 JANUARY

My Darling Madge,

Sorry have not received a letter from you during the past week. There is a kind of chaos in the Postal Section out here at present. They get in thousands of bags and seem to have no arrangements for dealing with them. A great number of the postal men have been transferred to the Infantry and the new men are strange to the work. Some of the postal men who can operate a little are coming into the Signals and as far as I can make out, fit men in the Signals are going to be transferred to the Infantry. I don't know if I shall get a turn in the Infantry. Anyhow, I shall not grumble if they do clear me out. It will be a change and it is only fair that all should have a turn. Up to the present they have not made any changes in the Signals. You will be gratified to learn that our officers are getting leave to Blighty. In some cases it is their second trip. This is a fine game but the officers win every time.

Headquarters and my section have moved up here. We have bags of staff so the office work is very easy. Of course there has been a lot of red tape pushed on to us. We march to the office with rifles etc. These things are put on to cause us extra trouble. I am tired of office work on these lines and would welcome a small office job. The weather has been delightful for the past week but it has started raining again today. I think it is the rain that causes me to grumble so much II..IIx NJP has rolled up here. He looks quite well and seems satisfied with Headquarters. I have not done much exploring lately. There is nothing fresh to see unless I take a long journey. There are plenty of rumours going round that the Turks want peace. Some of the papers say he will be throwing his mitt in. I hope he does, but I do not think he will be so easily settled. Two of my Xmas parcels from home rolled up a few days ago. Am pleased to say they were in good condition.

We have plenty of water here now with a tap in camp, and there are a few canteens in the vicinity. We are living in luxury. I hope you are getting plenty to eat. I learn from some of the 'stokers' who have recently joined us that life in England is no picnic. We have a railway near so do not go short of food. Oranges are very plentiful because there is no outlet for them. I bought 60 big ones for a shilling a few days ago. There are riots in Germany so I suppose they are anxious for peace. I hope they will bring matters to a climax. I send all best love dearest. Please give KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

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10 FEBRUARY

My Darling Madge,

It has just stopped raining after five days of it. The sun has come out quite warm so we are feeling quite happy. I hope it will keep fine for a few days now. During the past week I have made a trip to Richout, a Jewish village a few miles away. It is a prosperous little colony and seems self-supporting. They have all kinds of small shops and I was able to find a restaurant and get some lunch. The people at the restaurant were Russian Jews, I think, because their cutlery was made at Riga. However, they did not differ from other Jews very much. We paid 3/- for a small cutlet, bread, tea and two small cakes. I don't think a Greek would dare to have charged more. I came across an Arab camp. The people live in bivouacs made from odds and ends. The sheikh said they wander up and down the country getting pasturage for their flock. They had only been in their present place a fortnight and in that time had succeeded in gathering heaps of dirt and rubbish about their homes. Another feature of the camp was the dogs, which came out snarling and barking.

We have no furious wild animals here but there are the jackals like a small dog or fox. They come out about dusk and set up the most blood-curdling yells. It sounds as tho' somebody was being murdered. All being well and the weather fine I am going to try a trip to Jaffa in the course of a few days. It is a long way but I may be able to get a lift some of the way by motor. During the past week I have received yours of 24 Dec, 7 and 14 Jan, also some papers. Thanks very

Postcard of a
village in Palestine



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much for same. I hear Bennett is at Kantara. He was on the *Aragon* which got sunk. Nearly everybody who comes out nowadays seems to get torpedoed. Am pleased you have started the New Year well. As regards the letter writing there is no need for you to '*fasch*' (that's a Scotch verb) yourself about my letters. If I had any complaints to make I would soon do so II..IIx All your letters are quite dear to me, and I would not wish them to be any different. There is another thing I wish to thank you for – that is for giving the Mater a look up occasionally. I believe she would like to see us all back and worries at times. I know your visits have the effect of cheering her up.

Am afraid your girls are having a rough time at the office and each one that goes sick puts extra strain on the others. We should be glad to get back to the old place, and when we do arrive you will have to take a rest. I have had a letter from a friend who has gone home for a commission in the RE's. He tells me how he longed for Egypt when it was so wet and cold in England. He mentioned that he had a dream where he saw me in kilts carrying an infantry pack. It rather looks like coming events casting their shadows II..IIx Well, I think you have got all the news up to date. I posted some snaps to you last week. Hope they arrive safely. I think we shall be offered four days leave to Cairo, but I should not avail myself of it. The journey is too arduous and long. I want to go the other way. Please give my KR to Aunties. All very best love to you dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie

20 FEBRUARY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks so much for yours of 28 Jan and the papers. I wondered how you came to be using green ink. The news about Mrs Cameron is very sudden, and must have been a blow to Agnes and Jack. At present I haven't their address but have asked the Mater to convey my kind sympathy. It is very good of you to render a little assistance. Our letters seem to take a long time before they get answered. You mention about our Xmas and it is nearly March now. At present our conditions are quite decent and I have nothing to grumble about. The cooking is good, the hours of work short. Perhaps when you receive this I shall be on the move again. Last week we reduced our numbers to six in a tent, so I have made a bed. Sleeping on the ground is not a hardship but it is not good for one's health. The damp strikes thro. I am no longer a boss since H2rs arrived, but it was not much advantage to me. At present I work 8.00 to 1.00 and 17.00 to 22.00 one day and 13.00 to 17.00 the next. It is nice to get every night in kip.

You have really given me a poor month for holidays. Now when I come home you will have to support home industries and find me a better period II.. IIx I am pleased to hear old Carriline has turned up again. I expected he would come over and join. There has been quite a lot going off in our camp this week. We have had two whist drives. They were very enjoyable and we had quite a

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gathering of old pals. On Friday we are to have a concert. Unfortunately I shall be working. I did not win a prize at whist. Have you ever noticed that prizes usually go to the same kind of people every time? It is very funny how some people seem to have good luck. I have had a pal from Jerusalem to see me. He does not rave about being there, and he says there is not much to see. However it would be nice to get a peep at the interesting places, wouldn't it? Alf says he is coming up with the next draft. A chap from Base told me that if it hadn't been for me he would have stayed down there. II..IIx We have a friend at Base who was sick when we went on the Cape. He got on a writing job. He is not Staff Sergeant. Of course he has not seen very much, and any time he would have left it to come to the section. You see some people have greatness thrust upon them. I hope you are keeping well dearest. KR to Aunties. All very best love,

Yours ever, Eddie

I MARCH

My Darling Madge,

Thanks so much for yours of 4 and 10 Feb, also for bundle of papers. You see the posts are good to me sometimes. I am glad you have not worried yourself with the Turkish document. It would be too big a task for any of us to attempting translating. I can do a little at 'copperplate' printing but writing always beats me. There is also a disadvantage about the printing. They monogram the letters at times to make it look fancy. On the whole it is hopeless. Our Intelligence people are publishing a weekly newspaper in English, Arabic and Hebrew. Copies are not easy to obtain but when they get going I hope to be able to send you some. It is a proper newspaper and is published as a kind of political move.

Am pleased you have not had any difficulty in settling down at 26. It would be quite a change to be so near the office. I see you have had to keep running down to Starbeck to see if the Aunties were all right. Now I am sure I did not know Gladys had got an allotment. Of course she has been going to write to me for the past three years II..IIx I am so sorry to hear about Gus Hughes also about Dave's son. It is a pity that some people are always having to suffer. Let us hope that Gus will be able to find a suitable place for his constitution. You know Robert Louis Stevenson lived a long time with the same complaint, but he was able to select a suitable place. His last years were spent in Samoa. I hope Dave will hear good news of his son, before long. Posted 'missing' seems so unsatisfactory.

Well, you are hoping I have settled down in this camp. You would laugh to see me sitting on my bed like an old Turk, writing letters. I have a bookcase down the side and can just reach out if I want to fill in any time. It is a pleasant life for me at present and I have nothing to grumble about. After all, life is a funny business. I am as contented as ever I could be in the Army. I get a lot of happiness from books and friends. I don't think it is selfish to try and keep

sunny and bright. Perhaps it is a bit selfish to bother about oneself. You will have to preach at me when I return. As you remark, three years will soon be up. There seems no chance of getting home dearest, except on compassionate leave. They have even refused a chap who wanted to go home and get married. They said he hadn't sufficient grounds. My friend Tom Ewing is coming home to get a Commission. He is looking forward to a bit of leave more than to the star on his shoulder. He is very pushing and I think he will be successful. It is nice to think that we shall all be coming home someday. The War seems in such a funny state that we hardly dare look forward to the day. I know I shall make you happy dearest when I get my ticket. Am pleased to hear Alec is going on OK. Please give my regards to Maggie Polworth when you write. I have seen one of their officers. There was some style about him, sure. Well, I must close now as all my news is exhausted. I have just had a 3d rise (service pay) so I now get 3/1 a day. It is a generous army. I only work 6½ hours a day and hardly earn my money. I suppose they will start extracting it from us after the War in taxes. Please give my KR to Aunties. All very best love to you dearest. Good wishes.

Yours ever, Eddie

3 MARCH

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for packet of Waverley tobacco which arrived yesterday. I have not received a letter this week but am living in hope. There is not much news from this part of the globe. My life is very easy at present. Sometimes in the evenings I have a stroll through the almond and olive orchards. The scenery is fine. The ground is carpeted with coloured flowers just the same as at home and the bright green foliage has the look of spring. I would love to show you the beauties of Palestine at this time of the year. It is a pity that so many of us are on an errand of destruction: as it mentions in the missionary hymn 'where every prospect pleases and only man so vile'. We are not individually vile but as a collective class there is something wrong with us. I am sure I do not want to fight anybody.

I have had a long talk with a friend who has been to the Holy City. He says it is well worth seeing, but none of the places pointed out were authentic. In fact they are all jumbled together in a few square yards of space. For the present they have stopped sightseeing parties so I have no immediate prospect of going there.

Am enclosing you a few snaps which may be interesting. No 1 is Old Ramleh. It is well built and was once probably part of the castle. No 2 a group of Bedouins who were living in bivouacs in the country. The Sheik, who is standing in the middle, was a very interesting fellow. No 3 is almond blossom on a Jewish farm. No 4 the Tower of the Forty Martyrs at Ramleh, built by the Crusaders. No 5 is a native street in Ramleh. No 6 is the synagogue in the Jewish

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village of Richout. No 7 is a street in Richout. You see three Arab women carrying oranges on their heads. I daresay it would take us all our time to lift the bags. No 8 The boys say it is a photo of an old Jew and his native land. No 9 are two friends of mine taken at Luxor. No 10 is at Luxor. The pulpit is made of mud. The children are put in there so that the scorpions cannot bite them. No 11 was taken by a friend at El Arish. The girl was considered a beauty where she lived.

There is very little doing up here just now. In fact I think the Turks have gone back a long way. I have had four inoculations during the past eight days. The first dose gave me fever and I had to stay in bed. The second dose was not bad. I have got everything fitted up in the tent by now. Bed, bookcase and lamp are the chief articles of furniture. Your seeds are coming up fairly well and we shall be eating the cress soon. Alf has gone to the 60th Division. He was tired of the Base. Well, there is no more news for the present. Please give my regards to Aunties. I am longing for the time when we shall be together again dearest. Who would have thought it was going to last so long. All my best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

17 MARCH

My Darling Madge,

We have not received a mail as yet this week but we keep hoping. It has been raining cats and dogs for the last four days. All day long the clouds keep rolling up from the West. I don't think they spill a drop before they reach our place. They seem to drop the whole issue on us. Little rivers and wadis spring up all over the place. The rain is not a great inconvenience to us who work indoors tho'. The railway is doing fine and our food is coming up quite regularly. We live on the sand so we are not troubled with any mud. I had chance of going to Jaffa this weekend but the rain spoilt me. I don't know when I shall get the time off again. However, I intend to get there one way or another. It is too good to miss. By all accounts the food question is very acute with you at home. I do hope you can get enough to eat. It strikes me it is the people at home who are fighting the War. Our side seems to be getting further in the mire. Had there been no Russian collapse or Italian mishap [Note here?] we should have been home by next Xmas. Now – who knows, it might last years.

I am enclosing a few photos. No 1 is a Cactus lane. The leaves are about ½ an inch thick and are covered with spikes. One leaf grows out of another, which gives the cactus a peculiar appearance. No 2 is an olive grove. The three fellows are my tent mates. No 3 is the watering place and market at Ludd (Bible name Lydia). The soldiers at the front are Gurkhas. They have Mongolian features. Nos 4 and 5 are Ludd Church. Saint George of England is buried here. The place was out of bounds so I could not get a good look round. No 6 is an old Bedouin who lives in a straw shack in the woods. He said he was 80 years old.

