

No. 103

FRANCE

Dear Mother,

3rd Jan. 1918

I am sending you enclosed a Rising Sun Brooch, which I hope arrives safely. A parcel arrived from you yesterday, containing sox, soap & lollies. I was very pleased to get it. Yes I think I have just about enough sox to last me for some time now thank you. We are still waiting patiently for another Australian mail. As mine has come thro' the Division it takes a couple of days longer. I expect it this week.

The name of "1st Anzac Corps" has been changed to "Australian Corps", so in future will you please address my letters "Cpl R.O. Snape, c/o Australian Corps Headquarters."

We had a slight fall of snow again this morning but it is not extra cold. The roads are so slippery that you can hardly keep your feet on them have to get about like a cat on hot bricks.

I hope you are keeping well & cheery, also Father & Frank.

Your loving Son,

Bob.

No. 106

FRANCE

My dear Father,

15-1-18

Just a few lines to enclose with an absurdity called '**The Village Barber**' which I evolved during a few spare & silly moments.

Have you ever heard of Lord Chesterfield's Letters of Advice to his son? I had heard this book mentioned several times so wrote over to England for it. This Lord Chesterfield is supposed to be an authority on manners and I find his letters to his son make very good & useful reading. It will certainly serve as a cure for the carelessness which one is liable all too easily to fall into during a long period of army life. It was often said to me in Australia, "If you grow up to be as good a gentleman as your Father, you'll do." However, now when one's father is a trifle of 12 thousand miles away, emulation on the part of the son becomes a rather difficult problem. It's a most pathetic thing about life that one always wants persons & things & feels more in need of them when they are out of one's reach.

When a fellow leaves home, he slowly begins to realise what good parents he had and how he took things too much as a matter of course before he "went a-roaming." For this reason alone, Separation – "though like the toad wears a jewel in its head."

Love to Mother & Frank & vous-même.

Yr loving son, Bob.

No. 112

FRANCE

Feb 3rd 1918

My dear Father & Mother

Your welcome letter No. 85 dated 25th November arrived the other day. It is the first letter to arrive direct to Corps Headquarters.

We have had a touch of cold weather during the last couple of days but it is beautiful this afternoon and as it is Sunday I have been for a short walk. I had to play the hymns again this morning & sallied forth in my new tunic for the occasion. I am pleased to say that since last writing the S.A's cake dated 25th Sept & other parcel dated (I think) October, containing peanuts, soup, etc. I made the soup yesterday & found it very nice. The cake is just the thing. Thank you very much.

I like the way you answer my letters. I can always remember then what letter it is that you have just received.

Yes I am still at Australian Corps HQ but this is not where Mr Adeney is. He is on 1st Division HQ. Australian Corps HQ is the head of all the Australian Divisions' HQs. Compris? I daresay it is rather hard to understand the long & confusing list of military terms & formations.

Pleased to hear that music arrived alright thro' Florrie.

A letter turned up from Bob Callander yesterday. In previous letters, he had spoken of having everything arranged to get married so I thought that it would have been over months ago. However, in this last letter, he states that the girl had turned him down almost at the last minute. It seems rather extraordinary, doesn't it? He says he will explain everything when I came back.

Amused to hear that the piece of hops arrived home alright. It is very nice to walk along the avenues of hops – but of course they are things of the past this time of year – only the bare poles left like skeletons of the past. Yes I remember seeing the hops fields as I passed through Kent on my way to London last time.

Yes, we are having a mild winter alright, as father anticipated – although so far it has not been even wet.

It would bring back many old associations if you went to Daylesford for Christmas. I can remember the place as plainly as if it had been yesterday we went there – the stout & shrill-speeched Mistress Spargo; the anti-zealous Zimmers; the awful & arrogant Mrs Sloan with her weird cry of "Get out of my Garden!" the good-natured old gin-guzzler Mrs Davis of cherry-tree fame (we might sing "Are you there Mrs Davis?" to the old tune of "Are you

there Moriarty?" only somehow the syllables don't seem to fit). Then there was the blasphemous Bobby Bowsey, also Billy Bowsey & again Papa Bowsey.

