

AND STILL THE HEART IS HOME*

MADGE MACBETH

JOHNS DOUGLAS MACBETH is, as one may surmise, of Scottish descent. His grandfather, Col. John Macbeth (a veteran of the Fenian Raid), was born in Red River, where his parents were members of Lord Selkirk's Kildonan Settlement scheme.

Herbert Macbeth, the colonel's eldest son, fought in the Riel Rebellion and George, a younger son, in the South African war.

On my side of the family, Captain Randolph Lyons, 18 years of age, a signal officer, was running a blockade from England to the United States when his ship was chased by a Federal gunboat and he was forced ashore off North Carolina. Led by a negro into what he thought was a Confederate camp, he found himself a prisoner in Northern hands.

His brother Jack, aged 16, served in the trenches at Columbia, South Carolina. I. L. Lyons, the oldest brother, was captain of 10th Louisiana Infantry, and twice wounded.

With such a record, what chance had I, a cowardly, peace-loving person, to wean Douglas away from a military career?

The steps by which he rose from a cipher to a colonel need not be set down here. I think none will deny that he was largely instrumental in building up his unit into a conspicuously fine organization—as witness a few lines from his first letter after setting out on service overseas;

"We arrived in port . . . Got large bouquets from the railway representative for the behavior of the men, so I judge that some units were not all that they expected. Or maybe they were . . . and we fooled them! We marched directly from train to ship.

"Other troops were already on board and it was funny to see everyone looking at everyone else, for all the world like two dogs eyeing each other before starting to growl . . . Troops are like that—looking carefully over men who belong to another unit . . .

*Extracts from letters by a young man, Colonel of the 3rd Divisional Signals before the war, who voluntarily fell back to rank of Captain in order to go overseas with the first group. He has now received his Majority. The extracts are made by his mother.
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"I suppose the time of our sailing was secret. That conclusion is arrived at when I remember the crowds of people on the roofs of the houses and large hotel!

"I missed my lunch staying on deck to see the land fade away. I don't remember ever seeing land fade away except when flying above low clouds. It wasn't the same there, either, for one knew the plane would descend and the land would rise until the two met in a happy union. This was different; quite an emotional event. I thought of a Canadian Boat Song that goes this way—

From the lone shieling of a misty island
Mountains divide us and a waste of seas;
But still the heart is home, the heart is Highland
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

"The heart is still home in Canada with you, mum, and somehow it is also over there, where my people lived and fought and conquered.

"The land faded away—the land we were going off to save for Democracy a second time, and suddenly the troops who had been singing and yelling went very still. Then, it would have brought a lump to your throat to hear them break into *O Canada* . . . their damp eyes glued to that little bit of haze, all that was left to us of the country we loved so well."

That Douglas made some considerable sacrifice in reducing himself from colonel to captain in order to take his men overseas may be gleaned from this passage . . . "It feels strange to be saluting the colonels and standing respectfully at attention, waiting to be called or spoken to. Good discipline, no doubt."

Douglas had never been to England, and his first impressions were a justification of what I had told him of the climate. Possibly, they were more marked because he landed at Christmas time, when one's thoughts are associated with things at home. He was not alone in feeling so:

"The damp is terrible. I've never been so cold—not cold as we know it in Canada . . . but a miserable, penetrating wetness that won't be conquered. It made us warm, but in the wrong way, to read the jibes in the papers at the hardy Canadians who couldn't take it. If this is the English idea of cold . . . I prefer Winnipeg at 50 below.

"My office has a stove, about twice as large as a coffee tin. It's adequate, however, for the large allowance of coal—one scuttle a week . . ."

In logical sequence, the next letter I received was from hospital where Douglas was being treated for acute tonsillitis. His case was typical of many who felt that they faced possible death by taking a hot bath and having to run through icy corridors on a cement floor. True, there were three radiators

in the wing, but "they might as well have been painted on the walls." A further reference states that "The only heating arrangement is naturally a fire-place, but (1) we have learned to extract the maximum of heat, (2) Canadians can draw all the coal they need regardless of the British ration scale, (3) one of the batmen is constantly on duty keeping the home fires burning."

By contrast to the chill of the climate, the welcome accorded to our troops was unexpectedly warm. Invitations for Christmas flooded the barracks—more than could be accepted. Lord and Lady Dorchester, who are well known in Canada, invited the Royal 22nd to their splendid estate. Douglas had a very happy holiday at the home of Mrs. Spencer-Hill, whose parents were close friends of Cecil Rhodes. He was especially interested in meeting Commander Stephen King-Hall, and disappointed in missing H. V. Morton, who had to keep another engagement.