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No 7 is a Bedouin shack in the woods. The chap in the middle is a Sudanese. No 8 is a Bedouin dwelling. Owing to the shadow I could not get a good photo. On the right is a woman grinding corn.

I hope you are keeping well dearest during the cold weather. Blighty weather would kill me I believe. I think I shall just have to turn Arab and live in the sunshine. You never grumble about the War altho' you must be really fed up with it. However, keep smiling and it will finish one of these days. That will be a happy day for millions of people. Oh, let it be soon. Please give my KR to Aunties. All very best love to you dearest. Your loving boy,

Eddie

25 MARCH

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 18 and 25 February. Things seems to be going strong in Europe. Let us hope it will be the last throw of the dice. If we are able to fight this last time it is sure they cannot make a counter offensive gain, I cannot help thinking of those who are going thro' it all. Let us hope they will soon finish things off. I am pleased of your assurance that you are getting enough to eat. It would not be very nice for us who have plenty to know that you haven't enough. Many a time I could give you a few tins of ham or a few pounds of cheese if you would come right here II..IIx Thanks for parcel which you have sent off. I will let you know when it arrives. You don't say what the contents are. I will wait and see. However, with regard to food, as have previously said, we are much better off than you are and you must get all you can for yourselves. Of course anything you send has an extra value when it comes form you dearest, but if I thought you were stinting yourself in any way I would come home at once and kick up an awful row II..IIx I have applied for 4 days' leave for the purpose of visiting Jerusalem. They could spare us just now if they only would. It still rains a little here. Everything looks quite fresh. There are dozens of varieties of wild flowers such as tulips, poppies, daisies, irises, lilies etc. I wish you could come round and see them. I have been able to get a good crop of cress but the lettuce is not ready yet. You will be pleased to know I have made my way to Jaffa and had a look round. I borrowed a bike and did the best of 17 km quite easily. The town is fairly large and has many fine buildings. I was able to get a few snaps from the top of a building where one of our men keeps pigeons. The shops were fairly decent and the streets were full of people. As far as I could make out Jaffa is the place where Tabitha was raised to life. I could not see the church which is associated with the young lady because it was out of bounds. The house of Simon the Tanner was also out of bounds but I went down to the shore and had a look at it. It is a small building and has a little turret. The road to Jaffa passes through miles of orange groves.

Am enclosing you a few postcards of Jaffa and the photos will follow as soon

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as I can get them posted. The photo which is enclosed will perhaps interest you. The young lady sells oranges just outside out camp. One of my friends took her photo. I think she looks better in the photo than in real life. We are having a concert tonight given by the Homs Artillery Corp. It will be a good show. Well I hope you are keeping well dearest. Please give my KR to Aunties. All the best love to you.

Yours ever, Eddie

31 MARCH

My Darling Madge,

Thanks so much for yours of 3 March and the bundle of papers. I think I must have known you were going to mention about a photo of a native girl because I sent you one last week. I had seen the lady many a time and she did not strike me as being a beauty but a friend of mine said she was all right, and I must admit she looks fine in the photo. He gave her a print later on and then all the orange sellers wanted snapping. The views of Jaffa are not printed yet, but I hope to send them in the next letter. I don't know why the people here don't speak Arabic, but the Parson tells me that Yiddish is a kind of low German. Many people think it is 'infra dig' to speak Arabic. Italians, French and Greeks are not pleased if you try to explain yourself in Arabic. Of course when people are 'uppish' it is a pleasure to speak to them in Arabic.

Now you needn't call your letters dry attempts. I do not think they are and as they are for me to read – well, you cannot form an opinion II..IIx My word I shall have to get an 'igri' (the verb to run) on if I am to be home for your holidays. Now it seems easy to get compassionate leave, but to be granted leave for sticking it and doing one's duty is out of the question. Now, if you were to write and say that it was necessary to wind-up my green grocery business and that the firm was going bankrupt – well I might get home. Failing this I have no chance. Thanks for parcel you have posted. I will let you know when it arrives. We shall do full justice to the contents.

I am sending you a souvenir of Palestine – I came across some olive wood goods. They are of no great value to me but the best I can get. There is also something for Gladys and the Mater so I am sending the parcel home and you will be able to collect your candlesticks sometime when you call. I believe the people do turn out some very decent olive wood stuff, but I have not come across anything worth writing home about yet. My Jerusalem leave is not granted up to the present but I am living in hope. Oh, by the way, I promised to send you an earthen lamp about two years ago, also an ankle bangle which I got in El Arish last year – I will enclose them in the parcel for you. No doubt you will be able to swank with an ankle bangle. I am not quite sure whether it is gold or silver. Perhaps you will know when you see it.

Things are still going strong in France, I don't think we shall be able to form

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an opinion for a few weeks. It will be grand if this battle is a deciding factor in the War – I mean if Germany gets beaten. I send all my best love dearest. KR to Aunties. Your loving boy, Eddie

P.S. Am enclosing this with the Mater's letter. Green envelopes are almost '*ma fish*'.

8 APRIL

My Darling Madge,

Yours of 10 March to hand. Thanks very much for letter and papers. My word I wish you could come and spend a holiday here just now. One can understand how the Bible writers spoke of 'smiling valleys' etc. I spend quite a lot of time in the woods and enjoy the full beauty of the countryside. This morning I went over a big model farm. I call it a model farm because I think it would not be possible to get more out of the place than the people are doing. It is essentially a farm for oranges, lemons, almonds and grapes, but all kinds of garden produce are planted between the trees. The garden peas are almost ready for pulling so you can tell things are well advanced. The apricots and almonds are coming on fine and will be ready in about 6 weeks. The oranges and lemons, which have only just yielded their crops, are in blossom. I would like to send you some seeds from here for your garden, but I don't know if they are on sale. Sending parcels from here is a big job. I have to dodge about for days getting signatures on forms and on the parcel etc.

Am enclosing you a couple of photos. The old sheikh is one of the finest films I have ever seen. It is not very nicely printed tho' because the paper was faded. I have posted you some copies of the *Palestine News*. No doubt it will interest you. Am afraid I am fated to wear a kilt. II..IIx It would be a nice change for me and one that I would like but anyone who volunteered for the Infantry would be considered *magnoon*. I know Fred Barran very well. He is a clerk to the Director of Signals. I will give him the message when I see him. He has been out since February 1915, so it is time he had a leave.

With regard to the photo of the Bedouin shack, I am sorry to say that the chap who stands in the middle of the three is drinking himself to death. I have known him a long time and he is a very fine fellow, but he won't pull up. He was in a cable company before the War and has worked in America for a long time. One doesn't like to be dispensing advice to men of the world and truly I don't think advice would be any good. It is a great pity because Paddy is one of the best.

Well, my three years of exile will soon be up dearest. I wish it was all over. The travelling has been fine, but I did not hope to be away from you all this time dearest. However, let us hope we shall be all the happier for this long wait. What I do not like about the War is that it is so uncertain when it will finish. If it was going to last two years it would be possible to tick off a day at a time. As it is there isn't even a sporting chance because peace won't be declared soon.

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Well, am afraid I can't concentrate on this letter tonight. The boys in the tent are playing spooof and it is a noisy game. I shall have to write my letters in the olive groves in the future. I send all my best love dearest. You are always in my thoughts. Please give my KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

Am sorry haven't a green 'un so am enclosing this in the Mater's.

22 APRIL

My Darling Madge,

If all goes well, I hope to be at Jerusalem tomorrow for four days' leave. I do wish you could go also. Your share of the trip will be a letter telling you what the place is like. I shall do my very best to give you a good account, especially so because my letters have been very scrappy lately. There is so little to tell and making up racy letters from nothing is a gift I don't possess. The office carries on just the same. We have about twice as much staff as they would have in the PO. I have got a slight touch of cramp. It is not caused by rushing, I think it is owing to me doing manual work in the section. I had a fairly decent style and to oblige a chap I have done all the sending on a heavy DX line for a few months past. Now I am a bit rocky on letter H and figure 5. However, we have no speed-ing up here and nearly all our OTs seem partially crocked so I am not alone. I have been sticking in at French and Italian lately. I keep meeting chaps who know about four languages, and this urges me on to learn something myself. I don't know if languages will be any use but the study is very interesting. It is only possible to learn a little in a long time and it is almost impossible to know a language thoroughly.

Have just had an officer in to inspect the tent. He has choked me off severely because my tunic was hanging on the tent pole. I would like to tell him there is a war on but that would be a worse crime than hanging the tunic on the pole. Well dearest I think that is all the news this time. I hope you are keeping well and haven't been sent home again. All my very best love to you. KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

24 APRIL

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks for yours received. Am just at the end of the most interesting holiday I have ever had. An account of the trip will follow as soon as I get time. For the next few days I shall be a nomad because my people have moved and I shall have to find them. My kit seems to have gone West but I may manage to find some of it. Have bought a few souvenirs which will follow at a later day. Fortunately they are not bulky so I shall be able to carry them until I get time to post. It

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is easier to buy things than to send them by post here. I hope you are keeping well. All love.

Yours, Eddie

1 MAY

My Dearest Madge,

Have just rolled down into Jericho into the Post Office. It is one of the worst places I have ever seen. 1,200 feet below sea level with dirt and dust all over and thousands of flies, fleas and mosquitoes. I am the boss here and am nearly working day and night. We are in the Post Office. It is nothing to write home about. I will write as soon as there is time.

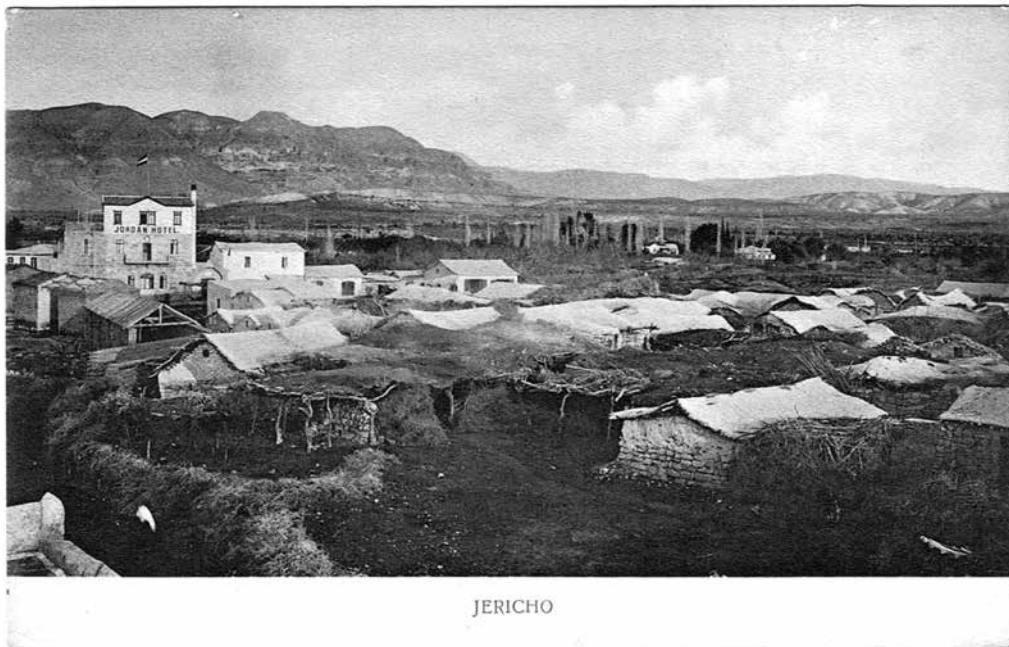
All best love, Eddie

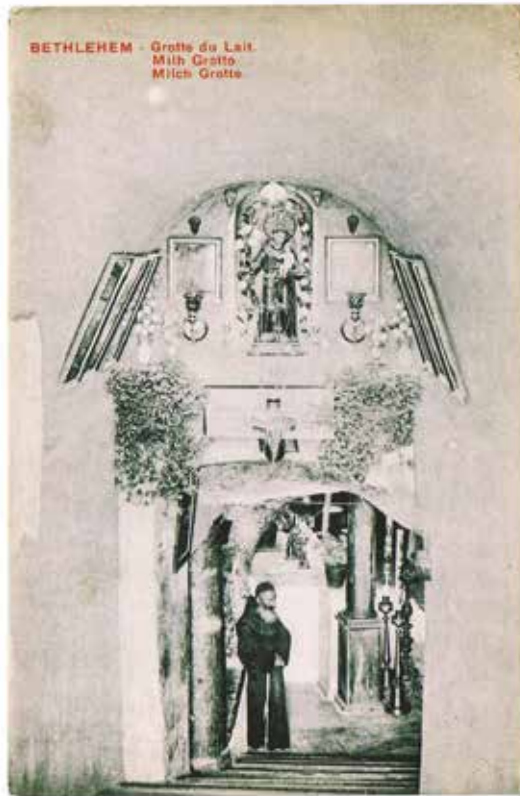
7 MAY

My Dearest Madge,

Here I am with a long yarn to tell you about Jerusalem and Jericho. The difficulty is finding the time. Briefly, I went to Jerusalem on four days' leave then joined my section on road to Jericho, then I went in charge of Jericho office

A postcard
from Jericho





The Milk Grotto
Chapel in
Bethlehem

during the stunt – now I am back with the section near the spot where the man fell amongst thieves when journeying from Jerusalem to Jericho. I have some souvenirs of Jerusalem and Bethlehem to post to you as soon as I find a Post Office and an officer with a censor stamp. The first trip to Jerusalem by lorry was very interesting. It is a stiff climb and by the time Jerusalem is reached we are 2,000 ft above sea level. The road is full of hairpin bends and in many places one can look straight down on villages from above. The only village of note thro' which we passed was Lation. The word Lation means thief – at this place the repentant thief was born. Jerusalem presented a very favourable appearance on our arrival. One sees many fine churches, mosques and other buildings, also the city walls which are very imposing. Most of the places connected with Christ are inside the city walls. This part is out of bounds to common soldiers unless chaperoned by an officer so we had to make an appointment.

