

Letter From France

Lance Corporal Tells Wife His Battalion Has Fared Well in Two Scraps

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With Canadians in France, June 8 (Delayed).—This is a soldier's letter home from France. It is the letter of one soldier to one home but with small variations it might be a letter from all soldiers over here to all homes back there in Great Britain, Canada and the United States.

This letter was dictated to me an hour ago by a 24-year-old lance-corporal who came in in one of the Canadian assault battalions Tuesday morning. If his wife finds it less intimate than most of the letters her husband sends to her that is because I warned the lance corporal that the only way I could get this letter back by cable was to have it published in a newspaper.

Reason for Delay.

It follows:

Dear Anita: I haven't written for some time and perhaps you will have guessed where I am because of that. I am glad I have this way of telling you so soon that I am well.

Probably you know more about the landing and the first battles than I know myself. Our officers tell us as much as they can about what is happening on the other parts of the front but we have been too busy to ask many questions about what the rest of the army is doing and I guess the rest of the army is too busy to tell us, anyway. Our own battalion has fought two hard battles and done all right in both of them. The worst one was on the beaches. The town where we landed is very small, right on the sea, of course, and its little stone houses kept reminding me of the houses at home.

The whole country is a little like home, in fact. Fields are a little flatter, churches are bigger and the roads are lined with high stone fences. But there are big fields of spring wheat and plenty of trees.

People on Our Side.

After only two days it's a little hard to say much about the people. Most of them are good people, I'm pretty sure, and nearly all of them are on our side. They treat me especially nice when they find out I'm partly French-Canadian, by the way, their Norman accent is almost exactly like the Quebec accent. I'll

never forget the first morning when we were lying in a wheat field behind the beach catching our breath before going on. An old woman came out of a farmhouse and gave me a cold glass of milk. I was dead tired and plenty thirsty and that's one woman I'll never forget. But we have to be careful with the French because the Germans planted a lot of spies and snipers in this territory and they're not all Germans, either.

The weather hasn't been good, but it could be worse. We've only had about half an hour's rain since we landed, although it has been cloudy and fairly cold most of the time. The first night I didn't get much sleep because I was standing guard part of the night and there was a big attack barrage on.

Good Night's Rest.

Last night we moved further away from the beaches and I lined my slit trench with green wheat, and wrapped my gas cape around me and even though they say the bombing and gunfire was louder than on the first night I didn't stir until reveille.

Our blankets are due up with the rear party some time tonight or tomorrow morning and the adjutant told us a big shipment of mail from England landed on the coast today. I hope there are some letters in it from you and maybe if I'm lucky the cigarets and food parcels you mentioned just before I left England will be there, too. Taking everything into consideration, things are looking up. We went on compositions today — that's the stuff I told you about getting on schemes sometimes back in England.

We are all confident. Our guns and tanks are rolling up all the time and there's another good belt waiting for Jerry any time he decides to come and get it. I don't think I've seen more than a dozen German planes by daylight since I landed, but I must have seen thousands of our own. The Germans are braver at night, but their aim isn't so good.

We are several miles inland now, but our naval guns can still fire over our heads and do as often as we call for support. I haven't told you much about what the fighting has been like. That's not because it's been so bad; I don't like to talk about it because I don't want to give you too many excuses for worry and stuff.

Hun Not So Tough.

By the way, I don't think I was cut out to be a hero. I was very nervous at first going on to the

beaches although I don't remember being scared. The Germans are good fighters, but they're dirty fighters, too. I still think we're better than they are. We've taken a lot of prisoners and they don't look so tough outside their pillboxes.

There is one thing I hardly know how to say. Soon some of our neighbors will be receiving telegrams to tell them that their sons or husbands have been killed. Perhaps some of them will have heard already when this reaches you. There is not much to say, but perhaps it would help if you tell the people back home that just before we went ashore we knelt and prayed and received general absolution from the padre. I saw many of them go down around me. Those who had to die died fighting hard and I don't think they were afraid.

All my love.

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Handwritten scribbles