Incidental inconveniences were compensated for by the thrill of exploring the English country—as when he took his men on a route march over The Pilgrim's Way, one of the oldest roads in England and about which a considerable literature exists, including a fine poem by Masfield.

The black-out had him "stoppered." He didn't consider it worth while to go to the movies, when he had not only to feel his way down the aisle but to stumble over the policemen on the street. He would, however, take a chance on finding his way to the nearest pub, which reminds me of his first description of his fare . . .

"The food is really quite different. Favorite and daily vegetable is the *potato*—every meal—boiled. The brussels sprout is in 2nd place, a nose behind the winner. Cabbage runs a good 3rd. Broccoli almost neck and neck with cabbage. Carrots, peas, baked beans, spinach, also rans. Other entries scratched. No cream or butter except at tea; a mixture of butter and margarine at other meals. I think the milk is either powdered or watered. I don't know what animal produces it. No tea or coffee at night—no *coffee* any time! Just warm mud. Tea is excellent. I have it before getting up in the morning, and it's just as effective as hot prune juice. I can now drink it in any form at any time. Soon I'll smoke it, thus completing all methods . . .

"This afternoon tea business is quite a sight. There are a number of 2nd Lts here (Royal Signals Mess) with appetites like wolves . . . they go through more cake, jam, tarts and fancy biscuits than anyone I've ever seen. At dinner, after a few heaping plates, they invariably leave the Mess with an apple, orange or banana. Then, about 9.30 they crowd the bar for a night-cap of chocolates or other sweets."

A letter written on the 25th of January, 1940, began . . .

"Eleven months from to-day will be Christmas, and in case the mails are messed about this eleven months as they've been so far, I'd better wish you all the compliments of the season now, so as to be in time."

Also in that letter;

"Yesterday, we were inspected by the King. We lined the route, much the same as we did when the King and Queen visited Ottawa and walked through the lines with a word or two for each man."

After going on an inspection trip himself—to the front line in France—Douglas returned "home" to England and took a few days leave:

"I've been tripping a bit about the country, seeing the historic sites. It's William of Orange country—Bill landed near here—and went to Newton Abbott, where he lived while rallying his forces. Yesterday, I saw the place where some murder occurred, the leading man being, I think, one John Lee. Anyway, they hanged him three times, and when he refused to die, they thought that perhaps they were wrong and so compromised with 23 yrs in the jug . . .

"I also saw the Smugglers' Rest, a wee pub in this town, about 700 years old—same stone floor, same wood panelling worn shiny with shoulders resting against it. There, the merchants from London used to meet the smugglers and buy their goods. I lowered gallons of Bass ale, listening to the proprietor load on the history. I went all over a fishing boat of about 40 tons, and what with two Channel crossings, this beautiful coastline and the fishing yawl, I'm crazy about the sea. Should transfer to the Navy."

Later, in spite of petrol rationing, he was taken by friends to Warwick Castle, owned by the Earl of Warwick, now in Hollywood:

"Also, we went to Kenilworth, where the Earl of Leicester entertained Queen Elizabeth at a big party. Only ruins left now, but what a pile it must have been . . . Loved Babbicombe Beach in the Kingsley country and thawed right happily in the hot sun . . .

"Afterwards, I drove down a country road with the Col. It didn't seem strange at all until I thought about it. Just looking from the car window seemed the most natural thing in the world. Perhaps 'the heart is still at home,' or something."

With the coming of spring, the discomforts of the autumn and winter were forgotten:

"These last few days have been simply glorious—sunny and bright, and the nights are full of stars. The leaves on the trees are progressing, and numerous little bushes have some sort of colour. So have the weeds.

"I hear by the grapevine telegraph that you are worrying and unhappy about it all, and that worries me. It's true that we were pretty miserable at first . . . sick . . . didn't like the food, etc. But I'm all right now, have met wonderfully kind people and am really enjoying it. Training is not much different from what we might have at an annual camp, except that this time it's serious . . . I know that everybody gets lonely and misses their homes and own people, and I'm no exception. But if I tell you about the discomforts, the cold billets in France, sleeping on the cement floor of the dock waiting for our boat, it's because I want to take you on the show with me just as you took me through the insects and vermin of the tropics . . . Most of us knew what it might be like. None of us know what will happen, but you really didn't know what would happen to us when we left the house for school, did you?