The little gushing reservoir on the Wombat Hill comes before my eyes as a beautiful vision, but could I be suddenly dropped in front of it at this moment I should probably find that it would lose much of its enchantment which twelve thousand miles of distance now lend to it. What a steep hill that was from the Gardens gate into Vincent St. And from the other side of the hill we could look down on the railway station with the wonderful turntable – the first I had ever gazed on.

What about the walking excursion to Tipperary Spring – located in a modest flower-pot. Then I hope you wouldn't forget to go round by the shortcut to Sutton & Hardhill Springs discovered by our Father.

I think we will walk out to Hepburn Springs now. By Jove it's hot getting along this dusty road, isn't it? How far do we have to go? Three or four miles I think. What's that place with the big chimney? The pyrites works. We all stare in awe & wonder. It is the name 'pyrites' more than anything else that makes the tremendous impression on our juvenile minds.

Father is explaining to Uncle Joseph all about the pyrites process & we hang around "all ears."

Here we are.

"I thought we were never going to get there," says Mother.

(Chorus) Why it's just like a summer-house.

In we go, all excitement, & Miss Dangerfield tells how Mr So & So drank 13 glasses of mineral water & Mr Someone-else drank 12 glasses. Where does all the water go? Is it wasted?

(I remember that I felt madly in love with Miss Dangerfield. Seems rather funny now, doesn't it?)

We are going back in a cab, I am clinging tightly to a small quantity of mineral water in a bottle. Half way back Father suggests that I give one of the others a drink out of my bottle. I don't want to give it up & end up getting my own way. (The selfishness of human nature! Even now I feel ashamed when I think of that little incident).

Then we get back to Stanbridge Street again & still have enough energy in us to go round to Mother Davis's place & have a big feed of white-heart cherries.

And what a game we had on those mining-trucks.

Ah me!

Yes, you seem to be having a wet spring. Some of the Queensland towns seem to be trying to emulate Venice. What about Hanna St. South? Any floods?

So I referred to the enamel billy in 3 letters. Well, well! My dear Mother, I must have done it for packing. When there's no news & a censor the only thing to fill up letter pages is packing – I suppose now you will take a tumble to the fact that all this Daylesford talk is just camouflage over the otherwise empty state of my letter. Dr Johnson (the man Mr Boswell wrote so much about) said it is an insult to write a short letter to anyone. Cut the piffle, bosh, trash & bunkum out of my letters & what do you find left? I'd like to see the expression on your dear faces when you read them. I remember the first time I set eyes on that book "Cowper's Letters." "What a funny name, Mother!" I said, I couldn't for the life of me understand why anyone should want to read Willy Cowper's letters to other people. However, I ended up reading quite a lot of them myself & realise now that I derived quite a lot of benefit from them quite unconsciously at the time of course.

Dear me I'm rambling nearly onto the 7th page & getting "worsen" fast.

I have been greatly honoured (last night it happened) by being appointed a committee man & caterer of our celebrated "mess." The person dignified by the title "caterer" has the task of purchasing extra foodstuffs at the various canteens & shops, for the glorification of the stomach of forty odd mess members. This job will last 2 weeks but I will remain on the committee for 3 months, always providing of course that the old war doesn't get tired of itself & fizzle out in the meantime.

Ah Mother! That was a nasty rub about the freshness of the eggs I partook of with Harold that day. What a fastidious person I once was!. And you & father will have to keep on reminding me of these little things when I get back if I show any sign of slipping back into the old rut. I'm brave enough to tackle any egg nowadays. Can't say that I have come across any cook to come up to Mother though.

It is a very nice idea you suggest about Madge & myself staying on with you for some time until we get properly fixed up . But what do you think of it Father? I would like it very much as I naturally want to see all I can of my father & Mother for quite a long time after I get back.

