

To Mrs. Armstrong

14th Jan: 1918

Dear Madam

I have received three letters from you since about the middle of Dec., & I do not know how to thank you: for I have not answered one of them until now. I have put off writing to you, again, & again; for just one reason, that I have been trying to get over to the 86th Bde to find out about P^{te} Hurley. It's a poor excuse, as I could have written before, & explained, as we have been scattered over a wide area, & I have been unable to get the time off, to go over to them, & it will probably be another few days before I can do so.

I thank you very much for the pipe & tobacco you sent me for Xmas, did you know that I was badly wanting a pipe, for I had lost mine, & we were billeted round country villages, where one cannot buy these little treasures; so you can imagine my delight when the pipe loomed up. It was as if Father Christmas had dropped it down the chimney

PG/1253(3)

1 OF 6

for me. I must also ² thank you for all the good wishes you sent for 1918; please accept the same from me; I wish you everything that is good. Although we were right in the country, we had some very good billets, our horses were made comfortable with plenty of straw, & three pals & myself, had the bakehouse with an old open hearth, at our disposal, & also a room to sleep in, & considered ourselves very lucky to be out of the line for Xmas. We cooked our own Xmas dinner, (I must tell you all this) we boiled a piece of beef in with some sweeds, carrots, & onions, & also put some dumplings in with it, & about twenty minutes before the time appointed, for declaring war on it, we crashed a few spuds in, & then, up came our Xmas dinner, I wish you could have seen the doings, it looked as if it was too much for two, & not enough for one. We put ourselves outside of the biggest part of it, & were well satisfied, with the cooking, & argued a little as to who was the chef. In the evening we had a good old Christmas log on the open hearth, & with a drop of wine, we

3

sat & jawed until midnight, we thought of the
boys in the trenches, & were very happy & lucky too,
to be sitting indoors, round a fire, instead of out in
the snow: & so ended our Christmas Day. 16th Jan

I am ever so pleased to hear about Nippers,
it is what I expected, although I did
not think that Duckie would agree with
her. I do hope you will not have to part
with her, since she shows so much affection
for you, I know it is difficult to get food
for two big dogs like that, at these times,
but I am sure you will try & manage it
at all possible.

I saw Melody yesterday, she is looking
jolly fit; Geisha is still with the 86th Bde
I do not know who has her now, as
Capt Deardon was wounded, at the last
battle. I shall try & get over to the 86th
this afternoon & see what I can find out
about Pte Hurley, & I shall go & see Geisha;
Capt M^r Connell of the 20th Hussars that I
was with, & who was wounded in this last

4
battle, is well, & back here again, & we are going to try & get Geisha, & I hope we shall succeed this time.

Pte Richie, that you heard about, being a prisoner, or missing, was not Gen. Di Lisle's servant, but an orderly on Div H.Q. He was well known to Capt Armstrong, as he often acted as his orderly, when we were on Div. H.Q. He was missing for 3 days, but had been fighting with The K.O.S.B.^s & eventually turned up at H.Q. alright. Pte Piddington of the 9th Lancers was the General's servant he is a prisoner of war, & a letter from his wife to H.Q. says that he is alright, which was good news, as we feared that he had been killed.

I am sorry I could not get to A- while we were down that way, much as I longed to go there, we were so busy that I could not get the time off.

I have not heard from Ames lately the last time he wrote, he told me he was

5

married, & quite happy & comfortable, & was expecting to get over this side again, but I doubt if we will be passed fit, for he has often told me that his old complaint troubles him. His address is, Manor House, Waltham Cross, London N.

I forgot to mention that you wrote me two letters sending New Year's greetings, you were not sure whether you had done so or not. The man that you met of the Worcesters, of course, may have been one of reinforcements that we have had during this last eight months, & that would account for him not knowing Capt Armstrong. The other man of the 87th Bde may have been A.S.C. or S.W.B., I will try & find out who he is, I must speak of the thing, & get it talked about, it will soon spread round, & I ought to find him, that is the only way I can think of finding him. I am 88th Bde, which makes it a little awkward, as we are not always handy to one another.

I will get Capt Ross's groom to help me, he is still with the 87th. I should be able to fish the fellow out. I can quite understand your feeling when the man was speaking to you.

We are off to a place in a day or two, which goes by the name of a dear master's dog. I think I have told you as much as I can, I am so sorry I have delayed writing, & I must let you know as soon as I get to know about ^{the} Hurley etc. goodbye,

Yours very respectfully

Pte W. Standen

