

B.E.F.

20 March 1917.

Well our popular Premier has visited us, arriving very opportunely on St. Patrick's Day (17 March) and we have had many speeches. It was great to hear him again and the men enjoyed every minute of his visit especially when he made his that evening which certainly carried away all the men of the various regiments as well as our own. I fancy Sir E.P. (Sir Edward .P. Morris K.G.M.G.) would have many votes in the B.E.F., provided they never heard that he was the gentleman who put the ban on beer.

On Irish night, which was H_____ (Holloway's?) Birthday, he, _____, _____ and myself rode to a village about eight miles from the camp and had a jollification. We got a most excellent dinner splendidly cooked and washed down by excellent champagne and served by the prettiest girl on the Somme so we really had a most delightful evening. H_____ suggested seats for the Methodist College Hall but we weren't able to. Did you have Irish night this year?

I met tons of people I knew down there; a lot of the Dublins who were very surprised to see me alive as I had been reported killed. Major Griffiths, a great pal of Colonel Gerard's and also Tim Healey's son. The four of us had they best evening we have had for a long long while and were greatly bucked when we got back to trek on the following morning as it was the only chance we would have had for sometime.

Well, here we are back where we spent Christmas and the whole village was delighted to see us. All the streets are named just as we left them and at present I have a cottage of my own, 15 Topsail Road, which runs off Newfoundland Avenue. The old lady at he Chateau was charmed to see me and proffered hospitality but this billet is really better than that one, as I have got a bedroom and sitting room and so I am in the lap of luxury.

My ever faithful orderly is looking after me most excellently and I can tell you that the evenings in front of the stove with a pipe, a drink and carpet slippers are top hole.

H_____ and I have planned some good trips and it really looks as though we'd be carrying them out this time next year which would be most decidedly 'bon', especially as the wealth we'll acquire in Hun-land will defray all expenses.

Everybody is in great form and the weather of late has been perfect. In another month this country will be lovely. The snowdrops are already growing 'dans mon jardin' and the strawberry plants are thinking of coming along, so we may take it that the winter is over, which is rather a good thing as at times it has been a bit unpleasant.

I was glad to hear how well you all are from Sir Edward (The PM) especially you, Dad. I suppose the weather at home is getting fine again home by now and soon you will be thinking about rods and flies.

We heard also that all the ships were in the seals and everyone is pleased to think that the people home will start the year well.

Haven't heard from Johnny (Edens - his cousin) lately. He seems to be getting on all right, though the dentist's is hardly the pleasantest of places. Tell Dr. Perkins to reserve October and November for me as we'll need all the time.

There is really not much more to tell you except that the Padre has got a really decent cross for Capt. O'Brien's grave . It is carved out of solid oak and will last years. I am so pleased about it, as even though it is only a very slight way of paying our tribute to him, it will be long lasting, though the memory of the man and of his work will outlast even the cross.

Haven't had a letter from you for quite a while. Expect to get one any day. The news is still of the best. The Boche had to retire much faster than expected and though of course his new line will be formidable, he won't have much time to improve it. The cavalry are coming into action and the Russian business seems to be going all right while the Crescent is most decidedly on the wane and, of course, the British prestige in the East is now stronger than ever before.

The Indian people will feel that THEY and the Whites have won out and so support from that quarter will be stronger than ever. In fact, the last thing to be at present is a Kaiser and the next worst is an ordinary Hun. The advent of China, I suppose, meant clean shirts for the Tommy with rice as a ration. It will mean two minutes more standing during the Allies anthems and should afford many patriotic ladies an opportunity of disporting themselves kimona-clad on Water Street selling the flags of our Celestial Allies the generous hearted souls, so after all the entry of the latest into the show will have a far reaching effect.

Well it is time I said goodbye , I'll be 23 tomorrow, my third khaki birthday. We are most decidedly getting on. I will write again before our next move. I am as usual in great form.

Hoping you are well, Cheer-o.