Have you heard anything of Frank Spencer lately? And how's his sister Irene? I suppose Bessie has settled in Essendon.

It was good of Arthur to send the things. Do you ever see the Cleaks? Please remember me to Margery & all my other one-time friends.

Fill up the old Seltzogene & drink an inebriating glass to me. I can "see the bubbles brightly blinking & hear the glasses gaily clinking."

Well. Drink away then. Drink awayto your loving son, Bob.

No. 115

FRANCE

20th February 1918

My dear All,

I've decided to commence another letter but don't seem to have any news. We have not been over-worked lately & things are rather monotonous. A "Herald" arrived the other day & on opening it I was surprised to see it dated September 5th. I was round at the 1st Div. the other day & enquired for Mr Adeney (now a sergeant) but was told that he was out for the afternoon so I missed the chance of seeing him. I hope Frank was able to lend me the £25 alright – when it arrives I will be able to go on leave to England. Did you receive my new Will safely?

Yesterday, Mademoiselle A. (see No 9 of Village Identities) told one of our sergeants that she wanted to see me. When I went round she said that if I would agree to teach her two young sisters (aged about 9 & 11 years) to play a piece each, I could come & play on their piano as often as I liked.

Naturally I agreed & gave them their first lesson yesterday afternoon. It was funny. I am teaching one a simplified arrangement of Rubenstein's Melody in F & the other a thing I forget the name of. Mlle can speak a little English but the little kids can't so things got complicated at times because I couldn't explain in French that I wanted the kid to "put her thumb under" (as Auntie Em. Used to say.) I'm alright on the "Essayez la main gauche" and "Essayez la main droite." I came to the eventual conclusion that the best way was to stand behind them & shove their fingers onto the proper notes. They are very quick to learn & have been taught before.

Oh! By the way, No 8, the little shy girl turned out to be a boy.. He turned up the other day in trousers with all his long hair cut off.

Did I tell you that Harold made me a present of one of the tiny copies of 'Science & Health'. It is very handy to carry about. I am keeping in good health & hope you are the same.

With much love,

Yr. Loving son & Br

Bob.

Un-numbered ["A dear little place called London"]

My dear Frank & Esca,

FRANCE

2nd April 1918

I have received letters of interest from you both, but as I have only one lot of things to say to each of you, I know I will be excused for writing but one letter. At present, we are in the muddiest village in France – but it's not France I'm going to write to you about but that dear little place called London. The old school book says- London on the Thames, the largest city in the world. Well, when "we" got there we certainly found London all round the Thames, & under it & over it. In fact, you don't get to see much of the poor old Thames - it's just about walled in. We decided that, if there were any bigger cities in the world than London, for the sake of a man's temper they've no right to exist. I thought Cairo was a twisty place but I never found such a place to get lost in as London. On "our" first visit, "we" were always lost. On our second visit, we were always lost. This was our third visit "and we began to sit up & take notice." On our first two trips, policemen & taxicabs were our salvation, but before going on our third trip, we made up our minds that asking policemen was too boresome and hiring taxicabs too expensive, so we studied hard at maps of streets, tubes & bus-routes for some days before daring to enter the big village again. We learned to dodge the "tubes" as much as possible: more than once we had had to change trains three times & walk two miles & more of underground passages, to get 100 yards.

