

Grace
31st August 1918

My dear Mother & Father & Frank

Oh how can I write to you about poor old Harold! This is the hardest blow I have ever had in my life. You can't realise what we have been to each other since we have been over here so far from home. One of the fellows at HQ said to me when I told him "This is terrible for you, you were not like ordinary brothers, you talked so much about him & wrote to him so often that you must have thought the world of each other". And he was just right. When I got the news I said to myself why wasn't it me & not him. He was so much nobler than I am. When I got to the hospital I could hardly keep from breaking down when talking about him with the nurses. My eyes were half full of tears all the time & I could scarcely speak at times. The nurses were also affected. They said he was wonderfully cheerful & didn't seem to think he was so bad. They didn't tell him at all that they thought his case hopeless as they said it is their rule not to. They did everything possible for him & he had a little room to himself. He asked them to read his *Scout's* & *Health*

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to him they read quite a lot to him & said this always had a wonderfully peaceful effect on him. Miss Ward, (a voluntary aid nurse) gave up her afternoon off to him & read to him from Science & Health the whole afternoon on the ^{morning} ~~last~~ last day. He said to her once "I wish I knew more about this than I would not be sick at all" I think if they had told him he was so bad he would have sent a message to Miss James for treatment. He said on the last day that he wished his brother ^(Mrs) was here. The orderly (Raynor) said he was one of the best patients he had seen, never grumbled, never complained & always said Oh Goodah when the orderlies suggested anything or gave him anything. When he was a bedroom then usual he asked for the book 800 & they always read it to him & it always seemed to improve him.

The cemetery (a civilian cemetery all round) is about 2 miles from the hospital. I took off my hat & knelt beside his grave as soon as the official went away. I completely lost control of myself & cried as though my heart would break for some minutes.

Oh he was so brave, so thoughtful for my feelings to worry me by letting me know he was ill, passing away sticking to Principle Love to the last, fighting for Principle for three & a half years.

I think he loved me as much as I loved him
 We had no one else you know who understood
 us, over there. He was so patriotic, his sense
 of duty to his country was so strong, there
 was no one so noble in my estimation. I
 felt like crying "Oh mountains fall on me"
 when, after a few minutes the light
 began to show through the gloom.
 I got out the little copy of Science & Health
 (which he gave me) & read aloud on my
 knees the Scientific Statement of Being
 ... Spirit as God & man is this image of likeness
 therefore man is not material, he is spiritual
 the correlative reading from John
 3, 1, 2, 3 Behold what manner of love
 the Father hath bestowed upon us that
 we should be called the sons of God.
 etc etc. And I said my kars & smiled
 I realised then that Gerald wasn't
 buried in this earth before me, - never
 was & never would be. Man, in the
 image of his Maker is always beautiful
 & grand. Behold now are ye the sons
 of God.

This is the greatest cross I have
 ever had & I can pacify myself
 & comfort myself only by vowing

to place Principle absolutely first in
my life. First last all the times I have
realised how I have been gradually
slipping back for some time excusing
myself by saying it was on account
of the war.

You have each other to sympathise
with & talk it over with but here am
I all alone. My sorrow is too deep
to discuss with anyone over here. I
saw Parker this evening. He was very
sympathetic but I was afraid to
say much as my tears come so
quickly & it looks so silly for a
boy to cry.

Frank, it behoves both you & I
in future to make a tremendous
effort to keep up the standard set us
by our Brother Gerald. Your grief
I hope will not be so great as mine
as you have not seen him for such
a long time but he has borne things
wonderfully over here. We always
went to see each other at every
opportunity & kept up a constant
correspondence. His character was
far far above mine in many ways.
He hated nobody & there wasn't the
slightest thing petty or mean
about him. We must put up a good
fight to make ourselves worthy of
meeting him in the next world.
He will have proved for himself by
experience now that there is no such
thing as "death" & I trust he is already
in the company of some of the Scientists
to who have also passed on. (As it is now
25 to 2 & I have kept up at 6 I will close & write again later)
Mother don't forget that we can always always know that God is Love
Your loving son & brother, Bob.