Our first day was spent in Bethlehem about 6 miles to the south. It was a fine walk

thro' the hills. The town is well built as there is an abundance of stone in the district. It holds about 1,000 Christians. We purchased quantities of mother of pearl trinkets, which the natives were busy making. After some trouble with regard to passes we got to the Church of the Nativity. The building is not very great from the outside and the entrance is thro' a low door. Inside we passed thro' a church which has some fine marble columns. Passing along we came to a recess, or grotto, which is pointed out as the birthplace of Christ. A brass star marks the spot. A question as to the ownership of this star was the cause of the Crimean War. The place is chiefly decorated with lamps of gold, silver and brass, also with tinsel ornaments. I was sorry to learn that this church is the scene of many quarrels between Greek, Armenian and Catholic. Some claim various walls or steps, others hang tapestry over the walls belonging to someone else and then another part will put pictures on the tapestry. One window cannot be cleaned because the ownership cannot be decided. There are dozens of tales of this kind, which show there is a lot of bitterness between the various sects.

We had a look round the German Church. It is a fine building and the interior is very similar to the churches at home. The German Pastor showed us round. He seemed very sorrowful. A very jolly Catholic priest showed us round the French Church and Monastery. The interior was very gaudy with tinsel and colours. The monastery is a huge place and has housed as many as 3,000 Turkish



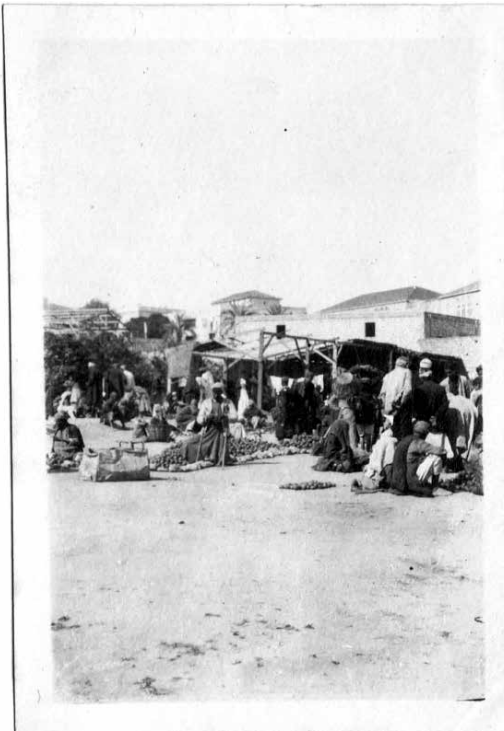
soldiers from time to time.

Bethlehem is the cleanest place I have seen in the East. The people are cheerful and friendly so we had a very nice day. In the evening I had a look at St George's Cathedral in Jerusalem. It is a fine building well fitted up inside. The next day we went outside the city walls in the morning and inside in the afternoon. We set off by seeing the Damascus Gate, one of the finest entrances to the city. Then along to Gordon's Tomb. Here in a garden there is a vault containing three tombs. Gordon claims that one of these was Christ's tomb – the chief reason for his assumption being that it is outside the city walls. The generally accepted tomb is inside the city walls but it stands outside an ancient wall which has recently been discovered. Solomon's Mines were visited next. These mines or caves extend about half a mile underground. Most of the stone used for building purposes was quarried here. A fine modern building was pointed out as the German Monastery. We went past Herod's Gate to the outskirts of the place and had a fine view of the Valley of Jehoshaphat, the Kaiser's Palace and the Mount of Olives. The city walls at this part are very high and one can well understand that they were almost impregnable in the olden days. The Ascension place was pointed out, also the Russian Gethsemane and Church with its gilded dome. The Russian's have fixed upon their own Ascension place and Gethsemane so that their pilgrims can patronize places owned by the Russian Church. We had a look at St Stephen's Gate and saw Absalom's Pillar and David's Vale. A small building, which marks the resting place of the Virgin Mary, was shown to us. Soon we came upon the Garden of Gethsemane. It is a delightful garden full of flowers (have enclosed some). One very venerable old tree is said to be the one

Postcard view of
Jerusalem from
the Mount of
Olives

under which Jesus prayed for the last time. Round the garden walls are 14 plaster casts showing the stations of the cross. Jesus is shown carrying the cross and the various incidents connected with the cross are shown. I am sure these pictures did not appeal to me, but all pilgrims are not looking thro' my spectacles. No doubt the peasant pilgrims who cannot read appreciate this kind of thing. We now began to climb the Mount of Olives. Soon we had a wonderful view of Jerusalem. The next place to visit was a Mohammedan Mosque accepted as being the proper one. Climbing still higher we arrived at the Russian Belvedere Tower. Away we went up the tower. The view was magnificent. Apart from having Bible land at one's feet, the view is perhaps one of the finest in the world. On one side is the Valley of Jordan and the Dead Sea about 4,000 ft below. A little to the right is the village of Bethany and a part of Bethlehem, and further to the right is Jerusalem. I wish you could have seen this. In fact I shall not be satisfied until you have been round here. This finished the morning trip. The afternoon trip was commenced at the Jaffa Gate. You have perhaps heard that the Kaiser was too mighty to use the gate so had a portion of the wall knocked down. The gate has a fine clock tower. I began to wonder whether I was drunk or the clock was out of order. One face showed 13.45 and the other 19.00. The YMCA man explained that one face showed Mohammedan time and the other our own time. We visited an Armenian church said to date back to the time of St Paul. The interior was lavishly decorated with porcelain, mother of pearl and tortoise shell. We passed out of the Zion Gate, which formerly was an entrance

Jaffa market



to the city of Zion. Soon we were at the Armenian Monastery built on the place where Cacophis once lived. A piece of mosaic has been unearthed which is thought to have been part of his house. It was at this place that Christ was imprisoned during his trial and Peter denied Christ. Over the place where the Virgin Mary died the Kaiser has built a fine church – we did not go inside. We next visited an old Moslim Mosque which contains David's tomb. Our Lord's supper took place on this ground. From here we had a fine view across the valley and a few interesting places were pointed out including the Valley of Gehenna, the Mount of Evil Council, the Mount of Offence and the leper settlement. Soon we were at the Jews wailing place. This spot was very interesting. The Jews under Turkish rule are not allowed to possess property in Jerusalem, but they are granted the privilege of reading the scriptures at the Temple wall. We saw some old ladies reading and wailing – they were touching and kissing the wall which is so dear to them. The

same wall is studded with thousands of nails placed there by Jewish pilgrims. As long as the nail remains firm, they are satisfied that they do possess property in Jerusalem despite the Turkish law. We now put on cloth slippers to visit the Mosque of Omar. It is a typically Eastern building decorated on the outside with porcelain. The place encloses the rock on which Abraham offered up Isaac. The interior decorations of mosaic and marble are superb. The carpets are very fine – in fact the more they are worn the brighter they look. I shall have to find out where they can be bought. We had a look at the Golden Gates – these are walled up and will reopen at the coming of Christ. Solomon's tomb is near here. The window railings were hung with pieces of clothing left there by pilgrims. I suppose it a similar idea to touching the hem of Jesus' garment. We next visited the Church of Anne, which was built by the French over the place where the Virgin Mary was born. This church contained many fine old writings. In the grounds of this place archaeologists have unearthed the Pool of Bethesda about 50 ft down in the ground. The tale of the lame man and the troubled waters has been written and exhibited in about 50 languages for the benefit of pilgrims. We passed along to where the Via Dolorosa commences. Proceeding along this way of sorrows we follow the path Christ took to Calvary. The various stations were pointed out until we arrived at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. We spent much time looking at the decorations which are very magnificent and costly. This display seemed a little gaudy but it is somebody's idea of showing devotion to the Christian faith, so it is not for us to set our standards or ideas up as being the correct ones.

We viewed Calvary and saw the place where the cross stood, also the rent in the rocks mentioned in the Bible. At the side was a figure of the Virgin Mary. It was adorned with thousands of pounds' worth of jewellery and many medals such as the Legion of Honour. Last of all we visited the Tomb of Christ. The YMCA Secretary gave us a beautiful address prior to our entry. One felt the reverence of the place where millions of pilgrims have visited to pay homage to the memory of Christ. The next day I visited the Kaiser's Palace on the Mount of Olives. It is a beautiful place – something like a first class hotel inside. The church has some fine decorations. I climbed the tower and had another fine view similar to the one from the Russian tower. Next day I was off to join WB. I found them on the road and moved out to the foothills. I did a day's hard work then went to Jericho. The journey from Jerusalem to Jericho is very wonderful. We dropped about 4,000 ft in 18 miles. Jericho is about 1,200 ft below sea level. We found Jericho to be a collection of mud huts. The Jordan Hotel, Russian Hospice and the PO are the only decent places. We took the PO for an office. The whole place was vile and dirty. We had thousands of flies, fleas, and mosquitos. The office was a busy one and I had lines coming on from all quarters. There was plenty of faults and testing. In time I got the place in order and we handed it over when the stunt finished. I was very glad of the experience altho' it was hard work. I never had time to visit to Dead Sea or River Jordan. I got all my office furniture from the Jordan Hotel which was deserted but still furnished. I had a proper bedstead to sleep on.

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I am not so sorry we left the office because we were getting knocked up with too much work and the depressing climate. I got a very bad throat but it is improving up in the hills. I don't know where we are going next. You may see the account of the stunt in the papers. I cannot pass any remarks because I don't know what has been published. Hope you are keeping well dearest. KR to Aunties. All best love.

Ever yours, Eddie

PS Parcel arrived a few days ago. We could not draw any rations today so my friend and I had that tin of partridge pâté with foie gras and truffles. I don't know what it means but it tasted excellent.

14 MAY

My Darling Madge,

Just received yours of 13 May. Thanks for same. You see they do dribble thro' occasionally. The subs seem to hang about Alex and mark the boats as they go in and out. Poor old Tom Ewing going home for a commission was bumped 7 hours out of Alex. He got back safely and has set off again. Am glad you were able to read my letter concerning Jaffa. As you remark I have visited the Holy City and an account of the trip was sent about a month ago. I hope it arrives safely. The photos are enclosed herewith. The bromide ones are taken by a friend of mine. Am sorry to say my snap of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was spoilt in developing.

My garden is '*ma fish*', in fact I don't think it is possible to grow anything on these barren mountains. Am pleased to hear that your soldier boys are going on well. Someday I may be able to meet them all and we shall be able to laugh and joke about our little hardships of the Great War. Speaking of these barren mountains, I had a pleasant surprise a few days ago. There is a wadi over to the North named Wadi Farrar, it is well marked by steep white cliffs and one would think it was about 2 miles away. I set off to walk in the hope of finding one of those cooling streams often mentioned in the Bible at the period when the Israelites were wandering in these parts. The trip occupied about two hours – there were many ridges of hills to cross not visible from our camp. I must have lost about a stone in weight thro' that journey. I arrived at the wadi and on looking down found it stone dry. This was disappointing but I was bent on finding water so struck down the course about a mile. Here I found a beautiful burn with a good supply of green stuff on the banks. There were plenty of fish and frogs and I saw three gazelles which had been down to drink. You can have no idea what charm I found in the brook. No wonder the Children of Israel used to go into ecstasies over streams. I followed the wadi to the source of the stream which turned out to be a spring. The journey back was very tiring and I drunk about a gallon of various liquids on arrival at camp.

