

No 2

Southampton Army
October 26, 1917.

Dear Mother:

The two big rooms here are both crowded with fellows writing home and I was only able to secure a very poor pen and writing is quite difficult. We are pretty well settled now in a large mobilization camp in England and very close to the boats over to France. To-day our battalion was slated to make the trip across but for some reason the trip has been postponed and we have been given the evening off. They never send across troops except in cloudy weather as there is danger from the zeppelins and hostile airplanes. The submarines are pretty effectively blocked from the channel now but there is constant danger from aircraft as they can sight the boats from great distances.

Last night another regiment marched down to the docks only to turn back as the moon had come out in the meantime. The city here is very pleasant, slightly larger than Hartford. Being a seaport there is an exceedingly motley crowd on the streets.: Hundreds of our own division, Canadian reserve regimentals, English (not many save young pink cheeked school lads and old men in the garb of the King's home guard) New Zealanders, French instructors, and sailors of all nations. Added to these are a large bunch of German prisoners at work constructing roads to enlarge our camp. These unfortunates seem pretty well fed and content and are dressed in old cast off military garments. One will have a sailor's trousers Canadian artillery coat and German tasseled cap.

One of them has a sailor's cap bearing the band "Untersee- boten"- which attracts a lot of attention from those of us still fresh through the sub danger zone. They are guarded by old Home Guards or partially crippled soldiers back from the front.

As for the women, they are also much in evidence. They run the trolleys, do the farmwork, skilled labor in factories, etc. and many are driving the heavy autottrucks. Here in England they observe the left hand **traffic laws** and **it is very confusing** to us. A bunch of us will be waiting for a car on the left side of the street when a big truck will come whizzing along and it too slowly occ urs to us on the left side to get out of the way. I've been most run do down more than once for that reason.

Last night we were allowed out of camp at 5 and we all made a dash for the city. With three fellows in our agents squad I had supper at a very good restaurant. After being used to sump- tuous spreads in New London we were far from pleased with the portion of meal we got. Their idea of a satisfactory dinner has slowly diminished till it is greatly different from ours. We had a small steak, a couple little pieces of French fried, salad, bread & butter, and soup for the sum of $3/4$ that is 3 shillings four pince which amounts to 80 cents in our coinage.

There are many Americans in town right along now that our coinage is understood and accepted in several of the larger restau- rants.

On coming out of the restaurants we had to fairly feel our way along, for the streets are very carefully darkened as this city is right in the zeppelin route and seen many bombardments

We inquired our way and managed to find a very good pastry shop where we ran up quite a bill. They had many kinds of cakes and cookies but it was very hard to find a single one at all sweet as sugar is very scarce.

While eatables are very dear, many articles can be obtained here very cheap. For instance a first class pair of leather puttees (modelled after the \$8 or \$10 kind in U.S. are sold here for 8 shillings or \$2. Watches can be bought for as low as two crowns or \$2.50. I changed my last \$10 bill last night into a pound, ten shilling note a couple of half crowns, two florins, a shilling and sixpence- a loss to me amounting to about 10 cents. The coins here are very large and cumbersome. Their copper hapenny is as big and heavy as our quarter while the penny is as big as our half dollar. Their smallest silver is a sixpence (like our dime) shilling like our quarter, then florin, (2 shillings) half crown and crown. For paper they have a ten shilling note and pound notes.

Our camp is just a temporary rest camp, that is, there are no drill fields and a bunch of soldiers only stay there till weather is suitable to go across to France. We can ~~hear~~ frequent booming of the heavy artillery practising in nearby camps and there are always airplanes overhead patrolling the coast. This combination kind of reminds us that we are not here on a sightseeing tour altogether. So far it has been just that and we are having a wonderful time.

Still no sign of our guns but hope they are waiting us in France as I hope is also some mail sent direct. Well I must close now but will write soon. Please do the same.

Your loving son
Sherm.

Hope Dad and Emily are well.