We went out to Bayswater one day & got on the bus going in the opposite direction. Clever! Wasn't it? We found that if you waited at a corner for a No. 11 bus they'd send every possible number past you but No. 11 & if, in desperation, you made a rush for the nearest tube, you'd find yourself making frantic efforts to get in the "Way Out" door. If you got on a bus at all, you'd clamber up to the top, only to find that every seat was full & then, after you'd got down again & managed to get a comfortable seat inside, you'd suddenly wake up to the fact that you'd been taken about half a mile past your destination. Never ask a Londoner where a street is! He never knows! Each person knows only 3 places: (1) Where he lives; (2) Where he works & (3) Where he buys his dinner. If you have to ask anyone, ask a policeman. (I am satisfied that London Policemen know the answer to every question in the world. They are the best-tempered of men, too. In all my vast experience, I can only recall one occasion on which a London John-hop got wild with me – I'll tell you all about it some other time.) To get back to our subject again – For goodness' sake, don't ask a boy the way, for, it might happen to be in the street where he lives, or works, or eats, in which case he will want to "take you there" & you will end up being lugged along as though you were a blind man & also have to part with 3d. And for pity's sake, don't imagine yourself in Melbourne & that you can cut off a block by going up a side-street. You will find yourself "up the pole" at once. The London street are not on the block system, they are on the anti-block or "maze" system.

Cadet H.J. & I saw The Old Curiosity Shop one Saturday afternoon – “immortalised by Charlie Dickens. I didn’t notice anything curious about it though, but it looked as though it would be “an easy house to knock down,” as Steele Rudd says.

One Sunday, morning, myself & H.J. took a trip by tube to Aldgate & walked to Middlesex street (otherwise known as Petticoat Lane). It reminded me of that hymn “Jerusalem the Golden.” - I never saw so many “Chews” in all my life. It is said they pinch a thing from you at one end of the street & try to sell it to you at the other end, but strange to say, we didn’t lose anything. The narrow street is packed with little stalls looks something like an elongated Eastern Market. Cadet H.J then piloted me round to dirty dick’s but were disgusted to find that the beast had closed for the Easter holidays.

Oh! there are many, many things I’d like to tell you concerning our doings in London but the ink freezes on my pen as the thought comes to me that the envelope may be ruthlessly torn from this letter & the contents exposed to eyes for which they were never intended. I would like to tell you about how I met J.W. Rickaby, the comedian, in the Great Western train to Cardiff, & all the funny things he said on the way; of the man who got in at Newport, & the weird things he produced from his pockets; of the argument I had with the girl-porter on the Cardiff-Romney Railway Station when she said, “You can’t travel on our railway with this pass”; of my quarrel with the officious official at the London Opera House; of my chase down the corridors of the Shaftesbury Hotel after the maid-servant who had sneaked one of brother H’s photos from our wash-stand; of the kind-hearted old gentleman who gave me the free use of a box at the Albert Hall after I had told him, misunderstandingly, that “I didn’t want to buy the place” – but what’s the use?

With much brotherly & friendly affection, believe me to be,

R.O.Snape

No. 124

FRANCE

28th April 1918

My dear Father,

Without receiving letters it is rather difficult to write letters. However, I will endeavour to construct a few sentences of interest.

I saw a French military band for the first time yesterday. They were playing in a field – 52 bandmen, including no less than no less than 20 trumpeters. When I arrived on the scene, each man was practising over his own favourite little tricky bit – with most interesting futuristic effect. Then Monsieur le Conducteur put his pipe away, rushed into

the ring & shouted "Silence, silence. Allons, allons."

The conductor was a stout little man with black moustache and fresh complexion & pince-nez on the tip of his nose. With a frightful glare, he cut off the saxophone player in the middle of his pet cadenza, blew a blast on his whistle, yelled, "Sambre et Meuse" . Un, deux..." & off they started. The trumpeters executed a brilliant flourish of the arm each time they put their trumpets to their lips. I couldn't take my eyes off the antics of the conductor though. You would have thought his life depended on that band keeping time. Yesterday, the band marched into the apology for a square this village boasts of & treated us to 'Si j'étais roi.'

Our present village is the absolute quintessence of decrepitude. Most of the houses are constructed of wood & mud (10% wood & 90% mud). I wouldn't give 6d. for the lot. The church is all cockeyed & you could push its silly little tower over if you tried. When I want a good laugh, I just go inside it. You never saw such a collection of tomfoolery – people frizzling in Hades, floating round in heaven, cardboard angels, St Peter with his key - made of wood; Joan of Arc & Pope Muttonhead the Tenth made of plaster. Such a poppy-show.