The weather here is very hot. I am a moderate drinker and to a certain extent

control my craving for liquids, but for all that in one day I consume 3 pints of tea, 2 of lime juice and 4 of water. If I let myself go I could easily drink twice as much. The bivouac is fairly snug and I have spent quite a lot of time getting it fly-proof. I have been making an acetylene lamp for a friend. It is a beauty and burns well. There is quite a lot of work in a lamp, making water, controls, air-tight gas chamber, burner etc. About a dozen of the boys started making lamps, but they all got tired. There are only two working and I have made them both. The officer is making one. It is a very elaborate affair but it won't work. II..IIx I have spent a lot of time trying to make a mousetrap but have had no success. I cannot get hold of any decent spring wire but may find some before long. It is rather amusing to be stuck with a mousetrap which normally costs a penny. It seems funny to be bothering with such trifles while kingdoms are being won and lost but when one is shunted, being interested in something saves one from going *magnoon*.

The officer has just put up a lot of orders concerning parades and rifle and harness inspections. There is an inspection of some kind every day. The men who have horses are supposed to work in the open 5.00 to 6.00 – 7.00 to 11.30 and 14.30 to 16.30. Anyone sticking to that programme would soon be in hospital. I don't know how they will go on but I shall do my usual stunt of 5.00 to 5.30, 7.00 to 8.00 and 14.30 to 16.00. Next week I am going down to a testing post near the Good Samaritan Inn. There is nothing to do except give a dis ac [*possibly dispassionate acceptance*] when requested by phone. Old Alf has got a good job at a Wireless Station in Cairo. I would like to get in easier surroundings but there is little chance of doing down the line unless one has fever or something. Am afraid my letter is not very interesting dearest, but you will understand that this place gives one the pip and furnishes very little of interest for letter writing. I love you in the same old-fashioned way and am longing for the finish of this War so that I can show you all that my love means. I hope you are keeping well during the warm weather. Please give KR to Aunties. All best of love.

Yours, Eddie

15 MAY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 8 Apr. We received a mail last night, which cheered us up. I found myself bursting forth into song and feeling quite happy. It is very trying here all day with the heat and flies. One sees nothing but ridges of stony barren mountains that throw back the sun's rays and make the place like an inferno. One day in particular was very hot. We just had to grin and bear it. We are thankful for the cool nights. I generally make a nice cup of tea for supper. Tea is the finest stimulant in the world.

I am so sorry you have not had any letters from me for some weeks. Up to leaving Ramleh I was writing regularly but since then have not been able to

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post letters so they may arrive all in a bunch. I sent you a long account of the Jerusalem trip and also the stay at Jericho. If the Jerusalem letter does not arrive you must let me know and I will write another. Am pleased to hear the news about the little one at Bedford. I hope she will go on all right. I have not got Alf back yet but I think he will come to GHQ when he has been thro' a quinine course. Harold Morris (of BKB) and I are living together at present – we are old pals and understand each other. I think it would be a good plan if you could have a talk with a few of my partners. They would be able to tell you of all my failings. I often wonder dearest when we shall be able to pitch a bivouac – just you and I. I know I could make you very happy, in return it is happiness for me to be near you. It is because I can look forward that I am able to be happy now. Someday I shall be back to tell you all about it and how much I love you.

Your year as a boss seems to have passed very quickly. I can understand it is a trying job. My turn of being a boss at Jericho was no tea party. I had a few fellows who were not fit to go on SMJ. There was a stunt on and our work was for a General and his staff. You can understand that mistakes would count. I suppose I have gone thro' a little of what you feel every day. Well, its lunchtime. Please give KR to Aunties. All best love.

Your boy, Eddie

Have not posted the Jerusalem souvenir yet.

24 MAY

My Darling Madge,

Have just received yours of 15 and 22 Apr. Thanks very much. The papers also came to hand – they are very welcome in these dreary days. You see we are not doing much work just now. That is as it should be because work knocks me up. My partner (Harold) has gone to Jerusalem today to buy cigarettes. I don't suppose he will be back tonight as it is getting late and motors cannot travel on these roads by night. During my absence from the section we have got a lot of new men. Now I find we are half Scotch. I shall be getting the accent all right if I stay long enough. I find myself saying '*Dinna fash yersel*' quite naturally.

Things seem to have been very serious in France according to the papers but no doubt it won't happen again. Just now we are bottom dog. But it won't always be so. These things put peace further on unfortunately. We will hope for it being over by next Xmas. Surely it cannot last much longer. This hanging out gets on people's nerves. I am sorry to say one of my friends at GHQ has shot himself. He must have been really fed up. I don't think it would have happened if we had been granted leave.

Am glad you have got some of my letters at last. Can't say if I told you anything important between those dates. I was at Ramleh and there is nothing striking in my diary. Have just had to suspend operations because a big spider was crawling over me. I believe it was a tarantula and I have missed him. It is a

terrible place for man-eating specimens. The scorpions are always intruding on us. They do not sting unless something upsets them, but it is not nice to have them about one's bed.

I am so sorry that Dave has heard nothing of his lad. The suspense is almost worse than knowing the truth. Mr Allen's seems to have been a big fire. I hope they will soon be able to get the place going again. In your second letter you say the War will soon be over now. That is very cheering. Perhaps you know something. Old Kaiser Bill says he can hang on for other 7 years. He must be a pessimistic kind of a chap. I certainly think that this recent reverse will cause a great effort on the part of the Allies. Something may be decided by Xmas. Let us hope so.

Well, I have walked over these mountains for miles and miles. I caught a small snake and some scorpions and saw a hare. Apart from that there is hardly a sign of life. The wadis are all dry and won't see any water until next winter. No doubt they are worth seeing when in flood. What do you mean by having snow so late in the year? It is quite hot here. There are enough flies to satisfy an Army Corps. I wish we could get rid of them. Well, I think I have finished the news. You are always in my thoughts dearest and I am longing for the time when I can come and tell you I love you. Please give KR to Aunties. All best love.

Ever yours, Eddie

4 JUNE

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for yours of 5 May. We are really living in some anxious times just now. You will be getting it very rough at the office if the older men are called up. I know you won't mind if it helps to win the War. One does not like to put out doubtful thoughts in connection with the ultimate decision because, as Sandy Thompson would say, 'thoughts are things' and they would assist the enemy. Nevertheless things are not going well. I can hardly see any useful purpose in the newspapers trying to gloss over our defeats, and represent them as tactical gains. We are not children who cannot face the truth. Lloyd George said we were slightly superior in men and guns at the beginning of this offensive. If that is so we must have been out-generalled. I like to think that there is some useful purpose in our tactics. If it turns out so we shall all be agreeably surprised.

Am afraid your outdoor clerical staff is in a bit of a muddle. However one cannot run away from oneself in the Army. There are plenty who would gladly work 12 hours a day on bread and water if they could only be home. I hope your learners will turn out all right. They train quite a lot in the Army. A 3-month course is considered quite enough. The trained man generally comes up the line telling everybody he can do his 25s each way. When tried on a circuit some of them cannot do 10 words a minute. Often these men are struggling along in some office while we are resting. It is 'some' Army. Well, they won't let us fight.

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We are shunted or as the Army say 'standing by'. I have settled down in these dreary mountains and don't feel too anxious to move. Some of the difficulties in the way of sand, flies and heat have been overcome since I rebuilt the bivouac. I have built walls of biscuit tins and raised the roof considerably. It is much cooler and can be made fly-proof during the day. Of course some days are very hot and one would need to be in an ice house to keep cool, then again some nights it blows great hurricanes such as you have never seen – some of the men find portions of their kit and clothing about half a mile away. One has to put up with these things which happen occasionally – otherwise I feel fairly comfortable. Alf has sent me a book by Dean Stanley on Palestine and Sinai. It is very interesting and fills in a lot of my time. I have derived quite a lot of pleasure from studying the insect life of this district. Altho' I have no book knowledge on the subject I know fairly well what they all eat, how they overcome their enemies and whether they are dangerous to man. I would not like to risk a sting from a scorpion or a bite from the galeodes or tarantula spiders. One fellow named the mantis might also be called the soldier's friend because he is both useful and amusing. He is like a big daddy longlegs and is camouflaged to look like a bit of a scrub. If brought into the bivouac he will give a fine exhibition of how flies should be caught and eaten. I have seen one manage as many as nine in half an hour. It is a pity for the fly but of course it is our duty to kill as many as possible.

I have posted the parcel of souvenirs so they may arrive sometime. They are addressed to the Mater. My friend Tom Ewing of Broughty Ferry was torpedoed about 9 hours from Alex. He has landed safely at Alex. He was going home for a commission. Well I think you will be tired of my chatter. It is difficult to get anything interesting from these dreary mountains. All best love to you dearest. KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

NO DATE

Dear Madge,

Eddie says I can do as I like with spare souvenirs, so I am sending you two spoons, they are just a forecast of coming events. When Eddie returns I thought you would like the salt cellar – these things are from Jericho (they must be costly). I hope you are keeping well. I know your time will be fully occupied.

I have been stewing in Mr Pikes true affairs and got so weary of it that I wrote and asked Mr Barwell what he knew of man and he said 'nothing' but he wrote him for addresses of lodgings which he gave him (Mrs Pikes with others). I have written my last to him, it's been going on 9 months. Best love to you all. Take care of your dear self.

From, E. Smith

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20 JUNE

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for yours of 20 May. So you have received quite a bundle of letters at last. Better late than never. Am sorry you cannot get home for holidays. It is a war and no mistake. Thanks for news of all the boys. It is a pity my postcard caused a flutter, you see there was really only one place where the Army would grant me leave and that was Jerusalem. However, when I do touch Blighty I will send a wire and you can kill the fatted calf.

Harold Morris and I have come down on the roadside for a week's duty at a test point. We live in a tent with a double roof. As the result of a few hours' hard work we have turned a hopeless wreck of a tent into quite a cosy home. Somebody asked where did we get the material to make the beds. The obvious answer was that it came from Gamages*. I believe a few signposts went west but it is the War, as the French say. There is plenty of life on the road, motors are passing all day. We get plenty of callers asking for water. A little further down the road on the Jericho plain the temperature reaches 125 in the shade. It is not quite so bad here. Some of the Arabs take the biscuit for perseverance and hard work. There is a village called Abu Dis about 2 miles this side of Jerusalem. They journey from thence to Jerusalem to buy tomatoes, cucumbers and eggs, then carry the produce on their heads up this road a distance of about 12 miles. What a life for girls to lead. We generally buy some tomatoes and cucumbers from Miriam and Amena who have been calling at the camp for quite a long time.

I believe we are going to be put thro' a test to see if we are worth our money. I shall have to be reading up the red book on Army Telegraphy. We are supposed to know all that is in the book but when it comes to working we have to forget the book and use our common sense. I see there is a new book about Palestine – you might send me one if you can get it. It is *Syria and the Holy Land* by Sir Geo. Adam Smith (Hodder and Stoughton 1/- net). With ref to the parcel that arrived: the Jerusalem lamp is from Egypt and the ankle bangle is from El Arish. I got them a long time ago but was too lazy to send them. I don't think there is any more news at present. All very best love to you dearest. KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

**Gamages was a large department store at Holborn Circus in London.*

30 JUNE

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks for yours of 27 May. Letters seem to take a month to reach us nowadays. Well, you have been having a wild holiday but never mind there'll come a time some day. I hope you will feel rested even tho' you haven't had much change.

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Thanks for all the news, am pleased to hear all are going on OK.

I haven't read *Greenmantle* yet. It is one of the books recently reviewed by Claudius Clear. If you can hang on to it I will read it when I come back – that will probably be this year, next year, sometime. If there is anything I dread it is this coming winter. The cold weather makes us suffer. Am hoping to be in more congenial surroundings by that time. At present we are living rough and there is not much fun attached to the game. Speaking of reading I have just finished *The World's Crisis in the Light of Prophecy* published by the International Tract Society. It is absolute piffle and would tend to make anyone give Christianity a wide berth, if this is a sample. It foretells the end of the world as cited in Daniel's prophecy. In Dan XI 13 he gives us 'time, times and half a time', for this event to take place. The thing is reasoned out like this: a time is the same as a year, so that the time, times and half a time would amount to a year, plus 2 years plus ½ year, 3 ½ years in all. In 3 ½ years there are 1,260 days. In prophetic time a day is the symbol for a year so the prophetic 3 ½ years of Daniel give us an exact period of 1,260 years. That brings us to the year 1798 so the end of the world is a bit overdue. The book has made me feel bad. However, I am going to send it to Alf as a joke.