Details

Harold passed from our sight in ~~the~~ a lovely old French town, the name of which I am unable to mention in this green envelope but I mentioned it in one of the cables. I did not receive your cable asking for particulars thro' Florence till 29th Aug. It was the first news I got that Harold had passed away. I never knew till the 21st that he had been gassed other only thro' a fellow on our No. noticing it in a return & telling me about it. I then borrowed a bicycle & went straight away to visit all the Casualty Clearing Stations who were receiving patients ~~that~~ on the 15th & 16th August. I found he had passed thro' No 55 but they could give me no information except that that had put him on a hospital train on the 16th & couldn't even tell me where the train was bound for. Of course under these circumstances they wouldn't know anything more at his Battery but I sent a note thro' the official dispatch rider to Harold's O.B. (some 12 miles off) & have not yet had a reply. I also wrote to Arthur Porter who works at a General Hospital to see if he could find out anything

I wrote to Mrs. James as soon as I heard that he had been gassed but of course it was then Aug 20th &

(6) but you have no idea how slow our means of communication are here. They had told me at the Cas. Barr. Station that he would probably be sent to England & I then got a letter from Glozier saying that Lt. Myglan, a pal of Harold's, had written to her saying that Harold had been gassed & was probably in England now. I couldn't possibly get leave on a bare supposition without anything definite so I just had to wait anxiously for some word & then I got your cable & applied for special leave to go to the No. 8 General Hospital. I was given 3 days Special Leave from the morning of Aug 30 so started off at 5.30am got to the nearest working railway station at gain. I was unable to get a train till 12.30 pm & arrived at my destination at 6pm. the same day. I went straight to the No. 8 General Hospital & found that the nurses who had attended Harold were off duty. So I went again this morning (31st August) & saw everybody who had had anything to do with Harold except Capt (Dr) E.C. Beaumont who had been sent to another town altogether some ^{long} distance off. However he had left full notes & another doctor gave me all particulars. (This was really no drawback as the nurses knew most about the details) - Their names are Sister Thompson, Sister Ewen, Miss Ward & an orderly named Raynor. They were all most exceptionally nice & gave me all possible information.

Here are all the bare facts I will just set them out as they were given. (You will understand) -

Harold arrived at the Hospital on the 17th Aug. with a temperature of 102 & had vomited a good deal on the way.

(D)

He had no burns at all on his body, but his face was very blue & his eyes were inflamed & the sight affected. He was much inflamed inwardly & had acute bronchitis in both lungs & fluid on lower part of both lungs. He was very cheerful & most wonderfully plucky all through but did not speak much. They ^{told me} said his case was hopeless from the first & it affected his heart was affected. He was a little delirious now & then & once counted up to 95. He passed away quietly while the orderly Rayner was giving him oxygen at 6.55 pm on 19th August.

There was no post mortem examination as it was considered quite unnecessary.

The following things were in his pockets; 1 pocketbook, 3 letters, 4 photos 1 pipe, 1 religious book, 1 compass, wrist watch & strap, 3 keys, 1 tobacco pouch, 1 fountain pen, 1 cig. holder, 1 wrist compass in case, 1 eye pr. field glasses, 1 revolver, 1 matchbox holder, 1 leather wallet containing papers, 1 farthing, 1 silver coin 96 francs 5 centimes. (The latter has been paid by the authorities into his account)

When I went to the Records Office I was disappointed to find they had already sent the above things to London & they will be sent immediately to you. They said I could not have got any of them in any case. I sent the following cable today, New Florrie as I will save some days by

sending it through her.

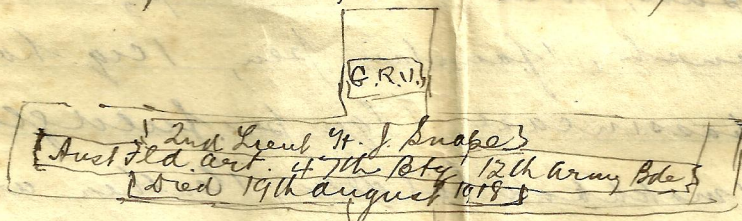
Harold gassed 15th died ~~to~~ fearlessly
peacefully 19th mustard gas. Hopeless
from first. Inward inflammation
lungs affected heart. No outward burns.
Cheerful courageous little pair
pacified by nurse reading from his
little religious book everything
possible done. Bob

I visited his grave. The graves are all
well looked after according to regulations
now all crosses must be the same
& flowers are planted on all the graves
by the officials there also grass on
the vacant spaces (like a lawn) between
the graves.

Here are the details of the cross.

Wood painted brown 3'6" high with
cross piece 19".

Inscription:



G. R. U. means
Graves Registration Unit

These are the exact words

Harold mentioned to one of the nurses that he was
gassed because they had taken away their
helmets & they had none to put on but she
doesn't know whether he was delirious or
not when he said it. However I am going
to visit the 47th Bty as soon as possible &
make full enquiries into this matter.
A Capt. Callaghan of the same Bty was gassed
at the same time. Bob.