
Dearest Alice

Sunday 1/5/1915
Trench C, Gallipoli

Sister, though I might never send this letter, it comforts me to write to you after the horrors of April 25th. Lying in my cramped burrow, crudely dug into the side of trench C, the sickly smell of dead bodies and burning gunpowder bombards my nostrils. The steady BANG! of heavy artillery rings in my ears, allowing no sleep, so even at this hour at night I see many a soldier reading, sharpening their bayonet-knives or hunched up in an effort to forget all we've been through. We know that chances of survival are slim, especially after what we have witnessed.

My mind often wanders back to my time in Cairo, training with 20 000 other troops. I thought war was just a glorified game where men slaughtered the enemy, becoming heroes. Training was tough but enjoyable and we were treated like heroes by the Egyptians. Jim and I even carved our names at the top of a pyramid!

As Jim and I headed to town one day, a soldier pushed through the crowd calling us to a summoning by the General. On arrival, we were told rudely by a stick-figure-thin man to, "Hurry up!" I glanced at Jim as we entered the room and joined the other soldiers gathered there.

He told us we were to attack the Turkish peninsula of Gallipoli. A shiver ran down my spine as all the men cheered loudly. We left for Gallipoli on the 13th of December.

After many horrid months at sea we neared the peninsula at 2am, April 25th. We boarded a destroyer which took us closer to land. Then it was into rowboats towed by steamers. I could hear Jim's heavy breathing as we approached the shoreline close to 3am. We peered through the darkness, straining to catch a glimpse of anything. Suddenly, searchlights cut through the black! We all froze, but nothing happened. "Close call," Jim muttered. We continued, and at four, were told that our rowing-boat-rafts could take us no closer.

At that moment, all hell broke loose!

I dived into the ice-cold water, bullets whizzing over my head. Jim wasn't moving, frozen by terror. I grabbed him, hoping to pull him into the cover of the ocean. He landed with a SPLASH, the water incarnadined. Sickened, I pulled my hand away. Fighting back tears, I continued the mad dash for survival, men falling to the left and right of me.

The beach was overlooked by huge, sandy cliffs, where the enemy were shooting. It seemed futile scrambling up as they picked us off, but we clenched our teeth and persevered, eventually succeeding in driving the Turks farther back.

Now the battleground is a maze of trenches, from where I write this letter. The food is horrible- tough bully beef and stale biscuits. The hygiene is dismal; you can't walk two metres without stepping on a dead body. The worst thing is the flies, which get on everything, and buzz like a swarm of bees, adding to the ruckus of the battlefield. I hate it!! Since Jim died I've become awfully lonely and have been missing

home. If I don't make it - know you, Ma and Pa are always in my heart. I am proud to serve my country and if I die, I know Jim will be waiting for me.

Love your brother,

Owen