Apart from the end of the world we should like to know when the War will end. Sometimes when we have had a good feed and feel optimistic we think it will finish this year but when we are going thro' the tortures of a hot day we estimate the duration at about 7 years. Let us hope the first estimate is the right one. Well, I have got a new Arabic book and Harold is reading out to me so I had better close or you will be getting a letter which is rather mixed up. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love to you dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie

7 JULY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for yours of 2 and 9 June. It's a real comfort to get a few letters. Am sorry to hear that my letters are occasionally dipped in the sea. Herewith another flower from Ramleh. I cannot send you one from this district 'cos there ain't none. The place for miles around is covered with powdery dust. Just now it is blowing on my bivvy like hail. I have been out this afternoon and came back full of dust. I was riding in clouds of dust so thick that it is impossible to see more than three yards ahead. Why we are kept up here nobody knows. The section is not working. Our officer of course is a boy hero and thinks there is something great in a life of this kind. Other sections are safely tucked away in monasteries or houses while we are in one of the dreariest, dustiest, and hottest parts of Palestine. You must excuse me for grumbling – if we were doing useful work I would not mind roughing it.

I hope you enjoyed the lecture on Baghdad. You say it was interesting – no

doubt a lot depends on the lecturer. I was under the impression that Baghdad, which has been made such a fuss of, is only a small place. I may be mistaken. Such places as Beersheba look all right in a newspaper but when you get there and find a place which has the appearance of being a refuse tip since the times of Abraham, well you begin to expect similar places all over the East. Damascus is a large place but I don't expect to find it any cleaner than the rest. I suppose we shall take it someday, unless this front is closed.

I am glad Goodwill has had to join at last. No doubt the Dept. held him back, but we out here have the impression that such men could join sooner if they wanted. Am glad you have got the long letter about Jerusalem. I may be going again shortly for a few days' change. In fact the officer read out that we were granted 4 days' leave and would go in turn. The men have started going but the passes are made out for 3 days. Can you wonder at a man overstaying his leave when the officer clips a day off a man's leave? There is a General Routine Order that says we are to have a pass down the line every 6 months. It is a year since I was down and no leave has been offered to me. It is a way they have in the Army. Oh dear, I am always grouching – if things go on you will have to sell the goat and buy me out. You say 'have I any failings?' Well I have. I shall be bound to swear if this wind doesn't settle. I believe even you would be annoyed with it. It seems as tho' we are going to stay here for ever so I have sent down to Ramleh for some books. I want to get on with French and Italian. When the War looks like finishing I think I shall send home for Herbert so that I can be ready to go in for the Telegraphy exam on return. I find more interest in the subject now that I have had a bit of practical experience.

We seem to be holding them in France. There is no doubt we shall win in the end but these German advances put back the clock of peace. A lot of chaps think we shall have to have another scrap at home when it is all finished. There are a few steel rings of politicians and autocrats Tommy doesn't like, and many think they will have to be broken. However, one war has been enough for me. I shall want peace and quietness after this is finished. I hope you are keeping well dearest and not finding the work too heavy. I send all very best love and am longing for the day. KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

14 JULY

My Darling Madge,

No letter this week so am assuming it has gone for a swim and may get washed up with the tide. Things have been a bit lively here today – Johnny was going to clear the plain, but he has gone back sadder and wiser. You will probably see about it in the papers. Well, Frankie has been granted some compassionate leave owing to his mother's health so you will probably be seeing him one of these days. For the present he does not want it mentioning to his Ma so that she won't

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be worrying about submarines. It may be a few weeks before he leaves.

At last we are leaving this weary spot and going to live in Jerusalem. The place is not exactly ideal but it is semi-civilization and will be a delightful change from here. I believe I am going to work in the ' . If I can get any information on the place I shall be able to look round at my leisure. It seems an honour to be able to live in Jerusalem. Old Alf seems to be fed up with Cairo altho' he has a fine job. He feels he isn't doing his bit. All jobs have their drawbacks when you want to go home. It is perhaps as well to make the best of the job you have got. If I get a nice operating job at Jerusalem I will try not to grumble anymore. I guess your job has its bad points. You get even less change than we do. However, just hang on a little longer and we shall soon be back quite eager for a civvy job once more. Next week I hope to write from my new home. We are going to live in tents so that will be a nice change and we shall be snug for winter and the rains which start in about 15 weeks' time. Well, it's about supertime so I will put the porridge on the fire. I believe I could show a Scotsman how to eat porridge. I hope you are keeping well. Please give my KR to Aunties. All very best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

21 JULY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for yours of 17 and 24 June. So ECW has been getting married despite Punch's advice. If he comes on leave again you might give him my congratulations, if it is not too late. Am pleased to hear all the boys are well. The subs have been kind to us in letting my parcel thro. The things are not of much value altho' they charge plenty for them. To give you an idea what anything really good costs – I offered a Jew 10/- for a small carved writing desk. He said it would cost me £15. There are also some carved mother of pearl shells the size of a tea plate. These range from £10 to £15. Truly we are in the land of the Jews.

Of course I don't mind you showing AJK my Jerusalem trip. He has his good points and I believe he would enjoy travelling. Well, we had a fine moonlight trip to Jerusalem. I walked 11 kilos of the way just to get a bit of exercise. We are living in tents, which is better than being in houses that are insanitary. We are not working in the office as expected so that means we get very little time off during the day for wandering round. I have been in the city at night and find things greatly improved. We can get a decent feed nowadays.

My work has been fairly tiring the last few days so I did not go to church tonight. I must enquire whether there is a nonconformist church. At St. George's you have to stand up when a General comes in. I wonder if they stand up for generals in heaven?

I have had two days fixing telephones at the American Red Cross Hospital. I had a few interesting chats with some of the men. Several of them have been

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in Turkey for a long time. A lot of girls are employed on diagnosing work; they seem very businesslike and have no nonsense about them. They all speak quickly but without the nasal twang and I did not hear anyone 'guessing' or 'calculating'. Somehow there is lack of expression in their talk because their voices do not rise and fall like ours.

Up to the present I have seen very little worthy of note. When I see these Jews for whom we are fighting I think it would have been as well to let the Turks keep them. They are such a weary anaemic looking lot. They generally have long beards and wear Quaker hats. They only rise to the occasion in a bargain and then they demand twice as much as any fairminded person would want for an article. However such is life. It is an insult to call an Arab 'Yahudi' (Jew) and no wonder.

Well, I believe a 'pard' of mine has made some tea so I will go round and have some supper. Hope to have more information for next letter. Please give KR to Aunties. G'night dearest.

All best love, Eddie

28 JULY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks for papers, also welcome letter of 1 July. The letter only took 27 days to get here so things are looking up. Am sorry you are letterless, but *maalish* as the Arabs say. There will come a time when I don't need to write any letters to you at all dearest. Then no doubt I shall bore you with my talk. I am interesting for half an hour but then people begin to yawn. For years I have been convinced that silence is a fine thing, and that most people enjoy talking rather than listening, but for all that I frequently find myself telling all I know. It is a mistake but *maalish*.

I have heard quite a lot about this Spanish flu*. You must be very careful to avoid a dose when it is being handed round. A friend of mine in Ireland says he has three quarters of his section down with it.

This spot is not healthy. In walking round I keep smelling patches of drains. In fact I have my doubts whether something has not been buried under my bed. Am glad the seeds have come up. Don't worry about them not thriving. Somebody told me they would overrun the garden. II..IIx Well, I have been having a lively week. My work will not permit of me doing any sightseeing during the day and it is too late after tea. This is unfortunate. However, I have been attending concerts and lectures or strolling round the town and having a feed in the evening. This week's trip round and a little extra food I have bought in camp seems to have cost about £3. II..IIx Of course now I shall have to settle down and go out occasionally. One is apt to feel a bit reckless tho' after such a weary time on that sun-scorched wilderness. Perhaps you will scold me for being a spendthrift. *Maalish* it would be rather unique if you were vexed with me.

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I have been fixing some phones at the Courts of Justice. Here one sees officers mixing up Turkish, Egyptian and English law. You know what a mix-up they can make of the English law alone, but when they have three sets of laws to wallow in these lawyers must be in the seventh heaven of delight. Here I met a young Jew who was very well educated. We exchanged a few ideas and had quite an interesting time. I have also got to know a Spanish Jew who keeps a shop. He knows about seven languages and of course interests me very much. A Montenegrin who works at the American Mission wishes me to go round occasionally so that he can learn English and me French. If I get the time I shall certainly go round.

You will be surprised to hear that I have adopted a boy. He is a bright-faced Arab boy of 10 years of age, as sharp and as keen as a cartload of monkeys. I had been questioning him about the Turks in my best Arabic – he showed a keen interest in the War and had observed many things when the Germans and Turks were here. However, he said that he was going to work for me and he could carry water and wash up plates etc. I didn't want a batman but he will do the work so I let him carry on in exchange for a little food. He is going to work for 'Mr George' always and he says that I have plenty of money and will buy him some boots and clothes so that he can go to England. So if I land home with my *walad* one of these fine days you must not be surprised II..IIx

Things seem to be going better in France just now. I hope they will give the German's a knock-out blow before Christmas. My word I have received a lot of letters lately – they will take me a week to answer. I shall have to buckle in and get them off. Am enclosing this letter to the Mater because green 'uns are scarce. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love to you dearest.

Yours ever, Mr George

**The Influenza pandemic of 1918–19 was known as 'Spanish flu' because it was Spanish cases that tended to be reported in the press – media censorship in countries at war prevented coverage of morale-lowering news. Fifty million people worldwide died during the pandemic and a quarter of the British population were infected, with 228,000 deaths in Britain alone.*

5 AUGUST

My Darling Madge,

There has been no mail last week, but I trust you are keeping well. I hope things are going OK at the office and that you are not having too big a share of worries. Work is a fine thing as long as you are interested in it. Just now I have no work that I can be interested in and there is no goal I can aim for. It is a rotten Army that puts us into such a position but it can't be helped. I find plenty of interesting things to do apart from my work. The weather has been fairly warm lately but conditions are not unbearable as at the last camp.

I had rather an interesting experience the other night. My *walad* invited four of us to his house. As he is rather a ragged youngster I did not expect to see anything very fine, however I had a pleasant surprise. The house was fairly large and the room into which we were shown was spotlessly clean. There was a fine upholstered sofa about 10 ft long and any amount of snow-white covers and hangings. The father was an ordinary working man, his clothing half-European and half-Egyptian. We were asked to partake of coffee then two trays of fruit were served. There were green and black grapes, pink and yellow melons, almonds, apples, and nectarines. It was a real treat because the fruit was of the finest quality. We did not see the mother who remained just outside the door. She kept peeping at us or joining in the conversation occasionally. I suppose it is not the custom to present the ladies to visitors. I really enjoyed the unique experience.

Yesterday afternoon I went on a conducted tour round the old city (inside the walls). There was nothing much fresh to see but I was glad to revisit the holy places and refresh my memory. After tea there was a band playing in the bandstand, so I was doing the Valley Garden stunt. Just now I am sitting under an olive tree because it is cooler than in the tent. Two very small Arab boys are helping me to write this. They say they can read English but they seem too small to read anything. One little boy is just explaining that girls are no good because they sit down in the house all the time. I think that is the general opinion here. Yesterday I was in two beautifully cool places. One was the Mosque of Omar and the other the Pool of Bethesda. I wish we had them in our camp. Am pleased they are doing so well in France. Some people are saying the War will soon be finished. Hope you are keeping well dearest. KR to Aunties. All very best love to you.

Yours ever, Eddie

12 AUGUST

My Darling Madge,

We have had no mail yet so it may be assumed that the tin fishes have been active. I hardly like writing at present because I am fed up concerning things in general and don't feel I can say anything cheerful. For weeks I seem to have been drifting into a state of health similar to Sandy Thomson's. I hoped to pick up in Jerusalem but nobody feels well here so I don't stand much chance. I have had a week with a swollen throat, then a few days of neuralgia. I have been to the doctor twice but he gave me some potassium tablets and said it would be all right. The dentist gave me a rough time by pulling a back tooth without using cocaine. He pulled the wrong tooth and here I am with toothache again. I reckon I shall have to go round again for another proof of his strength. However, this can't be very interesting to you so I will ring off and hope for better health when winter comes along. Please excuse me for telling you all my

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troubles but I must grumble a little to someone to relieve my feelings.

I am now working in the Signal Office. We have plenty to do but the job is all right. We are right in the centre of the part of the town outside the walls so we see plenty of life. One day last week I visited the German Catholic Church. It is a fine piece of architecture and inside there is some good mosaic work. The Kaiser built this place for his Catholic subjects because they got jealous of the Lutherians for whom he had already built two churches.

