

## DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

CANADA

June 29, Saturday

Dear Dr. Penfield,

You no doubt will have heard from various other members of our unit by the time you receive this letter. Therefore much of what I have to say in the way of news will be already known to you. Each of us viewed these new experiences from a distinctly individual point of view yet as a whole we seemed to have the same feeling of relief that we were at last on our way and that all of our pent up desires to actively participate in the prosecution of the task ahead were about to be realized. The final departure from the Drill Hall in Ottawa - our headquarters for so long - was a sight long to be remembered. It had its anticlimax in that all of the officers wives agreed to leave Ottawa prior to our departure. Lucie left on the six-thirty train together with Mary Cross. Colonel Cross and I were permitted on the platform while the others waited in the station for their final wave of goodbye as the train pulled out. From this time on we had several hours of work in getting our personal belongings together and then assuming our respective duties incident to the entrainment. Our train left at midnight in an outward appearance of disciplined order. This, in sharp contrast to the chaotic order of our own inward emotions and thoughts.

The train ride to Halifax, was uneventful and yet filled with new sights for me. I had never before seen this part of Canada. In the Matapedia valley the stream followed along the tracks for miles. The quaint farms along this stream with their long and narrow boundaries marked by the rail fences were even more interesting after their history had been told to me by one who was well acquainted with that part of the country.

On our arrival at Halifax we got on board ship and proceeded to settle ourselves in our new quarters. The following day, we were told that we were to change to another ship, that was less crowded. This move, although disturbing at first, proved to be to our advantage. Our final quarters were much better and the food, service and atmosphere generally were excellent. Arthur Childe, Fred Hanson and I were cabin mates and we had many good laughs with the honors evenly distributed. Our trip across was so pleasant, the sea so calm and the whole convoy managed with such apparent ease and confidence, that toward the end it was hard for us to realize the mission on which we were bent. On coming into port, however, we were met by numerous evidences which were grim reminders that the wonderful trip that we had just completed might have been otherwise.

As we slid into the quay, we were anxious to set foot on land again, but were told that we would not disembark until seven that evening. Looking out over the landing site we soon spotted Col. Russel. He came on board and had tea with us that afternoon and did his best to answer all of the questions that were fired at him. After his departure,

we prepared to leave the ship. We had our dinner on board and at each place there was a cardboard box containing our lunch which was to sustain us for eighteen hours. I will itemize the contents to amplify a very amusing incident that happened later in the same day. There was the usual quota of hard boiled eggs, two large slices of bread, one orange, one apple, a slice of fruit cake and last but not least, a can of "Bully Beef". As our unit stood on the quay surrounded on all sides by other units, one of our more serious members lost the entire contents of his lunch box as one end of the box came open. Amid the usual laughs and side remarks, he stooped to gather up the spilled items which had dispersed within a radius of some three or four feet. This was a feat in itself, hampered by the kit bags, respirator etc. slung over his shoulder. After the box had been repacked and grasped firmly by the end that had come open, our member stood smartly at attention with a grim look on his face intended to dispose of the awkward situation at once.

Suddenly the other end of the box gave way and the entire contents were again spilling over the ground. At this, no semblance of order could be maintained. After this incident I produced a roll of one inch adhesive tape that I had in my coat and we speedily fortified all lunch boxes against similar mishaps.

We did not leave by train until late that night. All were tired and few slept more than an hour or so. We left the train at about ten the next morning and were taken by buses to our camp site. Much had to be done in the way of clearing and pitching tents. Although the day we arrived was clear and warm, the following day was cloudy and two days later it began to rain. The wet weather lasted only two days and it has been wonderfully clear and warm since.

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Our camp has taken shape in quick time. The officers mess is in a large tent - the meal tables at one end and the other end used for bridge and just "sitting". Father O'Neil is the Mess president and Childe the secretary and treasurer. Tuesday night has been designated as the weekly mess night. We plan to have a few treats at mealtime and guests on that night.

We have had frequent visits by bombers at night. We hear the planes overhead and the warnings in the nearby villages. As yet we have no definite information as to when we may get into permanent quarters. We hope soon for the "main event" may begin anytime now. On arrival we were granted landing leaves. Most of the men have taken this time and have spent much of it in London. Arthur Childe went to his fathers home for his leave. I called Dr. Cone two days ago and expect to go to London tomorrow.

As you know this is my first visit to England. I have been thrilled with every part of it every day I have spent here. The countryside is beautiful and the cottages with their gardens and rose covered walls are more picturesque than I could have imagined. The spirit of the people! Even in this day when the might of steel and power of numbers are being impressed on us, the spirit of these people is more comforting than the rumble of tanks and the roar of guns. We must have the latter and the wheels are turning. The United States must realize that to maintain her principles of freedom she must be prepared to fight for them now. It will be too costly and probably too late to wait until she is openly threatened.

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I hope that the talks of J.B. Priestley have been heard in Canada and in the United States. His fifteen minute speech last evening was great. I am trying to get a written copy of it to keep.

Before I stop, I must explain to you why I did not get a copy of the equipment to you as I promised. I kept one out of our packing boxes for Lucie to take back to you. At two o'clock on the afternoon of our departure I was ordered to prepare a list of replacements. Thus it was that in the last remaining few hours I spent my time doing this when I had planned to spend it with Lucie and the only way I could comply with their request was to use the list I had meant for you.

We all think of you and the staff at the Institute daily. We are anxious to get busy, medically and surgically, that we may have the chance to justify the confidence placed in us. In the next few months that are to follow, great changes may take place within our ranks and about us. We are extremely fortunate in the type of men that are working under us and our fellow officers are equal to any situation. There is a nice balance in temperament.

Please remember me to Mrs. Penfield and to other members of your family. Also to my friends at the M.N.I.

Most sincerely,

Ow Stewart