29th April 1918

The seeming hopelessness of the life over here weighs heavily upon me sometimes. If you & Mother were only in England so that I could see you & touch you & talk to you when I went on Leave. Since my return from England last I have been forcing myself to do at least one accountancy problem per day. I also read a little each day from John Ruskin's beautiful book, 'Modern Painters'. If I were to walk in the front door of 'Belmiers' tomorrow I don't think you would notice much change in me since the day I went away.

This is the first real fit of depression I have had since I left Harold in London. They don't often occur now but I am longing to see you again. It is a great consolation to me to know that you are not experiencing any material discomforts. You will be pleased to know that I am very comfortable in my present job. I don't think there are many better ones in the Australian Force. And I like my work & the officers I have to work for are perfect gentlemen.

There now, I've been writing dismal things to you instead of trying to cheer up your long hours of waiting. But still, I daresay you prefer to know my true feelings. I know I hate reading insincere twaddle myself.

Have just been playing Swedish Banker for matches & finished up by winning 6 matches in half an hour. Can't be bothered with cards though.

Aunt Lizzie has just sent me another pair of socks. She & Florrie have been very good to us. I had been dwelling with pleasure on the thought that Uncle Robert was happier & more comfortable at Bert's house but all my illusions were dispelled by a letter he wrote me which arrived yesterday. He said time is hanging very heavily on his hands.

Doesn't seem to like Maesteg as well as Barry. I think he has great knowledge of geology & mineralogy. His explanations of lime & ironstone formations & old Roman camps was very interesting during a walk I took with him at Maesteg.

Oceans of love for your dear self & Mother & Frank.

After all, our only happiness seems to lie in looking away from material things. – Don't worry; we [are] surely trusting in Thy defence, may not fear the power of my adversaries.

..... Yr loving son,

Bob.

No. 126

FRANCE

17th May 1918

My dear Father & Mother,

Your letter no 95 turned up yesterday. It was dated 30th March: your surmise that it would travel by a longer route was correct. Another nice parcel also arrived two days ago- Shortbread, peanuts, honey, cream, etc. It was much appreciated. Thanks. I wrote to Frank a few days ago & also this morning. As I forgot to post the first letter I sent both away together this morning.

Did the Australian Xmas Book arrive? I paid 3/- for it through Capt. C.E.W. Bean.

We have been having a pretty decent time lately. Four of us sleep on nice clean straw in a little barn in the village & we work in a most beautiful château. It is the finest I have so far seen in France. You will get a fair idea of what it is like when I tell you that it resembles the Versailles palace from the exterior. There is a delightful wood of elms & birches round it & I wander in this whenever I get an opportunity. It is full of wildflowers of all kinds. The gardens are laid out for scenic effect from the windows of the château. I have never seen anything to equal some of the vistas – long avenues of beautiful green trees stretching in different directions as far as the eye can see.

Most of our officers are splendid fellows. On two occasions lately I have been taken for a blow in a motor car. The day before yesterday I was out for two hours. The country around is looking beautiful – we sailed along winding white roads thro' rich green meadows, along richly wooded river flats, past ancient châteaux & churches, through several fair-sized towns & quite a number of dirty little villages – some clinging to the sides of hills & others nestling in green valleys. The weather has been just

like Australian summer weather lately. I can only stand one shirt under my tunic & one blanket is quite enough at night.

Yes, as you say, I do miss Harold, but he is very good in sending little things over to me such as cigarettes etc. & he is always wanting to know if I have sufficient money.

I hope you got the cable I sent a few weeks back. I daresay it would ease your minds a bit to know that I was still going strongly.