The news from the Western Front has been very good lately. On one of our wires it said the end was in sight. I hope it is in sight and that we shall soon reach it. I hope you are keeping well dearest I do not forget that conditions are not too good in Blighty. I know you go thro' it all with a brave heart and you never grumble. Let us hope it will soon be finished. KR to Aunties. All best love to you dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie

18 AUGUST

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for yours of 7 July. Am afraid I was very fed up when I wrote last week, however I am feeling better now and looking thro' rosier spectacles. Thanks also for tobacco and papers. Am pleased you have had faith in our Army on the Western Front. After all things are turning out very nicely. Perhaps I had the wind-up, but I was not alone. The way we rushed troops into France showed that the situation was anxious. Am very pleased to learn that Alec has got leave at last. He has been out a long time. Perhaps my turn will come soon – it might if the War ends. I am still working in the office and conditions are fairly good. We can read and smoke on duty. I think GHQ is the only office where smoking is not allowed. There is always plenty to do when off duty. *Chaque jour je passé une heure avec mon ami Christo Djurich pour parler la langue française.* He is a fine chap and speaks seven languages. It may not be too good a plan to learn to speak French from a Montenegrin but one cannot easily find a French teacher in Jerusalem. There is a native who teaches but he does not know much about grammar and spelling and also charges a shilling a lesson. That is too much to pay II..IIx Somehow I have come to the conclusion that it is the height of folly to spend money in Jerusalem as things are at present. Last week I only bought a few vegetables to make salads and I find I am no worse off than if I had been buying a lot of food etc in the town.

My *walad* is going strong but is getting a bit unruly and won't work. However I haven't the heart to *ndrub* (chastise) him. I shall have to give him a good talking to. Today he came in wearing a pair of boots size 10. He is only very small so you can picture how he looked. He is another such lad as the one in that picture, 'The hope of his side'.*

Christo tells me that these days are very treacherous for the health and one

has to take great care. In our small section we have 11 men in hospital. They nearly all went in with high temperatures. Paddy has gone. He has been drinking a lot. Three days ago he had 2 bottles of wine in the morning, one in the afternoon and one at night. Next day he reported sick and was admitted. They are very short handed on the horselines and for that reason I am glad to be in the office. You know last summer I had three horses to look after while our drivers took the rest cure.

Please thank Aunties for the letter. I will write in the course of a few days. I don't know if we shall be here much longer. I reckon it is a privilege to live a month in 'Jerusalem the Golden'. I wish you could have an opportunity of seeing the place. I am on duty tonight, so have not gone to church. I hope to go sometime tho'. I send all best love to you dearest. I always say the same thing but you will perhaps understand what I mean. You are always my ideal girl and tho' you are so far away you contribute to my happiness. After the War I will tell you all about it. Have had a letter from Alf and he has looked thro' the General Orders and can see nothing about that leave for 3-years men. He tells me not to be chucking my chest out and singing the wedding march. However that is by the way. Please give KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

**a popular postcard image by sports artist EP Kinsella c. 1906*

26 AUGUST

My Dear Postmistress,

Can you give me a job? I can do anything from driving the mail to selling stamps. No doubt you will reply in the language of the poet 'nothing doing' – In that case I shall say '*Maalish*' and 'carry on'. My luck has 'been in' during the past week because I have received three letters from you dearest. The dates range from 15 to 29 July. When a good mail arrives. I generally burst forth into song unconsciously. It might be 'keep the home fires burning' or perhaps *yasis aeyni wanna biddi rowa beladi*. I will give you a rendering of the latter song when I return.

Don't you worry too much about those convolvulus plants – they will soon be all over the garden then I shall be for it. Am afraid the married women are a bit of a nuisance to you. The Dept. should deal firmly with them. As regards my membership of the Association, I don't know how I stand at present but I wish to be in. Perhaps Max could collect any subs off the Mater. You might fix it up for me, if you don't mind. Am glad the Jerusalem photos have arrived. To a certain extent you have the advantage of me. You can see views of the place without seeing all the dirt and refuse, also you don't notice the bad drains. That action west of Jericho was in our section but I was not near enough to see anything striking. I saw most of the prisoners come down. Am pleased you have got duly

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installed and hope you don't have too rough a time. It will be a change that is if you don't worry too much. Is it Miss Kendall who is postmistress now?

Edgar Blackburn called to see me yesterday. He is going on compassionate leave on account of his sister's health. To get leave it is necessary to have a very mournful letter from home and a doctor's certificate regarding somebody's health. Many chaps are engineering a leave just now by getting these documents from home. However, I would rather not get leave in that way if the facts were not genuine. Of course I want to come home, but the Army are not keen on it – that's the trouble. *C'est la guerre.*

During the week I have had a fairly interesting time. Almost every day I have spent a little time with Christo, am pleased to say I am getting a little more confidence and can make myself understood fairly well in French, however I am not wishing to pose as a linguist. So many people can do better than I. It is a treat to listen to Christo as he speaks to people in all the different languages. There was a fellow who puzzled him the other day tho'. He spoke Dutch. You know there are about 75 languages spoken here. There are even Gypsies who speak Romany. I was at a very fine concert the other night, given by 'The Vagabonds'. I should think all the artists are professionals in civvy life. During the week I visited the Coptic and Abyssinian churches. The Copts are Christians and theirs is a very old branch of the Christian faith. The church was just like an English chapel, but the hymn books and gospels were in Arabic. The Abyssinian Church is a very fine dome-shaped building. These people are also Christians. A little black man showed us round and he paid me a compliment by speaking Arabic all the time. The place was full of pictures and each had some legend attached to them. There were also pictures of most of the Bible characters, which were easily recognisable. One very good oil painting depicted St George killing the dragon. The old man thought quite a lot of St George.

Prisoners of war



I really believe this dragon business is a big fable. No doubt it was St Geo. who overthrew the idols erected to the fish god 'Dagon', hence we get the dragon. Another interesting fact I have discovered is that the miracle of Moses striking the rock may have suffered by bad translation. At present if you asked an Arab to sink a well (using the Arabic language) you would ask him to strike a well. The Arabic verb is '*darab*' = to strike. So it is very possible that Moses took a few weeks to strike his well.

Am sorry to say we are being relieved from the office by another mob. It has been a good job. We may get a move. Today I have paid my last visit to the dentist and left him another tooth as a souvenir. Otherwise I am feeling very well. It is no doubt due to my salad diet. I hope you are in the pink dearest. Please give my KR to Aunties. All very best love.

Yours, Eddie

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3 SEPTEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Have not received a letter this week, but will hope for better luck next week. My boy Kader seems very interested in this letter. He has asked me who I am writing to, so I told him. He then follows up with the question 'after the War how much money shall I pay your father so that we can get married?'. He says here one pays about £10 or £12 for a wife. This seems very funny but it is so. Well, I have got the sack at the office as we have been relieved. However I am fairly content as I have two horses and we go on a ride from 5.00 to 7.00 each morning. Have just been reading in an English paper that 3-years men are going to get leave. It appeared to be an unofficial statement so I don't know if it is worth anything. It is a big shame that they are treating us thus but we can do nothing. I wrote to Aunties last week – hope I haven't given them a disappointing idea of Jerusalem. No doubt we shall be getting a move before another moon. I shall be sorry to leave but *c'est la guerre*. Hope you have had a successful time at Knaresborough. No doubt I am too late for a job.

Somehow I have had a struggle to write this. Have had about 10 visitors during the evening and now there are three fellows in having a rough house. One of the chaps is always talking of our curtailed freedom in the Army. To tell the truth a man has no rights and at times he feels he could swipe the whole lot, however it is best to grin and bear it saying nothing. I send all my best love dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie

9 SEPTEMBER

My Darling Madge,

No letter during the past week, but we have been moving so the mail may follow us up. We are back once more amongst the olive groves near Ramleh. It is a beautiful fertile district and quite pleasant after the stony region we have just left. It is a little warmer during the day but on the whole we are in a healthy place. I was very sorry to leave Jerusalem because I found so much of interest there. The civilization such as it is seems to appeal to one. I was also very sorry to leave Christo because we had become good friends, and were helping each other in English and French. He has given me a beautiful photo, which I will send home. When you see it I think you will agree that he is really a fine looking fellow.

You will be glad to know I have been promoted to the rank of driver for a few days. I drove in the wagon to this place. It was a ride of 30 miles and took us from 5 pm to 6.30 am. As you will have noticed, we drive postilion in the Army. That is we sit on the near horse and hold the other with a rein. The rider

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is called the 'near horse' and the other one the 'off horse'. Well, as the driver is on one and off the other why shouldn't they be called on and off horses respectively? I shall have to suggest this to the War Office.

There is no issue of leave to Blighty yet. I suppose we shall get home some day. It is a swindle from beginning to end. The officers have been home and that is all they care. I hope you are keeping well dearest. I send all very best love to you. KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

1 OCTOBER

My Darling Madge,

Shall not receive any letters for some time because all transport is full up with food. However, I will trust you are OK. I have seen some life recently. At first I pushed up the coast and was at a busy test point in charge, then on 27th I arrived at Nazareth and had a good look round. Now I am a Superintendent at Tiberias on the shores of Lake Tiberias. We are working day and night, but apart from the heavy work I am comfortably placed in a house. Rations are of course 'iron rations' for present, but I buy a few extras in town. I can also get a few swims in. I have collected a few portable souvenirs, which I hope to send home sometime. This is a beautiful place dearest and I wish you could see it. We shall certainly have to include it in the grand tour. KR to Aunties. All very best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

7 OCTOBER

My Darling Madge,

Have received bags of letters from you for which I thank you very much. There has hardly been time for me to write since the stunt commenced. We have been working very hard and living on bully and biscuits until we are sick of them. The grub has not yet improved but the lines are getting straightened out and I am feeling more settled, so am going to worry you with an account of my travels. Forgive me for telling all my news before I answer yours, but I have had the trip of my life and am bursting to tell you II..IIx As I write I am looking out of the window at Galilee (sweet Galilee). I wish you could see the lake. It is really beautiful. You may receive the views, which left a few days ago. All the same it is a very dirty town and owing to this the natives have contracted an infectious disease. There are plenty of people on the job to stamp it out but in the meantime we cannot leave. It is stopping our trip to Damascus.

You may read in the papers how this fine advance was made so I will not give you details. We came from Jerusalem to the coast. I drove a pair all the way. We

lay concealed one night near the line and were ready for the advance. The boys went over and we were across about 2 hours afterwards laying a very important line. We caught our people up and got it working by dusk. We worked without food all day and were glad of a drink of tea before we got down for the night. We saw all the litter of battle and many signs of a retreating enemy. Next day we were at the same game and towards afternoon we struck some of Johnny's lines and I was dropped at a fairly busy test point. I had Brigades, Divisions and Corps with lines into my office and for some days was going nearly night and day. Everything comes to an end tho' and I got relieved and a trip to Nazareth. It was a great surprise to find things so orderly, especially the telegraphs. The office had all kinds of instruments including some Hughes devices working to Damascus. I had a jolly good look round Liman von Saunders HQ. I could have had thousands of souvenirs had I been able to carry them. As it is at present I have a German Military Medal and a Turkish Gallipoli star to send to you. I hope we get a Post Office up and I can get them off my hands. I have got for myself about a dozen dictionaries of various kinds. They are first class books and I shall do my best to get them home. I came to Tiberias in a Ford car. Things are quietening down. I am in a house and have got a beautiful German camp bed. The place is about 600 feet below sea level. Even now at 9 pm there is a dull heat which causes one to perspire. However this would be a fine warm place for winter. One of our boys got a trip to Damascus and found things fairly lively. There was a little shooting in the streets. I hope to go but one never knows. I have hob-nobbed with Turks and Germans and found many decent fellows amongst them. I don't know how many prisoners have gone down but I have seen enough to populate Harrogate. It has been a successful stunt and everybody is pleased.

Thanks for the book on Syria. It has been a big help because of the maps. I can remember the man who wore sandals. I think his pals used to call him 'Jesus'. I quite admit that the book is right in saying the Jews are worth bothering with. That refers more to the colonists tho'. They are very decent people. In fact at Kerkur they gave me quite a lot of bread.

We are in the same boat as you with regard to sick leave. They keep going in dock. Only the old hands hang on. It is by a kind of Christian science - 'willing to keep fit'. Of course I have lost the Arab boy now. When we left his great sorrow was that I should get another boy at Ramleh. I assured him that another would never fill his place and no doubt I should have to go a long way to find one like him.

Well, dearest, I am always thinking of you even in my busy and trying moments. All the War is going well and if I can hang out a little longer I shall perhaps get home with the first batch seeing our company has been here so long. That will be glorious. I send all best love hoping you are keeping in the pink. Tell Mr Kenyon I am seeing the sights. Please give KR to Aunties.

Yours ever, Eddie

1918

18 OCTOBER

My Darling Madge,

Same place still and merry and bright despite the fevers and non rations. There has been no mail during past week but I will keep believing that you still love me. Do you think it will be peace by Xmas? Lille and Ostend are liberated. This country is clear as far as Aleppo I think. The enemy is tottering on every side. It will be glorious if things can be settled up.