"People took chances when they went west in prairie schooners, and we're taking chances, too. But I'd much sooner be dead honorably, than beaten to death in a concentration camp, or have you in one because I *wouldn't* take the chance. I'm not going to take foolish risks, but I'm going to do my job for my men, for my unit and for my home. It's not an adventure. It's a serious job; and Lord knows I might have been killed or wounded by a falling cake of ice 20 years ago, or drowned in Muskoka or hit by a truck. Well, I wasn't, and I'll be back this time, too, mum darling. I have to get the lads home too, don't I? So please don't worry . . . I'll meet you in Spain or Monte Carlo or Belgrade, and we'll have a time pulling the buildings down, one by one. They'll say as they do, here, 'Just a couple of mad Canadians!'"

Writing from a new billet, he complained (Shame that this should come from a Macbeth!):

"My room looks out on the street where the Toronto Scottish have their Headquarters. Behind, their barracks. Each morning at 6.30 a bugler starts off the day with a solo. A split second behind him comes the pipe band on their daily promenade through the Barracks. The din is terrific, but I'm getting used to it, and soon I'll be able to turn over and finish my sleep."

And a further reference to sleeping arrangements says:

"Tonight is a lovely night; new moon and stars all out. A good night for a raid, I always feel. However, my mahogany mattress will protect me; nothing could go through it, not even my hip bones."

The English countryside made a deep impression on Douglas:

"I've just come in from a few turns round the garden. The smell of the flowers was almost overwhelming, brought out, I suppose, by the dew and the night air. Normally, this letter would be written beside the open casement, from which the moonlight could be seen on the trees and the road, but the blackout has changed all that, and the whole house is shut up tight, windows closed, blinds and heavy curtains drawn. And when I was walking round the garden like a skipper on the bridge, I looked up at the moon and the stars, and saw the pale glow where the sun had disappeared, and thought—such a lovely night for a raid! Instructions to the public about parachutists make one instinctively look up at the sky, expecting to see hundreds of Germans descending through the air. The Belgian and Holland episodes bring the war pretty close to this country now, and I almost wish I were out in France again, where it's safe. It's an awful thing to contemplate, this beautiful country being any kind of battlefield. We arrived here at the wrong time of the year. I mean we formed altogether a wrong idea of what a lovely country England is, and I'm glad we have been able to stay here long enough, so that our original ideas could be changed.

"By the way, driving down to the Salisbury area, the other day, we passed a pile of stones. In a flash, it came to me. Stonehenge! To think that at last I had seen what I read in the history books years and years ago!"

In the early summer, Douglas became uncle to a little boy, who was named after him. This is the letter he wrote:

"My dear Nephew,

Your grandmother has just sent me a cable announcing your arrival into our family. I offer you a rousing welcome—not as rousing as could be desired, because I am a great many miles away from you at the present time, on a job that you will probably read about in your history books at some later date.

And I see also that you are wearing my name. That is your father's idea, my lad, and although you won't realize it for some time, it makes me feel very honoured and proud. It's a good name, and it's known in a great many strange places and, to you, strange countries, and you will remember, please, that while you may not be able to help a little dust from getting on it at times, you must not let the dust get too thick, so that it won't come off. You see, I'm pretty proud and jealous of that name.

Your father and mother, you will get to know later, are pretty swell people. Your grandmother on your father's side is also a good guy. If you listen to her, you'll be all right. You come from a race of soldiers, sonny. Every generation since the family has lived in North America has had its soldiers, from colonels to privates. We've fought in every war that Canadians have

fought, and although you are born an American, you will please always remember your British stock. You will be the next representative for the Army, but right now you are a bit young to be thinking about that, aren't you?

I hope we shall meet some day soon, John Douglas, but if not, you'll find all of us in the Officers' Mess waiting to see you. Because you will be named after me, I shall take a special interest in you all your life, and very soon I will try to send a present from this uncle of yours.

I hope you are not awake at this time of night, which is reserved exclusively for older people and busy people. You be a good boy and very good to those swell people I've told you about—your father and mother.