I hear that pianos & organs have risen to a tremendous price everywhere so that it would be a good chance for you to sell my organ now as it is not doing any good(?)..... Besides, my opinion of those small reed organs hasn't improved since I've been away. It would be best to advertise it I should think. You might get £30 for it now. I wouldn't sell it for less than £ though. I would like you to keep five pounds out of the money for yourselves for a bit of a weekend spree & send the balance over to me. Though I am not wanting money at present I should like to know there was a balance to my a/c in the Commonwealth bank, London, for any emergencies during or after the war. *I prefer pianos to little organs nowadays. I think you will agree with me that it is better to sell it.*

I have actually saved 70 Francs over the last four or five weeks! Not too bad, is it? N Our cook at the mess is turning out splendid meals lately. He surpassed himself yesterday – What do you think we had for dinner? Fried chops & onions, mashed potatoes & then trifle made out of cake & custard with chocolate sauce. Not bad for active services, what? We can manage to get plenty of milk in this particular village. There are lots of refugees in most of these villages.

I do hope Mother is keeping quite well now. What's the use of worrying? Harold says anyone would think he was in the Flying Corps & I was in the Tank Corps. Still, I know it is far harder to wait than anything else.

Father's letters are always jolly.

Longing to see both your dear faces again,

I am

Your loving son,

Bob.

Un-numbered

[Bertangles]

FRANCE

26th May 1918

My dear All,

There is practically nothing to write about this time. The weather has been very warm lately, quite hot for two or three days. I investigated a small chain of underground cave refuges which they discovered in our village the other day. Nothing startling though. The local priest loaned Robertson (a pal) & myself the key of the church organ yesterday but it was another disappointment, one of those little beasts & hopelessly out of tune.

According to Harold's latest letter, he was to be transferred to Lark Hill. I suppose his course is nearly completed now.

I received a letter from Bob Callander the other day. He is married and living down in Murrumbena though I can't understand why he has gone so far from town unless he is working down there.

Last night I saw a performance of the "Anzac Coves" near here. They are a sort of Pierrot troupe and are very good. It was an enjoyable change.

I am keeping well & hope you all are the same. Oceans of love,

Your loving son & brother,

Bob.

No. 131

FRANCE

June 14, 1918

My dear Father,

As there are no letters to reply to this week, there is not so much to write. I must, however, try not to adopt the openly bare-faced methods which you admit to using to fill up your letters sometimes when there is no news.

My position as confidential clerk to General M is now a definite fact. It is a pleasure to work for him and of course, a great honour, as he is in supreme command of all the Australian troops in the Field. As the General has on two occasions mentioned to me that he is very well satisfied with the way I am doing the work, I trust that my long-delayed promotion will not be far off now. I must admit that I have only myself to blame for not

getting promotion as you will remember that I said before I left Australia that I had no intention of being anything more than a Private. However, it seems that some shallow minds judge a man's service & ability solely by his rank. They have now got another man for my old job so I am not quite so0 rushed with work at present.

Some more newspapers turned up yesterday & I appreciate your thoughtfulness in sending them.

Trusting you are in the best of health & arranging to eat three good meals per day & a bit of supper,

Your affectionate son,

Bob.

My dear Mother,

The little parcel containing jubes, lemon butter, laces & sox arrived safely the other day. Thank you for sending them.

I sent to Florrie for a tooth-brush & some razor blades a few days ago as they are unobtainable here. She is very good at sending things over.

By the way, where is that Mr Hutchinson (friend of Cleaks) now? His name does not appear among the Australian officers over here now.

A fellow brought some lovely strawberries, on a motor-bike, yesterday. It was a great treat, I assure you. We are getting very good tucker, as usual, though vegetables have been a bit scarce during the last week or so.

A chap from Corps HQ was returned to Australia a few months ago on account of a bad wrist. His name was Pte "Bill" Brewer & I have written him a line today asking him to call & see you if he happens to be out Essendon way. The postal a/d he left was P.O. Burwood so it would be rather far for him to go unless he happened to be near on account of some other reason.