Our quarantine may lift any day. There have been no fresh cases for four days. All the time there has been only one Army case and I am sorry to say the boy died. It is not infectious but the germ is transmitted in food and water. I am eager to see Haifa, Beirut and Damascus, then shall be ready for home. I am very fortunate – nearly all our boys have been down with fever and have suffered more than anyone knows. I keep jogging along and can take my food altho' it is rough. Just at this point when the end is so near I am not going to give way willingly to any of these maladies cos I want to go home. II..II Sorry am writing all about myself, but as you know it is a habit of mine. By the way I had my photo taken by an official photographer whom I had obliged with a tin of petrol. It may appear in a picture paper. I am wearing a 'Hun' hat, so you may see it. The natives are a bit puzzled with me – I have a white hat, which formerly graced the head of a German. One man said '*Vous êtes marine, n'est-ce pas*' another thought I was a Bosch.

It is an exciting life, many a time I would like to sit down and give you some real impressions of the War as I see it owing to my being too far back. I would like you to live just one day of this life. If I were poet or essayist I could arrange my words so that you would walk with me, see as I see and feel as I feel. Failing a fluent pencil, I am dumb and can only state a few bald facts. Nevertheless I am living – living a life of hardships mingled with happiness. Of hardships there are plenty and one could write a book about iron rations unsuitable for hot climates, about sweltering heat which causes one to perspire day and night, about insanitary places, and about fevers and temperatures which we get in our turn. As a set off against these trials one find a keen pleasure in experience, in seeing new places and fresh people and in taking part in a successful stunt which is freeing a promising country of an oppressive rule. One meets all kinds of people and many of the natives are interesting because they have seen both sides of the War. Some are glad to see us, others welcome us for what they can get, while many are indifferent – a few are hostile. It is hardly any good saying anything unkind about the tribe because they have had many wars in these parts and owing to the Turkish yoke have not had a fair chance. I have read much about them and studied them by observation. It is hard to find any good points. I could not describe how dirty the people are. Many of our chaps recommend burning them out. It is really beautiful to find people like our American Red X friends who are working amongst them at present. I think they are due VCs for so willingly giving their services during the cholera epidemic.

I have got to know quite a lot about the United Free Church Mission to the Jews who were represented in this town for many years. They were all Scotch I think – the principal names are Souter, Ewing and Torrens. They seem to have left owing to the War but there is a graveyard here where about seven of the Mission people are buried. One would hardly expect to meet with such examples of nobleness in a place like this.

Do you know Eliza Reid? I think she would probably be a missionary. In a small room downstairs in our building there is a marble tablet, which says ‘This building is erected in loving memory of Eliza Reid of Belfast, Ireland, by her sister 1896.’ Well, I wonder how you would feel if you came across a heap of gold and were only allowed to have as much as you could carry. I feel like that just now. Next door there is an attic full of books – they are all thrown about and trampled on – but once they were the Soutar Memorial Library. I should say the library is worth three or four hundred pounds.

There are hundreds of theological books and the rest are classical works of all kinds. I have had permission from the Military Governor to help myself. I am wild because I cannot read them very quickly – but such is life. I do hope somebody will pack the books up and take care of them. Old Alf would never sleep if he were here. Am sorry to say Harold Morris is having a rough time. He has had a week of fever and is now down again with pains in the stomach. A peculiar thing about all these maladies is that the patient never wants anything to eat, so we feel so helpless to help them.

It is a pity I cannot carry any souvenirs. Today I have seen hundreds of antique firearms collected from the natives. Have had to content myself with a small revolver. Am trying to get an automatic but don't know if I shall succeed. You see I want it backsheesh. Am buying one for the boss for £5 – the man is frightened to bring it down for fear we shall claim it. Yesterday I sent a ‘mily’ medal to the Mater in a green ‘un. Am a bit doubtful whether it will arrive safely so will wait until we get a Post Office before I send yours. I have one or two left still II..IIx Am enclosing a German paper published in occupied territory. If you can manage to translate it you will see how they try to gull the French population. It is my night duty tonight, and also every other night. Even now at 11.30 pm it is too hot to walk about. There is a night bell on so I am going to bed soon. I hope you are keeping well dearest. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

I can hear about a hundred dogs yelping and barking. What a beautiful serenade eh.

26 OCTOBER

My Dearest Madge,

Thanks so much for your letters of 9, 16 and 30 Sep. Am sorry that I am almost working day and night and have not time for a long letter. I am Supt. in a fairly

1918

busy office and have had nearly everyone down with fever until I found myself Supt., section clerk, ration man and co. However, things are improving. Harold Morris has been at the Zionist Hospital and returned fairly fit. I have got two new clerks straight from Blighty. (Needless to say they are very green and require a lot of watching.)

Well, am busy packing up. We are going on trek about 200 miles up country. Am looking forward to it very much. The rains have started but I don't mind as long as I get to see some new places. Alf has sent me some photos which am enclosing. Probably you have had the Holy Carpet previously. Shall not be sorry to say au revoir to Tiberias, but it has its good points. We shall have to include Galilee in our grand tour. KR to Aunties. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

2 NOVEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Just having the time of my life and am very busy but thought I would drop you a note. Yesterday I tasted fresh meat and bread for the first time since 19 Sep; so you can tell we have been away from the base. At Tiberias I had a lot of responsibility in the office and worked very hard. The boss seems to appreciate this. He is keen on motors and took me for a few rides. When we set off on this 200-mile trek he said 'Smith, would you like to form one of my house party.' Of course Smith 'did like', so here we are in Damascus. The house party consists of the boss (driving), the batman, and myself. We spin along and do the trip of about 20 miles each day then wait for the horses and wagons coming up. Of course we joy ride sometimes. One day we did about 75 miles. He is not a bad fellow and altho' very few officers become familiar with the rank and file, he is as familiar as his position will allow him. I'm becoming quite an expert with Ford car repairs but the boss is so keen on driving that I don't get a chance. However when Henry Ford puts a working man's car on the market we shall have to sell some consolidateds and invest.

Well, here we are in Damascus resting a day before going to Homs. I ought to tell you something about the district. Damascus is situated on a plateau 2,000 ft high and 180 sq miles in extent. The city is said to be the oldest in the world. The place is very fertile and there are 100 sq miles of vineyards and gardens. Icy cold water is very plentiful. Every building has its fountain and there are many canals. We have been near Mount Hermon (7,000 ft) which is snow capped so you can guess there is some of the genuine thirst quencher about.

Damascus city is fine in places and in others very dirty and mean. There are trams and electric light. One sees fine buildings, and wide streets, but of course there are many dirty, dark alleys. The King of the Hedjaz is King of this place and there are thousands of his troops in charge. They are armed to the teeth and not particular whom or what they shoot. The city is out of bounds but I have

chanced my arm and had a look round this morning. What a city it is, and how exciting. It does not look too safe to be out alone but I did not make myself too prominent. If I can manage to purchase some ammunition for my revolver I may have a mooch all over the spot. The streets are thronged with all types of Eastern people, and there are many magnificent shops fitted up like Boots. There are shops full of carpets and costly inlaid woodwork. One sees all kinds of workers in leather, wood, metals etc. There are also many fine native eating houses, but altho' the food looks nice – it is not our style and may not be clean. I don't seem to be able to do justice to this place in a letter. Perhaps I am too excited to think clearly, but it is the most Eastern place I have ever seen and if I could only get a look round am sure it would be the most interesting.

Well, dearest, what do you think to our armistice? They say we are thro' the Dardanelles and Bosphorus. I think in a few days we shall be able to write 'PAID' to the Palestine front. The War is nearly finished I think and we may be home in the course of a few months. It seems too good to be true. However, we can keep smiling for that short period. Hope you are well. KR to Aunties. All very best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

12 NOVEMBER

My Darling Madge,

We are too far North to receive mails and news but we have a good idea that the War is nearly over. We are eagerly waiting for some evidence in black and white. Isn't it glorious to think that we have finished with war and that this great sacrifice of life has ceased? Of course I am excited about getting home, but I am trying to be as patient as possible. There may be a lot of work for us and in any case there will be a long trek before we can embark.

We have completed the 10-day trek from Tiberias to Homs. It has been very interesting and I would not have missed it. I wrote you from Damascus giving you an account of the place. Homs, which is a city of over 50,000 inhabitants, is out of bounds. It is a fine specimen of an Arab city. I have been thro' several times, but it is impossible to get a real look round. Two days ago I went 156 kilometres on a motor trolley on the railway. It was a fine trip. At times we did 25 miles an hour, but we had to look out for the many broken bridges etc. We have known what it is to feel cold, and the weather is still cold here, but it is bracing and healthy. We have been on bully beef since 19 Sep, so you can guess I shan't want any corned beef as long as I live. We get bread now so things are improving. It has started raining tonight. I think this is the beginning of the wet season. Well, it is bedtime and I am very tired so will close. Will let you know if anything happens. Wish we could get a mail. KR to Aunties. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

1918

Railway sidings
in the desert



11 DECEMBER

My Darling Madge,

There has been no mail this week but I am writing tonight because I may be journeying into a far country tomorrow. Don't think I am coming home – not just yet, the weather is too cold and would nearly finish me off. There is a book of instructions out regarding demobilization. It does not say anything definite, but I should think we shall make a move in March or April. The rainy season has commenced and for the first few days it came thick and heavy. Now we are having a fine spell. We are really lucky to be living in a house. It will suit me until this Scotch mist clears away. I have just been down to Balbek by train. It was some journey. At first I waited 7 hours in the rain for the train to get steam up. As we moved off the rain stopped but I was in an open truck and the wind nearly stiffened me. The mountains on each side were covered with snow. I had the pleasure of seeing General Allenby on the return journey. He was travelling up to have a look at Homs. One cannot help but admire the C in C for his efficiency. He is no armchair soldier.

I don't know what kind of a Christmas we shall have. The rations are only poor owing to transport difficulties. However, if our boss can get any money I am going down to Ramleh for Xmas stores. It will be no joy ride. All the way in open trucks – some part of the trip on light railway and some on broad gauge. I shall have to change trains about a dozen times and if my luck is in I may reach Ramleh in five days. Perhaps it does not look far on the map but I should say it is 350 miles. If the money does not turn up soon we shall get nothing. I am not stony myself but the section seem to be 'skined' to a man. I don't know what language the word skined comes from but it is used in the Army a lot because the fellows are nearly always on the rocks. I hope you have had a good Xmas and that the work has not been too heavy. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love for you dearest.

Yours ever, Eddie

1918

29 DECEMBER

My Darling Madge,

Another year nearly gone and we are as far apart as ever. However, we have some hope for the coming year now that the War is over. As soon as the atmosphere of England becomes aired and the sun shines a little I shall be home again. They do not appear to be giving – it is more a question of having a job to return to. I shall be feeling very restless if they don't move us home by April.

We have had a quiet Xmas. On the 24 I went to Rayak for Xmas stores and returned at noon on Xmas day. My word I was starved to the bone nearly all the time. I had to sleep on the goods in an open truck and there was a white frost. There were none of my own pals in the billet so I had a quiet Xmas day. Nearly all our men seemed to be bent on getting gloriously drunk, so I did not go with the crowd. The Army gave us a good issue of plum pudding and we got plenty of tinned goods from Rayak.

We are not working very hard so I am often wandering thro' the markets. It is very interesting. I have posted you a packet containing some Homs silk, a German Military medal, a Turkish Gallipoli Star and a seal that will stamp your name in Arabic. As regards the silk I don't know if it is suitable for you, but you can count on it containing more silk than cotton. The German medal is from Nazareth and the Turkish medal is one that was issued to Turkish soldier. The seal is the type of thing Arabs use for signing their names. You will be able to try it with an inked pad.

Thanks for yours of 1 December. Am so pleased you have got over the flu safely. You should be granted a long holiday when the male staff return. I really believe you have had the worst of the bargain. We have had adventure and change to compensate for the little hardships. Nearly all the old hands seem to be leaving the firm. AJK is a long time in getting a promotion. Perhaps he has given up hope. Arthur is 'quids in' with his trip to Germany. We have not heard as yet that the censorship is off. Nevertheless I nearly always tell you where I am, or where I am going.

My doggie is growing by leaps and bounds and of course is as full of mischief as a cartload of monkeys. If at all possible I shall bring him home, but of course he will have to keep quiet while I am smuggling him. Please give my KR to Aunties – before very long I shall be telling them the tale about Egypt, Palestine and Syria. By the way could you please send me about half a pound of coffee if it can be procured without ration cards? Do not get it if it would rob you of your own food because it is a luxury I am asking for. Well dearest I am longing to see your bright face, but am trying to be patient. However it won't be long now. All my best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

On Active Service



**WITH THE BRITISH
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE**

14th March 1919

My Dad,

Have arrived at Taranto
(South Italy) and hope to be
leaving in the course of a
few days. I have just
come from St Paul via Malta.
The journey was OK but we
have been too crowded. The
same thing obtains on the
train thro Italy, but of course
it will soon be finished
with. There will not be
much chance to study the
organgrinders at home because
we have very little liberty.