I'll be writing to you again soon, I hope, but in the meantime, a great big welcome from

Your Uncle

John Douglas Macbeth"

The beauty of the estates and exquisite courtesy of their owners struck Douglas no less than the dauntless spirit of the British people:

"We are billeted in a sleepy little village—a beautiful part of England about which I shall tell you when we are about 3 months away from it. The men have made friends with the villagers, mending and moving furniture, and doing all the odd chores possible, for these people. We plan a sort of sports-picnic for the kids on Saturday, to show how completely we have adopted the village.

"The Officers are billeted in the Hall, a cosy little nest of about 2687 rooms and two baths! Parts of the house date from 14 something. Beds (many of them canopied) and mattresses rather absorb one. Weston had to dig me out the first morning. The host and hostess, a charming couple. He is a retired Army Officer, and she worked very hard and very 'high-uppishly' in the Can. Red Cross during the last war, cutting red tape! Has letters of thanks from Lady Drummond, etc., etc.

"They think of everything. This paper is put in each room, with ink, blotters, pens, etc. They have given us their kitchen, huge dining room complete with portraits, two libraries with Rembrandts, da Vinci's and such; and we, on our part, have iron discipline, for many sections of the house are veritable museums . . . secret stairways, sliding panels and all. My batman appointed himself Duty Trumpeter for our Mess dinner, and lost no time getting crossed trumpets sewn on his tunic. He already has Canada badges and two service stripes, so I tell him that with all of these and Divisional patches and a couple of wound stripes he'll look like a lion tamer. He hadn't thought about the wound stripes.

"The churchyard holds bodies of an uncle and aunt of Benjamin Franklin. The church dates from 15 something. Our

carpenters have added two rungs to the belfry ladder and now expect to be made deacons. (Actually in the interest of air raid precautions)."

Of another equally lovely place Douglas writes—

"Our host is a great old fellow. Looks like a gardener, which he is. Grows orchids, and people from all over the world come to see and to sniff his blossoms. There is a beautiful wrought iron well a thousand years old, and the estate was once a Kingdom mentioned in *Doomsday Book*. The original Hall was burned in 1934. It was so old that 'new' wings were added every 200 years or so . . . The Tudor wing, the Orange wing, and so on. Elms 300 and 400 years old. What once was a stable now houses a section of my Company. My office is located in the harness room. (Hugh Carson's period, with a dash of Massey-Harris thrown in!) A wicker-work fence surrounds the gold fish pond, and makes an ideal place on which to hang the rayon lingerie issued by the Rt. Hon. W. L. M. King! The other day one of the boys had to wade into the pond to retrieve his shirt and was called up 'in court' charged with conduct prejudicial to good military discipline!

"The cook house, also in the stable, is presided over by Corp. Wilson whose picture was in all the papers. When we marched off the lighter that took us ashore from the *Aquidania*, he was wearing his blue civilian greatcoat and had potato mashers, egg beaters, knives and cleavers besides toys and odd souvenirs hung round his mighty middle. Every man who gets a parcel shares it with the Corp. so that he continues to put on weight."

When the possibility of an invasion was uppermost in everyone's mind, this is what one letter said:

"With the war at this stage, we never know when active duty will begin. Some people say, 'Ah, a cloudy day. Just right for an attack.' Others cry, 'Ah, a clear day. Just right for an attack.' Personally, I can't think it will come. If spies are working in this country, they can't fail to be impressed with the precautions taken and the speed with which the new armies are being equipped. . . . Moreover, it's perfectly marvellous to breathe the spirit of these people. There's no hint of grumbling, and as for fear or anticipation of being beaten, why, mum, you couldn't imagine such a thing. A nuisance, yes. But only that. Scarcely any anger. I tell you, it's something more than words will express. It makes you proud and, at the same time, it makes you humble.

"Every citizen is doing something; reserve police, A.R.P. wardens, Home Guard who train at night, patrol roads and watch fields for parachutists, St. John's Ambulance First Aid—all sorts of salvage collectors. Practically everyone I've met does something. The farmer who brings eggs not only runs his farm but

takes his turn with the road patrols at night, and over the week-ends assists in building and bag shelters, pill boxes, etc. Some day I want to tell you what an English village is like during an Air Raid alarm. It's wonderful the way these volunteers rally round. And they have more initials to their jobs than one of Roosevelt's New Deal programmes . . . A.R.P., W.V.S., A.F.S., S.R.P., etc. We may get messed up a bit, but we can't be licked! They've taught me that, over here, and I want you over there to believe it!"