I received a letter from Harold today, written from Shoeburyness & he seems to be still having a pretty good time. We had another Australian military band here last Sunday an exceptionally good one too.

Nothing more to write about this time.

Oceans of love,

Yr lvg. son,

Love to Frank/.

Bob.

June 3rd 1918

**48 Browning St.
Moonee Ponds**

Dear Bob,

Your P.C. of Tower Bridge, London, came today, and I am indeed glad that you have had another look at England, which means of course an opportunity to spend some time with Harold.

Do you intend writing an account of the trip like "the eight days in Paris"? I secured that from Frank and enjoyed it so much that I had a copy typed to call my own, before returning it to Buckley St. By the way, Bob – you may develop into a writer yet, if you do, I know your writings will be worth reading. There is a Mrs & Miss Edwards (church members & fine people!) who are interested in the doings of both you boys so I always tell them the news. By the time you receive this note it is possible you may have had the opportunity of meeting Mr Withall, a friend of Mrs Hayes – she asked me your latest address, so I rang up Frank to tell your people and on Mrs Hayes' invitation your Mother & Father went into church yesterday and met Mr Withall. I was at "Belmiers" in the afternoon but the day was so perfect – everyone was out. Tomorrow night I shall have the privilege of attending the annual church meeting – the night has been changed from Friday to Tuesday to suit a dozen of us – although some of the old timers strongly opposed it.

Doubtless you have had a few nights of pleasure in London – there is nothing startling out this way – Today we saw a good comedy show at The Royal – (Graham Brown in "General Post") It deals with English snobbery and how it is being wiped out by the war.

A short time ago, the American Comedy Co had a few good shows, "Turn to the Rifle," etc, I saw them in "The New Henrietta," a bright, breezy & wholesome show, and what made it interesting, two of the actors were good C. Scientists. Alexander Watson is with us again and continually advertising "Farewell Performance," etc, but he turns up again as long as the good houses last – however, he is splendid and always worth hearing.

I saw recently in the papers that the Government were finally winding up the Continental Tyre Co & selling all their possessions. My time is rather limited tonight so must reserve any other news til next letter. With kindest regards and best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

[Miss] B.M. Busch

P.S. I do not see Miss Hill so often these days – there is a man in it.

(Un-numbered)
[SPAINSH FLU EPIDEMIC]

FRANCE
20/6/18

My dear All,

The annual inoculations have just come round, and gone again, and this reminds me of an incident which occurred about this time last year.

In the course of conversation one day with the warrant officer in charge of us, I without thinking, told him that I had schemed out of inoculation in Egypt and on the boat coming over to France. – I thought it a great joke but he apparently did not for when the time for inoculation came round again a few months later, he said he intended to watch me personally and make absolutely certain that I was done this time. They were giving the men a double dose straight off this time and the aforesaid warrant officer seemed rather delighted to remark that I ought to have a particularly bad time, seeing that I had not been done before. I told him that inoculation was all rot and that they would only be wasting their germs on me, but I would get done even if it was just to show that I didn't care one way or the other. Besides the effect of a double dose straight off the reel would certainly be rather interesting.

Half the staff had been done the day before and the warrant officer and I went up next day to get done. I had heard someone say that the doctor himself had been done in the chest instead of the arm so I said to the doctor, "You might do me in the chest too if you don't mind, sir." I undid my tunic and stood up in front of him, keeping my eyes on the window of the hut, and saying to myself, "I'm just an idea of Mind, and if these dear little germs are also an idea of Mind, they certainly can't fight with me or harm me in any way whatsoever; and if they are not ideas of Mind then they are nothing but illusion." I was going on with some thoughts about the impossibility of matter becoming inflamed, etc., etc., when I was rudely interrupted by the doctor exclaiming, "You've been done. Get out or I'll give you another dose." So I got out.

That was last time.