Hope you are well

all love

Yrs ever

Eddie

TO ECONOMISE PAPER, PLEASE WRITE
ON THE OTHER SIDE, IF REQUIRED.

1919

TUL KERAM

2 JANUARY

My Darling Madge,

I am just going on a railway journey of about 250 miles to fetch some stores. As I shall be moving about probably for 10 days there will not be much chance to write. Thought I would just let you know, and when I return will write a long one. All love.

Yours, Eddie

9 JANUARY 1919

My Darling Madge,

Just a note from Tul Keram. I arrived here safely after four days on the railway. Now I'm waiting for a truck to take my stores back to Homs. This place is very quiet and the climate is like an English summer. I'm resting for a few days but can do with it.

I hope your flu has cleared away never to return. In the next week or so I may send you a few of my war trophies. If possible I would like to get my diaries off, then you can read them. It will save me quite a lot of yarning. II.. II If possible you might touch up Mr Willis to ask for the old hands back. I'm not crying for home, but if nobody makes a move we shall be here into another summer. My health is poor and the present conditions are just about putting the lid on. I caught a nasty cold coming thro' the snow covered mountains and now down here I've been bitten with mosquitos and think I've got malaria. Every day I have a few hours on the rack. My head throbs like ten thousand furies. I shall be glad to get back and see the doctor. In the meantime forgive me for telling you all my troubles. You know men soon get downhearted when they are poorly. I shall go in dock if things don't improve, but I would rather carry on. Please

1919

give KR to Aunties. All very best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

SEMACK

20 JANUARY

My Darling Madge,

I have had no letters from you lately, but the reason is obvious – I am still travelling. When last I wrote I was at Tul Keram waiting for a truck to take our dump north. I had got a touch of malaria but now am feeling OK. This is a game. I left Homs on the 4 Jan and if Allah is kind I may land back about the 4 Feb. It rained very heavily one day at Tul Keram so they gave me a truck (an open one) II..IIx I landed at Haifa wet thro. They transhipped the stuff into a large covered van but I had to wait a week before they would hitch my wagon to a train. We eventually moved off but the engine could not manage the load so it left our train at Semack, a small village at the south end of the Sea of Galilee. I have been here three days and have no hopes of a move.

The job isn't so bad. I have no parades. I have fitted the truck up with bed, table etc. There are three other men on the same train so we draw rations and cook together. This place is very warm so I am fortunate to be away from the wintery weather of Homs. The waiting makes one weary but anyway the War will soon be over. Today I saw time-serving men going down the line for Blighty so they are making a start. We may be home in about six months' time. I hope you are keeping well dearest. KR to Aunties. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

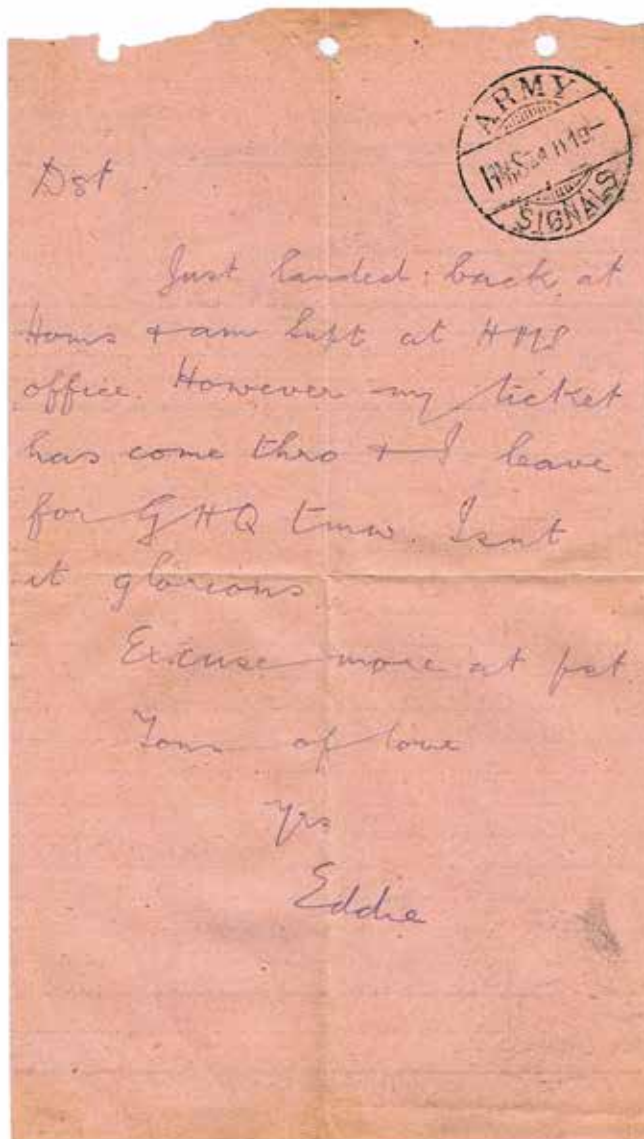
1919

4 FEBRUARY

Dearest,

Just landed back at Homs and am Superintendent at HMS office. However, my ticket has come thro' and I leave for GHQ tomorrow. Isn't it glorious. Excuse, more at present. Tons of Love.

Yours, Eddie



1919

HOMS

11 FEBRUARY

My Darling Madge,

Thanks very much for all your letters, which I received on return from my long railway journey. Well, here I am still not demobilized. Frankie and I both received orders for down the line. He got away but has been recalled. My ticket was cancelled before I left. It was a great disappointment. However, it might come thro' sometime during 1919. Have sent you quite a lot of things lately. Did you get that second lot of silk accompanied by German and Turkish medals? I posted a bundle of diaries, which you will perhaps like to read when you have any spare time. The Mater would also perhaps like to read them. However, they will be a bit tiring so don't take on the task if you are busy. I have also sent you two prayer carpets reputed genuine Persian. They may be II..IIx The correct thing will be for you to kneel down on these carpets and pray to Allah seven times a day. If you don't fancy that, you could hang them on the wall instead of pictures. If there is no room for them on the wall they might find a place on the floor like an ordinary Blighty carpet. There was a dagger enclosed in one of the carpets, but that is for me. Am enclosing herewith something to wear on a blouse. The lady who sold it said she was a Christian Syrian and was very poor. It took her two days to make. In consequences of all these things she charged me two Mejedies. I hope it will be OK for you.

Well, somehow I can't settle down much now – I'm eager to get home. I gave all my spare kit away when my telegram came thro' and I've given up collecting anything else. I am Superintendent at Homs office, the lines are very long so I'm often busy testing. I just want to mention one thing. I had a long letter from Elsie (Mrs Howden) telling me about the death of her husband. She asked me if I would write to her now and again. Well I don't think it would serve any useful purpose, so I expressed my sympathy for her sad loss and said that I could not undertake to correspond with her. I felt that I would rather tell you about it. I was so sorry to hear of Miss Bolton's death. You must have felt it very much and it must have been a great sorrow to her parents. I do hope they will get this influenza wiped out. It is making great havoc all over the world. Well, am just going to get supper then on night duty. KR to Aunties. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

1919

19 FEBRUARY

My Darling Madge,

Here I am again and not yet on a ship. However I am not despairing. A list of 10 men was submitted and I was on it. Five have already gone so it will be my turn soon. Of course if they had treated us fairly I should have been in 'civvies' before any of those men in England were demobilized. I suppose the only lesson we can learn from the whole business is that it does not pay one to be a volunteer when there is a war on. You must remind me of this next time I want to join the Army.

I am a bit troubled about young Ramleh (our dog). There is an order out which states that only 15 dogs will be allowed to leave Egypt. His chances seem very small, don't they? He is such a fine little chap and I did so want to bring him home for you dearest. I shall make every enquiry before I relinquish him. The office is progressing OK, and we have put a lot of lines thro, which prevents transmission. Some of the little boys who have arrived from England are very inexperienced. But I give them as much encouragement and help as possible because they are the ones who will take our places.

Tomorrow morning at 03.30 I leave for Aleppo to collect some stores. Isn't it glorious to get a trip up there – it is my only and last chance. I will write and let you know all about it. The place is about 120 miles north of here and the railway journey only takes 12 hours. Thanks very much for all letters received dearest. I seem to have quite a bundle. 16, 22 and 27 Jan and 4 Feb. Soon you won't need to write any more. Thanks for all the news. No doubt you will see many of the boys before I return. Mine is a kind of endurance test, but it will finish someday. Am glad you got the medals OK. You see I can win them quite easily from the enemy. I could have had hundreds of the German ones. There are no medals out for our last big stunt but I should think our officer will get his MC.

I suppose it was young Robinson who asked for me at Dewsbury. I met him a few times out here. I got my employment slip OK but in addition I am a pivotal man. They wired for me from the War Office. Frankie is the same. Am enclosing a few Homs violets. They smell very sweet, but of course they are not better than Blighty violets. I hope you are keeping well dearest. I am keeping fit and shan't worry about the cold of Blighty. It is very cold here. Please give my KR to Aunties. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie



A postcard from Aleppo

1919

25 FEBRUARY

My Darling Madge,

Have just returned from Aleppo after a very interesting time. Mr Barwell has sent me a letter to say that the Mater is in very poor health so I have applied for compassion leave. In addition the War Office has wired for me as a pivotal man and I have long service, so I should be home shortly. I would go on strike but it might cause further trouble.

Well, Aleppo is a fine Arab city with a few fine mosques and a large ruined castle. The bazaar is very extensive but the shops are full of common goods made in Germany. They were asking £10 for small Persian carpets, and other things were very dear. No doubt the ones I sent you are not Persian because they only cost £2.10 the two. However, one learns by experience. I could not see any souvenirs worth buying, but I invested in a narghile pipe for myself. If it arrives home safely you can have a smoke at it.

Things are fairly quiet at the office. We have plenty of lines but they are always going wrong. My chief concern is to prevent transmission at our place, and other large offices are on the same game. It is a case of diamond cut diamond. The bad weather has nearly finished but I am not looking forward to the warm weather because it will bring fever. There is a lot of water here and that means there will be plenty of mosquitos. There have been a few cases of stabbing in our town but I think it is mostly when men are drunk that they are attacked. Normally one Britisher can put two of these natives to sleep any time. Well, dearest, I don't feel able to settle to anything here. Am just waiting for demob. At any rate it should not be long now. Please give my KR to Aunties. All very best love to you.

Yours ever, Eddie

Will let you know as soon as my ticket arrives.

HOMS

27 FEBRUARY

My Darling Madge,

Just to let you know I am coming home. They have called up 'demobilizers' with over 3 years' service overseas. Frankie and I leave for GHQ tomorrow. Thank you very much for parcel which arrived today. I am quite excited so please excuse, more at present. I will write as soon as possible. Hope you are well. All love. Yours ever, Eddie

1919

4 MARCH

My Darling Madge,

Just arrived at Ramleh after a very tiring journey. It is raining so I am staying here with GHQ for the day and going to Kantara tomorrow. So far the conditions have been frightful. The trains are overcrowded and I have had to fight my way on. There are no arrangements for any food. People say it is no better further down. However, it won't last very long. I hope to be with you by the end of March. It seems too good to be true dearest, but it is 'dinkum' this time.

Of course I am very excited and I am wondering if I shall be nervous when I arrive II..IIx If I am you will have to forgive me because I haven't spoken to a decent civilized person for four years. Excuse, more at present. Dinner is up and I must get some food while I have a chance. KR to Aunties. All best love.

Yours ever, Eddie

KANTARA

7 MARCH

My Darling Madge,

Have arrived at Kantara demobilization camp after fighting my way down the line. Altho' there are many thousands of men here things are fairly well organized. Some men are having to wait a long time, but Frankie and I leave on Sunday on *The Caledonia* from Port Said. We shall be dispersed at Ripon. I will do my best to let you know when I am arriving at Harrogate, dearest, then you may be able to meet me. I want to see you as soon as possible. Please give my KR to Aunties. All very best love to you. Yours ever,
Eddie

TARANTO

14 MARCH

My Dearest,

Have arrived at Taranto (South Italy) and hope to be leaving in the course of a few days. I have just come from Port Said via Malta – the journey was OK but we have been too crowded. The same thing obtains on the train thro' Italy, but of course it will soon be finished with. There will not be much chance to study the organ grinders at home because we have very little liberty. Hope you are well. All love.

Yours ever, Eddie

1919

SOUTHAMPTON
25 MARCH

Arrived Southampton.

Eddie

N.B.—This Form must accompany any inquiry respecting this Telegram.

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The wedding day,
DATE?