Shortly after writing this letter, Douglas suffered an accident to his knee and was rushed to the nearest hospital, which happened to be one requisitioned for the R.A.F., where "patients come and go every day so that one hardly gets to know anybody save the old boarders. We are referred to as 'the bloke with the purple bedroom slippers,' or 'the fellow with mahogany crutches.' I am 'Canada' or 'Canuck' or 'Cap,' easily identified as the only khaki uniform among the Air Force Blue:"

"The hospital is bone dry, so we mobile cases usually go down to a little pub about a shilling's taxi fare away. It's too funny to see the taxi with 4 people in it—legs in plaster casts supported on the driver's shoulder, and crutches sticking at all angles out of the windows, looking for all the world like a loon's nest. The loading and unloading of us takes longer than the actual drive."

In the next bed there was a young flier who has lost both feet but who was the most cheerful patient in the hospital, only lashing out at the doctors for not getting him up so that he could be fitted with new feet and take to the air again. He had a date with a couple of Germans whose plane got away while his was coming down. "This is the spirit I spoke about. Don't you see that people like this are undefeatable?"

"If the war does nothing else, it will have served the magnificent purpose of letting us understand the character of the British people . . . Age 29 has been called up now, and it doesn't matter whether the men are married or single or fathers of 23 children. They go—rich and poor alike—war discipline. They call it playing the game.

"The Sergeants are old Regulars mostly, red beery faces and waxed mustaches. Quite a sight!

"There's more to them than that, however. There's a solidarity or something that gives a fellow unbounded confidence. In fact, all these people give one that feeling. I have yet to see anyone go jittery even when a plane or bomb drops almost on top of them. Enclosed is a piece of a Heinkel that fell in a field

close to us, and the only excitement occurred when the boys got permission to hack it to bits for souvenirs.

"What can the Germans do to people like this? They don't even lose their sense of humor. Have you heard of the two women who having spent all night in a shelter found their homes in ruins? One propped up a sign reading *House To Let*. And the other wrote on a paper *No Milk To-day*.

"On the reverse side of the picture, milkmen often leave bottles in masses of ruins near what they imagine was the home of a customer; just as though no disaster had occurred.

"You've heard me speak of Nurse H. She's another example of what I call the British Spirit. Not that I mean she's an exception. Quite the contrary, mum. During an Air Raid when bombs were dropping all round her hospital—one eventually took off the big wing—she wrote to me from the basement. 'The other day in a pub I met a very, very ancient man. We got to talking about Air Raids, of course, and I asked him where he slept. He told me, under the stairs.

'Alone?' I asked, meaning, had he grown children or others to look out for.

"He hesitated.

'Well, not as you might say alone, Miss.' He finally admitted:

'I know it's very immodest, Miss, but my housekeeper sleeps with me. However,' he added, 'we sleep head to foot and anyway, she's an old, old woman.'

"Nurse H. ended by saying, 'I expect there are a lot of queer people sleeping in a lot of queer places all over London. If you get this letter, you will know I'm safe. At least, until the next Raid; for I'll post it in the morning. If you don't hear from me—well, we've had plenty of fun, thanks to a bloke named Hitler!'"

He wrote that London had been "messed up a bit, but nothing serious." *Open For Business* was advertised in most shops even if partially destroyed. A few that had been badly bombed announced *More Open For Business*:

"How can anyone hope to crush people like that?" he demands, writing from London where he'd gone on a few days leave *for a rest!* The Mayfair hotel did him very well, and the delicious dinner complete with wines was a happy change after short rations, even in the pub "whose enormous oak chest was the loveliest thing in carved wood I ever saw, and whose size was probably designed to compensate for the smallness of the beef portion!"

Douglas hadn't slept on a mattress for so long that at first he couldn't rest comfortably at the Mayfair. "Finally, however, with the A.A.'s chattering outside and bursts of fire lighting up the district, I just pushed my back down into the bed and rolled around like a horse in a pasture."

Often he speaks in glowing terms of the work of The Salvation Army, whose motor canteens drive all over the country and serve field units coffee and doughnuts. They even provide cigarettes free.

Coming back from one of these field manoeuvres, he found he had been moved again. He was billeted at another grand old estate over which enemy planes flew every night on their way to attack London. Notwithstanding, the unit decided to organize a concert, a description of which follows:

"Concerto Uhuus, or Fun and Frolic Under an Elm Grove before an Air Raid while with the C.A.S.F. somewhere in England.