This time, we were told that we could be done either on the arm or the chest, as we wished. Only one other fellow that I know could bear the thought of getting done on the chest and he ended up by being in bed for two or three days after it. I felt as though I'd been punched in the chest for a few hours afterwards but otherwise nothing happened. I had no inflammation whatever – So Mrs Eddy's statements on the subject were again proved.

A few weeks ago an epidemic spread all round here of some mysterious complaint after the style of influenza. Some said it was a kind of dog disease and others said it came from Spain. The doctors didn't know what to make of it. Nearly everybody got it, for periods lasting from three to eight days. Now, four of us sleep in a small barn. – Three

got it in turn, then, they waited patiently for my turn to come. But, needless to say, I missed my turn. I simply did a little right thinking on the matter now and then.

To finish up, it is worth mentioning that the man who took my place when I left the orderly room of the Field ambulance was killed, and also the man who took my place at Divisional Headquarters. At the actual time the former was killed I happened to be closer to the Line than he was, too.

I have typed this so that you can send a copy to Mrs Hayes and Miss Busch, because I have told you at various times that I thought I had lost what little knowledge of Science I had, but I now mention the above incidents to show that such is evidently not the case. Don't you think I have very, very much to be grateful for?

Yr. Loving son & brother,

Bob.

P.S. I don't forget the helpful thought I am always receiving from Australia.

EXTRACT (of a speech, or commiqué, supporting Conscription?)

(June 1918)

“Since the opening of the German offensive in March, every Division of the Australian Army in FRANCE has been engaged, and always with decisive success. - The men of AUSTRALIA, wherever and whenever they have entered this mighty conflict, they have brought the enemy to a standstill and have made him pay dearly for each futile attempt to pass them on the roads to AMIENS and to the Channel Ports. - Their reputation as skilful, disciplined and gallant soldiers has never stood higher throughout the Empire as it does today. Those privileged to lead in battle such splendid men are animated with a pride and admiration which is tempered only by concern at their waning numbers. - Already some battalions have ceased to exist as fighting units, and others must follow, unless the Australian nation stands by us and sees to it that our ranks are kept filled. - We refuse to believe that the men and women of AUSTRALIA will suffer their famous Divisions to decay, or that the young manhood still remaining in our homeland will not wish to share in the renown of their brothers in FRANCE. - Nothing matters now but to see this job through to the end, and we appeal to every man to come, and come quickly, to help in our work and to share in our glorious endeavour. -

MONASH

Lieutenant General.”

COPY, 27/6/18.

Monsieur le Major General Monash,
Commandant la 3me Division Australienne,
F R A N C E.

Avant de quitter la Somme et la region devastee de RIBEMONT ou je possede ma filature de laines, je me fais un devoir de vous remercier du concours aussi devoue qu'assidu prete par votre Division au sauvetage et a l'evacuation de mes laines. Grace a ce concours j'ai pu recuper toutes mes marchandises representant environ Deux Millions de Francs, et eviter ainsi un disastre irreparable pour moi comme pour la pays.

Je vous adresse comme chef de la 3me Division mes plus sincereres et chaleureux remerciements en vous priant de les transmettre a vos vaillants officiers et soldats ainsi qu'aux membres de la Mission Francaise:

Monsieur l'Officier Interprete De Gail les interpretes Petit, Girand, Montaland qui ont uni leurs efforts a ceux de vos vaillants troupes que vous commandez; tous meritent une recompense qui leur sera, j'espere, bientot accordee.

Recevez, Mon General, l'assurance de ma haute consideration.

(Signee) CH. HOURDEQUIN,
Refugee a Lardy,
SEINE ET OISE.

N.B.- Je suis tres reconnaissant en particulier au colonel du 3eme Bataillon au Mitrailleuse pour les soins apportees a la conservation a ma maison d'habitation attenante a l'usine.

This letter of thanks to General Monash must have been copied on an English typewriter, there being no accents available for use.