"The stage had been there for centuries. The scenery for at least 350 years. The audience was enthusiastic. The players were willing and able. The music . . . Well, there's the story.

"Our Workshop Section is located in a grove of huge elm trees; the kind of elms that grow in England; large ones that must be 350-400 years old. Perfect cover from the air is one of the factors in its location, because that must be considered in this area. There used to be grass under these trees, but the traffic—human and vehicular—has worn off all trace of the green carpet.

"The audience was composed of the off-duty men, operators from the day shift, cable men, fitters and instrument mechanics whose daily chores had been done; wireless operators having a breathing spell and a large group of odds and sods including cooks, clerks, drivers, batmen, etc., etc.

"The players, until they appeared, were in the audience. It was a catch-as-catch-can show, with volunteers coming forward to do their acts; guitars, ukeleles and mouth organs appeared. How the guitars get smuggled in a soldier's kit, I don't know, because the usual answer to the question, 'Where is your button brush?' is that there was no room to carry it, and it's the size of a small nail brush! Anyway, the guitars were there!

"Our dentist-shop and Pay-Office (the only place in the world where a dentist is so close to pay) is in a requisitioned schoolhouse on the estate; and amongst the effects left behind was a piano—not much of a piano and not a yearling piano, but there were keys and strings that made some sort of noise that could pass for melody.

"Now, you're in the picture. The rest was easy once it started. The cable gang went down to the schoolhouse with a 30 cwt lorry and carried the piano out to the truck, hoisted it on and triumphantly bore it away to the elm grove. From our fast-fading Company funds, we laid in 18 gallons of beer, one big keg and two small ones. They were perched on the tail-board of a work-shop lorry, and I leave it to you to imagine the willingness with which volunteers stepped forward to do the lifting. Everyone lined up with the mess tins and filed past the keg, and those without mess tins produced every sort of receptacle except a bath tub.

"Lt. Harry Hadwin, our cable Officer, then sat down (as Capt. Holmes the Technical Maintenance Officer put it) at the keyboard of the 'mighty Wurlitzer' and the party was on. We were galloping through a skit led by Corp. Wilson, D Section cook, after having had a bit of community singing and a single turn or two, when *Whee-ee* went the Air Raid siren.

"The party broke up reluctantly, because there was plenty of beer left and everyone took to the shelter trenches. Everyone had the same thought—I guess. Who was looking after the kegs? However, the All Clear went soon, after which no bombs being dropped on either the piano or the beer, and the show resumed.

"It wouldn't have sounded much on a broadcast or in a talkie, but somehow, it was different out there. The same old songs, it's true, but they sounded grand. For instance, I thought of the R.P.T. song sheets that used to be handed out on every occasion where two or more felt like singing, and that made me think of Ottawa. I suppose others felt the same way, but I didn't ask. We have men with darn good voices, and a few yodlers as well, so there was plenty of variety.

"As I write this, the sirens have just gone again. Everyone is inside behind these thick walls—all with tin hats on. The Line Maintenance Party is ready to go out in case a line gets blown, but there's no alarm; just a feeling of annoyance at being interrupted. There was a Raid this morning. We saw three parachutes coming down. One was a Boche, for he is now at Headquarters in the Guard Room.

"Anyway, to get back to the concert . . . We carried on till dark, by which time the beer had evaporated, and got back to the quarters just a few minutes before the next alarm went. The piano had to stay on the ground over night, but next morning we got it carried down to the Mess and, with the assistance of the local tuner, will soon have it in shape to listen to. Right now, it's a typical example of the horrors of war.

"It was a good show, and coming on a night before pay day was probably enjoyed all the more. I'd like to see it repeated, but it's a bit rough having plans broken up by Air Raids; and then I'll have to assess the Officers whenever we want to have beer with the music. I can't do that very often. Perhaps we'll drink tea. Next time, I'll try to get a picture of the scene to send to you, although it's pretty dark in our theatre and nobody but a candid camera fiend would be able to get a good picture.

"So there you are . . . a story poorly told about a good evening. There is little or no news other than the Air Raids which keep us up all night and working all day as well. So far, no casualties in this unit, but I shouldn't think there would be except through a mistake. The Boches seem to drop bombs anyway without any reason, except the idea of getting rid of them before streaking for home. Our fighters have a regular field day, each day . . .

"As I sign off, I can hear a group singing 'There'll Always Be an England,' even if, as someone has said, 'we lose every battle but the last.'"